



Off-Season Practice Plans for Kickers and Punters

In designing a practice plan for specialist, keep in mind that the leg is a muscle. Too much kicking or punting can be detrimental to a kicker's body and mechanics. Stick to a prescribed number of footballs per practice and do not make the mistake of having to "finish on a good one." Many young players fail to follow this rule which can result in over kicking and lead to poor technique or injury. While kicking does take thousands of repetitions to master, it is about quality not quantity. One way of increasing quality repetitions without over doing it is to incorporate drills into a practice plan. Most of the drills mentioned here are done on air which allows for proper muscle memory with little risk of overusing the kicking leg.

It is vital for kickers and punters to develop, refine or maintain their mechanics with drill work at different times of the year. Solid fundamentals are the key to becoming a consistent kicker or punter who can perform their skill "on command" in any given situation. The following practice schedules are broken down by the time of year and are designed to reduce injuries and maximize performance heading into the season. For each prescribed day, there is a practice plan for kickers, a plan for punters and a plan for those who kick and punt (combo players).

Off-Season Training Cycle for Kickers & Punters

Phase I. / Off-Season / February-April / Skill Development

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Weightlifting | Kicking/Punting | Weightlifting | Kicking/Punting | Weightlifting |
| Plyometrics/Abs | Running | Pilates/Abs | Running | Plyometrics/Abs |
| Stretching | Stretching | Stretching | Stretching | Stretching |

Notes: Monday's lift is upper body; Wednesday core power area; Friday lower body.

Phase II. / Pre-Season / May-July / Skill Refinement

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Kicking/Punting | Weightlifting | Kicking/Punting | Weightlifting | Kicking/Punting |
| Running | Pilates/Abs | Running | Plyometrics/Abs | Running |
| Stretching | Stretching | Stretching | Stretching | Stretching |

Notes: a one-week break from kicking and weightlifting before training camp is ideal.

Phase I. / Off-Season / February-April / Skill Development

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Kickers Tuesday Practice | Kickers Thursday Practice |
| Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch |
| Leg Lock Drill 1 x 10 | Leg Lock Drill 1 x 10 |
| Kick & Skip Drill 1 x 10 | Kick & Skip Drill 1 x 10 |
| Ball Contact Drill 1 x 10 | Dry Run Drill FG's 1 x 10 |
| 10 Extra Points | 10 Extra Points |
| 15 Field Goals under 40 Yds. | 15 Field Goals under 40 Yds. |
| Dry Run Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 | Dry Run Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 |
| Kick Up Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 | Cone Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 |
| 10 Kickoffs | 10 Kickoffs |
| Punters Tuesday Practice | Punters Thursday Practice |
| Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch |
| Ball Drop Drill 1 x 25 | Ball Drop Drill 1 x 25 |
| Flat Surface Drill 2 x 10 | Flat Surface Drill 2 x 10 |
| Leg Swing Drill 2 x 10 | Leg Swing Drill 2 x 10 |
| Step Drill 2 x 10 | Step Drill 2 x 10 |
| 25 Regular Punts | 25 Regular Punts |
| 5 Pooch Punts | 5 One-Step End Zone Punts |
| 5 Coffin Corner | 5 Drive Punts |
| Combo Tuesday Practice | Combo Thursday Practice |
| Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch |
| Ball Drop Drill 1 x 25 | Ball Drop Drill 1 x 25 |
| Flat Surface Drill 1 x 10 | Leg Swing Drill 1 x 10 |
| 15 Regular Punts | 15 Regular Punts |
| 5 Pooch or Coffin Corner Punts | 5 End Zone or Drive Punts |
| <i>5 Minute Rest</i> | <i>5 Minute Rest</i> |
| Leg Lock Drill 1 x 10 | Ball Contact Drill 1 x 10 |
| Kick & Skip Drill 1 x 10 | Dry Run Drill FG's 1 x 10 |
| 5 Extra Points | 5 Extra Points |
| 10 Field Goals under 40 Yds. | 10 Field Goals under 40 Yds. |
| Dry Run Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 | Cone Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 |
| 10 Kickoffs | 10 Kickoffs |

Notes: The off-season is the time to make mechanical adjustments to correct any technique flaws. Studying the fundamentals of kicking and punting should be a priority.

