

Basic Soccer Position Terms

Backs – Refers to defenders.

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

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.

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

Keeper – Abbreviation for Goalkeeper.

Midfielder – 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.

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.

Advanced Soccer Positions

Attacking Midfielder – The midfielder that plays right behind the forwards; they support the offense by providing passes to forwards to set up goals.

Central Defender – A player who guards the area directly in front of their own goal, often considered the strongest defender.

Central Forward – A team's best-scoring forward who plays towards the center of the field.

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.

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.

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