

The Zen of Refing Roller Derby

version

Axis of Stevil

February 18, 2024

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Welcome to the Zen of Refing Roller Derby!

A training manual for referees

Created by Stephen "Axis of Stevil" Lorimor. Maintained by Isabelle "Blocktopus" Santos.

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Last updated: September 2023.

YouTube videos on Illegal Target Zones and Passing the Star are in need of updating.

As used by

Badlands Roller Derby League (Drumheller, Canada)	Montreal Roller Derby (Montreal, Canada)
Boom Town Roller Derby (Mat-Su Valley, Alaska)	New Hampshire Roller Derby (Manchester, NH)
Brazos Valley Roller Derby (Bryan, Texas)	New Jersey Roller Derby (Morristown, New Jersey)
Brighton Rockers Roller Derby (Brighton, UK)	North Texas Fallout Junior Roller Derby (Denton, Texas)
Capital City Crushers (Topeka, Kansas)	North Texas Roller Derby (Denton, Texas)
Central California Area Derby (Fresno, California)	Old Capitol City Roller Derby (Iowa City, Iowa)
Central West Roller Derby League (Bathurst, Australia)	Pensacola Roller Gurlz (Pensacola, Florida)
Charm City Roller Girls (Baltimore, Maryland)	Pirate City Rollers (Auckland, New Zealand)
Chattanooga Roller Girls (Chattanooga, Tennessee)	RockyView Roller Derby (Airdrie, Alberta Canada)
Chick Whips Junior Roller Derby (Topeka, Kansas)	Roller Derby Iceland (Reykjavík, Iceland)
Copper State Roller Derby (Tucson, Arizona)	Roller derby Hanover (Hanover, Germany)
Dragon City Roller Derby (Bendigo, Australia)	Sailor City Roller Derby (Buenos Aires, Argentina)
Free State Roller Derby (Rockville, Maryland)	San Marcos River Rollers (San Marcos, Texas)
Flint Roller Derby (Flint, Michigan)	Sintral Valley Derby Girls (Modesto, California)
Gallatin Roller Derby (Bozeman, Montana)	Sirens of Smash Roller Derby (Nelson, New Zealand)
Garden State Rollergirls (Newark, New Jersey)	Southern Oregon Derby (Medford, Oregon)
Hellions of Troy Roller Derby (Troy, New York)	State College Area Roller Derby (State College, PA)
Hurricane Alley Roller Derby (Corpus Christi, Texas)	Strong Island Roller Derby (East Setauket, New York)
Ithaca League of Women Rollers (Ithaca, New York)	Suburbia Roller Derby (Yonkers, New York)
Jerzey Derby Brigade (Morristown, New Jersey)	Tenerife Roller Derby (Tenerife, Spain)
Les Quads de Paris (Paris, France)	Tokyo Roller Girls (Tokyo, Japan)
Lille Roller Girls (Lille, France)	Veuves Noires de Rouen (Rouen, France)
Molly Rogers Rollergirls (Melbourne, Florida)	Whenua Fatales Roller Derby (Levin, New Zealand)
Roller Derby Toulouse (Toulouse, France)	

Does your league use (or no longer use) this training manual? Please e-mail me so I can update this list.

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The Zen of Refing Roller Derby

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About these handouts

These handouts were written by Stephen ("Axis of Stevil") Lorimor. This program is his own creation and he is solely responsible for its content.

About the author

Axis of Stevil, a self-described rules nerd, is a former WFTDA level 1 certified referee and a member of the WFTDA Rules Committee. He is dual-affiliated with both Garden State Rollergirls and Jerzey Derby Brigade. He formerly volunteered with the WFTDA Apprentice Program and served as lead writer for Roller Derby Rule of the Day on Facebook. He is also the former co-THR for the JRDA Champs and JRDA World Cup. The truly curious can read his game history at www.tinyurl.com/stevil2. In his downtime he's the webmaster of Roller Derby Patches, the owner of Patches by Stevil, and admin of the Roller Derby Patches group on Facebook.

About the Maintainer

Blocktopus has been swallowed by an all-engulfing passion for the rules of roller derby. She is the author of tools such as [the random penalty generator](#), [roller derby inspiration](#) and the "who's reffing?" game.

Ruleset

This document is updated for WFTDA's Rules of Flat Track Roller Derby (January 1, 2023 version). On occasion information is presented in light of rules discussions accessible to WFTDA member leagues via the WFTDA forums. No information contained in these handouts violates WFTDA's non-disclosure agreement.

Special thanks

The knowledgeable folks at [Zebra Huddle](#) assisted me in peer reviewing many of the earlier handouts on referee procedures. I'd also like to thank the many readers who have taken the time to email their thoughts and observations on The Zen of Refing Roller Derby. Finally, I'd also like to thank the WFTDA, MRDA, and JRDA and their volunteers for their tireless dedication to the sport of roller derby.

Feedback

Readers are encouraged to submit feedback, corrections, criticisms, and comments via email at njderbyref@gmail.com or via [Stephen's page on Facebook](#). Reports of typos, bugs, erroneous information, and the like are always welcome.

Disclaimer

The WFTDA, MRDA, or JRDA are not responsible for this document and make no claims as to the accuracy of its content.

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Lesson #1: Duties, skills, and ethics

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 21, 2018

Referee duties during scrimmages and games

Contents

- (top priority) Maintain safety
- Protect game flow
- Penalize illegally gained advantage
- Establish an atmosphere of professionalism, impartiality, and fairness

Referee duties (in general)

- Teach the rules to others
- Supervise or assist track setup
- Officiate drills and scrimmages
- Continue one's own professional development
- Mentor newer referees
- Have fun!

Required skills for referees

- Skating skills
- Rules mastery
- The ability to correctly spot, process, and issue penalties
 - This can take years to develop.
 - Scrimmage experience is an important part of developing this skill

Conduct

- Display good judgment in regards to behavior, honesty, fairness, and integrity
- Treat league and community members with respect, dignity, and fairness
- Maintain exemplary (even over-the-top) standards of neutrality and impartiality
 - No clapping, displaying team logos, posing for pictures with skaters, etc.
 - No hugs, high-fives, celebratory behavior, etc.
- Demonstrate a consistently high commitment to safety
 - We lose the authority to enforce safety in others if our own behavior is lax or inconsistent
- Discuss rules and procedural disagreements privately, not in front of others. The more formal/public the atmosphere, the more likely discretion should be exercised.
- Avoid conflicts of interest. Disclose all that exist to the head referee and/or crew
 - Avoid: gambling, public predictions, public opinions of skaters (coaches, etc.)
 - Allowed but disclose: Familial, financial, and associational
- Refrain from gratuitous displays of attention-seeking behavior while on duty.
- Zero tolerance of alcohol or drugs at derby-related events while officiating and/or on skates
- Be wary what you post on social media about the sport
- Always be respectful of NSOs – they are equals, not inferiors.

Lesson #2: Whistles

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: May 9, 2018

Whistles

- (standard) Fox 40 Classic
 - On lanyard
 - On finger ring
- Fox makes several other acceptable models
 - Classic Mini is a smaller version of the Classic. Same tone, but 6 dB quieter.
 - Eclipse is the same sound and volume as Classic, but a sleeker design.
- Fox 40 makes several other whistles (Pearl, Sonik, etc.)
 - Avoid non-standard whistles unless specifically instructed to use them.
 - Skaters are trained to respond to the specific tone of the Fox 40 Classic, and may be confused by non-standard whistles.
- Covid tip: Fox now makes a whistle-mask for officials. (If you ever try one out, write to me and tell me how well it works.)

Signals

- One short blast → Jam start
- Two short, rapid blasts → Lead jammer
- One long blast → Penalty
- Four rapid, short blasts (one set) → Beginning of a timeout (team or official)
- Four rapid, short blasts (three sets) → Jam end
 - Continue sets until skaters cease playing.
- Rolling whistle → End of timeout or period

Don't forget

- When being called off, other referees should attempt to exactly match the timing of the tweets.
- Whistles are not used when issuing penalties between jams.
- Whistles are not used with warnings.
- A jam continues until the fourth tweet of the first set of jam call-off whistles.

Bonus tip

- If you have pockets on your game uniform, carry an extra whistle or two in case an official's whistle breaks during a game.

Lesson #3: Verbal cues and hand signals

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

Watch [lesson #3a \(verbal cues\)](#) and [lesson 3b \(hand signals\)](#) on YouTube.

Last updated: January 21, 2018

The basics

- All penalties are issued using the following format:
 - (whistle) + team color + skater number “spelled out” + penalty (cue and hand signal) + report to the box hand signal
- Verbal cues (especially penalties) fall into three tiers called stars (one star, two star, etc.). They roughly correspond to basic, intermediate, and advanced cues.
 - One-star cues sometimes lack specificity but are appropriate for the beginning official.
 - Two-star cues are standardized cues that provide additional information that replace one-star basic cues in certain situations. They are appropriate for experienced officials.
 - Three-star cues are non-standardized and should be used as used as necessary to provide additional context. Advanced officials are expected to use these.
 - Example:
 - One star: “Gold one zero, illegal procedure”
 - Two stars: “Gold one zero, star pass violation”
 - Three stars: “Gold one zero, star pass violation, report as the jammer”
- Call loudly, clearly, and repeat hand signals as necessary (especially on the outside)

Penalties

4.1.1 - Impact to an illegal target zone

- Back block
- High block
- Low block

4.1.2 - Impact with an illegal blocking zone

- Head block
- Forearm
- Leg block

4.1.3 - Other illegal contact

Illegal Contact, or

- Illegal assist
- Late hit
- Out of play block
- Early hit

Direction, or

- Stop block

4.1.4 - Multiplayer blocks

- Multiplayer

4.2.1 - Illegal positioning

Illegal position, or

- Failure to reform
- Failure to yield
- Skating out of bounds
- Failure to return
- Destruction

4.2.2 - Gaining position

Cut, or

- Illegal re-entry

4.2.3 - Interfering with the flow of the game

- Interference, or
 - Delay of game

4.2.4 - Other illegal procedures

Illegal Procedure, or

- Star pass violation
- Pass interference

4.3 - Unsporting conduct

Misconduct, or

- Insubordination

Obsolete penalty cues

- These were removed or heavily modified in the current system.
- They may resurface as three-star cues

Out of bounds block	Out of bounds assist	Destroying the pack
Clockwise block	Clockwise assist	Stopped assist
Illegal return	Elbows	Too many skaters
Blocking with the head	Penalty box violation	Uniform violation
Illegal call-off	Team staff violation	Stalling
Leaping contact	Charging	Unsporting conduct
Reckless entry	Embellishment	Blocking while down

Additional communications

Skater identification required

- Show the star
- False start
- Report to the box
- Stay on the track
- Return to the track
- Go to your bench
- Lead Jammer
- Not lead jammer

No skater identification required

- Star pass complete
- Team timeout
- No pack, or
 - No pack, split
- Official timeout
- Official review
- Jam is on
- Multiple penalties

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- Pack is here, or
 - Pack is front / back / all / etc.
- Out of play, or
 - Out of play in front / back

Hand signals

- Referees must know all hand signals
 - Expressively – the ability to perform them correctly for others
 - Receptively – the ability to recognize hand signals by others
- This is an appropriate time for referee trainees to learn standardized hand signals as well as hand signals used by the local officiating community.

