

Goalies Ages 10–13

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 your 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.

At this stage, these recommendations are aimed more toward goalies who have played the position before and are beginning to play goalie more regularly.

Players are learning to shoot harder.

They're becoming more accurate.

They're starting to understand offensive systems.

Screens, tips, rebounds, and deflections become more common.

That means protection becomes increasingly important.

Mask

At this age, I recommend moving into a true goalie mask.

Players are learning how to shoot high and increasingly want to put pucks under the crossbar.

An entry-level goalie mask would be my minimum recommendation.

I'd start by looking at something around the protection level of a Bauer 940/950-type mask, although it absolutely doesn't need to be Bauer.

You don't necessarily need professional-level equipment yet.

You do need proper protection.

I also like using a **dangler-style throat protector** attached to the mask.

Goalie Jock

A goalie-specific cup becomes much more worth considering here.

Players are shooting harder, and you'll want the extra protection goalie equipment provides.

Leg Pads

You still don't necessarily need top-of-the-line pads.

Kids this age can grow incredibly quickly.

Middle-of-the-road pads can provide plenty of performance while preventing you from spending premium money on equipment your child may outgrow.

Used equipment can also be an excellent option.

If you're allowing room for growth, make sure the additional size isn't preventing your goalie from moving properly.

Catching Glove

Middle-of-the-road equipment is perfectly reasonable here.

Used gloves can also be a great value.

Depending on your goalie's hand size, intermediate equipment may be appropriate.

Your goalie will probably outgrow the glove eventually, so don't assume spending the most money automatically means you're making the best decision.

Blocker

Same idea as the catcher.

Comfort.

Protection.

Correct sizing.

Reasonable price.

There's no need to chase the most expensive blocker on the wall just because it's the newest model.

Pants

Goalie pants become increasingly useful as players start shooting harder.

If your goalie is still rotating between forward and goalie, you may be able to delay the purchase depending on their situation.

For goalies playing the position consistently, I would start looking at goalie-specific pants.

Some room for growth can be helpful, but don't buy them so large that they interfere with movement.

Neck Guard

This becomes a must-have in my book.

I strongly recommend a goalie neck guard with collarbone protection.

At this age, players love trying to shoot high — including during warmups and sometimes between drills when the goalie may not even be completely ready.

Protect the neck and collarbone area.

Chest Protector

Middle-of-the-road protection can still be perfectly reasonable.

Again, your goalie may be growing rapidly.

The biggest test when trying on a chest protector is simple:

Can your goalie move?

Have them:

- Raise their arms.
- Bring their gloves together.
- Get into their stance.
- Rotate their shoulders.
- Drop into a butterfly.

If they can't move properly, the chest protector isn't helping them stop pucks.

Knee Guards

Strongly recommended.

At this age, players are beginning to shoot harder, and teams are learning offensive structure.

That means your goalie may be dealing with more:

- Screens
- Tips
- Deflections
- Rebounds
- Traffic around the crease

Knee guards help protect areas that can become exposed when a young goalie doesn't land perfectly in their butterfly.

Stick

I'm still not a huge believer in spending big money on composite sticks for young goalies.

Foam-core sticks can still do the job.

They're generally less expensive, and young goalies aren't exactly known for treating their sticks delicately.

And while we're talking about sticks:

Don't let your goalie constantly slam their stick when they're frustrated.

Yes, it's hard on the stick.

More importantly, teammates are watching.

Goalies are emotional. I understand that better than most.

But learning how to control frustration is part of learning how to play the position.

Goalie Skates

This is where goalie-specific skates start to make more sense.

Goalie skate blades are designed around goalie movement and can make things like:

- Shuffles
- T-pushes
- C-cuts
- Small crease adjustments

feel more natural.

But once again:

Comfort comes first.

You don't need the most expensive goalie skate available.

You need one your goalie actually likes wearing.

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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