



# The Stick



*"Your lacrosse stick is an extension of yourself, you develop that stick for you personally. You work it so that you can throw your way and this stick becomes a part of you. Don't take it lightly, this stick is you. Work it to make it your way. Keep that in mind all the time, don't abuse it. Don't think it's any less than. This stick is you."*

**Alfred Jacques - The Stick Maker**

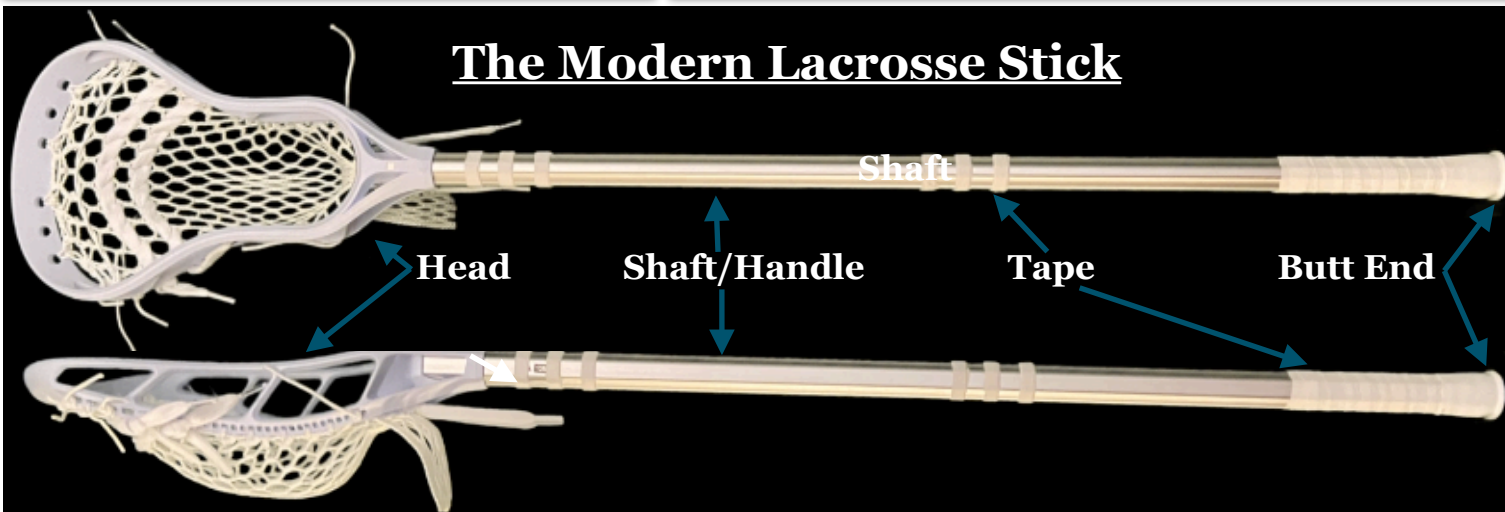
## The Importance of Picking the Right Stick

The primary relationship between a player and their stick is what evens the playing field for players who have different strengths. You can be the most athletic person in the world, but if you don't master the stick, you won't be able to bring those gifts to the game. For that reason, the importance of having a stick that operates properly is paramount to early development.

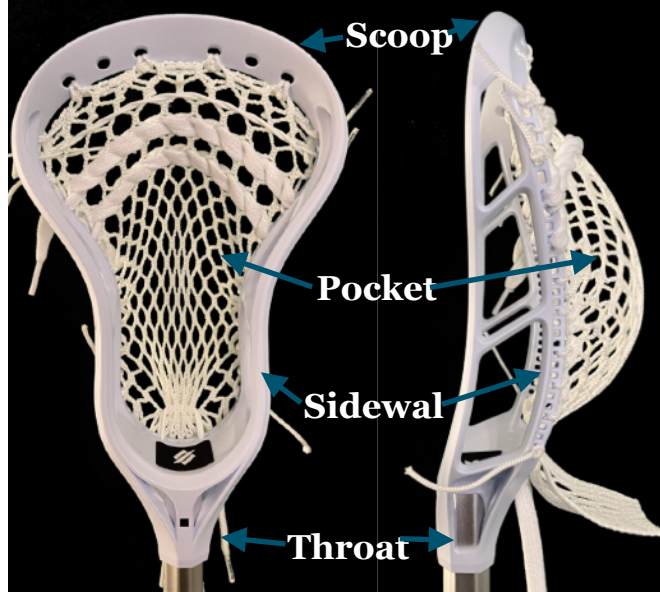
One of the main issues facing players who want to try the sport today is the lack of knowledge about what matters when choosing a stick. Parents who are unsure of whether their kid will enjoy the sport pick up the cheap end offerings, not knowing that they are sabotaging their kids ability to enjoy the sport due to inconsistencies of the pocket. Players that receive these inconsistent sticks are less likely to continue playing the sport due to the frustration created by sticks that perform differently from rep to rep and create bad habits that must be broken later.

