

Goalies 14+

At 14 and older, I separate goalies into two general groups:

Goalies who want to pursue higher-level hockey.

and

Goalies who love playing the position and want to keep having fun.

Both are perfectly good reasons to play goalie.

But if your goalie wants to keep climbing levels, equipment becomes more important because the game gets faster and shots get harder and more accurate.

Mask

If your goalie plays high-level travel hockey and wants to keep progressing, **this is where I would spend money.**

Protect the head.

Players are shooting harder and more accurately than ever.

Your goalie may also occasionally practice with older players.

Higher-level protection becomes worthwhile.

I'd start by looking in the general category of a Bauer 950/960-type mask.

Again:

It does not have to be Bauer.

I'm simply using those models to describe the general level of equipment I'm talking about.

I also recommend a dangler-style throat protector.

Goalie Pants

At this level, goalie pants are necessary in my opinion.

They're designed to provide the coverage and protection the position needs.

Sizing becomes somewhat personal.

I personally liked my goalie equipment loose.

Really loose.

I didn't want anything interfering with even the smallest movement.

At one point, I wore an XL pair of pants when I probably technically belonged in a medium or large.

That doesn't mean your goalie needs to do the same thing.

The important thing is figuring out **how your goalie likes their equipment to feel while still maintaining proper protection.**

Goalie Skates

Comfort remains the priority.

Depending on your goalie's growth and your budget, upper-middle-range skates can make sense here.

You don't automatically need the most expensive model available.

Find the balance between:

Protection + Performance + Comfort + Budget

Leg Pads

This is where goalie equipment can start getting expensive.

If your goalie is serious about pursuing higher-level hockey, investing in better pads can make sense.

Higher-end equipment can provide:

- Better protection.
- Better rebound performance.
- More adjustment options.
- Additional customization.

If your goalie is still growing, keep that in mind before dropping premium-level money on equipment.

Catching Glove

At this age, your goalie may start experimenting more with glove preferences.

Depending on hand size, some goalies may use a senior glove with a smaller or intermediate-style palm.

Different catching gloves also feel different depending on the break.

Let your goalie explore.

Let them try different gloves.

Let them figure out what actually feels natural.

I personally always loved the **580 break**.

That's my preference.

Your goalie may completely disagree.

And that's perfectly fine.

Blocker

Same philosophy.

At this level, your goalie is experienced enough to start developing preferences.

Let them try different brands, shapes, fits, and setups.

What matters is that they're comfortable and confident using it.

Chest Protector

At this level, better protection becomes increasingly worthwhile.

Players are shooting harder, they're using modern composite sticks with customized flexes, and the puck is getting to the net quickly.

Protect your goalie.

And remember:

The most protective chest protector in the store doesn't help very much if your goalie can't move in it.

Neck Guard

Get a quality goalie neck guard with good collarbone protection.

Simple as that.

Goalie Jock

At this level:

Goalie-specific protection is necessary, in my opinion.

Stick

I'm still a foam-core stick guy.

They're solid.

They work.

They're usually easier on the wallet.

If your goalie loves composite sticks and you want to spend the extra money, there's nothing wrong with that.

I don't believe every goalie needs an expensive composite stick just because they're playing at a higher level.

Where Parents Can Save Money

Goalie equipment is expensive.

There's no getting around that.

But you don't have to buy the newest professional-level equipment every season.

Used Gear Can Be Great For:

- Leg pads
- Gloves
- Blockers
- Some chest protectors
- Beginner equipment
- Kids who are growing quickly

Before buying used equipment, inspect it carefully and make sure it still provides appropriate protection and fits your goalie.

Where I Would Be More Careful About Saving Money

If I were prioritizing where money goes, I would focus heavily on:

Head Protection

As shots become harder, make sure your goalie's mask provides the protection appropriate for the hockey they're playing.

Skates

Not necessarily because expensive skates automatically make someone better.

Because uncomfortable skates can make a kid hate playing hockey.

Neck and Collarbone Protection

This is an area I strongly believe in protecting.

One of My Favorite Goalie Equipment Tricks

Tie the Chest Protector Into the Pants

Most goalie chest protectors have a loop around the stomach or belly-button area.

Depending on the equipment, you can use the:

- Pant laces.
- Pant belt.
- Both.

to connect the chest protector to the pants.

This helps keep the chest protector positioned properly and reduces openings around the stomach area.

Some goalies like wearing their chest protector tucked **inside** their pants.

Others like wearing it **outside**.

I personally liked mine outside.

But I still tied it into my pants loosely enough that it moved the way I wanted.

Try different setups.

Your goalie will eventually figure out what feels right.

Let Your Goalie Make Their Gear Their Own

Goalies are different.

That's part of what makes the position great.

I used the same chest protector from roughly age 14 until I was 20.

That thing had everything imaginable holding it together.

Tape.

Stitching.

Velcro.

Probably more tape.

I took padding out.

I added padding.

I adjusted things.

I spent summers figuring out exactly how I wanted my equipment to feel.

Was the equipment pretty?

Absolutely not.

But it was **mine**.

I knew exactly how it moved.

I knew exactly how I wanted it to feel.

Working on my equipment also taught me a lot about the gear I was wearing.

Your goalie will eventually develop preferences too.

They'll have opinions about:

- How tight their pads are.
- How their chest protector sits.
- How their gloves close.
- How their pants fit.
- How their knee guards sit.
- What stick feels right.
- What catching-glove break they prefer.

Listen to them.

You don't have to agree with every strange goalie preference.

But let them experiment.

The Most Important Thing to Remember

No single goalie setup is perfect.

No two goalies are the same.

One goalie loves tight equipment.

Another wants everything loose.

One goalie loves one catching-glove break.

Another can't stand it.

One goalie wants the newest gear every season.

Another finds a chest protector they love and refuses to let anyone throw it away for six years.

That's goalie life.

These are simply recommendations based on what worked for me and what I've learned from being around the position.

Use this guide as a starting point.

Ask questions.

Try equipment.

Experiment.

And most importantly:

Help your goalie find equipment that keeps them protected, allows them to move, and makes them excited to get back on the ice.

Quick Parent Checklist

- ☐ Does the equipment fit comfortably?
 - ☐ Can my goalie move freely?
 - ☐ Can they butterfly without equipment interfering?
 - ☐ Are their head, neck, collarbone, knees, and other vulnerable areas appropriately protected?
 - ☐ Are their skates comfortable?
 - ☐ Is the equipment appropriate for the level of hockey they're playing?
 - ☐ Am I buying expensive equipment because it's necessary, or simply because it's the newest model?
 - ☐ Have we considered quality used equipment where appropriate?
 - ☐ Does my goalie actually like how the equipment feels?
 - ☐ Have I let my goalie develop their own preferences?
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