

Goalpost Safety

Many accidents have occurred involving goalposts of all types and sizes. Accidents involving both portable and fixed types have caused injuries, some fatal, when they have overturned or broken. This has often been as a consequence of the behaviour of children, either climbing onto the frame or swinging on the cross bar. Some of the free standing goal frames are extremely heavy and yet can be pulled forward with a light pull. To help prevent further incidents, the following basic guidance should be followed. There are standards specified for goals and nets in all sports – football, rugby, hockey, badminton, basketball, handball, volleyball etc. Managers/teachers should also refer to the relevant British Standard and the specific sport standard for more details. Ensure all goals purchased comply with the relevant standard.

- For safety reasons goalposts of any size, used outside or inside, and including those which are portable and not installed permanently at a pitch or practice field, must always be anchored securely to the ground or a suitable, permanent wall/fence. Portable goalposts must be assembled and secured as per the manufacturer's instructions. Portable goals designed for indoor activity only, should not be taken outside unless a method exists by which the goals can be secured.
- Goal posts must be anchored at all times whether in use or storage.
- Goal post sockets should always be set into concrete. Install as per manufacturers instructions to determine dimensions of concrete.
- Under no circumstances should children, or adults, be allowed to climb on, swing from, or play with the structure of the goalposts. Play areas that include goalposts should be supervised at break times to ensure pupils do not misuse the apparatus.
- A permanent identification label should be attached to every goal.
- Regular inspections of goalposts must be carried out to check safety and condition.
- Portable/free standing goalposts should not be left in place after use. They should be dismantled and removed to a secure store, or fastened together to prevent them falling over and unauthorised use. If stored against a wall or fence they must be securely attached so they cannot fall over.
- Nets should be secured by plastic hooks, net grips or tape and not by metal cup hooks.

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- When using goalposts that require padding, it is important for the safety of players that the padding is used during matches, training and warm-up sessions.
- Goalposts which are “homemade” or which have been altered from their original size or construction should not be used. These have been the cause of a number of deaths and injuries.
- An inspection of playing fields should be undertaken prior to lessons/matches to ensure they are in a safe condition for sport activities, and to check for bottles, cans, stones and any other hazards on the surface. Goalposts should also be included in this inspection.

Free standing Goal Frames

It is essential that a Risk Assessment is in place around the use of free standing goal frames, including the arrangements for securing and anchorage, maintenance, moving and storage. It is important to assess the particular site to evaluate the suitability of specific types of anchorage. Free-standing goals are only safe if they are properly stabilised. Most of the commonly used methods of stabilisation can be affected by poor installation techniques as well as by poor ground conditions. The most reliable methods of stabilising freestanding goals are either

- attaching the back bar of the support frame to permanent fixing points in the correct position or suitable attachment points on a permanent fence or wall;
- or using adequate weights attached to the back bar of the support frame in the correct positions specified by the manufacturer.

The use of pins, u-staples or screw-in anchors on natural turf pitches is generally not recommended as these types of fixings may provide inadequate stability on some types of ground or under certain weather conditions. They should be used only if there is evidence that they are effective under the worst possible predictable ground conditions on the site in question.

Care should be taken to ensure the attachment of anchors does not create an additional hazard such as entrapment or trip.

In carrying out the assessment, consider what instructions and information should be given to people/groups that hire school facilities or equipment.

Storing goals

When not in use, it is important that goals are correctly stored so that they are protected and cannot fall. They should never be left accessible, upright or unstabilised. Socketed goals and folded free-standing goals should not be left leaning unsecured against a wall or fence. They should be locked securely to a wall or fence, or left lying flat on the ground. Free-standing goals may be chained face to face in pairs to prevent them falling over.

Moving goals

Extreme care needs to be taken when goals are moved. Goals should never be moved without an adequate number of physically fit and capable people who have been fully trained to use proper lifting techniques. Goals should never be dragged across the ground as this may damage the goal and/or the playing surface.

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Goals fitted with wheels should be moved in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Wheels should be of a type suitable for the surface across which the goal is to be moved. Goals fitted with four wheels can easily topple if they are pushed in the wrong direction and should only be moved by pushing the uprights in a backwards direction. Goals with two wheels should be moved by lifting the back bar and pulling in a backwards direction. If the ground is soft, wheeled goals should be lifted.

Portable goals are frequently moved and assembled ready for use by pupils and they have little perception as to any dangers. Undertake a risk assessment to determine if this is an acceptable practice, considering the age and maturity of pupils, site conditions, size of goals etc. After any move the goals must be inspected prior to use by the teacher, referee or other responsible person.

Inspection and maintenance

Goals must be inspected regularly to ensure that they are safe to use. The following inspection procedures should be used as a guide to establish the minimum frequency and level of checks required for any particular set of goals. The frequency of inspections should be determined by a risk assessment, taking into account type of goal, manufacturers recommendations, British Standards, frequency of use, site conditions, weather, risk of vandalism or misuse etc. This process should be recorded along with any defects noted and the action taken. (If an accident occurs, these records will be required as evidence). If the records show that faults are found at each inspection, the frequency of inspections should be increased.

If a goal is damaged or if faults are found during an inspection then the goal should be withdrawn until fixed. Goals should not be modified or repaired by welding or substituting incorrect parts.

A permanent identification label should be attached to every goal and a log should be established to record everything from when the goal was purchased and first erected, to how it was installed and how it will be maintained. Also record the regular inspections, any damage and faults found and the repairs made. Good practice recommends that records are kept for a minimum of 21 years.

Weekly inspection – and before any game or training activity

Undertake a thorough visual check and check for the following -

- loose/missing nuts, bolts, pins and other fixings
- no signs of movement in sockets and anchoring points
- missing net fittings or broken net cords
- bent sections, sharp edges, or other damage to the goal
- all identification and instruction labels are attached and legible

Repositioning inspection

In addition to the checks listed above, repositioned goals should also be checked to ensure

- the anchors are secure and the goal is firmly reattached
- if weights are used, ensure that they are all present and positioned correctly (the manufacturer's label on the goal should say what weight is needed to stabilise it)

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- the goal has not been bent or suffered other damage during transit.

Annual/new season inspection

Every twelve months, ideally prior to the start of every season, undertake all the checks listed above and in addition check every goal for strength and stability in accordance with the appropriate British Safety Standard.

Rugby posts - The RFU recommends that full sized goalposts are hinged so they can be raised and lowered safely, making regular inspections and maintenance as safe and achievable as possible. The upright posts should be checked for stability in both mild weather and high wind.

Damaged goals and replacement parts

If any inspections reveal damage or faults, the goal should be immediately removed from use until the defect is made good. Replacement parts should always be purchased from the original manufacturer/supplier. Goals should not be modified or repaired by welding or by substituting incorrect parts. No repair should be made that changes the structural integrity, design or shape of the goal. Repairs of this type should only be completed by the manufacturer or an agent authorized to do the work.

Any replacement goals, nets and fittings should all conform to the relevant British Safety Standards of the original goal.

Further advice on goal safety and anchorage systems can be obtained from the Football Association www.thefa.com, the Association for Physical Education www.afpe.org.uk and goalpost suppliers/manufacturers e.g. www.harrod.uk.com/