



# GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

Guidelines for an Introductory Small-Sided Game



# FIELD HOCKEY

is an Olympic sport for men and women, and fun for all ages. It's a sport for life!

USA Field Hockey has created GAME ON Field Hockey and GO Cards to make teaching the sport easier.

GAME ON Field Hockey is a small-sided game that can be played by players to learn basic game concepts in a stage and age-appropriate setting.

GO CARDS support GAME ON Field Hockey play and provide many hours of fun activities to help individuals get started. Each game can be made easier or harder depending upon the age and experience of participating players. Be creative! GAME ON!

These resources, and many others, are available on [usafieldhockey.com](http://usafieldhockey.com) and support the DISCOVER and PLAY & LEARN stages of the USA Field Hockey American Development Model.

**GROW THE GAME. SERVE MEMBERS.  
SUCCEED INTERNATIONALLY.**

[USAFIELDHOCKEY.COM](http://USAFIELDHOCKEY.COM)

## 5 STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT





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# INTRODUCTION

## TO GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

### FIELD HOCKEY IS FUN, FAST, SAFE AND EXCITING!

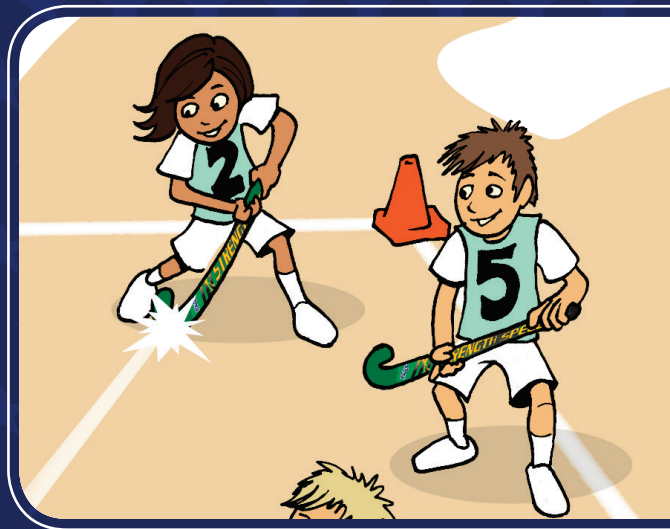
GAME ON Field Hockey, also called GO Field Hockey, is an official standardized small-sided game format that can be played by players to learn basic game concepts in a stage and age-appropriate setting. The game and its supporting resources aim to provide players of all ages with a high quality first exposure to field hockey, irrespective of ability and gender, in a safe and challenging environment.

These resources have been designed to make it easy for anyone to teach and learn field hockey.

GO Field Hockey can be introduced and played on a variety of surfaces including school yards, grass, turf, gym, even tennis courts...any flat surface! It is fun, fast, safe and exciting to play, watch, umpire and facilitate. The goal is to grow field hockey participation among young players.

GO Field Hockey activities introduce and develop skills and tactics enabling participants to successfully progress to the full indoor and outdoor versions of the game. It's turnkey hockey!

GAME ON Field Hockey is supported by 50 illustrated GO Cards which introduce the game and skills gradually. GAME ON can be played or taught by anyone! The general philosophy is to have fun while learning and developing core skills, setting the foundation for a lifelong love of the game.





# DESIRED OUTCOMES

## OF GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

### THE KEY OUTCOMES OF GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY ARE TO:

- Increase the number of organizations delivering field hockey programs by providing appropriate resources and equipment
- Support the delivery of quality field hockey programs everywhere: In physical education classes, after-school programs, recreation centers, multisport providers and local clubs
- Aid relevant progression from early physical literacy development to sport-specific stages of development
- Provide a standardized small-sided game structure that applies learner-centered best principles
- Keep play active, safe and fun for all participants, with minimal equipment needs and uncomplicated rules

### GO FIELD HOCKEY IS BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT SMALL-SIDED GAMES:

- Are enjoyable to play for athletes of both genders and of all ages and field hockey abilities
- Require fewer players and offer athletes full involvement, increased ball contact and greater skill development
- Do not need sophisticated facilities or equipment and can be played on fields of various sizes and surfaces
- Teach common skills and tactics to make the transition to 11v11 field hockey easier
- Introduce development opportunities for playing, umpiring, coaching, managing and leading within field hockey



