

⚽ 1,000 Drills and Skills: A Soccer Training and Coaching Manual: ⚽

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Compiled by C Weber. Feel free to share this text with other coaches and players. Most of these drills were accumulated from online soccer coaching education sites and then organized and modified by myself. Enjoy.

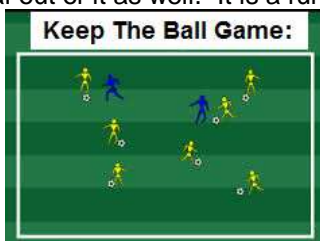
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Fun Games:

These games may not be as "educational" as some of the [Small Side Games](#) included, but they are guaranteed to be fun and enhance conditioning. Use them as a reward for when the team has worked hard during a training session and to add a little variety. Also see the section on [Soccer-Related Games \(Soccer Croquet, Golf, Baseball, Tennis etc\)](#) | [U6 - U8 Drills & Easy-Fun Games](#) |

Keep (Steal) The Ball Game:

A variation of the steal the ball or a sharks and minnows game except no-one gets kicked out. While this might seem like a game more geared toward younger players, but try it with older players as well and I believe you will see that they get a great deal out of it as well. It is a fun game that works on dribbling, moves, shielding, conditioning, field vision, and



defense.

Play: Start with a restricted space (for 15 players maybe 25 x 25 would do). Use a 2:1 ratio of those with and without a ball.....if 15 players: have 10 start dribbling soccer balls, 5 without.....if 12 players: have 8 with a ball, 4 without. Those "without" are working independently trying to win a ball from one of the those who started with a ball. If a player wins a ball, he/she tries to keep it and the player who lost the ball can try to win that ball back or to go after someone else's ball.

At the end of a predetermined time period, the players who end up NOT having a ball lose.

Playing Time: 5 times for 2 minute periods. Keep track of the number of times each player ends up with a ball. This could give you, and the team, an idea of who is best at both holding onto the ball as well as who works the hardest.

Consider: keep changing the time periods or else smart players might allow themselves to lose the ball early and only work the last 30 seconds or so. If they don't know when the game might end, they have to work the whole time (however, the time must be pre-determined or else it's easy to pick on one player and always end it when he/she doesn't have a ball).

Coaching Notes: If there is a large discrepancy in skills, have the "losers" move to another area to play in a parallel game, but allow those that win 3-times in a row to re-enter the main game.

(3+3) v 3:

3 teams of three, each team identified with different color pinnies (practice vests).

Two attacking teams (example A and B) play against a third defending team (C).

As soon as defending team (C) wins ball, C now becomes an attacking team and the attacking team that last touched ball prior to loss of possession becomes the defending team.

• Loss of possession occurs as soon as defending team touches the ball.

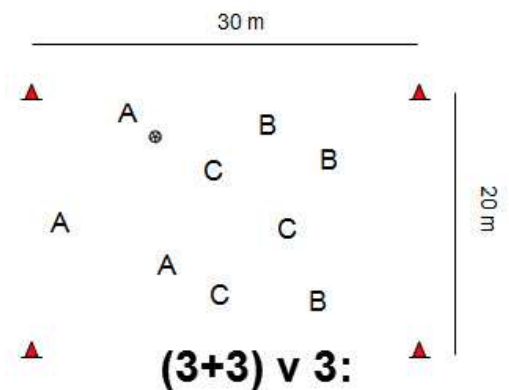
Coaching Points

1. One or two touch play.

2. Team in possession must use entire area of play and make some long passes to open players. Player passing the ball needs to envision the option for player receiving the pass. Passing into corners makes play difficult.

3. Defending team must challenge ball, close passing lanes, anticipate passes to intercept them, and put immediate pressure on player receiving ball.

4. After change of possession, the team who last touched ball must transition quickly to defend, defending team must immediately start passing. This requires a reaction from all teams. If the teams are hesitant, seem confused, can't decide, then stop play and emphasize quick decision making.



5. Group the teams according to your system of play. For example play 3 midfielders, 1 midfielder/2 strikers and 3 defenders together.

6. Depending on size of team you can set up two groups.

Game Application: Quick passing plays with minimal touches will keep defenses unsettled. Recognizing available space and playing a ball into it while a team mate makes the run to space is a building block of soccer.

- Quick transition to attack after gaining possession requires fast decision making and reaction to a change of circumstance. It will catch opponents off balance and out of shape.

- Defending while outnumbered occurs occasionally and this drill trains decision making (who to cover) and anticipation of runs and passes followed by quick reaction to get into best defensive shape.

World Cup Soccer Game:

This fun and action packed game can be played by all ages and encourages your players to work as a team in both attacking and defensive situations.

Objective: To encourage communication and taking goal scoring chances quickly. Skill level: All. Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Play Inside the penalty box area (18 yard line) or in half a small-sided pitch (about 30 yards square) with a regular-sized goal at one end. Split your squad into groups of 2 to 4 players and let each pair choose the name of a country. Use bibs to differentiate the pairs of players. Have the full supply of soccer balls nearby. This game encourages players to look to take a chance and hit a shot because the likelihood of getting a perfect shot in that type of game is very



slim so they must be willing to hit a shot the first opportunity they get.

How to play: All the teams play against each other in the playing area. If you don't have a spare player, you are in goal.

- Serve a ball into the grid. Each team plays at the same time against the other teams.

- The team to score sits out for the remainder of that round and advances to the next round. The team that fails to score in the round is out of the tournament.

- Ex: Round 1: 3v9 then 3v6 then 3v3. Last team to score is out.

Round 2: 3v6 then 3v3. Last team to score is out.

Round 3: 3v3. Team to score first 2 goals wins the world cup.

Variations: The first team to score is awarded five points, the second team to score gets four points, the third gets three points and so on. When the fifth team has scored, the sequence begins again. Play for a set time or until one team reaches 15 points. The winners lift the World Cup!

Afterwards ask them if they hit any shots in these games that they wouldn't hit in a real soccer game. Almost every one of them will say they did. Emphasize that there are very few "bad" shots in soccer and the only way to score goals is to take shots. Then, have them go out and play it again. Follow this up with a regular scrimmage and encourage them to take as many shots as they can.

The Shooting Challenge:

Set up: Play Inside the penalty box area (18 yard line) or in half a small-sided pitch (about 30 yards square).

Use a goalkeeper and split the rest of the team in half.

How to Play: 2 teams lined up. **Step #1:** The 1st player dribbles then shoot behind the 18 yard line.



Step #2: They then receive a closer ball from the coach (back pass).

- If he/she makes 1 or more he's still in, if he misses both he's out.

- If he makes both he/she get's to "challenge" any player from the other team to make 2 as well...if that person can't then he's out.

- The teams alternate shooting and the one with a man still standing wins.

Shooter-Keeper:

A fast paced shooting game. One person in goal, the rest of the team lines up 10 yards past the 18.

- The coach give them crosses or drop passes. The player needs to one-touch the ball in the goal (2-touches if U10).



If they score the keeper in goal loses one "life"Each person get's 2 lives.

- They can redeem themselves after they lose both lives by catching a ball in mid air as they stand behind the goal as the shag balls.

- As soon as one person shoots, they need to rush to become the next keeper as to keep the pace of the game going (an excitement). Do not wait long for the person to get in goal....as soon as one person shoots send another ball for the next in line shooter as the prior shooter needs to hustle to cover the goal (hence shooter-keeper). Last man standing wins.

Variations: include the shooters starting their own balls by dribbling toward the 18, forward rolls and bouncy volleys.

Four- Team - Four Goal Game:

Objective: To practice quick decision making, rapid transition from defense to attack. It allows players maximum freedom to express themselves and actively involves every player in both attack and defense.



Set-up: 30-yard square playing area. Place four goals at each side

of the playing area (Four Full Size Goals if you play the option that sideline teammates are all goalies but may not use their hands and must stay on the goal line....otherwise can use small goals). Tell your players to divide themselves into four teams. Each team wears a different colored training vest.

How to play: Any team can score in any of the four goals. Start playing 1 v 1 then progress to 2 v 2, 3 v 3.

- The key to winning the game is to "pull" the bulk of the defenders over to one goal before switching the ball suddenly towards the less well-guarded goal and trying to score there. This teaches players that they need to play with their head up, spot opportunities and make quick decisions. Play for a set time or until one team scores 3 number of goals.

Coaching notes: It usually takes players several minutes to come to grips with this game but try to resist the temptation to jump in with advice. Let them work it out for themselves!

Progression: On your call, two or more of the teams combine. For example, if you call "reds and blues", these two teams join forces against the other two teams. You can also create overload situations by calling three colors - "red, blue and yellow" - who play against the fourth team.

- Take away the player's training vests. Now they have to work out who is on whose team in a non-visual way.

Variation: Two teams, each team defends two goals attacks the other two. Have two balls in play.

This practice is designed to improve both the players attacking and defensive skills. Emphasis is placed on explosive attacking move and intelligent defensive work.

Focus On: Attack the defender with pace. Quality defending technique. Small group attacking and defending tactics.

All Up!

An effective and yet simple small sided game that is suitable for ages 7 to 17. Simple to adapt to differing numbers of players (3-5 player per team is optimal, add a neutral player if have an odd #).

Objective: To encourage your players to stay "switched on". To improve players' peripheral vision, fitness and speed of



transition.

Set-up: Mark a halfway line (can use cones at sidelines) across a 30x20 yards playing area with a goal at each end.

How to play: Play soccer with the following condition: For a goal to count, the entire attacking team must be in the opponent's half when the ball hits the back of the net. If all the attacking team's players are not over the halfway line, the goal does not count and a goal kick is awarded. First team to five goals wins.

Progression: When your players are comfortable add a second condition: When a goal is scored, the defending team must have all their players in their own half. If not, the goal counts double.

• This is a great game if you have difficulty with players losing concentration. It also encourages your team to attack in numbers, win the ball back in the opponent's half, and stops defenders hanging back near their own goal when they should be supporting an attack.

King of the Ring ("Death Square" if no handy circle):

A simple, competitive, suitable for all ages, any number of players and it teaches good defending, dribbling, shielding and ball control skills.

Set-up: Create a playing area big enough for all your players to dribble around in. Every player has a ball.

How to play: Players dribble their ball around and, at the same time, try to kick the other players' balls out of the playing area.

Players who have their ball kicked out - or allow their ball to leave the playing area due to poor skills can re-enter the same area after they perform some sort of conditioning such as 20 top of ball toe taps or dribble the ball around the circle



King of the Ring:

twice etc. The winner is the player knocked out the least number of times.

Progression: Ask your players to dribble with their "wrong" foot only, sole drag, etc. Make the playing area smaller. A player gets a point for every ball he/she kicks out (so if you spend time outside dancing on your ball or shielding it away from others, you have less time to win points). Play for a set time.

Variations: One or two players without a ball try to kick all the other players' balls out as quickly as possible. Set up two playing areas. Start the game with everyone in one playing area. Players who have their ball kicked out go to the second (smaller) playing area where a new game begins. A great option as it equalizes the game with the weaker players playing the other weaker players.

1v1 Score at the Triangle:

• 4 pairs play 1v1 game independently from each other in the same grid.

The attacker has to dribble the ball into the open triangle goal from any direction.

- When it's managed, the attacker can start the play again from any sides of the pitch.

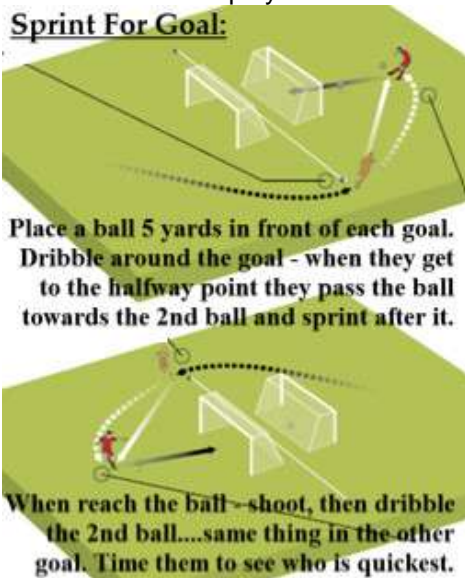


- The defender tries to arrest the attacker from scoring and intercept the ball.
- When the defender robs the ball, he becomes the attacker immediately.
- Play for 4 minutes, then switch players around.

Sprint For Goal:

A fun activity that works on technique and improves shooting and dribbling. It helps them to unleash a shot when they have used a burst of speed to get past an opponent. It helps with their coordination, balance and dribbling skills, as well as shooting. And they find it great fun competing against each other to see who is fastest.

Set up: This session is a test for individual players so use as many or as few players as you want. You need cones, balls,



a stopwatch and goals.

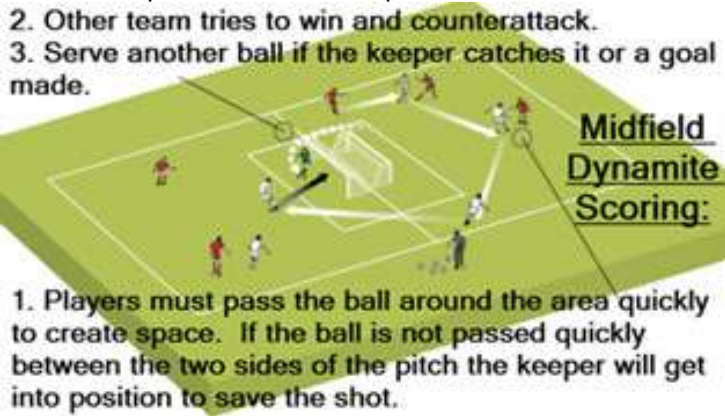
How to Play: Set up the goals back to back, and place a ball five yards in front of each goal. Players start at the first ball and dribble around the goal – when they get to the halfway point they pass the ball towards the second ball and sprint after it. When they reach the ball they shoot, then dribble the second ball and do the same thing in the other goal. Time your players to see who is quickest.

TECHNIQUE: This is a fun session for the players and a good test of technique, without the pressure of opponents. Passing the ball before shooting is a good way of getting players to understand the weight of the pass and what a difference it makes if they hit an accurate pass.

Midfield Dynamite Scoring:

If you want your players to create goal scoring chances, try this exciting and fast-moving game and you'll soon see the benefits. A session aimed at getting players to create and utilize space in midfield. With quick passing and movement, it should help open up the opposition and make goal scoring chances.

Set up: Create a playing area 40x20 yards, with two goals back to back across the middle, but just one goalkeeper. We're using eight players and a keeper for this session, plus a server who can be the coach. You need bibs, cones, balls and



two small goals.

How to Play: Start by serving a ball into the game. Players can score in either of the two back to-back goals. If the keeper gains possession or the ball leaves the area, serve a new ball in. The keeper puts any balls he gathers into the net behind him. When a goal is scored, immediately serve another ball into the game.

Technique: Creating space in a match situation with fast and accurate passing will open up the room for midfielders to exploit. In this game a quick switch of play allows players to take advantage of one of the goals being unguarded – they must be aware of the position of the keeper at all times.

1. Players must pass the ball around the area quickly to create space. If the ball is not passed quickly between the two sides of the pitch the keeper will get into position to save the shot.
2. Other team tries to win and counterattack.
3. Serve another ball if the keeper catches it or a goal made.

Net buster - Attack from Distance:

A fast and frantic game that encourages your players to make the most of the extra man and create the space to shoot from distance. The session aims to improve your players' attitudes to shooting at goal by concentrating on having a good first touch or by combining with team-mates in order to create the space for a shot.

Set up: An area 50x30 yards. We are using 10 players in this session and you will need balls, bibs, cones and two goals.

1. 3v3 with keepers + 1 (or 2) neutral player(s). 50x30 yards. Great for getting players to shoot correctly from long distance.

Netbuster - Attack from Distance:

The teams play in the central zone and cannot enter the two end zones.

The neutral player(s) help give an overload in the attack so help create chances to score.

How to Play: Both teams play inside the central zone with one neutral player who plays for the team with the ball. The idea is to use the player overload to create space and shoot from the central zone. One player from each team (i.e. an attacker and defender) can follow the shot to react to rebounds etc.

Technique: This is great for getting players to shoot correctly from long distance. You can make the distance bigger or smaller for your players depending on the success they get. Challenge your players to disguise a shot, then move past the defender into a better position to shoot. Combination play will also be effective.

- 3v3 with keepers + 1 (or 2) neutral player(s). 50x30 yards. Great for getting players to shoot correctly from long distance.
- The teams play in the central zone and cannot enter the two end zones. The neutral player only plays for the team with the ball, giving an overload in the attack to help create chances to score.

One For All:

A fun knockout training game that gives your players a great 1v1 workout.

Set Up: Set up an area of 15x10 yards with a goal at each end. You need a good number of balls – use about eight at each end. We've used 12 players.

How to Play: You need four teams to play the Club World Cup semifinals. Here we have four teams of three and players choose their team names from the competing clubs in the CWC.

1. Each 1v1 lasts one minute; players fight for the ball in the center. The other players stand around the pitch and keep the ball in play.

One For All - 1v1 Knockout training game. 4 teams of 3 players.

2. When shot taken, shooter runs back to touch his crossbar as the opponent tries to score at the other end.

3. Add up the scores, winning team goes through to the final. Play two semis, the final and a third place play-off.

- Players go individually, so each semi is a series of 1v1s and tactics determine which players go first and last. Each 1v1 lasts one minute; players fight for the ball in the centre and the player who gets it must shoot into the goal.
 - Whether he scores or not, he must then run back to his own goal and touch the crossbar before turning and trying to dispossess his opponent, who has collected a ball from beside his own goal.
 - The other players stand around the pitch and keep the ball in play. It should not go out unless a shot is taken.
- Once every 1v1 has played, add up the scores and the winning team goes through to the final. Play two semis, the final and a third place play-off.

Technique: Touch, control, accuracy and speed of foot and thought go into making this a great activity for youth players.

War!

Works on shielding, tackling, shooting, dribbling and aggressiveness on the ball (beat the opponent to the ball and never let up...if you lose possession, immediately start to defend).

Option 1: The players form two lines, one at each goal post. Coach has all the ball in the middle of the goal. As he tosses the ball out he yells "war". The first two in line rush out. The first to get to the ball try's to score as the other



defends.

Option 2: player line up just outside the 18 yard line and the coach tosses the ball from behind them or from the goal line.

Option 3: Set up a 20x40 grid with both short ends of the grid open. Place a pair of cones about 3 feet apart in the middle of each of the short ends. These are your goals. Divide your players into two equal teams. Even numbers are important for this game.

1. The teams line up behind their goals on opposite sides of the pitch. Assign each player a number (or ask them to do it).
2. The coach starts the game by rolling the ball into the grid and calling a number. The players of that number from each team run into the field of play and try to score through the opposite goal.

Coaching Points: If you want to emphasize close control, make it a condition that a goal can only be scored if they have control of the ball and are no more than two steps away from it when it crosses the goal line. If they do not have control or are more than two steps away from the ball, the goal does not count.

Alternatively, you can encourage quick shooting by allowing the children to shoot as soon as they get a sight of goal.

- Defending techniques, (closing down, positioning between the attacker and the goal, not 'diving in'), can also be emphasized and reinforced in this fun 1 v 1. If the ball goes out of the grid, roll another ball in to keep the game flowing. Once a player scores, award that team 1 point. First team to score, say, three points wins. After players are back into position call out another number. You can add an element of conditioning if the children have to run right round the marked out area when their number is called, entering the field of play through the opposite goal. Ensure both teams stand in the goalmouths while they wait for you to call out a number!

Uno-Dos-Tres Game:

Game of 4 vs. 4 on four small goals. All ages. The aim of the game is to have fun while scoring and defending the goal. Along with technical skills, the game helps improve players' cognitive skills, which are required to better take in information (input) and then store this information. This stored information later allows improved decision making during a game (output). Furthermore, these cognitive skills help improve a player's attention (focus) and adaptability to new situations and stimuli.

Set up: Field size of 25mx40m, 4 small goals, minimum 6 soccer balls

How to play: The game is played 4 vs. 4 on four small goals, and supplemented by three commands from the coach:



“Uno” When the coach shouts “Uno”, the player who has the ball, has to immediately give it up. He/she simply kicks the ball out of the game and at the same time, the other team has to find a new soccer ball as fast as possible. Three soccer balls are lined up along both sidelines for this purpose (see illustration).

“Dos” means that the direction of the game is switched. Instead of playing from right to left, team A now attacks from left to right. Team B obviously also changes their direction of attack.

“Tres” incorporates “Uno” and “Dos” simultaneously. The team with the ball gives it up and both teams switch sides.

Coaching-Tips: For children start only with “Uno” and “Dos”

Uno-Dos-Tres can also be played in a competitive tournament (despite the influence from the coach’s commands). However, this is only advisable after the players are familiar and confident with the rules and concepts.

Do not use the commands too often at the start (especially with small children).

At the start, set the game duration to about 15 mins. After each session with the team, add 5 mins to the duration. Max duration should be around 30 mins (but you may add further game variations when you reach this limit).

Include sufficient rest periods

In order to keep the game flowing, the coach should ensure a good supply of balls.

As always... keep coaching, and don’t forget to add compliments for good play!

Be creative and find solutions for unequal numbers of players

Variations: Play on diagonal goals. If you choose to use cones or bibs for the goals, you can change their position throughout the game. Create two teams but do not provide them with bibs or specific markings which tell the teams apart. The coach does not announce “Uno”, “Dos” or “Tres” anymore, rather he replaces the words by movements. For example, instead of saying “Dos” he does a jumping jack.

Soccer-Related Games:

Topics: Soccer Golf | **Soccer Croquet** | Soccer Baseball (Kickball) | **Soccer Basketball (Volley and Catch)** | Soccer Rugby | **Wall Ball** | Tag | [Soccer Tennis \(Volleyball\)](#) | [Netball](#) | [Bocce](#) | [Marbles](#) |

Soccer-Related games are useful. They are not only an excellent diversion from the everyday grind of practice, but they also help improve technique, touch. More importantly, some soccer games can be played alone or with just one additional player.

Soccer Golf: Similar to the games of golf and disk golf. This game can be played at any park or field.

- Each player tries to hit a pre-determined target with as few kicks as possible.



Possible targets: a tree, trashcan, light post, bench, small goal, etc.

- Each player has a ball and all players shoot one at a time.
- The player with the lowest score on the previous "hole" shoots first. The game can be any length, usually 18 holes. Be creative with the holes. Try "around the light pole, over the top of the bench, under the drinking fountain and hit the tree." The player who wins the hole can determine the next holes' course. Soccer golf can be played alone or with a whole team (to save time, have everyone shoot at once).

Soccer Croquet:

Requires some pre-made wickets. Can make them out of irrigation tubing. Make a semi-circle shape large enough for a



soccer ball or two to go under. Drill a hole in the side at each end so you can insert a 4 inch long nail to hold each base. You can number them 1 to 12.

- Set up a course with a variation of long and short shots.
- Alternate turns each round. See who can make the least amount of touches to go through them all.

Soccer Bowling:

Set up some cones in a triangle.

- Take turns kicking them from 10-20 yards.



- Each cone counts as one point.
- Each person gets 2 kicks per round.

Wall Ball: Played against a single wall. It can also be played against a three or four wall racquetball court.

- One player serves the ball by kicking it against the wall. The ball should return from the wall over the service line. The opponent must then play the ball back against the wall using any legal soccer touch (not hands).



- Once the ball is played, the ball must hit the front wall without bouncing.
- Points are only scored by the server. The server will continue to serve as long as the server continues to win points. If the server cannot return the ball to the front wall, the other player wins the serve. Games are played to 15 or 21 points. Wall ball can be practiced alone.

Soccer Baseball: A fun, extremely competitive and very good for developing their passing skills.

Set-up: Mark out a diamond shaped playing area as shown below.

- Mark the points of the diamond with poles placed about 15 yards apart.
- Enclose one end of the diamond in a 5x5 yard square of cones. This is the batting square.
- Mark another 5x5 square in the center of the diamond. This is the "pitcher's mound".
- Split your squad into two teams - batters and fielders. The fielders spread out around the playing area.
- You are the pitcher.

How to play: The batting team's players take it in turns to enter the batting square. You roll a ball into the square.

The batter must kick the ball as it enters the batting square, first time, as far as he/she can and immediately set off around the diamond.

- The fielding team collects it and passes (kicks) the ball to the pitcher (you) as quickly as possible. You have to stay in your area. The one time the ball can be touched to catch a "fly ball", otherwise it is trapped and passed back.

Note: Very young children can throw the ball back to the pitcher.

The batter gets a point for his team if he can run right round the diamond before the ball gets back to the pitcher - a home run.

But if a batter is running between the poles when the ball gets back to the pitcher, he/she is out.

Batters are also out if:

- They miss the ball.
- Slice their kick so that it goes outside the playing area.
- If the ball is caught by a fielder.

- The innings continues until all the batting side is out or players are stranded in the diamond and there is no one in the batting square to face the next pitch. Both team have one or two innings. The team with the most points wins.

Variations

- Set up a goal somewhere in the playing area. If the batter can kick the ball into the goal his/her team gets an extra point.
- Batters kick the ball with their non-dominant foot.

Soccer Basketball: AKA Volley and Catch.

Set-up: Standard SSG pitch: 30 x 20 yards (minimum) up to 40 x 25 yards (maximum)

- Two teams of four players. Six mini goals. No offside
- If the ball leaves play, the game is re-started with a volley pass.
- The player in possession is allowed to make a one bounce movement (using the hands basketball style).



- To pass the ball your players must make a volley pass out of their hands to one of their team-mates.
- To score a goal, the players must make a first-time volley shot into one of the opponent's goals.

5 Minute Tag: Bib Pull Away:



Helps with movement, agility and shielding.

Each puts a bib in the back of their shorts.

The players move around the area and try to pull someone else's bib away.

If your bib gets pulled away you are out of the game.

Last player left is the winner.

Players must run and dodge each other in the area as they try and pull the bib out of each other's shorts

Soccer Tennis (Volleyball): Use this fun game to work on your players' ball control and communication skills.

It is important that young players get their bodies quickly into line

with a fast approaching ball, especially if it is in the air. If they don't, the ball usually goes straight past them and that is very frustrating for the player and coach!

Set-up: Create a square "tennis court" for every four to six players. Create a 20-yard square with a double line of cones across the middle to mark the "net". Alternatively, you can use a rope stretched between two poles, a ladder on its side or a line of ball bags.

Or even a row of plastic chairs...Divide your players into teams of two or three.

How to play: One player bounces the ball then serves it across the net with a half volley or side foot lob. The receiving team must return the ball over the net before it stops bouncing, or before it bounces a certain number of times. For very young players, I allow three or four bounces. Older players have less.

- The receiving team must play it back across the net using their body as tennis racquets.
- They can use their feet, chest or head to control the ball before passing it back across the net.

Players should be encouraged to pass to their team mates before returning the ball.

Tip: Don't be too prescriptive. The aim is to for your players to get into line quickly and keep the ball moving with lots of good touches. Keep score as in a tennis match: 15-0, 30-15 etc. Play for a set time or until a certain number of games have been won. If your players find it too hard to return the ball before it stops bouncing, change the game so the ball simply mustn't stop moving. Encourage players to keep the ball moving by passing to each other.

Coaching note: If you need to leave some players out of a small-sided game or other activity, set up a volleyball game for them to play while they're waiting.

Ground Rocket Soccer:

A soccer passing skills game. Same court at tennis soccer but lower the net to 1 foot. two teams of 2 players...one passed hard on the ground (must not touch or go above then next). The receiver on the opposite end of the court must one touch to his/her teammate who then serves it back before the ball stops. 1 point if the ball stops or goes out of bounds. Play until 10.

It is similar to foot tennis but instead of keeping the ball in the air, the objective is keeping the ball on the ground as much as possible. This game trains a player's ability to both control the ball on the ground and to keep it down when making a pass.

See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akJO_j4Q1sl

Foot Tennis: Played with a soccer ball on a tennis court and can be played with two, four, six or eight players. The rules are similar to volleyball and tennis. Players can use any touch that is allowed as a field player, i.e. foot, knee, thigh, head, chest etc. The ball is served over the net to the opposition.

- The ball must bounce once before it is kicked over the net. Like in tennis, the ball must be served over the net, directly into the service area. The ball must bounce in the service area before it can be played by the opposition.

- The player who receives the serve may use one or two touches to return the ball to the opponent's side of the net, but the ball may not touch the ground between touches.

After the serve is returned, either player may play the ball back over the net, either without letting it touch the court or after one bounce.

- Each player serves for five consecutive points. Points are only scored by the server. A point is scored when the receiving player serves unable to legally return the ball into the serving players court.

- The game of Foot Tennis has been used for years to improve the players touch on the ball. The rules of the game may be customized by the coach to fit the players. More or fewer touches or bounces may be allowed to make the game easier or harder. When teams of two or more players compete, the rules are similar to volleyball. Each player has only one consecutive touch, but may play it to a teammate. Each team has to return the ball in three touches or less. More information on the official game of Foot Tennis, the International Foot Tennis Federation, San Diego, CA.

Soccer Rugby: Throw to Pass, Head to Score:



Two teams of four players. No keepers.

- The game is played by throwing and catching the ball.
- The player in possession cannot move with the ball.....This encourages his team mates to make movements off the ball.
- The player in possession must not have the ball in their hands for longer than 3 seconds.....This encourages quick passing and decision making.
- A goal is scored by heading a thrown pass into the goal.
- A progression would be to allow players to score by volleying a thrown pass into the goal.

Netball: Great fun and it's excellent for demonstrating the value of supporting the player on the ball, clear communication and quick transition. One can use netball as a pre-match warm up and progress to a 5v5 game that ends just before the kick off. It gets the players warm, alert and ready for action as soon as the whistle goes.

Set up: This is a small sided team game (3v3 4v4 or 5v5). Set up a goal at each end of a small square, circle or triangle. The shape of the playing area doesn't matter, in fact an unusual shape makes the players think a bit more. The size of the area depends on the age and number of players. Just make sure they have plenty of room to play. For ten year olds I would suggest 40 by 30 yards.

How to play: The aim of the game is to pass the ball among your team WITH HANDS, keeping possession and working up the field in order to score a point. Each team scores by placing the ball (or throwing the ball down) in their opponents goal or on the end line.

Alternatively, teams score by making a successful pass to a team mate who is stationed on their target end line.

Players pass the ball by throwing it. Once a player receives the ball they cannot run, they are frozen (or can take a limited number of steps depending on their age and ability) and then must pass to a team mate.

The opposing team can only intercept between passes - they cannot grab the ball out of players hands. If the ball goes out of the playing area award a throw in to the opposing team.

You may need to mark a 'no entry' zone a few yards from the end line or enforce a 1 or 2 defender rule. If you don't, defending players tend to just crowd around the goal area.

Bocce Soccer:

This is played similar to the Italian game on an open field, except you use eight soccer balls for the bocce balls and one mini soccer ball for the pallino, and you kick the balls rather than throw them.

The game is played with two, four, or eight players.

- Ideally, players should be able to tell their soccer balls apart from the other players, i.e. one person uses colored balls while the other uses white balls, etc...
- At random, choose a player to kick the pallino (mini soccer ball). The same player will kick his first soccer ball. The purpose of the game is to get your soccer balls as close to the pallino as possible. After the first player has kicked his soccer ball, he is considered "inside" because his ball is closer to the pallino than anyone else. All other players are considered "outside." **Whenever a player is considered "inside," he forfeits his turn kicking.** All "outside" players take turns kicking their soccer balls until one of theirs gets closer to the pallino than the "inside" player.
- After all players have kicked, the player that is "inside" is awarded points. One point is awarded to this player for every ball that is closer to the pallino than his closest competitor's ball. After points are awarded, the frame is complete. Start a new frame by electing a new person to kick the pallino and to kick the first soccer ball. A game is won when a player reaches 13 points.



BASICS – Kick the big balls (Soccer Bocce) at the little ball (Pallino). Closer is better.

It's really as simple as that! You get points for every ball that is closest to the target ball, until your opponents ball appears. So... if you have 2 balls close to the target, and then the opponents ball is the next closest... you get 2 points. Only 1 person/team can score points in a round.

AREA OF PLAY – Soccer Bocce can be played anywhere – Beach, Park, Backyard, Alleyway; pretty much any open area. Just stick to the "Basics" and only kick the Soccer Bocce Balls at the Pallino. Do not kick the Soccer Bocce Balls at anything else.

COURT SIZE (optional) – Most people just play Soccer Bocce in any open area. The Pallino is tossed and then the Soccer Bocce balls follow. If you are interested in building your own official backyard Soccer Bocce course, then the dimensions are as follows: 13 foot square box, then a 65x13 foot rectangle, then another 13 foot square box. Typically, there are boundary walls created around the entire court.

SOCCER BOCCCE BALL RULES – There are various ways to play "Bocce" style games and many ways to keep score. This is the Day of Games way to play. Soccer Bocce can be played 1 vs. 1, 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3, 4 vs. 4 or even 5+ vs. 5+ (if you have enough soccer bocce balls). The rules below describe games played one team vs. another team. This can be 1vs.1, 2vs.2, or 4vs.4. If you would like to play Soccer Bocce Ball with more than 2 teams the rules are very similar but

each person gets their own balls to play with rather than partnering up with a teammate. The rest of the rules are the same with regard to scoring, order, and how to play bocce.

Playing in an open area:

- 1) Decide which team will kick first. Split up the Soccer Bocce Balls so everyone has the same amount.
- 2) This team will create a line in the playing field and this will act as the foul line. Nobody is allowed to walk past this line until all the Soccer Bocce balls are kicked. If someone crosses the foul line this will result in a negative point! (optional rule)
- 3) Team drawing the line will toss the Pallino into the field of play
- 4) This same team will act first and kick a Soccer Bocce ball at the Pallino. Teams then alternate kicks.
- 5) Once all the Soccer Bocce Balls have been kicked, the scoring of this round takes place. Only one team is allowed to score in each round. A point is awarded for each Soccer Bocce Ball that is closer to the Pallino than the closest ball of the opponents.
- 6) Optional Rule – Award 2 points to any ball that is touching the Pallino.
- 7) The game can be played to 11, 21, or any number you come up with. Win by 2 points.

Playing in a court with boundary walls: Same rules apply as above with these additions -

- 8) The Pallino can't hit the back wall on its initial toss. It can hit the back wall during game play. If it hits the back wall on the toss, it should be tossed again.
- 9) Kicked Soccer Bocce Balls cannot hit the back wall as a result of a kick. This is considered out of boundaries and the ball is dead. Dead balls should be removed.

Soccer Marbles:

This is like a soccer game on a field except every player has their own soccer ball and the goals are cones inside the field, similar to hockey or lacrosse.

Another ball is used for the game ball.

- Players kick their ball, and only their ball, to strike and move the game ball toward their opponent's goal.
- The reason I suggest goals is that players should be able to come through the goal, with their ball, to stop opponents.
- This can be played 1v1 too.

Soccer Tag:

Grid roughly 20 x 30 yards. - Have each player enter the grid with a ball.

Execution: Players dribble inside grid and you designate one player to be "it" to begin and all players have a ball.

- Player must tag players to pass the "it" to them, just like normal tag but they must always dribble their ball and cannot leave their ball to avoid being tagged.

Quality: players to dribble with the ball close to their feet to allow for quick turns, and quick changes of pace to avoid being tagged.

Progression: Players work in teams of 2, one ball between 2 players, to build on communication/teamwork.

Players with a ball at their feet CANNOT be tagged as it, only teammate without the ball at their feet can be tagged. This forces players to move into space, builds awareness, improves communication, and encourages them to make accurate passes.

Variations: First round players can only skip, taggers included.

Second round players can only shuffle side to side.

Third round players can only run backward. Fourth round players can only crawl.

When a player gets tagged they hand over the scrimmage vest to the player that got tagged. The players that get tagged have to perform a funky exercises.

Group Tag: Coach has three players link arms - no ball. The players have to run with arms linked and tag free players. If a player gets tagged they join the group.

Total time estimated: 5-7 minutes for soccer tag.

U6 to U8 Drills:

U6 players are unlikely to be able to cooperate together. They all tend to mob the ball. Teach them the basics by letting them have fun with soccer oriented games.

• **U6: Stuff.** Dribbling: Pretend you have a puppy on a leash, if it gets too far away with might get lost (taken). Follow the Leader.

“Go Score”: all dribble and put ball in goals. “Big pile & Score”: all balls in pile, one at a time all take and score.

Driving school: coach (later a player) leads: commands: forward, back, turn R, L, start, stop.

Treasure Island: scatter all the balls, the team is told to get the balls one at a time and bring them back. Add pirates (parents).

Treasure Hunt: Circle of cones as “treasure chest”. Extra cones or rags as “treasure”. Ask them to “go find treasure and bring to the chest”. Watch out for pirates (coach, parents).

Monster Invasion: Kids dribble around the field as parents (monsters) try and steal the ball...teach them to shield.

Soccer Bees: The field is the bee hive. Parents are wasps that have invaded the hive...try and kick the ball and hit them to sting them...this sends them out of the hive (to the sidelines) until they can come back.

Snowball fight: everyone has a ball, the object is to hit your ball into another players and you call out “SPLAT”.

“**Chase The Kid**”: call a name and everyone dribbles their ball and tries to tag them.

Monster Kicks: line up and all kick as far as possible.

“**Hit the coach**”: If they hit you with a pass, you will imitate any animal they want.

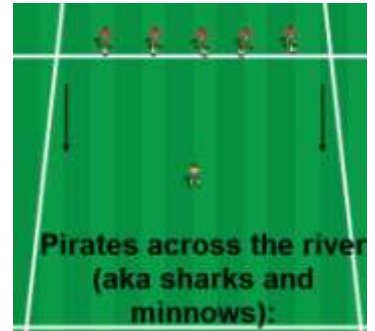
Formations?: the emphasis should be on teaching basic skills, playing 3v3 or 4v4 and allowing your players to get as many of touches on the ball as possible. There is no need to try to make children play in recognizable positions and they should be free to express themselves in whatever way they choose.

Pirates Across the River (aka sharks and minnows):

Players (minnows or sailors) dribble across the square as the "Pirate/Shark" in the middle tries to take their ball. Once their ball goes out of bounds (kicker or inadvertently), they join the pirates / sharks team.

Set up: Play in a large grid. The players have balls and are the Minnows. The one that does not is the Shark.

Play: The Minnows start at one end of the grid. The Shark stand on the opposite line. The Minnows must try to cross the Shark's line without losing possession of their ball. Each Minnow who loses their ball join the Sharks. The Sharks defend their line, trying to kick the Minnows' balls out of the defined area. Minnows who successfully dribble across the Shark's line go back for round two. The last Minnow left in is the winner. A variation is “**Centipede**”, one tagged join hands.



Ghostbusters (AKA "Stuck in the Mud" or "Freeze Tag"):

Encourages youngsters to dribble the ball with control and turn away from defenders. Used as a warm-up before a session on shielding the ball but you can use it at anytime... just for a fun break!

Set-up: Create a square playing area large enough for your players to move around in comfortably but not so big that the taggers will have trouble catching them. Every player has a ball except two players who are the taggers.

How to play: The children dribble their ball around the playing area while the two taggers try to tag them. If a player is tagged, they are frozen and must pick their ball up and hold it above their head shouting "HELP!" as loudly as they can. They can only be unstuck from the mud (or unfrozen, depending on what you call the game) by another player who passes their ball between the frozen players' legs. See how many players the taggers can freeze in two minutes then change the taggers and play again.



- Once a player has been tagged, they freeze and stand with their feet apart holding their ball above their head. See how many players the ghosts can freeze in one minute. The quickest time to tag all players, or the most tagged when the time runs out, wins.
- After each game nominate two new ghosts and restart with all players back in the game.

Skills objectives of soccer drill: The soccer skills developed in this drill are dribbling, close control of the ball, turning away from defenders.

What to call out in the soccer drill “Head up!” “Accelerate!” “Freeze if you’ve been tagged!”

Advance the drill skills Allow free players to unfreeze tagged players using a nutmeg move – playing the ball between their legs – which means the ghosts have to work harder to tag everyone. In order to be unfrozen, players must shout out

"I need a ghost buster". A good coaching tip to make the drill skills even harder is to get players to crawl through a frozen player's legs after they have played the nutmeg move.

Run Gauntlet (Space Invaders game):



If your ball is hit by a laser, you are shot down.

Parents, siblings and coaches on the outside. Just a fun and goofy game. Outsiders firmly pass ball across the line to other outsiders and hope to "hit" the dribblers in the foot as the players (kids) dribble 20 yards to get across the line to safety. If "hit" once they have to one leg hop dribble. If hit twice they crawl and carry their ball to get across. 3rd time they join the outsiders. Keep going back and forth until all are out. The quickest to reach the safety zone wins. Alternatively, allow the passers an extra touch so they can be more accurate when firing the "laser". If an invader's ball is touched, they're out. Make sure the passers are only using one-touch to begin with.

Rock-em Sock-em passing: 4 players and one "sock-em". Ensure that the player with the ball holds onto it until the player is committed to tagging them. The sock-em has a rolled up sock and can throw it at the legs of the players who has the ball, if they are hit (tagged) when they have possession, they have to be the sock-em.

The Name Game: Players stand in a circle and pass the ball to one another, but they must call out the name of the person they are passing to. This is great at the beginning of the season, so they (and you!) learn everyone's names. If the players are doing well and you have enough players, add additional balls.

Zombie Tag: Start with one zombie who can only walk....tries to kick the ball from all the other players (humans). If your ball is kicked out of the play area you become a zombie. Soon there will be more and more zombies. The last human standing wins.

Fun Stuff: Try balancing the ball on your foot.

Learning each other's name: Pass around circle, call out name before passing to the person. Square passing, 4 cones, accept pass the tap to player next to you and run to the next cone.

Races: *With the ball:* Dribbling, roll-overs (sole drag)- L foot, R foot, passing ball between feet, backwards dribbling, left foot only..... Coach (Simon) says.....

Without the ball: Crab races, run across the field doing the crab walk. Cat/dog races, run across the field doing the cat/dog walk. Frog races, rabbit races, hopping races, skipping races, running backwards, running sideways, crawling, high knee slapping, marking, heel-to-toe walking.

Pac-man: All with ball, try and tag another player with your ball by hitting them with it below their knees. Once hit they get a ball and join the Pac-man to hit others.

"Head or Catch": two players stand in front of a coach who alternates tosses to them at head level and says "head" or "catch".....they have to do the opposite. Mentally challenging, helps them think on their feet and gives them a fun training break. See [U8-10 Drills](#) |

Goal wars:

Objective: To improve dribbling and shooting skills. Improves ball control and encourages players to keep their head up while dribbling. U5-12. Whole team.

Set up: You need a minimum of one ball per child and preferably more.

- Place two goals next to each other on the same line, about 5 yards apart.
- Place a cone about 15 yards in front of the goals, and centered between them.
- Place half your balls next to goal A and half next to goal B (making sure there is at least one ball per child).

How to play: Divide your players into two teams and have each team line up next to a goal each.

Players dribble a ball round the cone then shoot at the opposite goal (i.e., team A shoot at goal B and vice versa). After several minutes, the whistle blows, and the team with the most balls in "their" goal wins.

Bumper cars:

Objective: This game improves dribbling skills, passing technique and encourages players to keep their heads up.

Age group: U5s to U9s (you also need a few willing adults)

Number of players: Whole team.

Set up: Create a 20x30 yard playing area with flat cones and a smaller rectangle just outside the playing area.

How to play: The players and the adults dribble a ball around the playing area. The children try to bump (pass) their "car" (the soccer ball) into an adult's "car."

If an adult's car is "bumped," the adult must take their car to the repair shop (an adjacent, small area designated by cones), and cannot leave until they count to 10.

Adults (coaches and parents) should encourage the children ("you can't catch me" etc.) so that the kids try very hard to bump their car.

As many parents as possible can play - kids LOVE to send their parents to the repair shop. Older siblings also are great targets.

Simon Says:

Your children will already know how to play this popular game. It's a lot of fun for the little ones and it's great for improving their ball control, concentration and to look up while dribbling (avoid collisions). Purpose of the Game: to encourage children to run with the ball, keeping it close to their feet, and to carry out instructions.

Age group: three years old upwards. **Number of players:** whole team.

Area Needed: 20 yards x 20 yards.

Equipment: flat cones to mark out the grid and a ball for every player.

How to play: Players dribble round the grid waiting for an instruction from Simon, the King of the Ring (that's you!).

When you preface a command with "Simon says" they must do it immediately. For example, if Simon says, "foot" they must stop the ball with that body part immediately.

If you don't say 'Simon says' before the command your players should ignore it. If they forget and carry it out, just shout 'gotcha!' or similar. No-one is out of this game. You can add other commands such as "change direction," "go faster," "bobble, backward, pullback and so on.

Circle circus:

Objective: To improve passing and receiving skills. U7s to U11s.

Number of players: If you have more than five or six players, split your squad into two groups and play this game in two circles to avoid players standing in line too long.

Set up: Create a circular playing area about 15 yards across or use the center circle. Your players line up facing the circle and about ten yards away from it.

How to play: You stand in the middle of the circle (on the center spot) with one soccer ball.

Pass the ball to the first player in line who then runs towards you with the ball. As he runs, he passes the ball back to you. The player then runs around the circle receiving and returning passes from you as he goes.

Once the player has gone completely around the circle he either passes back to the coach and returns to the group of players or he brings the ball into the center and takes your position.

Lee says: "Believe it or not, all of my under 8's managed to do this very well and they even started to turn it into their own competition with how many passes they could get in on their way round. We've found that this game helps with:

- passing ahead of the player
- collecting the ball on the run
- passing back to same player (1-2)
- moving after passing."

Finishing School:

We all spend time teaching our players how to shoot but most of us don't spend much time teaching them how to finish. That's a shame because young goalkeepers often spill the ball and a player who follows his teams' shots will often reap rewards.

How to play: Play a small sided game and put a coach or parent in goal who is instructed to parry or drop the ball whenever a shot comes in.

Coaching note: Don't use your regular goalkeepers for this: you don't want to ingrain bad habits!

This encourages players to follow up on their shots and defenders to run back with them.

Variation: Play soccer with regular goalkeepers but goals only count if the player who shoots enters the goal and touches the back of the net in less than three seconds after the ball has crossed the line. If he doesn't, the goal is disallowed.

Circle Game

Objective: A fun center circle practice that develops accurate kicking.

Organization: Mark a circle having a center mark (line intersection; a coin; a scratched "X").

- A center circle works well, but regulation size will be too big for young players.
- 5-yard radius for 6-year olds; 6-yard for year olds, etc.
- Use marker disks to make a circle.
- From center spot pace out radius by going N, S, E and W. Fill in the rest of the circle.



- Each player on one side of the circle has a partner directly opposite.
 - Each pair has one ball between them. If there is an odd number the coach joins in.
 - One player passes the ball towards his or her partner, while trying to knock over a cone.
 - The partner retrieves the ball and returns the pass, again trying to kick over a cone.
 - The ball must be passed from outside the circle.
 - The game is stopped when all cones are knocked down.
- Teaching points
- Encourage the players to use pace as well as accuracy of pass.
 - Suggest they continue to kick towards the ball even after they have actually kicked (follow through).
 - Encourage them to approach the ball at a slight angle to the direction they are kicking (45 degrees).
 - The coach uses a stopwatch to set the "team" record of knocking all cones down.
 - Later, winners are the pair to first knock over the most cones.

Progression: Reduce the number of cones and/or make the circle bigger

Target: The coach uses a stopwatch to set the "team" record of knocking all cones down. Later, winners are the pair to first knock over the cones 5 (6, 8, 10) times.

Teaching points Encourage the players to use pace as well as accuracy of pass.

- Suggest they continue to kick towards the ball even after they have actually kicked (follow through).
- Encourage them to approach the ball at a slight angle to the direction they are kicking (45 degrees).
- The coach uses a stopwatch to set the "team" record of knocking all cones down.
- Later, winners are the pair to first knock over the most cones.

Snatch:

Objective: To improve ball control tackling and passing. U7s upwards.

Number of players: If you have more than ten players, create two playing areas and play two games of Snowball alongside each other.

Set up: Create two 20x20 yard playing areas with a 5-yard gap between them. Divide your players into two teams, one per playing area. Each player has a number. One ball per team.

How to play: Each team dribbles and passes the ball in their playing area.

You shout a number and the corresponding player runs into the other team's square and tries to win the ball. If they win the ball and kick it out of the square they get one point for their team. If they can win the ball and take it back into their square they get three points. Allow thirty seconds for a snatch to take place.

Progression: Have two balls per team and/or call more than one number.

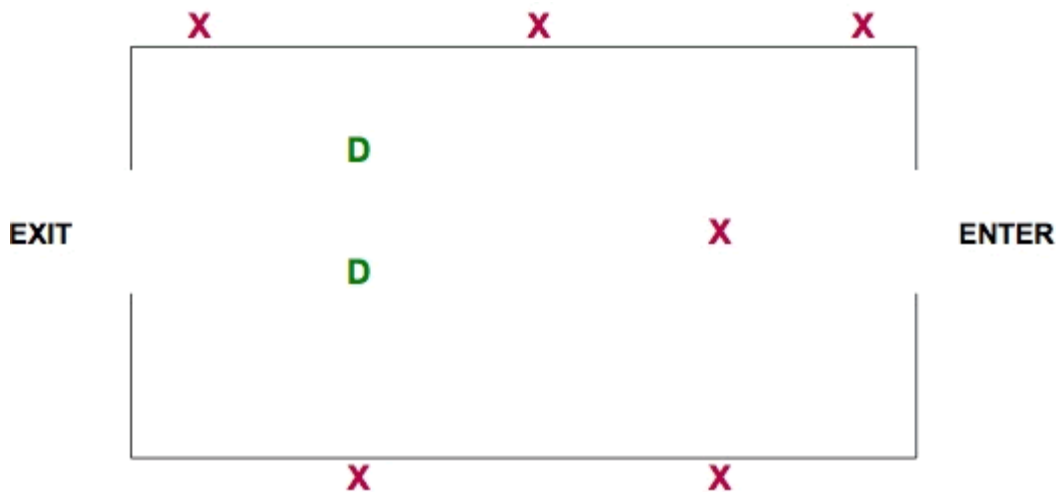
Through the Tunnel:

Objective: To improve passing, tackling and communication skills.

Age range: U7s to U10s.

Number of players: Eight.

Set-up: Create a 10x4 yard "tunnel" as shown below.



Divide your eight players into a team of six attackers (the Xs) and a team of two defenders (the Ds).

How to play:

Five attackers stand diagonally opposite to each other outside the tunnel while the sixth attacker enters the tunnel with the ball.

The sixth attacker tries to get a point for his team by getting past the two defenders and out of the other end of the

tunnel.

He can pass to any of the five outside players and they either return the ball directly to him or they can pass to another outside player first.

The two defenders work together to try to stop the attacker getting through the tunnel. If they can win the ball and can pass it to you (who is standing just outside the playing area), they earn two points. If they can kick it out, they earn one point.

Each attacker takes a turn in the tunnel then add the points up.

Congratulate the winning team then play the game again with two new defenders.

Steal the Ball:

I like keepaway games. They are great for improving ball control, shielding the ball, supporting play and communication. But "normal" keepaway quickly bores young players. There's not much fun and no end result. Steal the Ball, however, is fun to play and it can get very competitive.

Age group: U6s to U10s.

Set-up: Create two playing areas. For team sizes up to six, 20 yards square is OK. If you have more than that (or your players are inexperienced) make the playing areas bigger.

Split your players into two teams and give them numbers (Ex: P1 to P4 in the image below). One team per playing area.

How to play: To begin with, your players pass the ball to each order in number order: P1 to P2 to 3 to 4 etc in their adjacent playing areas.

Tip: Encourage your players to move immediately after passing and tell them to use the whole of the playing area.

After a few minutes, call a number. The players with that number run into the other team's playing area and try to steal the ball. Whoever steals the ball first gets a point for their team. When all the numbers have been called, the team with the most points wins.

Variations: Call two numbers.

- Play with two balls in each playing area and require the ball stealers to knock both balls out of the playing area to get a point.

Award a bonus point if the ball can be stolen in less than five seconds.

Ladder shooting Game:

This game will encourage your players to move the ball quickly from defense to attack. It will also encourage them to take their shots quickly and to follow up on their shots in case the goalkeeper drops the ball. It is also a good workout for your goalkeeper and you can use it to reinforce the importance of good positioning.

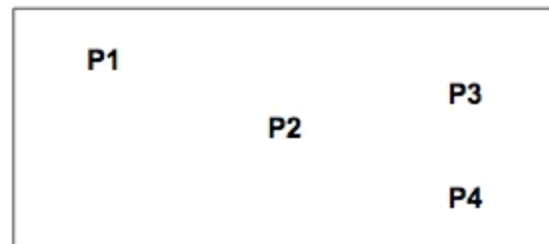
Objective: to be the first team to score.

Set up: place one normal-sized goal at one end of a playing area 40 yards long by 30 yards wide.

- Split your squad into two teams of four plus one goalkeeper. If you have more than nine players consider setting up two games.

- The first player in each team has a ball and stands on the end line furthest from the goal. Each team's players form a zig-zag line between the first player in their team and the goal. The teams should be separated by about ten yards.

How to play: on your command, the first player in **both teams pass to their nearest team mate**. This player passes to the next player and so on. When the ball reaches the player nearest the goal, they have to control it quickly, shoot and score.



- After a goal is scored, the shooter takes the place of the player on the end line and everyone else moves down one position.
- If the goalkeeper saves a shot, the ball is thrown out and the shooter has another go. If a shot misses the goal, the shooter retrieves the ball and tries again.
- The first team to score gets a point and X number of points wins the game.

Coaching points: Does the shooter follow her shot in? Remember, it's the first team to score that gets the point, not the first team to shoot. Is the goalkeeper moving out to narrow the shooting angle?

Progression: add a defender who plays between the shooters and the goal.

The Triangle Goal Shooting Game: Just by playing games like this, and keeping score so that the games are competitive, players will improve.

Set up: Set up a triangular goal in the middle of a 50 x 50 grid.

- Play an even sided game with both teams having their own keeper.
- Both teams try to score through any one of the three sides of the triangular goal.
- It is best to place the goal in the center of a 20 yard in diameter circle, with only the keepers allowed inside the circle.
- If the keeper catches the ball, his or her team must take the ball outside of the grid before they may attack again.
- Play with 2 balls for real excitement.
- Goalkeepers may become attacking players when their team has possession.

Coaching Points: Attacking and defending principles of play. Shooting. Finishing. Possession. Goalkeeper positioning, shot saving and distribution.



Pool Soccer:

Objective: To improve passing and receiving skills, teamwork and defending.

Age Group: U6s to U10s. **Number of players:** Twelve (but is easily adapted for larger or smaller squads).

Equipment required: Some flat cones, training vests, one ball.

Set-up: Create a 20x15 yards playing area with six small gaps around the edges (the "pockets") as shown. Split your players into two teams of six.

How to play: Both teams try to gain possession of the ball and pass it (or shoot) into a pocket.

- If a team scores with a ball, it keeps possession and tries to score again.
- If a player kicks the ball "off the table" or commits a foul, possession goes to the other team.
- The first team to score eight wins the game.

Tip: If your players are finding it difficult to score, make the pockets bigger.

If players find it hard to keep possession long enough to pot a ball, make the playing area bigger.

Progression: Play with two balls.

Knock over the Cones: Set a couple of cones in the middle of the goal. Players at the 18-yardline all kick at once to try and knock it over.

Dribbling Races: 2 or 3 teams, each with a cone at the far end of the field. One at a time they dribble down and around the cone. The first player in each team dribbles their ball around the opposite cone and runs back with it until they get within passing range of the second player in line. Note: With six-year-olds, this might be three yards. With eight-year-olds, it could be 10 yards or more. As soon as they are within range, the ball carrier passes to the next player, and they run around the far cone. The first team to complete the race is the winner. Next player waits until their teammate returns. First team to finish wins.

Anatomy dribbling: Area: 10 yard square. One ball for each player. Players dribble freely inside the square. While players dribble, coach calls out a body part such as "left foot". Players put that part of the body on the ball as quickly as possible. Let anticipation build between calls. Body parts can include hand, elbow, shoulder, nose, ear, knees, buns, etc. Variations: 1) Use two or more parts, such as "nose, right elbow and left knee". 2) For older players, include combinations that require teamwork such as "two left hands" or "six right feet and three knees".

Let's all steal the ball! Put all your balls in the middle of the same playing area. Place the groups at the four corners of the area. When you say 'go', one player from each group runs to the middle of the area, collects a ball and takes it back to their corner. Then the next player goes. Repeat until there are no balls left in the middle. The winning team is the one with the most balls in their corner. Very young players can carry the ball. Older players can dribble with it.

After a couple of rounds, tell your players they have 30 seconds to steal balls from the other teams' corners. Again, the winning team is the one that ends up with the most balls.

Danger! Mines!

This game is a great way to improve your players' passing accuracy and receiving skills. **Age range:** U6s to U10s.

Equipment required: 20 to 30 flat cones, two balls. Number of players: Whole squad.

Set-up: Spread the flat cones randomly inside a playing area big enough for your players to move around in but not too big - all the cones need to be close together. Make sure there are no defined lanes from one side of the playing area to the other.

For eight U10s, create a 20-yard square playing area.

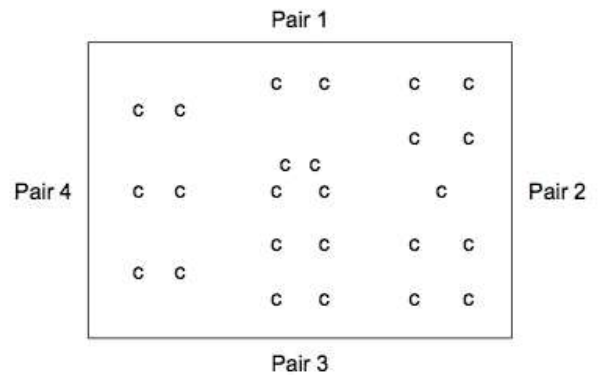
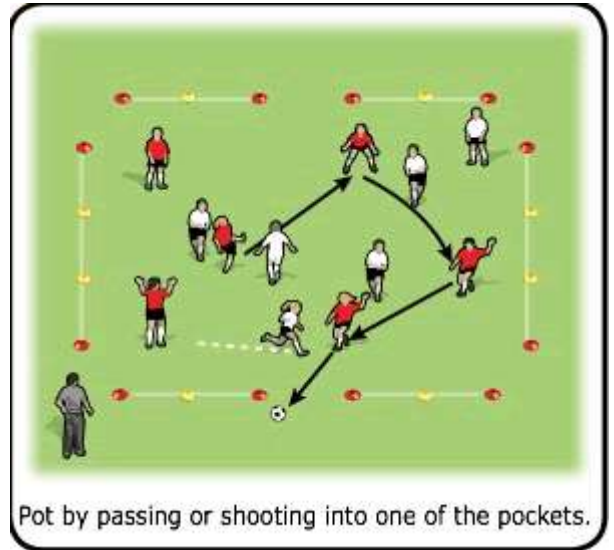
Divide your players into pairs.

Each pair waits just outside the playing area. In the image below, there are four pairs of players waiting to begin the game.

If you have an odd number of players, have one team of three players.

How to play: The object of the game is for each pair to pass the ball to each other as they cross the minefield and return to their starting position without touching a cone (i.e. mine) with their feet or the ball.

Dribbling is not allowed, the ball must be passed across the field.



If a player or their ball touches a cone, that pair of players has to start again.
The pair (or team of three) that can cross the minefield and return the fastest is the winner.

Non Stop Shooting:

Objective: To practice shooting skills.

Age range: U8s and upwards.

Difficulty: Easy.

Equipment: Four small goals, cones, balls.

Set-up:

- Divide your players into groups of five.
- Create a 40-yard square with a five-yard square in the middle.
- Use one playing area for each group.
- Place small goals on the side and end lines.
- Put several balls in the central square.

How to play: One player starts in the middle, the other four players (the defenders) start in front of the goals.

The player that starts in the middle collects a ball from the center of the playing area and attacks a goal of his choice.

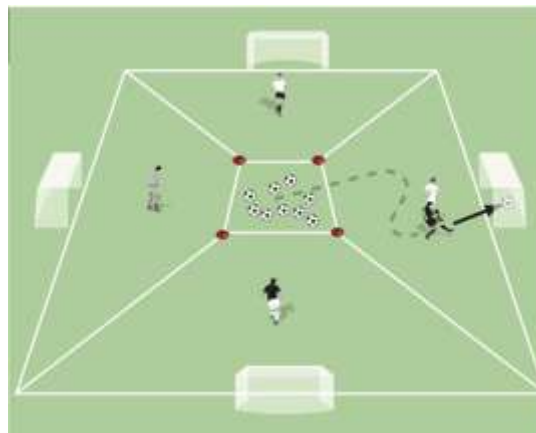
If the player scores, he races to retrieve another ball from the middle of the playing area and attacks another goal.

However, if the defender stops the attacker from scoring, their roles are reversed. The shooter goes in goal, the defender grabs a ball from the center and attacks a goal.

What to say:

"Stay on your feet and win the ball"

"Defend well and you get the chance to attack"



Moving the Goal Posts

Objectives: To improve passing and encourage players to keep their heads up when in possession of the ball.

Age group: U5s to U10s.

Set-up: Create a 30-yard square and divide your players into two teams.

Take one player from each team and give them a three-yard rope or pole to hold. This is the "moving goal".

You stand outside the playing area with a supply of balls.

How to play: The players holding the moving goal move freely around the grid.

- The two teams try to score in the moving goal.
- The first team to score three goals wins the game.
- If the ball leaves the area, keep the game moving by putting another ball in play.

Variations: Play with two balls (this also makes the game easier for younger players). Reduce the width of the moving goal and/or restrict players to two or three touches.

Beep, beep!

This simple little game is excellent for improving the co-ordination and balance of very young players. It also helps them get used to finding space and changing direction.

Number of players: Whole team.

Equipment required: Flat cones, a ball for every player.

Age group: U4s to U8s.

Set-up: Create a playing area big enough for all your players to move around in freely.

Give each player a flat cone to hold. They are told to pretend that they are cars and the cone is their steering wheel.

How to play: Begin the game by telling your players to move in different ways around the playing area - forwards, with little steps, big steps, hop, move sideways, go backwards, etc.

- Encourage your players to keep their heads up and avoid crashing their car. Tell them to use their horn and go "beep, beep" if another "car" comes too close.
- Progress the game by giving the players a ball each. Now they dribble their ball around in the grid, again trying to avoid "crashing" into another player.

Coaching points: Encourage players to move around the grid with their heads up and look for spaces to move into.

Ask: How can you avoid crashing your car? Should you look at the ball while you're dribbling? Why not?

⚽ Circle Drills & Warm ups: ⚽

Links: [Basic Skills](#) | [Basic Games](#) | [Circle Passing Games](#) | **See:** [Conditioning Circuits & Circle Courses](#) | [Various Small Side Games](#) | [Agility Ladder](#) | [Game Day - Warm-ups](#) |

Basic Practice Warm Up Skills:

Aerobic Training and Skills: All in a circle. Practicing dribbling with all sides of the foot enhances coordination, improves confidence on the ball and helps evade defenders. These dribbling techniques need to become second nature. Start with the “bounce” (soccer hop) and back to the bounce between drills. Do people underestimate you? Work ethic is the great equalizer...talent means nothing without work ethic. See [Key Dribble Skills](#) |

10-20 times each: Toe taps & Toe tap 360's. **Bobbles** (up, down, sideways).

Step-overs (chest over ball). **L turns / L-pulls** (L-steps or the escape).

Sole drags (to center, change foot & 360's each way [for shielding] alternating feet).

The Jamaican (back and forth with bottom of feet parallel to your body in front- start / learn by touching and stopping – do 10 times).

The alpha (Drag stepover) (sole drag across body as step).

Drag cuts (drag across body and cut back to original position with opposite foot).

The Dooblay (pull from bottom of foot). Instep & Out step Dooblay.

Monster walks. The Geg (also with instep geg and out step get as hop on one foot).

V-turns (the omega – same foot then opposite foot – inside then outside of foot [= Irish Jig]).

V-pulls (omega as turn hip out)

Free play – work on your ball skills.

Magic hops (pass ball under knees – alternate).

Figure-of-8's (scissors) with ball on ground around feet.

Drop balls (behind head, step back and pick up after 1 bounce).

Laces strikes (as hold ball in front of you).

Body - Ball Bounces (Overhand throw ball at feet and jump at same time it bounces and catch the ball as many times in 1 min.

Quick Warm-up: 10 each: Jumping jacks. Butt-kickers jogging in place. Side-to-side hops. Side lunges (groin stretch). Heisman's (jump side-to-side). Knee highs. Jump Twists (Jump high and twist 180 degrees to land in opposite direction).

STRENGTH WORK: Sprinkler's (Down squats – go sideways). Side hops (jump over ball sideways as if hopping a log). Bottom (Butt) kicks. Knee highs. The Mummy. Show us your moves. Rock climbers + Chomping (both feet). Soccer sit-ups. Lunges. Star jumps. Diamond jumps. Burpees. Burpees with a push up.

FUN: Monkey(s) in the middle (keep away). Target practice (one in middle protect the 2 cones). Keepaway. King of the circle.

Possession with Responsibility:

A simple possession game that works on possession, defending in groups, and also taking responsibility. Takes the old "monkey in the middle" game to the next level.

Setup: Set them up in a center circle area. ~4:1 ratio of outside (passers) to inside (defenders) players. The outside are playing **one touch keep away**. While the players on the outside can move around the outside of the circle, they may NOT move inside or outside the circle. If 15 players, 3 players start in the middle and the 12 players on the outside.

Objective: for the players on the outside to keep the ball away from the players in the middle.

• One problem with possession games such as 3 v 1 or 5 v 2 is that the person who loses possession of the ball is actually NOT the one who is at fault.

Rather, the supporting players didn't do their job properly which results in the loss of possession. The way this game tries to work on this is that **if a player loses possession of the ball, not only does she/he go into the middle, but so does the player on each side of her** (the 3 players who were in the middle rotate OUT at this time). This encourages the players around the ball to provide proper support because if they don't, they will most likely become defenders as a result.

• The other thing this rule accomplishes is that it encourages the player on the ball to look further than the players next to her. Since we want to encourage our players to keep their head up and look further than the closest player, this is an excellent way to accomplish it (if the ball was coming to you and you knew that by playing the ball first time to the player



right next to you might result in the loss of possession and you have to go play defense, wouldn't you start looking further first?).

- As an added incentive to get the defense working hard (and working together) is that if the offensive players can string together 10 consecutive passes, it results in an extra turn on defense for the players in the middle. This means that if the players on the circle make 12 successful passes and then a player loses possession, the defense stays in for another turn. If the players on the outside can make 20 successful passes, then the defense gets two extra turns. It is for this reason that the circle must be very small (adjust it for the ability of the players as well as the numbers).

The great thing about this activity is that it gets quite exciting as the players try to keep other players in the middle as long as possible and also start providing proper support and better decision making.

First Touch And Pass Warm Up:

SET UP: An area 15x15 yards. Balls, bibs and cones. 6 players in the session.

HOW TO PLAY: 4 players are outside the area and 2 inside. Two balls are played at the same time. The two inside players must continually receive passes, then control the ball to pass out to one of the outside players. The outside players must be continually on the move. Any misplaced passes and players switch roles.

TECHNIQUE: Each player should have a picture in his mind so that he knows how he will receive the ball and how he will pass it on. Players need to get side-on to receive, control with one foot and pass with the other. Passing and receiving is all about first touch, a poor first touch.



Pursuit Dribble:

1. Players in 4 groups around center circle
2. Each player numbered 1-4, with a ball
3. Coach calls out a number from 1-4
4. Players with that number dribble around circle. Player getting back to their group first wins.
5. Players waiting tap ball between feet.

Pursuit Dribble Reverse: dribble in opposite direction

Coaching Points

1. Players run around the outside of players waiting, therefore keep players waiting close to circle.
- Otherwise they may obstruct the dribblers and "cheat".
2. Players dribbling must keep close control of ball.
3. Players waiting must look at players running and at the same time move ball between their feet.

They need to "stay on their toes" while tapping ball back and forth and therefore be ready for "their run".

4. Coach can add challenge by sending the next group running before the previous one has returned to their group.

Game Application: This drill fosters reaction to an outside stimulus, a call from a team mate for example. Players in a game must always be aware of their surroundings and make a decision to change their action. In this case players progress from holding/shielding the ball and then starting a fast dribble into space.

Dribbling with use of both feet while keeping tight control at high pace is a skill that makes any player less predictable.

The change of pace and direction is a standard method of losing defenders.

Snatch:

A warm-up game that encourages competition. Helps with awareness, reactions, speed and agility.

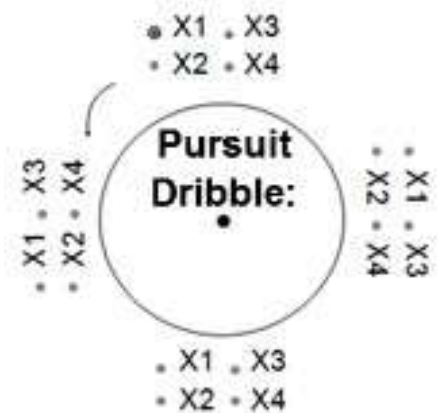
Players in pairs standing either side of the gate with a ball in the middle.

On the coach's instruction the players must react, for example.

If the coach says "SNATCH", they must take the ball.

If the coach says yellow, they must touch the yellow cone.

The first player to react gets a point.



Free Your Team Mate: Mark out a circle of about 25 yards diameter using cones or markers. Two teams of four players. No goals. Each team has one player on the pitch and three players on the outside. To start, pass a ball into the pitch. The two players compete for possession.

- The player who wins the ball attempts to pass the ball out to a team mate outside the circle.
- If a successful pass, the team mate enters the pitch to make a 2v1.
- The winning team is the first to have all four players on the pitch and complete 6 consecutive passes.

The Center Circle Game:

Two teams of four players. Two mini target goals, one at each end of the center circle.

- Each team has two players on the pitch and two players on the outside (in the attacking half).
- The players on the outside can move up and down their side and look to receive a pass.
- The team in possession must attempt to score in the mini goal.
- They can use their team mates outside the circle to help build a passing move.
- The outside players are only allowed to use one touch.
- The game is played for four periods of two minutes.
- After each period, the players on the pitch reverse roles with their team mates on the outside.

Circle Skills Station Drills: Players rotate around in inner circle as those on outer part of circle (stay put) give the inner rotators volley throws, traps, headers etc.

Advance to cushion traps (use foot to lower the ball to the ground with the laces). Wedge traps (from the side bring the ball down to the ground with your laces) Advance to head-toe traps / Chest-toe traps / Thigh-toe traps / High foot traps.

- Once good at traps **take it to the next level** with 3 or 4 on the inside of a circle (about the size of the kick-off circle) and 3 or 4 on the outside. The inner group all run to a central cone then rotate in a clockwise direction back out toward the outer circle to run into a trap on the go and pass it back to the outer person....then back to the center cone and rotate to next outer server for another trap. Also do this for volleys. Players need to practice changing their speed as they "make their runs".

- Once they get the basic idea of how to make the runs.....or if an odd number of player...have them make runs to the open server of their choosing. They first hold up their hand and call the servers name....then start their run across the middle trap and pass/volley/head it back to the server. This is much more real game-like and teaches them communication, making runs and going into the pass.

Frantic Ball: Team A forms a circle. Team B all have a ball and are in the circle. Call out "frantic ball" and team B starts passing around the ball with one-touches only. If a ball comes to a stop designated Team A player calls out "frantic". Once called 5 times switch sides. Team A helps keep the balls inside the circle.

Everybody's It: Dribbling in a circle, have players attempt to tag others while maintaining ball control. One point for each tag.

Knock Out / King of the Circle: Dribble around and try to kick the other players ball out of the boundaries. Once can rejoin after performing 10 alternating ball taps.

Cross-over: Player dribble in same direction on outside of circle. Have players cut across without touching anyone else.

Hospital Tag: All are dribbling, once tagged, you have to hold that spot as "injured". Second tag you hold both spots. Third tag you go to the "hospital" until you are healed at the end of the game.

Cops and robbers: This simple and fun game encourages your players to work as a team and develop their core soccer skills.


Objective: To improve passing, defending and shooting skills. **Skill level:** Beginner. **Set up:** create a circular playing area about 20 yards across. Make it smaller for fewer or more skilful players. Place a small goal (ideally with a net) in the middle of the circle. Split your squad into two groups with a ratio of three to one. If you have 12 players, for example, you

KEY	
● Player	--- Ball motion
— Player motion	▲ Cone
○ Ball	

Ballwork drills should be practiced after you have warmed up. There should be one ball for every two or three players and these should remain in play throughout the session.



Fluid motion
The sequence continues so you can take turns to dribble and pass



Role reversal
Players swap positions halfway through the drill

DRILL ONE: GIVE AND GO
All players line up on the edge of a circle. Those with the ball dribble into the center, pass to players without the ball, and run back.

DRILL TWO: IN THE MIDDLE
Half the players stand on the outside of the circle, the other half toward its center. The two sets exchange passes with several balls.

should now have one team of nine and one of three. **How to play:** The team with the fewer players (the cops) defend the goal from the larger group (the robbers). When the robbers win the ball, they try to score in the goal. If they succeed, the player who scored joins the cops. **Who wins?:** The robbers win the game if they all become cops within a set time, say five minutes. The cops win if they can score a set number of goals in the same time.

Earthquake: Objective: To improve dribbling and ball control skills. Age range: U5s to U8s.

Equipment: Some flat cones to mark out the playing area, a ball for every player. **Set-up:** Create a playing area big enough for all you players to move around in freely. For 10 U6 players, a 20-yard square is a good size. All the players dribble around in the playing area.

Ask them to dribble with different parts of both feet, i.e. "dribble with your left sole", "the inside of your right foot", etc.

When the players hear the coach shout "Earthquake!" they leave their own ball and have five seconds (that's how long an earthquake lasts!) to find another ball and stand with their foot on it. **Progression:** Remove one ball every time you shout "Earthquake!". This puts a little pressure on the players to find another ball quickly. Create two or three four-yard square safe zones in the playing area. Instead of finding another ball, players now have to dribble their ball to a safe zone within the five-second "Earthquake".

Coaching points: Encourage players to dribble with their heads up and keep the ball close while they are dribbling.

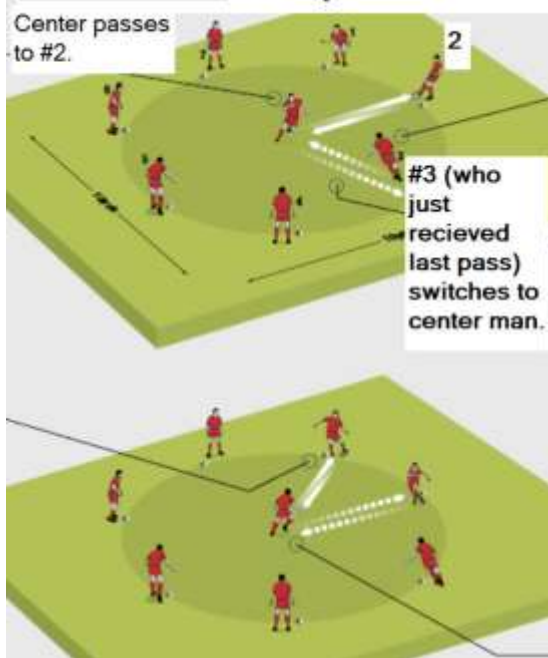
Circle Passing Drills:

Pass & Switch:

A simple warm-up that is suitable for players of any age range, it will soon have your team using effective one touch passing.

SET UP: Use your players to create a circle of around 10 yards in diameter. Place cones around the circle where each player should stand, or go inside the centre circle and get the players to take a few steps forwards to get the right size.

Pass and Switch: 10x10yrd area.



We've used eight players.

HOW TO PLAY: Place one of the players in the centre. Give the outside players numbers going around the circle like a clock. The middle player starts with the ball and passes to one of the circle, then immediately moves to switch play with the next number on the clock. The player coming on receives the ball and passes anti-clockwise around the clock and swaps with the next clockwise player. Eventually you want to get players getting the ball around the clock with one touch for each player and then you really will have a Brazilian warm-up on your hands.

TECHNIQUE: Although simple in execution, this uses key elements of awareness, movement, passing, receiving and first touch control.

Depending on the age and development of your players, the ideal is to get one touch passing and movement so the session is quick and

continuous.



Pre-season coaching:

In the "good old days" the thought of pre-season training used to make players shudder. Players didn't see a ball for weeks, they just did lots of shuttle runs, laps, long-distance running and sprints interspersed with stretches and a few press-ups. Very boring and probably not very effective.

Most coaches now understand that players under the age of 13 or 14 do not need fitness-specific training during pre-season as long as they are provided with well-planned, high-intensity soccer coaching sessions.

How to use small-sided games (SSGs) in pre-season: Running laps in pre-season has been dropped in favor of SSGs, which have been shown to improve fitness as well as performance. While just about any SSG will improve the fitness and skill of your players, you can make them an even more effective part of your pre-season training program by optimizing three variables: **Time, intensity and size.**

Take, for example, a simple 3v3 match with supporting players waiting on the outside of the playing area.

• **SIZE:** The playing area should be big enough for the players to take short sprints but not so big that a player can hide.

- **INTENSITY:** The players on the outside maintain the intensity of the game by stopping the ball leaving the playing area.
- **TIME:** Adjust the length of the game to suit the fitness of your players.

Planning: As in all your coaching sessions, pre-season coaching plans must focus on one aspect of your players' game. E.G., movement off the ball, playing through the thirds, converting crosses into goals, etc.

The key is to ensure all the activities in your session work on the chosen skill. If you're working on movement off the ball, for example, make sure your warm-up, small group work and final game are designed so they work on movement off the ball and not something else!

Tip: Traditional coaching sessions begin with a warm-up followed by skill/tactical work in small groups and finish with a game where the learned skill can be practiced in a realistic situation. But your coaching sessions don't have to be like that. You could start with a warm-up then go straight to a scrimmage followed by some 1v1 work then another scrimmage. Pre-season is a good time to experiment with different formats and seeing which works best with your players.

Team bonding: "The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime." Babe Ruth

Pre-season is often the time when new players arrive and they need to be made a part of the team as quickly as possible. There are lots of ways to make new players feel welcome. I like to buddy up new players with experienced team members and play lots of games that require communication and co-operation in order to succeed.

Locomotion - Circle Warm-up:

Suitable for all ages and abilities. It will improve communication, passing awareness and decision-making.

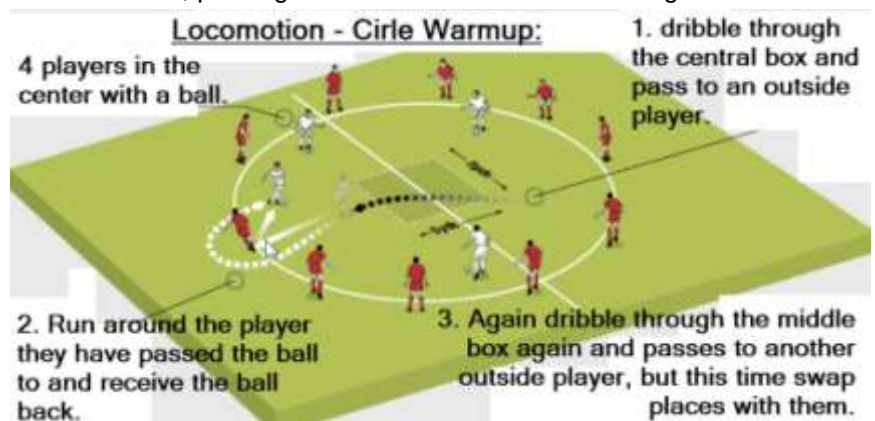
HOW TO PLAY Place 10 players equally spaced out around the circle. Put four players in the centre, each with a ball. Players must run through the square and then pass to one of the outside players, run around the back of them and receive the ball back. They then run through the square again and this time pass to an outside player and swap places with them. The outside player then does the same routine.

The numbers of players in the warm-up can be easily adjusted but just make sure there are three or four more players on the outside than on the inside when it starts.

TECHNIQUE Passing the ball, receiving, running with the ball, running with head up, control, communication and decision making all come into play in this effective and game realistic warm-up exercise.

The speed of execution will depend on the ability level of the players but even younger players will be able to gradually build up their pace and skill level.

1. Dribble through the central box and pass to an outside player.
2. Run around the player they have passed the ball to and receive the ball back.
3. Again dribble through the box again and passes to another outside player, but this time swap places with them.



Skills Round Up:

This session gives a lot of different ways for players to use the ball to attack, defend, pass and shoot.

SET UP: Use a circular area of 18x18 yards (or use the centre circle of your pitch) with back-to-back mini goals in the middle. We've used nine players. You need balls, bibs and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Split the players into three teams of three. Play 3v3 in the centre of the circle. The other team are around the outside and they play for the team in possession, making 6v3 in favor of attack. They cannot enter the circle but they can play around it. Teams can score in either goal but the team in possession must move the ball via an outside player before taking a shot. After a goal, or if the ball goes out, restart by playing to the team who didn't put it out.

TECHNIQUE: The defending team must think about how to protect the goals. Attackers must be alert to where there is space to play the one-two and they must work the overload to their advantage. Look for players who anticipate the



passage of movement and who never give up. Also look for good passing and receiving skills, awareness of space and good shooting.

Four Way Wars:

Objective: To improve decision making, defending, taking goal scoring opportunities and switching from defense to attack quickly.

Age range: U7s to U12s. **Number of players:** Twelve.

Equipment required: Training vests in four colors, some flat cones, four small goals, one ball.

Set-up: Mark out a circular playing area 30 yards in diameter. Place four goals at equal distances around the circle so that each goal is opposite another. Use four teams of three players.

How to play:

- One player from each team starts on the pitch.
- You pass a ball onto the pitch to start the game.
- The object is to score in any other team's goal.
- Each team has three lives.
- Any player who concedes a goal is ejected from the game, his team loses a life, and a team mate comes in to replace him.
- The winner is the last team with a player left on the pitch.
- After each round, swap players between the teams.



Coaching notes: Generally, I don't like to play games in which players are excluded for making an error but this game moves so quickly that no individual is excluded for more than a minute or two. And even while players are waiting they can still contribute to their team's success by shouting encouragement and telling them which goal is open.

Race and Score:

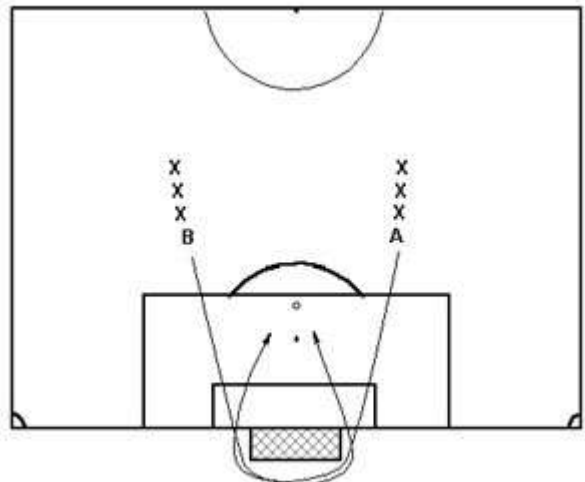
Now that the players are used to winning the ball and keeping it, we now add winning the ball, keeping it and then going to goal. Start with two lines approximately 25 yards from the goal.

When the coach says "go" the first player in line A sprints around the goal going toward the post nearest her first. At the same time, the first player in line B goes around the goal toward the post closest to her. The ball is on the top of the 18 and the first player to the ball, wins it, shields it until she can find the opportunity to turn and then goes to goal. If the second player then wins the ball, she then goes to goal. This drill works on conditioning, aggressiveness, shielding, finishing, goalkeeping and defense. The coach should have the next two players in line start as soon as the two in front of them get near the ball.

This drill can have as many as 12 field players going to one goal without there being too much standing around. See the diagram below for the setup.

The last step in this progression is to have a 6 v 6 game with two goals on a small (40 x 30) field. The ball gets served into the middle and either team can win the ball and score on either goal. This will encourage the players to fight to win the ball since defending in this game is very difficult. Be careful to watch for fouling as it is possible for this game to get out of hand if not monitored properly.

Variation: Coach stands in the middle of the goal and player form 2 lines at the sides of the posts. Coach throws ball down the field and the plays race out to gain control, then turn and score a goal as the other defends.



Cross the River is a good example:

1. Use two ropes to indicate the banks of a river and put eight or 10 training vests in two different colors between the banks. The vests represent rafts.
2. Divide your players into two teams.
3. Explain that team members must work together to cross the river using only the rafts while following certain rules, i.e. only two feet and one hand can be placed on any one "raft" at a time. If more hands or feet are placed on a raft, it will "sink". Also, all rafts must remain in use at all times or they will "float away".
4. Each team is given a different color of raft to use. For example, team A uses the blue rafts and team B uses the white rafts.

5. Time the two teams to see who can get across the river quickest. If a team sinks a raft or allows it to float away, add 10 seconds to their time.

Finally... don't forget to have a pre-season meeting with your players' parents. If you don't explain your coaching philosophy, the team rules and how you want your parents to behave during matches before the season starts you're going to have a lot of avoidable problems when the season kicks off.

References

[1] Pre-season fitness training, The Coaches Bench, 23 June 2012

Lane Drills: Create 6 lanes. Can play one-on-one within the lane. Have a cone in the middle of a lane and have two player at the ends passing and trying to knock over the cone (or ball set on top) as they pass...the other player does a lap or 5 pushups.

If have 3 (or 4) people the ones in the middle pass back and forth to the ones on the ends (who are stationary) – pass-trap-pass.

Sprinting down and back from the baseline. The coach sets the end point by where he stands. Can also be done while dribbling with a soccer ball.

Other:

Up and Down: How many times can you throw the ball while on your back and catch it. Then while sitting. Finally throw ball and stand up and catch. Add a forward roll.

Sit-ups: With ball between your feet, how many sit ups in 45 seconds. Next with feet held off the ground, weave ball in Fig-8 around legs. Knees bent.

Push Ups: How many in 20 sec, 30s. With hands on the ball. With ball under chest, side to side not touching the ball.

Stationary Ball pick-up: How many times in 1 min one can flick ball up with feet and catch it.

Juggling: How many touches in 1 min. Use head, shoulders, thighs or feet. I can do something with the ball, can you? Who can show us something you can do with the ball? What is your best number of touches?

Follow the Leader = mirror / shadow dribbling. Peter pan dribbling = Front player carries the ball the other is the shadow.

How to put cones down in a straight line: Nothing looks worse than playing areas marked out with zig-zag or curved lines! To keep your lines on the straight and narrow all you have to do is:

1. Place your first cone down.
2. Line up this first cone with an object in the far distance; a tree, house or whatever.
3. As you walk backwards from the first cone, dropping the rest of your cones at regular intervals, keep the cones lined up with the object in the distance. Result: a nice straight line!

It's a Knockout

Objective: To improve decision making, communication, passing and shooting skills. Suitable for: Players of all ages.

Set-up: Three goals are evenly spaced around the edge of a circular playing area.

The size of the playing area depends on the age and experience of your players. For players up to the age of about eight, I suggest the circle is about 25 yards across.

Divide your squad into three teams.

How to play:

Each team defends one of the goals and attacks the other two.

Each team starts with five lives. Every time each concedes a goal, it loses a life. When it gets to zero, that team is out.

Alternatively, the team that loses all its lives first can join forces with one of the other teams.

Coaching points: Making the goals big and playing with no goalkeepers encourages quick shooting.

If you allow the first team that is knocked out to combine with one of the remaining teams, you will see how your players cope with "numbers up" situations.

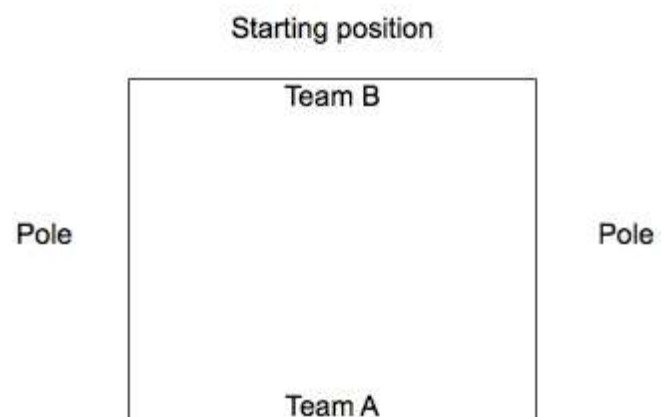
Sneaky Tag:

A great warm-up game for players aged from six to 16.

Equipment required: Training vests in two colors, cones to mark out the playing area.

Set-up: Create a playing area large enough for your players to move around in safely. For twelve 10-year-olds, it should be about 20x15 yards. Place a pole or distinctive cone on each side of the playing area, about five yards from the sideline.

Split your players into two teams.



Each player tucks a training vest into their waistband. Use a different color for each team (e.g. team A has red vests, team B has yellow vests).

Send each team to opposite ends of the playing area.

How to play:

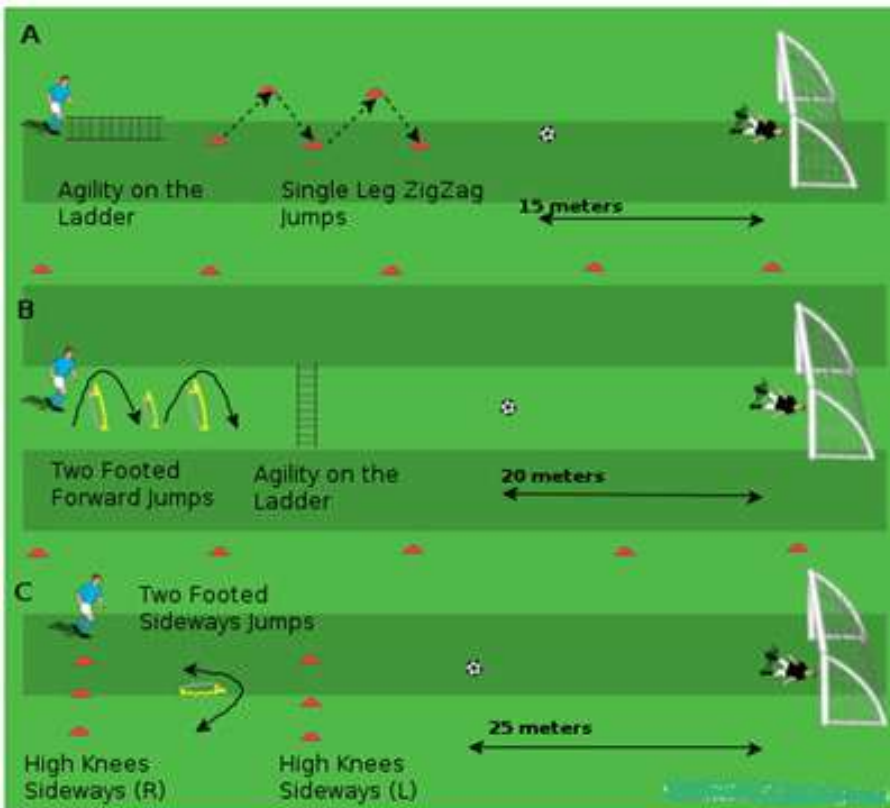
- On your command, players try to take a vest from a player on the other team and drop it on the ground.
- If a player loses his vest, he must run around one of the poles outside the playing area and rejoin the game, picking up his vest and tucking it into his waistband as he returns.
- Play for one minute. The winners are the team who have the most bibs when you call "time".
Play best of three.

Conditioning Exercises:

Most of these should be done during practice or tryouts as keeping the kids active with small sided games will generally keep them in shape.

Examples: Skipping. Running and jumping (every other step). Run backwards. Sideways running. Grapevine running (legs alternate crossing as run sideways) Lines (reach down and touch before turn around). **Killer Shuttles:** Simple. Excruciating. But very effective. You can perform this drill on your own or as part of a group in a line. Leave this soccer conditioning drill until the end of a training session because it can leave legs feeling weak (not ideal for skill practice!).

1. Place 5 cones out 10 yards apart.
2. Starting on cone 1, run to cone 2 and back, then cone 3 and back, 4 and back, then 5 and back.
3. The sprint should be flat out and players should turn sharply off a different foot at each cone.
4. Rest for 30 seconds and repeat. Rest another 30 seconds and repeat for a third time. This is one set. Now rest for 2 minutes and repeat



for a second set (i.e. 3 lots of shuttle runs with 30 seconds rest between each).

Indian Running file - Players jog around the field in pairs. The back pair must sprint to the front, outside the line of other players, then the next pair, and so on.

Shuttles, sprinting, backward and sideways sprinting - Arrange a line of cones 3 yards apart and 30 yards long. Players sprint to the 1st cone and then back; 2nd cone then back; and so on.

The 5000 endurance running - Using the soccer field, players first jog around the perimeter. When they return to the starting point they must sprint one side then jog the remainder, then two sides, three sides and full field sprint.

Strap an old car tire to a player's midriff with approximately 25 feet of slack rope. Player must run distances of 50 -100 yards against the resistance.

Circuit training (30 seconds on each) - Arrange 5 stations; divide group into 5 equal teams and start 30 second drill. -a) Pushups. b) Burpees. c) Sit ups. d) Star Jumps. e) Bench Jumps.

Up and down the clock- 10 yd; 20 yd, 30 yd, 40 yd, and 50 yd sprints then walks back breathing deeply. Arrange cones in 10 yard distances; develop progressive long run sprinting and develop breathing for recovery.

Plyometric training is designed to develop the explosive muscle power needed for sudden bursts of acceleration, such as a forward chasing a ball. A good example is players jumping over a series of hurdles set narrowly apart.

Dribble warm-up: dribble in box; at 'GO!', sprint to farthest line and back into box; at 'NUMBER!', form a group of that number; last ones to make it do 10 press-ups.

The Zidane Challenge:

This challenge from soccer legend Zinédine Zidane is a technical workout that should be done as fast as your players' skills allow. It helps young players when running with the ball and beating players in matches.

SET UP: Use half of your normal pitch. You need balls, cones or poles, a couple of hurdles and a goal. The goal is full sized in the penalty area.

HOW TO PLAY: Players need a ball and must weave through the poles, play the ball through the hurdles, dribbling past the cones in the middle, and do a skilful turn at the final cone before shooting into the net. Try to use at least three or four players so they can rest at the end of each circuit. They should each do three circuits of the course.

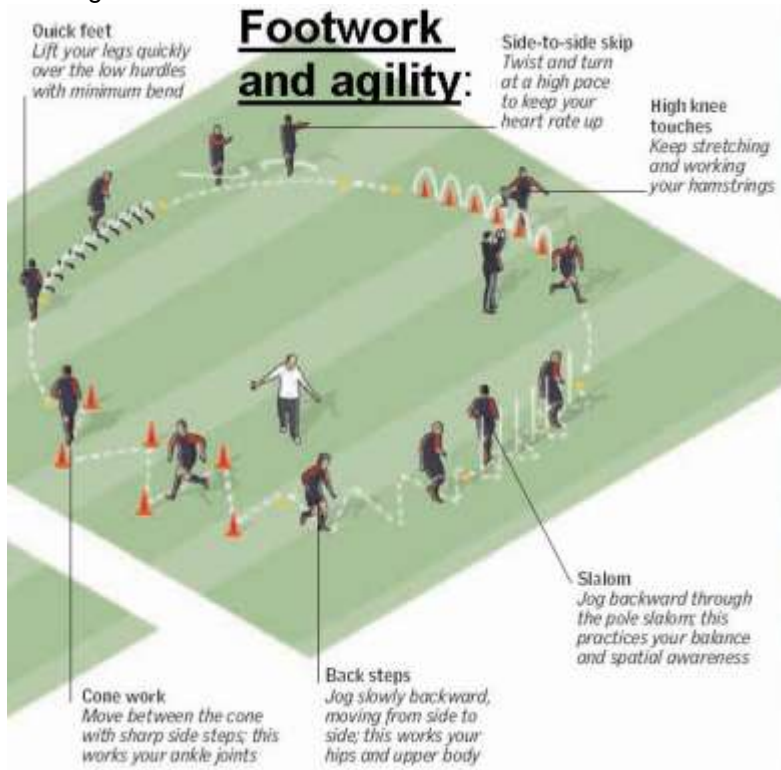
1. Start by dribbling through the cones or poles, before passing the ball under the hurdles.

The Zidane Challenge:

Set up the session using poles, cones and small hurdles in half a pitch. An individual time challenge: Players go one at a time. Use a stopwatch to time them. Each do 3 circuits of the course.

2. To turn around the final cone, must do a skill, like a hook or a sole drag. 3. Shoot.

TECHNIQUE: This is a challenge – and the challenge is to get the ball around the circuit and into the net as quickly as possible using skill. It is a fun way to get players to try skills they may not be confident using and it helps them to get used to doing the skills for a match.



Set up the session using poles, cones and small hurdles in half a pitch. An individual time challenge: so players should go one at a time. Use a stopwatch to time them. They should each do 3 circuits of the course.

1. Start by dribbling through the cones or poles, before passing the ball under the hurdles.
2. To turn around the final cone the player must do a skill, like a hook or a sole drag.
3. Shoot into the net and get back to the start.

Box relays: set out enough grids of 9 cones that you can divide your team into groups of 3-4, each group with its own grid. The grid looks like this:



Each grid makes a little box and a big box. Run a series of relay races - 1. each runner goes around the small box and then the big box, with no ball, touching each cone with his/her hand as she passes it (best with flat cones); 2. each runner dribble around the small box, then the big box, and passes to the

next runner after clearing the last corner; 3. each runner dribbles around the small box, then the big box, using a specified turn for each corner (pull-back/spin; tap behind standing foot; scissors; etc.). Alternate directions so they must use both feet! The purpose of having a little box and a big box is to vary the pace at which they must go to maintain control of the ball.

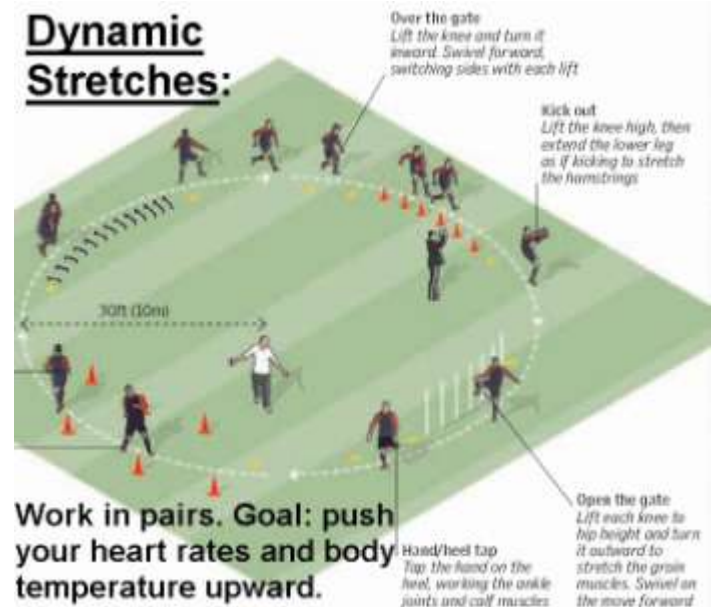
Lane races: set up 4-5 lanes with flat cones approximately 35 yds long; straight dribble right, left, choice, cone weave right, left, choice

Horseshoe: set out 8 cones in square (one at mid-side on each side); divide in groups; dribble & trot 7 gaps, then sprint one gap; next time 6 & 2, then 5 & 3, all the way to 7 sprint and 1 trot

Amoeba: small groups with 2 cones each; lead takes off and sprints until catches back up to end; new lead takes off; all w/ ball & dribbling; rest of group trots

Switch field: groups of 3; pass from edge to edge; rotate every 2 minutes.

3-fly: groups of 3 goal to goal for time; 3 times so each is in middle once; set limits such as 2-touch or 1-touch; cannot shoot until coach ok's



Wall Pass Ladder: stagger 6-8 players in zigzag; one takes a ball down the middle, passing and receiving wall from each side alternately

Pass relay race: one group at corners of box or pentagon; pass around perimeter to beat a runner from the other team; keep score by teams

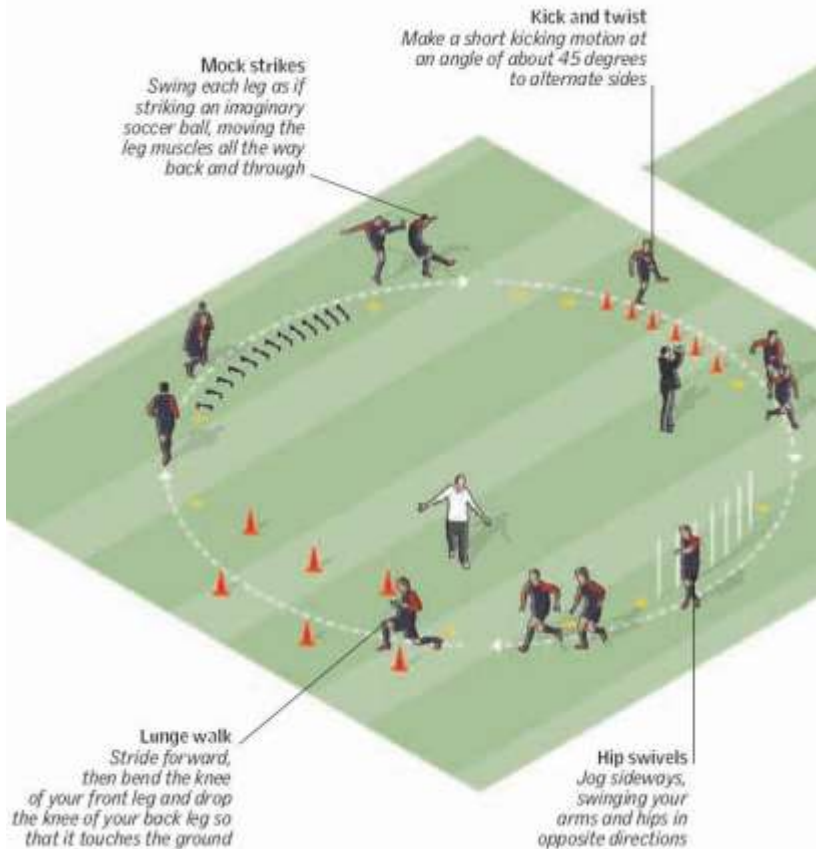
Team relays: set in team alignment; pass F LM CM RM RS LS LD CD RD W G; a runner goes the same path & tries to beat the ball; when runner is done, replaces a field player; from goalie, work back up in opposite sequence

Pair Pass Challenge: series of connected boxes (approx 10x10x6 boxes); D at back of each box; cannot leave back line until someone enters box; pairs try to go thru all boxes; who can go farthest?

Dribble w/ front challenge: in pairs, one in front is passive defender; each time D changes stance to adjust, A moves dribble to other side

Dribble w/ rear challenge: In pairs, D behind; A must dribble away & shield ball; change sides by touching with inside of foot closest to defender, then outside of foot away from defender; each time passive D changes sides.

5-ball: set 5 balls in a row on the 18 yd box top line, spread within the edges of the circle; 2 girls start from opposite intersections of the 18 yd box and the restraining circle; at GO, they race diagonally to circle around a cone at the intersection of the end line and the goal box, loop around and straight back up to the intersection where their challenger started, and around to shoot the nearest ball. Back down the diagonal, around, and straight up, to shoot the second ball. Back down around and up to see who can get to the remaining ball and shoot it first. Great conditioning, tight turns, and shooting.



BALL!: Coach with lots of balls stands in goal; two kids stand out between goal and 18 yd box. One team-mate is assigned to count shots on goal for one player, another counts the second player; other teammates shag loose balls; for 2 minutes the coach feeds balls and shouts 'BALL!' as he does; kids fight to shoot the live ball; if they go too far or take too long, just feed another ball! Begin by working them out away from the goal, gradually make the feeds closer to the goal until they are hitting headers, volleys, etc in the goal mouth. Manipulate the throws to keep things fairly close. This is easier with a count-down timer on your watch.

Short circuit your way to better skills:

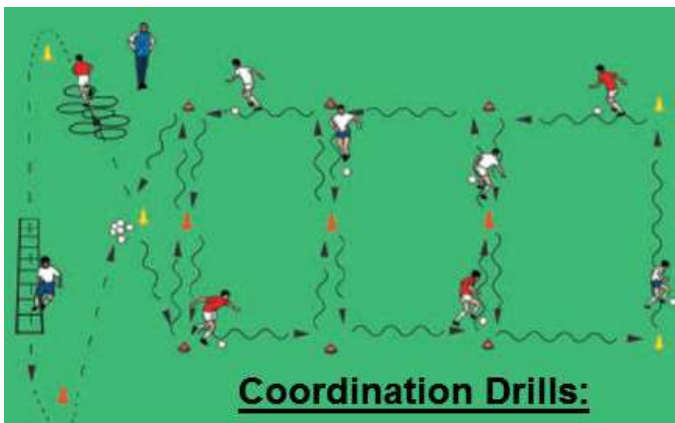
It's important to vary the format of your coaching sessions occasionally.

The traditional format of technical skill, individual practice, opposed practice followed by a small-sided game is tried and tested and it works. But your players will appreciate it if you spend a little time and effort setting up something completely different sometimes.

Mini World Cups are a great way of injecting pure

fun and letting your players do what they really want to at training sessions: play soccer.

Another interesting format is a short skills circuit.



Children love to compete with each other and a skills circuit allows them to do just that while, at the same time, improving the essential skills that you teach them all year round.

Set-up: the skills circuit I use with eight or nine year olds consists of five 10 yards square playing areas marked out by cones.

Your players should be split into five groups. The groups should be small – no larger than four players in each – so if you have more than 20 players you should consider setting up two circuits or having the extra players take part in another activity.

Each activity requires an observer who records the results. He or she can be a coaching assistant, a parent or an older player.

Each group of players starts in a different area.

On your command, your players spend a specified time (two minutes or so) carrying out the activity in their area before moving on to the next one. I suggest that you blow a whistle to start and stop the activities.

In each area, the players are challenged to perform as many of each activity as possible in the time allowed. They are also encouraged to make the transition between area as quickly as possible.

Each player has a ball that they take with them from one area to the next.

Area 1: Ball control

Equipment required: one ball each.

Activity: Ball Taps – tap a ball between the insides of both feet.

Variation: the "hat dance" – sole taps on the top of the ball with both feet.

For more advanced players: ball juggling.

Area 2: Dribbling

Equipment required: 16 small traffic cones set up in four lines of four and balls.

Activity: Each player dribbles their ball up and down a line of cones as many times as possible without knocking them over or missing any.

Variation: Dribble with "wrong" foot.

For more advanced players: Dribble with a specified part of the foot: sole, inside, outside etc.

Area 3: Running with the ball

Equipment required: balls.

Activity: run with ball from one side of area to the opposite side as many times as possible. Ensure players do not turn short.

Variation: Two players start on one side and two on the adjacent side of the area. This forces the players to keep their heads up while running with the ball to avoid collisions.

For more advanced players: perform a specific turn at the end of each run: drag back, stop turn etc.

Area 4: Shielding the ball

Equipment required: one ball per group.

Activity: use an even number of players in each group.

Players split into pairs. One player has a ball and for one minute, he tries to stop his partner from touching it. He gets a point for every 10 seconds he is successful so can get a maximum of six points if he can keep the ball away from his partner for the whole minute.

After one minute, the players swap roles.

Variation: none.

For more advanced players: award one point every 20 seconds.

Circuit training for young players

This particular circuit allows for a cardio-vascular work out followed by a strengthening task. It can be easily adapted to suit the ages and needs of your children.

Set up the stations below going in a clockwise direction around the hall. We begin with 20 seconds on each station, and we change very quickly, no rest! That's why I have built in alternating stations, it allows for a rest. We then build up in 5-second intervals, until we have reached the maximum of 30 secs. They quickly learn that their only competition is themselves, and work really hard to do more each time.

Work the children in pairs, getting them to rotate anti-clockwise after each activity.

1. Line jumps: Jumping across a line, making sure that the whole foot touches the floor. Adaptation: skipping.

2. Squats: with backs against a wall, slide down so that the legs are bent and the knees are bent at 90°. Adaptation: squat without the wall, making sure there is a straight line from ankle to knee and that bottom goes out behind the feet, back straight.

3. Star jumps or jumping jacks or diamond jumps: the movement of arms above the head makes it a much harder workout. Jumps may be slow or fast, depending on the ability of the child. BEND KNEES on landing, making sure knees don't go further than toes.

4. Bean bag hold: arms are parallel to the floor and they have to hold the beanbags up for the whole time. This exercise can be made more difficult by asking the children to slowly rotate their arms!

5. Running on the spot: if children have bare feet, make sure this is done on a thin, gymnastic mat. Again this can be made harder by encouraging the children to get their knees higher.

6. Ball roll or hoop-la-hoop: the idea is to exercise the waist and stomach. They can either roll a soccer around their waists, making a large circle with their hips at the same time (large range of movement), or they can twirl a hoop around their waist. The boys tend to prefer the ball rolls. This can be made more difficult by using a small ball/ different shape ball etc.

Note: If you have a helper or two, you should record their scores as they progress around the circuit. Over the weeks you can then work out how each has progressed and congratulate them on their success. In this way, you add value and interest to the circuit training. You are also emphasizing how much you value hard work and improvement and not just technical excellence.

The whole circuit takes about 15 minutes to complete. At the end you should share the results with your players and, if you wish, give a small award to the player who scored the most points, either in each area or in the circuit as a whole. Repeat the circuit every month or so, track your players' progress over time and at the end of the season give an award to the player who has shown the most improvement over the period.

Soccer Dribble Sprints:

1. Players sprint 20 m to ball
 2. Player speed dribble 20 m and stop ball right on line
 3. Slow dribble back to deposit ball on center line
 4. Slow jog back to starting line.
- 8 reps per player.

Coaching Points:

1. Players must slow down before their first touch on ball to set up proper control and direction.
2. After the first touch, they accelerate as fast as possible into high pace dribble.
3. Slow down before reaching end line and ask for perfection when stopping the ball on the line after dribble.
4. Nice tight ball control dribble to return ball to center line.
5. Easy jog to starting point.
6. Ask players to stay as much in line with each other as possible - this is not a race.

Use at least one of the natural field lines if the field is marked, and make it the center line so that balls always are in same spot prior to dribble.

Game Application: Short sprints to a ball, to receive a pass or to close down an opponent are common. High paced dribbles while keeping control and changing direction are the signs of excellence. The key to control is to slow down the final steps of a dribble prior to changing direction or beating an opponent with a 1v1 move. After a change of direction quick acceleration is the best way to now lose the opposing player.

Soccer Speed Cones:

Change of Direction Reaction Sprints. Two players are on opposite sides of an imaginary line between two cones, 10 m apart. X sprints between cones changing direction often, trying to lose O. O reacts to X moves. Every time X "fakes out" O and gets to a cone first, X gets a point. Reverse roles every 60 seconds, 4 turns each.

Coaching Points:

1. Get players to change direction often.
2. Players need to develop and use quick body fakes (head, shoulder leaning, etc.) to get defender moving one way while quickly turning and sprinting in the opposite direction.
3. Develops reaction speed.
4. Coach can adjust the number of sprints per player based on fitness development need.

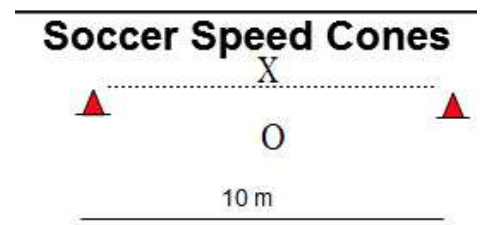
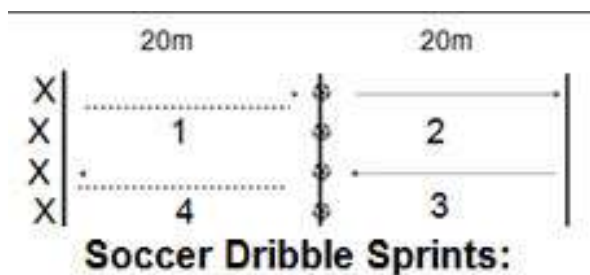
Game Application: Players are constantly marked and losing defenders is important. The common terminology for attacking players is to "check in" and "check out". This means to take a step or two in one direction drawing the defender with them and then suddenly moving in the opposite direction to increase space to defender. Player now has space to receive a pass. The ability to have head or body fakes to get a defender moving one way while player moves opposite way is valuable. The same eventually applies when dribbling 1v1.

2v2v2: Use the penalty area as a boundary. 3 teams of 2; i.e. 2 reds, 2 blues, 2 yellows. GK in goal. Teammates line the 18 yard box with balls. Coach puts ball in play. It's always 2 attackers vs. 4 defenders. The ball and players may travel within the goal box, but shots must be taken outside of it. If a ball leaves playing area, nearest player on touch tosses another up, then shags. All balls caught by GK are restarted by GK. When one team scores, the other 2 swap out. LOTS of action, emphasis on shooting at the 1st chance, partner moving open in front of the goal.

Turn'n'go: from front of goal, A faces goal with ball in front; D behind facing away & touching; when A goes, D turns to chase down before shoots

3v2+G: 1D in front, 1D behind; pass to space & overlap

3v1, 4v2, 5v3: keep-away

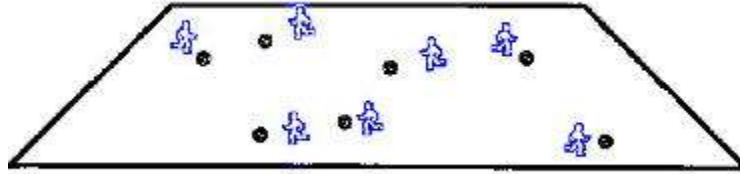


3v3: with extras divided into 3's; whenever one team scores, the replacement team from the other end starts immediately with their own ball; they should try to 'fast break' against the team that just scored.

Progressive sprints: jog in line; last one sprints to front, then slows down; as soon as you are last, you start your sprint, so a sequence are sprinting

Dribble sprints: 1 min. Back/forth across goal box, then penalty box, then penalty to midline, then goal to midline, back down; who can do the most lengths in each 1 min. period?

Warm Up 5 - 10 minutes. Activity level - Mild ramping up. Space: General. 1 - 2 Players per group.



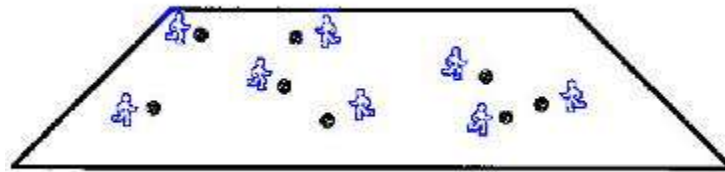
Numbers Dribbling

The Game

1. Each player has a ball and dribbles freely around the grid.
2. The coach demonstrates 3 - 4 dribbling or control moves, assigning each a number.
3. As players dribble, the coach calls out a number and the players execute that particular move.

Coaching Points

1. Emphasize keeping head up, change of pace, change of direction, ball control.
2. A good warm-up for any dribbling session



Knock Out

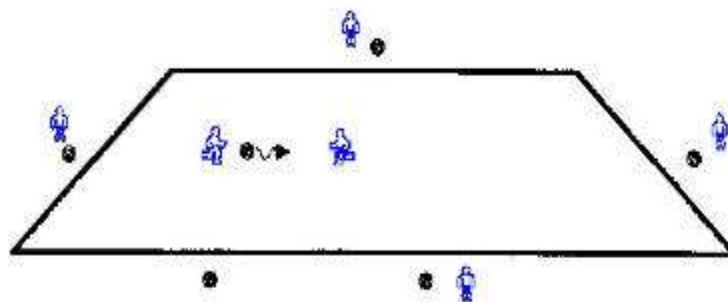
The Game

1. Each player has a ball.
2. The object of the game is to protect your own ball while trying to kick the other player's balls out of the grid.
3. If your ball is kicked out, retrieve it, do five push-ups and return to the game
4. The player that is knocked out the least amount of time wins.

Coaching Points

1. Shielding sideways on
2. Tackling with nearest foot.
3. Make sure players do not hang out in the corners.

Small Game 20 - 25 Minutes. Activity level: Medium progression to high. Space: Defined space "smaller". 3 - 5 players per group.



One Versus One Basics

The Game

1. 2 players play 1 v. 1 inside a grid.

2. Players outside the grid assist the practice, inserting balls when they go out and encouraging their teammates to work harder.
3. Rotate new players every 2 minutes or so.

Try This Progression

1. Attacking player tries to get behind the defender whenever they are in the grid. Defender tries to gain possession of the ball. This is a continuous flow game, never stopping. If the attacker beats the defender, they immediately try to face the defender and beat them again.
2. Play where the attacker tries to stop the ball on the endline.
3. Play a game with goals on the endline to shoot through.

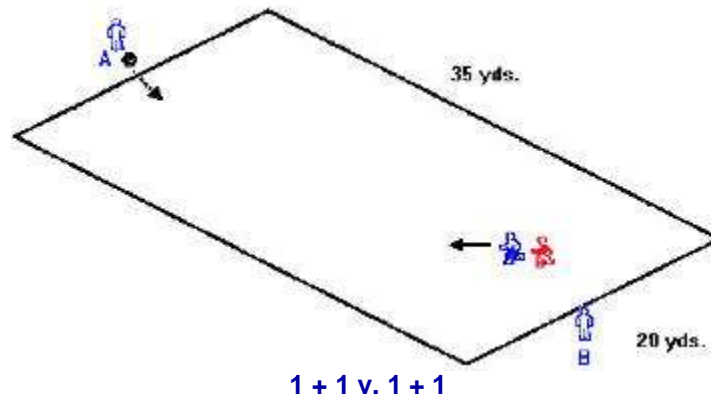
Coaching Points

Attackers:

- Keep balanced, short steps, knees bent.
- Always try to face defender, and take them on.
- Shield ball for possession, sideways on.
- When taking players on, drive towards leading foot. First fake the other.
- When attempting to face defender, make a "self-pass" to get away.

Defenders:

- Keep balanced, short steps, knees bent, never square to attacker
- Try to channel attacker to sideline.
- Tackle after touch is made.
- Don't lunge.
- Angle of approach, speed of approach.
- Make play predictable.



The Game

1. The object of this game is to get the ball from one target "A" to the other "B" without losing possession.
2. Each time this is done, it is worth one goal.
3. The attacking team keeps this sequence up until possession is lost (i.e. they can score as much as possible).
4. If the ball goes out of bounds, it belongs to the other team.
5. Targets "A" & "B" may move along their line.

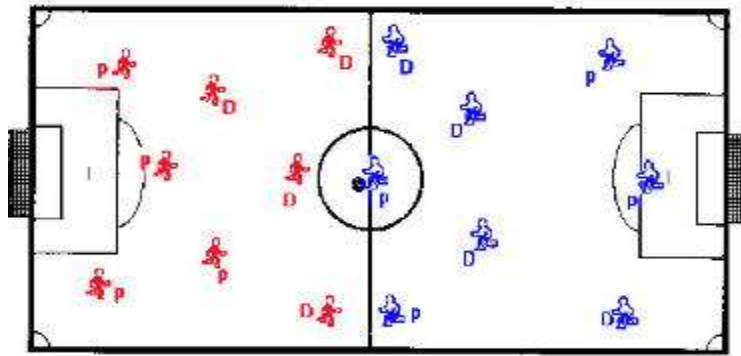
Coaching Points

1. In attack
 - Encourage combination play between the players.
 - Have targets look for the player farthest away.
 - Check away from the ball to create space for yourself, check back for the ball at angles.
 - Receive the ball sideways on whenever possible.
2. In defense:
 - Make attackers play the ball back whenever possible.
 - keep the play in front of you.
 - Never get flat with each other.
 - Take away options for the attackers, make the play predictable.

Variations

1. Limit target players to one touch.
2. Limit field players to two touches.
3. Do not allow field players to play the ball back to the target they received it from.
4. Play 2 v. 2 in the middle or 3 v. 3, size accordingly.
5. Make field players play it to each other at least once before they make a goal.

Team Game 30 Minutes plus. Activity level: High. Space: Defined for the game = larger space. 7 - 11 players per team.



Passers & Dribblers Game

The Game

Two equal teams on a regulation field. Divide each team: half are **dribblers** (with a maximum of 5 touches before they shoot or pass) and **passers** (maximum of two touches). All soccer rules apply. If dribbler or passer breaks the restrictions, ball goes to the other team. Use different color pinnies to identify dribblers and passers.

Coaching Points

1. Each team must organize passers and dribblers so they are in the best positions on the field.
2. Make sure to rotate passers and dribblers.
3. Dribblers must control the ball, and dribble to shield if there are too many players around them or dribble to goal and beat opposing defenders.
4. Passers must receive the ball on their first touch and make good passes with the next touch. Don't allow them to just kick the ball away. It should be passed to a teammate.

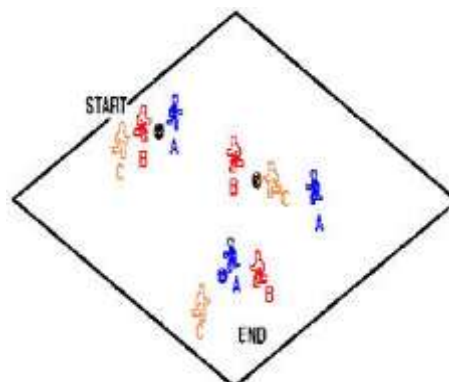


Match Conditions

The Game

1. An even sided game with full goals that is played just like the real game but not necessarily with an 11 v. 11 format.
2. The coach then observes if the training has had any effect on the players' ability to meet the demands of the game.
3. Coaching points can still be made but the coach focuses his comments on the theme of the practice.
4. If the session was a technical session, the coach focuses on the players body and sees if it is meeting the demands of the game technically.
5. If the session was tactical in nature, the coach focuses on what the player is seeing and focuses on whether or not the player is interpreting the visual clues correctly or making the correct decisions based on what is seen.

Warm Down 5 - 10 Minutes. Activity level: Low ramping down. Space: General, No specific boundaries. 1 - 2 players per group.



Snake

Snake Dribble

Divide players into groups of three or four. Middle player (B) starts with the ball. Player B must try to follow the head of the snake, Player A. Player C follows Player B. On command, B steps on ball and becomes new head of snake. Player A goes to the end and Player C now has the ball in the middle.

Coaching Points

1. Head of snake should move at different speeds, including stopping.
2. Encourage moving in many different directions.
3. Middle player must keep eyes up to see the head of the snake.
4. Encourage use of many different surfaces of the feet in contact with the ball.

Improving Balance and Coordination:

There are two types of balance: static and dynamic. Static balance is maintaining equilibrium when stationary, while dynamic balance is maintaining equilibrium when moving. We use our eyes, ears and 'body sense' to help retain our balance. Coordination is a complex skill that requires not only good balance, but good levels of other fitness components such as strength and agility. Balance and coordination can be improved through practice and training within specific sports. Take this simple test:

"Stand on one foot for 15 seconds with your eyes closed."

If you're over 40 you probably couldn't do it. If you're between 25 and 40 you may have had problems, because after 25 your sense of balance begins to decline. This means the danger of falls increases as we age. Even young people, who are more likely to take chances - like climbing high on a ladder, should be concerned with falls.

Balance is the most overlooked element of fitness and should rank right up there with strength and endurance, but gets overlooked until you have a problem. Various sports activities can call for good balance and we're all aware of the susceptibility of seniors to falls.

Balance is controlled by an array of body systems that track sensory information from nerves and muscles. In older people, balance may worsen, because they become less fit and sensory receptors begin to fail. An improvement in balance can benefit everyone and make you feel more graceful and improve coordination and posture.

Staying as fit as you can will help preserve your sense of balance, but here are some specific exercises to add to your workout.

Stand near a support, rise to your tiptoes 10 times. (Repeat with your eyes closed)

Stand on one leg, flexing the other leg slightly. Repeat 10 times.

(Repeat with your eyes closed)

Repeat exercise #2, but lift your leg to the side. Repeat with the other leg.

Stand in a heel-toe position (right foot ahead of left foot, with toes touching heel). Now try it with your eyes closed.

Practice walking heel to toe across the room. (like walking a "tightrope")

Repeat exercise #5 with your eyes closed. (Now try it again backwards)

Stand on one foot and lean forward to touch the ground with your hand, without the other foot touching the ground.

Improving thigh muscle (Quadriceps) strength can be of great benefit to improving balance

Single Leg Balance: The single leg exercise is great for an athlete trying to improve his or her balance and coordination, and it is very easy to do. All you have to do is stand with your feet about hip length apart, place your hands on your hips, and lift your left leg off of the ground. You should lift the left knee back, hold this position for 10 seconds, and then repeat 10 times. It is best to do this exercise 10 times for each leg, making sure to hold the position for 10 seconds each time. This exercise can also improve strength in the leg and thigh muscles, and can improve flexibility.

Side Lateral Raise Balance: The side lateral raise is one of the best exercises that an athlete can do, if he or she wants to improve coordination and balance. This exercise can improve flexibility in the legs as well, which is also important for preventing injuries. For this exercise, you want to stand so that your legs are hip length apart, balancing your weight on both feet, and hold a dumbbell in your right hand. Raise the right arm so that it is about perpendicular to the ground, lift the right leg off of the ground, and bend the knee backward. You want to hold this position for 10 seconds, go back to starting position, and then repeat the exercise 10 times. You should then repeat the exercise 10 more times with the left arm and leg, remembering to hold the position for 10 seconds, and continue with 10 repetitions.

Various Small Sided Games (SSG's):

Links: Intro to SSG's and Pearls | [SSG Part 1](#) | [SSG Part 2](#) | [SSG Part 3](#) | [SSG Part 4](#) | See [Drills \(Basic\)](#) |

How to create a team of quick-thinking all-rounders? Simple. Play lots of SSGs. Quality of instruction is emphasized over quantity. Soccer players are more attracted to drills performed with the ball than to formal fitness work such as repetitive runs. In one study of the energy cost of dribbling a ball (Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport. 1984;55:267–271) showed that oxygen consumption, heart rate, blood lactate and perceived exertion were elevated by the task of dribbling compared to normal running. At a particular running speed, the training stimulus was raised when the ball was employed. Their recommendation was to utilise training drills with the ball where possible.

Why it's important to keep team sizes small: Dr Rick Fernoglio, a lecturer in Exercise Science at Manchester Metropolitan University, compared the experience of young soccer players during eight-a-side games and SSGs (4v4). He found that the players in 4v4: Made 135% more passes. Took 260% more shots. Scored 500% more goals. Experienced 225% more 1v1s. Did 280% more tricks, turns, and moves (published in Success in Soccer, March 2004).

- Remember these numbers the next time you're tempted to allow a "mass scrimmage" at the end of one of your coaching sessions.

Pitch size: 30 x 20 yards (minimum) up to 40 x 25 yards (maximum). Typically two teams of 3-5 players. No offsidess.

Re-start options:

1. The coach passes a new ball onto the pitch.
2. The players take a roll in.
3. The players take a throw in.
4. The players make a pass in.
5. The players dribble in.

Key benefits of small-sided games: (64 Small Sided Games. 2008 Green Star Media Ltd.)

- Less coaching, the game is the teacher
- Simple to set up
- Simplifies the choices in possession (pass, dribble, shoot)
- More player participation
- Different games bring different problems to solve and skills to use
- More touches of the ball
- More passes attempted
- More 1v1s attempted
- More goals scored
- When used, goalkeeper participation is greatly increased
- No referees required
- No results recorded
- No positions, just players
- The players take responsibility

Why play small sided games? (from USYouthSoccer)

1. Because we want our young players to touch the soccer ball more often and become more skilful with it! (individual technical development)

2. Because we want our young soccer players to make more, less-complicated decisions during the game! (tactical development)

small sided games are fun!3. Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically efficient in the field space they are playing in! (reduced field size)

4. Because we want our young soccer players to have more individual teaching time with the coach! Less players on the field and less players on the team will guarantee this! (need to feel worthy and need to feel important)

5. Because we want our young soccer players to have more, involved playing time in the game! (more opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents)

6. Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball! (more exposure to attacking and defending situations)

7. Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunities to score goals! (pure excitement)

Best of all, the game is simple, can be played without adult involvement and it's FUN!

Pearls:

- **Number of players:** Most games are played 4v4 but don't worry if you have an odd number of players. Depending on the which game you are playing you can have one game with uneven teams, i.e., 4v3 or even 4v2. Use spare players as

neutral support players who work on the sidelines. Have one neutral player on the pitch who plays for the team in possession.

Why 4v4: 4v4 is the smallest manifestation of a real match. In a real soccer match children have the option of passing the ball forwards, square or backwards. Three children cannot do this because one of the directions will be missing. While 3v3 is a valuable tool for young children and learning technique, it is limited in its use as a tool for the positional game. 4v4 also provides the minimum numbers needed for all of the principles of play. One player is up top for penetration. Two are needed for width and one holds back to supply depth. Three cannot do this; one of the principles will be left out. With five, confusion will result as the "also" player gets involved when they change positions, which is called mobility. In 4v4 the responsibilities are very clear. All tasks are covered and none are shared which keeps things simple. In the 4v4 format players learn the "diamond" shape which is the basic shape to allow the players to find options in every direction. Even though 3v3 is a practical small sided game for player development, it will always miss the extra player to complete the "diamond" therefore limited in its use as a tool for the positional game.

How to cope with the "wrong" or "odd" number of players: Use extra player(s) as substitutes who rotate into the game after a couple of minutes. Use them as neutral player(s) who play for the team in possession. Simply make one of the teams bigger. It will be instructive to see how the bigger team uses its numerical advantage and how the smaller team copes with being "numbers down".

- **Size of playing area:** For players up to the age of about 10, use a 20x15 yards playing area. Older children may be given a larger space to play in but bear in mind that the smaller the space, the greater the pressure and - potentially, at least - the greater the benefits in terms of skill application.

- **Duration:** 10 to 15 minutes....any longer gets boring!

You have to teach!: An uncoached game will improve your players' co-ordination and balance and it will allow them to learn the basics of ball control, i.e., if you don't keep the ball close, you might lose it to another player. A small-sided "street soccer" style of scrimmage will also allow your players to learn by watching other players and it will give them time to experiment without worrying about making mistakes.

That doesn't mean you have to step in and stop small-sided games every few seconds to make a coaching point. Young players like their games to flow more or less uninterrupted and they get very restless if you shout "stop! stand still!" too often.

Teaching skills via SSGs is all about conditioning - adding "rules" and awarding bonus points - that force your players to deal with the types of scenarios they will meet on match days. Conditions can also be used to introduce or improve skills. If, for example, your defenders tend to panic under pressure and hoof the ball up field or into touch too often, you can play a small-sided game on a pitch that is divided into thirds. Award bonus points to teams that can score a goal after moving the ball through the thirds. When the ball goes dead, the game is restarted by the goalkeeper who must roll the ball out, not kick it.

This type of game should be preceded by a short discussion on the merits of playing out from the back rather than hopefully punting the ball up field. But be careful not to say "you MUST move the ball through the thirds" - there are times when the ball has to be cleared quickly and decisively.

Restarts: Use them to focus on a team / player problem. The starting point leads into the learning point. In small sided games there are numerous restarts. Most of them should lead back into the learning moment. For example, the soccer problem is the sweepers poor distribution out of the back....make the rules of the game are that all throw-ins, kickoffs and corners for his team will restart with a goal kick. The sweeper may dribble or pass out the goal kick. This way the coaching moment will be repeated often giving him many chances to succeed or fail and to learn.

Stay on the topic: When things go wrong outside of the topic ignore it if possible. Fix what you came to fix, don't get distracted.

Freeze the moment: When the problem occurs have the players freeze. Address it with questions. Was that a good pass? Why did you run there? What could you do better? Ask for solutions. Demonstrate. Begin again. You capture the moment and present them a snapshot. After all a picture is worth a thousand words.

Keep the ball on the ground: Teams can only play quickly, consistently, when they are able to move the ball on the ground. Taking the air route only appears faster but results in players chasing the ball as opposed to using it. Children moving too early onto the big field and 11 a side struggle with this and the game often degrades into a battle to control geography as opposed to controlling the ball and the opponents.

Don't over coach: Experience teaches the coach when to step in. Over coaching kills the game and ruins the fun. Avoid language that the children don't understand or don't need. Slogans and mottos work well.

What to do if your players are obviously finding it too easy:

- Make the playing area smaller or change its shape.

- Change the number of players on the teams (play 5v3 instead of 4v4 etc.)
- Add blockers - additional players who try to disrupt the flow of the game.

If the game seems too hard for your players:

- Reduce the pressure by making the playing area bigger.
- Make the teams smaller (play 3v3 instead of 4v4).

Compared to the 5 vs 5 youth matches, 3 vs 3 games resulted in:

- 1 more high-intensity activity such as sprinting and cruising;
- 2 longer periods of time and distances travelled in possession of the ball;
- 3 more short and medium range passes, more successful passes, forward passes, dribbles and attempts at goal.

How to get the most out of SSGs: While almost every skill and technique can be taught while children are playing SSGs, there is still a place for simple drills when introducing very young children to the basics of the game - such as passing, shooting, dribbling and turning.

- As children get older and become reasonably competent in the core skills, SSGs can take the place of drills. However, it's not just a case of turning the kids loose and hoping they will learn something. Using SSGs as a coaching tool is not an easy option. It requires just as much preparation as drill-based coaching and you need a high level of confidence in your own ability.

A few tips for SSGs

- Be very clear about what you want to achieve. Decide on your topic (for example, improving goal kicks or attacking corners) and stick to it. If you spot other problems during the SSG, do not get sidetracked - stay on topic. Use the moments when the game restarts to return to the learning point. If you're practicing goal kicks, for instance, restart your SSG with a goal kick every time the ball goes out of play or a goal is scored.
- Mind your language: Keep explanations short and simple and don't use long words or jargon. 'Drop into the hole' may mean something to an adult soccer player, but say it to a seven-year-old and all you will do is get them looking for a hole to jump into.

Focus on the players who need help. Sometimes it is better to speak directly to the players who need your help rather than the whole group. And don't try to improve on success. If a team scores a goal, don't show them how to do it better. It's the end result that counts.

Finally, if you set up an SSG and your chosen topic doesn't present itself (the goal kicks are taken okay or the players are scoring goals from the corners), move on to a different topic. Improve real problems, not what you think the problems are.

How to Quickly Organize:

To make the most of practice time, getting organized quickly for drills is essential. Most of the time when players are asked to get into small groups for a particular activity friends will always look for friends to practice with, while some of the kids are left out or left to be assigned to groups by the coach.

- Here is a trick to use to get going quickly and to build team unity at the same time. Use "the numbers game". Use it as a season long game.

Whenever you call out a number, the players must get into groups of that number as soon as possible. Whoever isn't in a group "loses". For example, if there are 16 players at the training session and you call out "4" the players will quickly get into 4 groups of 4. If you call out 3, they will get into 3 groups of 5 and one person "loses."

- When you first introduce the game, give the kids some examples of consequences for the loser. For example, he/she might have to do 5 push-ups or 5 donkey kicks. Players will learn very quickly that whenever they hear you call out a number that they need to grab whomever is closest to them without regard for whether they are an old friend or a new friend.
- This is also a great way to get players to work together with different teammates throughout a training session or season. It even works in large numbers (if you want to split 16 players into groups of 11 and 5, just yell 11 and those 11 become the first group right away. If a player wants to be in the group of 11 they will do so and if they don't that is her decision. This is a great way to find out who wants to do things because the players will frequently figure out what you are thinking with the numbers and will get into the bigger group to participate.
- Sometimes you might want to assign players into groups, but most often you will find yelling out the number and let the players do it, which saves time and avoids potential conflicts. Next time you need to break your players into teams, play the numbers game and see how many potential problems are avoided.

Why do some girls hate playing SSGs?

Girls don't like what they see as "silly" rules and conditions being imposed arbitrarily. And they don't like coaching points being made during a SSG if it means they keep having to stop playing.

So when you explain the game to your players, it's very important to explain why you are imposing the condition (e.g. "You have to score with your first touch") and how it relates to a game situation.

- This applies to boys as well but (as I'm sure you know) girls typically want to know why they are being asked to do something and they don't respond well to being told "just do it."
- And coaching points need to be made before or after a SSG, not during it. Shout "stop, stand still" to a group of 11-year-old girls more than once every 15 minutes and they will turn off, I guarantee it.
- If you can't get your girls going even if you let them play uninterrupted, conditioned games with simple, discussed and clearly relevant conditions try asking them to do what you want them to do but don't make it a rule. For example: "Try to score with your first touch but if you need more than one touch, take it". Then let them play without any intervention other than to applaud any player who scores with a first-time shot or makes a good assist.

SSG's Part 1:

See: [SSG Part 2](#) | [SSG Part 3](#) | [SSG Part 4](#) |

"Any Goalkeeper" variation: Standard SSG but instead of chosen keepers, the nearest player(s) to the goals become the keeper to stop the shot.

"Skinny Pitch" variation: The pitch is standard in length but short in width....This forces the teams to try to build up through the middle of the pitch using quick skills and passing combinations.

"Wide Pitch" variation: This encourages the following tactics from the teams:

1. Shooting from distance.
2. Passing the ball into wide areas to create crossing opportunities.

4v4+4 Game:



Organization:

4v4 with 4 support players on the end lines. 30x30 field. Great for keeping the ball in the game and involving the resting players. Play for 2 minutes. Rotate teams.

- Support players can be limited in touches and attackers should look to score off their first touch when receiving from a support player.

Coaching Points: Combination play, Penetrating pass to support players, Quick finish, Head up, Communication, Accuracy in passing.

Steal The Ball and Score:

It's all about positioning in this lively intercepting game aimed at teaching your

players how to nick the ball back from the other team while it's still in midfield. This is a great game to help defensive midfielders prevent penetrative passes by intercepting the ball. Once they have it, they are encouraged to counterattack.

SET UP Mark out a 12x12-yard square with pop up goals (or cones two-feet apart) on each corner and placed two-feet behind the line. Mark out a centre box 4x4ft. You need balls, bibs and cones.

HOW TO PLAY Play a 5v2 game with one player of the team of five locked in the centre box and one on each side of the playing area. The team of five play with two touches and the two midfielders must try to steal the ball. As counterattacking is vital, if they intercept the ball they can score in any of the four goals. The key to success is the midfielder's starting position in relation to where the ball is, where the centre square is and where the opponent is.

TECHNIQUE In this small area the midfielders must press and support each other to steal the ball from the passing team. They will learn where best to position themselves to make it hard for the passing team to penetrate the box.

5v2 with 4 goals (two-feet back so out player can cover it) and central box.

1. Passing team starts with the ball. They must play each pass through the grid and are restricted to two touches, one to control and one to pass. Team of 5 score if can pass to their team-mate in the center or make 8 passes. Team of 2 score in one of the small goals.

Triangle Target Player:

Use this session to turn your midfielders into a well-oiled attacking machine and teach them the benefits of bringing strikers into the game with some exciting one touch play.



A session aimed at getting midfielders to play off each other in order to bring attackers into the game and provide support in attack, taking shooting chances when they are created. It also sets up good opportunities to coach counterattacking from midfield.

SET UP Mark out a tight playing area 30x15 yards with two mini goals at both ends of the area. We're using six players in the session and you will need balls, bibs and cones, plus the four mini goals.

HOW TO PLAY Play a 2v2 game with a target player at each end of the pitch positioned between the two goals. The midfielders attack the opposition goals but the attack must involve the target player at the attacking end of the pitch.

TECHNIQUE One of the most attacking ball formations uses a three-man midfield behind three attackers. This session shows midfielders how to make the most of the midfield by playing off each other to set up attacks and make use of counterattacks.

1. 2v2 players must combine to get a pass into the target player (has a 1-to-2 touch limit) at the end they are attacking in order to set up a chance at goal. Quick counterattacks and long passes help.

One Up and Hang On game:

AgeU8s and upwards.

Set-up: Play 4v4 or 5v5 on a 30x20 yards playing area with a goal at each end. Goalkeepers are optional.

How to play: The basic rule of this five-minute game is that you can only win by one goal. So when a goal is scored, the team that is now winning 1-0 can't score again. Instead, they try to keep possession until the match is over.

Note: If the team that is winning does score again, the goal is disallowed and a goal kick is awarded.

If the losing team equalizes, the score is level and either team can then score to give them a single goal advantage. Play continues in this way until the final whistle.

The 1-0 Game:

Objective: To win a five-minute game by one goal.

How to play: Play "normal" soccer until one team scores. At that point, the team that has scored can't score again unless the other team equalizes so it must try and keep possession and "run the clock down". Play two or three five-minute games.

Note: If the winning team scores again, the goal is disallowed and a goal kick is awarded. As well as learning how to keep the ball away from the other team when they're winning, (it's called "closing the game"), your players have to attack with speed and determination when they need to score in a limited time.

The Dutch End-Pass Goal Game:

3 teams of 4 players. Team on outside performs as the 2 wingers and the 2 goals. A successful goal is a pass to the touchline with a good trap.

Once a goal is scored the teams change direction and the trapper passes the ball back into play to the team that scored. Passes to the wingers on the outside will pass it back to the same team that passed to them or knocked it out of bounds.

Possession v Pressure:

2 keepers on a standard SSG field. One team starts on the pitch and passes the ball around.

- On your whistle, the team on the outside must race onto the pitch and try to win the ball and then score a goal.
- The passing team must try to keep possession.
- The passing team can use their keepers to keep possession of the ball.
- The pressuring team have 30 seconds to win the ball and score a goal - if they fail then the passing team is awarded the goal
- Rotate the teams for the next game.

Possession Game:

Two teams of four players. No goals. No keepers. No offside.

- Both teams must try to win and keep possession of the ball.
- A goal is awarded to the team that completes a certain number of passes (a minimum of 5 for younger players).
- The game is played for a set time period.