Homework

- Read and study the WFTDA Officiating Cues and Signals document
 - <https://static.wftda.com/officiating/wftda-officiating-cues-codes-and-signals.pdf>
- Practice calling penalties and doing the hand signals
 - <https://roller-derby.frama.io/-/random-penalty-generator/-/jobs/2092254/artifacts/public/index.html>
- Have a friend quiz you until you can pass this test
 - Print version: <https://tinyurl.com/ycb4fun4>
 - YouTube version: <https://tinyurl.com/y8l4nhqw>

Lesson #4: Game concepts

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 9, 2019

Game types

- Sanctioned games are regulation games that count towards rankings within a specific organization.
 - WFTDA sanctions adult women's derby
 - MRDA sanctions adult men's derby
 - JRDA sanctions junior (18 and younger) derby.
 - JRDA has females only, males only, and open divisions.
 - In a sanctioned game, teams may have a maximum of 15 skaters.
- Regulation games are games played using the WFTDA rules, officiating procedures, and officiating cues/codes/signals with no deviations.
 - American (but not all international) games must also adhere to WFTDA safety guidelines.
 - In regulation and non-regulation game there is no maximum number of skaters.
 - Participating teams may agree upon a maximum in advance of the game.

- Other (aka non-regulation) games are those played that deviate from the regulation game requirements.
 - Example: 30-minute games.

In bounds, out of bounds, down, and upright

- A skater is out of bounds if they touch beyond the track boundary line with any part of their body.
 - Exception: touching beyond the track boundary line with one hand or arm
 - The track boundary line itself is considered in bounds
- A skater is straddling when they are touching both in and out of bounds at the same time.
- A skater is down when they have both hands on the floor, one or both knees, or are in a prone position.
 - One hand or arm touching the floor is not down.
- A skater is upright if they are not down
 - Falling is upright until they are down.

The pack

- The pack is the largest group of upright, in bounds blockers from both teams skating or standing in proximity.
 - If the pack is destroyed, a strict set of rules is enabled until it is reformed
- A no pack situation is when a single pack does not exist
 - This can be two or more equal-sized packs
- The engagement zone is an area stretching from 20 feet in front of the pack to 20 feet behind it.
 - This is where the bulk of gameplay takes place
 - Blockers must remain inside the engagement zone
 - An upright, in bounds blocker in the engagement zone is in play
 - Out of play blockers must immediately return to the engagement zone
 - The engagement zone does not extend out of bounds.

Jammers and lead jammer

- A jammer not wearing a helmet cover is an inactive jammer
 - Inactive jammers cannot earn passes towards scoring or lead jammer status
 - Inactive lead jammers cannot call off the jam
 - Exception: if the lead jammer's helmet cover was removed through natural gameplay or an opponent's action
 - An inactive jammer may still leave the engagement zone
 - An inactive jammer may put the jammer helmet cover on their head to become active
- The lead jammer is the first jammer who...
 - Establishes a superior position to the foremost in play Blocker, having already
 - Earned a pass on all other Blockers (except those ahead of the engagement zone)
- A jammer loses the ability to become lead jammer if they...

- Remove their helmet cover
- Receive a penalty
- Exit the front of the engagement zone without first earning lead jammer
- A pivot-turned-jammer (following a star pass) cannot become lead jammer

Blocking and assisting

- A block is physical contact made to an opponent, and any movement or placement of one's body to impede the opponent's speed or movement
- The initiator of a block is the person who causes the block to occur.
 - A block can have multiple initiators.
- A positional block is a block without contact wherein a skater positions themselves so as to impede an opponent.
 - Positional blocks need not be intentional
- An assist is physical contact to a teammate that affects their movement
- Blocking and assisting must occur while upright within the engagement zone
 - Exception: Jammer vs. jammer blocking
 - Exception: Counter-blocking while out of play
 - Counter-blocking beyond what is required for safety is considered a separate block
 - Exception: Passively assisting while straddling the track
 - Other minor exceptions
- A block can be initiated with any part of the body
 - Exception: The head
 - Exception: Hands, forearms, and elbows
 - Exception: Legs below mid-thigh
- It is legal to block any part of an opponent's body (ie; target zones)
 - Exception: Neck and head
 - Exception: The back, including the butt and back of the legs
 - Exception: Legs below mid-thigh

Other concepts

- Game flow is the natural progression of the game, ideally without undue delays
- If a team has five or fewer skaters (after injuries, foul-outs, etc.), the head referee may declare a forfeit. This is rare, and is done after consulting with both team captains.
- The teams and head referee may mutually suspend play due to safety concerns, problems with the venue or track, etc.
- There is no such thing as an inactive pivot. A pivot not wearing their pivot cover loses all privileges of being pivot until they again wear the cover.

Lesson #5: Safety gear, skates, and accessories

by *Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil*

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Mandatory Safety gear

- Required gear: helmet, elbow pads, knee pads, wrist guards, and mouthguard
 - Mouthguards are not required for referees
 - Skaters are not required to wear safety gear that provides no medical benefit
 - Example: a wristguard for a skater with a missing hand
 - Example: a mouthguard for a skater missing so many teeth it cannot be fitted properly
- Helmet, elbow pads, knee pads, wrist guards
 - Must have a hard shell or insert
 - Partially cracked shells can be taped over
 - Fully cracked shells must be replaced and are not allowed
 - Loose velcro on pads or wrist guards must be taped down at the referee's discretion.
- Helmet
 - Cage-style face shields are not permitted
 - Visors are legal provided they are designed for use with the helmet
 - Visors must be transparent, meaning the wearer can be distinctly seen
 - Mirrored and iridium visors are not permitted
 - Visors must be fixed in place during game play (ie; not raised).
 - Helmet should have little play when moved side-to-side or front-to-back
 - Chin strap should not impede breathing but should be tight enough to prevent sliding
 - Straps should form a short V under the ear, not a long V under the neck.
- Elbow pads / knee pads
 - Pads should be secure on the arm/leg when lightly tugged up and down
 - Pads should be properly centered over the elbow/knee, not overly high or low.
 - Elbow pads with a padded (not hard) shell are not allowed
 - This includes pads that are soft until impact (at which point they become a hard shell).
- Wrist guards
 - When palms are up, the hard shells or insert may be on the top, bottom, or both.
- Mouth guard
 - Trimming of mouth guard is allowed, but it must be in one piece.

Optional safety gear

- May not have a hard shell
 - Padded shorts
 - Knee or ankle supports
- May have a hard shell

- Chin guards
- Turtle shell bras
- Shin guards
- Tailbone protectors
- Form-fitting face shields (ex: nose guard)

Skates, accessories, and casts

- Skates must be quad-style skates. Players are not allowed to use in-line skates, although referees may use them.
- Skates are not safety gear. They are entirely the purview of the skater.
- Skates must be functional and intact. A jam may be called off or a skater may be ordered from a jam due to equipment failure at the referee's discretion.
- Toe stops are not required equipment.
- Accessories are permitted so long as they have no sharp edges, internal wires, or anything capable of harming another skater.
- Jewelry, belts, safety pins, spikes, or anything that might pose a hazard to other skaters are disallowed.
- Casts are permitted if they do not pose a hazard to other skaters.
 - They do not require padding.
 - A wrist guard is not required over a cast that extends to the wrist.

Other rules and requirements

- Roster numbers
 - May not be affixed to the uniform with safety pins (hazard) or tape (falls off)
- Captains and alternates
 - The captain and alternate must sport a C (or A) on their uniform, clothing, or arm.
- All off-skates personnel (NSOs, photographers, coaches, etc.) must wear closed-toed shoes
 - Exception: those beyond 15' from the outside track line or behind a raised barrier.
- A skater whose injury alters the flow of the game must sit out the next three jams.
 - This includes stopping the game clock, causing a jam to prematurely end, or requiring a substitution in the penalty box.
 - A second occurrence from the same skater in a period requires they sit out the remainder of the period.

Penalties related to safety gear

- "Illegal procedure" + optional cue indicating the violation
 - For removing required safety equipment during a jam (including to/from the box)
 - For removing required safety equipment while in the penalty box.

- Mouthguards may be removed while seated in the box, but must be replaced prior to exiting.
- Straps can be adjusted without penalty
- A skater in the box may not remove gear to fix or adjust it. To do so, after being released from the box they must leave the track area.
- This includes both during and between jams.

Lesson #6: Safety, injury, bleeding, and concussion

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: June 12, 2018

This is a simplified list of safety practices. See the WFTDA Risk Management Guidelines for more information.

Safety

- All games must have two dedicated emergency medical providers.
 - They may not have a secondary job in the game (skater, NSO, etc.)
 - At least one must be watching the track at both times. Gameplay must halt if both are attending to a patient until at least one can resume watching the game.
- The vast majority of games must comply with the WFTDA Risk Management Guidelines
 - The outside safety lane must be 10 feet wide (5 with a 3-foot high raised fixed barrier)
 - Columns / posts (even padded) may not be within 5 feet of the inside track boundary or 10 feet from the outside safety boundary
 - I strongly encourage officials refuse to work games (and skaters to play games) in venues that fail to meet minimum safety standards.
 - This includes walking out of a game before it starts.
 - Some non-sanctioned games outside the USA played under other insurance company safety guidelines may have different requirements.
 - Discuss this with your league if it applies to you.
- Safety gear should be worn at all times while standing on skates (see lesson #5).
- Skaters, refs, and NSOs may not participate in a game while under the influence of alcohol or narcotics.
 - Immediately report even suspected violations to the game head officials.

Injury

- Minor (no immediate danger to self or others)
 - Examples: broken finger, sprained knee, having the “wind knocked out of you”
 - Skaters may withdraw from a jam and/or resume play at their discretion
 - Skaters in the box may be subbed out between jams at their discretion
- Serious (potential danger to self or others, skater unable to continue)
 - Jam may be called at the ref’s discretion.
 - Skater unable to continue play should be directed off the track.

- If fails to exit the track before active gameplay nears the skater, the jam may be called at the referee's discretion.
- Skater should be brought to the medics (or vice-versa) as appropriate
- Major (immediate danger to oneself or others)
 - Jam must immediately be called
 - Medics should be summoned to the skater
- Impaired / confused skaters
 - Jam may be called at the referee's discretion
 - Speak directly to the skater
 - Tip: Ask the skater, "can you continue?" and not "are you okay?", as skaters will often say they're okay even when they are not.
 - If the skater does not respond or is disoriented, treat as a major injury.

Bleeding

- A Skater who is bleeding must be removed from play
 - The skater may return to gameplay (even in the same jam) if these conditions are all met:
 - The bleeding has stopped
 - The wound is appropriately dressed
 - There is no visible blood on their gear and uniform
- Blood on uniforms must be washed and disinfected, covered with duct tape, or cut out
- Blood on gear must be cleaned and disinfected
- Call the jam if...
 - ... the skater has significant bleeding
 - ... **there is blood on the track, safety lanes, penalty box, etc. – even a single drop**
 - Gameplay may not resume until affected areas are cleaned and disinfected

Concussion

- A concussion is a traumatic brain injury cause by a shake, blow, or jolt to the head.
- A skater who is potentially concussed is no longer able to consent to playing in a game.
 - The skater must be cleared by the medics before they are allowed to return to play
 - A skater may refuse the medics' evaluation, but is barred from participating for the remainder of the game
 - A skater whom the medics determine has no signs or symptoms of concussion may return to play
 - If this occurred in the first half of the game, the skater must be re-evaluated before the start of the second half.
 - If this occurred in the second half of the game, the skater must be re-evaluated at the end of the game.
 - Medics may request skaters return for re-evaluation at later times as well.
 - Example: before the skater's next game of a multi-game event.