Phase II. / Pre-Season / May-July / Skill Refinement

| Kickers Monday Practice | Kickers Weds. Practice | Kickers Friday Practice |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch |
| Leg Lock Drill 1 x 10 | Dry Run Drill FG's 1 x 10 | Leg Lock Drill 1 x 10 |
| Kick & Skip Drill 1 x 10 | Plant & Drive Drill 1 x 5 | Kick & Skip Drill 1 x 10 |
| Ball Contact Drill 1 x 5 | Poor Hold Drill 1 x 5 | One Post Drill 1 x 5 |
| Crossbar Drill 1 x 5 | Around World Drill 1 x 5 | Winning FG Drill 1 x 5 |
| 10 Extra Points | 5 Extra Points | 5 Extra Points |
| 25 Field Goals | 15 Field Goals | 20 Field Goals |
| Kick-Up Drill KO's 1 x 5 | Dry Run Drill KO's 1 x 5 | Cone Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 |
| 5 On-Side Kickoffs | 5 Squib Kickoffs | 5 Bloop Kickoffs |
| 10 Kickoffs | 10 Box Drill KO's | 10 Kickoffs |
| Punters Monday Practice | Punters Weds. Practice | Punters Friday Practice |
| Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch |
| Ball Drop Drill 2 x 25 | Ball Drop Drill 2 x 25 | Ball Drop Drill 2 x 25 |
| Flat Surface Drill 2 x 10 | Leg Swing Drill 2 x 10 | Step Drill 2 x 10 |
| Ball Catch Drill 2 x 10 | Bad Snap Drill 2 x 10 | Partner Pass Drill 1 x 10 |
| Hang Time Drill 1 x 10 | Drive Punt Drill 1 x 10 | Game Situation Drill 1 x 10 |
| 10 Pooch Punts | 10 End Zone Punts | 10 Coffin Corner Punts |
| 30 Regular Punts | 30 Regular Punts | 30 Regular Punts |
| Combo Monday Practice | Combo Weds. Practice | Combo Friday Practice |
| Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch | Warm-Up & Stretch |
| Ball Drop Drill 2 x 25 | Ball Drop Drill 2 x 25 | Ball Drop Drill 2 x 25 |
| Flat Surface Drill 2 x 10 | Leg Swing Drill 2 x 10 | Step Drill 2 x 10 |
| 20 Regular Punts | 20 Regular Punts | 20 Regular Punts |
| 5 Pooch or Coffin Punts | 5 Drive or End Zone Punts | 5 Pooch or Coffin Punts |
| <i>5 Minute Rest</i> | <i>5 Minute Rest</i> | <i>5 Minute Rest</i> |
| Leg Lock Drill 1 x 10 | Dry Run Drill FG's 1 x 10 | Leg Lock Drill 1 x 10 |
| Kick & Skip Drill 1 x 10 | Plant & Drive Drill 1 x 5 | Kick & Skip Drill 1 x 10 |
| 5 Extra Points | 5 Extra Points | 5 Extra Points |
| 15 Field Goals | 15 Field Goals | 15 Field Goals |
| Kick-Up Drill KO's 1 x 5 | Dry Run Drill KO's 1 x 5 | Cone Drill Kickoffs 1 x 5 |
| 5 On-Side Kickoffs | 5 Squib Kickoffs | 5 Bloop Kickoffs |
| 10 Kickoffs | 10 Box Drill KO's | 10 Kickoffs |

Notes: For ideal recuperation, it is very important that kickers and punters take a one-week break from kicking just before the start of training camp.

Field Goal Kicking Drills

1. Leg Lock Drill - A great drill to develop consistent muscle memory for kickers of all levels. No football is needed. First, mark a spot on the ground (athletic tape works best) along a straight line where the football would normally be. Standing beside this line, which represents a target line, align your plant foot next to your ball spot. Make sure your plant is where it would be at impact depending on if you are using a block or kicking off the ground as discussed in chapter one.

Standing balanced on your plant foot with a slightly bent knee, reach back with your kicking leg as far as possible and freeze for ½ second. Then slowly bring your leg down and lock out as if you were striking the football. Freeze again at the leg lock position for ½ second. Keeping your leg locked and your body upright, finish by swinging up and through before freezing again with your toe pointed down your target line. Note your opposite arm position while swinging your leg as it should remain balanced and slowly come across and meet your kicking leg in front of your body about chest high. Repeat to your self: “Swing Back, Lock Out, Follow Through” as you hone your mechanics.

