

About Hurling

A review of hurling by Gary

- Introduction to Hurling

We like to boast that hurling is the oldest field game in Europe. It is also recognised as the fastest field game in the world.

Records show evidence that the game was a regular pastime in Ireland for well over 2,000 years. It was a common way to train ancient warriors for battle. Even the Vikings tried their hand at the sport when they visited our land!

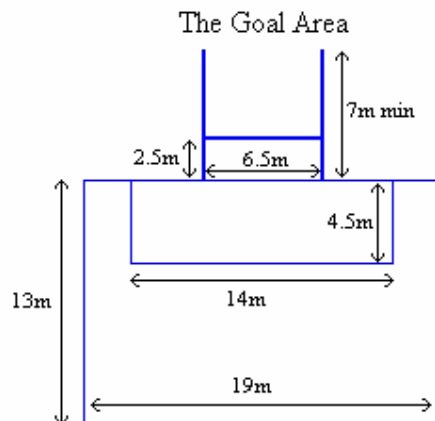
- The Basics of the game

Game Basics: A hurling game is played on a grass field with goals at either end. It is contested by two teams of 15 players per team. The tools of the game include a hurling stick, simply known as a 'hurley', and a small ball called a sliotar. The game is comprised of two halves, 30-35 minutes each half (depending on the competition) with a 10 minute half-time period. The object of the game is to score as often as possible into the opposing team's goal.

- The Playing Field

The playing area is a rectangular grass field approximately 137 meters in length (130m minimum & 145m maximum) by 82meters in width (80m minimum & 90meters maximum). These dimensions are often reduced in European games depending on what playing facilities are available.

There is a goal area at either end of the pitch. The goals are comprised of two high circular posts 6.5m apart and at a height of not less than 7m. There is a crossbar spanning the distance between these posts at a uniform height of 2.5m over the ground. Each goal will also have a net covering the area at the back of the goal between the posts and under the crossbar. In many ways they are similar to Rugby goals but with the addition of a net.



- **Game Officials**

The game is officiated over by a team of 7 people, a referee, two linesmen and four umpires. The referee has complete authority over the game the same as a referee is soccer or rugby.

The linesmen, one on either side of the playing field assist the referee, their main function being to watch for when the ball goes out of play on either side. The linesmen also assist when substitutions are being made and help the referee to keep control over the game.

The umpires are placed at the goal areas, two at either end of the field. They signal when a team scores, a white flag for one point and a green flag for one goal (3 points). They also signal when the ball goes out of play over the end line.

- **The Teams**

Each game is contested by two teams. Each team has a total of 15 players (sometimes reduced in European games) and is allowed a maximum of five substitutions during the game. In the case of extra-time three more substitutions are allowed. Both teams wear their registered distinctive team colours, and if both teams have similar colours they must change to their alternative colours. In the case of the goalkeepers, they must wear a colour different to that of their own team and of the other team.

Unlike sports such as soccer for example, in hurling the teams normally line-out in a stricter format much like this:

	Goal keeper	
Right Full Back	Center Full Back	Left Full Back
Right Half Back	Center Half Back	Left Half Back
Right Midfield - Left Midfield		
Right Half Forward	Center Half Forward	Left Half Forward
Right Corner Forward	Center Full Forward	Left Corner Forward

- **Game Equipment**

The two basic items a player uses in hurling is a hurley stick, camán in Irish and a sliotar (ball). The hurley stick varies quite a lot in length, and depends pretty much on the person using it. A quite average size hurley as used by an adult might be 92cm (3foot) in length. The bass of the hurley at its widest point cannot be more than 13cm wide.

The ball used is a small white ball which we call a sliotar. The circumference of the sliotar is normally between 23cm and 25cm and weighs between 100g and 120g. It has a raised edge called a rib which is between 2.2mm and 2.4mm high.

Some players choose to wear a helmet during the game. This is recommended but it is not compulsory.

- **Scoring**

A goal is scored when the sliotar is played over the goal line, between and posts and under the crossbar. A goal is worth 3 points and is signaled by an umpire raising a green flag.

A point is scored when when the sliotar is played over the goal line, between the posts but OVER the crossbar and is signaled by an umpire raising a white flag.
The sliotar cannot be carried over the goal line but must be hit with the hurley stick or struck with the hand or kicked with the foot.
Obviously the team with the most points overall (goals and points together) is the winning side.

- **Playing the game & some basic rules.**

I will only explain quite briefly here how the game is played. Obviously there is quite lot info the game so I will only give you a taster.

At game start the referee throws the sliotar into the center of the field where the four midfield players try to get the ball first (similar to a face-off in ice hockey). The aim of the players is then to score on their opponents by carrying or passing the sliotar down field and striking at the goal area.

Carrying the ball: The ball is usually carried balanced on the hurley when running and can also be bounced on the hurley. This is called soloing. It can be taken into the hand but can only be carried in the players hand for a maximum of 4 consecutive steps, then the player must release the ball by shooting or passing the ball. The player can take the ball from the hurley into his/her hand only twice. Or if the player had previously caught the ball he/she can only take it into his/her hand only once.

Passing the ball: The ball can be passed by hitting with the hurley, striking the ball with the hand or by kicking the ball.

Getting the ball: The ball can be caught from the air or lifted from the ground. It cannot be taken from the ground using the hand but must be lifted using the Hurley stick.

Tackling: Players may tackle each other to get the ball. Usually this will involve a shoulder charge on the player in possession of the ball or if you are competing against another player chasing a ball. Quite often tackles can be vigorous as hurling is a very physical game. However challenges deemed as dangerous will be punished.