



FOR COACHES

FROM GOALIE TO COACH

A free guide for goalies who want to coach goalies.



[LAXGOALIEHUB.COM/BECOME-A-GOALIE-COACH](https://laxgoaliehub.com/become-a-goalie-coach)

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Hi, Coach. You are in a unique position to help the youth in your community, and I'm looking forward to working with you. My name is Greg.

Maybe a club director asked if you'd help with the goalies. Maybe a parent at the field heard you played and wondered if you give lessons. Or maybe nobody has asked yet, and coaching is just something you've started to think about. Either way, I'm glad you're here.

You spent years in the cage. You know what a good step feels like, what a clean save sounds like off the pocket, and what the walk back to the crease is like after one that got by you. That's the part of this job that's hardest to teach, and you already have it.

I should tell you up front that I didn't play goalie. I'm the coach who kept getting handed one, and then kept coaching them. These days I'm a goalie coach and Vice President at Stanwood Youth Lacrosse here in Washington, and I write the daily training at LAX Goalie Hub. So we come at this from opposite ends of the cage, and I think that makes for a good trade. You bring the position. I'll share what coaching goalies has taught me about the rest: turning what you know into training for kids who are nine or sixteen, and running coaching as a small business that covers its costs and pays you fairly for your time.

Take what fits and make the rest your own. Here's the whole thing in five lines, and then we'll walk through it together.

The short version:

- **Coach the age in front of you.** A ten-year-old needs a different session from the one you got at eighteen.
- **Plan a year,** not a pile of drills.
- **Get the safety basics done before you coach anyone.**
- **Price from your real costs,** and put your policies in writing.
- **Show families progress** they can see.

01

YOU KNOW THE POSITION. THAT'S THE HARD PART.

Let's start with the good news, because it's real.

As a player, you needed to know *what* to do. Coaching adds a layer on top of that: *why* it works, how to break it into pieces a ten-year-old can take one at a time, and what the first wrong version of it looks like.

That's where your experience pays off, with one small catch. A lot of what makes a goalie good goes automatic years before college. A lot of goalies stop thinking about their top hand somewhere in high school. Teaching it means going back to find it again, slowing it down, and putting words to something your body just does. It turns out to be one of the more enjoyable puzzles in coaching.

The age of the kid in front of you changes everything else. A college goalie wants three hundred shots a week and will tell you when the angle is wrong. A fourth grader needs to catch, step, stay brave and laugh at least once, and the session worked if he wants to come back on Thursday.

One small suggestion for your first few sessions: **watch more than you talk.** It's tempting to fill the silence with corrections. Pick one thing, say it in five words or fewer, and let him take twenty reps at it before you add a second. Kids fix a surprising amount on their own when you give them a little room.

02

COACH THE AGE, NOT THE POSITION.

Once you've got your feet under you, the next question is what belongs in a session, and the answer depends almost entirely on how old he is. The USA Lacrosse Athlete Development Model is the best map I know for this. It splits youth development into stages by age. Here's the short version, in grades:

GRADES	AGES	STAGE	WHAT MATTERS MOST
3-4	8-10	FUNDamentals	Balance, agility, catching without fear, a basic stance, stepping toward the ball. Short sessions, lots of fun.
5-6	10-12	Foundations	The best years for learning skill. Consistent mechanics, hand speed, the arc, calling the ball, a first habit of resetting after a goal.
7-8	12-14	Emerging Competition	Explosive footwork, clearing, reading the play, core strength. Growth spurts can make a good goalie clumsy for a season.
9-10	14-16	Competitive	Higher-intensity goalie work, reading the shooter, clearing under pressure, strength training learned properly.
11-12	16-18	High Performance	Decision speed, film, leadership, and college preparation for the ones who want it.

A few things follow from that table.

What a college drill does to a fourth grader. It doesn't make him tougher. Hard shots at close range on a kid who hasn't learned to step toward the ball teach him to step away from it, and that habit takes a long time to undo. The drill isn't wrong; it's just wrong for him this year. [Why a 9-year-old shouldn't train like a 15-year-old](#) goes into the reasoning in more depth.

