

## Checking Progression

A common misconception is that the skill of checking begins at a certain age or age category of play. In fact, checking is a 4-Step Progression that begins the first time a young player steps on the ice. Each step builds upon the previous step and brings the hockey player that much closer to being able to give and receive body checks competently and confidently.

### Step 1: Angling

Angling can be considered the first line of defense for a player. Body and stick positions are important in checking without making contact. Angling is the ability to force your opponent to go in the direction that you want. This normally would be towards the boards or to the outside of the player.

### Step 2: Stick Checks

Stick checking may be considered the second line of defense as angling forces the opposition to a position where contact can be made with the stick.

When a player stick-checks, he/she must maintain control of both their stick and the opponent's stick. Stick checks are effective to:

- delay the advancement of the opposition
- force a loss of puck control by the opposition
- control the puck yourself or gain possession for one of your teammates

### Step 3: Body Contact - Contact Confidence

Defensive play begins the instant the opposing team possession of the puck. Checking is used to regain possession of the puck. To review the steps in the progression – skating, positioning and angling are used to direct the puck carrier. This is accomplished by using the stick as an active line of defense in attempting to further control the opponent. Body contact is the third step in the progression and is used to gain separation, when a player positions his/her body between the puck and the puck carrier.

### Step 4:

Body checking is the final step in the 4 step checking progression. A body check can be defined as body contact primarily caused by the movement of the checker. That movement can be and often is, in a direction different than that of the puck carrier. The checker uses their body for the purpose of stopping the attacking progress of the puck carrier and/or to separate the carrier from the puck.

The skills needed for body checking are the effective mastery of the first three steps in the checking progression. First of all the checker must be a strong skater with particularly good balance on their skates.

