

Goalies 10 & Under

Beginner Goalie Gear Guide for Parents

Helping Your Young Goalie Stay Protected, Comfortable, and Excited to Play

Becoming a goalie parent for the first time can be overwhelming.

Whether you grew up around hockey or are completely new to the sport, goaltending is its own world. The equipment is different, the sizing can be confusing, and it can feel like every piece of gear comes with a huge price tag.

And sometimes, kids decide they were **born to be a goalie**.

Maybe they watched a goalie at a game and thought the position looked awesome. Maybe they love the custom masks and matching pads. Maybe they noticed the goalie wasn't skating laps quite as much as everyone else.

Whatever brought your child to the crease, you're here because you're now the parent of a goalie.

This guide is meant to make that transition a little easier. I'll walk you through which pieces of equipment matter most, where you may be able to save money, when goalie-specific equipment becomes more important, and some things I've learned from spending most of my life around the position.

I've learned a few things from being a goalie in the Western Hockey League and being coached by ex-NHL players.

Hockey starts in the classroom – A B- average for grades is the minimum.

Hold yourself accountable and be honest with yourself: did you work your hardest? Did you do everything you could out there to improve (Practice especially)? Getting on the ice for practice in itself isn't cheap or easy. Moving appointments around, missing dinner time with friends, so make sure you are making the most of your time out there.

Being a good teammate, you don't have to be friends with your teammates away from the rink, but being a good teammate is the most important thing, and sometimes you have to do the uncomfortable things, hold them accountable if they miss an empty-net shot in practice. "Billy, why did you miss that shot? I know you can make it; let's do it." Don't put them down; always pick them up. It's never meant to be negative, and when a teammate holds you accountable, it's not negative either.

Before We Talk Gear: Safety Comes First

A hockey puck is a piece of vulcanized rubber being shot toward your goalie almost every time they step onto the ice.

Saving money is important.

Protecting your goalie is more important.

The recommendations in this guide are based on my experience playing and coaching the position. Every goalie develops differently, and every piece of equipment fits differently.

When buying equipment, make sure your goalie can:

- Move comfortably.
- Bend their knees.
- Get into their stance.
- Butterfly without equipment interfering.
- Move their arms freely.
- See clearly through their helmet or mask.
- Skate comfortably without pain.

If you're unsure about the fit of a protective item, have someone experienced with goalie equipment help you fit it properly.

The Two Pieces I Would Prioritize First

There are two pieces of equipment I believe are especially important for young hockey players:

1. Skates

Uncomfortable skates can quickly ruin hockey for a young player.

A kid can deal with elbow pads or shin pads that aren't their favorite. Painful skates are much harder to ignore.

Your goalie should actually want to put their skates on.

Comfort comes before price, brand, and appearance.

2. Helmet or Goalie Mask

Protecting your goalie's head needs to remain a priority.

As players get older and begin shooting harder and more accurately, upgrading the protection around your goalie's head becomes increasingly important.

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At this age, your child may still be switching between goalie and forward.

That's completely fine.

If your goalie is still playing forward occasionally, you **do not necessarily need to immediately replace every piece of their player equipment with goalie-specific equipment.**

Depending on their level and situation, they may still be able to use player equipment:

- Pants
- Skates
- Cup
- Helmet

The goal at this age should be helping them **learn the position, stay comfortable, stay protected, and have fun** without making parents feel like they need to purchase an entire professional goalie setup.

Stick

A foam-core goalie stick can be a great option for a young goalie.

They're learning the position, banging sticks around, dropping them, getting them hit with pucks, and occasionally using them like construction equipment.

You don't necessarily need to spend a fortune on a composite stick yet.

Coach's Take

At this age, I'd rather see the money spent on comfort and protection than on an expensive stick.

Mask

An entry-level ice hockey goalie mask may be appropriate for young goalies at this stage.

Some very young goalies who are still rotating between skating out and playing goalie may continue using their player helmet depending on their hockey program and situation.

And yes — many young goalies will desperately want the goalie mask.

Sometimes that has less to do with protection and more to do with how cool they think it looks.

Sticker wraps can also give a goalie the custom-mask look without paying for a full custom paint job.

Pants

If your goalie is still playing forward, their player pants may work for now.

Going slightly larger can give them room to grow and provide additional coverage, but your goalie still needs to move comfortably.

Skates

If your child already has player skates that fit comfortably, you may not need to buy goalie skates right away.

This can save parents from purchasing a second pair of skates while their child is still deciding whether goalie will become their full-time position.

Cup

For very young goalies, a traditional player cup may be sufficient depending on their level and equipment setup.

As players get older and shots become harder, goalie-specific protection becomes increasingly important.

Leg Pads

Used pads can be a great option for young goalies.

Last year's model can also save parents a significant amount of money if you're buying new.

Young goalies grow quickly, so finding equipment that gives them some room to grow can help extend the life of the gear.

Just remember:

Extra growing room should never prevent your goalie from skating, moving, or getting into position properly.

Learning to skate in goalie pads is difficult enough already.

Catching Glove

Ask your goalie which hand feels natural when catching.

There used to be a common idea that your hockey shooting hand should determine whether you played regular or full-right goalie.

I don't believe every goalie needs to follow that rule.

I played baseball growing up and wanted to catch with my left hand, so that's what felt natural to me.

Every goalie is different.

Let them find what feels comfortable.

Blocker

The same idea applies here.

Don't overcomplicate it.

Find something comfortable, protective, appropriately sized, and suitable for their level.

Chest Protector

A young beginner doesn't necessarily need the most expensive chest protector available.

Protection matters, but so does movement.

When trying one on, make sure your goalie can comfortably:

- Raise their arms.
- Bring their hands forward.
- Get into their stance.
- Rotate their shoulders.

- Butterfly without the chest protector interfering.

Some parents choose a slightly larger size to allow room for growth, but don't sacrifice mobility to make equipment last another season.

Neck Guard

This is one piece I strongly recommend.

Look for a neck protector that also covers the collarbone area and fits comfortably under the chest protector.

Even at younger ages, getting hit around the collarbone can hurt and can make a young goalie nervous about facing shots.

Knee Guards

I also strongly recommend knee protection.

Young goalies are still learning how to butterfly correctly. Sometimes they'll drop awkwardly and expose areas around the knee or thigh.

Even if the players aren't shooting extremely hard yet, getting hit in an exposed area can hurt enough to scare a young goalie.

You don't necessarily need the highest-end model.

You **do** want something that:

- Fits correctly.
 - Stays in place.
 - Doesn't interfere with movement.
 - Feels comfortable while butterflyflying.
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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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