

Tips for Young Goalies

John Shorey

Hockey Made Easy

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The Goaltender Is The Backbone Of Your Hockey Team!

Many coaches consider their Goaltender to be the most valuable player on their team. The goalie has the very difficult job of keeping the puck, sometimes fired at great speed, out of the net and any mistake the goalie makes usually results in a goal against.

If the goalie stops the first shot they have done their job. If they have to stop the 2nd and 3rd shot on the same play, their teammates are not doing their defensive job of clearing rebounds and covering or moving opponents from in front of their net and the slot area.

Keys to Good Goaltending

Positioning is the key to good goaltending. If you are in the correct position to stop the puck it will hit you 99 times out of 100. The goalie must be positioned square or 90 degrees to the puck when it leaves the shooter's stick and move to a square position to stop any rebounds. Keep your eye on the puck at all times even when its in the opposite end of the rink. Nothing is worse for your team than giving up a soft long shot because you weren't watching the puck.

Another key element of goaltending is cutting the angle. The goalie must move out of his net beyond the goal crease to cut the angle in order to make the net seem smaller to the shooter. The shooter will always tip the goalie off that he is going to shoot by looking down at the puck to make sure it is on his stick in the right shooting position. Move out 1 to 2 feet further towards the shooter when he does this to make the net seem even smaller.

Try to catch every puck shot at you, even on the blocker side, this way you prevent any possible rebound and can get a stoppage in play if required.

Stay up on your feet as long as you can and, if you go down, try to get your legs spread out towards each post in the butterfly style to prevent low shots from going in. Remember the entire puck must cross the goal line to count as a goal -- not 50% or 75% of the puck.

Young goalies in Mites and Squirts will go down early to try to stop the puck. This is not a bad thing to do, as most players in this age group cannot shoot/lift the puck up into the top corners of the net yet, but as players get older and stronger in Peewee and Bantam, they will shoot high to the top corners and the goaltender will have to stay in a standing position longer.

Controlling rebounds will be another challenge for the goalie. If s/he can stop the first shot and the puck rebounds forward or off to the side, the goalie must be quick to fall on it, or direct or shoot it into the corner to prevent the opposition from getting a 2nd shot at it. Your defensemen and forwards should also clear any rebounds away from the net.

Always talk to your defensemen to let them know if a player is open in front of your net, or if you are screened. Also, let them know if a forechecker is after them in the corner or if they have time to make a good play. If you help them, they will help you.

Playing breakaways! - Sooner or later you are going to have to play a breakaway where one forward comes in alone against the goalie. Move out to challenge the shooter then slowly retreat to the top of the crease. Stay in a standing position as long as you can and try to get the shooter to make the first move to either shoot or deke. If you make the first move and go down early, the shooter will either shoot high or go around you. If you hold your position, always square to the shooter even when they try to deke you. The shooter will run out of room and either shoot at you or miss the net nine out of ten times.

Hopefully these basic tips will help young goaltenders and their parents get some idea of the demanding skills required to keep the puck out of your net and help you become a solid puck stopper.