



Common Elements of Speed

Speed in today's hockey is almost blinding. Players seem to move at the speed of light. When we think of skating speed, we seem to focus on straight ahead speed. But in hockey, there are numerous skating maneuvers. All have to be performed at top speed, and while controlling the puck. Forward skating, backward skating, circling and cornering, moving from side to side (lateral mobility), instantaneous stops, quick turns, explosive starts, changing gear while in motion, and of course, balance and agility.

Put together, the above maneuvers constitute complete speed. Now consider that each maneuver has numerous elements, (each of which must be performed as if second nature - without having to think about the "how's" and "why's") and you start to appreciate the complexities of hockey skating.

Skating is not a natural motion of the body! In fact, it is probably the furthest thing from natural. Very few players are able to perform all skating maneuvers perfectly; even fewer are naturally perfect skaters. Most have to be taught correct technique, and then practice over many years to perfect their technique.

Although every skating maneuver is specific in technique and differs in execution, there are several common elements that link them. Some of these common elements are listed below. You can find more detailed information in my book, Laura Stamm's Power Skating.

- **Knee bend** Skating requires a very deep knee bend, both on the pushing leg and on the gliding leg. If the angle of the knee bend is measured between the thigh and shin, it should approximate 90 degrees.
- **Edges**
 - The pushing edge. The edge of the pushing skate (either inside or outside), whether skating forward or skating backward, must dig into the ice at a strong angle. The ideal angle of the edge digging into the ice is approximately 45 degrees.
 - The gliding edge. To glide (skate) on a curve, it is imperative for the gliding skate to be on a strong edge. Sometimes we glide on an inside edge; sometimes we glide on an outside edge. To travel a sharp curve or circle, (whether skating forward or backward), the ideal angle of the gliding edge to the ice is approximately 45 degrees.
- **Body Weight** The body weight must be totally (100%) above the working skate. Thus, when pushing, all the weight is above the pushing skate. During the push, it is imperative to transfer the body weight until all of it is above the gliding skate.
- **Center of Gravity** I call the center of gravity the "Power Pack". The center of gravity is an imaginary circle, approximately three inches in diameter, located in the mid section of the body. All power is initiated from beneath this center; thus the term "Power Pack". If, when beginning to push, the feet are wider apart than this imaginary circle, power and efficiency will be sacrificed.





- **Leg Drive and Recovery** Every push, in every skating maneuver, must be executed to full extension, and every push finishes with the toe of the pushing edge. I call the finish of the push the "Toe Flick". After each push, the pushing leg must quickly return until it is centered under the body (under the center of gravity) in order to properly execute the next push.
- **Arm Swing** The arm swing helps to increase momentum. They must therefore move - in line and in rhythm with - the legs, and in line with the direction of travel. When skating straight forward or straight backward, the arms must move in the same direction. When moving laterally, the arms move laterally as well.

As I always say, "Power Skating may not be the most fun part of hockey, but it is the part of hockey that makes hockey more fun!"

by Laura Stamm © September, 2002