

## The 11 Goalkeeping Principles

All goalkeepers are different and no two are ever exactly the same. The reason being that as goalkeepers learn their trade, they all develop their own unique goalkeeping style. Whether it be through coaching techniques, trial and error or just simply through learnt experiences during games a goalkeeper's personal style is adaptation to this culmination of factors.

Although not two 'keepers are the same, it is possible they seem similar in styles. All goalkeeping styles do have a core system of principles that they all are derived from. These core principles act as a framework to growing their attributes through position specific training which results in the evolution of a goalkeeping technique.

As a midfielder I turned goalkeeper at 29, after having a four year break away from the game, and although having played for a few teams as a goalkeeper once I decided to commit to the position full time, I threw myself into studying the position profusely. It was during this intense study I created a set of principles for myself to use as a framework to develop my own goalkeeping style. It is also what I use whenever I am coaching goalkeepers to guide them in finding their own unique styles.

My eleven principles are a fantastic starting point for any young goalkeeper wanting to develop their own style of goalkeeping. It can also be used as a strong measuring system to assess a current style that may need updated or tweaked. They incorporate all the major areas of goalkeeping and if used correctly can be incorporated into a fully-fledged appraisal system that includes self and peer feedback, which generates areas of improvement as well as periodized view of your continuing development.

## My 11 Goalkeeping Principles are:

1. **HANDS:** These must be safe and secure, catching whenever you can and punching clear when you cannot. A 'keeper must be confident underneath high balls and the Hands lead you to the ball, using relaxed (Soft) hands to absorb shots, preventing rebounds and strong (Hard) hands to parry balls away from danger.
2. **STANCE:** The Set Position is fundamental stance for all other Principles to operate from. The main components are being on the 'Balls' of the feet; bodyweight forward while being "In the Line/Down the Line" of the shot. The Goalkeeper always stays In the Line of the shot and moves Down the Line to close attacker's angle.
3. **FEET:** Everything a keeper does begins with the feet so good footwork is essential. Diving, high catch, restarts, set position, closing down attackers even decision making (thinking on your feet) begins 'FEET FIRST'. If mistakes happen use the phrase 'Clear Your Feet' to reset your focus.
4. **HEAD:** Decisions are best made using logic, instinct and past experiences. Always be focused and play simple while also reading/understanding game flow. It is important to be composed and always decisive in actions using 'Blue Head' thinking and 'T-CUP' (Thinking Clearly Under Pressure).
5. **DISTRIBUTION:** From both dead ball and in possession the importance of this area has become paramount to the 'keeper's ability. Always move the ball on as quickly as possible but be comfortable when in possession and be willing to carry the ball. On restarts be accurate and use the 3C's (Calm, Controlled, Consistent) when kicking and my C.R.A.F.T. (Consistent, Reading, Accurate, Flight, Technique) method for a competent kicking routine.

6. **CLOSE THE GAP:** close down attackers through on goal as early as possible. 'Take Their Space' and get as close as possible to them before a shot can be taken. Be alert and off your line quickly for any balls over the top/through your defence. Rushing the attacker hurries their decision making which increases your advantage hesitation hands the advantage back to the attacker. Once on the attacker DO NOT leave them even if they turn away from goal.

7. **MANIPULATE:** To gain more advantage a goalkeeper can influence the shooter's shot selection by direct or indirect methods. Used with the Close the Gap Principle above, you can hurry the shooter into a forced decision by showing one part of the goal, coming out on a certain side of the shooter or talking to the shooter as you approach. A 'keeper can also counteract opposition game plan by using their defence to plug holes or pick up loose men/runners. A goalkeeper makes more saves through effective communication rather than blocking goal bound shots.

8. **RECOVERY:** a goalkeeper's recovery deals with two things:

a] How quickly they can return to the Set position after a dive/save/catch/fall/challenge etc. To minimise this timeframe use the MSG Pendulum Roll technique to get back to the set position as quickly as possible without using your arms.

b] How well they recover from making a mistake, conceding a goal, being caught out of position or being wrong footed.

9. **COMMUNICATION:** when talking to teammates a 'keeper must use the 3C's (Clear; Concise; Constant) to relay game information/commentary/patterns/structures to teammates/management in a timely manner. The goalkeeper must be able to praise players when playing well, paradoxically they must also be able to challenge players when they are playing below expectation while being conservative with your tone. Any Buzz Words or Defensive Calls must be used effectively and in a timely manner so players can act on them in real time.

10. **PRESENCE:** Felt within the goalkeeper and then by their teammates, be a strong confident presence. This will un-nerve the opposition while boosting your teammate's morale. Always attack the ball with aggression and always 'Lead by Performance' oozing confidence especially when feeling nervous. Become **MR / MRS CONFIDENT!!**

11. **C.A.N.I. (Constant And Never-ending Improvement):** Be forensic in your on/off field training techniques for improvement. Use Self and Peer Appraisal for feedback. Learn to admit/deal with mistakes and accept Challenges from players/management. Methods of improving include statistics, match analysis, video analysis, modern training methods, regular recorded testing, focus on problem areas, focus on specific skills, goal setting, as well as planning training schedules for the day/week/month/year. Asking advice from players/management/other keepers, adequate rest, hydration and nutrition is also vital.

Whether you are looking to create a goalkeeping style or just tweak one you already have. My Eleven Goalkeeping Principles will be the perfect framework for you to follow.