

Goalkeeping

The soccer goalkeeper is the only truly "specialized" player on the field. A defender can act as a striker and vice versa and although their trained skills probably won't fit best for these new roles, they would still be able to hold themselves up. However, put the same striker or defender in the goalkeeper's place and you get one goofy goal guardian.

When playing goalkeeper keep mind these 5 goalkeeping tips. If you follow them you will be a better goalkeeper and hopefully bring your game to a new level. These tips are posted with permission of Sam Snow and US Youth Soccer. Here are the 5 Goalkeeping tips for soccer.

Goalkeeping Tip #1- Go for everything!

You may not be able to stop every shot that comes your way, but if you make the attempt, you will find that you are stopping shots you never before thought possible. You will also have the personal satisfaction that at least you made the attempt and your teammates will be more forgiving even if you miss.

Goalkeeping Tip #2- After a save – get up quickly!

If you have gone to the ground to make a save get back on your feet as fast as possible. Look for a fast break distribution or to direct your teammates into position to receive a build-up distribution. This aspect is particularly important if you are injured. You cannot show weakness, you may tend to your injury after you have started the counterattack. This will particularly intimidate your opponents and raise the confidence in your teammates.

Goalkeeping Tip #3- Do not be half-hearted --- 100% effort!

Every time you make a play it must be with all of your ability. If you go half way you will miss saves and injure yourself.

Goalkeeping Tip #4- Communicate loudly!

You must constantly give instructions when on defense. When your team is on the attack, come to the top of your penalty area or beyond and talk to your teammates and offer support to the defenders. Be mentally involved in the entire match, no matter where the ball is.

Goalkeeping Tip #5- No excuses! No whining! Just get on with the match.

If a goal is scored against you, a corner kick is given up or the shot is a near miss, DO NOT yell at your teammates even if it's their fault. DO NOT hang your head; kick the ground or the post if it was your fault. During the match is no time to point fingers or make excuses. The play is over, its ancient history, get on with playing the remainder of the match. Focus on what lies ahead!

Goalkeeper Responsibilities

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Defending the Goal - Obviously, this is the goalkeeper's main role.

Deflecting shots, saving loose balls, gathering crosses will be all handled by the goalkeeper, but they'll also need to defend the goal in set pieces. Goalkeepers coordinate the position of the wall at a free kick and sometimes they position defenders at corners.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Initiating Offensive Plays - Once a goalkeeper saves a ball, he should immediately look for a counter-attack opportunity. If you look closely at a soccer match, you'll see a goalkeeper that has just made a save quickly stand up and rush out at the edge of the penalty box, looking for a striker to play as fast as possible. If there's no striker available, a soccer goalkeeper will

usually make sure his defensive line reached its position (usually somewhere around 30 yards from their own goal) then he will initiate the positional attack, by passing the ball to a free defender (usually sideways).

In very rare situations, the goalkeeper has an additional offensive job...creating offensive superiority in last minute set pieces. Just like in hockey, where the goalkeeper is replaced with a field player in the last few seconds to create superiority, a goalkeeper might sometimes run up to the enemy penalty box in a late match set piece. Creating numeric superiority might be an advantage in itself, even if the goalkeeper himself doesn't score. Obviously, this is a **great risk** since the opposing team might get the ball and immediately initiate a counter attack and score in an empty goal.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Coordinating the Defense - Since a goalkeeper has his back at the goal and has the widest view of all players on the pitch, he is usually responsible with coordinating the entire defensive line (at least that's what a good goalkeeper does). For example, he can spot gaps in the defense that other players cannot or he could assign man marking if the opposing players change areas a lot.

He might also be in charge of coordinating the defense's offside trap, by lining up players in front of him or telling them to push forward so the opposing strikers are left offside (however, staying in a straight line is the defender's job since the goalkeeper can't see whether or not the players in front of him are aligned correctly).