- Common symptoms of concussion include blacking out, headaches, abnormal behavior, confusion/disorientation, difficulty balancing, nausea, agitation, and sensitivity to light.
- For more information, see the CDC's information program on concussions in youth sports at <https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html>.

Lesson #7: Referees (all positions)

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: May 22, 2018

Game-related duties

- Assist with setting up the track
- Attend pre-game and halftime officials' meetings
- Call out penalties as observed
 - If a referee is in doubt on a call, a penalty must not be called. (5.4)
 - If intent must be inferred but is not clear, legal intent must be presumed.
- Echo jam call-off whistles / hand signals (for an exception see lesson #10)
- Call official time-outs as necessary to protect safety and proper game play
- Participate in official reviews
- Call off jams early if necessary for safety
 - Maybe call off for: minor injury, skater equipment failure, penalty that gives one side an unfair advantage, nearby emergency, spectator interference, or spills/debris on the track
 - Always call off for: injury that presents an immediate danger, technical or mechanical difficulty, venue malfunction (ie; power outage), fighting, or physical interference by anyone not in the jam (including fans on the track).
- Between jams / at the jam start
 - Communicate penalties from the prior jam with the penalty tracker as necessary
 - Watch for false starts and early/late hitting
 - Watch for too many skaters (pivots, jammers, etc.)
 - Bring major issues to the attention of the head referee
 - Provide warnings for technical infractions (too many skaters, potential false starts, missing skater numbers, etc.). Do not provide warnings after the five second pre-jam announcement.
 - (low priority) Address non-officials' minor issues/questions/requests as time and your duties allow.

Tips and reminders

- Skaters (team staff, spectators, etc.) will aggravate you, sometimes on purpose. Any response should be professional and done within the rules.
- Referees are not coaches. Our duty is to ensure fair play, not to assist a team or individual skater.
- Referees must wear safety gear at all times while standing on skates.
 - Exception: removing one's helmet during a national anthem.
 - Exception: safety gear that provides no medical benefit
- Only the lead jammer ref should initially call off the jam in response to a jammer's call-off signal.

- There are ideally 2 inside pack, 2 jammer, and 3 outside pack referees.

Scope of officiating

- The scope of what we can and cannot officiate is not well defined.
 - When do we begin and end officiating during a game?
 - When do we prevent a skater from participating due to injury?
 - At what point do we bar a skater from participating due to equipment failure?
- At some point our authority ends and skaters are responsible for themselves. The line of demarcation is not clear.

Lesson #8: Outside pack referees

by *Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil*

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: May 22, 2018

Duties

- (priority) Call penalties on actions easily missed by or difficult to see from the inside
 - Cutting the track
 - Blocking with elbows, forearms, hands
 - Back blocks when the skater is angled to face the inside of the track
 - Illegal position (skating out of bounds)
 - Illegal contact (out of bounds blocking)
 - Illegal contact (out of play blocking) during no pack situations
 - Star pass violations and pass interference
 - High blocks near the inside line
 - Illegal re-entry from the penalty box
 - Skaters taking an illegal route to the penalty box
 - False start warnings and failure to yield penalties if they fail to yield
- Communicate to the refs on the inside of the track
 - Nod to indicate a skater avoided an illegal action
 - No earned pass hand signal to indicate a pass was neither legal nor a penalty
 - Tap helmet to indicate a jam is being called off
- Miscellaneous duties that might otherwise distract the inside staff
 - Check on potentially injured skaters in or near the outside of the track
 - Removing debris from the track
 - Looking for and enforcing instructions from the penalty box manager

Don't forget...

- When a skater does not hear your call, follow these steps:

- Chase them down on the outside and repeat the call. This overrides your normal coverage.
 - This may involve skating clockwise around the track to meet a counterclockwise moving jammer.
- Communicate the penalty to the inside referees.
- Communicate the penalty to another OPR in better position to make the call
- (Last resort) Skate to the inside and call the penalty from there
- Focus heavily on jammer interaction as the jammer comes through your coverage area
- Listen for calls from other referees
 - Two referees calling out the same penalty is redundant; one can remain focused on the game
- OPRs rarely define the pack or issue out of play warnings, but sometimes it is necessary

Tips

- Accelerate before the pack reaches your position.
- Accelerate into turns to avoid falling behind the pack
- Always be aware of the location of the other OPRs
- “Leapfrog” (ie; pass and assume their position) other officials as necessary.
- Watch for skaters (team staff, audience members, etc.) in the outside safety lane

Three referee coverage

- Fluid half-lap - The rear OPR falls back from turns 2 and 4 to turns 1 and 3.
 - This works in reverse if the pack is sprinting clockwise (rare)
- Sectional - Three refs on the pack at all times. Used for slow packs. Shift to fluid if it speeds up.

Two referee coverage

- Both refs on the pack, but as a ref falls behind they fall back until the pack catches up

One referee coverage

- Sprint like hell and pray for slow derby

Homework

- Watch Ref-Ed's great videos on OPR coverage
- Practice the fluid half-lap rotation

Skating skills

- Fast skating
- Backwards skating

Lesson #9: Inside pack referees

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 21, 2018

Front and rear IPR duties

- Focus on failure to reform, failure to return, and destruction penalties related to their side of the engagement zone
- Focus on penalties committed by pack blockers, particularly against jammers
- Call penalties on jammers as necessary
 - Good form dictates giving a moment for the jammer ref to call the penalty first.
 - Be 100% sure when making a call on a jammer as an incorrect call can have a major impact on the game.
- Communicate pack status, in/out of play, and no earned pass information to the jammer referees
- An IPR (usually the rear) almost always serves as the game's head referee

Rear IPR (IPR-R) duties

- Holds primary responsibility for defining the pack
- IPR-R has an ideal view to issue penalties for:
 - Back blocks
 - Failure to yield after a jammer line false start
- Watch blockers for legal pack re-entry
 - Returning from the penalty box
 - Returning to play having temporarily removed themselves from the game due to equipment failure, injury, etc.
- As requested by the box manager, send blockers in the queue back to the box
- Between jams, confirm skaters in the penalty box queue enter the next jam in the correct position

Front IPR (IPR-F) duties

- Defines the pack when the IPR-R needs assistance
 - Often occurs when there is an out of play situation to the rear
 - When the IPR-R is confused or has erred
- Watches closely for these penalties
 - Multiplayer blocks
 - Skaters using elbows/forearms to "swim" through the pack
- Communicate lead is open / closed to the jammer referees
- If appropriate, offer a fast assessment who should have lead jammer status ("yellow was first")
- If necessary, chases down the Pivot following incomplete or illegal star passes
 - Important when the Pivot is under the incorrect belief they are the Jammer.

Tips

- The IPR-F should remain ahead of or even with the foremost blocker.

- The IPR-F primarily skates backward. Good backward skating skills are important.
- Skating a few feet away from the track line not only gives room for the jammer refs to pass, it widens your field of vision allowing you to see more action on the track.
- If you notice a jammer referee is inconsistent about dropping the whistle from their mouth when covering a not-lead jammer, add their name to your lead is closed call to subtly (and politely) call their attention to your declaration. (ex; "Lead is closed, Stevil")

Skating skills

- Backwards skating for the Front IPR
- Fast transitions between forwards and backwards, clockwise and anti-clockwise skating, to follow the shape of the pack
- Quick stepping skills to stay out of the way of the Jammer Ref lane

Lesson #10: Jammer referees

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 9, 2019

Duties

- Call off the jam in response to the lead jammer's call off signal
- Declare lead jammer status the instant it is earned.
- Track earned passes on each trip through the pack
- Report points earned after each scoring trip through the pack
- Issue penalties on the jammer and skaters engaging the jammer
- Monitor your jammer on their way to, from, and inside the penalty box
 - Watch for safety gear and penalty box violations
 - Do not miss their departure from the box
 - Verify they legally re-enter the track
- Watch for nodding or "no earned pass" signals from OPRs when your jammer skates near the outside track boundary
- Watch your jammer for false starts
- Verify your jammer's team is fielding a jammer in visible possession of a Star cover.
 - Issue appropriate warnings if your jammer's team is not in compliance
 - If your jammer's team fails to field a jammer, issue a delay of game penalty to their captain
- Communicate unusual situations to the IPRs (e.g., "too many skaters")
- Wear a colored wristband on your left arm that matches the jammer's team
 - JRs and scorekeepers switch teams and wristbands at halftime.

Lead and Not Lead

- When a jammer earns lead jammer status, their JR should blow two short whistle blasts in rapid succession. Signal lead jammer until they enter the engagement zone of the first scoring trip. Continue pointing at the jammer for the remainder of the jam or until lead jammer status is lost.

- When a jammer fails to earn lead jammer status, the jam referee usually spits out their mouth whistle. Signal “not lead jammer” at the start of the jammer’s first scoring trip until they enter the rear of the engagement zone.
- What happens if the jammer falls back into a prior trip through the pack
- What happens if a jammer gets lead (but does not exit the EZ) then goes to the box?

Calling off the Jam

- Do not call off the jam until the second tap of the hips, not the first
- You’re committed if you blow the first four call-off whistles – finish the sequence.
- JRs does not use the jam call-off hand signal unless their jammer called off the jam.
- Learn to recognize moments when jammers tend to call the jam
 - Upon completing a trip through the pack
 - Upon the other jammer entering the rear of the engagement zone
 - Upon falling or being knocked out of bounds
 - When the other jammer is standing in the penalty box
 - When both jammers are racing around the track in close proximity

Enforcing penalties

- Focus penalty calling on your jammer and the skaters engaging them
- When sending a jammer off the track, repeat the hand signal for the skater’s team staff and/or the game announcers. Not required, but this is a professional courtesy.

Scoring

- Scoring continues until the fourth whistle of the first set of call-off tweets
- Communicate points scored to the scorekeeper (bench, fans, etc.) using hand signals.
- Points should be held up from engagement zone to engagement zone and for a minimum of 5-7 seconds at the end of each jam. This includes when no points are scored.
- Track which opponents have (or have not) been scored upon
- Observing the penalty box and the to/from the pack pathways between scoring trips makes tracking NOTT points much easier.
- Develop a system that works for you to remember which blockers your jammer has legally passed (and/or not passed). Make sure it works even after a minute or more in the penalty box.

Working with your scorekeeper

- Meet with your scorekeeper before each game
 - Demonstrate how you signal points (including your “did not complete initial trip” signal).
- Teach this to your scorekeeper: if you tap your wrist while your jammer is in the penalty box, it means you forgot if your jammer is on their initial or a scoring trip. The scorekeeper should respond with either your “did not complete initial trip” hand signal or the scoring trip number.
- After each scoring trip verify the scorekeeper recorded the correct number of points
- (Between jams), if the scoreboard displays an incorrect score, work with your scorekeeper to identify and fix the error.
- Check your scorekeeper’s math at the end of each period.

Whistles

- JRs have special whistle needs. Approaches vary, but an excellent one is:
 - Both JRs start with a whistle on a lanyard in their mouths
 - Not-lead JR spits out the whistle after lead jammer is declared
 - Lead JR spits out the whistle if lead jammer status is lost
 - Both referees also wear and use a finger whistle
- If you choose to only use a whistle on a lanyard, have a backup whistle on your person
- When blowing your whistle may be imminent (ex: calling off the jam), have an inhaled breath ready. Even a half-second delay may impact the game.

