

GOALKEEPING

What is a goalkeeper?

A goalkeeper is the most specialised position on the hockey pitch, they are the last line of defense, able to use every part of their body to stop the ball entering the goal. They are also responsible for the circle and guiding the defensive players.

The important aspects of goalkeeping can be summed up with G.O.A.L.I.E (Gear, Offensive, Awareness, Leadership, Individual and Effort).

Gear

Gear is very important to a goalkeeper as it is responsible for protecting you from harm and reducing the risk of injury.

The gear is the Goalkeeper's responsibility (not parents or coaches). It is your responsibility to maintain your gear; you need to check straps for wear and body armour and helmets to ensure the padding is in the correct position and that there are no cracks in the foam. If something needs to be repaired check with your club and the supplier.

Goalkeepers should also make an effort to dress themselves. it will help you focus on your game and also double check your gear and make sure it is sitting comfortably.

Coaches and parents are not always available to help you with your gear, it is a good idea to practice dressing at home. Also practice packing and re packing your bag, so you know how everything fits in and hopefully nothing gets left behind, another special Goalkeeper skill!

Gear should always fit properly leg guards and kickers should not be too big or loose.

Chest guards, padded shorts, arm guards should not move about or be so tight, that they restrict movement.

An Overshirt and Overshorts are essential for helping to hold gear in place, as well as helping to protect the body armour and shorts from wear.

Gloves or "Foams" should be able to stop a ball without flying off the wrist of the wearer, check you have the correct size.

A Neck guard is a very important piece of equipment. It protects the neck and throat and a wrap around neck guard should always be worn.

The Helmet should fit comfortably without too much moving around.

(Goalkeepers playing higher than U12 should wear fiberglass helmets not plastic ones as these may shatter due to the improving skills of players and the pace of the game).

Goalkeepers should always wear full kit when on the pitch, whether it be training or a game.

At training you will become use to running and moving in your gear (you don't play without a helmet and gloves, you don't train without them).

Offensive

While being a goalkeeper is a defensive position it is important that a goalkeeper knows how to play and be an offensive goalkeeper. An offensive goalkeeper is a goalkeeper that is willing to take a calculated risk in order to stop or clear a ball, is not afraid of the ball hitting them and owns their circle.

Goalkeepers are unique because they are allowed to use any part of their body to stop a ball within the circle. As a result of this, a goalkeeper should aim to be completely in control of their circle by forcing offensive players to take shots from difficult positions.

An important part of being an offensive goalkeeper is your stance. When play enters the goalkeepers quarter on the ground, the goalkeeper's stance is as follows:

- Feet, shoulder width apart
- Heels, off the ground (not on tippy toes! the goalkeeper should be able to hold this position for a minute or two)
- Knees, bent
- Body, leaning slightly forward
- Both hands should be up and just lower than the shoulders, they should not be too close or too far away from the body.
- This stance works best two and a half, large steps of the goal line. This allows the goalkeeper to cover more space.

This stance allows the goalkeeper to cover more of the goal area than they would otherwise be standing normally. This stance also makes it easier and quicker for a goalkeeper to move into a position to save the ball on the ground or in the air.

A goalkeeper should **NEVER** sit down on the pitch, or in the back of the goal net.

Awareness

Awareness is a very important aspect of goalkeeping.

A goalkeeper should always know exactly where the ball is, and its relationship to team mates and opposition players and the goal.

It is impossible to save a shot on goal if you have no idea where the ball is and it is very difficult to call your team mates into positions to help you.

Opposition players will also try to sneak around or past your defenders, it is important that you know where they are so you can call your team mates on to them and avoid a 1 on 1 or a 2 on 1 situation.

As you become more and more familiar with hockey and goalkeeping you will begin to be able to 'read' the play. Being able to read the play is a part of being aware, as it allows you to predict what opposition players are going to do and call defenders in earlier to stop or break down opposition plays

Leadership

During a game of hockey the role of the goalkeeper becomes very important, you are a leader on the field. 95% of a goalkeeper's game is calling and directing players.

The best goalkeepers are able to defend goals by calling players into defensive positions.

Goalkeepers should always be calling and encouraging their players, it helps to motivate them and focus their game. It also tells the opposition that your team is serious about the game and it makes This also helps the goalkeeper focus on the game and follow the flow of the play.

Common calls for a goalkeeper include;

- Clear! Get the ball out of the circle.
- Goalside! Tells players to get between the player and the goal
- Man Up! Tell players to man up on an opposition player
- Two Here! You're manning up two or more players and need assistance
- Tim mark up! Telling a single team mate to man up usually followed by a direction left/ right
- Tackle! Tells a teammate to tackle the ball carrier
- Mine! The goalkeeper wants the ball, players should leave the ball for the goalkeeper it is now the responsibility of the goalkeeper to play the ball.