Gates Game:

Two teams of four players. Five gates (3 yards wide) made from cones. No goals

There are two ways to score:

1. The player in possession must dribble through a gate to score.
 2. The player in possession must make a pass through the gate to a team mate.
- The team not in possession must try to dispossess the team in possession, and then use one of the methods above to score.

Passers v Defenders - Rewards Game

1 goal with a keeper on a standard SSG field.

Mark out a 10 x 10 yard area on the far touchline. Two teams of four players.

One team works as the passing team. One team works as the defenders.

- The passing team work in the 10 x 10 yard area, passing the ball around and attempting to retain possession.
- Each player in the defending team has two turns at entering the area and attempting to win possession from the passers.
- If the defending player manages to force a mistake or win possession, then they break out of the 10 x 10 yd area and receive a pass from the coach in order to shoot at goal.
- If the passing team manage to make 10 consecutive passes, then the defender is ejected and replaced.
- The passing team scores a point for each set of 10 consecutive passes.
- The defending score a point for each goal scored from a pass from the coach.
- When each defender has had two attempts at defending, rotate the teams.

4 v 4 - Ice Hockey Style:

Two teams of four players

- Two goals made using cones or poles. Two goalkeepers (optional).
- As with most small-sided games, the emphasis is on pass and move.
- The players can score in the front or back of the goal.
- The game is played for a set period of time.

4 v 4 - Role Reversal Game:

Two teams of four players. One goal, no keeper.

- Each team number themselves 1 to 4
- One team starts as defenders. One team starts as attackers
- When defending, the players each take a turn as goalkeeper.
- The attacking team receive a ball from the coach and attempt to build up and score in a 4v3 (+1) situation.
- If the attacking team score, then they turn and receive a new ball from the coach.
- If the attacking team fail to score then the defending team break out to receive a pass from the coach and the roles are reversed.

2 v 2 Continuous:

Two teams of four players. One goal, one keeper.

- The pairs of players take turns at attacking in a 2v2 situation and then immediately defending a 2v2 situation.
- The game is played continuously for a set time period or until a set number of goals is scored.

4 v 4 Attack v Defense Game:

One goal, one keeper. Two teams of four players.

- One team starts the game as the attacking team. One team starts the game as the defending team.
- The game is played for two five minute periods.
- The attacking team continue to receive balls from the coach and attempt to build up and score goals.
- The defending team attempt to stop them.
- When the first five minute period is completed, the attacking team count the number of goals scored.
- The roles are now reversed with the defending team attempting to beat their opponents score.

4 v 4 Build Up To Score:

Two teams of four players. One goal, one keeper.

One team starts the game as the attacking team.

- One team starts the game as the defending team.
- The game is played for four balls and then the roles are reversed.
- To start, the attackers spread out across the pitch and play against a single defender.
- The attacking team receives a pass from the coach and attempt to build up and score in a 4v1 situation.
- After each ball is played, a new defender enters the pitch.
- The attacking team has a total of four attacks (4v1, 4v2, 4v3, 4v4).
- Each time the attackers score, they are awarded a point.
- Each time they fail to score the defenders are rewarded with a point.

Two Goal Game One Touch Finish:

Two teams of four players. No offside. No keepers. Standard SSG pitch.

The players can only score by using a first time shot (i.e. without taking a touch to control the ball).

The game is played for a set time period.

Two Goal Game - Score in the End Zone:

Two teams of four players with the usual two goals, no keepers. Two end zones, 10 yards in from each goal-line.

- A goal can only be scored from inside the "end zones" (last 20% of the field, marked with cones). Discourages long shots and encourages good penetration.
- The game is played for a set time period.

Four Goal Game Must Score In Each Goal

Two teams of four players. 4 small goals at each end. No keepers. No offside.

- The aim for both teams is to score in all four goals. The team to complete this task first is declared the winner.

Two Goal Game Target Man:

Two teams of four players. Two keepers. No offside.

Two end zones, 10 yards in from each goal-line.

Each team selects one player to be the "target man". This player stands in the attacking end zone.

- The aim of the game is to make a pass into the target man and then receive a lay off pass in order to shoot at goal.
- After a shot is made the shooting player swaps position with the target man.
- The game is played for a set time period.

Two Goal Game Sweeper System:

Two teams of four players. Two keepers. No offside.

Two end zones, 10 yards in from each goal-line.

Each team sends one of their players into their defensive zone to become the sweeper / covering defender.

- The aim of the game is to dribble through the middle zone and into the opponent's defensive zone. Now the player in possession has a 1v1 against the sweeper / covering defender.
- Rotate the players so that each player spends time in the sweeper role.

Center Circle Game:

Two teams of four players. Two mini target goals, one at each end of the center circle.

- Each team has two players on the pitch and two players on the outside (in the attacking half).
- The players on the outside can move up and down their side and look to receive a pass.
- The team in possession must attempt to score in the mini goal.
- They can use their team mates outside the circle to help build a passing move.
- The outside players are only allowed to use one touch.
- The game is played for four periods of two minutes.
- After each period, the players on the pitch reverse roles with their team mates on the outside.

4 v 4 Overload Defending:

A standard SSG field. Two teams of four players. One goal, no keeper. One team starts the game as the attacking team. One team starts the game as the defending team.

- The game lasts for four attacks.
- The defending team number themselves 1 to 4 and each take a turn as goalkeeper.
- The defending team score a point for each time they stop the attackers scoring.
- The attacking team score a point for each goal scored.
- To start the game, one attacking player dribbles into the pitch (at the far end of the field) and attempts to score in a 1v3 situation.
- When this ball has been played a new attacker dribbles into the pitch and attempts to combine with his team mate in a 2v3 situation.
- The game continues until all attackers are on the pitch and the game is a 4v3 (+1) situation.

Multi-Ball Game:

A standard SSG field. Two teams of four players. Two keepers. No offside.

- Each team has two balls.
- To start, blow your whistle for both teams to enter the pitch.
- Each team has two balls to attack with but must also simultaneously defend two balls.
- The game continues until all four balls have left the pitch.
- Continue the game for a further five balls by feeding in one at a time to replace those gone.
- When all five balls have been played, count the goals scored and declare the winning team.

Angled Goals SSG:

Two teams of four players. Two keepers. No offside. Two goals placed at opposite corners of the pitch.

This practice is played as a normal 5-a-side game.

- Because of the angled goals, your players will start to realize where they need to pressure and force their opponents when they are defending.
- When attacking the team in possession should look to switch the ball quickly or to use the wings and get into good crossing positions.

4v4 + Wide Players:

A standard SSG field. Three teams of four players. Two teams play the game. One team acts as the goalkeepers and crossing players.

- The game is played as a normal 4v4 plus keepers, but the teams can use the players off the pitch to provide crosses.
- The crossing players are allowed 3 touches (control, dribble, pass/cross).
- The game is played for a set period of time.
- The teams are rotated for the next match.

2 v 2 v 2 v 2 Game:

A standard SSG field. Two keepers.

Start the game with four teams of two playing with one ball. Players can score in any goal.

- On your call, two teams immediately join together and the game continues in a 4v4 situation. An example of a call would be "white and hoops". Both these teams would now join forces to play against black and stripes.
- You can also overload the game against one team, for example "white, stripes and hoops" would play against black.
- Again, the teams can score in either goal.

Two In and Two Wide:

A standard SSG field. Two teams of four players, two players from each team starting on the pitch. Two keepers

The central players are involved in a 2v2 game but can use their wide players to their advantage when in possession of the ball.

- The wide players might make a return pass or maybe cross for an attempt on goal.
- The wide players can only use two touches on the ball.
- The game is played for a set time period before the wide and central players switch positions.
- This game can be progressed to a continuous game in which the central player that passes out to a wide player must go out and change positions with them. The wide player now dribbles onto the main pitch.

Middle or Wide Advantage:

A standard SSG field. Two keepers Two teams of four players.

- One team play with all four players on the pitch. The other team play with two players on the pitch and two wide players off the pitch.

- This set up gives the teams different tactics when in possession and when defending.

• "White" (middle) team:

-The white team have all four players on the pitch.

-When in possession they need to pass the ball quickly in order to create an opening to score a goal.

-In defense, this team can pressure quickly as they have the extra players and attempt to force the black players to play inside and not towards their wide advantage.

• "Black" (Wide) team:

-In possession the black team need to try to pass out wide quickly. This enables them to get another one of their players into the game.

-The receiving wide player can choose to dribble down the outside unopposed or dribble onto the pitch and attempt to score.

-In defense, the black team must try to drop off and reduce the space for the white team to exploit.

The Fabregas Game:

Barcelona's Cesc Fabregas is probably one of the best holding midfielders in the game - he just doesn't give the ball away. This game will help your players learn how to look after the ball, just like Cesc!

Age group: U9s and upwards.

Set-up: Play 4v4 (or 5v5 with goalkeepers) on a 30x20 yards pitch with a goal at both ends.

How to play: Play "normal" soccer with the condition that a goal is worth two points.

- Occasionally when you see a player win possession of the ball in midfield, call out "Fabregas!"
- That player has to hold the ball for a minimum of 10 seconds. He is not allowed to pass or shoot. He must keep the ball by shielding it or dribbling.
- If he succeeds, his team is awarded one point.

Coaching points: Before the game starts, demonstrate the technique of shielding the ball.

Variation: The game can be adapted for younger players by placing two or three safe zones in the playing area. Instead of shouting "Fabregas", (they won't know who he is!), call out "keep it". The player in possession now has 10 seconds to hold off his opponents or dribble into one of the safe zones.

Barca Keepaway:

Objective: To improve your players' core skills: Their ball control, passing/receiving, support play and ability to keep possession. **Age range:** U7s to U15s. **Number of players:** Eight.

Equipment required: Flat cones, training vests, one ball.

Set-up: Mark out a 15-yard square within an 18-yard square. Divide your players into two teams.

How to play: One team (the passing team) plays in the smaller playing area. The other team (the defenders) wait outside the playing area in the larger square.

- The game lasts for two minutes and begins with one defender entering the central playing area and trying to take the ball away from the passing team.
- After 30 seconds, a second defender is added to make the game 4v2. Thirty seconds later, a third defender makes it 4v3 and finally the last defender enters to make it 4v4.
- Feed in a new ball every time the ball leaves the playing area.
- Count the number of successful passes the passing team makes in two minutes.
- The passing team and the defending team swap roles and the game is played again.
- The team that makes the most successful passes wins.

Coaching points: Encourage players to scan the playing area before receiving a pass. Players' first touch should be away from pressure. Progression: The defending team is restricted to three, two or one touch of the ball.

Slow Soccer:

Objective: To play soccer thoughtfully, to plan ahead.

Age range: U8s and upwards.

Set-up: Play a 4v4 or 5v5 "match" on a small pitch. For U8s, 30x20 yards is a good size.

How to play: Tackling, shooting, scoring and passing as in normal soccer.

There is only one condition - running is not allowed.

When the ball goes out of play, the game can be restarted in a number of ways:

- A normal throw-in.
- A kick-in.
- With a goal kick.

Note: Speed walking is allowed in Slow Soccer but if anyone breaks into a run, even for a second, a free kick is awarded to the other team.

Progression: After five or 10 minutes, lift the "no running" restriction and allow your players to play normally.

Why this works: Not being able to run to get back in defense or chase after a misplaced pass, makes young players see the importance of accuracy and anticipating what might happen next. And, believe it or not, it's great fun

Target Passing

Objective: to improve ball control, passing and communication. Age group: U8 upwards.

Set up: play in a rectangular grid about 20 yards x 30 yards, depending on the age and skill of your players. The smaller the grid, the harder the game will be.

How to play: start with three teams of equal numbers wearing bibs. Team A start as target players standing just outside the grid on the side and end lines.

Teams B and C play a game of keepaway. Passes can be made to the A players who must return the ball to the team that passed the ball to them. Count the number of consecutive passes. Ten equals one goal.

After a specified time period, or a goal, rotate teams. Let the scoring team make the decision whether to become "targets" or stay in the grid.

Coaching points 1. Encourage good pace and accuracy of passes.

2. Pace should be fast enough so defenders cannot intercept but comfortable for the receiver to control.

3. Accuracy - the ball should be played to players feet.

4. Players need to make good decisions and use the target players to retain possession.

5. The target players need to stay alert and move along the sidelines.

Variations Targets play one touch. Field players have 1, 2 or 3 touches, depending on their skill level. Award a goal if player can make a wall pass with the target players.

Secret Weapon:

Objective: To create goal scoring opportunities for a specific player.

Age range: U8s to U12s.

Number of players: Twelve

Equipment required: Some flat cones, training vests, two goals, a few balls

Set-up: Divide your players into two teams of six (five outfield players plus a goalkeeper). Use training vests to differentiate the teams.

Set up a suitable size playing area with a goal at each end. For U8s, 30x20 yards is a good size. For U11s, try 40x30 yards.

How to play: Both teams get together and choose their "secret weapon" - the only player that can score for their team.

The teams whisper the name of their secret weapon to you.

Players who are not the secret weapon can shoot - and perhaps deliberately miss - in order to trick their opponent into identifying the wrong player as the secret weapon. This is a fun introduction to tactics and strategy.

Tips: Every player should be chosen as the secret weapon at some point - a great way to integrate new or shy players. Make sure you remember who each team has nominated as their secret weapon. It's your job to ensure only goals scored by the nominated player count.

6 Goal Game

Objectives To practice basic defensive principles (it's also good for encouraging players to get their heads up and talk to each other).

Set up Mark out a 40 x 30 grid with three evenly spaced goals at each end.

Create two evenly matched teams of four or five players. No goalkeepers.

How to play Each team defends their three goals and tries to score in their opponents three goals. The team with the most goals at the end of the game wins. You can play for a set time or until one team scores a certain number of goals.

Progressions • Play two or three touch, or

- Goals must be scored with a player's first touch, or
- Dribble through the goals instead of shooting with a player's first touch.

Around the clock

It is simple but incorporates spacing, passing, trapping & moving. We use this drill at every practice and as a game day warm-up.

Divide into groups of 4 to 6 (five is ideal). Four players start in the corners of a 15 yard square. A fifth player has a ball in the center of the square. The ball is passed from the middle to one of the corners and the center player immediately moves to switch places with any of the other corner players without the ball. The player that has just received the ball quickly returns it to the new player now advancing to the center position.

Continue until passing and trapping is crisp and quick!

The drill encourages young players to: Pass & move to space, recognize when teammates enter your space, receive & pass quickly.

Spacing is our biggest issue BY FAR and this drill has really helped us.

Three team keepaway:

Objective: This is an excellent warm up game, emphasizing team work, ball control, possession and passing.

Area Needed: 20 yards x 20 yards.

Number of players: Whole team in three groups of four, five or six.

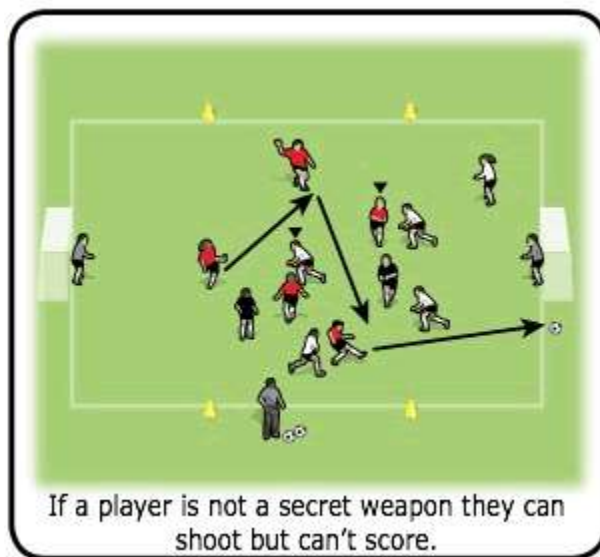
Set up: Mark out a square grid about 25 yards across. Divide your players into three teams of four, five or six. Use bibs to define the teams.

How to play: Two teams play keepaway in the grid. The third team spread themselves along the sides of the grid and act as support players, passing the ball back to whichever team passes to them.

The third team come on and take the place of the team that gives the ball away.

Note: support players cannot be tackled.

Tip: If your players find it hard to string more than one or two passes together, make the grid bigger or change the teams around so that they play numbers up, e.g. 4 v 1. They must be able to experience success or this game becomes very boring, very quickly!



Progression: place a goal at one end of the grid and tell your players that they can shoot when they have passed the ball X number of times without the opposition touching it.

Shuttle passing:

Objective: This is a passing, receiving and conditioning soccer drill for groups of three or four players. Shuttle passing can also be used to practice heading and a variety of other ball skills. Age group: U9 upwards.

Equipment: Flat cones, a ball for every three players.

Number of players: Three minimum, no maximum.

Set up: Separate your players into groups of three. Stand **two players about 20 yards apart** and the third should be in the middle, standing between two marker cones. Each of the end players has a ball at their feet. (You can have groups of four by having two players in the middle)

How to play: On your command the player in the middle runs towards an end player calling for the ball. The end player passes the ball to the middle player's feet the middle player controls it and passes it back. As soon as the middle player passes the ball back, he turns and runs towards the other end player to repeat the process. (No stopping to admire the pass!)

Coaching points: The middle player should be calling for the ball when they get about three yards from the other end player. Again, they receive and return a pass, turn and run. After thirty seconds or so, the middle player switches with one of the end players and recovers. Continue this drill until all three players have been the middle person. The middle player should be running at pace and trying to maintain good speed and quality touches throughout the entire drill. Be ready to correct technical mistakes, especially as players get tired.

Make it competitive by seeing which group can complete the most passes in one minute.

You should be looking for quality passing, quick turns and hard work. The middle player will be tired towards the end of his session and will have to focus hard on making good quality passes. Applaud his efforts.

Progressions: 1. To increase the difficulty of this drill, make the middle person use only one touch, increasing the need for concentration. 2. Get the end players to throw the balls into the middle person, forcing them to make more effort at control. The middle person can either bring the ball down to his feet or directly volley pass the ball back to a team mate. 3.

Using one ball, the middle player receives a pass from an end player, turns with the ball, runs back to the cones in the middle, passes to the other end player, continues the run, gets the return, takes the ball back to the middle and so on. It's hard work, but very good for fitness and improving basic ball skills.

2 v 1 to Goal

Objective: to improve tackling, passing and shooting skills. Age group: U6 upwards.

Set up: play this game on a small-sided soccer pitch with one normal sized goal set on the end line and two small goals on either side of the half way line.

How to play: a defensive player standing beside the goal kicks the soccer out to two offensive players standing on the halfway line. The defender follows the pass and tries to win the soccer back and clear it toward either of the two goals on the halfway line. The offensive players try to score in the normal sized goal. Goalkeeper is optional.

Rotation: The player who shoots or loses the ball rotates to the defensive line. The other two players go to the offensive line.

Coaching points Attackers should control the ball quickly and keep it in front of them.

"Pass the ball once the defender is committed"-- if the defender is committed to stopping the ball carrier, the other offensive player should be in an open position ready to receive a pass. Don't get in the defender's shadow.

The defender should close the ball carrier down quickly and try to channel the attacker with the ball towards the sideline, away from the other attacker.

Variations Play with a goalkeeper. Allow only one pass for offensive players. Allow another defender to enter play once the first pass is made. Require a one-touch shot for a player who receives the ball in the penalty area.

Soccer marbles:

Objective: Develops both defensive and offensive skills. The defenders learn how to protect open space and turn with the ball. The attacking players learn how to dribble, turn and perform evasive maneuvers while running with the ball. Because the players take turns in each position, they develop a well-rounded skill set. Age group: U6 upwards.

Area Needed: 10 yards x 10 yards.

Number of players: Whole team in groups of three.

Set up: Mark off a 10 yard x 10 yard area with cones. You'll need a stopwatch to record each attacking player's time. Give each player a ball -- two players start off as defenders and the third as an attacker.

How to play: The attacker dribbles the ball around the space, trying to keep it away from the two defenders. The defenders try to be the first to hit the attacker's ball with their own ball. When a defender hits the attacker's ball, the

players rotate positions. The coach times how long each player is in the attacker role. The player to last the longest, without getting their ball hit by the defenders, is the winner.

Coaching points: When dribbling, attackers should try to glance up and around between touches. Defenders should try to get close to the attacking player before attempting hit their ball.

Attackers should practice frequent turning and changing direction.

Progression: After a few rounds of this drill, try the following for 10 minutes or so: The attacker must still dribble the ball, but the defenders can carry the ball and roll it at the attacker's ball -- increasing the challenge for the attacker.

Next, have the attacker focus on defensive shielding and positioning techniques. The attacker should work on shielding the ball by positioning their body between the defenders and the ball.

This drill teaches attackers to be aware of their surroundings while finding an attacking space. At the same time, the defenders practice following the attacker and reading their movements. Use this drill to increase coordination and teach players to think fast on their feet.

Sequential Passing:

Objective: Sequential passing exercises are a great training tool to teach players some important playing habits including decision making, speed of thought and 'vision'. Age group: U10s upwards

Number of players: Whole team in groups of six or seven.

Equipment: Flat cones to mark a grid, 3-4 balls per group.

Set up: Play in a 30x30 yard grid.

How to play: Divide your players into groups of six or seven. Each group plays in a separate grid.

Assign each player a number and tell them that:

1. No player is allowed to stand still.
2. No pass may be less than 5 yards.
3. The players must pass the ball sequentially, receiving the ball from the number before them and passing the ball to the number after them. For example, number 2 receives the ball from number 1 and passes the ball to number 3.

Let them play without any conditions for a few minutes. **Then up the pace by placing the following conditions:**

Two-touch, one to receive it and one to pass it. This encourages the players to:

1. Look where their next pass will be before they receive it
2. Prepare the ball in the direction the pass will go
3. Measure the weight and accuracy of the pass to their teammate.

One-touch passing. This will:

1. Further reinforce the need to look where they will pass the ball before they receive it
2. Put the onus on the next sequential player to call for the ball early and move into space early to help the passing player execute an effective pass
3. Put maximum emphasis on the speed of the pass knowing that the teammate also has only one touch.

Introduction of a second, third or fourth ball

This will force the players to pass the ball quickly as they do not want the two balls to arrive at a single player at the same time.

The Diamond drill:

Objective: This practice teaches players to develop the good habit of taking the ball in an open body shape on the back foot. Age group: U9s upwards

Number of players / Equipment: Whole team in groups of four. Two balls and four flat cones per group.

Set up: Arrange the cones so that three are about 5 yards apart in a semi-circle. The fourth cone is placed so that it faces the other three, about ten yards away.

Place one player on each of the cones. Two the players in the semi-circle have a ball.

How to play: The player facing the semi-circle receives a pass from either player with a ball and returns it to the player who does not have a ball.

He receives a pass from the other player who has a ball and so on...

Make it competitive - who can make the fewest errors out of 20 serves?

Development

1. Receive on one foot pass with the other.
2. Pass with one touch using back foot.
3. Control aerial serve with first touch, return with side foot volley on second touch.

Small Sided Games - Part 2:

See [Intro Small Side Games](#) | [SSG Part 1](#) | [SSG Part 3](#) | [SSG Part 4](#) |

Pass, move and turn

Objective: to improve passing and receiving skills. To warm up before a match or training session.

Age group: U6s upwards. **Number of players:** whole squad

Equipment: one ball for every two players, some flat cones.

Set up: Place half your players in a 20 x 20 yd grid without a ball. Place the other half of your squad on the outside of the grid, each with a ball.

How to play: inside players move around the grid freely, receive a ball from an outside player, return it and move quickly to another outside player and repeat.

Switch the inside and outside players after a few minutes.

Development

1. Return with one touch, then two touches.

2. Receive with outside of the foot, inside of the foot, left foot only...

3. Receive balls out of the air.

4. The inside players have a ball each. They pass to an outside player, receive the ball back, find another outside player and repeat.

Explode

Objective: To improve dribbling skills and ball control.

Age group: U6s upwards. **Number of players:** Whole squad

Equipment: Cones to mark out a grid, one ball each

Set up: For up to ten players, use cones to mark out a circle about 30 yards across. Mark out a bigger circle if you have more than ten players. This is the playing area.

Use a few less cones to mark out an additional circle about 10 or 20 yards further out.

The younger your players, the closer the additional ring should be to the playing area.

How to play: Start by telling your players to dribble inside the playing area.

Give instructions such as 'turn', 'use your other foot', 'stop', 'go', 'change direction', 'leave your ball and find another one'.

Encourage your players to keep their heads up and not collide with anyone.

After about a minute of dribbling I shout the word "explode".

The players will then run out of the playing area with the ball, dribble round a cone in the outside ring and run back into the circle.

Tell them that no two players can go around the same cone, so they have to find another cone if somebody is already ahead of them.

I suggest that you stand in center of the circle and get the first player back to give you a high five.

At the end of agreed time (30 secs-1 minute) award 1 point to the team that has the most balls in their opponent's half.

If a player touches a ball after the stop signal, you may automatically award that round to the opposition to discourage cheating.

Tip to encourage good ball control, tell your players that they must stop the ball in front of you before the high five.

3v3 one goal:

Objective: To take early shots from within shooting distance of the goal. To provide support for the player with the ball.

U6s upwards

Number of players / Equipment: Whole squad with a keeper. One ball, some flat cones, a small goal or poles.

Set up: Set up one 20 x 30 yard grid for every six players. Divide your squad in teams of three and assign two teams to each playing area.

How to play: Play a normal 3-a-side game in each playing area, except that it is played around one goal rather than two.

Each team can only score from one side of the goal. For example, the yellow team can only score from the left side of the goal while their opponents can only score from the right side.

When goalkeeper makes a save from one team, he throws the ball into the opposing half of the field.

Progressions Both teams score into the same side of the goal. Play 5 v 2 and see how the team with the advantage uses their extra players. Goals only count if they're scored with one touch.

Coaching Points Choose the coaching point you want to work on. If it's support play, watch for good examples of support play and praise them. Don't try to coach more than one topic at a time! Stay focused on what you want to achieve. Always emphasize shooting at goal at the earliest opportunity.

Let me out of here (monkey in the middle):

Objective: This is one of the best ways to warm up your players before a match or training session.

Number of players / Equipment: Whole squad in groups of four. One ball and three cones per group.

Set up: Use three cones to mark a triangle about 5 yards on each side. One player stands on each side of the triangle and one goes in the middle.

How to play: The three players on the sides of the triangle keep passing the ball to each other while the player standing inside the triangle must intercept the ball to get out of the triangle.

The outside player who loses the ball goes inside the triangle.

Progressions: Try an alternative where the player in the middle needs two interceptions to score a point and the outside players need four consecutive passes to score. Time it for five minutes.

Quick passing:

Objective: To improve ball control, passing technique, concentration and speed of thought. U10 upwards.

Number of players / Equipment: Whole squad in groups of four. Four flat cones and two balls per group of four players.

How to play: This is a very simple drill but it is also one that will really sharpen your players' ball skills. It should only be played for a short time but you should insist on hard work and focus. Don't accept anything less than 100% effort!

- Mark out one 10 yards x 10 yards playing area with flat cones for each group of four players. Position one player on each side of the square (not on the corners).

- Two players who are opposite each other have a ball.

- On your signal, the balls are passed in a clockwise direction around the playing area.

Coaching points: Your players need to receive the ball on the back foot, and pass with their front foot. Play two touch to begin with (one touch to control the ball and one to pass). When they have mastered this (and it's easy!) they should try to use one touch and keep the balls moving constantly around the square. Your players need to be aware of where both balls are at all times. After a few minutes, reverse the direction of the passes.

Everybody up!:

Objective: to improve speed of transition, passing and communication. U9 upwards. Whole team.

Set up: Create a 30 x 40 yard playing area with a half way line marked.

- Divide your team into two teams. They don't have to be evenly matched.

How to play: Play ordinary soccer with one condition: a goal only counts if every player in the team is in the opposition half when the ball crosses the line.

Progression: 1. Goals count double if the defending team fails to get all its players back into its own half. 2. Goals have to be scored with one touch (great for encouraging assists). 3. Goals have to be scored after X number of passes. 4. Every player on a team has to touch the ball before a goal can be scored.

Quick.....Shoot!:

Objective: To improve your players ability to shoot quickly and accurately under pressure as well as follow up on their shots in case the keeper drops the ball. U8-U14. Divide your squad into two teams of between 4 and 6 players. If you have more than 12 players, set up two games.

- Create a 30x20 yards playing area.

- Place a team behind each end line.

- Place a cone about 8 yards away from each goal to mark the point at which your players should take their shot.

- Place a few balls at both ends of the playing area.

How to play:

1. To start the game, team A sends one of its players to be goalkeeper.

2. The first player in team B dribbles a ball (at speed) to the marker cone and shoots. This player follows their shot in and tries to score if team A's goalkeeper drops the ball.

3. Whether team B's player scores or not, team A's goalkeeper retrieves the ball and returns to her team.

4. The shooter from team B is now in goal. She faces the first player from team A who dribbles out and shoots.

After taking their shot, this player takes over in goal and so on.

5. The first team to score X number of goals wins.

Coaching points: Impress on your players the need to dribble at speed, shoot quickly and follow their shot.

If the shooter does not follow her shot and get into goal quickly, the opposition will have an open goal to shoot at!

You can, if you wish, encourage a finishing mentality by awarding two goals if a player scores from a fumbled shot.

You probably won't need to, but make sure the next shooter doesn't wait for the goalkeeper to get ready. They should start to dribble at goal as soon as they have the ball.

Vary the distance to goal and the size of the goal so players can experience success then make it harder by increasing the distance to goal and making the goal smaller.

Note: Although this game involves players waiting in line, the speed of the game means they should only be waiting for a few seconds.

Quick Shot 1v1 Competition:

To improve your players ability to shoot quickly and to go after the ball aggressively.

How to play: Put a neutral player, an assistant coach or a parent in goal. The first players in each team stand together on one side of the goal facing you with their backs to the playing area. You stand between them facing the playing area.

- You lob the ball over their heads and they turn and compete for the ball.
- They play until the ball is dead - goal, save or ball out of the area.
- The next pair step up quickly for their turn, after each round make sure everybody has a new opponent.

Tip: Make it competitive. Award a point for a shot on target and two for a goal.

Progression: Instead of standing, get your players to lie on their backs as you throw the ball over them

Attack! Attack!:

Set up: Create a 30x15 yard playing area with a goal and goalkeeper at both ends. **The players are split into two groups:** defenders and midfielders/forwards.

How to play: The midfielder/forwards can attack either goal but regardless of their success (i.e. if they score, the defenders clear or the goalkeeper saves) they have to attack the other goal next.

- All the players will have to be aware of the sudden changes in direction of play, the speed of the game and their position on the field.
- It will also improve the midfielder/attackers fitness and work rate by encouraging them to chase the ball and attack constantly. Can be made easier for the midfielders/attackers by reducing the size of the playing area and/or the number of defenders. It can be made harder by doing the opposite.

Where's the Goal?

A great way to help young players play with their heads up and work together to score goals. U6s to U10s.

Equipment required: A pole, training vests, a playing area and a couple of balls. Six to 14 players.

Set-up: Create a scrimmage area. For ten U10s, I would use a 20-yard area.

Divide your players into two equal teams plus two players who are going to be the "goal posts".

The goal posts hold a pole or stretch a training vest tightly between them. They move randomly around the playing area while the two teams try to score a goal by passing the ball under the pole or vest.

Play for five minutes, congratulate the winning team then change the goal posts.

Progression: Players score by passing to a team mate through the goal. A pass that is intercepted on the other side of the goal does not count as a goal. Add a second ball. Add a second goal. Players will now get more shooting chances but it's even more important that they communicate and play with their heads up.

Encourage and praise: Communication between team mates. Teams that try to keep possession of the ball. Accurate passing. Meeting the ball (as opposed to waiting for a pass to arrive). Supporting team mates. Winning the ball back quickly.

The one goal game:

Suitable for: all ages/experience.

Set up: use a suitable sized playing area with one cone or pole goal set in the middle (not on the end line).

Pick two teams of three or four, plus a goalkeeper.

How to play: Both teams attack and defend the one goal.

- Goals can be scored from either side of the goal.
- The player who has the last touch on the ball before it crosses the line is the scorer, even if it is only a slight deflection.
- If a goal is scored, the game continues from the other side of the goal.
- If the goalkeeper makes a save, they throw the ball to the edge of the playing area.

Knock It Off!

Objective: To improve passing, movement off the ball and teamwork.

Age group: U7s to U12s.

Equipment required: Some flat cones, three balls, training vests in two colors.

Set-up: Create a 25-yard square playing area. Divide your players into a team of four (the attackers) and a team of two (the defenders). If you have more than six players, vary the numbers in each team or (preferably) set up two playing areas. Balance two balls on top of flat cones and place them in two corners of the playing area.

How to play:

- The attacking team's objective is to knock the two balls off the cones.
- The defending team protects the balls by blocking shots, tackling and trying to gain possession of the ball.
- Play for two minutes. If the attacking team succeeds in knocking both balls off, it earns a point.
- If defenders can hold the attackers at bay for two minutes, they get a point.

Coaching points:

Attackers: Good movement off the ball. Quick decisions. Spreading out and using the whole playing area.

Defenders: Good communication. Close down the attacker with the ball quickly but don't dive in. Don't allow the attackers to split you with a pass.

Progressions/variations:

1. Play 3v1.
2. A ball that is knocked off a cone is in play and can be used to knock the other ball off.
3. Add a third or fourth ball on a cone.
4. Make the playing area bigger or smaller.

Inside Out

Objective: To encourage your players to use the whole width of the pitch.

Age range: U9s and older.

Number of players: Nine (but can be easily adapted for a different number of players)

Equipment required: Flat cones, training vests, six small goals (or traffic cones/poles as goalposts), one ball.

Set-up: Place three goals at each end of 30x20 yards playing area.

Divide your players into two teams of four plus one neutral player.

How to play: Both teams defend and attack three goals.

- They score one point for scoring in the centre goal and three points for scoring in one of the outside goals.
- The neutral player plays for the team in possession.
- Play for 10 minutes or until a set score is reached.
- When the ball goes out of play, the game is restarted with a kick-in from the line.

Progression:

- Points are scored by dribbling the ball through a goal instead of shooting.
- The neutral player is restricted to two or three touches.

Play it Through

To help young players spot opportunities for a through pass and play the ball quickly before the chance disappears.

Age range: U9s and upwards.

Number of players: Eight.

Set-up: Split a 40-yard square area horizontally into thirds.

The middle third is 20 yards wide and the end zones are each 10 yards wide.

The end zones are further divided into four 10-yard squares.

How to play Place one player in each of the four squares in the end zones.

- The player in square 1 attempts to pass to the player in square 3.
- If the pass is intercepted by the player in square 2, he tries to pass to the player in square 4 and now the player in square 3 tries to intercept.
- If the pass is successful, the player in square 3 tries to pass back to the player in square 1.

Coaching notes: To begin with, players are not allowed to leave their zones.

If your players are finding this exercise easy, allow the intercepting player to move out of his square and put more pressure on the pass.

Tell your players not to let the ball stop moving.

Move players around between squares every minute or two.

Progression: Take away the four squares in the end zones and play a 4v4 game in the middle zone.

Teams score a point by making a pass into an end zone for a team-mate to run onto.

Coaching note: the only player allowed in the end zone is the player running onto the pass.

Finally, remove the end zones, put a goal at each end and play a "normal" SSG. Award extra points for through passes.

Small Sided Games Part 3:

Links: [Intro Small Side Games](#) | [SSG Part 1](#) | [SSG Part 2](#) | [SSG Part 4](#) |

Targets:

A SSG that will improve your players' communication and attacking skills as well as their passing and receiving technique.

Age group: U8s to U14s.

Number of players: Ten.

Equipment: Training vests, cones, two goals and a ball.

Set-up: The goals are set up at each end of a 30x20 yards playing area.

Divide your players into two teams of five - four outfield players plus goalkeepers.

One outfield player from each team waits on the end line next to the goal her team is attacking. These are the target players.

How to play: Before a goal can be scored, the attacking team must play the ball to their target player. He or she plays the ball back and the shot must be taken immediately.

If possession is lost or a shot cannot be taken immediately, another successful pass to the target player is required before the attacking team can score.

Play for five minutes then change the target player and goalkeeper.

Progression:

- Limit the number of touches the target player is allowed.
- The player who passes to a target player swaps places with her.
- The target players come off the end lines and continue their role in the field of play (harder).
- Both teams play 2v2 plus two target players, one on the end line and one in the field of play (easier).

The Xavi Game:

This game is named after Barcelona's Xavi Hernandez who is, perhaps, one of the most skilful players in the game today. It is designed to encourage a Barca style, quick passing style of play plus the freedom to dribble and run at defenders when in the final third.

Age group: U8s to U14s.

Set-up: Create a 30x20 yards playing area divided into horizontal thirds.

Divide your players into two teams of five or six.

How to play: Players in their defensive or middle third of the pitch are restricted to three touches of the ball before they must pass.

- In the final third (the third of the pitch nearest their opponent's goal), they can take unlimited touches.
- When the ball goes out of play, the game is restarted with a kick-in that must be taken in four seconds or less.
- Goalkeepers must roll the ball out, again within four seconds.
- Play first to X number of goals or play for a set time.

Coaching note: younger children can practice their ball control skills in a less structured 4v4 where the coach awards extra 'goals' for good examples of getting into line with a pass or a nice, soft first touch.

Minefield:

To practice passing, receiving, good movement and quick decision making. U8s to U14s.

Equipment: Cones to mark out the playing area, training vests and a ball.

Set-up: Mark out a 30x20 yards playing area with a small goal at each end.

Create a minefield in the center of the pitch with two parallel lines of cones.

How to play: Divide your players into two teams of four or five.

Play a normal game of soccer with the condition that while the ball can cross the center of the pitch, no player is allowed to step in the minefield.

If they do, a free kick is awarded to the other team.

Progression: Allow ground passes across the minefield to begin, then add the condition that the ball has to cross the exclusion zone in the air.

Some questions to ask your players before you play the game:

- Why do we pass the ball?
- How do you know your team mate is ready to receive the ball?
- Should passes be played to feet or to space? Why?

Out!:

A fun way to practice attacking and defending skills. It also helps develop ball "vision", communication skills and tactical awareness.

Age group: U6s to U14s.

Equipment: Some cones to mark the playing area, two small goals, training vests and a ball.

Number of players: Whole squad.

Set-up: Create a 30-yard square with a small goal on opposite end lines.

Split your squad into two teams.

Each team stands next to you on the edge of the playing area.

Tell the teams which goal they need to score in.

How to play: Throw a ball into the playing area and shout a number.

That number of players from each team run into the playing area, compete for the ball and try to score in their allocated goal.

- As soon as a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, shout "Out!" and the players return to their teams.

- Then shout another, different number.
- Vary the numbers from one to the total number of players in each team.
- The first team to score X number of goals wins the game.

Progression: Play with a goal in each of the four corners. This encourages your players to keep their heads up and switch play to the open goal.

Allow your players to choose the number of players who will compete for the ball. First, team R chooses then it's team B's turn to choose.

Build up from the back:

Objective: To build up out of the back using quick, accurate passes.

Set up: Create a playing area about 60x40 yards or use a seven a side pitch. One end place two small goals that can be marked with poles or cones. Put a full size goal on the other end of the playing area. Divide your players into two teams, wearing bibs. One team has an extra player.

How to play: Play soccer with the following conditions: the team with the extra player defends the large goal and gets a goalkeeper. All restarts begin with the goalkeeper.

Coaching points: Encourage possession, ('if you can't shoot, pass...if you can't pass forward, pass back') quick, accurate passing, good communication and supporting play (movement off the ball).

It's a knockout!:

Objective: To improve awareness, decision making, quick transition and communication.

Set up: Create a large (30 yard diameter or more) circle and place three goals evenly spread around the perimeter. Split your group into three teams each of whom have a goal to defend.

How to play: Each team start with ten points and lose one point when a goal is scored against them.

Play for an agreed time or until a team loses all their points

Coaching points: Congratulate your players when they change the direction of play and score in an undefended goal. Watch for the moment when two teams make an alliance and work together to knock out the third team.

Stuck in the mud (Freeze Tag):

Objective: To improve dribbling skills. Three years old upwards. whole team.

Set up: create a 30x40 yard grid. Every player except one has a ball.

How to play: Select one player who is "it". Each of the remaining players should be standing in the grid with a ball waiting for the coaches whistle.

On the whistle, the players with a ball dribble round the grid trying to avoid getting tagged.

If a player is tagged, she must pick the ball up, hold it over her head and stand with her legs apart.

Frozen players should be encouraged to shout 'help!' as loudly as possible.

To get "unfrozen" an 'unfrozen' player must pass her ball through the spread legs of the "frozen player".

Once the player is "unfrozen", she resumes dribbling in the grid. If a player dribbles the ball outside of the grid, that player is "frozen".

Tip: if the tagger is finding it hard to catch the other players, add another tagger or two.

Coaching points: Players must dribble and keep close control of their ball.

Players should keep their head up and see where the "tagger" is located.

Players should dribble away from the "tagger" and dribble toward teammates who need to be "unfrozen".

Steal the cone!

Objective: To improve decision making, shooting, communicating and long passing. U7 upwards. Whole team.

Equipment: Ten or twelve small traffic cones, flat cones to mark out a playing area, bibs in two colors, one ball.

Set up: Mark out a 30x50 yard playing area. Place half the traffic cones on each end line, about three or four feet apart. Divide your players into two teams.

How to play: Each team tries to knock down the opposing teams' cones with the ball. The player who succeeds in knocking down a cone picks it up and stands it on his teams' end line. Play for a set time or until one team has all the cones.

Do a turn:

Objective: To practice turning technique, defending, shielding the ball, shooting to score. U8 upwards. Whole team.

Equipment: Cones to mark out the playing area, two goals or four poles to use as goalposts, a few balls.

Set up: Mark out a 40x30 yard playing area. Position two goals on opposite sidelines but don't put them exactly opposite each other. Divide your players into two teams.

How to play: Nominated one team to be the defenders. The other team are the attackers. The two teams line up opposite each other on the end lines. On your signal, one of the defenders passes to an attacker. As soon as the attacker touches

the ball the defender closes him down. The attacker's job is to score in one of the goals while the defender tries to take the ball away from him.

Coaching points: If the defender blocks the way to one of the goals the attacker should turn quickly and attack the other one. Make it competitive - keep scores of successful attacks for both teams.

Progression: Play 2v1 with two defenders or two attackers. Instead of shooting, the attacker has to dribble the ball into a goal.

Hit the target:

Objective: To improve ball control, passing, support play and communication. U10 upwards. Whole team.

Equipment: Flat cones to mark the playing area, one ball.

Set up: Mark out a 40x30 yard grid with a 2x3 yard grid in the center of the larger grid. Divide your squad into two teams, Team A and Team B (you can give the teams more exciting names if you wish!).

How to play: Team A puts a player in the small center grid. They score a goal every time they can play the ball into the center grid player and back out again to a Team A teammate (ground passes, volleys, headers all count as goals if successfully played back out to a Team A player).

Team B tries to keep Team A from scoring. Team B scores a goal if it completes five consecutive passes. Team A tries to disrupt Team B and intercept passes. Reverse the teams regularly.

Progressions: If your players find this game difficult, award team A goal for simply getting a pass into the center grid player (who now doesn't need to return it to a team-mate) and team B get a goal for three consecutive passes.

If your players find the game easy, make the space smaller to put more pressure on the ball carrier and make them take quicker decisions.

Hit The Pass:

Many young ball players spend most of their time watching the ball, the goal that they are attacking, their mum on the sideline or the seagulls on the next field! This game encourages them to concentrate on the game and look for a player to pass to instead.

Age group: U8s and U12s.

Number of players: Two teams of six.

Equipment required: Some flat cones to mark the playing area, two goals and a ball. Training vests in four different colors.

Set-up: Create a 30x20 yards playing area for every two teams.

How to play: Each team consists of four outfield players plus two target players. The target players wear a different colored training vest to the rest of their team.

Goalkeepers are optional.

Game 1: Target players are positioned on each sideline, just outside the playing area. Goals can only be scored if one or both of a team's target players are involved in the attacking move.

Game 2: Target players are positioned either side of the goal their team is attacking. Goals can only be scored following a pass back into the field by a target player.

Progression: Restrict the number of touches target players are allowed.

Note: In games 1 and 2, target players cannot be tackled and should be changed regularly.

Game 3: Target players move freely around the playing area but only the target players can score.

Game 3 variation: With older players, try asking each team to select their target players in secret. When they have decided (this can take a long time) they tell you who the target players are.

- Play a 10-minute game.
- Non-target players can score but the goal will not be counted by you, who is the only person who knows the final score at the end of the game!
- You can award bonus "goals" at the end of the game to the team that correctly identifies their opponent's target players.

Pass to the coach:

Objective: To improve aggressiveness and the ability to shield the ball. U6 upwards. Whole team.

Equipment: Flat cones to mark the playing area, bibs, one ball.

Set up: Mark out a 30x30 yard playing area. Divide your players into four teams (it doesn't matter if one has an extra player).

How to play: Each team stands at a corner of the square. Play a ball into the center of the grid and shout 'Go!'.

- The first player in each team runs out from their corner and tries to get to the ball first. Whoever gets the ball must try to hold it for a five seconds before earning a point for his team by passing the ball to you.

- If the ball is stolen or the pass is intercepted, the player stealing the ball should keep it for five seconds before passing to you. The first team to five points wins.

Tip: Very young players will find it difficult to hold onto the ball against three opponents so allow them to either pass to you straight away or play with two teams instead of four. The older and more skilled the players, the longer they should be able to hold the ball before passing.

Killer Ball:

Objective: To improve passing accuracy, spatial awareness and fitness. U6 upwards Whole team.

Set up / Equipment: Ball per player Use the penalty area of a normal sized pitch or mark out a 30x20 yard area with cones. All players are in the playing area. One has a ball. The rest of the balls are lined up just outside the playing area.

How to play: All players jog around inside the area. The player with the ball is a 'hunter' and he attempts to hit one of the other players below the waist with A killer ball (note: do not allow the hunter to aim above the other players' waists. A firm side foot pass is what you are looking for.)

- If a player is hit he collects a ball from the side of the playing area and becomes a hunter. The winner is the last player to get hit by a ball.

Coaching points: "Hunted" players are not allowed out of the penalty area. A player who is a hunter must retrieve his own ball if it goes out of the playing area. Hunters can pass to each other. Encourage accuracy not power. Encourage hunters to work as a team, to hunt in packs. Encourage thought processes and tactics.

Quick, it's a corner!:

Objective: To improve passing accuracy, spatial awareness and fitness. U8 upwards.

Number of players: Sixteen is the ideal number but the game can be played with eight or more players from with some minor adjustments (see below).

Set up: Play on half a small sided pitch or create a 30x40 yard playing area.

Place a goal on both end lines.

- If you have sixteen players divide your players into two teams of eight.

- A number of balls are placed at each of the four corners. .

How to play: Play 4v4 with one of the remaining four players from each team placed at a corner of the playing area.

- Every time the ball goes out of play, the team that just gained possession is awarded a corner kick to be taken by one of the players waiting at the corners. The on-field players should sprint to the relevant penalty area and try to convert the corner-kick before the defending team reacts.

- If a goal is scored, the game can be restarted with another corner kick.

- Alternatively, the beaten goalkeeper can restart by passing to a team mate. This adds an extra element to the game; building up from the back.

Adjustments for less than sixteen players: if you have eight players, play 4v4 but have the players run back to take the corners.

If you have between eight and sixteen players, split the players into two teams, play 4v4 and spread the additional players around the four corners.

Coaching points: encourage your players to try a variety of different corner kicks; defenders should sprint back to their goal after the ball goes out of play; the emphasis should be on quick transition from defense to offense and offense to defense.

Bill's Gates:

Objective: To improve your team's spacing on the pitch. U6 upwards. Whole team.

Set up / Equipment: Ball per player. Mark out a 30x40 yard playing area and place a goal at either end. Use flat cones to make two small gates (about three yards wide) on the pitch near the half line and about twenty yards apart. Split your squad into two teams.

How to play: Play soccer. A goal counts as two points and a pass through one of the gates to a teammate is worth one point (the same gate cannot be passed through twice in a row). First team to ten points wins.

Coaching tip: If you have more than ten players, make three teams, reduce the target to five points and play winner stays on. The resting players can be positioned on the side lines and act as extra players for the team in possession. This encourages give and go (wall passes) as well as giving your players another reason to use the full width of the pitch.

Through the gate:

Improves passing and receiving. Mark out small (20x10 yard) grids, one for each group of four players in your squad, with a center line dividing the grid in two. Place a small gate (about 2 yards wide) in the middle of the center line.

The object of the game is for each pair of players to pass the ball through the gate to the other pair.

The rules: both players must touch the ball before it is passed through the gate and ball must never stop. If the ball does stop or the players fail to control it before it leaves their side of the grid a point is awarded to the other team.

Play to a specific target (e.g., first to ten wins) or challenge your players to play for a set time without making a mistake.

Tip: to stop players trying to blast the ball through their opponents half of the grid insist on side foot passes only.

Progression: when your players are comfortable with the basic game, allow them one or two touches only to control the ball before passing.

The box game

Objective: To improve passing, vision, movement off the ball, communication and transition from defense to attack.

Age group: U9s upwards.

Number of players: Whole squad divided into two teams of four or five (if you have more than ten players, make four teams and play two games).

Set up: Create a 40x30 playing area with flat cones. Mark out a five square yard box at each end.

How to play: One player from each team (the target player) goes into an end box. The rest of the players try to get a pass to their target player. To score a point, the target player must one-touch the ball back to one of their team mates.

Progression: When a point is scored, both target players sprint to the other box and their team attacks that end.

Blob tag

Objective: This game encourages players to dribble with their heads up and keep good, close control.

Age group: U6s to U10s. **Number of players:** Whole squad divided into two teams of four or five (if you have more than ten players, make four teams and play two games).

Set up: Create a 30x30 yard playing area. All players except three have a ball.

Divide your squad into two teams (red and blue). One player from each team becomes the goalkeeper. The rest of the red team wait at their end of the playing area, half at one corner and half at the other. Arrange the blue team in the same way at the other end.

You stand on the half way line with a supply of balls.

How to play: All the players are inside the grid. The three without a ball form a 'blob' by holding hands. The blob moves freely in the grid and tries to kick any player's ball out of the grid. If a player's ball leaves the grid (either by being kicked out by the blob or because the player loses control of it) he/she joins the blob. The last player dribbling is the winner.

Tip: Long chains are difficult for the players to control so when the chain gets to six players in length, break it into two smaller chains.

What to say:

"Stay away from the blob"-- that's the purpose of the game.

"Don't get trapped" -- move into space away from the blob.

"Keep control of the ball" -- don't kick it too far away.

"Work together" -- the blob must work as a team. They must stay together when kicking balls out of the grid.

Progression: Change the size of the grid to make it easier for dribblers (a bigger grid) or harder (a smaller grid).

Have blobs break into two players per blob (harder for dribblers).

Pass and shoot

Objective: To improve fitness, ball control, passing and shooting.

Age group: U7 upwards. **Number of players:** Whole team.

Set up: Mark out a 40x20 yards playing area. Place two small goals about 3 yards apart on one of the end lines. On the other end line place a pole or large cone opposite each of the two small goals.

Split your squad into two teams, red and blue, with one ball per team. Position the red team next to one of the goals. The blue team stand next to the other goal. One player from each team stands half way along the sideline nearest their goal.

How to play: When you blow the whistle, the first player from each team dribbles up to and around the cone opposite their goal, then passes the ball to his/her team mate on the sideline. This player returns the pass to his/her team mate who takes a shot at goal. The first player to score gets a point for their team.

Coaching notes: Encourage good, strong passes by making the sideline player collect weak passes from the dribbling player and return to the sideline before passing back.

Return passes should be in front of the dribbling player to run onto.

If you have more than ten players, create three teams.

Progress to one touch for the sideline player.

'Don't let the ball stop!'

Objective: To improve your players' first touch, ball control and passing.

Age group: U6 upwards.

Set up: Mark out a short, wide pitch with big (10 yard-wide) goals at either end and a center line. Divide your squad into teams of 3 or 4. If you have more than two teams, play more than one game. Each team defends a goal. There are no goalkeepers.

How to play: The game starts with each team spread out in their half of the pitch. The coach stands on the center line and rolls a ball to one of the teams. Their objective is to score a goal by shooting from within their own half.

Rules:

- Players must stay in their own half of the pitch.
- Each player on a team must touch the ball at least once before a shot can be taken.
- The ball must not be allowed to stop - if it does, possession is passed to the other team.

Progression:

- Restrict players to three, two or one touch.
- Ask them to shoot with their 'wrong' foot.

Coaching notes:

Can your players:

- Work the ball up to the halfway line without letting it stop, only having 1, 2 or 3 touches each?
- Lay off a good ball into the path of the shooter?
- Block shots with their body and gain immediate control of the ball?

Will the players stand on the halfway line and get in the way of their opponents' shots?

Shuttle shooting

Objective: To practice shooting and goalkeeping skills.

Age group: U8s upwards. **Number of players:** Whole team.

Set up: Create a 40x15 yard playing area with a goal on the center line. Divide your squad into two teams plus a goalkeeper. The teams stand at each end of the playing area, the goalkeeper stands in the goal.

How to play: 1. The coach stands on the center line in line with the goal and serves a ball for the first player in each team to control, then shoot. Vary the serves so the ball goes across the player, away from him and towards him. Also serve the ball so that it goes to either side of the player. Play hard passes and serve a bouncing ball.

2. Give each player a ball. The first player on team A takes one touch to push the ball in front of him then shoots. If the goalkeeper saves the ball he returns it to the player. If the shooter misses or scores he retrieves the ball. As soon as the first shot has been dealt with, the goalkeeper turns to face the other team and the process is repeated.

Coaching notes: This is a drill that involves children standing in lines, but it is fast-moving so there shouldn't be a problem providing you keep the lines short. If you have more than ten players I advise setting up two games. Make the game competitive. The team scoring most goals with the least number of shots wins.

What to watch :

- Your players' first touch. Do they push the ball out of their feet?
- Their shooting technique. Is their head over the ball, their non-striking foot next to the ball and is there a good follow through.
- Do they use the correct part of their foot. The instep or side of foot.

Slam!

This is a brilliant indoor coaching game for improving kicking skills. Children of all ages love to play it and it is just about the simplest game you can imagine. All you need is a ball, a wall and a way to mark out a few goals.

Objective: To improve kicking skills. **Age group:** U6 upwards.

Set up: Divide your squad into pairs (if you have an odd number, have one group of three). Mark off 5 yards-wide 'goals' along a wall of the gym with cones, chalk or jumpers. Have a 4 to 5 yards gap between them. Assign each pair a goal to shoot at.

How to play: The first player in each group hits the ball into their goal. The other player (or second player in a group of three) has to play the ball back into the goal before it stops rolling after the rebound. You can impose a one- or two-touch condition, depending on the skill of your players.

Play continues until one of the players misses the goal, takes too many touches or the ball stops. That player then loses a 'life'. Each player has three lives before having to sit out.

Variations

- Players must use alternate feet or a different surface of the same foot.
- Allow the ball to stop for young players.

- Play three at a time in rotation.
- Play a tournament where the winners play each other on a knockout basis.

Squeeze!

Objective: This is a small-sided game that encourages your players to push up and attack as a team. The exercise is designed to:

- Improve players' concentration levels.
- Discourage laziness.
- Improve the forwards' ability to keep the ball until support arrives.

Age group: U10 upwards.

Set up: Play on a small-sided soccer pitch or create a 60 by 40 yards playing area with flat cones. Place a goal at each end of the pitch and mark out a center line.

How to play: Play normal soccer with the condition that any goal scored only counts if all the attacking team's players are in the opposition half when the ball crosses the line.

Coaching points: You can choose whether or not to require the goalkeeper to be in the opposition half. Personally, I do. It encourages my goalkeepers to play as sweeper when their team is attacking, a tactic that works well in matches.

- Make the game competitive by playing to a set number of goals, or for a specified time.
- Make the game more challenging for older players by adding a two- or three-touch condition.

Quick! Win the ball!

This is a quick and fun game that will get your players scrambling to reach the ball first before controlling it and taking a shot.

Objective: To encourage your players to be first to the ball, and to improve decision making and shooting ability.

Age group: U9 upwards.

Set up: Create a 40 yards by 30 yards playing area with a 15 yards-wide goal at both ends. Divide your players into two teams. Goalkeepers are optional.

How to play: You serve a high ball into the playing area and the two teams compete to get to the ball first. Whichever team gets the ball can score in either goal.

The small playing area and big goals make it easy to score. You should encourage players to get to the ball first and fire off a quick shot.

Coaching notes: If you want your players to win more high balls, make it a condition of the game that if the ball hits the ground from the serve, it is out of play and the game restarts with another high ball.

- Encourage risk taking (quick shots) and good finishing (follow up shots).
- The first team to 5 or 10 goals wins the game.

Passing to score

This drill encourages your players to improve the accuracy of their passing in a game-like situation.

Objective: To improve passing skills and to encourage players to use the full width of the pitch.

Age group: U9s upwards.

Number of players: The whole squad, divided into two teams.

Set up: Create a 50 yards by 30 yards playing area and put a center line across the pitch. Place a normal-sized goal on each end line and small cone goals (2 yards wide) on the center line, about 5 yards in from each side line.

How to play: Play a normal game of soccer but award one point for a completed pass to a team mate through one of the small goals on the center line, and three points for a normal goal.

Teams can score as often as they like and in either direction through the small goals, but discourage players from simply passing to and fro through these. Your players are still playing soccer and can score more points by scoring a normal goal.

Variation: Try placing a goalkeeper in each of the regular sized goals and one goalkeeper covering both of the small goals on the center line. Switch the center line goalkeeper regularly as it's hard work defending both small goals!

Moving the Goalposts

This simple game will encourage your players to look up and be aware of other players around them.

Objective: To improve passing and encourage players to keep their heads up when in possession of the ball.

Age group: U7 upwards.

Set up: Create a 30 yards by 30 yards playing area and divide your players into two teams. Take one player from each team and give them a 3-yard rope or pole to hold. This is the 'moving goal'. You stand outside the playing area with a supply of balls.

How to play: The players holding the moving goal move freely around the playing area. The two teams try to score in the moving goal. Play first to three goals wins. If the ball leaves the playing area, you keep the game moving by putting another ball into play.

Coaching notes: Encourage players to pass quickly and shoot decisively.

Progression:

- Play with two balls (this also makes it easier for younger players).
- With U10s upwards, restrict the players to two or three touches.

Quick, change!

This game is designed to prepare your players to move around the pitch rapidly and in unison.

Objective: To improve transition and quick shooting.

Age group: U8s upwards. **Number of players:** Between eight and 16.

Set up: Create a 40 yards by 30 yards playing area with goals at both ends. Split your squad into two teams. Ideally, you will have 12 players so you can have two teams of six. But you can play with less (four or five to a team) or as many as 16 (up to eight players per team).

If you have more than 16 players in your squad, choose 12 players to play Quick, Change! and set up another game for the remainder.

How to play: Half of each team play soccer with the remainder standing on their own goal line. They can stop the ball going into the goal with their feet or bodies, but not with their hands.

When you shout 'change!', the outfield players immediately swap places with the players in the goals. If an outfield player touches the ball after you shout 'change!', award a free kick to the other team.

Coaching points:

- Shout 'change!' at unpredictable intervals - between 10 seconds and four minutes.
- Reward really quick transition by playing in a short, wide pitch.
- The wider the goals, the more difficult they are to defend, and the more you encourage quick shooting by your players.

Three BIG goals

As any top striker will tell you, scoring goals requires a bit more than just good kicking technique. Many young soccer players lack confidence in their own ability and need to be actively encouraged to 'pull the trigger' when they are within range of the goal.

They also need to be reassured that it doesn't matter if they miss the target, and that a miss is better than no shot at all. You can do this by playing Three BIG Goals. It is a fast paced and exciting game that soccer players of all ages enjoy!

Objective: To encourage shots on goal. **Age group:** U7 upwards.

Set up: Create a circular playing area about 40 yards across. Position three big goals (15 yards wide) at equal intervals around the circumference of the circle. Divide your squad into three teams.

How to play: The three teams play soccer in the circle. Teams do not have a goal to defend and can score in any goal. Play the first team to score five goals wins the game - this encourages quick, positive shooting.

If you want to reward efforts on goal, play first to 10 and award a point for a shot and two for a goal.

1v1 to goal

This great game will improve your players' desire to win the ball before their opponent and sharpen their shooting skills.

Objective: To encourage a 'be first' mentality and take quick shots.

Age group: U6 upwards. **Number of players:** Whole squad.

Set up: Place a normal-sized goal on one end of a 30 yards by 40 yards playing area. Place one flat cone about 20 yards in front of both posts. Put a goalkeeper in goal and divide your squad into two teams. Place each team next to a goalpost. You stand to one side of the playing area with a supply of balls.

How to play: On your command, the first player in each line runs around the cone in front of their post. As they run, you play a ball into the playing area midway between the cones and the goal. Both players try to be first to the ball and score in the goal. The first team to 10 points wins the game.

Pressure Cooker

This game will encourage your players to win possession. It also helps them practice jumping and heading, and playing in a confined space.

Objective: To reward players who are first to the ball and players who win the ball in the air.

Age group: U10 upwards. **Number of players:** Whole squad.

Set up: Create a small pitch (20 yards by 20 yards) - a pressure cooker. Place normal-sized goals on each end line and divide your players into two evenly matched teams. You stand outside the pitch on the half way line with a supply of balls.

How to play: Start the game by throwing a ball in the air. Award one point for the team who touches the ball first, two points for a header and four points for a goal. If you want to focus on competitiveness in the air, call the ball dead if no-one touches it before it hits the ground.

Coaching notes: The short pitch compresses the play (hence the game name 'pressure cooker') and forces more physical contact. It also rewards players who take quick, hard shots. The first team to 10 points wins the game.

The Maradona v Messi game

This simple game aims to improve your players' close control and give them confidence when in possession of the ball and running at opposition players.

Objective: To encourage flair and dribbling ability.

Age group: U7 upwards. **Number of players:** Whole squad.

Set up: Create a grid approximately 30 yards by 40 yards with goals at both ends. Divide your players into teams of four, wearing bibs.

How to play: Normal soccer rules apply and the games last 10 or 15 minutes. Pick a player from each team to be either Maradona or Messi. When either of these players get the ball, they must try to score a goal by beating the players in front of them. They are not allowed to pass. If they lose possession or the ball goes out of play, the game re-starts.

Coaching notes: Encourage the players to express themselves and to use their speed and dribbling skills. Change the players who are Maradona or Messi every three minutes so everyone has a turn.

Protect your team mate

This simple game without a ball gets your players working together in order to protect their team mates.

Objective: To encourage players to take responsibility for their team mates and to co-operate with group members.

Age group: U7s upwards. **Number of players:** Whole squad.

Set up:

Create several 10 yards by 10 yards grids. One for every four players in your squad.

How to play: Three of the four players form a circle or triangle. They link arms at the wrist, shoulders or elbows, and are not allowed to break that connection. The fourth player is the tagger and starts the game outside the circle/triangle.

One of the three players is designated the target and the job of the other two members is to shuffle, move, spin and otherwise protect the target from being tagged. This competition continues for 15 seconds before another player is designated the tagger and the game continues.

The goal is to have everyone take turns being a protector and one turn being a tagger. Keep track of wins and losses as a protector and as a tagger so all four players are competing for the best win-loss record.

Four-sided keepaway

This simple game will help your players' passing, control and movement. It also encourages teamwork and communication.

Objective: To practice support play, ball control and 'vision'.

Age group: U10 upwards.

Number of players: Whole squad.

Set up: Create a 25 yards by 25 yards square grid with goals on two of the four sides. Divide your squad into three teams.

How to play:

Two teams play keepaway in the grid. The third team is positioned around the sides of the square. These players act as side supports, receiving and returning passes to the team in possession. They cannot be tackled but should be restricted to two or three touches of the ball. Or have a time limit of four seconds to return a pass.

The team that puts together four or five passes (depending on the skill of your players) can shoot at either goal. You can award one point for reaching the required number of passes and additional points for scoring. Play to a set score and then switch teams.

Coaching points: Young players may have difficulty keeping the ball away from the other team, even for one or two passes. If they are getting frustrated, reduce the number of players on one team or make the playing area bigger.

Vision On!

This is a feedback game that encourages players to understand their own field position and those of their team mates.

Objective: To improve players' awareness of other positions, and to know what's going on around them.

Age group: U8s upwards.

Number of players: Whole squad.

Set up: Use a 40 yards by 50 yards playing area with goals opposite each other at two ends. Divide your players into two teams wearing bibs.

How to play: The teams play soccer in the usual way. Before you begin, reinforce the need for each player to know what position they are playing (defender, midfielder or attacker). Make sure they also know their position relative to the playing area (left, right or center).

After every minute or two, freeze the play and ask the player with the ball to close their eyes and point to where the other members of their team are (or should be!) on the pitch.

Award points for correct answers.

Fast Shooting

This simple game will improve your players' awareness in front of goal and boost their goalkeeping skills.

Objective: To improve shooting technique.

Age group: U7 upwards.

Number of players: Whole squad.

Equipment: Enough cones to create a number of 15 yards by 20 yards grid. Have one goal (full size is great) but no net, and four or five balls per grid.

Set up: Place the goal in the center of the grid. Divide your players into teams of three.

How to play:

Have one team of three per grid. Place one shooter with a ball at each end of the grid and a goalkeeper in the goal.

Shooters alternately try to score past the goalkeeper one at a time. If the goalkeeper makes a save, he becomes a shooter and the shooter becomes the goalkeeper. The first player to score five goals wins the game.

Defense v attack

Objective: To introduce 1v1 defending and attacking skills.

Age group: U11 upwards.

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Create a 40 yards by 30 yards playing area with a full-size goal at one end. Divide your squad into two teams - defenders and attackers - and one goalkeeper.

How to play: The attackers wait on the end line opposite the goal. The defenders stand next to the goal. The first defender plays the ball to the first attacker. When the attacker touches the ball, the defender runs out and tries to stop the attacker from scoring.

As soon as a goal is scored, the defender wins the ball or the ball otherwise goes dead (leaves play), the next defender plays a ball out to the next attacker and the game continues. Play for five minutes and switch the teams round.

Make it competitive: see who can score the most goals in their allotted five minutes.

Progression: Play 2v2.

Coaching points: Defense v attack includes having lines of players, so you must keep the game moving or the waiting players will get bored. If you have more than eight players, set up two (or more) games so you never have more than four defenders or four attackers.

The defenders should be encouraged to close down the attackers quickly and force them to the outside of the playing area. Remind your defenders of FSOL: get there Fast, Slow down when you get near, force them Outside, get Low.

Tell your attackers to move towards goal quickly and shoot at the earliest opportunity. Get them to try to trick their way past the defender with a dummy or feint (or even knock the ball through their legs!).

A complete coaching session for U8s to U18s

This is an example of a successful coaching session I led with my girls' U10s team. Use the drills included in this newsletter and watch your players improve their fitness, ball control and passing, and overall teamwork. If you include today's favorite game, Squeeze the play, the session should last no more than 75 minutes.

Warm up - Run to the empty cone

10 minutes

Set Up: Divide your players into groups of three or four and get them to stand about 15 yards apart in a square or triangle formation. Give each player a cone to stand next to and place one spare cone on the ground within each group. Supply one ball per group.

How to play: The ball is passed from one player to another in each group. Immediately after passing, the first passer must run to the spare cone. The player receiving the pass will then pass to another player and run to the new spare cone - the cone that the first passer vacated, and so on.

Progression:

The player in possession calls out the name of the player they are passing to before they make the pass.

Coaching notes:

This is a deceptively simple game. It requires players to stay alert and move quickly. If it's done properly, a pleasing passing and moving rhythm can be established.

Make the warm up competitive by seeing which group can last the longest without making a mistake.

Age adjustments:

Move U8s closer together (about 5 yards apart) and allow them two or three touches. For U13s and upwards, start with one touch. Move them closer together (about 10 yards apart) to test their reactions and ball control.

Game - Team escort run

Set Up:

Create groups of four. Each group stands behind a cone with a second cone about 20 yards away. The group decides in what order they are going to run (players 1 - 4). Supply one ball per group.

How to play:

Player 1 runs to the cone and back, then links arms with player 2, who accompanies player 1 back to the cone while dribbling a ball. They return to the start.

Player 2 leaves the ball for player 3, who links arms with, and accompanies player 1 on the next run. When they return, player 1 takes player 4 out and back. Then it's player 2's turn to take over the running role and repeat the exercise.

Create a competition between the groups to see who can complete the exercise the quickest.

Remember to now take a drinks break (5 minutes).

The next game we played - Squeeze the Play - is today's favorite game (see below). After this, it was time to split the players up to finish the session with a few SSGs (small-sided games). My personal favorite is Paul Cooper's 1-0 game, first published in newsletter number 3.

Basically, the 1-0 game is a game of 4v4 where the rules have been changed slightly. The game only lasts for five minutes and a team can only win by one goal (for example 1-0, 2-1, 3-2).

These simple conditions have a major effect. For example, a team that goes 1-0 down no longer needs a goalkeeper as the other side is not trying to score again. So the goalkeeper can become an additional outfield player.

The team that goes a goal up simply has to play out a few minutes at most to win the game. This encourages the players to pass, support each other and keep possession. Excellent habits to get into!

After a few rounds of the 1-0 game, it's time for a quick cool down, a chat about the weekend's match and then the players go off with their parents... with a big smile on their faces!

Squeeze the Play

This easy to follow game can be used separately or part of a larger training session.

Objective: To encourage quick transition, pressurizing of opponents, keeping possession and scoring goals.

Age group: U8s upwards

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Play 4v4 in a 40 yards by 30 yards playing area marked with a halfway line. For a goal to count, the whole of the attacking team has to be in their opponent's half when the ball crosses the line. If the attacking team can win the ball in their opponent's half and keep it there until they score, that goal counts as two.

Progression:

If a player is in their opponent's half when a goal is scored against their team, that goal counts double. This forces players to work hard to get behind the ball when their team loses possession.

Down the channel

This simple game encourages your players to get their heads up to look, and promotes good teamwork.

Objective: To encourage players to use the full width of the pitch and to improve communication.

Age group: U10s upwards.

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Use or create a full-size mini soccer pitch with goals at each end. Mark out a four yards wide channel with flat cones, in from each touch line. Divide your players into three teams of four or five. Goalkeepers are optional.

How to play: Two of the three teams play soccer in the area between the channels. The third team is divided into the two channels (two or three players in each). The two teams playing each other must pass to a player in a channel before they can score. The players in the channel cannot be tackled and must pass back to the team that passed to them.

Coaching notes: Encourage the players in the channels to actively assist the teams in the middle of the pitch by moving up and down, and calling for the ball.

- Award two points for a goal scored from a cross made by a player in a channel.

Progression:

- Limit the players in the channel to two touches.

- Limit all the players to two or three touches if they are capable.

Win 1v1 battles to win more matches

A pre-requisite for your players being able to win a 1v1 contest is to have good ball skills, especially a good first touch. This gives a player that most valuable commodity - time. Time to get their head up and see where support is. And time to see where the threat is coming from. So, working on passing and receiving skills should form part of every practice session.

That doesn't mean you have to line your players up like soldiers and get them to knock the ball backwards and forwards ad nauseam. Passing and receiving skills are better practiced in games where keeping possession is the team's objective. Basic keepaway is good. Split your players into groups of five or seven and play 4v1 or 5v2. Make the game competitive - which group can keep the ball the longest? Which group can play 20 passes before they lose possession?

Even better than keepaway for improving basic ball skills is Paul Cooper's 1-0 game. I featured this small-sided game (for an explanation of this term, see today's Clinic) in newsletter 3, and it's one of my favorites. I use it in most practice sessions for U10s upwards.

Here is a reminder of how it is played.

1-0 game

Players play a 'normal' soccer match that lasts for five minutes, but they can only win by one goal.

When a goal is scored, the team that scored must try and keep possession and can't score again. If they do, the goal is disallowed and a goal kick follows. If the losing team scores, bringing the scoreline back to 1-1, either team can then score to make it 2-1.

The leading team's objective is to keep possession until the final whistle.

This is a simple game, but effective at improving ball control and first touch. And your players will love playing it! However, although their first touch will improve, you also need to show them simple skills to help them stop their opponent taking the ball away. One such skill is the circle turn.

The circle turn

Coach this skill first as a 1v1 and then progress so the situation becomes a 2v1 with a support player. To demonstrate, ask a player to pass a ball to you and another to try to win possession.

When you receive the ball, trap it under the sole of one foot, put your body between the ball and your opponent and lean back slightly. One arm should be held out for balance.

As your player moves around you, trying to get to the ball, pull the ball around in a circle using the sole of your foot.

Unopposed practice

Get your players to practice this skill in pairs to begin with. Working in a small grid, one player passes to the other and then closes them down. The receiver shields the ball as described above.

Small group work

When the basic skill has been mastered, introduce a third player. This player waits for 10 seconds before moving into a position where they can receive a pass from the player shielding the ball. Swap roles regularly.

Large group work

Position a line of players on both sides of a goal and a third line of players about 20 yards away from the goal. Serve a ball about 10 yards from the goal. The first players on each side of the goal run out and challenge for the ball.

A player from the third line starts after the count of three and acts as a support player for whichever attacker wins possession. The player who wins possession may try to score themselves, or can hold the ball until they can pass to the support player.

The defender scores a point by winning the ball, and the attackers score a point by getting a goal.

Coaching note

If you have more than two or three players in each line, this game will move too slowly. So use two goals if you have more than nine players. Have players rotate to a different line after their turn.

Finish the session with a scrimmage. Praise players who demonstrated the skills they have been practicing. Encourage all players to move into a position where they can help the player who has the ball, and to call out loudly when they get there.

Knock it off!

Objective: To practice shooting technique and decision making.

Age group: U5 upwards.

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Divide your players into teams of four or five. Two teams play in a 30 yards by 20 yards grid. At two opposite ends of the grids place a line of four or five balls balancing on flat cones.

How to play: Each team protects one line of balls and attacks the other line. Serve a ball into the middle of the grid. The two teams battle for possession of the ball and the winners try to knock their opponent's balls off the cones by shooting at them. After each shot, the players return to their starting positions and repeat. The team that knocks off all their opponent's balls is the winner.

Variations: Players can only shoot with the foot you designate. Let any team attack any ball - the team that knocks off the most balls wins.

3 v 3 + 3

This is a favorite game of mine. It's simple to play but not easy for very young players. For that reason I recommend you don't try playing it until your players have some awareness of space and are reasonably proficient at holding and shielding the ball.

Objective: To promote an awareness of space and correct positioning. To encourage good support play.

Skill level: Intermediate.

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Create a 30 yards by 30 yards playing area. Divide your players into three groups of three wearing bibs. If you have an odd number, it's okay to have one or two groups of four.

How to play: Nominate one team as the defenders. The other two teams join forces, playing keepaway. If a player from either of the two teams gives the ball away to the defenders, their team becomes the new defenders.

Coaching notes: If your players find this game easy, limit their number of touches and/or make the playing area smaller. If they find it hard, make the playing area bigger and/or reduce the numbers on the defending team. Look out for, and encourage, good communication, correct spacing, team shape, support play and quick, accurate passing.

SSG 4:

Links: [Intro Small Side Games](#) | [SSG Part 1](#) | [SSG Part 2](#) | [SSG Part 3](#) |

Possession with Turf-Shift:

A good workout that offers plenty of movement for your players and sharpens their control and technique...as it takes lots of teamwork and communication to move between the squares.

SET UP: Set up an area of 30x30 yards split into 15x15-yard quarters. We've used 14 players and you need bibs, balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: You need to split your squad into two groups of seven and start playing two basic 5v2 games in opposite boxes. The two defenders in each group have to carry bibs and after winning the ball they swap places with the player who lost it, giving the bib to that player. After three successful passes, the team has to move into a box not occupied by another set of players. That means each team is moving into different sectors as they try to keep the ball from defenders. Start with two touches but try to get them to use one touch as much as possible. If they are having trouble, make it 6v1 so they get more success.

TECHNIQUE: This game has all the elements of rondo, but adds another decision into the equation, making it a good test of tactics as well as technique..



Win The Ball:

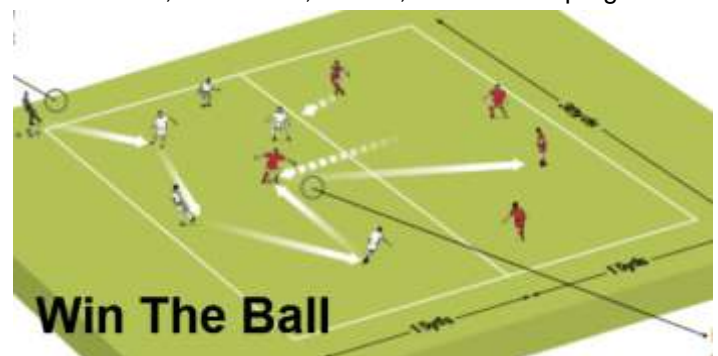
This uses all the elements of pre-season training: passing, communication, movement, control, and with the progression comes a tactical challenge. Players need to concentrate and react quickly, so it helps with general fitness too.

SET UP: Set up a 30x30-yard area split into two 15x30-yard zones. We've used 10 players plus the coach as a server.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your squad into two teams of five. Give a ball to one team and allow the other team to send two players into the opposition half to get it back.

- If they win it they can play it back to team-mates, but with two players in the wrong half they must react quickly or the team that lost it could chase it quicker. The game is one touch and continuous.

- Progress the game by giving both teams a ball. The winner is the team that can capture the other team's ball while keeping their own.



- In the progression, teams can send up to three players into the other half to win the ball, but that only leaves two players to look after their own ball. If it goes out of play a new ball is played into the opposite team.

TECHNIQUE: In the progression the emphasis is on fun, which is achieved using technique, tactics and communication.

The Swamp:

Helps players brush-up on their passing, their runs off the ball, dribbling and close range finishing.

SET UP: Set up an area of 50x30 yards with five-yard end zones filled with cones. Goals are a further five yards outside the area.

We've used 10 players plus keepers and a coach as server. If you have odd numbers, use a floater inside the main area.

You need cones, balls, bibs and two **goals**.

HOW TO PLAY: Inside the main area teams try to keep possession until they see the opportunity to dribble through the swamp at either end. If they get through the swamp without hitting a cone (alligator) they can score in the goal by passing the ball in with accuracy but not power.

If they hit an alligator the attack stops and possession is given to the other team.

If they score they keep possession and must attack the opposite end. Once an attacker has entered the swamp, no one else can go in until he has shot.

TECHNIQUE: Good technique should be praised as there are a lot of decisions to make when taking a run through the cones. Finishing is important here, after the hard work of getting through the cones.



Bank The Points:

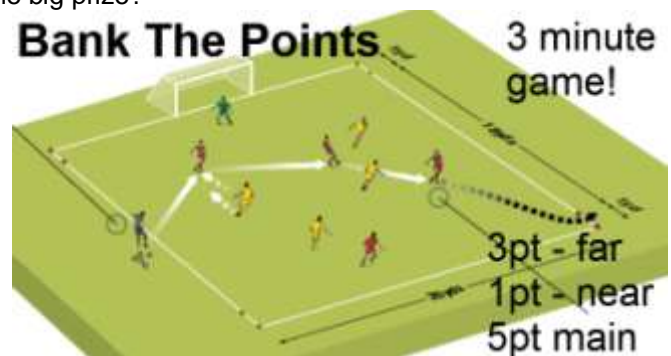
A fun game of options, teams score in three different goals but also defend three goals too. Should they bank points quickly or try to beat the keeper for the big prize?

SET UP: Set up an area of 20x20 yards with one-yard wide goals placed next to the corners on each side: one pair red and one pair yellow. You also need a main goal with a keeper.

HOW TO PLAY: Split players into two teams of four, plus a keeper. Both can score in the main goal but the reds can also score by running the ball through the red mini goals and the yellows can also score by running it through the yellow mini goals. The mini goals farthest from the main goal count as three points, the two nearest are worth one point, and scoring past the keeper in the main goal is worth five points. If the keeper saves, he kicks the ball high into the centre of the goal. Restarts after goals are from the server. Play in three-minute games so there is a time pressure.

TECHNIQUE: Develop an awareness of options around the goal with this game because banking points can win.

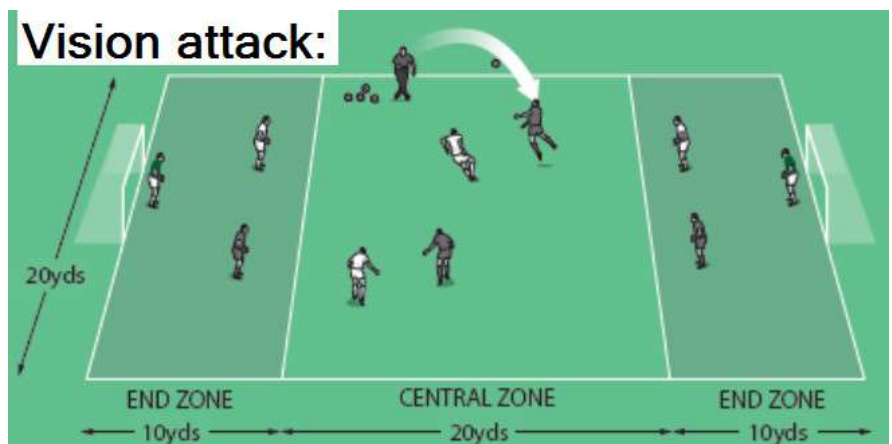
Finishing, communication and vision are all factors. The attackers make decisions on banking points, while the defenders cover three goals and move swiftly when they attack..



Vision Attack:

Helps to coach players in decision making, field vision....in knowing where the goal is, and in basic skills such as shooting, shielding and passing.

- Set up 3 zones (2 end zones of 10 yards each + a central 20 yard middle zone) - you need balls, bibs, cones and goals.
- The game is 4v4 plus two 'neutral' goalkeepers.



- Players are fixed in their zones – 2v2 in the central zone with a player from each team in the end zones.
- Attackers can score in either goal, but the shot must be from within the end zone.
- If a defender wins the ball in the end zone, he becomes an attacker, though the ball must go back into the central zone before a shot can be taken.
- After each goal, or should the ball go out of play, the game is restarted by you throwing a ball high into the air in the central zone.
- Rotate players frequently and play for 15 minutes.

Coaching notes: The 2v2 in the center is the engine room of the game. These players must be combative, and must link up and communicate well. Play is in both directions, so midfielders must look both ways, receive the ball on the half-turn where necessary and always keep their heads up.

- Attackers and defenders must be ready to alter their mentality quickly – one second defending, the next attacking, they have to be ready to perform very different tasks.
- The game also takes patience and craft. Winning the ball in the final third doesn't present the attacker with an instant opportunity to score, so you're looking for him to problem solve in an attempt to fashion a clear chance.

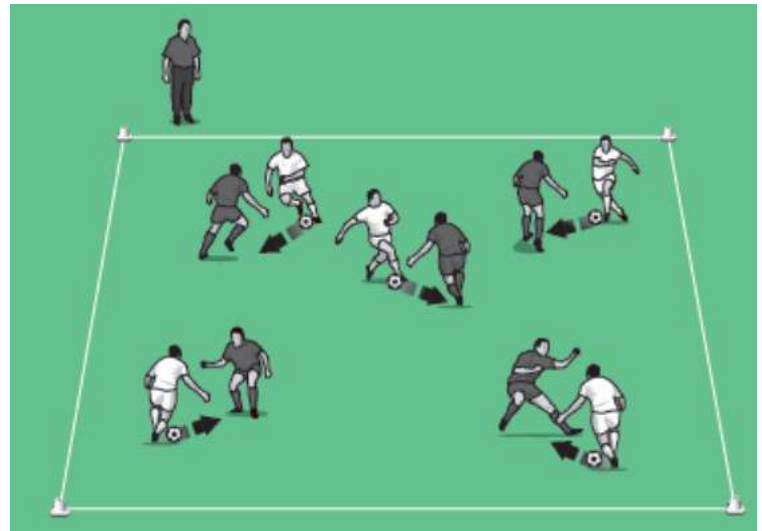
Dribble, jockey and hold off:

- Create a playing area big enough for your players to move around in comfortably.
- Arrange your players into pairs.
- On your whistle, the man in possession of the ball must dribble and try various skills.
- The second player must jockey and continuously change position in relation to the dribbling player.
- On your second whistle the player in possession now turns away from his partner and attempts to hold him off.
- On your third whistle, the players change roles.
- After two minutes switch partners.
- The warm-up lasts for 10 minutes.

Coaching notes: Tell your attacker to try skills that will make life hard for the defender.

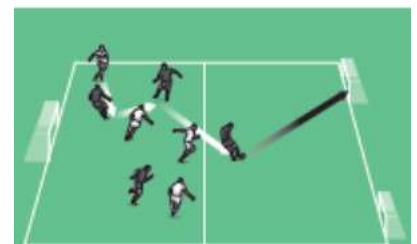
He should look to get his body in between the defender and the ball, and should use his arms to hold off and add extra distance.

- Tell your defender to move his feet quickly and concentrate on the ball.



Dedicated Defending:

- Set up a 40x30-yard area with two small goals at one end (to the sides) and one target goal at the other.
- Play 4v4 - the players defending the two goals play like a four-man midfield, while the other four defend the single goal as a defensive unit.
- The team defending the single goal must be tight, showing opponents outside and closing up space. If they turn over possession they can counter quickly and attack the two goals.
- The other team have a different job...namely protecting the wings; so they show inside.
- Play five attacks then swap team roles.
- Players must be adaptable to the changing conditions and need to work as a unit, whether they're defending the wide or the central goals.
- We're looking for plenty of communication, players advancing with their heads up, and an awareness of getting back to cover team mates when out of possession.
- When the team defending the big goal has the ball you want them to get tight and defend the middle, pushing the attacking team wide. Encourage quick counter-attacks as well.
- The team defending the two goals must replicate how a midfield would defend against the opposition, covering the whole area between the two goals. They need to spread out and support both sides of the pitch, and when winning the ball, must



quickly try and get into the danger area in front of goal before the defending team can recover.

Defend Well and Receive the Reward:

Shows defenders that by working together to stop the attack they will be rewarded with a chance to attack their opponent.

- Create a playing area measuring 50x30 yards, with a goal at each end.
- This game is 4v4 plus keepers – teams begin from behind the goals they defend.
- Two players from one team come forward against one attacker who, when on or near the central line, is served the ball.
- He attempts to score in an overloaded 1v2 situation.
- The defenders must pressure and try to stop the attacker.
- If they manage to win possession of the ball then they immediately attack the opposite goal 2v1 against the attacker's team mate who comes onto the pitch from behind the goal.
- If both defenders attack 2v1 and lose the ball, the lone attacker can pass back to his team mate in the other half of the pitch for a free shot at goal.
- Continue the pattern until each lone attacker has had two attacks, then see which team has scored most goals.

Technique and tactics:

- Tactically, the defender nearest to the ball must pressure.
- Team mates need to work together to win the ball.
- And teams must be ready to counter quickly and positively when play is turned over.

Quick Thinking

This is a good warm-up game you can use before a training session or a match. It is suitable for all ages of players.

Set up: divide your players into groups of five. Four players form a semi-circle facing the fifth player and a good passing distance away. Three of the four players have a ball. The fifth player does not have a ball.

How to play: the fifth player receives a pass who controls it with their first touch and passes back to a player facing her who doesn't have a ball with her second touch. She can't pass it back to the player who passed it to her.

Coaching points:

- Start slowly and focus on 100% accuracy of pass.
- Look for a good first touch from the target player and that they stay on their toes.

Progression:

- Move to one touch.
- Increase/decrease the distance between the players.

Knock it Off!

This game is designed for inexperienced players to practice their passing skills in a fun, competitive way. But older players will enjoy it too!

Set up: Divide your players into pairs or small teams. Place three flat cones opposite each team and balance a ball on top of each cone. The cones should be a good "passing distance" away from the players. For six year olds, that might be 10ft. For 12 year olds, the cones could be 30ft away. Each team has a ball.

Objective: the winning team is the team that knocks all three balls off their cones in the shortest time.

How to play: The first player in each team tries to knock a ball off a cone in a specific way. You might, for example, require the players to use the side of their foot or their laces. Hit or miss, the first player retrieves the team's ball and gives it to the next member of the team as quickly as possible.

It's a knockout!

Objective: to improve decision making, communication, passing and shooting skills. Experience: any.

Set up: three goals are evenly spaced around the edge of a circular playing area.

The size of the playing area depends on the age and experience of your players. For players up to the age of about eight, I suggest the circle is about 25 yards across. Divide your squad into three teams.

How to play: each team defends one of the goals and attacks the other two.

Each team starts with five lives. Every time they concede a goal they lose a life. When they get to zero, they are out.

Alternatively, the team that loses all its lives first can join forces with one of the other teams.

Coaching points: making the goals big and playing with no goalkeepers encourages quick shooting.

If you allow the first team that is knocked out to combine with one of the remaining teams, you will see how your players cope in outnumbered situations.

Take a chance!

The players decide how this game should be played. Will they take the easy option or take the harder one and potentially win more points?

Objective: to improve decision making, team work.

Suitability: intermediate or advanced.

Set up: divide your players into teams of four and give each pair of teams a small sided soccer pitch to play on.

How to play: first team to score gets a point and the first team to five points wins.

But here's the twist! Before you start, give each team 10 seconds to decide how many players they want on the pitch.

If they decide to play with all four they get one point for every goal. If they play with three they get two points, if they play with just two on the pitch they get three points for every goal and if one of them is brave enough to have a go on his own, he gets four points for the team if he can score first.

Both teams have the opportunity to change the number of players they use after each goal is scored.

It's loads of fun and makes your players think tactically.

Shoot! Score! Win!

This game is designed to improve your players' ability to shoot quickly and accurately. It will also encourage them to follow up on their shots which, on its own, will result in your team scoring many more goals this season! The variation of Shoot! Score! Win! is also a great workout for your goalkeepers.

Set up: Divide your squad into two teams of between four and six players. If you have more than 12 players, set up two games.

- Create a playing area about 30 yards long and about 20 yards wide.
- Place a team behind each end line.
- Make a goal in the center of the playing area with poles or corner flags.
- Place a cone between each team and the goal to mark the point at which your players should take their shot
- Place a few balls at both ends of the playing area.

How to play:

1. To start the game, team A sends one of its players to be goalkeeper.
2. The first player in team B dribbles a ball (at speed) to the marker cone and shoots. This player follows their shot and shoots again if team A's goalkeeper drops the ball.
3. Team A's goalkeeper retrieves the ball and returns to her team.
4. The shooter from team B is now in goal and faces a player from team A who dribbles out and shoots. After taking their shot, this player takes over in goal and so on.
5. The first team to score X number of goals wins.

Coaching points: impress on your players the need to dribble at speed, shoot quickly and follow their shot. You can, if you wish, further encourage a "finishing" mentality by awarding two goals if a player scores from a fumbled shot.

Also, if the shooter does not follow her shot and get into goal quickly, the opposition will have an open goal to shoot at. You probably won't need to, but make sure the next shooter doesn't wait for the goalkeeper to get ready. They should start to dribble at goal as soon as they have the ball.

Vary the distance to goal and the size of the goal so players can experience success then make it harder by increasing the distance to goal and making the goal smaller.

Encourage players to shoot hard.

Variation: choose one player to be the goalkeeper. The rest of the players take it in turns to dribble and shoot, i.e. a player from team A shoots followed by a player from team B in quick succession. The goalkeeper has to work hard: save, turn, save, turn. Although this game involves players waiting in line, the speed of the game means they should only be waiting for a few seconds.

Six pack shooting

Objective: to practice passing/shooting with all parts of the foot.

Experience: any.

Set up: create an area 30 yards long by 20 yards wide with a three-yard-wide "exclusion zone" marked across the middle. Split your players into two teams.

How to play: start the game with five or six balls in each half of the playing area.

On your command, both teams have to use a specified part of their foot to kick the balls into their opponent's half.

At the end of a specified time, the team with the least balls in their half of the pitch is the winner.

Play several games, using a different part of the foot each time.

Coaching points:

- Vary the parts of the feet that the players can use. You could start with the toes, then ask them to use their inside of their foot, then the outside, heel, instep and sole.
- Start each round with a quick demonstration of the correct technique (see the article above).

- At the end of the game, ask your players which part of their feet they find the easiest to use and why.

2v2 to targets

This is a very simple but very effective way to practice quick passing and supporting play with older or more experienced players.

Experience: intermediate.

Set-up: Two teams of four in an area 30 yards long by 20 yards wide, marked with flat cones.

How to play:

- Each team has two players in the inside of the playing area and a player at each end as a target.
- The objective is to get the ball from one target player to the next without losing possession.
- The two teams play in two different directions. One team plays north to south, the other east to west.
- Make the game competitive by awarding a point for each successful play. First to five points wins.

Tip: set up several playing areas next to each other and rotate the teams so that all the teams play each once. Then add up the scores to decide an overall winner.

Free form soccer

Choosing the right formation for a youth soccer team who play four, five or six-a-side isn't easy.

- Shall I use 2-2-2? Or 1-2-1? Or 0-4-0?
- Should I have wingers and a central midfielder?
- How many attackers do I need?

The permutations are virtually endless and it's no wonder many coaches find it difficult to decide on the right set up for their team.

But if you're coaching very young children I suggest that you don't need to worry about formations at all.

Instead of struggling to find a formation that suits your players, why not work on getting them to really understand the principles of pressure/cover/balance then give them the freedom to make their own decisions regarding where to position themselves on the pitch?

Playing without a formation – even in small-sided soccer – sounds risky. But if you can create a team of players who know what their individual and collective responsibilities are, you really don't need to put your players into fixed positions.

Try it and let me know how it goes!

The game

Play a 4v4 scrimmage on a small pitch.

Stop play and congratulate your players when you see them moving to pressure the ball or support a team mate.

4v4 to lines

Objective: to improve passing and receiving, playing "heads up" and communication skills.

4v4 to lines also encourages wall passes (give and go) as well as spotting team mates who are making a move into a space where they can receive a "killer" pass.

Experience: intermediate upwards. This game is probably not suitable for most players less than 10 years old.

Set-up: Set up rectangular playing areas marked with lines or flat cones suitable for the age and ability of your players.

The younger and less experienced the players, the bigger the space needs to be. That may sound a bit illogical but the smaller the space, the more pressure you'll be putting on your players and the harder it will be for them to experience success.

How to play:

Teams of four try to score by getting the ball across a nominated line.

The ball must be stopped on the line or just past it to count.

After a score, the ball is left on the line for the other team.

Variations:

- The ball must be passed through a target player before scoring.
- Award extra points for defense splitting passes, i.e., through a gap between two defenders.
- After scoring on one end line, the scoring team must attack the opposite line.
- Split the pitch into horizontal thirds and place two players from each team in the center third and one from each team in the end thirds. Players cannot move out of their zones.
- Try splitting the pitch into vertical thirds – left, center, right.

4v4 with bumpers

This is a great game for improving your players' ball control and "vision".

Experience: any.

Set-up: two teams of six (four plus two "bumpers" wearing bibs) play soccer in an area 30 yards long by 20 yards wide.

How to play: The bumpers are target players and can be placed on the sidelines, by a goal or allowed to move anywhere inside the playing area.

- Game 1: teams earn a point for a successful pass to one of their bumpers.
- Game 2: teams earn a point if they can score a goal after passing to a bumper.
- Game 3: teams earn a point for passing the ball from one bumper to the other without the other team getting a touch on the ball.
- Game 4: a regular game of soccer but only bumpers can score. Change the bumpers after each goal.

In the bag

Objective: to improve weight and direction of passes.

Age group: U7s and upwards.

Set-up: Divide your players into teams of four or five. Create two open-ended "bags" for each team with semi-circles of cones that are six yards wide and about 10 yards apart.

- One of each team's bags is empty. The other contains six balls.
- The teams stand behind their empty bag.

How to play: on your command, the first player in each team runs to their bag of six balls, collects one and tries to pass it into their empty bag.

If the ball misses the bag it is out of the game.

Once the first player has tried to pass all six balls into the bag, the second player in the team repeats the exercise in the opposite direction, but only using the balls that the first player managed to get into the bag.

When every player has had a turn, the team with the most balls in their bag wins.

Progression:

1. If a player misses, they must collect the ball, bring it back and try again.
2. Pass with alternate feet: left/right.

Tip: make the game easier for younger players by making the bags bigger and deeper.

Team target tag

Target team tag is a fun warm-up you can use before a coaching session or a game.

Objective: to improve teamwork, communication and to introduce the basics shielding the ball to very young players.

Set-up: One player is nominated as the tagger and one player as the target.

The target player tucks a bib in the back of their shorts and the rest of the team link arms and huddle round her.

The tagger stands a few yards away from the group.

How to play: On your command, the tagger tries to pull the bib out of the target's shorts.

The target tells the rest of the group which way to turn so that they are shielding her from the tagger.

Play for 30 seconds or until the tagger gets the bib.

Progression: Split your players into teams and allow them to choose their tagger and who should be their target.

Play several rounds to find out which team makes the best decisions.

Border wars

For more games like this, check out Fun Soccer Games for 5 to 8 year olds.

Objective: to improve short passing skills, keep possession, defend and intercept passes.

Age group: Four to eight-year-olds.

Set-up: create an area 40 yards long by 20 yards wide with 10-yard wide zones at each end.

Divide your players into two teams. Each team has a ball and occupies an end zone.

Give players on both teams a number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc).

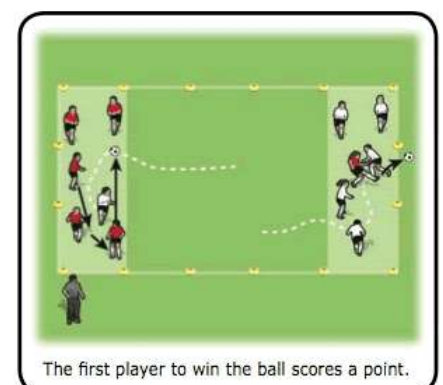
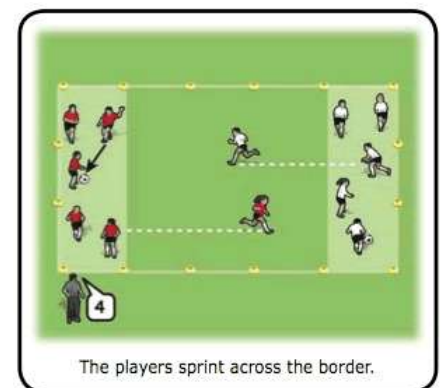
How to play: both teams pass a ball to each other in sequence: 1 to 2 to 3 etc.

Note: encourage the players to move to a new patch of grass immediately after passing. If you don't, they will play statues!

Call out a number. The players with that number run across to the opposite end zone and try to steal the ball or knock it out of the playing area. The first player to succeed wins a point for their team.

The first team to 10 points wins.

Note: when a number is called, the rest of the team do not have to pass in sequence any more.



Progression: call out two numbers and/or restrict the number of touches the players in possession are allowed.

Find the coach

Objective: to practice ball control, passing, support play and intercepting passes.

Age range: U4s to U7s

Set-up: create an area 20 yards long by 15 yard wide with flat cones.

Split your players up into two teams wearing different colored bibs (pinnies) i.e., one team wearing white and one team wearing blue.

You stand in the middle of one side line and the teams stand either side.

How to play: put a ball in play and call out "white!" or "blue!".

The nominated team sends two players out who try to win the ball and pass it back to you. The other team sends out one player who also tries to win the ball and pass it to you.

You should move around the playing area so players must get their heads up to find you.

First team to "Find The Coach" five times, wins.

Coaching points: encourage your players to support each other and shield the ball when under pressure.

If neither team can pass the ball to you within 30 seconds, call "time" and start again.

Progression:

- Play 3v1 or 4v1.
- If your players are old enough, you can restrict the number of touches they are allowed before they have to pass.

Four goals, two keepers

Objectives: to encourage your outfield players to play with their heads up and spot goal-scoring opportunities, and to encourage your goalkeepers to keep their eye on the ball and predict where the next attack is coming from.

Age range: U9 to U14

Set-up: play this game on a slightly narrower pitch than usual. For U10s, 40 yards long by 15 yards wide is ideal.

Place a small goal at each corner of the playing area.

Each team has one goalkeeper and between three and five outfield players.

How to play: Each team – and each goalkeeper – has two goals to defend.

First team to score X number of goals wins the game.

Alternatively, play for a set time.

Put a different player in goal every few minutes or after a goal is scored.

Progression:

- Restrict outfield players to three touches.
- Mark an exclusion zone about five yards in front of the goals where only the goalkeeper is allowed. This encourages your players to take their chances more positively and stops them trying to walk the ball into the net.
- Set up several playing areas and play a mini tournament.

Handball!

I have played Handball as a warm-up to coaching sessions with all ages of players – from six to 16 – and they all love it! Young children really like playing games that involve adults and as there's no physical contact in Handball, mums and dads can join in too. I've found that mixing mums/dads and players in games like this is good for team bonding and makes for a good, fun start to a session.

Objective: improving off the ball movement, support play, quick passing and communication.

Set-up: Handball is played in teams of four to six on a small soccer pitch with a goal at each end. About 30 yards long by 20 yards wide is good for 10-year-olds.

Put your teams in bibs (pennies) to aid identification.

How to play

Points are scored by throwing the ball into the other team's goal.

Alternatively, teams score by throwing the ball to a team mate who is stationed on an end line.

The rules

- Players can only pass the ball by throwing it.
- Once a player receives the ball they cannot run with it. They must stand still and look for the next pass.

Tip: allow very young children to take a limited number of steps with the ball.

- The team not in possession can only win the ball by intercepting a pass or picking up a dropped ball – no grabbing the ball out of a player's hands!
- If the ball goes out of the playing area award a throw-in to the opposing team.
- Physical contact is penalized by a penalty throw from a spot about 10 yards out from the goal.

Progression:

1. Players must pass the ball in less than four seconds. If they don't, the ball is given to the other team.
2. Take the goals away and place a player from each team on the end lines. The objective is now to pass the ball – with feet – to your team mate on the end line. If you can make a successful pass, you join your team mate on the line. The first team to get all their players on their end line is the winner.

Stop the shot

Objective: to encourage your defenders to keep attackers out wide and not dive into the tackle.

Age range: U10 upwards.

Set-up: Play this game on half of a small-sided pitch – about 30 yards long by 25 yards wide – with a goal at one end.

Divide your players into two teams: defenders and attackers.

The defenders stand on the end line opposite the goal. The attackers stand on the sidelines.

A goalkeeper is an optional extra.

Tip: if you have more than eight players – four defenders and four attackers – set up two or more playing areas to avoid players getting bored while they're waiting for their turn.

How to play:

- A defender starts the game by playing a ball out wide towards a side line. An attacker chases the ball and tries to score.
- The defender who passed the ball immediately closes down the attacker and tries to keep her away from the goal and near the touchline.
- Tackling is not allowed.
- The defender gets a point for her team if she can stop the attacker from getting a shot away for at least 20 seconds.
- When all the defenders and attackers have played, change the teams round. The team that gets the most defensive points is the winner.

Progression: add a defender who stands in the goalmouth. When the ball is played wide to the attacker, this defender is the first defender, i.e. she must close the attacker down quickly and hold her up until a second defender comes off the end line and gets into a covering position.

You can also add a second attacker who is allowed to come on 10 seconds after the ball is first played.

Points are awarded as above.

Tell your defenders: "Close down, slow down" - i.e. get there fast but don't dive in. "Work together".

Aim low

Objective: to improve shooting accuracy.

Age group: U10s upwards

Set up: Split your players into teams of three or four.

Create a rectangular or circular pitch about 20 yards long/across for each pair of teams.

Place four small goals, equally spaced, around the perimeter of the pitch.

Place a triangular cone or other small target in the corners of each goal.

Tip: I use teddy bears as the targets with my U12s. Not sure what it says about them but they seem to enjoy hitting teddies more than cones!

How to play: Teams compete to score the most goals in a set time.

If a shot hits one of the cone (or teddy) targets, it counts double.

Progression: players to score with their first touch only. Add two 'keepers who each have two goals to defend.

Don't let the ball stop

Works on ball control and shooting skills. Players of all ages.

Set-up Mark out a short, wide pitch – about 40 yards wide by 20 yards long – with a center line and a big (10-yard wide) goal at either end. Divide your players into teams of three or four. No goalkeepers.

How to play

The game starts with each team spread out in their half of the pitch. You stand on the center line and roll a ball to one of the teams.

Their objective is simple – to score a goal.

Rules

- Goals can only be scored from within your own half.
- Players must stay in their own half of the pitch at all times.
- Each player on the team must touch the ball at least once before a shot can be taken.

- The ball must not be allowed to stop – if it does, possession is passed to the other team.

Progression

Restrict players to three, two or one-touch.

Ask them to shoot with their "wrong" foot.

Challenges

- Can your players work the ball up to the halfway line without letting it stop?
- Can they lay off a good ball into the path of the shooter?
- Can they block shots with their body and gain control of the ball?
- Is anyone brave enough to stand on the halfway line and get in the way of their opponent's shots?

Under arrest

This is a great way to improve your players' marking skills.

Under arrest also helps your players learn how to get away from a marker and make space for themselves as well reinforcing the need for a good first touch.

Age range: U8s and upwards.

Set-up: two teams of four play in an area 30 yards long by 20 yards wide with a goal at each end.

How to play: outfield players choose (or are assigned) an opponent who they have to mark and who marks them when their team does not have the ball.

Tell your players: they can only be tackled by the player who is marking them and that player is the only player who they can tackle.

This encourages players to find space and pass the ball to a team mate who has managed to get away from their marker.

Play for a set time. Five minutes is probably enough – this is a tiring game, both physically and mentally.

Progression: add a spare player who plays for the team in possession. This further encourages your players to find and use a player who is not being marked.

Find the target

Objective: Find the target is a small-sided game (SSG) which requires your players to make quick, forward passes.

Find the target is also good for practicing shooting, defending, making forward runs and encouraging good movement off the ball.

Age group: U10s and upwards.

Set-up: create an area 40 yards long by 30 yards wide that is split horizontally into thirds.

Place a small goal at both ends.

Divide your players into three teams plus two goalkeepers. Teams of four are ideal but you can play with teams of three or five.

Two teams play "normal" soccer.

The players in the third team are split into two groups of target players. One group stands next to one goal, the other group stand next to the other goal.

How to play

- Players can only score following a pass to a target player.
- The target players move along the end line, trying to make themselves available for a pass.
- Target players cannot be tackled and have four seconds to pass the ball back to the team that passed to them. Or you can impose a two/three-touch limit.
- Corners are taken by target players.
- Goalkeepers throw the ball out – no kicking.
- Play five-minute games.
- Rotate the teams on the pitch with the target players in every new game.

What you're looking for

Attacking players passing to a target player at the first opportunity then moving quickly into space to get the return pass.

Smack and Trap

Gives players the opportunity to hit balls at each other as hard as they can!

The set-up below will suit a group of between four and seven players. If you have more than seven players, split your squad and run two parallel sessions. Smack and Trap is quite strenuous so make sure your players are properly warmed up."

Objective: To improve your players' ability to intercept a pass or shot and control the ball effectively.

Age range: U8s to U12s. Difficulty: Easy.

Set-up:

For U12s, create two eight-yard-wide goals about 30 yards apart (increase or reduce the sizes depending on the age of your players).

In front of each goal, mark out a tapered area about six to seven yards deep, with the goal posts at the corners.

How to Play

- Divide your squad into two teams.
- One player from each team starts in the area in front of his team's goal.
- Start with a ball at one end. The player with the ball (the attacker) shoots at the opposite goal using any part of his foot, e.g. his laces, side foot, etc.

Safety tip: All shots must be below head height by the time they reach the opponent's box.

- The opponent must intercept the shot, control the ball inside his own area, and then shoot back the other way.
- If a goal is scored, the defender goes off and swaps with a team mate.
- If the shot is intercepted, but not controlled inside the area, the defender swaps.
- If a shot goes wide, the attacker swaps.
- If a shot is too high to be controlled on the chest, the attacker swaps.
- Defenders are not allowed to use hands! Swap them if they do.

Coaching tips: Don't allow attackers to take ages lining up their shot - impose a time limit and swap out anyone who dawdles.

Progression 1. Limit the number of touches allowed.

2. Move to a small-sided game (SSG) - 2v2 or 3v3 works best on a 30 x 20 pitch divided in half with a six-yard goal at each end. No goalkeepers. The ball must be kept below head height. Players can move anywhere on the pitch but can only shoot from within their own half. Encourage quick shooting from intercepted passes.

Back to the Castle!

Back to the Castle! is a fun way to teach your players how to dribble with their heads up and work as a team.

Age range: U6s to U10s.

Difficulty: Easy.

Number of players: Use your whole squad.

Equipment: Four sets of colored training vests, some flat cones and at least 12 balls.

Set-up: Divide your players into four teams and give them different colored training vests to wear. If you don't have four different colors, base the teams on the color shirts that the players are wearing. If you have four players wearing red shirts, for example, they are the red team.

Create a 30-yard square playing area. Use flat cones to mark out a three-yard square safe zone in each corner.

Each team is allocated one corner, which is that team's "castle".

The coach stands just outside the playing area with at least 12 balls. The more balls, the better.

How to play:

- The objective of the game is for each team to get as many balls in their safe zone (or castle) as possible.
- Start the game by throwing two or three balls into the playing area.
- All the players are free to get possession of a ball and dribble it back to their castle.
- Keep throwing balls in. Soon you will have lots of 1v1 and 1v2 mini games going on.
- The game is over when all the balls are in the castles.

Coaching notes:

Players should be encouraged to steal any ball that is not stationary inside a castle.

Balls in a castle are safe and can't be stolen.

Throw the balls in different ways - high, rolling, bouncing, fast, slow.

If a ball leaves the playing area, it is dead. Players should leave it where it is and return to the game. Have an assistant or two gather the dead balls up and return them to you.

Snowball

Used it with players aged from six to 16, they've all had a blast and they've sharpened their shooting, defending and passing skills at the same time.

Age group: U7s and upwards.

Set-up: Create a short pitch with a very large goal (at least 15 yards wide) on each end line.

The size of playing area depends on the age of your players and the number in each team. As a guide, eight U7s would need a 20x15 playing area while 10 U10s would need 30x20. Split your players into two teams. There are no goalkeepers.

Coaching note: If you have more than 10 players, create two playing areas and play two games of Snowball alongside each other.

How to play: The size of the goals, the relatively short pitch and the absence of goalkeepers means it is possible to score from almost anywhere.

- Start with one player from each team on the field and encourage them to shoot as soon as they have an opportunity.
- Every time one team scores, the other team adds a player to the field - the idea being to swing the advantage back to the other team.
- Have players ready to sprint on as soon as a goal is scored and have some extra balls ready to throw in any time the ball goes out of play.
- The game is won by the team that scores against an opponent that has ALL its players on the field.

Variation: Have three teams. The resting team can play as side support players and the winners can choose to stay on and play again or take a rest break.

You're Off!

Objective: To improve possession, ball control, short passing, supporting the player on the ball.

Age range: U10s and upwards.

Difficulty: Medium.

Set-up: Divide your players into three teams with goalkeepers.

Set up a 40x30 playing area with goals at both ends.

Note: If you have an uneven number of players just make one or two of the teams bigger. If you have seventeen players, for example, you could have two teams of six and one team of five.

How to play:

There are only two rules:

1. When the ball goes over a sideline, the team that put the ball out of play leaves the field and the waiting team comes on.
2. If a goal is scored, the team that conceded the goal goes off and the waiting team comes on.

The team that wins the most games in 20 minutes is the winner.

Coaching notes:

To begin with, there is a lot of coming and going as players play the game normally, i.e., without too much thought as to the consequences of allowing the ball to go out of play.

After a while, however, they begin to put a lot of effort into keeping the ball. Short passes and close support should begin to replace hopeful kicks upfield.

You will also see players try to win the game by kicking the ball off an opponent and into touch!

It's also in a team's best interests to take lots of shots. If it scores, it wins the game but if it misses and the ball goes over the end line, it stays on anyway. However, its opponent will have to go off if it blocks the shot and the ball goes over a sideline.

Progression: Make the playing area smaller (makes the game harder) and/or reduce the number of touches each player is allowed.

On Target:

Today's game is simple, great fun and excellent for improving your players' shooting skills and ability to spot forward passes.

Age range: U10s and upwards.

Difficulty: Medium.

Set-up: Create a 40 yards long by 30 yards wide pitch with two small goals at each end of the pitch.

Divide your players into teams of five (four outfield players plus one target player).

The target player stands on the line between the two goals that her team is attacking.

How to play:

The players' objective is to make a pass to their target player, receive a return pass then score.

Rules:

- The game lasts 10 minutes.
- Attacking moves must include a pass to a target player.
- The number of touches the target player is allowed is restricted to two or three depending on the skill of your players. Alternatively, you can require the return pass to be made in less than four seconds.
- The target player cannot be tackled.

Progression: Reduce the number of touches (or the amount of time) the target player is allowed.

This encourages her team mates to get into supporting positions more quickly.

Quick Change:

Four and five-year-olds (and even older players) need to practice 1v1 skills and build their confidence in smaller-sided games before being asked to solve the problems posed by four-a-side soccer.

This 2v2 game is an excellent way to help your players practice their first touch, passing and support skills in a relatively unpressurised environment.

Age group: U5s and upwards.

Difficulty: Easy.

Number of players: Eight.

Set-up: Create a 20 yards by 15 yards playing area with two small goals set 10 yards apart on both end lines.

Divide your eight players into four teams of two.

How to play: Play 2v2 in the playing area. Each team attacks and defends two goals.

The other two teams wait at either end of the playing area. As soon as the ball goes over an end line or a goal is scored, the team waiting at that end immediately start attacking and the team that scored or kicked the ball over the end line must defend. The team that was defending leaves the playing area and waits behind their goal.

Progression: Increase the playing area to 30 yards by 20 yards and play 4v4 with four goals.

Agility Ladder Drills:

See: [Conditioning Circuits & Circle Courses](#) |

Agility Shoot:

Aim: To improve shooting technique

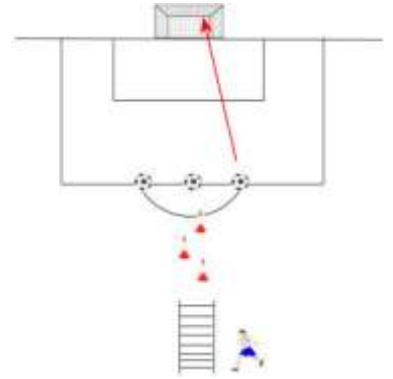
Suitable for: U9's and upwards

Equipment: 1 goal, 3 balls, 1 set of ladders, and 3 cones

Organization: 1 striker works and has 3 attempts to score. The player hops through the agility ladder then through the cones runs towards a ball and shoots 1st time. As soon as the player shoots they must sprint to the start and repeat the activity.

Progressions: Must be high tempo. One shot must be with weaker foot. Add a goalkeeper. Add defenders to pressure player as he picks up the ball.

Coaching Points: Accuracy of shot. Shot selection (driven, side foot placed, lob, curl, etc). Vision, awareness of goalkeepers position. Player given different activity to do when going through the ladders



Basic Agility Ladder Training:

All of these basic patterns are inherently challenging and fun at the same time.

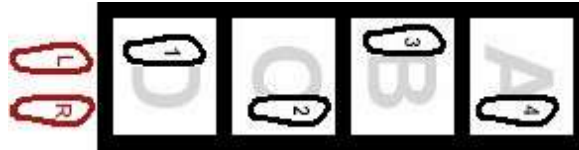
In the beginning, make sure you focus on the Effort being put into Learning the Technique rather than how fast they are going through the ladder.

The #1 Principle for Speed Training and building speed in your soccer players is: **"TECHNIQUE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SPEED!"**

If I were to say it in my best Spanish then it would sound something like this: "TECHNIQUE ES MAS IMPORTANTE THAN SPEED!"

Well, you get the idea... Enjoy the Basic Section and move onto the extensive intermediate drills.

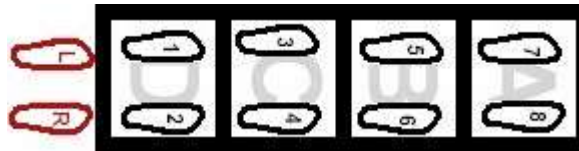
PS. Even though these are more basic, I find that they are the most effective patterns to "build, reinforce and re-invite" good technique. :: BASIC SPEED LADDER EXERCISES FOR SOCCER ::



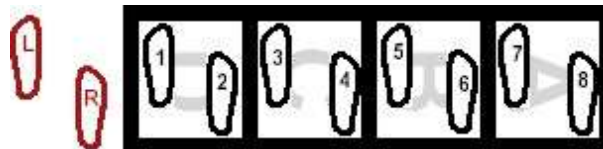
Basic #1 - One step in each



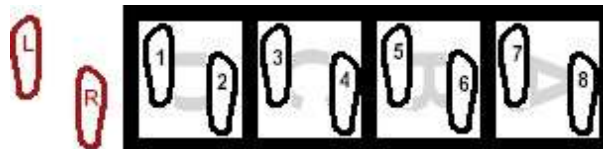
Basic #2 - Two steps in each - forward with a LEFT foot lead.



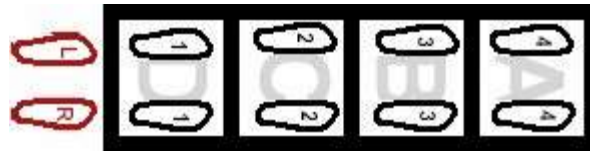
Basic #3 - Two steps in each - forward with a RIGHT foot lead.



Basic #4 - Two steps in each - Lateral with a LEFT foot lead.



Basic #5 - Two steps in each - Lateral with a RIGHT foot lead.



Basic #6 - Bunny Hops - two footed

STEP #2:

Intermediate Speed Ladder Training! Once you get familiar with the Basic patterns then you will want to continue to build coordination and speed in several "Soccer Effective" ways.

These intermediate drills will help you and your players become faster and more precise with your movement on and off the ball as well as increase your touch with the ball.

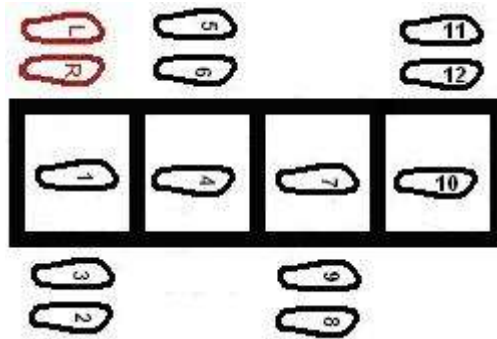
That's right - don't discount what I just said in the last sentence: "your players will increase their effectiveness with the ball even though they are not training with the ball!"

How does that happen?

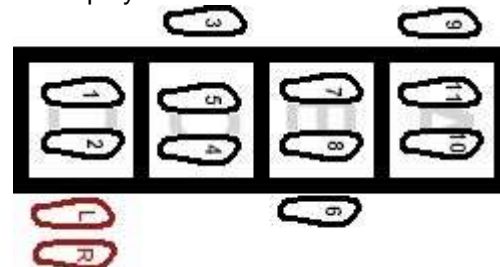
See the articles in "The Science" section of SoccerSpeedTraining.com for a more in-depth explanation.

In the mean time, Enjoy!

:: Intermediate Speed Ladder Exercises ::



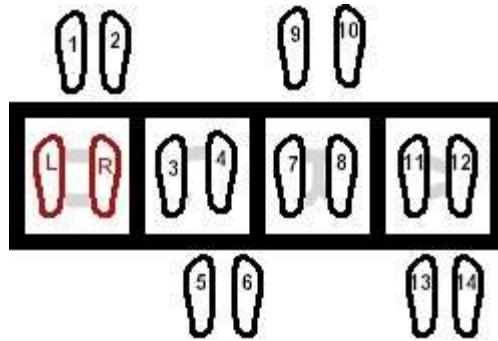
'Cross-Overs' precisely mimic the 'Step-Over' move in soccer. This is one of the best speed ladder drills you can do for soccer players.



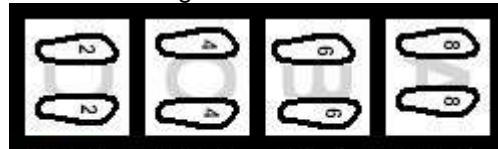
The Icky-Shuffle is another highly effective soccer specific movement that every player should learn.



'Eagle Jumps' forward. This is a great speed ladder drill for your Goal Keepers!



Lateral 'Zig-Zags' - two feet in each square. Great for reinforcing and re-inviting arm pumping technique and balance. Face opposite direction after each run through.



'Two-Footed-Jumps' moving forward using the 'In-and-Out' sequence.



'Two-Footed-Jumps' moving forward using the 'Zig-Zag' sequence.

Step #3:

Taking your Speed Ladder Training to a new level is as easy as working off of one foot.

What makes Soccer Specific Speed Training unique is how the drills mimic and recreate the actual movements needed to be successful on the field.

Part of our new section "The Science" explains in detail the different types of movements a soccer player does standing on one foot and why it is critical that you work your way up to this and include it in your soccer speed development plans. Here are some of the best Intermediate drills for building stability, explosiveness, balance and strength on the speed ladder.

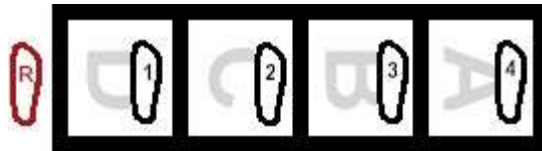
Special Note: Your players should be pumping their arms with each hop. These are excellent drills to reinforce and re-invite proper upper body techniques for speed.

Enjoy!

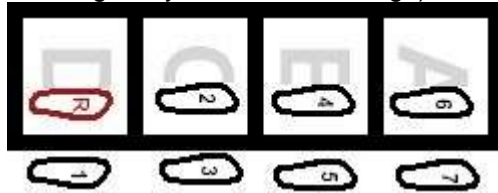
:: Intermediate - One Foot Training on the Speed Ladder ::



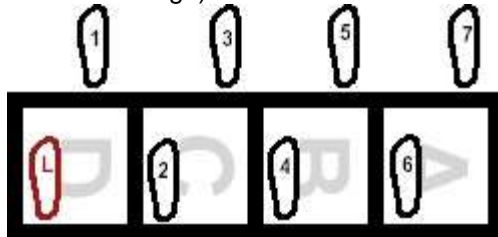
'One-footed-hops' in each square - forwards.
(switch legs on your next run through)



'One-footed-hops' in each square - Lateral (switch legs on your next run through)



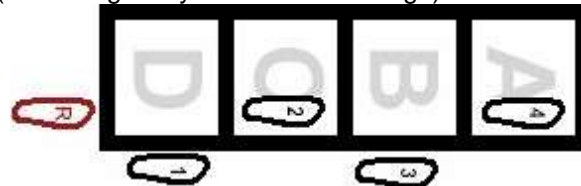
'One-footed-hops' in and out of each square - forward. (switch legs on your next run through)



'One-footed-hops' in and out of each square - Lateral. (switch legs on your next run through)



'One-footed-hops' skip a square - forwards. (switch legs on your next run through)

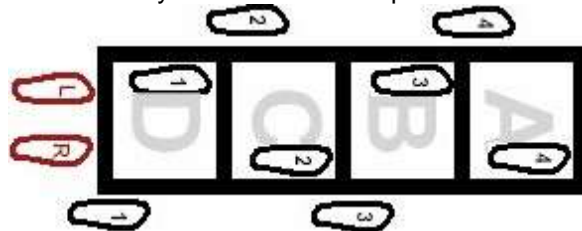


'One-footed-hops' in and out, skip a square - forwards. (switch legs on your next run through)

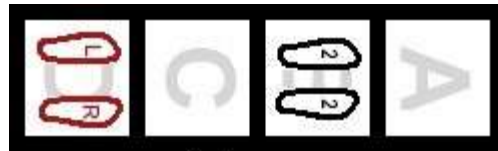
Step #4:

Expand your players agility and soccer athleticism by continually challenging their bodies balance and proprioception with these new Intermediate Soccer Speed Ladder Drills.

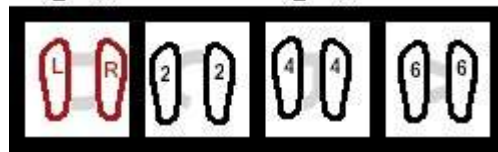
Here is one of my Intermediate Training Set Ups. I use this at all my sessions and camps.



Two Footed 'Eagle-Jumps' - in foot in each square - zig-zag - Forward with a Wide Stance. Great drill for all positions.



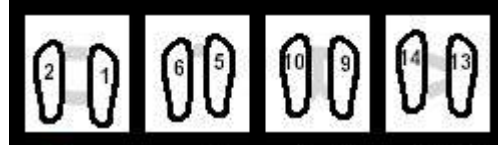
Two-footed-jumps - skip a square - Forward.



Two-footed-jumps in a zig-zag pattern - Lateral.



Two-footed-jumps - Doubles - Forward.

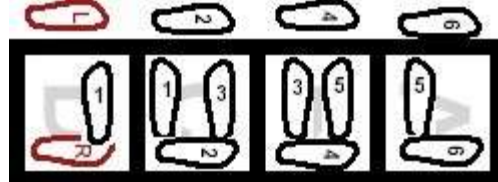


Two steps in, two steps out - Lateral.

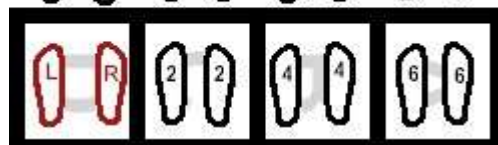
Step #5:

I have even more challenging footwork patterns for you plus a fun shooting drill that includes the speed ladder. I Challenge You to get to this point and implement these fun patterns in your practices for a minimum of 5 session. The Challenge is On! Any takers...? Enjoy!

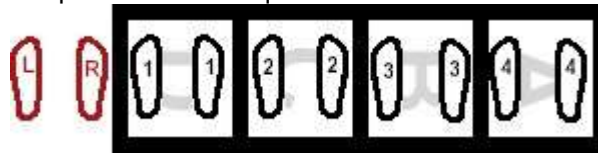
Here is a "Transitional Speed Activity" that you can use in a shooting practice that's lots of fun.



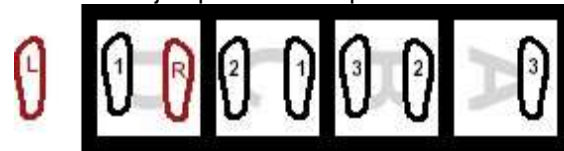
Twisters! - Two-footed-jumps with a quarter turn in each square.



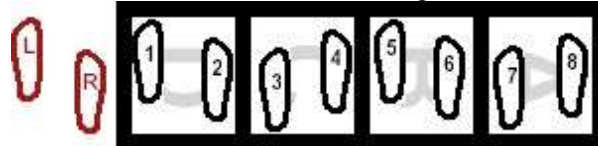
Two-footed-jumps using the 'in-n-out' pattern in each square - Lateral



Two-footed-jumps in each square - Lateral

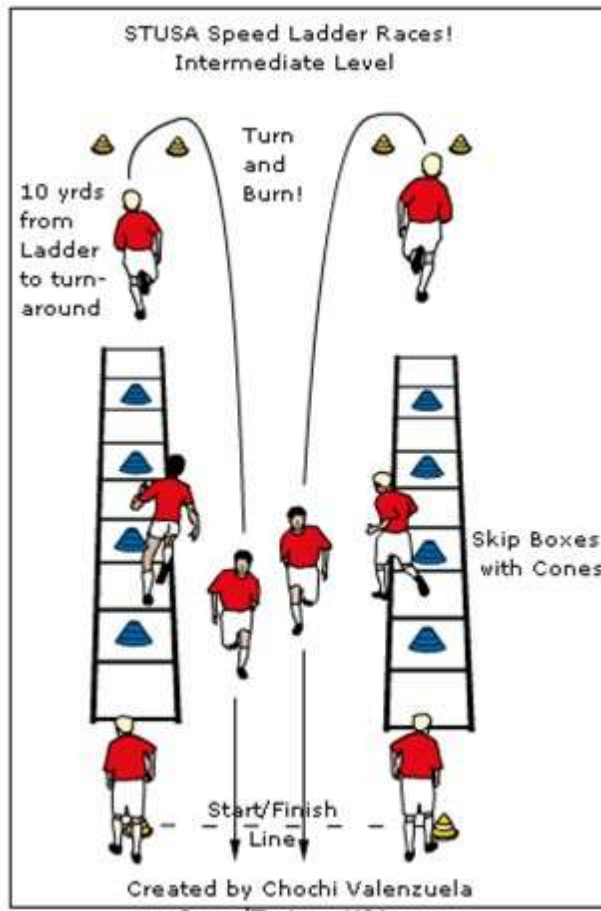


Two-footed-jumps in each square using a wide stance that straddles the rungs - Lateral

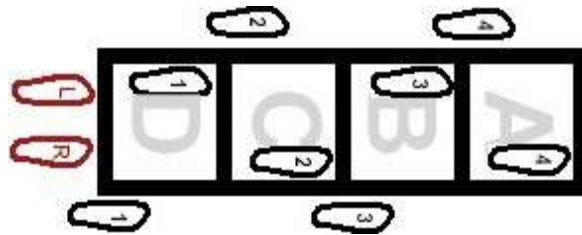


Two steps in each square using a repeating 'cross-over' step - Lateral.

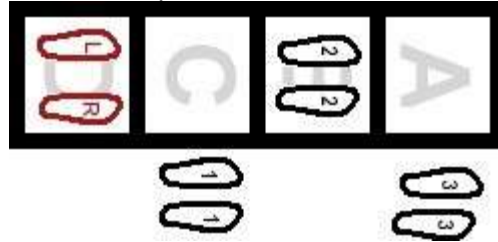
Expand your players agility and soccer athleticism by continually challenging their bodies balance and proprioception with these new Intermediate Soccer Speed Ladder Drills.



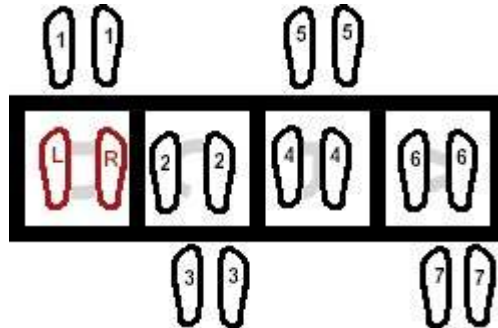
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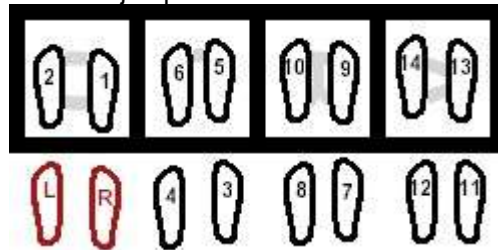
Two-footed-jumps - skip a square - Forward.



Two-footed-jumps in a zig-zag pattern - Lateral.



Two-footed-jumps - Doubles - Forward.



Two steps in, two steps out - Lateral.

Dribbling, Tricks & Moves:

Links: Info | [Key Skills](#) | [Dribbling Drills](#) | [Ball Control](#) | [Circle Drills, Warm-ups & Conditioning](#) | [Juggle](#) |

Many coaches are reluctant to teach moves (or "fakes") because they think they are irrelevant in match situations and/or they are too complicated for their players to learn. That's wrong. Knowing a few moves gives young players a massive confidence boost and they will use them in matches.

Players who know a few different ways to beat opponents will also be less likely to lose possession and they will be better able to get their head up and spot opportunities to pass or shoot.

And luckily, the most useful moves are also the most simple to teach! Any child over the age of six or seven (and any coach) can learn a few.

A young player only needs to pass if he can't dribble, run with the ball or shoot. If he can do any of these things, why should he pass? We need to encourage players who have great ball skills, not stifle their development by forcing them to share the ball.

1. Dribbling: perhaps, the most important skill for any soccer player. Dribbling the ball makes young players feel good, it gives them confidence and can demoralize the opposition.

4 key components: Ball manipulation. Developing foot speed. Change of direction. Change of speed.

Young players are never in the wrong place to try to dribble the ball. Defenders should be encouraged to dribble or pass their way out of their own penalty area rather than kick the ball into touch at the slightest sign of danger.

If you want to see attractive, skilful soccer you must encourage your players to take risks and accept they may sometimes give a goal away as a result. A goal conceded because a defender tried to dribble the ball instead of passing or kicking it into touch is a learning point, not a disaster! So no more shouting 'kick it out!' please. Encourage your players to use all parts of either foot when dribbling. The soles, toes, inside, outside, instep, even the heel, can and should be used. Tell players to keep the ball close to their feet at all times.

- **Practice with a smaller ball.** One of the best processes to get good at dribbling is to play soccer with a tennis ball, or another small ball. You will get used to the constant adjustments needed and dribbling a full sized soccer ball will seem much easier.

- **Use all the surfaces of your foot.** Most often you will be using the front part of your instep, especially when you are dribbling at speed. However, to become a good dribbler of the ball, make sure that you are adept at using the outside and inside of both feet. This way you can cut the ball away from pressure and keep control of the ball no matter where the defensive pressure comes from.

- **Change the pace.** This is the key to going by a player on the dribble. You don't necessarily need to be extremely fast to beat someone on the dribble; rather, you need to lull the defender to sleep for a second and then break past the opponent with a burst of speed.

- **Lift up your eyes.** Subtly be aware of your surroundings as you still maintain focus on the ball while dribbling. Lift your eyes slightly so you know if someone is making a run, another defender is approaching, or there is space to attack.

Practicing Moves:

1. Group Circle: form a giant circle as players dribble to the inner cone, perform their move and then return back to outer circle. Warm up by touching top of ball, step overs, pull backs, L-turns and cuts. Can also practice the fake-out moves by dribbling toward the goal from the sidelines with a series of staggered cones (set in a diagonal) toward the goal...do a series of fakes pretending the cones are players and then score. See <http://americaneaglessc.org/homework.htm>
<http://ballskills.wikispaces.com/>

2. Dribbling across a square:

- Split your players into four groups and place each group on each side of a large, square playing area.

- Start the game by telling your players to dribble across the square and perform a specific turn when they get to the other side. Make it competitive by playing for a couple of minutes and asking who made the most turns then repeat, using a different turn. Then allow your players a free choice of turn.

- As your players get better, make the playing area smaller to increase the pressure.

Why this works: The traffic in the square and the competitive nature of the game encourages good dribbling skills and fast, accurate turns.

Coaching notes: Ask your players: "Can anyone think of a different way to turn?". You may be surprised by their inventiveness!

3. Follow the leader: Pair up your players in a large area with one ball between two. One player dribbles around the grid practicing the drag back, the cut or the stop and go. The other player follows as closely as they can. After a few minutes, swap the players over.

4. Cone Races: Split your players into four teams. Place each team at the corner of a 20-yard square that has four cones in the middle.

Space the cones out so they make a small square. The first player in each team runs with the ball towards the center cones. When they get there they perform a turn of your choice and run back to their team with the ball. The ball is passed to the next player in line who repeats the exercise. First team to get every player back is the winner.

10 Basic Rules for a Good Dribbler:

1. Dribbling in the vicinity of an opponent should be preceded by a situation appropriate feint, which causes the opponent to react in the wrong way, thereby creating a slight time advantage.

2. After the feint, the attacker should continue dribbling as explosively as possible, so that the time advantage is not lost.

3. The dribbler's center of gravity should be low so that he is balanced and can start to run in any direction.
4. A skilled dribbler decoys his opponent out of his waiting position so that he does not dribble up to him head on but to the side of him, in order to disturb his stable posture. If the defender reacts to the movement, it is likely to cause him to adopt an unfavorable body position which makes it hard for him to react quickly. A feint with sudden change of direction is particularly effective if the opponent has to slow down a movement in order to move in another direction.
5. A skillful dribbler considers his own strengths when performing a feint. There are feints which are particularly suited to fast attacking players (e.g., on the wing with space gained after the feint) and those that are preferred by nimble players who are good ball handlers (e.g., in the penalty box).
6. The dribbler should observe the opponent's behavior closely in order to be able to react appropriately to the defender's reactions. If a feint does not accomplish the desired effect, then further action is required. A second feint could further destabilize the defender and eventually put him on the wrong foot. At the start of a game, an attacker should quickly spot the defenders' qualities (e.g., reaction and action speed) and take them into account in his feints.
7. A feint should not be carried out too soon or too far away, for this gives the opponent time to compensate for his mistake. However, if the feint is performed too late or too close to the dribbler, the attacker is likely to lose the ball. With match experience, a dribbler acquires a feel for the right distance to the opponent.
8. Dribbling should always be necessary and never done for the sake of it, but always serve the interests of the team. A player, for whom performing a 'nutmeg' or embarrassing an opponent are more important than a smart pass to a teammate, weakens his/her team, for he/she slows down the attack. As well as technique, the player must also learn when dribbling is necessary or if a pass would be more appropriate.
9. Dribbling should not represent a direct danger of an own goal. A player should therefore avoid dribbling in his own penalty box or without defensive back-up.
10. One should only use feints in matches that one has practiced many times and therefore confidently masters. A badly executed feint destabilizes the dribbler and reduced his self-confidence.

Dribbling Is only Useful or Necessary When...

- an attacker has nobody to pass to.
- a defender must be moved out of the way for tactical reasons.
- a shot at goal should be prepared.
- it is necessary to play for time.
- a breakthrough into free space is started.
- a 1v1 situation near the goal must be won.
- there is a need to open up room to move.
- time must be given to teammates to catch up.
- an offside trap should be avoided.

A Good Dribbler Should...

- possess good body control and balance.
- be able to observe attentively and interpret the reactions of the defender (anticipation of the opponent's intentions).
- possess a good feel for the ball.
- master dribbling techniques and feints with variations (technical playing qualities of a dribbler).
- good timing in the use of feints (time aspect of a feint).
- possess excellent orientation (spatial aspect of a feint).

How to practice dribbling: Have your players move around a grid while touching the ball with every step they take. Allow them to look at the ball to begin with, but as soon as they are confident ask them to keep their head up.

You can work on this essential skill by holding a colored cone in the air. Tell your players that if you hold up a red cone they must stop with their foot on the ball. A green cone means 'go faster'. A yellow cone could mean 'slow down' or 'turn'.

2. Running with the ball Running with the ball is not the same as dribbling.

Instead of keeping the ball close to their feet, your players should kick the ball ahead of them and run after it. **Lace chop dribbling** is the best technique.....as the leading foot lands it strikes the ball at a downward stroke with the laces such that there is a natural stride (faster than taking half steps to kick the ball).....practice the walking, then jogging and finally sprinting.

Dribbling sprints: have the players practice game like situation.....frequent turns around the cone with short 15-30 yard sprints as they dribble.

Practicing Moves: Pair up. 20 feet apart. Start at same time, as meet in middle both move to their RIGHT. Next both move LEFT.



Key coaching points: Use lace chop dribbling for faster sprinting. "Move the ball out from your feet quickly." "Run in a straight line using big strides." "Keep your head up." "Know what you are going to do with the ball when you stop running!"

Split your players into two groups (team A and team B) standing at opposite ends of a 40 yards by 40 playing area that is divided into four 40 yards by 10 yards channels. Team A players have a ball each.

Players from team A run down channel one and channel three with a ball each. Players from team B start running down channels two and four at the same time.

Team A players pass the ball to the team B player who is running towards them in the adjacent channel as soon as they are within passing range. The team B players collect the passes and continue their run. When they approach the other end of the playing area they pass the ball to the next player to run down the channel and continue.

Note: The playing area can be expanded to provide more channels if you have a lot of players.

Coaching tip: Challenge your players to perform this drill at pace and without making a mistake for five minutes.

Key Dribbling Skills:

See [Circle Drills & Warm-ups](#) | [Dribbling Drills](#) |

Cuts: As you're dribbling, bring back your dribbling foot as though you are about to shoot. But instead of shooting, use the inside of your dribbling foot to chop (or cut) the ball across your body and continue dribbling. That's an inside cut. To cut the ball to the outside (the right) of the defender, use the outside of your foot instead of the inside.

Inside out: Start with R foot, touch ball slightly with inside of R foot and then the outside of the R foot (move ball 1-2 inches). Next: do 10 reps alternating R and L. Next: How many can you do in 10 seconds with R foot, L foot. Next: Do as dribble forward.

Pull Back: Start with R foot directly on top of the ball, pull it forward and then pack (push / pull) as you jog on your toes. Next: As you pull with R foot, turn 180 to the left and stop the ball with your R foot. Try L side. How many pull backs in 15 sec's. Next: Do as dribble.

Sole Drag: Start practicing R foot crossing over L, open the feet and shuttle back to the middle of the ball. Next: R foot drags ball and stop with L foot and then L foot drags to R and stop. How many in 15 sec's.



Step Over: A direction change fake to get past a player. Start on toes behind ball. R foot steps around front of ball and crosses the L foot. Then open feet (spread with L foot, same direction R came) and come back behind the ball. Practice with L foot and then alternating R & L. Next: Once step over with R foot and start to open the feet, pull the ball back to the R with the side of your foot. Next: do as dribble forward. Next: add opponent.

Drag Back: Stop or slow the ball by stepping on it with the sole of your foot. Run past it by a few feet, pivot on one foot, turn quickly and run back the way you came, collecting the ball as you go.

Stop and Go: As you are dribbling the ball (usually with an opposition player alongside you), you suddenly slow down then explode away. The most effective way of doing this is to stop the ball completely with the sole of your foot then quickly push the ball forwards again with the instep

(laces).

Hop-Skip (In-Out) Fake: R foot skates forward and lateral. Practice with L foot. Hop 3 on L and 3 on R. Next hop on L foot 1x and skate with R foot. Next R foot touches ball with inside of foot and the skate with it to the outside and step forward. Practice as dribbling and alternate feet.

