



BOY'S LACROSSE

A beginner's guide



Have a child starting lacrosse?

Congratulations! Your kid is thinking of joining lacrosse. While trying a new sport can be a bit scary for all involved, we know once you get started you and your child are going to love this new sport.

In the past 20 years, lacrosse has become the fastest-growing team sport in the United States for good reason. Lacrosse combines elements of soccer, hockey and other team sports to create a fun, inclusive and easy-to-learn game with ample resources for newcomers.

Lacrosse is a different experience for many—new gear, new rules, new teammates—so it is helpful to understand some of the fundamentals before fully investing in all new equipment. This guide has all the information you and your child need to join America's fastest-growing team sport.



WORDS OF ADVICE

Parents and coaches shared information they wish they had before their kids started lacrosse.

Understand the game.

Lacrosse is a sport that combines physicality from hockey, endurance from soccer and ball movement from basketball. The rules can be confusing at times (even for lacrosse vets), so don't be afraid to ask questions of coaches, refs, and other parents. Once you start learning, we know you'll be hooked.

Practice stick skills all the time.

Stick skills include passing, catching and cradling, and are fundamental to success in lacrosse. Your child can practice these skills year-round with only a stick, a ball and a brick wall. Better yet, get a stick of your own and practice passing and catching with your child. Have your child practice throwing, catching and cradling from BOTH sides of their body.

Good athletes make great lacrosse players.

While there are lacrosse clinics and leagues for all seasons, it's not a bad idea to put down the stick for a season to play other sports. [Click here to find a sport!] Since lacrosse draws from so many other sports, playing soccer, basketball or hockey throughout the year will allow your child to work on his or her skills without getting lacrosse fatigue. Plus, lacrosse coaches love multi-sport athletes because they bring fresh perspectives and skills to the game.

Get to know your child's coach.

A good coach is accessible, honest and a good communicator. Get to know the coach's philosophies on playing time, development and off-season expectations, and communicate anything he or she needs to know about your child.

Be a fan (not a coach) at the field.

Let the coach do his or her job at games and practices while you cheer on your child. Shouting instructions from the bleachers can lead to confusion and stress for a new player. Wait until you are home to help your child practice his or her skills and knowledge.

Focus on socialization, not scholarships.

Less than 2 percent of high school athletes receive athletic scholarships and even fewer go on to play professional sports [Source: NCAA.org]. Encourage your child to play for fun and focus on building relationships with teammates, coaches and referees. The lacrosse field is a great place to work on communication and social skills and the players practice teamwork, conflict resolution and leadership.

Pick the right program for your child.

Lacrosse can be played in several ways, each requiring a different level of time and financial commitments. Find a program that suits you and your child's commitment level and interest. [See: "Ways to Play"]

For more information, visit:

sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/words-advice-lacrosse-parents



Lacrosse was created by the Native American tribes who lived in what is now New York and Pennsylvania. The earliest games date back as far as 1100 AD and were played by teams of up to 1,000 players on fields nearly two miles long. Lacrosse was named by French settlers who called the game la crosse, meaning the stick. www.uslacrosse.org/about-the-sport/history



FUNDAMENTALS OF THE GAME

Before your child takes to the lacrosse field, it's helpful to understand the basics of the game and what to expect .



Stop Quarter

Clock stops only for a team timeout, an official's timeout, or an injury timeout.

8 U	12	MINUTE HALVES
10 U	4-10	MINUTE RUN TIME QUARTERS
12 U	4-10	MINUTE STOP TIME QUARTERS
14 U	4-10	MINUTE STOP TIME QUARTERS



Team

The number of players on the field varies based on your age.

8 U	4	PLAYERS
10 U	6	PLAYERS
12 U	7-10	PLAYERS
14 U	10	PLAYERS



Goal

The ball must enter the goal and cross the goal line entirely. But score is generally not kept for 8 and under.