Early specialization. Some of the families who find you will want lacrosse twelve months a year at ten years old, and that comes from a good place. The development model points the other way: more sports when they're young, a narrower focus later. You can coach their goalie and still be the adult who tells them the fall soccer season is good for his feet. [The real cost of one sport all year](#) is a kind article to send a family weighing it.

The whole kid. This is the part I care about most. You'll be one of a small number of adults he sees every week. How he leaves your session, how he talks about a goal he gave up, whether he still likes the sport at fourteen: those count as much as his hands.

03

BUILD A TRAINING YEAR, NOT A PILE OF DRILLS.

With the age in mind, you can start thinking past next Tuesday. A pile of drills gets you through four sessions. A training year gets a goalie somewhere, and it makes your own planning a lot easier, too.

Think in seasons. A youth goalie's year has a rhythm, and your work can follow it:

- **Pre-season:** build volume, sharpen the stance, get fit for the spring.
- **In-season:** maintain skill with less volume and more intensity. His team practices and games are the main load now, so your sessions keep him sharp without wearing him out.
- **Post-season:** rest, recover, play something else. Less is more here.
- **Off-season:** the long stretch where real technical change happens, because there's no game on Saturday to protect.

Progressions, not novelty. Each skill can go easy to hard: slow and placed before fast and random, close before far, one variable at a time. A kid who succeeds most of the time learns faster than a kid who fails most of the time. So when a drill looks too easy to a parent, it's usually doing its job. [Why the drill looks too easy](#) explains that to families better than a sideline conversation can.

A weekly rhythm. Decide what each session is *for* before you plan what's in it. How often you see a goalie changes what each session has to carry, and no goalie should get a hard session the day before a game.

Benchmarks families can see. Kids love seeing proof that they're getting better, and so do their parents. Pick a handful of simple tests (hands, feet, reaction) and run them the same way a few times a year. The only comparison that matters is the goalie against himself last time. Our [benchmark scorecards](#) are free to print and use with your goalies.

04

SHAPE A SESSION.

Now for the part where you'll spend most of your time. Good goalie sessions tend to share the same bones, whatever the length:

1. **Warm-up.** Body first, then hands, then soft shots building in speed. Never take live shots on a cold goalie.
2. **The focused block.** One skill, taught and repeated. This is where the coaching happens.
3. **Live work.** Put the skill under game-like pressure: shooters, movement, decisions.

4. The close. A short wrap-up: what went well, the one thing to work on, a quick save on the way out so he leaves on a good one.

One hour or two. A one-hour session has room for one focused block. Two hours lets you add a second skill or more live work, but only for older goalies who can hold their attention that long. For younger kids, two hours is usually too long.

Group or one-on-one. One-on-one gives you every rep, and it's also where fatigue sneaks up fastest, because he never stands in line. Small groups give each goalie natural rest between turns, a little friendly competition, and a lower price for the family.

Mixed ages in one group. Give older and younger goalies different jobs inside the same drill, and keep the younger ones close and slow. Pair an older goalie with a younger one for some drills. The older one learns by explaining, and the younger one gets a hero for the afternoon.

Shot speed and distance. Start closer and softer than you think, and build only as long as he keeps stepping toward the ball. If he starts flinching or turning away, you've gone a little too far. The fix is to back up a step and slow down, not to tell him to be brave. He's already being brave just by standing there.

05

BEFORE YOU COACH ANYONE: THE BASICS.

I know this section isn't why anyone gets into coaching, so I'll keep it as short as I can. It's here because it protects you, the kids, and the families who trust you. **Everything here is general information, not legal advice.** Rules vary by state and by facility, so check the specifics with the organizations named and, where it matters, a licensed insurance agent or an attorney in your state.

