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TRAINING SESSIONS

FOOTWORK

Footwork training starts off every season. Basic footwork drills and warm-ups are used throughout the rest of the season for warm-ups and repetition. Even when training other topics, don't let them forget good footwork.

• **Warm Up (10 min)**


After jog & stretch, and introduction of basic steps (shuffle and crossover) if necessary, do footwork mirroring. Coach or leader move back and forth with good footwork, varying speed and with quick changes of direction, players mirror the leader. Using a [speed ladder](#) can also be a great warm-up for this or any other session.

 Make sure players stay light on their toes, knees bent, and keep their shoulders square to the leader.

For beginners, here's a great demonstration of why keepers need to be on their toes. First, have the players stand lightly on their toes and tell them to jump as high as they can. They should easily be able to get off the ground. Then, tell them to put their weight on their heels and jump again. This time they won't go anywhere!

• **Ready Position (5 min)**

Do footwork mirroring again, but now the coach or leader will call "Shot!" every so often. When he does, keepers must instantly come to the ready position. Then keep moving. Then, the leader gets a ball and dribbles back and forth with the players tracking the ball; occasionally the leader fakes a shot and the keepers must come ready.

 Make sure keepers are still light on their toes when in the ready position, not on their heels.

• **Footwork to cones (20 min)**

Players in pairs, each pair with two flat cones. Place cones 6 paces apart. Players face each other across an imaginary line between the two cones; one player is the leader, the other is the follower. Leader uses good footwork and attempts to touch just outside either of the cones before the follower can touch just inside; if they are



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successful, they get a point. After a set length of time (30 sec for younger players, 60 sec for older), rest, and then switch leader and follower. Winner has the most points after the two rounds. Rotate winners so players get different match-ups.

☞ Keep shoulders square. Do not stretch for the cones -- keepers should use quick footwork to get all the way behind the cone. Use the crossover step to accelerate away from the follower. This is an exhausting drill, so allow a good amount of time between rounds for rest.

- **Warm Up Hands (5 min)**

Now we get the goalkeeper's hands involved. Again in pairs, with a ball, players simply shuffle back and forth over about 10-15 yards tossing the ball back and forth. Simple throws for the first couple of minutes, then have the players intentionally throw the ball just off to the side of the other keeper.

☞ Don't allow poor hand position on catches. Adjust shuffle steps so the body is behind the ball; even if the keeper has to reach for the ball, they should quickly use the feet to get the body behind it.

- **Footwork Through Cones with Catch (20 min)**

Set up a line of 6-8 cones (use multiple lines if you have more than three or four keepers). Coach or server is 5 yards from end of the line; players at other end. Each player quickly shuffles side to side through cones, finishing by saving a ball hand-served slightly off target. Next, move the cones into a zigzag with 2-3 yards in between. Now keepers must use a crossover step between cones, with a quick shuffle around them, finishing with a save. Progress to finishing with a save off a out-of-hand volley or shot off the ground.

☞ Footwork should be quick, and keepers should come ready for the shot as they round the last cone. Once ready, keeper should be light on their feet and able to still quickly get their body behind the ball for the save. Balls should be served within "footwork" distance; do not allow dives.

- **Mirroring with Saves (15 min)**

Players in groups of three (each group in front of a net, if possible). One keeper stands in front of net, or cones marking an 8-yard long line. Shooter stands 10 yards away with ball on the ground, third player stands behind shooter. Third player begins side-to-side footwork with the keeper mirroring. At a random point, shooter strikes ball at the keeper. Keeper, while moving, must time the shooter, come to the ready position, and make the save. Keeper gets three shots, then rotate positions. You can make this a competition to see who gets the most saves.

☞ Shooter should serve the ball within "footwork" distance of the keeper; do not allow dives. Similar coaching points to previous exercise.

- **Shots on Goal (15 min)**

Take shots on goal from 14-16 yards out and have keepers make saves using good footwork (no diving). For young keepers, you can stipulate that shots must be below waist level, or even on the ground. Give each keeper one or two shots, then rotate keepers/shooters. Challenge the keepers as a group to see how many saves they can make.

