

History

Perhaps the first sport in North America, "baggataway" was played by Native Americans as far back as the 1400s, often with thousands of people participating and goals spread miles apart. French colonists referred to the stick used to play as a "crosse" — French for a "bishop's staff" — and lacrosse was created. A Canadian dentist, W. George Beers, established the rules in 1867 that formed modern lacrosse. Traditionally an East Coast sport, lacrosse has experienced recent growth at the high school and college levels, and the game has expanded across the country.



Object of the Game

Teams accumulate points by throwing the ball into the opponent's goal. The team with the most goals wins the game.

The Essentials for Boys Lacrosse

Game Length	Defense	Field of Play	
Start of game	Scoring	Positions	
Offense	Equipment	Penalties	Glossary

Game Length

A high school game is divided into 4 quarters of 12 minutes (other levels vary: 8- to 15-minute quarters). There are 2-minute breaks between each period with a 10-minute intermission after the second period. Teams switch playing sides after each period and have two time-outs per half. If there is a tie after four periods, the first team to score in overtime wins.

Start of the game

The action begins at the start of each period and after each goal with a **face-off** at the center of the field. The team that takes possession of the ball during the face-off is on offense.

Offense:

Lacrosse is played at a quick pace mixing various aspects of hockey, football, and soccer. With the exception of the goalies, players can only touch the ball with the crosse, or stick.

- Teams advance the ball toward the opponent's goal by running and **cradling** it or passing it to a teammate.
- If given the opportunity, the offense attempts to score during the **fast break**, before the defense can set up.
- During the set offense, when players are near the opponent's goal, proper spacing between players and balance in formation allow teams to execute plays that are designed to exploit defensive weaknesses.
- A player with the ball may attempt to **drive** during an **isolation** play, or **feed** the ball to an open player.
- Players without the ball are constantly **cutting** and setting **picks** to become open and create scoring opportunities.

Defense:

The defense attempts to stop the other team from scoring by deflecting or intercepting passes, taking the ball from the opponent, or forcing bad shots.

- **Man-to-man defense** is the basic strategy, but a
- **zone defense** can be used for more advanced teams and is often used in a **man-down** situation.
- Physical contact is frequent in lacrosse, and most contact occurs within five yards of the ball.
- **Stick checking** and **body checking** are the most common tactics used to take the ball away from the offense.
- Once the defense takes possession of the ball, it tries to **clear** the ball to the midfielders who then transition the ball to offense.

Scoring

One point is awarded every time the ball enters the goal.

Equipment

Sticks

- The crosse, or stick, ranges from 40 to 72 inches in length
- offensive players opting for shorter sticks
- defensive players opting for longer sticks.
- Goalies use a larger stick and pocket.
- Both offensive and defensive sticks have an aluminum or titanium shaft that connects to the head of the stick.
- A plastic head at the top of the stick has strings or mesh that form a pocket to aid in catching and throwing the ball.

Ball

The ball is solid rubber and is about the size of a baseball.

Uniforms

- Players wear shorts or sweatpants, short-sleeved jerseys, and shoes with cleats.
- To prevent injuries, players wear large padded gloves, arm pads, shoulder pads, mouthpieces, and a protective helmet with a chin pad and strap attached to a face mask.
- Goalies must use throat and chest protectors and can also wear shin guards and football pants, with or without pads.

Penalties

Any violation of the rules results in a penalty. A player called for a foul is sent to the penalty box and his team must play without that player, or **man down**, until the penalty is over or the opposition scores. If the defensive team commits a penalty when the opposing team has the ball, play is allowed to continue until the opponent loses possession of the ball, at which time the penalty is enforced. This delayed penalty is called a **slow whistle** and allows the offense to maintain its advantage. Players can be ejected from the game for fighting, playing too violently, or arguing with an official.

Personal fouls or major violations

- **slashing**, **tripping**, cross checking, **unnecessary roughness**, and **unsportsmanlike conduct**
- length of the penalty, which ranges from one to three minutes.

