

Goalie Development Skill Stages and Practice Drills

These drills and development stages are approximate and coaches should evaluate each goaltender on their individual strengths and weaknesses to encourage development in all aspects of goaltending. Just because a goalie is at a certain age group, does not mean they do not require skill development defined at a younger age group. Equally, a goaltender may have progressed beyond the specified age group and may be ready for more advanced instruction. The age group separations are only to highlight the important skills that should be focused on at each development stage, and how a goaltender should develop sequentially.

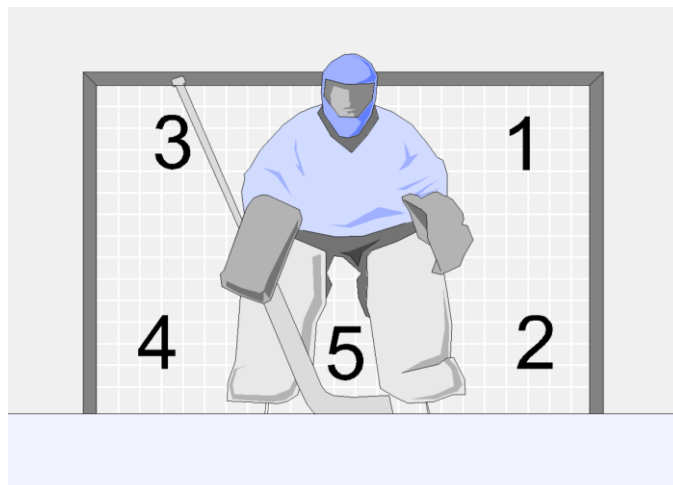
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Videos and Instructional Drills are uploaded regularly and can be found on YouTube @ [7HoleGoaltending](#)

Fast Thoughts

- Contrary to popular belief, the goaltender is 40% of your team! You do not succeed as a team without a good goaltender. Practices should reflect this. Assign one assistant coach as a goalie coach, or rotate the assignment. **WORK WITH THE GOALIES** – don't use them as target dummies! If you cannot identify exactly what move or skill you are developing in the goaltender (other than lots of shots), then the drill is for the shooters – **NOT THE GOALIE**.
- Beginner goaltenders need to practice (a) position (b) correct saves, and (c) recovery. To do this effectively, they **MUST** have time to practice in the crease! A little off to the left, right, back, or forward and they are out of position. To be good, a goalie must know where they are in the net. Practice with a crease (even if you have to draw one yourself).
- Work for muscle memory. Goalies who have to think about the save are already playing catch up. You want goalies who react. Repetition makes muscle memory, which becomes instinct on the ice. Each practice plan should, in part, re-inforce core/basic skills to develop that muscle memory.
- One puck at a time!! Shooters should not be shooting until the goalie has acknowledged the shooter and is ready for a puck. The last thing any coach wants is the goaltender out for several weeks from a preventable puck in practice.
- Keep drill sequences to 10-15 seconds in length at the longest! If your team allows more than 15 seconds of consecutive shots on your goalie, you have defensive issues, not goalie issues.
- As goaltenders advance and can achieve the skills in the drills described, start combining the drills so that the goalie must do one save and then a different one. This developed agility and adaptability.
- Use mini-pucks to force goalies to close holes. White pucks to encourage better puck focus and tracking. Different color pucks to get the goalie to tell you the color before the save. Move and save – drop/butterfly and save – from their back, up and save – on their belly, up and save.
- Yes, the goaltender needs to be a good skater. No, they do not need to be the best skater on the team. Making your goaltender perform all of the hard skating drills that the players do, in twice the size and weight of equipment, does very little for their development. Their time is better spent on small area edgework or recovery movements.
- It is true of all players and goaltenders, they develop better if they work on skills when they are not tired. Do your skill training **FIRST**, then your skating and edgework.
- **MAKE IT FUN!!** Goaltending is a hard position, practicing the same moves over and over again until they are perfect. Repetition can be tedious. Introduce gimmicks for no other reason than for fun!



