

HOCKEY CANADA

Officiating Systems for Referee and Linespersons



Lead, develop and promote positive hockey experiences

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Version 4.0

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1. POSITIONING – KEYS TO SUCCESS

The referee in any game must have a complete knowledge of the playing rules, be a good skater, be in good physical condition and display good judgment. The final quality required is good positioning.

1.1 End-zone Positioning

The fundamentals of end-zone positioning involve moving within the end zone to get the best possible sight lines on players and the puck.

Benefits of this system for the referee:

- ❑ A better overall view of the play.
- ❑ Improved view of the goal and goal line.
- ❑ Less chance of being caught behind the play on a fast break, thereby reducing unnecessary hard skating.
- ❑ Safer positioning from deflections of shots on goal.
- ❑ Players are more aware of the presence of the referee, which acts as a deterrent to any unnecessary activity.
- ❑ When using the "cone area", allowing the referee to move below the goal line, the official may have better sight lines; keep the play and players in front of them and be in a better position to avoid being involved in the play.

The preferred end zone positioning for the referee or end-zone official in the two-official system is anywhere in the cone (shaded area) in the illustration below.

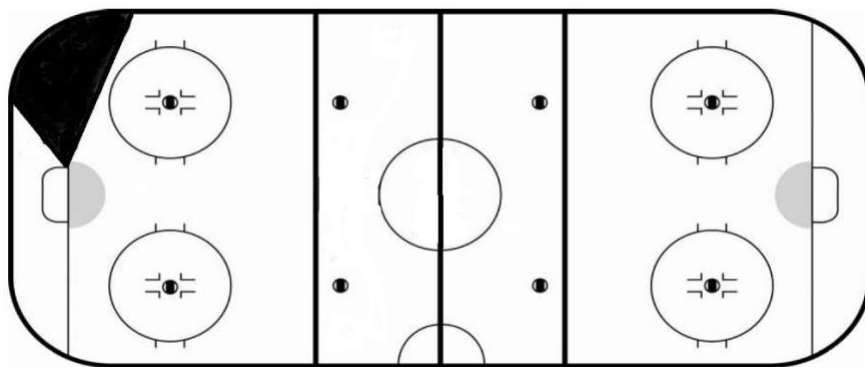


Figure 1. The "cone" for officials to utilize in their end-zone positioning.

The goal of end zone positioning is to allow the official the freedom of movement within the cone area to establish and allow for the best possible sight lines for the play.

At the Net is the position anywhere around the net that gives the referee the best view to see if the puck has crossed the line, but ideally, at the corner of the net, above the goal line. This gives the referee the best possible position to view the activity on and around the goal line and goal crease area.

The Cone area allows the official to position themselves below the goal line to gain the best sight lines as well as take up a position to avoid being caught in the play.

Officials use the following movement techniques to avoid play.

- ❑ Bump
- ❑ Pivot
- ❑ Reverse Pivot (Four-official System only)

The Bump is used when the play comes towards the official, they can move along the boards to avoid being in the way.

The Pivot consists of taking a stride out, away from the boards, crossing under, and skating backwards, back to the boards. This would happen after the play has passed behind the referee. At this point, the referee can follow the play either up the ice, or watch as play continues in the end zone.

When play is in progress and as it enters the end zone, the referee will also enter towards the end zone. The referee will move around within the cone to get the best possible sight line and stay out of the way of the puck and players. If the puck goes to the net area, the referee will also move into the At the Net position, ready and in an excellent position to make the appropriate call.

Referees may take up a position behind the goal line if this position provides the best sight lines to observe the play and players in the zone.