That's pretty much all a goalkeeper has to do in a match. Sounds hard? Well it is. Of course, a one-sided match where your team will be constantly in the offensive third trying to score might not put too much pressure on the goalkeeper, but in an even-sided match he may very well decide the end result (either way). So in order to handle all these factors, he will have to train the following important soccer goalkeeping skills:

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Agility – A slow goalkeeper is nothing more than a third post and you can't make much of a use of that. Instead, a goalkeeper will want to be as agile as possible, in order to be able to move quickly from one end of the goal to the other, to deflect a shot or save a loose ball.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Jumping – Good jumping is a must for any soccer goalkeeper. Not only will a good jumping skill help you out with saving high shots, but it's also important when saving or boxing out crosses.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Balance – Since goalmouth situations chance with lightning fast speeds, a goalkeeper must have good balance and positioning in order to be able to perform last second saves. Shots that get deflections half way will also require good balance to be saved.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Strength – Unlike field players, who usually focus their gym training on their lower body, a goalkeeper must get a complete workout. You'll need leg strength to help you jump higher, arm strength to help you **stop shots** and throw the ball further and upper body strength to allow you to take fall damage without getting hurt. Good overall strength is also important in direct duels, especially in the 6-yard box where you're basically allowed to run or through anyone without getting whistled.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Positioning – A goalkeeper's position in the goal is more important than you might think. Since 7 yards is a wide area to cover, positioning right can make defending the goal easier. A good soccer goalkeeper will protect the low post if the opponent has the ball in an angle and he will always be ready for a dive or a cross.

Usually, the textbook positioning is slightly forward of the goal line, with the knees bent for maximum balance. This way, you're ready to go either way after the ball, since your legs are already half-way through "charging up" the jump.

Your upper body should be straight, not leaned forward and your shoulder and arms slightly weighted forward. You should never let your weight center be too high up, even when repositioning yourself in the goal, according to the ball's position. Always keep your butt down and your knees bent, even while moving sideways on the goal line (the same move a basketball or handball defender would make to move sideways).

Soccer Goalkeeping - Save Stances

There are several types of saves a goalkeeper can perform, but knowing when to use which is entirely situational. You have your basic standing saves, kneeling saves, medium and high saves, forward vaults, tweener saves and **diving saves**. Let's see when and how you should use each:

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Standing Saves – This is not a recommended save when the ball comes rolling at a high speed, especially if you're playing on a wet pitch. Basically, what you'll be doing will be bending down forward from the waist, collecting the rolling ball and bringing it up to your chest. Simply allow the ball to roll up on your wrists, with your legs straight and back arched and your feet close together (so that if the ball accidentally rolls past your hands, it doesn't go through your legs). Then clutch the ball against your chest, protecting it and straighten up your back.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Kneeling Saves – The kneeling save is slightly similar to the standing save in what regards a goalkeeper's arm work, however besides bending forward from your waist, you will have to take a knee and keep the other one almost perpendicular to the one on the ground. This position of the legs reduces all chances that the ball might slip between your legs and into the goal. The kneeling save can be performed against balls that come at you at higher speeds in comparison to the standing save.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Medium and High Saves – If the ball is coming towards your chest or head area, keep your shoulders square on the oncoming ball and bend your arms forward, keeping them slightly tensed. Use the elbow flexion to dampen the ball's incoming force rather than your shoulders. Your shoulders will be used as a last resort if the ball is **too powerful** to handle. The reason you shouldn't take your shoulders back and dampen the ball's force using them is that you might not be able to fully stop the ball and it might hit your chest, bouncing off.

Now, unlike other types of saves, medium and high saves will require a bit more practice in the mechanics and less on positioning. When you get to a point where you can catch the ball and safely bring it to your chest in a full stop, you've mastered this type of save. One last thing, on powerful shots from close range, it will be extremely difficult to secure the ball, even if you use your fingers, elbows and shoulders as a force dampener. It might be better to punch the ball upwards or sideways in this case, or you might risk giving the other team a rebound opportunity.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Forward Vaults – The forward vault is an extension of the kneeling save. Use the same mechanics as in the kneeling save, but instead of standing up directly with the ball secured to your chest, vault forward to the ground and extend your arms beneath yourself with the palms upwards, trapping the ball between your fingers, wrists and forearms. Then, after the ball's force is dampened, pull your arms back and trap the ball between your arms and chest. Best used on slippery pitches, where stopping the ball is trickier and securing it tightly becomes even more important.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Tweener Saves – A ball that comes rolling to a goalkeeper's side is usually referred to as a tweener, hence the name of this type of save. Basically, the mechanics for this save are very close to the forward vault's ones, but since the ball is coming at your side, you have to vault sideways. The only difference between the two is the leg work. With the tweener save, you will have to extend your lead foot in the direction of the save, kneeling on the trailing leg. Just make sure you don't allow any space for the ball to squeeze through the space opening up between your legs.

