

# Russo's Golden Rules of Forwards

*Do you know the 16 Golden Rulers for Forwards ?*

## Golden Rules of Forwards

Reprinted from Lets Play Hockey  
John Russo

1. **Know what your job is** in all 3 zones and do it each time. **Don't try to do teammates jobs** or you will fail at your own. Ask questions in practice if you are unsure about any situations during play or face-offs. Intelligent hockey is what wins games.
2. **Backcheck at full speed until you have someone covered when coming back to your zone.** Backchecking at full speed is simply the complement of attacking at full speed. Don't be a one-direction player.
3. **When backchecking, pick up the most open man without the puck.** If the puck is in your area, it may well be appropriate to go after the puck carrier. However, the player without the puck is often most dangerous. Often it is most effective to let the defenseman take the puck carrier and to take away the pass by covering the open forward.
4. Put out a full and honest effort on each shift then get off the ice. **Maximum effort, short shifts have proven to be most desirable at all levels of hockey.**
5. **Push the puck into the offensive zone or get a whistle when you or anyone on your line is tired.** A tired line is most vulnerable - it is seldom productive to play tired. It's always desirable to take a whistle in the defensive zone than to defend it without legs.
6. **Always attack with the puck.** Do not make it easy for the other team to catch you from behind. A pressured attack is much harder for a defenseman to cover and results in more 2 on 1 and 3 on 2 situations.
7. **Move the puck up ice with passes to linemates ahead that are open,** then move quickly to join the rush. Don't force passes to covered linemates ahead. **Skating the puck up the ice is the slowest alternative.**
8. **Get into the habit of shooting when in the slot area** unless an obvious open pass is available. It is seldom productive to stickhandle further once in the slot unless to gain a better angle on the goaltender or to let linemates move in for rebounding. Extra passes look good but often take away good scoring chances. The key offensive strategy of hockey is to get shots from the slot. When they are available, they should be taken.
9. **Always use a wrist or snap shot when shooting from the slot.** Quickness and accuracy score from the slot, slap shots do not provide either.
10. Move away from the net when a teammate has the puck behind the opposition goal line or wide and deep on the boards, and move toward the net when your defense or high forward has the puck in a shooting position. It is easier to remember "**move out when the puck is inside and move in when the puck is outside.**" The tendency is to move up close to the net when a teammate has the puck in the corner or behind the net. However, up close is where most of the congestion and close coverage is. A high slot position will result in more opportunities for clear shots. **When a defenseman is in shooting position, on the other hand, moving to the net creates the best screening of the goaltender and also puts players around the net for rebounds.** There are some details to be worked out by individual coaches, but the basic concept is important.
11. Take specific care not to go offside when attacking in an advantage situation (2 on 1) or 3 on 2). While it is seldom good to be offside, it is critical to complete 2 on1 or 3 on 2 situations as many times possible in each game. It is best to be conservative going over the blue line in these situations.
12. **When throwing the puck into the zone, shoot it to the opposite corner or off the end boards where it will come out at a difficult angle for both the goaltender and defenseman to**

**handle.** Shooting the puck at the goaltender or around the boards gives control to the opposing goaltender - who can easily feed a defenseman or wing.

13. Don't tie up with an opposing player when your team is short handed. The odds of scoring get better as fewer players are involved in a power play situation, ie 4 on 3 is better than 5 on 4.

14. **Don't retaliate from checks or infractions, whether legal or not.** Part of the forwards job is to take checks and keep playing. Retaliation often results in a penalty and referees often miss the opposing players infraction.

15. **Communicate with your linemates** and other teammates. It is one of the most important parts of teamwork. Don't ever communicate with opposing players - it seldom is of value and exposes your emotions.

16. **Constantly practice your weakest skills.** Get away from the habit of just shooting when you have free time in practice. other skills are more important.