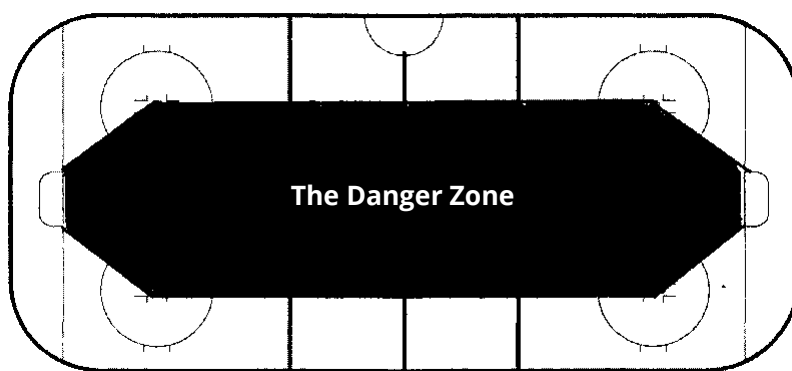


Figure 2. The "danger zone" for officials. Officials want to avoid this area at all costs.

The shaded area is called the danger zone. A good official never enters this area as they will become involved in the play and be a factor in its eventual outcome and risk putting themselves in danger of being injured. End-zone positioning for a referee in the three-official system is the same as in the two-official system. Once the official enters the end zone, the use of the cone and the two maneuvers (Bump, Pivot) are the same.

The ability to anticipate the play is very important to an official. This will allow the official to easily keep up with fast breaks and to quickly move within the cone, out of the way of the play. Relax, anticipate the play and move only when the play warrants it, this will help you to be in a better position and also enjoy the game more.

2. TWO OFFICIAL SYSTEM

Reminders to follow in this system:

- ❑ **Penalty Procedures:** Penalties can be assessed by either official, anywhere on the ice, where there is an infraction. The same penalty procedure should be followed as described in Section 1 of the Hockey Canada Officiating Procedures resource.
- ❑ **End Zone Positioning:** The official in the end zone must follow positioning as described, using the cone.
- ❑ **Line Change Procedure:** It is the official not dropping the puck that performs the line change procedure. The details of this procedure can be found in Section 2 of the Hockey Canada Officiating Procedures resource.
- ❑ **General Guidelines**
 - Each official covers two thirds of the total ice surface. This coverage overlaps in the neutral zone.
 - Officials should always be at, or just inside, their blue line prior to the puck and players. It is not possible to accurately call offsides from 3-6 metres (10-20 feet) away.
 - When the puck is in your partner's end zone making you the back official, watch for fouls in front of the net. If your partner is watching the play in the corner or along the boards, they may not be able to watch in front of the net as well.
- ❑ **Positioning for a centre-ice face-off at the start of periods and after a goal is scored.**

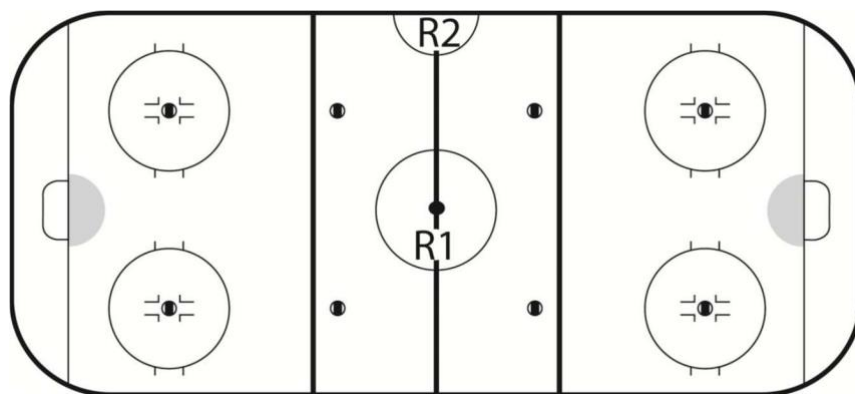


Figure 3. Positioning for a centre-ice face-off in a two-official system.

- To start the game, or any face-off at centre ice, the two officials should be positioned along the centre red line facing each other.
- The official taking the face-off should be facing the penalty bench so that the timekeeper can start the clock when the puck is dropped.
- When the puck is dropped, the official not dropping the puck must go in the direction of the puck, either to the left or right. This will allow the official to be at the blue line as the puck crosses.

- Note that the official dropping the puck has skated backwards to the boards after dropping the puck.

