

Continual development and consistent training are especially important for young goalkeepers. At young ages and those just beginning to be a goalkeeper, it is important to have the fundamentals developed before moving onto bigger saves and more game specific areas. This will not only provide future injury prevention with the right technique, but also provide the biggest room for development in starting with the basics. As the goalkeeper develops, these building blocks will continue to be highly emphasized and moved into more tactical decision making. The fundamentals can be broken down into these categories:

- **Body shape and Set position:** The goalkeeper's ability to control one's body and be in an athletic stance so that they can move efficiently and have the ability to cover their goal and have the greatest possibility of making saves in a variety of different scenarios.
- **Hand Shape and Catching:** The goalkeeper's ability to use their hands effectively in catching, punching, and parrying away from a variety of different saves and situations.
- Footwork
- **Diving:** Technique, power, and shape (low, mid, and extension diving)
- **Distribution:** throwing, passing and longballs, goal kicks, and punts
- **Tactics:** starting position, communication, ball line, 1v1 situations and organization

Each developmental stage will look different dependent on the age and ability of the player. At every age, each player will never graduate from these categories, and they will always be highly emphasized, but the goal is to refine them as players get older. Here is what the stages look like broken down by age:

Ages: U8-U10 (Introduction Phase)

Introducing set position and body shape, feet are shoulder width or slightly outside shoulder width apart, the goalkeeper is light on their toes, shoulders are slightly forward, and hands are in a neutral position slightly away from their body. Basic communication of 'keeper' and 'away' will be introduced here. The primary areas of development will be coordination, balance, movement, and technical development. Players will work on lots of slow catching and diving techniques and shape to get comfortable reading the ball and hitting the ground. They will also begin with how to learn how to jump for a ball in the air that is above their head. Basic fundamentals will be taught here. Tactically, the goal is to get the goalkeeper comfortable in their goal and get game experience. Tactical development will include distribution and introducing some decision making.

Ages: U11-U14 (Developing Phase)

A continuation of developing of the fundamentals, overarm throws, footwork, goal kicks, drop kicks/punts, and introducing moving back passes. A variety of new dives will be introduced, and more game specific training will begin to take place in developing the tactical awareness and decision making of the goalkeeper. An introduction to catching, footwork, and handling crosses will begin at this age. A continued development of ball striking and introducing longer range passing and punts.

Ages: U15+(Refining Phase)

For the older age group of goalkeepers there will be a continued development of the fundamentals, coordination, balance, and movement. Footwork for this age group will be more advanced, learning the most efficient and effective footwork to move across their goal in a variety of scenarios and situations. A greater emphasis on tactical awareness and decision making will be here. Training will become more

advanced and in tune with what they will see in game specific situations. There will be a greater emphasis on the goalkeeper's ability to play with one's feet, and the expectations are the goalkeeper has as good of distribution as the field players.