



When to Start on Your Toes

Many of you know that we are supposed to start on our toes. But do you know why? And do you know when to start on your toes?

First of all, by the "toes", what we really mean are the inside edges of the balls of the feet. We can't use our toes on skates in the same way as we do on shoes, because we would slip, and to skate we must grip, or dig into, the ice. The only way an edge can grip the ice is for it to be placed at an angle sideways to the direction of travel; thus the famous "V" position of the skates.

We start on our toes in order to get going as quickly and explosively as possible. With your feet in a duck-like position, try to jump the first two or three steps on your toes, actually running on your skates. Maintain a low body angle, and jump out for distance, not up for height! The player with the quickest starts definitely has the advantage when racing an opponent for the puck!

When should you use toe starts?

I call toe starts the "escape valve". Anytime you need to get away, start on your toes! For example, from a faceoff, or when changing gears from slow to fast, or when racing for the puck, or when trying for a breakaway, or in any situation when an instant getaway is crucial, get up on your toes and GO!

It takes years of training and practice to master this skill. Players often use them sporadically, forgetting to use them during hockey practices. In order to make toe starts an instinctive response, you must practice them at every opportunity and during every practice. When your coach blows the whistle for you to get going, remember to **Start like the Pros - Getting stuck in the mud is not for you!**

by Laura Stamm © November, 2000