8 U	3x3	FEET
10 U	4-6	FEET
12 U	6x6	FEET
14 U	6x6	FEET

For more information, visit:

<https://www.sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/fundamentals-lacrosse>



Lacrosse is the national sport of Canada. It's the fastest-growing team sports in the United States and is becoming more popular around the world. The Federation of International Lacrosse has members from 60 nations. Membership grew 233% from 2002 to 2017.



THE BASIC RULES

Following these six guidelines will help your child as he or she gets ready to play lacrosse.



Use your stick

Lacrosse players use their stick to pass, catch, cradle, scoop and shoot the ball. You are not allowed to use hands or feet to play the ball or interfere with an opponent.



Out of Bounds

Play stops when the ball goes out of bounds. If the ball leaves play on a shot, possession is awarded to the team of the closest in-bounds player, regardless of who took the shot. If the ball leaves play for a reason other than a shot, like a player running out of bounds, the team that did not touch it last is awarded possession.



Checking

There are two types of checks: stick and body. Stick checking is when a defending player uses his or her stick to lift or poke another player's stick in order to dislodge the ball. Rules on checking vary based on the age of your child, with limited stick checking at 12U and up.



Fouls

Fouls include cross-check, slashing, tripping, illegal body check, illegal crosse (stick), unsportsmanlike conduct and unnecessary roughness. The penalty for a technical foul is loss of possession. For a personal foul, the offending player serves a 1, 2 or 3 minute penalty suspension off the field (much like hockey). The severity of the penalty is based on the severity of the foul and the referee's discretion.



The Goal-Crease

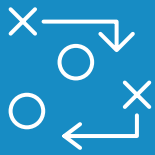
The goal-crease is a circle surrounding each net that is in place to protect each team's goaltender. Opposing players are not allowed to make contact with any part of a goaltender within his crease. Offensive players are not allowed to step foot in the crease at any time. Defensive players with or without the ball may pass through the crease but are not allowed to attempt to block a shot from within the crease.

For more information, visit:

sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/lacrosses-basic-rules

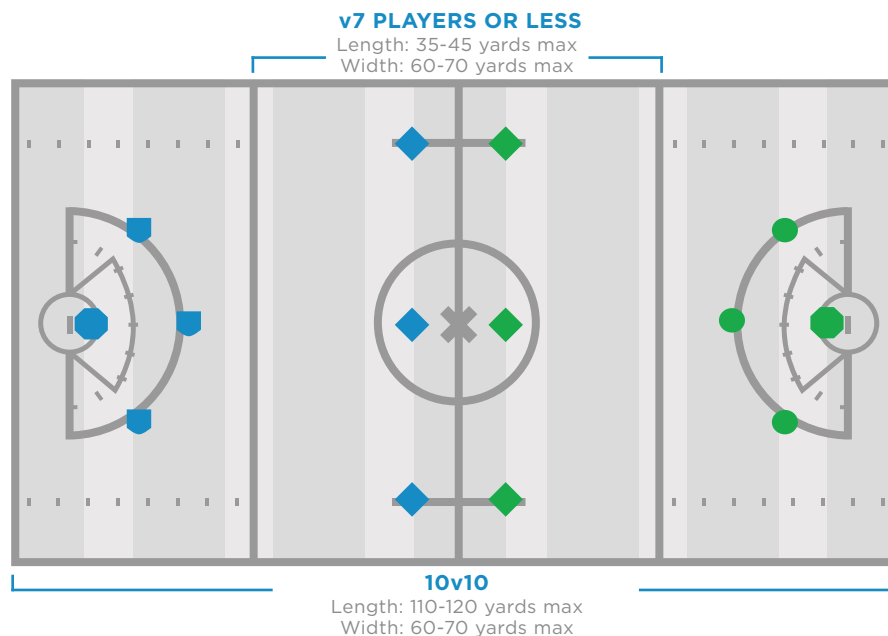


Men's Lacrosse was played at the 1904 Summer Olympic Games in St. Louis, Missouri and the 1908 games in London. Canadian teams won both times. Lacrosse has not been an Olympic sport since then, but held demonstrations at the 1928, 1932 and 1948 games and is petitioning to be part of the 2028 games.



