

JUST4GK — PENALTY KICK TRAINING MODULE

GK Technique, Psychology, Drills & Shooter Scouting | Ages 13–19



The truth about penalty kicks: The odds are stacked against the goalkeeper — but not as badly as the moment feels. Elite keepers save roughly **1 in 5** penalties: about **15–20%** in open play, and better than that in shoot-outs, where takers convert around **76%** instead of **85%**. The pressure is on them, and the data proves it. The goal is not to be perfect — it's to compete, be present, and give yourself the best possible chance. This module is about building a repeatable process, not a magic trick.

SECTION 1 — GK TECHNIQUE: THE FUNDAMENTALS

STARTING POSITION

- Stand **on the goal line** — at least part of one foot touching it or in line with it. That is your legal limit; there is no yard to steal.
- Feet shoulder-width apart, weight on balls of feet
- Slight bend in knees — loaded and ready, never flat-footed
- Hands out, elbows slightly bent — pinks up
- Eyes on the ball, not the shooter's eyes

DURING THE RUN-UP

- Track the shooter's **plant foot** — your best single cue, but an edge, not a guarantee
- Watch the approach angle: a straight-on approach favours the shooter's strong-foot side
- Look for tells — hip angle, standing leg position, last stride
- You **are** allowed to move — shuffle and shift laterally, just keep part of one foot on the line
- Your decision is made **by** the time the foot meets the ball — movement starts at contact or a fraction before, off the final stride

THE SAVE ATTEMPT

- Drive off the inside edge of the push-off foot
- Lead with the hands — never dive with arms behind you
- Stay tall through the dive — collapsing early narrows your reach
- If committed, commit fully — half-dives get beaten more often
- Get up immediately — in **open play** rebounds are live. In a **shoot-out** there is no second ball.

GK Encroachment Rule (Law 14): At the moment the ball is kicked you must have **at least part of one foot touching, or in line with, the goal line**. You **are** allowed to move — shuffle, bounce, shift laterally — right up to contact. You may not be in front of the line, behind the line, or touching the posts, crossbar or net. If you offend and you save it, the kick is **retaken**: a warning the first time, a yellow card after that. If the kick misses the goal or rebounds off the frame untouched, there is no sanction. Know the rule — it protects you.

SECTION 2 — GOAL ZONE REFERENCE

Use this framework in film review and scouting. Label zones consistently so keepers can communicate tendencies clearly.

GOAL — KEEPER'S VIEW (standing on the goal line, looking out at the shooter). Zones run left to right **from your own point of view** — say them that way every time so a scouting note never gets flipped.

1
KEEPER'S LEFT
LOW
LOW CORNER
HIGHEST DANGER

2
KEEPER'S LEFT
MID

3
CENTER
KEEPER'S FAVOR

4
KEEPER'S RIGHT
MID

5
KEEPER'S RIGHT
LOW
LOW CORNER
HIGHEST DANGER

ZONES 1 & 5 — THE LOW CORNERS

- The most dangerous placements, and the hardest to reach without a read
- Slightly more traffic to the keeper's left than the keeper's right
- But the split is more even than most keepers assume: one large analysis found **keeper's left 39.2%, keeper's right 32.2%, centre 28.7%**

ZONE 3 — THE CENTRE

- Nearly **3 in 10** penalties stay central — this is not a rare event
- Keepers who hold their ground save more here. Research on 286 elite penalties found keepers dive left or right **about 94%** of the time while kicks spread far more evenly.
- That gap is **action bias** — conceding while standing still *feels* worse, so keepers dive to avoid regret rather than to make saves
- Don't dive early. Make the shooter beat you, don't vacate the goal for them.

WHEN TO GUESS (COMMITTED DIVE)

- Shoot-out situation — the score is on the line and you need a save
- You've scouted the shooter and have a strong tendency read
- The shooter is a known power hitter — reacting won't be enough
- High-confidence read on body language during the approach

WHEN TO READ (WAIT AND REACT)

- You have no scouting on the shooter
- The shooter is a placement kicker (pace allows for reaction)
- Score allows — a goal here doesn't end the match
- Your team's momentum is strong — force the shooter to earn it
- Shooter shows signs of nervousness (hesitation, re-step)

SECTION 3 — PSYCHOLOGY & PRE-KICK ROUTINE

PHASE 1 — BEFORE THE WHISTLE (30–45 SECONDS)

- Take a slow breath. Reset your body language to calm and confident — not tight.
- Set your feet, set your hands, set your face. You own this goal.
- Make one last observation: approach angle, standing leg, grip on the ball.
- Pick your starting lean if you have a read — commit mentally before the run-up begins.
- If you have a pre-kick phrase, say it now. ("Stay big." / "Read it." / "One shot.")

PHASE 2 — DURING THE RUN-UP

- Track the ball, not the shooter's face. Eyes on contact point.
- Stay light on your feet — bouncing too much wastes energy and signals nervousness.
- Watch for the final tell at the last step — plant foot, hip angle, shoulder drop.
- Decision made by the time foot meets ball — so movement begins at contact or just before it. Waiting to see the ball leave the foot is too late for anything in the corners.

PHASE 3 — AFTER THE KICK (REGARDLESS OF OUTCOME)

- **If saved:** Controlled celebration. Stay focused — in open play the game continues.
- **If scored:** Get up immediately. Long breath. Reset. The next moment is what matters.
- Never stare at the ground. Never look at the shooter. Look at the ball.
- Your body language after a goal communicates to everyone — teammates, opponents, and yourself.

