

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Goalkeeping 101</i> .....	2
• <i>Footwork</i> .....	2
• <i>Catching</i> .....	3
• <i>Punching</i> .....	6
• <i>Diving</i> .....	7
• <i>Distribution</i> .....	8

# **Goalkeeping 101**

## **(Skill Level – Beginner - Advanced)**

Being a goalie in soccer is a unique position and one of the toughest positions to play.

As a coach, you want to ensure your goalkeepers are learning the fundamental skills necessary to develop into a quality goalkeeper.

Please note that depending on the age group the rules and skills required could vary but these are the basics.

### **(Footwork)**

A goalie should always try to collect the ball with their whole body behind it. And to do that, they need to get to it quickly, which is why footwork is one of the most important parts of the job.

### **Instructions**

1. Keep moving and stay on the toes. The feet of a good goalkeeper are constantly in motion, and they dance on the balls of the feet. A sure way for a keeper to get beat is to have their weight back on their heels. Watch for this! Not only does this keep them from moving quickly to a ball, but it has bad effects on their diving and jumping. Your keeper should have "happy feet", always bouncing on the toes and with their weight forward.
2. Stay square to the ball. The goalkeepers' hips and shoulders should always be square to the ball; that is, perpendicular to a line between the shooter/ball and the keeper. A common problem is for young keepers to turn sideways when collecting balls that aren't in front of them. Make sure they always square up.
3. Get behind the ball. It is easiest to make the save when the ball is directly in front of them, so they should use their feet to get behind the ball every time, if possible. A goalkeeper uses two types of steps to do this:
  - Shuffle step - this is used for short distances. The body stays square to the ball, the feet shuffle quickly but never cross over. Right foot stays on the right, left on the left.
  - Crossover step - used to cover more ground. Turn the hips and run in the direction they want to go, but with their upper body facing the ball. Again, don't cross the feet up - right on the right, left on the left. If

there is a long way to go, use the crossover, then end with a few quick shuffles to adjust the final position for making the catch. A common problem, especially for young players, is to cross their feet and trip themselves up. Make sure right foot stays on the right, left on left.

4. Move forward to the ball. The save should always be made forwards, moving towards the ball. This accomplishes two important things: it allows the keeper to get to the ball faster, and it gives the keeper the proper angle to deflect any balls that aren't caught away from the goal. Do not let your keeper take a step back when they catch the ball. If anything, they should take a step forward.
5. The Ready Position. At the moment a shot is taken, the goalkeeper should be square to the ball, on their toes with their knees bent, hands at the sides, weight forward, ready to spring quickly in any direction. This stance is called the ready position. Even as the keeper is moving, they should always be close to this position so they can react quickly to a shot. The keeper should almost always come to the ready position just as a shot is taken, so they can react in any direction necessary.
6. Recover quickly, and always keep your hands free. Just because the goalkeeper goes down with a dive or slide does not mean the play is over. A deflection may keep the ball in play, and perhaps send it right to an attacker! The goalkeeper must regain their feet as quickly as possible. Preferably, this is done without using the hands, so the hands are ready to make a stop if necessary. There is no set method for doing this, but goalkeepers should practice getting back up quickly and without the use of their hands.

## **(Catching)**

The only advantage a goalkeeper has over any other player on the soccer field is that they can use their hands. In this way, a goalkeeper can control the ball in a way no other player can, but to gain this control, they must catch the ball.

Catching technique is second only to footwork in making a safe, solid keeper. "Soft" goals that just slip into the net and rebound goals are tough for the keeper and the entire team to deal with. Proper training and practice can prevent these.

## **Instructions**

### **The Two Principles of Catching**

1. The first thing to remember about catching a soccer ball is always get the hands to the ball first! The occasional kick save may be necessary, but a goalkeeper's hands are their advantage, and they should always try to

exercise that advantage whenever possible. The "hands to the ball first" axiom applies to every single technique in goalkeeping.