Soccer Goalkeeping >> Diving Saves – The diving save is probably the most spectacular a goalkeeper can perform. When a ball is far enough from your current position that a tweener save isn't enough, you will have to perform a diving save.

This involves pushing yourself hard into the ground with both legs, fully extending yourself sideways in the direction the ball is aimed at and releasing the jump. Luckily, you'll be able to deflect the ball off its course towards the goal. Remember that a ball can rarely be "**saved**" and secured from a dive and even if you do grab hold of it, the fall has a chance of shattering the ball away from your hands. So, depending on the situation, it might be best to deflect it rather than try to save it.

Soccer Goalkeeper Over/Under Drill

This soccer goalkeeper drill will challenge your goal keepers ability to jump over an object, roll then get up and then leap again to stop the ball. The drill puts your goalkeepers in a position they might find themselves during a game, on the ground. Once on the ground the goalkeeper must learn to get off the ground as fast as possible to make a potential save.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVRnX5u7MC8>

Keeper Wars

Using four cones create two goal about 5-10 yards apart (depending on age, ability, etc). The width of the goals should be just beyond the arm span of the keepers. The keepers sit just in front of the cones facing each other. Each attempt to score goals on the other by throwing the ball through the goal. The ball must be kept below their shoulders.

Keeper Punts

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJxMRs1moOI>

Goalkeeper Warm-ups

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0SW1ckblik>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAXyuB64-KE>

Advanced Level Keeper Drills

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftPnZqd8pgE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCxbvEPiilY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5Tf6jlaMvA>

How to handle the ball

The goalkeeper's main objective is to prevent goals. He does that by either clearing or catching the ball.

Settling the ball

The general method used for settling rising shots (or shots above shoulder level) is known as The W. The name comes from the positioning of the keeper's hands. The index finger and thumb on both of his hands are locked at about 45 degrees. His hands are put next to each other, forming the letter W. Ideally, the index fingers should not be perpendicular but pointing slightly inward.

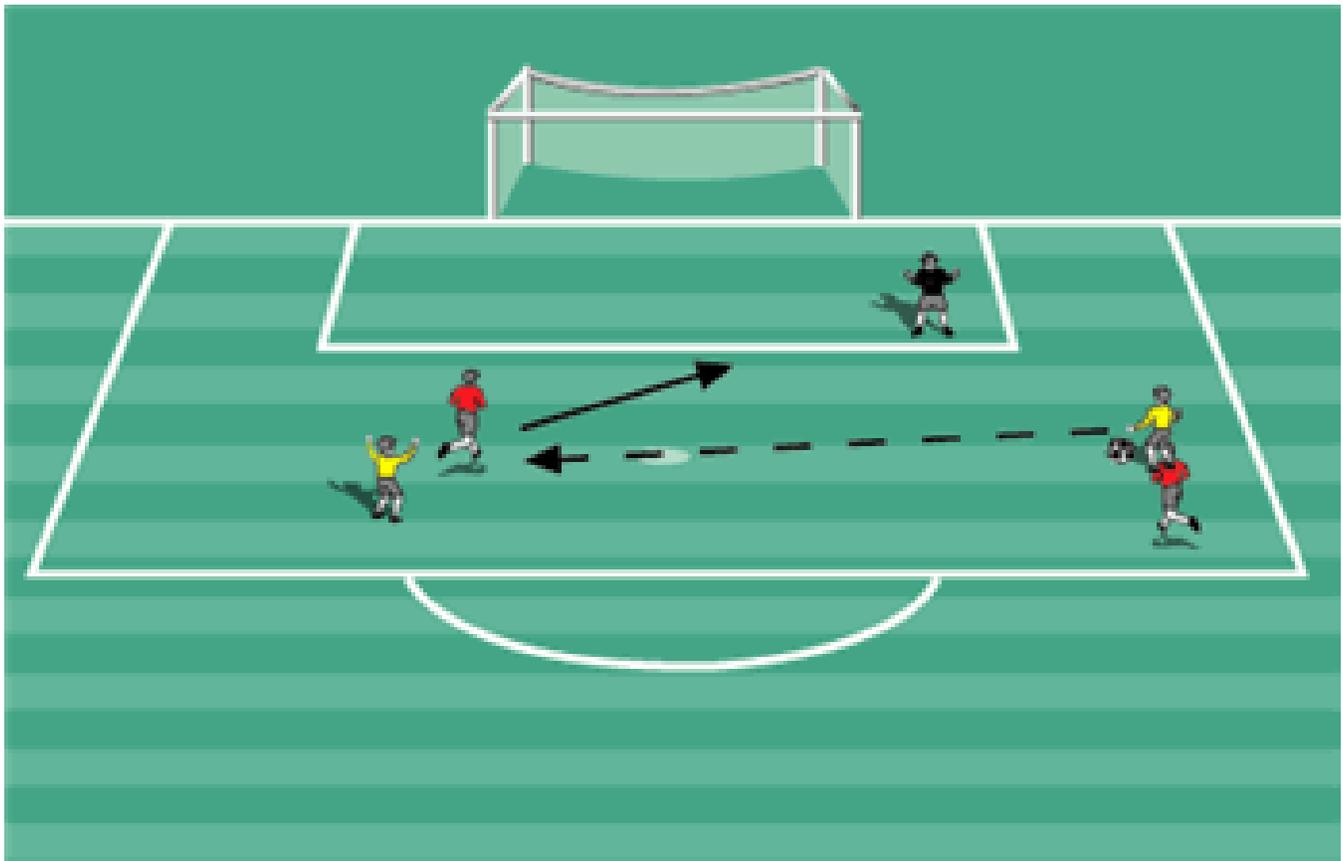
Balls directed below shoulder level (or dropping balls) are handled by cushioning it from below. Similarly to handling a baby, the keeper must cushion the ball from underneath, pressing it against his chest.