Scissors: Squared off behind the ball. R foot circles (faking) around the front of the ball medially to lateral, then use the outside of the L foot to move the ball to the L (cut to the L, medial to lateral). How many in 15 sec, after each one stop the ball and bring back to the center. How long does it take to do 20. Practice as dribbling.

Cruyff Turn: named after the brilliant Dutchman Johan Cruyff. Great for learning to lose an opponent.

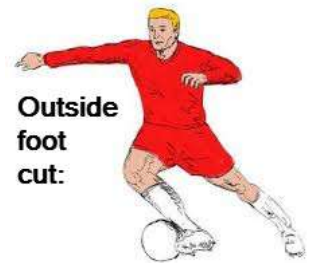
1. Shape your body as if you were going to pass or cross the ball.
2. But then drag the ball behind your standing leg with the inside of your foot.
3. Turn your shoulders and your hips so that you are back in line with the ball, then race away.

Baboom: Start by passing ball back and forth between inside of feet, then practice jumping to the R and L. R foot gives a soft touch to the L and the L foot hits it harder for a quick change in direction. 2nd touch slightly harder than 1st. Do as dribbling.

Twist-Back: R foot steps forward and to the R of the ball, next twist to the R (90 deg) and use the inside of the L foot to push the ball back (180 deg behind you in the original facing direction). Practice as dribbling.

Cross-over fake: Usually done while dribbling diagonally toward an opponent. Lead foot crossed over front of ball as if the R foot is cutting L, then the L foot cuts the ball (changes direction) to the R.

One Bounce Juggling: Hit the middle bottom of the ball with the middle part of the top of your foot. Throw the ball up, let it bounce once, kick it up and catch it. Alternate R and L feet. Don't let the ball



go higher than your chest. See how many you can do without catching. Every 3rd kick, flick it over your head.

Hip Swivel:

Pull Hop Skip Twist:

Outside Cut:

Inside Cut:

In-Step 180 degr pulls:

Mini-Pull Back: As you continue to dribble forward, pull the ball back with you sole, then push it forward with the instep of that same foot.

Sole drag Turns: perform a sole drag as you dribble forward, then hop and turn 90 degrees, then cut R or L.

Back Leg Fake: dribbling forward step over the ball and then kick it to the other side with the trailing foot to cut 45 deg in the opposite way you faked with the step over.

Pull Back Turn Fake: Stop the ball with your instep then turn (change direction) toward the direction (side) of the leg pulling it back.

Reveris: Stop the ball with the sole of the foot, then turn and use the in-step of the same foot to push forward and accelerate.

The Body-Swerve (Fake Lunge): falls into the category of 'Close Control' skills – skills which are used when in direct control of the ball. This particular skill ought to be absolutely basic, wherever on the field a player stands.

The Body Swerve is a skill that – as the name suggests – involves a player's whole body. He uses his weight to give the appearance of going in one direction whilst intending to go in another. It is best thought of as an advanced kind of turn.

When a player means to turn left he will naturally put his weight on the left foot. An opposition player seeing this will assume he can predict where the player is going. However, the body swerve is designed to upset their assumption. Leaning on the left foot, the controlling player inclines his shoulder as if to pivot on it, bringing the ball round with his right side. However, as the would-be tackler comes in, he suddenly changes direction, using the weight on his left foot to thrust off and suddenly tear away on the opposite angle.

Hopefully this leaves the opposing player flummoxed and the body swerve has claimed another victim.

The best thing about the body swerve is that it is infinitely adaptable and can be used in almost any situation, from defending the goalmouth, to shooting, to standing still for a free kick. It can even be used without the ball to try and wrong-foot a controlling opponent.

The Drag Scissors: 1. Drag; 2. Scissors; 3. Push; and 4. Accelerate.

STEP 1 When an attacker needs to create time and space they should dribble towards their opponent.

STEP 2 The attacker drags the ball as if to go to the defender's right.

STEP 3 But they step around the ball, the scissors, looking like they are going to go left.

STEP 4 Then they push the ball to the defender's right.

STEP 5 The anchor leg is used to push the player and help accelerate away with the ball.

Close Control: Close control refers to the skill of keeping the ball firmly under control and close to your body – usually when running with the ball but also controlling the first touch of the ball. This is important in a match situation as it keeps possession, for example if your first touch when receiving the football is poor, the other team will be more likely to regain possession and break down any attack. It also creates space and allows you to beat defenders.

If your close control is not up to scratch, defenders will easily be able to cut across your path and win the ball back. There is nothing more frustrating than watching a midfielder play a stunning pass towards a forward in the box, creating a possible goal-scoring opportunity, only for the forward to employ a poor first touch and force the ball out for a goal kick to the opposite team.

To improve your close control, there are several techniques to help:

1. Create an obstacle course with obstructions at various distances and angles. Run with the ball as fast as you can, keeping the ball close to your body and coming to a complete stop at each obstruction.

2. Simply run in a straight line with the ball as fast as you can, ensuring that the ball does not stray more than 50cm away from your foot.

3. Run with the ball but move it from foot to foot using both the inside and the outside of the foot – lowering your centre of gravity for this drill will make it easier.

Dribbling Drills:

Tight Space Dribbling: If you have the luxury of having a ball per person this is a great drill to develop touch and fitness simultaneously.

1. Perform this drill towards the start of a session - following the warm up and before more physically demanding drills.

2. Mark out a space about 20x20 yards (for 15 players). Adjust the size according to the number of players.

3. For 60 second intervals have the players 'express' themselves with the ball. They should try turns, fakes and tricks.

Encourage players not to running round in a circle (which WILL happen at first). They should change direction constantly and randomly.



4. Decrease the size of the area after each 60 second bout and repeat for 5 or 6 intervals with a 20-30 second break between.

Beehive: For this drill, mark off a square that allows for approximately 1 square yard per player. If the team has 20 players, the square should be about 20 yards long and wide. Each player has a ball and starts at a random point inside the square.

At the sound of the coach's whistle, players begin dribbling the ball around the square using proper dribbling technique for both inside and outside foot dribbling. The goal of the drill is to avoid the other players and maintain control of their ball within the confines of the square. Once players have a basic understanding of the drill, the size of the square can be decreased in order to increase the difficulty required for continued, controlled dribbling.

Take Your Turn:

This session is about using the outside cut under time pressure.

SET UP Mark out an area of 20x20 yards for the first part and then split the area into two five-yard areas. You need four cones in the centre opposite the corners for the first part. We've used eight players. You will need bibs, ball, cones and two goals.

HOW TO PLAY Split your players into pairs with one ball per pair. Players must dribble up to the cone and execute an outside cut before they get to the cone and play the ball to their partner. Try to get players doing it correctly before they do it quickly. In the second part of the session join up the pairs so you have two teams of four. Teams race against each other to run to the cone and turn around it using an outside cut before putting the ball in the net.

3. Once the turn has been completed, the player shoots the ball into the net.

Take Your Turn:

1. Split into 2 teams for a racing game.

2. Players race the width of the field and go around the cone with an outside cut.

4. As soon as the ball hits the net the next player goes - first team to score all 4 balls wins.



The winning team is the first one to get four balls in the net. The outside cut must be done correctly or players go back to the start.

PROGRESSION: Try other moves. Alpha, drag back, scissors etc. Try different angles.....come directly at the goals etc.

TECHNIQUE Players have to concentrate on getting the outside cut right. They must work hard to complete the turn with accuracy at speed and under time pressure.

1. Split into 2 teams for a racing game.
2. Players race the width of the field and go around the cone with an outside cut.
3. Once the turn has been completed, the player shoots the ball into the net.
4. As soon as the ball hits the net the next player goes – the first team to score all four balls wins.

Shake of Player and Shoot:

- Set cones 10 yards apart. 1v1 going in 1 or two groups at a time. The dribbler tries to shake of the defender with feints to one side of the other. Then shoots ball at mini goal.

Quadruple zigzag:

12 cones laid out in 2-3-2-3-2 rows. Players dribble in an infinite loop.

Dribblers meet at two points and must take eye off the ball to observe others.

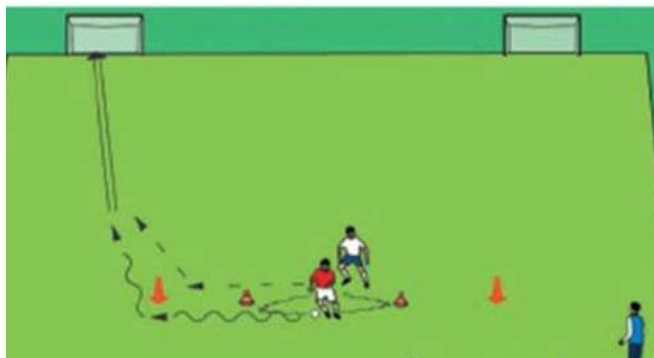
Techniques: Use inside and outside of foot. Use dummy step-overs and scissors. Drab back with the sole of the foot.

Quadruple zigzag: 12 cones laid out in 2-3-2-3-2 rows. Players dribble in an infinite loop.



Dribblers meet at 2 points and must look up. Use inside and outside of foot. Use dummy step-overs, scissors, drag back with the sole.

Shaking Off an Opponent with a Shot at the Goal

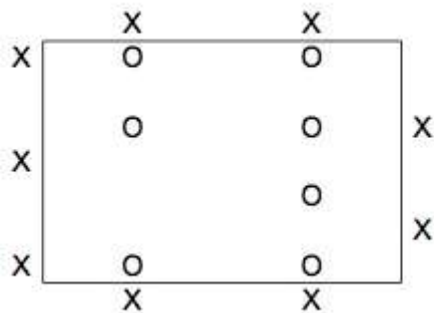


Turning with the ball:

Most young soccer players play the ball in the same direction they are facing when they receive it. It's the natural thing for them to do.

But the ability to turn with the ball and create space to pass, shoot or dribble is immensely valuable and it is one of skills that marks out "average" players from the best. This practice plan is designed to help players aged from seven to 11 learn how to receive the ball, control it and turn... all at the same time.

Warm-up Players are split into two groups. One group works inside a 20x15 yards playing area. Each player in this group has a ball. The other group is spread on the outside of the playing area as shown below.



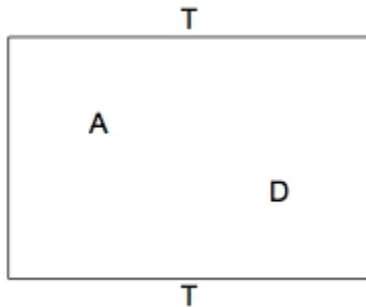
On your command, players inside the playing area dribble to an outside player, pass to them, receive a pass back, immediately turn with the ball, find a different outside player and repeat.

Ask your players:

- How few touches do you need to control the ball? Can anyone use no touches?
- What is a GOOD pass?
- How can you tell someone that you are going to pass to them?
- Should you tell the player you pass to that it's safe to turn? If yes, how?

Activity: 2v2 to targets

Split your players into groups of four. Each group works in a 10-yard square.



Two players stand just outside the playing area and opposite each other. These are the targets (the Ts in the image above).

The other two players play 1v1 in the playing area with the objective of passing from one target player to the other to earn a point.

The game is started by a target player passing the ball to one of the inside players - the attacker (A) - who tries to turn and pass to the opposite target player. If the other, defending player (D) steals the ball, he becomes the attacker.

If a player scores a point, he continues to attack.

Encourage the target players to work along the line, calling for the ball.

Play first to three points then change the inside and outside.

Ask your players:

- How can you create the space to pass to a target player?
- How can you stop the defender taking the ball away from you?

1v1 to Four Small Goals:

12x6 yard area.

2 goals on each side.

Play 2-3 minutes.

Score when a player dribbles the ball with their feet over the goal line. Variation: Winner stays in.

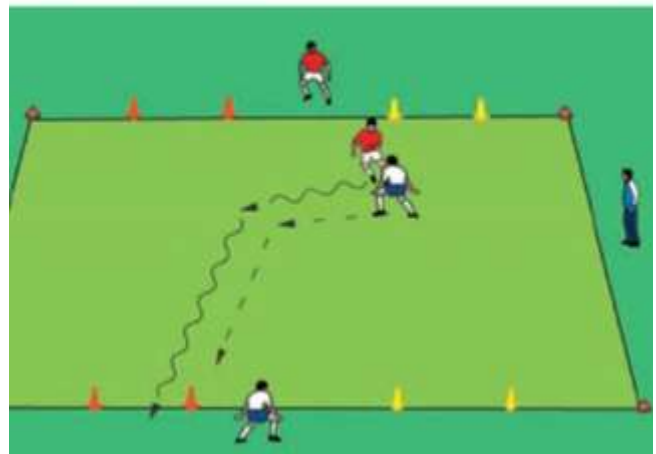
Activity: 4v4 plus goalkeepers

Two teams of four or five plus goalkeepers play on a 30x20 yards playing area with a goal at each end and a halfway line.

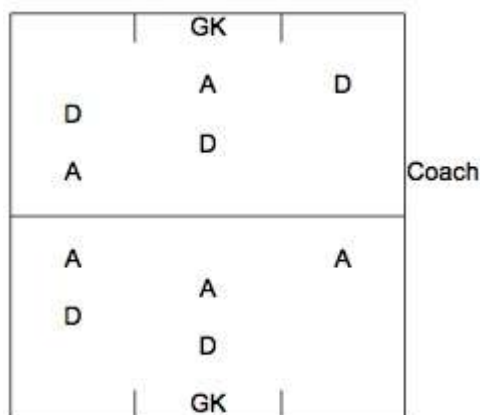
How to play:

- Players must stay in their own half of the pitch. Defenders stay in the defensive half while attackers remain in the opposite end.
- You, or an assistant, start the game by passing to an attacker with his back to the goal he is shooting at.
- Attackers try to turn and shoot at goal.
- If they can't turn, attackers can play the ball to another attacker or back to a defender on his team.

1v1 to Four Small Goals



- Defenders can shoot if the ball is passed back to them or pass forward to an attacker.



Activity: Match related

The same teams as above play "normal" soccer with one exception: If a player can score after receiving and turning with the ball, the goal counts double.

King of the Hill: performed in a 20 yard square. To begin this drill, each player has a ball except for one player who is "it". At the sound of the coach's whistle, players begin dribbling their balls around the square while the player who is "it" tries to kick everyone's balls out of the grid.

There are a number of variations to this drill. Some teams play that once a ball has been kicked from the grid, that player must sit out for the remainder of the drill. Others play that once a player loses their ball, they join the side of the "it" player and attempt to knock balls from the remaining players in the square.

Attack and Protect: It takes place within a 20 yard square, and this time each player is given a ball that they must protect while simultaneously trying to kick the ball away from the other players in the square. Once a player's ball has exited the square three times, they are out of the drill.

Shadow Dribbling: is a good drill for teaching players to keep their heads up while engaging in controlled dribbling. Divide the team into pairs, and give each player a ball. One from each pair will begin as the leader while the other is the follower. The leader begins dribbling the ball while the follower follows the leader, also dribbling the ball. Encourage the leaders to change direction, pace and technique frequently. After a few minutes, have the players switch positions and repeat the exercise.

How to Dribble a Soccer Ball: the quintessential soccer skill.

Step1 - Dribbling a soccer ball successfully requires you to keep the ball close to you. It may seem natural to punch the ball ahead and run up to it, but that makes it too easy for defenders to steal the ball from you.

Step2 - Use the insteps of your feet for simple soccer dribbling. Practice batting the ball rapidly between your left and right foot. If you are striking the ball with your insteps, the ball will be continuously moving from side to side in front of you, and you will be in complete control of your dribbling.

Step3 - You may have to begin soccer dribbling drills with your head down, watching the ball as you control it. Shift quickly to performing dribbling drills with your head up. Unless you plan on only dribbling a soccer ball in your backyard with no defenders, watching where you're going is an important aspect of soccer.

Step4 - As you become more confident with your skills, begin soccer dribbling drills that will test your abilities against defensive opponents. Play a simple game of keep away with a partner. You will need to practice using other parts of your foot to switch directions mid-dribble, and shielding the ball from your opponent.

* A simple drill to improve your skills: Dribble a ball (it does not have to be of regulation size) around your house for an entire day. Do not let the ball touch any surfaces besides the floor.

System for the Zigzag Drill:

- Run through – holding the ball: the players first run through the drill in order to familiarize themselves with the path.
- Run through – kicking the ball: in the second step they dribble the ball through the circuit with a technique of their choice.
- Kicking with the inside of the foot: the simplest change of direction in the zigzag is with the inside of the foot. Experience has shown that beginners are quick to learn this technique.
- Kicking with the outside of the foot: After the inside of the foot, players learn to kick with the outside of the foot, with both feet.
- Kicking with the inside and outside of the foot alternately: just as difficult is the change from inside to outside, i.e. kicking with just one foot. Children start with their stronger foot but must also practice with their weaker foot.
- Dummy step/step-over/scissors: once the players master kicking with the outside of the foot, the next stage is the dummy step. Progressing to the step-over and the scissors is then no great obstacle, for the only difference is in the foot and leg action.

In the dummy step, the foot bypasses the ball, in the step-over, over the ball and in the scissors, around the ball.

- 270-degree turn inwards: One of the most important basic movements in basic training is the 270-degree turn with the inside of the foot. This turn is a double change of direction against the dribbling direction. If the player wants to pull out to the left, he turns his body around to the right.

- 270-degree turn outwards: Advanced players like this turn, but it can present problems for beginners. This was a specialty of Beckenbauer, who liked to follow it with a volley with the outside of the foot.
- Drag-back with the sole of the foot: this trick can be successfully automated in the zigzag. The dribbler pulls the ball back with the sole of the foot and dribbles to the next cone. The second touch (dribbling in the new direction) is possible with the inside of the foot or with the instep.
- Drag behind the standing leg: the most difficult technique of basic training in the zigzag is the 'drag behind the standing leg.' Here, the other foot drags the ball back and guides it behind the standing leg to the next cone. So, if the player wants to dodge to the left, he drags the ball back with the right foot and then past the standing leg to the left.
- Combination of different techniques: if all these techniques are practiced, the coach can use different combinations, e.g. the change from 'kicking with the inside of the foot' and '270-degree turn inwards' or the combination of 'dummy' and 'drag back with the sole of the foot.' The players should then freely and independently combine different techniques.
- Zigzag with passing sequence: Course with Quadruple Zigzag and follow-through action. The players dribble through the Zigzag. A player waits without a ball at the last cone (5-10 yards away from the Zigzag). The dribbler performs a passing sequence with him, takes his place and waits for the next player.
- Zigzag with shots at the goal: Course with Quadruple Zigzag and shot at the goal. The players dribble through the Zigzag. Behind the end cone (10-20 yards away from the Zigzag) are mini-goals or normal goals with goalkeeper. The dribbler shoots after the Zigzag to the goal, takes his ball and dribbles back to the start.

Criss Cross

Objective: Criss Cross is a simple unopposed practice designed to improve the push pass and first touch. It allows the coach to work with a number of players in a fairly small area.

Set up: Place four flat cones in a cross pattern 10-15yds apart from each other.

Two or three players stand at each of the cones.

The players at two adjacent cones have a ball.

How to play: Players pass - two touch (one to control, one to pass) - to the player opposite and then run to the cone on their right.

Coaching points Tell your players not to let the ball stop at any time.

- Once mastered, this exercise should be played at a fast tempo. Do not let your players walk to the cone on their right after they have passed the ball.

- Challenge your players - how many passes can they complete without making a mistake?

- Then, if you have two groups, they should compete with each other.

- Competition will show your players why it is important to have a good first touch. If they lose control of the ball they will not be able to pass quickly and their team will lose the game.

- Older players should be able to recognize and correct their own faults.

Tip: Encourage players to aim for a high standard - never allow sloppiness to creep into your training sessions. If you tolerate players who give less than 100% in practice, they will give less than 100% in matches too.

Turning Fakes:

Dribble out about 5 yds. - make a 180 turn/cut, then return to starting point and make another. Do at least 10 with each foot.

1.) Pull backs. This is a cousin to the "outside and inside" rolls as discussed above but it "scrapes" the ball backwards. Start with the ball between your feet. Fake up to the top of the ball with your right foot in a kicking motion, but stop with your cleats on top of the ball. Then "pull-back" the ball by "scraping" your cleats backwards to get the ball rolling behind you. Now you can turn either clockwise or counterclockwise to face the ball again. If you used your right foot to "pull-back" and you turn clockwise or towards the pull-back leg it is a "turn-with pull-back". If however, your turn counterclockwise away from the right leg, it is a "turn-away pull-back". You should learn them both. The "turn-away pull-back" is the better of the two since you can continue to face a defender while you change direction and not "spin" away from him and risk losing sight of him and his attempt at a steal.

KEY POINTS: The pull-back moves are some of the first moves kids learn and initially they get a lot of mileage out of them. Unfortunately, they get overused and often times used in the wrong places, especially against older and more skilled defenders. They are best used deep in the offensive third of the field, usually off to the sides to quickly change directions on a slashing attack. They should not be used anywhere near one's own penalty area or anywhere in the middle of the field where an alert defender could begin a dangerous breakaway. The shielding turns like the stepovers, 3/4 shield turns and the "sharp inside/outside cuts" are safer in these areas.

Click here for discussion on differences between "under the leg moves"

2.) Fake kick into inside/outside cuts. (a.k.a. "chop" turns): Everyone knows how to cut the ball with the inside and outside of the feet. The difference in this move is to cut the ball very "sharply" backwards to the inside or outside, and set it up with a fake kick.

Begin by dribbling forward. Touch the ball a little in front of your feet, plant your left foot near the ball and wind up with your right leg like you are going to shoot (or kick the ball hard). Instead of shooting you bring your right leg down in a "chopping" motion to cut the ball backwards across the front of your body. It has to be a very sharp cut back towards your

left foot and maybe even in towards yourself. You may even have to hop out of the way with your left foot. Then continue in that new direction and do another with the left foot. This is known as the "inside cut".

The "outside cut" begins the same, but after the fake right kick, instead of "chopping" down of the ball, you "sweep" it away with the outside of your right foot away from the defender. This is a less aggressive move and actually shields the ball as well. KEY POINTS: Cutting the ball with the inside of the foot is the most basic maneuver in soccer. If it is done without some sort of a "fake" or violent change of pace, it is doomed to end up between you and the defender in another frustrating and purposeless kicking battle. What makes this move work is that it is preceded by the fake kick which "wrong-foots" the defender and then the cut has to be extremely sharp, literally a "chop" backwards and maybe even slightly into you.

3.) Stepmover 180 turns. "swivel". Start with the ball between your feet, as it is during your "in-betweens". Put your weight on your left foot as you swing your right foot up and over the ball (turning counter-clockwise towards the left). Plant the right foot down on the left side of the ball and step down. (This is the "stepover" part of the move and will be used in lots of fakes and feints). Now using that right foot as a pivot, spin (turning clockwise this time) around with your left foot, back towards the ball. Once you have turned a 180, take the ball with your left foot and begin to move in the other direction. The initial stepover move is also known as a "Rivelino" stepover and sometimes this turn is called a "Rivelino" turn.

-Another slight variation is to take the ball back with the outside of the right foot instead of using it as a pivot foot. Here you fake the "stepover" as you turn counter-clockwise over the ball with the right foot, just as before. Then instead of planting that right foot, you just tap it down and then back up as you begin to pivot back clockwise still on the left foot. Then you take the ball with the outside of the right foot (the stepover foot) and move back in the new direction.

Personally, I prefer this variation. I think it is quicker and a little easier to do the pivot with cleats on grass fields.

KEY POINTS: The move becomes effective when the "stepover" looks like a shot or pass or lunge in that direction. This "sells" the "FAKE" and then you take the ball quickly in the other direction.

4.) Shield turns. (a.k.a. 3/4 turn or "Spin Turns") If the inside cut is the most basic move in dribbling then the "shield turns" sometimes referred to as "3/4 shield turns" are a powerful way to use it. Start by dribbling forward towards a cone or mark that represents the defender. Just before reaching the mark, begin a series of sharp inside cuts with the inside of the right foot. The first cut turns you to the left, then immediately follow with another cut to be facing backwards, and immediately with another cut to end up facing to what initially was to your right. There should not be any extra steps between ball touches. The entire time the ball is shielded and multiple opportunities for lateral and trail passes are available. When done properly the dribbler can actually "shake-off" the defender and continue downfield.

Outside Shield Turns (a.k.a. Outside "Spin Turns). This move involve 2 or 3 quick turns like above, but this time cut the ball with the outside of the foot.

KEY POINTS: Many defenders are taught some variation of the "3-ways" approach to 1v1 defense.. First get in the way, second turn them away, and third take it away. Modern defenders are some of the best athletes on the field and are experts at turning or "herding" the strikers to the sidelines. This is where the "3/4 shield turn can really work. The first cut is with the "herding" defender (in the same direction), but then suddenly after 2 more sharp cuts, the striker is free again towards the middle, or has space to make a pass. It is a speed move and works best at a full run. If the first cut to the left is emphasized, the defender often over-reacts and when the second and third cuts quickly follow, they may lose contact completely. The outside shield move (among others) was often used by soccer legend Franz Beckenbauer and some still call it the "Beckenbauer".

{short description of image}Franz Beckenbauer

5.) Cruyff turns.(pronounced "Crow-EEf") The "Cruyff move could easily be listed under the next heading - "Fakes to beat the opponent", but it is still a move that turns the player 180 in the opposite direction and has some similarities to both the "turn-away pull-back" and the "inside cut".

Start by dribbling the ball forward and plant your left foot near the ball as your right leg "winds-up" for a big kick or shot. Instead of shooting however, bring the right foot down and "chop" the ball backwards and underneath your left leg. You may even have to do a little "hop" or "skip" with your left foot to get it out of the way.

The difference between this move and the "turn-away pull-back" is that the "Cruyff" uses the "chop" with the inside of the foot while the pull-back uses a "scrape-roll" with the sole of the shoe.

KEY POINTS: This move takes a little practice. The classic Cruyff highlight clips show him moving diagonally to the right across the field near the opponents penalty box. He fakes a pass/kick towards the right flag but instead "chops" it underneath his left leg giving him space for a shot.

Click here for discussion on differences between "under the leg moves"

{short description of image}Cruyff "getting set!"

6.) Stop-hop. (a.k.a. "Half Garrincha") From a full run, stop the rolling ball by briefly tapping the top of it with the sole of the right foot. Allow your momentum to sway a little forward as you lift the right foot off the top of the ball and "hop" onto the ground (just beyond the stopped ball). Now your left foot comes up and rests on the ball with the cleats as you turn to the side.

KEY POINTS: This little move allows the player to come to a screeching halt, then turn just a little and switch feet to prepare for the next move or pass. In the process, the defender usually flies by and when he returns you have the ball nicely "shielded" and your head is up for the next play. If you were to continue into a full spin with a left footed ball drag, then it would become more like a "true Garrincha".

Fakes to beat the opponent:

Dribble out about 10 - 20yds. and then back again - make 10 fakes out and 10 more back, alternating feet. Choose 3-5.

1.) Lunges. (a.k.a. Dummy Step Move) The lunge is a very versatile move that works standing still or at a dead run. Start dribbling the ball forwards then abruptly lunge (take a long deep step) with your left foot, to the left of the ball. Plant your left foot hard and take the ball back to the right with the outside of the right foot, on the diagonal. Accelerate. or as I like to phrase it - FAKE and FLY!

KEY POINTS: This move is the backbone of soccer feints. (In fact the "scissors", the "Rivolino", the "Matthews" and the fake kicks are all "lunge-type" moves.) Watch a Premier League game sometime to identify different kinds of moves, and the lunge (or variations on the lunge) will be the most common move by far. For instance, I don't think I have ever seen Michael Owen do any kind of "under the leg" or "spinning" fakes. He simply "faked" left, went to the right with the outside of his foot - and scored. That's the lunge at its best. Of course it helps to have breakaway speed like Owen, but if you "explode" out of the fake, you will find space.

2.) Double lunges. Once the defenders catches on to the "lunge left - go right" concept, they will not be fooled as often. Then it's time for an occasional "double lunge". Here instead of lunging left and then taking the ball to the right you lunge both directions and then "go". So, lunge left followed by a big step (lunge) to the right with the right foot, but then take the ball back to the left, with the outside of the left foot.

3.) Pull V's, (a.k.a. Pullback "V" or "Puskas") Start with the ball between your feet. Begin with a rapid movement with your right foot to the top of the ball and stop briefly with your cleats on top. This motion should make it appear like you are passing the ball, or taking the ball to your left side, across your body. Instead, keep your weight on your left foot and "scrape" from the inside to the outside with your right foot. This gets the ball rolling back to your right. Then turn your hips to the right and touch it with the inside of the right foot to deflect it off to the right on a diagonal. Repeat with the right foot several times and then switch to the left.

KEY POINTS: The key to this move is turning your hips to follow the ball as you roll it to the outside and slightly behind. This allows you to take control of it with the inside of your foot and proceed in a new direction. The move works best when the defender "bites" on the fake kick motion and lunges towards the ball only to find that you have pulled it back and gone away.

{short description of image}Puskas avoiding the German defender.

4.) Pull "Backwards" L's, (a.k.a. Pullback "L" or Underneath-L) This is the sister move to the "V" move described above. Start with the ball between your feet. Begin with a rapid movement with your right foot to the top of the ball and stop briefly with your cleats on top. This fake kick motion should make it appear like you are passing the ball, or taking the ball to your left side, across your body. Instead, keep your weight on your left foot and "scrape" from the inside to the outside and behind, (like a pull-back) with your right foot. When the ball gets slightly behind you, tap it behind your left leg to the left side. Turn to the left and dribble off in that direction.

4A.) Simple L This is the simple pullback of the ball with the sole of the right foot and then a push outside with the outside of that right foot. This is very similar to the "Fake Kick Push Outside" as described below.

KEY POINTS: The "backwards L" move takes some practice to pull off at game speed, but it is well worth it, since it provides an instant change in direction while shielding the ball, as well. If the defender "bites" on the fake kick, he nearly falls out of his cleats trying to cover the sudden change in direction after the move underneath the leg.

Click here for discussion on differences between "under the leg moves"

5.) Scissors. This is a lunge type move using an inside to outside stepover. It's a decent move but sometimes awkward to perform at high speed. Start dribbling with the ball between your feet. Plant your right foot next to the right side of the ball and swing your left leg around the ball in a counterclockwise arc, from the inside (right side) of the ball to the outside (left side) of the ball. This is an "inside to outside" stepover with the left foot. Then plant that left foot down and take the ball back to the right with the outside of the right foot. Accelerate!

There are 2 versions of this scissor type motion. The one described above when the stepover move goes out and around the front of the ball is a "front side scissors". You can abbreviate this motion and do the stepover motion mostly behind the ball and it is a "back side scissors". They both work well if you don't just swing your legs around but actually try to fake the change in direction.

KEY POINTS: The way to get scissors to work is to "sell" the stepover as a real move or lunge to the left. Too many times players swing their legs around the ball without a lunge motion or a shoulder dip to fool the defender. If you can't get the defenders to lean the wrong way (by making them think you are actually going somewhere with the stepover), your job will be more difficult.

6.) Double scissors. Once the defenders catches on to the "scissors left - go right" concept, they will not be fooled as often. Then it's time for an occasional "double scissors" or "multiple scissors". Here instead of a scissors left and then taking the ball to the right you do scissor type stepovers in both directions and then take the ball. So, scissors with the left followed by an identical scissors-lunge with the right foot, and then finally take the ball back to the left, with the outside of the left foot.

7.) Fake kick and push outside (some also refer to as Puskas) This is a lunge type move but instead of a lunge to the left by stepping out with the left foot, you fake a kick to the left using your right foot. Then before putting that right foot back down, push off your still planted left foot, and take the ball to the right with the outside of the right foot. Accelerate!

7 A.) Fake kick and cut inside. Same as above, but change direction with a cut instead of a push.

8.) Rivelino (Stepover-push outside or a.k.a. Reverse Scissors) : This is a lunge type move which involves a stepover like the scissors but in the opposite direction. Plant your left foot behind and to the left of the ball and swing your right foot around (or over) the ball in a counterclockwise arc, from the outside right around to the inside left. Then push off your still planted left foot to the right, and take the ball with the outside of your right foot. Accelerate! As the highlight clips show, players often combine this move with scissor stepovers and drag rolls.

If you perform the "Rivelino" outside to inside stepover, and then take the ball completely back in the opposite direction, then it becomes more like a "stepover turn" or a "stepover 180".

KEY POINTS: Once again to "sell" this move the stepover must be convincing. The defender has to buy into the thought that you are going to shoot or accelerate in the direction of the stepover before you actually explode in the other direction. This move can be done facing the defender or with your back to them. For example, you can shield the ball deep in their corner, your back to the defender, then do the "Rivelino stepover" to turn and find space for a cross.

Rivelino is probably best remembered for his phenomenal "cannon-like" shot, but his use of this particular "stepover" move has also become part of our terminology.

9.) Matthews. (a.k.a. Inside Out Move or "Touch and Go") Dribble forward and then with the inside of your right foot, touch the ball slightly to the left, as if you were going to cut that way. Instead, push off the left foot and take the ball back to the right with the outside of the right foot. It is essential to add a "little hop" to the left (with both feet) when beginning this move while you are lightly touching the ball to the inside. This keeps the left foot out of the way and in a better more balanced position to "drive" off sharply to the right.

KEY POINTS: This is an advanced approach to the basic "lunge" move. Like the "drag- swerve" below, the little movement of the ball in the wrong direction really helps "sell" the fake.

9 A.) Fake Matthews Fake Matthews with scissors- see "Matthews Stepover"

This move starts just like the Matthews complete with the all important "little hop" (with both feet) to initially move the ball to the inside. But instead of taking the ball back to the outside you step past the ball with the right foot towards the right in a little lunge motion. Then you take the ball away with the outside of the left foot to the left. After the first hop and touch, the rest of the move feels a lot like a double lunge.

9 B.) Reverse Matthews With this move the ball is pushed to the outside with a slight touch and the all important "little hop" (with both feet). Then it is taken quickly back to the inside with the inside of the right foot with a sharp cut.

The Side Step: Four important phrases used in the move: feet close to the ball, fake, push and accelerate away with the ball.

STEP 1 When a player is running towards an opponent they keep their feet behind the ball, staying close to it.

STEP 2 The player moves as if to take the ball outside with one foot...

STEP 3 ...but they take the ball with the outside of the other foot in the opposite direction.

STEP 4 The faking leg must stay firm to keep balance and provide a strong anchor to hold the body as the player changes his balance.

STEP 5 The anchor leg is then used to push off in the opposite direction, with a good touch with the controlling foot to get the ball in the right position.

10.) Half-Preki. Begin with a little lean or lunge out to the right side of the ball by lifting your right foot and stepping down lightly beside the ball. Do not put any weight onto this right foot. Instead shift your weight to the left and plan to "scrape" your cleats over the top of the ball, from the right side to the left, to begin it rolling to the left. After the ball has crossed completely in front of your body, use the inside of your left foot to touch it forward around the defender.

Accelerate!

10 A.) "Full"-Preki. This move begins very much the same as above, but after the drag roll to the left, add a "step-over" (a Rivelino-like move) with the left foot - then as the ball continues to the left take it away with the outside of the left foot. On the highlights clips you will see the pro's add a lot more.

11.) Maradona or Garrincha. This move is a spinning move. I teach it by learning the 3 components. Stop, Hop and Spin. Dribble the ball forward and then stop it with the sole (cleats) of your right shoe by briefly putting your foot on top of the ball. Then hop that same foot over to the other side of the now motionless ball. For an instant, you have "straddled" the ball. Finally, spin (counterclockwise) over the top of the ball and as your left foot reaches the ball pull it with you by scraping across the top. This will cause it to roll with you as you complete the spin to face the original direction. As you become more proficient, the middle part of the move (the hop-turn) is done with both feet in the air for an instant. This describes the "Garrincha". Don't hesitate to change direction as you complete the spin and head off into open space for a pass or shot. "Maradona" is similar but instead of initially stopping the ball with the cleats, the ball is pulled back and slightly to the side where it is collected by the other foot as the player spins over the top of the ball.

12.) Stop and Go (drag roll, "stop-hop", and Beardsley variations) Begin with your right foot on the ball with your cleats touching the top. Scrape your foot to the left to set the ball into motion, rolling to the left. Then stop it for an instant with your left foot, before you quickly "scrape" it again and get it rolling again to the left. The Beardsley is sometimes referred to as a "Hip Swivel".

KEY POINTS: This move works well down the wing to find space for a cross. (e.g. Cobi Jones). It also works at the 18yd. line to make room for a shot.

13.) Scotch Moves (Scotch-like after "tap")- see "Tap Behind" These are all moves that redirect the ball underneath the leg, (but in a different fashion than the Cruyff or "pullback L"). The basic maneuver ("straight Scotch", if you will) starts with stepping over the ball with the left foot. After placing that foot down use the inside of your right foot to tap it

underneath your left leg and off to the left side at an angle. Turn to the left and take it with your left foot. Yes, this is similar to the famous Cruyff but doesn't really start with a fake kicking motion and then a chopping movement. It is more of a quick little "tap" underneath the support foot.

The "stepover" variation uses the left foot to momentarily stop the ball then it proceeds to step beyond the ball and finally the right foot finishes by cutting it underneath that left leg with the inside of the right foot. And the "step-on" or "drag-out" variation stops the ball and even "drags" it to the outside with the sole of the foot and then knocks it underneath the left foot which has stepped beyond the ball.

KEY POINTS: I've seen this move work really well and I've also seen players end up in collisions with the defense. Unless the defense is really "wrong-footed", begin this move a little further out from the defender to avoid crashing into them. Click here for discussion on differences between "under the leg moves"

14.) Drag Swerve This move is similar to the Matthews without as much of a "little hop". Begin the ball rolling to the inside by dragging across it with the sole of the right foot. Before touching the right foot to the ground, use the outside aspect to push the ball back to the outside. The left leg stays planted throughout the entire "swerve" motion and then pushes off in the new direction.

KEY POINTS:OK, this "family" of moves has to be my favorite. The Drag Swerve and its sister move the Reverse Drag Swerve are deceptively simple, but so very effective. Like the Matthews moves, the feint is "sold" on the little drag movement of the ball before exploding in the opposite direction. Another bonus is that the move begins with the sole of the foot on the ball which allows multiple options (pullback, pull "V", pull backwards "L", half Preki, etc.) if it looks like the Drag move is inappropriate. These moves are especially effective on a smooth field, indoors or with Futsal. If the field is rough the Matthews moves probably work a little better. Have fun.

14 A.) Drag Scissors (a.k.a. Fake Drag Swerve) This move starts out just like the Drag Swerve with a little drag roll to the inside using the sole of the right foot. Then instead of "swerving" out with the outside of the right foot, you do a right footed scissors move, stepping over and around the front of the ball, finally taking it away with the outside of the left foot. It feels a little like the "full Preki" move which is a drag to the inside followed by a Rivelino stepover with the other foot, whereas here it is a "scissors" with the dragging foot.

14 B.) Outside-Inside Swerve (a.k.a. the Reverse Drag Swerve or "the Ronaldo") This move is a swerve first to the outside and then back with the inside. The left foot stays planted while you push the ball out with the outside of the right foot. Without losing contact with the ball, switch the right foot around to the outside and then cut inwards across your body with the inside of your foot and accelerate. This move is very similar to the "Reverse Matthews" but the left foot stays planted and doesn't do the "little hop" to the right at the beginning.

15.) Inside-inside Swerve This is another deceptively simple little move that I have seen work wonders. It begins as a sharp cut to the inside using the inside of the right foot, then immediately cut the ball back with the inside of the left foot to dart past the opponent. This has to go "bang-bang" with no steps in between the cuts. It feels a little like doing the actual in between drill in warm-ups, but you explode forward.

KEY POINTS: The key here is to sell the first sharp cut as a move in that new direction. This may make the defender "put on the brakes" and "poke" out at the ball becoming "wrong footed". Of course, your intention was not to change direction at all, and you fly into the left foot cut that takes you back on your original course as you "brush" past the defender.

The differences between the "under the leg" moves:

OK, I know the most important concept with all these moves is really just to fake left-go right, and then find space for a pass, shot or run. And it doesn't really matter what the move is called if we make the play.....

"We don't need no stinkin' names...."

But if you have read this far, you must have an interest, (like I do), in being accurate. For example, many times I will visit a practice and see every "under the leg" move called a Cruyff. So here are the subtle differences between the pullback ("turn-with" & "turn-away"), the pull backwards "L", the Cruyff, and the Scotch moves

The Pull Backwards "L" or "Underneath L" is almost a 3 step move. The first step is a fake kick motion up onto the ball. The second is a drag backwards with the sole (cleats) to prepare the ball for the tap underneath. The third motion is a tap with the inside of that same foot that redirects the ball underneath the support leg and into the new direction.

The Pullback ("turn-with" & "turn away") moves utilize the sole (cleats) of the shoe to "drag" the ball back towards the new direction, in one swift pivoting motion. The "turn-away" pullback is slightly different from a Cruyff in that it uses the sole of the foot to drag the ball backwards. The

Cruyff uses the inside of the foot with a little "chop", usually after a fake kick motion.

The Cruyff is a one step move that uses the inside of the foot to "chop" the ball underneath the support leg in a radically new direction. The key is setting up the support leg in the correct position, and also swiveling the body a little, to make room for the ball to pass beneath the leg. Note that the sole (cleats) are not part of this move.



Furthermore, Coerver and Vogelsinger often describe the "fake kick" motion associated with the beginning this move, and then that same leg "chops" the ball underneath the support leg.



The Scotch Moves or "Play Ball Behind" Moves are one step moves that like the Cruyff, utilize the inside of the foot and usually not the sole (cleats). But this move doesn't change the direction the player is heading as much as the Cruyff, which is nearly a 180 degree change. The Scotch moves are more like a basketball guard passing the ball behind his back while continuing to advance in generally the same direction.

Soccer drill to get your players practicing turns

Players will benefit greatly from having at least three turns in their armory to help them withstand pressure and create space to pass, shoot or dribble. Use these soccer coaching tips and drills to show your players how...

When a player is in possession of the ball he may want to:

- Create space for himself or...
- Change the direction of play or...
- Lose a closely marking defender...

One way your players can do each of the above, when on the move, is to perform a well-executed turn.

1. Inside and outside hook turn

These are two similar turns with slightly different execution.

- Take a stride forward to reach the ball.
- Use back foot as a brake/pivot.
- Cut or 'hook' the ball back in the opposite direction using the inside or outside of the leading foot.
- Push off from non-kicking foot to accelerate away.

2. Cruyff turn

- Named after the legendary Dutchman Johan Cruyff who played for Ajax and Barcelona.
- Plant non-kicking foot next to the ball.
- Feint to pass or cross the ball with the kicking foot.
- Turn kicking foot inward with toe down.
- Using the inside of the kicking foot, drag the ball behind the standing leg.
- Turn and accelerate away.



3. Stop turns

This turn can be used, for example, when attempting to keep the ball in play.

- Run over the top of the ball.
- Stop the ball with the sole of the foot.
- Using the same foot, push off in the opposite direction.
- Use the outside of the other foot to take the ball away.

4. Drag back turn

The foot stays in contact with the ball for the whole of the move.

- Shape as if to kick the ball forward.
- Place a foot on top of the ball.
- Roll the ball back under/across the body with the sole of the foot in the opposite direction.
- Accelerate away.

5. Stepturn turn

- Step over/around the ball so both feet are on the same side.
- Use the outside of the same foot to pull the ball back in the

opposite direction.

- Accelerate away.

Key soccer coaching tips • Make players practice these turns using first their stronger foot, then their weaker foot.

- Practice all turns slowly at first.

Ball Control - the basics

Every time your players make a poor first touch in a game they are likely to give the ball away to the other team.

- So in every activity in every practice session you need to observe how your players react to the ball as it arrives.
- Do they choose the correct part of their body to control the ball?
- Is their first touch nice and soft? Are they relaxed?
- Does their first touch move the ball away from pressure and in the direction they want to pass, dribble or shoot?

Remember: The basics of ball control are the same regardless of whether the ball is being controlled with the foot, head, thigh or chest.

General coaching points on ball control and first touch: Encourage your players to get into line with the flight of the ball as quickly as they can and decide how they are going to control the ball.

- Work on practicing control with your players' feet, thigh, chest and head so they can receive the ball at any height.
- If they are controlling the ball with their thigh then get the full face of it in line with the ball. Similarly, if they are using their chest they should receive the ball square on.
- As they make contact with the ball they should relax the part of the body they are using so that it drops quickly and close to their feet so they can dribble, pass, shoot or shield the ball to give their team-mates time to take up supporting positions.

What to say:

"Get into line with the flight of the ball quickly."

"Get the area of the body you're using behind the ball."

"Relax that surface area as the ball arrives."

You can practice ball control skills and first touch with this very effective game:

Basic Ball Control: Exercise 1

Setup: Use a 10 by 10 yard square grid marked out with a cone at each corner.

- Put players in groups of three.
- One ball to each group.
- Two players with the ball (players 1 and 2) are positioned on one side of the square and the third player (player 3) faces them on the other side.

Action: The player with the ball (player 1) passes to the player on the opposite side of the square (player 3).

Player 3 receives the ball with the inside of the foot and takes the ball a couple of yards to the side in one action.

On his next touch he passes the ball with his other foot back across the square to player 2.

After two or three minutes change player 3.

Coaching points Remind players that it's important to give a good pass so it is easier for their team mates to receive the ball and control it away with their first touch.

Allow two touches to start before limiting players to one touch.

Remind the receiving player to move toward the ball.

Basic Ball Control: Exercise 2

Setup: Use the same grid as above.

- Players are still in groups of three with a ball to each group.
- We still have two players with the ball on one side of the square and the third player on the opposite side.

Action Player 1 (the player with the ball) passes to the opposite player (player 3) and sprints around the back of him.

Player 3 taps the ball to the side, first touch, as the sprinting player 1 comes around him.

The sprinting player passes first or second touch to the player facing him (player 2) who repeats the action.

After a couple of minutes change player 3.

Coaching points Make this drill competitive by seeing how many passes each group can make in a minute or how long they can go without making a mistake.

Basic Ball Control: Exercise 3

Setup Mark out a short, wide pitch with big (10 yard wide) goals at either end and a halfway line.

- Divide the players into two teams of 3 or 4.
- Each team defends a goal.

Action The game starts with each team spread out in their half of the pitch.

The coach stands on the center line and rolls a ball to one of the teams.

Their objective is to score a goal by shooting from within their own half.

Rules

- No goalies.
- Players must stay in their own half of the pitch at all times.
- Each player on the team must touch the ball at least once before a shot can be taken.
- The ball must not be allowed to stop - if it does, possession is passed to the other team.

Progression

Restrict players to three, two or one touch.

Ask them to shoot with their 'wrong' foot.

Challenges

- Can they work the ball up to the halfway line without letting it stop and only having 1, 2 or 3 touches each?
- Can they block shots with their body and gain immediate control of the ball?
- Can they lay off a good ball into the path of the shooter?
- Will anyone stand on the halfway line and get in the way of their opponents shots?

Common ball control faults and how to correct them

During a session you are sure to notice some of your players having difficulty getting their body in line with the ball, choosing the wrong part of their body to receive it or allowing the ball to bounce off before they can get it under control.

Problem 1 – Your player misreads the path of the ball and misses it.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, this is a really common problem for young players.

When they begin to play soccer, almost all children see a pass coming and just stick out a leg and hope that the ball hits them.

How to fix it: pass a ball at your players from varying distances and at different speeds. Encourage them to keep their eyes on the ball and talk them through what they have to do: "move left", "move right", "turn to face me" etc.

Problem 2 – Your player chooses the wrong part of their body to receive the ball or has trouble deciding which surface to use.

How to fix it: working in pairs, one player shouts out the part of their body they want to receive the ball with and the other serves a ball towards that body part.

Problem 3 – The ball bounces off the player and they lose possession.

How to fix it: working in pairs again, encourage the receiving player to exaggerate the correct cushioning movement so a ball served in the air drops down at their feet and a ground pass "sticks" to the foot.

You could also try using a futsal instead of a regular ball. The slightly increased weight and much reduced bounce of a futsal makes it far easier to control.

Once you have worked on correcting these common faults, it's time to let your players practice their ball control skills in the more pressured environment of a small-sided game.

One of my favorites for children aged 10 and up is based on Paul Cooper's Xavi Game, named after Barcelona's Xavi Hernandez who is, perhaps, one of the most skilful players in the game today.

This is a 5v5 game with the condition that players in their own half of the pitch may only touch the ball three times but when they are in the opposition's half they can have unlimited touches. Goalkeepers must roll the ball out.

This game is great for encouraging quick, decisive passing and, at the same time, allowing players to express their individuality when going towards goal.

Younger children can practice their ball control skills in a less structured 4v4 where the coach awards extra "goals" for good examples of getting into line with a pass or a nice, soft first touch..

Keep Your Bedroom Tidy!

Objective: To improve ball skills, communication and teamwork.

Age range: U5s to U9s.

Number of players: Whole team.

Equipment required: Some flat cones, a few larger traffic style cones or poles one ball for every player.

Set-up: Create a 30x20 yards playing area with a goal at each end.

A row of cones is spread across the center of the pitch with larger cones or poles representing the "bedroom door".

Two teams are placed facing each other, each in their own bedroom.

All players have a ball at their feet.

You stand at the side of the area with a few additional balls.

How to play: The game starts with each player moving around their bedroom, controlling a ball.

Before the game starts, demonstrate a couple of turns and ask the players to try them as they dribble around the playing area.

Drag back

Stop or slow the ball by stepping on it with the sole of your foot. Run past it by a few feet, pivot on one foot, turn quickly and run back the way you came, collecting the ball as you go.

The stop and go

As you are dribbling the ball (usually with an opposition player alongside you), you suddenly slow down then explode away. The most effective technique is stop the ball completely with the sole of your foot then quickly push the ball forwards again with the instep (laces).

Then tell your players to swap balls with a partner to encourage communication.

While players are moving around they are asked to select a captain.

Then shout *"Keep your bedroom tidy!"*

- All players retire to their bedroom and kick their balls through the Bedroom Door into their opponent's bedroom.
 - The captain can select players to stand near to the door to intercept and return balls kicked by the opposition.
 - Other players will move around the bedroom collecting balls that have gone further into their bedroom.
 - Should a player score in the opponent's goal their team gets five points and the ball stays in the goal.
 - Play for two or three minutes then stop the game.
 - The balls in each bedroom are counted.
 - One point is given for each ball - don't forget five for any balls in the goal.
 - The team with the fewest points has kept their bedroom tidiest and wins the game.
- During the game, you can throw additional balls into each bedroom to keep the game interesting.

Soccer drill for turning and dribbling with the ball

When young players first start running with the ball, they like to run in the direction they are facing. It's difficult for them to keep control of the ball and turn their bodies at the same time. Use these basic soccer [ball control](#) drills to coach them to change direction as they run with the ball.

This is a great exercise to develop [dribbling](#) skills and get young ball (soccer) players used to having to change direction during a match, using both the inside and outside of their feet to manipulate the ball.

Set up turning and dribbling soccer drill

- In a 10 yard square, four players, with a ball each, stand at each corner - A, B, C and D.
- You need to place a cone a couple of feet inside the square from each corner and one in the center.

Run the turning, dribbling drill

- Starting with player A, each player, in turn, dribbles the ball around the cone in front of them, then moves quickly to the center cone.
- Players go around the center cone before dribbling back to their place, keeping the ball under control.
- Once the player has reached the start of their turn around the center cone, the next player (in a clockwise rotation) begins a similar route from their own corner.
- The players move in sequence.

Advance the turning drill skills

You can advance this soccer turning, dribbling drill to make it harder by getting the players to return to the corner to the left of them.

So, when player A reaches the center cone, player B sets off and player A will return to player B's corner. Player B will then return to player C's, and so on.

Key soccer (ball) coaching tips

- Tell players to use the inside and outside of their feet to control and dribble the ball.
- Control is more important than speed.
- Once players show control and good technique, then speed them up.

Soccer drill to sharpen dribbling skills

Use this soccer drill to coach your players to maintain good [ball control](#) when running and [dribbling](#). It's all about improving familiarity with the ball and touch when running with it.

Key coaching points in this soccer (ball) drill

You need to get your players thinking about what they need to do when they're running with the ball, including:

- Keeping the ball within playing distance.
- Using the inside and outside of both feet.
- Taking quick, small steps.
- Keeping heads up.
- Thinking about technique first, speed later.

Set up soccer (ball) drill for dribbling skills

- Set up eight pyramid cones approx 0.5 yards to 1 yard apart.
- Players split into two groups, one group at each end of the line of cones.

How to run the soccer drill

The first player from the first group dribbles in and out of the cones without touching them and finishes with a [pass](#) to the

first player from the second group, who repeats the soccer drill in the opposite direction.

Develop the drill

- Move the 2nd, 4th, 6th and 8th cones approximately 1 yard to 2 yards to the left to create a second line of cones.
- Players again take it in turns to dribble through the eight cones.
- Repeat the soccer drill, but increase the speed of the dribble.

Dribbling at speed soccer drill

When your players win the ball off the opposition in midfield and pass it quickly they must be able to dribble at speed towards the opposition goal to take advantage of the turnover. Use this soccer [dribbling](#) drill to help.

Speed dribbling skills

It can be so frustrating. Your tough, tackling [midfielder](#) has won the ball off the opposition who are pushing on towards your goal. Suddenly he hits a pass to a team-mate who turns and heads towards the other goal. But he cannot dribble at speed and has to slow down to get control of the ball. The opposition defenders catch up and the chance is gone.

How to dribble

Make sure this situation doesn't happen again. Get your players practicing their soccer [dribbling](#) skills in training and watch them take advantage in your next match.

How to set up the dribbling drill

- Set up a 20m x 20m square using cones.
- Stand two small goals 10m away to the left and 10m to the right.
- This is a 3 v 3 game so you may need to set up two or three grids.

How to run the dribbling drill

- The team in white starts out with the ball and has to play keep-ball for as long as possible.
- If one of the midfielders in the dark shirts wins the ball, he tries to dribble through one of the small goals at top speed.
- One player from the white team is allowed to move out of the square to try to tackle him.

Key coaching tip for soccer dribbling

Look for speed of combination play.

Soccer dribbling drill

This [dribbling](#) drill session looks at how players dribble with the ball when they change direction at speed. The aim of the drill is to get the players keeping the ball under close control as they move.

Basic soccer skills to look for in the dribbling drill

- Players moving the ball from one foot to the other as they change direction, and good [touch](#) on the ball.
- The aim of the drill is to improve dribbling skills and close [control](#).

How to dribble a soccer

Encourage your players to follow these key techniques when dribbling and changing direction at speed.

- Keep the ball within playing distance.
- Use the inside and outside of both feet.
- Take quick, small steps.
- Players must dribble with their heads up.

Set up dribbling drill

- Mark out a circular playing area approximately 15 yards in diameter, with a square inside approximately 5 yards wide. The size of each area is dependent on the number of players involved.
- The dimensions above should be used as a guide for six players - you will need this number of players as a minimum.

Run the drill

- Players stand, evenly spaced, around the perimeter of the circle.
- The first player dribbles into the square, changes direction, then dribbles towards another player, who moves forward to receive the ball and repeats the drill.
- When players change direction they must exit through one of the three other sides of the square and not the side they entered.

How to develop the drill

Get players to increase the speed of the dribble. Introduce a second dribbling player at the same time. Dribbling players now have to keep their heads up in order to avoid colliding. This also reduces the options of where a player can dribble out to.

Play the dribbling drill in a game

Play a small-sided game on a pitch 30 yards by 20 yards with two end zones. The two teams play across the width of the pitch, defending their own zone and attacking the one opposite. Teams score a point for dribbling into the zone they are attacking.

Heads up soccer drill to improve dribbling skills

Coaching young soccer players to look up when they are dribbling the ball is not easy. However many times you tell them to do it, they will keep looking at the ball, so I use this soccer drill to make them look up.

This soccer drill is great for every age group, especially very young players who are learning how to control the ball when they are running with it.

Using this drill will encourage players to use their right and left foot, dribble at speed and stop the ball. You can add to these three skills, depending on the age of your players, so they have to turn with the ball or keep the ball in a tackling move.

Set up the drill

Use an area 30 yards by 20 yards. You need a ball for each player and you need colored cues – red, yellow and green – traffic lights.

Red = Stop the ball (cars stop at a red light)

Yellow = Toe taps on top of the ball

Green = Use green after the other two colors so players know they can now start running with the ball again.

How it works

- Tell your players they are going to be driving a car on the road, which is the space inside the coned-off square, and they have to spot the traffic lights and do what the colors represent.
- You can ask them what would happen if the car left the road – it would crash – and ask them what happens at a green light, yellow light and red light. Tell them what you want them to do when they see the color of the light change – when you change the colored marker.
- Players must keep looking up to see when you change it to another color, then react accordingly.
- When playing the game you can encourage your young players to try out a few different ways to control the ball, such as using the inside and outside of their feet.

Soccer coaching session for passing and turning skills

Sometimes players have their backs to the way they want to go and have to turn with the ball before they run with it or play a **pass**. Use this simple passing and **turning** game to help both the passers of the ball and the receiver. Another bonus of this exercise is that the players are changing position all the time, so everyone is involved.

When players need to turn with the ball before they run, it is often an unopposed move, because the player has run back into space and just needs to turn and go. When they are in this position a player needs a good ball, which they can **control** and turn on, keeping the momentum going. A pass which is too light or heavy will not help the **receiving** player.

Set up soccer coaching game

- Use a 15 yards by 5 yards channel, marked out by three sets of cones.
- You need groups of players at each end and a player in the middle. The players and ball will go through the middle of the cones.

How to play it

- The player in the middle receives a pass from one of the outside players.
- The middle player makes a turn, then passes out and joins that group.
- The outside player who passed into the middle player, becomes the new middle player.
- The soccer coaching drill continues for a set period of time.
- The players can use a turn of their choice, including:
 - Open body turn.
 - Open legs and flick.
 - Open legs and dummy.

How to Control the Soccer Ball When Dribbling Dribbling is a fundamental skill that beginning players learn in soccer. New players must think of the ball as an extension of the foot. Keeping the ball close and in control at all times is crucial for the new player. However, it's achieved through many hours of practice and dedication to the sport.

Step1 - Look up from the ball and know where your opponent is at all times. Dribbling requires staying in control of the ball in case the pressure increases quickly.

Step2 - Take one step for each touch of the ball. Each touch should be a light tap that keeps the ball in play. Focus on moving towards the goal according to the set plays.

Step3 - Use all parts of each foot to move the ball. Use your toes, the insides and outer parts of the foot and heels. Tap the ball once between steps.

Step4 - Keep the ball in close proximity. Stay within one step with slight movements at all times. Move the ball by using both feet to dribble. Maintain a steady pace.

Step5 - Think of the ball as an extension of your foot always keeping it close and in control.

Step6 - Turn by moving away from the opponent and using the inside or outside of your foot depending on which way you're turning.

* Dribbling is an easy drill to practice alone. For younger soccer players, the skill is learned through practice to achieve better control. * Don't favor one foot when dribbling. Your opponent may pick up on this and find it easier to steal the ball.

Touch & Hop: Stand with the ball between your toes feet about twelve inches apart. Touch the ball 6 inches with the inside of one foot (Little touch!). Hop away 24 inches sideways from the ball with the other foot (Big hop!). Turn your chest and shoulders a little away from the ball before to enhance the fake before playing the ball away at a 45 degree angle in the opposite direction to the fake with the outside of the original ball playing foot. Explode for 5 yards to finish.

How to Chip: used when the soccer ball travels in a tall arc. Usually a quick kick is used to send the ball up and over a short distance, rather than in a long, soaring flight.

Step2 - Approach the ball at a slight angle.

Step3 - Place your nonkicking foot approximately 6 inches to the side of the ball and slightly behind it.

Step4 - Take a back swing with your kicking leg, keeping in mind that a shorter back swing will allow you more control and better placement.

Step5 - Angle your toe down - imagine your foot to be wedge like - as you make contact with the ball below its center.

Step6 - Lean your body back as you kick to increase the lift of the ball. The farther you lean back, the greater the ball's arc.

Tips & Warnings - * Work on the fake kick move until the move you do looks as fluid the real kicks you perform all of the time.

* Mix up when you perform the fake kick as you dribble the ball down the field.

* If you properly perform the fake kick move, your opponent should lunge toward where he thinks the ball will go.

* Remember to add more fakes and skills so you have choices to fool your opponents.

* Faking out opponents can make them very frustrated and even angry. Don't taunt your opponents after faking them out.

* Don't use the fake kick with the same foot every time. Learn to use either foot to perform this move to truly fake out your opponents.

Soccer drills to brush up on dribbling skills

Dribbling is a basic soccer skill and it's important to incorporate this in your training drills so your players get a proper grounding in soccer technique that will stay with them for the rest of their soccer lives.

In training drills, get your players to

1. Have their knee over the ball.
2. Make sure the front of the dribbling foot pulls the ball along so it stays on or near the foot at all times.

If you start your under 4s/5s/6s running at players using this technique it will soon become natural to even the most basic player. Get them to practice on real players, NOT THROUGH CONES! Cones are not realistic soccer situations. In fact don't take cones to training.

Dribbling drills for warm-up time

Some of your players will be convinced they can dribble easily and will want to learn some moves to impress their friends. Teach them some, they are great for warm-up drills before a match and great for giving as homework and if they can pull them off in a match you're on to a winner. During training drills, coach the Cruyff Turn, which is a great move to bamboozle defenders.

You are creating match winners

Expect your players to make mistakes along the way, to try and dribble when they should pass, but don't stop them doing it. More often than not, it will win you matches

Coach the perfect nutmeg

Encourage your players to go through a defender using a nutmeg move, instead of going around them.

Key soccer coaching tip: the trick is to get the defender off balance.

1. Control the ball before the defender gets within two strides of you. Determine which foot the defender has his weight on. Defenders are taught not to stand flat-footed, with their planted foot slightly ahead of their other foot.
2. Push the ball to the outside of the defender's planted foot. Keep contact with the ball as you push it no more than six to 12 inches.
3. Allow the defender to shift his weight to his back foot while moving his front foot to block you.
4. Redirect the ball toward the spot where the defender's front foot was previously.
5. Tap the ball between the defender's legs. Step around the defender and you've opened up a number of possibilities.

Turn and lose your opponent trick

Drill your young players in the soccer skills of turning while keeping control of the ball to get away from the opposition.

Soccer drill to speed up reactions

Getting players reacting to situations is an important part of your soccer coaching plans. Try this soccer drill to get your players reacting to the ball in attacking positions.

Soccer drill tips

What you get your players to do:

- Player A – Dribbles and shoots.
- Player B – One-two with A and shoots.
- Player A – Follows in for the rebound.
- Player B – Reacts from shot and turns to defend 1v1.
- Player C – Dribbles in to attack 1v1 against B.

How to develop the drill:

Change the roles and responsibilities of the players. You may add extra players or reduce the numbers. Here is an example of how to extend the drill skills:

- Player A – Dribbles and shoots
- Player B – Dribbles to attack 1v1 against A
- Player C – Has a choice of team-mate. Calls team mate's name and dribbles to make a 2v1 situation
- Player A – React to player C's choice
- Player B – React to player C's choice

Use a quick one two soccer drill instead of dribbling

It can be frustrating for you and your team when one player, who may be very good at [dribbling](#), will not take the opportunity to pass past a player with a quick one-two and keeps losing the ball to a strong defender. Use the following soccer drill to coach more options when players are running with the ball.

This is a good soccer drill to add to your repertoire when you are coaching dribbling skills. Rather than dribble through poles or cones, you can get your players to dribble through real defenders, as they would in matches. Then show them how to pass past the same players.

Set up the dribbling drill

- Split your training pitch into three zones around five yards x 10 yards each, and have two attackers/passers in the first zone. Put defenders in zone two.
- One of your attackers dribbles to the second zone where he must play a quick one-two with his supporting team-mate to beat the defender.
- The supporting player passes the ball back into his path.
- The first attacker then dribbles towards the next defender and repeats the same action.
- His team-mate successfully plays the ball back.

Extend the dribbling drill

Once your players have got the hang of this soccer drill, you can make the drill challenge harder for the more advanced players with the following soccer coaching tips.

- Tell your players to vary their approach angles and starting positions and you can vary the size of each zone in the drill.
- Put in a chasing player to pressure the dribbling soccer player.
- Add another defender who puts pressure on the supporting player so they have to pass quicker.

Key soccer coaching tips for dribbling skills

- Tell your dribbling player to wait for the defender to come to him.
- Tell him to keep the defender guessing by using faking movements, such as [step-overs](#) and dropping his shoulder.
- Tell both the dribbler and the supporting player they must use explosive bursts of pace to get into the positions to play and receive the ball.

Soccer drill to get players running long distances with the ball

Running with the ball over long distances is important, but you need an end product - a cross or a shot. This soccer drill gives you the chance to use the running skills of your players to put the ball into danger areas that your team can exploit.

How to set up the drill

- Use a 20/30 yard pitch with a wide channel, as in the diagram below.
- Two goals and two goalkeepers.
- A white-shirted player runs at speed with the ball from left to right in the channel. Just before reaching the touchline, they cross the ball in front of the goal, not too close to the goalkeeper.
- A dark-shirted player runs on to the crossed ball and shoots first time at the goal. The drill is then repeated from right to left.
- Rotate the player's starting position so that each has a turn from each direction.

Put these soccer drill skills into action

Play a game at the end of the soccer drill session to put your coaching skills into action.

Play a normal game and encourage players to run into space with the ball when the opportunity arises. You might continue to use the wide channel in the game and award an extra point for any goals scored from crosses from this position.

Dribbling skills soccer drill with defender element

Young players are always keen to get the ball and run with it. When players arrive at my soccer training sessions and they see an open field in front of them, full of balls, off they go running and dribbling. Use this soccer drill to harness that enthusiasm but add defenders to make the drill more of a challenge.

Your young players gain confidence from the knowledge that they can run with the ball without being tackled - so when you put a defender in their way some of that confidence goes. In this soccer drill the attacker has free reign to run and beat three defenders.

Set up the drill

- In an area around 40 x 20 yards, mark out four grids.
- Defenders must stay in their drill zones.

There are three ways of running this soccer drill

1. You can tell all your defenders to try and win the ball.
 2. You can tell the first two they can only jockey the player and not win the ball, but the last defender can win the ball.
 3. You can tell the dribbler they have to use a trick to beat the passive first defender. They are then faced with the second defender who tries to win the ball but even if they win it they allow the attacker to continue the drill. The final defender can win the ball.
- In each case the attacker replaces the final defender who moves forward.
 - The other defenders all move forward one zone so that the first one becomes the attacker.

Key soccer coaching tip

In this soccer drill, concentrate on your players' ability to dribble and beat defenders using sudden changes of speed and direction along with body feints - attack at speed with close ball-control skills.

Dribbling skills drill in a square

Younger players often just need to run around a square, keeping the ball close to their feet without any tackling. Use these soccer drills to get your youngsters used to having the ball so they're not just fly-kicking it up the pitch in any direction.

This soccer drill session is all about being comfortable on the ball and improving your young players' dribbling skills.

What you get your players to do in this drill:

Stage 1: In an area 12 x 10 meters, 11 players - who have a ball each - dribble in and out of the other players, making sure they avoid each other and that their soccer's don't touch any other player or soccer.

Stage 2: Increase the size of the area to 12 x 12 meters. This time each player has a set time, say 45 seconds, to dribble their ball to each of the four touchlines.

They must stop the ball dead on the line before moving to the next line.

Make sure your players are aware of the other players around them.

Soccer drill to get attackers showing a disguise

Use the following soccer drill and coaching tips to help your players develop the ability to show a disguise when in attacking positions. This is a great training session for all ages and abilities.

What you want to see from your players are changes of pace, creative moves and signs that they are going for disguising their intentions - using bodies, eyes and feet.

Disguise drill tips

- The defender passes a ball to the attacker and runs to defend.
- The attacker must try to beat the defender and score in one of the goals.
- You can use two normal goals with goalkeepers, or use two small target goals instead of a normal goal.

How would I put this soccer coaching drill into a game situation?

Play a normal game. Games will naturally create opportunities for players to be creative and show skill. You may want to keep the idea of two goals for each team to attack. Make sure your players are quick and sharp.

Players must make quick decisions and act on them – if they take their time, opportunities will be lost. If they take too long, blow your whistle and tell them they've missed their chance.

Fun soccer training drill for all round development

Make your training drills fun with this [soccer coaching drill](#) from Tony Carr, academy director, West Ham, English Premier League. In the drill players have to react to the next ball from a variety of positions - not only that, they also have to turn and be involved in the next part of the drill.

Your players should be working at match pace during this soccer drill, and be totally focused on what they are doing. Reacting to the next ball is a key soccer coaching point in the drill.

What is happening in this soccer (ball) training drill covers all the corners of player development:

- Technique (skills, passing, shooting).
- Physical (power, running, strength in 1v1).
- Mental (decision making).
- Social (communication, combining with team mate).

How to set up the soccer drill

As in the diagram. Once you have shown the players what to do in this soccer (ball) drill, stand back and let them work it out.

- Player A – Dribbles and shoots - looks to help player B.
- Player B – One-two with A and shoots.
- Player A – In for the rebound.
- Player C – Dribbles in to attack 1v1 against B.
- Player B – Reacts from shot and defends 1v1.

Develop the drill

- Player A – Dribbles and shoots.
- Player B – Dribbles to attack 1 v 1 against A.
- Player C – Has a choice of team mate. Calls team mate's name and dribbles to make a 2 v 1 situation.
- Player A – React to player C's choice.

- Player B – React to player C's choice.

Wide pitch soccer drill to work on dribbling skills

One of the things about dribblers is that they need a bit of space to get the ball, and that is often on the wing. When you want a match-like soccer training session that forces the ball wide to your [dribbling](#) wingers, set up a small-sided game but change the elements.

In this case the game is played on a wide pitch, which is short in length. The dimensions encourage shooting and wide play. Your dribblers will be tempted to run with the ball because the pitch is short and they can see the goal and get a shot in.

Set up the game

- Tell your players to use the full width of the pitch to get maximum benefit from this game.
- Pitch size: 30 x 20 yards (minimum) up to 40 x 25 yards (maximum).
- Place the goals on the longer touchlines, making the pitch wide.
- Two teams of four players.
- Two keepers.
- No offside.

If the ball leaves play, you have a few re-start options:

- The coach passes a new ball onto the pitch.
- The players take a roll in.
- The players take a throw in.
- The players make a pass in.
- The players dribble in.

Shielding the ball under pressure

This soccer drill initially focuses on individual skills such as [dribbling](#), [shooting](#) and 1v1 attack and defend. You want to see good technique throughout this soccer coaching session and you should point out any technical errors to your players as you proceed.

Soccer coaching skills checklist

- Do players have the [ball under control](#)?
- Are they shooting low and hard, placing the ball, or just blasting it at the goalkeeper.

Develop the soccer drill

You can progress the soccer drill to a team game where these skills are to be applied to a team environment if the team is to be successful.

- Can your players exploit the spaces?
- Is their movement good?

Soccer drill set up

- In a 30-yard square arrange your players into groups of three with one nominated goalkeeper per team.
- The goalkeeper can be rotated so everyone has a turn at attacking.

What your players have to do

- Let the players set out the pitch as in the diagrams.
- The soccer drill starts with one player from each team attacking the goal to their left.
- They must dribble and shoot to score past the goalkeeper.
- Ensure that players use good technique and they play at match intensity.

How to advance the soccer drill skills

- Now each team introduces a defender.
- The players again take it in turn to attack the goal to their left, but this time they must beat a defender on the way.
- Look at their decision-making. What skills do they use to beat the defender?

How to put the drill skills into a game

Now all the outfield players play simultaneously with one ball – a 2v2v2 game! Each team starts with 10 lives and they lose a life each time they concede a goal. Again, look for good decision-making skills. How do the outfield players organized themselves and how do they respond to winning or losing possession?

How to Change Direction When Ball Dribbling in Soccer

Soccer is a fast paced game. But it's not always speed that carries the day. Having greater ball control than your opponent can help you get the edge. One way to have that ball control is to change directions whenever you want while dribbling the soccer ball.

Step1 Dribble the soccer ball in a straight path. Get some momentum going and move the soccer ball as you normal would by pushing it slightly ahead of you with each foot.

Step2 Cut the ball with the inside of your foot to the other direction. Once you built up the speed, suddenly and spontaneously tap the ball with the inside of your foot to move in the opposite direction. So if you want to go right, you'll tap the ball with the inside of your left foot. If you want to go left, you'll tap the ball with the inside of your right foot.

Step3 Re-position your body so that you are once again behind the ball squarely. If you remain to the side of the soccer ball, it will not only be hard to dribble, but you'll leave yourself open to a defender taking the ball.

Outside Hook

Step1 Move ahead with the ball while dribbling it at your feet. The basis to change direction is the same with the outside hook as it is with the inside cut. Get a good amount of speed going.

Step2 Push the soccer ball with the outside of your foot to change direction. Your foot will make a hooking motion around the ball and push it in a new direction. If you want to move right, you will hook with your right foot, if you want to move left, you will hook with your left foot.

Step3 Re-align your body behind the soccer ball. The finish is the same on this move. You must realign your body so that it is squarely behind the ball.

How to Do a Step-over Move in Soccer Soccer is a great team game involving many strategies for moving the entire team on the field, but it is also a great opportunity for an individual to use his soccer skills to make good things happen. The step-over move is a basic soccer move used to fake out one opponent or several opponents at the same time.

Step1 - Begin by dribbling the soccer ball down the field.

Step2 - Think about showing your opponent you are going to kick the ball hard by moving your shoulders as if you are kicking the ball.

Step3 - Use your kicking foot (the one you are using to provide the fake) up the back of the ball, over the top of the ball and down the front of the ball. These three moves should be fluid, without your foot ever leaving the ball.

Practice the Soccer Step-Over Move

Step1 - Start with a stationary soccer ball.

Step2 - Step up to the soccer ball with your left foot to the side of the ball, just as you would when you kick the ball with your right foot.

Step3 - Place your right foot on the ball about three-quarters of the way up the back of the ball.

Step4 - Roll the ball over with your right foot moving along the top. The ball should roll over about half way.

Step5 - Focus on moving the ball with your foot, taking care not to put your body weight on your right foot or on the ball. If you place your weight on the ball, you may fall down and lose the ball.

Step6 - Prepare to practice the step-over move while moving by choosing in advance where you will slowly dribble the ball.

Step7 - Dribble the ball slowly and after a few steps, perform the step-over move with your right foot.

* Find a friend to practice with you as you get the step-over move down. See if you can fool your friend. * Vary the number of dribbles and steps you take when before you use the step-over move. * Remember to mix up the fakes and moves you use in the game so your opponents do not know what is coming. If you constantly do the step-over move, opponents will quickly learn to look for it.

How to Do a Double Touch Move in Soccer In soccer, offensive players are limited to using fakes and misdirection to move defensive players out of the way. Defensive players are taught to always keep an eye on the ball and to anticipate where the ball is going. While body fakes (lunges, scissors, reverse scissors) work well, quickly changing the direction of the soccer ball is often more efficient at moving close defenders out of the way. The double touch move quickly changes the direction of the ball so defenders don't know what to do.

Step1 - Dribble the ball slowly at first by passing the ball from your right foot to your left foot a couple of times.

Step2 - Kick the soccer ball quickly from the inside of your left foot to the inside of your right foot.

Step3 - Hop into the air to kick the ball with the inside of your right foot in order to send the ball back to the left quickly.

Step4 - Practice kicking the ball hard with your left foot as if passing to another player. Instead, you'll jump forward so that your right foot passes the ball back to your left foot.

Step5 - Remember your right foot should not touch the ground from the time your left foot kicks the ball for the double touch.

Step6 - Add a burst of speed to practice dribbling the ball away from defenders after do the double touch.

Step7 - Switch it up and start the double touch with your right foot. Mastering this skill with both feet may make you a more effective player, as you can perform it no matter where you're at on the field.

* Limit the number of times you do the double touch move in a game. You don't want the defenders correctly guessing when you will use this technique. * Always keep an eye on where defenders are. If defenders are far away, use a different fake, as the double touch tends to work better when defenders are close to you. * The first touch of the soccer ball should be hard enough to fake out the defender who will think you are simply passing the ball. * Avoid performing the double touch slowly or standing too upright, because it can make the technique appear less fluid and cause it to be unsuccessful.

How to Do a Reverse Scissors Move in Soccer Excellent ball movement sets one soccer player apart from others no matter what the skill level of the league may be. The reverse scissors move can be used to fake out defenders, causing them to get out of a good defensive position. With defenders off balance, you can continue dribbling the ball down the field, pass the soccer ball to a teammate or make a shot at the goal. The quick change of direction away from where the defender expects the soccer ball to go makes this fake very effective.

Step1 - Place the soccer ball on the ground to practice the reverse scissors move very slowly the first time.

Step2 - Perform the step-over move by moving your right foot over the top of the ball to dribble the soccer ball toward your left foot.

Step3 - Move your left foot away from the ball.

Step4 - Swing your right foot to the inside (left side) of the ball as if you are going to pass the ball with the outside of your right foot.

Step5 - Move your right foot around the outside (right side) of the soccer ball and back underneath your body.

Step6 - Dribble the ball with the inside of your left foot, sending the ball back to your right foot.

Step7 - Dribble the ball slowly to work on performing the reverse scissors move while moving the ball down the field.

Move the ball forward and across your body to do the reverse scissors move easier.

Step8 - Increase your dribbling and running speed until you can do the reverse scissors move as fast as possible.

Step9 - Switch feet and work on the reverse scissors move with your left foot providing the fake kick. Start slow and gradually increase speed like you did when practicing with your right foot.

Step10 - Ask a friend to defend you and practice the reverse scissors move to fake him out.

* The reverse scissors move is similar to the scissors move you may do and incorporates the step-over move. * Work on making your foot look like you are kicking the ball (as you normally do) as you pass your foot around the ball for the fake. * Be careful to switch up your fake out skills. Learn other moves, like the fake kick and scissors, to keep your defenders guessing.

How to Do a Stepmover in Soccer: When it comes to dribbling the soccer ball, you'll be constantly challenged by defenders who are trying to knock that ball from your possession. In your bag of offensive weapons, you should be able to perform a "stepover." It's easy to learn and when performed properly will leave the opposing team's defenders in the dust. Here's how.

Step1 - Dribble the soccer ball so that it is a comfortable distance in front of you. You want to have a decent amount of speed, but not so much that you are pushing the ball several yards in front of you. A half yard is perfect.

Step2 - Approach the defender head on. Many defenders will try to come at you on an angle; this will force you to move the ball to the sideline, thus limiting your options. If the defender is angling you out, square your shoulders straight to him and continue dribbling the soccer ball.

Step3 - Juke the defender by throwing your hips in the direction that you intend to perform the stepover. Defenders are taught to look at your waist, because as your waist moves, so will your body. By sending your waist in one direction, they'll think you are certain to dribble the ball that way.

Step4 - Stepmover the soccer ball in the same direction that you just moved your hips. Remember not to actually touch the soccer ball as your foot moves over it.

Step5 - Use the outer portion of your foot to flick the ball back in the other direction around the defender. After you've performed the stepover, both feet will be on one side of the ball. Quickly tap the ball with the outer part of your foot and send it in the opposite direction.

Step6 - Dribble ahead and look for the next defender or pass that you can make to a teammate.

The Ronaldo stopovers When it's useful: To beat a close marking defender.

How to do it:

Stepover 1. Start with a stationary ball in front of the player. With the sole of their foot, they roll the ball across their body. They then flick the ball back with the inside of the other foot behind their leading leg. Make sure they step right over the ball after their first touch.

Stepover 2: The player rolls the ball across their body again. But, instead of flicking the ball back, they step over it so it rolls under their leg. They then drop their shoulder and push off hard in the other direction, dribbling the ball with the outside of the foot they started the skill with.

Repeat steps 1 and 2 at walking pace. Then gradually increase the speed until your players can perform the Ronaldo stepover while running with the ball.

Inside, outside cuts (or chop turns): When it's useful: When your players are in a shooting position and need to beat a defender who is blocking a path to goal.

How to do it: As they are dribbling, the player pulls back their right foot as though they are about to shoot. But, instead of shooting, they use the inside of their right foot to chop (or cut) the ball across their body and continue dribbling. That is an inside cut. To cut the ball to the outside (the right) of the defender, the player uses the outside of their foot.

How to Change Speed in Soccer: Before you can become an effective soccer player, you need to know how to dribble well and change speeds while maintaining possession of the soccer ball. Varying your speed can give you a chance to get around an opponent, allowing for a clearer passing lane or even a better shot on goal.

Increase Speed

Step1 - Obtain possession of the soccer ball, and position it close to your feet by taking a few small touches.

Step2 - Keep your back straight while making the small touches. You should also keep your head up to see what options you have available.

Step3 - Increase your speed, lowering your body as you gain more momentum. When accelerating, you should push the soccer ball further in front of you with less frequent touches.

Step4 - Use your instep when dribbling faster. This can insure the quickest acceleration, allowing for a smoother transition from jogging to full-fledged running.

Decrease Speed

Step1 - Sprint quickly with the soccer ball, using shorter touches but still maintaining possession. Keep your body low to the ground.

Step2 - Decrease your speed, or stop completely, once you sense pressure from your opponent. The defender is likely to run past you, since they don't expect you to stop running.

Step3 - Straighten your back, keeping your eyes up to survey your options. Check to see if you have a pass or a shot on goal.

Step4 - Step on the ball with the bottom of your foot to maintain a complete stop. You need quick feet and a sturdy balance in order to perform this correctly.

Tips: * If you plan to slow your acceleration, you need to keep the ball closer to you with shorter touches. This way you can have the ball closer to you once you decelerate.

* Performing a quick stop is difficult for many soccer players to learn. This is a skill you can practice with a friend or even by yourself.

How to Do a Cruyff Turn in Soccer: Pioneered by the brilliant Dutch center forward Johann Cruyff, the Cruyff turn is one of the most effective feints you can use to lose a defender on the soccer field. It's an incredibly simple move, but with good timing and a strong effort to "sell" the fake to your marker, you can get away from defensive pressure and into open space in a matter of moments.

Step1 - Place the ball on the ground in front of you.

Step2 - Take a few steps back from the ball and line it up as if you were going to kick a cross or pass to a teammate.

Step3 - Approach the ball and plant your non-kicking foot next to it, just as if you were going to kick it.

Step4 - Swing your kicking leg toward the ball.

Step5 - Use the inside of your kicking foot to drag the ball back behind your planted leg and into the open space opposite the direction in which you would have kicked it.

Step6 - Turn your body away from your defender (real or imagined) and explode after the ball.

Step7 - Take one or two touches to settle the ball and begin dribbling in a new direction.

Tips: * Practice planting your foot and doing the turn slowly before trying it at full speed.

* Make your fake kick seem as genuine as possible, since the success of the feint relies on your defender planting his or her feet and believing that you're going to dump the ball off to one of your teammates.

How to Nutmeg a Defender in Soccer Going through the defender with a nutmeg move alleviates the problem of trying to go around the defender.

Step1 - Control the ball before the defender gets within two strides of you.

Step2 - Determine which foot the defender has her weight on. Defenders are taught not to stand flat-footed, with their planted foot slightly ahead of their other foot.

Step3 - Push the ball to the outside of the defender's planted foot.

Step4 - Keep contact with the ball as you push it no more than 6 to 12 inches.

Step5 - Allow the defender to shift her weight to her back foot while moving her front foot to block you from scooting around her.

Step6 - Redirect the ball toward the spot where the defender's front foot was previously.

Step7 - Tap the ball between the defender's legs.

Step8 - Step around the defender and continue on.

Step9 - Listen for cheers of "nutmeg" from your teammates on the sideline.

* The trick is to get the defender off-balance. * A defender becomes more vulnerable the more times she has to shift her weight. * Because it's embarrassing to be nutmegged, defenders are quick to stop you from pulling it off. It's very easy with most defenders to 'meg em but if they are good this move won't work : dribble towards them keeping the ball under control the faster you can do this the better, take your lead foot usually your strong foot and step over the ball as if you are going to push it to the outside, if the defender goes for the fake and the feet come apart use your off foot to tap the ball strongly and quickly through their legs and shoot down the keeper. this move is nice cuz if they catch on to you can actually move the ball to the outside instead of stepping over it, try using both feet and becoming adept with them

How to Do a Rainbow Move in Soccer The rainbow move is a simple offensive move from the soccer play books. When perfected it can make you look like a skilled soccer player. Save the move for a time in the game when there's one person between you and the goal, or better yet for after the game when you're celebrating.

Step1 - Start by dribbling the ball quickly to build up motion.

Step2 - Place the ball between your feet with your right foot in front of the ball and your left foot behind the ball. Your right heel and left toes should be holding the ball in place.

Step3 - Use your left toes to roll the ball up your right leg. Bounce the ball with enough force to remain in the air for a short time.

Step4 - Kick the ball with the right heel so that it flies up in the air and hopefully over your opponent's head landing on the back side of him.

Step5 - Keep running to catch up with the ball on the other side of your opponent.

Step6 - Practice is the key to the rainbow move. Work on the steps individually and then together. Reveal the your skills at your next game.

* The rainbow move is easier if you do it running at the ball. It can also be executed while standing still. * Keep the rainbow move in your pocket for showing off before or after the game, it's not a great defensive move to use during the game because of the lack of accuracy and chances for your opponent to steal the ball.

How to Do the Hocus Pocus Soccer Trick one of the most exciting dribbling moves performed by soccer players. It is essentially a reverse elastico that you do behind your leg instead of in front of it.

Step1 - Place the ball in front of you on the ground.

Step2 - Plant your left foot about 6 inches in front of the ball.

Step3 - Rest the inside of your right foot gently against the outside of the ball.

Step4 - Sweep the ball behind your left leg with your right foot. Concentrate on feeling the ball move with your foot.

Step5 - Wait until the ball passes your left leg and then snap it forward. Try to reverse its direction by passing it in front of your left leg and back toward the right.

Step6 - Uncross your legs and chase the ball down.

Step7 - Regain control of the ball with a few touches and dribble away as if you were eluding a defender.

* Once you have gotten good at sweeping the ball gently with your foot, try hitting it a little harder and speeding up the snap. In order to pull the trick off in a game, you'll need to do the trick very quickly, so practice building up your speed once you have mastered the control. * Allow your center of gravity to move with your right leg as you pull the ball behind you. The hocus pocus is all about flair, so make sure you use your whole body to pull it off, not just your leg.

How to Do the Full Preki Dribbling Move

Difficulty: Moderate

Step1

Place the soccer ball in front of you on the ground. Dribble straight ahead at a medium pace. Don't overdo it. The Preki can be used at a full run, but you must slow down to learn the correct timing and steps.

Step2

Roll the ball to the left with the bottom of your right foot. Plant your right foot on the ground as quickly as possible.

Step3

Step over the soccer ball with your left foot as it rolls to the left. Your foot should move forward and in the opposite direction from the ball.

Step4

Land on your left foot, then take a quick step, again, with your right. Make sure your whole body moves in the direction of the ball or you'll lose control of it.

Step5

Tap the ball to the left with the outside of your left foot, and accelerate away from the defender.

* Make each of your steps light and nimble when performing the move at full speed. This is hard for heavier players, but faster steps lead to a faster feint.

How to Do a Soccer One Touch Feet Drill If you watch professional soccer, you'll notice that all the players have the ability to pass and shoot the ball utilizing just one touch. As the ball comes in their direction, they only touch it one time as they make their offensive move. It's a valuable skill to have and will instantly enhance your play once mastered.

Step1 - Stand 10 yards from your partner. As the drill continues, you'll continue to back up for one pace with each pass; this will also allow you to practice the one touch drill with distance.

Step2 - Get in the ready position to pass the ball back to your partner. As the ball approaches, point your non-kicking foot toward your partner, and bring back your kicking leg behind you.

Step3 - Strike the ball with the instep of your foot. It is optimal to hit the ball squarely in the arch so that it travels straight. Be sure that your leg follows through to complete the kick. If you "chop" down on the ball too quickly, you'll get some air under it which will make it prone to be picked off in game play.

Step4 - Repeat this drill for 10 repetitions as you continue to back up.

Step5 - Switch your kicking leg and move back toward your partner over the course of 10 repetitions.

* As a variation try receiving the ball in the air and kicking it back to your partner with the instep of your foot. In game play, you'd use this as a short pass.

How to Do a Toe Touch Drill in Soccer There are a number of good drills you can use to improve your ball control and touch in soccer. Juggling is probably the most popular and widely recognized one of these, but the toe touch drill is almost as good for improving your skills. Instead of focusing on ball control and feel like juggling, the toe touch drill focuses on developing quick feet and a light touch on the ball.

Step1

Position the soccer ball on the ground so it's resting right in front of your feet. There are other positions you can use to increase the drill's difficulty, but this is the best one to start with.

Step2

Find a stopwatch or clock to use as a timer. The drill only lasts one minute, but you don't want to skimp on time and cut short your touches on the ball.

Step3

Hop into the air and place the toe of your right boot on top of the ball.

Step4

Jump lightly back into the air as soon as your toe touches the ball. Speed is the key to this drill, so focus on being quick.

Step5

Set your left toe on top of the ball as your right foot lands on the ground.

Step6

Alternate these light toe touches for one minute.

* Count the number of touches you get on the ball during the drill. Remember this number as your record and try to improve upon it with future drills.

* Use as light a tap on the ball as you can to keep it from moving around.

How to Do an Ankle Dribble in Soccer

In soccer, ball control is key. As long as you don't use your hands, then you can use any other part of your body to control that ball. One such drill, used in game play, is learning how to dribble with your ankles.

Step1

Place the soccer ball between your legs with your feet standing shoulder width apart.

Step2

Tap one side of the ball with your ankle, toward the other ankle. When the ball reaches the other ankle, tap it back.

Step3

Repeat consecutively utilizing only your ankles for as long as possible. Once you have mastered the initial move, try and move forward and backward while dribbling with only your ankles.

* Place this into a dribbling drill where you must use different forms of dribbling like ankle, instep, toe touches and more. This combination drill will help you gain better control of the soccer ball.

* Learn to throw a head fake to deceive the defender. You have the advantage over the defender, as you know what move you are going to make. Give him a head fake in one direction and then use the ankle dribble to move in another direction.

* Practice this drill with your shin guards on. Shin guards usually have supports and padding for your ankles as well as your shins. Performing the ankle dribble can be quite different as it hits back and forth off the padding. Master it with the shin guards on and you'll be ready for game play.

How to Do an L-Turn in Soccer Knowing how to do execute different moves while controlling a soccer ball can help you turn away from opponents for a better pass or shot. One such move is an L-turn. This is a great move to practice by yourself or against teammates before using it in game situations.

Step1

Position the ball so it's stopped and close to your feet. The L-turn must be executed with a motionless soccer ball.

Step2

Move yourself in front of the opposing player, with your opponent facing you and the ball. This move works well when you dribble up the field and come across a defender who's moving toward you.

Step3

Pull the soccer ball backward with your dominant foot. In this example, use the right foot. You could also attempt this move with the foot opposite from the direction in which you want to go. If you want to move to your right, pull the ball back with your left foot.

Step4

Pull the soccer ball back a little further than the heel of your nondominate or opposite (left) foot. This makes the turn more manageable so you don't trip over your feet.

Step5

Kick the ball with the inside of your right foot so the soccer ball travels behind your left heel. You have now changed directions with the ball and completed the L-turn. Continue dribbling the ball after you complete the move.

* This move should only be attempted if you're dribbling down the field and come across a defender approaching you. Since you need to stop the ball completely, this move wouldn't work during a full sprint.

* You could also tap the soccer ball with the inside of your right foot, turning your foot so the ball travels toward your right. This way you'd be moving the ball in the opposite direction of a regular L-turn.

How to Do Dribbling Moves in Soccer

Get past your opponent in soccer with several dribbling moves. A few of these are the Step Over, the Cut Back or the Cruyff Turn. All the moves, if done correctly, should fake your opponent out and get you to the goal.

Do the Stepmover

Step1

Approach the defender with the ball as if you're going to kick it hard.

Step2

Step over the ball slightly with your right, or kicking foot. Force the defender to shift his defense towards you.

Step3

Keep your right foot on the ball and move it to the side with slight pressure.

Step4

Continue with your dribble around the opponent.

Do the Cruyff Turn

Step1

Fake your opponent out by acting like you're going to kick the ball with the inside of your foot, and step over the ball instead with your opposite foot.

Step2

Rotate the initial kicking foot with toes pointing downward.

Step3

Use the inside of the kicking foot to shove the ball back behind the support foot.

Step4

Play the ball with the support, or opposite, foot after your opponent is thrown off balance defending the initial kicking foot.

Do the Cut Back

Step1

Cut back like you're about to take a shot. Trick the opponent by actually moving in a different direction away from him.

Step2

Plant the left foot near the ball.

Step3

Use the right foot to move the ball around to the back side of the left foot, and dribble in the opposite direction.

How to Do Roll Overs in Soccer When developing their ball control and touch, soccer players usually focus on the insides and outsides of their feet. Players almost always pass the ball with one of these two surfaces, which also play a dominant role in dribbling. However, the balls of the feet are also useful for certain feints and skills. Roll overs are a great way to sharpen these special soccer skills.

Step1

Position the ball on the ground directly in front of your feet.

Step2

Determine for how long you'd like to do the roll over drill. Consider choosing somewhere between 30 seconds to 1 minute to get the best feel for the technique.

Step3

Grip the ball through your boot with the ball of your right foot. Then, roll it across your body to the left.

Step4

Stop the ball using the inside of your left foot. If you want, control the ball so it moves forward a bit after the touch, as if sliding past a defender.

Step5

Drag the ball back to your right with the bottom of your left boot.

Step6

Control the ball with the inside of your right foot.

Step7

Repeat Steps 3 through 6 for a predetermined length of time to finish the drill.

* Don't be afraid to freestyle a bit during the roll over routine. The balls of your feet give you good control of the ball, so it's easy to get creative with your moves.

* Once you've mastered the basic roll over, try advanced soccer dribbling moves like the Half and Full Prekis.

How to Do a Double Scissors Move in Soccer After you have mastered the scissors move, it is time to do the double scissors move. When in a game, you want to start out using the scissors move against defenders and then switch to the double scissors move to throw defenders off track. Mix up the scissors and double scissors moves as the game goes on to confuse defenders. A good double scissors move should freeze the defender and open up a pass or shot for yourself.

Step1 - Dribble the soccer ball slowly down the field.

Step2 - Pass the soccer ball from your left foot toward your right with the ball moving forward.

Step3 - Kick your right foot to the inside (left side) of the soccer ball and around to the outside of the ball. Do not make contact with the soccer ball with your right foot.

Step4 - Plant your right foot to the outside of the soccer ball as if you are going to kick the ball with your left foot.

Step5 - Kick to the inside (right side) of the soccer ball with your left foot.

Step6 - Swing your left foot around the outside of the ball so that your left foot doesn't come in contact with the ball.

Step7 - Dribble the soccer ball with your right foot and move forward as quickly as possible to practice moving swiftly away from a defender.

Step8 - Switch feet and do the double scissors move by passing the ball from your right foot toward your left foot.

* After performing the double scissors, add a burst of speed to dribble the ball past the frozen defender. Practice dribbling away as quickly as possible after you do the double move.

* Make sure you turn your shoulders and hips as if passing the ball to completely sell the fake to your defenders.

* Remember you will actually pass the ball from one foot to the other but the opposite foot does not dribble the ball until two scissors are performed.

* When dribbling the ball, make sure your kicks are short and concise so you can maintain control of the ball.

* Don't lean back too far or stand too upright because you can lose your balance and control of the ball.

* Don't perform the double scissors move when multiple defenders are very close to you.

How to Do Soccer Dekes Good dekes and fakes are useful to every soccer player on the field, not just wingers and midfielders. When defenders are under pressure from opposing forwards, they can either drop the ball back to the goalie or, if they're skilled enough, use a feint to move around their marker. On the other hand, offensive players can use fakes to punch holes in the opponent's defensive line and create scoring opportunities.

Step1

Learn proper dribbling technique before attempting any fake, deke or feint. Being a confident dribbler is essential to becoming a confident trickster with the ball.

Step2

Execute abrupt changes of speed as you receive the ball and head past your marker. When you're on the ball you have an automatic advantage because the opposing player must react to each of your moves. Changing speed creates time for you to move around him.

Step3

Make sharp lateral cuts when dribbling the ball. Much like changing speed, moving abruptly from side to side puts you in control of the situation and often leaves your marker flat footed.

Step4

Move the ball around your body to shield it from the opposing player and create shooting or passing opportunities. Fakes like the Rivelino, the Maradona and the Scotch move all move the ball around your body and your trailing leg, protecting it from your opponent.

Step5

Look at your opponent's footing before executing a fake or feint. Your marker's foot position and weight distribution help you decide which way to take the ball in order to wrong-foot her.

How to Do The Around The World Soccer Trick

The around the world soccer trick is performed by all Soccer Freestylers around the world. It's one of the most famous soccer tricks. Once you learn this trick you'll be able to impress all your Friends, Coaches, and Family. The key to this trick is practicing!

Step1

Start with the ball on the ground, put your dominant foot on top of the ball and roll it back so that the ball is balanced on the top of your foot.

Step2

Practice balancing the ball on your foot until you can hold it there for about 8 seconds

Step3

Lift your foot and take it around the top of the ball while trying not to touch it, and then bring it around for a full Rotation. Don't worry about catching the ball! Just try to get your foot around the soccer ball as fast as you can; then hit the ball whenever your foot has done the full rotation around the soccer ball!

Step4

Just keep on practicing until you can get the trick while balancing it on your foot.

Step5

Once you can do the trick regularly it's time to attempt it while juggling.

Step6

First you need to start juggling the ball very close to your foot. Then you follow the same procedures as you did while balancing the ball on your foot. You kick the ball up and get your foot around the ball as fast as you can!

- * Practice, Practice, and Practice the around the world soccer trick until you can do it. That's the secret!
- * I would recommend Stretching before attempting this trick
- * It might be wise to warm up too.

How to Do the Puskas Dribbling Move

The Puskas is a simple dribbling fake that allows you to change direction quickly and move the ball away from a defender. It's one of the fundamental feints in soccer, so you don't need great technical ability or incredible feel for the ball to pull it off in games.

Step1

Start by dribbling the ball forward. Touch the ball with whatever part of your foot you like, but don't let the ball move more than three feet or so away from you.

Step2

Take one quick step with your left foot, then plant your right foot on the ground.

Step3

Reach out for the ball with your left foot and grip it with the bottom of your shoe.

Step4

Pull the ball back toward your body.

Step5

Move the ball to your left using the inside of your left foot before putting it back on the ground.

Step6

Chase the ball down, regain control of it and dribble away from the defender.

- * Make the Puskas move more athletic by hopping off of your right foot as you pull the ball back with your left. When your right foot touches back down, land on the ball of your foot and push off in the direction you kicked the ball.
- * When you pull the ball back, move your hips, as well as your leg. Dragging the ball with just your leg drains power from the move and can throw you off balance.
- * Wait until the defender lunges for the ball before executing the move.
- * If you want to really sell the fake to a defender, pretend to kick the ball to a teammate with the leg you're going to pull it back with.

How to Do a Matthews Turn in Soccer In soccer, controlling the ball is the best weapon you have. If you have the ball, your opponent can't be scoring. So when you come upon a defender, you need to figure a way to maneuver around him and maintain possession. One such way is by executing the Matthews Turn.

Step1

Approach your defender head on. Dribble the ball without hesitation toward your opponent. Keep the soccer ball fairly close to your body so that the defender cannot swipe at the ball with his feet and take possession.

Step2

Determine which side you want to pass your opponent on. The Matthews Turn involves a bit of a juke move. So whichever way you want to dribble the soccer ball, you'll be faking in the other direction.

Step3

Lower your shoulder and give the fake. Do this with the opposite shoulder. If you are dribbling left, fake right and vice versa.

Step4

Hook the ball with the outside of your foot and push it in the opposite direction that the ball is moving. As your upper body has indicated your movement one way, simultaneously take your foot and push the ball to the opposite side.

Step5

Dribble past your defender to complete the Matthews Turn. Once the defender has committed to traveling in the direction that your shoulder dipped, you have him beaten. Merely dribble the soccer ball past him, look to pass, shoot or take on the next defender.

- * Look to pass the ball after completing the Matthews Turn. If another defender is in the area, he may try and attack, since your momentum will have slowed while maneuvering around the initial opponent.

How to Do a Roll and Push in Soccer

The key to the roll and push move in soccer is changing pace and direction. Keep your defender on his toes, and speed by him with a basic roll of the ball. This move uses different parts of both feet and tests your dribbling skills.

Step1

Approach the defender with a normal dribble move. Slow the move down to get used to it. Practice this move alone initially, when comfortable ask a team member to be the defender.

Step2

Use the bottom of your right foot. Roll the ball in front of the defender to your left side. Make sure you keep the ball under control and far enough away from your opponent.

Step3

Cut the ball with your left foot. Using the inside of your left foot, push the ball behind the defender back toward the right side. Slide the ball right behind the defender's heels.

Step4

Move around the defender to the left following the ball. Keep your head up so you know where the opponent is at all times.

Step5

Pick up your dribble where you left off, and cruise past the competition towards the goal.

Step6

Practice the roll and push move using each foot as your roll foot. This dribble move requires the use of both feet. It's also easily adapted to swing around either side of the defender.

Warnings

- * Change pace during the move to throw your defender off, while he looks right, you go around the left.

- * Try the same roll and push move with the opposite foot.

How to Do a Hesitation Move in Soccer Moving defenders out of your way is an important part of the offensive side of soccer. Since bodily contact is not allowed, the offensive player must use various fakes to throw the defenders out of position. You want to make the defender think the soccer ball is going in one direction, causing his body to move, while you send the ball in another direction. The hesitation move is one of the most basic moves, but it can be very effective. You want the defender to over-pursue the ball and move out of your way.

Step1 - Dribble the soccer ball slowly at first as you work on learning the hesitation move.

Step2 - Stop the ball and your body abruptly to hesitate for a moment and then keep dribbling the ball.

Step3 - Practice stopping the ball with both your right foot and left foot for mastery of this skill.

Step4 - Maintain control of the ball when you stop by applying light pressure on it with your foot to prevent it from rolling away. You do not want the ball bouncing off your foot or leg and into the control of the opposing team.

Step5 - Dribble again after hesitating for a very short time. You want to wait just long enough to mislead a defender, but not enough time for the defender to steal the ball from you.

Step6 - Increase the speed with which you dribble the ball down the field while maintaining control of your body and the ball to perform the hesitation move fluidly.

Step7 - Practice the hesitation move after receiving a pass by stopping the ball for an instant when it hits your foot.

Step8 - Add in a fake body movement to make the defender think you are moving in one direction and then dribble the ball in the opposite direction to add another twist to the hesitation move.

- * You need to sell the hesitation move to the defender to make the defender react to you. You want the defender to react to your body and not the ball.

- * Keep track of where defenders are before you do the hesitation or any other move.

- * Watch the body position of a defender to find out if the defender is leaning one way or another. You can also use his body position to determine if he is under control and able to defend you successfully.

- * Don't use this move too many times in a row because defenders will come to anticipate what you are doing. Mix up your fakes and mis-direction moves.

How to Do the Reverse Elastico Soccer Trick: The reverse elastico is a simple but effective way to trick a defender into planting his feet and committing to position before you actually dribble around him. In comparison to the normal elastico popularized by Ronaldinho, the reverse elastico is less natural and requires greater balance and foot speed to perform well. However, like all difficult dribbling maneuvers, it only takes a little patience and a lot of practice to master.

Step1

Place the ball on the ground in front of you.

Step2

Practice pushing the ball to the left with the inside of your right foot.

Step3

Practice snapping the ball to the right with the outside of your right foot. This is a basic dribbling move. You want it to feel comfortable before trying the reverse elastico.

Step4

Connect the two dribbling moves in a smooth sequence. Move the ball across your body to the left, then immediately cut it back to the right and into open space. Make the touches on the ball two parts of one fluid motion.

Step5

Explode into a run and chase the ball down as soon as you make the second touch. This is probably the trickiest part of the reverse elastico, because it requires you to be perfectly on balance during the trick.

Tips & Warnings

- * Practice the movements slowly at first before trying them at full speed.

- * Practice starting the move at different distances from your body. Some of you may like having the ball right in front of you, but others of you may prefer to have more space to move your dribbling leg. It doesn't matter as long as you're comfortable with the distance and can stay balanced during the trick.

How to Do a 360 Spin Move in Soccer As you move the soccer ball down the field, you will attract the attention of the opposing team's defenders. When two defenders surround you, do the 360 spin move so you can fake out one or (hopefully) both of the defenders. When the defenders are out of position after the spin, you are

Step1 - Dribble the ball forward slowly to do this move at a pace where you can concentrate on making the proper moves.

Step2 - Jump up into the air and spin your body around with a 180 degree turn.

Step3 - Run your right foot lightly over the top of the soccer ball, spinning the ball forward. You should make contact with the soccer ball with the ball of your right foot.

Step4 - Spin your body on your right foot as it comes in contact with the top portion of the ball.

Step5 - Move your right foot off the ball and back to the ground with your body still spinning.

Step6 - Lift your left foot from the ground near the soccer ball to the top of the soccer ball as your right foot is leaving the soccer ball. Both feet should be in the air for a split second as your feet make the transition.

Step7 - Continue your body spin with your left foot lightly touching the top of the soccer ball.

Step8 - Land on your left foot and dribble the ball away.

Step9 - Change your spin by starting with your left foot and spinning in the opposite direction.

- * You will need good balance to successfully do the spin move. You want to manipulate the ball while in the air. * Make sure you are always aware of where the defenders are as you do the 360 move so you protect the ball properly. *
- Practice the spin slowly and gradually increase your speed. * Never land on top of the ball with your weight because the ball will shoot out from under you and more than likely throw you to the ground. * Watch how often you use this tricky move. Overusing it could decrease its effectiveness. Instead, use it in combination with a variety of "fake out" moves for the greatest efficiency.

How to Do the Crossover Soccer Trick Like the Around-the-World, the Crossover is one of the most frequently performed tricks in freestyle soccer. The Crossover basically requires that you switch feet while juggling, adding a little extra style in the process. If you can perfect the Crossover, you'll not only have something to show your friends you'll also sharpen your balance and ball control in the process.

Step1 - Juggle the soccer ball close to your body and no higher than your waist.

Step2 - Hit the ball into the air with the bottom joint of your big toe.

Step3 - Put your kicking foot back on the ground and shift your weight to that leg as quickly as you can.

Step4 - Lift your other leg up and over the ball.

Step5 - Hop into the air and kick the ball again with your kicking foot.

Step6 - Land on your kicking foot again and resume juggling.

- * Try doing the Crossover with both of your legs so that you develop the accuracy and strength of your weaker leg. *
- Try to bring your leg over the ball at the same time as you kick it with your trailing leg. This will make your Crossover smoother and more reliable. * If you can't quite juggle the ball with control you can still try the Crossover, but to do it with style you'll eventually need to learn how to keep the ball from drifting away from you as you juggle it. * Don't try to do a Crossover if your balance is off or if you're standing on lumpy ground, as you might injure your ankle or knee with an unsteady landing during the trick.

How to Do the rainbow (the easy way)

Step1 - 1. get ready for a couple of days of practice.

Step2 - 2. Take your soccer ball and place your kicking foot in front of the ball.

3. put your other foot directly behind it but don't have it touch the ball.

4. slide the ball up your front leg

5. lean forward and snap your leg up to kick the ball

6. watch it go over your head

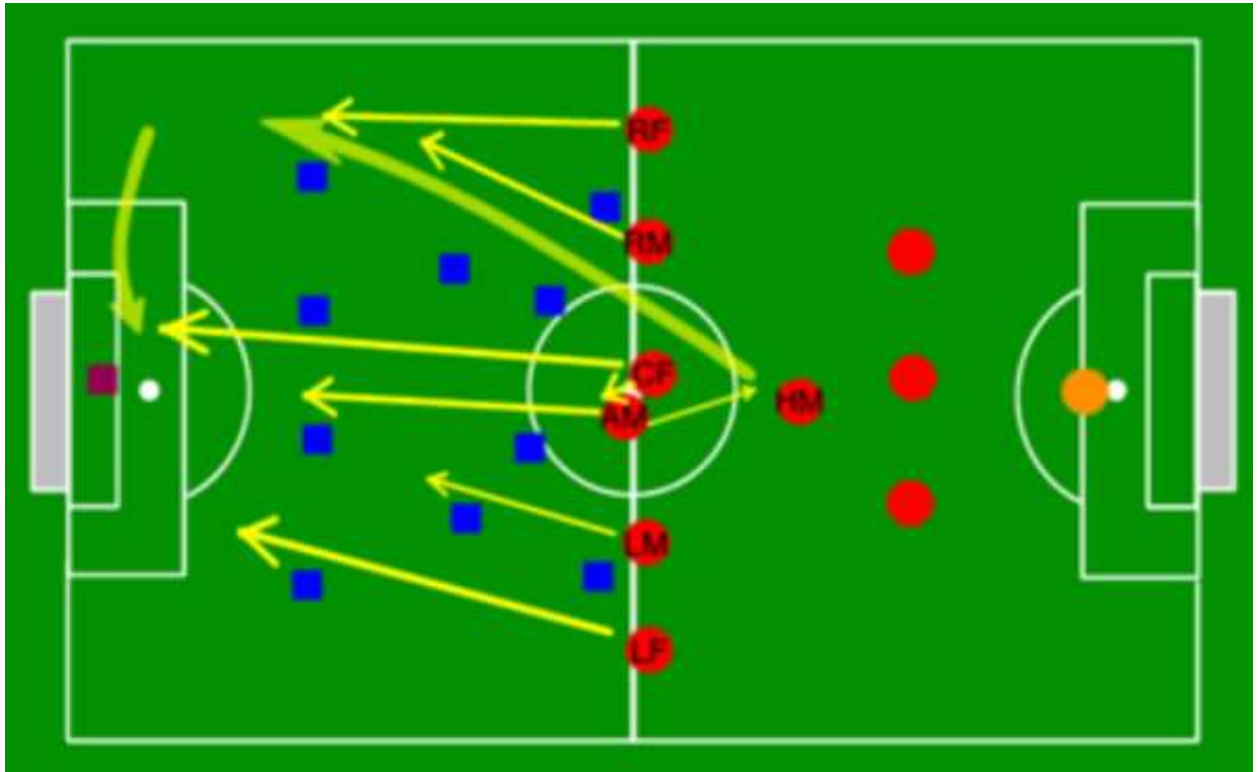
* take the time and don't give up. * try and feel if the ball comes off your leg.(this is the best time to kick it)

* slide the ball up about 2-3 inches above your shoe. * when you slide the ball up you must take the back foot away before you kick the ball or else you will most likely fall on your face

Kick Off:

Key Points:

The kicker, CF, raises his hand to signal the play. 1 to the L. 2 to the R. 3 would be played back to the CD to swing ball from side to side. Play 2 is shown (above) . The ball is touched forward and then dropped back to the



HM. The ball is played long (with back spin) into the corner. The ball is then crossed. RM covers the point. CF-near post, AM-arc, LF-far post.

The Two Touch Kick Off will begin with the two center Midfielders in the Center Circle. The kicker will raise his hand to indicate he is about to kick off and will roll the ball forward so the other Midfielder can take possession. Upon obtaining possession, the Attacking Midfielder (**AM**) can either dribble up field, pass back to a Defender, or pass forward to a charging Forward or Midfielder. The back pass can further be played to a side Defender, or passed back up to the Forwards and Midfielders.

How to Use a Kick-off Technique to Start a Soccer Game:

Winning soccer strategy starts with the kick-off. Best to view the kick-off as a way to set up a quick score. Defensive teams often load up the strong side and kick short in hopes of quickly recovering the ball. Some teams barely move the ball at all with their first kick. Other teams go for the long strike and try to steal the ball away down field, close to their own goal. No matter what kick-off technique a team uses, most coaches agree that coming out strong at the start makes a statement to the opposing team.

Step1 - Understand kick-off basics. You can't devise a kick-off technique to start the game until you have kick-off fundamentals down pat.

Step2 - A ball only has to move slightly forward to satisfy the rule that it has been kicked off.

Step3 - The ball must be touched by someone other than the original kicker before the kick-off player can touch the ball again.

Step4 - The opposing players must be standing outside of the center circle when the defending team kicks off.

Step5 - Emphasize control of the kick-off rather than fancy trick shots.

Step6 - Develop the tap technique for a kick-off. The player who kicks off gently taps the ball to make it move. A second player then kicks it just enough to allow the first player to take over.

Step7 - Vary the kick-off techniques you use. Go short to the side one time, kick deep another time.

Step8 - Go to different sides of the field on kick-off. Always keep the other team guessing.

Step9 - Load up the strong side, kick short and recover the ball. The strong side of the field refers to the side where you plan to kick the ball.

Step10 - Steal the ball after a long kick. Increasingly, teams load to one side and go for the short kick. A long kick can be unexpected.

Step11 - Use an unexpected kick-off to the weak side to gain the upper hand. Load up the strong side and at the last minute kick to the weak side.

Step12 - Realize that goals scored from kick-off by either team are incredibly rare. Good kick-off technique sets up the play, but it rarely scores a goal.

Step13 - Watch for "tells" when the other team is kicking off. Many times the kicker will signal what the team is planning to do by making eye contact with another team member or by moving in a certain direction before the kick.

Other Pearls:

Why are some goalkeepers allowed to take 5 and 6 steps before they punt the ball?

A goalkeeper should not be allowed to take more than 4 steps. The referee may not be counting some initial steps after a pickup or he may choose to warn the goalkeeper on some initial violations before giving the opponents an indirect free kick at the spot of the fifth step. Realistically, most referees are not real picky on this, unless a goalkeeper is extremely blatant and consistent.

A ball is played wide of the penalty area. The goalkeeper ran out and dribbled the ball back into the penalty area. Can he pick it up?

Yes, if the ball was not deliberately kicked or thrown-in by a teammate. If a teammate did deliberately play it, the goalkeeper cannot handle the ball. He can kick it, chest trap it, etc.

Should tiny steps by the goalkeeper be counted?

The intention of the rule was to not allow the goalkeeper a free run out to the near the 18 to distribute the ball. If the tiny steps do not gain much distance or advantage, then they can and should be overlooked. However, some referees are "bean counters." If warned, the goalkeeper better heed the advice.

The attacking team is awarded an indirect free kick on the defensive team's 6-yard line. Can the goalkeeper charge the ball when the attacking team plays it? Where does the goalkeeper have to stand?

Yes, the goalkeeper can grab the ball immediately after it moves on a legally taken free kick. In fact, the goalkeeper is may be the best defender to charge the ball (assuming it is played short). As with any other defender, the goalkeeper must be at least 10 yards away from the ball or standing on the goal line between the posts.

I see goalkeepers punt (volley kick) the ball when they are outside of the penalty area. Isn't this a foul for handling the ball outside of the penalty area?

It certainly would be if the goalkeepers hands were in contact with the ball when it was wholly across the penalty area boundary. However, the ball release from a running goalkeeper occurs much sooner than the point from where the ball is kicked. In other words, in many cases the ball is released from the hand(s) before it is past the line.

If a goalkeeper chest traps a long shot down to the ground and then dribbles around before picking it up. Isn't he delaying the game?

He may be running time off the clock, but he is not necessarily guilty of delaying. The goalkeeper is only mandated to get the ball into play within a reasonable amount of time (5-6 seconds) when he has control of the ball. In this case, control will not be until he picks the ball up. It may be up to the opponents to force him to do that. Of course, it is within the referee's right to determine delay of the game at any time.

The attacking team kicks an indirect free kick directly at goal. The ball grazes off the goalkeeper's glove and goes into the goal. Is this a goal? What if this situation was off of a throw-in?

In both cases, the goalkeeper's touch was the touch by a second player that was needed to allow a goal to be scored; therefore, the goal counts and the defending team will kickoff.

After a save near the goal line, the goalkeeper started to throw the ball up field, as he swung the ball back, all of the ball crossed the goal line. Is this a goal, even though the goalkeeper maintained total control of the ball throughout the throw?

Goal. The defenders must kick off.

The goalkeeper's teammate kicks a pass back and sends a high ball towards the goalmouth. What should the goalkeeper do?

If the goalkeeper can't get to it with any other part of the body, then by all means he should grab it. It is better to give up an indirect free kick to the opponents at the point of the catch (*), than to allow a goal.

It seems that the referee will call trifling fouls on other players that merely touch the goalkeeper, but the goalkeeper is allowed to commit fouls such as jumping on the backs of players or using the hands to push players out of the way. Is this legal?

Often, the goalkeeper is allowed a little more freedom in his domain. For instance, the goalkeeper is allowed to put himself in certain dangerous situations (e.g., diving to the ball at the feet of an attacker) that field players would be called for fouling. In his penalty area, the goalkeeper probably is allowed to cause more contact in tight situations; however, every referee has his tolerance limit and goalkeepers are expected to abide by the law as well as field players. A goalkeeper foul usually means a PK, whereas a foul on the attacker is just a free kick from the defensive end. Therefore, the referee may not choose to call some fouls on the goalkeeper.

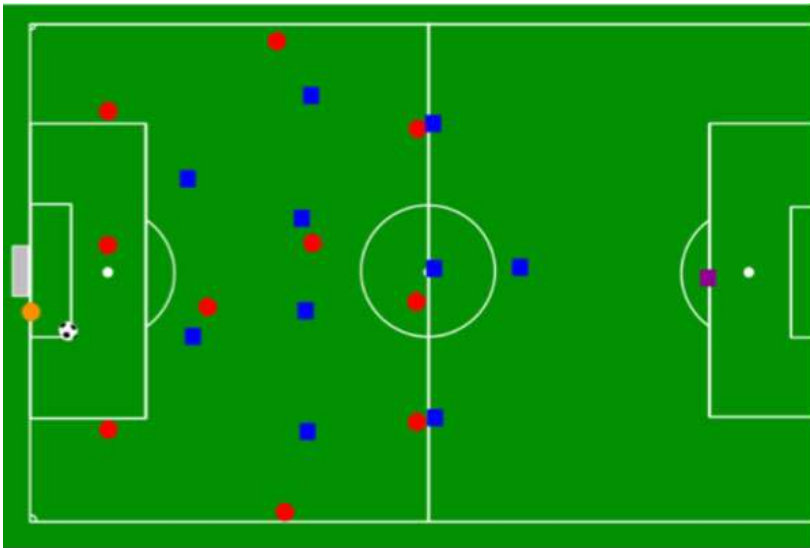
A goalkeeper made a diving catch. As he hit the ground, the ball came loose slightly. An attacker kicked the ball as the goalkeeper was still trying to get control. The referee allowed the goal. Correct?

As long as there is some part of the goalkeeper's body (hand, fingertip, chest, nose, etc.) is touching the ball, the ball can be considered to be in the possession of the goalkeeper. However, if the goalkeeper is not touching the ball, the ball is fair game for an opponent, assuming the opponent is not playing dangerously (e.g., a high kick near the goalkeeper).

The goalkeeper made a diving save and the ball rebounded just out of reach. Right before the attacker kicked the free ball, the goalkeeper reached out and touched the top of the ball with one finger. Why did the referee disallow the attacker's shot?

Because the goalkeeper is considered to be in possession if any part of his hand or arm is touching the ball. The attacker cannot kick the ball out of the goalkeeper's possession.

Goal Kicks & Punts: Links: [Goalies](#) | [Restarts](#) |



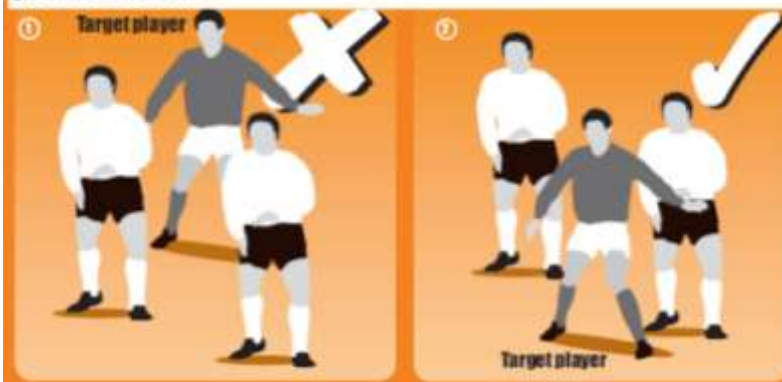
Goalkeepers ought to take their own goal kicks if possible. This allows the defense to push out and keep attackers from lurking near the penalty area. As with punts and drop kicks, technique is the key. Key factors in getting a good goal kick are:

- Approach the ball from a slight angle. This will allow the hip flexor to get involved more and generate more leg speed.
- The ankle of the plant foot should be just behind the ball and the body should be leaning back. This differs from shooting technique! If the plant foot is too close to the ball, it will be difficult to get any height on the kick.
- The final step into the kick should be a long, smooth stride. This also helps generate leg speed. A short, choppy run-up won't allow a proper leg swing.
- The toe needs to be pointed down and the ankle locked in order to get the foot under the ball. This

is probably the most crucial point. Although a goal kick is an instep drive, you want to use the inside of the shoelaces, not the top.

If a keeper is struggling to get the ball off the ground, it can be helpful to try working off a "tee" at first: a tall tuft of grass, flat cone, etc. This will allow more space to get under the ball. Once that is working well, lower the ball.

Goal Kicks: your target player is in front your goalkeeper can see them and get the ball to them.



Tip: Emphasize the importance of good technique. A keeper who tries too hard to "explode" the ball will often mis-hit it. Tell your players to relax and let good technique do the work for them.

- Finish the session with a small-sided game and sit back and watch.
- Have your players absorbed the key principles you have been teaching them?
- Do they get into good open positions when the goalkeeper has the ball?
- Does the goalkeeper make the right decisions regarding passing or kicking the ball out?

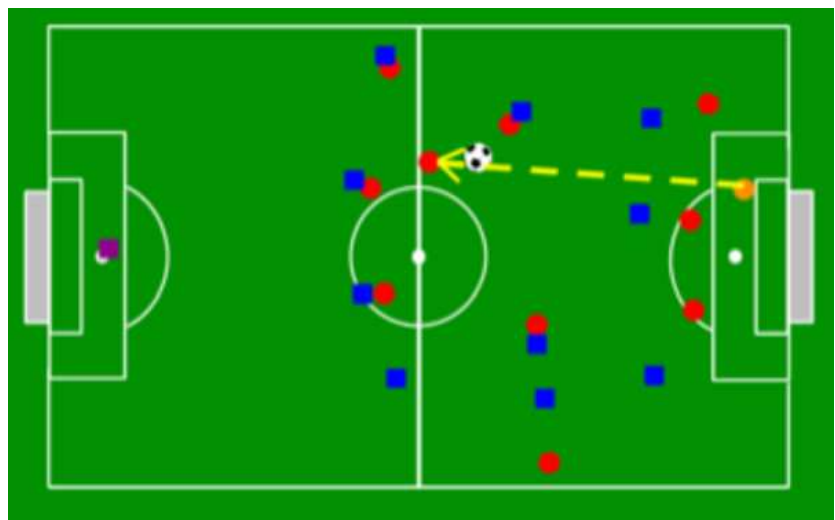
- Is the technique correct?
- Finally, warm down and ask them what they have learned.

Goal kicks can be very difficult to work with because if you don't have a player that is able to kick the ball far and accurately it can put increased pressure on your team because the ball could travel to an opponent in a dangerous area.

Here are some guidelines that you can follow;

1. Have the goalkeeping take the kick (unless injured)
2. Kick to the side that the ball is on (never across the face of your goal)
3. Make sure your team is ready before the kick is taken.

Key Points: For Long kicks, 1 is to the L. 2 to the Center. 3 is to the R. Players need to shield for position when the ball is in the air. Goalie must get the ball into the air. Offensive players must keep defenders from heading the ball back into our half of the field. Try to flick the ball forward. Hitting the ball back to

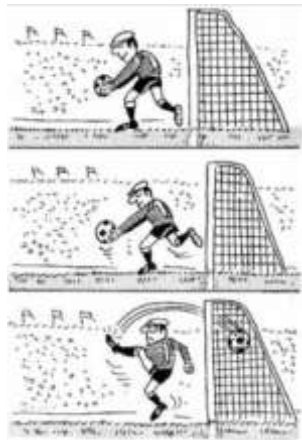


our own goalie is a major error. Note how the goalie is kicking to area 3 and the offensive players have been able to shield the ball.

The set-up for a goal kick- memorize this!!!

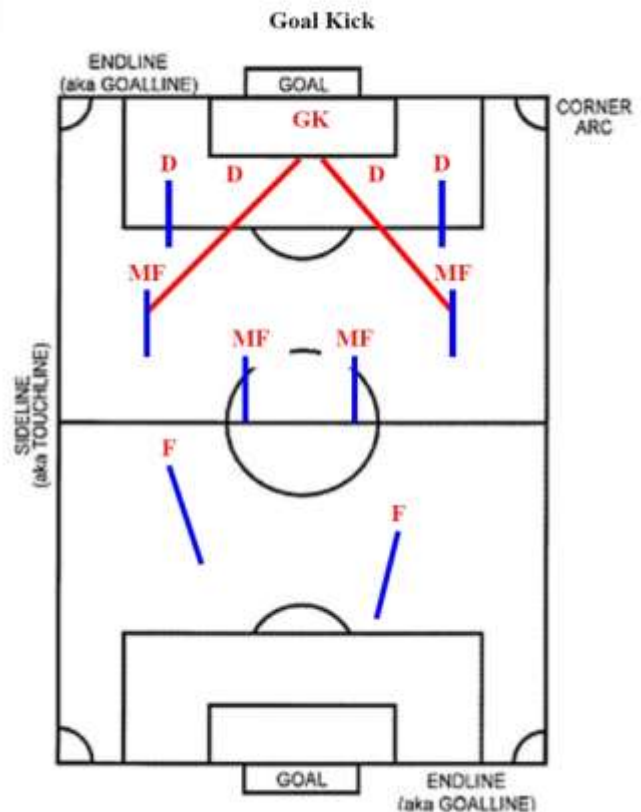
Goal kicks: If your goalkeeper has a weak kick, improve it.

- But while he or she is getting better at kicking a dead ball, you might want to consider an insurance policy. You could place one of your quicker and more confident defenders on the goal line whenever you get a goal kick. This player will be able to challenge for the ball if it's kicked straight to an opposition forward and give the rest of your defenders time to regroup.
- When the other team has a goal kick, tell your forward players to watch the goalkeeper closely, try to work out where he or she is going to kick the ball then make sure they get to the kick before the opposition players.
- Being stared down can be very off-putting for the 'keeper who will often panic and kick the ball straight to one of your players who will have an easy shot on goal. But don't overdo it. If it becomes clear that this tactic is going to work every time, tell your team to drop back and give the goalkeeper a break.



Note our positioning. The goalie has set the ball in the L side of the goal box. The defenders are even with the 12. The CD is to the opposite

side of the goalie, even with the far post. The R and LD are on the edges of the penalty box. The R and LM are on the touchlines at the 40. The HM is at the 30 even with the near post. The AM is even with the far post at the 45. The wide forwards are at the midfield line, even with the penalty box and midline. The CM is even with the midline and near post.



The CD is to the opposite side of the goalie, even with the far post. The R and LD are on the edges of the penalty box. The R and LM are on the touchlines at the 40. The HM is at the 30 even with the near post. The AM is even with the far post at the 45. The wide forwards are at the midfield line, even with the penalty box and midline. The CM is even with the midline and near post.

Goal kicks – a disaster waiting to happen?

Young players find it hard to get any distance on their goal kicks and they often struggle to pass accurately over short distances, especially when everyone is watching them!

This means that your goalkeeper will often tap the ball straight to an opposition player standing just in front of your own penalty area. Result? The ball is kicked straight back into the net.

If this happens with any sort of regularity, goal kicks become nerve-wracking disasters waiting to happen!

Allowing the opposition to score direct from your own goal kick is a very soft and disappointing way to concede a goal and it's quite avoidable if you follow these simple guidelines:

Don't be tempted to let your strongest kicker take your goal kicks. Your goalkeeper will never learn how to take goal kicks if he or she never takes them.

Your goalkeeper should take the kick from one side of the penalty area, not from the middle. A goal kick that goes straight to an opponent standing in the middle of the pitch is an invitation to shoot.

Your defenders and midfielders should stand within range of the goal-kick. If your players are standing thirty yards away from your goal and your goalkeeper can only kick the ball 10 yards, you're going to have problems. It sounds obvious, I know, but it's a common mistake.

Your outfield players should stand "goal side" of their opponents. "Goal side" simply means standing between the nearest opponent and your goal. It stops the other team from getting to a poorly struck goal kick first.

Tell your goalkeeper to kick towards the sidelines if there is no easy and obvious safe pass to a team mate in the middle of the pitch. If the kick is intercepted by an opponent on the sideline they will find it hard to shoot directly at goal and your defenders will have time to re-group.

If you still want to take out some insurance against poorly taken goal kicks, put a defender on the goal line when the kick is taken. Remind the defender they must not use their hands to stop a shot and, if an attacker does intercept a goal kick, they must run out from the goal line and close them down quickly.

These tips should help stop your goal kicks turning into goal-scoring opportunities for the opposition.

Now...if your opponents are having trouble with their goal kicks why not put the boot on the other foot?

When the other team has a goal kick, tell your attackers to spread out across the pitch, watch the other team's goal kicker closely and try to work out where they are going to kick the ball. It's usually not difficult as the kicker's body language gives it away.

Encourage your players to stand between the opposition players and their goal and move quickly towards the ball as the kick is taken. If your players are like mine (nice girls with a dash of 'attitude!') they'll enjoy unsettling the other team's defense and you'll be surprised how often you score an easy goal.

Practice taking and attacking goal kicks at training by playing a small-sided (4v4 or 5v5) game with the condition that every time the ball goes out of play, the game is re-started with a goal kick. That will give your players plenty of opportunities to practice the right way to take and attack goal kicks.

Finally, having problems with goal kicks suggests your players could do with a refresher on the right way to kick a ball with power and accuracy.

Remember....there are plenty of ways you can concede a goal on match days. Most of them you can do little about.

Just don't give them away from your own goal kicks!

Problem #1: Your goalkeeper can't kick the ball very far or get any height on the ball

If your goalkeeper doesn't have a very strong or accurate kick, it's tempting to allow an outfield player to take goal kicks. But goal kicks are part of your keeper's job and if they don't practice taking goal kicks in matches, they are not going to improve. So you must let them take the kicks themselves.

Solution: Teach good kicking technique

If it isn't possible to pass the ball out to an outfield player, goalkeepers may need to be able to kick the ball far and high enough to avoid opposition players who are standing near your penalty area. But young keepers often toe poke the ball or try to use the same technique that they would use when shooting. So you need to teach them how to chip the ball with power.

How to get air on a ball: Approach the ball at a 30 to 45-degree angle. If you take a straight run up, your plant foot will end up too close to the ball and you won't be able to get your kicking foot under the ball. Also, the knee of your kicking foot will be over the ball and not behind it as it needs to be.

Key teaching point: The plant foot needs to be at least one ball width away from the ball.

- As the ball is struck, the plant leg must bend and the keeper's hips must sink. This allows them to get more height on their kick.
- The toe of the kicking foot should be angled down and away from the ball.
- The bottom of the ball should be struck with the side of the foot, just behind the toe.

Key teaching point: Don't approach too fast. Too much speed makes it hard to use the right technique and it's easy to lose your balance. You need to develop a good, steady rhythm.

Very little follow through is needed... in fact the more you can get the foot under the ball with no follow through the better.

How to practice: Encourage your keeper to practice by standing 10 yards from a goal and try to kick the ball over the crossbar. As they improve, the ball can be moved farther and farther away from the goal.

Tips for your keeper:

- Don't try to hit the ball too hard!
- Good technique is much more important than strength.
- Watch pro keepers on the television - they hardly make any effort but the ball goes 50 to 60 yards. With practice, you'll be able to do that too.
- Be confident, relax and if it goes wrong... don't worry!

Problem #2: Your goal kicks are usually intercepted by opposition players

Ask your players how they can stop this from happening. They will probably come up with the solution below. They may also come up with some of their own.

Solution: Encourage defenders to go wide and be prepared to receive a quick pass from the keeper

This simple tactic will help your team keep possession and it can build an attack from the back. A defender who goes short to receive a pass may also open up a space farther away from goal that your keeper can pass into.

However, if the goalkeeper "telegraphs" the pass (i.e., makes it obvious) an opposition player will put your defender under immediate pressure and the ball might be lost in a dangerous area. But if you can get your defenders to take up close, wide positions quickly and if your goalkeeper doesn't delay the pass, a short pass is often the best way to take a goal kick.

Tip: Remind your goalkeeper that she can take a goal kick from anywhere within the penalty area (small-sided soccer) or six-yard box (nine to 11-a-side soccer) and ask her: "Where is the best place to take the kick?"

Tip: Try giving your team a match-day objective: Every time we have a goal kick, one of our players must touch the ball before the other team.

You could also suggest to your players that if they stand between the opposition and the ball at goal kicks they really ought to get to the ball first. Simple!

A temporary fix

While your goalkeeper is developing his kicking technique and your outfield players are learning how to stop the other team getting to the ball first, you could put a defender on the goal line at goal kicks.

This will give the keeper more confidence and reduce the number of morale-sapping goals you concede when (not if) the goal kick goes wrong.

But take away this safety net as soon as possible.

Kick, Chip, Volley:

Links: Basics | **Powerful shots** | Basics | **Bending** | [Chip, Bicycle & Volley](#) | [Shooting](#) | [Crossing](#) | [Corner Kicks](#) | [Kick-offs](#) | [Goal Kicks](#) | See [Passing](#) |

Ball striking – A ground shot can be taken by using the inside, outside, instep or front of the foot (the heel isn't usually considered in this category, since back heels have a special status in soccer shooting).

• In order to keep shots low and powerful, force your upper body slightly forward when taking a shot, but make sure you still leave enough room for your shooting leg to extend.

The Inside of the Foot Kick (aka the “Push” Pass): The most basic pass in soccer. The easiest to learn, it is effective over short distances, and it does not require much leg strength. Although it is a little awkward at first for young beginners, the push pass provides the highest level of control because the shape of the inside of the foot conforms to the shape of the ball. Once mastered, progress to passing involving the “instep drive” kick, which allows for passing at greater distances. The push pass, however, still represents more than half the passes used in

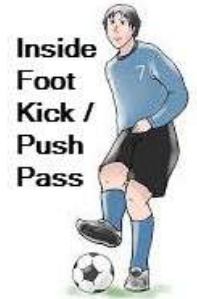
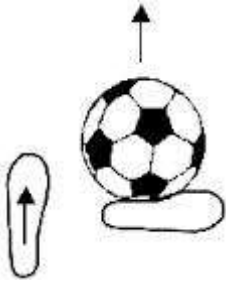
games, even at the highest levels. Because the ball is kicked with the inside of the foot, the foot must be turned at the ankle and the leg rotated at the hip so that the toes are pointed 90 degrees to the outside from the way the body is facing. Balance is established on the non-kicking, or “plant” foot, so that the kicking leg can swing freely at the hip. The toes and foot of the non-kicking leg should point in the direction the player wants the pass to go.

• The whole of the kicking foot should be slightly flexed by bringing the front of the foot slightly toward the shin and then the ankle must be “locked” in place.

• Requires the weight of the body to be balanced over the “non-kicking”

“balance” foot. A good “follow-through” is needed to get power. The non-kicking foot is placed

“level” or “even” to the side (not touching) the ball.



Angle approach Kick: One of several styles of correct kicking. With the straight kick, the ball is struck with the laces. With the angle kick has an angled approach and the leg will slightly swing across and around to our front. This angle arch also allows the toe to be pointed slightly “outward” requiring less “shorting” of the leg and less chance of the dreaded “toe stub”. When working with young players, the angle kick is taught first.

• Learn to strike the ball just left of center. (For right footed kickers.) This applies to the angle kick because we are approaching the ball from an angle. Striking the ball in the center will cause the impact to be more of a “glancing blow” and create a huge amount of side spin.

Toe Kicking: There is a place and time for it, like when you are stretching for the ball and can only just get your toe on it or if you want to surprise the other team's keeper by shooting with your toe. For the most part it is inaccurate and more likely to injure the foot (especially as the ball size get's larger or when another player firmly sticks their foot out to block your

kick).

How to Stop Child from Toe Kicking:

With advance play toe kicking will lead to poor passing skills and poor shooting as it is less accurate than kicking with the laces or instep.

• The reason this “habit” happens is that it feels natural to kick with one's toe and when it is not corrected quickly it becomes a bad habit. At the U8 and younger ages it will not be that obvious as there is little passing and most kicks are close to the goal and inaccurate for all the kids. At U10 and above it will start to affect their quality of play a bit. At U12 level the child will be drastically behind in quality compared to those not toe kicking.

• Curing the toe kick is often the first step. Very young players really don't go into a “kicking mode”. They are simply running at the ball and when they think they are close, or their foot makes contact with the ball, they “push” their leg through the shot. They are simply trying to force the leg forward so it moves the ball. During this stage there is no “forethought” to the soccer kick. As players mature they learn that the harder they “push through” the shot, the farther the ball goes. This seems great in their eyes, but it starts a habit that is hard to cure. The reason for a toe kick it that it is the natural foot position. When we run or walk our foot changes position. At the end of our stride our toe is naturally facing down because we have just finished “pushing off” the ball of our foot or toe area. As our foot comes forward in a walking or running stride the toe naturally returns to the forward pointing position.

Option 1: Learn kick with the instep (best option as the inner foot is a large surface area, more accurate for passing and kicking and much less likely to be injured kicking this way. In the long run, nothing better than lots of repetition, good form and solid contact vs lashing at the ball.

Option 2: Done at home.

A. Barefoot kicking to discourage toe kicking. Done at home with the parent practicing with the child and letting them kick a ball hard with their toes while barefoot.....will hurt so will listen more closely and concentrate on kicking with their insteps as taught. Cannot be done at coach's practice as liability issues.

B. Kicking in flip flops (or thongs) and a beach ball... have to keep the toes curled down to keep the flip flop on and the beach ball doesn't have enough mass to cause any stinging when struck... (and the flip flops mitigate any objects in the grass.)



Option 3: Kicking with the Laces: (From "Blast the Ball")(this is the advanced way)

Step #1: Have patience. This unnatural movement or change takes time. You will practice it and it will look good. Then, come game time, the child will revert back to the movement that is instinctive. Eventually the new kick will become a muscle memory or instinctive. Plan on this process taking 6 – 12 months depending on the child's age.

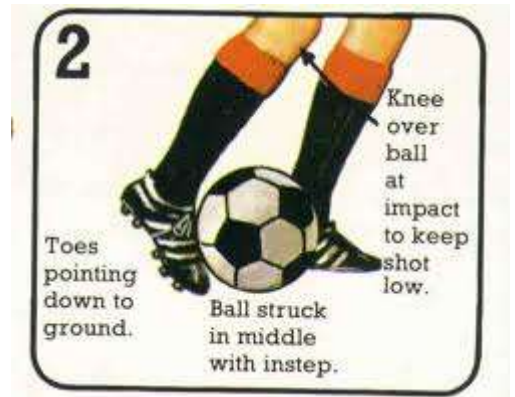
Step #2: Start by having the child step closer to the ball. Most youth players step their plant foot well behind the ball. This causes the ball to be struck on the "upward swing" and naturally kicked by the toe. Having them step next to or even slightly past the ball forces the ball to be further back in the swing circle.

Step #3: Practice loading the leg. It is the slight hop or large stride just before kicking a soccer ball. Just as in any sport such as baseball, golf, tennis etc, when you are going to come forward to hit a ball, you must first load or have a backswing. The entire leg will come back and with "power shooters" you will notice the load or backswing is so large that the sole of the foot almost touches their "behind". Now instead of a "push" we are preparing to release and kick.

Step #4: Shorten the kicking leg. No not by surgery, but by maintaining the "V" position of the leg all the way through the swing. When our leg is in the backswing and just starting to come forward, there is a strong "V" position. We want players to maintain this "V" all the way through the shot. Stand up with both feet close together. Raise the kicking hip slightly, and then bend the knee slightly. You must do both. You will notice that if you hold this position you can point your toe down and swing your leg back and forth. Your toe will not hit the ground. While the shape and size of the "V" will change through the kick, it should never totally disappear. (No locking straight leg.)

Have the child barefoot at home sitting down with the ball in their hands outstretched in front of them. They then drop it and try to kick it in the air, but to do so correctly requires them to have their ankle locked and toe pointed.

Teaching a child to kick softer: Kick against a wall. If you put them 6 feet away from a wall, they will have a fear of the ball bouncing back and hitting them. This will force them to kick softer. Also, if they kick too hard they have to go chase the ball.



Kicking Power:

All about balance and weight transfer. To be balanced, should have the non-kicking foot planted at side of ball and pointed at the target. Better to focus on kicking "faster" rather than "harder" to get more power. To maximize the velocity pull leg back as far as possible and follow through....landing on the foot that kicks.

1. Use the instep (shoelace part of the foot) for power.

2. Have your ankle "locked" with the foot extended downwards. The easiest way to do this is to scrunch the toes up real hard.

• The kicking leg should whip through the shot in a smooth and controlled manner.

3. Keep your head down and over the ball as you follow through (land on the kicking foot). A good follow-through is essential. I tell my players to imagine that there is a big pane of glass about a foot in front of the ball and their kicking leg should break the glass after the shot.

4. Accuracy over speed and power. See [Shooting Drills](#) |

- More effort doesn't equal more power. If your players try to kick the ball harder by going at it more violently they won't kick it any harder, they'll just get frustrated as their accuracy drops off and the power in their shot stays the same or becomes weaker.