2. The second thing is a keeper must have "soft hands". This means they must use their arms, back and legs to cushion the ball, absorbing its energy and allowing them to hang on to it. When reaching for a ball, the arms should be extended (but don't lock the elbows!), then the elbows bend as the catch is made, allowing the arms to absorb the speed of the ball. The keeper can also bend back a bit at the waist to help cushion the ball. A quiet catch is a good, soft catch. If the ball loudly slaps the hands, the keeper is not giving enough with the ball. Don't allow the keeper to take steps backwards to cushion the catch - remember, the keeper should always move forwards towards the ball.

There are *four main handling techniques* or "hand shapes". Keepers should regularly practice these go-to handling techniques in training and incorporate them into their game.

**The 'Scoop'** handing technique is used to save or gather low balls.

1. Adjust the position of your body so that it's in line with the direction of the ball.
2. Bend your elbows slightly.
3. Use the fingers and palms of your hands to create a smooth "ramp" for the ball to roll into, before scooping it tightly to your chest.
4. Treat your body as a wall behind the ball, offering an extra barrier of protection (read on to learn more on this).

## **Additional Advice**

- Use the Scoop technique whenever the ball is played along the ground and up to about the knee height.
- Collapsing Forward. With most aspects of goalkeeping, it's better to be safe than sorry. So, if a low ball comes at speed (or with spin), collapse forward onto the ball — and smother it to ensure that it doesn't spill out.
- Always try to land on your (soft) forearms rather than your elbows.

**The cup (or "basket")** handling technique is used to save shots around the mid-drift.

7. Keep your eyes on ball at all times.
8. Position your body square to ball, with your body weight slightly forward.
9. Present your hands out to the ball by allowing your little fingers to touch. This creates a pathway for the ball to follow towards your body.
10. As the shot comes in, guide it to your chest/stomach area. Allow it to hit your body first and cushion the blow. Maintain forward momentum and balance.
11. Wrap your hands and forearms tightly around the ball and bring your head and body over the ball to grip it safely.

## **Additional Advice**

- Use the Cup technique whenever the ball is played above knee height, around the chest/stomach/waist area.
- Collapsing Forward. Exactly like the Scoop, you have the option to collapse forward onto the ball — and smother it to ensure that it doesn't spill out.
- It's advisable that you aim to collapse forward on hard-drilled shots.

**The W (or “Diamond” or “basket”)** handling technique is used to catch shots struck at head height, as well as crosses in the air. Its name comes from the ‘W’ shape formed when both hands meet at the thumbs.

1. Keep your eyes on ball at all times.
2. Position your body so that you meet the ball in front of you, and keep your elbows slightly bent as you raise your hands to make the catch.
3. Spread your fingers wide and bring your two thumbs together to create a ‘W’ shape.
4. Wrap your thumbs and fingers around the contour of the ball. Ensure that as much latex from your gloves is in contact with the ball as possible
5. As the ball strikes your gloves, you'll need to be:
  - a. Firm in the wrists — so that the speed of the ball doesn't blow your hands back or allow the ball slip through.
  - b. Soft in the hands — to stop the ball dead, like a shock absorber.
6. Bring the ball into your chest by wrapping your hands and forearms tightly around it.

## **Additional Advice**

- Use the W's technique whenever the ball is played at head height or above, in an area where it can be claimed.
- Keep elbows close and bent to allow the ball to push your hands back towards your face slightly. This helps to absorb the power behind the shot/cross.
- Having soft hands is different to have weak hands. You need to practice using W's to absorb the power behind the ball to ensure that you don't parry it away into a dangerous area.
- Try to wrap your hands around the top half of the ball rather than the bottom. This way if the ball isn't caught then it'll drop down in front of you to recover, rather than going over your head (and possibly into the goal).

## **(Punching the Ball)**

There are a few occasions when a goalkeeper will not be able to catch the soccer ball. It still must be kept out of the net, of course, so sometimes the keeper must deflect the ball over the crossbar or around the post. For high crossed balls in traffic, sometimes the safest play is to knock the ball away from the goal area if it cannot be caught.