# BENEFITS

## OF GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

### GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY OFFERS MULTIPLE BENEFITS. GAME ON:

- Provides a developmental, process-based program using various challenges whereby the pace of learning can be modified according to the individual needs of the player
- Introduces a framework that is inclusive and provides a fun, flexible and consistent approach to quality competition for players, regardless of age and ability
- Promotes fun and healthy activity and helps develop essential motor skills
- Is based on small-sided game principles, making it more exciting and simpler to play and teach, minimizing danger and maximizing playing time
- Helps develop team spirit, social interaction and fair play
- Increases participation by engaging beginners in field hockey play and friendly competition
- Introduces the many leadership roles and responsibilities that exist within field hockey and are needed to run successful programs: coaches, umpires, managers and volunteers to help with equipment, field set-up and other logistics
- Progresses to teach physical literacy and field hockey - specific concepts and skills
- Doesn't require goalkeepers or penalty corners to minimize equipment needs and frequent stoppages, so everyone is active and involved
- Provides a simple and affordable opportunity for volunteers, parents, schools and local clubs to help deliver the sessions and GO Field Hockey playing opportunities



# EQUIPMENT

## FOR GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

### GO FIELD HOCKEY EQUIPMENT

Equipment needs for GO Field Hockey are minimal: sticks, balls, cones, pinnies, whistles and goals. USA Field Hockey equipment packages and accessories are available, although any field hockey sticks or equipment can be used.

### GO FIELD HOCKEY BALL

The GO Field Hockey ball is an oversized, lightweight ball specifically designed for use on a variety of surfaces, including grass and school playgrounds. The ball is softer and bigger than a standard field hockey ball making it perfect for beginners.

### GO FIELD HOCKEY GOALS

GO Field Hockey goals are smaller than regulation field hockey goals. Goals sizes can be adjusted to suit the size of the field and the age, experience and skill level of players. Cones, other markers, and multisport goals are also acceptable and encouraged for recreational use.



Thank you to Harrow Sports, the official sponsor of GAME ON Field Hockey.

For information on purchasing GO Field Hockey equipment, please visit [usafielddhockey.com](http://usafielddhockey.com).

**USAFIELDHOCKEY.COM**

### GO FIELD HOCKEY STICKS

GO Field Hockey Sticks have been designed in partnership with Harrow Sports to incorporate specific teaching points within the graphics. For example, the grip is two-tone to identify where the hands should be placed.

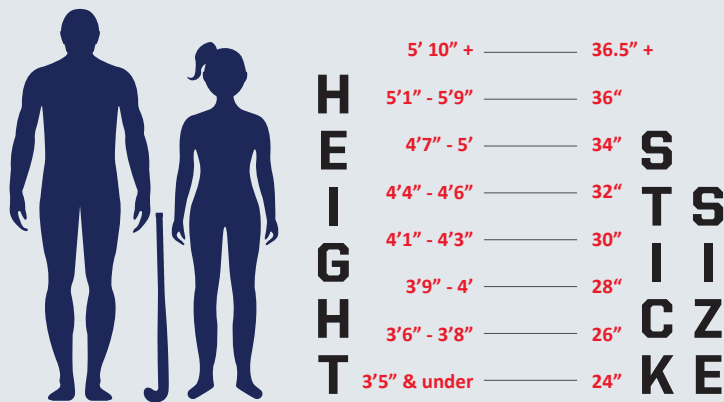
GO Sticks are available in seven different sizes ranging from 24 to 36 inches. Players should use a stick that is approximately the same height as the top of the hip when standing the stick up vertically at their side. Please note that each size stick is a different color. This color coding enables program leaders and players to identify the correct size/color once, saving time for when they play again.

You will also notice that all sticks have a flat side. This is the playing side and on GO Sticks, this is the “white side”. Players should be encouraged to use only the flat side of the stick. This is a fundamental rule of hockey which should be encouraged at the early stages of skill development and will aid in the development of core skills and decision making.