This is because too much effort tends to make the kicking leg go stiff and the stiffer their leg, the less power is transmitted from foot to ball.

- Do not try and "cheat" the ball up into the air by leaning back or lifting your toes.
- kicking with the inside instead of instep – the toe should be pointing at the ground, not the target.
- stopping as the ball is kicked – the run up should be fast, smooth and at a slight angle to the ball.
- not "loading" the kick – practice hopping on to the non-kicking foot in the final stride.
- placing the plant foot too close to the ball – the non-kicking foot should be at least six inches from the ball.

How to Get a Stronger Kick / Shot:

Do not use a heavier ball as this may lead to foot, leg and hip injuries.

The keys to a stronger shot are leg strength and good form. Most often poor shooting is related to form.

Step #1: The basics. Plant foot lined-up next to the ball (6-12 inches to the side...a bit ahead of the ball if it is rolling forward), striking the center, etc.

• The higher you bring your kicking leg back the more powerful kick you will get.

• The knee of your supporting leg needs to be slightly bent.....By doing this it will be easier to kick the ball with the instep part of your foot.

• In the last stride before the ball is struck, the player should hop on to the non-kicking leg. This gives the kicking leg extra flex and springloads the shot.

• The ankle of the kicking foot must be locked. The easiest way to do this is to scrunch the toes up real hard.

• The kicking leg should whip through the shot in a smooth and controlled manner. Try kicking "fast", not "harder or more violently"....Accuracy drops off because too violent execution of the instep drive usually results in a deterioration in technique. Too much effort tends to make the kicking leg go stiff and the stiffer their leg, the less power is transmitted from foot to ball.

Step #2: Good Follow-through. Use the right technique in a smooth and relaxed manner. You cannot "make" yourself follow-through more. Follow-through is a natural swing-through of your leg after your kick. Bring your leg back, strike the ball, and let your leg swing through. If your muscles are stiff because you are trying to "force" a follow-through, you will not strike the ball with your full kicking momentum.

• Keep in mind also that the direction of the ball will depend in which direction your supporting foot is pointing.

• Position of Your Body - If you lean your body forward your shoot will stay low to the ground. However, if you lean your body back the ball will fly higher.

Step #3: Take many, many shots, repeatedly. Eventually you'll feel the "workout" in your legs.

Notes:

Imaginary glass and a video camera: tell your players to imagine that there is a big pane of glass about a foot in front of the ball and their kicking leg should break the glass after they have taken the shot. Taking video of them in action on the training pitch is a very useful way of showing them the flaws in their technique.

- START EACH PRACTICE WITH THE WEAKER FOOT, and then later work the stronger one.

Talking to players and demonstrating how to increase the power in their shot is only part of the answer. Taking video of them in action on the training pitch is a very useful way of showing them the flaws in their technique

I use a still camera that also takes video and play it back to my players on a laptop. Seeing any flaws in the way they kick the ball for themselves really does help them to improve quickly.

"PK's" - Nothing is more fun than penalty kicks. Use your garage door or your rebounder net as the "goal". Take big kicks at the goal and keep score. Keep moving the shooter further and further back.

Garage Punts - Find the side of you garage roof that slopes towards you (hopefully there are no windows nearby).

Practice "goalie type" punts up to the roof. Make good contact with the instep (shoelace part) and follow through. The ball will conveniently bounce back to you as you build strength. If you are really "into it", you can try to "trap" the ball as it bounces back to you (chest trap, thigh trap etc.) and then try to flip the ball up to your hands with a little pull-back lift. Now you have worked on kicking power, trapping skills and some juggling and the shingles are still up there.

Soccer Golf - Go the nearby park or schoolyard or common ground area. Each player brings a soccer ball. Then make up a "golf" hole. For instance, I might say "We kick it to the right of that big oak tree, then around the back-stop, then hit the brown dumpster..... and it will be a 'par 6'" So now the players put their balls down and try to do that hole in 6 shots or less. Make the holes reasonably long to work on big kicks. The players take turns in making up holes. Keep track of who wins the hole. (Smaller players get handicap strokes so they may have to do the hole in 8 kicks not 6 kicks etc...) And yes, you can "blow" putts in this game too!

Wall Ball: Knocking the ball against a wall gives you the chance to practice several skills.

- Put an X on the wall and try to hit it with your pass. Vary your distance from the Passing wall and your angle to the X.

- As the ball comes off the wall, control it with different parts of your body: inside Receiving of the foot, thigh, top of the foot and so on.

- See how many times you can head the ball against the wall without it touching Heading the ground. How about trying the same things as you did in passing, but now with headers.

- Hit the X. Try some shots off the ground and some when the ball is in the air. Shooting

- Hit the X. Throw-in

- Try different types of throws and hit the X. Also try out different catches as Goalkeeping the ball rebounds from the wall. Vary the height of the ball.

Use the "rebounder" - Don't underestimate the value of banging the ball against a wall or rebounder net. It is an excellent way to rehearse volleys, half volleys, rollers, bad bounces, side volleys, chest traps to volley kicks etc. In fact I would go so far as to say that kids that do not work with a rebounder will be at a disadvantage as they get older.

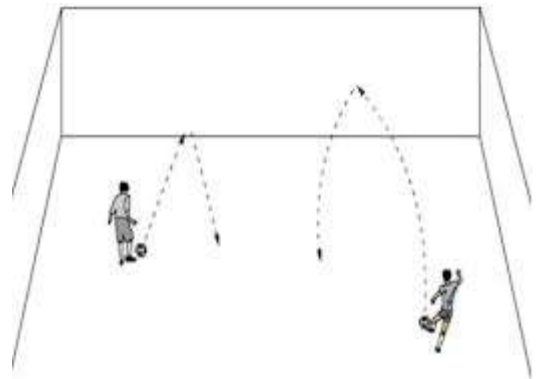
Shooting practice: Work on approaching the ball from a slight angle. Laces shot with standing ball. Laces as dribble.

Striking the ball on the Sweet Spot (laces shooting): The perfect shot is when you hit the ball with your toe pointing toward the ground (and just brushing it), knees bent, opposite foot planted 6 inches next to the ball, good follow through leaning forward, continually pointing the toe. You transfer more power and know you have a good follow-through when you land on the foot that kicked the ball.

Slide shots: Move the ball with the outside of your foot about 1 yards then shoot with your laces. Common situation in front of the goal to evade a defender and get a shot off.

Chipping:

A): Side angle chip: Use the inner edge of the instep. Come at a sharp angle from the side. Foot is supinated. Use a sweeping action to get under the ball.



B): Full instep chip: Come straight on. Put backspin on the ball. Practice 15 yards away.; Practice chipping over a 3rd person.

C): Chipping with the outside of the foot: Foot turned inward. Strike the ball off center. Use a big follow through. Allows you to put a curve on the ball.

How to teach effective shooting: Kicking the ball correctly:

Before you start teaching your players how to shoot and score you should make sure they can kick the ball correctly. Correct kicking technique will not only help your strikers hit the net more often but it will help all your players to kick the ball hard and pass accurately.

Age of player: the session is suitable for any age of player.

Equipment: a ball for each player.

Objective: the emphasis is on getting your players to use the proper surface of their feet when striking the ball - the instep or laces - and getting a 'feel' for the ball.

Start with the basics....

Tell your players to take off their boots or trainers and sit down with both feet on the floor and their knees inside their arms. (Consider the weather conditions when running this session - you don't want to be doing it on wet or muddy ground).

They begin the session by kicking the ball out of their hands (like a goalkeeper drop kick or punt).

But, just do it lightly so that the ball only goes up about 2 feet or so.

What to say:

- Make sure that your toe is pointed and that you keep your ankle "locked".
- Strike the ball with the "laces" part of the foot.
- If your ball goes up without any spin or with a little "top" spin you are doing it correctly.
- If the ball comes back towards your face try again.

This will develop a good feel for what it is like to hit the ball with their instep (laces). After you have managed that try hitting the ball twice with the foot. But make sure that there is still a proper spin, the ankle is locked and the toe is pointed.

When your players can manage this tell them to stand up.

Now tell your players to kick the ball out of their hands (like a goalkeeper drop kick or punt) but have the ball only go up in the air a short distance - two or three feet for a beginner.

Look for the ball going up with no spin again.

What to say:

- Your knee needs to be slightly bent.
- Kick the ball straight up in the air.
- You are just trying to get a good feel for the ball. The ball's spin tells you if you are doing it correctly.

Next, get your players to do it with a bounce between each kick. But still only have the ball go up about a few feet high. It is important that they do this with control instead of power.

This is almost like juggling, but let the ball bounce each time.

What to say:

- Can you do two touches...(each one going up without backspin) between each bounce?

Next progress to where your players are letting the ball bounce on the ground, then kicking it to a friend or against a wall. Still with bare feet!

What to say:

- Make sure that you strike the ball when it is on the way down.
- Hit it with your "laces".
- Toe pointed, ankle locked.
- Now the ball should have "top spin"...and should not go higher than your head.

Now it's time for your players to put their boots or trainers back on and start the practice again. You should notice an improvement as they now have a real feel for the ball.

How to teach the instep drive:

The power kick. Start children aged 7 to 12.

- Focus on the ball.
- In the last stride of your run up, place your non-kicking foot next to the ball. Make sure it's pointing where you want the ball to go.

- Move your kicking foot back and forward in one swift motion. Point your toes at the ground.
- **Scrunch your toes up. This creates power by locking your ankle and stiffening your foot as it hits the ball.**
- Your knee and shoulders should be above the ball as you strike it.
- **Kick through the ball as if it doesn't exist.**
- If you want to keep your shot low, strike the ball on, or slightly above, the mid-line.
- Follow through in the direction you want the ball to go.

Bending a Ball:

It is always stunning to see a player with a wall of defenders between the goal and then see the ball curl around them and drop into the corner of the net. The technique uses natural air resistance to make a shot change direction in mid-flight.

- After the ball has lost a certain amount of speed it will drift in a direction due to spinning. To bend a ball you need to strike it off-center and give it the exact amount of power and spin required. Too much power will result in too slow a bend; too little spin and there'll be no bend to speak of.
- The direction of bend depends on the rotation of the ball. A ball spinning clockwise will bend to the right; a ball spinning anticlockwise will go left.
- To spin a ball it is necessary to maintain contact with it for longer than a straight 'punch'. Practice is needed to develop the right combination of power and friction from the boot. Remember that the follow through will point away from the target because the ball is struck at an angle.
- Bending can also be useful for passing around a defender. Although hardly a necessary skill, bending shots provide a potent finish to any offensive campaign.



Chip kicks:

When you are coaching soccer passing skills show your players how to do the chip kick.

When to use the chip kick

If defenders are in the way of a [pass](#), a chip over them is the best way to get the ball to a team-mate. Similarly, if the goalkeeper is off his line, a chip kick is the best way to score, or it may be that a [free kick](#) near goal needs chipping over the wall.



Soccer kicking technique for the chip

A chip kick can be quite a difficult technique to pick up. You need to get your players to practice chip kicking technique a lot so they know how much power to use, how high to hit the ball, and how a quick downward swing of the kicking leg can put a lot of backspin on the ball, which has an effect on bounce and the flight of the ball.

Chipping over a player is a good soccer passing drill

Set your players up in groups of three and play a piggy in the middle-style passing drill, with the outer two players chipping the ball to each other over the middle player. Tell



the middle player he cannot move until the ball has been chipped, then he can turn and try to win the ball.

Chipping Tips: Players should place the non-kicking foot to the side slightly behind the ball. The kicking foot should come underneath the ball with the inside three toes directly under it. The leg swings downwards, with the body leaning slightly back. > Like a golfer using a chipper, a quick downward swing of the kicking leg and a very short follow-through can put a lot of backspin on the ball, which takes it up high in the air and down again very accurately.

Chipping Games 1: Mark out an area of 30x20 yards with five-yard squares at each end – the goal areas. Ex: If 5 on each team. Play a 3v3 in the main area of the pitch with two players in the goal area that they are attacking. Goals are scored by chipping into the hands of a teammate inside the area without the ball bouncing. The game restarts with one of the catchers rolling the ball out to the opposition.

Advance the game by having a player from each team in the area. The team in possession must chip the ball to their goalkeeper, who must catch under pressure from the opponent who can only head the ball.

Game 2: Chip into the bag. One player starts with the ball and tries to chip it into the bag. The player holding the bag can chest the ball in if the chipping player misses. If it goes in they get one point and the next player goes. If they miss, the next player tries to put the same ball into the bag. When a player misses, whoever reaches the ball first can take the next turn. The game ends when the last ball is in the bag.

Overhead (bicycle kick or a scissors kick) Kick:

A method of making contact with the ball is nothing other than spectacular...as long as the player can pull it off. Executing an overhead kick requires skill, athleticism and timing. The player must launch him or herself into the air, scissoring the legs as the body reaches a horizontal position, so that one leg reaches high into the air to make contact with the ball at head height.

The ball therefore travels in the opposite direction to the way the player is facing. Both feet must be airborne for this kicking technique. The footballer, meanwhile, generally lands on their back or bottom! A bad landing, especially a knock to the head, spine or elbows, could have serious consequences.

Overhead kicks are generally only used around the goal – either by a defender needing to clear the ball quickly, or by an attacking player with little room for manoeuvre. A forward in a good scoring position but with his or her back to the goal, might opt for an overhead kick if the ball is bouncing at head height.

Volleying:

Volleying is the art of striking the ball while it is still in mid-air. A professional player will be able to anticipate where and when the ball will arrive near him and quickly position himself to connect with it. It is one of the hardest skills to master.

Because everything happens much faster in the air, a player attempting to volley needs to be even more focused on timing and accuracy than in ordinary play. He can use the momentum the ball already has to create a very powerful strike, but if it's not on target he will probably lose control and the mistake could cost him and his team dearly.

Not having time to think is one problem for the volleyist.



Another is that a ball spinning through the air will behave very differently to one that has come rolling along the ground. The strike must be decisive and clean. There is no opportunity to calm the ball's movement down, and little chance to judge the amount of strength required to put it where you want. For these reasons, volleys are notoriously difficult to aim.

Technically, the key elements of volleying are that the strike is decisive, the player is well-anchored to absorb the shock of the ball's impact, and he follows through. Without these in place the ball will behave unpredictably.

As well as keeping up the pace of play, volleys can be used to seize control from the opposition. An intercepted pass can be turned to great advantage by a well-placed volley. Along with headers, volleys are a vital skill for

players at the front of the field, being key to picking up crosses and delivering them into the goal.

How to Kick a Soccer Ball:

It sounds easy enough to do: correctly kick a soccer ball. But there are some important mechanics to remember if you want to kick the ball in the direction you want without hurting your feet. Although you use different parts of your feet depending upon the angle of your shot, the basic premise is to never use your toe to kick the ball.

Step1 Determine where you want the soccer ball to travel. If you want the ball to go to a teammate, you should kick the ball with the sides of your feet. If you want to clear the ball from the defensive area or shoot upon the goal, you should use the top of your feet or where your shoelaces lie.

Step2 Run to the soccer ball on an angle. This can provide a stronger kick since you're using your hips for more power. If you're kicking with the right foot, come to the ball from the left.

Step3 Place the foot you're not going to kick the soccer ball with to the side of the ball. For instance, if you're kicking the ball with your right foot, place your left foot to the left side of the ball.

Step4 Swing your kicking foot toward the soccer ball. Keep your toes pointing down. Have your foot act as if it's a pendulum with your knee bent.

Step5 Strike the soccer ball with the "sweet spot" of your foot. This is located on the inside of your foot, just above your big toe. You should connect with the middle or lower middle of the ball. Kicking it higher may cause the ball to remain on the ground and not soar through the air. Keep your ankle locked at 90 degrees after connecting with the ball.

Step6 Lift the soccer ball in the air by placing your kicking foot under the ball. This should provide the ball with some spin through the air. Lean back a bit but not too much.

Tips & Warnings

* To slice your shot, connect with the ball on the lower part of the outside. This should produce a spin opposite from a regular shot.

* Practice kicking the ball with a teammate. You both can practice your technique by standing 50 feet away from each other. Work on kicking dead balls and slowly moving balls. Recruit a goalkeeper to mind the net and practice working on your shots as well.

* Watch professional soccer games on television or attend a game. This is a great way to watch other players in action and copy their kicking styles.

* Don't lean back after you've completed your shot. This can cause the ball to soar over the goal instead of in it.

* Avoid kicking the soccer ball with your toes. This doesn't provide accuracy, and you could potentially cause yourself an injury.

Shooting & Drills:

Links: [How to Shoot](#) | [Other Striker Drills](#) | [Attacking Games](#) |

The worst shot is the one not taken! "Pretend like you are passing to a teammate just behind the goal"...give it a firm, low kick!

Shooting Practice: Always practice 10-15 minutes each day. All players love shooting drills. See below. Try to make all drills dual purpose....like trap (and or dribble) before shoot, and then take an accurate shot. All players love competition, so try to keep score. Ex: 3 points for a far corner shot (hardest for keeper). 2 points for near post goal and 1 point for a middle goal. Once they get accurate, start adding a low pressure defender (this can be the coach that is passing the ball). Soccer is an ambidextrous sport, a player with be at a great disadvantage if they cannot kick with both feet.



Drills:

Do these at least once a week. Start at 50% power & 50% speed. Accuracy over power. Quality, not quantity. Keep the ball low as usually the most difficult spot for the keeper. Always ready for the rebound after shooting. Start with the inside of the foot (pass) and practice with the instep (laces), inside and outside of both feet.

Start all drills with no keeper....then add keeper....then passive defender.....then active defender.

Also practice direct kicks outside the 18 yard-line as these are very common due to tripping the attacker in soccer.

Have your best kickers aim for the upper corners (you can hang a hula-hoop there) or hard and low near the post.

Part #1: SHORT RANGE SHOTS: Pass 20 balls from the R side of the goal, L side of the goal and from middle of the goal to the play standing at the PK area. They need to aim for the lower corners.

Progression: Striker making runs in toward the goal....use knees, shins, chest, head, volley. Strike making near post runs (practice kicking to near and far post [behind the keeper]).

Part #2: LONGER RANGE SHOTS: Outside the "18". Must use laces. Get over the top of the ball. Land on striking foot. Keep ball on ground as also helps teach strong passes in game-play. Ok to use 1-2 touches to control the ball. Work on getting the shot off quickly as defenders will close them off.

Left-Right Shooting: Flag or cone in center of goal. Coach feeds them a ball and calls L or R as to which side they need to shoot.

A. Serve the ball from the goal and then from the sides.

B. Striker dribbles the ball up then shoots. Progression: Dribble up and make a cut around a cone.

C. Receiving ball from behind, then turning to shoot. Progression: Add passive defender, used outside of foot to "roll around the defender". Practice shooting on the turn....turn the plant foot in the direction of the goal...common as most strikers spend their time with their backs to the goal.

D. Bending the ball from outside angles. Need to strike the outside of the ball and create heavy spin. Start by trying to score from extreme sides of the goal, this way they can visualize the bend. Each player takes 3 consecutive shots...dominant foot, outside of dominant foot and non-dominant foot. They will learn that they may have to use the outside of the foot if not willing to use both feet. Next try bending around a wall of cones from a distance as they pass back and forth. A difficult skill to learn but practice.

Part #3: Trap, dribble, shoot: Receive the ball from the goal line at the 18, dribble to cut around a "cone" and shoot.

Part #4: Connecting with crosses: Cross the ball to the striker from different sides, angles and ball heights. The striker needs to get their body in line with the ball, concentrate with their contact on the moving ball.

Work on ground passes, bouncy balls, side volleys and headers from tosses (or crosses) across the goal.

Part #5: Diagonal Runs: Receive the ball from behind in the air, then turn and shoot. Start the run at the 18. The server is at 30 yards. The ball should be placed slightly ahead of the striker.

Part #6: BREAKAWAYS.

Vs Keeper: Start at 35 yards. Pass the ball up to the striker who is at 25 yards and then they go 1 on 1 with the keeper.

Progression: Add a "recovering" defender who starts well after the attacker makes their run (make them run around a cone first). Add another defender coming on the other side from behind as well.

Vs Defender: Start at 35 yards. Pass the ball up to the striker a few yards in front, then put immediate pressure on them from behind as they try and shoot.

Part #7: 1v1 Facing the goal: With no keeper, the defender is at the goal line and passed to the striker at 25 yards and then they charge and defend. The striker must faint/cut and shoot. Start with passive defending. Progression: Add active defending.... If the score they get to keep being the striker. Add two defenders.

Part #8: Wingers Game: 4v4 on small field. Two on each team play are far outside. You must use the "wide" player to score from their cross.

3-Line Shooting Drill: Players form 3 lines. One at each post and one at 25 yard in middle of goal. All groups have the ball. The one at the 25 yards, dribbles up and shoots before the 18yrd line on a forward moving ball. Just as they shoot the player on the R side of the goal gives them a back pass diagonal cross for them to shoot, then the L side of the goal tosses them a high ball for a volley or header. If the keeper stops all 3 they do 5 pushups. The shooter has to gather all

the balls they missed and then join the line on the L side so that they all rotate clockwise in the lines. As improve can either add a keeper or put out cones so they aim for the sides of the net.

4 Corners Shooting Drill: 4 lines with two teams. A line at each goal post and a line just outside the 18yrs wide of each post. As they alternate sides, the players at the posts give a diagonal cross to their teammate outside the 18yrd line who then one touches it into the goal. The most goals scored wins.

Play "HorseShot" or "PIG-shot": Once again this is a "horse" style game where players get letters when they miss. This can be a competition by scoring goals from certain angles, distances or with certain shots (volley, header) or via targets.....Set up some targets in the corners of the rebounder or wall. Sometimes I even use trash cans. Then one player calls their move or (moves), followed by a shot to a target. So, I might call "rivolino-go left, pull vee-go right, shoot the green trash can". Then I would have to actually do that shot and hit the can. If successful, the next player would have to also make the shot or get a letter "H". If more than 2 people are playing, each player has to make the shot as long as the player before them made it. If the player in front of them misses, then they get to call a new shot. Once a player has all the letters in the word "HORSE" they leave the game. Last person in is the winner.

Play "Round the World". See below.

Two Touch Shooting Game:

Players to receive a ball played to the edge of the penalty area and shoot with their second touch.

SET UP: Use the penalty area of your pitch. Mark out a 4x4-yard shooting zone in the D of the penalty area. We've used four players here – a working player, a goalkeeper and two servers. You need balls, cones and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY: The working player stands in the shooting box, and has one touch to control and one to shoot. The servers play crisp passes into the striker, making it more difficult to control the ball – much like the chances he would get in a match. The attacker must stay inside the shooting zone at all times, so his first touch has to be good. As soon as the shot has been made, the second server passes another ball in. Play six balls for each player and then swap players around and see who scores the most goals.

TECHNIQUE: The body shape is vital to cushioning the pass into a position where a shot is on. At first players will have a poor first touch but, as this gets better, the percentage of goals to shots will get much higher. If no goalie, put up flags.....You can the run two games at once by having a second set work shots from behind.



TECHNIQUE: The body shape is vital to cushioning the pass into a position where a shot is on. At first players will have a poor first touch but, as this gets better, the percentage of goals to shots will get much higher. If no goalie, put up flags.....You can the run two games at once by having a second set work shots from behind.

The Shooting Competition Game:

A two touch shooting to control and fire in a shot. This is a fun game that gets players competing against each other in teams.

SET UP: Use your penalty area for this session. We've used 13 players and you will need a goal, plenty of balls and some cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Split the squad into three teams of four. One team are the servers and the other two play against each other. Four balls are played alternately to the two teams from the servers beside the goal. Each player gets one pass and has two touches to try to score. Whichever team scores the most goals stays on and the other team become the servers. Get the servers to pass with different heights and speeds.

TECHNIQUE: Great for two-touch skills where the first touch sets up a shooting chance. Technique is important as each player only gets one chance to shoot and must concentrate and try hard not to be the one who misses. It is a great session for a warm-up on match day.



Shooting - the basics:

To begin with, let's break the mechanics of shooting into a few simple steps:

Key: Head down – eye on the ball. Keep your chin down.....Let the crowd be the one to tell you if you scored.

Tell your children that as they approach the ball they have to have a quick look up to pick out their target and then look back to the ball as they actually shoot.

Why? Because it is critical that your players strike the ball correctly and they can't do that if they're not looking at the ball when they kick it.

1. Approach the ball running like you normally do. Do not skip or hop at any point.

2. Plant the non-striking foot next to the ball. (Image 3) Your last step before your shot will involve your foundation foot

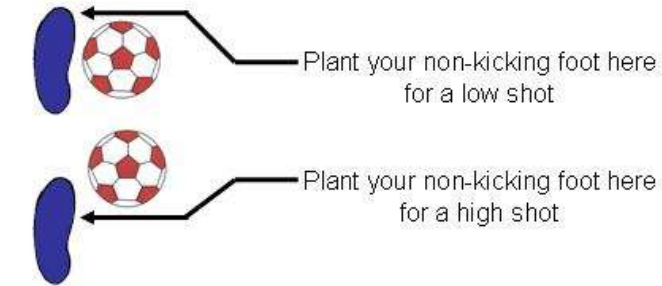
(the one not hitting the ball) stepping about 2-4 inches to the side of the ball and pointing towards the goal.

If the non-striking foot is planted behind the ball the resulting shot will go high (and probably wide of the target).

3. Pick the spot on the ball you want to hit. Your players need to fix their eyes on the center line of the ball as they bring their foot back to kick it. If they do that they will naturally strike the ball in the right place to get maximum power and accuracy.

If they make contact below the middle of the ball it will rise and if your player 'tops' the ball it will just roll along the ground.

4. Keep the knee of the kicking leg over the ball. (Image



5) Often, children will stand too far behind the ball when they shoot. This results in their back arching as they kick the ball and loss of power.

5. Approach the ball slightly from the side. This is perhaps the most important part of the whole technique. If your players run straight at the ball they won't strike it with their instep, they will hit the ball with their toe.

Keys to good technique:

- Use the shoelaces (instep) for power drive shots.
- Use the inside and inside front part of the foot for quick accurate shots.
- Glance at the target but then keep your eyes on the ball while shooting.

Shooting practice is just plain fun. It is what soccer is all about.

Use the shooting wall or rebounder and keep at it.

Practice with a moving ball! Except for the rare set-play, most shots must be taken while moving and sometimes at top speed. Always do a cut or fake first and then rip the shot.

'Toe-poking' can be quite effective sometimes. In a crowded penalty area, for example, a quick toe poke may well result in a goal. But when a player has time to choose how to kick the ball they will get more power and accuracy by using their instep.

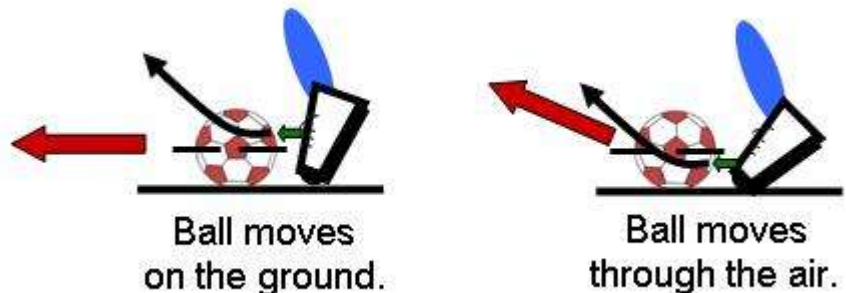
Younger children may protest that it's easier to kick the ball with their toe and it goes further. You need to show them that they can hit the ball just as hard with their instep and their shots will be much more accurate. An easy way of doing this is to get them to shoot at a cone or pole set up 10 or 20 yards away. You should be able to demonstrate that is much easier to hit the target and knock it over using the instep. Teach your players to approach the ball from side and use their instep right from the start and you will avoid many problems in the future.

6. A good follow through. (Image 7-8) You need to encourage your players them to extend their kicking leg after contact with the ball. If they don't, they will not get much power on the shot.

Coaching Points: Break the skill into simple steps as described above:

- Show your players where to strike the ball;
- Show where to plant the non-kicking foot;
- Show them why they must approach the ball from the side;
- Show the head down position (eyes-on-the-ball!)

Fake Shot: Place the standing foot 9 inches behind the ball. Withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up for a powerful shot and rapidly bring the foot forward as if shooting. At the last second pull the toe up and make slight contact with the sole of the foot on the ball. You properly perform the fake kick move, your opponent should



lunge toward where he thinks the ball will go. Don't use the fake kick with the same foot every time. Learn to use either foot to perform this move to truly fake out your opponents.

Running Shots:

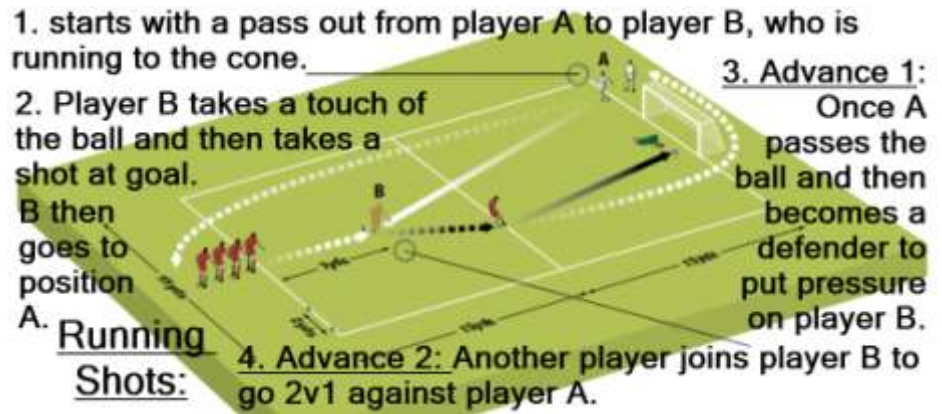
This session helps your players get into positions to hit the target more frequently. The idea is to improve the striker's ability to get into scoring positions by running with the ball.

SET UP: Set up an area of 30x15 yards with a goal. Put two cones at the other end for defenders to score in. Place a cone in the first zone that players run to and the ball is passed to. We've used eight players.

HOW TO PLAY: Put two players next to the goal (A), put a keeper in goal and at the other end place five players (B). Player A passes to the first player B who takes a touch and shoots at goal before entering the next zone. The next

player at A passes to the next player at B but this time player A runs to defend the move. The next player at A then passes but this time he is facing two attackers who can either shoot or combine. They can also go into the next zone to shoot. If the defender wins the ball at any time he can try to score in the cones at the other end.

TECHNIQUE: This works on individual skills. It gives players confidence to control the ball and shoot when not under pressure and then when under pressure. It also works on their ability to get the ball out from under their feet to hit a good shot.



1. starts with a pass out from player A to player B, who is running to the cone.
2. Player B takes a touch of the ball and on the move pushes it in front and takes a shot at goal. He then runs around to position A.
3. Advance 1: Once A passes the ball and then becomes a defender to put pressure on player B.
4. Advance 2: Another player joins player B to run to the ball and go 2v1 against player A.



Round the World:

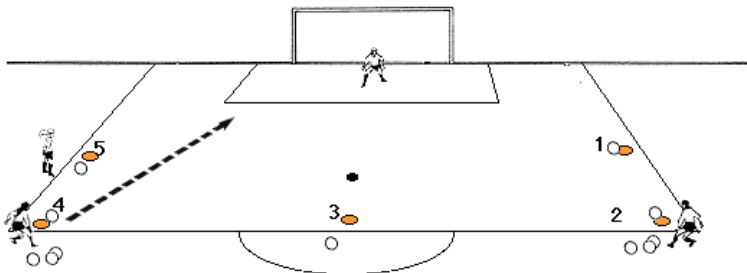
This is a shooting game patterned after the "age-old" basketball game that has players taking shots from around the basketball court. It can be played with or without goalies and the shots can be taken after feints or even passes from the coach.

Here is the basic game. Place some disks out near the penalty box line, as shown in the diagram. For younger players move them in a few yards.

The first player starts at position #1 and takes a shot at goal. (If there isn't a goalie, I insist that they do a little move or feint first to make it more difficult.) If they score, they go straight to station #2 and shoot again. As long as they keep making goals they continue to go "round the world" and take shots.

As soon as they miss, the next player begins at station #1 and shoots. The first player to score from each position is the winner. **Sometimes we play that the players shoot with their left foot from station #1 to #5 and then with their right foot coming back from #5 to #1.**

To avoid a lot of players standing around, I set up a juggling area or a soccer tennis game, where the other players can stay active when not in the game.



⚽ Play a game first without goalies. Later on, serve balls to the players at their stations and have them shoot one-timers or after a touch.

⚽ To help keep a supply of balls, have the player that just took shots, shag balls out of the net and from behind the goal.

⚽ This drill works best with 3-5 players. One shooter, one goalie, one shagger and maybe one serving the balls.

⚽ I like this drill the best when the players make feints before the shot. **And it's really cool to serve them a pass - then they make a simple feint (e.g. lunge or fake kick) - then they rip a shot at your diving goalie.**

Shoot, score, win!

This game is designed to improve your players' ability to shoot quickly and accurately. It will also encourage them to follow up on their shots, which will result in your team scoring many more goals this season! The variation of this soccer coaching game is also a great workout for your goalkeepers.

Set up: Divide your squad into two teams of between four and six players. If you have more than 12 players, set up two games.

Create a playing area about 30 yards long and about 20 yards wide.

Place a team behind each end line.

Make a goal in the center of the playing area with poles or corner flags.

Place a cone between each team and the goal to mark the point at which your players should take their shot

Place a few balls at both ends of the playing area.

How to play:

1. To start the game, team A sends one of its players to be goalkeeper.
2. The first player in team B dribbles a ball (at speed) to the marker cone and shoots. This player follows their shot and shoots again if team A's goalkeeper drops the ball.
3. Team A's goalkeeper retrieves the ball and returns to her team.
4. The shooter from team B is now in goal and faces a player from team A who dribbles out and shoots. After taking their shot, this player takes over in goal and so on.
5. The first team to score X number of goals wins.

Key soccer coaching points: impress on your players the need to dribble at speed, shoot quickly and follow their shot. You can, if you wish, further encourage a "finishing" mentality by awarding two goals if a player scores from a fumbled shot. Also, if the shooter does not follow her shot and get into goal quickly, the opposition will have an open goal to shoot at. You probably won't need to, but make sure the next shooter doesn't wait for the goalkeeper to get ready. They should start to dribble at goal as soon as they have the ball.

Vary the distance to goal and the size of the goal so players can experience success then make it harder by increasing the distance to goal and making the goal smaller.

Encourage players to shoot hard.

Variation: choose one player to be the goalkeeper. The rest of the players take it in turns to dribble and shoot, i.e. a player from team A shoots followed by a player from team B in quick succession. The goalkeeper has to work hard: save, turn, save, turn.

Note: although this game involves players waiting in line, the speed of the game means they should only be waiting for a few seconds.

Shoot on Sight: a 4v4 SSG on a pitch that is really short and wide. Big (at least 12ft-wide) goals are placed at both ends. Goalkeepers are optional. Your players should be able to shoot with confidence from anywhere inside their opponent's half and they should score lots of goals! I play "first to nine wins" with my girls.

Motivational soccer shooting exercise:

Shooting techniques: Instep kick 1

Fig. A: Soccer shooting technique

Fig. B: Soccer shooting technique

Training concept and objective

- Step-by-step teaching of the soccer instep kicking technique

Main focus group

- 8- to 10-year-olds

Setup

- Players line up 20 yards in front of a goal with goalkeeper; each player has a ball.
- Using cones, mark a shooting line about 11 yards in front of the goal.

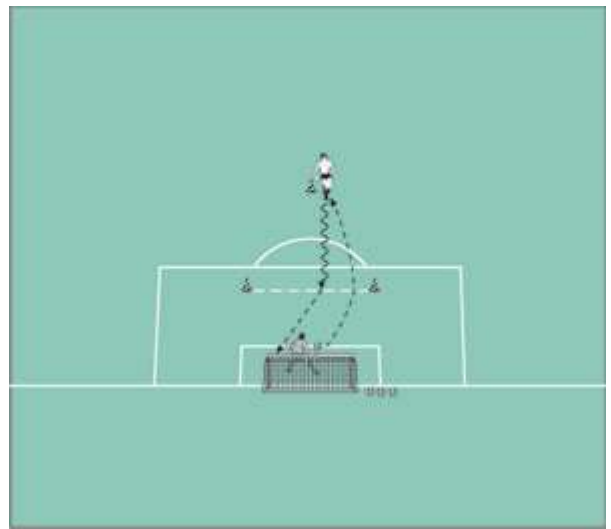


Sequence

- Soccer dribbling and shooting exercise 1: Dribble to the shooting line, step on the ball, then back up for a short running start and shoot.
- Soccer dribbling and shooting exercise 2: Dribble to the shooting line and shoot while still dribbling (Fig. A).
- Soccer dribbling and shooting exercise 3: Receive a pass from the goalkeeper, dribble and shoot (Fig. B).

Technique tips

- Space feet hip width apart. Place plant foot next to ball, with toe in line with front of ball, and bend plant leg at knee and ankle for cushioning.
- Bend upper body over ball, lift opposite arm for balance and keep head down.
- Draw back kicking leg from hip and knee and swing straight through from back to front.
- Flex ankle of kicking foot, follow through and keep foot flexed after contact.
- Kicking surface should be shoelaces/small bone on top of foot.
-



Rapid Fire :

Ag 6-16yo. An effective way for your players to practice their shooting and goalkeeping skills. You can play the game with as few as six and as many as 16 players. All you need is a supply of balls (one for each player) and a couple of goals to shoot at.

Objective: Teams try to score as many goals as they can in two minutes.

Set-up: Place a goal at both ends of a playing area 40 yards long by 20 yards wide.

- Mark the center of the playing area with a cone.
- Place another cone 10 yards away from the center of each goal.
- Split your players into two teams and allocate them a goal each.
- One player from team A goes in team B's goal and a player from team B goes in team A's goal.
- Each outfield player has a ball.

How to play: On your command "Go!", the first player from each team dribbles to the center cone, turns and runs back towards their goal.

- They must take a shot no closer than the 10-yard cone.
- As soon as the first player shoots, the next player goes.
- If the goalkeeper saves, he returns the ball to the player who shot. If the player misses or scores, he retrieves his ball and goes back to his team.
- At the end of two minutes, the team that scored the most goals wins.

Coaching points: Encourage players to aim for the corners of the goals rather than just blasting the ball straight at the goalkeeper.

Progression: Players shoot with their "wrong" foot. Move the 10-yard cone to the side of the goal to practice shooting/saving angled shots. Teams leave their balls by the goal and move to the center cone except one player who stays next to the goal and passes a ball out to each shooter.

How to Get a Better Kick in Soccer

Improving upon your soccer skills obviously takes practice, ability and desire to get better. Every player on the field, goalkeepers included, needs to know how to have powerful kicks, whether it's in dead-ball situations, during a breakaway or even when you try to cross the ball to a teammate.

Step1 - Take a few steps back before kicking the soccer ball. It's easier to do this during a dead-ball situation, but you can also do this if you're running with the ball. Run up to the ball on an angle--go to the left if you're kicking with your right foot, and vice versa with the other foot. This can provide better power behind your kicks.

Step2 - Place your nonkicking foot next to the soccer ball. If you secure your foot too far in front of the ball, you risk tripping over it. If your foot is too far behind the ball, you risk missing the ball completely.

Step3 - Lean over the ball before you make contact. Your knee should be directly over the soccer ball before impact. Make your hip the pivot point, not your knee.

Step4 - Swing your kicking foot down, connecting with the middle of the soccer ball. Point your foot in the direction where the ball should go. Aim to hit the ball with the laces, toe pointed down. If you want the ball to have a higher arc, place your foot under the ball further.

Step5 - Follow through with your shot. Put all the power behind your shot. If you want the ball to sail higher, lean back slightly. If you want the ball to power through lower, lean forward slightly.

How to Shoot Precision Shots in Soccer:

Precision kicking is important in soccer because it gives you the ability to control the movement of the ball as well as its placement. Using the inside of your foot and with enough power behind it, you will be able to place the ball into the goal. Ultimately soccer is about scoring goals so take the time to master this technique to become the soccer player you want to be.

Step1

Place your non-kicking foot beside the ball. Your non-kicking foot will act as an anchor and where you will place most of your weight when you go to kick the ball.

Step2

Bring your kicking foot in, lock your ankle and keep your toe pointed. Angle your foot to kick the ball with the inside of your foot.

Step3

Kick the ball with your ankle locked. The ball should strike your foot just below the anklebone. Be sure to keep your ankle locked, as this will give you the control you need to place the ball in the goal.

Step4

Follow through with your kick and drop back the shoulder of your kicking leg. The follow through and the dropping back of your shoulder will give you the power and precision needed to get the ball past the goalkeeper.

Step5

Repeat Steps 1 through 4 to practice your precision kicking. The idea is to control the ball and its movement and to put enough force behind the kick to score a goal. The more practice you have the better soccer player you will become.

How to shoot in Soccer

No matter the age or strength, kicking a ball is all about coordination, not the size of your leg muscle.

Step1 If you are on a grass field, place the ball at a flat elevation on the ground, not on a hill or a small hole, otherwise you can easily damage your fibula if you place your foot wrong. If you are on a hard surface, i.e. a park, then you are fine.

Step2 A 24-inch running start is the best way to go if you are taking a long shot with the ball. Remember, long shots are not powerful. If you are taking a powerful, low shot for penalty/foul kick reasons then a 12-inch running start is fine.

Step3 To begin, your pivot foot, or the foot you do not use to shoot the ball, should always land next to and parallel to the soccer ball. If you land ahead of the ball with your pivot foot then this may mess up your shot. So remember to always land with your pivot foot next to and parallel to the ball right as you are swinging your foot to kick the ball. Also, your pivot should point to the direction you want the ball to go. For example, if you are a righty, and you want to shoot to the left then land your pivot foot next to and parallel to the ball and point the foot to the left. This will enormously help your aim.

Step4 Now that you have knowledge of your pivot foot, let's get the kicking part down. You may be thinking that in order to shoot well you must be strong. Shooting is all in the hips. Yes, that is what I said, the hips. Not the leg. The hips help coordinate your body and put more power into your shot. So, when you are about to shoot a ball, simply push your hips a bit to the side, not too much! Do not exaggerate with the hips to the side as this may hurt you a lot, only a bit to the side and twist your hips opposite the way to the foot you are using to shoot. So if you are using your right foot twist your hips to the left and push your hips to the left side. And remember, only do this slightly!!!!!!! do not exaggerate this, it could hurt you!

Step5 Finally, the last step. In this step you will put together all that you have learned and simply swing your foot. Swing your foot halfway behind you, not all the way. Now, I think you know the rest. Also, remember never to shoot with your toe, shoot with the area a bit below the big toe and a bit to the right/left depending what foot you use to shoot. Use the area with your laces.

Step6

Now go and test it out! Also, if you did not believe my theory is good simply look at this picture for proof. This is Andrea Pirlo, Freekick Maestro. You see how he twists and pushes his hips to the side? see his pivot foot is pointing the direction he wants to kick the ball? Then, there you go. Go on youtube search some videos of his shots and you will realize how amazing his shots are and how this theory actually works.

Coaching tips to improve volley skills



One of the most effective skills for your players to work on in soccer training is the perfect volley, that is striking a ball which is still in the air.

Volley training drill tips

- In this drill, tell your players to keep their eyes focused on the ball and get into the line of flight.

- Get them to use their arms for balance, imagine a strike zone in front of them and keep their head still.
- They should plant their non-kicking foot on the ground and leading with the knee, bring the kicking leg through.
- The leg should be slightly bent, with the toes pointing down and the ankle held firm.
- They should strike the center or top half of the ball with the instep and keep their head over the ball to keep the volley down.

Half volley: When you kick it just after it bounces. You will hear a double sound.

How to Do a Bicycle Kick in Soccer:

Keep your back to the target and your eyes on the ball.

Step2 - Bring the knee of your non-kicking leg toward your chest followed immediately with the same motion of your kicking leg. The movement of your legs will appear as if you're pedaling a bicycle backwards.

Step3 - Extend your kicking leg to meet the ball while you're airborne and falling backwards.

Step4 - Pedaling down with your non-kicking leg, kick through the ball.

Step5 - Pull your toes back so your ankle makes a right angle as you connect with the ball.

Step6 - Extend both arms and your palms facing the ground behind you to brace yourself.

Step7 - Watch the knee of your kicking leg until you're on the ground to insure that you don't hit your head.

How to Do the Crossbar Challenge

Think you've got an accurate shot and good ball control? Put your skills to the test and take the crossbar challenge. The rules of the challenge vary from club to club, but the essence of the challenge is always the same: hit the crossbar with the ball as many times as you can.

Step1

Decide on how many shots you'll take at the crossbar before beginning the challenge.

Step2

Pick a spot on the ground to place the ball. You can set it down as far from the goal as you want, but make sure it's lined up with the center of the crossbar.

Step3

Take three or four steps back from the ball and line up your shot.

Step4

Train your eyes on the crossbar and imagine exactly where you'd like the ball to hit. By focusing on as small a spot as possible, you have a better chance of hitting your mark.

Step5

Approach the ball at a 45-degree angle and chip it into the air toward the crossbar.

Step6

Pay attention to the placement of your shot and adjust the next one based on where it landed. If it sailed over the bar, hit the next one softer or with a lower trajectory. If it missed the goal to the left or the right, focus on striking the center of the ball and not the sides.

Step7

Make note of how times you hit the crossbar and how many times you miss. Remember your score and try to improve it when you repeat the challenge.

Serving / Curving the Ball: For crossing and scoring. Be aware the up to 50% of the time the ball will not go where you wanted it. Less power than kicking regular but more spin = more bending toward the spin.

A) Start by practicing while sitting on the ground. Kick with putting a spin on it.

B) Practice standing and dropping the ball.

C) Practice dropping and kicking to a partner. Try hitting against a wall.

D) Practice shooting from the side of the goal.

How to Shoot the 'Knuckle Shot' (Banana Shot) in Soccer: One of the most dangerous shots in soccer, the 'knuckle shot' is almost impossible to control. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be. A goalkeeper will have even less of an idea where this fluttering and diving shot is going than you do, and if you can master the technique of the 'knuckle shot,' the goals will pour in. The key to this shot is timing, concentration and foot placement. (This is written from a right-footed perspective. If you are left-footed, simply reverse the directions.)

Step1 - Approach the ball from directly behind. A bouncing ball will 'knuckle' more, but there is a better chance of blowing it over the crossbar. A ball rolling along the ground won't have as much 'knuckle,' but is an easier shot to take.

Step2 - Plant your left foot approximately 9 inches behind the ball (in the 8 o'clock position)

Step3 - Shoot the ball with your right foot, making sure to strike with the laces of your shoes, your toes pointing down.

Step4 - Keep your knee over the ball throughout the strike! This is especially important if the ball is bouncing. In the case of a bouncing ball, you'll want to strike it on its downward path, about 6 inches above the ground. The force of the ball falling and the force of your foot rising gives the ball its extra 'knuckle.' Some suggest you strike across the ball with the outside of your foot. Practice by sitting and dropping the ball.

Step - Follow through in a straight line. The ball will go in the direction of your follow-through.

Step6 - Hop. This will feel awkward at first, but it is one of the keys to the shot. As your right leg follows through, you will want to sort of 'hop' with your left foot, landing on your right. Imagine that your right foot has followed through so hard that it is bringing your left along with it.

Step7 - Watch the ball swerve, dip, shake and score.

* Practice in different scenarios: rolling towards you, rolling away from you, stationary, bouncing. Learn how the ball tends to react in each situation. * More important that brute power is placement and timing. Take it slow at first to make sure you have the technique down, then begin to speed the process until you are going at a match pace. * Learn to shoot with both feet. It will make you a much more versatile and dangerous player.

World Champion Shooting Competition:

Players love this practice! The exercise is designed to encourage players to attack the goal with pace and accuracy. The object is to be the first player to score 2 goals in the "Champions League".

Field Preparation:

12 Entire Team, plus 3 goalkeepers

Attacking third of the field

3 full size goals, cones, balls.

Coaching Pointers:

Perform the exercise in the following sequence;

Place a goalkeeper in each goal. All players start in the "Championship League".

Players have to work their way up to the "Champions League" by scoring goals.

CHAMPIONSHIP LEAGUE

Player dribbles the ball to flag "1", checks back to flag "2" then tries to score a goal.

Must score a goal to advance to the Premier League.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Player must throw the ball out forward and above head height. He has 3 touches to control the ball and score a goal.

If the player takes more than 3 touches, or he misses the target, he is relegated to the Championship League.

If he scores a goal, he is promoted to the Champions League.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Player dribbles through a series of flag poles and tries to score a goal. If the player misses the target they are relegated to the Premier League. First player to score 2 goals in the Champions League are declared "World Shooting Champions."

Striker Drills:

Links: [Attacking Games](#) | [How to Shoot](#) | [Shooting Drills](#) |

The Counter Attack Game: 3v3 small side goals, half field length. Once a person shoots on goal, they must run around the back of the net (whether they scored or not)...this sets up the other team to have a 3v2 to counter attack.

Composed Finishing:

Set up: 4 wingers pre-positioned outside the 4 posts. The other strikers behind the goal attack goal. Half field. 2 keepers.

How to: 2 strikers start at one end with short pass, then long diagonal to a winger, then receive a cross to finish.

Two new strikers from the recently attacked side repeat this sequence going in the opposite direction.

Rotate wingers and central strikers after several rounds.

TECHNIQUE: Focus on well weighted passes. Timed runs. Controlled finishes.



Beat The Crowd:

A fast and exciting game to teach your attacking players to create realistic goal scoring opportunities, even in a box crowded with defenders

WHY USE IT: Crowded penalty areas can allow attackers to disguise their shooting by shielding themselves from the keeper behind defenders. Can your attackers beat the blocking defenders and not hit their own players?

SET UP: Use the penalty area of your pitch. You need bibs, plenty of balls and a goal with a goalkeeper. We're using six attackers and four defenders but you can use up to eight attackers. The coach acts as a server.

HOW TO PLAY: The coach passes to the attacking team who attempt to find space to receive the ball. The attackers must try to combine to create space to score in the area. Rebounds, deflections and on the ball skills will happen quickly so players must be alert. The defenders must try block any shot.

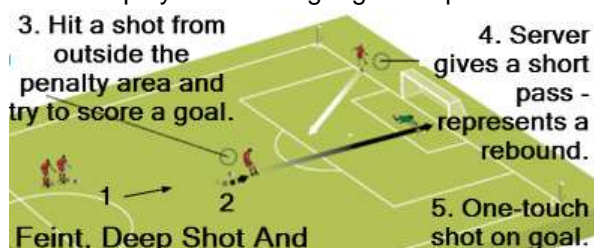
TECHNIQUE: This game will create realistic match situations like corners and free-kicks, especially if the attacking team are a goal down and they need to score. They will throw players forward in an attempt to create a goal scoring opportunity that they can exploit. It is a fast, fun and skilful game.



Feint, Deep Shot And Follow Up:

Long-range shooting is a thing every player should be trained to do. Also good training for the keepers.

SET UP: Using your normal pitch, place a cone just outside the penalty area and another to the side of the goal. We've used five players including a goalkeeper.



HOW TO PLAY: You need three attackers, a goalkeeper and a server. The attacker dribbles to the cone, completes a skill to get past (like a feint to one side) and when he is past it, he must shoot from outside the penalty area. The attacker must then react to hit a first-time shot from a pass inside the penalty area, just like a ball coming from a rebound. Play for a set time with attackers joining the back of the queue after their two shots. Regularly swap the keeper and the server with two attackers.

TECHNIQUE: This is a great session to practice shooting on the run

from outside the box and the precision of putting in rebounds with a first touch.

1. Attacker dribbles a ball to the cone.
2. Complete a skill like a feint to get past.
3. Hit a shot from outside the penalty area and try to score a goal.
4. Server gives a short pass - represents a rebound.

5. One-touch shot on goal.

Tight Combinations:

Use this session to improve the short passing of your players in a crowded penalty area. If they pass quickly enough they can create solid scoring opportunities under pressure. The short passing game of Around the penalty area there will often be very little space and short passes help to get the ball in positions where one can shoot.

SET UP: Use the penalty area of your pitch with a 6x6-yard box in the front part of the penalty area. We've used six players. You need cones, bibs, balls and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY: You need a server and a goalkeeper. The other players split into one defender and three attackers who cannot leave the 6x6-yard box until a pass is made for a player to run on to. The attackers must make three passes before they can release one of them to run at goal and shoot. The defender can follow the attacker out of the square and pressure him. Switch players around often because the defender has to work hard and the server is a good position for a rest.

TECHNIQUE: Quick feet and quick passing are both key to this session. Attackers must be able to pass and shield the ball from the defender and then react to a pass played out of the square.

Attack: Right Place, Right Time:

Help your strikers to be lethal around the penalty area. Timing runs to meet the ball and beat a player is the aim as the ball is played through into space. Giving players the chance in training to practice this art will help them to do it in matches.

SET UP: Set up a 40x20-yard pitch split into a central zone of 20 yards and two end zones of 10 yards. We've used 13 players. You need bibs, balls, cones and two normal goals.

HOW TO PLAY: Use two teams of six, with four attackers, one defender and one goalkeeper. Play 4v4 in the central zone plus one neutral player who plays for the team in possession.

Players stay in zones until a pass is played into one of the end zones for a player to run onto. If the pass into the end zone is one touch the goal counts as double.

TECHNIQUE: Players learning to read the pass and finding their first touch when they get to the ball is vital to the success of the move. There is lot of technique involved here, with movement, passing, first touch and shooting being the main areas.

Four Square:

This session is all about player awareness and seeing who has the ability to spot openings when teams try to organize themselves to defend and attack. This game will provide plenty of opportunities to make clever passes and set up play around the goal area.

SET UP: Set up an area of 50x40 yards with four squares marked out, two in each half next to the centre line. You need two normal sized goals, one at each end. 12 players + 2 optional keepers. 1 min, 20 sec, then 30 sec. Then rotate. Assign red and white sides (for part 3). All 4 balls in play each part.

HOW TO PLAY: Split players into two teams of six and put two keepers in the goals. In each of the four zones play 2v1 keep ball for one minute and then call out one of the following options...



12 players + 2 optional keepers. 1 min, 20 sec, then 30 sec. Then rotate. Assign red and white sides (for part 3). All 4 balls in play each part.



ONE! Using the balls in zone one, players must go into two 3v3s in their own half. The teams with the ball attack the goal in their half.

1. On your call of 'ONE': Starts with teams in the 4 squares playing 2v1 keep ball – play for ~1 min.
2. On your call of 'TWO': Go into a 3v3 and attack the goal on the side they are on x 20 sec. Same as 'One' but use the balls from zone two this time. The teams with the ball attack but there is only 20 seconds to complete a move this time.
3. On your call of 'THREE': players go into a 6v6 directional game x 30 sec. THREE! The teams play 6v6 using all four balls in a directional game (tell them which way they are shooting when you explain the game). Play until all four balls are dead. The team with the most goals from the three situations wins.

TECHNIQUE: Great for individual skills and communication – you find out who the leaders are and who can exploit space.

Beating the offside trap:

A good attacking and defending session from Team USA will teach your players the importance of keeping possession and helps with beating the offside trap. Possession is key with players tactically keeping position in the midfield focal point of the pitch. Movement is vital to keeping the ball and fast breaks will result.

SET UP: Use your full pitch, marking out the midfield area between the Ds of the penalty area and cutting off the wings by eight yards. Create two end zones that run along the six-yard lines. We've used 20 players.

HOW TO PLAY: Play 10v10 in the marked out box in the centre. Teams have a back four plus two midfielders in their half of the box, with three attackers and a midfielder in the attacking half of the box. When defending, the centre backs can drop back out of the box to defend the area in front of the end zone. When attacking, two players from the back half can join the attacking half. No more than six players from each team are allowed in either half. Teams can attack after making five consecutive passes and two attackers can break out of the box. Score by passing and receiving in the end zone. Play offsides.

TECHNIQUE: It is important for positional sense all over the pitch and winning the midfield battles.

1. Start with a pass by coach to one team. Teams must make 5 passes before they can attack and break out of the box.
2. Team without the ball has 2 defenders can drop back out of the box when the opposition have the ball.
3. After 5 passes 2 attackers can break out, passing and receiving the ball in the end zone to score. They must try to stay outside.
4. 2 players from the defending zone can join the attacking zone when their team has the ball. Max of 6 players from either team on one half.



Box Attackers:

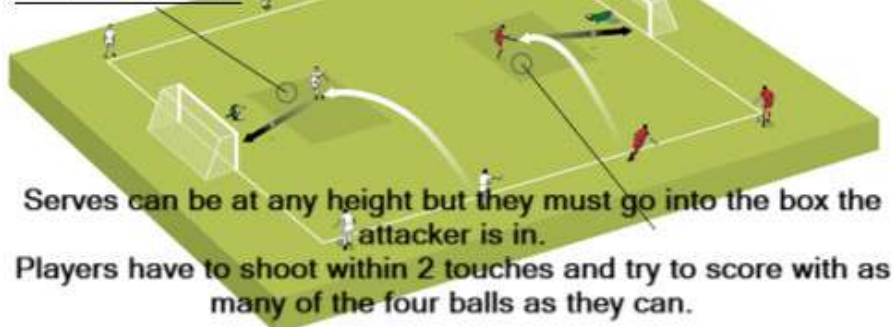
Use this attacking session to improve and vary your strikers technique when taking shots at goal. Forwards must be able to score in many situations. They need to be able to score with one or two touch, using a shot with either foot, a volley or a header.

SET UP: With Under 11s we used an area 20x30 yards but you can make it bigger or smaller so the delivery of the ball into the box is correct. Mark out a 6x6-yard box eight yards in front of each goal. We've used 12 players.

HOW TO PLAY: You need two attackers, one in each box, and eight players as servers. Each forward receives four balls from the servers near to him.

Mark a 6x6-yard box eight yards in front of each goal. The 4 servers at the attacker's end of the pitch serve one ball.

Box Attackers:



The serves can vary: low, high, driven, curled, fast or slow passes. The only rule is that the ball must enter the player's square. The forward must get a shot on goal using two touches – the most goals scored wins. Rotate players after the four serves.

Advance the session by using servers from the other ends to pass into the opposite boxes.

TECHNIQUE: To encourage a player to shoot with one or two touches, this recreates a crowded penalty box where players have little space to move and little time to receive the ball. Advance the session by using the opposite servers, so the attackers are receiving the ball with their backs to goal.

1v1s in the final third:

How to play it

- Set up as shown on a half-pitch - use a keeper, a server, three defenders and four attackers.
- The attacker starts on the halfway line. He dribbles through the cones then plays a one-two with the server. When the server touches the ball, the defender becomes active and is allowed to turn and approach.
- The attacker must hold him off and shoot at goal.
- This is a fast drill that requires energy, so both defender and attacker must swap with team mates after each 1v1 attempt. Developing the session
- Develop the drill by adding another defender in the penalty area, or by putting a time restriction on the attacker. Technique and tactics
- The idea is to create 1v1s at pace so that everything is game realistic.
- Having negotiated the chicane, the forward is under pressure to make an accurate wall pass.
- **Then**, the placement of the ball past the defender must be well planned - he should push the ball on no more than a couple of yards, then unleash a controlled shot. The game situation
- Set up a small 15x8-yard pitch, with a target goal at each end, and a collection of balls beside each goal.
- Split your squad into two teams and place players around the area on each side.
- One player from each team goes 1v1. He uses team mates either to play wall passes or as a way of keeping the ball in play.
- Players can only shoot in the opposition half, and when a player scores he must sprint back to his goal and touch the crossbar before defending the 1v1, as opposition players switch.
- Members of the new attacking team must move quickly to get a ball, and attack before the retreating player has touched the bar.
- Each 1v1 lasts for one minute, then change players.

Intense In Attack:

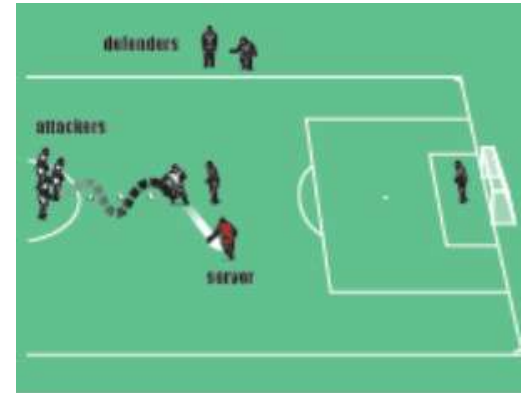
This is a quick and reactive session that will get your forwards using creativity and team work to score more goals.

Round 1: everyone plays a round of 2v2 with keepers for 2 minutes.

Round 2: 2v2 still but adds non-playing teammates on outside for support.

Rotate middle players every 2 minutes.

This is an intense and creative session that has players taking advantage of any space they can get. Because the pitch is small it also encourages shooting, so individual skill and team work are vital to success.



Round 1:
everyone plays a round of 2v2 with keepers for 2 minutes.

Intense In Attack:

SET UP: Mark out a 30x20-yard area with normal sized goals. We've used 14 players in the session, including goalkeepers. You need balls, bibs, cones and goals.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your players into two teams of seven made up of six outfield players and a goalkeeper. Split the teams into pairs and get them to play 2v2. After each pair has

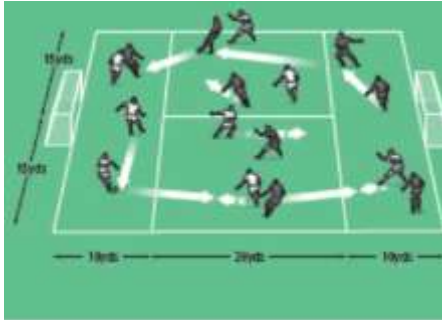
Round 2: 2v2 still but adds "resting" teammates on outside for support. Rotate middle players every 2 minutes.

experienced the 2v2 for two minutes, get the rest of the players to stand around the playing area and these can be used when the team has the ball. This means the attacking team will be 6v2 if the players use their teammates on the side. Play each pair for two minutes before swapping.

TECHNIQUE: Look for strikers shooting at every opportunity and for players to be creative with the ball. It is a quick and reactive game that gets your players using the width of the pitch and quick passing to beat their opponents. Any defensive errors will most likely be punished by a goal.

Attacking intent:

A session that focuses on quick attacks. Quick forward movement puts pressure on the opposition and can be really effective against teams that press high up the pitch. That's because while playing against a pressing team makes it much harder to keep possession, fast forward movement can quickly catch opponents out of position.



it

- Set up as shown in the diagram on a 40x30-yard area.
- I have used two teams of eight, but you can split any number of players into equal teams. My set-up is balanced, but you might choose to have a 2v1 in midfield instead. Similarly, if you have a limited numbers of players, you might want to use small goals without keepers.



- The session involves two balls at once – each keeper plays out to a full-back, who feeds it down the right-hand side of the middle area.
- In a 2v2 in this area, midfielders must make space to receive the pass, either holding onto possession or playing forward into the final area.
- In that final area, the attacker is 1v1 with a defender. When he receives the ball he must negotiate a shot on goal.
- However, if the defending team wins the ball they can counter-attack. This means that keepers could face shots in quick succession – once from a standard attack, and once from a counter-attack begun by a turnover of possession.
- If the ball goes out of play, return to the nearest keeper. Play for 15 minutes.
- To progress, allow players to move freely between the zones but emphasize the need to retain structure and shape.



Technique and tactics.

- This is a great practice that gets players to support and position themselves correctly in playing forward as quickly as possible. You must ensure they're looking for cues, triggers and at body shape in order to be able to read where their team mates require support.
- Look too to highlight what prevents (as well as what enables) players from playing forwards early.

Feed the Forwards:

A SSG that puts your strike in a position to receive the ball but then he/she must learn to get the shot off quickly. As soon as they touch the ball everyone can enter their box.

Any goal scorer who has lost his touch must practice hard to regain it. In this game the idea is to improve the movement of the forward, and for the midfielders to feed the forward and then make supporting runs.

SET UP: Mark out an area of 40x40 yards, with a centre rectangle of 25x20 yards and with a five-yard channel at each end of the centre rectangle. You need two goals. We've used 10 players including goalkeepers.

HOW TO PLAY: Split the players into two teams of five. Each team has a keeper, three players in the centre zone and a forward in the end zone. Playing a 3v3 in midfield, the aim for each team is to pass to the forward, who is free to turn and shoot. The forward must be quick because on his touch the midfielders are free to move, so encourage him to shoot.

TECHNIQUE: This is a great session to work on a forward's individual skills. It gives them confidence to control the ball and shoot when not under pressure, and it works on their ability to get the ball out from under their feet to hit a good shot..

Overload options:

Attacking awareness with an eye on the defense.

As coaches, we teach kids to look for and exploit overload situations – they're the best opportunities for scoring goals and putting opponents under real pressure. But we should remind our players that overloads can be a threat as well as an advantage, namely if possession is lost when pushing forwards.

This directional practice is great for rehearsing the basics of overloading in certain areas, encouraging communication, teamwork and passing. But players must be aware of the danger that results when a move breaks down.

How to play it

- Set up as shown in the diagram – a 25x15- yard area with two zones 10 yards in depth, and one of five yards. There is a target goal at one end and two two-yard coned goals near left and right touchlines at the other.
- The coach passes to any one of the four attackers. As a group, they move into the second zone, attempting to make their way past the two defenders in a 4v2 overload.
- If they make it through, two attackers can move into the third zone – a 2v1 overload – where the aim is to score a goal.
- If the ball goes out of play, players return to their original positions and the coach restarts play.
- If the lone defender wins possession, he can combine with his team mates, potentially forming a 3v2 counter-attacking overload coming back in the other direction. If one of the pair of defenders wins possession, they counter in a 2v2. Defenders can score in either coned goal.

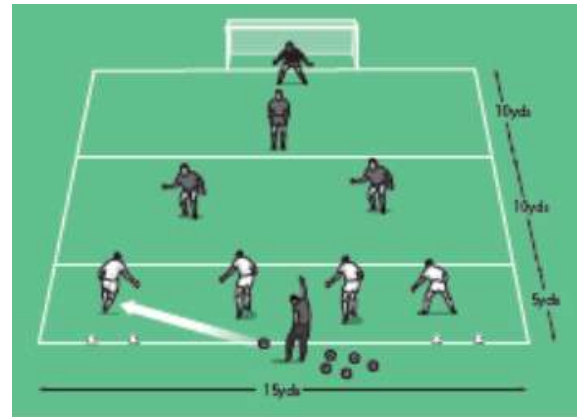
Technique and tactics

- Players must be constantly aware that while this practice is directional, it's transitional as well.

Feed the Forwards: 40x40 yards area, a center rectangle 25x20 yards, five-yard channel at each end. 2 goals. 5v5...1 keepers + 3 midfields + 1 forward in zones.



The aim for each team is to pass to the forward, who is free to turn and shoot. Once the forward touches the ball the midfielders can enter the endzone to pressure them.



That means attackers pass forward whilst staying aware of defensive duties at the same time.

- Defenders playing against the overload aren't expected to win possession, but if they do, they must counter quickly and positively.
- We can develop the practice by putting the playing area into grids in order to set up overloads within overloads.

Dutch Flow Exercise

This activity works on technical and tactical aspects of finishing, passing, attacking in a 1v1 situation and goalkeeping.

Set-up:

Field length is 44 yards (length of the penalty area). Width is from the edge/corner of the penalty area to the midfield line. Two flags should be placed in the middle of each end line to be used as goals. 4 additional cones should be placed equidistant from each corner-flag (goal-post) and each corner cone on the end lines; per the diagram.

- Each goal should have a goalkeeper in it whom is playing full-out and the balls should be split into two groups and placed opposite each other at a diagonal on each end-line; per the diagram.
- The players break into four separate groups and each group goes to one of the four cones on the end lines.
- This is an ever-evolving activity; fast-paced "flowing" activity that will seem chaotic to those looking in from the outside, but will be quite organized to the players involved.



Here's how it works:

The first player in each line is going to face the first player in the line directly opposite them on the other end-line in a 1v1 battle to goal. The player in the line who has the ball will serve the ball the length of the field to the first player in the opposite line (the line on the other end-line who does not have the balls) who should be checking forward to receive the ball in preparation of attacking the server 1v1 in an attempt to break them for a chance on goal. The server becomes the defender and is attempting to deny the attacker (receiver) a clean look at the goal. The defender should be playing full-out and should tackle and/or blow-up the play if the opportunity arises.

- While this is happening on one side, it is also occurring on the other side simultaneously.

The goal which each attacker (receiver) is attacking and each defender (server) is defending) is the goal which is located on the same end line that the ball began on (the end line the ball was served from).

- Players should rotate as follows: Server (1) to opposite end-line receiver (2) to same end line server (3) to opposite end line receiver (4). This would be a counter-clockwise rotation as seen in the diagram below.

Coaching points:

The attacker needs to work at taking their shot from inside the sticks (goalposts).

The attacker's first-touch is of the utmost importance. It needs to be towards the near-post, close enough that it does not carry to the defender, but still far enough away that it allows the attacker to run onto it and strike it one-time with their next touch if it is on.

The attacker should set-up their final touch (shooting-touch) at a 45 degree angle.

There are three options an attacker will face when in these 1 vs. 1 situations:

1. The Defender will close down too slowly. When this occurs, the attacker should simply just take the shot!
2. The Defender will close down too quickly. When this occurs, the attacker should simply "tap" the ball by the defender, allow the defender's momentum to carry them past and then take the shot! It is important that when the attacker does this that they set the ball-up at a 45 degree angle so they are able to quickly get the shot off.
3. The Defender closes down correctly. When this occurs and the attacker is unable to take the quick shot or to use the defender's momentum against them, the attacker needs to pull the defender outside the near post and then cut the ball back inside at a 45 degree angle setting themselves up for a shot.

Variations:

2 v 2: Server and the player immediately in line behind them step-up to defend the receiver and the player immediately behind them; who press forward and attack the same goal as in the 1 v 1 scenario.

3 v 3: When progressing to these numbers only one ball should be used at a time and only one goal is attacked at a time. The goal that is attacked is still the same goal located on the end-line where the ball originated (where the ball was served from) but this time the ball alternates back-n-forth from each of the two different points of service.

To get the 3 v 3 numbers, two players will enter from the line that serves the ball and one player will enter from the other line located on the same end line of which the ball was served. These three will be the defenders.

The server has their choice of which of the two opposing lines they wish to serve to. The line that receives the ball will enter two players and the opposite line on that same end line will enter a third. These players will be the attackers.

Progress to 5v5. Once you're at 5v5, let them loose and allow them to open-up and just play a small-sided match.

Soccer drill for long range shooting

Long-range shooting has a big role to play in youth soccer. If you can, get a couple of early long-range shots in at the opposition goalkeeper before they have had a chance to settle down. You will often see them fumble the ball or not see it at all and give chances to players running in, or the ball will end up in the net because the opposition were not expecting the shot.

The following training drill is aimed at improving two vital soccer skills, the long range shot and scoring using the secondary chances that result from it.

Get your players into pairs and work on the key techniques and skills. These start with a crisp, accurate pass between the two players, a run and set up for the shot making sure the players follow up.

Set up the soccer drill

- In an area approx 50 x 30 yards, the players divide into two columns at the ends. Two attackers stand in the middle third and one group operates at a time in a rotational practice.
- The passing sequence and subsequent cross and finish are numbered as shown. First ball is played into a server (1), played wide on first touch (2). The original passer follows the ball and shoots for goal (3) the server follows up at the far post for rebounds (4).
- The grey team goes first then the white team in the same sequence.
- The pairs rotate positions so all practice each role in the sequence. Servers becomes attacker and attackers become servers.

Back to Front

- **Objective:** To improve defensive and attacking skills.
- **Age range:** U6s and upwards.
- **Number of players:** Eight.
- **Set-up:** Create a 30x20 playing area with two goals set in about five yards from each end line.
-
- **How to play:** Divide your players into two teams of four. Goalkeepers are optional.
- Each team is given one goal to defend and one to attack.
- They can score from either side of the goal.
- **Coaching notes:** Encourage players to attack the back of the goal if their path to the front is blocked.
-

Simple soccer drills for more accurate shooting skills

Getting your young soccer (ball) players to concentrate on accuracy, rather than power, is one of the key points when coaching [shooting skills](#). Focusing on accuracy at all age levels is more important. Power will come once players get their shooting direction right.

It's a good idea to concentrate on coaching players' shooting accuracy rather than their shooting power. Obviously you want your players to strike the ball firmly. But I've noticed that when U8s go for power, they miss the target by a long way.

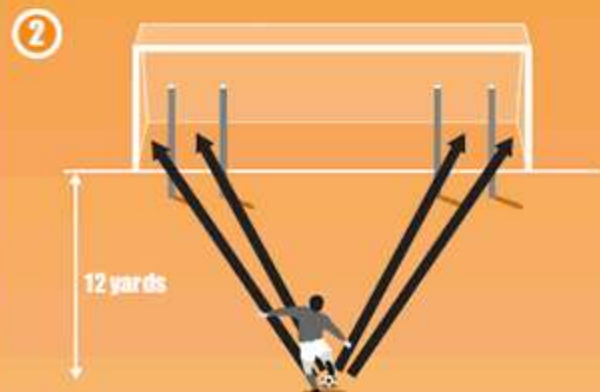
They need to start with simple shooting accuracy exercises.

When using the soccer (ball) drills below, players can switch between kicking a stationary ball and a rolling ball. This does make a difference as it's easier to get power from a rolling ball, but harder to be accurate with it.

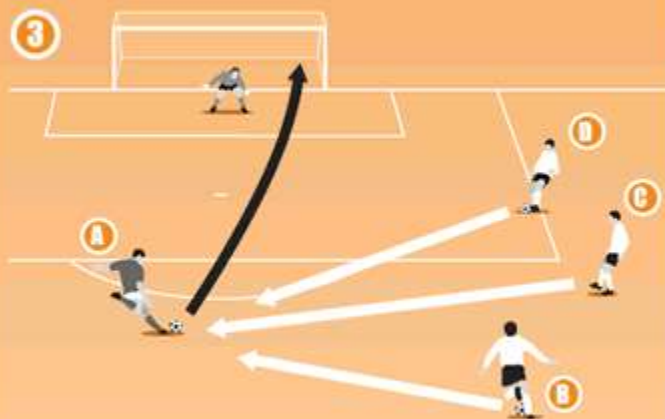
Improving shooting accuracy



Players try to get the ball past each other in the channel.



Players must hit one of the four target areas or lose the game.



Put players' accuracy to the test with different angled passes.

pass → shot →

Simple starter drill

Split your players into pairs and name them players A and B, as in diagram 1. They need a ball and four cones to make a channel on the pitch that is two yards wide and 15 yards long.

Player A must try to get the ball past player B, then player B past player A, keeping the ball in the channel. If the ball goes outside the channel, the player who kicked it loses a point.

If the ball gets past the player inside the end two cones, the shooting player wins a point.

Between the poles drill

In diagram 2, players are shooting at a target 12 yards from goal. Tell the players to shoot the ball between the poles or between the goalpost and the pole. If they miss the target they are out. Play until someone wins. If no one is getting out, simply make the target smaller.

Strike the pass drill

In diagram 3, the players are striking a ball moving across them at a goal defended by a goalkeeper. Player A is the attacker while players B, C and D are servers. They serve a variety of [passes](#) to player A, who must try and strike the ball first time at the goal.

Make sure you rotate the attacker regularly – after two passes from each of the servers, say.

Each server should make a different type of pass. Player B serves up a lob to volley, player C, a pass to shoot first time or control and shoot, and player D, a chest high serve to control and shoot.

Soccer drill to get strikers back outside to score

Although this is a [soccer coaching](#) session to get strikers running back outside once they have taken a [shot](#), it is also a good movement and agility [soccer drill](#) for all strikers to show their ability to move quickly to the ball when [passed](#) from different angles.

This is an unopposed soccer drill which helps improve technique and movement, and gives players the confidence to attack their opponent's goal.

Strikers have to be alert so they can move quickly to the ball for a second chance to score, once they have got back outside.

Set up striker skills soccer drill

Use a 40 yards by 30 yards playing area with two cones, two mannequins (or poles/cones), a goal and a goalkeeper. In this soccer coaching session I have used six outfield players and two coaches.

How to play it

- The attacker [dribbles](#), completes a skill (such as a [step over](#)) and shoots at goal.
- Now the attacker reacts to quickly run back outside.
- Once in position the attacker makes another run behind the mannequin as you (or the other coach) plays a second ball into space.
- The forward races after the ball and completes a second shot at goal.

How to rotate players

The attacker joins the back of the opposite queue ready for their next turn.

Fun finishing soccer drill

You can bet your life that if you spend most of your [soccer coaching](#) session working on scoring with the feet, the best chance on match day will be with your attacker's [head](#), and they'll try to kick it!

The beauty of this soccer coaching session from Michael Beale is the variety of balls players must react to. Have them react to these three different chances and it will make them more versatile when they get a chance on match day.

Michael's advice is to use this simple drill to "encourage a variety of finishing techniques".

Set up finishing soccer drill

You need half a pitch, three cones, a goal and a goalkeeper. Michael has used six outfield players but you can use as many as you want with a minimum of three.

How to play it

- The [shooting](#) player passes into the target player and runs to receive a return [pass](#) and shoot.
- The shooting player reacts and runs to the goal line server in order to receive an aerial pass to head at goal.
- Finally, he runs to the last server and receives a pass to turn and shoot at goal.

How to rotate it

- The shooting player becomes the target player.
- The target player joins the queue to become the attacker.

Soccer coaching session to encourage shots from a distance

Goals are scored from a range of areas, not just from shots inside the box. Improving players' attitude and willingness to [shoot](#) from a distance will increase the team's chances of scoring.

You should always praise and encourage young soccer players who are willing to shoot, even if the shot is not a good one. This [soccer coaching](#) session will help your players have the courage to try a shot from distance.

Set up soccer coaching session

Use a 40 yards by 30 yards area with two goals, two goalkeepers and a halfway line at 20 yards.

How to play it

Players take turns to [dribble](#), complete a skill and shoot at goal from behind the halfway line.

Develop the [soccer drill](#)

- Each team has three players inside the defending half and two players inside the attacking half.
- The aim of this drill is to create space in a 3v2 situation in order to shoot at goal from inside your own half.
- As the attackers outnumber the defenders, they should always be able to create a shooting opportunity.

How to advance the drill

Allow the players to show disguise when they are pressured and make a clever [pass](#) to a forward to shoot. This shows good decision making.

Soccer drill to get players shooting with their left or right foot

Attackers who can [shoot](#) with either foot have more opportunities to score, so your players will be much better placed if they can score with the foot that naturally takes the ball towards goal. Use this [soccer drill](#) to help your young players practice shooting using either their left or their right foot.

Soccer drill set up

Use an area 40 yards by 30 yards with two goals and two goalkeepers.

How to run the soccer drill

- The shooter makes a long [pass](#) to the coach and runs to receive the ball back.
- The player now shoots with one foot.
- After shooting, the player reacts and runs to receive a second ball from another server and shoots with the other foot.

How to rotate it

After completing the circuit, the player becomes a server for the next shooter.

To get more shooting and finishing soccer drills like this one, click the link to order a copy of Michael Beale's [Soccer Attack!](#) manual.

Volleying to score soccer drill

There are some basic [soccer skills](#) which your players need to make them better players. One of these is the ability to volley the ball when it is bouncing or from a flighted pass. Use this soccer drill to help.

This is a great skill to use in front of the goal when a well-directed volley will be hard to defend against, especially in youth matches.

This [soccer coaching](#) session is all about [shooting](#) and scoring goals with volleys and helps you coach your players to develop the technique for doing so. One of the main benefits is being able to hit a volley hard and straight.

What players must think about

- Look up to see where the goalkeeper is.
- Head steady, eyes on the ball.
- Let the ball fall as low as possible.
- Head and knee over the ball to keep the volley down.
- Lock ankle, point toes down, use laces.
- Strike middle to bottom half of ball but not underneath.
- Hit through vertical midline, keeping leg straight.
- Use arms for balance.
- Follow through.

Set up soccer drill

You need a goal and a cone about 20 yards from the goalmouth (vary the distance depending on age and ability) and a lot of balls and ball boys if you have any available.

How to play it

Players line up behind a cone and take it in turns to throw the ball in the air towards the goal, let it bounce then volley the ball into the net.

How to develop the soccer drill

- Introduce a goalkeeper.
- Have players throw the ball then volley before it bounces.
- Add servers to play the ball from the left and right. The servers should throw the ball to the volleyer rather than kick it.

Put it into a game situation

- Play 4v4 in an area 30 yards by 20 yards.
- No goalkeepers.
- Players move the ball by throwing it to each other and each player must take no more than four steps before releasing it.
- The opposition can intercept the ball or win it if the team in possession drops the ball.
- Goals can only be scored on the volley.
- Award two points for a goal and one for an attempt on goal.
- Add goalkeepers to make it harder.

How to Do a Lofted Kick in Soccer

The lofted kick is one of the most important skills for a soccer player to possess. There is no better way to send the ball to a teammate who's far down the field when the passing lanes are blocked by defenders.

Step1

Place the ball on the ground in front of you.

Step2

Take a few steps back from the ball. The number of steps you take will depend on how much speed you want to carry into the kick, but you should give yourself at least 10 feet or so for the run up.

Step3

Line yourself up for the approach at a 45-degree angle from the ball.

Step4

Make your approach to the ball while smoothly speeding up your steps.

Step5

Plant your non-kicking foot about 3 to 5 inches behind the ball and as many inches to the side of it as you need for the kick to feel natural.

Step6

Strike the ball below its equator with the instep of your kicking foot.

Step7

Follow through your kick enough so that you need to land on your kicking leg to stay on balance.

* Depending on how large your foot is, you may need to cock it outward a bit to get good contact with the ball. Feel free to experiment with different foot positions, but make sure you focus on how each one feels. Note how much lift each kick produces.

* Lean back as you strike the ball to generate more lift.

ADVANCED:

How to Kick an in Swerve in Soccer

With enough spin, you can make the ball curve and dip around players and, better yet, sometimes in between goalposts. This trick makes it bend in.

Approach the ball at a slight angle.

Step2 - Place your nonkicking foot approximately 6 inches to the side of the ball and just behind it.

Step3 - Take a full backswing with your kicking leg.

Step4 - Keep your ankle locked at a 90-degree angle.

Step5 - Let your toes lead your foot to the ball.

Step6 - Strike the ball with your instep on the edge of the ball farthest away from your planted foot.

Step7 - Keep your ankle locked as you follow through.

How to Kick an out Swerve in Soccer

With enough spin, you can make the ball bend and dip around players and, better yet, sometimes in between goalposts. This trick makes the ball curve outward.

Approach the ball straight on.

Step2 - Place your nonkicking foot to the side of the ball and about 12 inches behind the ball.

Step3 - Take a full backswing with your kicking leg.

Step4 - Keep your ankle locked at a 90-degree angle.

Step5 - Point your toes severely to the right before making contact with the ball, if you are kicking with your left foot, or to the left if kicking with your right foot.

Step6 - Strike the ball on the side closest to your planted foot.

Step7 - Follow through, keeping your toes pointed to the right.

How to Cross a Soccer Ball

When you're stuck with the ball out near the sideline, how do you get it back closer to the goal? The answer is a cross (a pass from the sideline to center field) to one of your teammates.

Control the ball as you move down the wing (outside) of the field, eluding defenders along the way.

Step2 - Glance to the middle of the field to see where your teammates are making runs.

Step3 - Chip the ball to the area to which your teammates are moving.

Step4 - Pass the ball back to a teammate if you are approaching the goal line. Try to keep the ball low to the ground so your teammate can shoot more easily.

How to Half-Volley a Soccer Ball The half-volley is a spectacular kick because of its instant and powerful redirection of the ball. Determine where the ball will hit the ground. Plant your non-kicking leg 6 to 12 inches to the side of this spot.

Step2 - Keep the knee of your kicking leg over this spot and, ultimately, the ball.

Step3 - Kick through the ball at the exact moment it touches the ground. If you miss, your leg will windmill through the kick. It's no big deal - everyone does it.

Step4 - Point your toes to the ground to increase power.

Step5 - Cock your ankle and point your toes parallel to the ground to better ensure that you make contact.

Step6 - Practice this kick on your own by tossing the ball in the air and then kicking it.

Soccer drill for swerve shots

Swerving the ball using the inside of the foot is easier than with the outside. But learning this rarely used [skill](#) with the outside of the foot will give players the option of using the same foot to bend shots either side of their opponents.

How to swerve the ball

- Have a straight approach.
- Place the non-kicking foot alongside, but slightly behind the ball.
- Have the kicking foot pointed down diagonally towards the inside, with the ankle locked.
- Use the outside of the instep and strike the inside of the ball (the side nearest the player).
- The kicking foot moves across the body.
- Follow through.

How to set up the drill for swerving the ball

- Use a penalty area at one end of a pitch.
- Have three servers spaced equally across the penalty area between the 6- and 18-yard areas.
- Place three disc cones/markers, equally spaced just outside the penalty area.
- Have three ball boys behind the goal to return balls to the servers.

Run the soccer drill

- Starting from the right, players line up at the first disc cone. The first player receives a [pass](#) from the right side server, opposite. He then attempts to swerve the ball around the server before moving to the next cone and repeating.
- Players have an attempt at each disc cone/marker before rejoining the back of the line.

- Repeat two or three times before rotating the ball boys, servers and shooters. Repeat the entire soccer drill from the left side of the pitch, with players using their left foot.
- Play 4v4 in an area approximately 40 yards by 25 yards with two mini target goals at each end. Teams are awarded extra points for scoring goals with the outside of the foot.

Crossing:

Links: Intro | [Crossing Practices](#) |

Rule #1: "ELIMINATE THE GOALKEEPER" - That is, do not allow the Goalkeeper to catch or block the cross. Aim from the top of the goal box to the PK area, not into the goal box.

Rule #2: Have multiple attackers making nicely timed runs. If the first defender is marking closely, the attacker should attempt to dribble to the end line and attempt to turn in toward goal. At that point, the attacker needs to cross the ball low and hard diagonally toward the top of the 6-yard box.

- A second attacker should be making a diagonal run toward the player in possession of the ball.
- A third attackers should be covering the middle of the goal and the back (far) post.

Early crosses: Can be an excellent weapon. An "early" cross is taken from the area by either touchline, 18-30 yards from the goal line.

Early crosses should be attempted when the defending players are tracking back but have not yet entered the penalty area and are hooked behind the defenders. The early cross should be waist-high or lower. When crossing from the flanks, the ball should be struck in the following manners: 1) low to the near post; 2) high to the middle or back post; or 3) bent behind the defensive line, while also bending away from the goalkeeper. When crossing from the end line, the ball should be struck: low and diagonally back toward the near post and/or penalty mark or chipped to the back post

Notes: All young players need to practice scoring from crosses. Although very young (U6 or U7) players often won't have the power or ability to cross the ball in hard from the wings, they still need to know what to do when the team is awarded a corner.

From U9 upwards, you can expect some of your players to be able to create decent crosses that really should be converted into goals more often than not.

The kicking technique: has to be sound and one needs to be able to get some power behind the ball. **Tips:**

- Relax. The only part of your body that should be tight is your ankle. The rest of your body, including your kicking leg, must be relaxed.
- Hop. Your last movement before kicking the ball should be a hop onto your non-kicking foot. This loads your shot with power.
- Knee first. In the delivery stride, the knee of the kicking leg should be over the ball for as long as possible. The kicking foot should be whipped through the ball.
- Use your first metatarsal. The ball should be struck with the part of your foot just above the big toe. This is the first metatarsal - the thickest bone in your foot.
- Break the glass. Imagine that there is a pane of glass resting against the ball. You want your foot and your body to smash the glass so make sure you land on your shooting foot after the shot, not your non-kicking foot.

1. High crosses

While you shouldn't expect your players to repeatedly head the ball for health and safety reasons, children need to be encouraged to get their head on balls that arrive at head height.

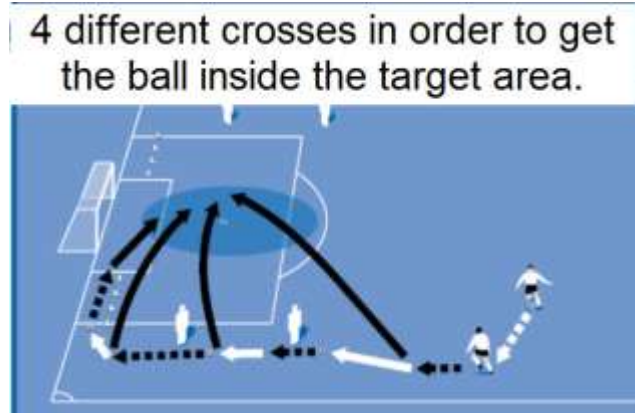
First of all, you need to show them that heading the ball doesn't hurt - if it's performed correctly. Teach them to keep their eyes on the ball and their mouth closed (to avoid biting their tongue), and build up slowly. Start with gentle serves with a soft indoor ball and gradually progress your players to take part in games like Throw, Head, Catch.

If you start this process early enough, your players will view heading the ball as a perfectly natural part of soccer and won't be afraid to meet high crosses with their head.

2. Low crosses The key to converting low crosses into goals is for your players to anticipate the direction of the ball and simply get in the way of it. Kicking across the line of the ball as it arrives is a difficult technique to master. It's much simpler and more effective to teach young players to stand in the line of the ball, let the ball hit them if necessary, control and shoot.

Lots of practice is required. Play plenty of 4v4 or 5v5 games where you re-start with a corner every time the ball goes out of play. Award one goal for a goal scored from normal play and two 'goals' for a goal scored from a cross or corner.

Emphasize that your players do not need to score with their first touch, but they do need to get in the way of the ball. It's a crime to let the ball travel across the penalty area without anyone getting a touch!



Crossing Practices:

Delivering accurate crosses from wide areas is a key part of any side's attacking arsenal, and the better your players become at it, the more effective your team will be at creating goal-scoring opportunities. This session of exercises is guaranteed to improve your players crossing confidence. Depends on the age and skill level of your players, it is best to generally start with basic no-pressure crossing and then work up to the more advanced sessions to give them confidence. It may take one to three separate practices to complete these sessions.

Step #1: Start by teaching them where to cross. (see [Crossing](#)) Split players into 2 groups. Both groups start approx 25-30m from goal, although this can vary depending on the age and ability of the players.

Step #1: The basic cross: Aimed at the area highlighted, away from the keeper.



Step #2: Add a 2nd attacker who runs to the far post.



The players from the first group take it in turns to run with a ball until they pass a marker, and cross it to a player from the second group who has made a run into the penalty area. Players receiving the cross attempt to score with a **first time** header or shot.

Step #2: Add a 2nd attacker who runs to the far post. The crosser must now select their target...short vs. long cross.

Step #3: Add a defender in penalty box who actively competes for the ball.

Teach: Observe where team-mates are.

- Aim between the edge of the 6-yard box and

the penalty spot.

- Keep cross away from keeper but give team-mates something to attack.
- Upper body faces direction of cross.
- Height/pace of cross? Bending away from the keeper?

"Head steady, eyes on the ball. Use arms for balance" "Hit the ball firmly" "Make it easy for the forward"

Timing the runs: the player attacking the near post can check away from the wide player, or hold their run, before arriving at the same time as the ball. The far post attacker bends a run around their partner, then sprints once the ball is crossed.

- Players must accelerate to lose their markers.
- Attack at pace.

SOG #1: Goals scored from crosses count double.



SOG #2: "Four to Cross" Wide players have three touches. Goals scored from crosses count double.

- Communication – should players use signals or trigger movements, etc?

SOG #1: "Double Cross": Create a wide pitch to encourage crossing. Two goals and goalkeepers. Goals scored from crosses count double.

SOG #2: "Four to Cross" Outside channels and no pressure. Allow players outside the touch lines three touches to pass or cross for the team with the ball. Goals scored from crosses count double. The 4 wide players (crossers) operate outside the touch line who play for the team with the ball and are conditioned to provide crosses for players. Wide players have three touches (control, dribble, cross/pass). Other players cannot come out and take the ball so they have less pressure to get the cross off.

SOG #3: Four to Cross with inside channels and pressure.

Set up: Set up a playing area of 35 yards by 25 yards. Within that, mark out four 5 yards by 15 yards channels, one in each corner of the area.

How to play: Play 5v5 – including goalkeepers – but 2v2 in the central area. Each team has one player in opposite attacking channels. Those players must stay in their channels, and no other player is allowed to enter the channels.

Play begins with a goalkeeper serving the ball to one of his two team mates in the central area. To score a goal, a team has to work the ball to one of their team mates in the channels, who crosses for the two central players in his team to head or shoot. Each time the ball goes out of play, the game restarts with the keeper of the team entitled to have possession. Wide players should keep possession if there's not a good chance to cross the ball. Rotate crossers and central players, and get crossers to switch channels so they have to cross with their other foot. To progress, limit wide players to three touches.

Advancing: Once they get proficient at this increase the difficulty...When a wide player receives the ball, one defender may enter his channel to stop the cross.

Progression: Add a goalkeeper. Add one defender and play off sides. The defender can also mark each striker in turn man-to-man.

SOG #3: Cross with inside channels and pressure.



Play It Wide and Full Team Attack:

Using half your normal pitch mark off two 7 yards wide channels your players will use. I used 12 players in the session.



HOW TO PLAY Split players into two teams of 5 players plus two neutral players in bibs. Both teams attack the opposition goals. They are encouraged to play the ball wide to a neutral player. No one else is allowed in the designated wide channels except for the neutral players. Once the ball has been played out to a neutral player, their objective is dribble up and serve the ball into the attacking third to set-up an attack.

TECHNIQUE This has a lot going on in the session. Starting with good tactical play there will be passing and receiving, opening up play to get the ball wide, crossing technique from the wide players and good

shots at goal from headers, volleys and strikes. Get the defense to work as a unit defending the crosses.

1. Half pitch with a regular game play. 2 wide neutral players. 5+2 vs 5+2. No goalies.
2. Only neutral player allowed in wide channel. 1 point for goal from middle. 2 points if off a cross. Later add if defender scores then 3 points.

Continuous Crossing Game:

If you want your players to hone their crossing skills, try this non-stop game aimed at helping them get the ball into the box at the right time.

WHY USE IT: The session is a good work out to help teams experiment with angles and different heights of playing a ball into the box from the wings. The crossers are unopposed so they can concentrate on the technique and get good crosses in. It's a fast and continuous session.

SET UP: Create a playing area 40x30 yards including a five-yard crossing zone. You don't need to use keepers even though we've included them in our session. But you do need four teams of two players and a server. You also need balls, bibs, cones and goals.

HOW TO PLAY: The server plays the ball to the attacking pair, who must get the ball to the crossing zone for a cross into the two attackers. After the attack the team defends and the previous defenders break out to attack the other end.

TECHNIQUE: Arriving in the box at the right time is important for the session to work – if the attackers are waiting for the player to cross before they run it will be easily defended. Putting balls into the box is good practice for match days. Three Teams play 3v3 with keepers and a winger. Optional neutral player. 1. First set of attackers must move the ball wide to the wing player in an unopposed zone who can cross in. 2. After first attackers, coach plays a ball to the previous defenders for them to attack the other end.



Wingers: give a variety of crosses at different angles, heights and speeds to encourage different clever runs. Clever timing of the runs will make the defender's job impossible.

Score Wide and Score Double Game:

The secret to opening up a tight back four is to switch play and catch defenders out of position. This session will help your players attack the space that the defenders leave.

This session shows you how to open up the pitch and exploit space behind the defense. Your players will learn how to drag defenders to one side and switch play across the pitch in order to pull defenders apart and create space in the middle.

SET UP: For this session you will need bibs, plenty of balls, cones, two target goals and a full sized goal. Use the attacking third of your pitch with a 10-yard channel on each wing.

Use the full-size goal at the penalty area end and place the target goals 25 yards from the other end at opposite sides. We've used 11 players including a keeper.

HOW TO PLAY: Play 6v4 plus keeper. The team of six has four midfielders, plus two attackers who must stay in the penalty area. Only the two nominated attackers can score. If the team of six get the ball from one channel to the other (switching play) and are able to score, then their points are doubled. The team of four try to score in the target goals. There are no offsides.

All starts/ restarts at the 25-yard line. 4v6 with keeper. Only the 2 strikers can score. Midfielders cross. Get 7 restarts and then rotate the players.

Switch Wide and Score Double:

The defenders try to score in the target goals. No offsides.

Players don't have to use the channels but if they score without using both channels it only counts for one point.



TECHNIQUE: Switching play needs to be done quickly with players exploiting the situation. You want to see an end product from the switch, so look for good crossing and finishing.

Play it Wide and Back Game:

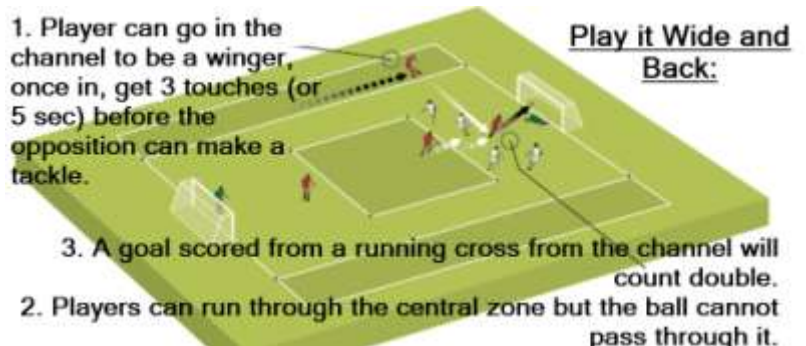
Use this activity to improve the crossing of your players. The ability to cross the ball on the run made life difficult for the opposition defenders. This is one of the harder skills that wingers need and it helps them to catch out defenders on the counterattack without stopping or slowing the attack down.

SET UP: Set up a 45x35-yard area with a 15x15-yard box in the centre of the pitch and a five-yard channel along each side. We've used 10 players in this session. You need bibs, balls, cones and two normal goals.

HOW TO PLAY: Play a simple 5v5 including goalkeepers. In this game the ball cannot be passed or dribbled through the centre box, so play must go wide to get past it. Players can run into the channels on the wings to receive the ball and can only take three touches before the opposition can follow them into the channel. Any goals scored from a running cross out of the wing channels count double.

TECHNIQUE: Players need to look up while they are dribbling the ball and execute a good cross on the move. This is difficult for young players to co-ordinate, so give them plenty of opportunity to practice and don't punish any mistakes.

1. Player can go in the channel to be a winger, once in, get 3 touches (or 5 sec) before the opposition can make a tackle.
2. Players can run through the central zone but the ball cannot pass through it.
3. A goal scored from a running cross from the channel will count double.



Cross & 2 v 1:

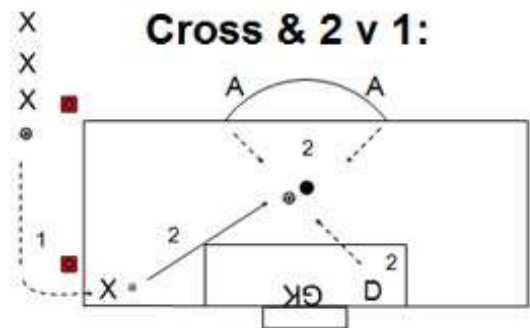
1. X dribbles along edge of penalty box for a cross
2. As soon as the ball leaves foot of X for cross:
 - one of strikers A attacks ball
 - second striker A runs to far post or gets in supporting position.
 - defender D challenges for ball.

Attacker A with ball can go for one touch shot or header or start 2v1 against D with a quick strike on goal.

Coaching Points

1. This drill is all about timing of runs !!
2. The cross must be to target area triangle going from the near top corner of the 5m box to the penalty spot to the far top corner of the 5m box.
3. Ensure that the player crossing aligns body with direction of cross. This is best done by playing the last touch of the ball prior to crossing in the direction of the cross.
4. Attackers need to delay their runs until they know where and at what speed the ball is going. One of the attackers decides to go for the ball while the other gets ready to support a 2v1 or get a rebound. If the striker attacking the ball cannot finish on first touch, then they must control the ball and set up a 2v1. Part of this 2v1 may be a flick-on header to the second striker, a touch back to the top of the box, a lateral pass, etc.
5. The defender attacks the ball as soon as they anticipate where the flight of the ball will end.
6. If defender cannot clear on first touch, then they must block a shot by the first striker or react to a pass and then block the second striker.
7. It is vital that the strikers do not over run the crossed in ball, then the ball will end up in their back and an opportunity for goal is missed.
8. Ask for the cross to come from as close to the goal line as possible.

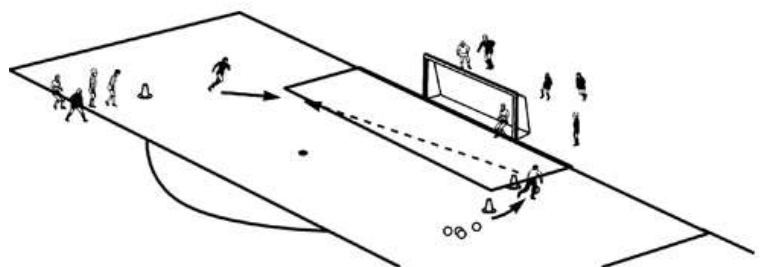
Game Application: This is a drill to develop one of the fundamental soccer attacking plays - the flank attack. Many goals are scored from crosses and the timing of the cross and runs are critical to success. It is also important for the goalkeeper and defender to judge the flight of the ball and the run of the strikers to come out and intercept the cross before the strikers reach the ball.



Side Kicks Competition:

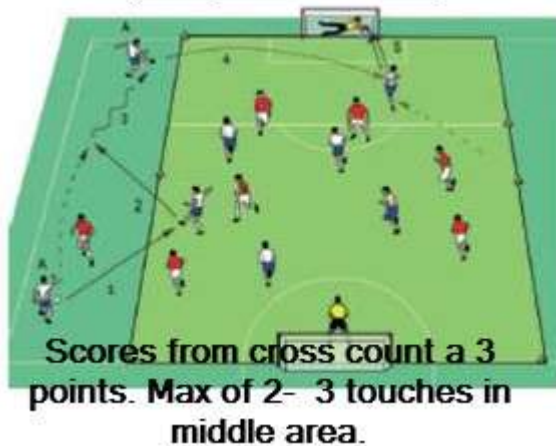
The practice starts from one side and is later changed to the other. Initially the "side kick" can be served in by the coach, later by the players.

- The keeper must start at the near post area. If the keeper anticipates the cross, then shots/goals are permitted at goal in the open near post.



- The squad should be split into two teams - one shooting while the other fields. The challenge is between the two teams. How many can they score from 20 shots.
 - The goalkeepers have their own challenge - to keep the success rate on scoring under 50%; or they split - one with one team and one with the other.
 - It is important that the placement of the cones is such that the cone nearest the goal line for the "side kick" is sufficiently close to the end line to make the cross a "pull-back."
 - When players are crossing themselves place a cone or marker disk three yards or so out from the near post and decree that they must play the cross outside the cone not inside (stops simple passes to the far post).
- Coaching Points:** Goalkeepers must defend the near post first and foremost. Encourage keepers to position marginally in front of the near post - so they won't push a high shot into the top of the net, nor crash into the post. May consider inside hand extended sideways and backwards to touch the post.
- After forcing the cross by holding position, the keeper can cut out the cross ball - or, more likely, move across the goal to defend the impending shot. As the ball is played across the goal, the keeper must move towards the far post fast, and attempt to "set" just before the shot.
- A delay in the shot, may allow the keeper to advance a step or two to cut down the angle.
 - Praise each keeper for every effort and success (may not be many to start with!).
 - Field players have to time their runs or they will get ahead of the ball.
 - Clinical side of the foot finishing to the near and far post - depending on the GK position.

Wing Zones Game:



- Avoid running around the ball with a cross from the left to get onto good (right) foot and vice-versa.

Crossing and finishing soccer drills

When you are preparing for matches make sure you organized some crossing and finishing drills during training so that the crossers of the ball are playing

2 v 1 After pass by Defender (RED):



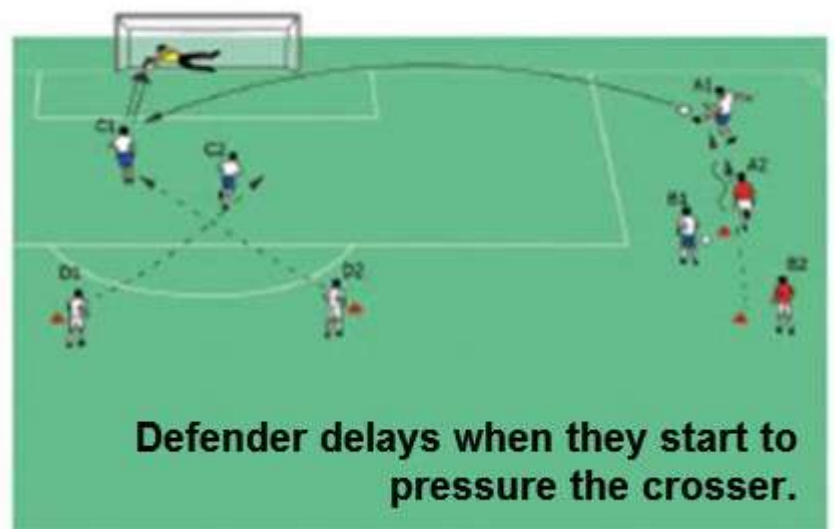
to your strengths not your weaknesses. It is very important for you as a coach to play to your strengths. Incorporate into your training sessions a 10-minute quick-break soccer drill that involves passing, crossing and finishing. You know your players, so arrange your soccer coaching session so the crossers know to play it high to the big guys and low to the small ones.

Crossing and finishing: good for motivation

Not only is crossing and finishing a very important part of the game but it is a good conditioning tool and scoring goals always motivates players to work harder.

Drill to pass and cross

Crossing under Time Pressure



In the soccer drill, set up your players as in the diagram. The ball is passed out wide close to the line and crossed to your designated players who have made their way into the box. Tell your players to alternate between hard, low crosses into the box and higher crosses that they can head into the goal.

Key soccer coaching tip: Fast passing and movement are essential soccer skills f

Soccer drill to get attackers crossing to the far post

When you watch professional players crossing a ball, they often take the option of crossing to a player at the far post who then plays it across the face of goal, which is very hard to defend. Use the following crossing soccer coaching drill to get your players working on the same skills.

I was working on this soccer drill in training with my players and saw the success of it in the match we played the following Saturday.

My players were knocking the ball across the goal and the player arriving at the far post drew the defenders away from the middle of the penalty area, so when the ball was knocked back our striker had a great chance to score goals. He scored three.

Soccer drill tips

- Use three players and a goalkeeper.
- The winger crosses to the far post.
- The player on the far post meets the cross and lays it back into the center.
- The attacker has moved into the area and shoots at goal.

Vary the soccer drill

- Tell your players to change this soccer drill by playing crosses to the near post where the ball can be laid back or flicked on.
- Get them to vary height and power of crosses depending on where the supporting players are.
- You can also add defenders to challenge attackers.

Soccer coaching tips for an early cross

You often find with young soccer teams that the defenders are drawn forward when they are on the attack, leaving space behind them for your team to exploit. An early cross is the best way to do this. David Clarke explains how.

I normally like my wingers to get to the goal line and pull the ball back to the near post or onto the penalty spot. Or for the older age groups and the ones that can kick it further, I coach drills with them using the long cross to the back post.

However, if you are playing a team with a flat back four, one where the players are static in a line, you should get your players to use the 'early cross' as a way of crossing the ball from the wings.

This soccer skill is best used when the defenders are being attacked by a winger and are running back towards their own goal. The technique for the early cross is quite different than that used for the goal line cross.

The winger keeps the goalkeeper out of the equation by crossing the ball so that it lands in the space between the D of the penalty area and the penalty spot. The ball should come in at waist height or below so that retreating defenders have difficulty clearing it.

Key soccer coaching tips:

1. Tell your winger his hips should be facing forward in the direction he is running;
 2. Get him to strike the ball with his foot around the outside of the ball;
 3. He must make sure his big toe is pointing up — essential in putting spin on the ball.
- You must make sure your winger does not turn his hips inside, otherwise the ball will be driven rather than hooked.

Coach your players to recognize when a space has opened up behind the retreating back four.

or a quick breakaway.

Extend the soccer drill

If you want to increase the intensity, try starting the soccer drill 15 meters in front of the penalty area. You can work this soccer drill back to the halfway line and build in relays, overlaps etc as you see fit. A good fun soccer drill to try is give your players the ball 40 meters from goal and tell them they have 10 seconds to score a goal. This is extremely motivating, generates good banter and concentrates on skill.

Double your wingers soccer coaching drill

A useful soccer coaching trick, which I've found helpful in smaller 6-a-side games, is doubling up my wingers so the defending team is caught by surprise on one side. It gives the players a chance to combine and get good positions in front of goal to give them more scoring chances.

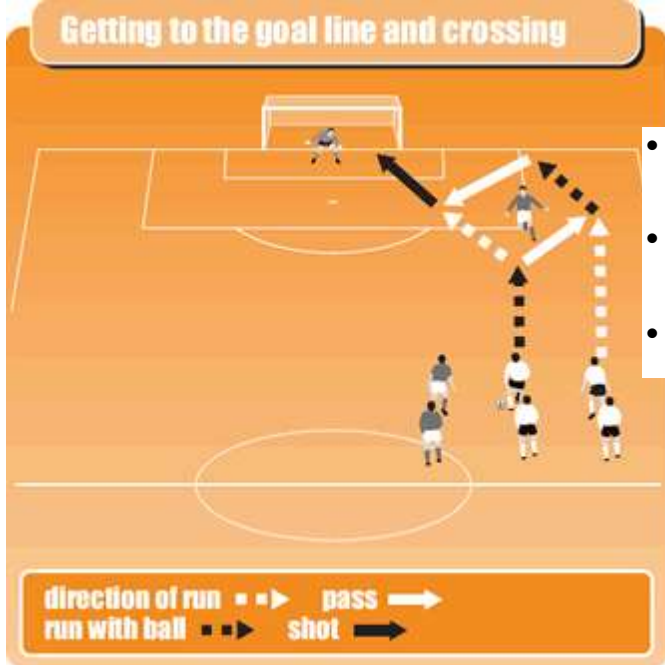
You need to make this a quick move and have all your players using good communication skills so they know what is going to happen. When your right winger gets the ball, the left winger immediately switches wings and supports them on the outside. This enables the winger to draw the defender and pass the ball on the outside and continue their run into the box.

It's a move to take the defenders by surprise, and to test their reactions. They may fall for it the first time but may see it coming the second time so make sure this tactic is used sparingly and is executed well.

You may also get your left back to move into the space the winger has left behind in case the ball comes across the penalty area, or to keep the defending team spread out across the back.

Set up the soccer drill with a 30 x 30 yard square and play down one side of it.





- The attacker moves forward with the ball, they aim to draw the defender before passing to the player outside to their team-mate.
- The crossing player controls the pass and aims to get quickly to the goal-line whilst being placed under pressure by the defender.
- They cut the ball back to their team-mate who can go on to beat the goalkeeper.

You need three sets of players - two attackers, one defender and one goalkeeper. It is a continuous soccer drill - when they have finished, each player moves on one queue so everyone has a chance to play each part of the drill, except for the goalkeeper who stays in goal.

Soccer drill tips:

You can use this soccer drill on both sides of the pitch, so players can get used to attacking from different angles. You can also award points for when the cutback is stopped by the

defender or when a goal is scored.

Soccer drill to get attackers crossing to the far post

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Vary the soccer drill

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Soccer drill to get players using the whole pitch

This soccer coaching drill uses the whole of the pitch and gets young players understanding how good, accurate passing and runs from the wide players can open up the pitch for a cross into the attack, creating lots of goal-scoring chances. Getting players to pass the ball to each other and create passages of play that lead to openings in the opposition defense is vital to establishing a good team.

Crisp, accurate passing, combined with effective runs from the wide player and attackers, will carve out chances time after time.

You need to set up this soccer drill using half a pitch, five cones and a goal. Play the drill with nine outfield players and one goalkeeper.



A series of passes moves the ball wide to the full back.



The forward lays off a pass from the full back for the wide player.



The wide player crosses for the forwards to score.

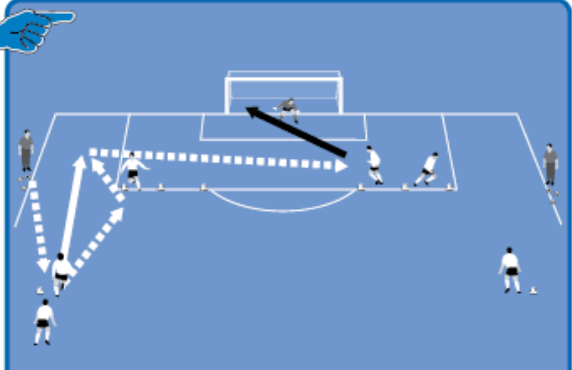
KEY

..... Player Movement → Ball Movement

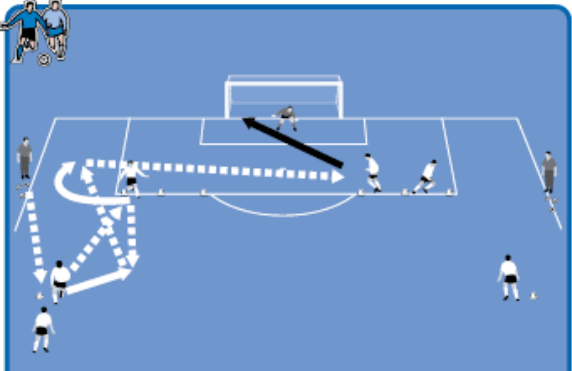
Run the drill

1. The central player makes a pass out to the wide player. The wide player sets the ball back to the full back.
2. The full back plays a pass into the center

direction of run ⇨ pass ○○○⇨ shot →



A wall-pass releases the wide player to cross for the forward.



Now the wide player comes inside and the forward makes the cross.

3. The wide player crosses for the two forwards to score.
- forward. The center forward now plays the ball down the line for the wide player to run onto.

How to rotate players in the drill

- The central player becomes the full back.
- The full back becomes the wide player.
- The wide player becomes the forward on their side of the pitch.

- The forward returns to the beginning and waits to become a central midfielder.
- Soccer drill for crossing combinations**
Crossing is a vital soccer skill for any player. This soccer drill gets players thinking about combination play by developing crossing ability, as well as the build-up play needed to create crossing opportunities.

What you are looking for in this soccer drill

- You are looking to see your players involved in quick, combination play in wide areas to create space for an accurate cross.
- Each player should practice crossing with their right and left foot, so run the soccer drill on both sides of the pitch.
- Make accuracy, rather than pace, the focus of each cross in the drill.
- Combination play should be quick, one-touch passing.

How to run the drill

- The wide player passes into the forward and sprints to receive a return pass. The wide player crosses for the forward on the opposite side to attack.
- After each cross, the forward moves to the inside gate ready to attack the cross coming from the opposite side. The starting wide player goes into the first gate to become the forward for the next turn.
- After attacking a cross, the player collects the ball and joins the queue of wide players on the other side.

How to develop the soccer drill

- The wide player passes to the forward and moves infield to receive a lay-off. The forward spins wide and receives a pass into the wide area to cross for the opposite forward.
- You can add an extra level of complexity by introducing yourself as a passive defender, requiring the wide player and forward to communicate to decide which route to the crossing zone will work best.

Do not obstruct the drill itself.

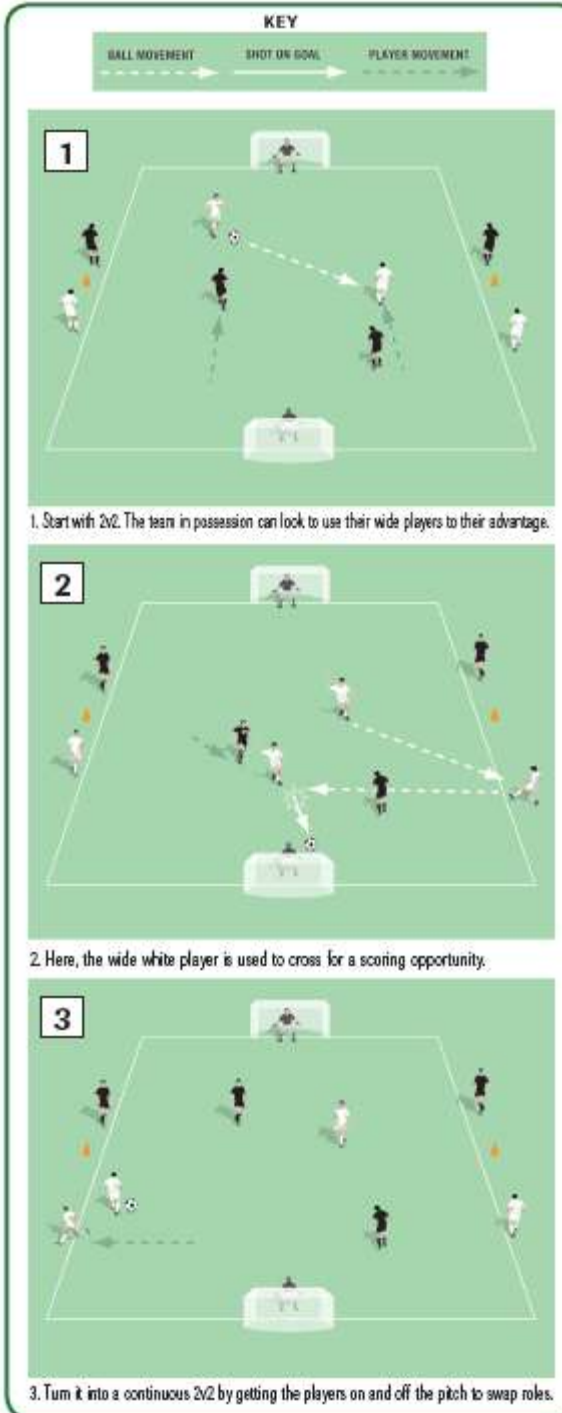
Small sided game for crossing skills

this small-sided soccer game you are looking for good [crosses](#) from the wide players, which can create scoring opportunities. Because the game is essentially 2v2, the defending team will have to work extra hard to block crosses.

Set up the game

- Use a pitch around 30 x 20 yards, with two teams of four players.
- Two players from each team are on the pitch, the other two on either side of it in advanced positions.
- You also need to use two keepers.
- The central players are involved in a 2v2 game but can use their wide players to their advantage when in possession of the ball.
- The wide players might make a return pass or maybe cross for attempt on goal.
- The wide players can only use two touches on the ball.
- The game is played for a set time period before the wide and central players switch positions.

Advance the soccer skills



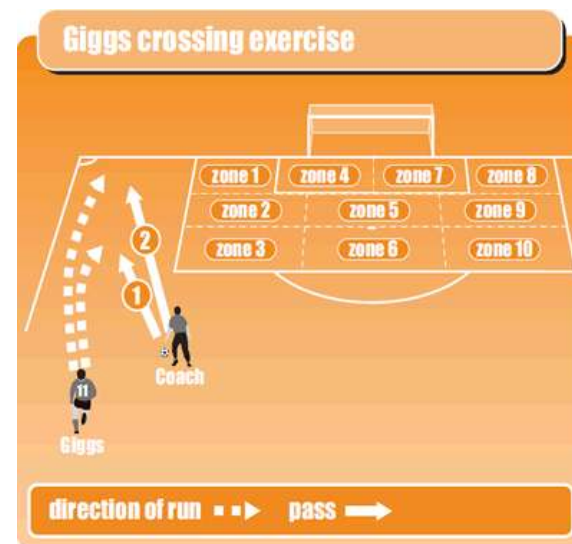
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This game can be progressed a continuous game in which the central player that passes out a wide player must out and change positions with them. The wide player now dribbles

onto the main pitch.

Soccer drill to get wingers working on their crossing skills

This **soccer (ball) drill**, which was used by Ryan Giggs in a training session, can be adapted for both left and right wingers.

It gets your players used to crossing the ball to the front and back of the penalty area.

Spend time on individual skills soccer drills

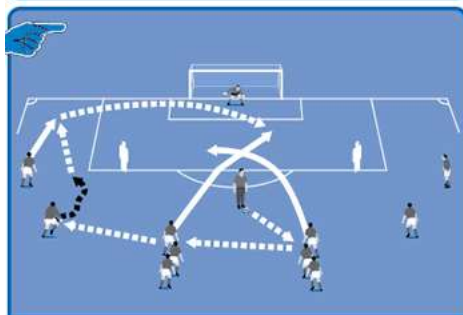
I was watching Ryan Giggs training recently, and thought about how good it would be to be able to spend a lot of time with my individual players and concentrate on what they do best.

So I asked a couple of my players to turn up 20 minutes early at our soccer training session so we could run through a few soccer (ball) drills. My assistant and I spent the whole time using this soccer drill, which was used by Ryan Giggs in training.

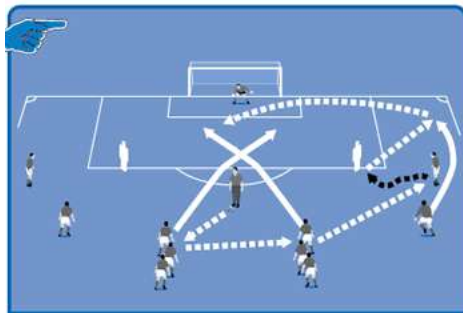
Split the penalty area into zones for the drill

The penalty area is divided into very tight squares numbered one to ten. When the coach called out a zone to Giggs, the player had to cross the ball so it landed in that square.

It was a very precise soccer (ball) drill. In the drill, the coach had a lot of balls and played them to either position one or position two for Giggs to run onto and cross first time to the called-out zone.



The full back plays a through ball for the wide player to cross.



The attackers play directly to the wide player and the full back must make an overlap to cross.



The addition of defenders calls for greater accuracy on the cross and well timed runs from the attackers.

How to adapt the Giggs soccer drill for younger players

As I was coaching under-15s I could use all the zones, but if you're coaching younger age groups you could just shout "near," "far" and "penalty spot."

There is also an opportunity in this soccer drill to work on cutback skills where the player crosses the ball back to the edge of the penalty area for players running in.

Soccer drill to work on run and cross skills

For players who cannot cross the ball very far, this soccer (ball) drill is a good exercise to get them to run onto the ball and cross it using a good technique - their skills will soon progress.

Soccer crossing skills drill

This soccer coaching session is about getting the ball into wide areas, creating **crossing** opportunities and getting players into the box to convert chances. With so many goals scored from crosses, it is vital that your young soccer players have the ability to create and finish from them.

By playing the ball into wide areas, your team stretches the opposition's defense. This often leads to space in central areas. It is important that players - particularly **midfielders** - are willing to make runs into the box and get on the end of the cross.

How to run the crossing skills soccer drill

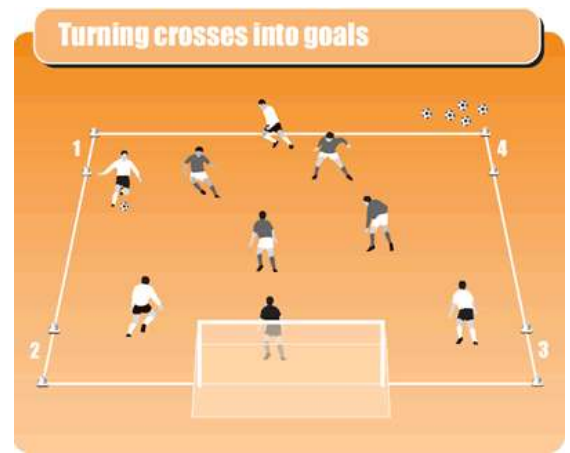
- In a 60 by 40 yards area, the coach passes to one of two attackers who must combine with their strike partner and pass out wide to the full back.
- The full back **dribbles** forward and passes down the line for the wide player to cross into the box.
- The two attackers run into the penalty area and try to score.
- In the next stage, the attackers pass directly to the wide player who dribbles inside, allowing the full back to overlap. The wide player makes a **reverse pass** for the full back to cross into the box for the two attackers to try to score.

How to develop crossing skills drill

- Add defenders to the crossing drill.
- The attackers have a choice

of passing to the full back or wide player. The full back and wide player must react according to the pass made.

- The attackers must time their runs to arrive with the cross and get in front of the defenders to get to the ball.



Penalty area game to turn crosses into goals

The penalty area is an exciting place to be, but when ball (soccer) players are in there, they need to know how to make the most of their chances. I use this game to give my players the vision to change the point of attack from [crosses](#).

Key soccer coaching tip

Get your attackers to convert crosses!

One thing I always tell my attackers is, "If your wingers have put the effort in to get beyond the defense and hit a hard, low cross, you have to be there to convert it into a goal."

It's no good if players just stand there admiring the cross, they have to meet it, [pass](#) it or [shoot](#).

Coach attackers to be prepared

Sometimes the attackers are going to have to [head](#) the ball, sometimes it will come to them off a defender and needs to be guided into the net, sometimes they will have to [dribble](#) with it or pass to an attacker in a better position. The penalty area is an important place for attackers.

Penalty area game

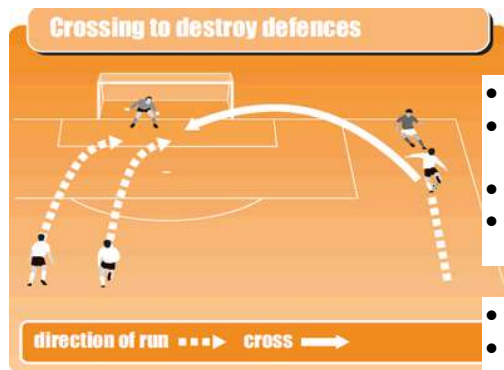
- This is a 4v4 game inside the penalty area with a keeper in the big goal and 4 small goals set up on the sides of the area.
- The white team can score in goal 1 or goal 3 and the grey team in goal 2 or goal 4.
- A goal scored in a small goal counts as 1 point.
- Both teams can score in the main goal but only with a header or volley. Scoring in that goal counts as 2 points.

Developing communication and vision

This is a great small sided soccer game to develop awareness in the penalty area as well as finishing, communication and vision. When the keeper makes a save he should throw or kick it high into the air in the penalty area so both teams can compete for it.

Crossing from wings to score

Using the width of the pitch is a great way to launch attacks on your opposition defense. It doesn't matter whether your players are under-4s on a small pitch or under-14s on an 11-a-side pitch, [crossing](#) the ball from the wings is one of the most successful ways to create goal-scoring opportunities.



Key soccer coaching tips for crossing skills

- Low, powerful crosses are hard to defend.
- A good, accurate, low cross into the penalty area is one of the hardest balls young defenders will have to face.
- High, looping crosses are hard enough but at least you can see those.
- Balls coming in at an angle just behind the defenders are almost impossible to control and often any touch by a defender will result in an own goal.

Crossing skills drill

- Deliver a swinging cross from out wide.
- Tell your attacker to cross from a wide position, to the side of the penalty area and a few paces past the edge of the area.

What your player must think about

When your winger is going to cross the ball he must think about how best to exploit the space available:

- Where is the goalkeeper?
- Where are the [defenders](#)?
- Where are his [attackers](#)?
- Which area should he hit?

When you are practicing this move tell your player he must:

- Cross to the back of the defense.
- Keep the ball away from the goalkeeper.
- Keep the ball below head height.
- Cross with pace.

How to do it

The technique players should use is the swerve [pass](#) using the inside of the foot.

The technique

- Non-kicking foot should be slightly behind, and to the side of the ball. Use the inside of the foot to kick across the ball.
- Tell player to keep his head steady, eyes looking at the ball at the moment of contact.
- His body should be slightly forward to keep the ball low.

How to practice the crossing technique

- Using the top third of a full size pitch or half a 7-a-side pitch.
- You need a goalkeeper, a defender, the crosser and two attackers to cross to.
- The winger runs down the wing on the far side of the pitch towards the defender.
- He must deliver a cross into the area just before he gets to the defender.
- The two attackers attempt to connect with the cross and score.

Attack the ball!

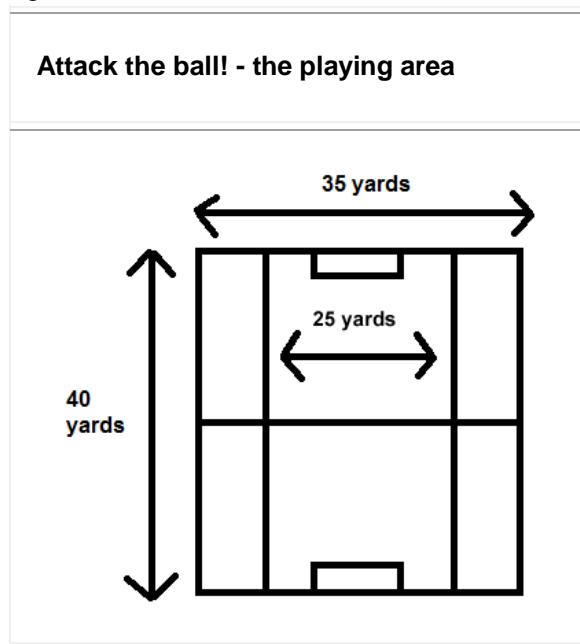
This game teaches your players about positioning in the penalty area and reacting when the ball is played out wide.

Objective: To improve your players' ability to cross the ball and defend/attack crosses.

Age group: U10 upwards.

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Set up a 40 yards by 25 yards playing area with a goal at each end and a half way line. Extend the width by adding a five yards wide channel along either side.



Divide your squad into teams of three or four, including goalkeepers, plus two more players who will work in the channels as neutral wingers.

How to play: Play 3v3 or 4v4. Put one neutral player in each channel. The game is started by one of the goalkeepers, who throws the ball to a player in a channel (**note:** these players cannot be tackled). The winger runs with the ball to the other end of the channel and crosses.

If the goalkeeper or defenders win the ball, it is passed out to the other winger and the attack moves in the other direction. Rotate your players through the positions and play first to five goals wins.

Coaching points: Encourage the goalkeepers to throw the ball out fast and accurately. Wingers should vary their crosses - hard and low, head height, and to the near or far post. Encourage forwards to attack the ball, and remember, it's a crime for a ball to travel through the penalty area without anyone getting a touch!

Soccer coaching session to make the most of crosses

Encourage your players to get into the right position to take advantage of [crosses](#) with the help of this [soccer coaching session](#).

It happens to a lot of attackers – they see the ball travelling towards them from a cross but are frozen to the spot and fail to get into a position to take advantage.

Taking advantage of crosses is key to winning matches - especially when your team has done all the hard work to play the ball into a position where it can be put into the net.

I like to use [soccer drills](#) that make my attackers think about their position in relation to the ball, so it comes naturally to them when they find themselves on the end of a cross.

This fast-moving crossing game tests attackers' ability to score with their head or their feet. The players are constantly moving and finding the right positions to take advantage of the balls played into them. It recreates situations your attackers will face in the matches they play.

Run crossing soccer drill

Check out the illustration above. You have to make sure your players are performing at pace and thinking about where they are running and the accuracy of their [passing](#) or [shooting](#).

- Set up a 30 yards by 30 yards playing area or use the penalty area of your pitch.
- Place two cones 10 yards apart, which players have to run around.
- Have your main group of players – you need at least two – stand top left of the playing area with a few balls.
- You, or a server, stand top right with a few balls.
- You need a player standing at position B, who crosses the ball.
- Use two goals and two goalkeepers – keep changing the goalkeepers.
- The first player in the group (player A) passes to player B, then runs around the cone into a position to score in goal 1.
- Player B then runs towards goal 2 and shoots from a ball played by you. Player A then replaces player B, who returns to the group. Repeat.

Advance the soccer drill

You can advance the soccer coaching session by adding a [defender](#) by each goal to try and stop the [attacker](#) or win the ball. Make the session competitive by using two groups of players and see who scores the most goals in five minutes.

Soccer drill for crossing combinations

[Crossing](#) is a vital soccer skill for any player. This soccer drill gets players thinking about combination play by developing crossing ability, as well as the build-up play needed to create crossing opportunities.

What you are looking for in this soccer drill

- You are looking to see your players involved in quick, combination play in wide areas to create space for an accurate cross.
- Each player should practice crossing with their right and left foot, so run the soccer drill on both sides of the pitch.
- Make accuracy, rather than pace, the focus of each cross in the drill.
- Combination play should be quick, one-touch passing.

How to run the drill

- The wide player passes into the forward and sprints to receive a return pass. The wide player crosses for the forward on the opposite side to attack.
- After each cross, the forward moves to the inside gate ready to attack the cross coming from the opposite side. The starting wide player goes into the first gate to become the forward for the next turn.
- After attacking a cross, the player collects the ball and joins the queue of wide players on the other side.

How to develop the soccer drill

- The wide player passes to the forward and moves infield to receive a lay-off. The forward spins wide and receives a pass into the wide area to cross for the opposite forward.
- You can add an extra level of complexity by introducing yourself as a passive defender, requiring the wide player and forward to communicate to decide which route to the crossing zone will work best.
Do not obstruct the drill itself.

Small sided game for crossing skills

In this small-sided soccer game you are looking for good **crosses** from the wide players, which can create scoring opportunities. Because the game is essentially 2v2, the defending team will have to work extra hard to block crosses.

Set up the game

- Use a pitch around 30 x 20 yards, with two teams of four players.
- Two players from each team are on the pitch, the other two on either side of it in advanced positions.
- You also need to use two keepers.
- The central players are involved in a 2v2 game but can use their wide players to their advantage when in possession of the ball.

- The wide players might make a return pass or maybe cross for an attempt on goal.
- The wide players can only use two touches on the ball.
- The game is played for a set time period before the wide and central players switch positions.

Advance the soccer skills

This game can be progressed to a continuous game in which the central player that passes out to a wide player must go out and change positions with them. The wide player now dribbles onto the main pitch.

How can I get my winger to cross the ball?

One of my U10s players is a very tenacious and determined winger who makes lots of excellent runs past opposition players.

He often gets into positions where he could cross the ball but usually he continues on until he runs out of room and either loses possession or the ball goes into touch.

How can we encourage him to cross the ball more often?

Answer: While it's wrong to actively discourage nine-year-olds from taking on players, it can be frustrating - both for the player and his team mates - if there is no end result.

First, you need to consider if your talented winger has the power to cross the ball into the penalty box. If necessary, show him the technique and devote a coaching session to the driven pass.

Assuming that your winger is able to cross the ball, you need to encourage him to dribble with his head up and look for players to pass to.

Now you've got a winger who has the ability to cross the ball and is playing with his head up.

The next stage is to make sure there are players in the box waiting for the cross!

You can encourage your players to be in the right position to receive a cross by playing the Crossing Game - a SSG, in which the goals are placed diagonally opposite each and nearer to the sidelines than the middle of the pitch.

Also see: How to convert crosses into goals

Finally, you could move this player into the centre of attack. His skills may prove to be more productive if he is able to run directly at the goal.

Switch and Score

Objective: Your players will improve their ability to switch play, to play with their heads up and their decision making.

Switch and Score is also a good physical work out for you!

Age group: U9s and upwards.

Number of players: Whole team.

Equipment: Six poles or traffic cones to make the goals, one ball, some flat cones, training vests.

Set-up: Divide your players into two teams of four or five. Differentiate the teams with training vests.

Set up a 40 yards long by 30 yards wide playing area with three goals at each end.

You stand at one end of the pitch behind the goals and an assistant stands at the other end.

How to play:

- Each team attacks and defends three of the goals.
- There is one rule: You can't score in a goal if there is someone standing behind it.
- So you and your assistant work along the end line, blocking off whichever goal you think will be targeted next.
- Players will love making the coaches scamper along the line, trying to stop them shooting!
- First to score five goals wins the game.

What to say to your players: "Play with your head up" "Find the empty goal" "Pass the ball quickly"

Passing:

Links: [How to Pass](#) | [Types of Passes](#) | [Passing Games / Drills](#) | [More Passing Drills](#) | [Support Play](#) | [Passing-receiving combination exercises](#) | [Crossing](#) | [Receiving \(trapping and controls\)](#) | [Kick – Chip - Shoot - Volley](#) | [Kick-offs](#) | [Goal Kicks](#) | [Heading](#) | [Possession Soccer](#) | [Back Passes](#) | [Circle Passing Games](#) |

Key Passing Skills: Always lock your ankle with the instep pass, inside of foot pass or out-step pass. Can sole drag pass. Flick Pass. Or pass with any part of your body (chest, head, knee).

- Hop into each pass and give it a little "zip".
- The best short passes are quick "rollers".
- Follow your leg through the ball in the direction you want it to travel.
- Brush up and over the top of the ball to get it rolling smoothly.
- Use the inside part of the foot to pass for accuracy.
- Learn to pass with the outside of the foot as well.

Don't underestimate the value of just passing the ball back and forth using correct mechanics and the inside aspect of each foot.

Use both left and right feet.

2 Touch Passing = 2 touch control: (1 touch to receive and the next touch to pass). Count how many you can do consecutively.

Occasionally go to 1 touch control,- Pass the ball back and forth utilizing only "2 touches". The first touch controls the ball and the next is the

pass back to the other player. Try not to "trap" the ball with the first touch. Instead, "redirect" it to the side and then pass it back. In other words, keep the ball moving at all times. Challenge yourselves to see how many you can do before a miss.

- It is important to control the weight of the pass such that the receiver can control the ball with the first touch and follow through immediately with the second touch pass. The first touch has to be at an angle to the outside and away from the foot to set up the second touch.

- While waiting, players must jog on their toes - do not let them stand flat-footed. Passes that are too hard will force errors and loss of control from the receiver. Players need to determine how hard a pass their partner can handle comfortably and then serve at that pace (weight). Favor accuracy and smooth, flowing execution over pace.

- Try all of the above only using the outside aspect of the feet.

- Try all of the above using only instep (shoelace) kicks.

1 Touch Passing - Same as above but this time don't even control the ball, just pass it right back without receiving it first. Stay over the top of the ball with the inside of the foot. Try to keep it from bouncing up and keep it rolling smoothly. Count how many you can do. If you do ten good ones in a row try adding a "first-timer" shot at the garage door or rebounder net, just for fun.

Outside footwork - Do the above exercises but only use the outside aspect of the feet. The first one to miss, gets a "letter" in the game of "HORSE".

Getting younger players to pass more: Request they make a minimum number of passes before a shot on goal can be taken (1 or 2). Make a rule that whichever player scored the last goal cannot score the next one – that should get them.

What is the most important touch on the ball? **The first touch.** Without a good first touch there is no way to play at a high level. A good first touch allows you to play the ball quickly, hold the ball, beat players on the dribble, and score goals. If you're constantly controlling the ball too close to you, and you're on top of the ball, then you're bound to lose the ball and not get the pass, shot or cross off in time.

- A good first touch is controlling the ball out in front of you, and not right under your feet so you have to take another touch before you make the pass. Watching great players helps. Ask your players to identify the key players and the individual skills and actions that make them so effective. Then use the stars as your model to make the action yours and your player's. We think this is a great way to motivate young players and expand their soccer knowledge and skills. If you watch players in the European Premier Leagues for example, they control the ball out into the space in front of them, so they can get their head up and make the next pass or take the next touch. First touch is all about being able to control any type of pass at any speed right out in front of you so you can make the next pass, take a shot, cross the ball, or dribble. It doesn't matter if the ball is blasted at you, your first touch is so good you're ready and can control the ball so you're prepared to make the next play.

- **The best and easiest way to Improve Your First Touch:**

Step #1: Find a wall and kick the ball against it and control the ball out in front of you with the inside of your right foot and then your left. Do this a thousand times a week and you'll improve your first touch. Do this for fifteen to twenty minutes a day and you'll see improvements. The key is to hit the ball hard though, to almost strike the ball as hard as you can against the wall so the ball is tough to control. And act like there's a defender closing you down, so you have to be ready to protect the ball with your body. Imagine your playing in a game and control the ball like you're being closed down by the other team.



Step #2: get a friend to pass the ball into your feet as hard as they can. Have them almost take shots at you, but below the knees, and try to control the ball out in front of you a say three or four feet. This is still with the inside area of your foot, as this is the main part of your foot you use to control the ball.

Step #3: After you master the above, setup two sets of cones, a few feet apart, to the right and the left of you. Try to control the ball through those cones when your friend plays the ball into you. Essentially, you're trying to pass/control the ball through these cones as the ball comes to you.

• As you progress further, have your friend hit the ball hard into your feet and then close you down to the right or left. If they are closing you down from the right side then your first touch is to the left, away from pressure.

The Give-and-Go ("One-Two"):

A classic maneuver that sees two players exchanging the ball as they advance across hostile territory. It is one the most exciting sights in football to see two masters of the art 'one-two' the ball between, over and among bewildered defenders before driving the ball into the back of the net.

• The one-two is known less

familiarly as the 'wall pass', and it is this name that gives the best

clue to its principles. One player acts as little more than a 'wall' off which the ball bounces back to his teammate.

• Once the ball has been sent on its way by player A, his colleague B must make ready to receive the pass at the same time as watching where A has gone. As he receives the ball he must quickly return it to the space A is going for. It is impossible to execute a one-two without good sympathy between teammates, as they must have an almost telepathic knowledge of each other's plans.

• One of the best things about the one-two is that it enables the team to move up together. Used well, it is extraordinarily effective and can propel the ball deep into the scoring half with plenty of support from friendly players. Short of a single forward taking the ball up himself, it is the most rapid and threatening way of penetrating the opposition's defense.

• The one-two can be employed on large and small scales, whether it's used to cross half the field or just to slip around a knot of defenders.

Wall Passes: Place some large cones between yourselves and work around them with ("give and go") wall passes.

Follow the last pass with a shot at the rebounder net (or the garage door or even a large trash can). Alternate shooters, keep score and see who wins. The return pass should be in front of the running player 1, (i.e. a "lead" pass). Then player 1 could shoot at the rebounder net or the garage door etc. Use cones to make some targets in the corners of the goal, then have the shooter call which target they are shooting at. Do the give and go and if the shooter hits the target they get a point.

