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Off-season on Dry Land

By eRix

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Improving ones hockey skills does not always entail practicing drills on the ice. There are always some practice time away from the rink that can enhance your ability for when you are on the ice and moving at full speed. A couple of critical aspects of stick handling is the ability to control the puck through your peripheral sight and feel; with the feel of the puck on the stick being the most important aspect because it enables you to concentrate your vision on watching out for where you are headed, as well as for where your teammates are at on the ice. A few of these drills might seem improbable of enhancing your skill but the drills are designed for repetition of movement which forms a foundation for your hand-to-eye coordination.

An example of a short drill as noted by Mike Hartman and Sam Mercurio in 'STAY IN SHAPE BUT HAVE FUN' is to "work on little things like stickhandling. Take out a golf ball and stickhandle in the driveway for an hour or so. Controlling the golf ball will further enhance your hand-eye coordination and, again, you will be amazed at the difference when you step back onto the ice in the fall" (www.hockeycoach.com). For all practical purposes, all you need for stick handling improvement is your hockey stick and something to hit. Common choices for something to hit can be: golf ball (as stated before), tennis ball, roller hockey ball or puck, racket or hand ball, or any comparable sized object in your vicinity. Balls tend to work the best for drills off the ice because the ball naturally returns to the shooter, depending on where you are practicing.

Another fun drill to practice is to take a hockey stick, a tennis ball wrapped in 1-layer of hockey tape to lessen the bounce, a brick wall, and something to mark the wall with. Chalk can be used on the wall, but you do not want someone accusing you off graffiti; therefore, it is best to take some hockey tape and stick it on the wall. If you want the exact dimension of a regulation goal, 72"x48" what most goals opening are scaled at; however, for your purposes, just put a large rectangle of tape on the wall with the corners marked as targets. Try to copy the dimensions in this diagram. Another idea is to transpose this diagram onto a piece of plywood, which can be transported to where you want to practice.

Once you have this shooting target, you can begin to repeated shoot for the corners with your various shots. A way for you to see where your shots hit is to dampen the wrapped ball with water, which

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should leave a water mark where it hits; the water also adds to the ball's weight since it is not as heavy as an ice puck. This drill should not be rushed because you want to assign a number of direct hits to each corner triangle (15 per corner) before shooting at the next corner. The higher the number of direct hits you assign to each corner will gradually lead to an increase of your hand-to-eye coordination because you are not just haphazardly shooting at a goal. You need to take your time to aim at each target mentally, locate the ball, and then shoot at the target while your is head up looking at it. Hitting the corner successfully while your head is up will also increase your confidence and feel for shooting by relying on your peripheral vision. You can call it looking out of the corner of you eyes, or how you see the ice.

Battling the off season blues should not be wasted by laying around watching TV or playing video games. You could take the initiative to improve your stickhandling and shooting aim by practicing these

fun, basic fundamental drills mentioned in this article. You could come up with a new drill of your own that builds your own confidence. The main point is to take some quality time in practicing stickhandling and shooting. The more often you practice, the easier and more natural handling a ball or puck will become to you. The benefits you will receive from this diligent practice will be realized when you return to the ice for the beginning of next season. Your teammates will be really pleased that you took the time off the ice and used it to your and their advantage.

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How to launch your kayak

By Jakob Jelling

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Launching your kayak does not have to be difficult as long as you know what you're doing.

When it comes to launching your kayak, there are a few important decisions that you must make. The first thing you should decide is whether or not you want to launch your kayak from the land, or on the water. You can even launch your kayak from a dock, though that is usually a bit harder to do than launching the boat from the beach, or on dry land.

The two main methods of launching your kayak from the land consist of the regular launch, and of "wet-footing" it. Wet footing means that you load up your kayak in the water so that the bottom will not rub against the sand or rocks that might be on the beach. You should definitely use this method to launch your kayak if you are going to be launching from a rocky beach, or any other situation where there might be objects that can harm your kayak in the sand.

After all, while most kayaks are generally designed to be fairly sturdy, it is always possible that they could be damaged. This is especially the case if they are loaded up on land, and then dragged over

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rocks. When launching your kayak from the water, you should make sure that you are able to put everything into your kayak that you want to use. You should probably load the lighter objects into your kayak when you are still on land, as well, since they won't cause any extra harm to your kayak, and it will make getting in a lot easier once you are in the water. If you decide to try launching your kayak this way, make sure that you practice a little bit first. That way you'll be able to get into your kayak quickly and easily, and you won't fall.

If you think that this method sounds too complicated, some people find that it is easier to get into their kayak on dry land. However, you should only use the dry land launch if you are on a sandy beach where there are no major obstacles between yourself and the water. Then, pull your kayak out so that the bow is actually floating. This is so that you will not have to drag your kayak over too much sand before you get into the water.

Keep in mind that launching your kayak can get a lot more dangerous and difficult if you are launching in an area where there is a lot of surf. While it is always possible to launch a kayak in high surf, you're probably better off avoiding this. Therefore, you should try to find a beach that is sheltered for launching your kayak.

Jakob Jelling is the founder of <http://www.kayakhelp.com>. Please visit his complete kayaking guide for all skills and ages.



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