



8

GOALKEEPER SKILLS



The Basics:

Communication – The goalkeeper is the one player on the pitch who will always have play in front of them. They are in a position to communicate with their teammates on where to move to, who to pick up, when to press, and dangerous areas to be aware of.

Communication between a goalkeeper and their teammates is vital, particularly when defending, as miscommunication can result in an error and potentially conceding a goal.

Communication on the pitch is normally verbal (talking) or non-verbal (pointing, gesturing, or body shape).

Table 1: Examples of Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication for Goalkeepers

Verbal	Non-Verbal
“Goalkeeper’s ball”	Pointing in the direction where you want your teammate to go.
“Away”	*Clapping hands* can indicate a teammate has done something well OR to show encouragement.
“Push up”	Open body shape to allow you to receive a pass and play off of your first touch.

Positioning – A goalkeeper’s positioning on the pitch can have a huge impact on how their own team and the opposition will play.

- **In Possession:** The goalkeeper is another player on the pitch, this means they should be used when their team is in possession of the ball. Goalkeepers should be keeping up with play and not standing on their goal line when the ball is up the other end of the pitch. It is



important that the goalkeeper does not stray too far up the pitch and risk leaving the goal open for the opposition to attempt to score.

- **Out of Possession:** The goalkeeper should be disciplined and following play. The goalkeeper should be shifting to the side of the goal that the ball is on along with their teammates in front of them.

In and out of possession, the goalkeeper should be aware of their surroundings and the location of their goal to ensure they get their positioning correct. This should include:

- Distance to both posts
- Distance to the goal line
- Distance between the goalkeeper and their defenders
- Location in/out of the goalkeeper's box.

Shot Stopping – Shot stopping is what most observers will think about when you mention a goalkeeper. Shot stopping is what we would call a 'save' or 'block' from the goalkeeper, which has prevented an opposition player's attempt at scoring from going into the goal.

Shot stopping is normally done by catching the ball, parrying the ball, or blocking it with other parts of the body such as the arms, legs or feet.

- **Catch** – Goalkeepers should catch the ball when it is appropriate to do so. Often this will be when a shot is travelling at an appropriate speed to safely hold the ball without fear of letting it slip out of their hands.
 - **Common catch technique – The 'W'**



- **Parry** – A parry is when a goalkeeper is unable to catch the ball and instead palms it away from the direction of the goal (this can be over the crossbar, around the post, or back into play but away from the opposition players).
- **Block** – A block is when the goalkeeper will use any part of their body to get in the way of a shot from an opposition player. Often this can be the goalkeeper's legs, feet, arms or midriff (their core). This involves the goalkeeper making themselves as big as possible and reading where the ball may go in order to block the ball going in to the goal.



Distribution – Goalkeepers must be comfortable with the ball at their feet as they are with it in their hands. For goalkeepers, distribution can come in various forms but the most common are:

- ***Distribution from the feet*** – In modern football, the goalkeeper is an essential part of the build-up play. With this, they should be able to pass the ball with their feet. This can be from goalkeeper to defender, or goalkeeper to midfielder, or goalkeeper to forward.
 - This can also be from dead ball situations or restarts, such as goal-kicks or free-kicks.
- ***Distribution from the hands*** – Goalkeepers are at an advantage over the other players on the pitch in that they are permitted to use their hands, within the box. Their distribution from their hands is as important as their distribution from their feet. This can be underarm throws, overarm throws, or rolling the ball out to a player to start an attack.

High-Balls – High balls can be considered any ball that requires the goalkeeper to reach their arms over their head to catch or punch away. These can be uncomfortable situations for some goalkeepers as they may feel like they are putting themselves in a vulnerable position. However, reinforce that your goalkeeper is at an advantage because they can use their hands and that any unnecessary contact with them will result in the referee awarding them a free-kick.

When a goalkeeper is going for a high-ball they should consider:

- Their starting position and the flight of the ball – *where will I be able to catch/punch that ball?*
- The position of the other players around them – *is my path to the ball clear or obstructed?*
- Their recovery position in relation to the goal – *if I go to meet the ball and miss it, am I still in a position to defend my goal?*

1 vs. 1 – A 1 vs. 1 situation is when the opposition's attacking player is directly challenging the goalkeeper in an attempt to score a goal. The role of goalkeeper in this situation is to force the attacking player away from the goal, to make themselves as big as possible, or to 'smother' the ball (if the opportunity is there).



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Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Session Plan

Goalkeeper Skills

Level 1

Category:

Passing
Reactions
Scooping

No of Players Required:

1-5

Practice Length:

5-10mins

Equipment Required:

1 ball per pair

Aims & Objectives:

- Improve passing technique
- Improve reactions to flight of the ball
- Improve scooping technique

Coaching Points:

1. Body shape in relation to the ball.
2. Get full body behind the ball.
3. Hug the ball into your chest.

How to:

1. Use the inside of the foot to pass the ball against a 1. wall or 2. other player.

2. As the ball is rebounded (or passed) back, the GK should adjust body position to get behind the ball.

3. Scoop the ball up using both hands and hug the ball into chest.

Repeat.

