



Mohawk Turns - Heel to Heel Pivots

Transition skating is so important in today's fast pace hockey. The ability to smoothly change direction from forward to backwards and backwards to forward with ease is critical especially for a defenseman.

One of the best ways to change direction in a game is the Mohawk turn or heel to heel pivot. Mohawk turns provide the ability to change direction while maintaining speed in a game. They are critical to a player's overall maneuverability. Otherwise, a player can look like a pylon!

Like all skating skills, Mohawk turns utilize the edges of the blades. Edges are the foundation for skating balance and stability. When teaching this skating skill - good balance and a correct weight transfer are the key ingredients.

In order to execute a turn, a player's upper body and the hips must rotate to face the direction the player is going before the player changes skates. Shoulders are level, the back is straight, and the head is up.

The best way to teach this skating skill is to have a player go around the faceoff circle. Starting clockwise first and going forward have the player turn their head, and shoulders into the circle. Initially the player is going forward on both skates, the player turns their head and shoulders to the right – facing the faceoff dot, opens up the hip and lifts their right skate, weight transfers from both skates to only the left (outside) skate and the player goes heel to heel with their skates, pivots backwards and places both skates on the ice. When going backwards the player will turn their head and shoulders to the left into the faceoff dot and transfer weight from both skates to only the right (inside) skate – go heel to heel and transfer weight to both skates. Have the player go forward to backwards, backwards to forward, forward to backwards and backwards to forward on the circle – i.e. 4 Mohawk turns / pivots are accomplished each time going around the circle.

Now counterclockwise and going forward - have the player turn their head, shoulders into the circle. Initially the player is going forward on both skates, the player turns their head and shoulders to the left – facing the faceoff dot, opens up the hip and lifts the left skate, weight transfers from both

skates to only the right (outside) skate and the player goes heel to heel with their skates, pivots backwards and places both skates on the ice. When going backwards the player will turn their head and shoulders to the right into the faceoff dot and transfer their weight from both skates to only the left (inside) skate – go heel to heel and transfer weight to both skates. Have the player go forward to backwards, backwards to forward, forward to backwards and backwards to forward on the circle

Now, work on good technique which includes good balance, weight transfer and heel to heel pivots. Later work on foot speed.

Try the following progressions.

- 1: Correct technique - slowly without a puck
- 2: Correct technique - slowly with a puck
- 3: Correct technique - quick feet without a puck
- 4: Correct technique - quick feet with a puck

As the player refines their technique and gains confidence, the player can begin to go faster around the circle – two revolutions will allow 8 pivots. Players will have a strong and weaker side. Pay special attention to the weaker side to instill balanced skating.

When a player masters this drill, they will be able to execute good agility and mobility skating and will be able to handle transition skating with ease in a fast paced game. A prime example in today's game is Calgary Flames outstanding skater Jay Bouwmeester. Being a power skating instructor, I will enjoy and admire the opportunity to watch Jay pivot and showcase his world class skating skills this season! For the next Flames game take a closer look at the way Bouwmeester skates!

**Never discourage anyone...
who continually makes
progress, no matter how slow.
~Plato**