2.1 Pursuit of the Play

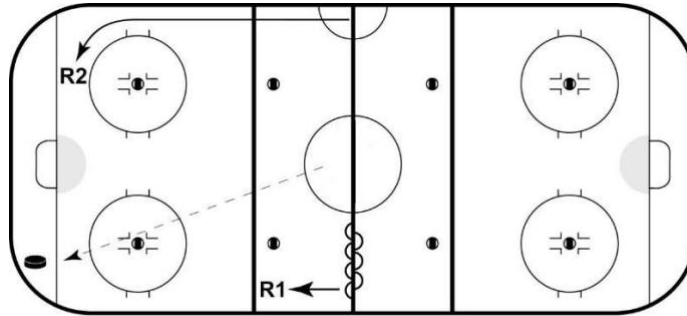


Figure 4. Pursuit of play in a two-official system, following a centre-ice face-off

- ❑ As the puck moves into the end zone, the front official (R2) must follow the play and begin to implement their end zone positioning.
- ❑ The back official (R1) will move up the boards and take a position one stride outside the blue line, at an appropriate angle to face the play.
- ❑ The back official can watch the following:
 - The play in the entire end zone.
 - For an off-side at the blue line.
 - The play that is away from the puck.
- ❑ At no time should both officials be on the same side of the ice.
- ❑ The front official should follow proper end zone positioning.
- ❑ When the puck is in the neutral zone, close to the centre red line, both officials should be within one metre of their respective blue lines, which places them in position to call offsides.
- ❑ If the play continues towards the front official's blue line, they need to be in position to call any potential offside, and then move in deep with the play.
- ❑ To summarize the movements of the two officials while play is in progress, they are in a diagonal position relative to one another, no further than one line apart. In this way, they are in position to call offside plays, etc., regardless of where it may occur on the ice surface.

2.2 Positioning for Face-Offs

- ❑ All face-offs shall be conducted at the designated face-off spots as indicated by the reason for the stoppage of play.

- ❑ When a face-off is at one of the four spots in the neutral zone, the official taking the face-off should skate backwards to the boards, and then move immediately to cover the near blue line. The back official is positioned outside the blue line.
- ❑ For face-offs in the end zone, the back official takes up position at the blue line.
- ❑ If the play begins to move out of the end zone, the front official must move quickly up the side boards to call plays at the blue line as the puck enters the neutral zone. The back official must hold the blue line until their partner is in the proper position to call offside in case the play moves back into the end zone.

2.3 When a Goal Is Scored

- ❑ When a goal is scored, the front official will signal the goal, report it to the timekeeper, and then conduct the line change procedure.
- ❑ The other official will retrieve the puck and go to centre ice for the ensuing face-off. Positioning and procedures are now the same as for the start of the game.

2.4 When a Penalty Is Assessed

- ❑ When a penalty is assessed, the official will assess the penalty and report it to the scorekeeper. The other official will escort the penalized player to the penalty box and then conduct the line change procedure. The official calling the penalty will then retrieve the puck and conduct the ensuing face-off.
- ❑ If the official assessing the penalty is the back official, the same procedure will follow but the front official will retrieve their own puck and drop it. In this situation, the officials do not change ends.

2.5 General Tips for Success

- ❑ A common error is when the official responsible for the attacking zone does not leave the zone quickly in pursuit of the play. A quick turnover in the neutral zone could result in a close offside call at this official's blue line and the official must be in position to make the call.
- ❑ When there is a stoppage of play at the net, to reduce conflict between players, the official in the attacking zone should move to the net position immediately, but keep all players in full view. Your presence and verbal communication will act as a deterrent to altercations after the whistle.
- ❑ How does the official in the end zone know when to move within the cone, as the play moves towards them? If the puck carrier is an attacking player, you can hold your position a little longer as they will normally go to the net, and you can follow. If the puck carrier is a defending player, retreat to the boards immediately, as the play generally goes up the side of the ice.

3. THREE OFFICIAL SYSTEM

Reminders to follow in each system:

- ❑ Penalty Procedures should be followed as described in Section 1 of the Hockey Canada Officiating Procedures resource.
- ❑ End zone positioning: The official in the end zone must follow positioning as described, using the cone.
- ❑ Line Change Procedure: It is the referee that performs the line change procedure. The details of this procedure can be found in Section 2 of the Hockey Canada Officiating Procedures resource.

