

Golden Rules for Goalies



My Golden Rules for defensemen and for forwards began many years ago, although each gets some fine tuning occasionally. It didn't take long to figure out that it was appropriate to have Golden Rules for goaltenders, too.

It is interesting to note that several of the rules are the same or similar to those for defensemen and forwards.

These are items that coaches should be using to teach goalies and to monitor their progress. They are things that players should strive to master as they progress up through the youth ranks and on to high school, juniors or college.

1. Stay alert at all times, no matter where the puck is on the ice. Of course, that does not mean you have to be in a crouch at all times, but it does mean that the eyes and the mind have to always follow play.
2. Learn the basic moves and techniques as soon as possible and work to excel at them. The basic moves and techniques are skate saves, pad stack, V drops, stick or pad saves with puck control, blocker saves, catcher saves, covering the puck, puck movement with the stick (shooting, passing and clearing), slides, glides and skating.
3. Understand and work on angles and distances. This is knowing the distance and angle from the goal to take away the maximum goal opening away from the shooter. This is a matter of constant practice and monitoring.
4. Learn to analyze each situation — especially when being attacked — then act accordingly. There are innumerable possibilities for situations that, by analysis, involve understanding the options of the player with the puck, as well as attackers without the puck, plus the level of support available from teammates.
5. Work on major segments of the goaltender's arsenal: feet, gloves, pads, stick. Work must be more than just taking shots; it must often be specific isolated segments. Don't let any segment be dominant because another is weak.
6. Just like other hockey positions, master the skating skills and major arsenal segments so that the thinking portion of the position can be concentrated on. If you don't have good mechanical skills, the critical mental portion of the game will not develop.
7. Work, work, work on skating skills. Invariably, the best goaltenders skate very well and have great agility and balance.
8. Learn what it takes for you to prepare yourself to play a good game. Find the appropriate process that gets you focused.
9. Learn to control the puck whenever possible. That means controlling shoot-in pucks behind the net, freezing the puck whenever it's loose around the net, deflecting shots or loose pucks to the corners, getting the puck to teammates and controlling rebounds.
10. Play with confidence and shake off goals allowed to maintain focus on upcoming action. Non-emotional, clear thinking is one of the basics of good goaltending.
11. Strive for consistency. The best way to do that is to control emotions and have a good grasp of physical skills.
12. Be aggressive and force the attacker with the puck to shoot when and where you want. Challenge the play any time possible.
13. When you are not involved in a team drill during practice, work on individual skills, such as shooting, handling the puck and skating skills and techniques. Good shooting skills are especially important because they allow you to become part of moving the puck out of your zone.
14. Ask for help from coaches and goaltender teammates if you are having problems.
15. Don't retaliate from contact around the net — whether legal or not. Retaliation often results in penalties to you and your teammates who feel obligated to defend their goaltender.
16. Communicate with your teammates, especially those defending around the net. It is a critical aspect of successful goaltending. Don't ever communicate with opposing players; it is seldom of value and exposes your emotions.
17. Look for opportunities to get shots. Every shot is an experience that makes stopping the next puck easier.