GETTING INTO POSITION

Players 8 and younger play with no goalie. Starting at 10U, players begin to learn the four basic positions, often spending equal time in each position to help them discover where they are happiest and most successful. As players grow older, they often spend more time and attention mastering the skills of one position.



Attack

Attackers spend their time on the offensive half of the field and are responsible for scoring goals. They rely on their teammates to stop the other team and pass them the ball.



Midfielders

Midfielders or “Middies” transition between offense and defense and do a little bit of everything. They are responsible for moving the ball from defensive to offensive players.



Defenders

Defenders spend much of the game on the defensive half of the field attempting to stop the opposing offense using stick and body checks.



Goaltender

The goalie's job is to block and catch shots using his body and stick.

For more information, visit:

sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/lacrosse-positions



More than 26,000 men and 5,500 women play collegiate lacrosse at the varsity and club levels.



LACROSSE TERMS EXPLAINED

Your child will have a tough time getting the hang of lacrosse if he doesn't understand the game's lingo. Communication between players, coaches and referees is crucial to the game. Here are a few terms you and your child will come cross on the lacrosse field.

Assist

When one player passes the ball to another and it leads directly to a goal without the scorer having to dodge a defender.

Clear

Transitioning the ball from the defensive half to the offensive half .

Crease

a circle around the goal with a radius of 9 feet into which only defensive players may enter.

Extra Player Opportunity

The advantage gained from an opposing player serving his or her penalty time. Also known as being a "man-up" or, when referring to the team serving the penalty, "man-down."

Face-off

Used to start each half of play and restart play after a goal. One player from each team crouches at midfield, holding their sticks parallel on the ground with the ball in between. At the whistle, the players vie from control of the ball.

Lax

A commonly used abbreviation of lacrosse.

Offside

An infraction for having too many players on one half of the field. The number of players allowed on the offensive or defensive side of the field varies for age and style of play.

Pick

When an offensive player blocks the path of a defender by standing stationary and motionless in his or her path.

Raking the Ball

A backward scooping motion to gain possession of the ball. At no time may a field player use the back of his stick to cover or rake the ball backwards. They may only use a forward scooping motion to attempt to gain possession of the ball.

Slashing

Using your stick to intentionally hit another player.

For more information, visit:

sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/lacrosse-terms-explained



Originally, a wooden ball was used to play lacrosse. Later on, the ball was upgraded to one made using deer skin and stuffed with fur. Today's balls are made of vulcanized rubber.



DRESSED TO PLAY

Lacrosse has some specialized equipment unique to the sport. Before you fully commit to buying new equipment, try borrowing a friend's gear or seeing if your club has equipment you can borrow or rent.

Here's what is required for your child to get started.



Stick (Crosse)

Stick sizes depend on age, level and position. Familiarize yourself with the guidelines for your child's league and ask a lacrosse gear professional to find the right equipment.



Shoulder and Arm Pads

Shoulder pads protect the shoulder, collarbone and sternum. They should fit snug, but not restrict movement. Arm pads should completely cover the elbow and be tight enough to stay in place, without restricting movement.



Gloves

Lacrosse gloves are similar to hockey gloves and provide padding for the fingers and wrist. They should cover the entire hand and 2-3 inches above the wrist.



Cup

Lacrosse balls are very dense and can cause injury, so wearing a cup for players of all ages is very important.



Helmet

Lacrosse helmets, like hockey helmets, are made of hard plastic and have a wire facemask. Look for guidelines on the package for sizing and fitting instructions.



Mouthguard

Mouthguards are one of the most important pieces of equipment and prevent concussions in young athletes. Make sure to get a color other than white or clear and follow the fitting directions on the package.



Cleats

Lacrosse-specific cleats are shorter, wider and lighter than soccer cleats. While lacrosse cleats are recommended, it is OK to start with soccer cleats if the spikes are rubber and not metal.