Punching, or boxing, is used to clear away crossed balls that cannot be caught, usually in heavy traffic. It is not a technique used often, as the ball should be caught whenever possible, but can be very effective in allowing a keeper to demonstrate they have complete control over their goal area. If there is any doubt for a keeper that they will not be able to catch a cross, it should be punched. "When in doubt, punch it out" (but remember this applies only to crosses, not shots!).

The three keys to an effective punch are:

1. Width - getting the ball towards the sidelines, out of the center of the soccer field
2. Distance - getting the ball as far away from the goal as possible
3. Height - getting the ball over the attacking players

### **Instructions**

1. The proper hand position for punching is important for best control and for avoiding finger injuries. The hands should form a fist, with the four fingers forming a flat surface, and the thumb pressed firmly against the side of the fist but below the flat surface out of harm's way. The flat surface allows for the most control, as well as getting sensitive knuckles out of the way. Do not tuck the thumb inside the fingers, as this is just asking for a hand injury.
2. Punching can be done with one hand or both hands. This is determined by the direction you want the ball to go: If you are trying to send the ball back

in the direction it is coming from, use two hands. If you want the ball to continue away in the same direction it is already going, use a one-handed punch.

3. A two-handed punch starts with the fists placed together to form the largest surface possible. The hands should start close to the body, elbows at the sides, and then explode through the ball, utilizing back and hip muscles as well, to drive the ball high, far and wide of the goal. Often a weak punch results when the ball is struck with arms already extended, so make sure the hands start from close to the body.
4. The hand takes the same shape for a one-handed punch as for a two-handed punch; use the flat surface formed by the fingers. Use a one-handed punch to box the ball in the same direction it is already going use the arm on the same side the ball is coming from, and punch in a powerful, compact motion across the body to send the ball on. Avoid a wide, looping swing as this does not generate much power. This should be a punch, not a slap!

## **(The Dive)**

The dive can be the most spectacular save in soccer, with the goalkeeper seemingly flying in out of nowhere to keep the ball from hitting the net. It's an important part of the keeper's arsenal, but a keeper must have sound fundamentals to perform a dive successfully.

Diving should only be done as a last resort - good footwork and positioning should eliminate the need to dive often. Beware the keeper who loves to dive too much and dives even on what should be easy saves. It looks impressive, but safety should come first.

### **Instructions**

1. Use good footwork to get into position to dive. Small shuffle steps, or occasionally even a quick crossover, need to be used to get the body into the proper range to make the dive.
2. Move forward at an angle into the dive. The first step going into a dive should be sideways towards the ball and forward at roughly a 30-degree angle. This gives the keeper the proper angle to deflect balls away from goal. One of the biggest problems for keepers is diving backwards - they put their weight on their heels and stretch backwards, and often will deflect the ball back into the side netting. Make sure they start with their weight forward on their toes and step forwards into the dive.
3. Get low and shoot out towards the ball. Drive with the near leg, starting low to generate power. This should come as a natural progression after the step forward at the angle.

4. Stay square while diving and after landing on the ground. Even while in midair, the keeper's body should be square to the ball. Why? Because this gives them the best catching position, gets the largest part of their body behind the ball, and will have them land on their hip and side which is the safest landing position. Same thing goes after they are on the ground. Do not allow the keeper to turn face-down while making the catch and land on their stomach! Not only can the ball slip through but landing on the ball can injure the keeper. Similarly, don't let them roll over on their back after the catch is made.
5. Catch the ball with the hands first, then cushion the fall. Many young keepers are afraid of falling to the ground while diving and fail to make the catch in the first place. Always make the catch first, with the hands in good catching position, then worry about landing. If they have good technique and land on their side, it will hurt much less. In addition, if they make a good catch and have the ball in their hands, they can use the ball as a cushion to soften the landing.

## **(Goalkeeper Distribution)**

The goalkeeper is the last line of defense, but also the first line of attack. After a save is made, the keeper must quickly look to break out and start the counter seconds.

