

NHL '98 FAQ/Strategy Guide

by VinnyVideo

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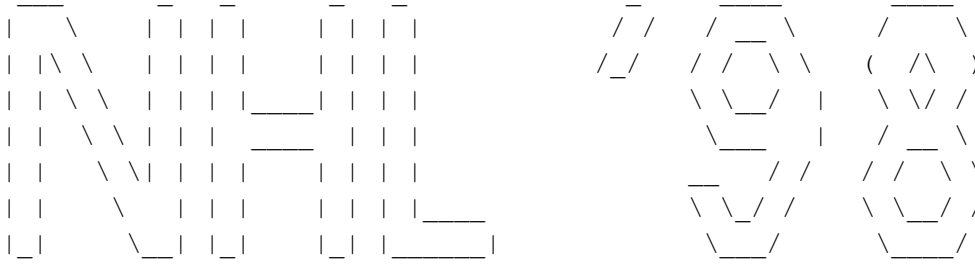


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Introduction

[INTRO]

Before any of you accuse me of being some redneck from a hick town who's trying to tell Canadians how to play the game, I've decided that it would be in my best interest to begin this guide by being perfectly frank: I don't know much about hockey. A decent chunk of my hockey knowledge came from watching my brother play NHL '97 years ago, actually. While I'm not exactly a hockey expert, I can at least say - with some certainty - that I'm not a complete fool, and I know enough about the topic to write a decent FAQ. I've racked up some pretty impressive wins even on the highest difficulty level, after all. Plus, this latest guide now means I've written a guide for games representing all four of the traditional "Big Four" sports. And that sounds sort of cool.

I know NHL '98 is by now a pretty old game - it was one of the last games for the Super NES - but it manages to be surprisingly fun, even if you know very little about ice hockey. As usual, multi-player action is especially good. Obviously, if you're interested in updated lineups or advanced tactics, this is not the game for you. The sprite-based graphics are somewhat limited, but they work fairly well and produce nice contrast. As for music, EA and THQ kept the NHL '97 theme song (which strongly resembles the old ESPN hockey theme) and the menu music, which both worked well for a hockey game. Besides remembering to include "O, Canada" for introductions to Canadian home games, they included many of the organ songs unique to certain venues. Occasionally, however, the music takes on a weird reverb effect and becomes glitchy. Also, on emulators, you'll occasionally hear a weird pop or hissing noise (this problem, unlike the music glitches, is solved by playing on a real Super NES). The sound effects, some of which are taken from the Madden games, are somewhat limited. The game

lacks an announcer (not that I'm necessarily complaining about that), except for the referee and a PA guy who tells you the names of the teams at the beginning and conclusion of the game. He doesn't say "Deeeee-troit" like he did in NHL '97. Play control is easy to get the hang of, even for non-hockey fans, and feels a lot like the FIFA games. It may take 15 or so games to master beating the computer on the highest difficulty level. The biggest problem with NHL '98 is that it's practically identical to NHL '97, with the only additions being a boring and flaky skills competition mode and random "hot" and "cold" players. Still, that's hardly a terrible thing, since NHL '97 was also a high-quality title.

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Gameplay Controls

[CONTR]
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Nothing too fancy here, but anyway:

---Menu Screens---

Control Pad: Move selection cursor

B: Go forward

X: Return to previous screen

Most menu options are explained pretty clearly in the game. In Season mode, press START to advance to the next game you're playing (or simulate a day if no games are selected).

---Any time---

Control Pad: Move selected player

START: Pause game

SELECT: Make line changes on the fly

The pause menu allows you to change lineups, view statistics, switch the team you're controlling, and many other things.

---With Puck---

A: Shoot; tap for a wrist shot, or hold and release for a slap shot

B: Pass/shoot in the direction you're facing

X: Pass to your nearest teammate

Y: Flip puck in the direction you're facing/fake shot in attack zone

L: Sudden stop

R: Spin-o-Rama

To perform a one-timer, pass to your teammate and then hold A during the pass. You can also perform one-timer passes, but those are less useful.

---Without Puck---

B: Switch to nearest teammate/poke check

Y: Poke check/hook

A: Hard check

X: Take control of goalie

L/R: Block puck when near goal

---Goalie---

A: Kick save

X: Dive and cover

Y: Quick dive

B: Switch to nearest defender

With the puck, press B to pass the puck in the direction you're facing, or Y to flip it down the ice.