2. Kick & Skip Drill - A similar motion to the leg lock drill except that the kick & skip is done at full leg swing speed. No football is needed. Here you will work on transferring your weight and power up and through the football and “skipping” down your target line 8-12 inches with your plant foot. After an imaginary impact with the ball, let your locked leg pull you toward your target. While you will finish slightly across your body, your hip and shoulders should be facing down your target line upon completion. The kick and skip should be done along a straight line to pause and check your follow-through and finish position after each swing.

3. Ball Contact Drill - Works on developing ideal ball contact off the instep of the kicking foot and the sweet spot of the ball (about an inch below the center). Standing five yards from your partner or a goal post, position your plant foot next to the football exactly where it should be upon contact. Place your kicking foot about 15 inches behind the football facing the sideline. Lift all of your weight onto your kicking foot, and then transfer your weight or rock forward to your plant leg as you raise your kicking leg to kick the football. Push your body with your plant leg past the football upon contact to maximally transfer the momentum to the football (follow your target line). You will not use any steps to the football because your plant foot is already correctly positioned. Emphasis is on making ideal ball contact with the inside laces and the sweet spot of the ball. When this occurs, the ball will “pop” off your foot with little effort and make a “thumping” noise rather than a tapping sound. Try to hit your partner in the chest five yards away or hit the center of the goal post. Use 50% leg speed.

4. Plant & Drive Drill - Solid ball to foot contact is hard to achieve without proper plant foot placement. The plant and drive drill helps you become consistent with your plant foot and work on exploding up and through the ball. You are teaching your body muscle memory so that come game time, your skills are automatic. Do this drill along the end line 15 yards from the side of the goal posts to check your form. This drill is identical to the ball contact drill except that one step with the plant leg is allowed. Start with your

kicking foot to the back and side of the tee, staggered in front of the other foot. Leaning forward with your weight on your kicking foot in a good starting stance, push off your kicking leg and step with your plant leg to plant your foot. Keeping your feet as close to the ground as possible and your steps compact, swing your leg and kick the football. Avoid hopping or lunging at the ball. Plant and drive up and through the football and down your target line. Try to drive the football straight over the top of the goal posts.

5. *Dry Run Drill* - This drill is used to practice the entire kicking motion without kicking the football. It is ideal for getting rid of any awkward steps, lunging etc. and perfecting your ideal form. Align, stand, approach, and swing exactly as if you were going to kick the football. Practice taking your alignment steps back and over (use athletic tape to mark your stepping pattern). Focus on a slow controlled movement straight to the ball. Keep your steps compact and feet close to the ground. Do not hop or skip. Keep your head down and drive down your target line, “kick & skip” through the imaginary ball. When possible, do this drill along a straight line to check your form.

6. *Crossbar Drill* - Designed to check elevation on the football, this drill requires a kicker to drive their hips up and through the ball with a descending / ascending leg swing. The block/ball spot for high school kickers is 7 yards, college kickers 7 ½ yards and professional kickers 8 yards from the crossbar. The crossbar stands ten feet high and represents the minimum height needed for a field goal to travel beyond the line of scrimmage without getting blocked. Using your regular field goal steps, align, stand, approach, and drive the ball up and over the cross bar. *Please be careful, as the football will travel back toward you at a high rate of speed if it makes contact with the crossbar.*

7. *Around the World Drill* - This drill tests a kickers accuracy and alignment skills by forcing you to kick from difficult angles. Starting from the center of the field, rotate in a semi-circle to both sides. Align, stand, approach, and kick a field goal through the center of the goalposts every 4 yards as you rotate toward the end line. The angle of each kick becomes more difficult as you get closer to the end line and the goal posts become smaller leaving very little room for error. You can even partner up with another kicker and award points for each kick until a winner is crowned or keep kicking until one of you spells the word “MISS” by collecting a letter after each miss.

