



# MIND THE NET GOALTENDING

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## Vision Training

Vision may be the most variable and selective of all the senses. Attempting to observe the fast movements that occur in the game of hockey places great demands on the goaltender's vision. It, therefore, makes sense that the goaltender's visual ability can enhance or inhibit their performance. The visual system ultimately determines the efficiency of the goaltender's success and directs the position and actions of the reactive and proactive position of control for the goaltender's lateral, foot, leg, hand, stick, glove and recovery movements. Therefore, the more effective the Visual system, the more effective the goaltender. Peak visual systems provide quick, accurate, consistent and automatic information to the brain. The reactions that transpire will likewise be the same.

A major input to performance breakdowns is ineffective and inefficient visual processing abilities. This skill is especially true for the goaltender. By paying attention to the visual aspect of the game, the goaltender can remove visual inefficiencies and visual fatigue, out of their game.

It was said that Babe Ruth's visual efficiency was at 90% while the average person's eyes work at only 60%.

Visual training will provide the goaltender with the following:

- Recognition: more time to react properly. Accurate, quick, consistent play
- Concentration: focus on the task at hand, clear vision, changing distances, holding action, quick reactions.
- Accurate Identification: Make better decisions.
- Visual Coordination: Track puck and players more accurately, following the flow, being more consistent.
- Increased Focus: Read puck release and puck rotation
- Visual Acuity: Sharper vision in motion, following action with no confusion and with clarity.
- Peripheral Vision: Soft vision (sides of the rink, play development, following the action)
- Central Vision: hard vision, (front of the net, rebounds, quick reactions, concentration)
- Eye-Mind-Body =Speed: see and react faster, accuracy, speed, consistency, endurance and depth perception.

### Visual Checklist

1. Can you easily follow the puck into your glove on a consistent basis?
2. Can you see both the left and right sides of the rink equally?
3. Are you able to see the puck rotation (e.g. the puck isn't a blur or double)?
4. Are you able to concentrate on the action as well as the puck at both ends of the rink without confusion?
5. Can you see the entire rink (i.e. effective peripheral vision)?
6. Are you able to get to the puck on time with quick reactions?

7. Are you able to concentrate on the puck while still being aware of the action around the net?
8. Are you able to anticipate the action and prepare for more than one possibility?
9. Can you pick up rebounds quickly after it bounces off the pads?
10. Are you able to see both around the net and beyond the field of action?
11. Can you easily read the puck during 2-on-1 and 3-on-2 attacks?
12. Do you easily find the open player in the slot?
13. Do you have good depth perception, and understand the flow of the game?
14. Are you able to follow the puck throughout the action of the game?
15. Do you perform equally effective in the third period and overtime as in the first period?
16. Can you predict which weakness or vulnerability in goal can be exploited?

If you answered “no” to any of these you may be lacking some visual acumen.

### **Visual Skills You Can Train**

**Dynamic Visual Acuity:** The skill and ability to see the puck clearly as it is in motion. Some people have 20/20 acuity when sitting still but add motion to the mix and acuity worsens.

**Eye Focus Flexibility:** Involves the ability to change focus quickly and accurately from one distance to another.

**Fusion Flexibility and Stamina:** The ability to keep both eyes working together under high speed and stressful situations. The goaltender using both eyes together, smoothly, equally, simultaneously and accurately.

**Depth Perception:** Ability to quickly and accurately judge distance and speed of an object. Also involves judging relative distances of objects and seeing and moving accurately in the three dimensional space.

**Eye Tracking:** Ability to follow a moving object smoothly and accurately with both eyes. It is the ability to keep your eye on the puck no matter how fast it is moving.

**Visual Concentration;** ability to screen out distractions and stay focused on the target.

**Fixation:** ability to quickly and accurately locate and inspect, with both eyes, a series of stationary objects, one after another. Goaltenders can use this skill by scanning the face-off positions of the offensive team before the puck is dropped.

**Visualization:** Ability to picture events with your minds eye or imagination. As far as the brain is concerned imagining it is the same as doing it. Visualization can boost confidence and provide greater focus on your goaltending goals. Researchers have found that the same areas of the brain light up during the execution or visualization of a performance.

### **Simple Sample Drills**

**Visual Acuity;** Cut different size letters out of a magazine and stick them to a stereo turntable and try to identify them from arms length at 33, 45 and 78 rpms. As it gets easier use smaller letters.

**Visual Concentration:** Practice while someone is standing trying to distract you or moving at erratic intervals. Screen shots.

**Tracking:** You must be able to follow objects without much head movement. Follow Objects while balancing a book on your head.

**Eye/Hand:** try jumping up and down while someone tosses you a ball from a variety of heights and angles.

**Visual memory:** the goaltender that has good visual memory always seems to be in the right place at the right time. Try paging through a magazine, glancing briefly at the page, turn the page and then try to reconstruct the page from memory.

**Peripheral Vision:** to increase your ability to see things while you are not looking directly at them try watching television with your head turned to one side then the other.

**Reaction Time:** Stand with your back to a friend have them carefully toss a tennis ball to you and yell “ Now”. When you hear the yell turn find the ball and catch it. Make sure you turn both ways.

**Focus Flexibility:** Hang a newspaper page on a wall at eye level about 15 feet away from you and hold a similar one in your hand about 15 inches away from your face at the same height but slightly to one side so you can see both pages. Focus on the headline on the page on the wall and then quickly change your focus to the page near your face. Keep changing your focus between the two pages. As it gets easier move the paper in your hand closer to your face.

**Depth Perception:** Have a friend hold a straw parallel to the ground about two feet in front of you. Practice inserting a tooth pick into the hole in the straw. Make sure you vary the position of the straw.

### References

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