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Modes of Play [MODES]
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Here's a list of the games available for selection in NHL '98:

---Exhibition---

Play a game using the teams of your choice. You can play against the computer or against someone else, or you can even watch a computer-simulated game. You can also set options like game length and whether or not you want penalties to be called.

---Season---

Season mode lets you play an 82-game season based on the real 1997-98 NHL calendar. You can play as many or as few games as you'd like, and if things ever get to be too boring, you can simulate a few days or weeks of the season. In season play, the game keeps records of goals and assists for every player in the game. Season mode also lets you create new players and make other roster transactions. Progress is saved after every game, thankfully, so you don't have to play 50 hours on end to finish the season.

---Practice---

When you're just getting started with NHL '98, Practice mode is a good place to start. This allows you to practice basic skills like passing and shooting, with or without any opposing players on the ice. You can set the number of your own players as well as the opposition's.

---Skill Challenge---

One of the small number of features added from NHL '97, Skill Challenge includes four training exercises that are hardly thrilling.

* In Puck Control, one of your players must skate up to the puck and then weave through a series of orange cones (which turn gray when cleared) back to the starting point. Then you repeat with two of your teammates.

* In Puck Blast, three players take three turns trying to hit a stationary puck as hard as possible. A fast skater will often miss the puck altogether, making this game irritating.

* In Rapid Fire, you control the goaltender and must protect the net from a barrage of shots coming from two different players.

* In Accuracy Shooting, the objective is to hit four targets in the corners of the net.

---Shoot Out---

Shoot Out pits two teams against each other in a penalty shootout. It's not exactly easy to win, but it's a good way to practice your penalty shots and manual goaltending.

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Strategies [STRAT]
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Here are some of the tricks of the trade used in various aspects of this game.

-----Scoring Goals-----

I'm going to start this section by discussing the most useful stuff: How to score goals. I've found five ways that goals generally occur in NHL '98:

1. Ricochets off the goaltender. When the goalie muffs a save, go in and shoot the puck, and there's a decent chance it'll go in the net. If you're not careful, though, this can result in interference penalties.
2. Scrums in front of the net. Sometimes a whole bunch of players pile up near the goal, during which time the puck may ricochet anywhere - including into the net. These kinds of goals are kind of random - just keep mashing B and hope nobody gets called for interference.
3. One-timers. Good opportunities for one-timers are rare, but when they happen, be sure to take advantage of them.
4. Own goals. These tend to occur when a defenseman gets careless around his own team's net. Own goals happen to both human players and to the computer. You can avoid most of these blunders by keeping your defensemen well away from the net when they have the puck.
5. By far the best way to score goals: Send a quick athlete skating down the flank, and turn toward the goal. Skate to the opposite goalpost from your position, and then shoot with the B button and the Control Pad toward the goal. If timed properly, the goalie will be sprawled on his stomach and won't have a ghost of a chance to stop the puck. This play works wonders on the opening faceoff but may fail against tight defense. I find it's much easier to pull this off when shooting toward the south goal.

-----Line Changes-----

Like in most hockey games, NHL '98 lets you make speedy mass substitutions. Every time play stops, you can change lines by pressing Y, B, or A to select the corresponding line you want (check the box in the corner). You can also press SELECT to make a line change on the fly, but the transition may leave your team vulnerable. Try to keep your guys reasonably fresh; once a line's energy meter dips into the yellow zone, you should make a change as soon as you get a chance.

Three lines are used in most situations: Scoring 1, Scoring 2, and Checking. Different teams are arranged in different ways, but Scoring 1 often has your best overall players, Scoring 2 might be a reserve team, and Checking may be a more defensive, harder-hitting line. When your team is up a man, your two available lines are Power Play 1 and Power Play 2, which are sometimes the same as your corresponding scoring lines but may be more offensive-minded. Lastly, when you're shorthanded, your available lines are Penalty Kill 1 and Penalty Kill 2. These teams are frequently more defensive-minded and sometimes don't contain any true wingers.

Usually it's best to have 15 different players on your main three lines (Scoring 1, Scoring 2, and Checking), although you could maybe put a high-endurance player on more than one of those lines.

The game's default lineups generally make sense, but you can produce better results by making a few adjustments. Take the Philadelphia Flyers, for example. John LeClair is the team's best winger but only appears on the Checking line. That's stupid. Put him on one of your Power Play teams. As another Flyers example, Dale Hawerchuk is on BOTH of the Penalty Kill teams. He's obviously a good player for those situations, but this arrangement defeats the whole purpose of line changes - which is to keep players fresh.