Goaltender Equipment

It is extremely important for a goaltender's equipment to be in good condition and to fit properly. Equipment in poor condition will not protect the goalie properly and could result in major injuries or the goalie not wanting to play anymore (not one likes being hurt and sore all the time, even goalies). Poorly fitting equipment can have the same result as damaged or poor condition equipment. The equipment is made to move with the goalie. If it is too big, the equipment may shift and open a soft spot for a puck or the ice to hurt the goalie. Equipment too small will not cover the goalie properly.

Protective Cup

- Goalies require a special protective cup that is larger and covers the area better than a standard player cup.



Knee Pads & Thigh Guards

- Knee pads for underneath the goalie pads are highly recommended. Most pads for younger age players come with Thigh Guards, these do essentially the same thing but provide less padding for the knee area. Knee pads should be snug to prevent rotation or falling down during movement.



Pants

- Goalie pants are different than regular player pants as they have significantly more padding all around the legs and hips. Pants should not be snug on the goalie and allow for a little movement, but should be secured to the waist if using the belt of the pants. Suspenders can also be used to provide more mobility but are entirely the goalie's preference.



Skates

- Goalie skates are different than player skates as they have a flat blade to allow more balance while standing. The flat blade also allows for better control in advanced on ice movements. Player skates can be used for lower level and younger goalies, as it is recommended that younger players are encouraged to play both in goal and out to develop skating and balance. Advanced technical movements are not likely something they would be performing and split time as a skater/player is also more likely.



Pads

- Goalie pads come in a variety of styles and designs, all to fit different styles of play. Single break, double break, added length, all adding that custom playability that each goalie develops on their own. So don't force a certain style, if the goalie is comfortable and able to move the way they play, let them play. The important factor is how the pads fit and cover the legs.
- The goaltender's knees should rest directly in the knee cradle of the pad. Most knee cradles are Velcro fit to the pad and can be moved up or down slightly.



- Goalie pads should not be strapped tight to the leg the way players wear their shin pads. The goalie should have space in the pad to allow the pad to rotate around the leg slightly. This removes a lot of strain on a goalie's joints. The pads are designed to not allow the pad to rotate fully and the toe strap will help return the pad to straight.
- Toe straps are available in a variety of styles including elastic chord, leather straps, and skate lace. While it is entirely the goaltender's preference, younger goalies may struggle with tying laces. Leather or elastic straps with Velcro are much easier and also allow for some stretch, again easing some of the strain on a goalies joints.



Neck Protector

- Goalies require a different style neck protector as they are much more prone to being down around the skate area. The neck protector should be thick around the neck and have an extension down onto the chest area. The extension prevents the neck guard from moving and allows protection above the chest protector in the neck area.



Chest Protector

- Goalie chest protectors also come in a wide variety of styles depending on the goaltender preference. Fit and condition are the most important factors to a chest protector. The chest protector should fit snug to the goalie's chest, some chest and belly movement under the chest protector is ok but too much and the equipment may rotate during movement and expose an unprotected area. Arms should extend to just below the wrists to cover the arms all the way to under the glove and blocker.



Glove & Blocker

- Glove hand and blocker hand are entirely goalie preference. If a goalie catches naturally with one hand, then that is the hand that should have the glove. Both glove and blocker should extend up the arm to past the wrist, overlapping the chest protector slightly.



Helmet

- The helmet is the most important piece of equipment a goalie wears, the brain does not heal the way the rest of the body does. Goalie helmets **MUST** be CSA Approved and in good condition with no loose screws or damaged straps. The helmet also needs to be snug fit, any rotation of the head inside the helmet reduces the protection drastically and may allow the helmet to fall off. Younger goalies can use a regular player helmet and cage while the shots are soft and less chance of head injury.
- Advanced levels of goaltending should greatly consider a higher quality constructed helmet. These helmets are made from fiberglass and Kevlar, and have much higher quality foam inserts to help prevent concussions and ringing in the ears.