In this section, we're going to do a quick overview of the parts of the stick, go in-depth into the dynamics of the pocket, and show you which complete beginner sticks will facilitate a great experience for your child right off the rack.

## The Modern Lacrosse Stick



## The Lacrosse Head



### Parts of the Lacrosse Stick

- 1) **Shaft/Handle** - Shafts vary in width, shape, strength, and length. Shafts with a thin diameter are for girls and 9U boys. Some shafts feature rounded corners while others are more angled. Mens shafts can vary in length based on position with defenseman and goalies able to have longer sticks. All players being introduced to the sport should begin with a short stick to learn technique. The end of each shaft must have a plastic or rubber butt end.
- 2) **Head** - The head of the lacrosse stick consists of the
  - 1) **Face** - This is the open portion of the head where the ball will enter and exit the head. The wider the head, the easier it is to catch.
  - 2) **Sidewall** - The plastic sides of the head.
  - 3) **Scoop** - The top of the head.
  - 4) **Throat** - The part of the head that attaches to the shaft.
  - 5) **Ball Stop** - A piece of useless plastic or foam that sits on the throat of the head.
  - 6) **Pocket** - The netting that is attached to the head. The pocket is the most important part of any stick because it controls how the ball enters and exits the stick. **We will discuss the Pocket in-depth on the next page!**



# The Pocket



## The Pocket



## The Pocket

The pocket is the most important aspect of a lacrosse stick because it controls how the ball sits in the stick and how the ball exits the stick when passing and shooting. **Whip** is the term used to describe how a pocket throws and shoots. Whip is the amount of force needed to throw the ball out of the pocket with all things remaining equal. A ball will come out of a pocket with low whip easier than a stick with a lot of whip. For beginners the whip must remain be relatively low and remain consistent so it will facilitate the proper throwing mechanics by allowing the player to follow through.

The pocket is created and manipulated using 3 components.

- 1) **Mesh** - Mesh is woven into the head using sidewall string. Mesh performs and differs greatly depending on the type.
- 2) **Sidewall String** - Sidewall String attaches the Mesh to the Head. The patterns used to attach the mesh to the head will determine the pockets shape by creating tension points that run from the top of the head to both sides of the head. The shape determines the pocket whip.
- 3) **Shooting Strings and Nylons** - These are added to the mesh to slightly alter the feel of the ball exiting the stick. For beginners purposes, the shooting strings should be loose and the nylon should have a little tension.

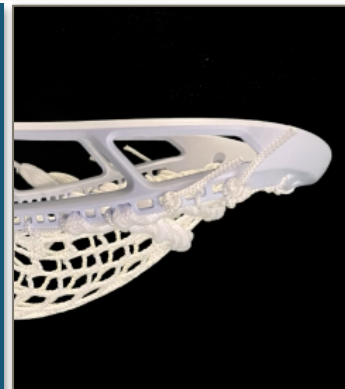
## How to Think about Whip - Kicker vs Quarter Pipe

To conceptualize whip a little further, we will use the analogy of a kicker vs a quarter pipe. The top portion of the head (right) creates a little ramp for the ball in the same way that the kicker and quarter pipe (left) create a ramp for skaters.

- If the pocket has a gradual continuous slope like the **kicker**, it will have **Low Whip** and require less force to leave the stick.

- If the stick has an abrupt steep slope like the **quarter pipe** it will have **High Whip** and require more force to leave the stick.

The depth and slope of this pocket will determine the amount of whip that the stick has. The only problem with this analogy is that mesh not solid like a ramp, It is fluid and can change.