Balls

8U and under uses a soft ball tennis ball, while 10U and up uses a certified lacrosse ball which is white, yellow, orange, lime green, or pink.

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WAYS TO PLAY

With a little research you should be able to find a lacrosse program that fits your child's interest level. There several types of lacrosse programs, each with varying structures and commitment levels.

Club Lacrosse

INTENSITY 

Age: 8 and older	Good for: Players looking to increase their skills and compete at the highest level.	
Commitment: Club requires the most intense time and financial commitment. It often involves year-round participation with several practices a week and travel at a metro, regional and state level.		Structure: Players often try out and are assigned to a club team based on performance or not chosen at all. This format caters toward developing skills and high-level competition.

School Lacrosse

INTENSITY 

Age: Middle and high schoolers	Good for: Skilled players looking to represent their school and play with their classmates.	
Commitment: School lacrosse is less of a commitment than club. It likely requires daily practices during the season, mid-level financial commitment and less travel than club.		Structure: Players are often required to try out for school lacrosse and are placed on teams according to performance. Unlike club, there's usually a team for everyone. Competition is between other school teams.

For more information, visit:
sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/ways-play-lacrosse



WAYS TO PLAY (CONT.)

Community/Recreational Lacrosse

INTENSITY



Age: Young kids to adults	Good for: Those looking to stay active, play with friends and have fun playing the game.
Commitment: Recreational leagues cost less than club or school lacrosse and require less of a time commitment. Expect to practice once or twice a week with no pressure to train during the off-season.	Structure: Learning the basics and enjoying the game is prioritized over competition and skill development. Players typically do not have to try out and coaching is on a volunteer basis. In general, anyone and everyone can play.

For more information, visit:

sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/ways-play-lacrosse

The United States currently has three professional lacrosse leagues.



Major League Lacrosse

Began play with four teams in 2001 and has since grown to nine teams and 230 players. MLL is that highest graduation rate of any American profession sport, largely because incoming players are only eligible if they have completed four years of NCAA eligibility



National Lacrosse League

An indoor lacrosse league with 12 teams throughout the U.S. and Canada. Commonly called box lacrosse, due to to playing in arenas with boundaries similar to a hockey rink, the NLL ranks third in average attendance for pro indoor sports worldwide.



Premier League Lacrosse

Begins its inaugural season in the summer of 2019. The six teams and more than 150 players feature more than 25 players on the U.S. National Team. Instead of traditional markets, the PLL plays a “barnstorming” style schedule where they travel to 12 different cities across the U.S. and Canada.



LACROSSE HIERARCHY

Lacrosse is believed to be the first sport played in North America after being invented by Native American tribes, but it has since spread across the world. Use this hierarchy to see how your child fits into one of the fastest growing sports.



For more information, visit:

sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/hierarchy-lacrosse



LACROSSE HIERARCHY (CONT.)

World Lacrosse	The international federation for men's and women's lacrosse, and currently has 62-member National Governing Bodies under them. Originally called the International Lacrosse Federation until the merger of men's and women's international lacrosse associations in 2008. This step was critical for eventual recognition as an Olympic sport, which lacrosse currently is not.
US Lacrosse	The national governing body for lacrosse. US Lacrosse was one of the first five national governing bodies accepted back in 1972. The US national teams have won 30 world championships, more than any other national lacrosse team
Regions	US Lacrosse is broken up into 10 regions, covering all 50 states.
States	As of 2018, there are 14 states with at least 10,000 kids playing lacrosse at the youth level.
Youth Teams	More than 15,000 coaches participate with US Lacrosse teams every year.
Youth Players	There are currently more than 450,000 members nationwide.

For more information, visit:

sportsengine.com/article/lacrosse/hierarchy-lacrosse



Lacrosse is often referred to as the fastest game on two feet because of how quickly the ball can travel. According to Guinness World Records, the fastest lacrosse shot recorded was by Patrick Luehrsen in 2015. His shot reached a top speed of 119.9 miles per hour.



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