

Soccer Position Terms

Goalie/Keeper/Goalkeeper – I bet you know this one. The player positioned directly in front of the goal who tries to prevent shots from crossing the goalline; the only player allowed to use their hands and arms, though only within the 18-yard penalty area.

Sweeper – Not always used. In some formations, a single defender that plays closest to their own goal behind the rest of the defenders; a team's last line of defense in front of the goalkeeper.

Rear Defender/Fullback – A player who works mainly in the defensive third of the field. They are primarily focused on stopping the opposition's attackers from scoring.

- **Central Defender** – A player who guards the area directly in front of their own goal, often considered the strongest defender.
- **Defensive Wing** – A player who guards the area on the left or right side of their own goal.

Stopper – The player that defends or guards the best scorer on the attacking team, often the opposition's striker.

Midfielder/Halfback – A player generally positioned in the middle third of the field between the forwards and defenders. Their job is to link the defense and the offense through ball control and passing. They play both an attacking role and a defensive role.

- **Defensive Midfielder** – The player positioned just in front of their team's defense and often assigned to mark the opposition's best offensive player; tends to play more defense as a midfielder.
- **Central Midfielder** – The midfielder most responsible for organizing play in the midfield area, creating scoring opportunities for the attackers, and often a team's leader.
- **Attacking Midfielder** – The midfielder that plays right behind the forwards; they support the offense by providing accurate passes to forwards to set up goals.
- **Midfield Wing** – A player positioned to the left or the right of one of the above midfielders.

Forward – A player who is responsible for most of a team's scoring. They play in front of the rest of their team (or in the attacking third of the field) where they can take most of the shots.

1. **Striker/Center Forward** – Generally the same as a forward, though it sometimes refers to a forward that is his team's primary scoring threat.
2. **Forward Wing** – The outside forwards (often the fastest players and best dribblers) who play on the sides of the field. Their primary task is to provide accurate crossing passes for scoring opportunities.

Responsibilities of a Defender

1. Must be goal side of opponents whenever other team has the ball.
2. Whenever the ball is between the defender and the goal being defended, the defender needs to get back.
3. The first defensive responsibility is to slow down the opponents' attack.
4. Secondary responsibilities include eliminating the opponents' advantage of moving forward quickly and allowing the midfielders and forwards to help on defense.
5. To accomplish these objectives, defenders must work to force the opponents and the ball to the outside of the field.
6. Defenders must try not to let ball get past them, not to let opponents get behind them (so the opponent is closer to the goal), and, most importantly, not to let an opponent with the ball get behind them (stop the ball or stop the player - get in between opponent and ball).
7. If the defender does get beat, he/she needs to recover immediately and get back, either to get goal side of opponent with the ball or to a back-up position of the goalkeeper or the defender who is now defending opponent with the ball.
8. If the goalkeeper calls for the ball, the defender needs to back-up the goalkeeper.
9. When other defenders are confronting the opponent with the ball, the first defender needs to both: (1) cut-off passes from opponent, and (2) prepare to back-up the other defender and to again become the primary defender on the ball if the other defender is also beat.
10. Defenders need to anticipate passes to opponents and step up to intercept passes.
11. Do not allow opponents to turn. For example, when an opponent receives the ball and his/her back is still to the goal, don't allow the opponent to turn to a position where they can see goal and can shoot.
12. Defenders need to control balls they receive and carry (dribble) them upfield.
13. Clear and pass balls to midfielders and forwards (go to outside - not middle of field).
14. Defenders should follow the ball upfield, staying one pass behind the midfielders, available for a back pass and in position to return a loose ball to the midfielders and forwards. (called "push up" or "move up")
15. On goal kicks, defenders should stay goal side of opponents, protecting against short kicks.
16. Defenders need to take throw-ins in defensive half of the field (and perhaps into offensive half depending on coach's preference)

Responsibilities of a Midfielder

1. Have to run, run, run.
2. Need to help on defense and on offense.
3. Have to control the space between our defenders and our forwards.
4. Need to be positioned so that one pass from a defender can reach you, and one pass from a forward can reach you.
5. Midfielders have to receive the ball from defenders, carry it up the field, make a good pass or a through pass to the forwards (midfielders must learn when forwards are offside), or go straight to goal.
6. Need to receive the ball from the defenders or take it away from the other team, and learn to cross the ball to the other side of the field to the other midfielder or the far forward.
7. Midfielders have to be one pass away from the other midfielder, to provide support.
8. When the other midfielder is defending, the first midfielder needs to provide support in case the other midfielder gets beat or opponent cuts toward center of field. This midfielder needs to cut off the pass to other side.
9. Midfielders need to follow forwards, stay one pass behind forwards, and intercept clearing kicks by other team's defenders.
10. Need to support forwards (receive back passes).
11. Need to get back to help defenders, especially on corner kicks and situations when other team has greater numbers.
12. Midfielders take throw-ins in offensive half or at least offensive third of the field (coach's preference).

Responsibilities of a Forward

1. Forwards are goal scorers. Forwards are our front line of attack, our main offensive players.
2. If the ball is between a forward and the goal or the goal line, forwards must be running to the ball - all the way to the goal or to the goalkeeper.
3. Forwards have to follow all shots.
4. If another forward has the ball, the first forward must move without the ball, along with the other forwards, to stay one pass away (as far as the other forward can pass), provide support, look to receive cross or through ball.
5. Forwards need to go back when we are on defense, to stay close to the midfielders and defenders, but do not usually go all the way back.
6. Forwards need to go back far enough that the midfielders can pass the ball to them.
7. Forwards need to stay in front of the midfielders, move without the ball if the midfielders have the ball, prepare to receive a pass or through ball from the midfielders.
8. Forwards need to learn to stay onside (watch the last defender).
9. Forwards need to learn not to come back for the ball when their teammates have the ball, learn to trust their teammates to get the ball to the forwards.
10. Forwards take kickoffs and forwards usually take corner kicks.
11. Forwards come back into defensive side of field to help pick-up cleared balls, get goal kicks, receive clearance passes from teammates.