Tips

- Listen to the IPRs for important announcements
- Never look away when your jammer is in the pack.
- Learn your league or area's standard practice for jam reffing. My personal preference:
 - During the initial trip through the pack, tuck your left arm behind your back to communicate that no lead jammer status has been established.
 - Maintain this pose if your jammer is sent to the penalty box during the initial trip.
 - Keep score at your side during scoring trips.
- JRs should usually be parallel with their jammers (not ahead or behind)

Skating skills

- Fast starting (ex: toe-stop start)
- Fast stopping (ex: hockey stop)
- Abrupt direction changes
- Shuffles
- Moving laterally

Lesson #11: The head referee

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 21, 2018

Duties (pre- and post-game)

- Conducts pre-game and halftime officials' meetings
- Meets with the captains prior to the game and at halftime.
- Re-assigns referee positions as necessary (ex; official becomes injured, doesn't show up, etc.)
- In conjunction with the head NSO, verifies that NSO positions are adequately staffed.
- Confirms the EMTs are present. Discusses an emergency action plan with them.
- Confirms the track is correctly set up.
- Provides verbal feedback to referees and NSOs

- Fills out certification evaluations for crew members when requested or appropriate
- Signs IGRF (sanctioned games only)

Duties (during a game)

- Monitors the penalty queue. Sends skaters in the queue to the box as space allows.
- Manages official reviews
 - Seeks consensus among the referee staff, but serves as final arbiter of the game
- Ensures accuracy of the score and game clocks
- Enforces and oversees skater expulsions
 - The head referee is the only person with authority to expel a skater, coach, or team staff member from the game.
- Re-assigns officials if they are unable to perform or poorly performing their duties.
- Remain calm and professional at all times.
 - True for all officials, double-true for head referees.

Duties (league)

- Supervises the league's referee staff
 - Recruitment, training, assessment, retention, conflict resolution, etc.
- Assists the coaching staff and team captain with rules training for skaters
- Assists the head NSO with rules training for the NSO staff
- Coordinates scheduling of the referee staff for games and scrimmages
 - Communicates in advance the schedule, assignments, expectations, dress code, etc. to participating referees
- Serves as an officiating liaison to the league administration

Don't forget...

- Not all game head referees are league head referees (and vice-versa).
- A game head referee traditionally serves as rear IPR (common) or front IPR (less common).
- The head referee should have an exceptional mastery of the game's rules. The rules do not allow the head referee to invent, ignore, or alter existing rules.

Lesson #12: The penalty box

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: May 25, 2018

The basics

- This lesson does not cover box staff verbal cues; speak to an experienced official for more information.
- The penalty box consists of two sets of three seats

- Two seats are for jammers
- The other four seats are for blockers (two seats for each team)
- The boundary line is considered part of the penalty box.
 - Touching in or on the line is considered “in the box”
- A penalty is 30 seconds long. Two penalties warrant 60 seconds, etc.
 - An official must alert the box staff if multiple penalties are to be served.
- A skater begins serving time by sitting in any box seat.
- Penalty time...
 - ... is only served while a jam is in progress.
 - ... is only served while seated.
 - Exception: penalized skaters must stand for the last ten seconds
- When a skater stands with less than ten seconds of penalty time remaining, their seat becomes available for a new skater.
- A skater must exit the box once their time has ended.
- If both of a team’s blocker seats are occupied, incoming blockers from their team are waved off from the box
 - Waved-off blockers are now “in the penalty box queue” and may return to the track
 - The blocker must return to the box when a seat becomes available
 - The skater must enter all new jams in the same position until their penalty time is served.
- Timeouts and official reviews may not be called from the penalty box.
- Skaters in the penalty box or penalty box queue cannot be substituted during or between jams.
 - Substitutions are permitted between jams in case of injury, fouling out, major equipment failure, expulsion, etc.
 - The penalty is applied to the offender’s tally, but the remaining time is served by the substitute.
- If a jammer is in the penalty box and the other jammer...
 - ... removes themselves from play due to injury, the jam is called off
 - ... quits the game / is expelled / is fouled out, the jam is called off
 - ... exits the track due to equipment failure...
 - ... the jam should be called off if the skater removes themselves from play due to major equipment failure (broken plate, lost wheels, etc.)
 - ... the jam should not be called off if the jammer temporarily withdraws to fix a minor equipment issue (loose toestop, laces, velcro, etc.).
 - Officials should use their discretion to determine which solution best fits the situation.

Jammer swaps

- When both jammers receive penalties, the first jammer is released when the second jammer is seated and the second jammer’s time is reduced by the unserved penalty time of the first.
 - This only works “per pair of penalties”
- Example 1: both jammers sit in the box at the same time
 - Both jammers are immediately released

- Example 2: one jammer sits followed by the second
 - Jammer A is released. Jammer B must serve 30 seconds minus Jammer A's unserved time.
- Example 3: same as #2, but Jammer A returns before B finishes their time.
 - Neither jammer is released.
 - Both jammers serve their remaining time
- Example 4: same as #3, but Jammer B returns before Jammer A finishes their time
 - Jammer A is released. Jammer B must serve 30 seconds minus Jammer A's unserved time.
- Example 5: one jammer with two penalties sits in the box, followed by the second.
 - Jammer A's penalty time is reduced by 30 seconds. Jammer B is released.

The penalty box whiteboard

- The box whiteboard is divided into labeled halves – one for each team.
- A lone number means that skater has unserved time.
- A penalty code underneath a number means the skater has committed that penalty.
 - A circled code means the box has assessed the penalty.
 - This communication is for the penalty tracker, not the referees
 - An uncircled code means a referee must issue the penalty.

Related penalties

- Delay of game
 - Failing to enter the next jam in the correct position while in the penalty box queue
- Illegal positioning
 - Remaining in the penalty box after being released by the penalty box staff and ignoring a subsequent warning to return to play.
- Illegal procedure
 - Removing safety equipment while in the penalty box
 - A mouthguard may be removed while seated, but must be replaced prior to exiting
 - Exiting the penalty box before one's time has expired
 - Fully entering the penalty box to communicate with a penalized skater
 - Fully entering the penalty box while not penalized then interfering with normal penalty box operation
- Misconduct
 - Hot entry into the penalty box that contacts another skater or official
 - Significant discretion is given regarding how this is enforced
 - Mitigating circumstances (ex; water on the track) may be considered
 - Forceful and reasonably avoidable contact to a penalty box official, including contact from a box seat, warrants expulsion.

Lesson #13: Skater concerns and official reviews

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 9, 2019

Skater (coach, etc.) concerns

- If a skater has a fast question or concern between jams, help as time allows.
 - Answering skater questions is a low priority task. If you're busy, say so.
 - Any question that requires more than a five word answer is probably too long.
 - Call an official timeout as concerns warrant (ie: track damage presenting a safety hazard)
- Don't lose control of the conversation. As soon as a skater asks you to rehash the last jam, suggest their team seek an official review to discuss the matter.
- If the team uses a Team Timeout, they can "buy" the head referee's time for a minute.
 - This is only to hear out their concern(s); it is not a free official review.

Official reviews

- Each team receives one official review per period.
 - This is their time to spend as they wish. It warrants your full attention and respect.
 - If you cannot be of assistance during a review, you may be asked to return to your duties.
 - The subject of the review must be about the prior jam, the lineup for the prior jam, or a scoring issue from two jams prior updated on the scoreboard during the prior jam.
- Official reviews must be requested by the Captain or Alternate
 - They must be wearing a visible "C" or "A".
 - They may not be inside the penalty box or on their way to it.
 - Successfully violating this procedure warrants a delay of game penalty to the captain.
- Outside pack referees should skate to the inside whenever a team requests an official review.
- Officiating issues from the prior jam should be resolved prior to the beginning of the review.
- A team has the option of exchanging their review for a 60-second "timeout".
 - This may not be changed to a "normal" review once significant time has elapsed.
- If a team's first official review of a period results in a finding of officiating error, the team's official review is "refunded" and may be used again. This may happen to each team once per half.
- There is no standard practice for official reviews.
 - Every head referee has their own style. Some are quite different from others.
 - If you are new to working with a head referee, ask how they conduct official reviews
- The head referee has control during an official review. Even if you believe you can solve an issue, do not interrupt the head referee or team captains.
 - Asking a clarifying question of the team captains is usually acceptable.
- The head referee will try to establish a consensus regarding the review.

- The head referee makes the final decision.
- The head referee notifies the team captains as to the verdict.
- It is good form to notify the announcers as to the nature and result of the review.
- You will make bad calls that will be overturned.
 - Learn from your mistakes.
- You will make good calls that will be overturned.
 - Sometimes the overturning is correct, sometimes it isn't.
 - Remember that your perspective is but one view of an event. It is not the entire truth.
 - It is not appropriate for referees to publicly air grievances regarding official reviews.
- Don't let an overturned call affect your focus or professionalism.

Lesson #14: Pack formation

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: May 27, 2018

Concepts

- The pack is a fundamental aspect of game play
- Its location determines the engagement zone where most blocking takes place
- A blocker that exits the engagement zone is warned to return.
 - Failing to return warrants a penalty.
- Intentionally destroying the pack can be a penalty.
- The nonexistence of a pack (a “no pack” situation) triggers a set of strict rules for blockers to re-establish its existence
 - Failing to reform the pack warrants a penalty.
- The location of an individual skater is measured at the centerpoint between their hips.

Definitions

- Pack - The largest group of upright, in bounds blockers skating or standing in close proximity (10' links) containing members from both teams.
 - “Largest” means two or more equal-sized groups cannot constitute a pack.
 - “Upright, in bounds” means down or out of bounds skaters are not part of the pack.
 - This includes skaters straddling the line.
 - “Blockers” means Jammers are not part of the pack.
 - “Close proximity” is measured at the centerpoint of the track. The skater needs to be mentally “slid” to the center of the in-bounds area of track. Ten feet is then measured forward and backward from that point.
 - “Members of both teams” means a group with only one team present cannot be a pack.
- Engagement zone - An area stretching from 20 feet in front of the pack to 20 feet behind it.

- Blocking is illegal outside of this zone.
 - Exception: jammer vs. jammer blocking is legal.
- In play - The status of any blocker who is upright and in bounds within the engagement zone.
 - Jammers who are upright and in bounds are in play. They need not be in the engagement zone.
- Out of play - The status of any blocker who is upright and in bounds, but not inside the engagement zone.
 - If there is no engagement zone, all blockers are out of play.
- No pack - When no group of blockers meets the definition of a pack
- Split pack - A type of “no pack” situation wherein there are two or more equally valid packs.

Homework

- *After going over this lesson, I strongly suggest going over the pack formation exercise packet available in the Zebra Huddle files section. It is an exceedingly useful assignment for a ref trainee learning about pack formation. (Approximate time: 15 minutes)*

Lesson #15: Basic scoring

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 9, 2019

Basic concepts

1. Points are earned when jammers lap opposing blockers in a legal manner.
2. To avoid being scored upon, an opposing blocker must either remain in front of the jammer, or cause the jammer to gain superior position without earning a legal pass (see below).
3. Points for blockers that violate #2 can be earned another way.

Earning passes

Jammers primarily earn points by passing opposing blockers.

- All passes are measured at the hips.
- The jammer must be upright, in bounds, and the pass must be legal.
 - If the jammer passes a blocker in an invalid fashion, the jammer can re-pass the blocker during that scoring trip to earn the point.
- The blocker being passed need not be upright, in bounds, etc.
- The blocker being passed can be on their way to the penalty box, but not yet off the track.
 - Once they're off the track, they're considered to be a NOTT point (see next lesson).

