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## Goalkeeping: Effective Communication

Central to any successful soccer team is effective communication. The sophistication and amount of communication will vary depending on age and skill level. In today's modern game the goalkeeper is the lead communicator on the field. Expectations are that a goalkeeper is not only a shot stopper but also the last line of defense, first attacker, and demonstrates game maturity with decision making, organization, and communication. That is a heavy burden at any age and ability level.

Communication between goalkeepers and field players is difficult due to game inexperience and the pace at which the game changes. Therefore, communication is a habit that has to be formed early just like proper goalkeeper catching techniques.

### Expectations:

**U-10:** Understand the importance of 'Keeper' call.

**U-11:** Calling keeper with balls crossed into the box. 'Away' call when the keeper is not in a position to challenge the ball. Communicate with defenders to 'clear' the ball when under pressure.

**U-12:** Communicate directionally: 'man on your left', 'Rachel on your left'. Mark players up on set pieces. 'Step players by name' or 'push players up by name' to insure players are defending and attacking as a team.

**U-13/14:** Begin to organize defense. 1st defender, 2nd defender. Identify immediate threat off the ball. Offer 'keeper' as a pass back option to clear or maintain possession. 'Step players' or 'push players up' to give the keeper more room to work in, to keep the attacking team contained, and the offside consideration.

**U-15/16:** Further understanding of team defensive and offensive responsibilities of the 4-4-2, man marking, zonal defending. Able to organize defenders to support defensive integrity: Pressure, Cover, and Balance.

**U-17:** Develop understanding of other attacking and defending formations. Confidently orchestrate the whole defense rather than just pressure, cover, and balance. Communicate constructive criticism to individuals and team.

**U-18:** With the help of the coach, central defender, and central midfielder organize the team to respond to varying defensive and attacking formations or styles of play.



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In addition to practice and game play, keepers should watch professional games as much as possible. While they are watching they should imagine that they are the keeper in the game. Try to figure out where the next pass is going and to watch how the defense and attack move in relationship to one another and off the ball. Try to communicate as the professional keeper out loud while watching. Using the keeper call, identify unmarked players, calling a particular defender back to recover a through ball.

The keeper has the best view of the team. Clear and concise directions given by the keeper will help organize the defense and minimize defensive breakdowns, contribute to more possession, provide offensive support, and thwart counter attacks. Effective communication has to start in practice from the group warm up to game situations.

This article is based on an article written by Christian Benjamin of [www.keeperstop.com](http://www.keeperstop.com)

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