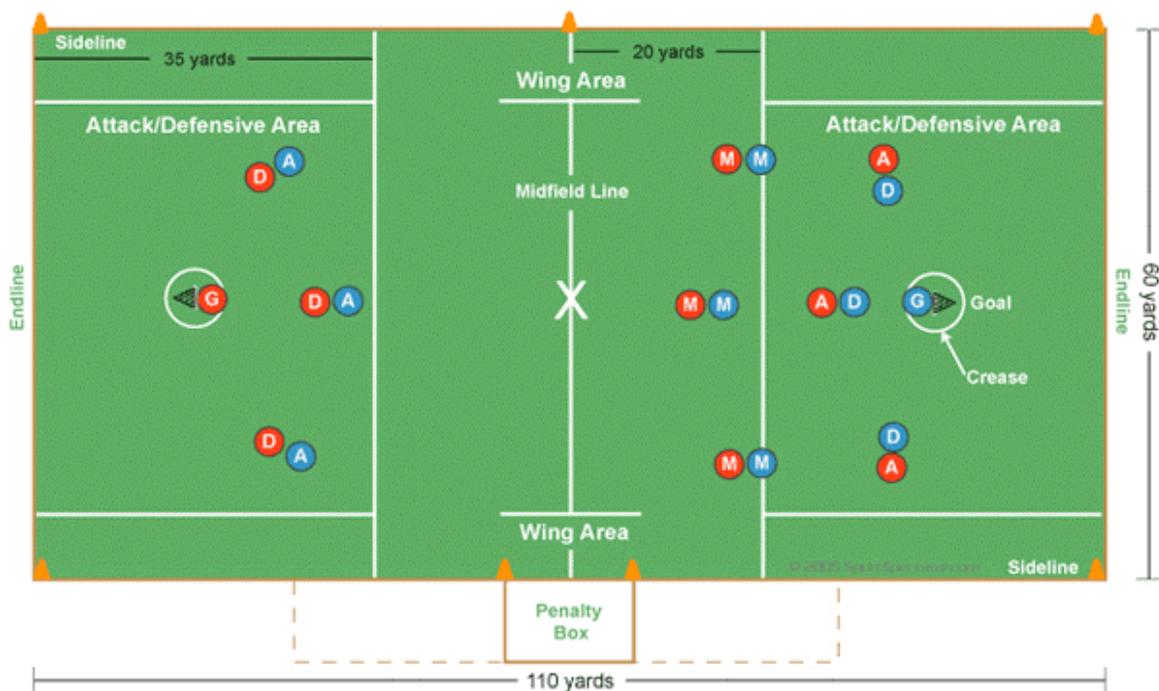
Technical fouls are minor infractions

- crease violation, **offsides**, **interference**, holding, illegal **screens**, illegal procedure, **stalling**, and **warding off**.
A player is ejected from the remainder of the game if he commits five fouls.
- 30-second penalty

Penalty Definitions

- **Illegal body check**: A late hit, or contact from behind, above the shoulders, or below the waist.
- **Pushing**: Illegal shoving of an opponent from behind.
- **Slashing**: Illegal **stick check** to the body of a player that results in a personal foul.
- **Tripping**: Impeding an opponent at or below the waist and causing him to fall.
- **Unnecessary roughness**: Excessively violent and usually calculated contact to the opposition.
- **Unsportsmanlike conduct**: Physical or verbal actions considered to be abusive, obscene, or threatening by a game official.

Field of Play



Lacrosse is played on a large rectangular grass field. The field has markings with specific functions:

- **Midfield line:** Divides the field into equal halves. The X centered on this line is where face-offs take place. Also, the proper number of players on each team must remain on each half of the field to avoid being called for [offsides](#).
- **Sidelines and endlines:** Mark the boundaries. When a ball or player goes out of bounds, the opposing team takes possession. Following a shot, the player closest to spot where the ball went out of bounds has possession. Therefore, a teammate should always be in a position to back up a shot.
- **Goal:** Points are scored when the ball passes through this six-foot by six-foot square.
- **Crease:** Circle surrounding the goal that the offense cannot enter. Players can reach into the crease with their stick to gain possession of a loose ball, but cannot touch the goalie. Crease violations result in a penalty.
- **Attack area/defense clearing area:** The offense has 10 seconds to move into this area after crossing the midfield line. Once the defense has possession of the ball, it has 10 seconds to advance out of this area. Also, attackers and defenders must remain in these areas during the face-off.
- **Penalty box:** Used as a holding area for players to wait out their penalties. It is also the access area for substitute players entering and exiting the field for [on-the-fly](#) substitutions.
- **Wing area:** Two of the three midfielders must remain in the wing area until the face-off starts.
- Positions