Basic Stance Mechanics

- Before directing a goaltender about the “correct” stance, watch the NHL and decide which stance is the “correct” stance. There is no one “correct” stance, each goaltender will have their own unique stance that will work best for them. The goal of the coach is to bring out the best in that goalie, not force that goalie to conform to a specific way of play.
- The following are guides to improve a goaltender’s coverage of the net and reduce the potential holes near the body. The end goal is for the goaltender to stop the puck, and if they can do that effectively with their preferred stance, then they are doing what’s required.

Standing

- Feet should be apart, outside the shoulders, with knees bent slightly. The goaltender’s weight should be slightly forward, onto the balls of the feet. Weight shifted too far forward and the goalie may tend to crouch in order to maintain balance, weight too far back on the heels and the goalie will stand more upright and will have slower reaction movement with the feet. Remember, the goalie is going to be standing like this for long periods of time (20-30 seconds is a life time in a half squat).
- Hands should be out front of the body slightly, with elbows in at the hips. Catching/blocking the puck with the hands requires the goalie to see the puck hit the hand, having the hands out front of the body allows the hands to be visible, as well as cuts down the angle slightly.
- The stick blade should be flat on the ice and between the feet. Sticks are measured by the length of the paddle (wide lower portion). This length should allow the goalie to stand in the ready stance and allow the stick to lie flat on the ice. The tendency is for goalies to want a longer stick, as it allows them to stand taller, this should be avoided as a taller stance decreases mobility and reaction speed.



Butterfly

- The butterfly position is not a natural position for the human body, and not all goalies have the same flexibility and movement in the hips and knees. Preferred style of play by the goalie also changes how the butterfly stance looks for each goalie, and the style of leg pads allow goalies to play more to their preferred style without sacrificing coverage. The purpose of the butterfly stance is to eliminate all gaps around the body and on the ice to create a wall to block the puck.
- In a standard (wide) butterfly, the feet will be out towards the posts and the knees will be closer together, closing the top of the pads in the five-hole. Butterfly pads have a stiffer and straighter thigh rise which closes the five-hole with the feet out.
- A narrow butterfly will have the feet closer together and the knees farther apart. Hybrid pads (for narrow butterfly) are more rounded at the thigh rise to cover the five-hole with the feet closer together.
- Glove and blocker should be down at the hips resting on top of the pads. Elbows should also be in tight to the goalie's sides to close any gap between the arms and the body.
- Chest and shoulders should be tall and upright, as if the shoulders were attached to the cross-bar.
- The stick should be out front in the middle of the knees, with the blade angled into the chest.



U11 Development

Comfort and Confidence in Blocking the Puck

- Shots should be easy to stop and soft to avoid injury
 - A goalie's confidence dictates how they play. Allow the goalie time in all drills to move, set up, and make the save
 - Shoot to where the goalie is able to reach with ease, gradually move the target as the goalie gains confidence and reaction speed
 - Use tennis balls or soft pucks to start. Pucks hurt. A goalie afraid to get hurt will not be focused on making the save, rather they will be focused on not getting hurt

Foundations for Movement

- Focus on crisp and precise movements
 - Balance (one leg)
 - T-Push (short, mid, long)
 - Shuffle Step
 - C-Cuts (1 foot, 2 foot bubble, forwards, backwards)

DRILLS:

- Skate forwards and backwards in the goalie stance
- One leg glide (forwards and backwards)
- T-Push/Shuffle Step along the goal line, always facing one end of the ice
 - *Progression* Follow the leader. Coach points in direction, goalie follows.
 - *Progression* Two steps one way, one step back.
- C-Cuts along the goal line, always facing one side of the ice (forwards to side boards, then backwards back)
 - One leg C-Cuts forward and backward, then repeat with the other leg.
 - Two leg bubbles forward and backward.