The keeper's mindset advantage: The shooter has to execute. You just have to compete. Every penalty that goes to a spot you didn't dive to is not a personal failure — it's the law of probability, and the numbers were always in the taker's favour. Two things are worth carrying into the moment: takers convert **less** often in shoot-outs than in open play, and keepers who hold the centre save more than keepers who guess. Make the shooter feel the pressure, stay present, give yourself a real chance. That's a win regardless of outcome.

SECTION 4 — TRAINING DRILLS

DRILL 1 — SPOT DIVE WARM-UP

Duration: 5 min | **Reps:** 3 each side | **Equipment:** Ball, goal

Keeper starts in set position. Coach/server calls a zone (1–5) one second before serving a placed shot to that zone. Keeper commits and dives. No guessing — this is technique only. Focus: drive off inside foot, lead with hands, stay tall through the dive.

Coaching Cues: "Lead with the hand." "Stay tall — don't collapse." "Get up immediately."

DRILL 2 — PLANT FOOT READ

Duration: 10 min | **Reps:** 8–10 kicks | **Equipment:** Ball, goal, cones for shooter approach

Shooter approaches from the penalty spot with a predetermined target (keeper does not know). Keeper watches the plant foot and commits on contact. After each kick, keeper states which side they read and why. This builds the habit of verbally processing the read — it locks in the learning.

Coaching Cues: "What did the plant foot tell you?" "Did you read it or guess?" "When did you commit?"

Note: The plant foot is the best cue available, not a certainty. Once keepers are reading it well, add two shooters who deliberately disguise it — and one who picks a spot before they start running and ignores the keeper entirely. That is what elite takers do.

DRILL 3 — SHOOTOUT PRESSURE SIM

Duration: 15–20 min | **Reps:** Full shootout (5 kicks each) | **Equipment:** Ball, goal, 2+ shooters

Run a full penalty shoot-out simulation. Two keepers alternate. Introduce pressure elements: score on the board, crowd noise or coach narration, walk-up routine enforced. After each round, keeper states their pre-kick routine, their read, and one thing they'll do differently next round.

Coaching Cues: "Stick to your routine — don't let the moment rush you." "What was your read on that one?" "Reset — next shot."

Note: Enforce shoot-out conditions properly: no rebounds. Once the ball stops moving, leaves play, or hits the frame, that kick is over and only the taker may touch it.

DRILL 4 — REBOUND RECOVERY

Duration: 8 min | **Reps:** 5–7 | **Equipment:** 2 balls, rebounder or server

After each penalty (save or goal), a second ball is immediately played into the box — a rebound or cross situation. Keeper must recover from the dive and compete for the second ball. Develops the habit of not staying on the ground after a penalty.

Coaching Cues: "Get up immediately — the play is alive." "First priority after the save: find your feet."

Note: This is for penalties **in open play**, where the ball stays live. In a shoot-out there is no second ball — don't train the two situations as if they're the same.

SECTION 5 — SHOOTER SCOUTING LOG

Fill this out for known opposing shooters before a match. Use game film where available. Keep this in your training kit for tournaments and big match prep.

SHOOTER NAME / #	TEAM	DOMINANT FOOT	APPROACH ANGLE	PREFERRED ZONE (1–5)	PLACEMENT VS. POWER	NOTES / TELLS
					Placement Power	
					Placement Power	
					Placement Power	
					Placement Power	
					Placement Power	
					Placement Power	

SECTION 6 — MY PERSONAL PENALTY LOG

Track every penalty faced in training and games. Patterns emerge over time.

DATE	MATCH / TRAINING	SHOOTER	ZONE (1–5)	COMMITTED?	READ CORRECT?	OUTCOME	TAKEAWAY
				Y N	Y N	Saved Goal	
				Y N	Y N	Saved Goal	
				Y N	Y N	Saved Goal	
				Y N	Y N	Saved Goal	

DATE	MATCH / TRAINING	SHOOTER	ZONE (1-5)	COMMITTED?	READ CORRECT?	OUTCOME	TAKEAWAY
				Y N	Y N	Saved Goal	
				Y N	Y N	Saved Goal	
				Y N	Y N	Saved Goal	

My pre-kick routine (write it here and memorize it):

My personal reset phrase when a penalty is scored against me:

WHAT CHANGED IN THIS REVISION

- **Encroachment rule rewritten.** Law 14 requires part of one foot touching or in line with the goal line when the ball is kicked — it does **not** require you to stand still. First offence is a warning, not a caution.
- **"Slightly forward of the goal line" removed.** Under the current law that stolen yard is the offence itself.
- **Save-rate figure corrected** from 20–30% to roughly 1 in 5 (15–20% open play), with the shoot-out conversion drop added as a confidence point.
- **Plant-foot cue softened** from "almost always" to "best single cue, not a guarantee" — and Drill 2 now trains against disguised and keeper-independent takers.
- **Movement timing fixed.** Waiting for the strike is too late; a penalty arrives in roughly 350–500 ms. Decision by contact means movement at or just before it.
- **Zone map relabelled** from near/far post (a crossing term that doesn't apply to a central shooter) to keeper's left / centre / keeper's right.
- **Shoot-out rebound caveat added** to Drills 3 and 4 and to the save-attempt card — in a shoot-out there is no second ball.