

The Goalkeeper (Aka, Goalie, Keeper or GK)

Except in small-sided play, each team must have a designated goalkeeper. He is the only player on the field who can legally use his hands and then only inside the Penalty Box. (Note that the Goalie cannot pick up the ball if it was deliberately kicked to him by a teammate... he can only pick it up if it was last touched by an opponent or if it was accidentally kicked to him by a teammate, or was passed from a teammate using the head, chest, knee, etc. instead of the feet.) Once he picks up the ball he has six seconds to punt it or release it. He is allowed to pick up the ball, run with it and then punt it, throw it, or drop it and dribble or kick it. (However, he cannot touch it with his hands outside the "Penalty Box" and once he drops it he can't touch it again with his hands until an opponent has touched it. The Goalkeeper IS allowed to go outside the Penalty Box and dribble or kick the ball back inside the Penalty Box and THEN pick it up with his hands. The line that defines the Penalty Box is part of the Penalty Box, so if the ball is touching the line it is defined as being inside the Penalty Box). The goalkeeper has special protections inside the Penalty Box; the ball may not be kicked if he is touching it with his hand or arm and the referee will call a foul if the goalkeeper is endangered. He must wear a shirt or jersey that is recognizably different from all other players (goalkeepers often wear special jerseys with padded elbows). Note: In hot weather, do not put a goalkeeper jersey on a player. They can get too overheated & become sick. Instead, have them wear a different-colored shirt (one shirt only) or a mesh training vest over their shirt. If your goalkeeper has a strong leg, let him take goal kicks. Encourage him to play aggressively & if you push up on the attack, to come out to the edge of the Penalty Box or beyond to play like a "Second Sweeper". If he picks up the ball & no opponents are close, encourage him to drop the ball & dribble it out & then kick it. (Once he drops it or when out of the Penalty Box, he can play like a field player but can't touch the ball with his hands). Encourage him to play aggressively & to take chances, everyone will have much more fun if you do & more kids will want to play goal. Goalkeepers tend to get blamed for goals when most of the time it isn't their fault (if the other defenders are doing a great job there won't be any shots on goal). You should tell your goalkeeper before the game that the other team is expected to score goals & that it isn't his fault if they score. Do not let anyone else (players or parents) blame the goalkeeper. In fact, after the game you should have the rest of the team thank the goalkeeper, even if he or she did make mistakes. You should encourage everyone who wants to, to take a try at playing goalkeeper. You will be surprised who is good & you really can't tell until they actually play the position. At the very least, it will give all the players respect for how tough the position is & they will be less likely to blame the goalkeeper when goals are scored. However, do not make a child play goalkeeper if he or she doesn't want to.