Triangle Passes: If you have 3 players try my triangle passing pattern with shots at a rebound wall.

Pass and Move: Do either 1 or 2 touch passing with movement. Place 4 to 6 disks or cones out in the shape of a big square (or circle) with about 5 to 8 yards between disks. Each of you stands near a disk to start. After you pass to the other player, you must run to an empty disk and get ready to receive the next pass. Try to keep the 2 touch passing going even while you are moving all around. Count how many you can do or keep track of who "goofs-up" first and keep score.

The Flick-On:

One of the most attractive and skillful areas of the passing game of soccer comes when a player 'flicks' a ball onto another player. A flick-on is simply when the ball arrives at a player and with only one touch of the ball they pass it on to another player at speed and often in motion. This can result in the opposing team being wrong-footed and a sudden need to defend.

A flick-on can be executed using any part of the body, except the arms or hands. The ball can approach a

player either in the air or along the ground and that player would make the instinctive decision not to stop the ball, or control it but instead release it immediately in any direction. Often this is due to them being closely marked by another player or players and they want to avoid being tackled. Alternatively this might be because they can see the movement or positioning of another player on their team who would benefit from receiving the ball immediately.

A flick-on can often prove very beneficial to an attacking team during set-pieces such as free kicks and corners, where the ball is often in the air and there are a number of players in a small area around the goal ready to score. A flick-on is also very useful during a sudden counter-attack from the attacking team when they aim to attack suddenly and at speed.

The Backheel Pass:



A deceptive move – easy to execute but difficult to do well. It is exactly as it sounds: the player brings his foot in front of the ball and uses his heel to flick it backwards to a teammate.

The backheel can form an integral part of a successful attack or defense. It can confuse the opposition and is useful for opening up space behind the front line of attack. It can be invaluable when faced with a knot of hostile defenders and it belongs in the repertoire of any good dribbler.

The main reason why backheels can present problems is that you can't see backwards. Good spatial awareness is required to ensure you are not playing into the hands of the opposition. What's more, your teammate must be ready to receive the pass or the chain will be broken and you may find yourself playing the ball straight towards your own goal.

It is important to strike the ball evenly with the back of the boot – a misjudged strike could send it flying off at a very unhelpful angle.

It's not only in dribbling that the backheel is useful – free kicks can be turned into surprise backheels, and it is a necessary part of good ball control. When playing along the sidelines, for instance, the slightest slip can result in a throw-in for the opposition and players must use their heel to keep control.

The most spectacular backheel trick is scoring with your back to the goal.

Long Passes: Spread out and try some really long passes. Do some along the ground but work in some aerial chips and crosses. Try to do 2 touch control and count your best efforts. Receive the ball, then perform a feint, (Matthews, lunge, scissors, fake kick etc.) and then zip a pass back. Count how many you can do before a miss. Experiment with the length of the pass. Start about 20 yds. apart and then have one player move in little by little until the players are only 5 yds. apart. Notice the difference in the "weight" of these passes.

Stand in place with the ball between your legs and do 4-6 in between touches and then fire a pass to your partner 15 yds. away, who does the same.

Dumming:

The dummy is one of the most impressive techniques in a player's arsenal. It blends psychology and footwork to outwit and even humiliate other players. An attacking player can leave a defender travelling in totally the wrong direction whilst he charges on towards the goal.

A dummy consists of giving the impression of being about to do one thing whilst planning another. A forward might give false signals in order to wrong-foot a defender, or a player taking a free kick might unexpectedly backheel the ball to a teammate behind him. A good team will have rehearsed and orchestrated dummies to produce quite powerful set-pieces. Dummies can be used offensively or defensively.

Examples of classic dummies include:

Stepping over a pass – or opening the legs – to pass the ball to a player to the rear.

While dribbling, making as if to turn, then stepping over the ball and continuing in the same or opposite direction.

Bringing the foot onto the ball as if to backheel, but pushing it forwards with the front of the boot.

Passing the ball one way around a defender, before running the other way around to retrieve it.

Common passing errors and how to correct them

Problem 1: Passes are being intercepted

A lot of passes in soccer are intercepted by defenders who win the ball by simply stepping between the passer and the player being passed to. This is because young attackers who are focusing on moving towards the opponent's goal don't appreciate they sometimes have to stop moving forward and go back towards their own goal to receive a pass.

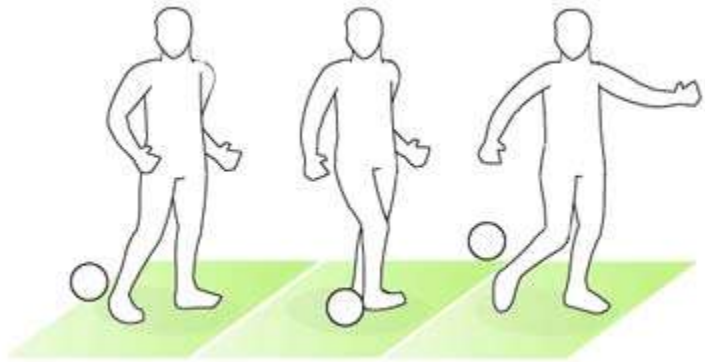
Solution

Teach your players to be prepared to move towards the ball (in soccer jargon, "go short" or "show" for the ball) as it being passed to them.

The best way to do this (and to correct many other soccer errors) is by playing a small-sided game and waiting for the problem to occur.

When it happens - in this case, a pass is intercepted because a player waits for the ball rather than move towards it - stop the game and ask:

- "Why did that pass not get to the player it was intended for?"



- "What could the player have done differently?"

Then show your players how moving towards a pass is sometimes the only way they are going to get the ball.

Tip: If you tell your players to stop playing every few minutes they are going to get frustrated. Once or twice is enough. All you're trying to do is get your players thinking about how they can improve their game, not drill the desired improvement into them.

Problem 2: Passes never go backwards - your players always play the ball forwards, regardless of the result

Generally, if a player can pass the ball forwards, they should do so. However, if there is no forward pass available, the player in possession has to make the decision whether to dribble, shoot or pass away from pressure, i.e., backwards. But often the option to pass backwards is ignored and the player with the ball either dribbles into a wall of defenders or the ball is lost when they try to play a pass that isn't possible.

Solution

As above, step in during a SSG when you see an attacking move fail because the attackers ignored the opportunity to pass back to a supporting player.

Ask:

- "Why did that attack fail?"
- "How could you have kept the ball for longer?"

Then show how a pass back would allow your players to retain possession and wait for another opportunity to penetrate the opponent's defense. In soccer jargon, that's called "recirculating the ball".

Passing for Beginners:

"Nothing destroys a team quite so quickly as inaccurate passing. Nothing builds a team's confidence more rapidly than accurate passing. Without good teamwork, accurate passing is impossible... the art of passing is the art of doing the simple things quickly and well." Charles Hughes, ex-director of coaching for the Ball Association, UK.

Passing the ball is an integral part of soccer and it is important to help your players learn how and when to pass to a team mate - as long as they are old enough.

Unfortunately, many coaches try to force young players to pass the ball before they are ready.

U4s to U6s aren't developed enough to make the complicated decisions required to decide when to pass and when not to pass. They are still learning how to dribble, voluntarily giving the ball to another child doesn't make sense to them and forcing them to pass the ball before they are ready is about as sensible as telling a toddler to shut up when they are learning to speak.

Patience is the key. Wait until the game is showing your players the possible benefits of sharing the ball before rewarding players by praising deliberate passes or giving additional points for a pass made during a game but please don't tell your players to "share the ball" or tell them that "passing is good".

Young players should only pass when there is another player in a better position, not because they want to "share" the ball or because passing is inherently "good".

When your players start to realize that soccer can still be fun if they give the ball to a team mate, you have to start developing the decision-making process that enables players to decide if they should pass, if they should continue dribbling or if they should shoot.

A good way to help this process along is to play handball and simple keepaway games.

Handball (playing netball or basketball with a soccer ball) is a sensible way to begin. Young players who are still learning how to control a moving ball with their feet find it hard to get their heads up to spot potential passes.

Allowing them to carry the ball but limiting the number of steps they can take with the ball in their hands encourages them to look for a team mate to pass it to. It also encourages players not in possession of the ball to move to place where they can receive a pass - an essential element of "real" soccer.

Players can score points by throwing the ball into a goal or to a target player standing on an end line. The number of steps that can be taken with ball in hand should be limited according to the age/skill of your players. Two or three steps is usually about right.

Older players can also play "tag handball", in which possession is lost if the player with the ball is tagged by an opponent or be given a set number of seconds to release the ball.

Keepaway games are the next step in the learning process. But possession of the ball for no reason is pointless and quickly becomes boring to young players, especially if they keep losing the ball because their first touch or ability to shield the ball is not very good.

How to develop a good first touch

How to teach shielding the ball

So don't try keepaway until your players are reasonably proficient in controlling/shielding the ball and keep the numbers uneven - 5v2 or even 5v1 in a fairly large playing area is a good starting point. You can make the teams more even and reduce the size of the playing area as your players improve.

The best keepaway games also have a soccer-like end result. Simply putting a goal at each end of the playing area and allowing your players to shoot as soon as they have made three or four passes is good. But don't stifle individuality by saying you MUST make X number of passes before shooting.

Award double points for a goal scored in the preferred manner but you need to leave the decision making with the players - if they spot an opportunity to dribble or shoot they should be allowed to take it, even in a keepaway game.

Great Passing Drills / Games:

See [Circle Passing Games](#) | [More Passing Drills](#) |

Keepaway with a Purpose:

Keepaway is the best way to practice making space, support play, passing, receiving and shielding the ball. But children soon get bored with keepaway unless it has a 'soccer-like' end result. **Skill level:** Any. **Number of players:** The whole squad.

Set up: Create a suitable sized rectangular playing area, with a goal at each end, for every six or seven players in your squad. For young or inexperienced players, make the area big enough for them to experience success. Make the playing area smaller for intermediate or experienced players. The smaller the area, the harder it is to keep possession.

How to play: Start with five attackers versus one defender in each playing area. Progress to 5 v 2 or 5 v 3 if your players find 5 v 1 too easy. Allow the **attacking team to shoot if they put a set number of passes together** without the defender(s) touching the ball. **If the defender(s) intercept the ball, they can shoot.** The first team to five goals wins. Rotate the defenders regularly.

Progression: Move to two or three touch only. Instruct the attackers to call the name of the player they are passing to before making the pass.

Coaching point: Congratulate players who use good technique.

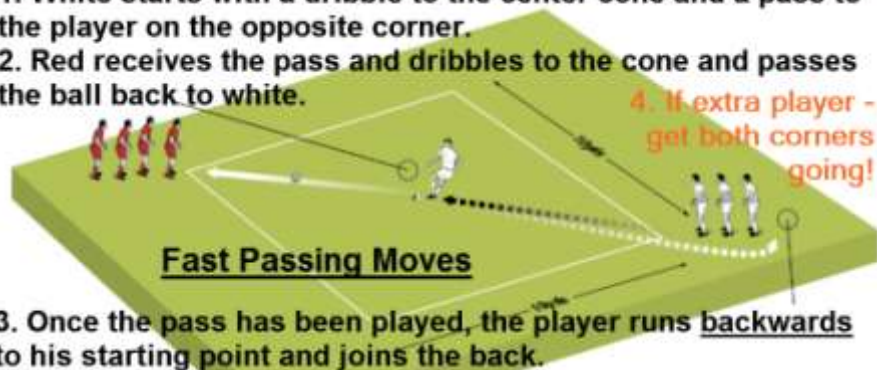
Three ball Keep-a-Way: Divide soccer players into two teams of equal numbers and play with 2 to 3 soccer balls. The goal of this passing soccer drill is for each team to try and possess as many balls as possible when play ends on the coach's whistle. This passing drill should develop strong passing and teach the concept of finding open space, while players learn how to make good decisions in dribbling and passing. The team with possession of two or more balls wins each match.



1. White starts with a dribble to the center cone and a pass to the player on the opposite corner.

2. Red receives the pass and dribbles to the cone and passes the ball back to white.

4. If extra player - get both corners going!



3. Once the pass has been played, the player runs backwards to his starting point and joins the back.

cone, passes across the square and then runs backwards to return to the start position. The player on the opposite side runs to the cone with the ball, passes across the square and then runs backwards. When they have run through it once, get them to see how many passes they can do in 30 seconds – then see if they can beat the score. Use this over a number of weeks and see if your players can beat their previous week's scores.

TECHNIQUE: This is a great way to get players to advance their control and passing technique. Speed comes with the challenge and you should get players trying hard to go faster. It also adds to the fun with running backwards at speed.

ADVANCE: After the pass, put some pressure on the player so they get a good first touch to their side to keep possession. The goal is not to take to ball but for them to experience fast passing, pressure and getting a controlling touch on the ball.

Fast Passing Moves:

WHY USE IT: Fast passing in tight spaces helps forwards move in and around the penalty area, where simple movement and passing are key to creating a route to goal.

SET UP: Area of 10x10 yards with a cone in the centre. We've used eight players in the session. You need bibs, balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Split the group into two teams of four and start them on opposite corners of the square. There is only one ball in play at a time. Start with the first player in one group – he dribbles to the

Eyes Up and Passing:

Helps young players to recognize when the ball is passed to them by looking up at all times giving them more chance to control it. In matches it is often speed of movement and control which gives a player the edge when they are receiving the ball under pressure.

SET UP You need ball and cones. Set up an area 20 x 20 yards with a smaller 6 yard square in the centre marked by four cones. For this session, used 8 players.

HOW TO PLAY The players outside the square pass to their partners next to the cones who move forward to control and return the pass. The players then move on one cone. After 10 passes get the outside and inside players to swap roles.

Diagram 2 advances the session by removing the cones. The players in the centre have a ball each. Players in the square must jog around then sprint, pass to an outside player, control the return and sprint away. Play for 90 seconds then swap roles.

In diagram 3 tighten the square to 10 yards. Use four players outside the square but only two inside. The players inside can pass to any of the four outside but passes must be fast and sharp. Switch the pair in the middle every 90 seconds.

TECHNIQUE This is all about technique and advancing play so that players can recognize when to pass and receive as well as use the right technique.

A. Pass & Move

1. Outside players pass to one central player who comes to the ball, receives and passes back.
2. Center players rotate clockwise one cone. Repeat 10 times then inner & outer players switch.

B. Removing the cones.

1. Centrals have a ball each. Look for an outer player to make a wall pass to.
2. Central players jog around then sprint, pass to an outside player, control the return and sprint away. Play for 90 seconds then swap roles.

C. Tight Passes

1. Half size square. 4 on outside 2 inside. Those inside can pass to any of the 4 outside but passes must be fast and sharp give-n-goes. Switch the pair in the middle every 90 seconds.

Soccer Pinball: For conditioning and accurate passing. Groups of 3. 1 player gives and goes between two players in a line (on opposite sides of person) or in a v-formation (box formation). Makes sure they cushion the ball with a good first touch before they pass back.

Variation: the two players toss the ball to the action player who then traps it and passes back. Try it with their back facing the tosser and as they toss they call how to receive the ball as the action player turns (the tosser calls out: head, chest, thigh etc).



Y-drill: A pass and move drill. Rotate Player 2 after 10 passes as they are the one doing most of the work as they need to pay attention where the next pass is going based on runs made.

Player 2 (in the middle of the "Y") is going to be the working player. They start by passing to one of the 3 outer players.

Ex: If passes to Player 3. This player touches the ball across their body and passes back to the Player 2 and makes a run toward one of the two other players without the ball. This is the person whom player 2 must next pass to. The person who gets the pass then has the choice of whom to pass to again by passing back to player 2 and making a run in that directions.

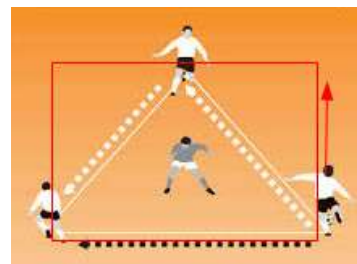
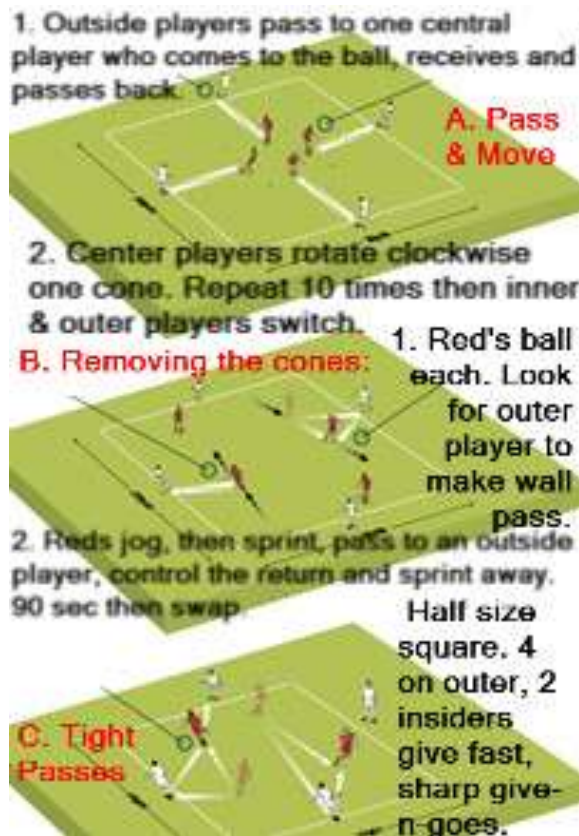
Ex: Player 2 passes to Player 3 who passed back and makes a run toward Player 4. Player 2 must pass to Player 4. Player 4 passes it back to 2 and makes a run towards either Player 1 or 3. Whomever he chooses, this is where Player 2 passes to.

Player 1 takes up the position of Player 2.
Player 2 takes up the position of Player 3.

Switch directions with each pass so that Player 4 (at the top of the other arm of the Y gets the ball next).

Box-to-Box Passing: For accurate in-air passes, quick close traps then quick passes. 10 x 10 ft grids 20-25 feet apart, each with a player in them. Pass it to the opposite box, that player then traps it with one touch, keeping it in the box and passes back accurately.

Triangle - Box Passing: Pass in groups of 4, 1 person starts in the middle and keep away from them. The object is to accurately pass and then be ready to move as needed. Encourages players to open up angles for good pass support positioning. Start with a rigidly defined box, then allow open play as long as keep 10 yard spacing. If player in the middle gets a solid touch (deflects or blocks the ball) they switch with the person on the outside who passed it.



Soccer Catching: Works on long lofty passes. Two players pass back and forth. Quick trap / receive with intention then pass back. After each pass take a step backwards to increase the distances.

4 person Give-and-Go: Two sets of players stand ~25 feet apart. Each player does 3 actions in one or two-touches as they do give and goes. To start a player passes to the opposite side and then runs forward to the side and gives and goes, then gives it back to the next person on the opposite side and takes their place in line to go again. Helps with communication, coordination and how to their teammate when passing.

6v6 Transition Passing:

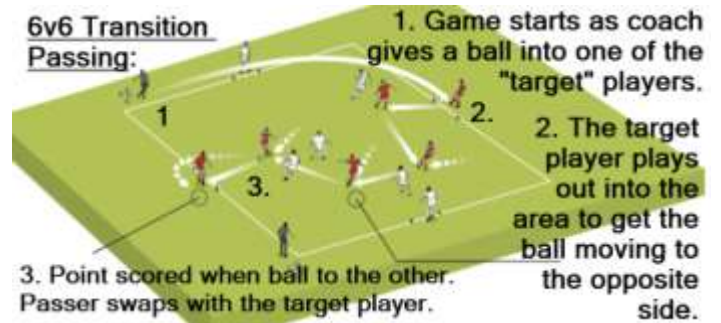
This session is all about possession play in a tight midfield area. Players must use quick decision-making coupled with crisp, clean passing to move the ball between target players. Players must use good disguise, creativity and clever passing to keep possession and get the ball to the other end side.

SET UP: Set up a 30x30-yard area with a three-yard goal made of two cones on each side. We've used 14 players in this session.

HOW TO PLAY: This is a 6v6 game, with a target player behind each goal and a 4v4 in the centre. There are two servers at the side. Play starts with a ball from a server. The aim for each team is to pass the ball from one target player to the other, with the player who made the final pass swapping places with the target player. Target players must have control of the ball for it to count. No one-twos are allowed when the target player is passing to team-mates. Changes of possession occur the same as in normal play. If the ball goes out, a new ball is played from the server to one of the target players.

TECHNIQUE: This teaches penetration, use of width and depth, and makes players take ownership, which is a great corrective tool. Progress it by going two-touch to force players to be creative and to teach them how to play out of tight situations.

1. Game starts as coach gives a ball into one of the "target" players.
2. The target player plays out into the area to get the ball moving to the opposite side.
3. A point is scored when players get the ball from one side to the other. The successful passer swaps with the target player.



Back-to-Back Give and Go - Warm up:

Use this simple but fun warm-up exercise to get your players moving, running, receiving and passing the ball at speed.

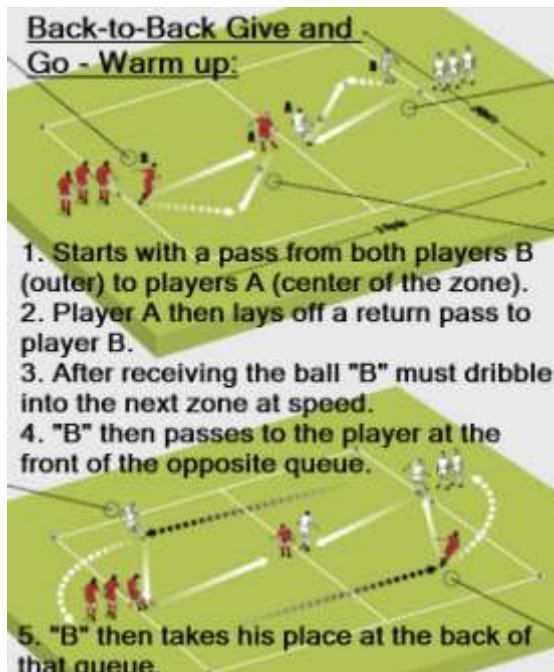
SET UP: Create an area of 20x30 yards and create two equal sized zones. We've used 10 players for this warm-up and we've split them into two groups of five. You will need balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Set up the warm-up so that the two teams are in opposite zones. Player A should stand facing their group. Player B starts by passing the ball to player A; player B runs forward to receive the pass back from player A and then runs with the ball to the opposite group and passes to the player at the front of that group. The opposite group follow the same instructions and do exactly the same thing, going the other way at the same time. Only one ball per group is needed for this activity.

Keep changing player A.

TECHNIQUE: Although it is simple in execution, this warm-up activity uses key elements of movement, passing, running with the ball, receiving and first touch control. Depending on the age and development of your players, the idea is to use passing, running and movement so the session is quick and continuous. Players can be added as required.

1. Starts with a pass from both players B (outer) to players A (center of the zone).
2. Player A then lays off a return pass to player B.
3. After receiving the ball "B" must dribble into the next zone at speed.
4. "B" then passes to the player at the front of the opposite queue and



takes his place at the back of that queue.

Quick passing:

Objective: To improve ball control, passing technique, concentration and speed of thought.

Age groups: U10 upwards.

Number of players: Whole squad in groups of four.

Equipment required: Four flat cones and two soccer balls per group of four players.

How to play: This is a very simple drill but it is also one that will really sharpen your players' ball skills. It should only be played for a short time but you should insist on hard work and focus. Don't accept anything less than 100% effort!

Mark out one 10 yards x 10 yards playing area with flat cones for each group of four players. Position one player on each side of the square (not on the corners).

Two players who are opposite each other have a ball.

On your signal, the balls are passed in a clockwise direction around the playing area.

Coaching points: Your players need to receive the ball on the back foot, and pass with their front foot. Play two touch to begin with (one touch to control the ball and one to pass). When they have mastered this (and it's easy!) they should try to use one touch and keep the balls moving constantly around the square. Your players need to be aware of where both balls are at all times. After a few minutes, reverse the direction of the passes.

Push pass circle:



It's useful to begin by giving a quick demonstration of the basic push pass technique then test the passing accuracy of your players.

You can do this by placing each player in the centre of a circle of small, traffic-style cones or balls balanced on top of flat cones. These are the targets.

The distance from the player to the cones should be determined by their ability. I would place an "average" eight-year-old, for example, in the centre of a circle of cones about 10 yards across.

The player being tested is given the same number of balls as there are targets and asked to try to hit the targets with a pass while staying in the centre of the circle.

Keep a record of each player's score.

Split the Defenders Passing Game:

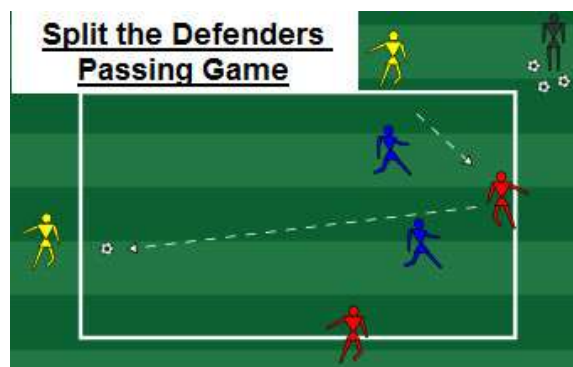
Make a grid approximately 18x18 yards. Split team into three teams of two players per grid. Build multiple grids for additional games.

Instructions: 2 teams work together on the outside of the grid while the 2 defenders work on the inside of the grid. The four players on the outside keep possession and keep the ball from the defending team in the grid. The outside team scores a point when the ball is passed between two defenders (SPLIT) and is received by their teammate across the grid.

- If a player on the attacking team makes a mistake, he and his partner become the defenders and the team winning the ball comes outside the cones and joins the other attackers.
- When the defensive team gets split, they have to win the ball 1 extra time. So for example, say the 2 defenders get split 2 times before winning the ball, they must win the ball 3 times before switching with the attackers.

Variations: Limit the number of touches per possession. Play the same game, but expand the grid 3-5 yards on all sides and have the players play inside the grid instead of outside the grid.

Coaching Points: Make sure the attacking players are moving for their partners and opening up in space. Make sure balls are passed with good pace and on target. Encourage players to communicate verbally and with their body and hands.



Score 1 point for 5 successive passes.

2 points for passing between two defenders.

Play for three minutes and then change the defenders.

Advanced Split the "D" Game:



Shuttle passing

This is a classic warm-up to a training session or match that requires a lot of concentration and hard work by the players. When it's done well, it is a pleasing exercise to watch.

Objective: To improve passing and receiving, turning with the ball, fitness.

Experience: Any.

Set up: Divide your squad into groups of three or four. Set up a line of three cones (see below) for each group. The distance from one end of the cones to the other is approximately 12 yards for U9s, less for younger players and more (up to 30 yards) for older players.

One player (A) stands at the top cone and another (B) at the bottom cone. They have a ball each. The third player (C) stands at the middle cone, facing one of the end players.

How to play: The player in the center runs towards an end player calling for the ball. He receives a pass, controls it, passes back and immediately runs to the player at the other end and repeats.

Coaching points

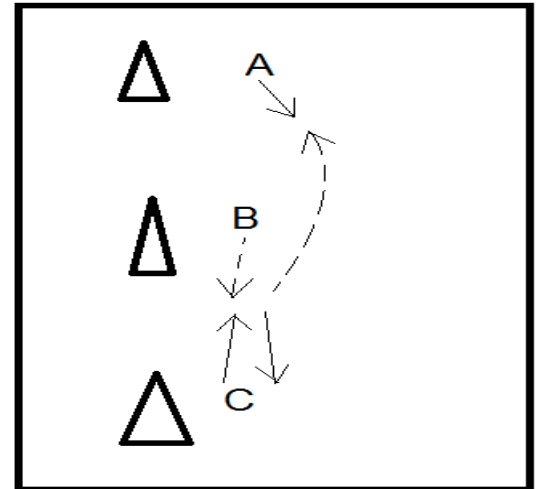
The center player should turn and run as soon as he passes the ball and not wait until it has been received.

The end players need to be 'on their toes' and not allow the ball to get past them.

Make it competitive: which group can make the most passes in one minute?

Progression

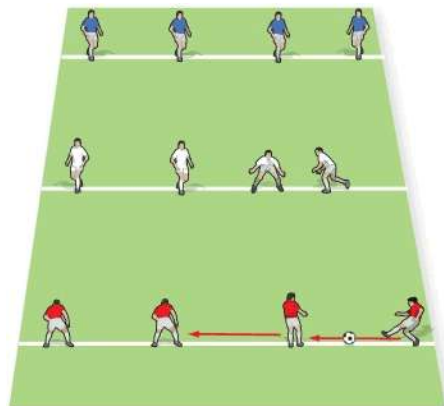
- Move to one-touch pass and control.
 - The end players toss the ball to the center player at varying heights.
- The ball stays with the center player who carries it between the end players, passing and receiving a return pass



Block That Pass!

Block That Pass! is one of my team's favorite games.

It's fast moving, easy to play, but challenging at the same time.



Objective: To improve passing skills.

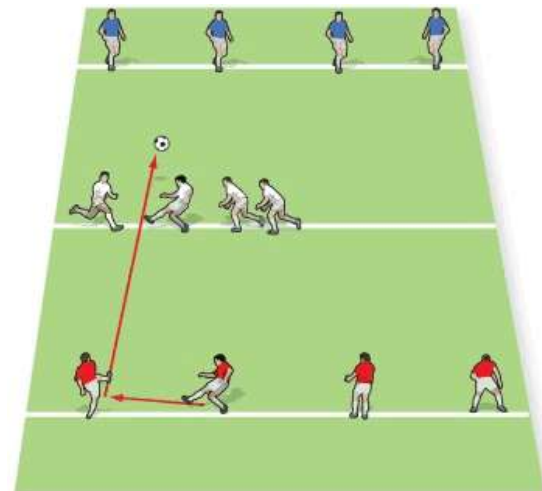
Age range: U8s and upwards.

Number of players: Twelve.

Set-up: Mark two end zones and a halfway line on a 30x20 playing area.

Note: Adjust the length of the playing area to suit your players' abilities. They should be able to pass from one end to the other without difficulty.

Divide your players into three teams and position them as shown below.



How to play:

One team are the "blockers". They are positioned on the halfway line.

The other two teams attempt to pass the ball to each other through the line of blockers.

The blockers attempt to intercept the passes. If they do, they pass the ball back to the team that attempted the blocked pass.

Scoring

One point is scored for a successful block and one point for a successful pass, i.e. one that is controlled by the receiver within the end zone.

Three four-minute rounds are played to allow each team to have a turn at being the blockers.

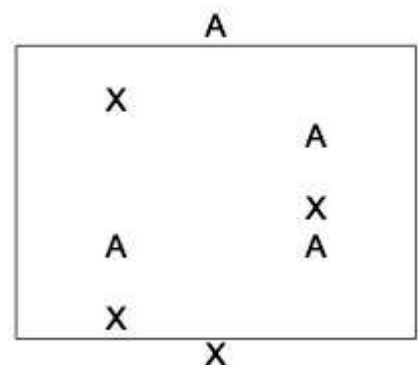
At the end of the three rounds, the team with the most points is the winner.

Progression: Make the playing area shorter and/or limit the number of touches each player on the passing teams is allowed.

Pass!

Pass! is a great way to improve passing and receiving skills as well as the ability to spot and execute a through-pass. U8s and upwards. Whole squad plays.

Set-up: Create 20-yard square playing area.



Divide your players into two equal teams of between five and seven players.

Note: If you have more than 14 players, create four teams and play two games of Pass! It doesn't matter if teams are not equal in size.

How to play: A player from team A stands on one end line and a player from team X on the opposite end line.

The rest of the players compete for the ball and try to pass to their team mate on the end line. If they succeed, they join their end player on the line.

The team that gets all its players on their end line first is the winner.

Note: To be counted as successful, a pass must be controlled by the end player.

Progression:

The end lines are now called jails.

The game begins in the same way as before - with one player from each team in jail (i.e., on their end line) - but now if you make a successful pass, you don't join your team mate on the line.

Instead, you get to send a player on the other team to their end line - in other words, send them to jail.

The winning team is now the team that can send all the players on the other team to jail first.

Coaching notes: Generally, the more players you have, the bigger the playing area needs to be.

If I had ten U10s playing this game, I would begin with a 20-yard square playing area. If I had 16 players, I would use a 30-yard square.

But regardless of the number of players you have (or their ages), it is good practice to progressively shrink the playing area.

Making the space smaller requires players to play faster, more accurately and is a good way to build the tempo of your coaching sessions.

With my ten U10s, for example, I would start with a 20-yard square but as they got used to the game I would gradually move the cones inwards until they were playing in a 15-yard square.

Basic Practice passes:

Start with short passes two touches, one to control, the other to pass back. Work on accuracy. As advance increase the distance and **one touch passing.**

Attack the pass: Pass and take 3 steps back and that person passed back to you....then come up to meet pass. This way you stay in the same area. Can progress by moving down the field. Keep your feet moving!

First touch receive with intention: Using two touches pass in groups of 2 or 3. First touch moves the ball to an open space and the second touch back to the other person. As progress can add challenges...after you pass follow and put pressure on the receiver. Can also progress to do this in a small area where the players have to watch out for other groups.

Wall passing: Groups of two, pass in reverse triangles as each player takes turns with the give-and-go. Try the outside of the foot wall pass....the "explode into space" and receive the pass back.

Triangle Passing with cones: Make a square. Start with 4 kids on the outside and use two touches (one to control, one to pass). Once pass (kitty corner), follow your pass and move down to next cone.

Advance: with competition – how many in one minute. Next try with 3 one outside and one in the middle (if he/she gets the ball they get to go to outside).....helps to get them to go to the open space.

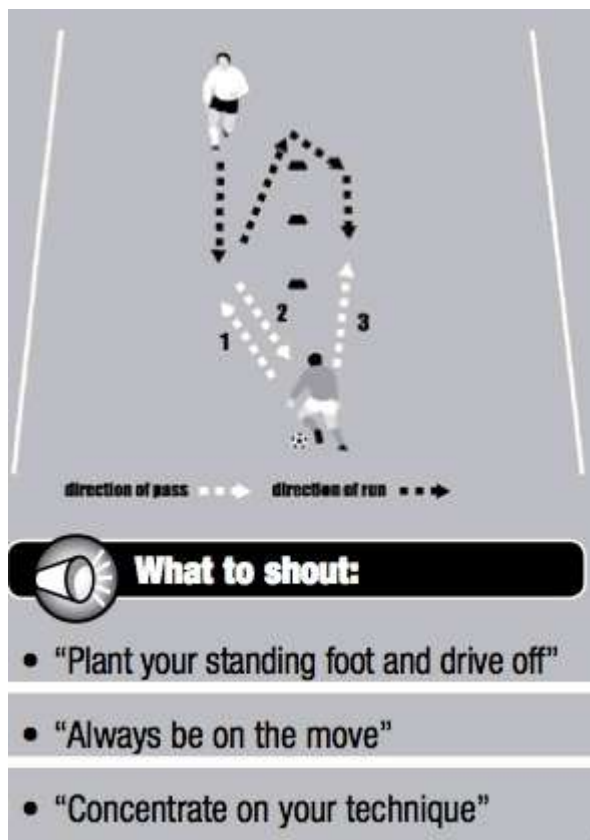
3 cone passing: In groups of 2 players. Have 3 cones lined up about (5 feet apart). Player pass ball between the line with two touches (helps first touch receiving)...Ex: player #1 receive between cones 1&2 and then passes it between cones 2&3....the receiver (player #2) does the same.....passes it back between cones 1&2...keep going. Add some competition, see which group can do 10 times and then sprint down to a designated area first.

4 Sides passing: flat cones in 10 ft x 10 foot square. 4 players on each side of square. Start with one ball and two touches passing around one way, then switch. Advance to two balls then to one touches.

Triangle passing in Formation: To encourage back passing, have the players practice passing and travelling with the ball in a "V" formation down the field. Once they pass back, they all move forward as the player at the tip (back of the V) dribbles up then passes. Pass back, dribble forward as group, pass (stand / hold position), pass back, then dribble forward. Can advance this to weaving (changing positions).

On your Bike!

Objective: passing and receiving skills. **Set-up:** Put your players into pairs. One ball per pair. Place three flat cones in a short line as shown in the illustration below.



How to play:

One player is a server and his partner works round the cones. The player working must go forward to receive a pass then back-pedal up and around the cones in order to receive another pass on the opposite side.

The players work for 30 seconds on the following:

1. First-time pass back with left foot.
2. First-time pass back with right foot.
3. Bouncing serve and a half-volley return with left foot.
4. Bouncing serve and a half-volley return with right foot.
5. Aerial serve and a volley return with left foot.
6. Aerial serve and a volley return with right foot.
7. Aerial serve and head the ball back.

When the sequence is complete, swap the players round.

Coaching notes: Players should work at speed but accuracy is also important.

Make the game competitive by seeing which pair can get through the entire sequence without making a mistake.

How to check and improve your players' passing technique:

Do your players know how to pass the ball? Of course they do – they've been doing it ever since they started playing ball, haven't they?

But, as I explained in the last newsletter, it's a good idea to make sure your players' basic skills are properly embedded before moving on to more advanced topics in your coaching sessions.

So don't just assume your players know the basics – how to receive the ball, keep it, pass, tackle and shoot – check their technique and correct any errors you find.

It is especially important to do this with young players because bad habits can quickly creep in and, if they are not corrected promptly, they will be very hard to eradicate later.

As the saying goes: "Never assume... it makes an ASS out of U and ME!"

Let's start our check list with the most commonly used (and most effective) technique – the side foot pass.

Key coaching points:

- The ball should be struck with the inside of the foot as close to the heel as possible, certainly no further forward than the middle of the arch of the foot.
- The foot should be made into a firm striking surface by lifting the toes slightly above the heel as the ball is struck.
- The non-kicking foot (sometimes called the plant foot) should be alongside the ball as it is struck and pointing towards the intended target.
- Young children often don't know where they should be looking when they pass. Make sure they are looking at the ball at the moment of impact, not the player they are passing to.
- The ball should be struck firmly and the kicking leg should follow through towards the target.

And if your players get it right, make sure they don't stand admiring their perfect pass. Children often seem to think that their job is done when they pass to a team mate. Make sure they always move to a supporting position after they pass – they should want to get the ball back!

Common Mistakes

These are some common mistakes and how to correct them:

If the ball is struck with power but off target – the player has not pointed their non-striking foot at the target.

If the pass lacks power – the ankle was not locked when striking the ball, the player is hitting the ball with the side of their toes rather than with the arch of their foot or the top of the ball is being struck, forcing it into the ground, instead of the middle.

If the ball goes in the air – the player has struck the ball below the center line.

If your player looks unsteady (or even falls down after passing) check the position of the plant foot and that the follow through is straight.

Summary

Don't let your players develop bad habits. Continually checking how your players' perform the basic skills and correcting their errors is just as important as teaching the skills in the first place.

5-Man Box Passing:

1. Start with 2-touches. Person in center (#2) receives the ball and can pass to either side of him. After 30 seconds, the next person he passed to (Ex to #3) replaces the outer person and the inner person (#3) dribbles that ball and takes the center position.
2. The new center person passed to another outer player who passes back and the center person the passes to either the Right or Left side person and replaces him. Again, that person dribbles to the middle and starts over.
3. Progress to one touches.
4. Progress to two quick back and forth pass prior to the middle man switching with the outer person.
5. Progress to three quick back and forth passes.

Tikka Takka:

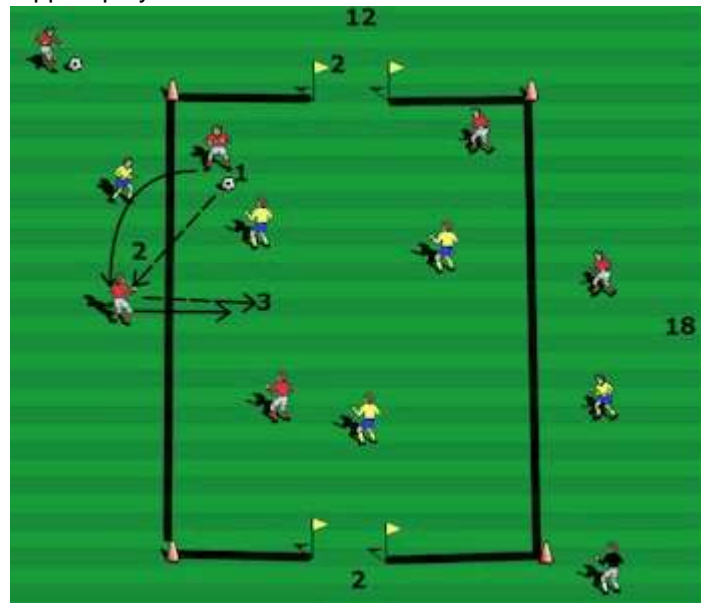
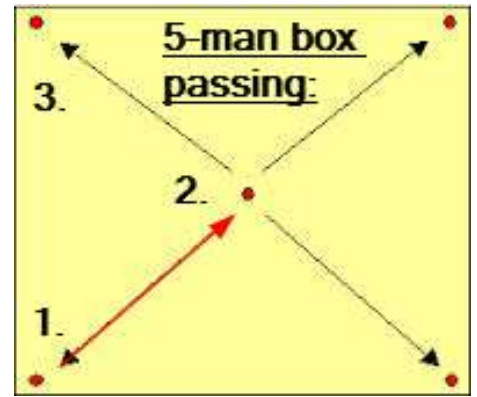
Objective: Tikka Takka helps improve first touch, spotting passes that split defenders and encourages good movement off the ball.

Age range: U7s and upwards.

Set-up: Create an 18x12 yards playing area with two-yard-wide goals made with cones or flags at both ends.

Divide your players into two teams of five.

How to play: Three players from each team play inside the area. The fourth and fifth players on each team work as a support player on the sidelines.



How to play:

The object of the game is to score by stopping the ball between the cones or flags on your opponent's goal line. Players are encouraged to include at least one pass to a supporting player in every move.

A supporting player on the sideline, who receives a pass, dribbles the ball onto the playing area (or passes to a team mate) and the player who passed to the supporting player swaps places with him.

Rules: Passes to supporting players must be successful (i.e., controlled). If not, the other team gains possession. Supporting players cannot interfere with each other or try to intercept passes.

Coaching Points: Pass and move, pass and move! Look for and highlight: a good first touch, effective communication, speed of movement, playing a penetrating

pass.

Note: The supporting players should be encouraged to move up and down the line, calling for the ball.

Progressions:

- 1) Have a third team ready to come on as soon as a goal is scored.
- 2) When a team scores, it retains possession but is now going in opposite direction.
- 3) Use two goals (each two paces wide) near the corners on each goal line.

Tips: If less than 10 players are available, use neutral supporting players. Inside players can hold bibs/pinnies that they pass to the supporting player as he comes into the game.

How to coach the wall pass

The wall pass – or give and go – is a quick way to move up the field and go past opposition players on the way. It's a relatively easy technique to teach but before you begin you must make sure that your players are competent at passing and receiving the ball over short distances.

How to assess your players' short passing/receiving skills

You can assess your players' short passing and receiving skills by playing Moving Triangles.

This game is also a good way to begin a session on the wall pass if you are confident that your players' basic skills are up to scratch.

How to play Moving Triangles

- Split your players into groups of three with one ball per group. The players form a triangle with about five yards between each of them.
- To start the game, Player A passes to player B, and A immediately sprints through the gap between player B and player C.

- Player B receives the ball and passes to player C. She then runs through the gap between player C and player A.
- Player C now passes to player A then runs through the gap between player A and player B.

As this pattern continues each group of players will travel across the field, passing and moving as they go.

Watch to see if each player has a nice, soft touch and pushes the ball slightly away from her body and towards the player she is going to pass to. Check that your players are also passing with an appropriate amount of pace – not so hard that the ball is difficult to control or so slowly that it doesn't reach the target player.

All being well, you can start to think about moving on to teach the wall pass but if your players need to improve their short passing skills, check out this page on [footy4kids](#) and follow up with some of these games and drills.

Teaching the wall pass

Tell your players that the objective of this game is for two players to play a "one-two" around a defender.

The defender's job is to try to prevent the other two players getting the ball past her.

Set-up

Keep your players in groups of three and about 10 yards apart.

Player A has the ball. Player B is the defender. Player C should be a position where she can receive a pass from player A.

The demonstration

Walk one group through the following sequence while the others watch.

1. Player A dribbles towards the defender and tempts her to come for the ball.
2. When the defender is committed, player A passes to player C and immediately runs into a space behind the defender.
3. Player C receives the ball and quickly passes back to player A.

After watching a couple of demonstrations, each group of three begins to practice the wall pass. Change the players round regularly so that they all have a go at being "the wall".

What to look for

Make sure that:

- Player A commits the defender to come for the ball then passes to player C just out of the defender's reach.
- Player A runs into space immediately.
- Player runs into space after passing.
- Player C is not standing so far away that the defender has time to close her down before she can make the return pass.

Progression

When we teach soccer skills we are – or should be – looking for an end result.

Up to now, the end result has, hopefully, been a successful wall pass. But we don't just want our players to be able to perform a wall pass – we want them to use it to achieve something meaningful.

So put a goal and a goalkeeper in front of each group of three players. Now the objective for two of the players is to get past the defender and score a goal. If they can use a wall pass to do so, so much the better, but the objective is to score. It may be that the player with the ball doesn't have to pass around the defender. If so, great! But if they try to dribble their way to goal and fail, ask them if they could have used their new wall-passing skill.

How to use this skill

Play a 4v4 game with goals and goalkeepers. Award an extra "goal" to the team that plays a good wall pass to score.

How to Teach your players how to play the through ball:

The through ball is a pass (usually a long pass) into a space behind the opposition. **Three conditions must be satisfied at virtually the same time:**

- The opposition back line needs to be high up the pitch. There has to be at least 15 yards or more of clear space for an attacker to run into.
- The player in possession of the ball needs to be able to spot the space behind the opposition back line. To do this he needs to be able to control the ball with his head up.
- The player in possession of the ball also needs to see that there is a player ready to run onto the through pass. This player needs to be in the correct position - it's no good if the space is on the right and the attacker is on the left.

When is a through ball likely to be on? There's often a chance to make a through pass whenever the opposition has pushed most of its players up into an attacking position. Following a corner, for example, or a free kick near to your goal there will probably be a great deal of empty space in front of the opposition goal.

In these situations, a quick through ball can be a killer pass and it is an excellent way of mounting a fast counter attack.

Why coach it? When carried out correctly, the through pass is an exciting move that can be devastatingly effective. Your players should be taught how to recognize the moment when a through pass is a possibility and be allowed time to practice it.

How to coach the through ball Warm up by splitting your players into groups of three or four and playing piggy in the middle in small grids.

Change the player in the middle every minute or two and award points for every successful pass.

Coaching notes: Encourage the player on the ball to play with her head up and be decisive. The pass should be played as soon as an opportunity presents itself. Encourage the receiving player to keep out of the defender's "shadow".

Game 1: Long Passing

Set-up: Divide your players into two teams of four or five plus two defenders.

Create a 30x20 playing area, divided into horizontal thirds: zone 1, zone 2 and zone 3. The middle third - zone 2 - is a relatively narrow "no go" zone that players cannot enter.

Team A and the two defenders go to zone 1, team B go to zone 3.

How to play: Team A pass the ball between themselves until they can spot an opportunity to earn a point by making a long pass to a player in zone 3.

The two defenders attempt to win the ball. If they succeed, they swap places with two of the players in team A.

If a long pass is made successfully, the defenders go to zone 3 and team B attempts to earn a point by making a long pass back into zone 1.

Progression:

- Increase the size of the central "no go" zone.
- Restrict players to two or three touches.

Game 2: Passing Through The Thirds. Place a goal at both ends of the same playing area.

Divide your players into two evenly matched teams and play a small-sided game with the condition that a goal scored following a pass through two thirds of the pitch counts double.

Coaching note: To encourage your players to spot counter-attacking opportunities following a set piece, you can restart the game with a corner every time the ball goes out of play.

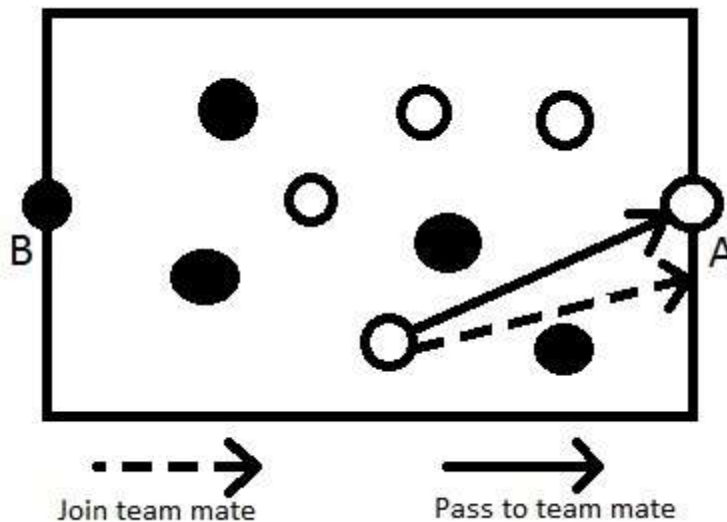
Finish the session with 4v4 games on separate pitches. No coaching, just congratulate any players that attempt a through pass.

Pass to the end player

This game is a good way to practice movement off the ball, decision making and passing to players in space. It is suitable for players who can pass the ball accurately over a distance of about ten yards. It is fast paced and great fun to play.

Set up: split your players into two teams of four or five and create an area 30 yards by 30 yards.

How to play: a player from team A stands on one end line and a player from team B on the opposite end line. The rest of the players try to pass to their end player. If they succeed, they join their end player on the line. The team that gets all its players on the end line first is the winner.



Note: to be counted as successful, a pass must be controlled by the end player.

Progression: play two or three touch.

Coaching notes: this is a deceptively simple game. As it progresses you will see how your players cope with numbers up situations, how well they communicate and if they can support each other off the ball.

How to Pass a Soccer Ball: Like many other sports, passing the ball is a big part of playing soccer. Players must pass the ball often to keep the ball moving in the right direction and to keep it out of the hands of the opposing team. The best soccer players are ones who know how to pass correctly so that the ball ends up where it was intended.

Step1 - Choose a person that you can pass the ball to. It should be someone who is open to receiving the ball so that it is not likely to be intercepted by the other team. Pass the ball to the closest person who is open--trying to pass too far away can result in the ball being overtaken by an opponent.

Step2 - Slow your running and put one foot near the soccer ball, parallel with it but about a foot from it. Keep the foot facing in the direction of the person who will receive the ball.

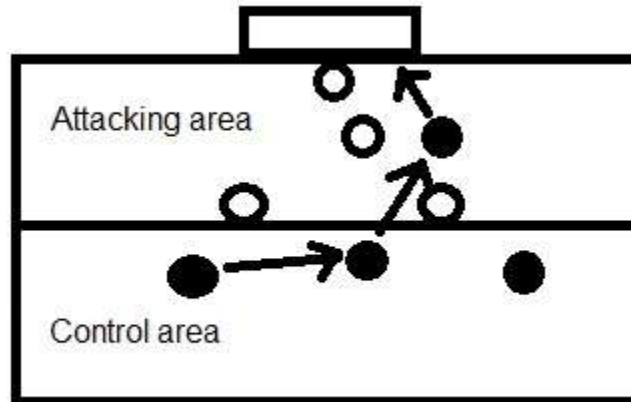
Step3 - Use the inside of the other foot to kick the ball. Keep the ankle straight so that the ball will kicked straight. This will also help you to avoid twisting an ankle. The toes should stay even with the ground and not pointing up or down. Look in the direction the ball is traveling as it passes. This will allow you to aim better and to quickly see where the ball has gone.

Step4 - Watch the ball to make sure it reaches your intended target. If it goes elsewhere, catch up to the ball and attempt to pass it again.

The control game

Objective: to encourage good, composed build up play. To improve movement off the ball and practice passing and receiving.

Set up: create a short, wide playing area with a goal at one end. For U10s, 40 yards by 20 yards would be a good size. Mark a line across the playing area about ten yards out from the goal. This is the attacking area. The remainder of the pitch is the control area.



How to play: play a numbers up small-sided game. E.g. 4v3, 5v3 etc. The larger team starts with the ball in the control area. They attack the goal but must make X number of passes within the control area before they can move into the attacking area and try to score.

Rotate the players regularly.

Variations: restrict the number of touches the attackers are allowed.

Add a target player that the defending team must try to pass the ball to if they win possession..

Supporting the player on the ball:

A "fix bayonets and charge!" mentality is very common among young players but it's not necessarily a problem - it can be very effective, providing the spaces ahead of the ball do not become too crowded. See [Coaching Pearls \(Positions, Discipline\)](#) |

The real problem (for the coach) occurs when possession is lost. If his players can't regain possession or get back behind the ball quickly enough, they will often concede goals to teams that pass the ball to an opposition attacker who has been told to stay away from the action and wait for a pass.

The answer is to help your players get better at keeping possession by providing support to the player with the ball from behind and from the sides.

The session plan below will help your team do this. It has been designed for players aged eight and over and I've found it really does help players retain the ball for longer, attack more effectively and score more goals.

But don't expect your team to be transformed into a mini Barcelona overnight.

Young players need lots of encouragement and positive reinforcement before they curb their natural instincts to run towards the opposition goal as fast as possible and completely ignore what is happening to the player on the ball.

Tip: It will help speed up the learning process if you award one of our very popular motivational patches to players who understand and apply the principles of effective support play. I've used these patches with my players for years - if you want any tips on how to use them, feel free to drop me an email.

Before the session starts, you should **discuss the key factors of support play with your players.**

Q: Why support the player on the ball?

A: So she can pass the ball if she needs to.

Q: How do we provide support?

A: Move to where a pass can be received.

Demonstrate the correct and incorrect angles of support as shown in the pictures below.

Supporting players must be able to see the ball!

Tell your players not to hide behind an opposition player.

Warm-up

Set-up: Create two 20-yard square playing areas next to each other.

- Divide your players into two teams and give each player a number.
- One team per playing area.



How to play: Your players begin the warm-up by passing the ball to each other in number sequence, 1 to 2 to 3, etc. Watch for 60 seconds then stop the game if necessary and demonstrate how to get into a good position to receive a pass. After a couple of minutes, call a number. The player with that number runs into the other team's playing area and has 20 seconds to steal the ball and kick it out of the area (one point) or steal it and dribble it back into their own area (three points). Once every number has been called, the team with the most points wins.

Pass and Supportive Run:

This simple passing exercise will encourage your young players to work on their possession so they can dictate the play at speed in match situations. This session is to help players to pass the ball at speed and will improve the skills of young players in one of the most vital areas of the game – possession. It also helps encourage supporting runs on the outside of a team-mate.

SET UP Set up an area 15x10 yards. We are using 10 players in this session. You need balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY Follow the passing sequence in the diagram, making sure players use communication to let other players know when to pass. Look for accuracy and weight of pass. B and C should be rotated as they are the servers.

TECHNIQUE This is an unopposed session to get players looking up and calling for the pass. It is vital that players look up so they pass accurately. This simple passing sequence will help you to gradually speed up your players' first touch, control and pass so that they will do it at speed in matches and so that they know how to take advantage when they have possession.

1. A passes to B (center), and makes a supporting run behind B.
2. B passes to C (side), who makes a one-touch pass to the supporting player A.
3. A passes to D who begins the process again by passing to B and running to support.
4. Progression: Player B can pass to C or A.



Numbers Up

Before you play this game, ask your players questions about supporting the player on the ball. For example:

- How close to a team mate do you need to be to receive a pass?
- If you're standing right next to the player on the ball, is it easy for them to pass to you?

Set-up: Divide your players into three teams of three or four and put them into different colored training vests.

How to play: Two teams (attackers) work together to keep the ball away from the third team (defenders).

When the defending team gains possession of the ball, it switches to attack and the team that lost possession switches to defense. So you always have 6v3 or 8v4.

This type of "numbers up" game should make it relatively easy for younger players to experience success in keeping the ball as a unit but if the attackers are struggling, add one or more floating players who always play for the team in possession.

Tip: Make the game more realistic by placing a goal on one end line and allowing the attackers to shoot after they have made a set number of passes.

Progression: Players on the attacking team must pass to a player in a different colored vest. So if you have red and green as attackers, the red players may pass only to green and vice versa.

Coaching point: I'm not a fan of SSS (Stop, Stand Still) but it can be useful if used for the right reasons (not so the coach can hear his own voice!) and if it's used very sparingly.

In this game, you may wish to use SSS if you see a player who is not supporting the player she has passed to. Ask if she thinks she is in a good position to receive a return pass. And what about the other players? Does the player on the ball have at least two passing options?

Finish with one or two 4v4 matches. Don't coach, just let the players play. Hopefully, you will see much better support around the ball and less "fix bayonets and charge!"

Support Play for 10 to 14-year-olds:

Players have to learn that if they want to go forward it's sometimes necessary to pass the ball sideways or even backwards.

- Players who don't have the ball have to learn that they must move into a space where they can receive a pass and, at the same time, the player on the ball has to decide who to pass to. None of this comes naturally to young players.
- A 10-year-old in possession of the ball tends to have just two thoughts in his head: "I'll score" or "I'll get rid of the ball." If it's the former, he gets his head down and dribbles straight at goal and, quite often, he runs into a wall of defenders who will stop his progress and probably take the ball away from him. If he decides to get rid of the ball, he will just hoof it upfield and watch to see if any of his team mates are lucky enough to be near it when it lands.
- Players who don't have the ball will tend to either stand around, get in the way by moving too close to the ball or charge, head down, towards the other team's goal. If your players are very young you should expect and allow them to play like this.

- As your players get older and more experienced, you need to help them develop the skills they need to really support each other. Such as find "useful" space, stay within range of a pass but not get too close and progress towards goal by passing the ball in different directions.

Number of players: Between nine and 12.

Equipment required: Three different colored bibs [pennies], some flat cones, two small goals (or poles to use as goal posts) and several balls.

Warm-up: Three color passing. Divide your players into three teams of three or four and give them different colored bibs [pennies] to wear.

- Players move around a 30-yard square playing area and pass to each other in sequence, for example: red to blue to yellow then back to red.
- You don't want to see players standing around. All your players should be in constant motion. The whole playing area should be used.
- Encourage long and short passing and insist your players move immediately to a new patch of grass after passing. Progress by imposing a two or three-touch limit and changing the color sequence.

Game 1: Three color keepaway Using the same teams and in the same playing area, two of the teams try to keep the ball away from the third team, the defenders.

- To improve movement and encourage your players to get their heads up, tell the team in possession that, like in the warm-up, they can't pass to their own color – if the defending team is in yellow, they must pass red to blue to red etc.
- The defending team earns a point if they can intercept a pass.
- Teams in possession earn a point for every five passes they can put together without the defenders touching the ball.
- The team that gives the ball away becomes defenders.
- Play for 10 minutes and see which team has the most points.

Game 2: Silent soccer Good support play requires good communication but it doesn't have to be verbal. Help your players to understand the importance of non-verbal communication by playing a small-sided game in which players are not allowed to say anything for the first five minutes. Play this a few times during the course of a season and you should see an improvement in the way your players "show" themselves for the ball.

Game 3: The 1-0 Game: This is a game I've described several times in this newsletter but it's brilliant for encouraging composed, thoughtful soccer even in players as young as eight or nine.

- Finally, take off the restrictions imposed by the 1-0 Game and let your players play without any coaching from you.
- You should, even after just one session, see an improvement in the decisions your players make when they have the ball and the way they move off the ball and support each other.

Coaching points: Supporting the ball carrier from behind is difficult. How does the ball carrier know that he has support? Encourage supporting players to move into the line of sight of the player on the ball or, if they are directly behind him, to call "I'm behind you." Loudly.

- Should supporting players be in front or behind the ball? Help your players understand that they should only move forward of the ball carrier when he no longer needs any support.
- How good are your players' first touch? If they need three touches to get the ball under control they won't have time to see or pass to supporting players.
- Do players glance around to see where pressure is coming from before they receive a pass? Encourage your players to take a "snapshot" of the field every few seconds.

Tag Netball :

Objective: To improve speed of play, movement off the ball, supporting the player with the ball.

Age range: U7s to U14s

Set-up: Use an area 40 yards long by 30 yards wide with a goal at each end. Create two evenly matched teams of five or six players wearing bibs.

How to play: The players' objective is to throw the ball into the opposition goal.

Play begins with you throwing a ball in the air.

Teams advance the ball up the field by throwing it from player to player.

If the player holding the ball is tagged by an opposition player possession goes to the other team.

Balls that go over the side or end lines result in a throw-in from wherever the ball went out of play.

First team to score five goals wins.

Tips: Other than tagging, physical contact is not allowed. Stop players protecting their goal by setting the goals three yards back from the end lines.

Half and Half

Objective: To practice supporting the player on the ball, spotting a through pass.

Age range: U9s to U15s.

Number of players: Eleven. If you have more than 11 players, don't make the teams bigger. Instead, use your spare players as "side supports" working up and down the touchline receiving and passing back to the team in possession.



Equipment required: Flat cones, one ball, training vests in three colors.

Set-up: A 30x20 playing area with a centre line and a goal at each end.

Divide your players into two teams of five: One defender, three attackers and one goalkeeper, plus a neutral player who plays for the team in possession.

How to play: Play with one condition: Players cannot move out of their own half - the attackers must stay in their opponent's half and defenders must stay in the half of the pitch in front of their goal.

So you always have three attackers and one defender in each half.

Any player can score except the neutral player who can play in either half of the playing area.

Progression: The neutral player is restricted to two or three touches of the ball.

Coaching points: Encourage defenders to keep possession until they spot an opportunity for a through pass to one of their attackers.

The neutral player can carry the ball from one half to another and assist the attackers.

Guided discovery questions:

- How can the defenders keep the ball away from the other team's attackers while they are waiting to pass the ball to their attacker?
- How can the attackers help their defender find them with a pass?
- In which half should the neutral player be?

Soccer passing, receiving, combination play exercises:

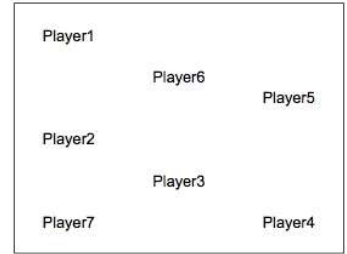
"Numbers Passing" Game: See [Receiving \(traps and controls\)](#) |

In groups of 3 to 5. Each player has a number. They pass it around in an area....making typical soccer runs....must always pass to the person whose number is one higher than theirs. This makes them keep track of the field and dribble with their "heads up".

First, allow unlimited touches, then: Two touches. Not allowing the ball to stop. One-touch.

Try: Playing with left foot only, outside of foot only, without talking. Ask your players how they can tell their team mate that they want the ball.

Move towards them, make eye contact, shout, etc. Praise good passing technique and accuracy, especially the correct weight of pass.

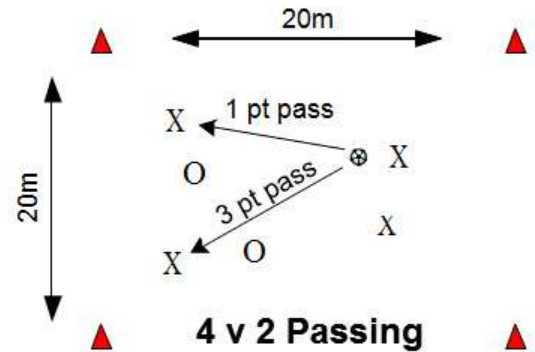


4 v 2 Passing:

Group of 4 keeps possession and scores one point for a completed pass and two points for a pass completed between defenders.

Rotate two defenders after 3 minutes.

1. Emphasize movement by the attackers to open up space and therefore open up lanes between defenders.
2. Try to set up three passing options, one support, one wide and one vertical (splitting defense)
3. Maximum two touches on the ball to force quick decision making and movement.
4. All attackers must be moving at all times.
5. Get players to pass to feet as well as into space anticipating runs.
6. Defenders need to work close together - first defender (closest to ball) must challenge, second defender must cover close as well as cut off passing lane.
7. Defenders need to anticipate passes and have vision to perceive attacking runs.
8. The attacking group needs to consist of players that combine in your team formation, i.e. 3 midfielders + striker, or 2 midfielders + 2 strikers, or 1 defender + 2 midfielders + 1 striker - plan this out ahead of practice.



Game Application: The passing drill mirrors what you want to see in an attacking style of soccer. Quick two touch passing and off the ball support movement is the most effective way of breaking down defenses. The pass splitting the defenders, particularly in the attacking third, is practiced by pro teams everywhere. Deciding whether to play a pass to the feet or into space depends on the position of defenders, space available, and knowledge of the running patterns of team mates. Knowing this in a game is vital information. Use this drill to get players to learn about each other and to communicate their preferences.

Defenders may be in a situation of being outnumbered. They need to learn and communicate who the first defender is, the speed at which to close down opponent and when (if at all) to tackle. The role of the first defender is to delay the attacking movements and challenge for ball only if the attacker loses tight control. The second defender needs to cover and be ready to challenge if the first defender gets beat. Second defender must also be aware of attackers passing options, be ready to close down passing lanes quickly and intercept passes.

"Prepare and Play" Game: 3 servers 5 feet across of one receiver. Two balls. All players keep moving (busy feet or jog in place). Two touches as the server passes to the receiver. The receiver must pass it back to the server without the ball. Pick up the speed...need to prepare the ball with the first touch then get it back. Trade after 100 balls.

Next keep the ball in the air, serve it to his thigh, he knocks it to his foot as passed a volley to the open player. Next to the chest receive and play with foot on second touch.

Receive and Sprint Drill: 20 yards across in groups of 4. One player passes to first in line who receives it with two touches passes directly back then sprints after the ball. Good for conditioning. Then work on outside of foot touches and pulls. Progression, change to a triangle shape and pass, follow it around the triangle....change direction to work with both feet. Pull it - play it and sprint. Need the proper pace on the pass....not too hard or too soft.

Progression, change to a square shape...need a 5th player.

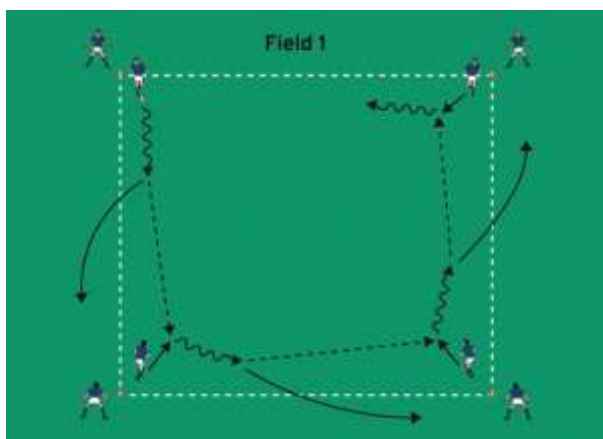


Fig. A

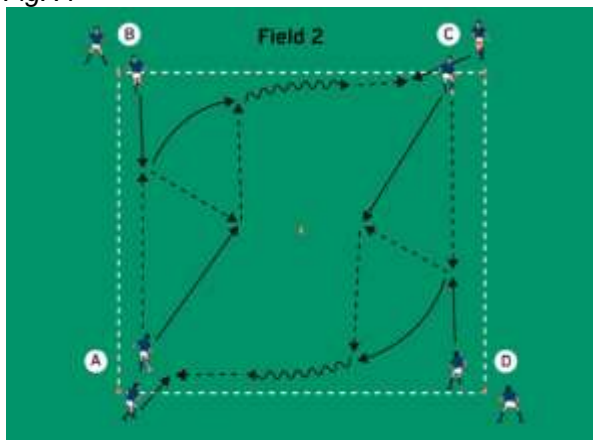


Fig. B

Teams that can move the ball forward with purposeful combination play are more likely to take their opponents by surprise. Fast finishing can be a great way to score goals!

This practice session is all about improving the accuracy of your team's passing. Players pass according to a set sequence and then finish on the goal. To keep the tempo up and the players focused, these passing sequences are intentionally kept simple, as they need to be when playing fast combination's in the middle.

Soccer passing, receiving, combination play exercises

Fig. A + B: Warm-up

Setup

- Field 1: Mark out a square with different colored cones.
- Field 2: Mark out a square with a cone in the center.
- Divide players into two groups and assign one to each field.

Sequence (Field 1)

- Distribute players evenly around the corners of the field.
- Players pass counterclockwise around the field and follow the pass to the next cone.
- Players are limited to two touches at the yellow cones and three at the red cones.

Sequence (Field 2)

- Player A plays a wall pass with B, who then takes the ball toward C before passing.
- Then C plays a wall pass with D, who passes to A, etc.
- Use two balls: A and C start simultaneously.
- All players advance to the next position after each play.

Tips and corrections

- The players on Field 1 must pay attention to the varying touch limitations, and they should always pass to receivers' feet.
- Receivers need to take the ball with them while controlling it.
- Passers need to flex their foot and lean slightly forward from the waist.
- Players switch directions on the coach's signal.

How to coach perfect passing technique

There has been a bit of a debate going on between some of our readers and on our forum, The Dug-Out, over how to coach the simple pass. So these are our soccer coaching tips.

Key soccer coaching tip: Passing accurately and quickly requires practice.

There are lots of ways to pass the ball – with the outside of the foot, in the air, driven along the ground, even backwards using the heel – but the easiest and most accurate, whether straight to a teammate or into space for them to run onto, is the sidefoot pass.

Side-foot pass tips

- Use the inside of the foot - that's the area from the base of the big toe to the central area of the heel, under the ankle bone.
- Kick foot at right angles to the ball.
- Belly button should be facing the player receiving the pass.
- Non-kicking foot alongside the ball.
- Knee and ankle joints held firm.
- Body over the ball.
- Head steady, eyes on the ball.
- Use the arms to keep balanced.
- Hit through the ball's horizontal mid-line - that way it will keep low.
- Kicking foot follows through towards the target.

But getting the technique right isn't the end of the story - there are two other skills players should work on perfecting: timing and weight.



1. Timing tips

Get this wrong, for example, pass too early or too late, and the momentum of a move can stall. For example, a forward pass before a striker is ready to make their run could run harmlessly out of play, while delaying a pass too long can give defenders time to block off space and the passing angle, or mean your striker strays offside.

2. The 'weight' or power of a pass

Similarly, get the weight wrong, for instance, too heavy or too light, and that can also mean the end of an attack. Too heavy and a teammate could have trouble controlling the ball, while too light and the ball might not have the pace to reach the teammate, allowing a defender to intercept it.

A WELL 'WEIGHTED' PASS WILL ALLOW A TEAMMATE TO CONTROL THE BALL WITH A MINIMUM OF EFFORT, GIVING THEM TIME AND SPACE.

How to One Touch a Soccer Pass: Soccer is perhaps the most popular sport worldwide, with millions of people watching and millions more playing the sport every day. If you watch any soccer games, you will see the one touch soccer pass multiple times. The one touch pass is the fastest way to advance the soccer ball down the field to other players to outpace the defense and rush toward the goal.

Understand the One Touch Pass

Step1 Remember the one touch pass requires you to time your kick for the moment the ball approaches your feet, so you kick the ball to your teammate with the first touch.

Step2 Expect to run to the ball as it is fed to you from another player.

Step3 Lead your teammate with the pass you send her.

Practice the One Touch Soccer Pass

Step1 Ask a friend to practice with you so you have someone available to feed you the ball.
Step2 Run down the field as your friend dribbles the soccer ball in the same direction.
Step3 Keep an eye on the ball and signal for your friend to pass it to you.
Step4 Time your steps right as you approach the passed ball so you can kick the ball with your right foot.
Step5 Kick the ball back to your friend with one single kick to complete the one touch soccer pass.
Step6 Get your friend to attempt the one touch pass back to you.
Step7 Work on passes with the inside of your right foot and the outside of your right foot by having your passes come to you from both sides of your body.
Step8 Switch feet and practice the one touch pass with your left foot. Remember to practice with both the outside and inside of your left foot as well.

Tips & Warnings

- * Keep your eyes open for the ball at all times.
- * Make sure you aim your pass to your teammate's feet, not the chest or any other part of the body.
- * Practice the one touch soccer pass at a slow speed and then gradually increase the speed of running and passing until you can perform the pass while running at full speed.
- * Get several friends together to practice one touch passes around the soccer field.
- * Don't lead your teammate too far with your pass or the other team may take possession of the ball.
- * Remember to have some water readily available to replenish your fluids as you practice outside in the heat.

Simple tricks to beat opponents: Teaching the Wall pass:

Beating an opponent is a basic ball (soccer) skill to teach your players. Use the following soccer coaching drills and tips to show them how.

Key soccer coaching tip:

Get your players to use quick feet and a change of pace as they go past their opponents.

It is important that you coach your players in how to create space by taking a player from the other team out of the game, by coaching them to wrong foot and beat their opponent. Practicing these two simple skills will give the players confidence to try the tactics in games.

Drills to teach the tricks

In figure 1, player A runs with the ball towards the mannequin (or one of your helpers), he performs his trick to beat his opponent, uses a change of pace to go past and passes to player B who repeats the sequence.

The technique or trick the players use is up to them. Get your players to use the trick that they are most comfortable with.

Extend the soccer drill

Progress the soccer drill, as in figure 2, by adding player C who acts as a wall. Player A runs at the mannequin as before but instead of a trick to beat his man, he passes to player C, who passes first time back to player A. This simple wall pass achieves the same objective, that is, beating the opponent.

Give your players a choice, either trick your opponent or play a wall pass. Let the player decide. Player B repeats the process from the other end.

Wall pass soccer drill

One of the simplest and most effective passing movements is the wall pass. You give the pass, run past the player, then receive it. Get your players trying this skill all over the pitch and they will not only enjoy the drill but realize how successful simple passing can be.

The way this drill works is to exploit the space behind the defending player. It is important to practice the timing of the return pass so the ball is passed quickly. Acceleration after the first pass is made is also important so the defender has less time to recover.

Drill set up

- Inside a 20 x 20 yard area, the drill begins with player 1 running with the ball towards the first cone.
- Just before reaching the cone, a pass is played to player 2.
- Player 1 now runs behind the cone to receive the return pass.
- Player 2 now jogs to the back of the first line as Player 1 plays a long pass forward to player 3 and waits to replace player 4 when the sequence returns in the opposite direction.

The players continue to rotate in this way, experiencing all positions in the drill. The ball is always played on the ground.

Soccer training drill to get players passing through midfield

If the opposition are not using the wings, you will find your team in a midfield battle. To get the ball to your players on the wings you are going to have to win the midfield battles and get possession of the ball, then keep hold of it to allow your team to pass through midfield to the wide players. Use this drill session to coach your players in practicing these skills.

What you need to focus on in this soccer training drill session is:

- Spreading out to create space.
- Identifying and attacking the space.

- Quick, accurate passing.
- Good movement to create space.
- Good first touch away from defenders.
- Using angles to receive and pass.

Drill set up tips

- Set out a 30 x 30 yard square with cones or markers. Inside the square mark out a smaller 10 x 10 yard square in the center.
- One attacker, the midfielder, stays in the smaller central area, which the other players are not allowed to enter.
- The attackers in the outer area must keep possession away from the defenders and, whenever possible, use the central midfielder to switch the play.
- Run the soccer training drill for a set time and give each player a chance to be the central midfielder.

Extend the soccer drill

Once your players are comfortable with this soccer drill you can allow the attackers only two touches of the ball, one to control and one to pass. As always, you should encourage players to use both feet to pass and receive the ball.

Warm Up 5 - 10 minutes. Activity level - Mild ramping up. Space: General. 1 - 2 Players per group.



Toss and Control

The Game

Players move around the space freely, tossing their own ball in the air and trying to control it before it lands. Players dribble around controlling, then repeat the activity.

Coaching Points

1. Have player's body touch ball before it first hits the ground.
2. Have players control first touch with different body parts: foot, head, thigh, etc.
3. Have players flick ball into hands before the toss, don't allow them to pick the ball off the ground with their hands.
4. watch for height. Encourage different heights.
5. Have players fake before their first touch, fake on way to first touch in the opposite direction.

Small Game 20 - 25 Minutes. Activity level: Medium progression to high. Space: Defined space "smaller". 3 - 5 players per group.



Receiving Square

The Game

Define a space approximately 20 x 20. Each player should have a partner and one ball per group. One partner goes to the outside of the defined space with a soccer ball. The other partner goes into the space. On command, outside players pass the ball to partner, who must receive and turn the ball. While dribbling, the inside player must find a new outside player to pass to. After a successful pass, the inside player must move to any outside player with the ball and repeat the sequence.

Coaching Points

1. Inside players must be moving toward the incoming pass.
2. Encourage players to turn the ball several ways inside, outside of foot. Use of both feet is important.
3. After the turn, encourage quick decisions on where to pass or dribble next.
4. Change player roles (inside/outside) every 2 minutes.

- As players become more proficient at receiving and turning, encourage them to fake one way before receiving, then turn the opposite way.

Team Game 30 Minutes plus. Activity level: High. Space: Defined for the game = larger space. 7 - 11 players per team.



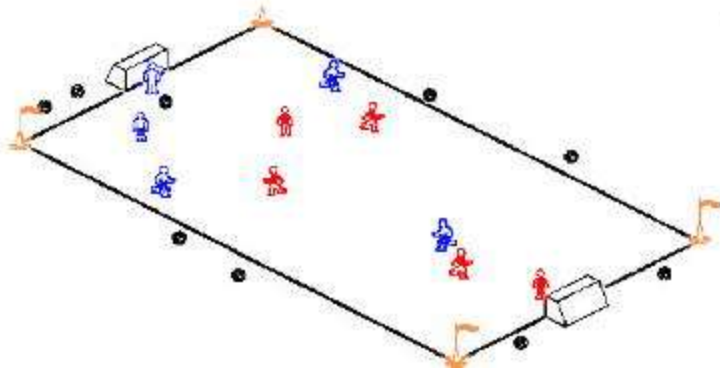
Keeper Game Receiving

The Game

Play on your soccer field or across the width. Two equal teams, each with at least two keepers. keepers are allowed to move anywhere on the field and use their hands, but are not allowed to score. Field players can score one point by getting a header over the endline and five points for a header in the goal. Play a regular game. When keepers get the ball the only way they can pass to their field players is with underhand tosses to the players body or bowling on the ground to their feet.

Coaching Points

- This game allows keeper to use hands out of the penalty area to make sure players get plenty of good air balls and ground balls to receive.
- It may be necessary to add or delete keepers for desired results.
- Make rules only when necessary.
- If keepers run too much with ball, allow them only four steps.
- Keepers throwing to other keepers? Make it so they cannot make a direct pass from keeper to keeper, they must use a field player.
- Encourage keepers to attack and defend.



Match Conditions

The Game

- An even sided game with full goals that is played just like the real game but not necessarily with an 11 v. 11 format.
- The coach then observes if the training has had any effect on the players' ability to meet the demands of the game.
- Coaching points can still be made, but the coach focuses comments on the theme of the practice.
- If the session was a technical session, the coach focuses on the players, and sees if it is meeting the demands of the game technically.
- If the session was tactical, the coach focuses on what the player is seeing, and focuses on whether or not the player is interpreting the visual clues correctly and making the correct decisions based on what is seen.



Receiving Through Gates

The Game

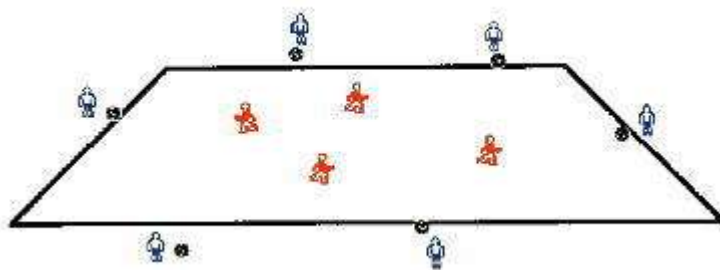
Two Players per gate. The gates are approximately two steps apart. One ball per group. First player must play ball on ground through the gate within two touches. The game continues until players cannot get ball back through gate on the ground within two touches.

Coaching Points

- Player receiving the ball should get in path of ball before it arrives.
- First touch should help player to get a good kick back through the gate..
- Keep score and rotate stations.
- Receive with thigh, pass back with instep.
- vary the serve to start the game: long balls, short balls, inside of foot, instep, outside of foot, weak foot only, etc.
- Players should receive with one foot and play it back with another.

Practice - Passing & Receiving:

Warm Up 5 - 10 minutes. Activity level - Mild ramping up. Space: General. 1 - 2 Players per group.



Passing Warm Up

The Game

Players in the grid are without the ball, players on outside each have a ball. Inside players move around the grid freely, receive a ball from an outside player and return it as quickly as they can. Switch positions after a while.

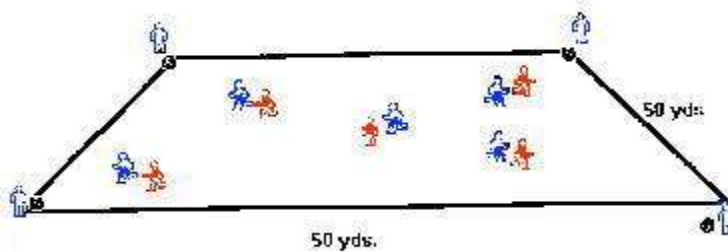
Progression

- Return with one touch, then two touches,
- Receive with outside of the foot, inside of the foot, left foot only...
- Receive balls out of the air.
- Receive, do a dribbling move then return.
- Receive, turn and find a different target

Coaching Points

- Quality of first touch. Keep it outside your "footprints" so that it can be returned quickly.
- Receive "sideways on" when shielding from an opponent,
- Prepare surface as soon as possible.
- Be first to the ball, get into the line of flight of the ball.
- Check away, then back to the ball.
- Make "eye contact" with the server.
- Changes of speed and direction.
- Teach turning moves when players need to get the ball back to a different server.
- Do not run "across" the server, check back at an angle. This makes it easier to turn and look back over your shoulder.

Small Game 20 - 25 Minutes. Activity level: Medium progression to high. Space: Defined space "smaller". 3 - 5 players per group.



Corner Passing Game

The Game

Players with the ball are put on the outside of the grid as shown. The other players pair up inside the grid and designate one person as the attacker and one as the defender (Attackers wear the same color). The attacking player must get free of their defender, receive a ball from any support player and play it back without losing possession.

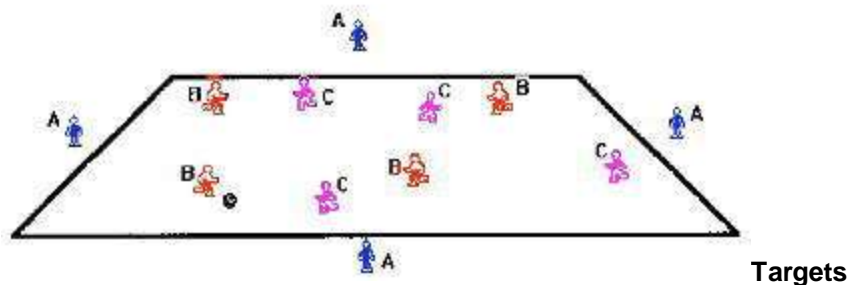
Coaching Points

- Change of speed, change of direction.
- Take defender away from the player you want to receive the ball from to create space for yourself.
- Receive "sideways on" to create more time for yourself.
- Make sure to rotate players.

Variations

- Attacker does 5 push ups at the end of the session for each time defender touched the ball.
- Attackers must 2 or 3 touch before returning the ball.
- Must return ball to different support player.

Team Game 30 Minutes plus. Activity level: High. Space: Defined for the game = larger space. 7 - 11 players per team.



The Game

Start with three teams of equal numbers. The space should be rectangular in shape. Team **A** starts as free target players on all sides of space. Teams **B** and **C** play a game of keepaway. Passes can be made to the **A** players (they must return the ball to the passer's team). Count the number of consecutive passes. Ten equals one goal. After a specified time period, or a goal, rotate teams. Let the scoring team make the decision whether to become "targets" or stay in the grid.

Coaching Points

- Encourage good pace and accuracy of passes.
- Pace should be fast enough so defenders cannot intercept, and comfortable for the receiver to control.
- Accuracy - Ball should be played to players feet.
- Players need to make good decision on how to utilize targets to retain possession.

Variations

- Targets can only one touch the ball.
- Field players must have 1, 2 or 3 touches, depending on skill level.
- Award a goal if player can make a wall pass with target players.



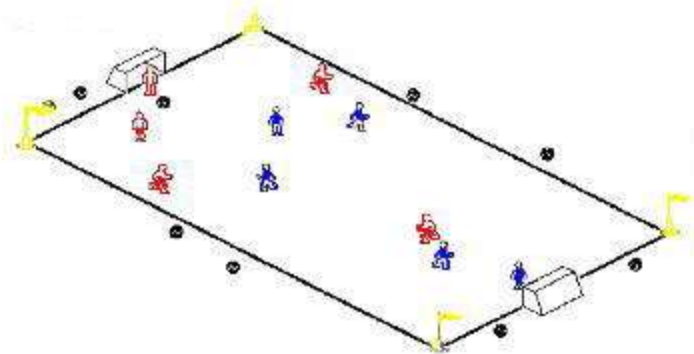
Bread & Butter

The Game

Three teams of 4 (A, B, C) and two keepers (X, Y). Team A attacks against keeper Y. If they score, they then quickly try to attack keeper X. At this time, team B leaves the field and takes the place of team C who were the supporting players on the endlines, supporting both teams. The supporting players support for both teams and can move along the end line. They are limited to one touch one the ball. Have an ample supply of balls ready in each net.

Coaching Points

- After scoring a goal, attacking players look to play quickly before the other team has a chance to come on and get organized.
- Try to play the ball to target players.
- Attacking and defending principles of play.



Match Conditions

The Game

An even sided game with full goals that is played like a real game but not necessarily with an 11 v. 11 format. The coach then observes if the training has had any effect on the players ability to meet the demands of the game. Coaching points can still be made but the coach focuses comments on the theme of the practice. If the session was a technical session, the coach focuses on the players body and sees if it is meeting the demands of the game technically. If the session was tactical, the coach focuses on what the player is seeing, and focuses on whether or not the player is interpreting the visual clues correctly and making the correct decisions based on what is seen.

Warm Down 5 - 10 Minutes. Activity level: Low ramping down. Space: General, No specific boundaries. 1 - 2 players per group.

Keep Your Yard Clean

The Game Create a 5 - 10 yard neutral area that no player can enter. Use a minimum of one ball per two players (for best results, use a ball for each player). On command, each team tries to keep its side free of balls by kicking through the neutral zone to the opposite side.

Play for a specific time limit.

Variations

- Must use two touches.
- Only use inside of foot.
- Only use instep (laces) when kicking.
- Must do an escape move, then kick.
- Increase size of neutral zone for more advanced players.
- Use fewer balls.



Warm Up 5 - 10 minutes. Activity level - Mild ramping up. Space: General. 1 - 2 Players per group.

Numbers Passing



The Game

Players pass the ball to the player with the number one higher than their own. (egg. 5 passes to 6, 11 to 1). Ball travels through the entire team. First, allow unlimited touches, then two touches, not allowing the ball to stop, then one touch. Try playing with left foot only, outside of foot only, without talking.

Coaching Points

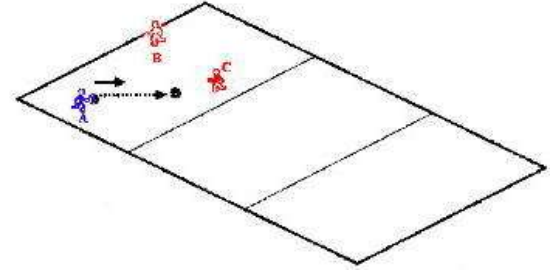
- Eye contact.
- Good passing technique.
- Angles of support.
- Proper weight of passes.

- Keep body open to the field of play

Pass and Defend

The Game

Groups of three, one ball per group. Player **A** rolls the ball (receiving ground balls) or tosses the ball (receiving air balls) to either player **B** or player **C**. In this example, player **C** must control the ball and get a completed pass to player **B**. While this is occurring, player **A** immediately challenges player **C** and tries to win the ball back. After successful pass, player **C** would then pick up the ball and repeat the activity as the defender. The defender is awarded a point for winning the ball back and gets to throw again.



Coaching Points

- Encourage defender to pressure quickly after the toss. Defender needs to work hard at closing down the space while the ball is in flight.
- Receiving player's first touch should be away from the pressuring defender.
- Player receiving the pass should move to create a clear passing lane.
- Do not allow the receiving player to one touch the incoming toss. This is a receiving drill, as well as a drill that serves as a good warm-up for practices dealing with defenders.

Small Game 20 - 25 Minutes. Activity level: Medium progression to high. Space: Defined space "smaller". 3 - 5 players per group.

Numbers Up Keep Away

The Game

A basic keep away game. One team tries to keep the ball from the other team. Because the one team has an advantage, the amount of reps of the skill (i.e. passing and receiving) is increased. There are many variations; lose the ball and go in the middle, play for a time limit, if you "split" the two defenders with a pass, you get a goal, play 3 v. 1, 5 v. 2, 6 v. 3.

Coaching Points

- Angle and distance of support must be good.
- Keep hips facing the play.
- Weight and accuracy of passes.
- Good passing technique.
- Team shape, wide support and at height.
- Defending - make play predictable by being patient.



Targets Passing:

Start with three teams of equal numbers. The space should be rectangular in shape. Team **A** starts as free target players on all sides of space. Teams **B** and **C** play a game of keepaway.

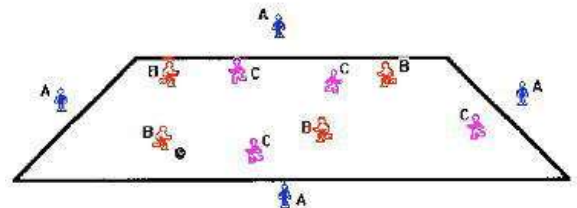
Passes can be made to the **A** players (they must return the ball to the passer's team). Count the number of consecutive passes. Ten equals one goal. After a specified time period, or a goal, rotate teams. Let the scoring team make the decision whether to become "targets" or stay in the grid.

Coaching Points

- Encourage good pace and accuracy of passes.
- Pace should be fast enough so defenders cannot intercept, and comfortable for the receiver to control.
- Accuracy - Ball should be played to players feet.
- Players need to make good decision on how to utilize targets to retain possession.

Variations

- Targets can only one touch the ball.
- Field players must have 1, 2 or 3 touches, depending on skill level.



- Award a goal if player can make a wall pass with target players.

Team Game 30 Minutes plus. Activity level: High. Space: Defined for the game = larger space. 7 - 11 players per team.
8 v. 8 with Corner Goals

The Game

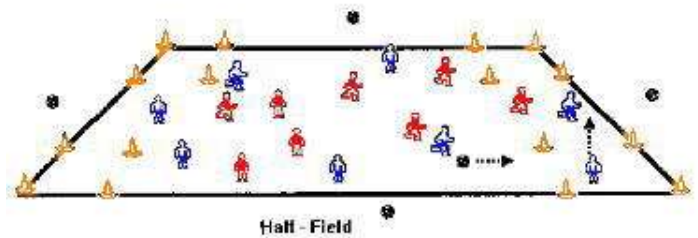
8 v. 8 played on half a field. Set up 10 yard squares in each corner of the field. These act as goals. A goal is scored when the ball is passed into the square and then out to a teammate. Each team can attack any of the four goals.

Coaching Points

- Keep the team balanced in attack and defense. Don't bunch up around one goal.
- Look to attack the goal that is open. See if players can recognize where the pressure is.
- It should be easy to keep possession since the defense has so many goals to defend. Be patient in attack and don't take unnecessary risks.
- In defense, look to create opportunities to double team.

Variations

- Play with two balls to open game up.
- Allow a goal if player dribbles in and out of square.
- Insist that passing goals require three players.
- Limit players to 2 touches



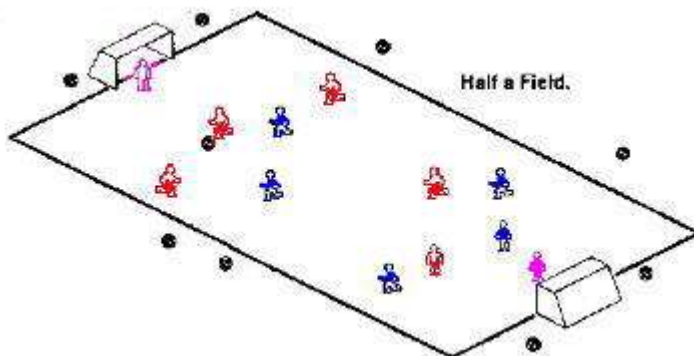
End Zone Game

The Game

Set up field as shown with a seven yard "Endzone" at each end. Score a goal by getting the ball from one "Endzone" to the other by passing or dribbling. Once a goal is scored, immediately attack going in the other direction. The end zones are "free". Only the attacking team can enter this area.

Coaching Points

- Attacking and defending principles
- Counter attack
- Passing and receiving



Keeper to Keeper

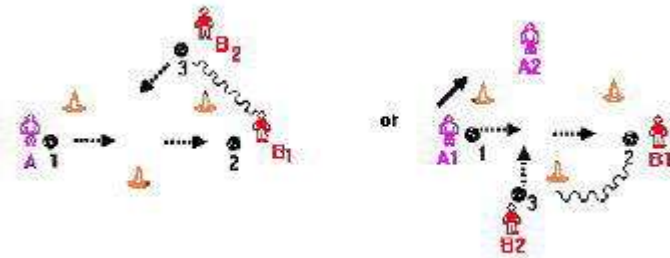
The Game

This is a possession game that uses the keepers. Instead of trying to score, each team tries to pass the ball from one keeper to another. Keepers can play the ball with their hands.

Coaching Points

- In attack: Attacking principles of play. Always look to get the ball forward and to the keeper. especially, right when you get it from the keeper. Counter attack often. Since the flow of play changes quickly, players get practice in the back and front.
- In defense: Must have pressure on the ball. Quickly get behind the ball when possession is lost. Prohibit counter attacks.
- Keeper distributions

Warm Down 5 - 10 Minutes. Activity level: Low ramping down. Space: General, No specific boundaries. 1 - 2 players per group.



Triangle Passing Drill

The Game

The triangle has sides of one yard in length. Player **A** passes the ball to player **B**. Player **B** receives the ball at position **2**, after it has come out of the triangle. **B** then touches the ball to the side and returns it to **A** making sure the ball does not travel through the side of the triangle which it came from. The diagram shows 2 options for the return pass. Try to keep the game going as long as possible without making a mistake.

Coaching Points

- Passing and receiving warm-ups.
- Preparing the surface before reception, keeping feet active.
- Keep body facing the play. Use good technique.

Progression

- Allow unlimited touches to develop a feel for the game.
- Restrict players to 2 touches, one to prepare ball, one to return it.
- Ask the players to determine if there is an easier way to bring their first touch. (This should be towards the nearest cone - the cut becomes determined)
- Nearest Cone forces player to take his eyes off the ball and look at the "field" in front of him.
- Make the triangle 2 yards apart and see what happens.

Soccer drill to give wingers the edge

Get your wingers to focus on a quick one-two soccer drill with their midfield team-mates so they can carve a way to goal and leave a few defenders behind on match days. Sometimes this move is better than dribbling.

Tips to get around a solid defense

When your wingers are hitting a brick wall every time they try to dribble their way to goal, tell them to try playing quick one-tuos to get around a solid defense. There is nothing more frustrating for your team if they are constantly losing the ball when your players are trying to dribble around defenders. This way they can beat them without losing the ball.

Set up the soccer drill

For this drill, mark your training pitch into three zones and have two attackers/passers in the first zone, and put a defender in zone 2 and a defender in zone 3.

How to run the soccer drill

- One of your attackers dribbles to the second zone where he must play a quick one-two with his supporting team-mate to beat the defender.
- The supporting player passes the ball back into his path.
- The first attacker then dribbles towards the next defender and repeats the same action.
- His team-mate successfully plays the ball back.

Extend the drill

- Tell your players to vary their approach angles and starting positions and you can vary the size of each zone.
- Put in a chasing player to pressurize the dribbling player.
- Add another defender who puts pressure on the supporting player so he has to pass quicker.

What to watch for

- Tell your dribbling player to wait for the defender to come to him.
- Tell him to keep the defender guessing by using faking skills, such as step-overs and dropping his shoulder.
- Tell both the dribbler and the supporting player they must use explosive bursts of pace to get into the positions to play and receive the ball.

Key soccer coaching tips

Accurate passing is crucial to beating players using this method; timing of passing is crucial; timing of the run is crucial.

Soccer drill to get players passing and moving in tight areas

When you are playing a passing game, it is crucial for any player to be able to pass and move quickly in tight areas, for instance, when they are tight up against the touchline or in a crowded midfield. Use the following soccer training drills to work on these skills with your players.

These soccer drills aim to get players practicing moving and passing with speed. They may look simple but they're not, particularly when your players are trying to be accurate and playing at a fast pace.

Passing between two groups of three players

The two sets of players should be around six meters apart. X passes to Y then runs to the back of the queue. When the Y players receive the ball, they play it first time to the next X player, then run to the back of their queue.

Players in these training drills must play the ball first time whenever possible, and they should be encouraged to use both feet. Younger players can be allowed to control the ball first, if necessary, then pass with the second touch of the ball.

Advance the soccer training drill

Advance the first drill by adding a team and passing with three teams in the same way, but this time the players run behind the opposing column after they have delivered the pass.

W, X and Y stand in a triangle, six meters apart, with two players in each column behind them. Using one ball, W passes to X who passes to Y then back to W. All passes should be first time. Once again, allow younger players two touches if necessary.

First touch soccer training drill

If you want to improve the first touch of your players, this is a good soccer coaching drill to get them doing it properly. First touch is important so players can get the ball under control quickly, allowing them to make use of any space they have created.

Soccer coaching drill tips

Players should be on their toes and watching the movement of the ball as well as the movement of players around them in this soccer training drill.

They should be assessing where the space is appearing and which direction they should move the ball when it arrives at their feet.

A positive first touch sees the receiving player move the ball into space and, in doing this he creates more time to make the next decision.

Will the player pass or run with the ball? Where to?

Run the first soccer drill training session as a warm-up drill. The players must take a touch to the side of their gate and pass back to their partner. The drill works continuously.

Dribble and pass out

The players must dribble across the area and pass out to a teammate. The teammate must take a diagonal touch to the side of their gate and dribble quickly to a new teammate.

Play Out, Go Out possession game

Six players compete to keep possession 3 v 3 in the middle of the area. The aim is to pass out to a teammate and follow the pass out of the playing area. The receiving teammate must be positive on their first touch and come into the area.

Soccer drill to brush up receiving skills

One of the key elements of playing a passing game is that your players are comfortable receiving the ball. Never mind instant control or ball position, coaching basic receiving skills is essential.

Soccer coaching for basic receiving skills

Coach soccer drills to teach basic receiving skills as early as possible; it is important for our younger age groups to learn how to receive the ball and use that as a foundation to build on. The art of receiving transforms into the first touch, and ultimately the ability to position the ball for the next move.

Key soccer coaching tips

1. **Head up** – make eye contact with the passer and “request” the ball.
2. **Knees flexed** – be ready to move in any direction.
3. **Heel down** – toe up.
4. **Soft touch** – give a little as the ball hits the foot.

Receiving the ball with movement

- Set up a soccer drill using a square grid with cones and three athletes.
- **Player 2** starts with the ball. He initially has **support to his right and left** from players 1 and 3. He now passes to **player 1**.
- **Player 1** now only has support from **player 2**. **Player 3** must run to the unoccupied cone and **re-establish support in two directions for the ball passer**.
- So the basic idea in this soccer drill is to pass and **have the athlete off the ball react to the pass and provide support by running to the open space**, in this case, the unoccupied cone.

Drill tips:

1. The off-the-ball player should be **alert to make his run**.
2. The passer should make **eye contact** with the player to whom he is passing. That not only alerts the receiver, but it cues the off the ball player to make his supporting run.
3. Passes should be received **open to the field**. For example, in the diagram, if **player 3** received the ball from **player 2** with his right foot, he would have to either play the ball across his body to player 1, or two-touch it to his left foot, or play it back to **player 2**. Effectively by playing the ball with the wrong foot he has **limited his passing options**. When there is no pressure, he will have time to adjust. **Under pressure the extra second that it takes to adjust may mean the difference between a completed pass and a loss of possession.**

Distance passing soccer drill

This soccer drill works on distance **passing** skills. You only need six players to complete one of the soccer drills, though it can easily be expanded to accommodate more players. With lots more players you could have a number of drill grids working at the same time.

What you tell your players the soccer drill is about:

1. Getting length, height and accuracy on long passing.
2. Finding team-mates in space you can't reach using the side-foot pass.

What you tell your players to do in the drill:

1. Strike the bottom half of the ball and hit an imaginary vertical line that bisects the ball.
2. Strike with the laces.
3. Keep the ankle firm, extend the kicking foot.
4. Lean back slightly.
5. Sweep through and across the ball.

What to shout:

- “First touch out your feet,” and “Eyes on the ball.”
- “Don't try to hit the ball too hard.”

What to look for in this soccer (ball) drill:

Crisp, good quality short passing in the build-up.

- Angled approach before striking.
- Non-kicking foot diagonally behind the ball but not immediately alongside it.
- A steady head.
- No curve on the pass.

What to think about in the drill:

If a player is struggling with these soccer skills, show them how and where to strike the ball by walking through the drill slowly yourself using a stationary ball. Get the technique right first – power can be added later if required.

Soccer drill set up:

Stage 1: In an area approx 10 x 40m, all the players stand in two lines at opposite ends and take it in turns to hit lofted passes. Switch to weaker foot.

Stage 2: Put one player in each of the middle two zones. The player at the end side foots a pass along the ground to the center of the playing area, where the nearest player returns it on their second touch. The player at the end controls it, then hits a lofted pass to the far side over the heads of both players in the middle. The sequence is repeated at the opposite end.

Develop the soccer drill

After hitting the return pass, the middle player runs towards the player at the end to exert some pressure. To increase difficulty the lofted pass can also be hit first time.

How would I put this into a game situation?

Set up manned target zones in four corners of a grid. Two teams of equal sides play a passing game against each other, scoring points when they hit a lofted pass accurately into a manned target zone. No player from either side is allowed to enter these zones.

Soccer coaching session to get players passing and communicating

Learning to communicate with your team mates, so each player knows what the other is doing, is an invaluable soccer skill. A lot of mistakes in youth soccer occur because of poor communication when passing the ball. The following soccer coaching session will help your team develop.

This soccer coaching drill session is designed to get your players passing the ball in a numbered sequence, then they have to communicate what they want to happen after the pass.

Set up a grid approx 30 x 30 yards, and use six players at a time. Number the players one to six.

Session 1: Tell your players to pass the ball in number sequence i.e. player 1 passes to player 2 who passes to player 3, etc.

Session 2: Now the players have three choices

1. Pass to the central player and call "turn," then swap places with the central player, who turns and passes to the queue opposite. The central player joins the queue where the player came from.
2. Pass to one of the wide coaches and call "overlap," receive the ball then go to the back of the opposite queue.
3. Pass to one of the wide coaches and call "one-two". Upon completion of the move, the player dribbles out to the opposite side.

Drill development

For session 1, add an extra ball to see if your players can keep their concentration.

Soccer coaching tips for one touch lay offs

Sometimes it is a good idea to lay the ball off to a team-mate when a player is either being closed down quickly or tightly marked, to create space for a pass or shot. Help your players work on these skills with the following soccer drill.

First-touch passing is hard to defend against because the ball is moved quickly away from the position expected.

It is a great soccer skill to coach your players - a lay-off from a pass can create goal chances, but you should tell your players to make sure they communicate to each other if they are going to use it in defense. A poor lay-off in defense can give the ball away.

It is quite a difficult soccer drill to use with young players as they have to control the ball and pass it correctly. You need to tell your players to keep their eyes on the ball and use the pace of the incoming pass to lay the ball off to their partners.

How to coach the soccer drill

- Put your players into pairs opposite each other. The ball is hit long to one of the opposite players.
- The receiving player immediately lays it off to their partner with one touch.
- Their partner hits a first-time pass to the opposite player..
- ...who controls the ball by immediately laying it off to the player next to them.
- This soccer drill is repeated five times before the roles are reversed.

How to change the drill

- Tell your players to vary the speed, height and angle of pass so that the receiving player has to use their chest, feet and head.
- You can vary the space between your players to increase the difficulty of this drill.
- Get your players using their 'wrong' foot for controlling and passing.
- You can also get your players to replace the second pass with a shot at goal.

How to Do a Heel Pass in Soccer So you want to play like you have eyes in the back of the your head? A heel pass is a subtle, yet deceptive maneuver.

Step1 - Maintain control of the ball.

Step2 - Keep your defender an arm's length away and your body between him and the ball.

Step3 - Take a quick peek to see where your teammates are.

Step4 - Wait until a teammate is making a run toward you on your back side.

Step5 - Step over the ball.

Step6 - Leave your kicking foot in the air.

Step7 - Make contact in a backwards kicking motion with your heel. You don't need to hit the ball with much force.

Step8 - Continue moving in the opposite direction of the ball to further confuse your defender.

* The heel pass is more effective when you're facing a sideline. When your teammate runs behind you, they're moving toward the goal. * Make sure the step-over, heel pass and continuation have smooth transitions to confuse your defender. * Experiment with heel passes to determine how hard you need to kick the ball. * If you have any condition which would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity. Some say don't do heel passes as they are a bad idea, because of the same reason you shouldn't toe ball a soccer ball (don't know where the ball will go). If you are going to try something like that, try using the inside of your foot. It may look cool, but it's not worth it when you can get the same effect from the inside of your foot. When doing the heel pass, don't take a big swing because the defender could see the move coming and if he does; that move won't anymore. Also if you take a big swing, you might miss the ball, and if the person behind you is a dude he will be hurting and you will most likely fall down. The heel pass can be a great way to confuse and beat a defender in a 2v1 situation, but it takes a lot of practice and trust to play like the Brazilians! Keep your head up to know where your teammates are, practice it, and make sure you find a way to communicate the pass. There's nothing more embarrassing than showing off with a heel pass that goes straight to the other team!

Soccer coaching drill to get players passing back

Sometimes you need to get your players to pass back so they can advance forward. These soccer coaching tips and drills look at how to pass into a target man.

Key soccer coaching tip: Get your attackers to check back when they are being marked.

Playing the ball up to a target man is a great way to open up defenses. You need to coach your target man to lose his marker by cutting back infield, drawing the defenders to him. By playing a one-two with one of his teammates he can then split defenses and create space in the attacking area.

Creating a 3v2 situation

If you look at the diagram below, the simple pass back from the striker has created space for the ball player and the right winger. The midfielder passer is past his marker and has moved into a 3v2 situation.

Target man soccer drill

Hitting the target man opens your options

- Practice getting your midfield players to pass the ball to a target man - one of your attackers in the middle of the opposition defense. Play it into the attacker's path as he moves across the defensive line.
- The attacker is surrounded by defenders with no space to play into, so he has to seek other options to create space.
- This is countered by getting your attacker to play a ball back to the midfielder who has moved wide to escape the defenders.
- In the soccer drill diagram you can see how the defenders have moved to block the attacker, and a quick one-two has opened the defense up, bringing other players into the attack.

Soccer coaching tips to get players passing out from the back

Good teams can pass the ball out from the back in a structured controlled manner. Use these soccer coaching tips and drills to get your players working on these skills.

Key soccer coaching tip:

Give your players the confidence and encouragement to do it!

Passing out from the back of defense, whether a back 3 or back 4 requires, first, that the players are comfortable in possession of the ball, and second that the soccer coach gives the players the confidence and encouragement to do it.

Soccer drill set up

In diagram 1 below, set up with three defenders in each half versus two forwards. Before the ball can be played into the attacking half, all three defenders have to touch the ball. This makes them involved in the first phase of the attacking movement and hopefully the attackers will receive a more controlled pass.

1. Defender 1 passes to defender 2, 2 to 3 and 3 passes forward to 4.
2. 4 and 5 try to score. When they have either lost the ball or shot at goal, repeat the soccer drill.

Develop the soccer drill

Pass out from the back to create 3 v 3.

If we advance the soccer drill in diagram 1, after all the defenders touch the ball, allow one dark-shirted defender or one white-shirted defender to break into the attacking half, making 3 v 3.

Get your midfielders to accept the pass

Finally, as diagram 2 shows, add a midfield section allowing a midfield player or defender to break into the attacking third of the pitch, making 3 v 3.

YOU'RE NOW PASSING YOUR WAY TO THE OPPOSITION GOAL!

Soccer drill to coach movement off the ball

I am always looking for good ways to coach movement off the ball. The best way I've found is to set up a soccer drill which needs good fitness and penetrating passes.

How to set up a drill to coach movement

- Start with a 15m x 15m grid and have a 4m x 4m x 4m equilateral triangle in the middle made up of cones.
- Use five players, with one being a defender and the other four being passers/attackers.
- The four players try to maintain possession, while also looking to score goals by playing the ball through the triangle to their teammates.
- The defender is NOT allowed inside the triangle so he must be constantly working his way around the triangle trying to cut out the penetrating passes.

Benefits of this soccer drill

What makes this a really good soccer drill is the required movement off the ball by the attackers. On every pass they are moving in order to get into a better position to either make a penetrating pass or to receive one.

Thinking ahead to make space for the pass

The players have to be thinking ahead of the passes because it's not good enough to just play the ball through the triangle, a teammate has to receive the ball for it to count.



Working hard but having fun

The game should last five minutes with each player having a one-minute turn as the defender. It gets the players working hard, thinking and competing while having fun trying to beat their teammates. The player who gives up the least number of goals on defense wins.

In the diagram, player 1 is passing to player 3 very close to the defender. The best opportunity lies in a pass to player 2. In this way your players have to move around the square looking and creating the best angles for passes.

Key soccer coaching tip: Tell your attackers not to get too close to the triangle as it cuts down the passing angles.

Extend the soccer drill

Change to 4 v 2, or 2 v 2 v 2. Keep the 5 v 1 game going until players get good at this before you do change. Experiment with numbers, increasing the difficulty of the soccer drill as you go.

Passing and receiving soccer drill

A soccer drill working on constant passing, which uses match-like situations and a bit of competition to give it an edge, is an effective way to coach your players to be ready for soccer matches.

Great for passing, agility and building fitness

Passing and first-touch of two of the most important soccer skills you can teach a young soccer player. I came across a soccer drill recently that I just had to share with you. It is great for passing and agility but it also has a little bit of fitness in there, too.

Run, pass, receive, control, pass

Use two players and four cones for this soccer drill. In the diagram the player at the bottom runs left to right and gives a square pass to the player on the opposite side. The top player does the same thing from right to left. Both players must keep up with play to receive, then pass. So it is a constantly moving soccer drill with first touch skills and good passing vital to its effectiveness.

Soccer drill tips

If your player makes a bad touch, he will have to work a little bit harder to get it back which is exactly what he would have to do in a game.

Making the drill competitive

You can extend this soccer drill by adding some competition, combining skills with fitness. Whenever you can do this in an soccer drill, it adds to its value.

After 10 touches, get your players to sprint to the 18 yard line and see who can get back to their positions first.

You will see that by adding a little bit of competitiveness to it, the pace picks up and the skill level goes up a notch. Once your players are doing the soccer drill in competition with each other, you've created a skill-building drill.

Key soccer coaching tip: First-touch is vital, coupled with a good inside-foot pass.

Circle soccer drill for passing under pressure

Use this soccer drill to prepare your players for match situations where the attackers are advancing and they need to make a good pass under pressure.

Tips for passing under pressure

Crucial passes occur throughout matches when either your defense is under pressure or your attackers are advancing on goal, needing a good pass to beat the defenders. In both cases the player under pressure can help his team with a good pass. If the pressing player forces a mistake, your team is either in danger of losing a goal from a defensive error or your goal scoring opportunity is wasted.

Circle soccer drills can help pressure passing

This soccer drill is a good one for passing under pressure and it gives you a chance to show your defenders how to force the passing player into a mistake.

1. Mark out two circles for this drill, as in the diagram. Place a target player in the small center circle and three defenders inside the bigger circle.
2. Arrange the rest of your players as attackers around the outside of the bigger circle.
3. The attackers start with the ball and they have to pass the ball to the player in the center without the defenders getting it. This player cannot move outside his circle.
4. The defenders must try to intercept the ball during the drill. They have to put pressure on the passer.

GIVE YOUR PLAYERS TARGETS TO AIM FOR IN THIS DRILL, SUCH AS THREE PASSES BEFORE THE ATTACKERS CAN PASS INTO THE CENTER, OR CHANGE THE NUMBERS OF DEFENDERS.

When a team mate is under pressure give him support

It is vital to encourage your young players who don't have the ball to get into positions to support the player who does. The following tips and soccer drill will boost their awareness.

When you hear the shouts: "Coach he's not passing to me!" you have to find out why - often it's because the player is not making himself available for the pass.

The skills you are looking for in your players - and you're the coach so you need to find these in them - are:

- Communication - calling out names letting everyone know where you are.
- Taking a position that allows the player on the ball to see you.
- Being in a good position to see what is going on.
- Good first-touch skills.
- Good ball position skills.

Set up support play drill

Set up an area 30 x 20 meters and play four attackers against two defenders. Put a target player at each end of the pitch - they must stay outside the pitch behind the back lines.

Soccer drill tips

The aim in the soccer drill is for the attacking team to get the ball from one target player, up the pitch to the other target player.

An important soccer coaching tip is that the ball must stay below waist height - the offside rule applies 10 meters in front of the second target player. The ball cannot be passed back to the first target player.

Once the attacking team has reached the second target player, the game begins again, this time playing towards the first target player.

During this soccer drill you are looking for your coaching points and skills - support, communication, control and body positions.

You need to shout to your players:

- "Make yourself available."
- "Call for it."
- "Make an angle."
- "Pass and move."

Game to get players passing the ball under pressure

I like running this fast game to get players used to looking to pass the ball, either first time or controlling then passing under pressure from an opponent. It's a bit like a boxing ring where the passing player has to be quick and get their pass away before the opponent wins the ball off them.

This game provides a constant attack-defense situation to boost your players' soccer skills. Once the player passes, they become the defender to stop their opponent passing.

You need to set up a 15-yard square with cones, and two teams of three players. Put two players from each team on the four corners with the remaining two players in the boxing ring.

Start in the bottom left corner, the player passes to his team mate in the center who must control and pass to the player top left.

As soon as the pass is made, the grey player - top right - plays the ball into his team mate who must pass to the player bottom right. And so on.

Key coaching tips to build player skills

- Tell your players they can only have one or two touches of the ball to control and pass it.
- Tell them they can only use the inside or the outside of the foot they are passing with.
- Move the cones in closer and serve the balls with the hands to practice volleying skills.

Throw-Ins:

- Your team will get lots of throw ins during a match and, like all restarts, every one of them should be an opportunity to start a new attack. But very often the ball is thrown straight to an opponent and possession is lost. See [Restarts](#) |



A throw-in is a method of restarting play.

A throw-in is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball when the whole of the ball crosses the touch line, either on the ground or in the air.

A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower:

- faces the field of play.
- has part of each foot either outside (or on) the touch line and **on the ground**.
- holds the ball with both hands
- delivers the ball from behind and over his head

- delivers the ball from the point where it left the field of play

All opponents must stand no less than 2 m (2 yds) from the point at which the throw-in is taken. The ball is in play when it enters the field of play. After delivering the ball, the thrower must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. **Tips:**

- There should be a minimum of two active players looking to receive the ball. One is should try to come short, and his job will be to side-foot the ball back to the thrower. The other player is slightly further away and 'on the run', so if the thrower chooses this man, the ball will be thrown into his path for him to take it away from the area.

- If there is no one within throwing distance and in open space, encourage your players to make a sudden run towards the thrower, receive the throw (which should be directed at the oncoming player's feet) and pass it straight back. As soon as they've hit the return pass they should turn and run, either towards goal or into space.

- You can practice this by putting half your players around the edge of a playing area with a ball in their hands. The rest of the players run around the area, receiving a throw and passing it back to the thrower.

- Progress by adding defenders whose job it is to put pressure on the throwers and receivers.

- Then split the players into teams of four and play a small-sided game where the game is restarted with a throw in whenever it goes across a line or a goal is scored.

- If the thrower has to wait for team-mates to get into position, then he should wait. After all, it's not his fault if he has no immediate options, and better to wait than hurry a throw-in and lose possession.

- During matches, don't tell your players where to throw the ball.

Even if you can see that a throw down the sideline would be effective, **resist the temptation to shout:** "Down the line!" **Let your players make their own decisions.**

How to teach the throw in:

Before you teach your players how to throw the ball long distances, make sure they are comfortable with the normal throw in technique:

- The ball should be held in both hands.
- The index fingers and thumbs need to be positioned close together so the hands form a "W" or "U" shape behind the ball.
- Hold the ball over the head just behind the ears, with the elbows pointed out to the side.
- Stand on the touch line with both feet together. If a player has one foot in front of the other they will tend to lift their back foot on release.

Lose your markers at a throw-in

① At the throw-in players A, B and C should set up in this formation and get ready for the call of the thrower.

② B and C must make dummy runs to take the defence away from A, creating space to move in to.

③ A can play a long pass or a pass back to the thrower.

movement ... pass → throw-in →

The diagram is a vertical infographic with an orange background. It is divided into three numbered sections. Section 1 shows a thrower on the touchline and three players (A, B, C) in a triangular formation. Section 2 shows the same formation with dashed arrows indicating dummy runs by B and C. Section 3 shows a solid arrow from the thrower to player A, and another solid arrow from A back to the thrower. At the bottom, a legend shows 'movement' with a dotted arrow, 'pass' with a solid arrow, and 'throw-in' with a solid arrow.

That's a foul throw and the referee will award the throw to the opposition.

- Bend backwards from the waist, holding the ball behind the head.
- Move the upper body forwards and use the forearms as levers - releasing the ball as it goes past the head.

How to Do Soccer Throw Ins:

When the ball goes out of bounds on the sideline in soccer, you need to use a throw in to get the ball back into play. The linesman will point out the location to you. The team that last touched the ball before it went out loses custody of the ball to the other team. A member of the other team is responsible for the throw in. This is the only time a player other than the goalie may touch the ball with his hands.

The basic technique:

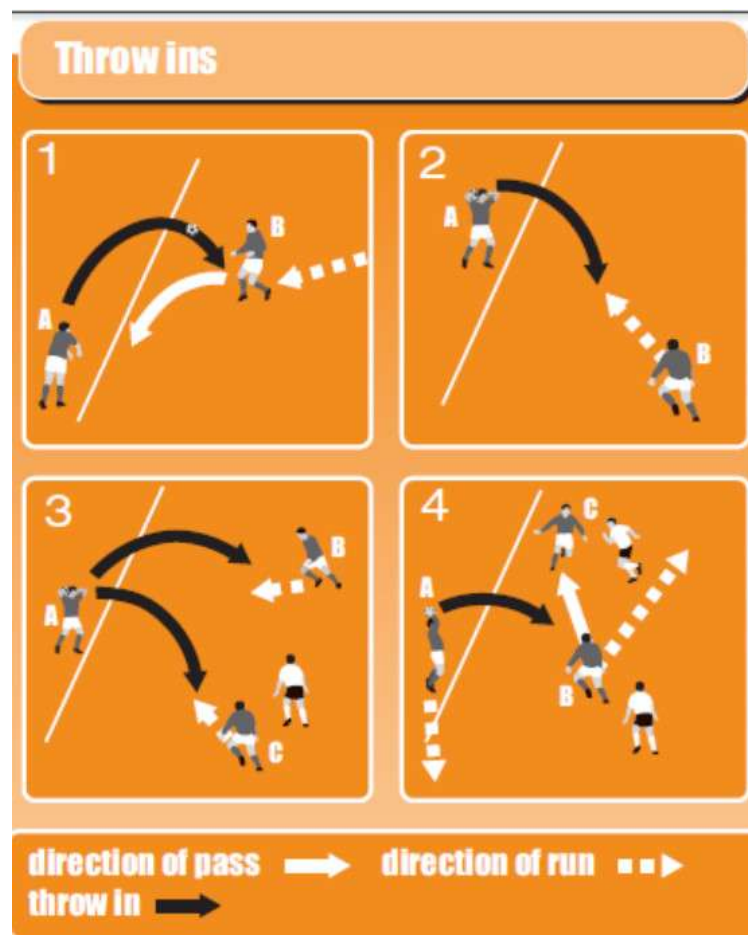
1. Hold the ball behind your head. Your hands should be behind the ball and the fingers spread so that your hands look like the letter 'W'.
 2. Older players can take a run up but they should be encouraged to drag the toes of their back foot along the ground in the delivery stride to avoid lifting the foot.
Young players (U5s to U8s) should stand on or behind the touchline with their feet together and about a shoulder width apart. If they are allowed to take a run up, they will almost certainly lift their back foot off the ground. If that happens, the ref will call a foul and give the throw to the opposition.
 3. Scan the field - where are your players? If you throw the ball to them will they have time to control it before an opposing team player closes them down?
 4. If you need to throw the ball a long way it helps if you bend your back as the ball is released. Bend backwards, creating a bow-like shape with your body. The ball should be held high over and slightly behind your head. This gives you the ability to spring straight at the time of release and allow that force to carry the ball forward. Swing your arms forward and use the arch of your body to provide additional inertia to the motion. Place one foot firmly forward and transfer your weight to that leg. The toes of the other leg should be grazing the ground, giving you the balance you need at the time of releasing the ball. Let go of the ball when it's just slightly behind your head. Let the arms follow through.
 5. A throw in is a pass the same as any other - so be accurate and don't throw it too hard.
 6. Immediately look to support the receiving player. Run back into the field. Often the teammate who received your throw will pass the soccer ball back at you. You should be ready for it and never take your eyes off the soccer ball.
 7. Be decisive. The longer you wait, the harder it will be to find someone to throw to. Try to throw the ball back into play as quickly you can.
- If you want your team to take quick, effective throw ins you have to practice them. They won't happen otherwise!

- The easiest way to do this is to demonstrate the right technique then play a small sided match. Every time the ball goes out (even for goal kicks and corners) the game is restarted with a throw in. Make sure there's a lot of movement from the players on the pitch and the throw is taken as quickly as possible; if the throw isn't taken in X number of seconds give it to the opposition.

Practice this move in pairs to get the timing right then follow up with a small-sided game when every time the ball goes dead (i.e., when the ball goes over the side or end lines, a goal is scored or a foul is committed), the game is restarted with a throw-in.

What to teach your players about the rules relating to throw-ins:

- A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in. If a player throws the ball into his own goal from a throw-in, the restart is a corner kick. If it is an attacker who throws the ball in, it is a goal kick.
- As the ball is released, the thrower must have part of each foot either on the touchline or on the ground outside the touchline. So, for example, a throw would be legal if the player had her heels on the line and her toes over the line.



- However, if the same player was to go up on her toes the throw would be deemed illegal as no part of her foot would be behind or touching the line as the ball was released.
- You can't stand right in front of a thrower (you must stand two meters away) and you should not try to put the thrower off. Impeding a throw-in is against the rules and could result in a yellow card.
- After throwing the ball, a player is not allowed to touch the ball again until another player has touched it. If she does, the referee will award an indirect free kick.
- Players can't be offside from a throw-in.
- If you throw the ball to your goalkeeper, she is not allowed to pick it up.

Throw-in tactics:

- Generally speaking, throw-ins should be taken quickly, before the defending team has time to organize.
- For that reason you should not have just one or two designated throwers. If you do, you will waste time waiting for one of them to run halfway across the field to take the throw. Instead, encourage the nearest player to the ball to take the throw quickly.
- The simplest throw-in tactic is to throw the ball to a **team mate who returns it to the thrower and runs into space for a return pass.**
- Good movement is the key to success here. The receiver needs to give herself time and space by moving away from the player taking the throw-in then quickly moving back into the space created by the first movement.
- Long throws can also be an effective tactic, especially if they are taken from near to your opponent's penalty box and your players are coached to throw the ball into space for a player to run onto.

Tip: If you don't have a player that can throw the ball into the penalty box, get a good crosser of the ball to take the throw. She can throw the ball to a team mate who passes the ball back to the thrower who, in turn, crosses the ball into the penalty box.

- **When throwing in, attempt to mislead the opponents by turning your face in one direction, but throwing in a different one at the last moment.**

Win With Quick Throw-Ins: Forget relying on that one kid with the long throw – make sure all your players are confident enough to throw the ball back into play as quickly as possible. Get your throwers to look down the line as a first option – even throwing into space rather than directly to a team-mate is good as it turns defenses and puts them under pressure.

1. Scan the pitch while collecting the ball to look for a teammate open to receive it.
2. Take the throw-in as quickly as possible to keep opponents off balance.
3. Throw the ball where the team will get the greatest territorial gain.
4. Throw the ball so that it is easy for a team-mate to control.

The Give and Go throw is:

One of the most common and effective throw-in tactic. You will see it played time and time again by professional teams and it's really quite easy to teach.

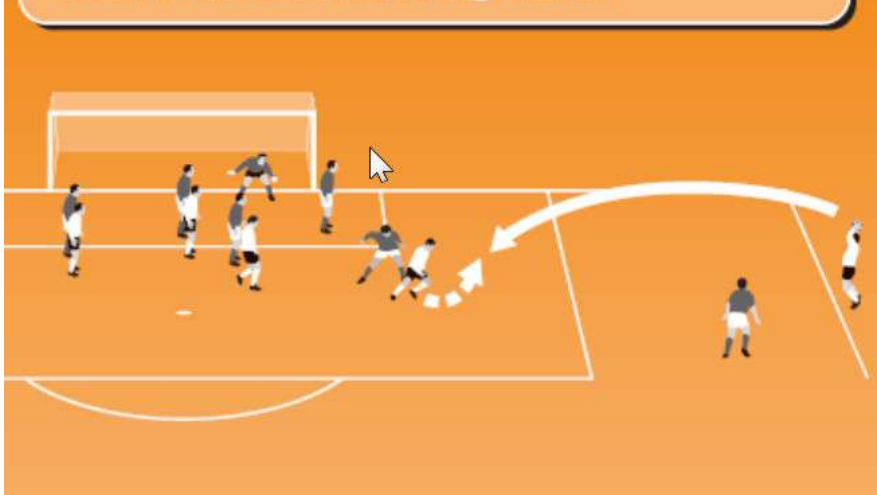
- Just before the throw is taken, potential receivers move quickly towards the thrower. This sudden movement should shake off a marking player and allow the receiver time to receive the ball.
- The ball is thrown to the receiver's feet. The receiver returns the ball to the thrower, turns and runs down the line or towards the goal.
- The thrower then plays a quick return pass either in the air over defenders' heads or on the ground.

Defending long throw-ins:

Encourage your players to stay tight and goal-side of their opponent (i.e. between the opponent and your goal) when defending a long throw-in.

- They should try to step in front of the opponent while the ball is in the air and challenge strongly for the ball.

How to defend the long throw



- You may also wish to consider treating long throws like corners and putting a player on one or both posts. Or even defend them in zones.

Whatever you decide, your goalkeeper should take charge and warn defenders if they leave an opponent unmarked.

How to practice throw-ins

- Set up a 15x10-yard playing area with a small goal at one end.
- Play 3v1.

- Play begins with one of the three attackers taking a throw-in from a corner of the area farthest from the goal.
- Once the ball is in play, the attackers combine to score a goal, preferably in three movements or less following the throw-in, i.e., throw, pass, pass, shoot.

Progression: After three plays, rotate the players so everyone has a go at being an attacker and a defender. Introduce another attacker and defender so you are playing 4v2.

Next, make the playing area bigger and place a goal at both ends. Play a 4v4 small-sided game (SSG) with the condition that goals scored in less than three touches after a throw-in count double.

Throw some bombs into the box!

Long throw ins can be a devastating attacking weapon in all forms of soccer. In the English Premier League, Rory Delap of Stoke City routinely throws the ball 35 yards or more into the opponent's penalty area, causing confusion and even panic among the defenders. Goals are often the result.

In mini ball, where the penalty area is closer to the touch lines, the long throw can be even more dangerous. Players who can throw the ball even 10 or 15 yards will be valuable members of any team.

How to teach the long throw technique

- Players need to have a good grip. They can dry their hands and the ball on their shirt.
- Take several steps back from the touch line.
- Hold the ball in the same way as in point 2 above, but hold it in front of the body, at eye level, not behind the head.
- Run towards the touch line and move the ball behind the head.
- All the power of the throw is generated in the final stride. Stamp the front foot down hard on the touch line and, in doing so, bring the ball from behind the head with elbows pointing out. Throw the ball forward in one, powerful, fluid motion.
- Additional power can be generated by bending the back as the ball is released.
- Keep the trailing leg in contact with the ground by dragging it behind in the final stride.

Note: To get the ball to fly into the penalty box as fast and as flat as possible, the angle of release should be between 20-30 degrees. If the ball is released at an angle of 45 degrees, the ball will tend to loop slowly into the box and be much easier for defenders to deal with.

Two ways to practice throw ins

1. Have a throw in tournament. Line up your players on the touch line and give them three throws each. After each throw, mark the spot where their ball lands with a cone.
2. Play a small-sided game, which is always re-started with a throw in whenever the ball goes out of play. If a goal is scored, allow the team that conceded to take a throw in from wherever they choose. Award two points for a goal that results from a long throw

Soccer drills to boost throw in technique:

With these soccer training drills your players can increase the distance they throw by up to 30 per cent and never have a foul throw called against them.

The perfect throw-in

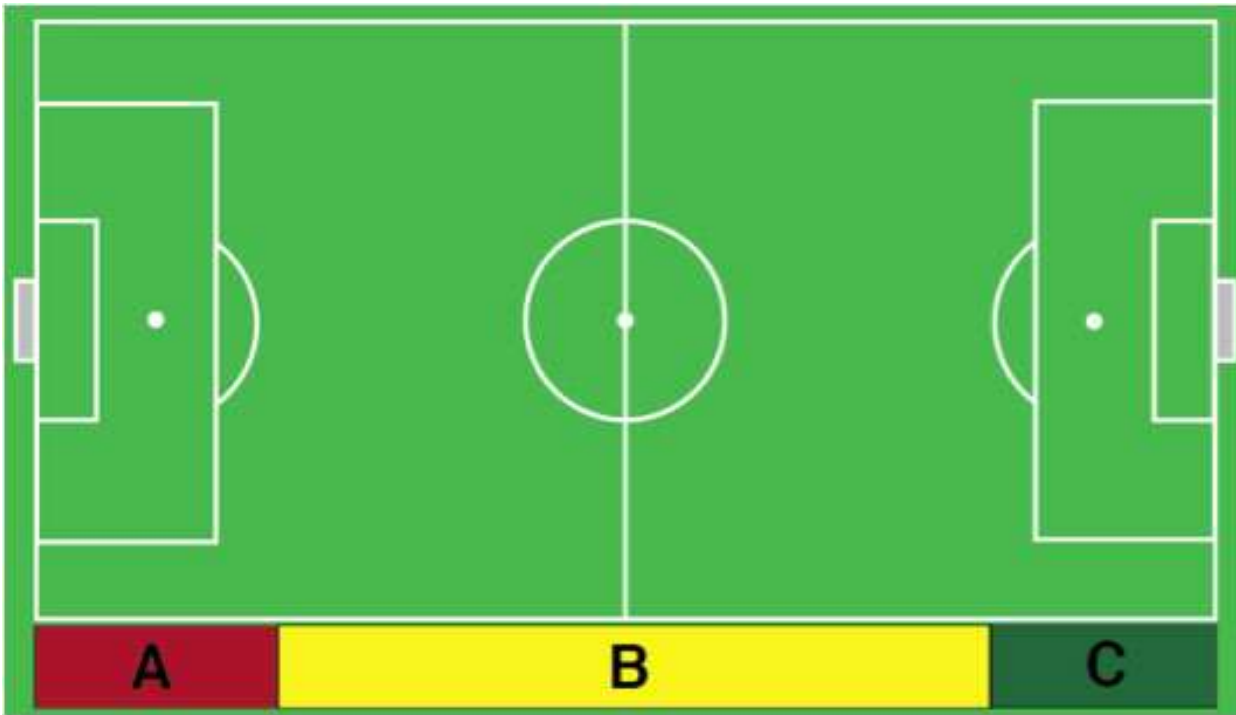
Simple throw-in drill for under 4s-7s

1. Stand facing the field with feet apart
2. Place one hand either side of the ball
3. Take ball behind the head and throw onto the field

For under-8s and above

1. You can teach throw-in skills without a ball, as it's about balance
2. To stop players feet leaving the ground, make sure they drag the toes of their rear foot (usually their strongest foot) so hard they can hear it. Knees must be bent to do this
3. When the ball goes behind the head, elbows should point out to the side for distance
4. Keep upright and follow through with a twisty action





Throw Ins-
 Taken by the RM or LM. In **Zone A** it is too dangerous to do anything but throw down the line. Try to let the other team knock the ball out to gain field position. **Zone B** -Play 1,2,3,4. **Zone C** - long throw into the penalty box or

down the end line. DO NOT THROW BACK TO OUR OWN GOAL

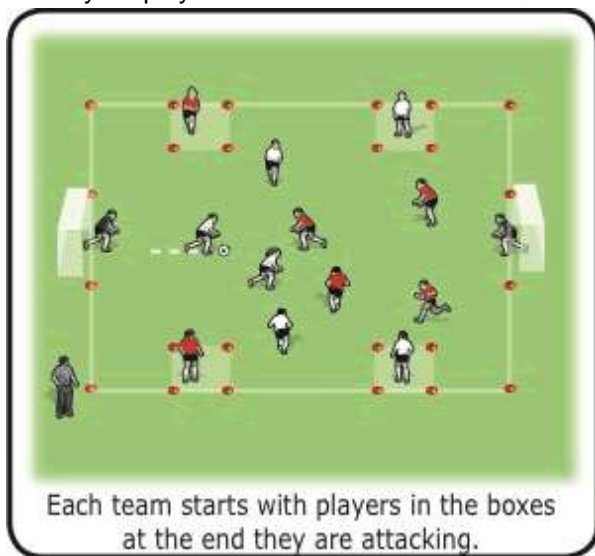
Throw-in Frenzy:

Objective: To encourage quick throw ins and movement off the ball.

Age range: U7s and upwards. **Difficulty:** Medium.

Set-up: Create a 40x30-yard playing area with a goal at each ends. Using flat cones, mark out two five-yard squares on each side line. The boxes should be placed about 10 yards from each goal.

Divide your players into two teams of five or six. Goalkeepers are optional.



How to play: First, demonstrate **the right way to take a throw-in.**

- Two players from each team are put into the boxes at the end they are attacking. The remaining players play in the main area.
- To score, a team must pass to one of the boxed players, who catches the ball or picks it up and quickly looks to take a throw-in.
- The attacking team tries to create a goal scoring opportunity from the throw-in before the defending team can get organized.
- Award one point for a goal scored in open play and two points for a goal scored immediately after a throw-in. Rotate the players in the boxes at regular intervals

How to Do a Flip Throw-in in Soccer A flip throw-in allows you to turn a basic restart of play into an offensive tactic by shooting the ball back into play like a cannon.

Step1 - Grasp the ball with both hands on the sides of the ball so your thumbs almost touch.

Step2 - Stand 15 to 20 feet away from the touch line.

Step3 - Begin running with a burst of speed, taking no more than three or four steps.

Step4 - Plant the ball on the ground.

Step5 - Flip your legs up as you plant the ball to complete a front handspring.

Step6 - Use your momentum to fling the ball as you become upright again.

Step7 - Land on your feet.

* Practice this throw-in without the ball to start. If you have access to a tumbling mat, learn on it.

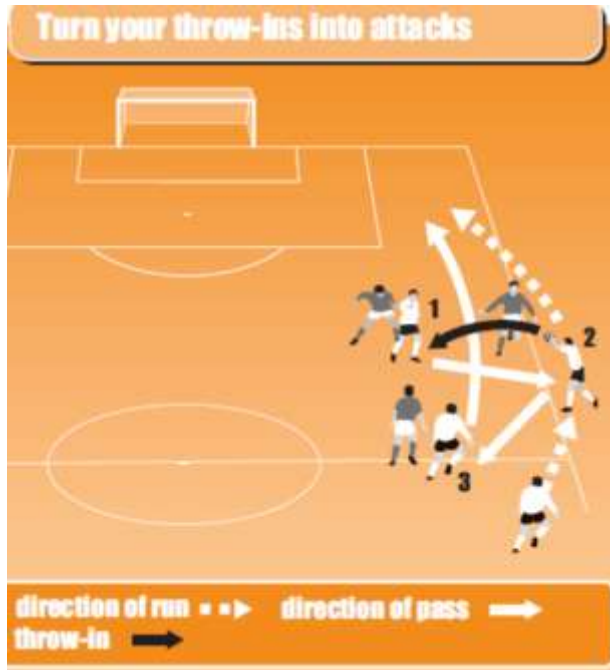
* After you're comfortable doing it without the ball, practice on a slight decline with a ball.

* For more distance, try releasing the ball at different points of the handspring. * If you have any condition that would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment.

Don't try this throw-in on wet grass! When flipping try to place the ball as close to your feet as possible. This limits the momentum you need to flip the ball all the way around. Follow through after you flip, bring your hands fully over your head, but remember to drag your back foot on the ground otherwise it will be an illegal throw in. It's okay to be a few feet away from the line when you throw the ball. It's better to be a few away than to get called for stepping on the line.

Turn your throw-ins into attacks:

1. The throw-in taker throws the ball infield to a team-mate who plays it back to the thrower with one touch.



2. The thrower controls and plays the ball back to another of his players who has come across from midfield. The defending full-back is drawn over to the thrower and attempts to close him down. Meanwhile, an attacking fullback starts his run behind his throw-in taker and behind the defense.

3. The attacking midfielder plays the ball into space behind the opposition for his fullback to run onto.

Indoor Soccer:

Link: [Futsal](#) | Differences between indoor and outdoor soccer

Indoor Soccer differences:

- There are walls (about 4-8 feet high).
- There are 6 players on the field per team (5 field & 1 goalkeeper).
- There is a midfield line and 2 "Blue Lines", like in hockey.
- The field is about 50yards long and 20yards wide.
- use the walls as a 'teammate'.
- no offsides.
- Goalie can pick up back passes.
- **Substitutions:** 'on-the-fly' method, wherein players can be substituted as many times as needed, provided the player to be substituted leaves the field before the new one steps in.
- **Cards:** The traditional yellow and red cards are used to issue warnings and expulsion respectively. In addition to these, a third card is also used, usually of the **color blue**. This serves as a warning before issuing the yellow card and carries the 'penalty box' rule. This concept, similar to the 'sin bin' used in ice hockey, requires the penalized player to spend time outside the arena in a designated penalty box, usually two minutes. The red card carries the same meaning in indoor soccer as it does in traditional soccer i.e. expulsion from the field. Can come on earlier than 2 minutes if goal is scored.
- **Zone Play (3-line rule):** A typical indoor soccer arena employs three lines i.e. the center line and one line in each half. The rule being that a player can't pass the ball directly over all the three lines, without it touching anything or anyone. This is to curtail the use of long balls and augmenting short passes and plays. Exception: Goalie can throw ball over 3 lines.
- **Out of bounds:** The walls surrounding the arena at the perimeter are to stop the ball from leaving the arena and no penalty or stoppage is awarded on contact. If the ball leaves the arena or hits the ceiling, then a free kick is awarded at the point where the ball last made contact with the wall.
- **Bouncy field:** played on artificial turf or hardwood floors, and so the balls tend to be bouncier and difficult to control.

Indoor soccer shares many of the basic skills and strategies of outdoor soccer. Many of the differences are obvious and it is assumed that differences in rules are known to players already. However, there are things that differ subtly and being aware of them can improve your play.

Passing the Ball Passing the ball indoors is easier and quicker than outdoors because of the smoothness and lower friction of the surface. Quick, short passes on the ground work very well indoors. Instead of making a traditional outdoor-type cross you should try to make your cross to the center earlier because you have no corner, but a rounded edge. Often times, rather than making a cross at all it is better to put the ball into the wall itself and use the wall to angle the ball's trajectory into the front of the goal.

Dribbling the Ball Dribbling the ball is similar indoors or out, except that indoor the ball does not bounce as much and you can move and cut quicker with the better traction of the surface. The downside of dribbling indoors for many players is that they tend to get trapped in the 'corner' or against the side walls. The key to dribbling indoors is to view any wall as a supporting player. This means that the wall should be used for short, quick, 'give and go' passes as you move along the wall towards an opponent. Using the wall gives the dribbler an advantage over the opponent because the opponent has to be ready for a pass at any time, even if the dribbler has no teammate open.

Strategy In terms of strategy indoor soccer is a much more offense-related game than outdoor soccer and it is a faster moving game. Part of the reason for the offensive-oriented nature of the game is the speed of the surface. Another big contributor is that there are no offsides. From the defensive perspective this means that you have less control over the offensive penetration than in outdoor soccer where you can maintain a buffer on your own half of the field and control the rate of advance. The offense, on the other hand, has more ability to penetrate quickly and deeply towards the opponent's goal. The offense also has an advantage over outdoor soccer in that shots on goal can be taken quicker and if kept low, can rebound back in front of the goal.

How to Coach Indoor Soccer

The most important thing to remember in indoor soccer is that there are no formations and specific positions that the players need to stick to (except for the goalkeeper). All the other players in the team need to be prepared to scale the arena up and down regularly, and defend and attack in equal measure. In some indoor soccer games, the ball is allowed

to bounce off the side walls without going out-of-bounds, so players also need to learn how to use these surfaces to their advantage. This is something that can only be achieved with the right kind of coaching.

