

"Little things" can help you become a better hockey player. Find your position and check them out.

- 1) Wingers
 - a) "Post-Up" Quickly
 - i) When a team-mate recovers the puck in your defensive zone, you should "post-up" quickly about two-thirds of the way up the boards. Your stick should be on the ice as a target for an outlet pass.
 - b) Board Play
 - i) An important skill is recovering pucks that are rimmed around the boards. This can be done with your stick, feet or body. Sometimes you have to "counter-pinch" in your defensive zone against a charging defenseman. On offense, a "chip" off the boards can often lead to a scoring chance.
 - c) Driving Wide
 - i) Good offensive wingers drive wide on defensemen at every opportunity. This forces the defenders to scramble and may result in a scoring opportunity, a drawn penalty or an open team-mate.
- 2) Centres
 - a) Rushes
 - i) Often it is the centreman who leads the rush. If possible, you should try to pass the puck wide to a winger before or at the blueline. Then the puck can be worked back into the middle for a good scoring chance.
 - b) Reading The Play
 - i) The centreman covers the middle of the ice and needs to be able to quickly assess all the different situations that arise during his shift. For example, when back-checking, the first forward who goes in deep to help the defenseman may be a winger. The centre must then take that winger's position and cover the point until he can switch back to his regular position.
 - c) Faceoffs
 - i) The centreman is the "quarterback" at all faceoffs. He must know what to do after a win or loss. Should he be put out of the faceoff circle by the linesman, he must instruct his winger what to do should the draw be lost. Games are won or lost in the faceoff circle.
- 3) Defensemen
 - a) Communication
 - i) A good "D" man is always talking to his partner, his forwards and his goaltender. On rushes, he is calling out coverage. In the defensive zone, he is talking to the goalkeeper to leave the puck for him or is point out an open man to a forward. Chris Pronger of the St. Louis Blues is one of the best at communication.
 - b) Checking
 - i) The job of the defenseman is to get to his man quickly, have his stick on the ice to prevent passes and then finish the check. Remember, QUICK -> STICK -> BODY.
 - c) Shooting
 - i) Point shots should be released quickly before the defenders can get into position to block them. Shots should not be higher than one foot off the ice. This enables forwards to screen the goalkeeper and deflect pucks. Low shots also make rebound control difficult for the goaltender.
- 4) Goaltenders
 - a) Stopping Rims
 - i) On hard rims or high rims, the goaltender should stay in the net rather than try to stop them behind the net.
 - b) Fielding Pucks

Little Things To Improve Your Game
By: Roger Neilson

- i) If the goaltender goes out of his net to get a puck, he should make his play right away and get back to his net. Goalkeepers are not equipped to make fancy plays.
- c) Powerplays
 - i) At the conclusion of his team's powerplay, the goalkeeper should alert his team with five seconds to go by banging his stick on the ice *twice*. More than two bangs can be disruptive.

Well, there you have some little things to work on. Practice hard and play hard. And remember, "It's amazing how much can be accomplished if no one cares who gets the credit."

Your friend,

Roger Neilson

- Drill 1: Pass wide before blueline and middle drive
- Drill 2: Winger "Post-Up" high on side-boards with support
- Drill 3: Centre taking winger's position covering the point
- Drill 4: "Chip" off boards to beat an aggressive "D"