



Transitional Moves

Hockey players weave, cut turn, and change direction at blinding speeds. Transition in hockey means sudden changes in play from one direction to another. When the attacker(s) change direction, the opposing defender(s) must be able to follow the directional changes while staying ahead of the play and ahead of the attacker(s). Technically, transitional moves can include stopping and starting, but I prefer to consider transition as moves done without stopping. It is usually preferable to change direction without stopping in order to maintain momentum.

Transitional moves include changing direction while skating from forward to forward, from forward to backward, from backward to forward, or from backward to backward.

Transitional moves might require more agility, balance, speed, and edge control than any other hockey moves. When making transitional moves players must be able to bring the puck along with them - in other words, the timing of the puck movement (and use of the hands and arms) must coordinate with the movement of the legs, arms, and body weight.

Several technical components must be combined and coordinated to execute quick transitions: Strong knee bend, edge control, perfect balance, powerful pushes, proper use of the arms, transfer of body weight, and rapid leg speed. Awareness, anticipation, creativity, and mental and physical toughness are also imperative. These skills CAN be improved upon with good teaching and many years of perfect practice.

Watch the dazzling agility and speed of Alexander Ovechkin as he maneuvers and fakes with the puck; he weaves, cuts, and changes direction with seemingly effortless speed and total control. His moves baffle defenders, often leaving them "in the dust".

Following are some types of transitional moves that are used in hockey. They are described only briefly, so for more detailed information on each of the transitional moves described and explanations on how to execute these moves, read the chapter on Turns and Transition in my book, **Laura Stamm's Power Skating, Third Edition**

Skating forward to skating forward: An excellent example of a forward-to-forward transitional move is the pivot or tight turn. Skating forward to skating backward: Skate forward, turn backward (without stopping), and accelerate backward in the opposite direction. Skating forward to skating backward: Windmill drill. This is a four-step move where each step requires a change of feet. It is a combination of skating forward on an outside edge, turning backward and landing on a backward outside edge (of the other skate), crossing over onto a backward inside edge, and then turning forward again onto a forward inside edge. Skating backward to skating backward: Backward pivot. Skating backward to skating forward: Skate backward and turn forward. Push with the inside edge; keep the skates and legs in the V-diamond position at the beginning of each backward-to-forward push. The above backward to forward moves can be performed with the skater exiting from the turns on different angles. For example: 270 degree angle turn. This is done when changing from skating straight backward in one direction to skating straight forward in the opposite direction. 45 degree angle turn. This is done when a defenseman changes from skating backward in one direction to skating forward on an angle 45



degrees from the original angle - for example, out to the boards - in order to cut off an attacking forward.

Several other transitional moves are done from one skate to the other - from an edge on one skate to the same or different edge on the other skate. Some of these transitional moves are used only infrequently, but all are possible. For example: Turning from a forward outside edge to a backward outside edge; Turning from a forward outside edge to a backward inside edge; Turning from a forward inside edge to a backward outside edge; Turning from a forward inside edge to a backward inside edge; Turning from a backward outside edge to a forward outside edge; Turning from a backward outside edge to a forward inside edge; Turning from a backward inside edge to a forward outside edge; Turning from a backward inside edge to a forward inside edge.

Watch Ovechkin in action and you'll agree that Great Skating and Great Stick Handling make an awesome combination.

By Laura Stamm © March 2006