3.1 Referee

- ❑ In the three-official system, the referee is the person in charge and has the final decision in all situations. It is important that the referee give the linespersons support and backing, as needed.

Positioning

- ❑ Proper positioning enables the referee to carry out their duties while not interfering with the linespersons, the flow of the play, or the players.
- ❑ Proper positioning allows the referee to call penalties and goals.
- ❑ In situations where the linesperson is blocked out and cannot see a call, the referee can make the correct call.

Pursuit of the Play

- ❑ After conducting the centre ice face-off, it is imperative that the referee get back towards the boards as quickly as possible to avoid having players behind them. If possible, it is best if the referee skate backwards away from the centre ice face-off dot, but if the situation allows, turning and skating forwards into position is acceptable.
- ❑ As the play moves towards the end zone, the referee should follow 8-10 feet (2.5-3 metres) behind the play if the puck is on the opposite side of the ice. If the puck is on the same side of the ice, the referee should follow the play from a distance of 15-25 feet (4.5-6 metres). This will allow the referee a good view and sight line of all players. Also, if the puck changes direction, the referee will be able to avoid the play or the players. At all times the referee must remember to stay out of the “danger zone”. When play is in the end zone, the referee will utilize the end zone positioning as described in Section 1.1 of this document.

General Tips for Success

- ❑ It is beneficial for a referee to move out of the end zone in pursuit of the play as quickly as possible. You must follow the play up ice even if some players straggle behind. By glancing back (shoulder checks) and communicating with your linesperson, you can keep on top of any potential problems.
- ❑ To reduce your stops and starts, and remain in proper position, use the “turn and follow” method utilizing tight turns while keeping a sight line on the play (avoid turning so back is to the play). It is important to remain skating, going goal line to goal line using a figure-eight pattern. The play transition will dictate how deep the official needs to go before using the turn and follow method thus keeping their momentum.
- ❑ Many altercations occur near the net. Once play is stopped, the referee should move to a position not more than 10 feet (3 metres) from the net. This will allow you to keep both players and benches in view. Also, at this time, your presence and verbal communication will help to deter any further altercations.

3.2 Linespersons

- ❑ All face-offs are conducted by the linesperson for that half of the ice (the linesperson who is conducting the face-off should retrieve the puck). However, the priority of both linespersons is to watch the players on the ice. If two players are talking or challenging each other, the linespersons should intervene to prevent anything serious from occurring.

Pursuit of the Play

- ❑ Linespersons should always be in position to call the play at the blue line.
- ❑ They should always be at their blue line as the puck crosses it, slightly inside the blue line to get an unobstructed view down the line. This is called “working the line”.
- ❑ They should work from their blue line to a position about halfway between the centre red line and the far blue line.
- ❑ When play is in the end zone, the front linesperson should be one stride outside the blue line, while the other linesperson should be midway between this blue line and the centre red line on the opposite side of the ice.
- ❑ When the defending team gains possession in their end zone, the back linesperson should anticipate the play coming out of the end zone and move back to the centre red line. In this position, the linespersons now have both the blue line and the centre red line covered.
- ❑ As the play moves back and forth, up the ice, the linespersons will react and be in their appropriate positions as the puck or play arrives. Linespersons should also get in the habit of watching players behind the play and after the play.

Positioning for a Face-Off

- ❑ Face-offs will be taken by the linesperson retrieving the puck.
- ❑ The linesperson not taking the face-off must cover the line of their partner until their partner returns to their proper position.
- ❑ When the referee is taking a face-off at centre ice, the two linespersons should be on opposite sides of the ice against the side boards, just outside the blue line at their end of the ice.
- ❑ For a face-off at one of the neutral zone face-off spots, the linesperson not dropping the puck must cover the blue line until the direction of the puck is determined or until their partner is back in position and has given a release signal. At this point, the linesperson covering can return to their proper position.
- ❑ For face-offs at centre ice (e.g. error in calling an icing or premature substitution of the goaltender), the two linespersons should be positioned opposite each other. The linesperson not dropping the puck is responsible for all lines, in case their partner gets trapped in the middle of the ice.
- ❑ When the face-off is at an end zone face-off spot, the back linesperson shall be positioned on the opposite side of the ice just outside the blue line. It is the job of the back linesperson to watch the players positioned behind the face-off dot for encroachment. If necessary, the linesperson at the blue line may need to move off the boards to get a better view. If one or both players encroach, the back linesperson will blow their whistle and point to the offending player's team. That team's centre will then be removed from the face-off.
- ❑ After the puck is dropped, the linesperson at the blue line will remain there until their partner makes their way to the blue line and gives a release head nod or hand signal.