*An important note is that there are no left-handed sticks in field hockey or GO Field Hockey. There are many left-hand dominant players within the sport. Players who are left-handed may find it easier to develop dribbling skills than right-handed players and might find passing and receiving a little awkward at first.*

## STICK SIZING AND SELECTION

Wood sticks, such as the USA Field Hockey Go Sticks, are perfect for beginner players because they are lightweight and forgiving, making it easier to control the ball. It's important that a stick is about the right size for optimal success and enjoyment. Most prefer a stick that comes to the top of the hip. Here's an approximate size chart based on height:



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GAME ON equipment can be purchased at [usafieldhockey.com](http://usafieldhockey.com)

**USAFIELDHOCKEY.COM**

## GO STICKS

Wood stick options:

- 26" – Royal blue with small stars
- 28" – Red with small stars
- 30" – Navy with small stars
- 32" – Royal blue with large stars
- 34" – Red with large stars
- 36" – Navy with large stars

Plastic stick options are also available for very young players and physical education classes:

- 24" – Navy
- 28" – Red
- 32" – Royal blue
- 36" – Navy

## GO BALLS

GO Balls are oversized and lighter weight for indoor and outdoor play. Standard field hockey balls or other types of balls may be substituted to provide a safe, fun and challenging experience for players.

## GO GOALS

Cones or other types of goals can also be used.



When possible, young athletes are encouraged to use GAME ON equipment. However, other modified equipment is recommended to best serve the needs of each individual.

Here are some examples of how this can be achieved:

### DIFFERENT STICKS

- Size and weight - ensure the participant has a stick that is appropriate to their size, strength and skill level
- Lighter - easier to manipulate with one arm or lack of physical strength
- Larger - larger striking surface makes it easier to contact the ball
- Longer - may assist in reaching
- Shorter - easier to manipulate for wheelchair users or seated participants, or to hold with one hand
- Adaptations - stick can be attached to participants wrist, hands, etc. (example: Velcro glove)

### DIFFERENT BALLS

- Lighter - travels slower giving more reaction time, inflatable balls are soft and easy to hit but are hard to control
- Larger - easier to hit and see
- Softer - travels more slowly on the floor, easier to control
- Different colors - may assist participants with visual impairments
- Internal bell - helps participants with visual impairment to judge the location of the ball



# GO STICK OPTIONS



## WOOD STICK OPTIONS

26" 28" 30" 32" 34" 36"

Real field hockey sticks for beginner use  
Indoor/Outdoor  
Use with standard ball or GO BALL

## PLASTIC STICK OPTIONS

24" 28" 32" 36"

Plastic "soft stick" design for physical education classes  
Indoor/Outdoor  
Not recommended for use with standard balls



# FIELD

## OF GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

The GAME ON field can be flexible in size to accommodate available facilities. The goal is to use local facilities that are affordable and accessible for frequent field hockey play.

USA Field Hockey has created an official GAME ON field size to facilitate a standard size for league play or large group play days. An official stand-alone GO Field is 30 yards long by 25 yards wide. Goals are 8 feet wide. See the diagram for an example of an official single field layout and markings.

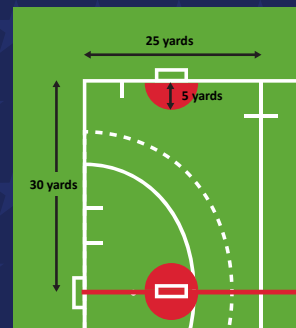
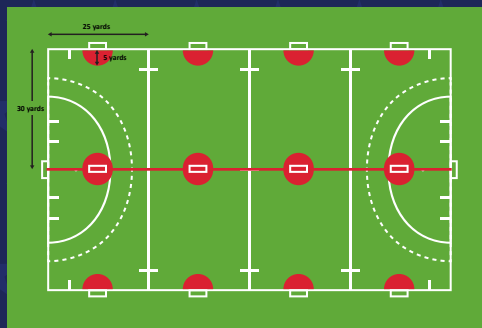
The diagram shows how one full-size field (100 yards x 60 yards) can be divided into eight GAME ON playing fields. Note that in this case, the fields will be slightly shorter and lines will be shared. USA Field Hockey suggests only using this layout when playing with a GO Ball or another softer, slower moving ball to ensure safety.

One full-size field is also ideal for four GAME ON Fields as in this case, lines would not need to be shared.

