



Retreat Line Additional Information

Revised: Tuesday, September 30th, 2025

The Retreat Line

The retreat line is an essential part of [Canada Soccer's Grassroots Standards](#). Per Canada Soccer' Grassroots Standards, "The retreat line has been introduced in grassroots soccer in recent years to help develop young players' ability to play out from the goalkeeper and to keep possession of the ball as they build an attack. This teaching tool has also been used to help build confidence in players as they retain possession of the ball."

Options for Goalkeepers – 3v3 / 4v4 (no GK) / 5v5 and 7v7

How the retreat line is implemented:

When the goalkeeper has the ball in their possession at a goal kick, after making a save or when the ball is in their hands; the opposing team members would "retreat" to the predetermined area of the field.

The predetermined areas are as follows:

- 3v3 - Halfway line. It is recommended the goalkeeper does not drop kick the ball
- 4v4 (no GK) and 5v5 - Halfway line. It is recommended the goalkeeper does not drop kick the ball
- 7v7 - 1/3rds line

Retreat Line on a Goal Kick

Once the opposition has retreated:

- The goalkeeper may throw or pass the ball to a teammate.
- The ball is in play once it is touched by a teammate, and the opposition may then pressure and attempt to win the ball.

If the goalkeeper chooses not to wait for the opposition to retreat and releases the ball early:

- The ball is instantly in play, and the opposition may pressure immediately.
- A teammate does not need to touch the ball first.

Opponents must remain behind the retreat line until the ball:

- Is touched by a teammate of the goalkeeper, or
- Leaves the field of play, or
- Crosses the retreat line.



Retreat Line During Active Play

When the goalkeeper gains possession of the ball during live play, they have two options:

1. Release the ball before the opposition has retreated – the ball is instantly in play, or
2. Wait for the opposition to retreat – the goalkeeper may then choose to:
 - a. Dribble the ball, or
 - b. Throw the ball to a teammate, or
 - c. Pass the ball to a teammate.

Once the ball is released after the retreat, the opposition may break the retreat line upon the second touch. The second touch is defined as follows:

- Dribble: The goalkeeper places the ball on the ground, takes one touch, then a second touch. After the second touch, the opposition may pressure.
- Throw: The goalkeeper throws the ball to a teammate. Once the teammate touches the ball, the opposition may pressure.
- Pass: The goalkeeper kicks the ball (either a drop kick or ground pass) to a teammate. Once the teammate touches the ball, the opposition may pressure.

For more information on the retreat line complete with diagrams please take a look at Ontario Soccer's publication, [Field Orientation Guide](#) and the [Adapted Match Formats Laws of the Game](#) documents.