- **USA Lacrosse coach membership and certification.** A coach membership is renewed yearly. USA Lacrosse's coaching certification starts at **Bronze**, which requires a current membership, a background check, an abuse prevention course, cardiac care, concussion and cultural competency courses, and an annual rules test. Many clubs require Bronze, and it is the clearest signal you can give that you've done the basics.
- **Background screening and abuse prevention training.** USA Lacrosse includes both with a coach membership and requires each to be renewed every two years.
- **Safe sport rules apply to you.** USA Lacrosse's Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy covers adults who work with youth athletes. In practice: one-on-one time with a minor must be observable and interruptible, so a private lesson happens where others can see it. Get a parent's written consent before individual sessions, renew it each year, and let parents watch. Every message to a minor copies a parent. USA Lacrosse treats every adult participant as a

mandatory reporter: report suspected abuse to law enforcement or child protective services, and to the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

- **Protective equipment for every live shot.** When your goalie faces live shots in a session, he wears the same protective equipment the rules require in a game, including a helmet, throat guard, mouthpiece, gloves and chest protector, with the helmet and chest protector meeting the current NOCSAE standards. If a piece is missing or doesn't fit, he doesn't face live shots until it's fixed. The chest protector standard is worth sending to each family before the first live shot.
- **Permission to use the facility.** School fields, parks and turf facilities usually need a permit or a rental agreement, and many will ask for a certificate of insurance before they'll let you on.
- **Insurance.** USA Lacrosse membership includes insurance for organized lacrosse, but don't assume it covers lessons or clinics you run and charge for yourself. Clinics where not every player is a member may need separate event coverage. Get USA Lacrosse's answer in writing, then ask a licensed agent about general liability coverage for your coaching.
- **A written parent policy.** Payment, cancellations, weather and lightning, where parents watch from, how you communicate, and what happens after a hard hit or a possible concussion. Ask an attorney in your state whether you need a waiver or registration form and what it should say. In many states, Washington included, a parent can't sign away a child's own injury claim, so a waiver is no substitute for insurance and safe coaching.
- **The business side.** Check whether your city or state needs a business license, and keep records of what you take in and spend for taxes, and ask whether your state charges sales tax on lessons.

None of this is exciting, I'll admit. All of it is cheaper than the problem it prevents, and once it's done, you get to put your attention back where it belongs: on the goalies.

06

WHAT TO OFFER.

With the basics in place, you get to decide what kind of coaching you want to do. My advice is to start with what you can do well and repeat every week, rather than the biggest menu you can imagine. You can always add more once you find your rhythm.

- **Private lessons.** One goalie, your full attention, the highest price per hour. Good for technical correction.
- **Small groups.** Two to six goalies. A lower price for each family, natural rest between reps, and goalies who push each other.

- **Clinics.** A few hours, more goalies, a set date. Good for reaching new families, harder to coach individually.
- **A club's goalie group.** Working with a club's goalies during or alongside team practice. Steady work, and the club often handles the families.

Seasonal packages or pay-per-session. Packages give you a predictable schedule and give the goalie consistency, which is what actually makes him better. Pay-per-session is easier for families to try. Plenty of coaches offer both: single sessions to start, and a package for families who come back.

07

HOW TO PRICE IT.

Talking about money can feel a little awkward when you love the sport, so let's keep it simple. There's no right number for your area that someone else can hand you, but there is a good way to find yours.

The common approaches:

- **Hourly**, usually for one-on-one.
- **Per athlete**, for small groups: each family pays a share.
- **Monthly or seasonal packages**, a set number of sessions for a set price.
- **Clinic registration**, a fee per athlete with a minimum number signed up before the clinic runs.

Count your real costs. Field or facility rental, balls and equipment, travel, your USA Lacrosse membership, insurance, and your own time spent planning, driving and answering messages. It's easy to price the hour on the field and forget the hour around it.

A break-even example, in round numbers. Say a two-hour clinic costs you \$200 for the field, \$50 in balls and supplies, and \$50 toward your insurance and membership. That's \$300 before you've paid yourself anything. At \$50 per goalie, six goalies cover your costs and the seventh is the first one that pays you. If you want \$200 for your time, you need ten. Now you know your minimum, and whether \$50 is the right fee at all.

Those numbers are an illustration, not a forecast. What families in your area can pay, what the other coaches charge, and how many goalies you can reach all vary, and no one can promise you an income from coaching. What you can do is know your costs well enough that you never coach at a loss without choosing to.