☞ Encourage quick feet, and insist the keepers get all the way behind the ball -- no reaching out, and if they must, they should finish the motion by ending with the body behind the ball. Make sure keepers start on their toes before the shot comes; small "training bounces" will help.

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TRAINING SESSIONS

POSITIONING

Simply being in the right place at the right time is critical for successful goalkeeping. The positioning demo can be dropped (or briefly reviewed) for more experienced keepers; use the time for more of the game-like exercises at the end.

- **Warm Up (10 min)**

Jog and stretch, light footwork mirroring exercise, simple catch in pairs to warm up the hands.

- **Positioning Demo (15 min)**

Have three ropes set up beforehand; one tied to a stake at the center of the goal line, one tied to each post. Place a ball out near the edge of the penalty area, off center, and explain the center line and covering the posts. You can move the ball and ropes around the edge of the penalty area to demonstrate the goalkeeper's arc (see the [Positioning page](#) for a brief description of this). Don't forget to point out they need to be "outside" the near post on shots from an angle.

☞ Make it clear that this positioning is a general starting position for facing shots; crosses and breakaways are handled a bit differently. It is helpful, but not absolutely necessary, to have the field markings on the grass for this demo.

- **Two-Sided Saves (15min)**

Keepers in groups of three, with two cones 6 yards apart. One keeper stands between the cones, the other two players are about 8 yards away, one on each side of the cone "goal", with balls. Keeper faces one player, who shoots a ball at keeper who makes the save. While the keeper is making the save, the player behind them is moving their ball to a new position. After keeper makes the save, they must turn, find the ball and the other shooter, get in good position and save the shot from the second shooter. The keeper immediately turns and find the other ball and shooter, who has also moved to a varied position, and save the next shot. Each keeper makes 5 saves in succession, then rotate positions. Encourage shooters to serve balls from all angles.

☞ The keeper's arc for this 6-yard "goal" is smaller, but keepers need to quickly check the posts and find good position, along the center line and far enough out to cover the posts. Make sure the keepers, after turning, move *through* and out in front of the cones, off the goal line, to make the save.

- **Color-Coded Shots (20 min)**

Place four differently-colored cones, pinnies or other objects in an arc around the goal, about 16-18 yards away from the goal. At least one should be at an acute angle close to the goal line. At each cone, there is a shooter and several balls. Keeper starts at one goalpost. The coach calls a color. The keeper must quickly find that color object, get in good position along the arc, and make the save. Coach calls next color, and so on until the keeper has faced four shots. Then rotate keepers. First time through, have the shooters evaluate the keeper's position and help adjust them if they are not properly positioned. The second time through, the color call and the shot come immediately after the previous save. If the shooter thinks the keeper is out of position, they should try to take advantage of it.

☞ Make sure the keepers check the posts as they move to be sure of their

positioning. Keepers need to be off the goal line and outside the near post, along their arc. Footwork comes into play here too; the keeper should try to be in proper position *before* the shot is taken, if possible. Don't hesitate to "freeze" the keeper after a shot and correct their position if necessary.

- **Follow the Bouncing Ball** (15 min)

This is similar to Color-Coded Shots, except now the keeper must track a moving ball. Put 3-4 players in a similar arc around the penalty area, and one keeper in the net. There is one ball. Players pass the ball around the arc; the keeper must use footwork and positioning to track the ball. At any point after 3-4 passes, a player may elect to take a shot, particularly if they feel the keeper is out of position. Each keeper saves three or four shots, then rotates out.

■👉 Similar coaching points to the previous exercise. The field players should try to quickly move the ball side-to-side to try to get the goalkeeper out of position.

- **Moving Ball plus Defenders** (15 min)

Take the "Follow the Bouncing Ball" exercise, and now add one or two players as defenders who can pressure the ball but not tackle it away or intercept it. This adds a match-related condition to the exercise.

■👉 This exercise is a good one to use in a team training environment, and make it a more match-condition exercise, by adding more players in a larger area. The offense should always be numbers up (e.g. 5v2+K or 6v3+K) and encouraged to quickly switch the point of attack.

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