General Tips for Success

- ❑ Both linespersons should work as a team, and always be aware of what is going on and where the other linesperson is at all times.
- ❑ Linespersons should always be alert and ready to cover each other's lines.
- ❑ Both linespersons should always be prepared to cover for the referee if they fall or gets trapped. If this is required, the linesperson may have to enter the end zone and assume the end zone positioning until the referee gets back into position.
- ❑ Linespersons should always be sure there is nothing going on during a stoppage (i.e. altercation) before retrieving the puck.
- ❑ Working as a team, along with the referee, should enable the officials to have complete control of the hockey game.

4. FOUR OFFICIAL SYSTEM

Reminders to follow in each system:

- ❑ Penalty Procedures: Penalties can be assessed by either referee, anywhere on the ice, where there is an infraction. Penalty Procedures should be followed as described in Section 1 of the Hockey Canada Officiating Procedures resource.
- ❑ End Zone Positioning: The referee in the end zone must follow positioning as described, using the cone.
- ❑ Line Change Procedure: It is the referee located in the neutral zone following the play or when conducting the centre ice face-off, the official not dropping the puck performs the line change procedure. The details of this procedure can be found in the Hockey Canada Procedures documents. The details of this procedure can be found in Section 2 of the Hockey Canada Officiating Procedures resource.
- ❑ The referees must remember the following basic facts when using this system:
 - Being consistent in all actions during the game.
 - There should be no competition between the two referees to assess penalties.
 - Not being afraid of taking charge when needed – both referees are as much responsible for controlling the game.
- ❑ Each referee has the same responsibility to call penalties, to deal with players and coaches, and to stop play whenever a situation dictates the stoppage of play.
- ❑ The document will reference and identify the two referees in the following manner:
 - R1 (referee in the end zone): their priority is the area where the puck is.
 - R2 (referee in the neutral zone): their first responsibility is the play away from the puck.
- ❑ The linespersons shall use the exact same procedures and positioning as they would in the three-official system.
- ❑ The Reverse Pivot consists of moving out from the boards and turning around the players, while facing the play. This will give the officials an excellent view of the play by the boards, as well as keep them out of the way.

4.1 Face-Offs

Centre-Ice Face-offs

- ❑ The referee (R1) will drop the puck facing the penalty bench while the other referee (R2) will be on the penalty bench side facing the players' benches.
- ❑ The referee who is awarding the goal will remain at the penalty bench, while the other referee shall drop the puck facing the penalty bench.

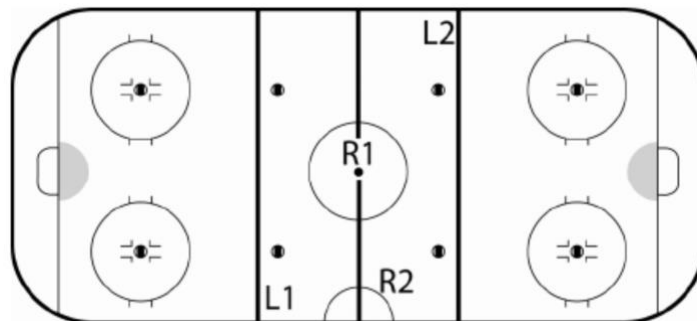


Figure 5. A centre-ice face-off in the four-official system.

End Zone Face-Offs

- ❑ The referees shall stand on opposite sides of the ice from each other.
- ❑ R1 will position themselves at or near the goal line as in the traditional three-official system. R2 shall position themselves on the opposite side of the ice from the lead referee, midway between the red line and blue line. R2 must not interfere with the view of the linesperson who is covering the nearest blue line.