Individual

A goalkeeper is a unique position in that there is only one on a team at club level.

It is quite easy for goalkeepers to become isolated during a game of hockey, so it is important to call and be involved in play.

Being the last line of defense it is very easy to become focused on the goals that go in and not on those you have saved. **Remember**, the opposition has had to beat ten other players before they get to you. **Hockey is a team sport**, and all of you are working together to score and defend goals. Every goalkeeper has goals scored against them, but for every one that goes in a goalkeeper will save countless others, focus on the ones you save and learn from the ones that go in.

Effort

Goalkeeping is 100% effort, every time you get into your gear you want to give 100%, whether you're at training or playing a game.

At training it's important that you try to save every single ball. Some will go in, but pick yourself up and re focus, because eventually you will start to save more of them!

At training you should also practise calling, learn players names and positions, by the time you get to a game it will be much easier to call players into positions that can help you and the team. Goalkeepers should also put effort into their fitness.

Being fit and flexible will improve your chances of saving a ball and reduce the risks of injury.

Many international Goalkeepers are the fittest members on their team.

Basic Goalkeeping Drills

Everyday drills

These simple drills are for everyday and don't require goalkeeping equipment

1. Hand Eye Co-Ordination

Simply get a tennis ball and bounce it against a wall throwing it with one hand and catching it with the other. When you tire of this, extend yourself, use a reaction ball instead.

2. Foot Eye Co-Ordination

Simply kick a tennis ball against a wall, alternating left and right feet. Again extend yourself to make it harder use a reaction ball

Goalkeeping Drills

These drills should be done as part of a warm up or when goalkeepers are by themselves. These drills should be done in full kit

1. Mobility Drill

Starting in the middle of the goal, goalkeepers sprint to the top of the circle, then side step left or right keeping their hands in their ready stance, following the curve of the circle.

Once the goalkeeper reaches the backline they run backwards to the goal post.

2. Recovery Drill

Start goalkeepers face down in the goal. Lay three different coloured cones at various position in circle. A coach or person assisting the goalkeeper should call out the colour of one cone.

The goalkeeper must get up off the ground and run to touch the cone. Upon touching the cone the goalkeeper must run backwards to the goal with their hands up in the stance position and return to the start position. Repeat using the cone colours in random order.

3. Kicking Drill

Set up five balls in a line in front of the goal, the goalkeeper should kick the balls into the goal alternating feet for every kick.

4. Saving / Reaction Drill A

Using multi coloured tennis balls, hit them at the goalkeeper either using a stick or tennis racket. (use tennis balls as they travel faster, bounce and goalkeepers are not use to saving them).

Start slow and keep the balls within reach of the goalkeeper, slowly get faster as the goalkeeper warms up and move the balls out of reach forcing the goalkeeper to move.

Finally add bounce forcing the goalkeeper to react faster.

5. Saving / Reaction Drill B

Get 3 hitters and set them up in the circle, one in the middle one on the left and one on the right just inside the circle, the goalkeeper starts at the goal line

Give each hitter 5 hockey balls, starting from the left the first player, hits the ball towards the goalkeeper who attempts to saves it.

Then repeat with the middle hitter, then the right hitter.

Continue from the left again until all hitters have shot their 5 balls to the goalkeeper.

It is important to give the goalkeeper time to recover between shots, the next shot should not come until the goalkeeper is up and moving towards the position for the next shot.

A note on training goalkeepers

It is very important, especially for new goalkeepers, to be very aware that most goalkeeping injuries and incidents are caused by turning your back on a drill or a game.

A goalkeeper has no back protection.

When moving behind the goals always face towards the middle of the ground. This minimises the risk of injury from a stray ball.

If for any reason (broken strap, drink etc) a goalkeeper should always move to the sideline, especially if you need to remove any of your protective gear eg.helmet, arm guard etc.

Never behind the goals as you can still be hit by a ball.

Once out of the circle and away from the drill let the coach know what you are doing (for example getting a drink) then remove gear. To rejoin a drill in progress make sure all your gear is on and move behind the goals, when you are ready let the coach know you are ready to re-enter the drill.

A Note for Coaches

It is important for Coaches to realise that once you have ended a drill or want to collect balls to continue on with a drill, that field players do not hit or take shots any further shots on goal.

Please make it clear to all players that the drill has stopped/ended.

When a coach ends/halts a drill, goalkeepers tend to relax and catch their breath or reposition their gear. As a result they are not concentrating on the field players. As a result of this they may be unprepared for a shot and the chance of injury is almost tripled.

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Notes