8. *Kicking at One Post Drill* - Another challenge on accuracy that requires a kicker to have perfect alignment and straightness of form. Standing fifteen yards from a goal post on the end line, align, stand, approach, and kick a field goal in an attempt to hit the post. Use the end line as your target line. Over emphasize driving down your target line and finishing toward the target. After finishing this drill, you will be surprised how wide regular goal posts seem! Another option on this drill is to move to the center of the field and start from 15 yards. Kick a field goal at one goal post every 5 yards back until you reach your maximum distance. You can also partner up with another kicker and award a point for each kick that hits the goalpost or flies directly over the goalpost until someone earns three points.

9. *Poor Hold Drill* - The reality for all kickers is that not every hold is perfect. Another reality is that when a kicker misses a kick, blame is rarely placed on the holder. This drill forces you to deal with a poor hold and still find a way to make the kick. Using a mechanical holder or someone holding the ball, vary each hold at a different angle. Tilt the ball forward, back, left and right to challenge your ability to handle a bad hold on each kick. Placing the ball in the incorrect location, on its side or letting go just before impact also presents a significant test for any kicker.

10. *Game Winning Field Goal Drill* - A great way to practice a pressure situation is to replicate a game winning kick. With the snapper, holder and kicker on the side line, a coach places the ball at the line of scrimmage and makes the call for the field goal unit. As the coach counts down from fifteen seconds, the field goal battery must run onto the field and execute the kick with very little time to set-up. Field goals from various distances and locations should be practiced. Kickers must learn how to perform without the usual time allotted for steps and alignment. Coaches and/or teammates can also blow a whistle or heckle the kicker as the ball is snapped to cause further distractions that are normal in a game situation. Many coaches have been known to tie the number of post practice passers to the success or failure of the game winning field goal drill. All of this is done to better prepare the field goal unit, specifically the kicker, for the psychological demands of a game winning field goal.

Kickoff Drills

1. *Kick-Up Drill* - Is a great drill to work on transferring power up and through the ball while building confidence in hitting the ball off the tee. Align, stand and approach the tee starting four inches back from your regular field goal starting point. Stay compact with your steps and swing easy. Keep your head down and your chest up as you drive your hips up and through the football, exploding off your plant foot and landing on your kicking leg. Experiment with your plant foot placement to see what gives you the best results. As a starting point, place the ball of your plant foot even with the side seam of the football about one shoe length away. This drill can also be done on air to warm-up.

2. *Dry Run Kickoff Drill* - Is used to practice your entire kick off approach steps without kicking the football and without your follow through. Align, stand and approach the tee as if you were going to kick the football. Establish a rhythm to the ball and get rid of any inconsistent steps. Also make sure you are planting consistently in the right spot that is slightly behind where needed on a field goal attempt (see chapter 1). Work this drill over and over again until you are completely comfortable with your approach steps.

3. *Cone Drill* - Is a great drill to work on exploding up and through the ball on a kickoff once you have mastered the dry run drill. After marking off your steps, place a cone or marker at your starting spot. Then place a small cone 15 inches in front of the kickoff tee and another cone five yards in front of the kickoff tee. Align, stand, approach, and swing exactly as if you were going to kick the football. Establish a rhythm to the ball and get rid of any inconsistent steps. Keep your head down and your chest up as you drive your

hips up and through the imaginary ball. Work on exploding off your plant foot up and over the cone in front of the tee and landing on your kicking leg. Continue your momentum and touch the cone five yards down field before jogging back to your starting position. Once you can consistently do this without hitting the cone directly in front of the tee, you are ready to actually hit a kickoff using this same format.

4. *Box Drill* - Works on a kicker's ability to properly place a directional kickoff. Using four cones, create a 5 x 5 foot box at the five-yard line that is centered with the top of the numbers. Practice placing the football with good hang time inside the box from the center of the field and from the hash mark closest to the box. For bloop or sky kickoffs, move the box to the 25-yard line for high school and 30-yard line for college and pro. For squib kicks, move the box to the middle of the field between the 25 and 30-yard line.

Punting Drills

1. *Ball Catch Drill* - standing in a proper staggered athletic stance, prepare to receive the center snap from your long-snapper or a partner. Catch the snap out away from your body and quickly put the football into the proper drop position. Emphasize properly catching the ball and putting it in the hand shake position with an eleven o'clock / five o'clock tilt. Stress handling the ball as quickly as possible. If you are having trouble catching the ball away from your body, stand directly behind a goal post when doing this drill. Wrap your arms around the post and do not let the snap hit the post.