You may want to adjust the strategies used by each line under the "Coaching" feature on the Pregame or Pause menus. A balanced approach works well most of the time, but you might want to give a defensive slant to your shorthanded teams and an attacking mentality to your power play lines. You might also want to make coaching adjustments when you need goals or when you're trying to protect a late lead.

Lastly, be sure to adjust your lines whenever a major penalty or injury occurs.

-----Personnel-----

Especially in Season mode, it's a good idea to become familiar with the abilities of your individual players. For example, knowing your players' ratings could help you decide whether you should let your defenseman take a shot, or risk breaking up the momentum of the play to pass to a better-shooting winger.

I'm sure you know this, but the letters shown next to the numbers of a player you're controlling tells the player's position: D for defenseman, C for center, L for left-winger, and R for right-winger.

-----Faceoffs-----

A faceoff occurs at the start of every period and after almost every play, whether it's after a goal, a penalty, a call of offsides, or even the net getting pushed out of position. Since faceoffs occur so frequently, it's good to know how to win them. Simply press B as the referee drops the puck, and be ready to skate towards the opposition goal or reclaim the puck.

-----Goaltending-----

The computer controls the goalie automatically except on penalty shots (which hardly ever happen against human players), so you don't have to worry too much about what the goalie does.

If you press X (when you don't have the puck), you'll switch to controlling the goaltender. It's tough to do a better job than the computer can, and you're better off using one of your defensemen to squash the opponent with the puck. Still, you might want to control the goalie if you've mastered the game and you're craving a challenge or a change of pace.

You'll automatically take control of the goalkeeper whenever he has the puck. Be careful then - if you pass to an opponent instead of a teammate (especially if you leave the net), you're very likely to allow an ugly goal. If opponents are too close to you for comfort, just hold the puck until the ref calls a faceoff, or press Y to dump the puck down the ice with little risk.

-----Offsides-----

Three violations occur quite a bit in hockey but can usually be avoided if you pay attention.

Offsides occurs when your player with the puck crosses the farthest blue line when a teammate has already entered the opponents' zone. The referee will appear in a small box in the upper-right corner when you're in danger of being offside.

Icing is called when a player touches a long pass while behind the goal.

Two-line violations are similar to icing. These are called when a player passes

to a teammate and the puck crosses two of the lines on the ice.

Getting called for offsides, icing, or a two-line violation is hardly the worst thing that can happen (unless you're about to get a breakaway). You won't be sent to the penalty box, and the ensuing faceoff can be a good time to regroup and reorganize, frequently right next to the opponents' net.

-----Fights-----

Ice hockey is a fast, physical game, and considering there's no shortage of goons in the game, you're occasionally going to find players who choose to settle their disagreements in ways Dr. King would never approve of. Regardless, fighting is a part of hockey, and the ability to win a fight can give you a profound sense of satisfaction, especially when losing to an otherwise-superior opponent in two-player modes.

You know a fight is about to begin when two players face each other on ice, pointing their sticks at each other as if this were some kind of swordfight. The energy meters will also appear. At this point, pressing any buttons will make the fight start (if you don't press any buttons, both players will receive two-minute roughing penalties). During the brawl, press Y to punch, B for an uppercut, and A to grab the opponent's jersey. A well-timed jersey grab will allow you to get in a punch or two without the opponent being able to fight back. Note that punches and uppercuts deal the same amount of damage, and all players can sustain six hits before getting KOed. All fights in NHL '98 are one-on-one and are always punished by a five-minute major fighting penalty, regardless of the outcome of the fight.

The most reliable way of winning a fight is this: Skate away from your opponent, occasionally moving forward to land a punch, then immediately retreating. This strategy may fail against a human player, but it works quite well against the computer. If you get cornered against the boards, however, you'll have to fight normally.

Lastly, I'm still ordinarily an advocate of nonviolence, but fighting can actually help you win if you understand how to choose your battles. When a fight is about to begin, consider who's involved. Since both parties in the fight will get slapped with a five-minute major penalty, they'll be off the ice for a while. If your fighter is a very talented player with a high Aggression rating (someone like Eric Lindros or Mark Messier), it's best to avoid dropping your gloves. Meanwhile, if your participant in the fray is a marginally-talented enforcer along the lines of Tie Domi, it may be quite advantageous to fight and put the more-skilled opposition player in the box for a while.

-----Other Penalties-----

Fighting isn't the only penalty that rears its ugly head in hockey. The most common penalty is interference, which occurs when a player collides with a goalie who's holding the puck or attempting a save. Sometimes you can get interference called on an opponent by running into him while controlling the goalie (especially when the goalie is holding the puck).