Positions

Two teams compete with 10 players on the field. Players fall into four categories:

- **A Attack:** Offensive-minded players who possess great stick skills that allow them to shoot with precision and [fake](#). They use speed and agility to elude defenders. Attackers also endure punishing hits from opponents.
- **M Midfield:** Always on the move, these players advance the ball up the field and play both offense and defense. Help defenders and tally assists by taking the ball from defensive area to attackers. They are fast, durable, and stick savvy. Also called “middies.”
- **D Defense:** Defenders use size, speed, strength, and skill to keep attackers from scoring. An aggressive mindset is beneficial, but playing under control and selecting the proper angle to prevent close range shots are more critical skills.
- **G Goalie:** Uses lightning-fast reflexes, quick decisions, and courage to stop a barrage of high-velocity shots. Body must handle punishment from the ball, and mind has to quickly recover from mistakes. The goalie directs the defense by calling for checks and relaying locations of the ball and attackers.

Glossary

- **Body check:** Contact from the front that is permitted between the shoulders and waist when an opponent has possession or is within five yards of a **loose ball**.
- **Clearing:** Transferring the ball from the defensive half of the field across the midfield line.
- **Cradle:** Running with the stick in either one or both hands in a manner that keeps the ball in the pocket.
- **Cutting:** When an attacker runs toward the goal to receive a pass and take a clear shot.
- **Face-off:** A player from each team stands face-to-face with their sticks on the ground along the centerline. The official places the ball between the two stick heads and blows the whistle. The two players then attempt to gain control of the ball using their sticks. Typical face-off moves include the **clamp** and **rake**. If a penalty is called before or during a face-off, possession goes to the opposing team.
- **Fake:** To make a throwing motion with the stick just before shooting it to deceive the goalie.
- **Fast break:** When the offense exploits an unsettled defense with a quick transition downfield. Many goals are scored this way.
- **Feed:** Passing the ball to a player to create a scoring opportunity.
- **Ground ball:** A **loose ball** that is on the ground. Players **scoop** the ball with the stick to pick it up.
- **Interference:** Limiting the free movement of an opponent who does not have possession of the ball and is not within five yards of a **loose ball**.
- **Isolation:** Offensive players clear out of the way to allow an opening for a teammate to drive towards the goal with the ball.
- **Loose ball:** Ball not controlled by a player (e.g. on the ground or in the air).
- **Man-down:** When the defense is at a disadvantage due to a penalty. Also called penalty kill.
- **Man-to-man defense:** Each player guards one specific player. Each defenseman matches up with an attacker, and each midfielder matches up with an opposing midfielder.
- **Man-up:** When the offense has an advantage following a penalty. Also called a power play.
- **Offsides:** Violation called when a team has fewer than four players on its defensive side of the field, or fewer than three players on its attacking side.
- **Pick:** Attackers or middies stand in a position to block the path of a teammate's defender to create space for the teammate to receive a pass.
- **Rake:** Face-off move in which a player sweeps the ball to the side for a teammate to pick up.
- **Riding:** Attempting to prevent a team from clearing the ball.
- **Scoop:** Picking up a ground ball in the crosse pocket.
- **Screen:** Offensive player stands outside the crease in front of the goalie to block the goalie's view.
- **Slow whistle:** Permitting play to continue during a penalty until the offense loses possession of the ball to allow an offense to maintain its advantage.
- **Stalling:** Intentionally holding the ball without advancing toward the goal.
- **Stick check:** Defenders attempt to dislodge the ball from an opponent's stick by executing a poke check or a slap check.
- **Warding off:** While in possession of the ball, using a free hand to control an opponent's stick or body.
- **Zone defense:** Strategy in which players defend a specific part of the field, close to the goal, instead of guarding a single opponent.