

Lacrosse Defense – Hat Drill

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZ-OMqcz3cM>

The hat drill is one of my favorite drills for defenseman of all ages. At the youth level, this drill teaches players about slide and recover, with a focus on our approach. As we mentioned in our other defensive posts ([link](#)), being a great defender starts with footwork and body position.

Footwork and body position begin with an excellent approach. In this drill, you want your players to focus on three things as they approach:

- **Approach under control.** Big, big, chop, chop. With your first steps cover as much distance as possible, as you get closer to the ball carrier start chopping with small steps. This helps get you out quickly, but keeps you under control as the ball carrier begins to dodge.
- **Take away topside.** Do not slide to where the ball carrier is when you begin the slide. Anticipate where he is going and get your inside foot up field. This will deny him the topside and force him down the alley into a less dangerous part of the field.
- **Lead with your stick:** A common mistake at the youth and even high school level, is players have their sticks down at their waist. Get that stick up and lead with it. A poke check is often the most effective check in these situations, when an offensive player will look to split.

If you have done a good job approaching and executed those three techniques above, the ball carriers only option will be to pass the ball. Lacrosse defense is all about teamwork. As soon as your man moves the ball, players should be thinking about helping out inside. We always want to play team defense “inside out”. Meaning, cover inside well and then move out to the ball. As we recover inside there are two things to consider:

- **Always see the ball and your man.** Open up to the ball, so you know where it is. At the same time, do not get caught ball watching. Your head should be on a swivel, “see the man, see the ball, see the man, see the ball...”. If your man cuts, it is your responsibility to move with him.
- **Take away passing lanes.** As I mentioned before, many youth players leave their stick down at their waist. The stick is an excellent tool, use it! Get the stick up in the passing lane, this takes away options from the offense. Also as you recover, you want to lead with the stick. Backside man should have a stick on the first slide defenseman’s man.