Basic scoring rules

- Only jammers wearing a jammer helmet cover (the “star”) with a visible star can score points
- The jammer’s initial trip through the pack each jam does not earn points
 - Exception: Scoring during overtime jams begins with the initial trip through the pack.
- Subsequent trips through the pack are scoring trips

- A scoring trip ends and a new one begins when the jammer exits the front of the engagement zone.
 - During a no pack situation, a scoring trip ends upon passing the foremost blocker.
- Re-entering the engagement zone from the front returns the jammer to the previous trip.
 - The jammer cannot score additional points on blockers until they return to the current trip by exiting the engagement zone to the front.
 - There is no lap count below the previous trip. (ie; A jammer cannot be two trips down regardless of how many times the pack laps them.)
- A jammer sent to the penalty box returns to the track on that same trip.
 - Exception: New jams always begins with a fresh initial trip.
- A maximum of one point per opposing blocker per scoring trip can be earned.
- Points are earned until the fourth tweet of the first set of jam call-off whistles.

Airborne passes

A jammer can pass an opposing skater while airborne (ie; jumping).

- The jammer must launch from in bounds.
- The jammer must be in bounds and upright at the instant of landing.
- The jammer must land before the fourth tweet of the jam call-off signal.

Lesson #16: Advanced scoring

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube \(updated!\)](#)

Last updated: January 9, 2019

All referees should be able to recite and explain these six ways on demand. (There used to be eight ways – consider yourself lucky!)

Six Ways to Score a Point

1. Passing an opposing blocker at the hips.
2. Opponents who skate clockwise past a downed jammer.
3. NOTT (“not on the track”) points (2.5)
 - a. There are five types of possible NOTT points.
 - i. Opponents on their way to or from the penalty box, or serving time within it
 1. This does not include penalized opponents instructed to remain on the track
 - ii Opponents off the track due to injury
 - .
 - ii Opponents not participating in the jam (ie; quit the jam or were never a part of it)
 - i.
 - iv Opponents who left the track temporarily due to equipment or skate issues
 - .
 - v. Opponents who returned to the track (from the box or equipment failure.) behind the jammer.
 - b. (common) Earned upon earning a pass upon the first opposing Blocker during each scoring trip.
 - i. This doesn’t have to passing at the hips. It can be any of the other ways to score a point.

- c. (rare) If a scoring trip presents no opportunity for a jammer to score because all opposing blockers illegally defend their points, all NOTT points are earned at the end of a scoring trip.
 - d. Once NOTT points are awarded, the jammer automatically receives a point for any unscored-upon blocker who becomes a NOTT point.
 - e. NOTT points not earned because the jammer was in the box or not wearing the star are earned once the jammer is able to score again.
4. Out of Play Blockers to the front of the engagement zone when the jammer completes a trip through the pack by exiting the front of the engagement zone.
 5. Out of Play Blockers to the front of the engagement zone when the jam ends.
 6. A jammer who returns to the track from the penalty box ahead of an out of play (rear) blocker.

Lesson #17: Introduction to penalties

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil and Isabelle Santos / Blocktopus

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: March 31, 2023

Concepts

- Penalties are a punishment for infractions related to:
 - Illegally gained advantage (for the individual or their team)
 - Disrupting game flow
 - Risking the safety of oneself or others
 - Unsporting conduct
- Three requirements to issue a penalty:
 - Initiator
 - Who initiated the action?
 - Nature
 - What was the status of the skaters involved? (ex; down, between jams, in bounds, entering the penalty box, etc.)
 - What parts of the skaters' bodies were involved?
 - Was the action intentional?
 - Did the action appear egregious, reckless, and/or negligent?
 - Impact
 - What was the result of the action?
- The initiator of a block is always responsible for the legality of the contact
 - Exception: when the contact was caused by an opponent's illegal action.
 - Example: White Jammer back blocks Black Blocker. Black Blocker falls into the legs of White Blocker causing them to fall as well. White Jammer receives a penalty; Black Blocker does not.
 - The initiator of the block isn't always obvious (ex: back block vs. blocking with one's back)
- Counter-blocking is held to the same standards as blocking

- Counter-blocking is movement toward an incoming block to counter its force.
 - Exception: blocking while out of play. (Blocking is illegal, counter-blocking is legal)
 - Continued engagement after a counter-block becomes a block.
- A skater penalized between jams serves the penalty in the position they appear to be acting.

Definitions

- Relative position
 - A skater's location on the track in relation to other skaters when that skater is in bounds and upright.
 - Relative position is judged based on the position of everyone involved in an engagement, not just the people who make contact.
 - Example: The relative position of a jammer that illegally blocks the left-most person of a three-person wall is judged against everyone in that wall.
- Advantage
 - An event that benefits one skater or team over another.
 - Examples: scoring a point, gaining relative position, an opponent losing relative position, impeding the progress of an opponent, rendering an opponent unable to block, stopping the game clock, interrupting a star pass, etc.
- Gaining advantages through an illegal action warrants a penalty.
- Established position
 - A skater's physical location and status on the track.
 - Example: Up vs down, in vs. out of bounds, in vs. out of play, and a legal vs. illegal starting position
 - A skater need not stand still to hold an established position, although if they change their status or trajectory they require a moment to establish a new position.
- Fouling out
 - The removal of a skater for the remainder of a game after accumulating seven penalties.
- Blocking zone
 - The part of a skater's body that initiates a block. Can be legal or illegal (2.4.2).
- Target zone
 - The part of a targeted skater's body that receives a block. Can be legal or illegal (2.4.1).
- Immediately
 - At the first legal opportunity
- Warning
 - A verbal (and sometimes physical) indication an individual or team is in danger of receiving a penalty for an illegal action.

Lesson #18: Three types of penalties

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Contact penalties

- Impact to an illegal target zone
 - Initiating a block to an opponent's back, including the buttocks and back of the legs
 - Initiating a block to an opponent above the shoulders
 - Initiating a block to an opponent in the side or front of their legs (below mid-thigh)
- Impact with an illegal blocking zone
 - Initiating a block with one's hands, forearms, or elbows
 - Exception: these are legal when pulled into the torso
 - Initiating a block with one's legs (mid-thigh or below)
 - Initiating a physical or positional block with the head
- Other illegal contact
 - Blocking between jams
 - Blocking or assisting to or from a downed skater
 - Blocking or assisting to or from out of bounds
 - Blocking or assisting to or from out of play
 - Blocking or assisting while stopped or skating clockwise
- Multiplayer blocks
 - Two skaters grasping, linking, or using an impenetrable wall, preventing an opponent from passing between them

Game structure penalties

- Illegal positioning
 - Illegally exiting the track or gaining speed outside of the track area
 - Assuming a downed position to avoid a block
 - Starting a jam completely outside of the legal starting area
 - Failing to yield advantage after starting the jam partially outside the legal starting area
 - Destruction (ie; destroying the pack)
 - Failing to return to the engagement zone
 - Failing to reform during a no pack scenario
- Gaining position
 - Illegally gaining position after re-entering from out of bounds
 - Illegally gaining position after returning to gameplay from the penalty box or fixing equipment
- Interfering with the flow of the game
 - Illegally preventing a jam from beginning
 - Calling off a jam while not lead jammer

- A fouled out skater interfering with a jam
- Forcing a jam to be called off due to too many skaters
- Other illegal procedures
 - Various infractions involving the penalty box
 - Various infractions involving star passes and control of helmet covers
 - Improper skates, uniforms, or jewelry
 - Improper use of safety gear
 - Miscellaneous technical infractions
 - Preventing a star pass via an illegal action

Unsporting conduct penalties

- Misconduct and insubordination
 - Misconduct
 - Impersonating an official
 - Physical or positional contact outside the range of what is acceptable for the sport
- Blocking while airborne
- Reckless entry into the penalty box
- Intentional jabbing with the elbow or knee
- Certain positional head blocks
- Positionally blocking a downed skater preventing them from standing
- Removing an opponent's helmet cover from their head
 - Hiding the star
 - Faking impact
- Intentional falling after being contacted to draw a penalty
 - Adopting a downed position before a block to draw a penalty upon an opponent
 - Violating policies of the governing body association under whose jurisdiction the game is being played.
- Example: too many team staff
 - Profane, abusive, or obscene language or gestures directed at a non-official
- Insubordination
 - Profane, abusive, or obscene language or gestures directed at an official
 - Willful or neglectful failure to obey the instructions of an official
- This is most commonly failing to leave the track after a penalty

Hierarchy of calls

- Sometimes an action warrants a penalty for multiple reasons
 - Example: leg-to-leg contact that forces an opponent down
 - Could be a low block or could be a leg block

- When an action warrants a penalty for violating multiple rules, the official should issue the penalty for which they feel most confident.
- If the official feels equally confident in multiple possible calls, use this hierarchy:
 - Misconduct (4.3)
 - Illegal Target Zone (4.1.1)
 - Illegal Blocking Zone (4.1.2)
 - Illegal Contact (4.1.3)
 - Multiplayer Block (4.1.4)
 - Illegal Position (4.2.1)
 - Gaining Position (4.2.2)
 - Interference (4.2.3)
 - Illegal Procedure (4.2.4)

Lesson #19: Illegal target and blocking zone penalties

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 14, 2019

Concepts

- Contact with an illegal blocking zone or to an illegal target zone is always a penalty if the block causes...
 - the target to fall down or go out of bounds, out of play, or back into play
 - the target to lose position against the initiator or an initiator's teammate
 - the initiator or a teammate to gain position on an opponent, or maintain a position that would not have been otherwise
 - Brief and minor gains of position do not warrant a penalty unless earning a pass toward scoring or lead jammer status
- It is not a penalty if the action was caused by the illegal action of an opponent

4.1.1 - Impact to an illegal target zone

- Verbal cues and their corresponding illegal target zones
 - "Low block" - legs below mid-thigh
 - "Back block" - butt or back (colloquially "between the bra straps")
 - "High block" - neck or head
- An illegal target zone block becomes legal (ie; the target becomes the initiator) if the target turns or moves thereby presenting an illegal target zone that cannot be avoided.
- Contact with an opponent's legs after falling small is not a penalty.
 - Exception: if this occurs 3+ times in a game
 - Exception: if sliding back in bounds initiates the contact
- Avoidable forceful contact to the back warrants a penalty regardless of impact.
- Forceful contact to the neck or head warrants a penalty

4.1.2 - Impact with an illegal blocking zone

- Verbal cues and their corresponding illegal blocking zones
 - “Leg block” - legs (below mid-thigh)
 - “Forearm” - arms (elbow to fingertips) not tucked into the torso
 - “Head block” - head or neck
- Additional penalty thresholds include:
 - Significantly altering an opponent’s speed (ie; impeding) or trajectory
 - Forcing an opponent significantly off balance
 - Intentionally and forcefully jabbing an opponent with the elbow or knee
- Head blocks need not include physical blocking (ie; can be positional) to warrant a penalty
 - Intentional positional blocking
 - No call - unintentional positioning causing an opponent to stop / change trajectory
 - Penalty - intentionally presenting one’s head to deter an opponent’s block
 - Penalty - continuing to deter an opponent’s block with one’s head after an initial unintentional positional block
 - Expulsion - reckless or negligent intentional positional block
 - Initiating a block with the head
 - Penalty - forceful contact initiated with the head or neck

Lesson #20: Illegal contact and multiplayer block penalties

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

Watch [lesson #20a \(Illegal contact penalties\)](#) and [lesson 20b \(Multiplayer block penalties\)](#).