2. *Bad Snap Drill* - standing in a proper staggered athletic stance, prepare to receive the center snap from your long-snapper or a partner. This time, your snapper or partner will deliberately throw you bad snaps to all spots. High, low, left and right. Learn to shuffle left or right like a basketball player to receive the ball in front of your body if there is a wide snap. For a low snap that hits the ground in front of you, keep your rear down and your palms up between your legs. Be careful not to kneel as this will result in the ball being downed automatically for the opposing team. For a high snap, jump as high as you can with your arms extended to catch the football. Work on handling the poor snap and quickly putting the football into the proper drop position.

3. *Ball Drop Drill* - aligning your punting foot straight down a yard line, stand in a comfortable athletic position with your body facing forward. Drop the football on the line using correct drop mechanics as previously described. If dropped properly, the football should hit the ground flat and bounce straight up, not forward or backward. Establish a rhythm as you catch the ball and move forward across the field and back.

4. *Flat Surface Drill* - starting in a normal punting stance along a straight line, take your regular steps at an easy walking pace. Get in a rhythm by taking a drive step, plant step and then taking your swing at about 25%. As you slowly swing your leg, pause and lock out with your toes pointed down and away from you body to create a flat contact surface. Visualize contacting a solid ball on every swing.

5. *Step Drill* - starting in a normal punting stance, have a partner throw you the football to replicate a center snap. If alone, you can bounce the ball flat back to your self off the ground or toss it in the air to simulate the ball catch. Once you receive the football, take your normal punting steps and swing your leg full speed without contacting the ball. Allow the football to drop to the side of your swing. Emphasize developing a smooth rhythmic stepping pattern and approach. Stay compact without covering more than four yards. To also work on straightness of form, move across the field on a yard line. A variation of this drill, known as the towel drill, can be done by taking your steps between two rolled towels which are four yards apart. This helps stress staying compact throughout your approach by limiting your stepping pattern to four yards.

6. *Leg Swing Drill* - aligning your punting foot straight down a yard line, stand in a comfortable athletic position with your body facing forward. Begin by taking a step with your non-punting foot. Keeping your head down and eyes focused in front of you; swing your leg full speed and straight down the line as if you were punting the football. Finish in a balanced position before collecting yourself and continuing straight across the field and back. Develop a rhythm and concentrate on having smooth form.

7. *Partner Pass Drill* - start by standing on a yard line in a regular punting stance ten yards from a partner. Using s similar technique described in the flat surface drill, take your regular steps at an easy walking pace. Swing your leg about 50% and lock out with your toes pointed down and away from you body to create a flat contact surface. Strike the ball straight down the line to your partner as if you were throwing a pass. After each punt, take three steps back until you and your partner are about forty yards apart. Then work your way back to about ten yards apart. Do not punt the ball for great height and distance, focus on making solid contact and being accurate.

8. *Hang Time Drill* - pick a tall object such as a large tree or light poll and stand in a regular punting stance twenty yards away. Raise your drop point to about chest high. Hold on to the ball slightly longer and contact the ball later in your swing at the upper thigh level. Lean your upper body slightly back to over emphasize driving the ball up in the air and over the tall object. Time your punts and shoot for five seconds hang time.

9. *Drive Punt Drill* - stand at the fifty yard line and assume a regular punting stance. Lower your drop point slightly below the waist and contact the ball about knee high. Lean your upper body slightly forward to over emphasize driving the ball downfield. Your goal is to drive the ball through the goal posts, working on distance and accuracy. If needed, younger or less experienced punters can punt from the forty or thirty yard line and then work their way back to increase difficulty of the drill.

10. *Game Situation Drill* - using ten total footballs, place two footballs starting at the back of the end zone, the 15-yard line, the 30-yard line, the 45-yard line and the opposite 40-yard line. If using a long-snapper, allow room for the snapper by placing the ball thirteen to fifteen yards ahead at the proper alignment depth. Working your way up the field using appropriate mechanics, take two punts for every game situation: one-step out the end zone punts, drive punts, regular punts, pooch punts and coffin corner punts.