Coaches of youth teams also focus a lot on indoor soccer drills and practice matches because playing the sport definitely builds up the technical skills of players. There is no hope of hitting long balls in an indoor arena so everyone needs to focus on controlling the ball, passing it over short distances and utilizing some dribbling skills to get past opponents.

One Touch Passing

The coach of a youth team, or any other team that plays indoor soccer, should always focus on building the one touch passing skills of the players. In indoor soccer this is the best weapon since the spaces that are available are very limited. The ability to quickly make an accurate pass with one touch is something that will make any indoor soccer team efficient, so the coach must devise several drills in order to incorporate this.

Pass and Move

The greatest soccer team in the world right now is FC Barcelona, and if you have seen the way they play, you will know what this means. The idea is to move the ball around very fast with small touches and over small distances, with the sole purpose of keeping possession of the ball. This is a style known as Tiki Taka and this is something that comes very handy in indoor soccer. Simply passing the ball is not enough, as a player needs to make a pass and then quickly move into empty space so that he can get the ball back as soon as possible. You may like to learn more on how to play indoor soccer.

Enhance the Technique

The underlying premise to learning indoor soccer is to have excellent technique and dribbling skills. This is something that can only be achieved through practice and intense drills. Different coaches will have different techniques to build the dribbling skills of players, and this is something that needs to be intensely focused upon. Here are some tips that coaches and players should keep in mind while performing technique building drills.

Always try to shift your body between the ball and the opponent who is marking you. This way they will never be able to steal the ball.

It is always best to keep the ball as close to your body as possible. Touching it with the active foot often will help achieve this.

It is important to look up and observe the players in the game rather than simply stare at the ball while dribbling with it. Always keep your eyes up.

Master the art of controlling the ball with soft touches. Heavy touches will cause the ball to move away from your body while you are attempting to control it, and this will give the opponents a chance to steal the ball away.

In indoor soccer always try to keep passes on the ground. High balls or bouncing balls are tough to control in an indoor arena so it is best to avoid making such passes.

The trainer should create some drills for players that involve kicking the ball against a wall and then controlling it. This will improve their ball control skills.

The most important thing is to prepare players for the transition period. In soccer, when a player loses the ball he needs to track back immediately and try to win it back. Simultaneously, his teammates need to switch from attack to defense instantly. The teams that can manage this transition period the best, are often the most successful.

Even though there are no fixed positions on the arena, it is important for the coach to determine who the best shooter of the ball is. This is an integral part of learning how to coach indoor soccer. Every team will have one player who is adept at shooting the ball powerfully and accurately, and everyone should be instructed to pass to this player as often as possible, when the goal is in sight. There will be another player who will be better at dribbling and moving past opponents, so he should be given the responsibility of carrying the ball forward and dominating possession. All such things will have to be learned by an indoor soccer coach over time.

Two Line Passing Drill

This is a drill that focuses on improving the first time passing abilities of players, as well as improving the mobility of the players. Two cones need to be placed about 10 yards away from each other. Half the players stand behind one cone and the other half stand behind the second cone. Now players from one half must pass the ball to players from the other half,

one after the other, in a chronological sequence. No player is allowed to touch the ball more than once, and after they have touched the ball, they must run towards a designated point and join the end of the line behind the second cone.

Beehive dribbling

This drill focuses on building the dribbling abilities and close control of the players. If there are 10 players who are training, then a square that is 100 square yards in area must be made (10 yards wide and 10 yards broad). Each player is given a ball and once the whistle is blown, they must move around the square whilst simultaneously dribbling the ball. Due care must be taken so as not to go outside the square, and also to avoid bumping into other players. With a few attempts this drill will become easier and more efficient, and as a result of this, the close control and dribbling of the players will greatly improve.

Circle Passing

This is a great indoor soccer drill to improve communication and teamwork between the players. Make a circle with about 5 people standing at equal distances from each other. There should be 2-3 players standing behind each of these 5 players at all of those 5 spots. The player who passes the ball to the next player must run outside the circle and stand behind the line at the spot that he has passed to. This pattern has to be followed by everyone. Thus, everyone is following the passes that they make. There are many variations to this game as more soccer's can be introduced, or some defenders can be placed within the circle in order to block the pass. Learn more on the various soccer positions.

Give and Go

This drill is also known as one touch passing. Or a 'one-two'. This is a great exercise for indoor soccer as it helps improve the shooting ability of a player without having much time to control the ball. It builds instincts and basic technique. There are two players involved in this drill. The first one passes the ball to the second player and immediately runs forward. The second player takes only a single touch and lays the ball in the path of the first player. The first player must then shoot for goal without breaking his stride. This is a move that you will commonly see in many soccer matches.

Goalkeeper pointers for the indoor game:

Low and Lower. With a goal only six feet high, only the youngest and smallest goalkeepers need to worry about getting beat over the top. Many shots are from close in and along the ground -- the goalkeeper needs to cover as much of that area as possible. Keep the knees bent, hands down and wide, and the head up. This is the same position you take up once you close down an attacker on a breakaway.

Be Patient on Breakaways. The penalty area, where the keeper is allowed to use their hands, is much smaller indoors than out. If you leave the line too soon, you'll run out of space and quickly become stranded. Time your run to meet the attacker a yard or so inside the top of the area.

Use Your Feet. The small penalty area also means that the keeper needs to leave that area more often to sweep up stray balls. Don't sit on the line! Use the opportunity to get involved and work on those footskills -- clear long balls, be available for back passes, and be part of the game.

Coordinate with Your Defense. Due to the lack of an offside rule, you will face many more breakaways and 2v1 situations. Make sure you and your defense are on the same page -- if there are two attackers and only one defender, should the defender take the ball carrier or play the pass? Personally, I prefer to have the defender cover the pass, since I feel indoors I can cover the entire net and stop the shot. This is the opposite of what I ask my defenders to do outdoors. Which way you go is personal preference, but make sure you talk about it first.

Coaching soccer indoors part 1: Games and drills to use in a small gym

It won't be long before some of us are moving our coaching sessions indoors for the winter.

But indoor soccer coaching poses its own unique challenges. Obviously there's less room so some of the games and drills you use outdoors simply won't work. On the other hand, there are benefits from training indoors. One of them is the surface. It's good for skill development to practice on a nice smooth floor rather than a bumpy and sometimes muddy field.

I'll suggest how you maximize the benefits and minimize the problems associated with indoor coaching in a short series of articles.

To get you started, this article suggests some simple games that always work well in a small gym.

Warm up with the Wall Game

Place your kids in the center of the gym. Identify the four walls as North, South, East and West (with very young children you could use colors or place different objects at each wall).

Tell them "I will call out a name of a wall and you have to run to it, touch it and run back". You could make anyone who runs to the wrong wall perform a penalty such as press-ups but please don't make the last one back perform a penalty – it's not fair on the slower kids.

Variations

- Ask the kids to skip, sideways run, etc (but not run backwards – falling over on a hard floor hurts!)
- Give the walls numbers rather than names
- Point to wall; call a different one (always works!!)
- Tell them to run to the opposite wall (you call 'North', they have to run to the 'South' wall)
- Dribble a ball to the wall and back

More indoor games

Shuttle races and relays - up until the age of 13 or 14 you can adequately stretch kids' muscles with basic shuttle races or relays. If you make sure they include elements that involve turning, bending, acceleration and stopping they will also improve aerobic fitness. A big plus is that kids love the competitive element.

Start without a ball and then get your kids to do the runs with a ball at their feet.

Spiders and bugs - divide your children into two equal teams. Each team should stand alongside the center line about two yards apart and facing towards the ends of the gym. Name one team Spiders and one team Bugs (or anything else). When you call 'Spiders!' or 'Bugs!' that team has to sprint for the end line nearest them. The other team tries to tag them. Anyone who is tagged joins the other team. Continue until there are only a couple of children left who haven't been tagged. Don't carry on until they are all exhausted!).

Basketball/netball - great for encouraging support play and communication. Just make sure the kids play to the rules!

3v1 keepaway - when the three make a mistake or get to a certain number of passes bring in the next set of three players. Make it competitive by seeing how many passes each team can string together.

How to coach soccer indoors

With cold winter days and nights upon us, many of you will be moving your coaching sessions indoors and enjoying the two big benefits associated with indoor coaching:

1. The playing surface. Playing soccer on a smooth floor encourages your players to adopt a quick passing style of play and the reduced space helps players improve their quickness, first touch and movement off the ball.

And because your players know that their attempts at creativity are not going to be thwarted by a muddy, bumpy pitch, they will be more inclined to show off (i.e., improve) their skills.

2. Attendance, cancellations and instruction. Because coaching indoors is much more child-friendly (do you really want to make your players shiver outside on freezing winter evenings?) you will have much better attendance.

There is also no risk of last-minute cancellations due to the weather and you can allow more time for discussions and instruction because you aren't constantly having to keep players moving to stay warm.

In today's article, I'll describe some of the games I've used with six to 10-year-old players in a sports hall.

The Wall Game - makes your players listen!

Players stand in the center of the sports hall.

Create a safety zone by placing flat cones six feet away from the walls then identify the walls as north, south, east and west (with very young children you could use colors or place different objects at each wall).

Tell them: "I will call out a name of a wall and you have to run towards the wall, stop at the safety line and run back."

Note: The safety line is important - it's not safe to ask players to run towards a wall and touch it.

Variations

- Ask your players to skip, run sideways, hop, crawl, etc.
- Give the walls numbers rather than names.
- Point to wall but call a different one.
- Tell them to run to the opposite wall (you call "north", they have to run to the "south" wall)
- Dribble a ball to the safety line and back.

Blob Tag - works on flexibility, movement and co-ordination

All the players except three have a ball.

The three without a ball form a chain (the "blob") by holding hands.

The players dribble around the sports hall trying to avoid having their ball kicked away by the blob.

If a player's ball is kicked away, he/she joins the blob.

Once the chain has six or more players, break it into two smaller chains.

The last player dribbling is the winner.

Make yourself heard!

The acoustics of most sports halls can make it hard to make yourself heard while a game is in progress but don't be tempted to shout.

Call your players to you, make sure they don't have a ball to play with and wait until they are quiet before you speak. If anyone starts chatting, stop talking and wait for silence.

2v2 War - works on teamwork, attacking, defending and shooting

Place a small, pop-up goal at both ends of the hall.

Divide your players into two teams of four and give each player a number, 1 to 4.

Each team stands by the goal it is going to defend.

Call out two numbers and roll a ball into the playing area. The two players with that number run out and play a 2v2 game.

When one pair of players score a goal, they get a point for their team.

Each 2v2 match lasts for two minutes or until a goal is scored.

The first team to get 10 points wins.

Basketball/netball - great for encouraging support play and communication

Play 5v5 or 6v6 and apply a four-second rule (players must shoot or pass in four seconds or less).

Want to play better soccer? Then play futsal instead!

What is futsal? Futsal is usually played indoors between two teams of five players, one of which is the goalkeeper. In addition each team may have a number of substitutes.

Futsal is the "perfectly designed game" to develop soccer talent. Futsal that make it the perfect tool for deep practice—and developing that all-important myelin. Because it is played on a smaller scale, with fewer players and a ball that has 30% less bounce, it naturally provides players with "perfect feedback and lots of quality reps." Although the fundamentals are the same, the significant differences between Futsal and outdoor soccer make it the ideal setting for maximum learning with minimal coaching.

Unlike some other forms of indoor ball (often has out-of bounds), the field is delimited by lines, and not nets or boards which the ball may be played off. The ball used is smaller, heavier and much less bouncier..... so promotes better ball control skills as well as passing on the ground. Furthermore the smaller area of play further forces players to improve their skills and decision making.

The character of this game is outdoor soccer played indoors. It is played in soccer's fundamental shape, which the 4 v 4 format is so good at presenting.

The futsal ball is smaller and heavier than the outdoor soccer ball and has dampened bounce. Players U12 and younger play with a ball about the size of a size 3 outdoor ball. U13 players and above play with a ball approximating a size 4 outdoor ball. Since the court surface is usually fast and the space small, these modified balls scale the game to the size of the court remarkably well. The smaller circumference makes precision touch and the sweet spot on the ball more challenging to hit.

The rules of the game are similar to soccer with some friendly modifications that fit the game to the smaller space. Throw-ins are replaced by kick-ins and the goal kick is replaced by a goal clearance. The goal clearance is a restart by the keeper using his hands to put the ball back in play with restrictions similar to those of the outdoor soccer goal kick.

Substitutions are made on the fly, including the keeper. Most importantly, the game is played with touchlines and goal lines, with all the consequences that go with them. Simply put, a bad play with the ball may result in the ball leaving the field of play with the resulting loss of possession being the consequence.

This game is all about skill and control. Rough play is discouraged, with shoulder charges and slide tackles forbidden. Fouls are tracked and teams penalized for playing too roughly. As in basketball, a sanction is placed on a team after 5 fouls have been assessed in each half. In futsal, this sanction takes the form of a revised free kick process. Only the goalkeeper may defend the goal during the taking of the kick. The offending team loses the privilege of their wall and the ball is spotted on the second penalty spot 10 meters from the goal. As you can see, this is a strong deterrent to rough play and I have rarely seen a game get to this point with young players.

Why play futsal?

"In a 40 minute Futsal match, a field player on a team using a dynamic system of play...will touch the ball once every 29.5 seconds . . . that's just over 80 possessions per player per match, if the player plays the entire match. This compares to only 30 to 40 possessions per player in a full 90 minute outdoor soccer match."

Futsal is great for young players. It provides numerous ball touches in a short period of time and it presents many of the fundamental tactical patterns of the big soccer game. The game contains many of the challenges faced in the final third of the field and provides repeated opportunities to finish.

Futsal provides a lot of repetition and immediate consequences for poor execution. A missed tackle in small sided soccer may not result in a goal straightaway but in futsal mistakes are usually punished swiftly and heavily.

Conversely, futsal also reinforces good play with tangible results, mostly shots and goals.

In most futsal training sessions, the 4 v 4 format is often used. The 4 v 4 game can present all the primary combination plays, shape (the diamond) plus it emphasizes offensive and defensive support, but most importantly - immediate transition.

Futsal can be a brutally honest game. It will isolate and expose your team's deficiencies. It will also showcase your team's strengths. The game is fast and numerous finishing opportunities are offered when played well. Technical and tactical speed are emphasized and rewarded. A bad touch or a slow recovery will almost always result with a loss of possession. Quite frequently the lesson is driven home with a goal scored by the opposition. These lessons are not easily forgotten.

The satisfying thing about this game is that these lessons are quickly learned and that players quickly adjust themselves to the game's demands.

Coaching experts have often stressed that the game is the best teacher. By putting players in the learning situations provided by futsal the results of their decisions and their technical execution will educate them with a minimum of coaching involvement.

Play futsal and your players will emerge as more skillful soccer players - guaranteed!

If a team has a five-goal lead the opposing team may add one extra player.

1 minute for half time

GK cannot play by hand ANY ball played back to them including head and chest.

Only one pass back to the GK per possession. Unless the ball crosses the half way line or is touched by an opponent.

Substitutions - Free substitutions are made "on the fly". Player can only enter or leave the game in the substitution areas immediately in front of their respective benches, and a player may only enter a game after the player they are replacing

has left the field. Failure to do so results in a caution and an indirect free kick is taken from where the ball was situated when the game was stopped to caution the player.

The GK is allowed to slide in an attempt to clear the ball, if in referees' judgment; his slide is an attempt only to make contact with the ball, not the opponent. If GK slid is reckless (a foot in air, a hook, rolling tackle) it is a foul and possibly a card-able offense.

Coaching futsal:

Replace players often to get the most of their energy and coach them while they are out.

Futsal is not kick and chase. It is about moving and getting close to the goal.

When your team has possession all players attack. Immediately when the ball is lost all players defend.

Players that don't move get in a dead zone. If a coach perceives a player in a dead zone the coach should replace the player immediately and talk to him. Either the player is tired or don't understand the game.

Tell your players to NEVER give up: a goal can be scored in 2 seconds in Futsal. If they think that the game is lost because you are losing by 5 or 6 goals you are mistaken.

Use the goalie as the fifth outfield player whenever possible. If an opposing player goes after the goalie the goalie passes to an open player. If the goalie can't pass he can kick to get rid of the ball after 4 seconds of possession.

When players see the clock on the last minute they attack desperately. If that happens, the odds are that they will get scored against. This tactics of over committing should be used only when the game or tournament is completely lost.

Futsal is dynamic and so is marking players. A front player walking back slowly should be replaced immediately.

Goalies should roll the ball as close to the floor as possible because it is easier for the player receiving the ball to control.

The faster the ball is played back in after it goes out the better it is for your team.

Ball watching is OK! Players should have the eye on the ball as close to 100% of the time as possible.

Don't let your players routinely control the ball with the side of the feet. In Futsal the ball is controlled with the bottom of the feet.

There is no time in Futsal for getting upset. Getting upset with a play or the referee may cost your team dearly. If you don't have the focus the odds are that your team will suffer.

Futsal is all about skills; it is not a physical game. Physical players need to focus on the game.

When attacking, players should be moving constantly. Rotation is highly desirable. When attacking, players need to be constantly looking for open space.

Players need to place the ball on the line and have their body outside the field to restart a play after the ball goes out of the boundaries.

The goalie must use his hands for a goal clearance.

The opponent player should allow 5 yards in a kick in play.

When the goalie throws the ball it must hit his own court or a second player before it hits the opposing court.

There are no shoulder charges or sliding tackles in futsal.

Players can't play the ball if they are not standing up (i.e. if they are on the floor)

Coaching soccer indoors: a practice plan for U11s

An indoor practice plan for U11 or younger.

As the players arrive have them pair up and begin passing the ball back and forth. The person making the pass must move to another spot. The person receiving must bring the ball under control within one step before returning it. Emphasize "pass and move", "pass and move" throughout the exercise, and stop only to correct fundamentals in both the push pass and the reception.

Continue this exercise for 5 minutes after all the players have arrived, then give a 3 minute water break.

During the break, lay out cones to make a square in the middle of the playing area. Now start the dribbling exercise known to as the "square dance":

Every player has a ball and moves about within the square, keeping the ball under control and avoiding running into other players.

Stop a couple of times and show your players a couple of simple moves such as the drag back turn or scissors. Ask them to carry on dribbling and practice these moves.

End the exercise by making them identify and explode into spaces. I usually tell them make one of the new moves, find a space, and then explode into it. And make sure they keep the ball under control when they explode...that's the point after all!

Now have everyone find a spot along the walls. Have them move back 10-15 feet and begin kicking the ball off the wall, controlling the return so they can play it with the next touch. Do not be concerned if every knock to the wall is not a push pass or a "ground ball"---if they hit a flier, the return will be a difficult ball to control, and they'll see plenty of those in a game, so let them work on controlling everything. Take about 10 minutes for this exercise, which should give you time to get around to each player and work on either kicking or control fundamentals as needed individually.

Finish this off by having them dribble with speed across the floor, hit a ball to the wall while they are still about 10-15 feet away, then control and turn with the ball that comes back to them. Make them go with speed, and work on the fundamental of receiving and turning with the ball. You can do this for about 5 minutes.

They'll need a break now!

Next comes 1 v 1 work for about 10-15 minutes.

I like to make up two teams of numbered players (lets say 6 to a side, each numbered 1 through 6).

I line them up along the wall, roll out a ball, call out the numbers and they compete to win the ball, take on the other player, then the goalkeeper.

I can control this exercise by where I roll the ball, who I match up with who, whether I play goalkeeper or use my regular goalkeeper, and by calling more than one number at a time. We usually work up to 3 v 3.

If one of your players is in goal, tell them not to dive for the ball. Indoor pitches are very, very hard.

Finally, finish off with a "scrimmage". I don't usually give a break between the numbers game and the scrimmage because they have alternated playing with rest (I allow them to drink when their number hasn't been called), and they are already

divided into teams. Sometimes I just yell out "everyone plays" and get out of the way. You should have about 5-10 minutes left in an hour session for the scrimmage.

This is an excellent basic indoor practice which covers virtually all the skills needed to play the game

Improve receiving skills: An indoor practice plan for U11 or younger.

It is so important that all your players can receive a pass properly you really need to spend a few minutes in every practice session watching how they do it and giving feedback to individual players or the group as whole.

- Receive on one foot pass with the other.
- Is the player alert and playing on their toes, do they look ready to react to the movement of the ball?
- Does the player move into the line of the ball early? Any delay in reacting will make control more difficult.
- They should get themselves right across the line of the ball and not end up chasing after it.
- Concentration is vital, do they keep their head steady and watch the movement of the ball carefully?
- If the pass is under-hit do they move quickly down the line of the ball to meet it?
- To cushion the ball the foot needs to be off ground and withdrawn at the moment of contact soft ankle.
- Check that they use the inside area, or top of outside of the foot to make a controlling touch on ground pass.
- Contact should be with the horizontal mid-line of the ball or above to prevent it skipping up on 1st touch.
- To wedge the ball sweep across the top of it with the inside or outside of the foot.
- With a high ball the player should make an early decision on what surface they will use to control it.
- Make sure they keep their eyes open and observe the flight of the ball.
- Chest, thigh, instep & outside of foot - relax and withdraw surface on contact to cushion the ball.
- The ball should not be allowed to bounce, move along line of ball to meet it as early as possible.
- If under pressure does the player redirect ball into space on first touch and pass it on early?

Indoor soccer - No goals? No problem

Recently, I took my players indoors to train and found there were no soccer goals available, just a big open space marked out as a basketball court with a few wooden benches dotted around the edges.

I had nine players. We played 3 v 3 with 3 teams so that one team was always resting. We used the benches as goals by lying each bench on its side under the baskets. The boundaries for the game were the outside lines of the basketball court.

The rules to the game were simple. Each game lasts three minutes. Anytime the ball goes out of bounds, the game restarts futsal style with a kick in. The kick in starts by a player stopping the ball with her hand and then passing the ball into the playing area. I imposed a four second rule (as in futsal) to encourage quick decision making and good movement. To score a goal, the ball has to hit the front of the bench. If a goal is scored the team that scores the goal gets the ball and immediately attacks in the other direction. At the end of the three-minute period whichever team has scored more goals wins and stays on. The losing team switches with the resting team for the next game. In the case of a tie, the team that last won stays on (this creates the situation where you have to beat the champion to become the champion).

For this to work best the key is to use a futsal ball instead of a regular soccer ball. On a gym floor, a regular soccer ball is too bouncy which results in it being too difficult to control. A futsal ball has a much lower bounce and works much better indoors than a soccer ball. It discourages children from simply hoofing the ball towards the opponents goal and encourages quick short passing instead - exactly what you want to see on the soccer field.

This game can be played anywhere there is some open floor space. By playing three a side in three minute bursts your players can afford to work really hard and playing 3v3 stops them 'hiding' as everyone is in the game all the time. It's a great cardiovascular workout.

Also, there are the tactical aspects to the game. The "defending champions" can play differently in the last minute of the game as they only need a draw to stay on.

If one team is stronger than the other two teams you can either switch the teams around or just let it go because the longer they stay on the more tired they will become which will equal out the differences in the teams.

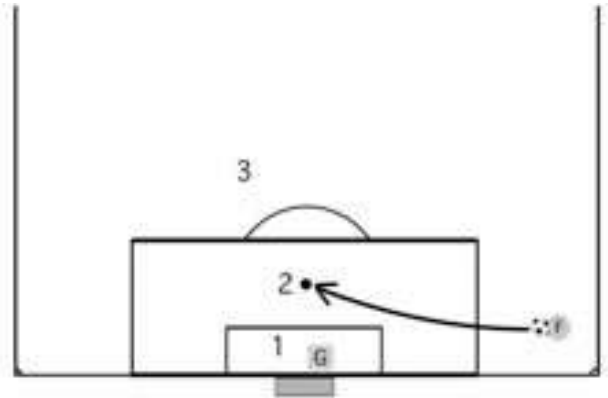
This is a great game for the players to work hard, have a lot of fun and learn more about becoming better soccer players.

Soccer Quizzes and Homework:

Coach Carl's Soccer Quiz

1) Your forward F has made a run down the left flank into the crossing zone. He is now ready to cross the ball. In which **position should you be in**, at the time he is striking the ball, to receive the cross?

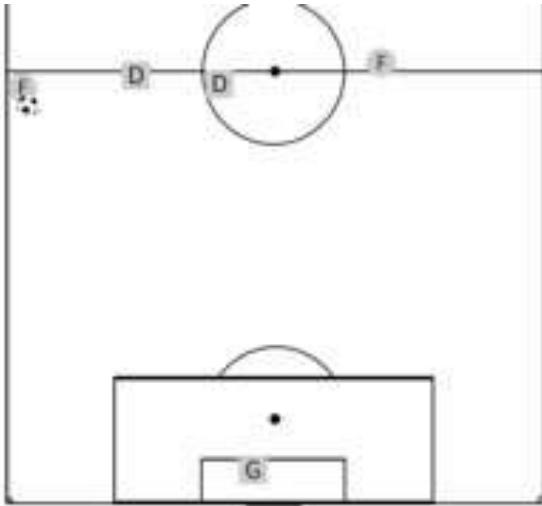
- Position 2 because you are in a good position to perform a header.
- Position 1 because you want to be as close to the goal as possible.
- Position 3 because you will be moving forward to receive the cross and will then be able to strike the ball with power.
- Position 1 because of the potential photo shot.



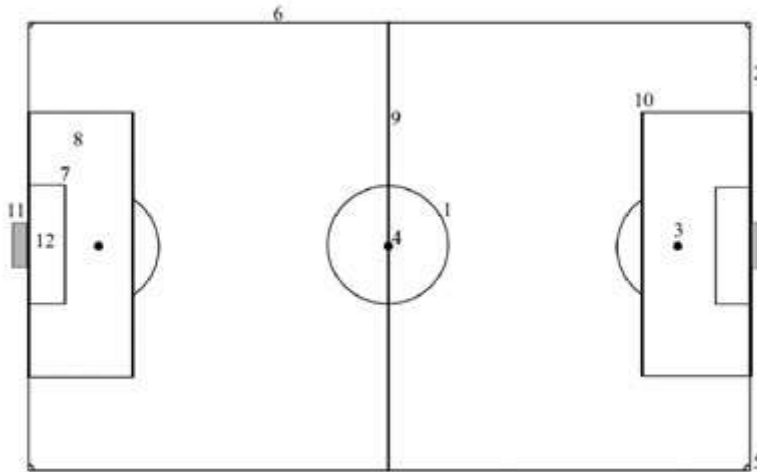
2) You are the right forward and have received the ball in open space. Your first touch was forward to goal and you have a step on the nearest defender. The second defender is also chasing you. You should:

- Beat the defenders with your dribble to the penalty spot and rip a shot at goal.
- Slow the ball down to let your other teammates catch up.
- Take the ball quickly to the crossing zone and cross the ball to the penalty spot.
- Drop the ball back to a midfielder to "set things up" for a better opportunity.

3 ___ 6 yard line



- 6 ___ goal
- ___ goal box
- mid line
- ___ penalty box
- ___ side line
- spot for corner kick
- ___ spot for kick off
- spot for penalty kick
- ___ the 18



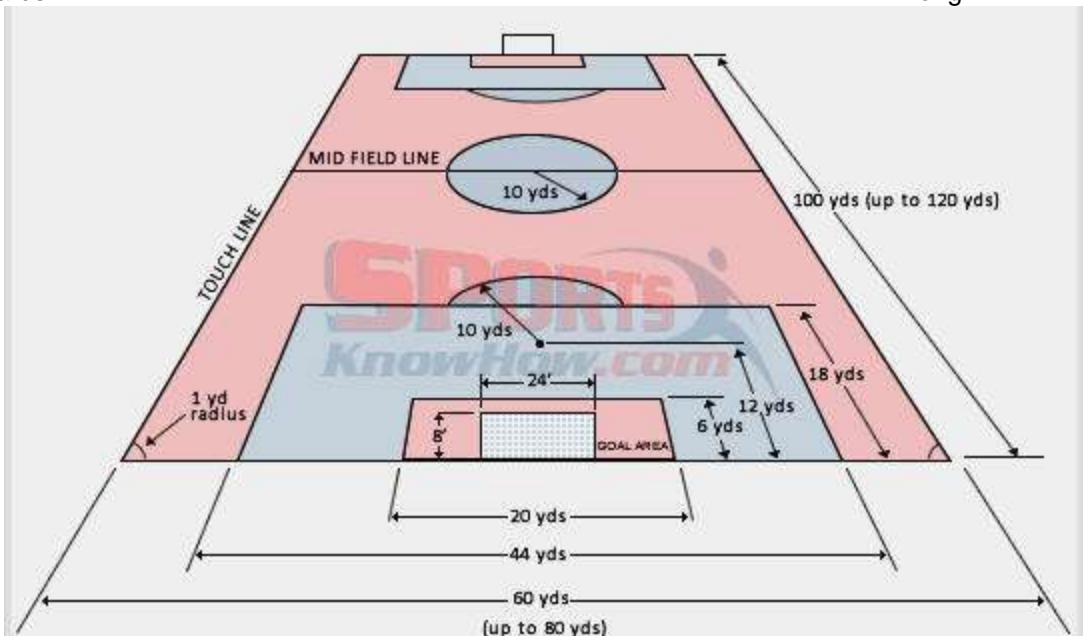
- 4 ___ center circle
- 5 ___ end line
- 7 ___
- 8 ___
- 9 ___
- 10 ___
- 11 ___
- 12 ___
- 13 ___
- 14 ___

long.

Coach Carl's Soccer Quiz

True or False:

- T or F: The soccer field is 100 yards
- T or F: The goal is 8 feet high x 24 feet in length.
- T or F: The soccer field is 55-75 yards wide.
- T or F: The penalty box is 44 x 18 yards.
- T or F: The center circle is 10 yards in diameter.
- T or F: The corner arcs are 1 yard in radius.
- T or F: The goal box is 20 x 6 yards.
- T or F: Player may step on the touch line to throw the ball in.
- T or F: Goalie can pick up ball to reposition after initial placement for goal kick.
- T or F: The arc is 10 yards



from the PK spot.

25) T or F: The arc farthest from the goal line is 22 yards out.

27) T or F: The penalty spot is 12 yards from goal.

26) T or F: A goal cannot be scored directly by a throw in or a goal kick but can with a corner kick.

28) T or F: You cannot be called "off sides" on a throw during a throw in or corner kick.

Bonus: T or F: A corner kick is also awarded if the team with a throw-in in a defensive area throws the ball into their own goal without the ball having been touched by any player.

29) You have a breakaway up the middle of the field to the opponents goal. The goalie does not come out and stays on his line. You want to:

a) Cut in front of the defender to eliminate the pursuing defender's angle of pursuit. deception and pass the ball into goal to one side of the goalie. the ball with laces as hard as you can.

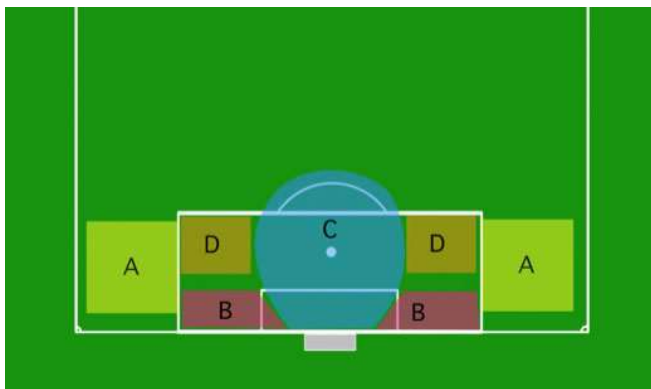
b.

30) The ball in the picture has moved from left to right as it is moving out of the field of play. It has rolled out of bounds.

True or b) False



b) Use
c) Hit
d) a &
play. It
a)



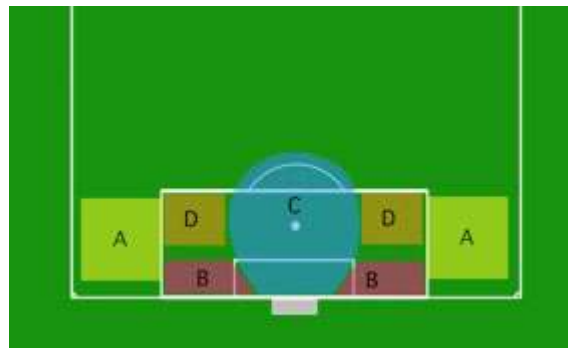
31) In the figure to the left,

Zone A is: a) The scoring zone. b) The crossing zone. c) The lunch area. d) The shooting zone.

32) Zone B is: a) The scoring zone. b) The centering zone. c) The lunch area. d) The shooting zone.

33) Zone C is: a) The bending zone. b) The crossing zone. c) The scoring zone. d) The centering zone.

Coach Carl's Soccer Quiz3



Use the figure above for the following questions:

Answer T (true) or F (false).

You are on offense with the ball in your attacking 3rd of the field:

In area A, you should:

34) Cross the ball to the penalty spot. T F

35) Shoot on goal. T F

36) Pass the ball back to midfield T F

37) Adjust your hair T F

In area B, you should:

38) Shoot on goal. T F

Pass the ball back to midfield T F

Center the ball T F

Bend the ball into the far post T F

In C, you should:

Cross the ball to the penalty spot. T F

Shoot on goal. T F

Pass the ball back to midfield T F 45) Grab your leg and scream

F

In D, you should:

Cross the ball to the penalty spot. T F

Bend the ball into the far post T F

Pass the ball back to midfield T F

49) Smile for the camera T F



39)

40)

41)

42)

43)

44)

foul T

46)

47)

48)

In the middle 3rd of the field, you should: 50) Try to advance the ball in to the attacking 3rd T F

51) Balance risk and caution. T F 52) Work on switching fields during an attack T F

In the attacking 3rd, you should: 53) Not take risks for fear of losing the ball. T F

54) Use your moves to beat a defender. T F

55) Try to get the ball into the scoring zone T F

In the defensive 3rd of the field, you should:

56) Try to beat the opponent's forwards with your dribble. T F

57) When under pressure, pass the ball through the scoring zone. T F

58) Use your Maradona move to beat the opponent. T F

59) Use one and two-touch play to get the ball out of your zone T F

Coach Carl's Soccer Quiz4



The opposing team has just lost possession of the ball over the touch line into a colored zone. You are throwing the ball in and are attacking the goal to the right (your goalie is in zone A).

In zone A you should:

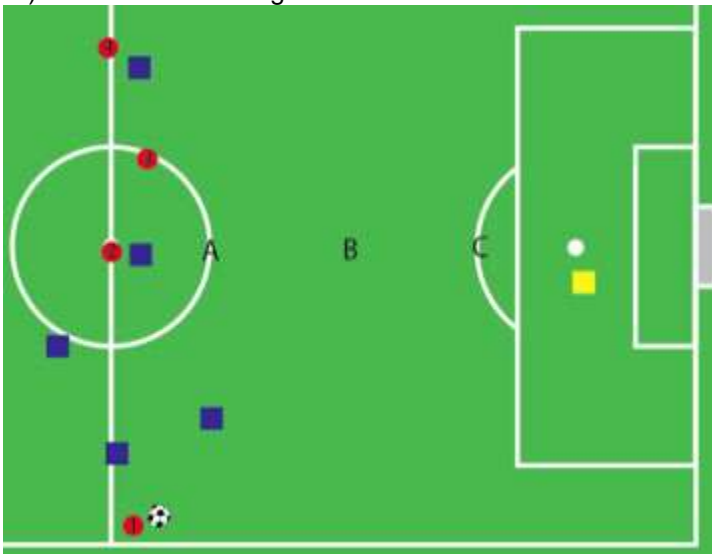
- 60) Throw the ball back to your own goalie T F
- 61) Throw the ball down the touch line T F

In zone B you should:

- 62) Run the play 1,2,3,4 T F
- 63) Always throw down the touch line. T F

In zone C, you should:

- 64) Run the play 1,2,3,4 T F
- 65) Throw back to midfield for a cross T F
- 66) Throw the ball into the scoring zone T F
- 67) Throw the ball along the end line T F



Use the diagram to the above to answer the following questions.

Your Right midfielder (1) has just crossed midfield with the ball during an offensive attack. Your center forward (2), Left forward (3), and Left Midfielder (4), are all joining the attack. The center midfielder is being closely man marked by Sam, the fastest and most highly skilled defender in the conference. The opponent's sweeper has just committed to the ball.

What should the offense do?

- 68) The right midfielder (1) should launch an early cross to A. T F
- 69) The right midfielder (1) should launch an early cross to B. T F
- 70) The right midfielder (1) should launch an early cross to C. T F
- 71) The center forward (2) should run straight ahead to receive the ball. T F
- 72) The center forward (2) should run to his left to clear space for the left forward (3). T F
- 73) The left forward (3) should run to B to receive the cross. T F

- 74) The left midfielder (4) should continue his run to the far post. T F
 75) The right midfielder should beat both defenders by dribbling into the scoring zone T F
 76) The right midfielder should shoot from 50 yds out because the goalie is out T F

Coach Carl's Soccer Quiz5

On our set goal kick play:

- 77) The defenders are lined up 12 yards from end line T F
 78) The forwards are on the midfield line T F
 79) The wide midfielders should be 40 yards out from end line T F
 80) The wide F and D should as wide as the edge of the penalty box T F
 81) The 2nd pass should be to the wide midfielder T F
 82) The wide midfielder acts as a wall passer T F
 Throw in play 1,2,3,4.
 83) Option 1 is to the wide forward down the line T F
 84) Option 2 is to a center midfielder T F
 85) Option 3 switches the field of play T F
 86) Option 4 is a waste of time and should be seldom used T F
 We have won a free kick 40 yards out and the kicker calls play "21"
 87) "21" means that the kick will be struck over the defensive line to the left T F
 88) He wants the forwards to go wide so that he can pass it to them T F
 89) He wants the other center midfielder to play a 2 on 1 and then cross T F

When we take a corner kick:

- 90) We prefer out swingers T F
 91) We move up one of our large defenders into the black hole T F.
 92) Usually will have our outside midfielder take the kick T F
 93) Try to play the ball to the far post T F
 94) Have our 2 CM's as arc players T F

When we defend a corner kick:

- 95) The outside mid closest to the ball acts as the bullet player T F
 96) We have our RD on our R post and the LD on the L post T F
 97) Have our RCM, CD, and LCM all at the front of the goal box T F
 98) When we send the bullet player, we leave our far post empty T F
 99) We place our CF high on the sideline closest to the kick T F
 100) We place our RF and LF at the top of the penalty box T F

(All questions are based on the FIFA outdoor game of soccer.)

1. How many rules are there in the soccer rule book?
2. How far is the penalty spot from the goal?
3. What are the dimensions of the Penalty Area? Goal Area?
4. What is the radius of the Center Circle? Penalty Arc? Corner Arc?
5. What is the height of the Goal's Crossbar?
6. What is the width of the Goal?
7. If during the normal course of play, the ball hits the referee and goes into the goal, is it a goal?
8. If the ball is on the line, is it in or out of play?
9. The ball is kicked directly into the goal from the kickoff, is it a goal?
10. The ball goes into the goal directly from a throw-in, is it a goal?
11. The ball goes into the goal directly from a goal kick, is it a goal?
12. The ball goes into the goal directly from a corner kick, is it a goal?
13. Can a player be called offside in their own half of the field?
14. Can a player be offside if the ball is received directly from a throw-in?
15. Can a player be offside if the ball is received directly from a corner kick?
16. Can a goal be scored directly from an indirect free kick?
17. A free kick is about to be taken, the referee's arm is extended straight up, is the kick indirect or direct?
18. A player takes a penalty kick, the ball hits the crossbar and returns to the same player, who kicks the ball into the net. Is it a goal?

Answers

1. 17. 2. 12 yards. 3. 18 yards x 44 yards. 20 yards x 6 yards. 4. 10 yards. 10 yards. 5 feet. 5. 8 feet. 6. 8 yards. 7. Yes. The referee is part of the field of play. 8. In play. The entire ball must be over the line to be out of play. 9. No. A goal may not be scored directly from a kickoff. 10. No. A goal may not be scored directly from a throw-in. 11. No. A goal may not be scored directly from a goal kick. 12. Yes. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick. 13. No. You can only be offside in your opponents half. 14. No. A player cannot be offside if the ball is received directly from a throw-in. 15. No. A player cannot be offside if the ball is received directly from a corner kick. 16. No. Indirect means a second player (from either team) must touch the ball before a goal can be scored. 17. Indirect. The referee's arm will remain raised until the ball is touched by a second player. Another hint to remember: Imagine the referee's arm is a big letter "i" for "indirect". 18. No. The ball must be touched by a second player before the kicker can touch it again.

Quiz #6:

How much do you know about the Laws of the game? The questions below (and the answers!) are based on the **Laws of The Game according to FIFA** - the game's governing body.

Mini soccer is played to a modified set of rules and some leagues have their own rules, such as distance from free kicks and where goal kicks are taken from. But all coaches (even coaches of U6s) should have at least a working knowledge of FIFA's Laws of the Game.

Answers and explanations are at the bottom but don't look at them until you've finished the quiz.

1. Which piece of equipment do players not have to wear?

- a) Soccer boots/cleats
- b) Shorts
- c) Shirt/jersey
- d) Shin pads

2. If a defender passes back to her own goalkeeper and she picks the ball up, what should the referee award?

- a) Goal kick
- b) Penalty kick
- c) Corner kick
- d) Indirect free kick

3. How much of the ball must cross the line before the ball is out of play or a goal is scored?

- a) A quarter
- b) A half
- c) Three quarters
- d) All of it

4. Which of these would not automatically contribute towards stoppage time at the end of a match?

- a) Taking a penalty kick
- b) Receiving treatment on pitch for an injury
- c) A substitution being made
- d) Time wasting by a player

5. Player A scores a goal directly from an indirect free kick. The referee should:

- a) Allow the goal
- b) Have the free kick retaken
- c) Award a goal kick
- d) Award an indirect free kick to team B

6. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

- a) True
- b) False

7. The team that wins the toss prior to the start of a match takes the kick off at the start of the second half.

- a) True
- b) False

8. Team A is awarded a corner kick. Before the kick is taken, a player from team A, who is standing in the penalty box, pushes a player from team B in the back. Should the referee award a free kick to team B?

- a) Yes
- b) No

9. Is it an offence to be in an offside position?

a) Yes

b) No

10. When a dropped ball is awarded, only one person from each team may participate in the restart method of a dropped ball.

a) True

b) False

Answers

1. a)

The basic compulsory equipment of a player comprises the following items:

- A jersey or shirt with sleeves - if undergarments are worn, the color of the sleeve must be the same main color as the sleeve of the jersey or shirt.
- Shorts - if undershorts or tights are worn, they must be of the same main color as the shorts.
- Stockings.
- Shinguards.
- Footwear - but footwear doesn't necessarily mean boot/cleats. You could play in high heels if you wanted too!

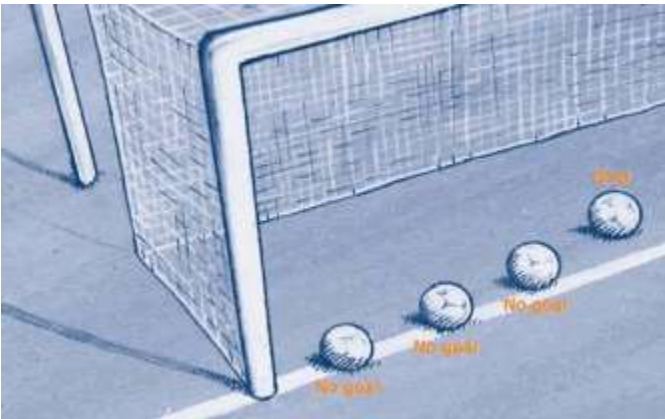
2. d)

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside his own penalty area, commits any of the following four offences:

- Controls the ball with his hands for more than six seconds before releasing it from his possession.
- Touches the ball again with his hands after he has released it from his possession and before it has touched another player.
- Touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team mate.
- Touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team mate.

3. d)

All of the ball must be over the line!



4. a)

Allowance is made for all time lost through:

- Substitutions.
- Assessment of injury to players.
- Removal of injured players from the field of play for treatment.
- Wasting time.

The referee could add time on to compensate for the time lost in taking a penalty kick but he doesn't have to.

5. c)

If an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded.

6. a)

A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in. If a ball is thrown directly into the goal, the referee must award a goal kick.

7. a)

The team that wins the toss decides which goal it will attack in the first half of the match and the other team takes the kick-off to start the match. So the team that wins the toss takes the kick-off to start the second half of the match.

8. b)

The ball is not in play so a free kick cannot be awarded. However, the player could be cautioned.

9. b)

It is not an offence to be in an offside position. A player in an offside position is only penalized if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one of his team, he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:

- Interfering with play.
- Interfering with an opponent.
- Gaining an advantage by being in that position.

10. b)

Law 8 states that any player may challenge for the ball. There is no minimum or maximum number of players required to contest a dropped ball. The referee can't decide who may or may not contest a dropped ball.

If you scored 10/10 - well done! If you scored between seven and 10, that's good too. Any less than seven and you really need to do some homework!

Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 1

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Dribbling, Foundation*

Type *Tap the ball between your feet (Bobbling).*

Goal *How many times can you tap the ball between your feet in 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *Bend your knees; upper body down; use the inside of feet; keep feet close to body.*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....
Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 2

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Juggling*

Type *Keep the ball in the air as long as possible (no bounces)*

Goal *How many times can you consecutively touch the ball while it is in the air?*

Coaching points *Use all parts of your body; no hands; stay relaxed; use controlled touches; you may start with the ball in your hands*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....
Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 3

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Dribbling, ball control*

Type *Rake the ball side to side*

Goal *How many times can you rake the ball in the 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *Put one foot on the ball, CROSS your legs and roll the ball, stop it with the other foot, rake the ball back across your body with the foot that stopped it; repeat*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....
Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 4

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Dribbling, ball control*

Type *Push forward, pull back*

Challenge *How many times can you pull the ball back in the 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *Begin with the foundation (tick-tocs); when ready, push/pass the ball forward slightly away from you with one foot; put other foot on the ball and pull it back toward your body; count one. Do a few foundation touches and repeat the same process, pulling the ball back with the other foot. Always facing one direction, continue to alternate and count every pull-back.*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....
Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 5

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Dribbling, ball control/change of direction*

Movement *Inside-outside touches moving side to side*

Challenge *How many times can you change direction in 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *Facing one way the entire time (or until you run out of room), (1a) Touch/cut the ball across your body with the inside of your right foot; (2a)immediately push the ball to your left side with the outside of your left foot; as quickly as possible, (1b) cut/touch the ball back across your body with the inside of your left foot; (2b) immediately push the ball to your right side with the outside of your right foot; repeat from step (1a). stay on your toes and get low when you change direction; count every time you change direction*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....

Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 6

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Dribbling, ball control/change of direction*

Movement *Beckenbauer*

Challenge *How many times can perform the Beckenbauer in 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *(1) Begin with 3 foundation touches, or tic-tocs, push the ball forward with the left foot then pull the ball back straight behind you with the right foot; (2) leaning slightly forward, touch the ball with the inside of the right foot to the left side of your body [this movement should be done behind your left leg]; (3) quickly turn to get the ball and repeat from step 1 using opposite feet.*

In other words, pull the ball back and touch the ball behind your body or standing leg.

.....

Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 7

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Moves; deception*

Movement *Scissor*

Challenge *How many times can perform the Scissor in 30 seconds?*

Coaching points

THE MOVE: *(1) Standing behind the ball and with your feet apart, drag your right foot toward your left foot; (2) move your right foot around the front of the ball and back to the right side; (3) your body-weight should be on your right foot now*

KEY POINTS: *keep your moving foot close to the ground, shift your weight, bend your knee and DO NOT simply kick your foot around the ball.*

THE DRILL: *Touch the ball across your body with your right foot, then scissor with your right foot; immediately touch the ball across your body with your left foot, then scissor with your left foot; repeat. Count every scissor; keep the ball moving.*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....

Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 8

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Foot speed/control*

Movement *Inside-outside*

Challenge *How many times can you touch the ball in 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *Begin with your right foot, touch (move) the ball side to side using the inside, then outside of your right foot. After ten touches, switch feet. Complete ten more touches (inside-outside-inside-outside....) with your left foot, then switch the ball to the other foot and repeat. Move your foot as quickly as you can and make sure the ball is moving!*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....
Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 9

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Moves/Ball control*

Movement *Cruyff*

Challenge *How many times can you Cruyff the ball in 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *Begin with three foundation (tic-toc) touches. Lift your knee and point it sideways.*

Keeping your foot flexed (toe up), move it to the front of the ball. Now point your knee in the complete opposite direction (across your body), and pass the ball behind your standing leg. Do at least 3 foundation touches before each Cruyff.

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....
Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 10

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Moves/Ball control*

Movement *“Matthews”*

Challenge *How many times can you perform the Matthews in 30 seconds?*

Coaching points *Begin by dribbling the ball. Using the inside of your right foot, touch the ball across your body. Keep your right foot in the air (standing on your left leg). Hop in the same direction the ball is moving. Now use the outside of your right foot to quickly change direction toward your right side (inside touch-HOP-outside touch). Be sure to push off your left foot to accelerate quickly. Dribble again and perform the Matthews with your left foot. Alternate every time.*

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile.

.....
Players Development - Weekly Home Activity - Week 11

Players Name: _____

Core Skill *Ball control*

Movement *Lifts*

Challenge *Can you perform all lifts and 5 juggles after each?*

Coaching points *These are ways to get the ball from the ground into the air without using hands.*

Level 1: roll the ball back, let it roll on top of your foot, point your toe up, lift your leg

Level 2: lift the ball with no roll, get under the ball and lift your foot forward and up

Level 3: stand with your heels close together and your toes far apart, place the ball between the insides of your feet, now VERY quickly bring your toes together and the

ball should pop straight up in the air

Level 4: "half rainbow" with the ball firmly between your feet, begin by leaning and rolling the ball up the inside of one leg quickly with the inside of your other foot, hop onto the foot that rolled the ball, and kick your standing heel straight up in the air

Level 5: with the ball firmly between your feet, begin by rolling the ball up the inside of one leg with the inside of your other foot (no leaning), let the ball go, smash the ball straight into the ground with your heel [DO NOT STEP ON THE BALL], the ball will hit the ground and bounce back up for you to juggle

Attempt #	Score:	Parents Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		<i>To be completed by coach</i>

Hand the complete report card to your coach at the start of each week in order to build your player profile

Daily Home Soccer Drills:

FAST FOOTWORK

1. **Inside Roll** -- Roll the ball across your body from outside to inside with the inside and sole of the foot and stop the ball with the inside of the other foot.
2. **Outside Roll** -- Roll the ball across your body from inside to outside with the outside and sole of the foot and stop the ball with the inside of the same foot.
3. **Side to Side Push-Pull** -- Tap ball back and forth with inside of feet, push ball forward with one foot and pull it back the sole of the opposite foot (triangle).
4. **Pull Instep Push** -- Push ball forward and pull it back with the sole, then tap ball forward with the instep of the same foot.
5. **Pull a Vee** -- Push the ball forward and pull it back the sole of the foot while turning and then take the ball with the inside of the same foot.
6. **Pull & Take with Outside of Foot** -- Push the ball forward and pull the ball back with the sole then push the ball diagonally forward with the outside of the foot.
7. **Pull & Roll Behind** -- Push the ball forward and pull the ball back with the sole of the foot then pass the ball behind the standing leg with the inside of the foot. Control the ball with the sole of the other foot.
8. **Pull turn** -- Push ball forward with one foot and pull it back with the other while turning toward ball and take the ball in the opposite direction with the inside of the first foot.
9. **Inside of foot turn** -- Push ball forward, move past ball and turn toward ball and take it with the inside of the foot in the opposite direction.
10. **Outside of foot turn** -- Push ball forward, move past ball and turn toward ball while taking it with the outside of the foot in the opposite direction.
11. **Cruyff** -- Push the ball forward, fake kick with inside of foot, but instead pull ball behind the standing leg and change directions.
12. **Stepover Turn** -- Push ball forward, step over ball with one foot, turn toward ball and take it in the opposite direction.
13. **Scissors** -- Starting with the ball to one side, step over or in front of ball so that the ball ends up on the other side of you. Take the ball in the opposite direction with the outside of the other foot and then stop ball with the sole of the first foot.
14. **360 (helicopter turn)** -- Push ball forward, stop it with the sole of one foot while stepping past it, turn and drag ball back with sole of other foot, continue turning all the way around and take the ball with the inside of the first foot.
15. **Kick Over ball** -- Kick over ball with inside of foot then pull it back with the sole of the same foot.

MOVES TO BEAT AN OPPONENT

1. **Hip Swivel** -- Fake with inside of one foot by swiveling hips toward ball, then reverse direction and take the ball with the inside of the other foot.
2. **Matthews** -- Fake with inside of foot nudging ball by dipping shoulder, then take ball in the opposite direction with the outside of same foot. (explode)

3. **Cap** -- Cut ball with inside of foot slightly backward and take ball ahead with the inside of the opposite foot.
4. **Stepover** -- With ball moving, stepover ball so ball is outside of stepover foot, turn and take the ball with the other foot.
5. **Scissors over ball** -- Step behind ball as if preparing to take it with the outside of one foot, then step over the ball and take it with the outside of the other foot.
6. **Rivelino** -- Same as stepover, but take the ball with outside of stepover foot.
7. **Vee** -- Fake pass with instep (across body), pull ball back with sole and take in opposite direction with the inside of the same foot.
8. **Cruyff** -- Fake kick with inside of foot, but instead pull ball behind the standing leg and change directions.
9. **Inside of foot cut** -- Cut the ball across body with inside of foot while simultaneously stepping over it and take with outside of opposite foot.
10. **Scissors** -- Step behind ball as if preparing to take it with outside of one foot, fake, then take it with the outside of the opposite foot. (easy to learn)
11. **Double Scissors** -- Push ball forward, make alternate scissors steps and take with outside of first foot. (ineffective close to opponent)
12. **Reverse Matthews** -- Fake with outside of one foot, step behind and take with inside of same foot. (also called body swerve or Touch 'n go)
13. **Stepover - Scissors** -- Ball rolling. Stepover followed by scissors with same foot and take with outside of other foot.
14. **Front Roll** -- While moving forward, pull ball across body with sole and take with outside of opposite foot.

SEVEN MINUTE DRILL

1. Rolls (4 each foot)
 1. Inside Roll
 2. Outside roll
2. Foundation (4 each foot, alternating feet 3 touches between moves)
 1. Side to Side
 2. Push-Pull
 3. Side to Side Step-On
 4. Side to Side Front Roll
3. Pull back and go. Do sequence with one foot then switch (4 times each foot)
 1. Pull, Instep Push
 2. Pull a Vee
 3. Pull & Take with Outside of foot
 4. Pull & Roll Behind
4. Turns: Travel 10 feet turn 180 degrees use 3 touches between turns (4 times each foot)
 1. Pull Turn
 2. Inside of foot turn
 3. Outside of foot turn
 4. Cruyff
 5. Stepover Turn
5. Change of direction with fakes, 3 touches between turns (4 times each foot)
 1. Hip Swivel
 2. Matthews
 3. Cap
 4. Stepover
 5. Scissors
6. Rivelino (You can substitute any of the "Moves to Beat an Opponent")

Complete Seven Minute drill is more than 575 touches on the ball.

Spend another ten minutes passing against a wall, both feet, both one and two-touch, instep and inside of feet, include fake kicks. Keep feet moving and work on accuracy.

Spend ten minutes juggling the ball trying to get 100 consecutive juggles.

Do 50 to 100 sit-ups, then stretch.

Try to do complete workout every day. This workout can be done anywhere that there is little danger of breaking things, for instance in a basement, playroom or outside.

Shooting Drills:

Find a fence or backstop to set the goal up in front of so you don't spend all your time chasing balls. You also need to have about ten balls to work with (all properly inflated).

To start:

Have the shooter standing about 20 yards out from the goal. Have a ball server standing behind and to the right side of the shooter. As the shooter starts to run, serve a rolling ball for the shooter to run onto and shoot. Ideally, the shooter is 10-15 yards from the goal when they shoot. Also, ideally, you'll have a keeper (mom's and dad's work fine for younger shooters) standing in the goal. The shooter shoots for accuracy (i.e., just inside the post on either side). Do this 3 times 10 balls with the right foot then repeat with the left foot.

Change the drill by having the server stand in front of the shooter and to one side. The server is now cutting the ball back to the shooter who is running on to it. Accuracy of shot placement is again the objective. Do this 3 times 10 balls with each foot.

At this point you've taken 120 shots on goal.

You can take this drill to the next level by serving a bouncing ball to the shooter.

Finally, you can serve square balls from either side. These are the hardest and should come last.

If you are good enough to serve the ball consistently with your foot great. If not, serve it from your hand. Either way you need to consistently serve a ball that is correctly paced and accurately delivered.

Important:

These drills (or any others for that matter) should be set to the level of the player. A good rule of thumb is that the player should be successfully hitting the target at least 50% of the time before you increase either the speed of service or difficulty of the drill.

Trapping:

Links: Info and pearls | [Chest, Thigh, Head and Foot](#) | [Juggle](#) | [Heading](#) | [Possession Soccer](#) |

There's no better way to start with a group of youngsters than by teaching them good ball control skills.

In my experience with recreational and mid level travel teams, kids aren't taught to chest trap, head the ball, and slide tackle despite being basic techniques of the game....spend some time teaching the proper techniques.

Chest traps, thigh traps, bottom of foot, toe, instep, wedge traps (out to side) and cushion traps (as lower foot).

- The chosen surface should act like a cushion, not a wall. Tell the players their body needs to be like a sponge or a piece of elastic as the ball arrives. If the player's foot, thigh or chest isn't pulled back slightly as the ball makes contact it will bounce away from them and possession will be lost.

- In competition, the ball should never be trapped. It should be received with a view to moving it on again as soon as possible and that's much easier to achieve if the ball doesn't become stationary.

- **First touch move (receive with intention):** Whether it is to be passed, dribbled or shot at goal, the ball should be gently moved in the direction it's going to go with your player's first touch. Players need to get into the habit of scanning the pitch as the ball is coming to them so they know, before the ball arrives, what they are going to do next. **How to practice this is ask:** First learn to pass and receive with intention, then have your players to move around a grid and pass to each other... with the condition that they must call the name of the player they're going to pass the ball to BEFORE they pass it.

- **Receive and turn:** As a ground ball comes toward you, receive it with the outside of the foot and change directions. First practice in open area, then in a large group area randomly passing balls and dribbling around just as practicing dribbling skills.

Trapping in a group: See [Circle Drills](#) |. Many coaches with have them move down the field (they often end up racing other groups) or teaming up with a partner. Best to stay in the same location such as around a circle (the group in the middle stays put and severs the ball, those on the outside rotate clockwise)... they rotate to the next server once trapped (this is best as it avoids the drama of two players teaming up or two players goofing off etc).

Field Trapping: once of the most difficult traps....the goalie punts. Combine it with a shooting drill. Have two lines and punt the ball to alternating lines, have them quickly trap it (square off in front, lean into the trap if possible)...then dribble 1-2 steps and shoot (two points for corner, 1 point for middle, 1 point for shooting with less than 3 touches).

Variation: have the two lines fight for the ball, the one that gains possession attempts to score while the other defends.

The Once Bounce Trapping Drill: Good for conditioning, learning quick feet, trapping and coordination. Players start next to the coach who tosses the ball out. The player needs to first run at a slight angle to get around a cone and then trap the ball on one bounce.

Controlling Touches Box:

Have a narrow rectangular lane marked off with passer and receivers lined up and spaced at 10-20 yards.

All of the passers firmly pass to receivers at same time.

The receivers must step forward to meet the pass and put a controlling touch on the ball such that it remains in the confines of the narrow lane.

Variation: longer passes with a receiving box set up such that they need to step toward the pass and control it with the confines of a small area.....progressive gets smaller as the skills improve.

How to help your players develop excellent ball control skills:

Ball control - the ability to receive and prepare the ball for another pass, dribble or shot - is a skill that every other soccer skill is built on. Without good ball control, your players won't have the confidence to "want" the ball and they won't enjoy playing in matches.

What to tell your players

1. Get in line. Make sure your body is in line with the ball, i.e. the ball is coming directly at you, not across your body.

Don't just hang out a foot and hope that you will make contact with the ball. If you do that, you'll miss the ball or, if you do manage to touch it, you won't be able to get it under control.

2. Choose the right part of your body. If the ball is coming to you on the ground, the first contact is usually with the inside of your foot. But it doesn't have to be! If you control the ball with the sole of your foot you won't have to look down to see where the ball is and it's easy to push the ball in the direction you want to dribble, pass or shoot.

If the ball is in the air, you need to decide if you need to control it with your thigh, chest or head. But don't wait for the ball to arrive before you make that decision. Try to decide what part of your body to use BEFORE the ball gets to you.

3. Don't trap the ball. In soccer, the ball is never "trapped". Instead, it is controlled with a view to moving it on again as soon as possible. If you trap the ball under your foot, you could find it hard to get it moving again and you'll probably get tackled.

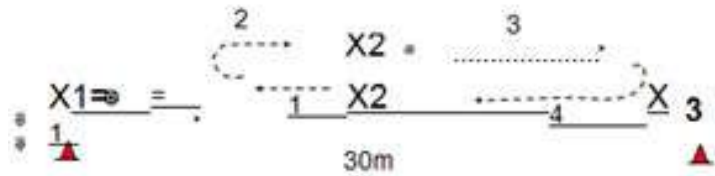
4. Make your body soft. Whichever part of your body you use to control the ball, try to make it behave like a cushion, not a wall. If you receive the ball with a "hard" foot, chest or thigh, the ball will bounce away from you and you are likely to lose possession.

5. Take a photo. Get into the habit of taking a mental snapshot of the field around you while the ball is on its way so you know what you are going to do with it. If there is a big space, you might decide to dribble towards goal. If there isn't much space you might want to pass, but where are your team mates? You need to know where they are BEFORE the ball arrives.

Sprint - Receive - Turn - Dribble:

1. X1 passes to X2 who attacks the ball
2. X2 receives ball and turns with one touch.
3. X2 dribbles to deposit ball with X3,
4. X2 turns and attacks next ball from X1

Player X1 starts with 3 balls. After all balls have been deposited with X3, direction changes with X2 now receiving pass from X3 and depositing ball with X1.



Sprint - Receive - Turn - Dribble:

After a set of six balls, rotate players. Have each player in the middle three times.

Coaching Points:

1. Player must attack ball with a sprint. Pass must be a soft pass and be received within 5m of passer.
2. First touch of player in the middle must set up the dribble in the opposite direction. Ball can be cut back with inside/outside of foot or pulled back with sole. It is important that the ball stays in line between X1 and X3. Ball control cannot be lost and players must ensure that their first touch does not let the ball bounce away.
3. Players turning must rotate on the spot, no looping or wide turns allowed.
4. This drill must look sharp and be timed to perfection - no dead balls, no waiting for ball or players.
5. Demand speed AND accuracy.
6. Extend duration of drill to suit your team's fitness development needs.
7. Players in the middle must tire and you may need to have them play 12 balls in one set depending on age and competitive level.
8. Passers tend to slow down play by reacting to or waiting for run. To keep intensity high passers must lead runners.

Game Application: Players must always approach the ball at high pace to avoid a defender intercepting the pass. The ability to control the direction of the second touch with a precise first touch under pressure and at high pace sets excellent players apart from average players. It is the execution speed of receiving passes, controlling the ball and making the next move that ultimately dictates the speed of the game.

Receive and Turn Under Pressure Drill:

For ages 9+

Set up: 10-15 yards x 25-30 yard lanes.

How to Play: Rotation is always A-B-C-D-A.

Player B needs to check player C away, then check back to player A to receive the ball.

Initially player C is a passive defender and player B works on turning technique (back foot, hook turns, sole) and play to target player D.

When player D gets the ball, player D enters the top box, B stays in the middle box and A enters the bottom box. To begin, D gets a passive defense to dribble through and work on his/her skills. When D gets back to the start, rotate as above and begin again.

When the defenders become active, if they win the ball, play ends and rotate.

Coaching points: quality passes, receiving and dribbling needed.

Quick passes, especially after turning. Did we check our shoulders and get an image of where the target was? Visual and spatial awareness. Checking where the defender is / feeling, distances between players etc.

Progression: All defenders active. Add a short-short-long with player A and B. Create a 2v1 (as seen in the yellow cone group to the right). Add small goals to have an end product. Add transition where the defenders can win the ball and attack.



Coaching points with 2v1: Start with the same A playing to B who turns and plays to the target D. Player B joins D and they play 2v1 with C in the middle box and A in the bottom box. As in the first group, if the defenders win the ball play is over.

Decision making: When to pass. When to dribble. How is the defender approaching (fast, slow, flat ect). Quality and weight of the pass.

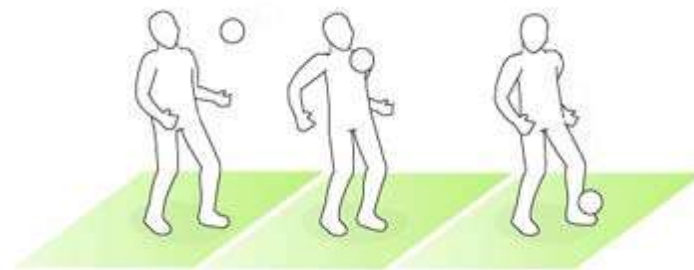
Chest traps:

There are several different kinds depending on the situation.

Field Trapping: This is done on the run is highly advantageous when in tight situations.

The Chest Control Trap: Controlling an aerial ball with the chest is not always an easy task. An extremely efficient way of bringing a ball in flight under complete control. Crucial to chest control is arching the back slightly. One needs a relaxed upper chest to cushion the incoming ball. The best way to present a backward inclining chest is to

lower the position of the midriff by positioning one foot forward and bending the knees, achieving a stable platform-like stance. Directing the ball with the chest is perhaps something that should be practiced once simple chest control is mastered, but is an excellent way to integrate an extra move in your first touch and buy yourself time to make that next pass. Make sure they have both feet off the ground when they receive. Not a jump, just a 1 inch



hop.

Try to "blow out the candle"... little exhale when the ball makes contact.

Bend slightly backward at the waist if the ball is falling to you.

Bend slightly forward at the waist if the ball is rising at you.

Thrust your shoulders forward just before making contact with the ball.

Make contact with the ball just below your collarbone.

Allow the ball to bounce off your chest a bit before it falls to your feet.

* If you are a rookie try not to trap the ball with the chest in big traffic, you might be better off heading the ball.

* If you push off from an opposing player, it will result a foul.

Chest Trapping and Girls:

Chest trap like normal, they can handle it, just work your way up to it (don't have them trying to deal with driven balls from 30y away the first time). The proper spot for chest trapping is right about where the line across the second rib meets the sternum at the upper chest.

That is nowhere near breast tissue. If a girls learns to chest trap at a young age using the proper part of the chest with a soft or plastic ball, there should be no issues at a later age.

The old message of "just tell the girls if they want to cross their arms it ok" is not in their best interest as they will be called for hand balls at higher levels of play.

A player, male or female, has three options if a ball is arriving in the air:

1. Do a proper, legal chest trap
2. Adjust to use some other body part
3. Get out of the way

Girls may not cross their arms across their chest while waiting for a long ball.....they will be

penalized for deliberately handling the ball. Males have a lot more flexibility as to where the ball can hit them in the chest and not suffer for it. Girls have to be more exact about where the ball strikes them, or it can hurt. So practice chesting the ball more for girls than with the boys to improve their technique.

Receiving (traps and controls):

-Keep the ball moving! Instead of "stomping" on it, (stopping or "trapping" it) you should deflect it softly to either side, or even behind you, as it continues to roll.

-Get in the habit of taking 2-3 steps toward the pass as you receive it. You will have to do this in competition or the opponent will beat you to it.

-Practice receiving the ball with all aspects of the foot. Always keep the ball moving as you touch it to the side with the inside and outside parts of the feet.



-Learn to turn with the pass and receive it on the inside of the rear foot as you turn away from the passer. This is known as "receiving on the half turn" and is a very important technique.

Combine these "moving" controls of the ball with all the passing activities and mini-games outlined above.

Learn to turn with the ball and cushion it with your trailing foot. This allows you to receive a pass and begin to turn upfield or perhaps away from the passer to "switch fields".

Get in the habit of leaning or lunging one way and then deflecting the ball in the other direction.

Call out to your partner - 1.)which way to fake and then 2.) which way to go - before they play the ball. Call "lean left and go right", or "fake up and go back" etc..... The person who misses get's a letter in the "HORSE" game.

How to Trap a Soccer Ball With Your Foot:

Trap a Ball Rolling on the Ground

Step1 - Lift your foot several inches off the ground.

Step2 - Point your toes up.

Step3 - Stop the ball with the bottom of your foot.

Trap a Bouncing Ball

Step1 - Judge where the ball will hit the ground nearest to you.

Step2 - Move to that spot.

Step3 - Turn your foot sideways.

Step4 - Lift your foot slightly off the ground.

Step5 - Touch the ball with your instep just as the ball hits the ground.

Step6 - Let the backspin on the ball roll the ball toward you.



How to Trap a Soccer Ball With Your Thigh A thigh trap is most useful when the ball is dropping toward you and is already below your waist.

Step1 - Raise your thigh to meet the ball.

Step2 - Allow your thigh to move in the direction of the ball as you make contact.

Step3 - Absorb the ball's momentum.

Step4 - Allow the ball to drop to your feet.

* The object of trapping the ball is to slow its momentum and change its direction.

* You want to provide a pliant surface rather than a rigid one. * If you have any condition that would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment.

Softly underhand toss the ball to your partner for thigh controls, chest controls and head controls. Always take 2-3 steps to the ball before you play it and then volley kick it back to the thrower. Then take 3 steps backwards to prepare for the next toss. Give a point for each volley back to the thrower's hands and play to 10.

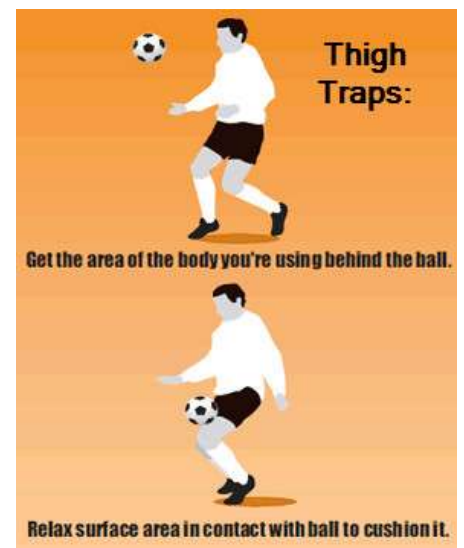
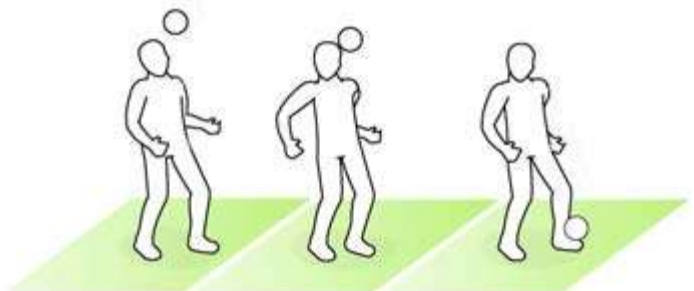
Toss the ball high into the air, or even better bang it off your garage roof or garage door to have it land back in your driveway. Practice running through the bounce with a moving chest trap or thigh touch. Follow it with a shot into a target and keep score.

Play soccer-tennis!! This game is a great way to combine all the controls from heads to chests to thighs to feet, and then follow them with a controlled volley kick. This game greatly improves a players juggling skills and "feel" for the ball. (You do not need a tennis court, just your driveway and some cones or even an old step-ladder). If you play just one game, this is the one!!

Head Trap:

To cushion the ball and bring it down to the ground. The best way to control the ball with your head is by making sure the first touch is a good one. The ball should hit directly onto the center of your forehead so that it doesn't fall down at an angle. Therefore, good concentration and accurate head-eye coordination is a must.

Also, many footballers forget that the correct movements are crucially important. By bending your knees and arching your back on impact, your head control will improve in turn through using your whole body as a shock absorber for the ball.



Get the area of the body you're using behind the ball.

Relax surface area in contact with ball to cushion it.

Although it might be tempting to bend your head down to send the ball down faster, it is better to let gravity do the work, as this will allow you to have better control of the ball once it hits the ground. It might also be useful for you to spread your arms and legs to increase stability whilst you control the ball with your head.

4v4 with bumpers: This is a great game for improving your players' ball control and "vision".

Experience: any.

Set-up: two teams of six (four plus two "bumpers" wearing bibs) play soccer in an area 30 yards long by 20 yards wide.

How to play: The bumpers are target players and can be placed on the sidelines, by a goal or allowed to move anywhere inside the playing area.

- Game 1: teams earn a point for a successful pass to one of their bumpers.
- Game 2: teams earn a point if they can score a goal after passing to a bumper.
- Game 3: teams earn a point for passing the ball from one bumper to the other without the other team getting a touch on the ball.
- Game 4: a regular game of soccer but only bumpers can score. Change the bumpers after each goal.

Key elements of good ball control:

a) The receiver's first touch should protect the ball from challenging players and not give them a chance to regain possession,

b) the receiving player should play the ball into available space to allow for the next touch and to gain or keep momentum. A poor first-touch will risk taking the momentum out of play and increase the possibility of losing possession. Some players make the mistake of killing the ball dead and not concentrating on getting it out of their feet. The first touch should ensure that a time wasting second touch is not needed to get the ball out ready for the next action.

The general technique for controlling the ball requires several simple skills which can be acquired through correct training practices.

1/ The first element of ball control is to place the controlling surface into the ball's line of flight. The body weight should be well distributed so it is possible to move forwards, backwards or sideways. Keep the head steady and watch the ball carefully to judge it's flight and speed. It is difficult to keep one's eyes permanently on the ball and better players are able to take a quick glance to know what is happening around them before contact is made.

2/ The second step is making an early judgment in choosing the right technique and body surface to control. Wedge control involves a more rigid surface where the player attempts to force the ball downwards or into space so he can move onto it. A cushioned control involves taking the sting out of the ball. This involves pulling the surface back just when the ball makes contact (the body becomes elastic) so that it simply drops at the players feet. This particular technique is very useful when closely marked, for example a forward receiving the ball on the chest with his back to goal.

The different body surfaces often used in controlling the ball are: The foot (sole, inside, outside, instep), thigh, chest & stomach and head. Generally, the part of the body used should preferably be large, flat and able to take the weight of the incoming pass.

Control also requires good mental abilities such as confidence and total concentration. A composed player is one who is calm, relaxed and unhurried in his movements. Confidence does play a big part in this as players who know what they can do and are confident in their ability are more likely to show great technique and succeed. Those who do not have confidence, will be indecisive and their technique hurried.

Problem 1 - Ball path has been misread and the player has missed the pass.

Corrective procedure - Repeated practice using passes from different distances and vary intensity. The coach must encourage player to keep their eyes on the ball at all times and get their body in line.

Problem 2 - Player is indecisive when choosing controlling body surface.

Corrective procedure - Player shouts the type of body surface they will use and the server provides the pass and vice versa until the player gets the right feeling for the choice of technique.

Problem 3 - The player does not get the ball out of their feet and needs a second touch.

Corrective procedure - Encourage the player to relax and exaggerate the movement. Repeated practice using passes from different distances and vary intensity.

Problem 4 - The ball bounces off the player and control is lost.

Corrective procedure - Again, encourage the player to exaggerate the movement, especially the relaxation phase, firstly without the ball and afterwards using gentle service (eventually building up service difficulty). Try using smaller or lighter balls.

Learning Juggling Skills:

Keys:

-Initially practice juggling on pavement so that you can play the bounce and keep the ball moving. Learning to softly touch a bouncing ball is almost as important as a juggle touch and teaches the same movements.

-Use the shoelace or instep part of the foot for most foot touches. Use the soft, fleshy part of the thigh for thigh juggles. Stay away from the knee.

• Learning to juggle is not easy! There are not many "shortcuts". It can be very frustrating to new players and they just want to quit trying. Take it slow with lots of encouragement for everything. Many times they will begin to show significant gains but seem to lose all of those gains the following practice. Go slow. The time and effort it takes a player to progress from 2 touches to 4 touches may well be the same as from 20 to 40 juggles later on. Work in games like "juggle-horse" to keep it interesting.



- Start with a decent but expendable ball that you can use on pavement and not mind the scuffs. You may find that if you under-inflate it just a tiny bit, it will allow for more control. Repeat all the skills with both feet.
- Hold the ball out in front of you with both hands and drop it onto the pavement for a bounce. After the bounce, tap the ball back up to your hands with the shoelace or instep part your foot. Catch the ball and repeat several times with each foot. We need to learn how to describe these movements so the teacher can lead some beginning jugglers through these skills. (I would call this a "bounce-foot-catch".)
- Now, drop the ball for a bounce, tap it softly up towards your hands but let it

fall back to the pavement for another bounce. Then tap it up to your hands for a catch. (I would call this a "bounce-foot-bounce-foot-catch".) Repeat this several times, again with both feet.

• Next we will drop the ball directly to the foot for a tap back to the hands for a catch. (This is a "foot-catch")

• Now drop the ball to the foot for a tap but let it bounce, then use the foot to tap it up to the hands for a catch. (This is a "foot-bounce-foot-catch".)

• Keep adding on touches and bounces alternating a foot touch with a bounce and ending with a catch. It's important to end with a catch to maintain control.

• Finally drop the ball for a bounce and tap it up with the foot but before it bounces try to tap it up again for a catch. (This is a "bounce-foot-foot-catch".) This is the beginning of "real" juggling! This is a big step. If it seems too difficult for the player, do not hesitate to back up and work on the 1 touch exercises again with bounces in between.

Continue to try different variations of bouncing and 2 foot touches. Don't try to go to 3 consecutive foot juggles too soon. • Getting from 2 juggles to 3 is a very big step as well. Instead try to link lots of 2 juggles together with bounces. Try a bounce-foot-foot-bounce-foot-foot-catch. Later on link together a several of these 2 touch juggles with a bounce between each one. In fact, see how long you can keep it going with 2 touches and then a bounce. Have a contest.

It may not be the first day, but eventually you are ready to go for 3 juggles. Warm-up with single touches and work up to 2 touches linked together with bounces, just as I have described above. Then try a bounce followed by 3 foot juggles and a catch. (This is a bounce-foot-foot-foot-catch.)Encourage alternating feet during the 3 touch juggle. Once they get the hang of this, start using bounces to link together more 3 and 2 touch.

• You can drop the ball directly to the foot without a bounce, to start the juggle, once they begin to develop some control.

Approach thigh touches and head touches the same way, but wait until they have some control with their feet so they can "dig" it up for a catch at the end. Also they will often find the thigh touches easier and tend to overwork them thus neglecting the feet. Start with a thigh-bounce-foot-catch combo and then keep adding on. Try a thigh-thigh-bounce-foot-catch and then a thigh-thigh-foot-foot-catch and now they are up to 4 legitimate juggles!

Once you have made it this far you should encourage less bounces between touches, but I still like to see players use the bounce to keep the ball moving. I think it is better that they keep touching it back up even with bounces, as opposed to getting frustrated and stopping.

• A great game for juggling skills and improvement of all first touches is "soccer tennis"! I highly recommend it.

• There will be breakthrough days when the player finally juggles 3 in a row or much later, gets to 10 for the first time.

These are often followed by frustrating days where nothing seems to work. Then much later, when they finally get to about 20 juggles, the "lights" seem to come on. Juggling actually becomes a fun thing to do and they begin to attract attention and compliments from other players, coaches, and parents. Now if they keep at it, they can break 50 in "no time".

The Importance of Juggling in Soccer:

Juggling allows the players to use all parts of their body to gain a feel for the ball. These touches build confidence and makes players aware of parts of their body used to control or pass the ball. Juggling is a key training element which is often overlooked. Juggling allows the players to use all parts of their body to gain a feel for the ball. These touches build confidence and makes players aware of parts of their body used to control or pass the ball. With a larger range of comfort with the ball, imagination is often sparked in game play. A good juggler does not guarantee the player will be a good game



player, as there is no substitute for match play. Juggling should become a daily routine that only takes a few minutes a day. Coaches should encourage players to develop good juggling technique. When juggling, coaches should stress the following points:

Use all parts of the body (head, chest, thighs, and feet) and alternate feet. Don't get caught only juggling with your dominant foot!

Focus on good controlled touch to realize the full potential of juggling. If a player does not have good body control this will lead to bad touches.

Be able to control the ball in different situations. So if a player has a bad touch, they should try to recover it rather than starting over.

Be able to maintain good body position.

Find rhythm and harmony between the player and the ball.

Practice while standing still, then progress to walking slowly and then with some pressure by either time or opponents.

Practice juggling about 20 minutes each day.

How to Improve at Juggling a Soccer Ball: Juggling a soccer ball is a good way to build ball control and skill. The idea behind juggling is simple: bounce the ball as many times into the air as you can without letting it hit the ground. Doing a few keep-ups is pretty easy, but becoming a masterful juggler can take years of practice. Here are some tips that should help you out.

Step1 - Take off your shoes and pick out the part of your foot you want to hit the ball with most. Some players prefer their instep, while others prefer the base of their big toe. In either case, visualize how that part of your foot will need to hit the ball for it to stay under control.

Step2 - Keep your shoes off and do some "shadow juggling" with an imaginary ball. This might draw a few strange looks from other players, but being able to see your feet makes it easier for you to adjust their positions until you can visualize the perfect touch.

Step3 - Put your shoes back on and pick up the ball. Drop it down, then immediately kick it back up with one of your feet. Repeat this one-touch juggling until the ball goes exactly where you want it to. Remember the foot position, amount of power and timing you used to create this touch and replicate it in the rest of your juggling.

Step4 - Set small goals for your practice sessions. If you want to eventually keep the ball in the air for 100 touches, it's easier to increase your record by five or 10 touches at a time, instead of going for it all at once.

Step5 - Practice juggling with another person. If you can learn to anticipate and control someone else's touches, controlling your own will seem a lot easier. Also, juggling with a partner can be a lot of fun and much less solitary than practicing by yourself.

3 man juggling drill: After 2 to 3 juggles, player passes to the person opposite them and then they run around behind and alternate the receive-juggle-pass back drill. Try not to let the ball touch the ground. After you pass, follow your pass to take up position behind the person you just passed to. The coach can call out different parts of the body they need to juggle with. Ex: Thigh, head or Chest to foot. Great for conditioning, ball control and teamwork.

Variation: Juggling triangle. The person who just passed calls out how many juggles the other person juggles (call out 1, 2 or 3).

How to Balance a Soccer Ball on Your Foot In soccer, the more control you have over the ball and your body, the more successful will be. You should develop enough body control to balance a soccer ball on your foot. It may not be that useful in game play (unless you're taunting the other team) but it is impressive.

Place the soccer ball at the base of your feet.

Step2 - Select the foot to balance the ball on. Start with your dominant foot, as you will have more control over it. Once you've mastered the dominant foot, you can move onto the other foot.

Step3 - Roll the ball up onto your foot. Place your foot loosely on top of the soccer ball. Then pull your foot back quickly so that back spin is created. Simultaneously move your foot so that it is under the ball.

Step4 - Arch your ankle up so that you create a little cradle between your shin and the end of your foot.

Step5 - Raise your foot off the ground, slowly balancing the soccer ball in the cradle.

Step6 - Slowly extend your foot so that it is again parallel to the ground.

Step7 - Find a sense of balance with the ball on your foot and hold it there as long as possible.

TIPS: # Practice this move while wearing your cleats and shin guards. This will help you simulate game play so you can adjust the balancing accordingly to the equipment you'll be wearing.

Once you balance the ball, start juggling the ball. In soccer, juggling is when you bounce the ball off different parts of your body (except your hands) without the ball hitting the ground.

Strikers and Attacking:

Links: [Strikers Job](#) | [Give & Go Pass & Overlapping](#) | [Transition Plays](#) | [Passing & Attacking](#) | [Making Runs](#) | [How to score goals](#) | [Crossing](#) | [Other Striker Drills](#) | [Shooting Drills](#) | [Kick-offs](#) | [Positions & Formations](#) | [Aggressiveness](#) | [Crossing](#) | [Kick – Shoot](#) | [Attacking with Long Balls](#) | [Team Shape](#) | [Heading](#) |

Job descriptions - Strikers: What's my job?

1. To learn and improve your skills
2. If you are within range and you can see the goal - shoot! It's OK to miss and if you don't shoot, you'll never score.
3. Follow your shot. Goalies often drop the ball so make sure you right in front of them if they do.
4. If you can't get a shot in, try to pass to someone who can. It's just as good to help someone else score a goal as it is to score yourself.
5. If the other side get the ball you are the first line of defense. Always work hard to get the ball back.
6. When it's our goal kick, stand in a place where you can get the ball. Don't just hope the ball will come to you.
7. When it's the other team's goal kick, get to the ball before they do. Watch the goalkeeper - where is she going to kick the ball?
8. "Create space". Move or make runs to open areas. Effective attacking play is not possible without the creation of space. The greater the range of techniques which a team employs to create space the more difficult it will be for opponents to establish a composed and effective defense.

Winger: Like their defensive equivalents, there are two wingers in a side, starting on both touchlines alongside the central midfielders. Their tasks include pressurizing the opposition fullbacks, attacking from wide positions and providing crosses into the box. However, as the position has developed, wingers have increasingly been called on to score goals, as they have the chance to run from deep positions and cause problems for defenders. The result has been the erosion of the old style of wingers like Stanley Matthews, who hugged the touchline, and an explosion of wingers who play much of their football closer to the centre of the pitch.

Striker/Center forward: The goal of the striker is exactly that; goals. Forward players start out just behind the opponent's penalty area, with the number varying from one to three. However, there are subtle differences in the style of striker:

Target man: The target man plays his football in the penalty area and acts as a focal point for attacks. They are typically good 'poachers' (meaning they are opportunistic) and headers of the ball, but rely on chances made by the midfield.

Withdrawn striker/Deep-lying forward: Much like the offside rule, the withdrawn striker is one of the hardest things to explain yet also one of the most important, being the position of some of the greatest players in football history. It is roughly defined as a forward player with both goal scoring and creative abilities, often tending towards the latter.

Pearls:

1. Shoot well, but shoot often...**scoring isn't the main thing, it's everything.**
 - It's the coaches job to encourage players to shoot from short range, from long range – wherever and whenever they can.
2. If shooting is your first priority, getting into the box is your second priority
 - "Without straying offside, get into that 18-yard area whenever you can. Just being there raises the anxiety level of their defenders and goalkeeper"
 - "Defenders get worried because they know anything might happen: the ball may cannon in off your knee, they might rush their tackle and give away a penalty"
 - "Their 18-yard area is your home. Don't wait for an invitation"
3. Spread out. The defenders love congestion....they hate one-on-ones.
 - When you as a striker gain possession.....be ruthless and show no hesitation.
 - You need to develop the ability to work on your own. Take on and beat the defender – before the defender has time to react.
4. Be unpredictable. Make runs, switch positions.....drift....probe for weaknesses and then exploit them.
 - Defenders hate uncertainty. Go narrow. Then go wide. Swap wings. Keep the defence off-balance.

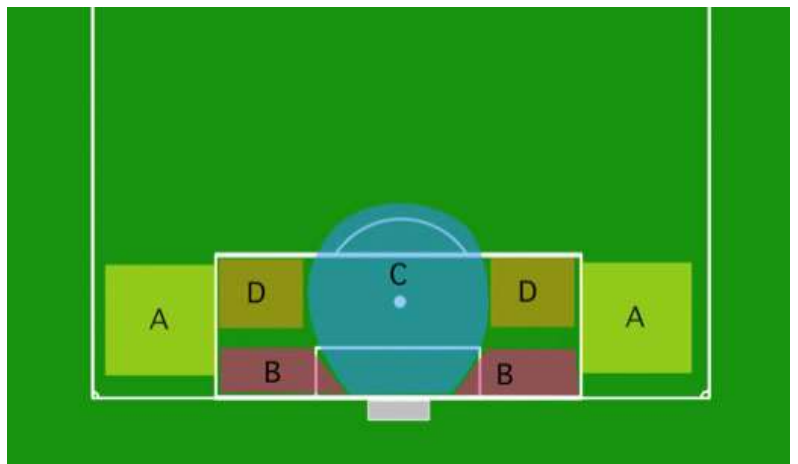
What to do on offense with the ball?

Zone A is the crossing zone. Cross to the penalty spot (PS). If you have beaten the defense, you should cross without hesitation. That will catch the defense running back toward their own goal before they have had time to set up. You are much more likely to score if the defense is running toward their own goal. Cross to the PS!!!

Zone B-the centering zone is too acute an angle for a shot on goal (you will miss or side net). You should center to the PS in this area.

Zone C- the scoring zone- 90% of all goals are scored in this area. Shoot on frame!!!

Zone D- the bending zone. Bend a shot into the far



post.

THE FIVE (5) PRINCIPLES OF ATTACK

Indeed, before teaching the “how to” of attacking it is a good idea to understand the “why” of attacking. And that begins with the five (5) principles: Creativity is the sub-principle of all of these....this is what makes soccer such a beautiful game.

- 1. Penetration:** moving the ball forward toward goal immediately upon gaining possession.
- 2. Support-Depth:** player or players not in possession of the ball, moving into spaces behind the ball to become a passing or finishing option. Constant movement wreaks havoc on the defense.
- 3. Support-Width:** player or players not in possession of the ball, moving into spaces on either side of the ball to become a passing or finishing option.
- 4. Mobility:** player or players not in possession of the ball making creative runs off the ball to unbalance a defense.
- 5. Finishing:** scoring a goal..... a culmination of all of the above -- a creative dribble to beat a defender + two or three creative runs by support players + a creative pass from the first attacker = a creative goal such as a header or volley off a cross, a cracking shot into the top corner of the net.

ROLES OF THE ATTACKERS

1st Attacker: the player in possession of ball, moving forward toward goal immediately upon gaining possession...first option should be a dribble...go to goal = penetration (see #1 above).

2nd Attacker: player in immediate support of the player with ball either behind, in front of, or on either side but with enough space away from the first defender.

3rd Attacker(s): player or players in support in front of, behind or on either side of the player with the ball, all making creative runs to unbalance a defense.

Support Players – Helping the Person With the Ball: Possession is a very important principle, which often determines the success or failure of a team. Properly supporting players with the ball requires early support from teammates without the ball. This early support comes from anticipating the play, reading the field, and knowing your teammates. One misconception among players is that when their team is in possession, and they are not in control of the ball, that they are not affecting the team’s possession. The exact opposite is true. Every player on the field determines whether the team is successful at holding possession. Teams must keep possession for long periods to be successful. Often, the length of the possession is directly related to the number of passes and the quality of the passes as well as the support. The supporting player (player off the ball) is very important and determines how well the player with the ball plays.

- Supporting players shape determines options. Players without the ball should position themselves at an angle so that there is a clear pathway for the ball to travel without a chance of interception. If a supporting player is too flat, they may be hiding behind a defender and not giving the player with the ball a good passing lane. The player with the ball should have 3 options at all times at any given moment to pass to.
- Supporting players must work hard to quickly position themselves in a way that they keep/create as much space as possible in front of them. The player with the ball should concentrate on passing the ball so that the player who receives the ball can control it very quickly and easily. Once the ball is passed, the supporting players should move quickly off the ball and reposition themselves in order to support again. It’s very important to keep space in front of you when you are supporting the player with the ball so that you will have time to play the next pass when you get the ball.
- Remember, good balls become bad balls when they are unsupported, and good players can look bad if they are not supported when in possession.

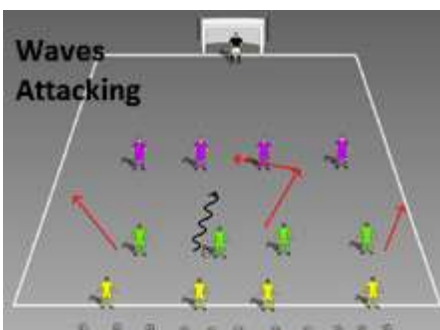
Get Strikers Scoring Again:

- Keep confidence high by sticking by strikers and giving them plenty of game time.
- Tell them to relax and enjoy their ball and not worry about the drought – the goals will come.
- Praise them for their passing and link-up play – even if they’re not scoring they need to be reminded of their vital role in the team.
- Switch their position slightly – play them just off another striker to remove some of the pressure and give them something new to think about.
- Encourage them to hit the ball earlier, first time, or after one touch. Misfiring strikers often take too long to set themselves because they fear they will miss

Waves Attacking:

Organization:

- Create 3 teams of 3 or 4. When a team scores they come back and collect a ball and look to attack again.
- When the attacking team loses possession they now become defenders, while the defending team leaves the field and the 3rd team becomes active as attackers.
- Keep intensity high and the role changes to happen as quickly as possible.



Coaching Points: Accuracy, Good passing angles, Support, Communication, Speed.

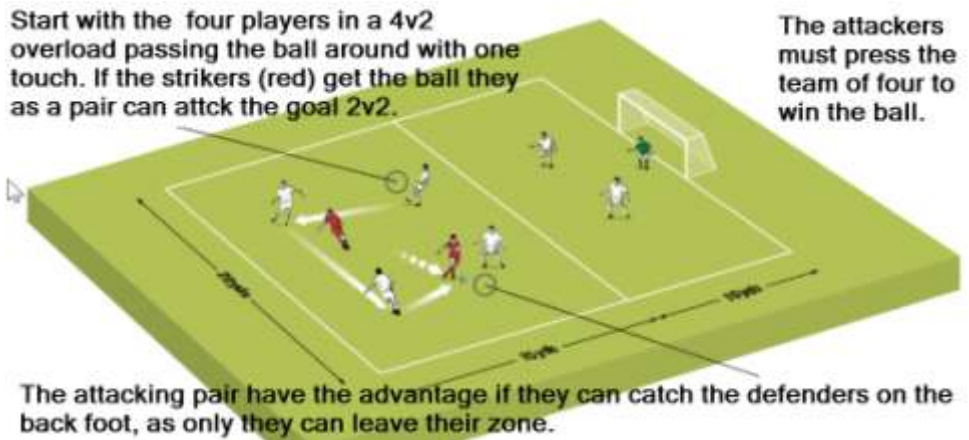
Quick Attacking Pair:

Coach your forwards to form a lethal strike partnership.....Get your forwards hunting for the ball, winning it and then attacking.

SET UP: Use an area of 15x20 yards split in two with a goal and a keeper in one half. We've used nine players.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your group so the two attackers start playing against four opponents in one half of the pitch with two defenders in the other half. The team of four are playing one-touch keep away. The attackers must press to win the ball and then attack the two defenders and take a shot on goal. If the ball goes out in the first phase, give the attackers the ball on the halfway line and get them to attack from there. Make sure you change attackers every four attacks and see which pair is the most successful.

TECHNIQUE: The pairs of attackers must take advantage of winning the ball quickly before they can be closed down and forced wide. This gives pairs a really good work-out in both a physical and technical sense.



How to Attack with Pace and Width:

Use the whole width of the pitch. Spreading out when you're attacking is a basic tactic. It pulls opposition defenders out of position, creates gaps that your players can exploit and gives them time to shoot.

Age group: U10s and upwards

Equipment: Flat cones to mark the playing areas, two small goals, training vests to differentiate teams and several balls.

- Divide your players into groups of four and give them numbers: 1 to 4.
 - Create a 20-yard square playing area for each group and place them adjacent to each other.
 - Players jog around the playing area passing in sequence, 1 to 2 to 3 etc.
 - After a minute or two, change the sequence so that players are passing in reverse numerical order: 4 to 3 to 2 to 1.
- Coaching point: Emphasize the need to move immediately after passing. No standing around admiring your pass!

Activity 1:

Keepaway:

One player in each group becomes a defender. The other three attempt to keep the ball away from her.

- Challenge each group to make as many passes as possible before the ball is intercepted (in which case the player who last touched the ball becomes the defender) or the ball goes out of the playing area.
- Make the activity competitive. Challenge each group to make five, 10, then 20 passes before making a mistake.

Coaching point: Ask your players to tell you the best way to keep the ball away from the defender. The answer is to pass and move quickly into a place where you can receive a return pass.

Progression 1: Add another defender. Add a second ball. Specify the number of touches each player is allowed to take before passing.

Progression 2: After five minutes, take away the dividing lines between the playing areas so that you end up with all 12 players in one, big playing area. Now play keepaway with three defenders.

Coaching points: If your players find it easy to keep the ball, add more defenders. If they are finding it difficult to keep the ball away from the defenders, make the playing area bigger or play with fewer defenders. Remember to set your players a target number of passes to complete. Emphasize the need to move immediately after passing but also ask the question: Where do you need to move to? Aimless movement should be discouraged.

Activity 2:

Attacking in threes:

Move all your players to a 50 yards long by 30 yards wide playing area with a goal at one end and divide them into groups of three.

- If you have a spare player, put him in goal. If not, you or a parent can be the goalkeeper for this game.
- The groups of three go to the end of the playing area opposite the goal. Players in each group are assigned positions on the field: Center, left and right.
- The ball is kicked out by the goalkeeper to one of the players in the first group.
- Each group attacks the goal at match pace, passing the ball at least four times before a shot is taken. Players must maintain their positions relative to each other and each player must touch the ball.

Note: If you have an assistant, use two playing areas with two groups of three in each.

Coaching points: Your players will probably begin by passing the ball to feet and moving very slowly up the field. Ask them why passing to feet slows the attack - because the player receiving the ball has to slow down or stop to control the

ball - and if there is a better, quicker way of passing. The solution is to pass in front of the player so they can run on to the pass and control it in their stride. Once they start to pass in front of the running player you should see a big improvement. **Progression:** Add a defender who tries to disrupt the attacks. Add a "no-go" line five yards in front of the goal. Attacking players now have to complete the move and shoot before they get to the line. Put a second goal in the playing area. Two of the teams now play a 3v3 game. To further encourage wide attacking play, the two waiting teams should act as side supports. The first goal wins the game.

Play winner stays on and see which team can win most games in a 10-minute period.

Coaching points: Congratulate players who pass in front of running team mates and applaud attacking moves that use all three players.

Give and Go's and Transition Play:

A **one-two (wall) pass** is a fundamental maneuver in many team sports which involves two players passing the ball back and forth. The player who has the ball passes to a teammate and then repositions in order to receive a return pass and a scoring opportunity.

Give & Go Passing:

1. X passes diagonal into run of O.
2. X sprints down line.
3. X receives return pass from O.
4. O sprints down the line.
5. O receives return pass from X

Players keep going back and forth using one touch passing

Coaching Points

1. First pass must have perfect direction and pace such that O can receive it straight in line with his/her run between cones. No waiting for ball.
2. All runs must be full out sprints - no jogging.
3. Return pass (3) must be directed to cone and arrive at same time as X.
4. For the first two minutes, emphasize accuracy over speed, then ask players to increase speed.
5. After five minutes, switch X and O so that they each get to work with both feet.
6. You may want to pair up midfielders with strikers and midfielders with defenders.
7. Ask for perfection!

Game Application: A fast give and go is the best way to get by a defender. Ideally, players can unlock a defense by successive give & go's working the ball into scoring position.

Accuracy of passes, weight of passes and ability to receive into the direction of the next pass are key skills.

Short sprints increase anaerobic conditioning.

Give & Go - with Short Passes:

1. X passes diagonal to O.
2. X runs down line.
3. O one touches back to X.

Continuous diagonal play up and down grid.

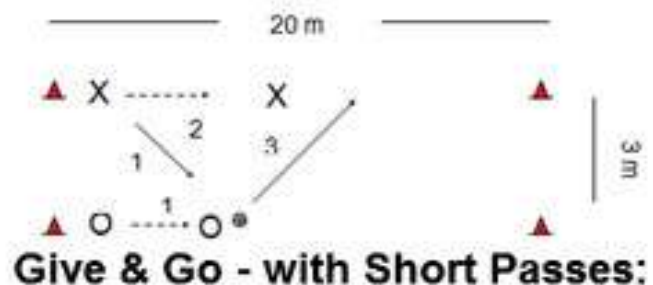
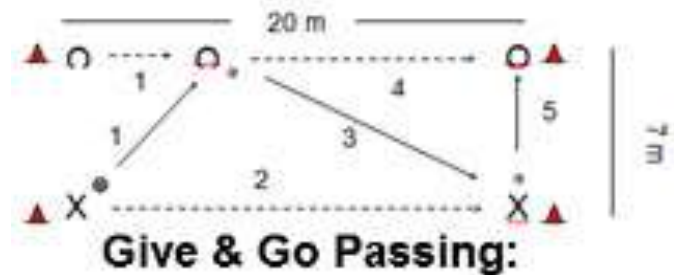
Coaching Points

1. Focus on accurate one touch passing first, then ask players to increase pace.
2. Passing must be accurate to feet and timed perfectly into runs.
3. Players need to coordinate quickly between looking at ball to receive it, looking up at target and looking back at ball to pass it.
4. There are no defenders and therefore coach must demand perfection in all aspects of executing this drill.

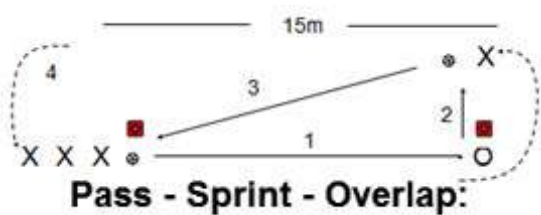
Game Application: Quick give and go's over short distances are effective to get out of tight situations, like the one practiced in the transition drill of this session.

By playing give and go's around a defender or multiple defenders your team can create the space necessary to mount a successful attacking play.

Pass - Sprint - Overlap:



1. X passes to O and follows pass sprinting around O.



2. O lays ball across with one touch into run of X.

3. X passes with one touch to next X in line and sprints to back of line.

Coaching Points

1. Passes must be to feet at proper pace to keep the play flowing and allow for successful receiving by players.

2. O must lay off ball "square" or slightly ahead diagonal to overlapping X keeping it within 2m of O to avoid X having to run wider than

necessary to get to ball.

3. X turns around O as tightly as possible, but always within 2m of O.

4. X must play a properly weighted pass to next X in line such that the next player can play a one touch (or at most a two touch) pass to O.

5. X always sprints after the pass is made.

Game Application:

Overlapping runs by defenders or midfielders are the essence of today's wide attacking game. Passing and moving immediately after the pass will make play less predictable for the opponents.

Accurate and properly weighted passes are the key ingredient to set up fast breaks. Sprinting into space against defenders who are facing the play is the best way to "lose" a defender, because they have to turn first before they can "chase".

Central Passing - Quick Attack:

Teams do a lot of work passing out wide and working the wings but sometimes the direct route is open and fast passing can create swift attacks and counter attacks.

This session looks at improving the speed of passing moves in attacking situations. It uses fast counterattacking as a key weapon using the quickest and most dangerous route to goal.

SET UP You need balls, bibs, cones and goals. Set up an area 40x30 yards with a 15x10 yard box on the half-way line on each wing. We used 14 players in the session.

HOW TO PLAY Split the players into two teams of 7 including goalkeepers. Play starts with one of the keepers who rolls the ball out to a player in his half of the pitch.

The ball cannot go into the two wide zones at any time during the game although players can run through it without the ball – if the ball does go in it is turned over to the opposition. Time penalties can be added as a progression. You can adjust the width of the no-go zones as the match progresses to make it tighter for passing moves through the middle.

TECHNIQUE Players' body angle is important – in particular, receiving on the half-turn to encourage rapid forward play. Don't forget that although the ball cannot go into the no-go zones, players can still run through those areas This can help create space in defence and attack.

6v6 with keepers. Ball can only go through the central area of the pitch. Coned off areas are no-go for the ball but players can run through them.

Player movement is important with receiving and being on-side as they move the ball forward

Great for quick counter attack. Quick interchanges and a one-two puts the attacker in on goal to score.

Pass - Overlap - 2 v 1 - Cross or Finish:

1. X passes into space to O, who runs and receives ball

2. After pass X overlaps O.

3. O controls the ball with first touch and passes back to X with second touch. X now faces defender D who is positioned between two cones, which are 10 m apart. X now has two choices:

4a. X beats defender inside far cone, dribbles to goal line and



5a. crosses to O who has run into position to receive cross and finish

or

4b. If X cannot beat D inside cone, X passes back to O who

5b. dribbles through cones past D and finishes on goal.

Coaching Points

1. This is a very complex combination drill requiring exact timing of runs and passes, therefore emphasize correct movements over speed initially until players are comfortable with sequences. Then pick up speed.

2. O needs to let X know that he/she is available for pass if X struggles to beat defender D.

3. This is the critical moment of this drill. Player X is approaching defender D and tries beat D 1v1 and while focusing on the 1v1, receives information from a team mate. X needs to make a decision while moving and controlling the ball which is extremely difficult to do. Be prepared for X to be "between two minds" and cause the movement/drill to break down or stop. Keep repeating until X's get it right.

4. X's and O's should be your midfielders and strikers. Once they are comfortable with drill, rotate their jobs.

5. D are your defenders and you can rotate them into drill after every two tries.

Key Points: It is absolutely critical that the attacker approaches goal being defended by D from the center. That leaves both options in play. A fake left can set up a successful 1v1 on the right and a fake/move to the right can open space for the pass to O and for O to dribble through. O needs to delay the run to the little goal to leave space to run onto a pass from X. O also needs to delay the run to finish the cross from X for option (a)..

Game Application: This drill combines all necessary elements to break down a defense with combination plays. Passes into space are effective. Quick, two touch turns, leading to a pass are common. The give and go with overlap can be seen frequently at high levels of soccer. The key to this drill are the decisions that have to be made, especially the one by X taking on the defender 1v1. These are typical game situations and your team needs to make those decisions quickly and with confidence to keep the play flowing. This will keep defenders off balance. If your flow slows or breaks down, the opportunity for a quick and decisive strike on goal will be lost and your team needs to regroup. Fast break or fast attacking soccer needs plays like this to be executed well.

Transition Play:

Field of play is an area twice the size of the penalty box.

A attacks goal 1 which B defends. If A scores, a save is made by GK, B wins ball, or ball goes out of bounds, B gets possession of ball and attacks goal 2.

Goal 2 will immediately be defended by team C coming off goal line.

Team A immediately drops to goal line 1 and waits to defend attack by C.

Attacking team always drops to goal line as quickly as possible.

Quick Transition Counter - Attacks:

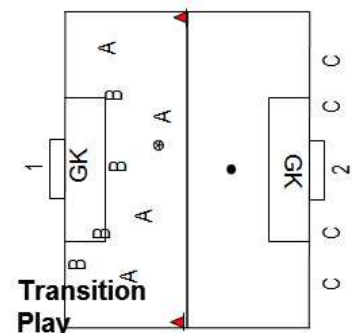
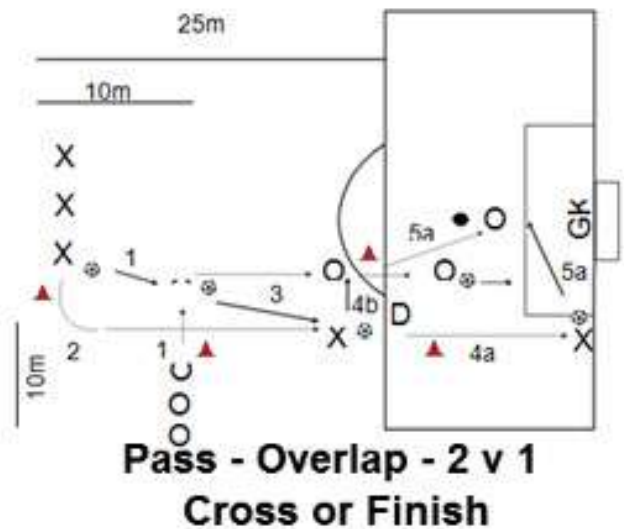
Swift counter-attacks are very successful in youth soccer but teams must react quickly

and move to support the play. They have to be quick in this game with only 10 seconds to score. This session is about counter-attacking, transition and players rotating in their positions.

Attackers practice good link up play and fast paced combinations and decision making. Defenders work against overloads.

SET UP You need balls, bibs, cones and goals. Set up a 60 x 40 yard area split into two halves with goals at each end. We've used 16 players in this session plus a server.

HOW TO PLAY Split your players into two equal teams of 8 players. There should be 3 defenders and a goalkeeper and 2 attackers in each half. Two supporting players start either side of their own goal. To begin one of the two players next to the goal passes to one of the attackers in the other half of the pitch, and the two players then support the attack and create a 4v3 overload.



8v8 but attack from the back with 2+2 v 3 defenders.

Transition Counter-Attacks:

Start as one of the two players next to the goal passes to one of the attackers in their defending half, and the two players then support the attack.

Have 10 sec's to score or if the defenders win ball....restarts with the defending team attacking.

Attackers have 10 seconds to score. If no goal is scored in this time possession is overturned and the other team restarts from their end of the area.

TECHNIQUE Good passing to start the move and good touches to set play up. A good counter-attack needs all players to be concentrating and playing good passes to move the ball quickly. Finish with a good shot – close range or long range. 8v8 but attack at 4v3. Start as one of the two players next to the goal passes to one of the attackers in their defending half, and the two players then support the attack. Teams have 10 seconds to score or if the defenders win the ball, play stops and restarts with the defending team attacking. The players beside the goal play a ball into their attackers which replicates winning the ball and starting a quick counter attack. The attackers are outnumbered by defenders so the players by the goal must quickly support to make a 4v3.

4 v 4 With 3 Groups:

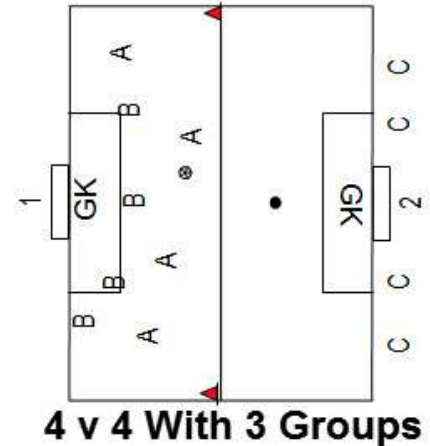
Field of play is an area twice the size of the penalty box (= 18yrd area x 2).

A attacks goal 1 which B defends. If A scores, a save is made by GK, B wins ball, or ball goes out of bounds, B gets possession of ball and attacks goal 2.

Goal 2 will immediately be defended by team C coming off goal line. Team A immediately drops to goal line 1 and waits to defend attack by C. Attacking team always drops to goal line as quickly as possible.

Coaching Points

1. It is critical that the team waiting on the goal line perceives change of possession in the other half and comes out to challenge the attacking team as quickly as possible.
2. All regular soccer rules apply: challenging player with ball, covering other players, closing passing lanes for defenders, two touch passing, give and go's, overlaps, crosses, finishing, for attackers.
3. To keep the game flowing, the attacking team has to get off the field as fast as possible once their play is over. They need to be watching the game on the field and get ready to come back off the line and defend.
4. Communication is very important so that all teams are organized all the time.
5. Create the groups of four based on how they play together in a game. For example, have four defenders on team A, four midfielders on team B and four attackers on team C. Then mix it up based on how your team transitions in a game. Team A could be 2 defenders, one midfielder, one forward; team B could be 2 defenders, 2 midfielders; team C could be one defender, one midfielder and 2 forwards.
6. Substitute extra players in freely. It is recommended to plan out the compositions of each group and variations before practice.



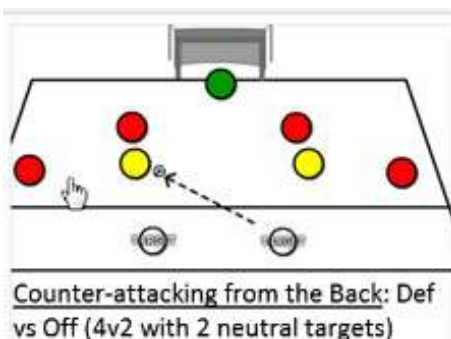
Game Application: teams need to transition from defense to offense and from offense to defense very fast.

Closing down and pressuring the opponents quickly to gain possession and then transitioning to be in a goal scoring position as fast as possible is vital.

Perception of passing lanes by opponents and closing them down while maintaining team shape is important.

Counter-Attacking from the Back:

Defense vs Attackers (4v2 with 2 neutrals)



The 2 central Midfielders play as targets or neutrals. The target (WHITE) starts practice by playing in to the attacker. Attackers (YELLOW) score by beating the keeper, defenders (RED) score by working the ball back to the neutrals.

- With a squad, you could run two of these practices so everybody is involved from the start. Personally I wouldn't intervene too much in this first practice, let the players have some time to recognise the aims and try and find solutions. In my opinion this trial and error process will get the players thinking about the game and correct errors they are making.
- This is ideal for younger players; it gives loads of repetition and is realistic to their game.
- To develop central defenders decision making; how to receive? When to play forwards?

• For all defenders to start to understand when to play into midfield Full backs begin to understand how and when to support the attack

• To challenge midfielders to create space, receive under pressure and maintain possession

• To challenge midfielders understanding; When to support?

6 v 6 Marking & Transition:

1. Play across 1/2 field 6 v 6 on full size goals.
2. Team in possession (X in diagram) plays to score.
3. Defending team (O) needs to mark each player of X, but must also have one player provide cover in case the challenging defender gets beat. In the example shown, O1 covers, but is also ready to challenge should the ball be played to X1.
4. Once O wins ball (successful challenge or restart play), O breaks fast and transitions hard to attack X's goal. X now need to immediately switch to defense, challenge O with ball, provide cover and mark everyone else.

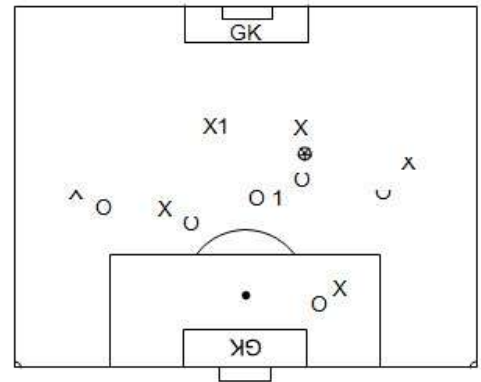
Coaching Points:

1. Attacking team must use quick moves and runs off the ball to lose marking defenders.
2. Defenders must have one player challenging attacker with ball and one player in a covering role. This will leave one of the attackers somewhat unmarked. This should be the attacker in the least dangerous position. Another defender needs to keep an eye on that open player while marking their own attacker.
3. Defending team needs to be in constant communication.
4. Make sure nobody on defending team marks space. This is not a zonal defense exercise.
5. On transition, get previously defending team to break fast, forcing attackers to transition fast to defense.
6. Defending team must mark attackers goal side as quickly as possible.

Game Application: Marking and covering (or keeping an eye on) each of the opposing players when they have the ball is the best way to regain possession and to start your own attack.

Reacting quickly to change of possession is essential. The faster your team can transition goal side the better will be your defensive record.

6 v 6 Marking & Transition:



Short Passing:

When passing to a marked player, you must aim the ball at the foot of your teammate that is on the opposite side of his marker.

If you're making a supporting run, you should initiate eye contact with the ball carrier or call out his name. This increases your chance of getting the ball.

If you are being marked, don't wait for the ball to roll towards you. You must check to it. Moving towards the ball will provide you with more time and an extra step ahead of your marker.

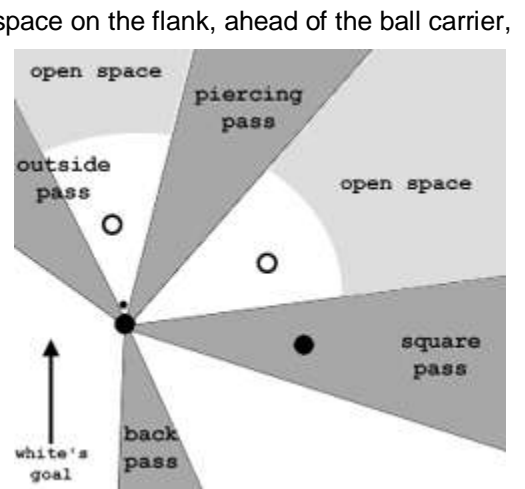
The Overlap



the overlap is very difficult to cover by enemy defenders. When executed across the width of the field, the overlap usually spreads apart the enemy defense.

Distributing the ball: Passes are sometimes categorized according to the direction of where the ball is headed. The "open space" area is room behind the opposite defenders. It is of great advantage to play the ball in the open space, because it makes it unusually hard for the defenders to recover. The open space can be exploited with a chip or a wall pass. The best way to use the outside angle is by making an overlapping run.

Square passes are good for changing the point of attack and opening new passing angles.

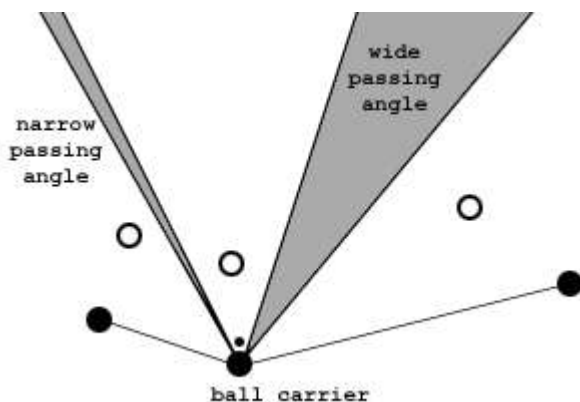


The piercing pass can be very dangerous, but it is rarely available, considering that most defenders stay between the ball carrier and their own goal.

Creating Passing Angles

On offense, the closer you are to your teammates, the quicker the ball has to be distributed, dribbled, controlled and so on. Playing in this manner requires great skill and agility from the players. It is also easier to defend against teams who remain compact when attacking.

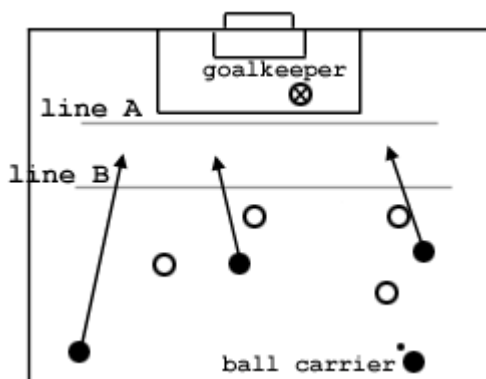
As this diagram shows, the further away your teammates are when



supporting you, the more open angles or options you have. That also makes it more difficult for the opposing defense, who have to work harder by covering more space.

Chipping Over the

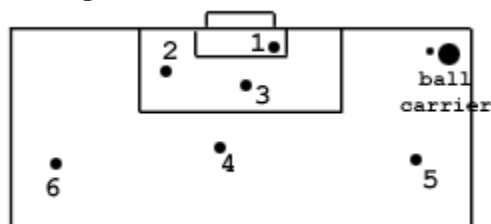
If the attackers from enemy defenders, option is for them to head run forward; the ball attackers' speed, the behind the last line of in front the goalkeeper The attacking players line of defenders leaves the feet of the because the enemy their ground.



Defense

your team are being marked by the last line of there are two alternatives. The more controlled check back to the ball. The more direct approach forward. Due to the offside rule, they cannot simply has to be played over them first. Depending on the ball should be targeted 3-10 meters (10-30 feet) enemy defense (Line B) and 6-10 meters (20 feet) (Line A.) should start running toward the area behind the (between line A and B) slightly before the ball passer. The attackers usually have an advantage, fullbacks would have to turn 180 degrees to regain

Crossing



It is unlikely that a shot will be successful when the ball is far out on the flanks. In such situations, the ball has to be crossed to a place where a better shot can be taken.

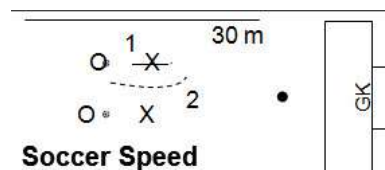
The ideal spot for a cross is in the area between the penalty spot and the 6 yard line. This is the perfect spot because it is far enough to force the enemy keeper in coming out while it is relatively close enough to the goal for a header or shot. In order to receive a cross, the attackers from a team must head to all the 6 points shown in the diagram in their respective order. It is important to note that the when heading to the target spots, one must stay outside of the penalty box until the ball carrier delivers the ball. This makes the opposite defenders' job much harder - they have to simultaneously follow both the moving ball and the player they are marking.

How to Move Off the Ball in Soccer Any successful soccer team requires players who know how to move off the ball. Even youth teams (from U8 or U9) will find this skill invaluable. As simple as this skill sounds, most teams (even at the professional level) don't do it well. When attackers stand around or the team doesn't anticipate off-the-ball movement than the defense finds it easier to take the ball away or passes tend to go to defenders, not teammates.

Soccer Speed: Pass, Reaction Sprint & 1 v 1:

Soccer speed game.

1. X stands with legs apart and O, with ball, is 1m behind X. O passes ball through X's legs.
2. O runs around X after ball and goes for goal. As soon as X sees ball, X sprints to play 1v1 on goal against O. Switch roles.



Coaching Points

1. The weight of the pass through the legs is critical. The ball should be played far enough to give O a head start on the 1v1, but close enough to avoid being in a simple sprint against X.
 2. O needs to maintain the element of surprise and advantage in the play. This drill is mostly for players in the X role to develop reaction speed.
- Game Application: One of the key game skills is reaction speed. Player X has to react to new information (seeing ball) and then decide whether or not to sprint to the ball, or sprint goal side to defend against O.

Offense - Pull the Defense Apart:

- 1) Play starts with a pass out from one of the small goals down that side of the pitch.
- 2) Attacking players use their quick combination plays to create space for a goalscoring chance.



Half field.
8v5 or 7v4
or 6v3.

Offense - Pull the Defense Apart:

- 3) If the defending team wins the ball they can try to score in one of the three target goals.

Creativity around the box is vital to ensuring the creation of scoring chances. The type and accuracy of pass are key, as is a good first touch from players receiving the ball. This session will help players perfect the timing and angles of their runs to support the playmakers.

SET UP: Use an area half the size of your usual pitch. Put a normal goal at the penalty area end and place three target goals at the opposite end.

HOW TO PLAY: The team attacking the main goal has eight players in a 3-2-3 formation and the defending team has five players in a 1-2-2 formation. Attacks start from one of the small goals, taking turns to start from each one, so attacks will go down the two wings and down the middle. The first pass must be into those areas each time. If the defenders win the ball they can try to score in the three target goals. Rotate positions regularly.

TECHNIQUE: This is about exploiting areas around the penalty box with clever passes, good skills and movement from an attacking overload situation. It involves three different attacking situations to give match-style variety.

RUNS OFF THE BALL:

The more creative the runs are the more effective an attack can be and the more a defense can become quickly unorganized. One of the most important things a forward can learn is to make runs off the ball, or, in other words, runs that are away from where the ball is or away from what may be a goal-scoring area, in order to free up space for another player to move into. These are called creative runs, made on angles, diagonally, laterally or straight forward or backward.

Flat runs: Lateral runs to one side or the other.

Vertical runs: penetrating runs, a direct run.

Diagonal runs: Cut across the field forward and to one side.

Reverse runs: When a soccer receiver runs toward from the soccer ball handler but then quickly runs away from the ball handler toward the goal for a through pass.

Checking Run: aka Pull-Return. When a soccer receiver runs away from the soccer ball handler but then quickly runs back toward the ball handler. The idea is to draw the defender away from the ball handler to create an open space that the soccer receiver can then run back into in hopes of being open for a pass. (i.e., the first run was a "dummy run"). The opposite of a "hooking run".

Delayed runs: a great weapon on an attack. A delayed run is when a second or third attacker either stands still while the ball is in play or slowly walks around and then...WHOOSH! -- a quick sprint to goal or toward the ball. Attackers can also make quick change of direction runs, going forward, stopping, angling to the left or right, etc.

Hooking Run: aka Pull-Series. When a receiver runs toward the ball handler & then quickly reverses & runs away from the ball handler. The reverse of "checking off".

Dummy Run: aka "Decoy Run". A run intended to distract defenders or to draw them away from the area you plan to attack in order to "create space" for a teammate.

Combinations:

1-2 / WALL PASS: GREAT TO PLAY 'AROUND' AN OPPONENT, CAN DRAW DEFENDERS IN, RELEASE AND GET IT BACK. SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE,

'JACKS' / 'SIDS: STEPPING OVER OR LEAVING THE BALL FOR A TEAMMATE. GREAT FOR CONFUSING DEFENDERS.

THIRD MAN RUN: 3 PEOPLE IN THE MOVE, EFFECTIVE AS DEFENDERS OFTEN FOCUS ON THE BALL. TIMING IS KEY!

IN -SET -THROUGH: 1.PLAYER IN POSSESSION 'LEND'S' THE BALL TO TEAM MATE. 2.TEAM MATE 'SETS' PLAYER 1 HAS BUILT A PICTURE. 3.PLAYER CAN NOW PLAY THROUGH I.E FORWARDS. STRIKER RECOGNISES 'TRIGGER' AND EXPLOITS SPACE

UNSELFISH RUNS: MOVEMENT TO CREATE SPACE FOR OTHERS, MOVEMENT TO 'SUCK' DEFENDERS. E.G FALSE NO. 9

OVERLAPS & UNDERLAPS: GREAT IN WIDE AREAS, IN THIS DIAGRAM WINGER STEPS INSIDE (9) TO CREATE SPACE FOR FB (2) TO OVERLAP. UNDERLAP -RUN INSIDE

Time Your Runs:

Use this attacking session to coach your strikers to burst into the penalty area with well-timed runs. The idea is to coach attackers to split the defence with well-timed runs into the box and get on the end of crosses.

SET UP: Use your penalty area but mark a 1v1 zone on the wing outside the area. We've used 12 players. You need bibs, balls, cones, and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY: Split players into four attackers and a creative midfielder versus four defenders with a keeper and two servers. The servers need a few balls each.

The attacking play must come from the 1v1 box but only one defender and one attacker are allowed in the box.

Play starts with the keeper passing long to the attacking midfielder, who passes wide to either winger. The winger must go into the box and cross for his attackers. The defender must try to stop him. If the ball goes dead (or if the defenders clears) the servers take turns to play another ball across goal for the attackers.



After the servers have played a ball across the goal, play goes back to the start with the goalkeeper's pass.

TECHNIQUE: This is all about striker movement and wingers getting the ball behind the defenders for attackers to burst through and score.

1. Starts with a pass from the keeper to a midfielder.
2. Ball passed to wide player, who goes into the 1v1 zone (darker) to try to beat the defender and play a ball behind the defence.
3. Attackers make runs in the box to pull the defence apart.
4. If the defenders win the ball or if it ball goes dead, the two servers take turns to play another ball across the penalty area for the attackers.

Step1 - Distinguish Between the Types of Runs. There are five types of runs players can make off the ball on attack. It's critical to know what each type is and the circumstances when it's likely to be most effective.

--**Crossing or Lateral Run:** the attacker runs from left to right (or vice versa). This run is most effective when someone can't run deeper without becoming offside or when the attacker wants to clear space for a teammate (because if the defender follows the run, the original space the defender was in becomes open for someone else to dribble into).

--**Penetrating Run:** the attacker heads straight downfield. This tends to work best either on the flanks (outside midfielders), against a defense that has pushed up the field and may be playing an offside trap (but there is space behind the last line of defenders) or when the attacking team is deep in their own end of the field. In all cases, the attackers have some space to work with.

--**Diagonal Run:** the attacker goes from left to right (or vice versa) but at an angle or diagonal. This is a superb run for forwards seeking to get open. By going wider and deeper in a consistent line (the diagonal), it punishes defenders who are ball watching, it allows forwards to sneak into defensive zones (often by entering at someone's peripheral vision) and can improve passing angles. It doesn't require as much space as a penetrating run (so is more usable on the entire field). Finally, it's a superb clearing run--any defender who follows a forward making a diagonal run is pulled badly out of position, the defense loses its' shape and there is space for another attacker to run into and receive a pass (but now with no defender in it).

--**Check back Run:** in this the attacker comes to the teammate with the ball. This makes sense when space is tight (near the opposing goal), when there is a poor passing angle to the attacker or the passing lane is blocked (but moving closer to the ball creates an open passing lane) or the player with the ball doesn't have the skill to make the pass to the attacker unless he/she checks back. The Check back run is also a superb way of creating space for a teammate. If a forward checks back to the ball and the defender follows, there is now a hole in the defensive backline that another attacker (making a diagonal run) can move to and receive a pass unimpeded.

--**Overlapping Run:** A teammate (usually a defender) runs behind the player with the ball and then up the sideline.

Step2 - Teaching Off-the-Ball Runs: There are lots of activities for teaching this skill in practice.

--Create a large circle (size depends on number of players). Half the team is inside the circle, half the team is out. Each player on the outside has a ball. Each player on the outside calls to a specific player on the inside and gives a movement command ("Diagonal" or "Check back") and then passes the ball as the player makes that run (who then passes it back).

--Form trios who attack against one defender. Attackers can advance the ball only by passing, no dribbling. They "score" by moving the ball down the field with five consecutive passes in which they use a different run each time (so one successful pass to an overlap, another to a diagonal run, another on a crossing run, etc.). This is similar to the warm-up "Monkey in the Middle" except the attackers have to move down the field.

--Divide the field into lanes (left, middle, right) and zones (defensive, midfield, attacking) and require a pass to each lane and a pass to each zone and that after a player completes a successful pass he/she has to change the lane or zone they're in (so a left outside midfielder has to make a run off the ball to another zone or lane and swap roles with someone else).

--Play mini-games where the player with the ball can ONLY pass the ball by first pointing out where a teammate should run to (and then play the ball into space in the path of the run). This teaches teammates to work together. And what happens when the defense sees the player with the ball motion or point to an area and then anticipates the run and moves there? Then the attacker has just made a clearing run (and if the attacker with the ball is smart, she'll quickly exploit that now open space).

Step3 - Create Goals Without Touching the Ball. The teams who are the best at moving off the ball do two things. The players make similar runs (so teammates know what to anticipate). More importantly, they recognize that it's okay if the run off the ball doesn't get you open (because the defender follows you). If you made a smart run and the defender followed, you've created space for a teammate to run into. Examples are a check back run where the defender follows the opposing forward who shows for the ball and results in a gap in the defensive backline. Or the outside midfielder who makes a lateral run (and is followed by the opposing midfielder) which now opens up a lane on the sideline for his teammate to overlap into.

Step4 - Reward This Behavior in Games. There are a number of things you can do in practice scrimmages and games that will encourage this behavior once you've worked on it specifically.

--Publicly praise it. When players make runs off the ball, point it out to the team mates on the sideline. During practice breaks or half-time, point it out to the entire team.

--When someone scores a goal because a teammate cleared space with a run, make it explicitly clear that the player who never touched the ball made that goal possible. And praise them for how tricky and clever they were (players love this).
 --Players who makes runs off the ball will stop or slow down or not extend their runs if they aren't rewarded. So talk to your primary playmakers and players who touch the ball the most. Tell them how critical it is to reward an early run.
 * It's easy for coaches trying to teach this skill to talk teams to-death. Try that and your players will die of boredom and miss what you're trying to teach them. Start simple (by introducing one or two different types of runs), get them practicing it right away, reward it when you see it. If you're using young players who know basketball or soccer then you might even start out with an activity where players make runs but throw the ball with their hands.

1. **Near post run** - the first player that arrives in the penalty area should go to this spot.
2. **Far post run** - this is the second most important target. The player who reaches it, collects the "leftovers" from point 1 or some of the harder passes.
3. **Middle run** - this point is 3rd in the order of importance. Only high passes for heading can reach this spot.
4. **Garbage man's spot** - the player at this point, collects the rebounds or "trash" coming in from the penalty box.
5. **Back pass** - from this point, many different plays can be initiated. The player who receives the ball on this spot can, for example, either cross it into the penalty area or head directly to goal.
6. **Opposite flank run** - this could be a dangerous place for exploitation by the winger from the opposite side

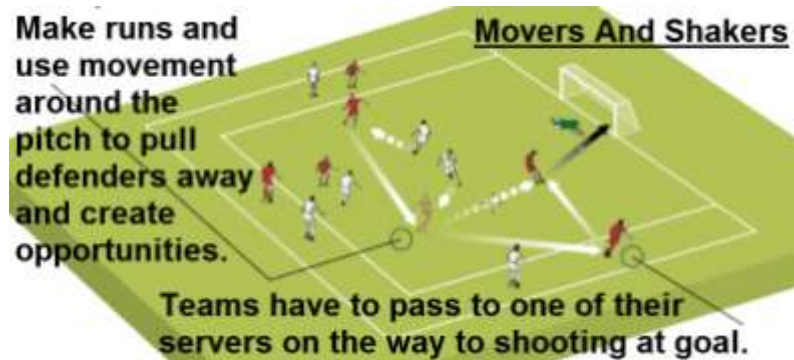
Movers And Shakers:

Teach your players how to use movement in order to disrupt a defense and create passing opportunities. This session is about using movement around the pitch to pull defenders away and create passing opportunities. Good movement can disrupt defenders and pulls them out of position.

SET UP: Use a 30x30-yard area, with a five-yard zone around it for support players. We've used 13 players. Split the squad into two teams of six with one neutral keeper. You need balls, bibs, cones and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY: Each team has three players on the pitch and three servers outside it. One team starts as the attackers and receives a ball from a server and tries to score. If the opposition win the ball, it is passed to one of their servers and they begin an attack. The players on the pitch mark an opponent to force movement off the ball in order to receive a pass. Rotate players and servers every four minutes. Servers cannot be tackled.

TECHNIQUE: Improving your team's movement off the ball will create space and disrupt the opposition defense. The more players move around the pitch, the more elusive they will be to their opponents. This will give opportunities to pass to players who have lost their marker.



To teach your players how to make blind side runs in the final third of the pitch – and as a result, increase your team's goal scoring opportunities. Goals come from the movement and creativity of the players who are making the runs – and by receiving the ball in areas of the pitch where they can shoot or set up a team-mate.

SET UP: Use half the pitch and focus on the area in front of the penalty area. We've used nine players in this session but you can use up to 16, as it's a fast moving game. You need bibs, balls and cones.

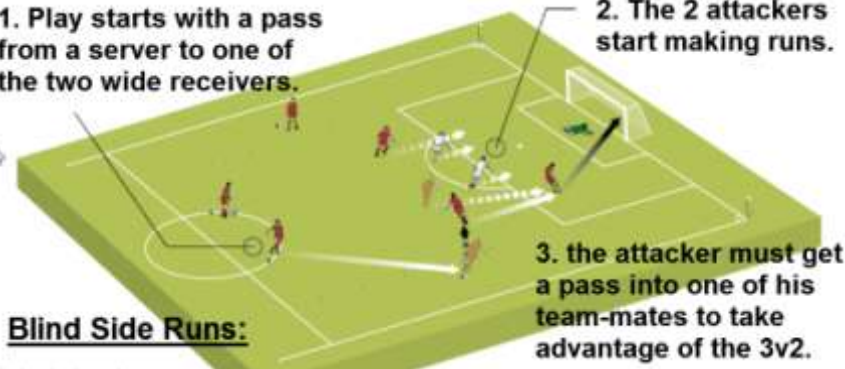
HOW TO PLAY: Two defenders and two attackers are in front of the penalty area 'D'. Put a wide receiver either side of the pitch to set up the attackers making the blind side runs. In the first part defenders are passive and cannot tackle but this changes as the session advances and players are confident with what they are doing.

TECHNIQUE: The session needs to be high tempo, with players making clever runs with good angles of play, timing, decision-making and weight of pass, as well as providing a clinical finish.

Blind Side Runs:

1. Play starts with a pass from a server to one of the two wide receivers.

2. The 2 attackers start making runs.



Blind Side Runs:

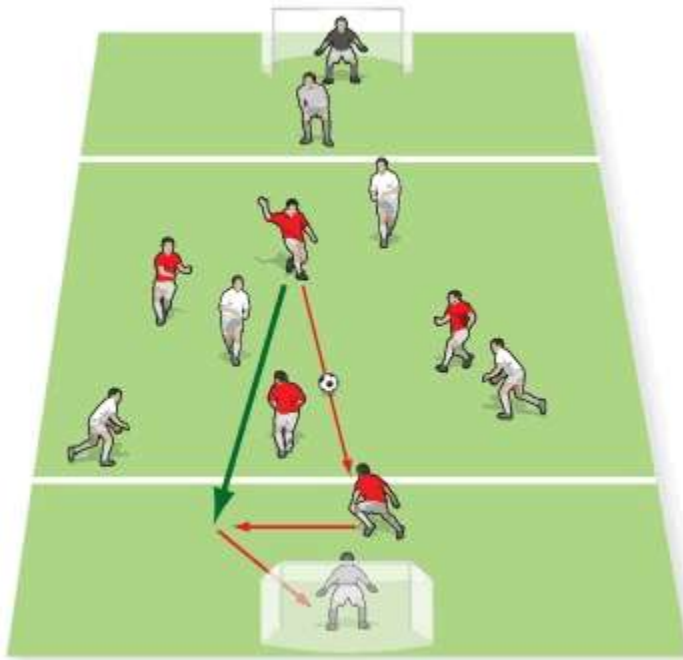
3. the attacker must get a pass into one of his team-mates to take advantage of the 3v2.

Lay Off and Shoot:

Encourages attacking play using dribbling, passing, forward runs off the ball plus teamwork and communication.

Age group: U8s to U14s.

Set-up: Create a 40x20 yards playing area with a goal at each end. Mark the pitch into horizontal thirds. Divide your players into teams of five or six, including goalkeepers.



How to play:

Each team nominates one player (a striker) to go into their opponent's end zone. The rest of the team plays in the central zone. Strikers have to stay in the end zones. Players in the central zone try to make a pass to their striker. When they do so, a second player can run into the end zone to receive a pass back from the striker and shoot at goal.

The striker then changes places with the player who ran into the end zone.

Rules

The game is played for 15 minutes. The striker is changed every three minutes, regardless of whether a goal is scored or not.

No central zone player is allowed in the end zone until a pass has been made to the striker.

Only one central zone player can run into the end zone to receive a pass from the striker.

Behind The Defense:

Teach your players to beat the offside trap by making defense-splitting runs onto well played through balls.

This session is all about the timing of runs and through balls to beat the offside trap and get behind the defense. This is a very successful way of playing.

SET UP Set up an area of 50x30 yards with two end zones of 10 yards. We've used 14 players. You need balls, bibs, cones and goals.

HOW TO PLAY The middle zone of the pitch is 30x30 yards and this is where most of the action takes place. The game starts with a pass from a goalkeeper into a player in the middle zone and the attacking team must try to play passes behind the defense. Only the attacking team can go into the end box they are attacking, but they must time their runs because that is the offside line.

TECHNIQUE This is a great game for timing runs and passes into the zone in front of goal. Because teams can only score by beating the offside trap, you will see players dribbling into the box and playing some great balls for their teammates to run onto. Watch for quick counterattacking when players win the ball in midfield.



How to Become a Successful Attacking Wide Defender

After researching online for several days, I had come to the conclusion that there was nothing of this sort. No one had covered one of the biggest sports in the world today. Soccer is a sport of talent, intelligence and grace. You must know the game, and know tactics to become successful on the pitch. In today's lesson, I am going to talk to you about the technical ability as a wide defender, and how to improve. As a wide defender, there are a few different roles you can execute. The first one I am going to talk about is the attacking wide defender.

As an attacking wide defender, you must have developed a few different talents. Those talents are a good pace and good ball control. Your main goal when your team is on the attack is to act as another wide midfielder, thus pushing up your wide midfielder making him a makeshift forward for the attack. This causes a larger threat on the attack, giving your team an advantage. So now that I have described what you are going to need to do, let me explain how to successfully do this.

You are going to need to be able to spring free out of the defense. Your goal is to get as wide as you possibly can, opening up the field and the ability to change the point of attack much more successfully. Once you push wide, you are going to move up with the play as if you are the wide mid. While in this position, if you receive the ball you should have several options which open up to you.

If you have good pace and dribbling abilities, you can choose to take it down the line and take on a man yourself. After you do this you can pick your head up and look for the cross into the box. If you decide that is not the route you would like to take, you can find the wide midfielder who should be down the line. After you play him the ball, be sure to give him an option in case he cannot get anything from his position. Another option is to reset the ball and play it back to one of your center backs who should be available. And yet another option would be to look for the big switch onto the other side of the field.

Whichever option you choose, be sure to find another teammate and support them. Movement is a huge attribute which will need to be mastered.

The next role the wide defender will need to execute is obviously defensive position. Bare with me here for a second when I call this the attacking wide defender on defense. I know that is a clutter of words but allow me to explain further.

The defensive role as an attacking wide defender is also very important to your teams success. You CANNOT be lazy and sit up in the midfield area when your team is being attacked. Most defenses play with a Flat Back 4, and this is what I will be explaining for.

If a counter attack occurs starting from the OPPOSITE side your role becomes quite simple; tuck in and help out. If there is a player sitting on your wide side, disregard him, he is just trying to unbalance your defense and cause gaps. If the ball is switched, you will have time to get out and mark him, just be sure to take a good angle on him. But be SURE you do not keep someone on sides, you need to be even with your center backs.

If the counter attack starts from your side, your goal is to confuse the attack and try and interrupt it and unbalance the attackers. How do you do this? Well, if no one is on the man with the ball and he is self dribbling towards you, confront him, but not all the way. Throw a few fakes in there and try to get him to cough up the ball. If by this time he has not coughed up the ball to you, you need to step straight for him, and by this time you have either won the ball, or it has been passed onto another teammate. If the man on the ball IS marked you should fall off and watch your side on the wide. Be sure that man cannot play a simple ball, or a ball over the top to your mark on the wide.

