



MIND THE NET GOALTENDING

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Stickhandling Basics for Goaltenders

Stickhandling and puckhandling skills are often overlooked and under trained by goaltenders from Novice to the Junior, College and Pro ranks. It is evident how many coaches and goaltenders believe that all a goalie has to do is “stop the puck” rather than to “keep the puck out of the net” by the amount of time a goaltender spends handling the puck during a practice or a game. There is a distinct difference between these two ways of thinking about goaltending. The first does not work on things that could make a goaltender’s and their teammates’ job easier through active stick skills, game readiness and awareness, preparation or basic puckhandling. Conversely, a “keep the puck out the net” philosophy looks at the many aspects that make a strong(er) goaltender.

In order to begin working on basic puckhandling skills it is important to understand the basics of stickhandling. First, we must look at different types of grips a goaltender can use when playing the puck. Then there will be a look at basic stickhandling, passing and shooting skills needed by goaltenders. Without further ado we have some...

Basic Stickhandling Grips

Two categories:

One handed grip:

- Can be used forehand and backhand.
- Holding stick in the regular ready position, with the trigger finger and thumb of the blocker hand on the paddle of the goalie stick. There should be no space between the top of the paddle and the bottom of the shaft of the stick.
- Push the puck with the blade of the stick.
- Make sure to roll the wrists in a way that the puck rolls from the heel of the stick to the toe.
- The toe of the stick should point in the direction that the puck must travel at the end of the follow through.
- Most often a one handed pass will be used for controlled sets or short quick-ups in the defensive zone.

Two handed (no flip overs) grip:

Traditional(Brodeur/Hextall style):

- Trapper facing away from the body.
- Blocker at the knob of the stick.
- Glove on the shaft of the stick (no extra support of the paddle), like a forward stickhandling or preparing for a wrist shot.

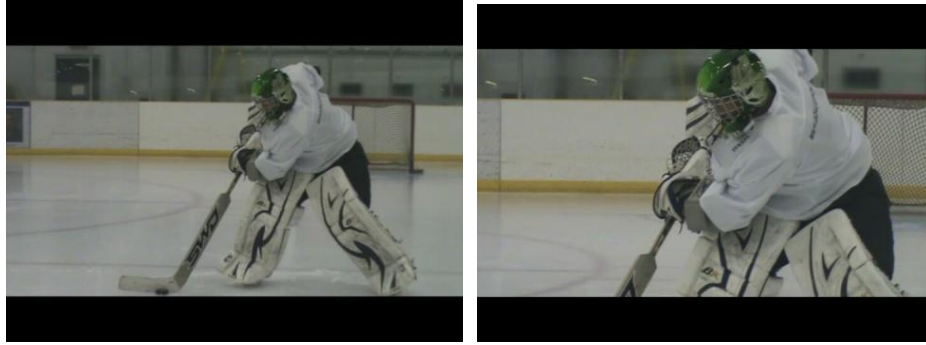
- Shaft of the goalie stick in the notch of the heel and the top of where the “T” of the glove closes.
- Squeeze the stick, as much as possible, using the trapper for better control.



Turco/Hand Over Top (Turco/most other NHL goalies style)

- Trapper facing the body, with the trapper being held with the top of the “T” facing the knob of the stick.
- Blocker at the knob of the stick.
- Trapper on the shaft of the stick (no extra support of the paddle), like a forward stickhandling or preparing for a wrist shot.
- Shaft in the notch of the heel and the top of where the “T” of the glove closes.
- Squeeze the stick using the trapper for better control.