## Playing Quarterback with a Bad Lacrosse Pocket!

To elaborate on the idea of whip and consistency, we will use the analogy of a quarterback in football who's hands will get sticky or slick depending on how hard he tries to throw the ball. This simulate playing lacrosse with an incorrectly strung lacrosse stick.

On the first play, he see's a man running down the middle of the field, sets his feet and delivers a good ball. This is what throwing with a decently strung stick is like 80% of the time.

On the second play, he finds a receiver open deep. As he goes to throw the ball, it sticks to his hand and he hooks the ball into the ground. This is what shooting is like with a soft mesh stick when the extra force applied creates more whip in the stick.

On the third play, he's forced out of the pocket and tries to lightly flip the ball forward to a receiver. Once again, the ball gets stuck in his hand and the ball falls incomplete. This is what it is like to play with a stick that has too much whip because it requires more force to get the ball to leave the stick than was required in the pass.

On the fourth play, a receiver gets open in the middle of the field like the first play. This time, he short arms the ball for fear that the ball was going to whip into the ground and misses the receiver completely.

## The History of Mesh - Fixing the Consistency Problem

As I grew up playing lacrosse, there were three options for how your stick was strung. Soft Mesh, Hard Mesh, and Traditional (which we're omitting for this discussion). Soft Mesh was great. It held the ball well, but when it got wet, the pocket got deeper, creating a more extreme slope, more whip, and inconsistency. To alleviate this, Hard Mesh was created to be more consistent, but it didn't hold the ball very well because it was stiff. Players would spend hours using shampoo and conditioner trying to soften it up.

To solve the problem of water effecting the mesh, wax mesh was invented. The company that benefited most from the wax mesh boom was East Coast Dyes, who's founder Greg Kenneally started the company in his bedroom. Coating the mesh protected the mesh from getting wet and expanding. The only problem was that the wax would soften and harden depending on the temperature.

To combat the temperature issue of wax mesh, Jake McCampbell from String King created a performance mesh made in the same way as soft mesh, but with materials that wouldn't change due to getting wet. With the help of String King's mesh and their U-String platform, which contained stringing patterns for every head on the market, performance mesh quickly became the most popular type of mesh out there.

Today, performance mesh is everywhere, but many companies still use outdated soft mesh and terrible patterns in their beginner sticks.



# Stick You Can Trust



## Beginner Complete Stick Options

To facilitate the recent growth of lacrosse, many companies have been on a mission to produce a complete stick at a low, introductory price point. Until recently, most completely neglected the pocket while striving for the lowest price. This was terrible for players and parents who didn't know any better because their kids would struggle with simple aspects of the game due to a terribly strung stick. Knowledgeable players and parents would purchase a stick and immediately have it restrung by a store associate who would rarely string it with a pocket for a beginner. Recently, a variety of companies have introduced sticks to the marketplace that are ready to go for beginners, right off the rack.

Companies like Powell Lacrosse, East Coast Dyes, and String King use their proprietary performance meshes and have their heads strung by hand using patterns that are perfect for young players.

Warrior and Brine Lacrosse went the R and D route and created a new type of stick called the Warp. The pocket of the Warp is sewn into the head itself. The warps are extremely consistent, but lack the feel and hold of mesh sticks. Warrior and Brine still provide sticks strung in the traditional manner, but they rarely have acceptable pockets.

Finally, STX and Under Armour still put soft mesh in their beginner sticks that are terribly strung and awful for the beginning player. If you have one of these sticks, you can have it restrung by your local stringing associate. Just remember, to tell them that it should have little to no whip. Stringing can cost anywhere from \$30-\$60.

## Sticks for Beginners - 9 and Below

These sticks have smaller heads and shafts that are not legal for play in older age brackets.

### Best 9U Option



\$69.99

**String King**  
"Complete 2 Jr"

### For 6 and Under



\$39.99

**Warrior**  
"Warp Mini"

### Don't Buy / Must Restring



\$29.99

**STX**  
"Stallion 50"

## Sticks For All Beginners

These are full sized sticks that can be purchased for any beginning player.

### Best For The \$



\$69.99

**Powell Lacrosse**  
"Scout 1"

### Best Overall



\$99.99

**String King**  
"Complete 2 Int"

### A Good Option



\$99.99

**ECD**  
"Bravo 1"

### Not for the \$



\$99.99

**Warrior**  
"Warp Next"

### Restrung or Never!



\$39.99

**Under Armour**  
"Nex Gen"