These have just been a few different situations you may be placed in, but they should cover about 75% of your troubles as a wide defender. The other 25% is just basic man marking and defending that you will encounter. Today in this lesson I have taught you a few critical points which include: Get as wide as possible on the attack, movement is KEY, counter attacks can be easily off balanced by a smart defender. I challenge you to go out and keep these things in mind in your next game and see how much your success rate improves.

Long Balls: Defending Against and Attacking With:

Rather than spend time on the ball picking the pass, exploiting small gaps in the opposition's defensive or utilizing the



flanks, the long-ball is employed as an opportunistic method of attack. By pinging the ball up the field from defense or midfield, the hope is that the strikers will either latch onto the hopeful pass or exploit any mistakes by the defenders. Because the long-ball is dealt with in the air most of the time, any team employing it needs to have a strong target man.

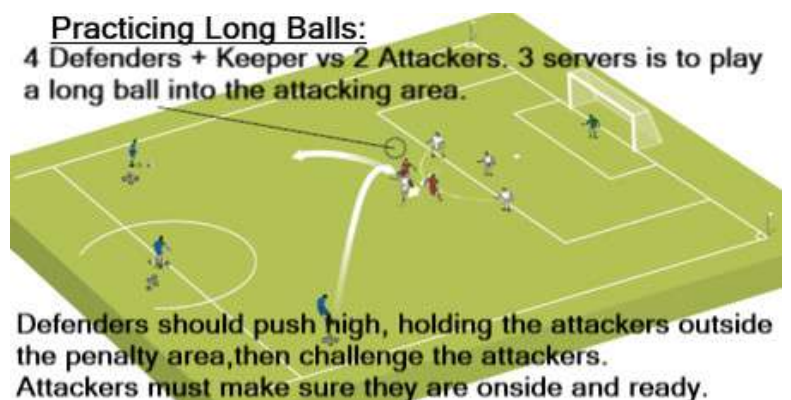
Practicing Long Balls:

In every match there will be moments when the team is under a lot of aerial pressure.

Defenders must be organized

and put up a united front. Successful teams are often the most organized defensively.

TECHNIQUE: Tactically this is a great work-out for your defense. The aim is to get your defenders to drop back into a tight unit and for one defender to then go forward and challenge the attacker by jumping to head the ball away. The other defenders are in the perfect



Practicing Long Balls:
4 Defenders + Keeper vs 2 Attackers. 3 servers is to play a long ball into the attacking area.
Defenders should push high, holding the attackers outside the penalty area, then challenge the attackers.
Attackers must make sure they are onside and ready.

position to cover any balls the attacker heads on if he beats the first defender.

4 Defenders + Keeper vs 2 Attackers. 3 servers is to play a long ball into the attacking area.

Defenders should push high, holding the attackers outside the penalty area, then challenge the attackers.

Attackers must make sure they are onside and ready.

Badlands (Long Ball Game):

Teaches defenders how to clear the long ball and attackers how to press to prevent the long ball. This shows teams how the front men can pressure and block long passes. It also shows defenders how to clear them. It is a good game for all round blocking when the opposition use long ball tactics.

SET UP: area of 60x30 yards split into three zones with a middle zone of eight yards – vary sizes depending on ages, but all age groups can play this. We've used 14 players including two goalkeepers. You need bibs, ball, cones and two goals.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your players into two teams of seven, with each team having a goalkeeper, four defenders and two attackers. Players must stay in their zones at all times and no one is allowed into the 'Badlands'. The game starts with the keeper, who bowls the ball out to his defenders.

At first don't allow the attackers to either block or pressure the defenders until they get used to the session.

Defenders play balls over the Badlands to their attackers who try to score.

TECHNIQUE: A good session for all round teamwork when long ball merchants come to town, or when your team is under attack from balls played in from the wing and from free-kicks.

1. Play starts with a pass from the keeper to his defence, who wait for an opening to pass the ball across the Badlands. Players must stay in their zones at all times and no one is allowed into the 'Badlands'.

At first don't allow the attackers to either block or pressure the defenders

Advance the session so the attackers can tackle and pressure the defenders into making mistakes.

Score with the long through ball pass:

If you want to put your strikers through on goal with a killer pass from midfield, try running this session and see your match day passing improve. This is a great session to encourage players to pass into the space behind the defense, unleashing an attacker to go 1v1 with the keeper. It replicates the throw of an American ball quarterback trying to get past the opposition with a good long pass that a receiver can get on the end of.

SET UP Set up a playing area of 40x20 yards and place a 10x10-yard square 10 yards from the playing area. We've used eight players for this session. You need balls, bibs and cones.

HOW TO PLAY Create two equal teams (here it is 4v4). Teams must make three passes before trying the killer pass. To score a point the ball must be passed into the small square and a runner must receive it in the area. You can use floating players who only play for the attacking team if your players are finding it hard to create space for the pass.

TECHNIQUE The quality of the pass and timing of runs to receive the pass are vital to the success of this session. It helps young players use space behind the defense to make a good pass that attackers can exploit.

How to Defend Against The Long Ball:

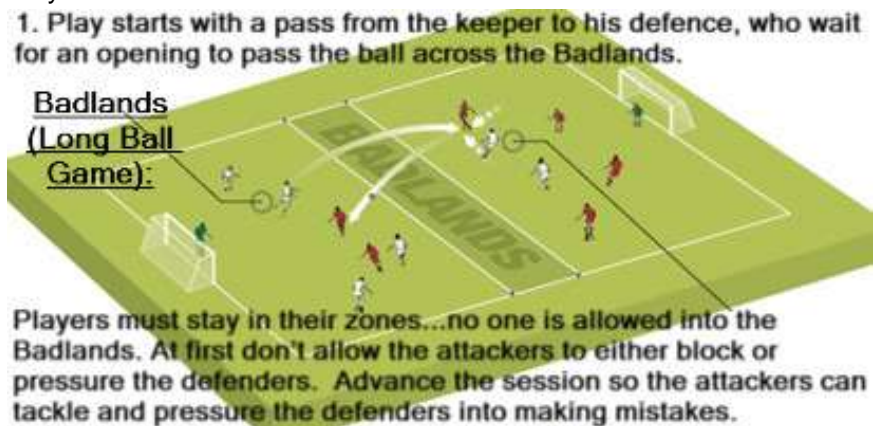
The long ball, or ball over the top can be a very effective weapon to beat teams...as it can catch even the best defences cold. It takes discipline, organization and concentration to counter the threat of the long ball – but with your back four well coached the tactic rapidly loses its effect.

Step #1: The solution to countering the long ball begins with your own attackers. Most long balls are launched from deep, bypassing the midfield completely, and your forward line must be reminded they have a defensive role, too. Your forwards

1. Play starts with a pass from the keeper to his defence, who wait for an opening to pass the ball across the Badlands.

Badlands (Long Ball Game):

Players must stay in their zones...no one is allowed into the Badlands. At first don't allow the attackers to either block or pressure the defenders. Advance the session so the attackers can tackle and pressure the defenders into making mistakes.



At least three passes must be made before teams can attempt a pass into the square. The neutral player who only plays for the team in attack to make it easier to create the pass.

Score with the long through ball:

A runner must reach the square to receive the ball.

The pass must be a good weight to allow the attacker to time his run.



need to close down those missiles and stop them at source. This means engaging high up the pitch, getting on top of opponents before they can size up a target, and then force them to lay the ball off, charge it down, or best of all, dispossess the player. Dropping off deep only encourages those balls to be aimed with more precision from closer to your six-yard box where one touch, or even a deflection, can result in a goal.

Step #2: A disciplined defense will also work hard to keep a tight line and play the offside trap. The defender need to drop a little deeper and work as a unit. One player, the best aerial defender, needs to challenge the striker, with the rest ready to pounce on the second ball if it drops in a danger zone.

One tactic is to force opposition wingers inside to stop them crossing the ball....Fullbacks and wingers should double up on wide players. Finally, the midfield should battle hard to prevent flick-ons....A flick-on is simply when the ball arrives at a player and with only one touch of the ball they pass it on to another player at speed and often in motion.

How to Score Goals:

Links: [Attacking Games](#) | [Kick – Shoot](#) | See [Attacking with Long Balls](#) |

Good technique + attitude + practice.

1. Technique: Young players won't score many goals unless they've been shown the basic shooting technique.

- Keep your head down and keep your eye on the ball.
- Plant the non-striking foot next to the ball.
- Pick the spot on the ball you want to hit.
- Keep the knee of the kicking leg over the ball.
- Approach the ball slightly from the side.
- Follow through.

2. Attitude: For every shot that hits the back of the net, many more will go wide or be saved.

So your players need to be confident enough in their own ability to take a chance when it comes and not worry about missing - if players are worried about giving the ball away or being criticized, they will hesitate to "pull the trigger".

You can encourage your players to shoot more often (and thus score more goals) by not saying anything when shots miss the target or players shoot when a team mate was in a better position.

Make notes instead and work on decision making and shooting technique in your next training sessions.

NEVER criticize a player for trying to score.

Lack of confidence: Many young players don't shoot because they are worried about missing.

This is, in part, the fault of well-meaning coaches who place a lot of emphasis on possession. Playing lots of keepaway games and continually encouraging players to "keep the ball!", "don't let the other team have it" and "look after it (the ball)!", teach your players that you value possession above all else.

They start to think that giving the ball away is the biggest crime they can commit and it's not really surprising that they are reluctant to have a speculative shot at goal.

So while it's important to help your players learn how to support each other, pass accurately and stop the other team from taking the ball, your coaching games should always have a soccer-like end result. And there's nothing more "soccer-like" than scoring a goals.

Instead of playing a simple 3v1 keepaway game, for example, put a small goal on the edge of the playing area and tell your players they can shoot if they can make X number of passes without the defender touching the ball.

I find young players will shoot early and take more chances in matches if you play 4v4 or 5v5 coaching games on a short, wide pitch that has really big goals at each end. Award two points for a goal scored from within your own half and one for a goal scored in the opponent's half of the pitch.

3. Practice: Then give them lots of practice at hitting the back of the net with some carefully designed small-sided games (SSGs).

- Young players need to be taught to shoot with all parts of both of their feet. In a crowded penalty area, a back heel or a toe poke might be required but if your players haven't practiced shooting with their toes and heels (as well as their instep (laces)) they are not going to be able to react quickly enough.

And if they are allowed to use their left or right foot only during training sessions, they are going to be half the player they could be.

Suggesting that players practice shooting with their toes probably seems like sacrilege to many coaches who try to drill toe-poking out of their players at a very early age. But a goal is a goal - it doesn't matter how it's scored - and many top professionals have scored great goals with a quick prod of a toe.

So always encourage your players to use all parts of BOTH feet when practicing dribbling and shooting. It will pay big dividends.

How to teach shooting technique

4. Not seeing the "big picture". While you do want your players to have the self-confidence to shoot in difficult situations, it's frustrating to see a youngster blaze a shot over the bar when there was a team mate in a much better position.

Sometimes this is the fault of parents who, consciously or otherwise, place pressure on their children to be the "star" and score lots of goals. In fact, it's not uncommon for parents to offer financial incentives to players as young as eight or nine - "score a goal today and I'll give you \$5". Coaches can also contribute to this problem by awarding Player of the Match to the player who scores the most goals, rather than the player who tries the hardest or displays a good sporting attitude or some other desirable trait.

Your team will score more goals (and win more matches) if you make sure parents do not place undue pressure on their child and if you make it obvious that helping other players to score is at least as important as actually putting the ball in the back of the net.

Tip: Playing a small-sided game (SSG) in which goals count double, if they are scored from a player's first touch, is a simple way of getting your players to look for team mates who can score from close range.

Score From Long Range:

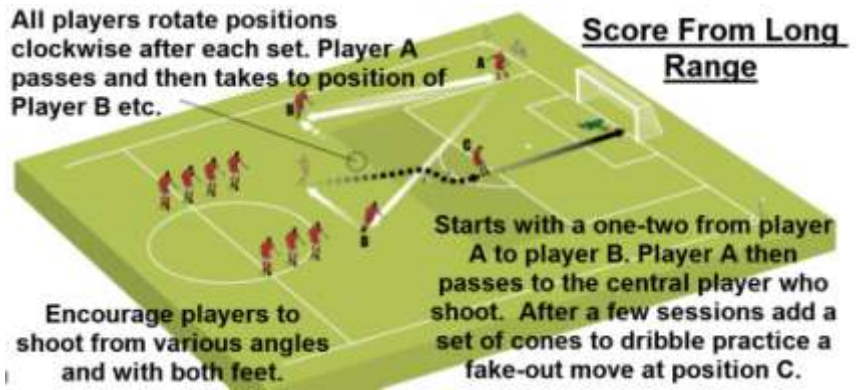


This session improves shooting technique and gives players confidence to shoot from long range. It also develops decision-making, as players make choices about when and where to shoot and which part of their foot to use.

SET UP: Mark out a zone in front of the penalty area 10 yards deep and the width of the area. We've used 12 players including a keeper.

HOW TO PLAY: Start with player A playing a one-two with player B, who moves off his cone to receive the ball. A then passes to D, who plays the ball to the oncoming C, who shoots. Allow the shooting phase to finish before the next one starts and ensure the keeper has time to get ready after each shot. In the progression add cones that players must dribble through before shooting.

TECHNIQUE: This is great to work on both individual and partnership skills. It gives the shooting players time and space to build the confidence to control the ball and shoot with both feet, and it also works on their ability to get the ball out from under their feet to hit a good shot.



First-Time Finish - Loose ball:

How to Play: Two servers (A and B) stand on the left and right of the penalty area with a supply of balls.

The shooters are positioned either side of the goal on the edge of the 6-yard box.

Player A rolls (later throws/bounces) a ball so the first player chases after it, swivels and shoots.

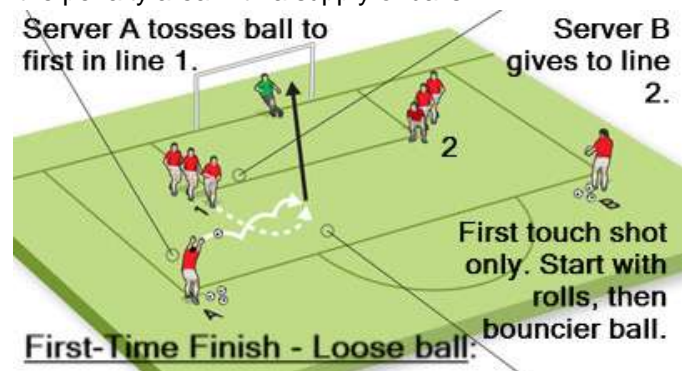
Do not allow a first touch, as pressure in the penalty area rarely allows one.

Progress to a bouncing ball, still keeping to a one-touch finish.

Do not allow the attacker to touch the ball before he shoots!

Coaching Points:

- Run on to the ball.
- With back to goal, place non- striking foot inside the line of the ball.
- Swivel on the non-striking foot, turning the chest towards the ball and swinging the striking foot across.
- Head over the ball when striking – by the time contact is made, the player is facing the goal.



1 v Keeper Attacks:

If your players struggle to cope when going one-on-one with the keeper, this attacking drill will give them plenty of practice at deciding whether to go around the keeper or shoot. Players attack the goalkeeper. The first attack is a dribble where the player must try and go around the goalkeeper and the second is a through ball and first time shot.

Goal scoring session plan:

Warm-up

Players work in pairs with one ball per pair.

Place a number of two-yard wide cone goals in an area large enough for all your players to dribble around in. I use a 30-yard square for fifteen 10-year-olds.

Players begin by passing the ball through the cone goals to their partner.

After each pass, players must move to a different goal and repeat the action.

Encourage your players to pass and control the ball with different parts of their feet: The instep (laces) and outside of the foot are just as important as the inside. Progress to passing/receiving with the "wrong" foot.

Progress by adding defenders who begin by passively defending the goals. After a few minutes allow the defenders to tackle.

Make all phases of the activity competitive by challenging the pairs of players to move quickly, pass accurately and try to score as many goals in a set time. For example: "How many goals can you score in 30 seconds using the outside of your foot?"

Coaching points: Watch your players' first touch. Is it soft or do they allow the ball to bounce off their foot? Are they playing with their heads up and moving the ball constantly? Or are they eyes fixed on the ball all the time?

Match-related activity 1

Play 3v3 (two outfield players plus a goalkeeper) on a 20x25 yards playing area with a four-yard-wide goal at each end.

Players compete for possession of the ball and attempt to score in their opponent's goal.

Progression: Encourage defense-splitting passes by awarding two "goals" for a goal scored following a pass that goes between opposition players.

Coaching points: Discuss how players can create space to receive a pass by moving out of the shadow of their opponents or even by standing still as players move around them.

Match-related activity 2

Play 5v5 (four outfield players plus goalkeepers) on a 40x30 yards playing area with full size goals at each end.

- Players compete for the ball and try to score in their opponent's goal.
- No coaching.
- Praise players who create space, play defense-splitting passes and shoot as soon they get an opportunity.

Goals Win Games:

An exciting training game that uses a simple points system to encourage all of your players to get on the score sheet. This is a game to get all of your players scoring goals, so that your team is not relying on just one or two players. If you score goals from every position on the pitch then your success will be guaranteed.

SET UP: an area of 40x30 yards with a goal at each end. We are using eight players in the session. You will need bibs, balls, cones and goals.

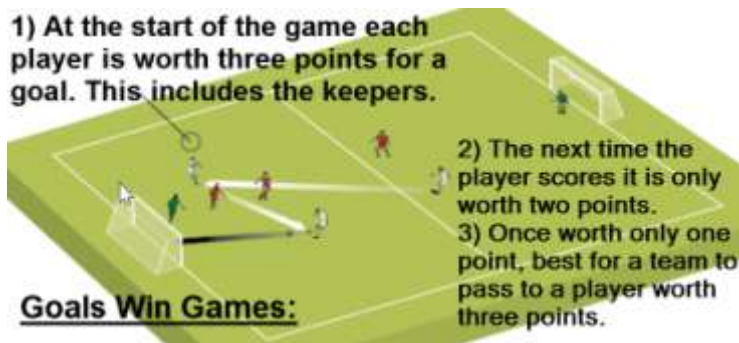
HOW TO PLAY: 3v3 plus goalkeepers using normal rules, but the twist is that players are worth points. Each player starts off being worth three points for a goal, but once they have scored they lose a point – so a player who has scored once is only worth two points for his next goal, and then one point for his third. After that his goals are worth nothing to the team. Call time out after a few goals have gone in to allow teams to talk tactics, so they can get their players with the most points scoring goals.

TECHNIQUE: This game is so simple and gets teams talking tactics to get the most points possible. It gets all the players in your squad trying to score.

1) At the start of the game each player is worth three points for a goal. This includes the keepers.

2) The next time the player scores it is only worth two points.
3) Once worth only one point, best for a team to pass to a player worth three points.

Goals Win Games:



Attack With Style:

Develop stylish attackers capable of collecting the ball with skill and weaving magic in the box. It helps players understand the need to create and exploit space around the penalty area. It gets players turning and receiving the ball while facing the goal and taking it into dangerous positions.

SET UP: Set up an area of 55x20 yards, with a centre zone of five yards and 10-yard zones on either side. Place three cones in each 10-yard zone. Use normal goals at either end. We've used 12 players.

HOW TO PLAY: Put a keeper and a defender in each goal zone. Put two attackers in the 10-yard areas and two players from each team in the centre zone. The defender is locked into his zone. The central zone players must use a one-touch pass to play to a striker, who dribbles around a cone and attacks the defender 2v1. The second attacker can be used as a decoy but if the ball is passed to him he must shoot first time. Play one team off against the other to see who scores most in three minutes.

TECHNIQUE: Players need quick feet and skill to unbalance defenders, creating space using changes of pace and direction, as well as dribbling with the ball.

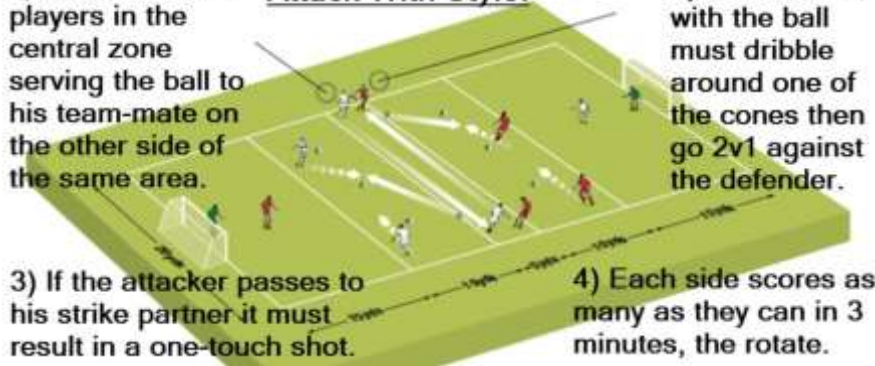
1) starts with the players in the central zone serving the ball to his team-mate on the other side of the same area.

Attack With Style:

2) The attacker with the ball must dribble around one of the cones then go 2v1 against the defender.

3) If the attacker passes to his strike partner it must result in a one-touch shot.

4) Each side scores as many as they can in 3 minutes, the rotate.



Score Or Go Out:

This session is great for attacking with an overload and for giving every player a chance to get on the score sheet.

SET UP: an area of 40x30 yards. Using 13 players in the session. You need bibs, balls, cones and a goal.

3 teams of 4 play 4v2. Red starts, has 4 minutes and must keep scoring to stay on the pitch.

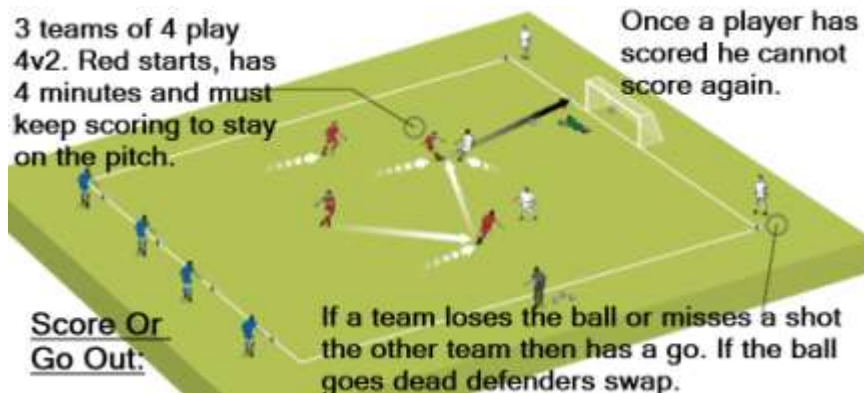
Once a player has scored he cannot score again.

Score Or Go Out:

If a team loses the ball or misses a shot the other team then has a go. If the ball goes dead defenders swap.

HOW TO PLAY: Create three teams of four, plus a keeper. One team defends in pairs, while the other teams are in competition to score the most. The two attacking teams take it in turns to attack a pair of defenders 4v2. If they score they get a second ball and attack again. The only rule is that once a player has scored, he cannot score again. When the team fails to score, the other team gets to attack. After four minutes, see which team has scored the most and the loser becomes the defending team.

TECHNIQUE: By running the game for four minutes, teams can work out tactics – for



instance, if a team scores, they can try and keep the ball from the defenders and run the clock down. But if they lose the ball while doing this, they may give it to the other team too soon. It's a great game of tactics and skill.

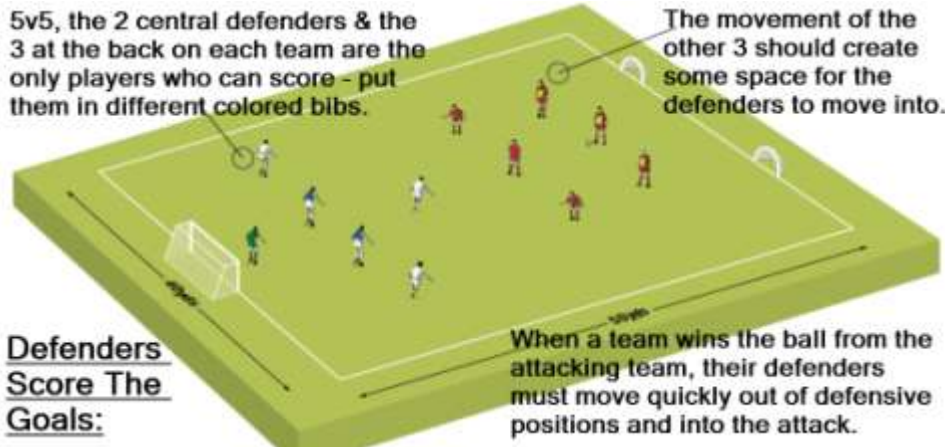
Defenders Score The Goals:

This is a fast, technical game that forces central defenders to support the attack and get themselves on the score sheet. It

also shows them how hard they have to work to get back to defend if the ball is lost.

SET UP: Set up an area of 50x40 yards with a normal goal at one end and two target goals at the other. We've used 12 players. You will need bibs, balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Play a team of six against a team of five plus a goalkeeper. The team of six has three central defenders and the team of five has two central defenders who are the only players on the team that can score – but they must also play in a



Defenders Score The Goals:

tactical role as defenders.

TECHNIQUE: This is a good workout to teach defensive responsibilities when in attack. Attacking defenders can be the winning difference in teams because often the opposition will fail to pick them up in open play. There are different targets at each end of the pitch that will test the goal scoring prowess of your players.

Free To Attack:

Young central defenders are often slow in coming forward, but once they have played this game you won't be able to stop them joining the attack. Sometimes

Put your central defenders in the center zone. They are neutral, waiting for the chance to join the attack and create a 4v3 overload for whichever side is attacking.

something different from one of your players is what is needed to win a game. Giving centre backs freedom to roam could be the key to success for your team.

SET UP: Set up an area of 50x40 yards with a five-yard central zone. We've used 16 players in this session with two keepers and a 3v3 at both ends of the pitch, and two neutral 'central defenders' in the centre zone. You need bibs, balls, cones and two full-sized goals.

HOW TO PLAY: The aim is for each team to win the ball and play it to one of the



Free To Attack:

players in the centre zone who creates a 4v3 overload in favor of the attacking team. You want this player to try to combine with the other players to score a goal. If the 'central defender' scores it is worth three points and if any other player scores it is one point.

TECHNIQUE: Getting your defenders to join the attack can build overloads that will give your team an attacking advantage over the opposition.

One Touch Finishing School:

An end-to-end game that will help your players to develop a goal poacher's instincts by limiting strikers to just one touch in the final scoring third of the pitch.

To score, players need to have the correct techniques and the ability to use all parts of either foot. This session will have your players practicing a variety of shooting techniques.

SET UP

Set up an area of 30x35 yards split into three 10-yard zones: attack, midfield and defense. We're playing 5v5 including keepers. You need balls, bibs, cones and goals.

HOW TO PLAY

Play a small-sided game. Players have limited touches in different thirds: they are allowed three touches in the defensive



One Touch Finishing School:

third, two touches in the middle third and just one touch in the attacking third. Players can only score from the attacking third. The first team to score five goals wins.

TECHNIQUE

Look for players to use a variety of techniques to strike the ball. For power, tell them to use the instep (the laces) with the toes down and the ankle locked; to sidefoot the ball, they should strike the horizontal mid-line of the ball; to chip they should 'stab' underneath the ball with the toes; or they can swerve it with either the outside or the inside of their boot.

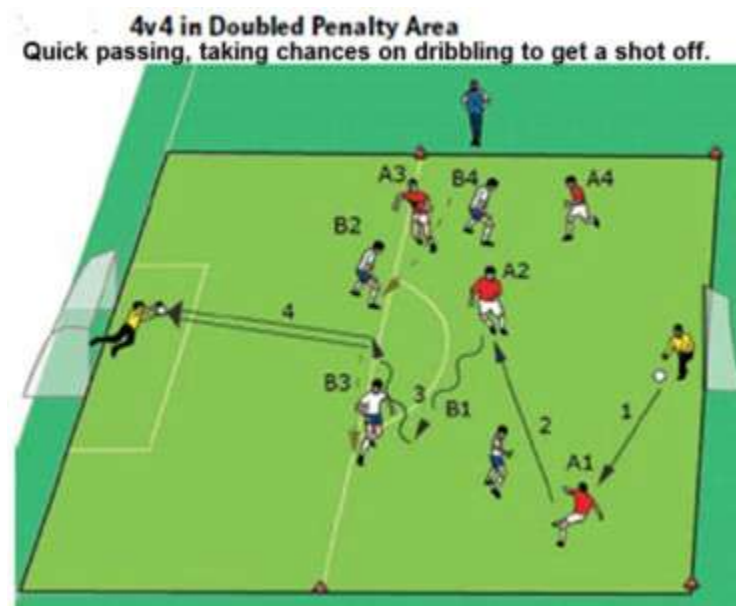
Soccer finishing drill to boost decision making skills

ABC finishing promotes independent thought and improves your players' decision making skills. Introduce the following ABC soccer drill to your team and reap the benefits in your next match. If you walk your players through what you have to do in a soccer drill you will get a much better response when they do it at speed. In this soccer drill you combine ABC with a defender to add an extra slice of realism to it. Follow it through in the diagram and show your players what they have to do. Then watch them reap the benefits in their next match.

Set up the drill Mark out an area 40 yards x 30 yards, with a goal and a goalkeeper. You need four cones and four players, one on each cone.

How to play the drill:

- Player 1 passes to player 2 then defends 1v1. Player 2 and player 3 play a 2v1 against player 1. Player 4 dribbles and crosses for players 2 and 3 who attempt to lose player 1 and score.



can win the ball and kick it out of the playing area. A ball that ends up out of bounds leads to a restart of your choice. Play the first to five points and then switch roles.

Progression: Limit the attackers to two or three touches of the ball. Increase the player numbers by trying 3 v 2 or 4 v 2.

Coaching points: Do not interfere with your players' decision making processes while play is going on. Discuss the learning points when the game is over. To begin with, let them get used to looking up to find a target player.

The stop and go: When it's useful: To beat a defender who is running alongside.

How to do it: As your player is dribbling the ball (usually with an opposition player in close attention alongside) they suddenly slow down and then explode away. The most effective technique is stop the ball completely with the sole of the foot, then quickly push the ball forward with the instep and continue the run.

How to Play Forward (Striker, Winger) in Soccer: When you play forward in soccer, you become a striker--part of the attacking group of players who will penetrate the defense of the opposing team and score goals. You will be responsible for maneuvering the ball from midfield into the goal of the opponent. You could either be on the wings or in the center forward position. Many famous and legendary players in soccer have a played in the forward position.

Step1 - Play to the needs of your position. If you are in the wings, your job is to receive the ball from midfield, move it forward along the outside edges of the field and

Move players on so player 1 becomes 2, 2 becomes 3 and so on.

Work together to score: This simple game allows your players to improve their teamwork in attack and tackling in defense.

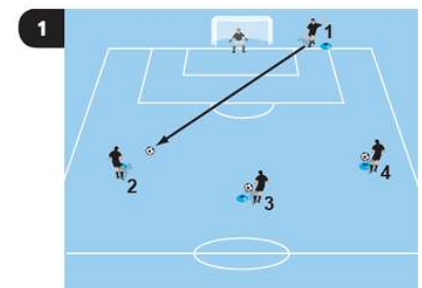
Objective: To improve combination play, passing, receiving, decision making and tackling. **Skill level:** Any.

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Create a 20 yards by 10 yards playing area for every three players in your squad. Have a cone goal at one end. Two players (an attacker and a defender) start near the goal. The third player (another attacker) is placed at the other end of the playing area.

How to play: A ball is passed to the attacker opposite

the goal. He dribbles the ball towards the goal and works with the other attacker to get past the defender to score. The defender scores if he



Player 1 passes to Player 2 and defends 1v1.



Players 2 and 3 attack 2v1.



And again from a cross by Player 4.

then get it back to the center so that the player in the center forward position can take it in to score.

Step2 - Position yourself at midfield at the beginning of play. Move forward with the ball towards the opposing team's goal. This will enable you to fall back when the ball comes back towards midfield, gain control of it and go on the offensive again.

Step3 - Establish a brave, tough and aggressive attitude. You must always try to get a shot at the goal. Your combined offensive is what will win the game for you. While you should always attempt to get to the right position to score, go for it anyway if you sense you are outnumbered and about to lose control of the ball. Being aggressive doesn't mean breaking rules or hurting opponents--it means being assertive and confident with the game you are playing.

Step4 - Communicate and pass the ball along to other players in better positions to score. Soccer is a team sport and you need to play it as such. If you are in the midfield, pass the ball to the wings who will take it along the periphery of the field towards the goal.

Step5 - Exert pressure on the defense of the opposing team. Constant pressure will wear them out and open up opportunities for your team to score.

* As a forward player, you should switch position with other players in the same position. If you are a winger, switch with center forward at some point in the game. * If you are playing in the wings, stay very wide and resist the temptation to participate in the battle in the center position. Your position has the responsibility of pulling the defenders toward the outside of the field and opening up space in the middle so that the center forwards to push ahead.

How to Play Offense in Soccer: All positions are important in the game of soccer, but the offense provides most of the goals. You must have stamina as a forward or halfback since you could be running short distances in a quick amount of time during the game. And, as mentioned, you need to know how to score goals. But there are other essentials you need to know to play effective offense.

Step1 - Line up at your position, which depends on how many forwards and midfielders your team has. Some teams play a 4-4-2 (4 defenders, 4 midfielders and 2 forwards). If that's the case, as a forward you should line up on the right or left side. Other teams apply a 5-3-3 (5 defenders including a sweeper, 3 midfielders and 3 forwards). In that instance, one player is on the right, one on the left and one in the middle.

Step2 - Be aggressive on offense. Sometimes this entails challenging the other team's players when the ball is on the ground, intercepting passes between players or heading the ball away when it's in the air. You should know how to properly trap the ball as this can help you gain possession.

Step3 - Use dribbling maneuvers to maintain possession once you gain control. There are certain moves you have in your arsenal, such as the scissors, step-over or the Breault. These moves can help you remain in possession of the ball and advance toward the goal while leaving your opposing defender behind.

Step4 - Maintain constant communication with your teammates. You may need to know where they are to pass the ball to them or to have them pass the ball to you. Soccer is a team sport, so use your teammates.

Step5 - Shoot the soccer ball once you have a good angle. Don't forget to follow up your shot since there might be a chance for a rebound. You can also apply pressure to the goalkeeper if he grabs the ball. This added pressure may make her lose possession of the soccer ball.

How to Play Striker in Soccer In the wonderful world of soccer, the striker is the all-star player. Similar to a soccer wide receiver or a home-run hitter in baseball, strikers score points. This glamorous position in the limelight comes with plenty of praise and celebrity but also carries its fair share of pressure.

Step1 - Stay on the offensive end of the field. A striker always stays on offense, so once the whistle is blown, this player will stay on the half of the field furthest from his team's goalie.

Step2 - Know your position in relation to the goal. A striker's main job is to score points, so she must always know how far she is from the goal and how easy the shot would be from where she is standing. Get to know various distances from the goal by doing random practice shots at hundreds of different angles.

Step3 - Study the opposing team's goalkeeper. As a striker you are always trying to score a goal; therefore, studying the goalie for his weaknesses is a good way to increase the odds in your favor.

Step4 - Be open and ready for a pass at all times. Strikers receive the soccer ball from midfielders (players in the middle of the field) and must be available to take a pass when their teammates approach with the ball.

Step5 - Communicate with the other forwards on your team. Strikers usually play in the middle of the field on the far end of the offensive half, but in some soccer formations, there are two or three strikers, or forwards. If this is the case, yell back and forth with the other forwards to communicate when you are going to pass, kick and receive.

Step6 - Practice your penalty kicks. The referee will occasionally call a penalty kick or free kick. Both are kicks toward the goal that are usually taken by the striker. Sometimes the goal is protected by many players during the kick, and sometimes it is just the striker versus the goalie. Spend time practicing your kicking strategies or "shots on goal."

* It is a good idea to practice stopping the soccer ball, since strikers are often on the receiving end of a pass.

How to score a penalty kick

Step1 - Well first of all you need some soccer skills and self-confidence. what you have to do first is to take the ball in your hands and place it on the spot. try to choose a high point on the grass with no dirt or holes nearby doing this you will escape from an embarrassing situation like hitting the grass or falling down.

Step2 - next step is to think where you want the ball to go before you kick it. Concentrate and focus on the place that you want the ball to go..always look the goalkeeper to the eyes , in this way he/she will know that you are not nervous and he/she, the goalkeeper, will be nervous about that.

Step3 - Now you have only one thing to do kick the ball. When you hit the ball be sure that your body is not going backwards because in that way you will hit the ball above the net. If you kick your penalty at the level of the ground and near one of the poles of the goal you have more probabilities of scoring. and that's all I hope that my article helps you.

* always look at the keepers eyes. * never said I can't. * focus on the right place. * look at the movements of the keeper(sometimes when they are nervous they move a lot)

Aggressive:

How to transform your most timid players

Timidity can be defined as 'easily frightened or lacking self-confidence'. But while timid ball players may lack self-confidence, they aren't lacking in bravery. Indeed, timid players can also be the bravest - it needs real courage to go out on to the pitch when you're frightened of getting hurt or letting yourself or your team mates down.

As a youth ball coach you may not be able to turn a mouse into a tiger, but you do have it within your power to give a timid player confidence in their own abilities. And remember that the benefits of having a team full of self-confident players are not confined to improving your win:loss ratio.

A self-confident child who has enjoyed success on the ball pitch will be more likely to succeed academically, and will have better relations with their peers and adults.

All you have to do is recognize that there are three key techniques that, when mastered, will turn the most timid of children into a strong, confident player.

Sprint and 1 v 1:

1. Goalkeeper plays ball out
2. X and O sprint around cones, each trying to gain possession of ball.

3. Player getting to ball first attacks goal, other player defends.

Coaching Points

1. Goalkeeper must vary distance and direction of passes out.

Direction change will favour one player and distance change will increase the length of the sprint.

2. The player who decides that they will not get to ball first must immediately get into position to defend the goal.

3. Encourage players to take a quick shot after winning ball. You do not want an extended 1v1 battle, but rather have players get to a fast shot.

4. Defender can win ball and take a quick shot.

5. It is important to keep drill moving so that rest periods for players are not too long.

Game Application: Short sprints to win the ball are the one of the elemental soccer fitness requirements.

Beating a defender to the ball and getting the body between ball and defender to shield ball and increase chance of successfully controlling ball is an important skill and strength requirement.

Getting to a quick shot anywhere near the penalty box is a potent offensive weapon, but many players try to work the ball closer to goal or to "set it up" perfectly. This delay often results in losing the opportunity.

Correctly judging that you are losing the sprint and then getting to proper defensive positioning is an important mental skill helping your team getting into defensive shape quickly.

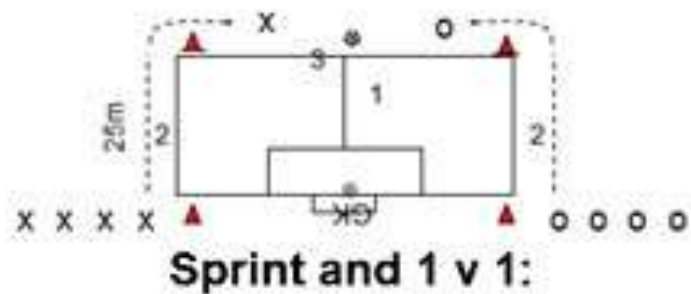
Key skill 1: Heading the ball

How to remove the fear. Despite the fact that some ball authorities recommend young children do not head the ball at all, I believe they are never too young to teach the right technique.

Step 1: Even children as young as four or five will enjoy keeping a balloon in the air with their head, and that's a great starting point.

Make sure you teach the 'mouth closed, eyes open' technique from the start and encourage your players to jump up to meet the balloon on its way down.

You can also make it a fun team game. Have four or five children in each team and see which one can keep the balloon in the air the longest.



Step 2: When your players are a little older they can begin to head the ball with a small, soft ball or an indoor ball. If they have been playing with a balloon for a while they shouldn't fear ball against head contact, but it's still a good idea to take things slowly.

Have your players hold the ball in their hands and move their forehead to the ball (you want to ingrain the habit of meeting the ball with the head, not waiting for the ball to hit the head). Then ask them to throw the ball a couple of feet in the air and head it back into their hands.

Step 3: Now you need to introduce a purpose for heading the ball. Split your players into groups of three or four. Put three flat cones in front of each team and balance a ball on each cone.

One member from each team stands on one side of the cones about three feet away from them. His team mates stand about three feet away on the other side of the cones. The single player tosses a ball to his team mates who attempt, in turn, to knock the balls off the cones in front of them with a header. The first team to knock the balls off the cones wins.

Step 4: The next step is to introduce movement. Put your players into groups of three and ask them to throw/head/catch the ball as they make their way up a ball pitch. The first team to head their ball into the goal wins. If the ball is dropped they have to start again.

Step 5: Now combine heading with healthy aggression. Play a small-sided game (SSG) where every time the ball goes out of play you restart by throwing the ball in the air and awarding a point to the team whose player heads it first.

Don't allow players to push each other to reach the ball. You're looking for decisive jumping and a desire to get to the ball first. If the ball hits the ground before anyone heads it, throw it up again.

Playing simple heading games like these from an early age will stop your players having a fear of heading the ball from taking hold.

But if your players are not used to heading and are reluctant to begin, return to step 1 and gradually work through the sequence, only moving on when your players are confident and showing no fear.

In the next newsletter: How to teach timid children to tackle and shield the ball.

How to transform your most timid players – part 2

In the last newsletter I suggested timid players are not necessarily lacking in bravery. Instead, they are lacking one or more of the three key skills required to overcome their fears: heading, tackling and shielding the ball.

In newsletter 114, I discussed how to teach heading to timid players. Today I'll look at tackling and shielding.

Key skill: tackling

Jargon buster – tackling

In ball, "tackling" is stealing the ball from an opponent or knocking it out of play. Unlike American ball, ball players are not allowed to grab their opponent or knock them over. It is also against the laws of the game to attempt to tackle the ball carrier from behind or, in the opinion of the referee, to be too aggressive.

Most young children seem to know how to tackle instinctively – if you tell a child who has never played ball before to go and get the ball from another player, they will attempt to tackle them.

A timid player, however, will shy away from tackles or, worse, go in half-heartedly.

Coaching tip: When teaching skills and technique, I find it helps to give young players key words they can remember easily. In today's article, the key words are in bold type.

To give our timid players the confidence they need in a tackling situation, we need to tell our players that quite often they don't even need to try to take the ball away from an opponent.

It's just as effective to delay an attacker advancing to your goal until help arrives or shepherd them towards the sideline where their options are limited.

Practice this in a 1v1 situation. Pair up players of a similar disposition (timid v timid) and put them in a small grid with a goal at each end. Start the players in the goals. One player (the defender) passes a ball to the other (the attacker). As soon as the attacker receives the ball, the defender runs towards him to close him down quickly.

Tell the defender that they are not to tackle the attacker. Instead, they win the contest if they can simply delay the attacker for 20 seconds – in a match, that's plenty of time for help to arrive.

You also need to tell your players to be patient. Tell them to watch the ball (not the attacker) and don't even try to dispossess their opponent unless they lose close contact with the ball. Then go and get the ball quickly and firmly.

The best way to practice this is for you or an assistant to play the role of an attacker with poor ball control!

Take your timid player to a grid with a goal at one end and dribble the ball towards him. Remind the player to be patient and guide you away from the goal. After a few seconds allow the ball to get away from you. If the player doesn't recognize this as the moment to strike, stop the exercise to explain the opportunity they missed and try again.

Keep practicing until your player steps in immediately you lose control of the ball.

Remember that you're trying to boost your timid player's self confidence so give lots of praise for small improvements. When the player consistently recognizes the right moment to tackle, you can bring in a team mate for him to practice with.

Key skill: shielding the ball

Jargon buster – shielding the ball

A player who is shielding the ball is standing still and keeping the ball away from her opponents until an opportunity arises to pass or shoot.

Timid players look as though they don't want the ball to come to them in a match and if it does they tend to get rid of it as quickly as possible (the "hot potato" syndrome). This doesn't encourage their team mates to pass to them so they often end up wandering around the field looking lost.

You need to show them how to shield the ball from pressure.

Key coaching points:

You, the ball and your opponent should make a "sandwich" with you in the middle.

- Lean into your opponent a little but be careful not to overdo it or you will lose control of the ball and possibly commit a foul.
- Look up to see what passing options are available.

Note: encourage your players to control the ball with the sole of their foot. That way they know exactly where the ball is without looking and it's easier to keep it close to their body.

How to practice shielding the ball

1. Place your players in pairs. The first player has a ball and stands with their feet spread about a shoulder width apart. The second player has 20 seconds to touch the ball by any fair means (i.e. no pushing or kicking from behind) or they lose the round. Change the players over regularly.

2. Play a small-sided game (3v3 or 4v4) with the condition the only way to advance the ball is to pass it – no dribbling. Allow your players one or two steps to control the ball then they must stand still. This means they must practice shielding the ball in a match-like situation. It also encourages the team mates of the ball carrier to move into good supporting positions.

Final word: players will, inevitably, look timid if they don't have the tools they need to overcome their natural fear of getting hurt or letting down their team mates.

Our job is to give our 'timid' players those tools and praise them for using them.

The resulting boost to their self-confidence may not turn them into tigers but it will certainly make match days more enjoyable for them and it could improve their lives in other areas too.

Principles of play part 1: how to attack

"You can be sure in succeeding in your attacks if you only attack places that are undefended" Sun Tzu, The Art of War
Youth soccer coaches spend a lot of time thinking about which formation they want their team to play in.

Coaches of children as young as four or five write to me asking if it's better to play 1-2-1-2 or 2-2-2 and when it gets to eleven-a-side ("proper" soccer), the issue of formations seems to become even more important.

Clearly, some coaches think that it's just not possible to play soccer if your team doesn't play in the right formation.

But (as I pointed out in a recent Clinic) there is no "best" formation for a youth soccer team. Coaches have to consider their team's strengths and weaknesses, how the opposition are going to line up, the style of play they favor (slow build ups from the back? Soaking up pressure, then a fast counter attack?) and even the weather conditions on the day of the match.

Coaches also need to consider the ability of their players to understand their role in a team formation.

In my experience, many players under the age of 12 or 13 find having to remember their role in different formations a big distraction and their performance can suffer as a result.

If you are finding it hard to get your team to play in your chosen formation you might be better to make sure they fully understand soccer's "principles of play" instead of the banging your head against a brick wall trying to make them play 4-4-2 etc.

The principles of play were first formalized by Allen Wade, former director of coaching for English FA, in the late '60s in the manual, "The FA Guide to Training and Coaching" and are the foundations upon which all good soccer teams are built.

Principles of play are important because your players need to use them in every match, irrespective of the formation you or the opposing team choose to play.

While principles of play may sound a bit theoretical (and you won't find principles of play even mentioned in 99% of modern coaching manuals), all youth soccer coaches should teach them in their training sessions.

Principles of play can be split into two main categories: attacking and defending. Each has five elements.

The five attacking principles of play

1. Penetrate

Always try to score. As soon as one of your team gets the ball they should ask themselves: "Can I score?" If the answer is "no", they should attempt to penetrate the defense by passing, dribbling or running at them. Players should always be encouraged to look and move forwards, not back.

2. Support

Help the player who has the ball. Players who don't have the ball should immediately move to a position where they can either receive a pass or draw opposition players away from area the ball carrier is running into (see below).

3. Create width

When attacking, use the full width of the pitch. Having your players in wide positions (with or without the ball) draws defenders out of the middle, unbalances the defense and creates spaces for other players on your team to move into. The lack of defensive pressure in the center of the pitch also allows your attacking players time to shoot. Consequently, you should encourage players to run into wide areas of the pitch even if they have no immediate intention of receiving the ball.

4. Create depth

When in possession, your team should attempt to stretch the opposition vertically as well as horizontally. Leaving at least one player back and encouraging attackers to move as far forward as possible will create options to pass the ball forwards and allow safe backwards passes.

5. Surprise/creativity

The ball should be moved towards the goal as quickly as possible and player movement should be immediate and hard to predict. You should also tell your players to be creative in the way they move the ball. Volleys, back heels, flicks, moves such as step overs and fakes should all be taught and positively encouraged. Even if they fail, the prize – a goal – makes them worth the risk.

How to practice principles of play

Penetration Practice and develop individual dribbling skills in 1v1 contests. Team penetration can be practiced by playing small-sided games on long, narrow playing areas to encourage direct play.

Support The basic principle of good supporting play (moving to a place where you can receive a pass) can be quite easily demonstrated and developed in 2v2 games.

Creating width Play 4v4 on a short, wide pitch with three goals at each end. The rewards of stretching a defense horizontally should soon become apparent.

Depth Practice stretching opponents vertically by playing 4v4 games where players are told there must always be someone in the position of central defender. Move on to 7v7, split the field into thirds and make it a condition that there must always be at least one player from each team in each third.

Surprise/creativity In all the above games, encourage speed of play and congratulate players who demonstrate individualism and flair. Teach moves, fakes and skills such as ball juggling and never criticize a player for trying something that doesn't work.

Conclusion

You will have a team full of players who understand the principles of attacking play (even though they may not know them by that name) can play in any formation, against any opposition and adapt quickly and effectively to whatever happens on the field.

You should take every opportunity to teach and reinforce them, ideally by using small-sided games and helping your players to discover the answers for themselves.

Let's hustle!

As many top professional teams have found out to their cost, having superior skills isn't always enough to win matches. Sometimes it's the desire to win, the willingness to hustle and the bravery of individual players that wins matches.

• We want them to win more tackles, win the loose ball and - most of all - win matches fairly. We don't want them to win by shirt tugging, diving, fouling or intimidating other players. In other words, cheating.

How to make your players more Up For It (UFI)

Confident players play confidently. They need to know the basic skills. You can't allow the players to have sub-standard ball control skills and still expect them to play fast, tough soccer.

1v1 to Goal: Stand next to a goal. Put your players in two teams and pair them up (e.g. player 1 from team X competes with player 1 from team Y). The first pair stand shoulder to shoulder, facing you. Throw a ball over their heads and let them fight each other for the ball and try to score. Vary the game by getting them to start from different positions: Sitting, kneeling, locked together back to back with crossed arms, eyes closed, etc.

- War! is another good way to encourage your players to be first to the ball.
- Anything Goes: This game is especially good for helping girls come to terms with the physical side of soccer. A SSG (small-sided game) where normal rules regarding physical contact are suspended. Defensive players can use their hands to push their opponent off the ball. Shirts can be pulled. Basically, anything goes, providing it is safe. Girls and boys typically react differently to this exercise.
- Boys, typically, will throw themselves into Anything Goes with abandon but girls usually need to be encouraged to pull and push their opponent off the ball.
- Just make sure your players know that this is a training exercise and they must not foul other players in a match!
- Ultimately a lack of aggression on the pitch may come down to personality. Some girls (and boys too, for that matter) are just too nice to fight hard for the ball and for many winning the match - or even the ball - isn't as important as having fun and playing the game by the rules. And that's something that really should be encouraged, not criticized.

Defense:

[Links: Intro and Skills](#) | [Practicing Defending](#) | [Defensive Strategies](#) | [Specific Positions](#) | [Defense Games](#) | [Shielding](#) | [Tackling](#) | [Defending Long Balls](#) | [See Goalies](#) | [Goal Kicks](#) | [Positions & Formations](#) |

Job descriptions - Defenders

1. Your main job is to stop attackers shooting - you don't have to win the ball.
2. If you're not the closest defender to the ball, make sure you back up the defender who is closest.
3. Stay alert, try to guess what is going to happen next.
4. Direct attackers towards places where they can't shoot - the sideline is your friend.
5. When you are closing down an attacker, keep your eyes on the ball. Wait for him or her to lose control before you tackle.
6. Be brave! If you have to put your body in the way of a shot, do it.
7. When you have the ball get your head up and look for a quick pass to a midfield player or forward.
8. Stay on your feet - sliding tackles are a last resort.
9. Don't hoof the ball upfield all the time hoping that one of your players will get on the end of it. That's another last resort!
10. When passing back to your goalkeeper, pass the ball to his stronger foot and to the side of the goal (see 'technique', below).



When do we start defending? Answer: As soon as the other team has the ball.

- If possession is lost in the attacking third (the third of the pitch nearest the opposition goal), we should try to win the ball back immediately. Why? So we can try to score!.....Ok to take chances here as the pay-off is big!
- If our opponent has the ball near to our goal, the situation is different. We are NOT trying to win the ball back quickly, we are going to stop them shooting or passing. If we do that, they will make a mistake and we will soon get the ball back.
- If we are defending nearer to our goal than theirs, get between the ball and our goal.

How to defend: Approach the attacker as fast as possible until you are about 6 feet away then slow down. If you rush in, the attacker can easily beat you with a sudden change of direction.

- Keep your opponent at arm's length.
- Focus on the ball, bend your knees and use your arms for balance. Crouch low and keep your weight over your toes so that you can move quickly into action.
- Resist the temptation to tackle (don't stab at the ball)!
- Your job is to first slow the attack down, not win the ball!
- Apply just enough pressure to get the attackers' head down so she can't shoot or pass then direct the attacker to the safest part of the pitch - the sideline.
- Only attempt to win the ball if the attacker makes a mistake and you are sure to win it...or when your second (backup defender notifies you that they are ready) Be patient!
- Fools rush in, usually fall over, and make life easy for attackers!
- Remember "**fast, slow, show**" - move quickly, put pressure on and make the attacker go where you want them to.

The "Defense" positioning: One foot in front of other ("side-on") and on the balls of feet (toes, light on your feet) and crouched down (bend from the knees, not the waist so can see the whole field & explode. Feet shoulder width apart. Try and make the offender play it with their left foot by keeping your left foot forward. Only players with good defensive posture and mobility will be successful at defending. The stance should be staggered with knees bent on the balls of their feet; chest leaning over toes, low center of gravity; ability to shuffle quickly; and reaction to the other players movements. Defenders work to keep ball in front.

Defenders never square or ball gets played into space behind. Work to allow attackers to make mistake.

Preventing Handballs:

We all know handball offences are very often open to wildly different interpretations – it depends on the distance from the striking player to the offending player, the area of the pitch, and sometimes which side of the field the referee got out of!

The best way to protect your team from the grey area of what is and what isn't a handball offence, is to teach them how to stand when they're faced with a potential pass or shot coming towards them.



As the coach, you must tell your players to try to keep their arms by their sides when a ball looks as if it's coming towards them.

- The best way to practice this is to play a small-sided game in which players have to fold their arms and put their hands under their armpits, thus getting used to what it feels like to keep hands out of the way.

Alternatively, get them to play with a bib under one armpit, and tell them to keep the other arm next to the side of their body. Play a game for five minutes – players will quickly begin to learn how to keep hands and arms away from danger.

It's time to learn how to defend!

Surrounding an opposition attacker with most of your team is a pretty effective defensive tactic when your players are four, five or six years of age. But as players get older, and a little wiser, it becomes less effective. A defender who used to win 95% of tackles by simply running at an attacker and taking the ball by force, suddenly finds the ball is being passed around them and into the back of the net. If this is happening to your defenders, you need to explain that a little more subtlety is required. It's also time to show them that they need to work together if they are to stop the other team from scoring. Before moving on to the nuts and bolts of team defending, let's demystify the jargon.



HIGH DEFENSIVE LINE

There is a danger of opponents breaking the offside trap (see box, below) with a well-timed through-ball.



LOW DEFENSIVE LINE

There is a danger of allowing opposition players to get too close to goal.

First defender (Pressure) -

The player closest to the ball. The player on your team who is nearest to the opposition player with the ball (the ball carrier). In general, the 1st Defender must put immediate pressure on the ball carrier to slow the attack and turn the ball carrier away from danger areas on the pitch.

Second defender (Cover) -

The player on your team who is next nearest to the ball

carrier.

Third defender (Balance) - This is a bit of a misnomer. The third defender isn't one player, but all of your players (apart from the first and second defender) who are between the ball carrier and your goal.

What does the first defender do? The first defender's job is not to get the ball, but to hold the attacker up until help arrives. They do this by putting their body between the ball and their goal, stopping the opposition ball carrier from progressing. This player is a 'one person' wall. It also keeps the attacker's focus on the ball such that he/she cannot look around easily to pass the ball off.

- Your job is to slow the attack, not win the ball;
- Slow the attacker down....Apply just enough pressure to get the attacker's head down;
- Make the attack predictable and push the attack to the least dangerous part of the field (the sidelines are your friends!);
- Only attempt to win the ball if the attacker makes a mistake and you are sure to win it; and
- Be patient.
- Stay on the balls of your feet so you can move quickly in any direction.
- Look at the ball, not the player.
- Only tackle if the ball carrier loses control of the ball.
- Try to move the ball carrier away from the center of the pitch and towards the touch lines. He can't score from there.

What does the second defender do? The next closest player to the ball. The second defender works closely with the first defender.

- Your job is to back up the pressuring defender;
- Cover the space behind the pressuring defender;
- Adjust your distance based on the speed of the attack, and the skill and speed of the attacker;
- Communicate with the pressuring defender, let him or her know that you are there, tell them which way to push the attack, if necessary. They should be positioned roughly between the ball carrier and the goal, but in a position that allows them to see the ball. The job of the second defender is to take over from the first defender if the ball carrier gets past. The second defender needs to loudly tell the first defender that they are in position. This allows the first defender to get closer to the ball carrier and apply more pressure, safe in the knowledge that his team mate will take over if he is beaten.

What does the third defender do? The job of the rest of your team - the 'third defender' - is two-fold.

They need to cover the danger areas. The places on the pitch where attackers shoot and score. For example, you would usually have one third defender on the edge of the penalty area and another near the penalty spot. Your third defenders also need to watch the opposition players and try to cut off the passing channels. To stop them from getting the ball. **The rest of the players on the goal side of the ball.**

- Your job is to watch the rest of the attackers and stop them getting the ball;
- Mark any attackers who could receive the ball;
- Watch attackers who are moving or could move into threatening positions;
- Cut out any passing lanes;
- Talk to each other - point out any unmarked threats or any opponents making runs;
- Be ready to assume the role of pressuring or covering defender if the situation changes;

Finally, all of your players need to practice defending, not just the defenders. Get your whole team to understand the importance of working together to stop the opposition attacks and you will have taken a big step towards 'proper soccer'.

How to Practice Individual Defending Skills:

The defensive stance: "Knees bent", "eye on the target", "lean forward slightly", "stay on your toes".

Game 1 - 10-Second Defending

Create some 10x5 yards playing areas. One for each pair of players.

One player (the defender) stands at one end of the playing area and passes a ball to a player at the other end (the attacker). Start with the ball middle and try and make it to the outer edge.

The attacker tries to dribble past the defender.

The defender earns 3 points if he/she can stop the attacker getting past her for 10 seconds or if she can force her over the sideline.

She gets 2 points for taking the ball away from the attacker.

He/she get 1 point for simply kicking the ball out of the channel.

Play three or four rounds then switch roles.

Progression 1: Protect The Cone. Use the same set-up as above.

Place a small cone goal at one end of the channel.

The attacker's job is now to score a goal by hitting the cone.

The defender gets a point if she can stop the attacker from scoring for 30 seconds.

Progression 2: Time to Score. add a cone goal at the outer edge to score/protect.

Widen the boxes from 10x5 to 10-yard squares with a small cone goal.

The defender starts the game by standing in the goal and passing the ball to the attacker who has 30 seconds to score.

Award 1 point to defenders who can stop the attacker from scoring by kicking it out.

2 points if they can steal the ball from the attacker.

3 points if they can stop the attacker from scoring for the required time.

What to say to the defender: "Close the attacker down quickly" "Watch the ball" "Knees bent"

Progress to a 4v4 or 5v5 game. Watch for players who put good individual defending principles in to practice and congratulate them.



The Role Of Luck And Defense?:

Soccer results are 50% luck. They claim that winning in soccer is 50% skill/strategy and 50% left to chance. One of the key analyses they use to defend this argument is looking at the winning percentage of teams that are favored to win. Soccer by far has the lowest winning percentage of favored teams at under 55% (adjusting for draws) of all major sports they analyzed. The NFL topped the list with 68% win rate among favorites. The idea is that even though the majority of the people feel that one team is better than another there are far more unknowns in soccer that drive unexpected conclusions. Winning a soccer match might involve more luck than we as fans would like to admit. (By The Numbers: Everything You Know About Soccer Is Wrong. 2014 by Chris Anderson)

General principles of Clearing the Ball:

The first principle of clearing is ensuring that your opponent can't gain possession of the ball. It should be used in defense where no other safe options are available. We don't want to make risky passes in our defensive third. For example, when a defender is pressured and has no support at the time it's probably best for him to clear the ball. Goalkeepers often clear crosses when they are not certain about catching the ball. Clearing is a last resort option for players who don't feel confident in defense. Typically, the direction in which the ball should be cleared is wide, **away** from the center of the field. Another common situations where we might want to clear the ball is when our opponents are attacking with a lot of momentum. This will not only stop the attack, but diminish our opponents' drive. It is hard to resume the attack with as much fervor after a defender has kicked the ball over the stadium's grandstands.

Thank you for not shouting **Boot it!!** There is a slight variation on this I hope to correct, I have not mentioned at the lower levels but at U12, my goal is to provide as much positive feedback for good plays / efforts, but **not** to provide positive feedback to defenders and midfielders who simply boot (clear the ball) away from our side **indiscriminately**. I would rather see a pass up the sideline or to one of our players. The “boot” is similar to the slide tackle (not many doing these yet)...they are both last resort plays when there is not an option to gain possession and loss of the ball may lead to a strike on our goal. There certainly are times when we want to cheer them for booting it....such as when they battle it away from the other strikers and make a valiant effort of it....or actually boot it down the line to one of our strikers etc.

BOOT IT! Just say no! “Boot it in Panic” vs. “Pass it with Precision” soccer. When teams are knocking balls forward so quickly, match turns into a game of panic ping-pong. When in doubt, kick it long and see what happens. I can tell you what happens – you lose possession.

A good player is looking to “pass” the ball. Each player actually looks for an outlet to feet and occasionally into space. Panic was not part of the equation. This is the ‘pass it with precision’ approach within the context of the direct European / English game.

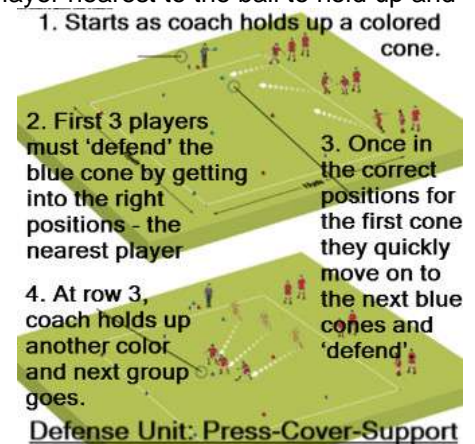
Defense Unit: Press-Cover-Support:

A great session for coaching cover individually and working as a unit, getting the player nearest to the ball to hold up and force play away before it gets to a danger zone.

Setup: Place three rows of cones five yards apart in an area of 15x15 yards, with three different colored cones in each row, but vary the order of the colors. We’ve used nine players.

Players work in threes. The coach holds up a colored cone and the three have to ‘defend’ that cone in the right press/cover/support combination. They move through the three sets of cones quickly, with the nearest player to the cone pressing the cone in the right combination each time. The players defend the same color through the sets of cones. The next three go once the first three have cleared the first set of cones.

Look for speed of movement and how the players keep the defensive unit – the closest player presses, body angle is side-on and players can work out whether they are forcing play inside or outside. Communication between players is also important so they know when and where to move.



Defensive Strategies:

Topics: As a Unit | **Holding the Line** | Zonal | **Man-man** | Supporting the Strike | **Pressure, Cover, Balance (PCB)** |

Also see: [Shielding](#) | [Tackling](#) | [Defending Long Balls](#) |

Defenders, like all other players, need to master the basic skills of the game, such as passing and ball control, but in some departments—notably tackling—they have to be considerably better than average. Individual technical ability, though, is only part of the story. Defenders also need to address how they are going to work together as a unit.

Defending as a unit: A good defense provides the foundation for every great team, and if a defense wants to become impenetrable, it needs to become a coherent unit. That means working together to regain possession of the ball, holding a tight defensive line, claiming responsibility for marking attacking players, and disrupting the opposing side’s organization as much as possible.

Holding the line: Defenders form a line across the field exactly parallel to the goal line, particularly when the opposition has possession of the ball. The line helps increase the chances of catching opposing forwards offside, unless one of them manages to cut through with a well-timed run. It also dictates how far upfield the team as a whole plays. Midfielders should base themselves slightly ahead of the defensive



line. The same is true of forwards in relation to the midfielders.

Zonal marking: For use when playing against a team using withdrawn strikers (ones that run in at the last minute). Here defenders are responsible for specific areas of the field rather



than particular opponents. Zonal defense is basically self-explanatory. To cover for a team's (or player's) lack of pace or technique, every defender and midfielder is given a particular zone on the pitch to cover when the opposition has the ball. This is particularly important during set pieces, but does rely heavily on every player fulfilling their duties and keeping their concentration.

Ideally, the opposition will be facing two lines of four players covering the entirety of one half of the pitch. The defensive line is particularly important as, with proper communication and synchronised movement, it can exploit the offside rule and prevent all long-balls and through-balls succeeding. Generally speaking, zonal defense is fundamentally simple but allows sides to deal with all types of attackers on the opponent's team. However, it can be fraught with danger if any individual fails to cover his area of the pitch.

Marking: Marking is about preventing the ball being passed easily among the opposing team. Picking up an opponent, whether from set pieces or in open play, is one of the defender's most important tasks. If several defenders decide to mark one opponent at the same time, they will leave other opponents dangerously unmarked. There are two options to avoid this: zonal marking and man-to-man marking.

Man-to-man marking: a defender is allocated an opponent and has to stick to him no matter where he runs. The system's advantage is its clarity. The disadvantage is that it allows crafty attacking players to pull defenders out of position. The term is often associated with continental (and particularly Italian) football and, once again, is extremely simple at its core. Whereas the defenders and midfielders are responsible for zones in zonal defense, man-to-man marking means certain individuals are responsible for guarding a particular opponent. Man-to-man marking is particularly effective alongside a sweeper who has a free role, enabling him/her to support anyone having problems with his opponent and reducing the potency of through-balls and balls played over the top of the defence for forward players to run onto.



However, man-to-man marking requires incredible discipline on the part of the marker, and good decision making on the part of the manager. If a slower defender is matched up with a pacey striker, the results could be grim to say the least!

Corners: the defending team: Although a defending team has no idea what kind of corner an attacking side will deliver, it should always follow certain principles such as adopting a marking strategy (be it zonal or man-to-man marking and putting a man on the inside of each of the goal posts.

Marking: Tactics vary depending on whether a team uses zonal or man-to-man marking, but the basic principle is to stick to your man and stay goal-side of him. If a defender lets the attacker get in front of him, the latter will have a chance to direct a header on goal.

Guarding the posts: The defending team should place one man on each post. As the ball comes in, they need to position themselves on the goal line, just inside the post they are guarding. If they do this, they will be ready to clear any goal attempts heading for the inside of their posts.

How to Turn Defenders Into Strikers:

One must be unpredictable and be able recognize the right time to make a difference to the game. Having a designated attacking central defender can be a real asset, not only giving extra support to your front men at set pieces, but also shaking things up in the penalty area and enabling your team to take the opposition by surprise.

- Advance higher up the pitch and join in with the midfield.
- Pick out risky passes to the forwards and follow with support play.
- Attack all aerial balls with power, purpose and timing.
- Shoot when the opportunity arises.
- Support attackers with good movement around the box.

Outside Backs / Outside Defenders:

The defender must come up as the ball moves into the attacking side. Defenders need to support the attack on their side by giving the attacker more options. ...such as a back pass or by making an overlapping run to overrun the opposing defense with numbers.....Note, when this happens the other defenders or nearby midfielder needs to communicate that they will drop back and cover that defender. Most of the supporting runs will be made by midfielders, either way there needs to be coverage for this "switching player" until they get back into position.

Pressure, Cover, Balance (PCB) Defending:

If you're leaking too many goals, mastering this simple tactic will, without doubt, dramatically reduce the number of goals your team concedes and might even increase the number of games they win! PCB (also known as **1-2-3 defending**) is a fairly simple concept that players aged from seven should be able to understand.

- **Pressure** - the job of the player nearest to the ball is to put pressure on the ball carrier immediately.

As discussed in the last newsletter, she should approach her opponent quickly but not dive in. Her objective is not to win the ball but to delay the attack until her team mates can get into position around her and provide the second and third elements of PCB - cover and balance.

- **Cover** - the next closest player is the second defender.

Her job is to cover the space between the first defender and the goal, and provide cover if the first defender is beaten. Her positioning - on a line between the ball and the goal - is dictated by her role and by the skill and speed of the attacker. If the attacker is fast and/or particularly skilful, the second defender should try not to get too close to the first defender. If she does, the attacker can beat both the first and second defender with one fast move.

The second defender needs to tell the first defender that she is there and, if possible, tell her which way to direct the attacker.

- **Balance** - the remainder of the defending players provide the balance.

They do this by marking opponents who could receive the ball directly from the ball carrier.

They also:

- Watch out for and track opponents who are moving into threatening positions and, at the same time, try to block the spaces that the attacker in possession could pass the ball into.

- Are ready to assume the role of first or second defender if the situation changes.

What's it all about? With young players, the hardest, and in my opinion, the most important single aspect to get across is that the closest person to the opponent with the ball does not have the responsibility to win the ball! Once defenders understand this, about 90% of diving in is eliminated and the attacker's job becomes much harder.

It also reinforces the next most important concept: that somebody had better be moving to cover the space behind the closest defender! That is the player who will, most often, end up winning the ball.

You can demonstrate this quite easily by selecting the best defensive soccer player on the team, placing that player isolated out on the pitch, point to a goal for him or her to defend, and then tell them to "get the ball" from you.

Then simply dribble up to the player, push the ball past them into space and run onto it. If you can get the defender to step towards you, you will do this quite easily.

Ask the team why this was so easy. Now ask how you can prevent it from happening.

Somebody should come up with the idea of having a team mate behind the pressuring defender.

Now repeat the demonstration with another opponent who has been instructed to cover the space. Also ask the closest (pressuring) defender to not win the ball unless a mistake is made by the attacker. Run it again and you should see a huge improvement.

How to practice PCB:

Game 1

Play 2v2 with two small cone/flag goals placed in the opposite corners of a 20-yard square.



Play for three minutes and keep plenty of extra balls ready to keep the game flowing.

Watch for, and praise:

- The first defender putting pressure on the ball and trying not to let the attacker's head come up.
 - The second defender covering the goal as well as being aware of the second attacker.
 - The first defender channeling the attacker toward the sideline and away from the second attacker.
- Encourage defenders not to become too spread out and allow the attackers to split them with a pass.

Game 2

Progress to a 5v4 game on a 30x20 yards pitch with a goal at one end.

The five attacking players try to score in the single goal.

The four defending players score a "goal" if they can stop the attackers shooting for 30 seconds.

Play for five minutes then switch the players around.

Coaching points: As above.

Team defending: low pressure or high pressure?

Once youth ball players reach the stage where they can understand the concept of team tactics, their coach needs to consider how he wants his players to defend as a team.

Luckily, there are only two types of team defending: high and low pressure.

But before we have a look at the benefits and drawbacks of high and low-pressure defense, it's worth noting that neither method will work unless your players are fully aware of their responsibilities as an individual when the other team has the ball.

In a previous newsletter,

8. Don't just kick the ball upfield hoping one of your players will receive it unless you have no other option. All you're doing is giving the ball back to the opposition.

If your players don't fit this "job description", don't waste time introducing team defending. Get the basics right first.

What is high-pressure defense?

Put simply, high-pressure defending is trying to win the ball back immediately after you lose possession.

High pressure defending, therefore, often starts nearer your opponents' goal than your own and it is your attackers who take the initiative. So make sure they understand defending is not just a job for defenders!

The advantages of high-pressure defending

The main advantage of high-pressure defending is that winning the ball back near to your opponents' goal often results in a shooting opportunity. This happens more often when you're playing a team whose players can be pressured into making mistakes near to their goal.

It doesn't happen so often when you're playing a team that has players who are confident on the ball, who have good ball control skills and can pass accurately over long distances.

Secondly, if you don't win the ball back immediately, your players have the time and space to retreat and regroup nearer to your goal.

The disadvantages of high-pressure defending

First, your players need to be fit. High-pressure defending requires instant transition from attack to defense and can involve a lot of fast running to a more defensive position if your players don't win the ball back quickly.

Also, if you are playing a skilful team that has players who keep their composure under pressure and has wide players that make runs off the ball, half of your team can be put out of the game with one penetrating long pass.

What is low-pressure defense?

Instead of immediately trying to win the ball back, a team that plays low-pressure defense retreats towards their own goal when they lose possession and will not seek to win the ball back until the other team get within shooting range.

Your attackers' and midfielders' job is to delay the advance of the other team as they retreat, rather than trying to force them into making errors.

Jargon buster – goal side

The player is in a "goal side" position if he or she is nearer to their own goal than the ball.

The advantages of low-pressure defending

Faced with your whole team between them and the goal, your opponents will press forward and will leave open space behind them that you can exploit when you win the ball back.

Your team will also have two or more players between the ball and your goal and you should also be able to cover all the other team's passing options.

The disadvantages of low-pressure defending

By retreating instead of trying to win the ball back you are allowing the other team to have possession and you are hoping that they will make an unforced error before your players have to tackle them.

This can be a dangerous and tiring game to play. Your players have to be alert and be constantly adjusting their position so that there are no gaps near your goal for the other team to advance into.

For this reason low-pressure defending is not a tactic that will work with very young or inexperienced players. They will instinctively want to play high-pressure defense (they want the ball back now!) and to tell them to fall back towards their own goal instead is to court disaster.

However, if you have a relatively skilful set of players who are able to build up an attack from their defensive third, low-pressure defending can be very effective and pleasing to watch.

High pressure or low pressure – the choice is yours!

WHAT SHOULD THE GOALKEEPER DO?

A goalkeeper has two main choices: to come and meet the ball (either by catching or punching it) or to stay on his goal line and hope to make a save. It requires excellent judgment to decide what to do in the heat of the moment.

Free-kicks: the defending team: Because free-kicks provide an opponent with an ideal opportunity to shoot on goal, it is vital that defenses are organized to deal with the impending threat. Every defender needs to be on his guard. Marking (zonal or man-to-man) needs to be tight, and then a wall needs to be created that directly blocks the route to goal.

Defensive walls: To defend a free-kick, the goalkeeper sets up the defensive wall. He may have only one member or as many as five. The goalkeeper needs to ensure that one side of the goal is covered, allowing him to concentrate on the other side.

Anticipating free-kicks: Defenders need to be alert to quickly taken free-kicks or ones delivered to an unmarked opponent. If the free-kick is indirect, a player should be nominated to close the ball down as soon as it has been touched by an opponent.

How to improve your defense – it's as easy as 1-2-3!

- The principles of team defense are simple. As soon as the other team gets the ball, most of your players should try to get between the ball and your goal.
- If the ball is in the attacking third (the 20 yards or so immediately in front of your opponent's goal), the player closest to the ball tries to win the ball back while the rest of your players cut off passing options or track opposition players who are running into space.
- If the ball is in the defensive third (the 20 yards of pitch in front of your goal), more caution is required. The objective is now to stop the ball carrier from shooting rather than trying to win the ball.
 - To do this, your player who is nearest to the ball (the "first defender") forces the ball carrier's head down by putting him under pressure. This stops him from shooting or passing the ball.
 - At the same time, the first defender also tries to direct the attacker with the ball away from the central part of the pitch and into a safer area – nearer to the touchline or even back towards their own goal.
 - But he must be careful not to get too close to the attacker. About a yard or so away is the right distance. Any closer and the attacker may be able to push the ball past him and run on to it.
- **Key points for the first defender:**
 - Close down the attacker quickly but don't get too close.
 - Look at the player, not the ball.
 - Stay on your toes (don't get flat footed).
 - Try to take the ball away from the attacker if he allows it to get away from him. If the attacker gets the ball stuck under his feet, tackle hard.
 - If the attacking player has the ball under control, force him away from your goal – sideways or backwards.
- **Key points for the rest of the defenders:**
 - The player who is second closest to the ball – the second defender – provides the first defender with cover. He should stay between the first defender and the goal and be ready to take on the role of first defender if necessary.
 - If the defense outnumbers the attack, the second defender can consider joining the first defender and putting even more pressure on the attacker with the ball.
 - The rest of your defenders cut off passing options and stay close to attackers who are moving into spaces where they could receive a pass. This is called "tracking" the opposition.
- **What all the team players need to know:** Talk to each other. Be brave. Be patient – don't dive in. You don't have to do it on your own. Stay on your feet (you should never have to make a sliding tackle). Look behind you!

How to improve your team's defensive play

All youth soccer coaches want their team to defend effectively and get frustrated when players "dive in" or go stand back and allow attackers a free shot at goal.

Left to themselves, children assume they must try to win the ball back as soon as possible and they don't really know how to stop the other team from shooting.

So you have to teach them!

This article will help you do just that. It covers the two important aspects of team defending – how to organize your players so they are never left to face an attack on their own plus when (and if) an attacker should be tackled – and today's featured coaching game will help your players understand and practice what you've taught them in a 'soccer-like' situation. Attackers are defenders too

One of the dangers of assigning positions to young soccer players is they will take you too literally.

If you tell a child that she is a defender, for example, she will think her job is to defend and nothing else. Similarly, a child who is told "you're an attacker" will think that their job is to score goals, not to defend.

It's important to make it clear that all the players on your team are defenders when the other team has the ball and when your team has the ball, everyone should be in attack mode, not just the "attackers".

How to do it

You can encourage your players to get in the habit of defending as a team by playing a small-sided game where goals count double if all the defending team are not in their own half when a goal is scored.

Don't dive in!

Teach your players that if they are defending near to their own goal, the player closest to the ball – the first defender – does NOT have to win it back.

Their job is to hold the opposition player up until help arrives and try to guide the ball carrier towards the side lines.

They should only attempt a tackle if the attacker clearly loses control of the ball.

If they allow an attacker to remain in a goal scoring position and attempt a tackle before the rest of the defense has had time to get organized they have to win the ball. If they don't, they will allow the attacker a goal scoring opportunity.

Let's work together – it's as easy as 1-2-3.

It's a basic principle that defenders should always outnumber attackers.

So while the first defender is slowing the attack down and trying to force the player with the ball into a position where they can't get a shot in, the rest of the defense need to get into covering positions.

The player who is second closest to the ball – the second defender – should position themselves on a line between the ball and the goal and provide cover for the first defender. If she is beaten, they take over the first defender's job and a third defender moves in to provide cover.

The remaining players in your defense should mark the attacking players and try to cut off any passing opportunities.

This is known as 1-2-3 defending.

You can demonstrate the effectiveness of 1-2-3 defending by placing one of your better defenders on her own in front of you, give them a goal to defend and then tell them to "get the ball" from you.

Then dribble up to the player, push the ball past them into space and run on to it. Get the defender to step towards you and you'll find this is easy.

Ask the team why the defender was beaten so easily and how they think they could stop it happening.

Somebody should come up with having a team mate behind the pressuring defender.

Now repeat the demonstration with a second defender who has been instructed to cover the space behind the first defender.

Also tell the closest (pressuring) defender not to try to win the ball unless you let it get away from you.

You should see a huge improvement and your players will understand the importance of not diving in and providing cover for the first defender.

What to tell your defenders:

- "If you're near defending near your goal, your job is to slow the attack down, not win the ball."
- "Apply just enough pressure to get the attackers head down so they can't see where to pass or if they can shoot."
- "Push the attack to the least dangerous part of the field – the side lines."
- "Only attempt to win the ball if you are sure you will win it. Be patient!"

Defending in the attacking third

If your team loses the ball near to the opposition goal the situation is slightly different.

Attackers who immediately try to get the ball back will often cause the opposition to panic – think wolf pack attacking sheep – and they should be encouraged to go for the ball fast and hard.

How to practice perfect defending

After you have demonstrated the importance of not diving in and supporting the first defender, put your players into groups of three – two defenders and one attacker – in an area 20 yards long by 10 yards wide.

The players practice what you have just shown them: how difficult it is for an attacker to get past two defenders who are working together.

Play for 30 seconds or so and award a point to the defenders who can stop the attacker getting past them for the allotted time.

Emphasize that the defenders don't need to tackle!

Rotate the attackers and the defenders – remember, everyone has to be able to defend – and see which pair can get the most points in five or six rounds.

Finish the session with a small-sided game – 4v4 or 5v5 – and congratulate players who show they can defend as a team in a match situation.

How to practice defending:

Use a 3v2 game: Place three defenders opposite two attackers in a 30-yard square with a goal at one end.

- One of the defenders passes the ball out to one of the attackers.
- As soon as the attacker touches the ball, the defender who passed the ball should run out quickly and stop the attacker advancing. Ideally, he should force the attacker backwards or towards the side of the area.
- The second attacker moves into a position where he can receive a pass.
- The second defender should cover the first defender (remember, he should be between the first defender and the goal) while the third defender's job is to stop the second attacker receiving a pass.
- Give the defenders the objective of stopping the attackers from getting a shot on goal for 30 seconds.

Pearls: Rotate the attackers and defenders regularly. Progression: Play with three attackers and two defenders. Ask your players if this makes it harder for the defenders (it should do) and what they can do if they find themselves outnumbered defensively. (Answer: Try to hold up the attackers until more help arrives.) Help them practice this by having a third defender on the touchline who has to wait 10 seconds before they can join the game.

Tip: Make the game competitive by awarding a point to the defensive team if they can stop an attack for 30 seconds. The attackers win a point if they can get a shot on goal in that time.

How to practice individual defending skills

The best way to practice individual defending skills is to play 1v1 games.

Warm up by pairing up your players and get them to stand a good defensive distance (three or four feet) apart.

On your command, they try to touch each other's knees. The first player to make 10 touches is the winner. Players can use their hands to deflect their partners attempts.

Use this game to practice the defensive stance. Say: "knees bent", "eye on the target", "lean forward slightly", "stay on your toes".

Game 1

Create some areas 20 yards long by five yards wide and divide them into three sections.

One player (the defender) stands at one end of a channel and passes a ball to a player at the other end (the attacker).

The attacker tries to dribble past the defender. The defender gets three points if she can hold up the attacker for 10 seconds in the first third of the channel, win the ball or kick the ball out.

If she can do it in the second section she gets two points and she gets one point for succeeding in the final third.

Play three or four rounds then switch roles.

Game 2

Use the same set-up as above.

Place a small cone goal at one end of the channel.

The attacker's job is now to score a goal by hitting the cone.

The defender gets a point if she can stop the attacker from scoring for 30 seconds.

Game 3

Set up a number of 10-yard square areas with a small cone goal in the middle.

The defender starts the game by standing in the goal and passing the ball to the attacker who has 30 seconds to score.

Again, award a point to defenders who can stop the attacker from scoring by stealing the ball, kicking it out or (ideally) holding up the attacker for the required time.

What to say to the defender:

- "Close the attacker down quickly"
- "Watch the ball"
- "Knees bent"
- "The touchline is your friend"
- "If you're going for a tackle, you must be determined to win the ball"

Soccer Defense Tactics: Teaching 1v1 Defending:

In soccer, learning to defend is typically much easier than learning to attack. This is because the defenders primary job is to simply dispossess the attacker. Even if the defender doesn't gain possession of the ball, by dispossessing the attacker will allow the defenders support to close down the loose ball or cause the ball to go out of play. A key element in good defending is remembering the defenders primary role is to break down the attack. Attackers, on the flip side, typically have to be more creative to beat defenders. Simply pressuring the attacker properly will often cause the attacker to turn over possession.

An aspect of defending which is often over looked is being able to go on the attack once the defender has won possession. Players should be reminded the importance of attacking once possession is won.

When defending 1v1's in soccer it is very important to focus on the following key elements:

Staggered stance with toes at a 45 degree angle.

Bent knees with weight on the balls of the feet.

Chest leaning over the toes.

Low center of gravity for greater explosion/quick change of direction (upright takes longer to start).

Ability to shuffle quickly.

Pay attention to the distance of pressure (depends on speed of attacker vs. the speed of the defender) usually 1-3 yards

Remember that the player closest to the attacker should be the player pressuring the ball. Players should sprint to close down space as quickly as they can, then when they get 5 yards from the attacker they should slow down and take steps backwards to match the pace of the attacker. During this time, the defender should slowly close down the space between the attacker and defender. Often proper pressure will cause the attacker to lose the ball.

One way to have players recall the proper way to defend is by the term "Quick, Slow, Sideways, Low".

Quick refers to the defender speed while closing down the attacker with the ball. This should be done at full speed sprint and note that it is often best to close down the ball when the ball is in flight.

Slow refers to the defenders ability to change of speed and direction required to start moving in the same direction of the attacker.

Sideways refers to the body positioning often used when defending. The defender should turn their body in a 45 degree angle to create the largest amount of defensive area. If the defender was to face forward, the attacker could then go around or between the defender's legs. If the defender turns perpendicular to the attacker, the attacker could easily attack the backside of the defender and have the advantage. However, if the defender positions their body in a 45 degree angle, they will have covered the largest area of space while giving the defender an advantage to channel the attacker.

Low refers to the defenders body position which should be bent knees with weight on the balls of the feet, chest leaning over the toes and low center of gravity for greater explosion/quick change of direction.

Defenders should often be reminded that they should "do their work" during the flight of the ball. So this means defenders should close down the player as the ball is in flight. Tight pressure causes the attacker to look down, where loose pressure allows the attacker to lift their head and have a better vision of defenders, space and possibilities.

Another important aspect of defending is knowing when to tackle. The defender should be patient and look for the following queues to predict the right time to tackle.

Tackle when the attacker has bad touch

Tackle when the attacking team has made a mistake

Tackle when the ball is the farthest from the attacker's foot

In addition, defenders should learn how to channel an attacker. This simply means to encourage the attacker to go a certain direction dictated by the defender. Typically channeling is done by bending the run on approaching the attacker to encourage attacker to move the ball away from the defender. Too much bend will allow the attacker to blow past defender, so the run must be bent just enough to make up the attackers mind for them. **Typically we want to channel**

attackers for the following reasons:

Move the attacker away from the goal.

Move the attacker towards the sideline.

Move the attacker to play to weak foot.

Move the attacker into a teammate (supporting defender).

Move the attacker away from their support.

To close this tip on defending, I want to make a third mention of a very important rule of defending, and that is proper defensive pressure will often cause the attacker to lose the ball. Therefore, teach your players the above defending techniques, and you should see a difference in your player's abilities to defend.

Principles of play: how to defend:

These five principles of defensive play are the key to good team and individual defending at all levels of the game. They were first described by the FA's director of coaching in the 1960s, Allen Wade, and have remained virtually unchanged ever since.

All youth soccer coaches – even coaches who have very young players – should be aware of the principles and take every opportunity to reinforce them in a way that their players can understand.

1. Pressure/delay

To prevent attackers from penetrating your defense, the first defender (the player nearest to the ball) should apply immediate pressure to the ball carrier.

His objective is not to win the ball, it is to slow the attack, get the attacker's head down and to try to force the attacker into a place where he cannot shoot.

However, if your first defender is outnumbered he should not put too much pressure on the ball carrier. Instead, he should try to delay the attack by dropping back to a spot midway between the ball and his goal. This should allow time for other defenders to regain their positions. When support arrives, your first defender should increase the pressure on the ball carrier.

Practice pressure/delay by playing a 1v1 game where the ball carrier tries to get a shot at a target or cone goal and the defender has to stop him for 20 or 30 seconds. Progress by adding another attacker.

Key coaching points for the first defender:

- Move in quickly but slow down when you get to within about one meter of your opponent.
- Approach at a slight angle, ideally so you are forcing the attacker towards the side line and away from the center of the goal.
- Watch the ball.
- Be patient.

2. Cover/support

The defender who is second closest to the ball takes up a position between the first defender and the goal and provides cover. His role is to take over the job of first defender if the attacker gets past his team mate.

The distance from the first to second defender is not fixed but he should be close enough to be able to put immediate pressure on the attacker if required. But he should not be so close behind the first defender that the attacker can beat both of them by simply pushing the ball past them.

Generally, the quicker the attacker is moving, the further away the second defender needs to be. If the attacker is moving very slowly or is stationary, the second defender can close right up and work closely with the first defender.

Practice the principle of cover and support by playing 2v1 (two defenders against one attacker) in a small playing area with a goal at each end.

Progress by adding attackers until you are playing three attackers v two defenders.

Coaching points for the second defender:

- While the first defender watches the ball, the second defender watches the attacker.
- Make sure the first defender can feel and hear your support: tell him you are covering him.

3. Balance

While the first and second defenders are working on the attacker with the ball, the rest of the defense provides balance. Their job is to cut off passing options, watch for other attackers making runs and to take on the role of either the first or second defender if the need arises.

The third line of defense has to work hard: they must be continually aware of where they are on the field in relation to the ball carrier and other players. They should always be able to see the ball.

Practice the principles of balance by playing a 4v4 game on a 30 yards wide by 40 yards long pitch. Emphasize the need for the third line of defenders (there is a first, a second and two defenders as a third line on each team) to work together to try to prevent the ball carrier passing the ball.

If the ball is passed, one of the third line of defenders, the one nearest the ball, should immediately take on the role of first defender.

Key coaching point: work together as a unit. Stay connected to each other. If one moves, you all move.

4. Compact (also known as concentration)

To avoid leaving gaps in the defense that can be dribbled or passed through, defenders should concentrate their numbers in the area of the pitch between the ball and the goal.

Practice (in a game situation) by coaching your players to play and move as a tight unit. They should mirror the movement of the ball, moving up, down, left and right as required. This cuts out the spaces available to play through, and reduces the chances of the defense being penetrated by a pass or dribble.

5. Counter attack

The final – and most important – principle of defense is to always take an opportunity to launch a counter attack.

To this end, the defense needs to have depth. One or more players should stay in an advanced position (between the ball and the opponent's goal) and if your defenders win the ball they need to play the ball forward at speed.

Coach your players to move the ball as quickly and in as straight a line as possible: it should not stop, go back or be passed out to the wings unless there is no other, more direct, option.

Practice counter attacking by playing a small-sided game on a pitch with a halfway line. Goals only count if all the players in the attacking team are in the opposition's half when a shot crosses the goal line.

Conclusion

The principles of play are the building blocks upon which all youth soccer teams should be built.

As soon as your players are old enough to be comfortable playing away from "the swarm" you should try to practice one or two of the attacking or defending principles in every coaching session.

If you continually emphasize the "right way" to play, you will end up with a team that can play well in any formation and against any opposition, no matter how skilled or experienced they are.

Defense Positions:

See [Goalies](#) | [Defensive Strategies](#) |

The Sweeper (SW)(Libero): The sweeper or libero (meaning 'free') is an exceptional

position which is seen irregularly today. The role of the sweeper is basically to act as an all-purpose defender who responds to any breach of the defensive line. As the last line of defence, he also initiates counter-attacks by bringing the ball out of the penalty area, thus necessitating some of the skills of the midfielder like passing, close control and dribbling.

<http://www.soccer-training-guide.com/sweeper-in-soccer.html>



you want to play as sweeper in soccer you should have a good understanding of the game and also strong leadership abilities. Your main task is to control the defense of your team and to always stay behind your fullbacks.

Center Fullback (CB) / Central defender: Starting out on the edge of his/her team's penalty area, the central defender's role is to protect the goalkeeper and, by implication, the goal. There are typically two central defenders in a team, but some formations utilize three.

<http://www.soccer-training-guide.com/playing-fullback.html> The center fullback's (or stopper's) main task is to mark the opposing team forwards or central midfielders. Distributing the ball to the midfielders and playing offensively at intervals is also an important skill if you want to perform well as stopper.



Fullback / Wingback (Left/Right = LB/RB): Although basically holding the same starting position, on the left and right of each central defenders respectively, the difference between the fullback and the wingback is the latter's willingness to move forward and support attacks. This is achieved either by running with the ball or 'overlapping' the winger (running ahead) to add width to an attack. <http://www.soccer-training-guide.com/left-fullback.html> If your team use a flat back formation, your main task would be to mark your opponent's forwards. Playing fullback in soccer requires that you are dependable and willing to give up any offensive raid. Whether you are playing as right or left fullback you will still need to concentrate completely on your game in defense.



Wingback (RWB & LWB): To

get a feeling on how to play as wingback, I advise you to study Dani Alves and Maicon

which are both playing for Brazil. By doing that you'll be able to notice what they are doing in particular situations which should give you a brief idea on how to play on this position.



Should Soccer Fullbacks "Push Up" on the Attack? Or Should They "Defend Deep"?

What is "Pushing Up" and Who Should "Push Up"? If you have fast, tough, skillful Fullbacks, you may want to have them "Push Up" when you attack, to help support your attack. But if the opposing Forwards are faster than your Fullbacks, you will probably be better off to "Defend Deep", because if you "Push Up" there is a risk of giving up goals on "breakaways" before your Fullbacks can "recover" to defend your goal.

The term "Push Up" refers to Fullbacks or Midfielders moving forward toward the halfway line. In certain formations and if your team has speed and stamina, you "push up" when you attack or any time the ball is near the other team's Penalty Box, even if the other team has the ball, so you can support your attack or put pressure on the ball. To build an attack (especially on a large field) it is an advantage to have everyone, including the defenders, shift with the ball. This allows your team to keep "shape" so there is "support". Moving the fullbacks up also has the advantage of keeping the other team away from your goal because they will be "offside" if they go past the last defender before the ball passes him. This keeps the attackers out of scoring range, but defenders must be quick to fall back if the ball gets past them. This is why some teams use a "Sweeper". A Sweeper is a very fast player with good endurance who is not afraid to make contact to stop the ball & clear it. The Sweeper will play slightly behind the fullbacks or as a Center Fullback with a "Stopper" in front of him. (The Stopper is like a "Front Sweeper" and must be fast, tough and able to stop the attack). The Sweeper will run down any through balls or breakaways and kick the ball out of bounds over the side line to slow down the other team's attack so your Fullbacks will have time to recover. If your fullbacks are slow and you want to push them up when you attack, consider using a Sweeper. Another alternative is to use a formation that creates more depth such as a 3-2-2-3 (2 Stoppers), 3-1-4-2 (one Stopper), or 3-2-3-2 formation.

Recreational coaches often believe they must "Push Up" their Fullbacks when they attack. There are two reasons to push up your Fullbacks: one is so they are in position to "support" your attack, and the other is to create an "offside trap" that keeps the opposing Forwards away from your goal. The danger of pushing up your Fullbacks is that the opposing Forwards may be faster than your Fullbacks. If they are, your opponent may leave his Forwards near the "halfway line" (or near your Fullbacks) and have his Fullbacks or Midfielders kick "through balls" into the open space between your Fullbacks and your goal, so his fast Forwards can get "breakaways" and easy shots on your goal. The longer the field, the greater the danger, since the "halfway line" is farther from your goal.

Note for U6 and U8 Coaches about Whether to Push Up or Defend Deep: If you are a U6 coach, don't worry about tactics, just have fun.

If you are a U8 Rec coach, you are probably better off to Push Up your Fullbacks to the Halfway Line when you attack instead of Defending Deep and having your Fullbacks stop on the Penalty Box Line. There are 2 reasons: The first reason is because your opponents probably can't attack as a team so the threat of giving up a lot of goals on breakaways isn't great. The second reason is that many U8 Rec coaches probably can't train their Midfielders and Forwards to drop back to a position to win cleared balls when their goal is under attack. Defending Deep only works if the Coach can train his Midfielders and Forwards that when their goal is under attack they MUST come back to a position where they can win cleared balls. If the MFs and Fs don't drop back to win the cleared balls, it is a disaster because the team Defending Deep can never clear the ball out of its Defensive Third and the opposing team will win all the balls your Fullbacks try to clear.

Remember, every situation is different and your decision should be based on your players and opponents, but if I coached a typical U8 Rec team, I would start by Pushing Up my Fullbacks when I attacked. IF I faced a great team that was scoring on breakaways, then I might consider Defending Deep, BUT I would only Defend Deep if I was able to train my MFs and Fs to drop back to a position to win cleared balls when our goal was under attack, because otherwise we would never clear the ball out of our Defensive Third. As I mention below, I might consider splitting the difference and Pushing Up halfway to the Halfway Line because that would stop most of the breakaways and your Fullbacks wouldn't be as far from your MFs and Forwards, so it would be easier for the MFs and Forwards to win cleared balls.

Of course, keep in mind that there are lots of variations of Defending Deep and Pushing Up and being "Pushed Up half way" and "Defending Deep half way" are the same thing. If your Fullbacks would be halfway to the Halfway Line in either case. Pushing Up halfway to the Halfway Line would stop most of the breakaways and your Fullbacks wouldn't be as far from your MFs and Forwards, so it would be easier for the MFs and Forwards to win cleared balls. If you coached a U8 Rec team you would probably tell your Fullbacks that their job is to kick the ball forward or to slow down the attack until your midfielders can recover to help.

You can probably get away with Pushing Up slow Fullbacks to the Halfway Line until about U9 or U10 most of the time. The reason is that most soccer teams simply don't have the skill to counterattack until U9 or U10. But by U9 or U10, if you Push Up slow Fullbacks against a well-coached team, you will give up lots of goals on breakaways. So, you will be able to beat poorly coached teams, but not well-coached teams.

If you have the speed to do so, Pushing Up your Fullbacks is definitely preferable. If you Defend Deep, Push Up your Fullbacks to at least to the Penalty Box Line. If you don't leave them on the Goal Box Line, that won't help you much and they will be in your Goalie's way.

How To Decide How Far To "Push Up" Your Fullbacks To Support Your Attack. Most teams "Push Up" their Fullbacks some when their attackers have the ball and are attacking on the opponent's half of the field (i.e., when the ball is far enough away from your goal that the opponent's can't quickly get into scoring range). "Defending Deep" means to only push up the Fullbacks as far as they can go and still recover - it doesn't mean you have to leave them in the Penalty Box, but that they play conservatively and don't give up goals because they can't recover in time to defend a fast counterattack.

Why Defend Deep? Defending Deep prevents your opponent from beating you with a fast counterattacking style of attack and forces your opponent to play a controlled-passing style of attack, and most Rec teams aren't very good at that.

The question is: How far can your Fullbacks safely Push Up but still recover to be in position to defend your goal if there is a fast counterattack by the opponent? This decision will be based on the speed and awareness of your Fullbacks (by awareness I mean are they paying attention so they can quickly fall back into position if the opponent launches an attack?) and how fast and skillful the opposing Forwards are. At the very least your team might Push Up to the Penalty Box line - that's a good place to start because it's clearly defined, they can see it and stop there. Even Pushing Up to the Penalty Box line or to the top of the Penalty Box Arc gives you some advantage because your Fullbacks are in position to kick away long "through balls".

Here are some of the factors to consider when deciding how far to "Push Up":

The number of players on the field makes a difference. What is best for 5v5 or 6v6 might be very different than what is best for 8v8, 9v9 or 11v11. If you play 5v5 or 6v6 you may have to Push Up in order to support your attack. You will want to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of how far to push up. The farther you Push Up, the more players you have involved in the attack, but the greater the risk your defenders won't be able to recover against a fast counterattack.

The experience and amount of practice makes a difference. How good your team is will be affected by whether your league allows teams to stay together (instead of breaking them up every year to re-balance the teams) and how many times per week you are allowed to practice (obviously, twice is better than once if you can get your players to attend).

The skill level, athleticism and speed of your players makes a difference. If one-third of your players are unskilled or slow, it presents challenges you don't have if all but one or 2 of your players are good.

The quality of the competition and the style of play the competition uses is also a consideration. Is the opponent good? Can they launch a fast counterattack?

Pushing Up the Fullbacks is not the best approach for many Recreational teams. Instead, many Recreational teams are better off Defending Deep. Here's what one coach said who switched from Pushing Up his Fullbacks to "Defending Deep":

"I have to say that using the attacking style and formation you recommended were extremely effective with my U-14 team. The girls scored many goals, and they really enjoyed playing. They were confident they could score on any team if they hustled (and they did). I should note that our practice attendance was very low (less than 50%), particularly late in the season. It only took about 3 practices to teach them this style of play, however, and they hit the ground running as soon as we started playing games. Also, your advice about not pushing up the fullbacks worked very well. I'm convinced now that, at the recreational level, pushing up your defense is very overrated. We had very few goals scored against us when our fullbacks "stayed home." The idea of using Premium practice games during practice, rather than drills, also worked very well, particularly with my U-10 girls. I had a lot more fun coaching this year, and I'm sure the girls had a lot more fun playing." Coach Jack, U-10 and U-14 Girls, Nevada, USA

Pushing up on the attack requires either fast Fullbacks or a great "Sweeper" (a Sweeper is a fast, tough player who plays behind the Fullbacks as the last line of defense, and whose job is to back up the Fullbacks and stop breakaways by kicking the ball away from the opponents).

If you have slow Fullbacks or few substitutes, it is probably better for you to "Defend Deep" than to Push Up. Pushing Up requires your Fullbacks to run a lot, and they will get tired if you don't have subs. This is especially true if you play on a long field. (If you have only a few substitutes but use a Sweeper, you may be able to push up in the first half while your Fullbacks are fresh, but you may be better off to change your Formation and Defend Deep in the second half). If you choose to Defend Deep, you may need to change to a "Formation" that puts players in positions to help support your attack, and whether you "Defend Deep" or "Push Up", you should teach a "Style of Play" that suits your team's abilities.

"Pushing Up" is an idea that Rec coaches picked up from watching professional teams or travel teams. It works for Professional and Travel teams because they have fast, tough, skillful Fullbacks. Most Rec teams don't have enough fast, tough, skillful players to play them at Fullback; these players usually play Stopper, in the Midfield or at Forward. Most Rec teams have some slower, less skilled players who must play somewhere, and they usually end up at Fullback (Tip: don't put a timid player at Fullback). Even Professional and Travel teams will "Defend Deep" if the opposing Forwards are faster than their Fullbacks. If you watched the 2006 World Cup Final, Italy beat France by "Defending Deep" and "counterattacking" in the 2nd half -- at times, Italy totally gave up the midfield. This was especially true in the 2nd half when they got tired and France got momentum, because what Italy knew was that they couldn't give up a goal on a breakaway and at that point their Fullbacks couldn't run as fast as France's Forwards.

Shielding the ball:

One of the most, if not the most, important skill to teach your players is how to stop another player taking the ball away from them. Shielding is not a skill that comes naturally.

• While shielding the ball means putting your body between the ball and your opponent, the key message to get through to your players is not to turn their back on the player who is trying to get the ball from them. This is because it is hard to keep the ball if you can't see what your opponent is doing. The only time you should turn your back on the pressuring player is when you can pass to a team mate you can see.



Part 1: The stepover. One player passes then follows the pass, putting pressure on the receiver who steps across it in order to put her body between the ball and the other player. The receiver's back foot rests on top of the ball so that it can be rolled from one side of the body to the other.

Part 2: The posture. Once the ball is being controlled with the back foot and the receiver's body is side-on to the pressuring player, it's time to get the body position right.

The receiver has to make her body as stable as possible so that

she is not knocked off the ball.

To do this, she should bend her knees a little and keep the arm nearest the pressuring player tucked in. Her other arm can be held out to help her keep her balance.

Part 3: Timing. Once the stepover and the posture have been practiced, it is important to emphasize that the receiver should move towards the ball as it is coming towards her.

Tell your players that if they don't do this, an opposition player will probably nip in and take the ball away from them before they get a chance to shield it.



Part 4: Use your strength. The player shielding the ball also needs to become comfortable with using her shoulder to keep the opposition player as far from the ball as possible. She should lean into the challenging player's shoulder or chest but make sure she does not use her hand to fend them off as in a match this would probably be called a foul.

How to practice: Once you have gone through the above sequence with your players, they can practice by playing a series of 1v1 competitions in which the player shielding the ball earns a point if she can hold off her team mate for five seconds.

- Another way to practice is to set up a circle of cones. Each player is assigned one cone. Balance a ball on top of each cone and put one player in the middle who tries to knock the balls off the cones. Play for one minute or until all the balls have been knocked off. Give every player a turn in the middle and see who knock the most balls off the cones in their 60 seconds.

Key skill - shielding the ball:

Shielding the ball is perhaps the most important skill your players can have.

Confidence in the ability to hold onto the ball for a few seconds when under pressure will transform your players' game and enable your whole team to play composed, attractive soccer.

On the other hand, if your players aren't confident that they can keep the ball away from the opposition they will try to get rid of the ball as soon as they can. Any thoughts of passing go out of the window - some players begin to panic before the ball even reaches them!

But shielding the ball is not a difficult technique to teach.

It's simply a case of positioning the body and legs between the ball and the opponent, and then, using the foot farthest away, keeping the ball as far from the opponent as possible while keeping it under close control at all times.

- Get side on – Ideally, have one shoulder pointed at the opponent to see what they are doing.
- Crouched posture – Knees bent, bottom lowered, feet about shoulder-width apart to provide a stable base and balance.
- Arms out – To help with balance and to keep the opponent away.
- Be aggressive – Use arms, shoulders, body and legs to keep an opponent from the ball, and body weight to push them away.
- Head up – To see what options are open.
- While shielding the ball, encourage players to play the ball with the inside and outside of the foot, and to try using the sole of the foot to roll the ball from side to side. It's also important they constantly readjust their body position to counter pressure from the opponent, and that they practice using both feet.



Group shielding exercises:

1. King of the Ring.

2. Knock to ball off the cone:

- The player in the middle tries to knock the balls off the cones.
- Play for one minute.

Give every player a turn in the middle and see who knock the most balls off the cones in 60 seconds.

1v1 exercise

Set up: Place two players in a 10x10m grid with one ball.

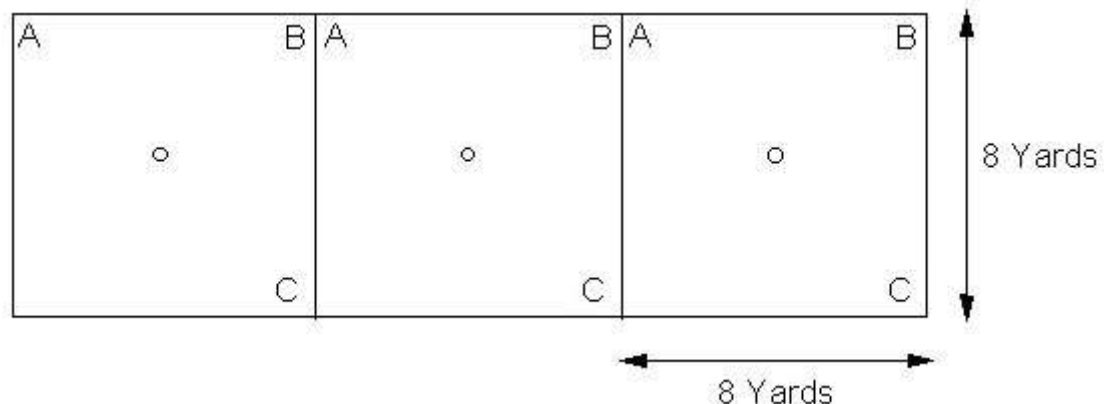
How to play: The first player starts with the ball. When you give the command to begin the player with the ball has to shield it, for say, 5 seconds, from the second player who tries to win it. If the second player wins the ball, they try to shield it for the rest of the 5 seconds.

To make it more competitive let each player start with the ball 5 times and see who has possession the most at the end of the 5-second periods.

Putting it all together

Now it's time to put your players' ball control and shielding skills to the test with this fun and challenging SSG (small-sided game).

Shielding and aggressiveness:



The first of these drills requires an 8 x 8 grid for each pair of players in your group. The two players are working on shielding the ball. One player starts with the ball and when the coach says "go" the other player tries to win the ball from the first player who is trying to keep the ball by shielding. If the second player wins the ball, then she tries to shield the ball for the remainder of the 10 seconds. The key is to emphasize that the player without the ball is trying to legally win the ball and that soccer is a CONTACT sport so this is a great way to work on it. This can be done as a competition where each player starts with the ball 10 times and see who has the ball the most times at the end of the 10 second periods. See the diagram below for the setup. Next, switch from 2 players to 3 players in a grid. Start with a player in each corner with the ball in the middle. When the coach says "go" each player tried so win the ball and keep it by shielding it from the other 2. This also should be done as a contest. If the ball goes outside of the grid, they all lose that battle. See the diagram below for this setup.

How to teach key soccer skills: shielding the ball:

Shielding the ball from an opponent is, perhaps, one of the most important skills you can teach your players. Young players need to know how to keep possession when under pressure. If they don't, they will panic and kick the ball anywhere.

When should I start teaching children how to shield the ball?

If your players are aged seven and over they should definitely know how to stop an opponent muscling them off the ball and even four and five-year-olds can be taught the basic principles.

How to teach the technique.

First, demonstrate the technique with a willing volunteer.

Ask your volunteer stand about 10 yards away, pass you a ball then run towards you and try to get the ball back.

Tip: control the ball with the sole of your foot. This makes it much easier to adjust your body while keeping the ball under close control.

As the ball arrives, step over it so that one or both your legs are between the ball and the incoming player.

The way you step over the ball is also important. Teach your players to turn towards support, not away from it, and only turn towards the sideline if they intend to kick the ball into touch.

Once you have stepped over the ball, your knees should be bent and your feet should be about shoulder-width apart to give you a stable base.

Tip: older players may be shown how to time their step over so that they make contact with their opponent with their shoulder. A slight bump is all that is required.

Keep sideways on to the player who is putting on the pressure as this allows you to see what he or she is doing. Avoid turning your back – it is much harder to keep the ball if you cannot see where your opponent is.

The arm that is nearest your opponent should be tucked in and the other arm held out to aid balance.

Tip: do not encourage young players to fend off an opponent with their arm. This is illegal and the referee will probably award a foul against you.

Keep adjusting your position relative to the movement of your opponent so that you stay sideways on and your body is between the player and the ball.

How to practice the technique.

Now it's time for your players to practice in a 1v1 situation.

- Two players stand opposite each other at opposite ends of a 10-yard square.
- One player passes the ball to the other and, as in the demonstration above, immediately tries to get it back.
- Encourage the receiver to move towards the ball so that they get control of it in the center of the grid. Being trapped on the end line will make keeping the ball much harder.
- The objective for the receiver is to keep possession for five seconds. If they succeed, they get a point. If the other player manages to get the ball in less than five seconds, they get the point.
- Play five rounds.
- Progress by increasing the amount of time the shielding player has to keep the ball.

Next steps

Allow your players to practice shielding the ball in a small-sided game.

Award a "goal" or a point to a player who can shield the ball for five or more seconds, depending on the age of your players.

Defensive Games to Hone Skills: **Keep Out of my Goal:**

Help you to coach your players to force opponents wide, leaving attackers unable to dribble into area; Without the ball, your defense can control the attacking team with good positioning, forcing play away or keeping it out wide in 'safe' areas. This session helps players learn how good positional play can force opponents away from goals and into areas where they are less of a danger.

SET UP: Mark out an area of 15x15 yards. Place a cone halfway down one touchline for the defenders and one on the bottom end towards the corner of the grid, with a target goal on the opposite side. We've used eight players. You need balls, cones and a target goal.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your squad in two, with four players on each cone. The defender passes to the attacker and when he touches the ball it is the trigger for the defender to win back possession while forcing the attacker away from goal.

TECHNIQUE: The defender shows the attacker outside and away from goal by positioning his body between the goal and the attacker. Defenders need to adopt the habit of moving the attacker away from goal while trying to regain possession of the ball.



Go for Goal Game:

Teaching your players the right way to tackle is important. If you don't, you will concede goals needlessly and worse, your players or their opponents could be injured, perhaps seriously.

Objective: To practice individual tackling and defensive skills.

Experience: Beginners and upwards.

Set-up: Create a 20-yard square with a normal-sized goal at one end.

Three or defenders stand next to the goal and three or four attackers stand at the end of the playing area opposite the goal.

How to Play: On your signal, a defender passes a ball to one of the attackers. As soon as the attacker touches the ball, the defender runs out quickly and tries to stop the attacker shooting at goal.

The defender is awarded a point if she successfully tackles the attacker or manages to keep the attacker from shooting for 15 seconds.

The attacker gets a point for a shot at goal.

Attackers and defenders change places every three or four plays.

Coaching points:

You can either play this as team game and play first team to 10 points wins or set individual targets.

Emphasize the need for defenders to close down attackers quickly and for attackers to shoot as soon as they can.

Progression:

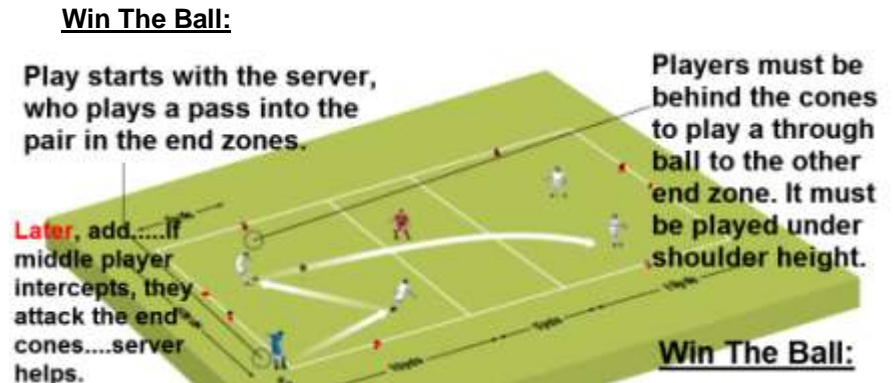
1. Award two points to defenders who can keep an attacker away from goal for 15 seconds without tackling.
2. If a defender wins the ball, he can shoot at goal.
3. Play two attackers against one defender.

All about intercepting the through ball. It encourages your players to anticipate the opposition pass in order to save the team from danger. This session is all about staying calm when under attack and reading the through ball. As the game progresses, good tackling is needed as the danger changes.

SET UP: Set up an area of 25x10 yards with a central zone of five yards, and cones on either side five yards from the ends. We've used six players. You need bibs, balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Players must stay in their zones, with two in each end zone and one in the centre. The server stands outside the area and plays the ball to one of the pairs in the end zone, who must try to pass to the players at the other end – but the passing player must be behind the line of the five-yard cone and he must keep the pass under shoulder height. Play is continuous until the centre player wins the ball and then the server plays a new ball in. To progress the session the server becomes a player in the middle zone and they attack the end they intercept from to try to score between the cones. If they fail or lose the ball, the defending team takes their place and attacks the other end.

TECHNIQUE: This initially gets defenders to read the game by working alone to win the ball, and then by playing in pairs to stop an attack. **Players must be behind the cones to play a through ball to the other end zone. It must be played under shoulder height.**

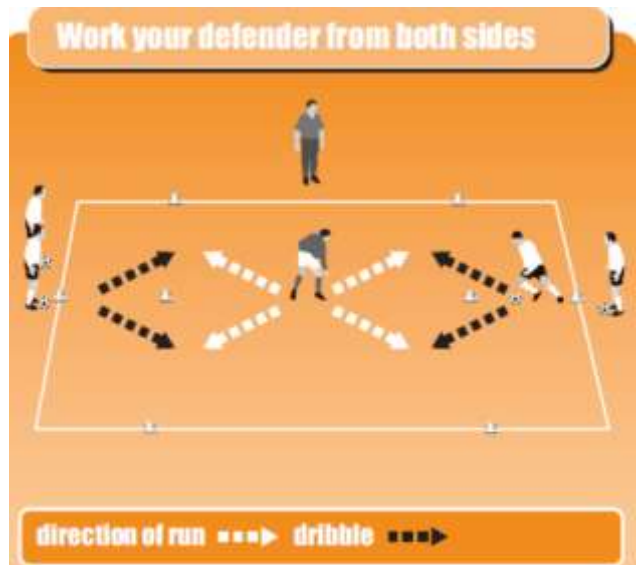


Stop the Fast Attack:

A great drill to coach awareness in defenders so they can practice tackling or jockeying attackers coming at them from all sides. It's a quick turn and defend exercise, that also tests your attackers.

Set up: Use three grids. The middle grid should be approximately 15 x 15 yards and the two end grids are 10 x 15 yards. Have two players at either end of the grid and a defender in the middle grid.

How to play it: The defender must stay in the middle grid and stop the attacker from dribbling through the grid to the other side. If the attacker is successful in making it to the other side, the defender stays in the middle. However, if the defender wins the ball, the attacker becomes defender and is attacked by the next attacker. Players should come quickly from alternate ends of the grid, and take on the defender. The defender must be quick to turn and face the attackers from either end. Only one attacker goes at a time.



Stop The Breakaway:

1 Defender + 2
Attackers +
Late defender.

1. Starts with a pass to either one of the attackers.
2. When the attacker receives the pass, defender(s) can recover to help their lone teammate in defence.

3. Recovering defender moves to area of danger and covers attacker w/o the ball.

If any player gets stuck defending for too long change them over – it can become tiring and lose its effectiveness. The idea is to improve their defending not to wear them out.

Key coaching tips:

Defending: Tell your defenders to concentrate on delaying the attacker and forcing him out of the grid. Tell your defender to keep his balance low down and quickly close down the attackers.

Attacking: What you want to see is dribbling at speed and change of pace to get past the defender.

Stop The Breakaway:

This session teaches your defenders how to shore up the defense in the face of an opposition counterattack, holding up forwards until help arrives. All coaches know how it feels when their team is attacking and loses the ball and their defender is unable to hold up play long enough for help to arrive. This teaches defenders how to hold up attackers.

SET UP: Mark out a 20x10-yard area with a goal at one end. You need to have a pair of cones at the far end and a pair five yards nearer the goal. We've used eight players including a keeper. You need balls, bibs, cones and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY: Split the players into three attackers, who stand at the cones nearest the goal; three recovering defenders, who are five yards back at the far end of the area; a defender in front of goal; and a keeper. The middle of the three attackers acts as a server and passes to another attacker. When the attacker receives the ball that is the signal for the coach to shout out the number of recovering defenders that must get back to help the lone defender. Play restarts with the attacker each time.

TECHNIQUE: Recovering defender needs to read the game well to position himself to make life difficult for attackers. It is this skill that defenders need to learn, plus recognizing when the team has to recover and get back into defense.

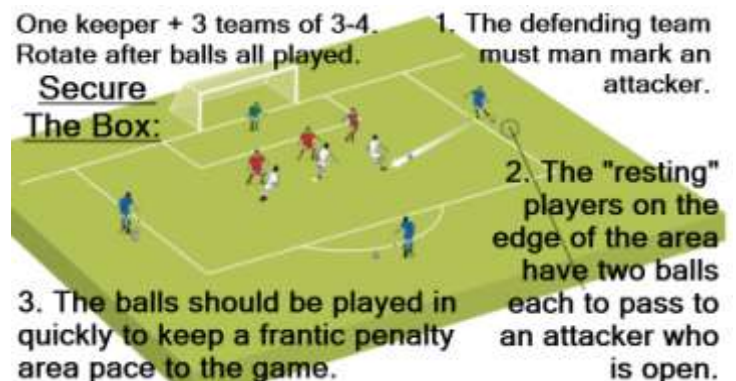
1. Starts with a pass from the static attacker to either of his two team-mates.
2. When the attacker receives the pass, defender(s) can recover to help their lone teammate in defense.
3. The recovering defender must move to the area of danger and try to cover the attacker without the ball.

Secure The Box:

Helps defenders understand the importance of marking tightly in the penalty area and not losing their man. It also helps players to read the game and clear the ball. The two central defenders have to be excellent at reading the game, especially when the ball is played into a crowded penalty area from set pieces or open play. Staying calm and making sure the ball is cleared is vital to stopping the opposition scoring rebound goals.

SET UP: Use the penalty area of your pitch. We've used 10 players including a keeper. You need plenty of balls, plus bibs, cones and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your group into three teams of three players with a keeper in goal. Two teams work inside the area, with one team attacking and one defending. The third team works outside the box around the edge of it. They have two balls each to play into the attacking team who try to score. Each game lasts for six balls and then swap teams around.



TECHNIQUE: The defenders must mark man-to-man and be strong, making tackles and blocks to stop shots on goal. A keeper and 3 Teams of 3-4 players. Rotate after balls all played.

1. The defending team must man mark an attacker.
2. The "resting" players on the edge of the area have two balls each to pass to an attacker who is open.
4. The balls should be played in quickly to keep a frantic penalty area pace to the game.

Shut Down the Pass / Shot:

Coach individual players in your team to take responsibility for stopping opponents with this useful and frenetic training game. This session helps you coach your players to understand that they have to stay close and not let opponents get free or they will give the game away.

SET UP: Set up an area in the centre of your pitch. You need cones that you can either stand a ball on or are big enough to be knocked over by a shot. We have used 10 players, plus a server. You need a lot of balls.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your players into two teams of five. Pair players up with a member of the opposite team. Each pair has a ball and players must defend and attack the player they are paired with in a 1v1. The cones are worth points and each time the cone is knocked over (or the ball knocked off), the team gets the points. Put the cone back up or the balls back on each time they are knocked down (you will need helpers for this). Play for five minutes and then take a break.

TECHNIQUE: This is a fast and furious game with 1v1s all over the pitch and with balls flying everywhere. It's great to get your players used to matches where they have the responsibility to stop the opposition passing through midfield.

1v1 with a ball per pair. Try to pass ball to knock over cones which each have different values.

Those without the ball try to deny them space or forcing them to shoot / pass from distance.

When players have shot they must go towards the coach to receive another ball. The first player there gets possession.



Win The Header:

Use this game to get your defenders winning the ball in the air in order to head off an attack and start a counterattack,

This is all about winning the first header and directing it to one of your team-mates. If your player can get control of the ball in the air, then it makes it easier to repel opponents and start an attack.

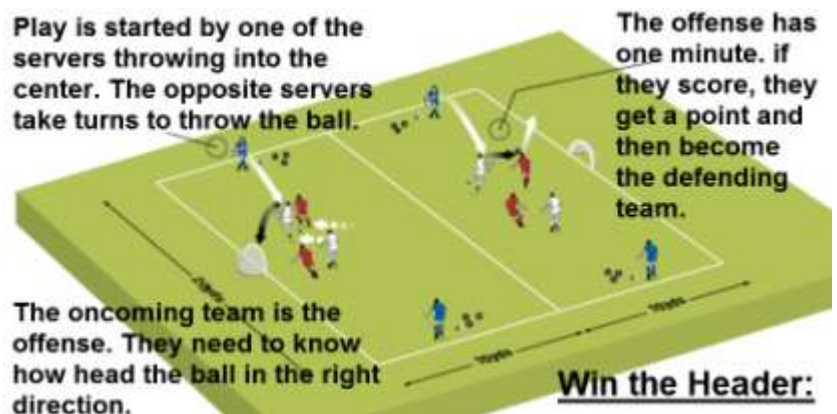
SET UP: An area of 20x20 yards split into two 10x20-yard areas. Each area has a target goal and two servers. We've used 12 players in this session.

HOW TO PLAY: In the centre of each area is a 2v2. The servers alternate to throw the ball into the middle of the players. Immediately one ball goes out, the next is thrown in so the 2v2 is fast and furious with balls coming in the air quickly. The teams need to try to beat their opponents to the first header in order to get it on target for a goal or pass to a team-mate to score. Either team can score, but obviously both should also try to prevent the other team from scoring.

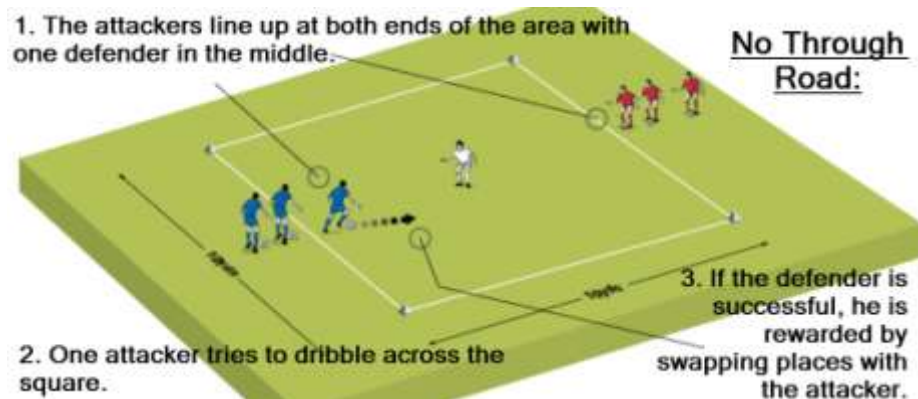
TECHNIQUE: This is a fun game to get players dueling in the air. Because of the distance and number of players, it's a good session to take the fear out of heading. The throw means the ball will not be difficult to head but it is important that young defenders understand the need to head the ball in the right direction before the attackers do.

No Through Road:

A simple and continuous game aimed at improving your players in 1v1 situations and developing their all-round tackling abilities.



In the modern game it is crucial that players can defend 1v1 against a range of opponents. Matches at all levels are made up of a series of 1v1 situations so it is important that adequate time is spent working on individual technique in training.



1. The attackers line up at both ends of the area with one defender in the middle.

2. One attacker tries to dribble across the square.

3. If the defender is successful, he is rewarded by swapping places with the attacker.

tackling, just jockeying (side to side movements to force play) or positional movements to force the attacker out of the area.

Add tackling to progress the session as it develops.

TECHNIQUE

Winning the ball back in 1v1 situations protects your team from attackers bursting through on goal. This is obviously a desirable situation for your team and will set up counterattacking opportunities.

Clash of the Titans:

Objective: To get your players to pay attention, win a 50/50 ball, shoot quickly, follow up on their shot, tackle and generally be rewarded for aggressiveness.

Set-up: Play this game on a standard-sized pitch with a goal at each end and a marked center circle. Divide your players into two teams.

- Give each player a number that corresponds with that of a player on the other team. Try to match players in terms of speed, size and skill.
- Put the teams on opposite sidelines and near to the halfway line.
- Place one ball in the middle of the center circle.

How to play: Call a number. The players with that number run out, try to get to the ball first then score in either goal.

- For a goal to count, the shooter must follow up on his shot and touch the back of the goal (or the goalpost) within five seconds of the ball crossing the line. If the other player can get to the goal first, he gets the goal. Play ends only when the ball goes out of bounds or a goal is scored – there is no time limit.

Progression: Put two or even three balls in play at a time. Move to 2v2. Add goalkeepers.

4 Corners Soccer Game:

Helps teach your defenders pressure/cover defending (how to work together) and how to "show" an advancing attacker towards the sidelines with a game like this:

Play 2v2 or 3v3 with four goals marked out in the corners of the grid. Have a regular game with periods of about two to three minutes in duration. Have plenty of extra balls ready to keep the game flowing.

Coaching Points: the first defender (the player nearest the ball) must put pressure on the attacker and keep close enough to him so that he cannot raise his head to look around.

- The second defender closest player to the ball must cover the route to goal (i.e., be on a line between the ball and the goal) as well as being aware of the other attacker.
- The first defender tries to channel the attacker into the sideline and away from the second attacker. This should be quite easy to do since the goals are in the corners of the grid and that is where the attacker should be aiming towards.
- I would also play a normal 4v4 game with one condition: no tackling. The only way a player can gain possession of the ball is by intercepting a pass or forcing the ball carrier into touch. It is a difficult game to play but very effective in showing players how to defend without jumping in and being beaten by a skilful dribbler.

Mark up! Cancel the danger man

One of the most important defensive soccer skills which players should learn (even quite young children) is how to mark an opponent so he cannot receive a pass or, if he does, is closed down so quickly that he cannot do anything with the ball.

There are two types of marking:

1. At set pieces, such as free kicks and corners.
2. Marking a particular player for the whole duration of the match, usually in an attempt to stop them from scoring.

It could be argued that the second type of marking is "anti-soccer" and it is unfair to remove two players from the game in this way.

Certainly, it is hardly in the spirit of the game to encourage a young player to touch, nudge and try to annoy/upset an opponent. But as long as coaches and players keep to the rules, marking is a perfectly legitimate tactic and it needs to be taught.

How to teach marking

The idea of marking at U10 level is abstract at best, so I suggest that you wait until your players are at least 10 years old enough before attempting to teach them how to mark opponents.

When you start to teach the technique of marking you will soon come across two problems: at set pieces, young players tend to watch the ball rather than the person they are supposed to be marking.

And when marking players in open play, children can be told that they only have to mark an opponent when the other team has the ball but they often find it hard to react quickly enough when their team gains or loses possession.

Both of these problems can be overcome by lots of practice (the next newsletter will tell you how) but don't expect your players to "get it" immediately.

Marking at set pieces

1. Corners and free kicks

Defenders should be "goal side" (i.e. stand between the goal and their mark) and also be slightly in front of the attacker.

This position will help the defender to beat their attacker to balls played along the ground. It will also give the defender enough room to move backwards and challenge in the air for high balls.

Note: not every defender should be assigned someone to mark. One defender should be left free to attack the ball or pick up an attacker who has got away from his marker. The fluid nature of this role makes it suited for the more experienced of your players.

Who's in charge?

Goalkeepers (even the very young) should be encouraged to organize their defense at corners and free kicks close to the penalty area. They are in the best position to see who needs marking and they should be allowed to instruct their team mates accordingly.

2. Throw ins

Markers should stand close behind the player they are marking. If they stand next to them or in front they risk having the ball thrown over their head.

Marking in open play

As I mentioned above, asking one of your players to stop an opposition player from playing by sticking to her like glue is a dubious tactic in youth soccer. It's the sort of thing a WAAC (Win At All Costs) coach would do.

In my opinion it isn't right to remove two players from the game in this way, especially if the marking player just follows their mark all over the pitch regardless of which team has the ball. It's poor, unimaginative coaching and it spoils the game for both players.

If you decide you need to stifle a particular opposition player, you should make it clear to the marker that she only needs to mark when the other team has the ball. And that's where a problem arises.

In youth soccer matches possession is often lost and won and lost again every few seconds. This makes it very difficult for a child to know when to mark and when they don't have to.

My advice? Don't bother with marking in open play.

How to combat marking As well as teaching players how to mark, they need to be taught how to react if they are being marked.

For a start, any of your players who are being marked in open play should treat it as a compliment. They are clearly considered to be good players who are a danger to the other team.

Advice to a player being marked: To shake off a marker in open play or at a set piece, try jogging slowly then putting in quick bursts of speed coupled with changes of direction.

If you're being marked in open play and you can't get away from your marker, turn the situation to your team's advantage. Take your marker somewhere harmless. You can even make him look really silly by taking him to your own goal line or a corner flag at the opposite end of the pitch to the action. Even better, mark a different opposition player yourself. Now you've taken two of the other team's players out of the game and created a lot of space for your team mates. 1

How to practice marking and getting away from a marker

Put your players into pairs. One is an attacker, the other is a defender. Tell the defenders to get to within two feet of their attacker (the ideal marking distance) and stay with him as he jogs around a playing area. Play it like tag. Tell your attackers to try to get away from their marker and all your players to freeze when they hear your whistle.

After 30 seconds, blow the whistle. Check that the defenders are all still close to their attackers.

Switch the roles of each player.

After a couple of repetitions you can progress by putting a goal at one end of the playing area and ask the defenders to stick close and stay "goal side" (nearer to the goal they are defending) of their attacker. This is the position they should be in when marking at corners and free kicks in and around the penalty box.

Sometimes, however, the marking player needs to be between the marked player and the ball "ball side" rather than goal side. In midfield, for example, and when running back into the penalty box with an attacker.

Progress your practice by playing a small-sided game in which all players except one are allocated a player on the opposite team to mark. This is the only player they are allowed to tackle.

If a player marks or tackles the wrong player, a free kick is awarded.

The spare player on each team has a free role and can mark/tackle whoever they like.

Conclusion

You shouldn't spend too much time teaching your players how to mark and what to do if they are being marked. But it's an important part of their soccer "education" and it must not be neglected.

4v4 Ice Hockey Style:

Set-up: Pitch size: 30 yards long by 20 yards wide (minimum) up to 40 yards long by 25 yards wide (maximum).

Two teams of four players. Two goals made using cones or poles that are set in five yards from the endlines. Two goalkeepers (optional).

How to play: The players can score in the front or through the back of the goal. The game is played for a set period of time or until one team achieves a winning score (e.g. first to five).

"Tell your players that if they are blocked when in front of the goal they should look to play quickly to the other side and try to score in the back."

Shark Attack!

Objective: To improve dribbling skills, (especially keeping close control of the ball and playing with head up), turning with the ball and shielding the ball from pressure.

Set-up: Mark a playing circle appropriate to the size of the group. If using a dozen 10-year-olds, 20 yards across is ideal. Every player has a ball and goes inside the circle except for two players – the Sharks – who don't have a ball and stay outside the circle.

How to play: Players dribble their ball around inside the circle and the two Sharks jog around the perimeter.

On your signal, the Sharks have 10 seconds to kick as many balls out the circle as possible.

Any players who lose their ball leave the circle and join the Sharks for the next attack.

The last two players left dribbling are the winners and they become the Sharks at the start of the next game.

Beating your opponent

It is important that you arm your players with the skills to create space by taking a player from the other team out of the game, by coaching them to wrong foot and beat their opponent.

Using these two simple practices will give the players confidence to try it in games.

To start, player A runs with the ball towards a mannequin (or one of your helpers), performs a move to beat his opponent (the mannequin), uses a change of pace to go past and passes to player B on the opposite side who repeats the sequence.

•Progress by adding player C who acts as a wall to one side of the mannequin. Player A runs at the mannequin as before but instead of using a move or a trick to beat his man, he passes to player C who passes first time back to player A. This simple wall pass achieves the same objective, i.e. beating your opponent.

•Give the players a choice, either trick your opponent or play a wall pass. Let the players decide.

•As before, player B repeats the process from the other end.

Transitions

Objective: to practice passing, shooting and dribbling skills. It also rewards the team that keeps a good 'shape' because when there is a transition, the back becomes the front and vice versa.

Set up: mark out one rectangular grid about 30x45 yards per eight players. Position a regular size goal on one end of the grid and two smaller goals at the other end.

•Divide your squad into teams of four players. If you have an odd number, play 5v4 or 6v5 but make sure the teams are evenly balanced in terms of skill.

How to play: while one team attacks the large goal, the opposition attacks either of the two smaller goals.

Coaching points When the team scores in one of the two smaller goals, they must change directions and take a turn at attacking the larger goal and vice-versa. The team trying to score in the large goal must now switch to attacking the smaller goals.

General Defensive Tactics:

Defenders need to cooperate closely to cope with fast moving attackers. Here, one of the tightest defenses in World Cup history, Uruguay 1970, is broken by a rapid three-man combination move: Jairzinho - Pelé - Tostão. The final defender, Matosas of Uruguay has no support as Jairzinho makes his final sprint.

All eleven players on the pitch have a defensive role. Which roles they are assigned, depends on tactics. In principle, there are two ways of defending, zone defense and man-to-man defense. In a zone defense, defensive players mainly move in relation to each other, whereas a man-to-man defense mainly moves in relation to opposing players. Whenever defensive players are given, or give themselves, a larger degree of freedom, hybrids of the two are seen.

First, second and third defender

The first defender has the main responsibility for what the opponent in possession does, seeking to obstruct dangerous passes. The first seconds after the team has lost the ball are important, as the defending team in these seconds will be poorly organized defensively. Wise first defending will contribute to the defending team managing to organized before the opponents may attack.

The first defender should usually be the player closest to the opponent holding possession, but needs to be at the defending side of him in order to do an effective job. He should keep a distance of about 2 meters, although the ideal distance will vary with each situation. The point is to pressure the opponent as much as possible without giving him a large possibility of a dribble. As a dribble isn't as dangerous when the defending team is well organized, the distance may be shorter in these cases. Analogously, the distance should be increased if the defense is poorly organized. In certain cases, the first defender should attempt a tackle. Often, however, this will increase the probability of being dribbled and passed.

The direction in which to move towards the opponent with possession of the ball may be the shortest direction. However, it may be of value to curve the defensive run, in order to channel the opponent in a certain direction. If the defensive team is well organized, he should be channeled towards the center of the pitch. In the case of temporarily poor defensive organization, however, he should be channeled towards the line.

The second defender is for security if the first defender is passed. In that case, he takes over as first defender, and ideally one of the third defenders takes over as second defender. The team should be organized in a manner to make this transition as fast as possible. The typical ideal distance between the second and first defender is about six meters, but this will vary strongly from situation to situation. The most important factor is the opponent's speed. If he's moving fast, the distance should be longer. If he's standing still, the second and first defender may in some cases join forces and work as two first defenders.

The job of the third defender is to provide deep cover. He is generally in a stand-off position relative to the first and second defenders and tries to view the "big picture", keeping watch for new opponents moving up, and covering vulnerable gaps if the first and second defenders are bypassed. The sweeper role is sometimes conceived as that of a third defender, but every defensive player not immediately engaging the ball has the obligation to adjust his positioning to guard against dangerous situations and to plug vulnerable gaps. While the role of first and second defenders are rather similar, the third defenders' role is very different in zone defense and man-to-man defense. Also, their organization will vary with formation.

The zone defense:

In zone defense, second and third defenders and midfielders are organized in two lines, in the transverse direction of the field, thus organizing a defender line and a midfielder line, the midfielder line working as an "outer shield" for the defenders. The lines should be as straight as possible, although the first defender and in some cases the second defender may rush out of it to pressure the opponent with the ball. A straight line of defenders may prevent spaces behind some of them due to the offside rule. Also, even in zone defense, some opponents, for example those moving into dangerous space, may temporarily need to be marked. The man-to-man defense ideology holds that almost all opponents need to be marked at all times, although they will have to keep an eye on zone considerations as well, and usually a sweeper will be given a free defensive role. In practice, however, every defense will be a mix of zone defense and a man-to-man defense, although often with heavy leanings towards one or the other.

The number of players in the defender and midfielder lines is given by the number of ball formations. Some formations use midfield anchors to stop attacks between the two lines. Attackers usually also play a role in pressurizing defenders, in order to give them less time to find good passing alternatives.

The lines should be shifted sideways depending where the ball is. The third defenders should keep a sensible distance to each other, depending on the width the opponent's attacking players are distributed in.

Marlon defense

Each player in defense and defensive midfield has a zone of the pitch to protect. When the opposition attacks, where ever the other team drive the ball in attack, the sweeper doubles up with the man who is protecting that certain area. The sweeper is usually a decent enough center back who has lots of energy.

Depth considerations

The distance between the defender line and the midfielder line should be kept constant at about 15 meters. However, the defensive line should back up and thus increase this distance, *standoff*, when there is no pressure on the opponent in possession, as this increases the possibility of a through ball. With tough pressure on the opponent, the distance may be reduced to below 15 meters. Also, as opponents move in close to the penalty area, the defending team will be forced to move their midfielders ever closer to their defenders.

When organized, the defending team will offer no resistance until the attacking team has advanced to a certain height on the pitch. The **pressure height**, or at which depth the midfielders should start acting as first and second defenders, depends on a lot of factors. For example, as higher pressure is more tiring, it demands players with good stamina. In general, a defensive-minded team will tend to stay lower, thus diminishing defensive risks as opponents get less space. This however, also gives them a longer way to the goal in the event of a break and counter-attack, making the long through ball a typical alternative.

The man-to-man defense:

In a man-to-man defense system, a single defender follows his opponent wherever he goes. Extremely tight marking can be achieved in this way and star players can often be neutralized in a game by use of a dedicated "shadow". Since the man to man defense will take defenders in any part of the field, interceptions and broken plays will often offer opportunity for quick counter-attack. The Italian teams of the 1970s and 1980s often used this approach with impressive results. The weakness of the man to man defense is depth when fresh attackers move up. The man to man defense also allows defenders to be drawn out of position, opening gaps for other attackers in vulnerable areas. This was Italy's fatal weakness in the 1970 Final, according to some analysts. To overcome this problem with depth, the man to man defense may use a 'sweeper', who is a central defender and has a free role, *i.e.* has not been assigned a player to mark. He sometimes takes up a position slightly behind the other defenders, as his defensive role often is to 'sweep up' any attacks that break through the defense and as such he adds valuable depth to the defensive unit. Usually the sweeper will be the controller of the defense. They will determine where the back line should be at any given time. Zone defense does not require a sweeper role, and as many teams have changed their tactics to this, sweepers are today rare.

Defending at set pieces:

Free-kicks from short range

At free-kicks from short range, a wall of defensive players is lined up. How many players should participate in the wall will depend on the angle and distance from the goal, and on the opponent's assumed shooting skills. The wall usually covers one end of the goal. The goalkeeper will be positioned nearer the other end of the goal, both because he then can see the ball when it's shot, and because it is more difficult for attackers to hit a powerful shot on target at the end that the wall covers.

Corner kicks and other crosses

At corner kicks, and at free-kicks or throw-ins that are likely to become a cross, most teams use man-on-man marking, even those which otherwise play zone defense. Each player is given an opponent to mark, in advanced ball they usually

have been assigned an opponent before the match. Substituting at the time of a defensive set piece is regarded as unwise, as play may be started before the substitute has come into marking position.

A few teams use the tactic of gathering defenders on one line on corner kicks and similar situations, in effect giving them the responsibility for zones instead of particular opponents.

Penalty kicks

In the case of a penalty kick, no defending players except the goalkeeper are allowed within the penalty area or within ten yards of the penalty spot. A significant number of players should, however, be placed right outside the penalty area, alert to advance into the area and clear any deflection. For this purpose, sometimes the attacking team will nominate two players to run at the goal from either side of the penalty spot; timing their run so that they only enter the penalty area once the kick has been taken will hopefully give them the first opportunity at gathering the ball if it is saved by the goalkeeper. This tactic is rarely seen, however, since the likelihood of the ball being saved and then falling into the path of the attacking player is small. A particular tactic that can be used by the goalkeeper involves trying to distract the penalty taker by drawing his concentration away from striking the ball cleanly. Such tactics normally involve moving one's body, or body parts, in an extravagant manner, or through verbal comments.

