

JUST4GK — CORNER KICK PROTOCOL

Positioning, Communication, Decision-Making & Drills | All Age Groups



Corner kicks are a goalkeeper's moment to lead. You are the only player on the field who can see everything. Your starting position, your communication, and your decision to claim vs. punch determine what happens next — not just for you, but for every defender in the box.

SECTION 1 — STARTING POSITION

Your starting position before the kick is your foundation. A poor starting position makes every decision harder.

Your baseline position — memorise this one: Start in the **back half of your goal** — between the middle of the goal and your **far post**, on the goal line. Your near post is already covered by where you stand; your job is protecting the far post and the 6-yard box. Most dangerous deliveries arrive between the 6-yard box and the far post, and starting too close to the near post kills your ability to move forward and across the goal. That is the most common GK mistake on corners.

BODY SHAPE — EVERY CORNER, EITHER SIDE

- Angle your body slightly toward the centre of the goal — **never fully sideways**
- Weight on the balls of your feet, hands at chest height
- Set so that moving **forward** and moving **laterally** are equally available
- Find your near post with one glance before the kick, then eyes stay on the ball
- Feet set before the kicker starts their run-up — never still adjusting as the ball is struck

IN-SWINGING DELIVERY (curves toward your goal)

- This ball is coming to you — be ready to **step off your line early**
- The danger is it dipping under your crossbar. Don't get beaten by a ball you could have claimed.
- If it drops inside your 6-yard box, that is **your** ball — attack it at the highest point
- Err toward decisiveness: an in-swinger that beats you ends up in the net

OUT-SWINGING DELIVERY (curves away from your goal)

- This ball moves away from goal — do **not** let it drag you forward early
- Start a touch wider and hold your ground
- The danger is an attacker **running onto it** around the penalty spot or far post
- Most out-swingers are a defender's ball, not yours — communicate, don't commit

One vocabulary note: Which side the corner is taken from changes which post is "near" and which is "far" — the principles above don't change. Always say near and far **relative to the ball**, and make sure your defenders use the same reference. A call that means two different things to two players is worse than no call.

SECTION 2 — THE CORE DECISION: CLAIM VS. PUNCH VS. STAY

Ball is in your zone — you can get there first — space to jump	CLAIM — two hands, strong take, call "KEEPER'S!"
Ball is in your zone — but congested — contact likely	PUNCH — get square if you can, maximum height and distance, punch to the corner
Ball is below the crossbar but coming to a defender first	HOLD — stay on your line, organize defenders, be ready for the second ball
Ball is outside your zone (dropping at the far post to an attacker)	COMMUNICATE — call your post, direct defenders, hold your position

CLAIMING CORRECTLY

- Call "KEEPER'S!" loudly **before** you leave your line — not at the moment of the catch
- If you have space to step into it, **jump off one foot** — with a run-up that gets you higher and lets you attack the ball. If the ball arrives on top of you with no room to step, a **two-foot jump** is stronger and more stable.
- Take the ball at the highest point you can reach, not where it's comfortable
- Tuck your elbows slightly to protect the ball on contact — don't reach with soft arms
- Land on both feet, immediately scan for distribution options
- Never stop moving after the catch — hold possession and initiate the transition, and release inside **8 seconds**

PUNCHING CORRECTLY

- **Two fists when you can get square to the ball** — more surface, more control, more distance
- **One fist when the ball is across your body or at full stretch.** Choose by your body position, not by preference — reaching across yourself is common on corners, not exceptional.
- Target: punch **WIDE and HIGH** — toward the touchline, not back into the box centre
- Punch at the highest point — if you wait, you lose distance and angle
- After punching, immediately get back into position — the ball may return
- Never punch straight up — it comes right back down into the danger zone

SECTION 3 — COMMUNICATION CALLS

Establish these calls in training so they're automatic in games. Every keeper should know exactly what these words mean before they step into a real match.

"KEEPER'S!"

- I'm coming for this ball. Clear out. Do not head it. This is mine.

"AWAY!"

- Clear the ball immediately. I'm not coming. Any defender near it — head it away now.

"HOLD!"

- Stay in position. Don't leave your marking assignment. Ball is not in danger yet.

"NEAR POST!"

- Near post is uncovered. Someone mark it — now. Directed at the nearest defender.

"FAR POST!"

- Far post runner — someone pick them up. Danger arriving at the back post.

"STEP!"

- Defensive line pushes up now. **Remember: nobody can be offside directly from the corner itself** — this only works on the second ball, after someone has played it.

Communication timing matters: Call **before** the ball arrives, not during. "KEEPER'S!" called at the moment of the catch is too late — your defenders have already committed to heading it. The earlier you call, the more space you create for yourself.

SECTION 4 — POST-CORNER ORGANIZATION

What you do immediately after the claim or clearance is as important as the corner itself. Transition quickly — the opposition is still in your half.