Last updated: January 9, 2019

Concepts

- A skater’s direction is determined by the motion of their skates.
 - If the skates are moving in opposite directions, use the hips instead.
- Blocks initiated while moving perpendicular to the track lines are legal
- Illegal contact while a jam is in progress is always a penalty if the block causes...
 - the target to fall down or go out of bounds, out of play, or back into play
 - the target to lose position against the initiator or an initiator’s teammate
 - the initiator or a teammate to gain position on an opponent
- Brief and minor gains of position do not warrant a penalty unless earning a pass toward scoring or lead jammer status

4.1.3 - Other illegal contact

- Illegal blocks/assists unrelated to target zones and blocking zones.
- Verbal cues

- “Illegal contact”, or
 - “Illegal assist”
 - “Early hit”
 - “Late hit”
 - “Out of play block”
- “Direction”, or
 - “Stop block”
- Early hitting
 - Initiating a block before the jam start whistle
 - Penalty thresholds
 - “Stealing” an opponent’s starting position
 - Forcing the opponent to touch an illegal starting position
 - Jammers touching the pivot line, behind the pivot line, or ahead of the jammer line
 - Blockers touching the pivot or jammer lines, ahead of the pivot line, or behind the jammer line
 - Pivots touching on or behind the jammer line, or ahead of the pivot line
 - Any skater going down or touching out of bounds
- Late hitting
 - Initiating or continuing a block after the fourth call-off whistle
 - Penalty thresholds
 - Forcing an opponent down or significantly off balance
- Blocking to or from out of play
 - Initiating a block while out of play or against an out of play target
 - Exception: jammer vs. jammer blocking is legal anywhere on the track
 - Exception: counter-blocking is legal while out of play
- Blocking while stopped or moving clockwise
 - Initiating or maintaining a block while stopped or moving clockwise
 - Additional penalty threshold
 - Severely changing an opponent’s speed or trajectory
 - Exception: if the initiator immediately ceases the block or resumes counterclockwise movement
- Illegal assists
 - Assisting while down, out of play, stopped, skating clockwise, or fully out of bounds
 - Active assists while straddling are illegal; passive assists are legal
 - Penalty thresholds
 - Causing a change of relative position
 - Helping a downed skater upright in the engagement zone while stopped is considered good sportsmanship, not impact.
- Additional illegal contact

- Blocking to or from out of bounds
 - Initiating a block against a fully out of bounds opponent
 - Initiating or continuing a block while out of bounds (including straddling)
 - Picking up speed for a block from out of bounds, even if the contact takes place once fully in bounds
 - Penalty threshold
- Significantly delaying a fully out of bounds skater's return to the track
 - Blocking while down
 - Blocking a downed skater
 - Penalty threshold
- Delaying their return to the track
 - Blocking while airborne
 - The rules are contradictory whether this is illegal contact or misconduct
 - Penalty threshold
- Forcing an opponent out of their established position

4.1.4 - Multiplayer blocks

- Verbal cue: "Multiplayer"
- A type of illegal block in which two skaters form a wall (sometimes called a "link") using one of these three techniques:
 - Grasping, linking, or impenetrable wall
- The multiplayer block must be physically challenged by an opponent
 - Exception: if the grasp or link that cannot be reached because it is ahead of the "wall" of both participants, and because it strengthens said "wall"
- Impact
 - Preventing the opponent from passing between the skaters
 - Usually counterclockwise, but can be perpendicular to the track (uncommon) or even clockwise (rare).
- Upon being challenged, immediately releasing a multiplayer block such that it prevents the opponent from being impeded is not a penalty.
- The penalty should be issued to the most responsible skater.
 - When in doubt, issue it to the closest skater involved in the block.
- (rare) Jammers can get multiplayer block penalties.

Lesson #21: Illegal positioning and illegal procedure penalties

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson](#)

Last updated: June 11, 2018

4.2.1 - Illegal positioning

- Illegal positioning penalties are for...
 - Adopting or maintaining a position in which one cannot be blocked (down, out of bounds, or out of play)
 - Destroying the pack
 - Starting the jam in an illegal starting position for their role.
- It is legal to gain an illegal position for reasons of safety.
- It is legal to maintain an illegal position because of the perception that re-entering would constitute an illegal act
- Types of illegal positioning penalties and their verbal cues.
 - “Illegal position” (the basic cue)
 - Starting the jam in a completely illegal starting position
- Exception: being blocked into an illegal position by an early hit
 - Assuming a downed position to deter an incoming block
- “Destruction”
 - A sudden, marked, or abrupt action that destroys the pack for a reason other than normal gameplay.
- Some examples of normal gameplay
 - Passing the star
 - Initiating or continuing a block
 - Returning to the track, engagement zone, and/or an upright position
 - Receiving a block
 - Accidentally falling down or out of bounds
 - At jam start, all of a team’s skaters immediately and rapidly skate (in either direction) until the pack is destroyed
- Clockwise movement is held to a higher standard than counterclockwise movement. It does not have to be sudden, marked, or abrupt.
- Pack destructions without impact are not penalized (“No pa-pack!”)
- (rare) Both teams can destroy the pack at the same time. One penalty should be issued to the most responsible skater on each team.
- Jammers can never receive a destruction penalty.
 - “Skating out of bounds”
 - Exiting the track without a legal reason or the belief one has a legal reason
- Some legal reasons (there are many more than this)
 - Going out of bounds as a result a missed block or receiving a block
 - Exiting the track during the jam call-off whistles
 - Exiting the track to retrieve an out-of-bounds helmet cover
 - Exiting the track following a failed apex jump

- Falling out of bounds by accident
 - Maintaining or increasing speed while out of bounds
- Exception: accelerating to re-enter the track
- Exception: accelerating to reach the penalty box
 - “Failure to reform”
 - After a warning, failing to act to reform the pack
- Penalty goes to the most responsible skater per team.
 - See lesson 25 (“No pack situations”)
 - “Failure to return”
 - After a warning, failing to return to the engagement zone
- Penalty goes to all offending skaters
- Standing in place is considered returning so long as the pack is approaching the skater.
- An out of play (front) blocker must skate clockwise if the pack is stopped or moving clockwise.
 - This is the only situation in the entire game when a skater must skate clockwise.
 - “Failure to yield”
 - After a warning, failing to yield after starting the jam while touching a illegal starting area for one’s role (ex; jammer touching past the jammer line)
- (rare) A warning is not necessary to issue a “failure to _____” penalty if the skater cannot reasonably believe they are legally positioned and/or cannot return to a legal position.
 - Example: a skater returns from the penalty box across the track from the engagement zone. Instead of returning to the engagement zone, the skater then engages a jammer.

4.2.4 - Other illegal procedures

- Technical infractions with significant impact, if not necessarily conferring an advantage to a specific team or skater
- When possible technical infractions should be resolved before they impact the game
- Types of illegal procedures and their verbal cues.
 - “Illegal procedure”
 - Removing safety gear other than a mouthguard while in the penalty box
 - Leaving the penalty box before one’s time is expired
- Exception: when permitted to leave by an official
- Improper use of safety gear, skates, uniform, or jewelry
 - Illegally controlling a helmet cover
 - Careless actions (ex; throwing a water bottle to another skater) that threaten the safety of an official, but do not forcibly contact them.
 - A captain or alternate successfully requesting a timeout or official review while not wearing the C or A

- “Star pass violation”
 - Illegally passing the star
- “Pass interference”
 - Preventing a star pass via an illegal action
- Verbal cues
 - “Illegal procedure”, or
 - “Star pass violation”
 - “Pass interference”

Lesson #22: Cutting the track and altering game flow penalties

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

Watch [lesson #22a \(Cutting the track\)](#) and [lesson 22b \(Altering game flow\)](#).

Last updated: June 14, 2018

4.2.2 - Gaining position (“cutting the track”)

- The illegal use of the out-of-bounds area to gain position on another skater.
- Concepts
 - Gains of positions are always measured at the hips
 - A downed skater who re-enters the track does not gain position until they are upright
 - Skaters have no position if they are down or out of bounds
 - Blockers have no position if they are outside an existing engagement zone
 - No pack situations do not exempt skaters from illegal gains of position
 - During a no pack situation, blockers more than 20 feet from the last defined pack have no position.
 - Illegal gains of position may be “ceded” by immediately and fully exiting the track
 - Signaling jam call-off does not negate a skater’s obligation to cede, although the jam may end before the skater is able to do so.
 - Officiating discretion is sometimes necessary to determine whether a skater is ceding.
- Impact to call a penalty
 - A skater bettering their position on one or more opponents
 - A skater bettering their position on two or more teammates
- Gaining position penalties and their verbal cues
 - “Cut” (basic verbal cue)
 - Refers to a skater returning from out of bounds (including straddling)
- Does not include the penalty box, or temporary withdrawal from the jam due to equipment failure or injury
 - A skater who is forced out of bounds must return behind all opponents who had superior position when they went out of bounds.
 - All upright, in bounds skaters ahead of the skater who went out of bounds have superior position.

- Superior position is temporarily lost if the skater goes down, out of bounds, or out of play, but can be regained by reversing this.
 - The initiator of a block that forces a skater out of bounds gains superior position, even if they were physically behind the target.
- This privilege comes with a price; superior position is permanently lost if they go down, out of bounds, or out of play.
 - All skaters passed during an apex jump that lands in a straddling position retain superior position, even if points were scored.
 - “Illegal re-entry”
 - Refers to a skater returning from the penalty box or temporary withdrawal from the jam due to equipment failure or injury
 - All in-play blockers have superior position.
- Jammers do not have superior position.

4.2.3 - Altering the flow of the game

- Warnings should be used whenever possible to fix a situation instead of issuing a penalty
 - The larger objective is to maintain game flow, not to send more skaters to the box
- Altering game flow penalties and their verbal cues
 - WFTDA has not formalized the difference between these penalty types, but these are generally acceptable distinctions
 - “Interference” (basic cue)
 - Illegal actions that interfere with the natural progression of the game, but do not halt the game clock
- Successfully calling off the jam while not lead jammer
 - Exception: if an official erroneously indicates the jammer has lead
- Too many skaters achieving a competitive advantage during a jam
 - “Delay of game”
 - Illegal actions that cause the game clock to be halted
- Failing to field a jammer at jam start
- Failing to field any blockers in a legal starting position at jam start
- Failing to field a blocker in the penalty box queue in the correct position at jam start
- An injured skater lined up for a jam at jam start for which they are not allowed to participate
- Successfully requesting a timeout (TO) or official review (OR) with none of that type remaining
 - If possible, charge the team the other type instead of issuing a penalty
- Successfully requesting a TO or OR by a non-captain/designated alternate
 - Exception: Calling a TO/OR in response to a skater signaling to their captain or alternate to request a TO/OR.
 - Docking a TO or OR instead of issuing a penalty is not an option.
- Penalties for altering game flow go to the team captain

- Exceptions: (penalty to the responsible skater)
 - Too many skaters
 - Failing to field a skater in the penalty box queue in the correct position
 - Calling off the jam while not lead jammer
 - Successfully calling for a TO/OR by a non-captain/designated alternate