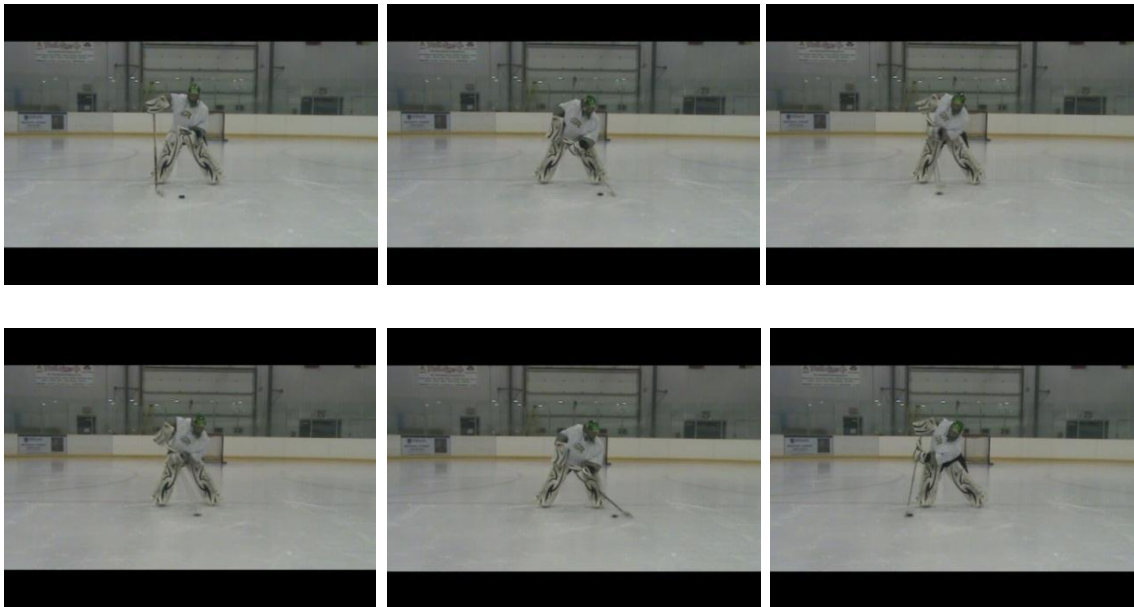




Basic Stickhandling and Passing Skills

- Stickhandling/Puckhandling:

- Protect/cradle the puck.
- Slide the puck laterally.
- Quickly place the stick on the other side of the puck in order to cradle the puck on the backhand.
- Repeat as needed.
- Be sure to get the head up to see what is coming once in a while.



- One Hand Passes/Sets:

- Stay in basic stance throughout the entire pass or set to avoid blunder by missing the puck.
- Push the puck with the blade of the stick.
- Make sure to roll the wrists in a way that the puck rolls from the heel of the stick to the toe when passing both forehand and backhand.
- Keep the follow through low.

- Do not slap at the puck, unless one is sure of contact with the puck as this can lead to a missed shot and a scrambling goaltender or goal against.
- Make sure to safely stop the puck before attempting any passes within 2-3 feet of the net.
- Most often a one handed pass will be used for controlled sets in the defensive zone.

- Two Handed Forehand/Backhand Passing:

- Keep the same knee bend as in the basic stance
- Start by cradling the puck beside or slightly behind the goaltender.
- Transition the stick forward while rolling the puck from the heel of the stick to the toe while maintaining enough pressure on the shaft of the stick to create a flex in the stick for whip and a quicker release.
- The body must shift transfer weight from the rear foot to the front foot if shooting like a forward or defenseman.
- Maintain a low angle on the blade stick (about 95 degrees), rather than angles back at 85 degrees, that will allow the goaltender to keep the pass low.
- Make sure to point the toe of the stick at the end of the follow through to ensure accuracy and the desired elevation of the pass is achieved. Remember, the higher the follow through the higher the shot.
- Is the same when passing on the forehand or on the backhand.



Basic Shooting Skills

- Forehand

- Keep the same knee bend as in the basic stance.
- Start by cradling the puck beside or slightly behind the goaltender.
- Transition the stick forward while rolling the puck from the heel of the stick to the toe while maintaining enough pressure on the shaft of the stick to create a flex in the stick for whip and a quicker release.
- Maintain an angle on the blade of the stick that will allow for the proper amount of elevation on the shot.
- Make sure to point the toe of the stick at the end of the follow through to ensure accuracy and the desired elevation of the shot is achieved. Remember the higher the follow through the higher the shot.



- Backhand (Shovel)

- Start with the same knee bend as in basic stance.
- Start by cradling the puck on the backhand side of the stick.
- Roll the wrists and towards the direction the shot will travel.
- Make sure the puck rolls from the heel to the middle of the stick.
- Increase the angle of the blade relative to the ice in order to ensure elevation of the puck.
- Try to get under the puck as though the stick is a shovel.
- Be aware of the height of the follow through as it is key to shot height.

****A back hand wrist shot is achievable, much the same way as a forehand wrist shot is achievable, but is less likely to be used as compared to the shovel approach on the backhand.****

Goaltenders must embrace a “keep the puck out of the net!” approach to goaltending as this is a more holistic view of what goaltending truly entails. The goaltender that neglects to work on their basic stick grips, puckhandling, passing and shooting skills is a goaltender that is neglecting an aspect of their game that can make the “toughest job in all of sports” a little bit easier. Basically, if a goaltender can make life for themselves easier then their teammates and coaches will appreciate those skills as they are going to better be able to cut down on chances against, the number of times a defenseman is punished, and help to make the team transition game run smoother. Hopefully, any coach or teammate should be able to see the benefits of helping their goaltender to improve their basic puckhandling, passing and shooting skills.