



The Toe Flick

One of my principles of hockey skating involves what I call the "one third, one third, one third" principle. This means that the hockey blade is divided into three equal parts - the back third, the middle third, and the front third.

When skating forward the beginning of the push comes from back third of the blade (the heel). The second third of the push comes from the middle third of the blade, and the final third of the push comes from the front third of the blade (the toe). Hockey players call this final push the "toe flick" or the "kick". When used properly, it is extremely powerful; it is actually responsible for one third of the power of the push. When used improperly, or not used at all, it follows that the player loses one third of the push.

The toe flick is always used when pushing with the inside edge. Examples of this are the push of the forward stride and the first push of forward crossovers. But it is also used when pushing with the outside edge, for example, the second push of forward crossovers. I call this push the "X" push (also called the scissor or crossunder push).

The toe flick is a push out to the back and side, but Not straight back.

Pushing straight back causes a slip rather than a push. Skaters who push straight back are toe diggers, not toe flickers. Pushing straight back is one of the most common errors in hockey skating and results from using a walking/running motion (back and forth) rather than using a skating motion (out/in). Almost all novice skaters use a walking/running motion, because it is an inborn and natural motion. Players must be taught how to properly use the skating motion, because it is **Not** natural.

Learning how to use the toe flick properly is also the first step in learning how to execute explosive toe starts. Toe starts involve the same use of the inside edge toe as that used in the toe flick of the forward stride. However, when starting out from a complete stop, players use only the toes (front thirds of the blades); the middle and back thirds of the blade are not used at all. Toe starts are difficult to learn and a challenge to perfect but I emphasize that the techniques are based upon the techniques of the stride. Master the forward stride and you'll have a much better chance of mastering explosive starts.