Lesson #23: Unsporting conduct penalties

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 9, 2019

4.3 - Unsporting Conduct

- This penalty type involves significant officiating discretion, and is not limited to actions listed on this handout.
- Unsporting conduct penalties can be elevated to expulsion for egregious or repeated offenses depending on the context.
- Unsporting conduct penalties and their verbal cues
 - “Misconduct” (basic cue) - Undermining the legitimacy of the sport or displaying a lack of respect for the sport, its execution, or those that contribute to it.
 - Abusive or obscene language or gestures directed at a non-official
- (no call or warning) Minor slights inaudible to the audience addressed to a teammate or opponent
- (expulsion) Long strings of profanity or losing one’s temper
 - Impersonating an official
 - Hiding an active helmet cover during a jam
 - Reckless or negligent penalty box entry
 - Attempting to deceive a referee into issuing a penalty
 - Blocking outside the acceptable range of the sport
- Positional blocking preventing a downed skater from standing
- Blocking while airborne
 - Non-forceful / unintentional contact with significant impact
 - Intentional contact regardless of impact
- (expulsion) Intentionally falling on a prone or down skater
- (expulsion) Pulling a helmet cover off an opponent
 - Failing to abide by governing body policies during the game
- Example: fielding too many team staff
 - Intentionally blocking a skater into a downed skater
 - An ejected skater that interferes with subsequent gameplay
- Penalty to captain, skater is banished to the locker room
 - (expulsion) Intentional, reasonably avoidable, and forceful contact to an official

- “Insubordination” - Willfully or neglectfully failing to comply with the instructions of an official, or wrongful or improper behavior motivated by intentional disregard for the rules.
 - Abusive or obscene language or gestures directed at an official
- Not every slight warrants a penalty
 - Willfully failing to follow the instructions of an official
- This includes immediately leaving the track in response to a penalty
 - A skater must exit the track relative to where they were issued the penalty.
 - A bit ahead or behind this area has no impact.
 - A lot ahead or behind has impact.
 - Exiting is also subject to having a safe and legal opportunity to exit the track.
- Failure to leave the track after repeatedly being directed to do so

Lesson #24: Expulsions and fouling out

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 21, 2018

Fouling out

- A skater fouls out after seven penalties
- Play continues without the fouled out skater for the remainder of the jam
- The fouled out skater must leave the track area and may not remain in the team’s bench area
- A fouled out skater is not required to remove their skates or gear
- Any official can process a foul out; this is typically done by the box manager or head referee

Expulsions

- Used for infractions so severe they warrant the removal of a skater from the game for a first offense
- Expulsion-level blocks need not make physical contact (ie; one can “miss”)
- Expulsion-level blocks need not have impact
- Legal blocks never warrant an expulsion
- The head referee is the only person with the authority issue an expulsion
 - Other referees should issue a penalty if appropriate and recommend the head referee upgrade the penalty to an expulsion
- Both skaters and non-skaters (coaches, team support staff) may be expelled
- Captains serve a penalty for expelled team staff, but it does not count toward fouling out
- Mitigating factors can be taken into account when deciding whether to expel someone
- Expulsions can only be issued when there is no doubt the action warrants an expulsion
- When discussing a potential expulsion, it can be useful to consult the NSO crew.
- In sanctioned games and some tournaments, particularly egregious expulsion-level actions can also result in a recommendation of suspension from future games.
 - The actual suspension determination process varies depending on the organization and tournament.

Ejections (all types)

- Ejected skaters are typically held next to the penalty box until the jam ends
- If the jam ends before the ejected skater's time in the penalty box expires, another skater is substituted for that skater between jams. That skater serves any remaining time in the same position (i.e.; as pivot for a pivot who fouled out).
- If a captain or designated alternate is ejected, the team may designate a new one.
 - If a penalty must be served by a (non-existent) captain, the team must designate a new one.
- An ejected skater may sit in the audience
 - The skater must behave in a manner appropriate for a member of the audience
 - If the fouled out skater interferes with game play, the captain is issued a unsporting conduct penalty and the skater is expelled back to the locker room or staging area
- Audience members that needs to be ejected should be handled in accordance with the host league's security plan.
- In tournament environments, the skater is often escorted away from the play area (usually by the alternate referee).

Expellable offenses

- This is not an exhaustive list.
- To an opponent
 - Negligent or reckless blocking to an illegal target zone
 - Negligent or reckless blocking with an illegal blocking zone
 - Negligent or reckless illegal contact (OOB, OOP, etc.)
 - Intentional, negligent, or reckless contact above the shoulder
 - Intentional tripping
 - Intentionally falling on a prone or downed opponent
 - Slide tackling
 - Holding or pinning a skater to the ground
 - Shoving
 - Intentionally removing an opponent's helmet cover
- To an official
 - Forceful contact that is intentional or reasonably avoidable
 - Willfully failing to leave the floor after fouling out
 - Deliberate and excessive insubordination to an official
- To anyone
 - Contact with the head of a skater not wearing a helmet
 - Pulling of the head, neck, or helmet
 - Fighting
 - Protecting oneself without engaging the other person is legal
 - Completely losing one's temper and/or yelling a string of abuse or profanity

- Threatening physical violence
- Serious physical violence or other action that causes an extraordinary physical threat to oneself or others.
- Sexual harassment
- Other
 - Interference in gameplay by skaters or support staff not in a jam
 - Forceful contact to a non-teammate while entering the penalty box
 - Forcible contact with the penalty box seat to a non-teammate while entering the penalty box
 - This cannot be due to the structural failure of the seat

Lesson #25: No pack situations

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: June 20, 2018

Failure to reform

- An illegal action whereby a blocker does not attempt to reform a pack
- All actions to reform the pack must be done immediately
 - Leisurely reforming is insufficient
- No penalties are issued if the pack immediately reforms
- Blockers who are directed to the penalty box cannot reform the pack
- Blockers in the back group must cease blocking and skate forward
- Blockers in the front group must cease blocking and brake to a halt
 - Blockers in the front group are not required to skate clockwise, but may do so.
- Blockers in a middle group (if any) may either stop or skate forward
 - The entire group need not perform the same action
- Out of bounds blockers who can legally re-enter must do so if reentering would help to reform the pack.
- Skaters in a position that prevents an opposing blocker from directly returning in bounds (i.e.; the opponent will receive a cut if they reenter) must skate forward until the skater may re-enter.
- Penalties go to the most responsible person (if any) in either group that fails to reform
 - Priority goes to a blocker who initiates a new block or continues an existing one
 - This includes positional blocks
 - Next priority goes to the blocker closest to the other group who fails to reform
 - This could also be a blocker who fails to move forward allowing an out of bounds skater to return to the track without skating clockwise
 - When skaters are equally responsible the penalty goes to the closest blocker
- A penalty should be issued to the most responsible blocker per team who fails to reform
- Sustained failure to reform warrants additional penalties

No pack situation handling

- “No pack” is announced.
 - The Rear IPR typically does this. Front IPR less often. On rare occasion an OPR.
- Destruction penalties are issued (if applicable)
 - These are typically issued by the referee who announced “no pack”
 - If a pack will reform quickly the destruction penalty is sometimes delayed until the pack reforms
- The front IPR issues failure to reform penalties to the front group as warranted
- The rear IPR issues failure to reform penalties to the rear group as warranted
- OPRs watch for blocks that cause an opponent to fall or go out of bounds
- If an immediate failure to reform penalty was issued and the pack is not yet reformed, an IPR re-calls out “No pack!”
 - Some referees consider this optional while others maintain this is good practice
- Repeat this process until the pack reforms
- “Pack” or “Pack is here” is announced when the pack is reestablished.

Lesson #26: Assists

by *Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil*

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: June 30, 2018

Basic concepts

- (glossary definition) Physically affecting a teammate. Common examples include a push or a whip.
 - An assist off an opponent is considered to be a block
- All assists have an initiator and a recipient
 - These are sometimes the same person
- An active participant of an assist is a skater actively causing it to occur
 - Example: Offering or accepting an arm whip
- A passive participant of an assist is a skater passively allowing it to occur
 - Example: The skater whose hips are grabbed during a hip whip
 - Not all assists have a passive participant

Legal and illegal assists

- Verbal cue: “Illegal assist”. This is a type of “Illegal contact” penalty.
- The initiator of an assist is judged for legality in the same way as the initiator of a block.
 - The initiator of an assist must be...
 - Upright

- Fully in bounds
- Inside the engagement zone
- Moving counterclockwise or perpendicular to the track
- The second participant in the assist is judged in the same manner as the target of a block.
 - The second participant in the assist must be
 - Upright
- Exception: helping a downed skater upright in the engagement zone should be considered an act of good sportsmanship
 - Straddling the track or fully in bounds
 - Inside the engagement zone
- Impact to call a penalty
 - The recipient of the assist gains position on a teammate or opponent.

Types of assists

- Arm and/or hand whip
- Hip and/or jersey whips
- Peg assist
 - Usually done at jam start
 - A (usually) stopped skater near a track line reaches around the side of the track and grabs their team's jammer behind an opposing wall between them. The jammer jumps toward the out of bounds area and the stopped skater pulls them in a semi-circle until the jammer lands in bounds.
 - In theory can be done legally, but is extremely difficult to do.
- "Fauxpex" jump
 - An apex jump in which a skater propels themselves forward using their hand on the shoulder of a teammate.

Lesson #27: Clockwise play

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 21, 2018

General

- Although roller derby is played counterclockwise, it is legal to skate clockwise.
 - Exception: a rear group reforming the pack during a no pack situation
 - Exception: out of play blockers to the rear of the engagement zone
- The direction a skater is facing while skating clockwise is irrelevant.
- Skaters are never required to skate clockwise
 - Exception: out of play blockers to the front of the engagement zone when the pack is stopped or moving clockwise.

Clockwise jammers

- Jammers rarely skate clockwise except to avoid track cuts.
- There is no “running lap count” for jammers.
 - A jammer that falls behind can be absorbed into the prior trip through the pack.
 - No missed points or credit toward lead jammer can be obtained
 - No matter how many times a jammer is lapped by the pack, the jammer needs only pass through the pack and exit the front of the engagement zone to return to the current lap.
- Eating the baby
 - Jammer A knocks Jammer B out of bounds at the start of the jam, after which Jammer A skates clockwise to the front of the pack. Jammer B must enter behind them, which is behind the pack of their prior lap. Jammer A then skates counterclockwise on their regular initial trip. Jammer B must effectively pass through the pack twice to complete their initial trip.

Clockwise pack movement

- The game does not change directions when the pack travels clockwise
 - The front and rear of the pack do not switch sides
 - Jammers must still pass skaters in the counterclockwise direction to earn passes on opposing blockers
 - Clockwise-moving skaters cannot legally initiate blocks or assists
 - Counterclockwise skating jammers can legally initiate blocks against clockwise skaters.
- Cutting the track and track re-entry rules are not altered.
 - Skaters must still re-enter behind (ie; clockwise) skaters to avoid illegally gaining position
- Out of play rules regarding no pack situations do not change
 - The rear group must still skate counterclockwise to reform
 - The front group can stop their clockwise motion as fast as they want and remain still until the counterclockwise group reaches them
 - Destruction penalties are assessed as normal. If the team makes a sudden, marked, and rapid stop or change of direction (including back to counterclockwise), it should be met with a penalty

Lesson #28: Passing the star

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: January 9, 2019

Concepts

- A legal star pass transfers both the star (jammer helmet cover) and the position of jammer from the jammer to the pivot.
 - Lead jammer status is not transferred
 - The new jammer is ineligible to become lead
 - The jammer who initiated the star pass becomes a blocker

- The position of pivot for that team ceases to exist for the remainder of the jam
- The pivot cover is considered debris and may be discarded or removed from the track
- A legal star pass cannot be reversed or undone.
- If the star pass occurs after the jammer “fell back” into a prior trip through the pack, the new jammer begins on the prior trip.
- Star passes are judged for legality if and when the jammer releases the star into the pivot’s grasp.
- Fallen star covers may only be retrieved by the pivot or jammer
- If the pivot is not wearing the stripe, they are treated as a non-pivot blocker.
- Star passes may be prevented by legal blocking
- A jammer or pivot carrying the star in a partially-hidden manner (ex; balled in their hand) should be warned to “show the star”.
- A pivot holding the star may drop, hand, or throw the star back to the jammer.
 - This includes a penalized pivot inside the penalty box.
- A failed star pass is either incomplete or illegal.
 - The physical star is transferred, but not the position of jammer.