Other penalties (roughing, cross check, hooking, tripping, slashing, charging, holding) typically result from rough checks and reckless play. Contrary to what the NHL '97 manual said, high-sticking is never called. Also, all of the penalties in NHL '98 are two-minute minor penalties or five-minute major penalties; "double minor" penalties and "misconduct" penalties don't exist in this game, nor will some real-life penalties (like boarding, elbowing, butt-ending, and delay of game) be called.

-----Penalty Shots-----

When a foul that prevents a major scoring opportunity occurs, you'll get a chance to take a penalty shot - a one-on-one scoring opportunity with only the goalie to beat. If you're taking the shot, go for a hard slap shot or try using the goal-scoring approach I recommend in the Scoring Goals section above. It's not as easy as it looks, especially if you're controlling a weak shooter. If you're the goalie, watch what the opponent does and dive if necessary.

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Team Stats

[STATS]

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These are the ratings according to the game. "Power-Play" usually refers to the team's ability to score goals, and "Penalty Killing" generally measures the team's defense. "Even-Strength" is the team's overall rating.

	Even-St.	Pow-Play	Pen-Kill	Goaltending
Mighty Ducks of Anaheim	9th	9th	22nd	11th
Boston Bruins	26th	16th	21st	26th
Buffalo Sabres	6th	26th	13th	6th
Calgary Flames	21st	8th	17th	13th
Carolina Hurricanes	19th	4th	10th	19th
Chicago Blackhawks	14th	17th	11th	7th
Colorado Avalanche	1st	3rd	2nd	5th
Dallas Stars	2nd	19th	16th	3rd
Detroit Red Wings	5th	7th	4th	2nd
Edmonton Oilers	13th	6th	18th	16th
Florida Panthers	7th	21st	7th	4th
Los Angeles Kings	24th	25th	3rd	20th
Montreal Canadiens	17th	13th	26th	23rd
New Jersey Devils	3rd	23rd	1st	1st
New York Islanders	22nd	22nd	15th	18th
New York Rangers	8th	1st	25th	10th
Ottawa Senators	16th	11th	20th	12th
Philadelphia Flyers	4th	18th	6th	8th
Phoenix Coyotes	11th	5th	5th	15th
Pittsburgh Penguins	10th	2nd	23rd	25th
San Jose Sharks	25th	20th	12th	24th
St. Louis Blues	12th	15th	14th	14th
Tampa Bay Lightning	20th	24th	8th	17th
Toronto Maple Leafs	23rd	14th	19th	22nd
Vancouver Canucks	15th	10th	24th	21st
Washington Capitals	18th	12th	9th	9th
NHL West All-Stars	1st	1st	1st	1st
NHL East All-Stars	1st	1st	1st	1st
EA Sports Gamers	1st	1st	1st	1st
THQ Angry Legion	1st	1st	1st	1st

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Frequently Asked Questions

[QUEST]

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Q: Are there any secret teams in this game?

A: Yep. After the Stanley Cup appears during the introduction shown when you first turn on the game, hold L and R and press Start. Keep holding L and R until you hear the announcer say "EA Sports." This accesses two secret teams and allows you to max out all abilities for created players.

Q: What team should I use?

A: If you want to boost your chances of winning, use one of the stronger teams, like the Avalanche, Red Wings, or an all-star team (THQ is the very best). If

you're in the mood for a challenge or you're playing a less experienced human player, pick a weaker club like the Sharks or Bruins.

Q: What difference does changing the difficulty level make?

A: In every mode of play, there are three difficulty levels - Novice, Intermediate, Expert - that can be changed at any time from the Options menu. On Novice mode, opponents are passive and won't check you unless you run right into them. The pace of the game is also slower. On the Expert level, however, the computer is much more aggressive and will be happy to slam you into the boards to get the puck (and will rack up more penalty minutes as well), and the game is faster and harder to control. Still, the difference between the easiest and hardest difficulty levels isn't enormous.

Q: What are User Records?

A: When playing using a User Records profile, the game keeps track of records you set - everything from your won-loss record to the player who's racked up the most penalty minutes in a single game. User Records aren't mandatory, even in season play, but I'd recommend that you set up a profile.

Q: What does it mean when a player is "Hot" or "Cold?"