Proper Position

- Focus on hands and legs for maximum coverage
 - Basic ready stance (feet just over shoulder width apart, knees bent, hands out front of body, chest up, stick on the ice between feet)
 - Butterfly stance (toes out, hands on top of pads, chest and shoulders up, stick out front)
 - Stance with movement

DRILLS:

- Stationary stance (standing and butterfly) with discussions from the coach
- Skate along the goal line maintaining a stance, forwards to one side then return backwards.
 - *Progression* Follow the leader. Coach points in the direction, goalie follows.

- T-Push/Shuffle Step along the goal line, maintain stance.
 - *Progression* Goalie drop to the butterfly after each T-Push or every 2-3 Shuffle Steps.

Recovery Movement

- Recovery from various positions to be ready for the next save or to control the puck
 - Recovery from the back to the stomach
 - Recovery from the stomach to the butterfly or stance
 - Recovery from the butterfly to the stance

DRILLS:

- With the goalie on their back, coach hide a puck near the goalie where goalie cannot see it. On command (stick slap) the goalie roll to stomach/knees and locate puck, then cover
 - *Progression* On the stick slap, the coach race towards the puck to try to beat the goalie.
 - *FOCUS* The goalie should identify where the coach is looking/skating in order to locate the puck
- Goalie lay on stomach/back, recover to butterfly or feet on coaches command (stick slap)
- Skate fwd, superman slide, back to feet
 - *Progression* Torpedo roll instead of superman slide
- Down/Ups (one leg at a time, alternating legs)

Puck Tracking

- Focus on head and eye movement to follow the puck before, during, and after the save
 - Follow the puck with the eyes AND the head (eyes and head direct the rest of the body in motion)
 - Movements start from the top to the bottom (eyes, head, hands, hips, and feet)

DRILLS:

- T-Push/Shuffle along the goal line. Place pucks in front of the goalie along the line, goalie moves one puck at a time down the line
- T-Push/Shuffle around a circle of pucks (goalie inside the circle, simulates the arch of the crease)
- T-Push up a ladder of pucks (pucks placed at 45 degree from goalie to right, then left, then right, etc...)

Net and Crease Positioning

- Focus on comfort at the edge of the crease, not deep between the posts
 - Centre and square (square to the puck, not the shooter)
 - Post position (armpit, hip, knee, and ankle on the inside of the post; hand on the outside of the post)
 - Movements along the outside of the crease (T-Push/Shuffle, maintain square and in stance, top to bottom movement)

DRILLS:

- 5 pucks along outside of crease, goalie on post to puck 1, back to post. Post to puck 2, back to post. Post to puck 3, back to post...etc
 - Full sequence from one post then repeat from the other post
 - *Progression* Coach to call out which puck the goalie to square up to
- 5 pucks along outside of crease, goalie T-Push/Shuffle along puck path, stop at each puck to square
 - Full sequence from one post, then repeat from the other post
 - *Progression* Move pucks out further after each sequence. Goalie maintain same path but square to pucks further out from the crease (simulate the play moving further away from the goalie)

Shot Management

- Focus on making the first save and controlling the rebound
 - Tracking the puck before, during, and after the save (eyes and head towards the puck)
 - Watching the puck into the save (into chest, into glove, off blocker to corner, off pad/stick to corner)
 - Using the stick for low shots, not the pad (redirect to the corner, not just stop the puck)
 - Rolling the blocker to redirect the puck into the corner

DRILLS:

- Goalie in the butterfly in center of the net, shots on the ice redirected with the stick to the corner (5-10 shots one side, then repeat to the other side)
 - *Progression* Goalie begin in the stance and drop to butterfly to make the save
- Active Hands. Goalie in the butterfly in center of the net, shots to glove hand (5-10 shots, repeat for blocker). Repeat with goalie remaining in stance during saves.
 - *Progression* Goalie begin in the stance and drop to butterfly to make the save
- Goalie in the butterfly in center of the net, shot to mid-section/chest. Goalie block with chest, capture with gloves, and hold.
 - *Progression* Goalie begin in the stance and drop to butterfly to make the save