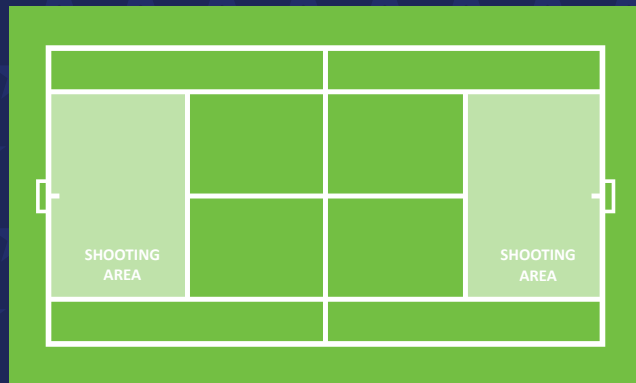
GAME ON Field Hockey is a fun, score-from-anywhere version of the sport. As players develop their skills, a scoring area in

front of the goals can be added to make the game more challenging - and more like regulation field hockey and indoor hockey. If using a standard basketball court, consider using the three-point line as the scoring area. If using a tennis court, consider using the service lines as the scoring area. The purpose is to adapt the game as the players develop the skills and to suit your facility.

See diagrams on the back for examples of field set up using tennis and basketball courts.

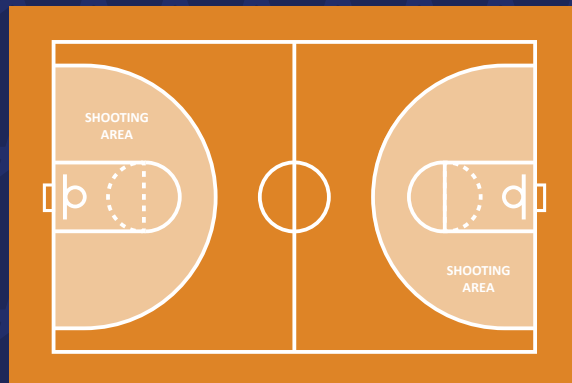


## TENNIS COURT



A tennis court works great for small-sided field hockey games. The size is 78 feet x 36 feet using the outside or doubles lines. Use the service line to define a rectangular shooting area. Even a half tennis court is good for 2v2 play. Be creative and use the facilities that are available, affordable and accessible in your community.

## BASKETBALL COURT



Basketball courts can make perfect small-sided field hockey fields too. Note how the three-point lines make good shooting areas. Basketball courts come in different sizes. An NBA court is 94 feet x 50 feet, high school 84 feet x 50 feet and junior high 74 feet x 42 feet. Again, be flexible and use what you have, adjusting the number of players to suit their age, size, experience and desired challenge.



# RULES & GUIDELINES

## OF GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

### PROGRAM LEADERS

Program Leaders are the adults responsible for organizing GAME ON Field Hockey play. They are the teachers, coaches, parents or other volunteers who are taking charge. Program Leaders are responsible for creating a fun and safe environment for all participants. They are also responsible for assisting and developing players and ensuring fair play. Successful Program Leaders are organized, enthusiastic, positive and inclusive.

### FIELD MARKINGS

Once the Program Leader has identified the playing area, make sure the field is marked appropriately with endlines and sidelines. Markings can be made with cones, throw-down markers or possibly chalk, depending upon the facility and surface.

### EQUIPMENT NOTES

**BALL:** While any ball can be used, a GO Ball is recommended for beginners, especially in tighter spaces when lines are shared. The GO Ball has been designed for use on all surfaces. A variety of balls of different sizes can also be used to differentiate and set learning objectives suitable to the needs of the individual or group.

**GOALS:** GO Goals are smaller than regular field hockey goals and can vary in size from 5 to 8 feet wide. Check [usafielddhockey.com](http://usafielddhockey.com) for official GO Goals. Cones or makers can also be used and width can be adjusted to make scoring easier or harder.

The front of each goal is to be positioned against the outer edges of the endline, in line with the center of the field. Please fix securely for safety where necessary.

## PLAYERS' CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

The Program Leader will determine whether shinguards and mouth guards are necessary, depending on multiple factors, such as the ball and surface. Uniforms or pinnies can be worn. Players should not wear anything which is dangerous to other players; this includes large jewelry, metal goggles and any sharp objects.

## TEAMS

There are NO goalkeepers in GO Field Hockey. An official team consists of six players; four are on the field of play at any one time, with the remaining two team members encouraged to take on the leadership roles of umpiring and managing (see page 17 for more information on leadership roles). It is suggested that the leadership roles are rotated among the team at the end of each playing period.

## DURATION

GO Field Hockey is a game of three periods. This is so that all players rotate with the two leadership roles at the end of each playing period and experience playing, umpiring or managing.

### *Suggested Game Time by Age for Beginners:*

5-6 year olds: three, 6-minute playing periods and a change-over interval of two minutes between each period. The game will therefore last 22 minutes.