A: You've probably noticed during the national anthems that one player in the game will be listed as "Hot," and another (not necessarily on the same team) will be "Cold." I haven't done extensive research on this phenomenon (which is similar to something found in Madden '98, except that involved teams), but I think a "hot" player's stats will be increased by a small percentage, and a "cold" player's abilities will go down slightly for that game. "Hot" and "cold" players are determined randomly; it's possible a player might score five goals in a game and become "cold" for the next game, or a backup goalie might sit on the bench for 15 games and then turn "hot." It might not be a bad idea to give a "hot" player more time on the ice than usual.

Q: What does the Aggression rating mean?

A: The likelihood a player will participate in a fight.

Q: What happens if you score five goals?

A: The computer changes goalies. When I've gotten hot, I've scored that many goals in a period.

Q: How do I pull my goalie and bring on a sixth skater?

A: Select "Change Goalie" from the pause menu and choose "None." Doing so obviously creates a huge defensive liability, but it can be useful in desperate last-minute situations.

Q: Can you make trades in this game?

A: In Season mode you can. However, the game won't permit you to make trades involving players of widely-varying abilities; you can't trade Wayne Gretzky for a player with an overall rating of 65.

Q: How are game MVPs determined?

A: Players of the game are always the ones who have made a major impact in the game. Duh. At least two of three players of the game will come from the winning team, and all will if the margin of victory was large. The winning goalkeeper will always be one of the MVPs if he had a decent performance, and scoring goals is also a good way to make the list. There isn't too much significance to these MVPs, however, since the game doesn't keep track of who had the most in season stats or User Records.

Q: What's an easy (albeit unfair) way to make scoring goals really easy?

A: Pause the game and select "Controllers" and take control of the opposing team. Set "Change Goalie" to "None" to yank the goalie. Then switch back to the

team you were controlling, and now there won't be a pesky goaltender in front of the opposing net! I think this trick is pretty cheap, though, and isn't fair to use in season play (or two-player play, of course).

Q: Why do I hear different organ music in different arenas?

A: Different songs are played at different arenas - that's why. The game includes many songs unique to a particular team or organist. As in real life, some organists get more action than others, too.

Q: How far have you gotten in the season?

A: I've played 22 games with the Philadelphia Flyers without skipping any portion of the season. Every player on the team (except the backup goalie) has scored at least one point. My brother played a full season with the Flyers over the course of a couple of months in spring 1997 (with NHL '97) controlling the Flyers. But I don't have that kind of patience.

Q: What music did you listen to while writing this guide?

A: I do most of my typing to the sounds of silence. Still, I received a little musical assistance from Billy Price & Fred Chapellier ("Last Two Dollars"), Brian Hughes ("Three Graces"), and Tzohar (a cool piano remix of Super Mario Galaxy's Gusty Garden Galaxy theme). Them, and various VG Music arrangers - and a MIDI of "O, Canada" from an SPC I ripped myself from Super RBI Baseball, just for the effect.

Q: How many guides have you written?

A: Depending on what you count, this is #71! To see the complete, current list, visit www.gamefaqs.com/features/recognition/74793.html.

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Version History

[VERSN]

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Date | Version | Size |
-----|-----|-----|-----
2- 8-10 | 0.5 | 16KB | Began guide, making major progress in all areas.
2- 9-10 | 0.85 | 27KB | Worked on Strategies, etc.
2-10-10 | 0.95 | 29KB | Finished things up and proofread everything.
2-28-10 | 1.0 | 30KB | Added a cheat. Submitted guide on 3/6/10.
3- 8-10 | 1.1 | 30KB | Added holding penalty.
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Contact Information

[CONTC]
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If you have any questions or comments about this guide, please send an e-mail to VHamilton002@gmail.com. That's zero-zero-two, by the way. Remember that not all e-mail messages will be read. Please follow these guidelines:

Do include "NHL '98" in the subject line.

Do send polite suggestions for ways to make this walkthrough better.

Do tell me about any errors or omissions you find in this guide.

Do send information about any glitches, tricks, or codes you discover.

Do ask any questions you have about NHL '98 gameplay. I will respond eventually if you follow all of these rules.

Do make a reasonable effort to use decent spelling, grammar, usage, punctuation, and capitalization so I can understand what you're trying to say.

Do use patience. I check my e-mail quite sporadically, and replies may take a week or even longer.

Do not send spam, pornography, chain letters, "flaming," or anything that contains profanity or vulgarity. Again, violating this rule will result in deletion of the message... and you'll need to stock up on Preparation H.

And lastly, a public service message: Fight for and affirm the rights of all humans, regardless of race, age, or creed! And... Say no to anabolic steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs. No one's likely going to read this, anyway.

For Marion Austin

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