



11 Executive Drive Suite 202
Farmington, CT 06032
Tel 860.677.7500 – 800.KEEPER-1
Fax 860.677.0460
www.soccerpluscamps.com

Catching: Four Ways to Catch a Ball

There are basically four different ways to catch a ball; the *basket catch*, the *contour catch* (sometimes referred to as the *W catch*), the *side contour catch* and the *high contour catch*.

Before we look at each of these catches there are some guidelines that should be applied to all catching techniques.

1. The hands must be relaxed and coordinated, allowing them to touch the ball at exactly the same time. If one hand gets to the ball first, chances of holding on are greatly diminished. Balls shot directly at the keeper are most easily caught because both hands are naturally lined up at about the same distance from the ball. Conversely, balls to one side or the other create a situation where one hand has to travel further to meet the ball than the other hand (more balls are dropped under this situation).
2. The arms should be relaxed and flexed at the elbows. There should be a cushioning or “giving” as the ball arrives. Do not over-exaggerate this absorbing of “giving” movement of the arms. If the arms are too active, it will cause you to arch your back and pull your head out of the catching arena.
3. The head must be still and straight (not cocked to one side or the other). Bring the head, hands, eyes and ball together to complete the catch. Train the eyes in perception to disregard extraneous movement (like the swing of the leg as the ball is hit), but to see or perceive the ball only through the impact and subsequent flight.
4. Keep shoulders square to the catch and forward. This means don't allow one shoulder to be closer to the ball than the other. Even when diving, both shoulders square themselves thus creating a body barrier behind the hands. When the shoulders are square, the hands are naturally lined up to catch easily. The shoulders are square, the hands are well positioned and the body is creating a barrier.

Our philosophy is to simplify the references for catching. This allows the goalkeeper to evaluate and correct.

Now let's look at the four basic catching positions:

The Basket Catch - This position is used when balls are caught between chest height and the ground. The keeper creates a basket with the hands, forearms and upper body. Flexion is at the waist. It is very important to keep the forearms parallel, and to make sure that the body is squarely behind the ball.

If the body cannot be positioned behind the ball, don't use this catching technique (see side contour catching below). The implication here is that good keepers have good footwork, and good footwork allows goalkeepers to get into this position behind the shot. The nature of the basket catch allow two touches to control the ball. The ball is first touched and controlled with the forearm area; the second touch comes as the ball makes contact with the chest and is secured in the basket created by the hands, arms and upper body. If the ball comes to the chest first, the chance of a rebound off the body is much greater than if the shot is absorbed by the first touch of the forearm. We term this a "two-sound catch."

Contour Catch - We call it this because we want the hands to create the shape, or contour, of the ball. We want the wrist slightly flexed, not hyper extended. The arms should be extended, thus preparing the hands to receive the ball. The head should be still. The eyes should be focused on the ball. The contour catch is used for balls taken at chest height or above, whenever the goalkeeper can position the body squarely behind the ball. Good footwork enables many top goalkeepers to catch using the contour position, rather than having to make a diving save (which is less secure, and more likely to cause a rebound). This catch is one-touch and one-sound. If both hands are not symmetrical and working together - actually making contact with the ball at the same time - the likelihood of retaining the catch is greatly reduced. For keepers that's bad news, because rebounds mean goals.

Side Contour - This position may become necessary if the body cannot be positioned squarely behind the ball. Like the contour catch, this is another one-touch and one-sound catch. You'll use the side contour catch for 95% of your diving saves, ranging from simple collapse dives to extension dives.

The challenge with this catch is to bring the far hand across the body, and get it to the ball at the same time as the near hand. If one hand arrives after the other, it will be difficult to hold the ball. We use the phrase "Bring the head, eyes and hands to the ball," thus assuring that the head is in a position to enhance the catch. The shoulders remain square to the field. The goalkeeper is on his side, not his chest or back. It takes a lot of training to learn to catch in this position, especially as the pace of the shots increases.

High Contour - This catch is used for balls above an opponents challenge, before any striker can attempt to score from a head ball. This technique is essentially the same as the contour catch, but in a different catching area: above the head. Use the leg closest to the challenge to protect the ball. By using knee flexion and arm swing to transfer momentum up to the catch, the keeper can jump higher and have more dynamic balance and strength to catch while going up for the ball. Upon catching the ball the

keeper then needs to protect the ball. The ball should be taken down to the chest and protected by the hands and arms.

The ability to hold on to the ball is often the difference between a good goalkeeper and a great one. Nothing demoralizes a forward more than a goalkeeper making a save and holding on to the ball. It is one of the basic elements of goalkeeping and one of the first skills that coaches notice when evaluating a goalkeeper.