Legal star pass process

- The jammer hands the star to the pivot
- Once both skaters are grasping the star, the jammer releases it.
- Jammer status is transferred the instant the jammer releases the star.
- The new jammer resumes the trip through the pack where the former jammer left off
- Credit for earned passes from the current trip through the pack is also transferred

Incomplete star passes

- An incomplete star pass is a non-penalty violation of the star pass procedure
- Can occur several ways
 - Pivot catches a star in mid-air
 - Pivot retrieves a fallen star from the track
 - Pivot is handed the star from a blocker or opposing skater
- Following an incomplete star pass, the pivot should always be warned they are not the jammer.
- To complete a legal star pass, the jammer need only re-grasp the cover at the same time as the pivot, then let go

Illegal star passes

- An illegal star pass is a potential penalty-level violation of the star pass procedure
- Can occur several ways
 - A jammer handing the star to the pivot while either skater is down, out of bounds, or outside the engagement zone
 - A jammer handing the star to the pivot while either skater is on their way to the penalty box, or while the pivot is in the penalty box queue

- A jammer handing the star to a pivot not wearing the stripe.
- A jammer handing the star to a non-pivot blocker
- Following an illegal star pass to a pivot, always warn the pivot they are not the jammer
- Penalties go to the initiator of the pass. This is almost always the jammer.
 - Exception: A blocker wrests the star away from the jammer, the blocker is the initiator
 - Exception: A pivot, after being warned they are not the jammer, who places the star upon their helmet.

Impact required to issue a penalty

- “Illegal procedure” (no specific cue)
 - A pivot or jammer who completely hiding the star cover (in one’s jersey, shorts, hand, etc.)
 - A pivot or jammer who fails to produce the cover after being warned to “show the star”
- “Star pass violation”
 - Passing the star to a non-pivot blocker if the blocker fails to immediately relinquish control of the star. No warning is required.
 - This also applies to blockers who retrieve a fallen star or catch one in the air.
 - A pivot who, after being warned they are not the jammer, places the star on their helmet.
 - After being warned they are not the jammer, a pivot wearing the star that fails to remove it.
 - Advanced concept: After an illegal star pass that was intentionally illegal, if the ensuing confusion from that action provides a significant advantage such as allowing the Jammer to escape the pack.
- “Pass interference”
 - Disrupting an opponent’s star pass with an illegal blocking zone
 - Disrupting an opponent’s star pass by contacting illegal target zone
 - Disrupting an opponent’s star pass via illegal contact (clockwise block, etc.)
 - Controlling an opposing team’s helmet cover (holding it, standing on it, etc.)
 - Exception: Accidentally obtaining the opposing star cover then immediately dropping it or handing it back to the opposing pivot or jammer
- Expulsion: Gross Misconduct (rare)
 - Throwing an opposing star into the audience, bench area, etc.
 - Intentionally removing the star from the opposing jammer’s head

Additional rules and procedures

- Officials should use the “star pass complete” hand signal following a legal star pass.
- Following a legal star pass both participants lose superior position in regards to drawing cuts on opposing skaters
- A star pass across opposing blockers does not earn passes.
- If a legal star pass occurs at jam start past all opposing blockers followed by the new jammer exiting the front of the engagement zone, this still counts as completing the initial trip.
 - It doesn’t matter that the new jammer never earned a pass on any opposing blockers
- Following an incomplete or illegal star pass, jammer referees should maintain focus on their jammer. Communicate verbally to the the IPRs, and let them deal with the pivot and fallen cover.

Lesson #29: Junior Derby Gameplay

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

[Watch this lesson on YouTube](#)

Last updated: June 14, 2018

Basic concepts

- Junior derby utilizes the WFTDA ruleset subject to modifications listed in the Junior Roller Derby Association Rules Addenda (.pdf format).
 - Other junior derby rulesets exist; this lesson does not discuss them.
- Games utilizing the JRDA ruleset can occur at three “levels”.
 - Level one is “no contact”.
 - Level two is “gentle initial contact” / “lean blocking” only.
 - Level three is “regular adult derby”. All JRDA sanctioned games occur at this level.
- Junior derby places a stronger emphasis than adult derby on safety, personal development, and fostering a supportive environment.
 - Incidents such as crying, emotional distress, or unwillingness to communicate may be treated as injuries at the official’s discretion.
 - For some games (non-sanctioned, level 1-2, games with younger skaters, etc.) it may not only be acceptable, but appropriate for officials to provide assistance in a manner not normally found at adult games.
 - For these games the captains’ meeting is an excellent place to discuss the level of assistance to be provided by officials.

Examples

- A skater on the track is issued a penalty. The skater moves away from gameplay, but does not leave the track and appears confused. It would be appropriate to provide a more specific instruction to report to the penalty box.
- A skater loses their toestop and falls down. They crawl off the track into the middle of the outside safety lane. The skater appears upset and unsure what to do next. It may be appropriate to retrieve their toestop, direct them off the edge of the safety lane, and/or notify their bench they need assistance.

JRDA Rules Addenda

- JRDA-only “hitting” penalties utilize the “illegal contact” penalty code, verbal cue, and hand signal.
- Level one
 - Only positional blocking is allowed; intentional contact or applying force to an opponent warrants a penalty regardless of impact.
 - This does not include minor incidental contact with no effect.
 - Unintentional contact that is otherwise legal (ie; legal target zone on legal blocking zone) is not penalized regardless of impact.
 - It is legal to adopt a downed position or go out of bounds to avoid contact with an opponent, even if contact could be avoided without doing so.
 - No penalty is issued for such an action even if it also destroys the pack.
- Level two

- Forceful initial contact warrants a penalty regardless of impact or effect.

- Follow-up contact is treated as a new block.

Example: gentle hip-to-hip contact followed by forceful shoulder contact warrants a penalty.

- After legal and gentle initial contact is made, blockers may apply force in the same manner (ex; hip-to-hip, shoulder-to-chest, etc.).

- Acceleration is irrelevant. (This was an important issue in prior rule sets.)

- Level three

- Contact penalties are treated in the same manner as adult derby.

- All levels

- All non-championship tournament games may end in a tie.

- Overtime jam(s) may be held if both teams agree. This may be repeated if the tie continues.

- All non-gameplay behaviors that taunt, harass, or intimidate another person (skater, official, or anyone else) warrant a Misconduct penalty.

- After a spectator (including parents) engages in one incident of such behavior, an official timeout should be called. Each captain should be given the opportunity to serve a penalty for the spectator's conduct. If neither captain agrees, the spectator will be expelled from the venue.

- A second instance of Unsporting Conduct by the spectator automatically results in their expulsion from the venue.

- The following behaviors warrant immediate expulsion on a first offense.

- Repeated, excessive, physical dangerous, and/or egregious Unsporting Conduct.

- Name-calling

- Slurs based on race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

- Threatening a person's or group's health or well-being in any way.

Examples:

- "I'm going to get you for that."

- "Kill the jammer!"

- Failure to remove or cover offensive language or symbols on uniforms or equipment after being instructed to do so by an Official.

- Junior-specific expulsion procedures

- Expelled skaters cannot be forced to leave the gameplay area without supervision.

- Expelled skaters may remain in the audience with a designated supervising adult (to be identified in the pre-game meeting).

Lesson #30: Junior derby (gear checks)

by Stephen Lorimor / Axis of Stevil

Last updated: August 30, 2018

Full procedure instructions can be found in the [JRDA Pre-Game Protocol](#).

Gear Checks

- All junior skaters must undergo a physical “gear check” before regulation and sanctioned games.
 - The gear check is either provided by officials (supervised by team staff), or by team staff (supervised by officials). This is typically the captains’ choice, to be decided at the captains’ meeting.
 - Checks involve making physical contact with skaters and their gear.
 - The check should be performed in public with a team staff member nearby.
 - Skaters must grant consent before being checked.
 - A skater may decline to be checked, but is not cleared to skate in the game.
 - To avoid misunderstanding, explain the check as it is being performed.
 - Officials and team staff must also consent to participate in a check.
 - No official or team staff should ever be forced to perform checks.
 - NSOs who understand how to perform a gear check may perform them at the discretion of the head referee.
 - Skaters are not cleared to skate in the game until they pass their gear check.
 - Issues noticed during gear checks must be resolved prior to the skater participating in the game. This may be after the first whistle.
 - All equipment issues that are not immediately resolved should be brought to the attention of the head referee.
- The head referee is the final authority on all safety gear, and may request any item be modified, removed, and/or replaced.
- Manufacturer instructions regarding sizing, use, and maintenance always take precedence if they differ from these guidelines.
- Brief summary of gear check procedures.
 - All gear
 - May not display any offensive words or symbols.
 - Must be in good repair.
 - Hard shells and inserts may not be cracked.
 - Helmet
 - Should not be able to slide side-to-side or tilt forward or backward
 - Helmet should be low over the forehead with the front rim approximately at the eyebrows.
 - Chin strap should be snug but not impede breathing and movement of the mouth, and should allow a maximum of two fingers to fit between the strap and chin.
 - The helmet should not have any cracks or sharp edges.
 - Face shields are allowed / disallowed as per the WFTDA Risk Management Guidelines.
 - Mouth guard
 - Ask the skater to display their mouth guard.
 - A mouth guard may be trimmed for comfort / fit, but should not be shortened or cut off before the molars.
 - The mouth guard should fit when they place it back in their mouth.

- Elbow pads / knee pads
 - Should be snug and not slide on their arm/leg.
 - Must have a hard shell that is not cracked or broken.
 - Tape should be used to secure loose velcro.
- Wrist guards
 - Should be snug on their wrist and not able to be slid in any direction.
 - Must have a plastic shell or insert that is not cracked.
- Skates
 - Skates are not considered safety equipment and are not part of the gear check.
 - Toe stops are not required on skates.
- Other apparel
 - Jewelry, clothing, or other items may not have sharp or pointed edges that present a danger to other skaters.

Document change summary

This is a list of changes within the last six months. It does not include minor fixes, tweaks, corrections, video updates, etc.

April 2023 - Update for the 2023 changes on counterblocking.

May 19, 2022 - A slew of minor grammatical fixes suggested by Molotov Latte. (Thanks!)

November 26, 2019 - Updated the link in Lesson 29 (“Junior derby - gameplay”) to the current JRDA rule set.

January 14, 2019 - Corrected a typo which significantly changed the meaning of the new metric for a back block in Lesson 19 (“Illegal target and blocking zone penalties”).

January 9, 2019 - Modified numerous lessons to bring them up to date for the 2019 rule set. Removed specific casebook citations as casebook numbers have changed.

August 30, 2018 - Added lesson 30 (“Junior derby - gear checks”).

August 3, 2018 - Revised lesson 28 (“Passing the star”) for better readability and comprehension.

All lessons have accompanying videos available on YouTube. The entire set of video lessons can be found at this [link](#).

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