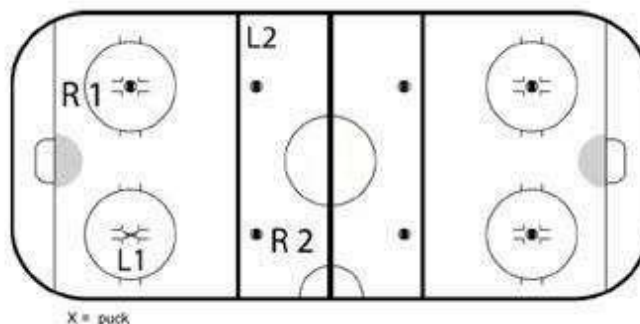


Figure 6. An end-zone face-off in the four-official system.

Neutral Zone Face-Offs

- ❑ The two referees shall take their positions on opposite sides of the ice from each other for neutral zone face-offs.
- ❑ R1 shall position themselves near the top of the end zone face-off circle on the opposite side of the ice from the face-off, as in the three-official system. R2 shall take their position on the same side of the ice as the face-off close to the far blue line, seeking ice that is not anticipated to be used and ready to move towards their designated end.

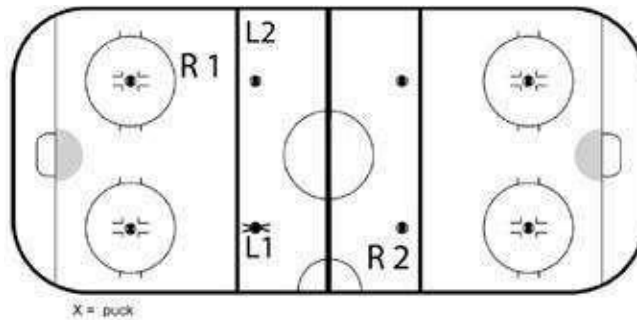


Figure 7. A neutral-zone face-off in the four-official system.

4.2 Positioning

Pursuit of Play

- ❑ The referee not conducting the centre ice face-off shall go in the direction of the puck and shall assume that end of the ice. They will become R1, while the referee that conducted the face-off will become R2.
- ❑ It is important that officials skate hard as the play transitions, to maintain the gap, or the distance between the official and the play. This will ensure the best possible sightlines to the puck and players.

End Zone Positioning

- ❑ The end zone positioning of R1 will be the same as that in the three-official system (Cone system).
- ❑ If R1 must cross over to the other side of the ice behind the net, then it becomes imperative that R2 then cross the ice so that the referees remain on opposite sides of the ice. This practice is encouraged only when necessary.
- ❑ R2 shall position themselves between the red and blue lines and may adjust their position moving up and down between the lines and back and forth across the ice to be on the opposite side as R1, and always be prepared to cross over if R1 crosses behind the net. They should never be stationary, and their priority is to control the players away from the puck carrier.
- ❑ It is the responsibility of the R2 to adjust their position according to the position of R1.
- ❑ The reverse pivot is an acceptable practice in the end zone to view a critical play developing when an official deems it necessary.

Transition of Play

- ❑ If one of the attacking players is skating around the centre ice when the play is still back in the end zone, then R2 shall adjust their position so they are ahead of this player if play begins moving out of the end zone.
- ❑ As the defending team gains control of the puck, R2 shall be prepared to move from their position in the neutral zone into the end zone skating backwards so that they are ahead of the play and in no way obstructing the view of the linesperson at the blue line. This referee now becomes R1.

- ❑ R1 shall transition themselves into R2 by following the play, staying behind, and keeping the last attacking player in clear view.
- ❑ By never remaining stationary, R2 allows themselves the flexibility to move to either side of the ice away from the play and puck during the transition from R2 to R1.

Positioning Following an Icing

- ❑ Following the stoppage of play for icing, R1, from that end zone (provided there are no altercations between players) shall skate quickly to the other end zone where the face-off will take place.
- ❑ R2 (from the end where the puck was shot) shall move to the neutral zone following the icing call and take control of the line change procedure.