7-8 year olds: three, 7-minute playing periods and a change-over interval of two minutes between each period. The game will therefore last 25 minutes in total.

9+ year olds: three, 8-10 minute playing periods and a change-over interval of two minutes between each period. The game will therefore last 28-34 minutes in total.

Alternative match periods and intervals may be agreed upon by both teams.





# RULES & GUIDELINES

## OF GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

### STARTING AND RE-STARTING GO FIELD HOCKEY

To start a GO Field Hockey game, each team begins on their own half of the field. Once players are set with the center passer in position at the center of the field and the defending team is at least 3 yards away, the umpire will blow the whistle signaling the clock to start. After the whistle, the player taking the center pass can pass or dribble the ball in any direction. Players from both teams can move once the ball moves.

A center pass is also taken at the start of each period of the game, alternately by each team, and by the non-scoring team after a goal has been scored. The direction of play for teams is alternated at the start of each period of the game.

### SCORING A GOAL

A goal is scored when the ball has been struck or deflected off an attacker's stick. The ball must completely cross over the goal line between the goal posts and under the cross bar for a goal to be scored.

A penalty goal is awarded if a defending player deliberately stops a ball from crossing the goal line with their feet or body.

### FREE HIT

A free hit is given when a foul or penalty occurs. A free hit, sometimes called a self pass, must be taken from where the offense took place. A free hit can be a pass or dribble in any direction. Until the free hit is taken, all players from the defending team must be 3 yards away from the ball. After a free hit is awarded, the ball must be passed before either team can score.

#### A free hit is awarded when:

- The ball passes completely over a sideline. The free hit should be taken by a player of the team which did not touch the ball last, and it must be played along the ground in any direction (on the field), from the point where the ball went off the field (i.e. where it crossed the sideline).
- The ball passes completely over the end line and was last touched by an attacker. The free hit should be taken by the defending team, in line with where the ball went out, about 5 yards from the end line.
- The ball passes completely over the end line and was last touched by a defender. The free hit should be taken by the attacking team, in line with where the ball went out, about 5 yards from the end line.

### And where a player:

- Kicks\*, propels, picks up, throws or carries the ball

*(\*Note: It is not always an foul if the ball touches a player's foot. The whistle should only be blown if the incident breaks down play or creates a disadvantage. The umpires must be the judge.)*

- Intentionally uses any part of their body to play the ball
- Attempts to play at any high ball (over knee height) with the stick
- Uses the rounded (back) side of the stick
- While striking the ball, causes any actual or possible danger to themselves or other players
- "Obstructs" by running between the ball and an opponent who is close enough to hit it, thereby unfairly preventing the opponent from playing the ball. Players must not use any part of their body or stick to obstruct another player
- Holds, checks, kicks, pushes, intentionally trips or strikes any player or umpire
- Interferes with another player's stick or clothing
- Plays the ball dangerously or in a way which leads to dangerous play

Rough or dangerous play will not be allowed, nor will any behavior that, in the opinion of the umpires, amounts to misconduct.\*

*(\*Note: The Program Leader is responsible for the safety of the game. If a player persists in breaking the rules, a suspension can be given. For the duration of a temporary suspension, the offending team plays with one player less. The suspension should be seen as a learning opportunity and the Program Leader educates the players on the impact or potential impact of their conduct.)*

## RESULTS

The team scoring the most goals is the winner; if no goals are scored or if the teams score an equal number of goals, the match is a "draw" or tie.

## SCORING CHALLENGE

If a winner is deemed necessary, challenges can be taken. Note: challenges will increase the total duration of a game.

- Teams get three penalty runs each and take them alternately.
- One attacker starts with the ball from the center of the field and tries to score against one defender. The defender about 5 yards from the end line.
- The penalty run is over when a goal is scored or the ball goes outside the playing area (edges of the field and the half way line) or 10 seconds have lapsed. An alternative time duration can be used if desired to take into consideration the age and experience of the players and the playing surface.
- If a foul is committed, the attacker regains the ball at the position of the foul with a full 10 seconds and the 10 second clock is reset. If a foul is committed that stops the ball from going in the goal, a penalty goal is awarded.

If after the six challenges the score is still even, then sudden victory challenges will be held. One player from each team takes a challenge. This continues until a result is achieved, that is, until one team scores and the other doesn't.

## WIN, LOSE OR DRAW

Remember, research shows that winning is much less important for kids than it is for their parents. The Program Leader can determine the game format.