U13 Development

Advanced Movements

- Focus on maintaining chest, hands and stick position throughout movements
 - Butterfly push (maintain shoulder, chest, hand, and stick position)
 - Butterfly slide from stance (maintain shoulder, chest, hand, and stick position; finish in full butterfly, not open up)

DRILLS:

- Butterfly push along the goal line
 - *Progression* Place pucks in front of the goalie along the line, goalie moves one puck at a time down the line
- From stance, goaltender drop to butterfly slide to blocker side along goal line. Maintain butterfly until slide has stopped. Return to stance and repeat. Repeat this sequence for the glove side.
 - *Progression* Place pucks in front of the goalie along the line, goalie moves one puck at a time down the line. Butterfly slide towards puck, then use lead skate to stop when square to puck, then complete with butterfly stance square to puck. Purpose is to control the butterfly slide, and finish with a complete butterfly square to puck.
- Goalie Soccer. Goalies play 1v1 in small area with 2 nets. Goalies must stay in butterfly position and attempt to kick a ball past the other into the net (soccer)

Advanced Net Positioning

- Advanced net positioning for maximum coverage and recoverability.
 - Vertical/Horizontal (VH) position (outer pad vertical on post, inner pad horizontal on the ice)
 - Reverse Vertical/Horizontal (RVH) position (outer pad horizontal with skate on post, inner pad at 45 degree in net)
 - Position selection (when to set up in stance, butterfly, VH, or RVH)

DRILLS:

- VH Setup. From stance on post, set up into VH
 - *Progression* Goalie start in stance off post, shuffle step into post and set up VH
 - *Progression* Goalie start in stance off post square to coach at face-off dot, shuffle step into post tracking coach and set up VH with shot from coach.
- RVH Setup. From stance on post, set up into RVH
 - *Progression* Goalie start in stance off post, shuffle step into post and set up VH
 - *Progression* Goalie start in stance off post square to coach at face-off dot, shuffle step into post tracking coach and set up VH with shot from coach.

Recovery Sequence

- Recovery towards shooter and preparing for next shot
 - Butterfly push towards shooter
 - Butterfly to stance
 - Butterfly push one direction, recover push back
 - 90/180 degree movement (in stance and butterfly)

DRILLS:

- U.S. 2 Puck. Goalie start on post, T-Push to square to shooter at the top of the circle. Shooter shoot low shot to far side, goalie make low save redirect to corner. Coach skate hard to second puck at far side in front of crease for second (rebound) shot. Goalie butterfly push to second shot for save.
- Goalie starts in butterfly off post. On command of coach (stick slap) goalie recover to stance towards center of net at top of crease and square to coach for shot
 - *Progression* Goalie start on post, bump out off post and down into butterfly. Recover to stance towards center of net at top of crease, square to coach for shot
- Goalie start on post, T-Push to square to coach between face-off dot and inside hash-marks. Coach pass to rebounder between hash-marks, goalie butterfly slide with puck to center of crease. Goalie stop and recover push back towards coach when puck rebounds back to coach for one-timer shot

Active Movement and Body Control

- Controlling movements to minimize out-of-position and maximize net coverage
 - Shuffle steps (micro shuffle vs. power shuffle), T-Push selection
 - Butterfly slide (strength, speed, and accuracy)
 - Reaction vs. leading the shooter (patience until shot is taken)

DRILLS:

- Shuffle step & T-Push along goal crease from one post to the other. Micro-shuffle, power shuffle, short T-Push, power T-Push
- Gates Shooting. Goalie set up on post, coach with pucks behind nets set up outside of circles. Goalie T-Push to coach behind first net, track coach around nets with micro-shuffles. Coach shoot between nets or outside of nets.
 - *Progression* Add second shooter for coach to pass cross ice. Goalie to power T-Push to track fast moving pass
- Goalie set up in stance at center of net at top of crease square to coach at hash-marks. Coach fake shot to attempt to get goalie to drop to butterfly, goalie wait until shot taken to react
- Iron Cross. Goalie start at bottom of the circle, skate fwd to dot, T-Push to hash-mark and back to dot, shuffle step to other hash-mark and back to dot, skate fwd to top of circle, skate bwd to bottom of circle
 - *Progression* Substitute T-Push and shuffles for butterfly slide and butterfly pushes
 - *Progression* Substitute fwd and bwd skating for additional butterfly pushes fwd and bwd