Distribution can be done two ways: throws or kicks. Both have advantages for certain situations.

## **(Kicks)**

### **Punts (U12+)**

A punt is usually the kick with the greatest distance, although the high trajectory and hang time usually mean 50-50 balls at the receiving end.

### **Instructions**

1. Start with the ball in both hands. It may be more comfortable to end up dropping the ball with one hand rather than two. If so, the hand on the same side as the kicking foot should be used. But starting with both hands will allow for more consistency in the drop.
2. Take a short run up (about 2-3 steps) at a slight angle to the kicking direction; this gets the hip more involved and generates more power. The plant foot should point towards the target.
3. Drop the ball - don't toss it upwards! - and kick, following through to land on the kicking foot. The kicking foot should be straight, directly online with the target, and should not swing around the body.



## **(Roll/Throws)**

Throws are usually much shorter than kicks, but much more accurate. A quick throw right to the feet of an open teammate is often the safest distribution. The goalkeeper has several basic throws available. I've listed them here in order of decreasing accuracy and increasing distance.

For the javelin, sidearm and overhand throw, the trajectory of the soccer ball should be mostly level or even downwards, not high and looping. We want the ball to hit the ground in front of the receiver, to give it time to settle on the grass and make for an easy trap. A rule of thumb is to have the ball initially hit the ground about two-thirds of the way to the receiver.

### **Roll (All Ages)**

The roll is the most accurate but shortest distribution. It is also typically the easiest for teammates to receive.

### **Instructions**

1. Control the ball between the palm of the hand and the forearm with a bent wrist.
2. Step with the opposite foot, and "bowl" the ball, making sure the fingertips touch the ground on the delivery. This will require bending the knees and waist to get low enough. Just like in real bowling, you don't want to drop the ball from the hand to the ground. The transition should be smooth.

### **Javelin or Baseball Throw (U12+)**

In the middle of the accuracy and distance scale is the javelin or baseball throw. The form is similar to how a javelin is thrown.

### **Instructions**

1. The ball starts in the palm beside the head and is thrown straight forward as the keeper steps into the throw. Some backspins on the ball will help it "sit down" and make it easier to receive, so the keeper can let the ball roll off their fingertips slightly at the end of the release to provide this.
2. Make sure the fingers are slightly over the top of the ball to keep it on a level or downward trajectory.

## **Overhand Throw (U12+)**

The overhand throw or "sling" is the longest but least accurate throw. It can be a good technique for very young players, since sometimes they can actually throw it as far as they can punt.

### **Instructions**

1. The soccer ball is again controlled between the palm and forearm with a bent wrist.
2. The arm is placed almost straight back, and as the keeper steps into the throw, the arm is fully extended, elbow locked, and brought around in a circle, over the head, and released towards the target.
3. The hand should end pointing at the target, and letting the fingertips roll under the ball at the finish can provide some backspin to help the ball roll smoothly.

## **Two Hand Overhand Throw (All Ages)**

The two-hand overhand throw is probably the simplest of all the throws for younger players to master.

### **Instructions**

1. Pick up the ball with both hands, one on each side of the ball. Hands should be evenly spaced on both sides of the ball. It can help to shift them back a bit, too, so the thumbs are almost touching the back of the ball.
2. Arch your back slightly. Many players try to throw exclusively with their arms, but most of the power should come from your back and shoulders, as well as the momentum from your running start. Think of your body like a catapult being pulled back -- your feet are still firmly planted, but your spine becomes a loaded spring. Do this right before you're ready to actually throw the ball.
3. Bring the ball up and over your head. Start with the ball behind your head and throw it over the top of your head. A legal throw in must travel "from behind and over his [or her] head. Referees might be a touch lenient here for a quick throw, but you must, at least, start with the ball held above your head.
4. Release the ball with a forward flick of the wrists. Bring your arms up and forward so that your hands and the ball travel directly over your head. At the same time, bring your arched back forward like a spring and extend your arms fully and release the ball from just behind the head.