Charge what your time is worth from the start. A low price feels generous, and I understand the instinct. In practice it fills your schedule with sessions that don't cover the gas, and raising a price later is harder than starting fair. Your time and what you know are worth paying for.

08

FINDING YOUR FIRST ATHLETES.

Once you know what you're offering and what it costs, it's time to let people know you're out there. Here's the encouraging part: good goalie coaches are hard to find, so you're starting with an advantage.

Start with the people who already know goalies need help. Club directors, high school coaches, youth coaches and rec league organizers all have goalies and rarely have a goalie coach. A short, specific email works better than a flyer: who you are, where you played, your certification, what you offer, and one clear next step.

What to send a club. A one-page summary: your background, what a session looks like, ages you work with, your safety basics (Bronze, background check, insurance), and your prices. Offer to run one free session for their goalies, with the club's permission and your insurance in place, so the coach can see you work.

Parent word of mouth. Your best marketing is a goalie who improves and still likes the sport. Families talk at the field, and a recommendation from another goalie parent carries more weight than anything you post.

Reviews and testimonials, honestly. Ask happy families if they'd say something you can share, use their real words, and get a parent's written permission before you use a child's name or photo. Never write a review for someone, and never imply a result you didn't deliver. If you give anything in return for a review, say so where it appears. [Camps and clinics: which ones are worth it](#) shows what families are taught to look for, which makes it a handy checklist for how you present yourself.

09

WORKING WITH PARENTS.

Parents will be your partners in this, and a little clarity at the start makes the whole relationship easier for everyone.

One clear welcome email. Before the first session: when and where, what to bring, the gear he needs for live shots, how payment works, your cancellation and weather policy, where parents can watch, and how you'll communicate. Most of the friction later comes from something that wasn't said at the start.

Progress updates. A short note every few weeks: what you're working on, what's improved, what he can do at home. Families who can see progress keep coming back, and it's a nice moment for the kid, too.

Boundaries. Decide your hours for messages and stick to them. During games, let his team coach do the coaching. If a parent wants to talk about playing time on his team, that's a conversation for his team coach.

Communication with minors. Messages go to the parent, or copy the parent, every time. No private messages, no social media connections with athletes, no apps that delete messages. It protects the kid and it protects you.

10

A FEW TRAPS WORTH STEPPING AROUND.

Before we wrap up, a few things to keep an eye on. None of these says anything about how good a coach you'll be. Each one catches good coaches because it starts from a good intention.

- **Too much volume.** The most common one. Young goalies get better from frequent, short, high-quality reps, not from being worn out.
- **Coaching from your own playing days.** What worked for you was built for your body, your strengths and your age. He's a different goalie, and he's ten.
- **Promising recruiting outcomes.** Never promise a roster spot, a scholarship or a college. You can help a goalie get better. You don't control the rest, and implying you do is a fast way to lose a family's trust.
- **Underpricing.** See section 7.
- **No written policies.** The first missed payment or rained-out session is a bad time to decide what your policy is.

FREE THINGS THAT HELP.

And finally, a few free things we've built that might help you along the way:

- **A Coach's Guide to Your First Goalie.** For the volunteer coaches you'll meet who have a goalie and no goalie coach. Send it to them.
- **The Wall.** A free guide to building a transportable wall ball rebounder. It's the best piece of homework you can give a goalie between sessions.
- **The benchmark scorecards.** Nine simple tests, free to print, built to show a goalie and his family real progress over a year.
- **A free week of our daily training.** If you'd like to see how we pace a week of goalie training at a given age, a full week is free to read, any grade from 3rd to 12th.
- **Articles for the families you'll coach:** Why a 9-year-old shouldn't train like a 15-year-old, The real cost of one sport all year, Why the drill looks too easy and The chest protector standard, explained for parents.

I'll leave you with this. You have something real to offer. A lot of youth goalies never get a single session with someone who has played the position, and you could be that person for a kid in your town. If you teach it patiently and safely, you'll change how a lot of kids feel about the hardest job on the field.

If this guide helped, or if there's a question I didn't answer, I'd love to hear from you at coach@laxgoaliehub.com.

Good luck out there, and welcome to coaching.

COACH GREG — LAX GOALIE HUB

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