Breakaway Management

- Focus on a quick challenge to cut down shot angle, then backing up with the shooter to force a direction
 - Net position, learn to not lose track of position in the net
 - Challenge outside the crease
 - Skating backwards with the shooter, allowing slow gap closure
 - Side motion control

DRILLS:

- Reverse Ladder. Butterfly slides backwards at 45 degrees. Start in stance square to puck. Twist 90 degrees backwards and butterfly slide to next puck. Stop and butterfly square to puck. Return to stance, twist 90 degrees backwards to other side, and butterfly slide to next puck down ladder...etc
 - *Progression* Pop up into stance at puck, rather than stay in butterfly
 - *Progression* Start in the butterfly. Twist and butterfly push to sequential pucks
- Mirror movements. Two goalies facing each other, one goalie moves (fwd, bwd, side to side) and the other goalie mirrors movement maintaining gap between goalies
- 'Y' Pattern breakaway. Goalie start in center of net, challenge to coach at center between the top of the circles. Stop then track backwards with coach, coach pick one side to go at hash marks, goalie follow with shuffle or butterfly slide
 - *Progression* Increase speed, decrease speed, fake to one direction (encourage goalie to be patient until coach makes move to one side)

Basic Puck Handling

- Focus on controlling the puck with the stick, stick handling, and passing accuracy
 - Stopping the puck behind the net and set up for breakout
 - Handling the puck with confidence
 - Passing the puck

DRILLS:

- Two goalies (or one goalie and a coach) passing puck back and forth
- Two goalies playing keep-away
- Goalie set up at top of crease square to coach at blueline near boards. Coach dump puck in around boards, goalie skate behind net to stop puck. Goalie skate puck up past net and pass back to coach
 - *Progression* After goalie pass back to coach, goalie set up in net and coach skate in and shoot

U15/18 Development

Complex & Sequential Movements

- Focus on developing strength and control in all movements while maintaining positioning. Adding multiple movements in sequence mimicking game play
 - Utilizing the power shuffle to maintain pad square to shooter
 - Combining basic and advanced movements to mimic in game situation

DRILLS:

- Power Shuffle. Goalie set up on post on coach side, coach just inside circle at hash marks. Goalie T-Push to center of net at top of crease, short shuffle away from coach, power shuffle back to square to coach for shot
- Combining T-Push, shuffle step, butterfly slide, and butterfly push in various sequence with a shot on net at the end
 - *Progression* Add a second shot to mimic a rebound attempt

Advanced Shot Management

- Focus on rebound control while in motion
 - Glove and blocker save and rebound deflection while in recover or directional motion
 - Deflect rebound to safe zone (not always in corner) away from opposing players

DRILLS:

- Advanced Active Hands. Goalie set up in butterfly in center of net with a coach at each hash mark. Goalie butterfly push one way, then recover back. Upon recovery back, coach shoot to glove/blocker that the goalie is recovering towards. Goalie keep pushing back and forth while coach shoots to each side
 - *Alternate* Coach shoots on ice to each side instead of at glove/blocker. Goalie deflect puck to corner with stick

Complex Net Positioning

- Focus on movement into and out of VH & RVH
 - Transition from stance to VH/RVH
 - Transition from butterfly to VH/RVH
 - Post to post VH/RVH movement

DRILLS:

- Goalie set up square to coach at half-wall. Track coach down from far hash marks with shuffle step and identify if coach to shoot from bottom of circle (set up in VH) or set up below goal line (RVH)
 - *Progression* Coach travel around net, goalie push to other post and set up RVH
 - *Progression* Coach shoot low short side, goalie deflect to corner from butterfly. Coach pick up puck in corner, goalie butterfly push to post and set RVH