AFTER A CLEAN CLAIM

- Land, scan, and immediately call "BLUE!" or your team colour — signal you have the ball
- Look for the quick outlet — a fullback wide, or a midfielder checking into space
- If pressed, take 3–4 steps in one direction to create an angle, then throw or kick
- Decision should be made before you land — don't stand and think
- **Avoid punting after a clean claim** unless you have no other option. You just won possession — don't hand it straight back.

AFTER A PUNCH OR PARTIAL CLEARANCE

- Reset immediately to position — don't watch where your punch went
- Call "SECOND BALL!" to alert defenders — the ball will likely come back in
- Get your starting position for a possible second delivery
- Stay loud — keep directing defenders until the ball is fully clear
- If the ball stays in your penalty area, be ready to come for the second ball or organize a block

The 8-second law (Law 12, 2025/26) — this one bites on corners: Once you control the ball with your hands inside your own penalty area, you have **8 seconds** to release it. Hold it longer and the referee awards a **corner kick to the opposition** — you can concede back the exact corner you just defended. The referee raises an arm and counts the last five seconds down out loud. So organise **as you land**, not after: claim, scan, distribute. Never let the hand go up.

SECTION 5 — TRAINING DRILLS

DRILL 1 — POSITIONING & STARTING LINE WALK-THROUGH

Duration: 5 min | **Equipment:** No ball needed | **Purpose:** Muscle memory

Walk the keeper through all four scenarios without a ball: corner from the left in-swinging, left out-swinging, right in-swinging, right out-swinging. For each, the keeper physically sets their feet in the correct starting position and explains why. Then ask: "If this ball drops here — what's your call?"

Note: Check the baseline every rep — back half of the goal, between the middle and the far post. If they drift toward the near post, stop and reset. That drift is the habit this drill exists to kill.

DRILL 2 — CLAIM VS. PUNCH DECISION

Duration: 10 min | **Reps:** 6–8 | **Equipment:** Balls, servers, 2–3 field players in box

Server delivers varied corners (in-swing, out-swing, short, deep). Field players contest every ball. Keeper must call verbally **before** moving and make the correct decision (claim vs. punch). Coach scores: +1 for correct decision plus clean execution, -1 for uncalled movement or wrong choice. Debrief each rep immediately — "Why did you claim that one?"

Coaching Cues: "Call it before you move." "Square to the ball or across your body?" "Highest point."

Note: On punches, check fist choice against body position — two fists when square, one when reaching across. Score the *choice*, not just the contact.

DRILL 3 — POST-CORNER TRANSITION

Duration: 10–12 min | **Equipment:** Balls, full corner setup, 2 wide players

After every corner (claimed or punched), the exercise continues: keeper must distribute in 3 seconds max. Two wide players are positioned as outlet options. If the keeper takes longer than 3 seconds, the coach calls "press!" and two players close in — the keeper must then kick long. Builds the habit of immediate post-corner decision-making.

Coaching Cues: "Decide before you land." "Three seconds — go." "Who's your outlet?"

Note: The 3-second target is deliberately tighter than the law's 8 seconds. Train the margin, so match pressure never pushes a keeper near a conceded corner.

DRILL 4 — SECOND BALL RECOVERY

Duration: 8 min | **Equipment:** 2 feeders, full box setup

Deliver a corner. Keeper punches or heads out. Immediately, a second ball is driven into the box from the opposite side. Keeper must recover to position and compete for the second ball. Develops awareness that the play doesn't end with the first action.

Coaching Cues: "Reset — don't watch your punch." "Second ball!" "Stay loud."

SECTION 6 — CORNER KICK SELF-ASSESSMENT TRACKER

DATE / MATCH	# CORNERS FACED	# CLAIMED	# PUNCHED	CONCEDED FROM CK?	STARTING POS. CORRECT?	RELEASED IN <8s?	NOTES / WHAT TO IMPROVE
				Y N	Y Partly No	Y N	
				Y N	Y Partly No	Y N	
				Y N	Y Partly No	Y N	
				Y N	Y Partly No	Y N	
				Y N	Y Partly No	Y N	
				Y N	Y Partly No	Y N	

WHAT CHANGED IN THIS REVISION

- **Section 1 rebuilt.** The old version told keepers to start "1–2 yards off your near post" in one place and "closer to your far post" in another. Those instructions contradicted each other. There is now one baseline position, and the cards split by delivery type (in-swing / out-swing) rather than by ambiguous "near post corner" and "far post corner" headers.
- **"Two-fist punch is always preferred" corrected** to a body-position rule — two fists when square, one fist across the body or at full stretch.
- **One-foot jumping qualified.** With a run-up, a one-foot take-off gets you higher; from a standing start with no room to step, a two-foot jump is higher and more stable.
- **"STEP!" now carries the Law 11 caveat** — nobody can be offside directly from a corner kick, so the trap only works on the second ball.
- **The 8-second law added** (Law 12, effective 1 July 2025). Holding the ball more than 8 seconds in your own area concedes a corner — directly relevant after a claim.
- **"Avoid goal kicks after a clean claim" reworded to "avoid punting."** There is no goal kick after a claim; a goal kick is a restart taken from the ground.
- **Tracker adds a "released in under 8s?" column** so the new law gets tracked like any other habit.