# LEADERSHIP ROLES

## OF GAME ON (GO) FIELD HOCKEY

Leadership supports players to become:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- And fulfilled individuals

Players develop these skills most effectively through learner-centered teaching – where the teacher/coach becomes a facilitator of learning rather than a director of activity. Enabling players to take on leadership roles, both within and outside of the practice session provides this child-centered environment.

**Schools and clubs that have implemented leadership find that:**

- Practice sessions begin more quickly
- Levels of attendance and participation increase
- Players are more motivated and motivate each other
- Behavior is improved
- Players take on more responsibility, in and out of practice sessions
- Progress and achievement improve

## LEADERSHIP ROLES

Multiple leadership opportunities exist in field hockey, and experiencing the many roles one can enjoy at a young age is a great way to create engagement.

### WARM-UP LEADER

Allow the players to take responsibility for warm-ups. Assign a different athlete to lead warm-ups each session, or allow each player to choose one short warm-up game each session. This will help players take a leadership role and understand the need and value of stretching and warming up prior to training. Reference the resource *Let's Play: Fun, Physical Literacy & Field Hockey* for some fun warm-up activities kids of all ages will enjoy.



## EQUIPMENT MANAGER

Even the youngest of players can assist with set-up, clean-up and equipment management. Assign players to pick up and count balls, making sure all are accounted for and put away properly. Consider rotating additional equipment set-up and clean-up among the players, such as organizing cones, pinnies, goals, etc. The purpose should be to leave the playing area as clean as you found it, and to keep the equipment in good shape while teaching responsibility, leadership and teamwork!

## TEAM MANAGER/COACH

Players who are not playing but are on the sidelines can assist with coaching and managing the team. They can cheer on their team and observe what is working well and what is not, communicating their thoughts constructively between periods. For example, they can point out great effort and maybe comment on something that the team did really well.

## UMPIRES

Umpiring can be both fun and challenging. It's a great way for players of all ages to learn the rules and develop respect and understanding for the position. Players learn quickly that umpiring is not as easy as it looks and that umpires deserve appreciation, respect and sometimes forgiveness. Too often, athletes, parents and coaches are disrespectful and loudly critical of umpires, unrealistically expecting perfection. Encourage players, coaches and umpires to do their best.





# UMPIRING TIPS

## OF GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

### STARTING AND RESTARTING GAME ON FIELD HOCKEY

Once you are ready and all the players are where they should be, blow your whistle to signal that play can start.

Remember that players on each team must be in their own half of the field, and the team without the ball must be at least 3 yards away from the ball.

The center passer can pass or dribble the ball in any direction.

### WHEN FOULS OCCUR

Blow your whistle and raise your arm in the direction that the team who has won the free hit is shooting to show that the free hit goes to them.

Remember that the free hit is taken from where the foul occurred. Until the free hit is taken, all players from the other team must be 3 yards away from the ball. The free hit taker can pass or dribble the ball in any direction.

These are the fouls that you should look out for:

- someone kicking the ball on purpose
- someone using the back of their stick (rounded side)
- someone lifting their stick up to play the ball in the air (above knee height)
- someone "checking" (touching another player's body or stick to stop them from getting the ball)
- someone playing dangerously

### FREE HIT (WHEN THE BALL GOES OFF THE FIELD)

A free hit is also awarded when the ball travels off the field, either over the sideline or end line.

Notice who last touched the ball before it went out of play and give the free hit to the other team. Raise your arm in the direction that the team who has won the free hit is shooting to show that the free hit goes to them.

- If the ball travels over the sideline - the free hit is taken from where the ball crossed the sideline.
- If the ball unintentionally travels over the end line off the defending team - the free hit is taken by the attacking team, in line with where the ball went off the end line, about 5 yards into the field.
- If the ball unintentionally travels over the end line off the attacking team - the free hit is taken by the defending team, in line with where the ball went off the end line, about 5 yards into the field..

Remember that when the free hit is taken, all players from the other team must be 3 yards away from the ball.

## SCORING A GOAL

Blow your whistle to signal that a goal has been scored. With both arms, point toward the center of the field.

A goal is scored when a shot is taken by an attacker and the ball crosses completely over the goal line.

Following the goal, each team goes back to their own half of the field, ready for the center pass.

## QUICK TIPS:

- Relax.
- Take your time to make decisions. Don't feel pressured by the players, spectators or coaches.
- Have fun!