Different methods of handling the ball

<p style="text-align: center;">Rolling ball pickup</p> <p>The safest way to gather a rolling ball is to get down on one knee and scoop it up with your hands. To ensure that the ball has no chance of going through your legs, you must plant your other foot near the grounded knee. From this position, you can easily cradle the ball to your chest. As you lock the ball against your chest, lean forward to protect it.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Grounding the ball</p> <p>Raise the knee of your opposite foot (the one further away from the ball) and leap sideways, off your other foot. When handling the ball, have your nearer arm parallel to the ground with fingers and thumb forming the bottom part of the W. Your other hand should be used for guiding the ball down.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Diving for air shots</p> <p>This is one of the more spectacular techniques used in goalkeeping. In terms of execution, it encompasses a scissors-like movement, similar to a bicycle kick. First, raise the knee of your leg which is further away from the ball. Then, take off from your other foot which should be nearer to the ball. As you're flying, accelerate the knee of your leaping foot while extending the other. When you catch the ball, get your hands on top of it and use it as a landing cushion. The ball should touch the floor before the rest of your body. Contrary to intuition, you should not land the dive on your side.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Crosses</p> <p>On high crosses and steeply falling balls, you must be the first person to contact the ball. Take off from one leg with the knee of the other raised as high as you can. This will give you protection against enemies (and even teammates) that can potentially collide with you. Immediately after you grip the ball, bring it to your chest and lean over it.</p>	

One area of goalkeeping that seems to get neglected a lot is the scramble save. If you aren't familiar with the scramble saves it's because it's not a regular save, it simply is a ball the keeper has to scramble across the goal mouth to make.

An example would be in the diagram below where the attacking player has beaten the defender, the keeper has stepped out and another defender is running across the goalmouth so the player with the ball plays the ball across the goal to the supporting player.



The only way the keeper is going to make the save on this shot is by scrambling across the goalmouth and throw himself toward the ball.

The way to train for this type of scramble save is by having a server start with a ball around the 6 on one side of the goal with another player toward the middle of the goal. The keeper starts by cutting off the angle for the shot.



The server plays a square ball across toward the other player who shoots the ball first time. The keeper takes a quick step then throws his body across the goal toward the ball to make the save



If the keeper starts 'cheating' early by leaning toward the second player before the ball is passed, the server can shoot instead of pass.

The keeper would do this 5 times from each side and work on scrambling quickly, getting to the ball early and making the save.