Positioning Following a Stoppage of Play in the End Zone

- ❑ R2 should move into the area between the centre face-off circle and the blue line in order to observe and/or go deeper into the end zone to observe and, if necessary, assist in penalty calls.

Positioning Following a Penalty Call

- ❑ When R2 (referee in the neutral zone) calls a penalty in the end zone, they report the penalty and then takes up a position as R1, in the end zone. R1 now moves to the neutral zone and conducts the line change procedure.
- ❑ When R1 calls a penalty in the end zone, they shall report the penalty and return to the end zone. R2 will remain in the neutral zone and conduct the line change procedure.

Line Change Procedure

- ❑ For end zone face-offs, R2 will conduct the line change procedure.
- ❑ For neutral zone face-offs, R2 (referee positioned in the neutral zone for the face-off) shall conduct the line change procedure.
- ❑ In all cases, R2 (the referee in the neutral zone) is responsible for controlling the line changes, in all situations.
- ❑ They should be off the boards and making themselves visible to the coaches, especially when they are positioned on the same side of the ice as the players' benches.

4.3 Penalties

- ❑ Either referee may call a penalty at ANY time in ANY zone of the ice, regardless of the position of their partner. This will be dictated by the referee who has the best viewing position or angle (sight line) of the play.
- ❑ If a referee is 100% sure and can see that an infraction took place, they must make the call. If in any way a referee is not 100% sure that an infraction has occurred, or they are confident that their partner has seen and judged the play, then they should not make a call. The system works best when approached with a team effort.

- ❑ The areas of judgment between referees will be challenged (i.e. R1 says “no penalty” while R2 says “penalty”). The judgment of the referee and between the two referees must not be challenged on the ice. Both referees have the right to stop play and assess a penalty at the time and immediately after the foul.
 - No official should ever make negative comments or allow their body language to suggest disapproval of a fellow referee’s call or non-call.
- ❑ Even though there are two referees on the ice, referees must involve the linespersons if necessary as they may have a better angle or sight line, of the incident.
- ❑ During an altercation in the end zone, R2 shall have the responsibility of observing and controlling the players’ benches. It is not recommended that they enter deep into the zone. They may move into the top of the circles while at the same time checking to ensure the defenders do not move in past the top of the circles, which would cause the face-off to move to the neutral zone.
- ❑ The following is a summary of the procedure for altercations:
 - R1 is in charge.
 - R2 will control players away from the fight or altercation.
 - Both referees shall consult after the altercation to make sure that both know all the penalties being assessed.
 - R1 shall report and assess all penalties.
 - R1 shall inform both captains of the penalties being assessed.
 - R2 shall oversee the benches and players on the ice while the penalties are being reported.

Calling of Penalties

- ❑ It is accepted that both referees may have their arms up to assess the same penalty or different penalties to the same or different players.
 Note 1: It is perfectly acceptable to have both referees with their arms up. If this is the case, they must communicate to the other official as to whom they are calling and for what infraction. If both have the same infraction, R1 will perform the procedure. If there are two different infractions, R1 will make both penalty signals and report the penalties.
- ❑ When play stops in the end zone and both referees signal for a penalty, the referee in the end zone (R1) shall assess the penalties.
- ❑ When there are multiple penalties to be assessed on any play, the two referees should consult with each other to ensure all appropriate penalties are assessed.

Reporting to the Benches

- ❑ When there is a decision to go to the benches (coaches), it is recommended that the referee who had made the decision or judgment be the one to make the explanation.
- ❑ At appropriate times, both referees may go to a bench or one referee may go to each bench.
- ❑ During multiple penalty situations when one referee goes to each bench, it is imperative that each referee knows and understands all the penalties that are being assessed.

4.4 Other Procedures

- ❑ Both referees will have the responsibility to making such calls as “Hand Pass”, “High Sticking the Puck”, “Puck Out of Bounds”, etc.

Note 1: The linespersons may assist in such calls if the referees have not observed the call.

- ❑ Due to the movement of the play, both referees may be on the same side of the ice on occasion. They should adjust their position at the first opportunity.