Forward" versus "collapsing" defenses:

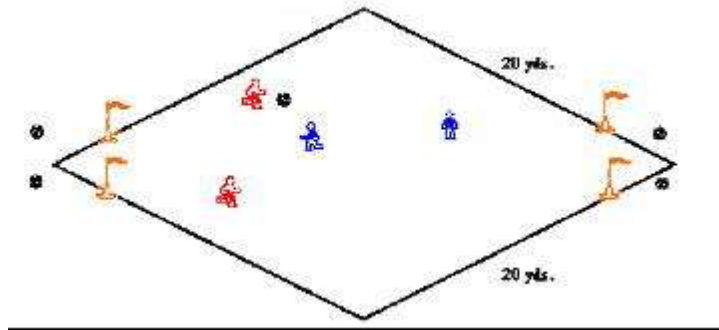
Some teams use forward defending, aggressively challenging the ball when on the defensive in any part of the field. Others rely on a "collapsing" style, that falls back deep into its own half when the opponent is in possession of the ball. The "forward" policy can put immense physical and psychological pressure on opponents, and is aimed at slowing down or breaking up attacks early. It has more physical demands however, and may spread a defensive formation more thinly. The "collapsing" approach is more economical in physical demand, and provides a packed back zone to thwart attacks. However it sometimes creates large gaps in midfield, and invites the opposing team to dribble forward and to take shots from long range; if the opposing team is good at the two aforementioned skills then goals will be conceded freely.

Defending with the ball:

Clearing is when the player in possession of the ball is pressed hard, often near his own goal, and chooses to shoot the ball away with low precision simply in order to get out of a dangerous situation. When opponent pressure is extremely high, the ball is often cleared to a corner kick or to a throw-in. Clearing long, but into opponent control, may give the defense time and the opportunity to organize, including setting up the correct formation and pressure height. If the attack was high up the field, such as in or near the penalty area, defenders will thus quickly push out, and attackers will then be forced to retreat in order to avoid offside in the next move. Clearing may be combined with an attempt to hit a long pass or a long through ball. Players high up in the field who are pressed hard, and who are eager to avoid a counter-attack, may in some instances combine clearing with a shot.

A team composed of good passers and mobile players with good positioning skills may more often try to avoid clearing, as their skills make it easier to make shorter passes and thus retaining possession until they get out of a difficult situation. Retaining possession in this way may also be regarded as a longer-term way of defending, as the opposing team cannot attack when they don't have the ball. With the ball, the team applying this tactic can simply pass the ball between each other - as in the possession ball style, but with little or no intention of building up an attack, thus decreasing the risk of a break.

The major benefits of this tactic is that the team is in complete control over its opponents. Meanwhile, by knocking the ball around, opponents playing the pressing game can easily tire. And should an opportunity suddenly arise, defense may be quickly switched to attack. A major downfall is that because the accuracy of passes needs to be high, short passes between the players are required. This significantly narrows the gap between the attack, midfield and defense (usually, the latter is forced to push up). So if the opponent gains possession, a long ball could effectively open up the defense. Similarly, if it is the attack and midfield that need to drop back, the team will have little chances of counter-attacking even if possession is won back.



The Game

- 2 v. 2, with goals marked out in the corner of the grid.
- Have a regular game with periods of about 2 - 3 minutes in duration.
- Have plenty of extra balls ready to keep the game flowing

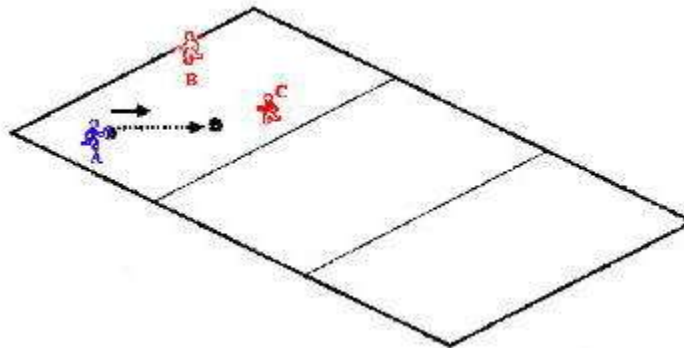
Coaching Points

Defending principles of play

- Pressure on the ball, do not let the **first attacker's** head to come up
- Second defender** must cover the goal as well as be aware of the **second attacker**
- First defender** tries to channel the attacker into the sideline and away from the **second attacker**. (This is easier to do since the goals are in the corners of the grid, the sidelines come up quicker.)
- When **first defender** has made the play predictable, **second defender** tries to double team.
- Make sure the defenders stay balanced, that they do not become too spread out, enabling the attacking team to make "splitting passes".
- As soon as the ball is won, can they shoot? This is the best time to do so because the attacking team is not in a good defending posture.

Practice - Small Group Defending

Warm Up 5 - 10 minutes. Activity level - Mild ramping up. Space: General. 1 - 2 Players per group.



Pressure

The Game

Groups of three, one ball per group. Player **A** rolls the ball (receiving ground balls) or tosses the ball (receiving air balls) to either player **B** or player **C**. In this example, player **C** must control the ball and get a completed pass to player **B**. While this is occurring, player **A** immediately challenges player **C** and tries to win the ball back. After successful pass, player **C** would then pick up the ball and repeat the activity as the defender. The defender is awarded a point for winning the ball back and gets to throw again.

Coaching Points

- Encourage defender to pressure quickly after the toss. Defender needs to work hard at closing down the space while the ball is in flight.
- Receiving player's first touch should be away from the pressuring defender.
- Player receiving the pass should move to create a clear passing lane.
- Do not allow the receiving player to one touch the incoming toss. This is a receiving drill, as well as a drill that serves as a good warm-up for practices dealing with defenders.

Small Game 20 - 25 Minutes. Activity level: Medium progression to high. Space: Defined space "smaller". 3 - 5 players per group.



The Game

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- Have a regular game with periods of about 2 - 3 minutes in duration.
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Coaching Points

Defending principles of play

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Four Goals - End Line

The Game

4 v. 4. Each team defends two goals and attacks two goals. Having the goals on the end lines makes this game more realistic as it forces the attacking team to have more of a direction to their attack.

Coaching Points

Defending principles

- Defending become particularly challenging since the defending team has two goals to defend, essentially turning this into a 6 v. 4 game.
- It is a good idea to allow each team to decide by themselves, at first, where they are going to try to win the ball. In other words, are they going to challenge the ball all over the field, or will they hang back and try to only defend the space close to their own goals?
- Can they **"channel"** the ball into certain areas of the field to gain possession.
- Can they apply enough pressure on the ball to limit the **first attacker's** options, and make the play predictable.

A good session for U-12 players and above.

Team Game 30 Minutes plus. Activity level: High. Space: Defined for the game = larger space. 7 - 11 players per team.



Four Zones Game

The Game

A regular 11 v. 11 or 8 v. 8 scrimmage. Break the field into 4 horizontal zones. Award the defending team points when they win the ball back in a chosen zone. For example, the **Blue** team might be given 3 points for winning the ball back in the first zone, two points for the second zone, one point for the third zone and no points for the fourth zone. This can change depending on where the coach wants the team to try to force the play

Coaching Points

- Try to get the players to work together, collectively, as a unit, with all 11 players aware of the defensive plan.
- Can the defending team control the attacking team, making them play the ball in a certain area of the field, and then winning the ball there.
- Make sure you give defending agendas to both teams.

Warm Down 5 - 10 Minutes. Activity level: Low ramping down. Space: General, No specific boundaries. 1 - 2 players per group.



Two Sided Goal Game

The Game

A 2 v. 2 game played to a two sided goal. Goals can be scored from either side. The game is a continuous flow game that is best played for 2 - 3 minutes.

Coaching Points

- A good warm-up or cool-down game to teach defending and attacking skills.
- Defenders must make sure they cover the goal as well as the attacking players.
- Defenders must work at channeling the first attacker away from their support.
- Attacking team must be good at combination play to unbalance the defense.
- As soon as the ball is lost, defending team must get goal side.
- Try to attack immediately when the ball is won.

Diamond soccer drill :

As in the diagram, use four players, including your midfielders and attackers to build the diamond. Your best header of these four is number 6 at the base of the diamond. Your best goal scorer/poacher is at the top of the diamond (number 7). 4 and 5 are on the sides of the diamond and control the shape.

After 4 or 5 win the ball it is their job to pass into number 7. If the goal kick is poor or short, number 7 runs on to it and shoots. If the kick is good and long, number 6 heads it back into the danger zone.

Keep the opposition deep

Another important soccer coaching tip is for number 7 to keep the opposition defenders deep in their own half, making it harder to move the ball quickly into attack.

Defender soccer drill to keep attackers at bay

When your defender is the last man, if he jumps into a tackle and doesn't win it, the attacker is through on goal. So, you need to coach your players how to hold up an opponent until help arrives.

It's not always necessary to tackle an opponent in order to dispossess them or slow their progress. Jockeying denies your opponent time and space, and it's a good tactic to allow your team-mates to get back in position.

Soccer drill set up

1. Tell your players to adopt an almost side-on position, with shoulders opened out slightly so they provide a barrier to their opponent. This keeps the opposition in front of your player so he can see them.

Your players should keep their knees slightly bent, with their weight on the front of their feet, which makes it easier to change direction while they move backwards.

2. Make sure your players stay goal-side, and also in front of your opponent. They do this by turning off their back foot as they move backwards.

3. Tell them to stay within an arm's length of their opponent to increase the pressure on them. They should have their arms slightly out to create more of a natural barrier. But make sure they don't use them to push!

Key soccer coaching tip: Don't jump in!

Soccer drill to improve marking skills

Work on your players' core defensive skills with some tips and drills aimed at getting more effective marking of opponents.

What you tell your players the soccer drill is about:

1. How to mark opponents effectively.

2. When to mark players and when to cover spaces.

What you tell your players to do in the drill:

1. Move quickly into position when the ball changes hands.

2. Position between your opponent and your goal.

3. Position to see both the ball and your opponent.

4. Closer to the ball or goal; closer to the opponent.

5. Be ready to intercept the ball but don't commit unless you are sure.

6. Adopt a slightly sideways on body position to move quickly in any direction.

7. Don't allow the opponent to receive and turn.

Drill set up:

Set up the drill in a 30m x 10m grid, play this 2v2 target zone game.

The players on the outside act as servers and targets. The players on the inside start in the middle third. One player receives from his partner and the objective is to turn and pass to the target player at the other end. The soccer drill is then reversed. Players are rotated so they all get to practice marking skills.

How to extend the soccer drill

Bring two grids together and increase the numbers to 2v2 in the middle and two targets at each end. Increase this again by allowing one of the outsiders to join in after the first pass to make 3v3 in the middle. Now they will develop marking and



covering.

Put the drill into a game situation:

Increase the pitch size to allow for a 5v5 game with end zones. There are no goals or keepers so the team in possession must try to achieve penetration into the opponents' end zone.

What to shout:

- "Move quickly" / "get tight" / "not too tight"
- "Watch the ball" / "don't dive in"
- "Sideways on" / "can you intercept?"
- "Watch the space" / "don't let them turn".

What to watch for in the drill:

- Players moving too late, allowing players to receive under no pressure; marking too far away, allowing opponent to turn.
- Players getting too close, allowing opponents to turn around or allowing a pass into space behind them.
- Exposing the goal by marking on the wrong side.
- Marking directly behind an opponent and not seeing the ball.
- Marking flat or square; unable to move in any direction.
- Failing to intercept/attempting to intercept at the wrong time.

Key soccer coaching drill tips: Are the players concentrating when they are in possession? And are they working as a unit or a team? Do they communicate?

Soccer coaching tips to boost defenders support role

When a defender plays the ball out of his penalty area to one of his midfielders or attackers, he should not stop running. He should run outside the attacker, to help put pressure on the opponents, says David Clarke. Use the following soccer coaching tips to put these skills into practice.

Tackling:

Topics: Basics | **Block tackle and poke tackle** | [Slide tackle](#) |

How to teach tackling

All your players, including the goalkeeper, need to be good tacklers but while young players will instinctively try to take the ball from another player, the correct technique does not come naturally.

Watch any group of six to 10-year-olds and you will see players who think that all they have to do is stick out a foot and they will win the ball. This is not only ineffective... it's also potentially dangerous.

A mistimed or poorly executed tackle could cause serious injury to an opponent or the player making the tackle.

In addition, a "stab" tackle could result in a free kicks (or even a penalty) against your team.

So it's important to teach your players the correct technique. Let's start with the basic tackle - the block.

How to teach the block tackle

The first thing you need to teach your players about block tackling is that they have to get close to their opponent... but not too close.

The first defender (the one nearest the ball) has to close down their opponent quickly (pressure the ball) then stop when they are about an arm's length away.

If they rush in and get too close, the attacker can easily push the ball past them and continue to goal.

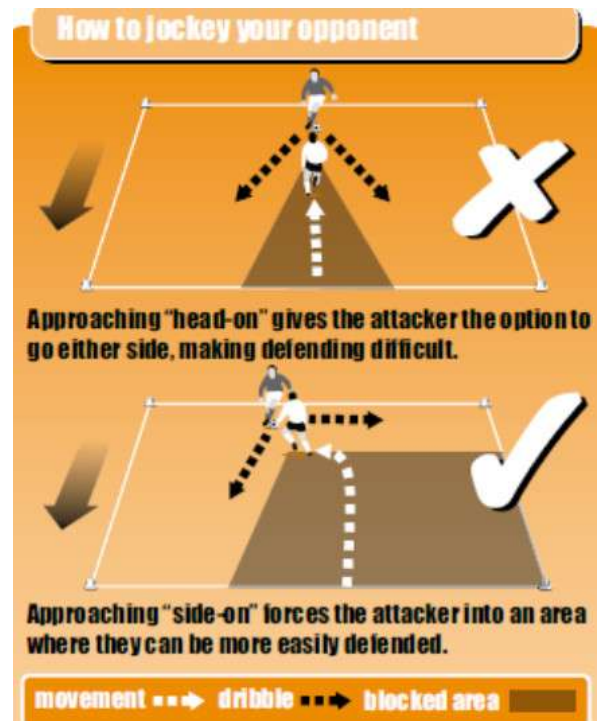
Once the defender has closed down the attacker, they should remember that their main job is NOT to win the ball. Instead, they should try to delay the attacker, stop them shooting or passing and direct them away from the goal.

However, if:

- The attacker seems to be off balance...
 - Has allowed the ball to get away from them...
 - She is looking at the ball...
- ... your defender should take the opportunity to make a block tackle.

The technique

The tackling foot has to make contact with the middle of the ball - like a side-foot pass.



Correct (lean forward)

Incorrect

The ankle joint of the tackling foot must be firm and locked.

The knees should be bent to lower the center of gravity of the player and put more power into the tackle.

The hands should be closed (make a fist). This will tighten the upper body.

The ankle of the tackling foot should be locked to avoid injury and make the tackle "solid".

Finally, make sure your players understand they should never attempt a tackle if they are chasing an opponent - tackling from behind is very dangerous and against the rules.

But it's not just about technique.

Good tackling is an attitude. Your players must be aggressive tacklers, be determined and be 100% committed to winning the ball. If they don't, they probably won't be successful and they could even get injured.

How to practice the block tackle

Pair your players up in a small playing area (5x10 yards) and give them one ball between two.

The players stand at opposite ends of the area.

The player with the ball passes to their opponent. When she touches the ball (and not before) they close her down and try to either:

a) Stop their opponent getting past them for 15 seconds.

b) Make an effective block tackle.

Award one point for either outcome. Play three rounds then switch the players round.

Coaching note: If attackers find getting past the defender too easy, reduce the width of the area.

Next, play keepaway in a small grid.

- Start with two defenders against four to six attackers in a 10-yard square - the small space gives defenders an advantage.
- Give a point to the defenders each time they make a good tackle or two points if they can steal the ball and pass it to the other defender.
- Give a point to the attackers each time all of them can touch the ball without an intervening tackle by the defender.
- Play to five points and switch.

Soccer drill to coach the block tackle:

Tackling is a basic soccer skill that every player - not just defenders - should be able to execute correctly, otherwise the consequences could be disastrous. Use the following soccer coaching tips and drill to help your players get to grips with it. There are three reasons why you should coach players the correct tackling techniques for this basic soccer skill.

1. Mistimed or poorly executed tackles can result in free kicks (or penalties) against your team.
2. Bad tackles can lead to yellow or even red cards against your players.
3. They might even cause serious injury to an opponent or the players themselves.

Key soccer coaching tip: The first lesson to teach players is that they can't carry out a tackle before they GET IN RANGE. That means quickly closing down the attacker's space. Once that's done, there are several ways an opponent can be dispossessed or stopped but two of the most common are the **block tackle and the slide tackle**.

The block tackle

The block tackle is mainly used when confronting an opponent head on. As with all tackling, timing is crucial, so players have to recognize the best moment to make a challenge. That could be when the attacker...

... is off balance

... has allowed the ball to run too far in front

... is looking at the ball.

If any of these situations arise, use the drill to coach your players in the following technique:

- Plant the non-tackling foot firmly on the ground to provide an anchor.
- Let the tackling foot make contact with the middle of the ball – like a side-foot pass – and be in an L-shape.
- Get all their strength and weight behind the ball.
- Head down over the ball.
- Eyes on the ball.
- Bend the knees.
- Lock solid the knee and ankle – to maintain strength and to avoid injury.
- Be well balanced.
- Show a committed attitude.
- Ideally, put a foot under the ball to lift it away.

Tell your players to try not to make contact with the top of the ball because they will find it tough to put any force behind the challenge, and also risk missing the ball and fouling the attacker. Also, if they are too low



on the ball, it tends to roll over the tackling leg, leaving the attacker with the ball.

And if you can't win it...

Of course, if your players don't see an opportunity to win the ball, they should defend properly, and that means, among other things, being patient, delaying the attacker and stopping the ball from being played forward.

The Slide Tackle

The sliding tackle is a means of dispossessing an opponent. Unlike other tackles, the sliding tackle happens at ground level, by sliding the body feet-forward to take the ball from the player in possession. The player must watch the ball carefully, approach from an angle and be decisive – timing is crucial.

The tackle is very effective and a key skill for defenders to acquire. However, a mis-timed tackle may cause a player to make contact with their opponent, conceding a

free kick. Defenders have been known to cynically "scythe" down an attacking player, using a sliding tackle to target the opponent's legs rather than the ball. Inside the penalty area, a poorly executed sliding tackle usually leads to a foul.

A sliding tackle can be risky. Another disadvantage is that the defender does not stay on his or her feet, which effectively puts them out of the game for a few seconds. An unsuccessful sliding tackle could leave the defender behind and give the attacker a clear run on goal.

How to Slide Tackle in Soccer A soccer slide tackle is a sideways slide that attempts to knock the ball away from your opponent's feet. You use it as a last-ditch effort if your opponent is going to get past you.

Step1 - Commit yourself to the slide, deciding whether you'll simply be kicking the ball away or trying to gain possession.

Step2 - Slide on one side of your body.

Step3 - Lead with one leg. If you're sliding on your left side, lead with your right leg, extending your foot toward the ball, while the left leg is bent at a 90-degree angle.

Step4 - Be sure to slide only leaning partway down on the side of your leg; sliding in a more upright position will allow you to spring up after the slide.

Step5 - Make contact with the ball first. If you hit your opponent first, you'll be called for a foul.

Step6 - Knock the ball a long way if you're sending it out of play, or tap it more gently if you're attempting to gain possession.

Step7 - Using your left arm and left leg, quickly rise from the turf and be on your way.

* You'll discover that you're more comfortable sliding on a particular side of your body, but you should always practice using both sides. * It's a good idea to learn to slide tackle on a wet day, when the ground is soft. * Bumps, scrapes and bruises are all likely when you use the slide tackle. * In addition to injury to yourself, you risk hurting your opponent with an ill-placed slide.

When slide tackling, make sure your cleats are not facing up. Try to keep your toes pointing out or you may be called for a foul. When you slide tackle, if the ball is on the opponent's feet, try to kick their shin guards. You're almost guaranteed to get the ball. Trust me, I do it all the time and never get called. Never slide tackle from behind or use two feet. You will be sent off and that normally means a 3 game suspension.

There are several ways of coaching players to win back the ball or stop the opposition, but we've focused on two of the most common.

There are three reasons why you should coach the correct tackling techniques:

- Mis-timed or poorly executed tackles can result in free kicks (or penalties) against your team.
- They can lead to yellow or even red cards against your players.
- Or cause serious injury to an opponent or the players themselves.

Coaching the slide tackle

The slide tackle is usually used when the attacker and defender are running in the same direction and the attacker's threat is such that the defender must stop them immediately...

Key soccer coaching tip: to carry out the slide tackle, coach your players to:

- Approach from the side and tackle across the path of the opponent – REMEMBER, THE TACKLE FROM BEHIND HAS BEEN OUTLAWED.
- Decide early whether to knock the ball out of play or 'hook' it to win possession.
- Be decisive and committed.
- Tackle using the leg furthest from the ball and keep it slightly bent.
- Tuck the leg nearest the ball underneath the backside and ideally slide on the outer thigh.
- Kick through the ball, or get the ball on the shoelaces (instep) and swing the leg around in a wide sweep to 'hook' or trap the ball with the foot.
- Meet the ball solidly and make contact with the center to top half of the ball so it doesn't roll over the foot.
- GET BACK UP as quickly as possible, whether the tackle has been successful or not.

Disadvantages



The problem with the slide tackle is that it leaves the defender lying on the ground and can leave them temporarily out of the game. That's because, as with the block tackle, the slide has three possible results—the attacker keeps possession, the ball runs loose, or the defender wins the ball. By sliding, defenders make it difficult to deal with the first two of these outcomes.

Drill tips



direction of run → dribble →
direction of ball →

Give your defenders the edge by practicing perfect slide tackling technique.

- Ensure players wear shin guards for the drill.
- Coach the slide tackle on a wet day, when the ground is soft.
- Make players practice sliding on both sides of their body.
- Build up the soccer drill slowly – begin with a stationary ball, then have players roll or pass a ball forward to themselves and run it down.

Extend the drill

Finally, progress the drill to where one player dribbles forward at half speed while the other player runs in from the side and attempts the tackle.

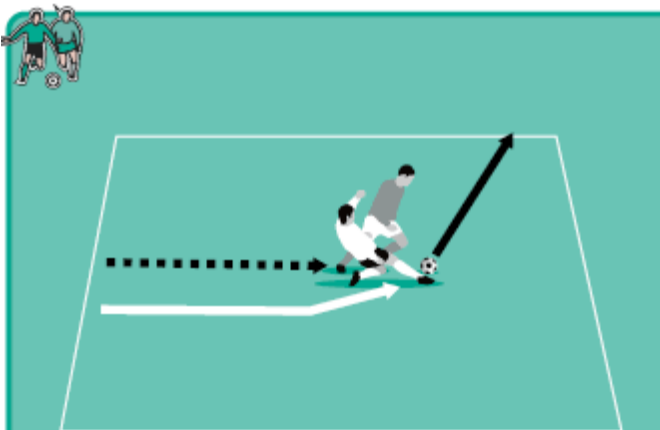
Key soccer coaching tip: the slide is a last resort tackle, only to be used when any other form of tackle won't do the job.

Slide tackle soccer drill session

Your young soccer players will love practicing these slide-tackle soccer drills. But make sure you tell them that usually the slide tackle is a last-resort method to stop a player with the ball advancing on goal and it buys some time for your team to reorganized in defense or regain possession of the ball.

A slide-tackle soccer drill session is all about:

- Last resort defending.
- Knocking the ball out of play.
- Winning back the ball.



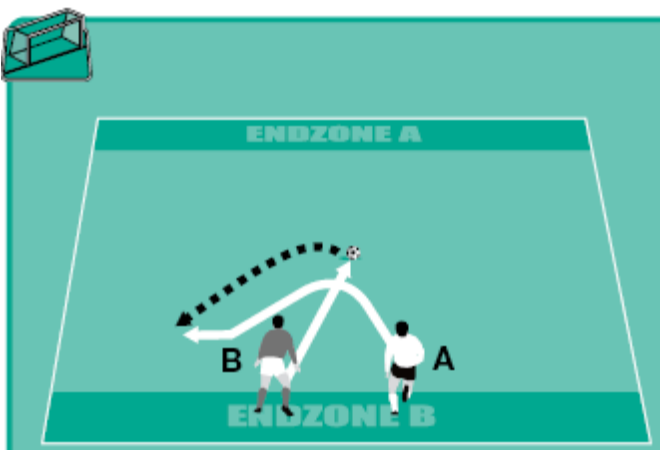
Run the opposed progression at half speed to get players used to performing a slide tackle against moving opponents.

What players need to think about in this drill

- Approach from the side.
- Wait until the attacker separates from ball.
- Use the leg furthest from ball.
- Tuck the other leg underneath backside.
- Slide on outer thigh/hip.
- Tackle with shoelaces.
- Contact center to top half of the ball.
- "Hook" the ball in opposite direction so keeping possession, or knock it out of play.

Soccer drill set up

In this drill, set up a few coned-off areas around 10 x 20 yards and get your players into pairs. They need a ball to use for the tackling.



Can player B return the ball to their endzone without being slide-tackled?

What players have to do in the drill

- Each player leaves a short distance between themselves and a stationary ball, before running to it and performing a slide tackle.
- In pairs, players take it in turns to roll or pass the ball forward to themselves, chase after it and attempt a slide tackle.
- To progress the soccer drill both players stand at one end of the grid. The first player, acting as an attacker, dribbles forward steadily at half speed so they can be caught, before the second player, the defender, begins their run and slide tackle.
- Swap roles and have players working on slide tackling with their left and right foot.

Put the drill into a game situation

- Play 1v1 in the grid but add end zones.

- The ball starts in the center with both players at one end of the grid.
- Play begins with both players running to the ball.
- Player A attacks the end zone opposite, while player B attacks the end zone both players started in.
- Points can be scored by dribbling into their respective end zones or for well-executed slide tackles.
- The ball is placed in the center following a successful dribble, but players should alternate ends for the re-start. Roll-ins or dribble-ins can replace throw-ins.

Small sided soccer game to improve tackle technique

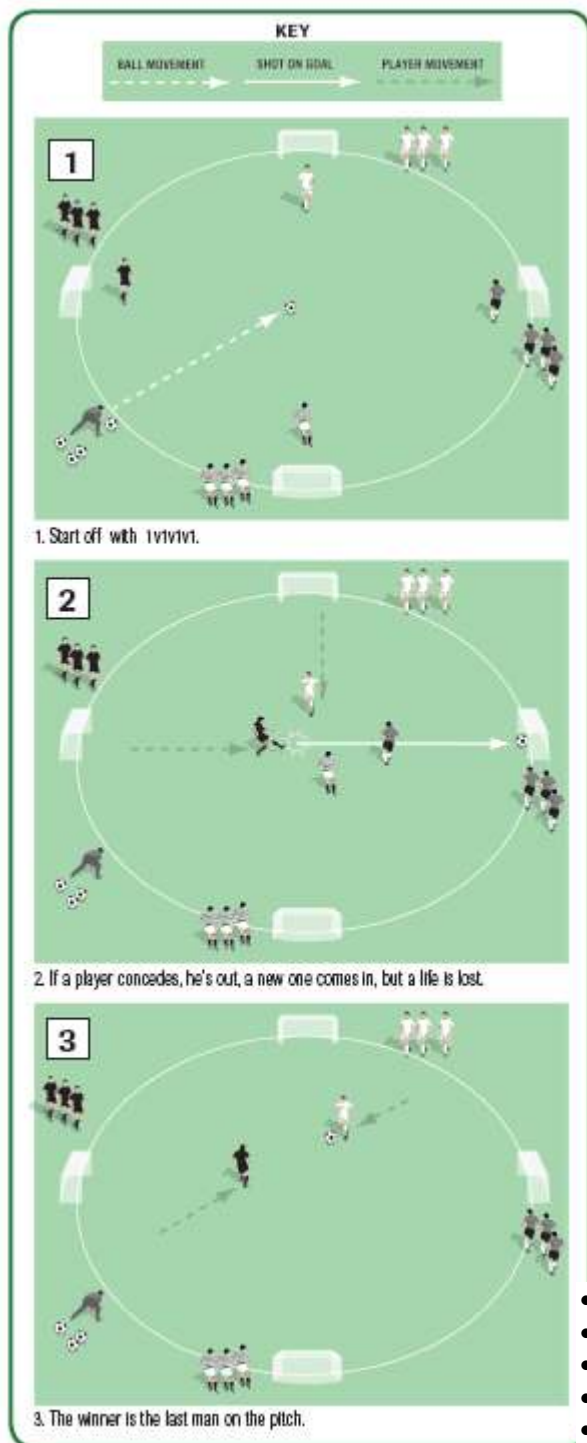
This small-sided soccer game makes the most of 1v1 situations and works on players' tackling skills and their ability to evade tackles. The players in this game need to have good all-round soccer skills so their team doesn't lose a life.

Set up the game

You can use the center circle of an 11-a-side pitch, or mark out a circle with cones around 30 yards in diameter.

You need four goals, as in the diagram, but you can use cones to mark out goals. Split your squad into four and line them up next to the goals.

The game works with four players on the pitch, one from each team. You have to defend your goal but attack the other three. Any player letting in a goal has to go off the pitch and another of their team joins. Once you are off the pitch you have lost your life and cannot go back on. The team with the last player on the pitch wins.





Soccer drill to coach the poke tackle

When defenders have players running at them in 1v1s, they often just need to touch the ball out from their opponent's feet to gain control for themselves. This is a much simpler tackle to the [slide](#) or [block](#) tackle. Use the following coaching tips and soccer drill to get players working on a poke tackle.

The poke tackle gets players to knock the ball away from the attacker so it either goes out of play or they win it for their team. It concentrates on 1v1 defending and getting the ball off an opponent who is shielding it.

Players in this soccer drill need to:

- Approach attacker from the side or behind.
- Get close to the attacker.
- Use the foot nearest to ball.
- Focus on the ball.
- Extend foot from side or through opponent's legs.
- Stab ball away using toes to kick near its center.

player movement 
direction of tackle 



Defender gets close to attacker.

- Do not make contact with opponent.
- Keep their body balanced to make the tackle.
- Try and make the tackle with good timing or they will give away a foul.
- If the ball is in play, can the defender win possession by putting their body between it and attacker?

Soccer drill set up

- In this drill both players start at one end, with the attacker close to the touchline. At half pace to begin with, the attacker dribbles the ball towards the opposite end, allowing the defender to practice executing the poke tackle.
- After several attempts, the players switch roles.
- Make sure players practice using first their right foot, then their left foot.

Develop the soccer drill

To progress the drill, the attacker must attempt to dribble at full speed to the end line, so that the defender can practice the skill of the poke tackle at match pace



Defender performs poke tackle to knock the ball out of play.

Play a small-sided game

Mark a grid of approx 25 x 25 meters and split players into two teams. Each member of the attacking team has a ball inside the grid, while the defending team remains outside. On your signal, the defending team enters the grid and tries to knock as many balls out of the playing area as possible.

An attacker who loses their ball must retrieve it and re-enter the grid. The defending team gets a point for every ball kicked out of play. After a set period, the teams switch roles.



How many poke tackles can the defending team make?

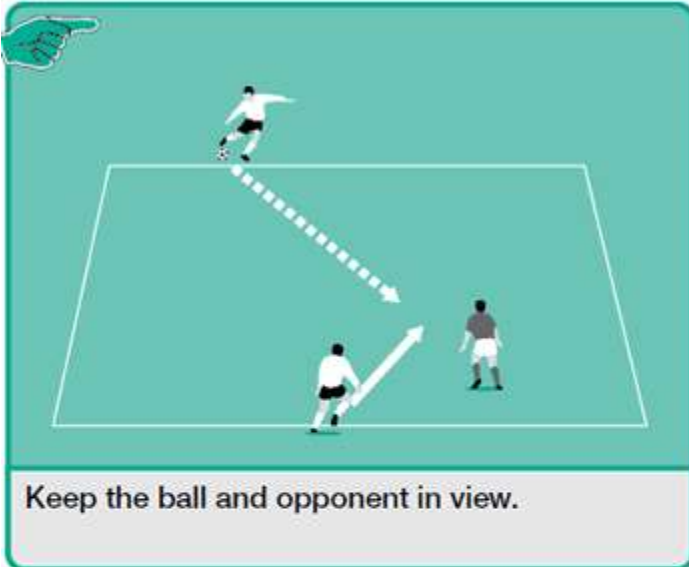
Soccer coaching session on intercepting the ball

Intercepting the ball is an alternative to **tackling** so your team can regain possession to set up an attack. This soccer coaching session is about learning how to read the play - predicting when and where the other team will pass the ball so players can move to intercept.

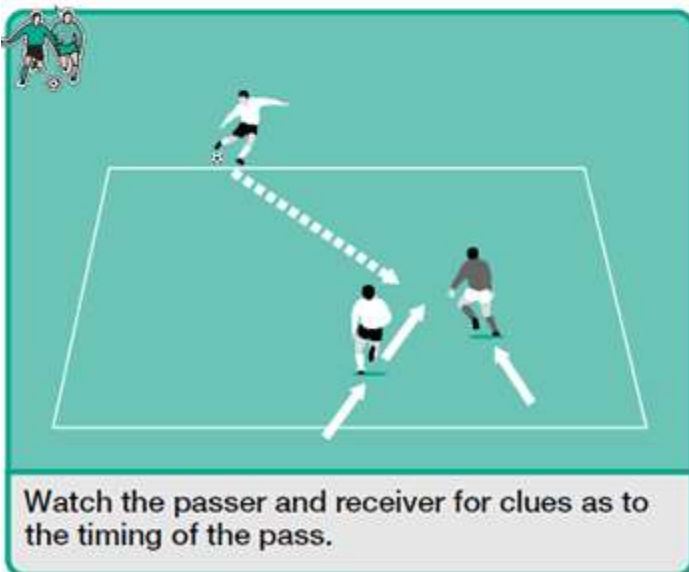
What players need to think about in the drills

- Mark goal- and ball-side.
- Stay within touching distance.
- Keep ball and receiver in view.
- Slightly sideways-on body position.
- Anticipate the pass.
- Does passer's eye or head movement give away intentions? Is the receiver set? Are their checked runs predictable?
- Don't get turned.
- Jockey - move from side-to-side to hold up the player - if ball can't be won.

player movement ⇌ pass ⇌



Keep the ball and opponent in view.



Watch the passer and receiver for clues as to the timing of the pass.

How to run the soccer drill

- The server stands at one end, with the defender standing behind the attacker at the other.
- The attacker is passive but is allowed to move from side to side.
- The defender anticipates when the server will pass the ball to the attacker and tries to intercept it by stepping in front of the attacker.
- Switch roles during the drill so everyone has a go at being the defender.

KEY

BALL MOVEMENT SHOT ON GOAL PLAYER MOVEMENT



1. Start off with 1v1v1v1.



2. If a player concedes, he's out, a new one comes in, but a life is lost.



3. The winner is the last man on the pitch.

How to develop the drill

Remove restrictions on the attacker's movement. The attacker can now look to receive the ball by moving towards the server and then turn to dribble over the end line.

The defender must be able to react to forward movement from the attacker to stay close enough to intercept. If they are unable to intercept the ball they must try to tackle the attacker before they cross the line.

Tackle techniques soccer game

This [small-sided soccer game](#) makes the most of 1v1 situations and being able to make and evade [tackles](#). The soccer (ball) players in this game need to have good all-round soccer skills so their team doesn't lose a life.

Set up soccer game

- You can use the center circle of an 11-a-side pitch or mark out a circle with cones around 30 yards in diameter for the [drill](#).
- You need four goals, as in the diagram, but you can use cones to mark out goals.
- Split your squad into four and line them up next to the goals.

Run the game

- The game works with four players on the pitch, one from each team.
- You have to [defend](#) your goal but [attack](#) the other three.
- Any player letting a goal in has to go off the pitch and another of their team joins.
- Once you are off the pitch you have lost your life and cannot go back on.
- The team with the last player on the pitch wins.

Small-sided games are recommended as one of the best ways to coach your players soccer skills.

Goalies:

Links: Technique | [Ball Catches, Dives & Pickups](#) | [Positioning](#) | [Back Passes](#) | [Drills & Warm-ups](#) | [Goal Kicks](#) | [Free Kicks and Shootouts](#) | [Penalty Kicks \(PK's\)](#) | [Keeper Tips and Drills - 2](#) | [Keeper Tips and Drills - 3](#) | See <http://www.ibgoalkeeping.com>

Job descriptions: the goalkeeper: The job of goalkeeper in youth soccer is not a glamorous one. Games are either one-sided affairs where goalies are either picking the ball out of their net every few minutes or watching the rest of the kids on their team knocking the ball into the other net sixty yards away. Or if the game is close, young goalkeepers are keenly aware that one mistake on their part could mean the difference between winning and losing. For a child that is a worrying thought.

Is it any wonder that it's often hard to find a player who actually wants to play 'between the sticks'?

We can make our 'keepers lives a bit more bearable by taking the time to coach them properly (not just for five minutes every other week...) and making sure they know exactly what their job entails.

Give them some tips:

1. Always make a 100% effort to save a shot, even if you know you can't stop it.

a) your teammates will find it hard to blame you if you at least try to stop the ball and

b) you will find that actually you can stop shots you didn't think you could. All you need to do is try!

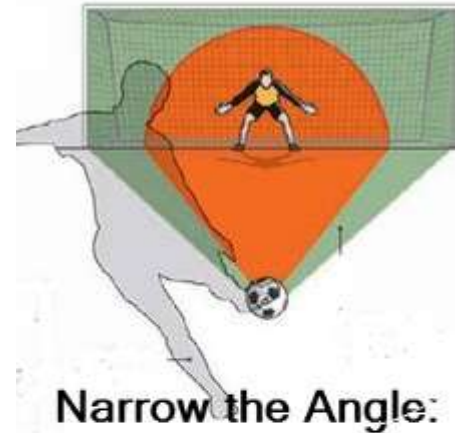
2. If you dive to stop a ball, don't lie on the ground any longer than you have to. Jump up quickly and look for a teammate to pass to. If there isn't anyone available, tell them - loudly - that there should be!

3. If you do concede a goal, don't complain. Don't have a go at defenders, even though they are at fault. What's done is done. If you dwell on it will affect your game and the confidence of those around you so just get on with the match and concentrate on the next save, not the last miss.

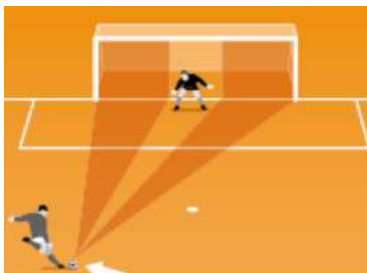
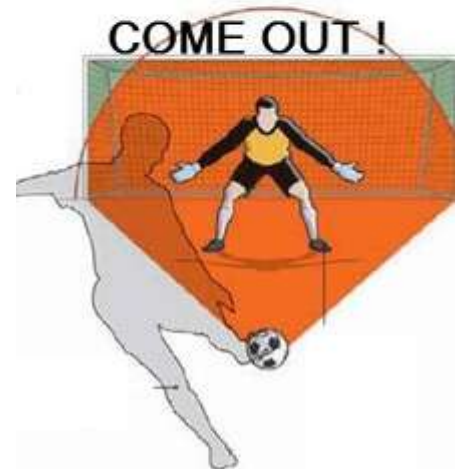
4. Communicate! Loudly! Goalkeepers need to tell their defenders where to stand at set pieces and warn them when attackers are approaching on their blind side.

"Goalkeepers never let goals in, it's the team that concedes a goal." Most suggest you get all your players to have a go at being in goal during practice sessions, putting the more nervous or younger players in goal during matches may be a step too far for some of them. If a player really don't want to go in goal, don't make them. An unwilling 'keeper won't do much except stand on the goal line hoping the ball stays at the other end of the pitch and when they do get a shot to save, they will probably freeze and watch the ball hit the net. And that's no good for anyone. You will find it much easier to find a player who wants to go in goal if you make the job of shot-stopper a desirable one by:

1. Making the time to deliver dedicated goalkeeper coaching sessions.
2. Buying smart goalkeeper playing kit.
3. Allowing goalkeepers to play outfield – in a position of their choice.
4. Making sure all your players – especially your 'keeper – know that the position of goalkeeper is the hardest one on the team.



Narrow the Angle:



Cut the target size. Step forward!



How to Play Goalie in Soccer: The soccer goalie can be the hero or the goat of the game. It's rarely a glamour position, and the goalie can quite often be blamed for a loss. In truth, goalkeepers don't lose games all by themselves. They do often prevent winning goals. Many people don't want to play in the goal because of the tremendous pressure placed on the goalie. In recreational soccer, coaches should always emphasize that the team as a whole must work to prevent the other side from making a goal.

- Know when a goalie can touch the soccer ball. Goalkeepers can touch the ball only when they are inside the 18 yard box.
- Other options a goalie has while in the penalty box. You can run with the ball, drop kick it, throw it or release it and then dribble it while inside the penalty box.
- Even within the penalty box a goalie can only hold onto the ball for six seconds.
- Remember that once you drop the ball you can't pick it back up again until another player has touched it.
- Consider different ways to distribute the ball effectively. Goalies have to decide quickly whether a punt, a dribble or a throw will put their teams to the best advantage.
- Punt with two hands, facing forward to get the most consistent drop and most distance from your kick.
- Play aggressively. Goal is not the place for a timid player.

• Take constructive criticism to heart but don't blame yourself entirely for the loss of a game. When the defense allows an undue number of shots on goal, the law of averages says eventually one will get by you.

The 'ready' position: This is the position goalkeepers need to adopt as they prepare to stop a shot, whether during practice or in a match.

- Feet must be shoulder width apart.
- Knees slightly bent.
- Weight on the ball of the foot.
- Hands at waist height.
- Elbows tucked in.
- Hands in the "ready" position.
- Shoulders forward so their "nose is over their toes".
- Balanced.
- Head steady, eyes on the ball.



The Goalie Is The Game Decider:

Everyone agrees that the goalie has a central role in any soccer team. But the goalie isn't just there to protect his goal. That's because the skills a goalie needs in soccer today have become more complex.

The technical skills: If you think for a moment about the past, each backwards pass to a goalie used to be a nail-biter for every fan. How many times have you seen backwards passes just get punted forward instead? The chance that the goalie never even got the ball was a lot higher than it is today.

Ruud Gullit said: "A goalie is a goalie because he can't play soccer" That statement is no longer valid in today's modern goalkeeping. The times are over when a player gets put in the goal because they are of no use on the field. Especially in youth soccer, it's important that the children don't specialize in the goalie position too early. You should let the kids rotate who wants to play goalie so they can gain experience as players and learn technical footwork skills.

Especially when goalie training, footwork skills should not be neglected. Many drills can be done with just the feet. Passing drills should always be part of the regular drills of a modern goalie.

The opening game: The goalies are also crucial to the game development. It is precisely for this reason that a goalie should have collected a bit of experience as a field player. Through a fast opening game, the play can always come back to dangerous attacks that can be difficult to defend against. But the modern goalie should be ready to cooperate on the game development as an active player as well. The phrase goes: "the goalie is the first to attack."

The actively playing goalie: If the goalie has already worked a lot with the hands, then they should have more contact between the ball and the foot than with the hands. The goalie should be very much involved with the game and not just because their team is in possession of the ball and a backwards pass could mean a gain of time. The goalie is increasingly involved in the the game development and plays a large role in particular in shifting the play back to the other side. Therefore, they should master not just the passing moves, but especially the reception of the ball and carrying the ball, working both legs in the drills, of course. Often the goalie is also known as the "modern fullback", which we all know is missing in the back four.

Naturally, it is important to actively participate in the game. Today, goalies no longer stand along the goal line as if they were planted there permanently.

A goalie must be able to "read" the game at any time and be willing to engage in active play at any time. It is required of a modern goalie that he focuses on the game from the first minute all the way until the last minute. Scenes in which the goalkeeper leans against the goalpost and watches the game as a spectator now belong in the distant past.

Communicating With Defenders

Communication is a key for every player on the soccer field, and especially so for the goalkeeper. Once the keeper has made a decision, the defenders need to know what it is. The goalkeeper also must be an organizer and general on the field - they are the only player who faces the field the whole time and are the best positioned to see the development of the play.

The keeper should know at least these two basic calls:

- **"Keeper!":** this means the goalkeeper is making a play on the ball, defenders should get out of the way.
- **"Away!":** this means the opposite - the keeper is *not* going after the ball and the defense should pursue it. It is usually used for crosses or corners.

The keeper must yell these commands loudly and repeat them if necessary. There must be no doubt in anyone's mind who's ball it is! This even includes the opposing team - forwards will sometimes back off if they think the keeper is coming hard.

The keeper should also direct traffic and position defenders on the field. Don't expect a lot of this to occur with young keepers, especially those who don't play in goal full time, but with experience a 14 or 15 year old full-time goalkeeper should be able to scan the field and set the defense as necessary. To do this, the keeper must be a student of the game - they must know:

- The defensive scheme used by the team and how the coach wants the defenders to play
- Tendencies and strengths of the opposing team and opposing players
- The role of first defender, second defender, third defender to make adjustments on the fly
- The role of first, second and third attackers to help anticipate how the attack may develop

In short, they must be a second coach out on the soccer field. This is a tall order for a youth soccer player, but here are a few points that will help develop this.



- **Be loud and repetitive.** It can be hard to hear out on the field, especially for someone on the ball with their head down. Make sure the message gets through.
- **Be specific with commands.** Yelling "Mark up!" or "Who's on #10?" often isn't enough - tell specific players what to do ("John, mark #10" or "Ashley, Kristy, shift one mark to the right").
- **Work from the ball outwards.** The keeper should focus on the ball carrier first, and arrange defenders near the ball first. When danger is less imminent, set the

defenders who are further away.

- **Arrange to get feedback from defenders.** It can be eye contact, a wave of the hand, a verbal okay, but have defenders let the goalkeeper know they were heard. The goalkeeper will be able to shift focus knowing the defender is set, and the defender won't have the keeper yelling at them for something they already heard.
- **If the keeper does not call, the defenders must take responsibility.** The defense should never assume the keeper has a ball unless the keeper calls for it; they should go for the ball unless they hear otherwise. A few collisions with their own defense in practice should quickly teach a quiet keeper the value of calling loudly for the ball!

Communication between the goalkeeper and defenders is a key to making the defense function as a unit.

Can a goalkeeper touch with his hands a ball that is outside his box although his feet are inside the box?

Answer: **No.** When determining whether a goalkeeper may touch a ball with his hands, only the position of the ball matters. If the ball had not crossed (or touched the plane above) the boundary of the goalkeeper's own penalty area, it would be considered deliberate handling, The restart would be a direct free kick at the location of the handling. The goalkeeper might be cautioned if the act prevented the development of a promising goal scoring opportunity in the opinion of the referee. The goalkeeper might be sent off if the ball would have entered the net if not for the handling (and without being touched again by any player) in the referee's opinion. It makes no difference where the goalkeeper's feet were when the ball was kicked. What is important is when the goalkeeper released the ball to kick it. If that occurred when the 'keeper's hands were inside or on the penalty area line, then no infringement occurred and no verbal announcement of any sort is necessary. If the ball was not released until after the goalkeeper's hands were outside the penalty area, then the proper restart is a direct free kick.

Can a goalkeeper catch a ball that is in the air outside his box if his her feet remain inside? **No,** the only thing that matters is where the ball is, if the ball is outside the box and he catches

Can the goalkeeper touch the ball with his hands from a throw-in? Only if the throw-in was taken by an opponent.

Can a goalkeeper touch the ball with his hand following a back pass from his own teammate? **No.**

Setting a Wall

If the opponent is given a free kick within 10-20 yards of the penalty area (or an indirect kick inside the penalty area), the standard defense is to make a "wall" of two or more players the minimum 10 yards from the spot of the kick. This wall serves to block part of the goal from the shooter so that the goalkeeper only has to worry about guarding a small portion of the goal mouth. However, if the wall is not properly positioned, it may actually do more harm than good!

The wall must be set up quickly, following these basic guidelines:

- One defender must identify themselves as the outside "anchor" of the wall. Make sure everyone knows who this is; they should raise their hand and make eye contact with the keeper. Some teams may wish to identify this player ahead of time, even in practice sessions.
- The goalkeeper must choose how many players will be in the wall. The more extreme the angle, the fewer players. Two players is sufficient for a ball close to the end line;

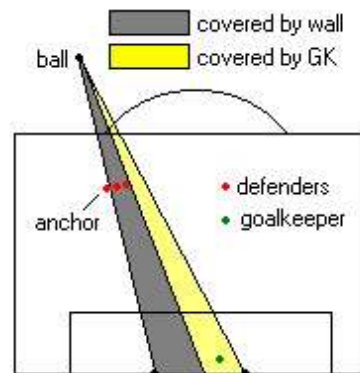


Fig. 1: Setting a Wall

the keeper might want as many as five or even six in the wall for a straight on shot. The exact number will depend on the situation and how much goal the keeper feels confident covering.

- The goalkeeper sets the "anchor" just outside a line between the soccer ball and the near post (Fig. 1). This covers the near part of the goal with a little overlap to prevent balls from bending around the wall. The keeper will usually dash over to the near post to sight from the post to the ball to make sure things are positioned properly. While doing this the keeper is way out of position, so speed is essential! Some teams prefer to free the keeper of this duty by using a forward, who lines up the wall by sighting from *behind* the ball back towards the goalpost.
- The other players line up against the "anchor" player to the inside of the goal. Players need to be right against one another so no ball can slip through the wall.

Once the wall is set, the goalkeeper moves to cover the space between the inside of the wall and the far post.

On rare occasions, the attacking team will win an indirect free kick in the penalty area that is less than 10 yards from the goal. What to do then? Defenders are allowed to be closer than ten yards to the ball, provided they are on the goal line and between the goalposts. The wall, then, will actually be set *in the goal*. The tallest players available should be on the goal line, to prevent a chip shot under the crossbar. Since this can only happen on an indirect kick, one defender should be designated as the "bullet man" to rush the ball as soon as it is touched and disrupt a subsequent shot.

Most teams almost never practice this situation; I have seen it occur only a handful of times in thousands of games I've seen. But a good goalkeeper is prepared for any situation, and if they're aware of this provision of the laws, they can organize things quickly if it should ever occur.

- **Basic Positioning Principles**

Three easy steps to positioning your goalkeeper

Being in the right place at the right time is the most important part of the goalkeeping art. You can help your goalie understand the basics of positioning by explaining these three key techniques and playing the games described below.

1. Your goalkeeper must know where the goal is. This sounds obvious, I know. But 'keepers can't do their job unless they know exactly where the posts are relative to their own position. Make sure they glance behind themselves occasionally and get a fresh fix on the goal.
2. The goalkeeper should be positioned on a line between the center of the goal and the ball. You can help very young players understand and master this by simply walking around the penalty box with a ball in your hands while they maintain the correct position. Once they have got the hang of it, play the games below to reinforce the technique.
3. The goalkeeper should be able to save a shot aimed at either post. This requires the 'keeper to be in the right place relative to the center of the goal and the ball.

Young players often stay rooted to the spot as an attacker advances. If you can get them to narrow the angle by quickly moving out to meet the attacker, they will stop a lot of goals. Not just because they can save shots aimed at either post. But because their very presence will make many young attackers shoot too early and wide.

- Note: If the shot is coming from a very narrow angle (from an attacker near to the end line), your goalie needs to be positioned so that the post is just behind him, not in front. This will prevent the goalkeeper diverting shots aimed at the near post into his own net.

First, to position themselves accurately, the goalkeeper must know where the goal is! It sounds obvious, but during the scramble of a game a keeper can lose track. When the play starts moving towards the goal, the first thing the keeper must do is check the posts to make sure they are starting off with good position. Then, whenever they can divert their attention for a split second, they should check the posts again to make sure they've maintained that good position in the face of a moving ball.

Second, the goalkeeper must always try to position themselves on an imaginary line that runs from the center of the goal to the ball (**Fig. 1**). This puts them in position to get to either post equally well. The center line determines the side-to-side positioning. Third, the goalkeeper must position themselves far enough off the goal line to cover the angle created by the ball and both posts. They should be able to cover either post with a couple of quick steps (footwork!) and a dive if necessary (**Fig. 2**). The angle and the keeper's ability determine the forward/backward positioning. Many young or timid goalkeepers tend to stay very close to the goal line - sometimes right on it. They must be taught to come off the line if they are to cover any shots near the posts.

How far out a keeper must come depends on their size and ability - smaller goalkeepers or keepers with a poor range will need to come farther out to be able to cover the entire angle.

But don't forget the third dimension not represented in these pictures: height. A keeper who is far off their line is more likely to be beaten by a chip over their head, so that must also be put into the equation. The keeper must adjust the forward/backward position so that they're confident they won't be beaten easily over the top.

Positioning Around the Goal

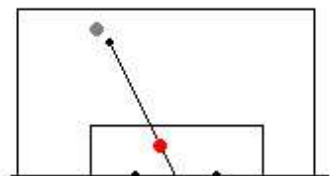


Fig 1. The Center Line Position

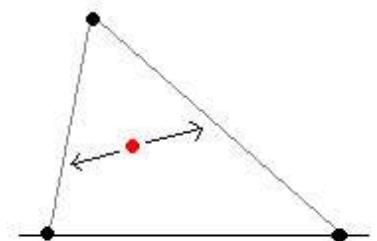


Fig. 2 Covering the Angle

The goalkeeper must constantly adjust his or her position as they move around the goal. Let's look at what happens as the ball changes spots.

At a tight angle, with the ball near the end line, the angle the keeper needs to cover is very small, so they can stay near their goal. However, the keeper must stay outside the near post. This will prevent them from deflecting a shot into their own net inside the near post. At sharp angles the goalkeeper should always position themselves so any ball they deflect at a right angle (they should already be square to the ball) will go outside the near post.

Here's a quick way for goalkeepers to tell if they are outside the near post: if the goalkeeper, while square to the ball, points their arms straight out sideways, the arm nearest the goal should be pointing outside the near post. If it is pointing into the net, the keeper needs to take another step or two out from goal.

As the ball moves further out onto the soccer field, the near post is not as much of a concern any more, but the keeper must move further out to cover the angle.

Figure 3 shows conceptually where a keeper should be positioned (red dots) as the ball (black dots) moves around the edge of the penalty area. The blue line shows the shape this makes. The actual size of the arc will differ depending on the size and skill of a particular keeper, but the general shape will remain the same. (The angle lines are only drawn on the left side of the illustration to avoid clutter.)

If we look at the top of the arc, though, we notice that the keeper is very far off the line (sometimes 10-12 yards out!) and likely to get chipped, especially if they're not very tall. So we need to adjust the top of the arc to account for high balls. The top of the arc gets flattened, bringing the keeper back to a position where they have a chance to get to any ball over their head (**Fig. 4**). Again, the exact position will depend on the size and skill of the player. Shorter, less skilled keepers will be more comfortable closer to the goal line, others may be comfortable closer to the six.

Tony DiCicco calls this concept the "Arc Angle". It can easily be demonstrated on the soccer field with three ropes about 50 feet long, one attached to each post and one to a stake at the middle of the goal line. Place the ball at varying spots around the penalty area and have the keeper find their position, then place a cone there. When the exercise is finished, the cones will show that keeper's arc as in **Figure 3**. Adjust for chip shots and you'll end up with the keeper's arc as in **Figure 4**.

A keeper should learn this arc and use it as a general guideline for how they position themselves as the ball moves. Notice that this arc roughly follows the goal box. Make sure the keeper notes how their own arc matches or differs from the goal box, so they can use the goal box as a reference during practices and games. However, do not let a keeper, especially a young one, think they must move along this arc at all times. If the ball quickly changes position, they must move as quickly as possible to cover the new position, cutting across the box if necessary.

Also, remember a given keeper's arc will change as they gain size, strength and ability. You may want to run the exercise with the ropes once a season to see if their arc has changed.

Summary:

- Know the location of the goalposts
- Stay on line between the center of the goal and the ball
- Move far enough off the line to cover the angle to each post
- Be aware of balls over the head when way off the line
- At sharp angles, always play outside the near post

Mistakes to Watch For:

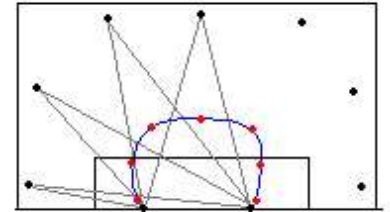


Fig. 3: The Goalkeeper's Arc

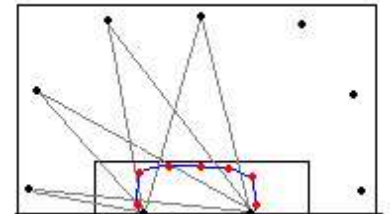
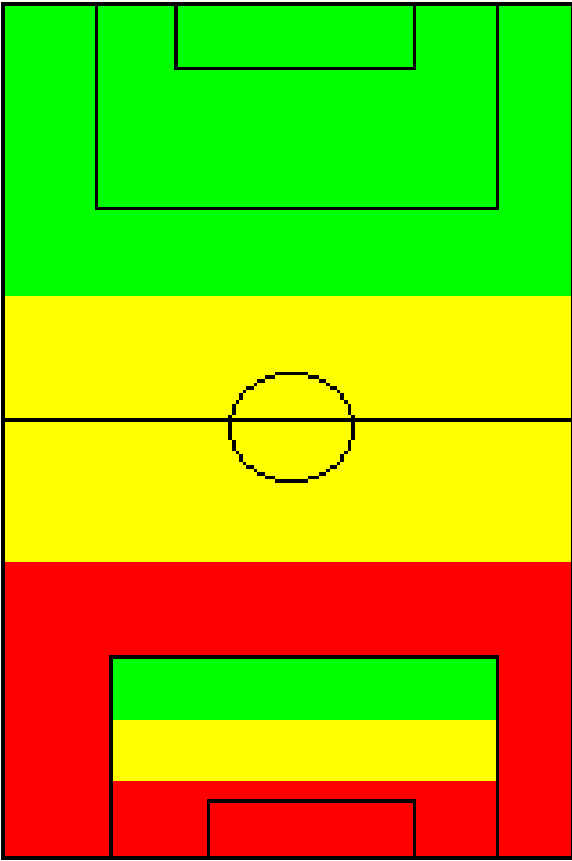


Fig. 4 Adjusted Arc



- Not checking the goalposts frequently
- Staying planted on the goal line

Standing inside the near post on sharp-angled shots

Coming Off the Line

Inexperienced keepers struggle with trying to decide when to come off their line. This is certainly a difficult decision to make, since it depends on both the situation on the field - attacker's speed and ability, positions of other players on both offense and defense - and the keeper's ability and confidence.

Handling Corners:

Key points for handling corner kicks:

Anything within the 6-yard box in the air should belong to the keeper! Older players should be able to extend their range even beyond this. Train your keepers in traffic so they will have the confidence to collect corners and crosses in their goal box.

Start position will vary, but I prefer a spot about 2/3 to 3/4

(Fig. 2). This is because it is easier to move forward

The area the keeper should easily be able to cover is

Always position a defender on the near post, shoulder the corner. This player is there to clear away hard driven the keeper can't get to.

For balls hit over the head past the far post, track the punch it wide or be ready for a shot or deflection from the area in Figure 2). Some goalkeepers or coaches like to

post to handle these, similar in duties to the near-post defender. I prefer to have this defender marking rather than

standing at the far post.

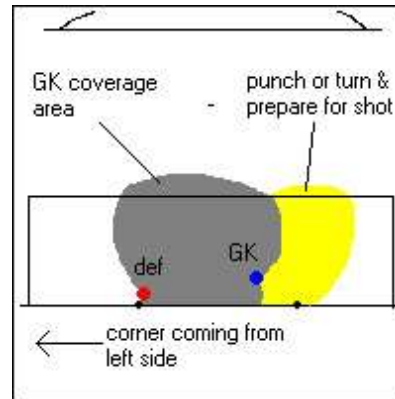


Fig. 2: Corner Kick Setup

Fig. 1: Keeper's position in penalty area should match ball's position on the field

of the way to the far post quickly than backwards. shaded in gray.

right up against it and facing shots to the near post that

ball, leave it late and either far side (the yellow shaded station a player at the far

marking rather than

Ground or Rolling Ball Pickups:

There are several techniques for picking up a rolling ball. For all of them, the keeper must get their hands all the way down, fingertips brushing the ground to ensure a clean catch.

The straight-leg pickup seems to be falling out of favor lately, and most goalkeepers use the knee-bent pickup and its moving variation. In fact, since basic footwork principles tell us we should move forwards to the ball, the moving pickup is probably used the most of any of these techniques.

Straight-leg pickup (Fig. 3) - the keeper bends from the waist, slightly bent at the knees, with feet behind the ball. Catch with the hands, then bring up to the chest. Use this save when there is no pressure. Watch out for young or not very flexible keepers who bend from the waist but cannot get their hands all the way to the ground. This is a recipe for missed balls. These keepers should probably use the following bent-knee pickup instead.

Also, a keeper should not use this type of save when under pressure from opposing forwards. It does not allow enough ability to move out of the way if necessary, and puts the head low and in a vulnerable position as well. Use a moving-ball pickup, below, to run through the ball or out of harm's way, or make a sliding save as for a breakaway.

- **Knee-bent pickup** - keeper staggers their feet slightly, one just behind the other. Keeper bends at knees and waist, one foot beside the ball and the other behind the ball, catch with the hands and then bring up to the chest. Although the feet are staggered, they should be behind the ball and close enough together that a ball cannot slip between them.
- **Moving pickup** - similar to a knee-bent pickup, but used when the keeper is on the move towards the rolling ball. The foot on the goal side of the ball is placed beside the ball, the other foot behind the ball. Keeper is low as they approach the ball, scoop with hands behind the ball and not on the sides of the ball, and continue to move through the ball in one continuous motion.
- **Knee-down pickup** (Fig. 5) - contrary to what many young goalkeepers seem to be taught, this save is actually one of the least used because it restricts mobility. This technique is only used in special situations, on long, low, hard shots on uneven fields or wet grass. It gives the keeper the largest "backstop" for low balls that may be difficult to corral. Keeper bends one knee; the other goes down almost to the ground and very close to the other heel. The down knee should not touch the ground and should not bear any weight, so that the keeper can easily get up and move if need be. Also, the gap between heel and knee should be less than a ball width, for obvious reasons.





Fig. 3: Straight-Leg Pickup



Fig. 4: Bent-Knee Pickup



Fig. 5: Knee down pickup

- For any low balls, the legs must be kept more or less together and behind the ball. Opening the legs invites the "ole" goal right through the wickets - quite embarrassing for the keeper!

How to catch the ball:

- For shots over waist height, the palms of the hand should be facing the ball with the fingers spread in a "W" shape and the thumbs almost touching.
- For shots under waist height, the hands should be in an inverted "W" with the little fingers almost touching.
- **Tip:** Players with small hands may have to have their hands spread a little further apart than that.

How to practice hand positioning:

- Teach your whole team the best way to catch a ball.
- **For shots over waist height:** The palms of the hand should be facing the ball with the **fingers spread in a 'W' shape** and the thumbs almost touching although players with small hands may have to have their hands spread a little further apart than that.
- **For shots under waist height:** The hands should be in an **inverted 'W'** with the little fingers almost touching.



Grounding the Ball:



2. As you hit the ground, land on one knee with the trailing leg outstretched.

1. Dive with hands in W position. Concentrate on the ball coming in.

Catch the ball slightly above its center. Keep your torso rigid.



Focus your upper body weight down onto the ball.

3. Bring the ball firmly down to the ground, holding it tightly with hands still in W position.



Practicing: In pairs, players throw the ball to each other above and below waist height. Walk around to check their technique - especially those players who have a go at your keeper when he drops the ball!

- Now put your players into groups of four or five. Each group makes a circle about 10 yards across with a player in the middle. Each player on the outside of the circle has a ball. Give each player a number.
- When you call a number, the player with that number throws the ball at the goalkeeper - at varying heights - who catches and returns it.
- Make sure every player plays as the goalkeeper and make it competitive by seeing who drops the ball the least.

Protecting the ball after a catch

The proper position for protecting a ball after a catch is made is shown in Fig. 6. Both forearms vertical, with hands curled over the top of the soccer ball. In this position it is almost impossible to dislodge the ball. The forearms should never be held horizontally like a running back receiving a handoff.

Your keeper should not attempt to protect the ball too soon after a catch. Too often, keepers attempt to bring the ball to the protected position before they have made a clean catch, and end up bobbling the ball, or attempt to make a "catch" in the protected position and end up having the ball ricochet away from their chest or forearms. I cannot stress enough that catch must always be made with the hands first. In fact, if there is no pressure on the goalkeeper, it may not be necessary to protect the ball at all. If the catch is secure, the keeper should be able to simply hold the ball in the catching position. Catch/protect should be two distinct actions - in fact, they should be two distinct *sounds* as the goalkeeper makes the save - the first the sound of the ball hitting the hands, then the sound of the ball being protected against the chest.

Also, do not allow the goalkeeper to bat the ball in front of them and then catch it. They should be able to "stick" the catch in good catching position right away, using arms, back and legs to cushion the ball as mentioned above.



Fig. 6: Protecting the ball

Quick Summary - Catching:

- Hands to the ball first
- Soft, quiet, cushioning hands and arms
- Good catching position - "W" with thumbs behind the ball or inverted contour with pinkies touching
- High balls need to be caught at the highest point possible
- On ground pickups, get fingertips all the way to the ground by bending at the waist and knees
- Protect the ball properly, but only after the catch has been made securely

Mistakes to Watch For:

- Trapping ball with body part other than hands (chest, forearms, etc.)
- Hands on the sides of the ball
- Waiting on high balls
- Legs apart and not behind the ball
- Attempting to protect the ball before the catch is secure
- Knees on the ground at any time

● ADVANCED DIVING

- The forward smother and the rotation ("windmill") dive. Long sleeves are a must for practicing these dives!
- **Front Smother** - Basic Technique (5 min) - We use a kneeling/squatting/standing progression similar to other dives. Keepers start on their knees, with arms in front of them as if protecting an imaginary ball. Keepers then fall forward, using their forearms to cushion the fall. Do this several times. Then have the keepers actually holding a ball in the protected position, and fall forward again using forearms to cushion, and smothering the ball securely. Now have keepers squat, holding ball, take a step forward and go to the ground on their forearms. Gradually have keepers go to a more upright position, and start to move forward as if intercepting a ball. Finally, have keepers receive balls softly served to them at ankle height and smother them.
- The goalkeeper's body should be directly on top of the ball, with the forearms parallel, hands over the top, and the ball trapped firmly against the chest below the collarbone (not under the belly!). Keepers should not roll over on their side. This is not a "collapsed" dive; keepers should attack (or pretend to attack) the ball aggressively and use their momentum to carry them forward and over the ball as they go to the ground.
- **Front Smother - Facing Line Serves** (5 min) - Have keepers in two lines, facing each other about 10-15 yards apart. One line has balls and will serve, the other line receives. Servers throw balls low and hard, so they are going to land right at the feet of the keeper. Keeper charges, gets low, and performs a front smother of the ball (preferably before it hits the ground), then gets up and takes the ball to the server line. Server goes to the goalkeeper line.
- This gets the keepers moving towards the ball. Don't let them wait for the bounce, unless the ball is way too far in front. Even then, they should attack and get the ball on the short hop.
- **Front Smother - Shots on Goal** (10 min) - Move to live fire, with shots being aimed to bounce just in front of the keeper or low - ankle high - and hard. These types of shots require the front smother.
- Attack the ball, make sure the keepers catch it with their hands, and get over the ball so it's completely smothered and there's no chance for the ball to come loose.
- **The Rotation Dive**
- **Rotation Dive - Basic Technique** (10 min) - Start from a slightly crouching but standing position. Roll balls on the ground about two feet from the keeper's foot. Keepers drop their shoulder closest to the ball, get their near hand as low as possible, and just drop on the ball, getting the far hand on it as quickly as they can. The next step is to have the keeper reach low for the ball, and just kick the near leg out away from the ball, and get the upper body down behind the ball as

quickly as possible. Finally, as the near leg kicks out, the far leg then comes up and the knee drives across to complete the rotation, and the keeper lands on their hip and side. Repeat to the right and left sides.

- The trick for this dive is not to think about the feet too much, but to think about getting the hands and upper body down to the ground as quickly as possible and let the feet come along for the ride. The keeper should start low to help this. Serve balls with good pace to make the keepers react quickly. This dive really can't be done in slow motion.
-
- **Rotation Dive** - Shots on goal (10 min) - This doesn't actually require a full frame, since this dive is intended for shots close to the goalkeeper's feet. Server should be fairly close, 8-10 yards away, and hit hard, ground-hugging shots (probably using push passing technique for accuracy) a yard to either side of the keeper.
- This is as much a reaction type of dive as a technique dive, so encourage keepers to react quickly and not over-think on these dives.
-
- 1. Dive with hands in W position. Concentrate on the ball coming in.
- 2. As you hit the ground, land on one knee with the trailing leg outstretched. Catch the ball slightly above its center. Keep your torso rigid. Focus your upper body weight down onto the ball.
- 3. Bring the ball firmly down to the ground, holding it tightly with hands still in W position.
-

- **THE SLIDING SAVE**

- Now we introduce the sliding save. It's a good idea for keepers to have long pants and shirts for this session to prevent scrapes and cuts. The exercises are similar to the fundamental breakaway session, but now we allow the goalkeepers to slide if appropriate.
-
- Warm-Up (10 min) - Jog, footwork, and stretching. Finish with some short sprints.
- Footwork and quick sprints off the lines are again important.
-
- Sliding Technique Demo and Practice (5 min) - Demo the sliding save technique and work on the technique with stationary ball.
- Goalkeepers should stay behind the ball -- step forward towards the ball; don't step to the side to set up the slide. Doing so will leave the goal exposed for a quick low shot. Goalkeepers need to get the hands to the ball first, and then slide through ball, and finish in square in a protected position on their side (it should look just like they have finished a dive). Keepers should end up square to the shooter; either a head-first or legs-first finish position is dangerous.
-
- First to the Ball (10 min) - Use flat cones to set up a "gate" about 6 yards wide. Goalkeeper stands about 10 yards behind gate, with server 10 yards away on the other side. The server rolls a ball towards the gate, and the keeper must get to ball and make a sliding save before the ball passes through gate. Serve balls towards either side.
- Sprint hard, get hands to the ball first, and finish square to the field. If the ball is served to the side, the goalkeeper should slide with their feet towards the center of the gate.
-
- 1vK to Goal (15 min) - Start an attacker with the ball from about 30 yards out, and have them go one on one with the goalkeeper. This is the same exercise as in the previous session, except now the goalkeeper is to look for bad touches and slide in to make the save if they can get the ball. If necessary, you can ask the attackers to "accidentally" make a long touch occasionally. Vary point of attack from the center, left and right sides.
- Keepers should only slide if necessary! If they can make the save on their feet they are better off. Only go down if absolutely sure of getting the ball.
-
- 1vK+1 to Goal (15 min) - As the previous exercise, but now have a defender start five yards behind the attacker. This adds to the complexity of the goalkeeper's decision-making process.
- It now becomes key for the goalkeeper to delay and stay on their feet, in order to give time for the defender to arrive and help.
-
- 2v2 Slide/Smother (15 min) - This game requires four goalkeepers. Set two tall cones about 20 yards apart. Play 2v2, with the attacking pair playing as field players, using their feet to score by hitting their cone with the ball. The defending team plays as goalkeepers, able to use their hands and trying to delay the attackers as in a breakaway, and sliding to cover balls on the ground if they can. Once the defenders win the ball, they then play as attackers using their feet and the other team defends with their hands.
- In the small area, most saves will be right at the feet of the attacker, which can be a dangerous situation. Make sure when the defenders go to grounds, that they lead with their hands (not heads!), use the ball and forearms for protection, and bring up their top leg to protect the midsection.
-

- Breakaway Game (20 min) - It's time to put it all together. Play the breakaway game as above, perhaps on a larger field than before.
- Look not only for good technique, but good decisions. Keepers should stay on their feet if possible, and slide when appropriate. Give the keeper credit for forcing missed shots, shots right into the them, shots deflected wide, and delaying tactics that allow defensive help to arrive.

Handling Back Passes

The goalkeeper must sometimes make themselves available as an outlet for a defender under pressure. However, if done incorrectly, a back pass to the goalkeeper can result in tragedy - an uncontested giveaway in front of the net or even an own goal. Here are key points for back passes to the keeper.

- The goalkeeper must ask for the ball. Don't ever back pass to keeper who isn't expecting it!
- The keeper who is making themselves available must move **away** from the goal and **outside** the near post. This puts them in the least vulnerable position should the pass go awry.
- The passer must pass with good pace and **outside the near post**. Many own goals have been scored by defenders who passed inside the post and missed connecting with their keeper.
- Once the ball is received, the keeper must clear it quickly, preferably with one or two touches. Switching fields is often a good option to get the ball away from pressure. This is a skill that must be practiced!

The right way to pass back to the goalkeeper:

- Remember. A goalkeeper cannot pick up a back pass or they will give away an indirect free-kick. Never pass the ball back to the goalkeeper between the goalposts. ALWAYS pass to the side so that if the goalkeeper misses their kick the worst that can happen is your team gives away a corner.
- Make sure your players always pass to the goalkeepers strongest foot. A left footed goalie doesn't want the ball on their right foot with an attacker charging at them. This means you must let all your players know if your goalkeeper is right or left footed!
- The key to back passing is ensuring good communication between defenders and their goalkeeper.
- Players can and should communicate their passing intentions before the ball is played, and then the pass should be positive and firm. It's also a very good idea for the defender to play the ball outside the width of the goal – that way if the keeper misses the ball, the cost is likely to only be an opposition corner rather than a goal.
- When faced with a back pass, the keeper needs to decide quickly whether to contain the ball, lay a short pass, or hit it upfield, but all of these elements can be practiced using appropriate passing drills.
- **How to Practice:** Play a game where as soon as possession is lost, the team needs to pass back to the keeper in order to reset their attack.

Sweeper keeper:

When the keeper comes a long way out of goal. A great way of alleviating some of the keeper boredom that can be associated with a winning game. Don't force the keeper to come out of goal if he doesn't want to. The idea behind this tactic is that he is a sweeper, not a 'rush goalie', so you may want to mark an imaginary line he cannot advance past.

Goalie Drills and Warm-ups:

In a circle, throw the ball from one player to another. The only rule is that you can't throw it to the person next to you or throw it too high. Talk about correct hand positioning while you do this. Get the players to throw the ball quickly and decisively.

Step #2: Then introduce a second ball. Make it fun! If a player drops the ball make them do a simple forfeit such as running once round the circle or sitting down until they can make a clean catch.

Drill 1: Soft hands: In pairs (standing about five yards apart) simply throw and catch a ball. Check each players hand position as they catch the ball - are the thumbs close together and the fingers spread? Check for soft hands by listening - does the ball make virtually no sound as it hits their hands?

Drill 2: The triangle

Set up: set up a circle 20 yards across. In the middle of the circle place three cones, (or corner flags or poles), to make a triangle. Each side of the triangle should be a full goal width so you have three 'goals'.

Place one goalkeeper between two of the cones. The rest of your players are spread around the edge of the circle with a ball each, facing the goalkeeper.

How to play: your players take it in turns to shoot at the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper moves quickly from goal to goal to reposition herself for each shot.

You should tell your players who to shoot next and when to shoot, allowing time for the goalkeeper to reposition herself correctly.

Allow a reasonable time period between shots - this drill is hard work for the goalkeeper!

Rotate the players so that all of them take a turn in goal. Remember you are coaching ALL your players to be effective goalkeepers, not just one or two of them.

Progression • Create a competition among the goalkeepers to see who can let in the least number of goals in a given time period.

- Some of the players shooting the ball can be asked to play a certain type of shot to give the goalkeeper practice in that situation. For example, a player may attempt to chip the ball over the goalkeeper's head.

- The coach can increase the tempo of the practice whereby each player shoots just as the goalkeeper recovers from the last shot, thus putting her under greater pressure. Never begrudge spending a whole practice session on goalkeeper skills. Focusing on your team's most important playing position is a good investment!

Goalie Wars:

This handy training game not only teaches goalkeepers how to come for the ball, but it helps them learn when to distribute the ball quickly to start a counterattack.

When keepers catch the ball they can distribute quickly and set up a counterattack. This session has keepers on their toes trying to catch crosses, distribute quickly and save shots.

SET UP: Use your penalty area, with a goal at each end. Cone off across the six-yard areas. The session uses two keepers and two servers.

HOW TO PLAY: The goalkeepers compete for high crosses played into the combat area. They must judge whether they have a good chance to beat their opponent to catch the cross or punch it clear. If they catch the ball they have five seconds to distribute it into the opposition goal

with a throw; a punch into the opposition goal also counts. The priority is for keepers to defend their own goal. Servers should alternate crossing in four balls each and vary the area they cross into – for instance, nearer one goalkeeper, or right in the middle so that decision-making becomes important.

TECHNIQUE: The session teaches keepers to understand how their starting position in relation to the ball and the goal helps them to move and collect the cross, or punch with power and accuracy. Recovery lines also come into play if they go for a ball and lose out.

2 goalies and 2 servers. Use the penalty area. 4 balls crossed from each side at varying areas / heights.

Score by either:

1. distribute it into the opposition goal with a throw within 5 seconds after catching.
2. a punch into the opposition goal also counts.



Goalkeeper Centered Practice Plan

Whole team, 45-60 minutes (including drinks breaks and instruction)

Game #1: Small Sided Keeper Centered Game: Grid about 30 yards by 40 yards, play a 4v4 game with one condition: **every time the ball goes out of play the game restarts from the goalkeeper.**

Tip: Have several balls 'parked' in each goal to speed the game up.

How it works: If, for example, the ball goes out for a throw to the red team, the red team goalkeeper takes a ball out of the net and looks for a red player to pass to.

Coaching points Use this warm up to remind your outfield players that they must provide your goalkeeper with options.

- As soon as the goalkeeper has the ball under control they should revert to the correct team shape, a diamond. This will provide the goalkeeper with the option to roll or pass the ball to a wide defender or kick the ball upfield to the player or players at the top of the diamond.

- Your sweeper (or central defender) should position them self between the goalkeeper and the closest attacker to provide cover in case the goalkeeper makes a mistake.

Game #2: Team possession game (15 minutes)

Objective: Improve goalkeeper distribution, passing, receiving, decision making and possession.

Set up: In the same grid as above, play a 4v4 game with the **condition that X number of passes equals a goal but the ball must be passed through the goalkeeper at least once.**

In addition, tell your players that if the ball is shot at the keeper in the air it must be caught. If they drop the ball a goal is awarded to the opposition.

- To make sure your players don't get into the habit of passing back to their keeper and expecting them to pick the ball up (an infringement of the rules that is penalized by an indirect free kick) the keeper must control and pass the ball with their feet if it is passed back on the ground.

Coaching points Discuss the following key points with your players before you begin.

- Once the ball is successfully collected and controlled, the goalkeeper must make a quick decision on the method of distribution, whether to roll, throw, pass or kick the ball back into play.

- Tell your outfield players that they need to find space to receive the ball from the keeper. Defenders should take up wide positions close to the penalty box and midfielders should spread themselves across the field so that they are in a position to receive a pass direct from keeper or from a team-mate.

- Most goalkeepers in the seven to twelve age range will be most accurate if they roll or pass the ball out.

Tip: Goalkeepers should be encouraged to distribute the ball to the sides of the goal and to try to switch the play to the opposite side from where the ball has just come from.

Decisions your goalkeeper needs to make - Shall I throw the ball?

There are two main throwing techniques a goalkeeper can use - the underarm throw (rolling the ball out) and the over-arm throw.

- Over-arm throws are difficult for young goalkeepers to execute quickly and accurately and can be difficult for the receiving player to control. So if your keeper decides to throw in this way they must make sure they are not throwing the ball to a player who will be quickly be put under pressure.
- An underarm throw is much easier, especially for very young players. Rolling the ball to a team-mate who is fairly close and does not have an opposing player nearby involves a motion very similar to ten pin bowling. The goalkeeper's feet should be moving in the direction they want the ball to go. The ball should be rolled firmly and decisively on the ground (not bounced).

Shall I pass the ball?

If the ball comes to your keeper on the ground and there is no immediate pressure on them from opposing forwards, the quickest and most accurate method of distribution is to pass the ball out.

- This requires composure on the part of the goalkeeper (who needs to get their head up and take a quick 'snapshot' of the field before controlling the ball) and assistance from the outfield players who need to take up close supporting positions quickly and tell them if they have the time to pass or not.
- Encourage your goalkeeper to take a few steps out of the penalty area before releasing the ball if possible.
- A word of warning! If the goalkeeper is attempting to control the ball with her feet she should try to do this when the ball is not heading directly towards the goal (David James take note!)

Shall I kick the ball?

- There are times when all your outfield players will have a member of the opposing team fairly close by and it is not wise to pass or roll the ball out. In these circumstances the goalkeeper needs to kick the ball.
- There are three types of kick: the punt, (where the ball is dropped onto the kicking foot), the drop kick, (where the ball is dropped onto the ground and kicked just as it bounces), and a normal kick off the ground.
- If your goalkeeper is also an outfield player they may be comfortable with simply rolling the ball on the ground before taking a normal kick but it can be a risky strategy.
- The punt is used when maximum distance is required while the drop kick with its low trajectory is most useful when kicking into the wind.
- All three types of kick require a lot of practice. Don't be concerned if your players make mistakes to begin with and emphasize that accuracy is more important than power.

Goalkeeper Q & A:

Q: The weather is turning cold, any advice for apparel choices to help our goalkeepers stay warm?

A: I would start with layering. There are tons of great products in stores that should serve as a base. Materials that wick away moisture and help insulate are plentiful. A piece to cover the torso, hip and thigh area is a good start. Then, building the second layer with shorts and a cotton-poly shirt should come next, along with a good pair of socks (or two pair, for those so inclined). A rain shell and pair of polyester pants should finalize the layered approach.

There's a saying that goalkeepers need to learn to "sweat" in their gear, so a good layering system will serve the keeper well in most wet, cold conditions. Some goalkeepers like to "peel off" their layers as they warm up and end up in just their second layer: shorts and a shirt! With wind, rain and puddles, this can be a tough environment over an hour or two of training.

On match day, a good approach is to layer as described above, then time the warm-up so the goalkeeper can change into a dry jersey and gloves before the start of the game.

Q: My goalkeeper came out on a through ball and as a part of the play came away with a bruised shin. Her technique is pretty good, but I think her shin guard is too small. Any recommendations?

A: Yes! This is a huge issue. In the last few years, small shin guards have become common amongst players. The small, light, 6-inch shin guard. Tell goalkeepers to get a shin guard that covers the shin from top to bottom and go from there. Several good goalkeepers I have known over the years have come out on the wrong end because of poor coverage in this area. While the outfield player may be able to rationalize the small guard, the goalkeeper should think differently.

Q: My son is 8 years old and loves to play in goal. When can he begin training regularly to play in goal?

A: It is my opinion that full-time goalkeeping should not begin until a player has had the opportunity to go through the normal growing pains of childhood and be well on their way through puberty and into adolescence. The physical, technical and tactical demands of the position really make the time to start at around 14-16 years of age. The training an 8-year-old

should experience should be "play-based" and not based on any position. An 8-year-old can certainly tumble and dive around, but should play in a variety of roles in a small-sided game situation (6v6).

Q: I have one goalkeeper on my U-14 Division-I team. She's not bad, but what are some of the things I should look for in helping her get better?

A: A goalkeeper at this age (regardless of gender) needs to be well-grounded in the basics: catching, footwork, diving and kicking. Finding a way to give her some personalized attention is important while also making sure that she understands that the team depends on her to perform well. Since there may not be a second goalkeeper to put into action if the "No. 1" has a substandard performance, it is critical that the one-and-only goalkeeper is willing to put her best foot forward. She must be able to show the team she will always be willing to try to perform at her very best. Coaches must remember that no matter how talented a goalkeeper is at this age, mistakes are inevitable. What is critical is that the goalkeeper realizes that recovering from the odd mistake with great effort is what will be important in the long run.

Q: I have a hard time getting myself to concentrate during games, what are some hints in improving my ability to stay focused?

A: This is a pretty complex question. One of the first things to figure out is whether anxiety or stress causes a lack of "focus." Often, fear (of failure or of having to perform under pressure) can cause a goalkeeper to withdraw from a competitive situation (like staying "tuned in" during a game). Coaches and parents need to work with the goalkeeper to make sure that undue pressure does not come into play. Many times, a goalkeeper "freaks out" and withdraws from a situation only to hear from the sidelines, "stay focused!" The goalkeeper must be reassured that he or she is not being judged and that everyone involved in the team is confident of goalkeeper's ability to play. In training the coach needs to share some key things that the goalkeeper should be responsible for and include communication basics to make sure that the goalkeeper and the outfield players are all on the same page. Tying the practice keys to game performance (and being positive about the experience) is a good way to help the goalkeeper "stay in the game."

Q: My goalkeeper struggles with his back-passes; any ideas to help improve this area of his game?

A: One of the reasons youth players should not take on goalkeeping at too early of an age is that they may not get the touches needed to become skillful in passing and receiving. Goalkeepers should take 1-2 times a week to work on their passing, long kicking and receiving. Working with another player, a coach or alone against a wall are ways to improve in this area. Making up competitive games or skill challenges is essential to building the self-motivation necessary to sharpen passing and receiving skills. All young players should play a ton of soccer tennis/volleyball to hone their touch and skill on the ball. As the goalkeeper ages, this player should be above average on the ball as a passer and receiver.

Keeper's Colors

Your goalkeepers will learn how to move in line with the ball and be in the best position to save shots with this simple game.

Objective: To practice correct goalkeeper positioning.

Age group: U9 upwards. **Number of players:** Whole squad.

Set up: Divide your squad into groups of four or five. Set up a goal on the end line of your playing area and mark a semi circle around the goal. I suggest it should be at least 10 yards from the goal. Put one player in goal and the rest standing next to different colored cones (or bibs) positioned around the arc.

How to play: To begin, have the cones fairly close together. You call out a color and the player standing at that cone shoots. Make sure the 'keeper moves to the right position (on a line between the ball and center of the goal) before he has to make the save.

If they are out of position, stop the game and show them where they should have been. Go through all the colors, then change the 'keeper.

Progression 1: Move the cones further apart and have at least one just off the end line.

Progression 2: Remove the cones. Now the players standing around the semi-circle pass a ball to each other. The goalkeeper has to move quickly to stay in the right position. The player with the ball shoots on your command. The goalkeeper has to save four or five shots before you rotate them out.

Indirect Free Kicks

There are four offenses in Law 12 specifically aimed at the goalkeeper. An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the keeper, in the penalty area, commits one of the following:

- Takes more than six seconds, after controlling the ball with the hands, to release the ball into play.

Six seconds is not hard and fast; referees are instructed not to count or signal publicly, and first offenses are usually given verbal warnings. But six seconds is plenty of time to settle the ball, jog up to the edge of the penalty area and find an outlet. During this six seconds, the goalkeeper can move anywhere in their penalty area. Don't get caught by this Law - instead, use it as a reason to work on quick [distribution](#) to start the counterattack.

- Touches the ball again with the hands after releasing it into play, before the ball has been touched by another player. Bouncing or softly tossing and catching the ball are not considered "releasing the ball into play", but why even risk it? Bouncing the soccer ball is a holdover from olden days where a goalkeeper was able to move in the penalty area if they bounced the ball (similar to a basketball dribble). That rule no longer applies, so once the keeper has the ball safely in their hands, they should hang on to it until they are ready to deliver it downfield.
- Touches the ball with the hands "*after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate*". The italicized above is a direct quote from the FIFA Laws, and is often misunderstood. Remember the intent of the Law, which is to prevent time wasting by the defense. As such, only a deliberate kick by a teammate, either to the goalkeeper or to a place where the goalkeeper can safely pick the ball up, should be penalized. An accidental deflection off a defender's foot, or a missed clearance that falls to the goalkeeper should not be penalized.

But as always, "deliberate" is in the opinion of the referee. So 🤔 if in doubt, don't pick the ball up - **unless** the ball is at risk of going into the net if you don't use your hands! In that case, better to concede an indirect free kick than a goal.

- Touches the ball with the hands directly from a throw-in from a teammate. The goalkeeper may still be used as a target for a throw-in, but they must handle the ball with their feet like any other player.

An indirect free kick can also be given to the goalkeeper's team if an opponent prevents the ball from being released into play by the keeper. This is seldom called, but it's good to know the keeper gets a little protection in the Laws!

Finally, it is an indirect kick if an opponent plays in a dangerous manner. This applies not only to endangering an opponent (e.g. high boot) but also to endangering one's self (this is why the player on the ground is called for this - they have put themselves in harm's way). By tradition, the goalkeeper is given leeway here and is allowed to put themselves in positions that would be dangerous for any other player on the field (for example, sliding at the feet of an attacker).

Law 13 - Free Kicks

Direct and indirect kicks differ in one respect: a direct kick that goes into the net without being touched is counted as a goal; an indirect kick must be touched by another player (on either team) in order to count. Indirect kicks are signaled by the referee raising one arm straight up above his head. Look for this signal; if it is not given, assume a direct kick. If in doubt, ask the referee -- most will also inform you verbally.

Occasionally an attacker will not realize a kick is indirect and shoot straight at the net. In this case, if it is a difficult save, the keeper should just let the ball go in rather than risk deflecting the ball in themselves and providing the touch that let the goal stand. But be absolutely sure it is indirect and nobody but the shooter touched the ball. If in doubt, try to make the save. (By the way, an indirect kick that goes into the net without being touched is awarded a goal kick.)

Any free kick from within the penalty area must leave the penalty area before it is considered in play.

Everybody knows that the defenders must be 10 yards from the spot of a free kick, but what about an indirect free kick that is less than 10 yards from the goal (subject to those "special circumstances" in Law 8)? In this case, defenders are permitted to be closer than 10 yards provided they are on the goal line and between the goal posts. This kind of situation doesn't happen much, but it can come up and it would be wise if the keeper knows how to set the defense if this happens - see Setting a Wall under "Advanced Tactics" for more on this.

Law 14 - Penalty Kicks

See [Penalty Kicks](#) |

The only time during a game a goalkeeper should be standing on the goal line is during a penalty kick, and that is only because the Law says so. Goalkeepers are allowed to move side-to-side along the goal line, but not to move forward until the ball is struck.

As the Laws of the game of soccer currently stand, the goalkeeper must be on the goal line between the goalposts, and may not move forward until the ball is struck. All other players are outside the penalty area, at least ten yards from the ball and behind it. The shooter is identified, the keeper and other players take up their position, the referee signals, and the pressure is on!

For the goalkeeper, a penalty-kick really is a no-lose situation. The keeper is not expected to make the save, so the pressure is on the shooter (the conversion rate of penalty kicks, at all levels of soccer, is 80-90%). But there are tricks a goalkeeper can use to increase their odds of making the save.

The days of guess and dive are over. The goalkeeper should learn to "read" the shooter to try to predict where the ball is going. Combined, perhaps, with scouting reports on shooters, and statistics on general tendencies, a keeper can do much better than 50% in picking direction. Although picking the correct direction doesn't always mean the keeper can make the save, it gives them a head start.

Reading the Shooter

- **Watch the shooter's eyes and overall demeanor.** Often they will give away small clues before they are ever ready to shoot, like peeking at the corner they are aiming for.
- **Watch the approach.** Is it straight on, or wide? A very wide approach often indicates the shooter is going towards the opposite corner. A straight-on approach gives fewer clues.
- **Watch the plant foot.** The ball will go where the plant foot points.
- **Watch the hips.** The ball goes where the hips point. A "push pass" shot will require the hips to open up in the direction the ball is going.
- **Watch the head.** If the shooter drops their head low with a big pull-back of the leg, it usually means a cross-body shot. If the head stays up more, it can mean the shooter will stay open to push the ball to the opposite corner.
- **Don't react too soon.** Use the cues above to predict where the ball might go, and be *ready* to go that way, but wait a split second to be sure it really is going there. The keeper might think one direction based on the shooter's eyes and approach, but the plant foot and hips may tell a different story just before the ball is struck.

General Tendencies

A study done of all the penalties taken in the 1998 World Cup (including shootouts) noted that almost 70% of the kicks taken went to the opposite side from the kicker's dominant foot (that is, right-footed kickers shot to their left -- keeper's right -- and vice versa). (See *Goalkeeper Soccer Training Manual*, DiCicco 2000.) This is the natural swing of the foot across the body; it is difficult to put the ball to the other corner with an instep kick. So, if all else fails, the keeper should go right for a right-footed kicker and left for a left footer.

Don't Act, React

Also, the goalkeeper should react quickly, but not too quickly. Many penalties, especially at the youth level, are poorly taken, either weakly hit or right down the middle. Often the goalkeeper can easily make the save if they just wait and simply react to the shot.

Even "reading the shooter" is a reaction to what the shooter does, and not just guesswork.

A veteran goalkeeper will use all of this, plus their gut feel from years of experience, to try to save a penalty. Brad Friedel says, "Generally there are loads of subtle little hints as to where a player will shoot that they give to the goalkeeper. How he runs up to the soccer ball, how he stands, if his weight's back, if his weight's forward, if he's looking at you the whole time, if he takes a long run as opposed to a short run. There are lots of little differences but you will never really get the gist of it unless you practice a lot of them and figure out what works best for you."

Two simple tips that will help your goalkeeper save a penalty:

1. Get your goalkeeper to watch the penalty taker's eyes and body shape.

Before young players shoot they often look at the corner they are going to hit the ball.

They must also watch the player's approach. A very wide (diagonal) approach often indicates the shooter is going towards the opposite corner. A straight-on approach gives fewer clues.

2. Get your players to watch the plant foot. The ball often goes where the plant foot points.

Coaching tip: tell your 'keeper not to react too soon. Use the clues to predict where the ball might go but wait a split second to be sure it really is going there.

And remember - junior penalties are often poorly hit.

Many penalties, especially at the youth level, are poorly taken, either weakly hit or right down the middle. Often the goalkeeper can easily make the save if they just wait and simply react to the shot.

Psychology:

The position of goalkeeper is one of the most psychologically demanding on the soccer field. Mistakes are final. The glory is usually reserved for the players at the other end of the field. It's not a position for everybody. You can't be stupid and play goal, but perhaps you must be a little crazy.

A coach must, of necessity, be a part-time psychologist, and nowhere is this more important than for the goalkeeper, where confidence is key. I am not a sports psychologist, nor do I play one on TV, but here are a few ideas I have found a coach can use to help a goalkeeper's mental toughness and attitude.

- **Only play those who want to play in goal**

In youth soccer, everyone is encouraged to try all positions. However, I would not include goalkeeper in that category, at least in game situations. It does no good to put someone in the box who simply does not want to be there. It can be shattering for a youngster to be scored upon. If you must, try everyone in practices, but limit game play to those who want to be (or at least, don't mind being) in net.

- **Stay positive when goals are scored**

It can be tough to be positive, especially when a simple lapse has just let in the game-losing goal with seconds to play. Goalkeepers need to be able to put mistakes behind them quickly and recover, so try to put a positive spin on things:

- Credit the shooter. Sometimes the opposing team has just made a great play; give them credit - it's not always a mistake by the keeper that lets a goal in.
- Don't dwell on it. Help the goalkeeper shake it off quickly, make a fast coaching point if necessary, and move on once the kickoff has been taken. You can cover problems in more depth at the next practice.
- Look for the technique that needs improvement. Focus on the skill that needs work, not the fact that the goal was allowed. Very often it's just basic footwork or catching that needs brushing up.

- **Give credit for other than direct saves**

A keeper can keep the soccer ball out of the net in more ways than making a direct save - forcing a missed shot gets the job done too. Aggressiveness goes a long way here - by making the shooter decide too early, a keeper can force a miss or a pass on an otherwise open shot. A goalkeeper who can get into the heads of opposing forwards early has a huge advantage.

- **Don't panic after a save**

This applies to both coach and goalkeeper. Give the keeper time to internalize the save (builds confidence), calm down, give field players time to recover, and look upfield to restart the attack. Six seconds is plenty of time to do all this. If you stay calm, you're showing that you have confidence in the keeper's ability to control the ball and the game.

- **Help the keeper develop good habits**

Teach them good technique, then hammer it in with repetition. Don't allow any lazy or sloppy technique, even when they're not officially doing drills or playing. Good habits will show themselves in games just like bad habits. Repetition is the key; doing it right every time (consistency) is what separates a good goalkeeper from a great one.

- **Don't allow less than full effort, every time, every shot**

Every shot deserves an attempt at a save, even if it seems futile. Eventually, the shots that seemed impossible to stop before will start coming into range. If the effort is there, the results will start to come.

- **If things aren't going well, pull the goalkeeper with care**

Many coaches will pull a keeper if they are getting shelled, but be aware of the repercussions of this. Some players will take this as a sign you lack confidence in them, and only go downhill. Make sure you stay positive, and point out you're not pulling them because they are a poor player or person, just that it's not their day.

- **Encourage additional training**

There isn't always time to properly train a keeper in normal practice sessions, especially when that player needs to develop foot and field skills as well. Encourage them to attend club or private training sessions, goalkeeper camps, rent or buy books or videos, or visit this and other web sites. A player who is serious about goalkeeping needs all the extra training and practice they can get.

Golden rules for goalies:

Go for everything! You may not be able to stop every shot that comes your way, but if you make the attempt, you will find that you are stopping shots you never before thought possible. You will also have the personal satisfaction that at least you made the attempt and your teammates will be more forgiving even if you miss.

After a save – get up quickly! If you have gone to the ground to make a save get back on your feet as fast as possible. Look for a fast break distribution or to direct your teammates into position to receive a build-up distribution. This aspect is particularly important if you are injured. You cannot show weakness, you may tend to your injury after you have started the counterattack. This will particularly intimidate your opponents and raise the confidence in your teammates.

Do not be half-hearted --- 100% effort! Every time you make a play it must be with all of your ability. If you go half way you will miss saves and injure yourself.

Communicate loudly! You must constantly give instructions when on defense. When your team is on the attack, come to the top of your penalty area or beyond and talk to your teammates and offer support to the defenders. Be mentally involved in the entire match, no matter where the soccer is.

No excuses! No whining! Just get on with the match. If a goal is scored against you, a corner kick is given up or the shot is a near miss, DO NOT yell at your teammates even if it's their fault. DO NOT hang your head; kick the ground or the post if it was your fault. During the match is no time to point fingers or make excuses. The play is over, its ancient history, get on with playing the remainder of the match. Focus on what lies ahead!

How to Be a Successful Goalie in Soccer:

A skillful goalie is really important to win a soccer game. One must master certain techniques to become a successful goalie. The goalie is an essential position, and this player must block kicks and balls at every angle from the goal. You have to be physically fit and have good reflexes to catch the soccer ball when your opponents try to score.

Step1 - Make sure you have 2 very important pieces of equipment to be a goalie. You need goalie gloves and a goalie jersey. The gloves will give you the strength and material to catch the ball firmly. The jersey will make you stand out and look different from every team member and opposing team.

Step2 - Position yourself so you appear as big as possible when guarding. When you are protecting the goal, you must have your arms wide and your legs spread wide so you can protect from all angles.

Step3 - Practice blocking shots for a few hours. Get a friend or teammate to practice taking shots at you. When you block a shot, you will want to get the soccer ball back out and onto the field.

Step4 - Use the goalie kick technique to get the soccer ball back out into the game. Throw the ball to one of your team members and give a lot of power in your goalie kick.

Step5 - Repeat these exercising techniques over and over with your teammates until you truly can block a goal at any angle. You will be catching balls at low points, diving for the ball, jumping high and to the side, all to protect your goal.

A goalkeeping practice plan to rely on

This goalkeeping practice plan is suitable for beginners and intermediate players. I've used it with players aged from 5 to 10, but with a bit of tweaking you could use it with older or even younger children. There will be many opportunities to coach your goalkeepers' positioning and use of hands.

How to adapt coaching activities to suit the ability of your players

If your children are having difficulty with a game or drill, you need to reduce the pressure on them by:

- Making the playing area bigger.
- Reducing the number of players involved.

This should allow them to experience success. If it doesn't, the game or drill is probably pitched at the wrong level, so stop doing it and try something a bit easier.

If your players are finding a game too easy you can:

- Make the playing area smaller.
- Introduce conditions such as limiting the number of touches on the ball.

Swedish Handball (warm up, 10 minutes)

Split your players into two teams. In a rectangular grid with a goal at each end, the players work the ball up the pitch by throwing it to each other. Don't allow any physical contact - the ball can only be intercepted when it is being passed.

Players can carry the ball for two steps and score by throwing the ball into the goal.

If you find the goals being blocked by a line of defenders, mark out a 'no go' area with flat cones five yards out from the goal. No one is allowed to step over this line. Play the first to five goals wins.

Triangle goal game (15 minutes)

Place three poles in the center of a large square playing area to make a triangular goal. Place a goalkeeper in the goal. The same two teams try to score in any of the three sides of the goal (the player who gets the last touch scores). Again, it's first to five goals. This game is great for improving goalkeeper reaction times and encouraging quick repositioning.

Color shooting (10 minutes)

Use a small-sided penalty area for this game or mark out a similar-sized playing area. Put four different-colored cones (or other objects) on the edge of the penalty area. At least one should be at an acute angle close to the goal line.

Place at least one player and a few balls at each cone. You call out a color and the player at that cone shoots. The goalkeeper must quickly respond to the color called and find a good position. Keep calling colors until the goalkeeper has faced four shots. Then rotate goalkeepers.

Tip: Make sure the goalkeepers check their posts as they move around to be sure of their positioning. For best results, goalkeepers need to stand off the goal line.

1v1 to goal (15 minutes)

This game should produce many shots for your goalkeeper to save.

This is a game for teams of three or four players at most, so set up two games if you have more than eight players. Use the same playing area as in the last game but place a small goal on each of the short ends. The teams line up at each end with a goalkeeper in each goal. Give each outfield player a number.

Serve a ball into the center of the playing area and call out a number. The players with that number challenge for the ball and try to score. The player who scores stays on. The player who doesn't score goes in goal. If the ball goes out of bounds, both players take the place of their goalkeepers and the game starts again.

Tip: If one player keeps scoring, play 2v1.

Finally, let your players play a small-sided game (SSG) with one condition. Rotate the goalkeepers every time the ball goes out.

Seven tips for young goalkeepers:

Use these tips to coach your goalkeepers and give them more confidence.

1. Get hands in the correct position. It's critical that a goalkeeper's hands, especially the thumbs, are behind the ball. When the ball is above waist height, the fingers and thumbs should form a "W" shape with the thumbs touching. Below waist height, the hands should form a basket, or M shape, with the little fingers touching.

When picking the ball up from the ground, your goalkeeper should bend their knees and back, stay low with finger tips brushing the ground and scoop the ball in one fluid motion.

2. Get behind the ball. Make sure your goalkeepers always get some part of their body behind their hands when catching or picking up a rolling ball. They should sidestep quickly to get in line with the shot, and not reach out sideways for the ball.

Activity

Have your players stand in a circle about 15 yards across. Start the exercise by getting the players to throw one ball around the circle at shoulder height. The only rule is it can be passed to anyone except the player next to them.

After a minute or so, add a second ball. For young players or beginners, the passes need to be slow. But older or more experienced players will enjoy seeing how quickly they can throw and catch the balls without making errors.

Then allow balls to be thrown at knees or rolled along the ground. Balls can also be thrown intentionally off target to test footwork.

Coaching points

Check your players' hand positions are correct and make sure they stay on the balls of their feet, moving quickly to get behind the ball.

3. Don't stand rooted to the goal line. This is perhaps the biggest mistake young goalkeepers make. You can easily demonstrate the benefits of closing down approaching attackers by standing on the goal line with your goalkeeper in front of you, about 5 yards away. Ask them: 'how big does the goal look?' Answer: 'big!'

Then you move off the line by 10 yards or so and place your goalkeeper right in front of you. Ask: 'how big does the goal look now?' Answer: 'very small!'

This should be enough to convince your goalkeeper that they should get as close to approaching attackers as possible and not wait on the line for them to shoot.

4. Get your knees dirty! Beginner goalkeepers tend to bend from the waist to block low shots and rolling balls. This makes it hard for them to get their hands low enough and prevents them getting some part of their body behind their hands. You need to encourage them to get down. Call out: "Get your knees dirty!"

5. If you're not sure, kick towards the touch lines. Young goalkeepers often struggle to get any distance on their kicks and throws. Accuracy can be a problem too, and the receiving player doesn't often have brilliant ball skills.

All this adds up to danger... goalkicks in youth ball often result in goals for the opposition. Especially if they are coached to step in front of the receiving player and intercept the ball.

Tell your goalkeepers to take their time and not rush. If they are not sure where to kick or throw the ball, they should kick towards one of your players on the touch line - not straight up the middle of the pitch. It's safer that way.

6. Stay focused. Children often switch off when the action is at the other end of the pitch. You need to help your goalkeeper to stay alert, even when the ball doesn't come close by for long periods.

If you're on the touch line, occasionally talk to them. Ask them if they are okay and encourage them to move around the penalty box to stay warm. That way they will be ready for a sudden attack from the other team.

7. It's not your fault! Young goalkeepers nearly always blame themselves if they let in a goal. Sometimes they can get really upset. I always tell my goalkeepers we have 10 outfield players whose job it is to stop the other team shooting at our goal. If they can't stop the other team shooting, it's not the goalkeeper's fault if the shot goes in. It's a team game!

How to Do a Drop Kick as a Goalie: This kick has a smaller angle of trajectory and gets to its target more quickly than a traditional goalie kick.

Step1 - Compose yourself after gathering the ball into your possession.

Step2 - Allow some time for people to clear out from in front of you.

Step3 - Bounce the ball on the ground and catch it if you feel the need. Some goalies bounce the ball in order to concentrate better.

Step4 - Determine where you want to kick the ball.

Step5 - Hold the ball with two hands waist high.

Step6 - Take 2 steps, starting with your non-kicking leg.

Step7 - Aim the ball for the spot where you intend to make contact with it.

Step8 - Drop the ball just before it touches the ground just after taking your 2nd step.

Step9 - Kick the ball as it touches the ground.

Step10 - Follow through the kick.

Tips: * It will take some time to get used to the distance of this kick. You may have to ease up on the power you use to kick the ball. * Experiment with the height from which you drop the ball. * If you take more than three steps, the referee may whistle a foul. * If you have any condition that could impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity. "If you take more than three steps, the referee may whistle a foul. It helps to give it a backspin before it touches the ground.

How to Throw a Soccer Ball Sidearm For the goalkeeper who needs to get the ball to a teammate quickly, the sidearm throw is more accurate than kicking the ball, if the distance is not too great.

Step1 - Cock the wrist of your throwing arm.

Step2 - Turn your body and raise your nonthrowing arm to aim at your target.

Step3 - Pull your throwing arm back and twist your waist as far as you can comfortably manage.

Step4 - Take two or three steps forward.

Step5 - Begin to unwind the ball horizontally before taking your last step.

Step6 - Release the ball with your arm extended as you take your last step.

Step7 - Follow through toward your target by continuing to swing your arm across your body.

- * Twist your waist more or less, depending on how far you need to throw the ball.

- * After some practice, you'll be able to throw the ball 35 to 40 yards on the fly.

- * If you have any condition that would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity.

Goalkeeper coaching for young soccer players

An entire practice on keeper training is not appropriate for young players and because all players should be exposed to these basics.

First let's define the age group as U-9 or U-10 and younger. A player this young should not be forced to play goalkeeper full time. All the players should get some keeper training. This training should include the rules for keepers including where they can use their hands and how they may get rid of the ball. Pay special attention to the latter since it varies widely at the lower levels. For example a local recreational league allows the keepers to run to the top of the area and get rid of the ball, whereas another league enforces the 4 step rule.

Specific training should be aimed at teaching proper catching technique. Forget diving and all the advanced stuff. For the upper limit of the age group (U-9) you can begin to teach positioning. Stress importance of protecting near post, cutting down angle, and moving across the goal mouth as the ball moves across the field. You can teach them to come off the line for free balls in the area where they can handle the ball beginning at the U-7 level.

Spend time also on what to do after the keeper gets the ball. Teach the kids not to panic. Lots of kids in this age (and older too) want to get rid of the ball as soon as possible. Teach them to catch the ball, take a deep breath, let the traffic clear, and then distribute the ball. U-8 and younger you probably want to kick, throw, or whatever the ball as far up field as possible. When you reach U-9, you can probably start adding other options, if the field players have sufficient skill to retain control of the ball after the keeper gets it to them. If the field players lack skill, then it's still best to blast the ball up-field.

The team should buy a couple of junior keeper gloves (2 sizes so that all the kids can use them) that are form fitting and provide a dimpled surface. These gloves cost under \$10/pair at your local department store. Avoid the big gloves. As anyone who has coached young kids baseball can tell you, young kids can barely control their bare hands. So don't even think about any of the large modern gloves because of the kid's inability to control them.

Assuming that practice time is limited:

1. For the whole team go over the rules for keepers.
2. For the whole team demonstrate proper catching. Divide the team into pairs and let them practice catching. Walk around and make necessary corrections.
3. Above is probably 5 to 10 minutes.
4. Set up shooting/keeper drills and rotate all kids into the goal. Keeper teaching points are catching technique and what to do after the ball is caught.
5. During scrimmages, place emphasis on what the keeper should do with ball after the save.

There are three key points for training young keepers:

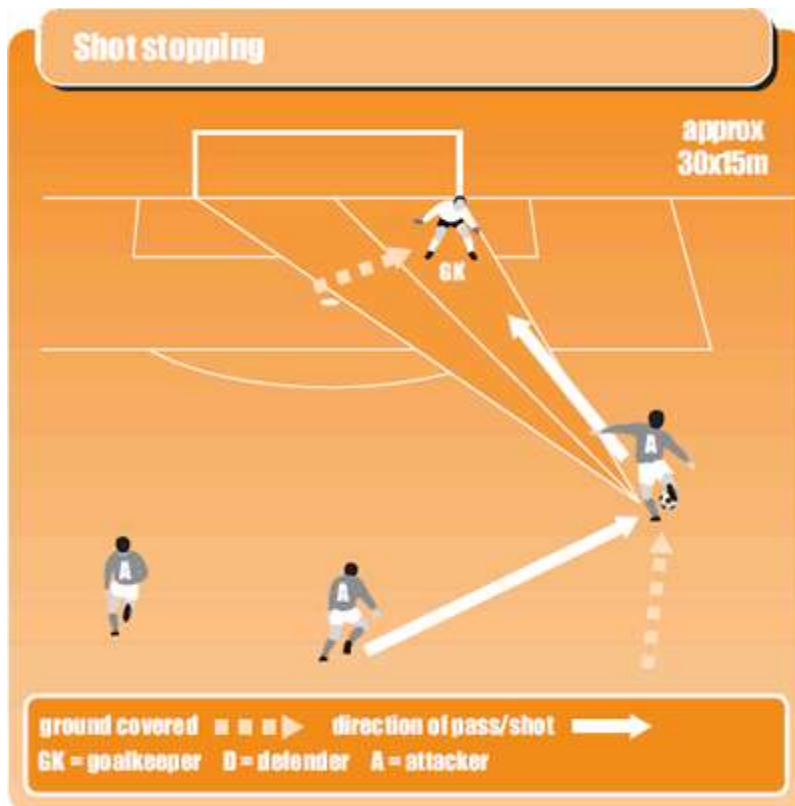
1. Don't blame keepers for giving up a goal.
2. The coach MUST stay calm when the keeper has the ball. Too many coaches panic and start screaming "GET RID OF THE BALL." If the coach panics, there is no way to expect the kids to stay calm.
3. Remember that young kids have a short attention span and may be studying the bugs on the field while the ball is headed for the back of the net. Don't let this bother you.

Positioning tips for goalkeepers

Soccer coaching tips and tactics to get your young goalkeeper in the right position to make a save.

Always on the go

Before a goalkeeper even uses any part to touch the ball, they should be making constant adjustments to their position in relation to where the ball is on the field of play – even when it's at the other end of the pitch! Below, we look at where keepers should be positioned in general play and when facing a shot.



Phase 1: The middle attacker plays the ball to themselves, at any angle left or right, and gives chase. They shoot with their second touch.

Phase 2: The middle attacker plays the ball left or right to either of the two supporting attackers. The supporting attackers can either shoot first time or take a touch before shooting.

Phase 3: The middle attacker can either take a touch left or right and take a shot, or pass. If they pass, the supporting attackers can now shoot on their third touch if they choose to.

Key soccer coaching tip: The coach should observe the keeper's movement from behind the goal.

Goalie positioning tips

1. If the ball is in the attacking third of the pitch, the keeper should be in the front third of their penalty area.
2. If the ball's in the middle third, they should stand in the middle third of their penalty area.
3. If the ball's in the defending third, they should position themselves a little distance from their goal-line.

Sweep it up

Why is all that important? Because as well as making saves, a goalkeeper's job is to provide support for their defense. The space between the keeper and defenders should be small enough to make it tricky for opponents to play a ball into it without either the keeper or defenders getting there first. A good position also means the goalkeeper is available to receive a back pass from an under-pressure teammate.

Stop that shot – part 1

To prepare for a save, goalkeepers should:

- Constantly adjust their position in relation to the sideways or backward/forward movement of the ball.
- Be towards the midline of a triangle formed by lines joining the position of the ball and the two goal-posts (see diagram).
- Once in line, plant their feet and be balanced when the attacker is in possession and in a position to shoot.
- Get on their feet quickly again after saving the shot and be ready for the next one!

Shop that shot – part 2

When an attacker's through on goal in a 1v1, the goalkeeper should also:

- Move along the line to the ball if it's outside the playing distance of the attacker, and as fast as possible.
- Once the keeper has closed down the attacker, they should slow to a couple of arms' lengths away and force the shooter to make a decision. Slowing down makes it easier to react, and makes it harder for the attacker to dribble around the goalkeeper.

Remember: The goalkeeper is a specialist position so he deserves special attention.

Basic handling for keepers, by Tony DiCicco

Goalkeepers at all levels are required not only to handle the ball, but to handle all routine shoots and crosses successfully. Yet in every game, regardless of the level, we see mishandled shots or crosses.

HANDLING TECHNIQUES

WARM-UP (Fig. A)

Setup

- Using cones, mark out two shoulder-width goals facing each other, about 10 yards apart. Then mark out a larger goal two yards in front of each of these.
- GK2 and GK3 stand in the smaller goals. GK1 has a ball and stands in the larger goal in front of GK3.

Sequence

- On GK1's command, GK2 steps forward and handles a ball delivered by GK1.
- Players rotate positions after each serve.
- Train each technique in two- or three-minute intervals.

Variations

- Foot distribution: Off the ground, half volley, and volley should be used for intermediate- to high-level goalkeepers.
- Coach serves; goalkeepers rotate through the exercise.

Coaching points

- To train basic handling techniques, maximize repetitions by varying your hand distribution:
 1. Basket catch: Throw an overhand skipped ball.
 2. Contour catch: Sling the ball toward the chest/head
 3. Side contour catch: Toss the ball just outside the frame of the body.
 4. High contour catch: Toss the ball into the air in front of the keeper.

PHASE 1 (Fig. B)

Setup

- Place two cones three yards in front of the goal line, marking the middle third of the goal.
- GK1 stands in the goal with the ball, between the cones. GK2 and GK3 stand outside the goal at the posts. Coach serves from 14 to 16 yards away.

Sequence

- GK1 bowls the ball to the coach, then reacts to the shot using proper handling technique.
- After making the save, GK1 exits the goal toward GK2, who enters the exercise and continues the sequence.

Variations

- Coach has the soccer balls; GK1 faces the goal. On command, GK1 turns to handle a shot from the coach.
- GK1 starts outside the cones. On command, GK1 shuffles and sets between the cones to handle a shot from the coach.
- Coach serves volleys and drop kicks.
- Incorporate agility: Start goalkeepers on their stomach or sides.
- Have goalkeepers face the flank outside the cones. This forces them to use a drop step and/or crossover step.
- Have goalkeepers shuffle and touch the cones or footwork around them.

Coaching points

- Emphasizing the middle third of the goal forces keepers to use proper footwork, which should eliminate diving and reinforce usage of basic techniques.
- Focus on setting feet and using proper position to handle shots.
- Utilize proper techniques to catch the ball.
- Emphasize footwork and getting the body behind the ball.
- Maximize the number of repetitions to train technique.

More goalkeeping drills and tips

Would having one more outfield player than the other team make life a bit easier on match days?

Well, now you can have exactly that... by turning your 'keeper into a sweeper!

Keeper/sweeper

The idea of having the goalkeeper push up to the edge of the penalty area or even the halfway line when their team is attacking is not new or particularly unusual.

Futsal goalkeepers routinely move out their goal area to give their team a numerical advantage and a regular soccer team goalkeeper often takes free kicks in his own half of the field. Goalkeeping goalies can even be seen in the opposition penalty area when their team has a corner, but only when their team is losing by the odd goal and time is running out.

Why do soccer goalkeepers leave it so late to move upfield? Because it's a risky strategy, that's why.

There is always a chance the goalkeeper won't be able to get back to her goal in time to protect it if her team loses possession. Even more embarrassing, an alert opposition player with a strong shot could score in an unguarded goal from 30, 40 or even 50 yards away.

But pushing your goalkeeper up out of her penalty area to support an attack is a tactic that can pay off, especially if she is athletic and has an outfield player's skill set: a good first touch, good "vision" and the ability to find team mates with an accurate pass.

Communication

A goalkeeper's "job description" includes organizing the defense at set pieces and coming off her line to claim possession of the ball wherever possible.

To do that, your goalkeeper has to be vocal. A quiet call of "keeper's" is no good. As soon as the decision is made to come for the ball, you should hear a loud shout of "KEEPER'S".

When defenders hear this, they know the goalkeeper is coming and they should get out of the way. Conversely, a loud shout of "AWAY" means the goalkeeper is not coming and defenders should deal with the situation.

At set pieces, your goalkeeper should give strong, specific instructions to the rest of the team. A vague shout of "mark up" is unhelpful. "Joe, mark the number 10" is much better.

Defenders should be taught to listen for and obey instructions issued by the goalkeeper and to let her know that they have heard them. A simple wave of the hand or "OK" allows the goalkeeper to quickly move on to organizing the rest of the defense.

Quick clearances

When she stops a shot or collects a loose ball, your goalkeeper should immediately try to give her team an advantage with a quick, effective clearance.

She should first look for a team mate in space and within range of a roll or throw out. If there is no one available nearby, your goalkeeper should look upfield to see if any of her team mates are in a "numbers up" situation.

If they are, she should try to kick the ball to them without delay. If a quick roll, throw or kick is not on, your goalkeeper should wait until her team mates have moved to better positions before releasing the ball.

Know the rules

Goalkeepers and goalkeeper coaches need to know all the laws of the game but they need to be particularly familiar with those laws that relate directly to goalkeeping.

Note: the laws below are the laws according to FIFA, the game's governing body. Your local league's rules may be different. If in doubt, ask your league for clarification.

Law 4 – The Players' Equipment

The goalkeeper's kit must be a different color to the players on both teams and the referee.

Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

It is important to note that a free kick awarded to the defending team inside its own goal area (the six-yard box) is treated like a goal kick: it may be taken from anywhere in the six-yard box.

It's equally important to note that an indirect free kick awarded to the attacking team in the goal area – for example, if the goalkeeper picks up a deliberate back pass – should be taken from the line of the goal area parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.

Law 10 – The Method of Scoring

It's worth making sure your goalkeeper knows that the whole of the ball must cross the line for a goal to be scored.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Your goalkeeper must be aware that she cannot:

- control the ball with her hands for more than six seconds before releasing it.
- touch the ball again with her hands after she has released it and before it has touched another player.
- touch the ball with her hands after it has been deliberately kicked to her by a team mate.
- touch the ball with her hands after she has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team mate.

Any of these offences will result in an indirect free kick being awarded to the other team.

You should also make it clear to your goalkeeper that it is an offence to play "in a dangerous manner". So she should take care not to charge wildly at attackers or jump for the ball in a manner that could injure an opponent. Referees usually allow goalkeepers more leeway than outfield players when it comes to Law 12 but they don't have to.

Law 14 – Penalty Kicks

An easy one this. The defending goalkeeper must remain on her goal line, between the goalposts and facing the kicker until the ball has been kicked.

Soccer drills to help goalies stop a high cross

Corners, free-kicks and crosses can cause chaos if your goalkeeper doesn't jump high and catch the ball. Use the following soccer coaching drills and tips to sharpen your goalie's skills.

Drill A. Defending the High Cross

- Use a 15m x 15m square.
- Put your goalkeeper and two attackers in the square and a player at each corner with a ball.
- The coach calls out a number (1 to 4) and that player kicks a high ball to the keeper. The keeper has to attack the ball and win it in the air, under pressure from two attackers in the box.
- Keep repeating the soccer drill, as practice is important.

Drill B. Defending the High Cross and Clearing

- In this soccer drill, have your goalkeeper in the goal against two attackers.
- Two players with multiple balls stand on the wings to cross high balls into the box. Two other players are 25m down field in a marked off target area (cones will do).
- The goalkeeper attacks the high ball, wins it in the air and immediately turns and throws it downfield in the opposite direction from which the cross came. This switches the field and catches the attackers still charging at the goal.

Soccer coaching tips to help goalies read penalties

Seventy per cent of the penalty kicks at the last World Cup went to the opposite side of the foot the kicker took the penalty with. If professionals make that choice, then how much more likely are young players to do so? Use the following soccer coaching tips to get goalies prepared for penalties.

Key soccer coaching tip: right-footed kickers shoot to their left, the keeper's right, and vice versa.

1. Get your goalkeeper to read the shot

- Tell your players to watch the penalty-taker's eyes and body shape. Before young players shoot they often look at the corner they are going to hit the ball.
- As well as watching the body language, a goalie must also watch the player's approach. A very wide approach often indicates the shooter is going towards the opposite corner. A straight-on approach gives fewer clues.
- Get your players to watch the plant foot. The ball often goes where the plant foot points.
- And then the hips. The ball goes where the hips point. A "push pass" shot will require the hips to open up in the direction the ball is going.
- Even the head. If junior penalty takers often drop their heads low and have a big pull-back of the leg — expect a cross-body shot. If the head stays up he's going for the opposite corner.

Key soccer coaching tip: don't react too soon. Use the clues to predict where the ball might go but wait a split second to be sure it really is going there.

2. Junior penalties are often poorly hit

Many penalties, especially at the youth level, are poorly taken, either weakly hit or right down the middle. Often the goalkeeper can easily make the save if they just wait and simply react to the shot.

Three way soccer drill for goalie and striker skills

Strikers and goalkeepers work well together in threes. This quick, shooting soccer drill keeps your goalkeeper on his toes and helps your strikers find the best place to put their shots to beat the opposition keeper.

Setting up the soccer drill

Use a small area with two cones for goal posts in this drill. You can vary the width of the goal to test shooters and the goalkeeper. You need lots of balls and someone to retrieve the wayward ones!

1. The first player takes a shot at the goalkeeper.
2. The goalkeeper tries to save, immediately gets up and turns around ready for the other player to shoot.

Extend the soccer drill

- Make it more difficult for your goalkeeper by making him stand next to a post before each shot.
- Reduce or increase the size of the goal.
- Add a player to follow shots in and put pressure on your goalie.

Key soccer coaching tips

Tell your attackers to shoot often and shoot quickly so they really make the keeper work hard. Get them to shoot hard and low near the goalkeeper's body and into the corners to force him to adapt. Tell your goalkeeper to be on his toes. It is down to you, the coach, to make sure his shot-stopping skills are good.

Soccer drill to build goalkeeper long distance throwing skills

Long throws from your goalkeeper are a great way to set up counter-attacks - you only need to watch professional goalkeepers to see how one-arm, long throws can get the ball quickly into target areas.

This is something you can try yourself before you get your goalkeeper doing it, but remember he's half your size and in many cases is still developing the strength to throw.

Drill tips for long distance throws

Tell your goalkeeper to throw as though he was bowling a ball with a straight elbow overarm, transferring the weight from the back foot forward to the front foot.

In an area around 10 meters long (the distance can easily be adjusted in relation to your goalkeeper's throwing ability) the goalkeeper starts from a central position and alternates throwing the ball into the two target areas marked out either side of the goals.

The goalkeeper at the opposite end repeats the soccer drill.

Extending the soccer drill

You can develop throwing skills by telling the goalkeepers to defend the two target areas nearest them by intercepting the ball before it bounces.

The keepers are awarded points for successfully bouncing the ball in either of the opposition's target areas, and for intercepting a ball before it bounces in the target areas nearest them.

Hands on soccer drill for young goalkeepers

Soccer coaching tips and drills to get your goalie saving a goal using their hands, not their feet.

Any shot that is travelling towards a goalkeeper's legs at pace is difficult to deal with. Young goalkeepers, in particular, have problems with these and often opt for kicking the ball away, or end up with the ball hitting, or even worse, going through their legs into the goal.

Goalkeeping tips

1. You want to give goalkeepers a reliable alternative to saving difficult shots that are driven straight at the legs.
2. Train your goalie to minimize mistakes and rebound opportunities for opposition strikers.

Goalkeepers need to be on their toes for the whole of this soccer training drill.

Set up the soccer drill

Set up a 15-yard square. You need a goal and two goalkeepers. One goalkeeper works and the other serves.

- The server must initially just pass the ball straight to the goalkeeper's feet. As the goalkeeper warms up, develop the soccer drill so that the server begins to shoot at the goalkeeper's legs with force.
- Encourage your goalkeeper to step "into line /down the line" of the shot.
- Bend knees to form a "k" shape with legs, leaning into the direction of ball.
- Scoop ball with both hands into chest.
- Drop on top of ball to cover the ball and prevent it spilling from the hands and creating rebounds.
- After each save in the soccer coaching drill, the goalkeeper becomes the server for the goalkeeper at the opposite end.

Throw out coaching tips for goalies

Goalkeepers like nothing better than to have the ball in their hands, run to the edge of the area and blast it into the sky. But coaching them to use throw-out skills instead can produce better results.

The ability to throw the ball quickly and accurately is increasingly important

Many of the world's top keepers can throw the ball more than half the length of the pitch, and the distance and accuracy they can achieve is a big counter-attacking weapon for the team. The overarm throw allows your goalkeeper to clear the ball over a longer distance and at greater height.

AND IT CAN BE MORE ACCURATE THAN KICKING THE BALL.

Tips to focus on in training drills include:

- Tell your goalkeeper to adopt a side-on position, and put their weight on the back foot.
- Your goalkeeper's throwing hand should be positioned under the ball, and their throwing arm kept straight.
- The non-throwing arm should point in the direction of the target.
- The goalkeeper then brings this arm down as the throwing arm comes through in an arc over the top of their shoulder.
- The goalkeeper's weight should be transferred forward as the ball is released.
- It is similar to a bowler's action in cricket.

OVER LONG DISTANCES, GET YOUR PLAYER TO CONCENTRATE ON POWERING THE ARM DOWNWARDS ON THE SAME LINE AS

THE TARGET SPOT. THIS WILL HELP YOUR GOALIE'S ACCURACY.

Soccer drill tips to boost goalkeeper drop kicks

Goalkeepers can score from within their own area, so teaching your goalie effective long kicking skills can be a good attacking move.

1. Get your players to hold the ball out in front of them in both hands, or in the palm of the hand opposite to their strongest foot.
2. As they move forward, tell them to release the ball.
3. Then get them to bring their kicking leg through to meet the bottom half of the ball before it bounces.
4. They can let the ball bounce and take it on the half-volley if they prefer to kick the ball at a lower height.
5. The fuller the follow-through, the greater the power - but there is a greater chance of a mis-kick.

Coaching tips for diving saves

Keeping the ball out of the net is just as important as scoring, and the best part of being a goalkeeper is making a diving save. Follow these soccer coaching tips to improve your goalie's diving skills.

Key soccer coaching tip: Get into position early.

1. Diving saves are not just about agility through the air. Sharp reactions and good footwork skills are also essential.
2. Be on your toes and move your feet to give yourself the best chance of reaching the ball with your dive.
3. Bend the knee nearest to where you will be diving and collapse that leg as you fall to the side.

4. Keep your arms well out in front of you so that you can reach as far as possible or react to any possible deflection on the shot.
5. Get your hands behind the ball and try to hold on to the shot. If you cannot do this, try to push the ball away from the goal so there is no chance of a rebound.
6. Get back to your feet as quickly as possible after making the save, as another shot could come straight in.

Soccer drill to work on goalkeeper footspeed

Coaching your goalkeeper to work on his foot speed is vital to his ability to get in position to block shots. [Goalkeepers](#) who are quick off the mark will save your team if they can get the skills right. Use the following soccer coaching tips and drill to get the best from your goalie.

One of the mistakes that goalkeepers often make is to stand rooted to the spot when faced by advancing attackers. In this soccer (ball) drill you can get your goalkeepers used to moving around and anticipating where the ball will go.

When you are coaching this soccer drill, look out for good positions the goalkeeper gets in to using quick-reaction footwork. Point them out and praise your goalkeeper. Goalies need your encouragement so they use their soccer skills successfully.

This soccer drill gives a good work out and should make the goalkeeper work hard. Depending on the amount of space you have and the age of your players, you should give your goalkeeper more time to start with so the shooting players should be further away, then move closer as the soccer drill continues.

Do not continually point out how poor the goalie's position or handling of the ball is. Use more positive instructions such as, "Not a bad move but it would be even better if you used your feet more, or were quicker," rather than "That's wrong, do this!" - otherwise they will soon get fed up with the criticism and lose confidence.

Soccer drill set up

- Arrange the soccer drill as the diagram shows, using three attackers to fire in shots.
- Make three goals, red, white and blue using cones. When you call out a color, the goalkeeper runs through the white goal to the red or blue goal, depending on the color you have shouted out. The player opposite those goals can only shoot once the goalkeeper has gone through the white goal.
- If you shout "WHITE" the player can shoot straight away and the goalkeeper must try to get to the goal before it goes in.
- Award a point for each goal or save and see if the goalkeeper can beat the attackers. You can also add in some one-on-ones so the player runs at the goalkeeper rather than just shoots.
- You will need a couple of helpers behind this soccer drill because there will be a lot of balls to retrieve!

Soccer warm up drill to keep goalies on their toes

I like this soccer drill because it's easy to set up and it makes a good warm-up drill for your goalkeeper before matches or before your soccer coaching sessions. It also helps your strikers work on their low shots.

Unfortunately, goalkeepers sometimes stand around for matches with very little to do. But, even if they are feeling underworked, they have got to put the effort in during your training drill sessions so they're ready for that one important save they may need to make.

Of course, there are games where the goalkeeper is constantly having to save his team, and that's when all the hard work you put in during the season pays off. Use this simple warm up drill to get your goalie match ready.

You can vary the width of the goal by moving the cones. Start with a relatively small goal and move the cones further apart at intervals.

Soccer drill set up

The first player takes a shot at the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper tries to save, immediately gets up and turns around ready for the other player to shoot.

Setting up this soccer drill is easy. Use a small area with two cones for goal posts. You can vary the width of the goal to test shooters and goalkeeper. You need lots of balls and someone to retrieve the wayward ones! Pick two good attackers and your goalkeeper.

Advance the soccer drill

Make the drill more difficult for your goalkeeper by making him stand next to a post before each shot, or add a player to follow shots in and put pressure on keeper.

Key soccer coaching tips:

- Tell your attackers to shoot often and shoot quickly so they really make the keeper work hard.
- Get them to shoot hard and low near the goalkeeper's body and into the goal corners to force him to adapt.

- Tell your goalkeeper to be on his toes.

Fun, fast game to get goalies making shots

This is a good, fun game to get your goalkeeper making shots and to help him with goalkicks. It's a fast 1v1 where each goalkeeper can score using various skills - throw, kick, drop-kick. As soon as a goalkeeper saves, he shoots back. This game is all about the ability to get behind the ball and move across goal as each player tries to score. Encourage your goalkeepers to use both feet and to try different techniques for shooting.

Game set up

You need two goals, two goalkeepers, plenty of balls. Start with a distance of around 15 yards between the two goals and work from there. You can make it harder or easier depending on the size and age of your players.

Goalkeepers start in their own goal. The aim of this game is for each goalkeeper to score more goals than their opponent. Encourage your goalkeepers to serve the ball as quickly as they can – do not let them wait for the other goalkeeper to get ready (they have to be ready at all times just as in a game situation).

Develop the game

Making the area smaller makes reaction times shorter. Also, you can add a free central player (this can be the coach). This player can set up the goalkeepers for a free shot and also slightly obstruct the view of the saving goalkeeper.

Goalkeeper drill to deflect the ball

In a perfect goalkeeper's world, every shot would be cleanly caught and brought into the body. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Tony Carr, academy director of West Ham United, English Premier League, has this soccer training drill to help goalkeepers deflect the ball safely away from the goal using the correct technique and quick decision-making skills.

This soccer training drill involves all your players in boosting this core goalkeeping skill.

What to think about in the drill

- Where is the best place for a shot to be deflected to? As far away and as wide as possible from goal.
- Defenders need to be aware, and ready to assist the goalkeeper with any balls not held and deflected, in case they do not leave the field of play and fall for a rebound.
- Goalkeepers must be on their toes throughout the drill, ready to make the save.
- Decision-making – can your goalie get both hands or just one to the ball?

Set up the drill

- Have a small goal (four to six yards), with the server approx six yards from the goalkeeper and two target zones.
- Development: small area, 15 x 15 yards. One goal each end (four to six yards wide). Two target zones.
- One goalkeeper works, while the other serves. Alternate frequently.

Key soccer coaching tips

- The server must initially throw the ball underhand with both hands. This develops into shots as the drill and the goalkeeper's understanding develops.
- Encourage the goalkeeper to step into line/down the line of the shot. Get as close as possible to the line of flight of the ball.
- The last step before the dive (the power stride) should be slightly diagonally forward into line. This will ensure the deflected shot is pushed well away from goal.
- Tell them to have strong wrists/hands and to almost swat the ball away.
- They must then make a quick recovery. Don't assume the ball will go out of play and get up as fast as possible in case of rebounds.

Soccer coaching drill to work on goalkeeper angles

When your goalkeeper is faced with a burly attacker bearing down on the goal and some quick decision-making is needed, it's helpful to get him to use angles to work out where to move. Use this soccer [drill](#) session to help your goalie save more shots on goal.

Confidence is a huge factor for young goalkeepers, but there's nothing quite like making saves when the attacker is favorite to score. Then you'll see the pats on the back from team-mates.

And that response and reaction gives the goalkeeper confidence when he feels the rest of the team think he's good.

Give your goalie the ability to save and become more confident in his role by [coaching](#) him how to use angles.

Soccer drill set up

- Set up an area approx 20 x 30m, and get five or six players to help you out. You're going to get your players to run at the goalkeeper and shoot from a distance in this drill.

- Tell your players to take it in turns to **pass** long to a position around 10m from goal. The attacker follows his own pass, then shoots with his second touch.

Key soccer coaching tips

Focus on the goalkeeper and tell him to watch the position of the attacker. When the attacker moves to where the ball has been passed to, he moves from a central position to face the attacker and cut down the amount of goal he can see.

In the second phase of the drill, the middle attacker plays the ball left or right to either of the two supporting attackers. The supporting attackers can either shoot first time or take a touch before shooting.

Soccer drill to give your goalkeeper the diving basics

Technique is just about the most important thing a young goalkeeper can be taught. He can be agile and have quick reactions but if he hurts himself when he dives I can guarantee he won't be doing it very often. Use the following tips and soccer drills to show him how to do it safely.

It's no good thinking that your goalie has good positional sense and is strong so you don't need to coach him in diving to save a ball. One bad dive and not only is his mom shouting at you, your goalkeeper is crying and he never wants to play in goal again. You're creating problems for yourself.

Teach him now and watch him grow in confidence and save more goals in the process. It's got to be the biggest win-win situation in soccer coaching. The more you give to your goalkeeper, the more your team gets back and the less of a headache on match day for you.

Soccer drill set up

- The goalkeeper stands between two balls.
- Each ball should be slightly in front of the line of the goalkeeper's feet.
- Get your goalkeeper to stand in the "ready" position.
- On your command of "LEFT" or "RIGHT" the goalkeeper dives into the ball.
- Encourage him to dive diagonally forward into the line of ball – ATTACK THE BALL!
- Encourage the goalkeeper to use both hands to scoop the ball into the body.
- Get him to pull the knees around in front of the body to complete the save.

Develop the soccer drill

The coach or goalkeeper partner can roll the ball to the side of the goalkeeper and he repeats the above drill with the moving ball.

How would I put this soccer drill into a game situation?

With ANY small-sided game or shooting drill, encourage the goalkeeper to use this technique. Repetition is the key soccer coaching tip to acquiring any new skill. You should also encourage the use of this technique when organizing the goalkeeper's pre-match warm-up drills.

Footwork soccer drill for goalkeepers

Soccer coaching drills that focus on footwork are essential for your goalkeepers. Using hands to make a save is obviously crucial for shot stopping but if the goalkeeper is not in position, they'll never get the chance to use their hands.

Soccer coaching drill tips

- **Fast feet** - goalies need to cover the ground as fast as possible to make the save.
- **Ball handling skills** - your goalie's priority should always be to catch the ball, but if catching is not possible, he needs to know where the ball can be safely deflected to.
- You need one goal and six cones placed six yards from the goal line with one yard between each cone for this soccer drill.
- The coach stands approximately 10 yards from goal line. The goalkeeper must be "on their toes" at the drill starting position.
- Server calls "Go" for the goalkeeper to start the drill.
- The goalkeeper moves quickly between the cones.
- Ball is served as goalkeeper gets to last cone.
- Encourage the goalkeeper to step "into line/down the line" of the ball.
- Recovery saves: if goalkeeper doesn't catch the shot, they must quickly get back up and cover the rebound.

Develop the drill

Advance this soccer drill by getting the goalkeeper to complete the footwork facing the goal, then spinning when they reach the last cone. This reduces the amount of reaction time they have. Add a server at the other end. As soon as a save is made, the keeper repeats the drill in the opposite direction.

Soccer drill to work on goalie skills with the whole team

Use the following soccer coaching drill to focus on your goalkeeper, as well as involving the rest of your players. In the drill the goalkeeper must react to outfield players, who are passing and moving to catch the goalkeeper off guard so they can score.

How to set up the soccer drill

Mark out an area 20 yards x 20 yards You need a ball, four outfield players, four cones and a goalkeeper. Set up the cones in the middle of the square 8 yards x 8 yards.

Run the drill

- The outfield players pass the ball around inside the area, but outside the goalkeeper's square.
- The goalkeeper must focus on the ball and position himself in the right place.
- The passing needs to be sharp, and a goal is scored by passing to a team mate through the cones.
- The goalkeeper works on quick movement of feet, agility, and trying to get strong hands behind any attempts to pass through the square.

Key soccer coaching points

- You need to keep the tempo high. Tell your players you want to see sharp passing. They should work the goalkeeper with plenty of passes through his box.
- Goalkeepers must remain focused on the position of the ball.

Soccer drill to improve goalkeeper catching skills

Catching the ball is a basic [goalkeeping](#) skill. Use these soccer coaching tips and drills to help your goalie improve their catching.

Key soccer coaching tips

- Start by getting your goalkeeper to think about where they are in relation to the goal and the ball and get in line behind it.
- They need to form a W behind the ball with thumbs and forefingers. Spread their fingers and watch the ball in to their hands.

Run the soccer (ball) drill

- Each player bounces the ball repeatedly from around chest high into the ground and catches it on the way back up in this soccer (ball) drill.
- Keeping feet planted, players now twist their torsos to the left and bounce the ball, twist back to the center for a second bounce, then twist to the right for a third bounce.
- Players continue rotating back and forth.
- Increase number of bounces in each position, then increase the speed in the drill.

Advance soccer drill skills

- In pairs, players stand opposite each other about 3-5 yards apart and gently throw the ball to each other.
- Service should be varied, including using one hand or two, underarm, over arm and [throw-in](#) techniques, while the ball should be directed straight at the goalkeeper as well as slightly to the left and right of them.
- Balls should also be thrown at anywhere between chest height and above head-height so goalkeepers have to jump.

Put drill skills into a game situation

- Play 1v1 in a 10x15 yard grid with goals at opposite ends, although distance is dependent on the age and ability of players. Players take it in turn to attempt to score by using any goalkeeper kicking or throwing technique and skills.
- If a goalkeeper saves the ball, they take their turn to score from the spot they collected it. Narrow the width of the goals using poles if each goalkeeper is spending more time practicing deflecting skills rather than catching skills.

Soccer drill to test goalies on shots and crosses

Using this soccer (ball) drill you can coach shooting and crossing skills as well as the numerous handling responsibilities that your [goalkeeper](#) has to deal with during matches.

Soccer drill to develop your wingers' aim

This soccer drill also helps to show your wingers where best to cross the ball so that the goalkeeper has to work hard to catch the ball.

It is a good three-man workout, but you can involve more of your players if you double up on the shooters and the crossers.

Run the soccer drill

- Goalkeeper is tested by the player crossing the ball in hard and low.
- Player shoots for goal at near post.
- Player shoots for goal at far post.

Change the soccer (ball) drill

- Start the soccer (ball) drill or practice in a different order to decrease predictability.
- Change shooting techniques and skills, shoot for far post and vary the power. When crossing vary the delivery by playing the ball in high, low, with bend etc.

- Add more players into the soccer drill to put pressure on the keeper by following shots in and challenging for crosses.

Key soccer coaching tips

The goalkeeper should be made to move constantly, testing his handling, agility and fitness skills.

Use the soccer drill as a warm up

You can also use a 'smaller' version of this soccer drill as a warm up practice for your goalkeeper on match days. Move the shooters into the penalty area and get them to shoot 'soft' shots and the crosser to 'pass' the ball into the goalkeeper in the air and on the ground to get him moving, bending and using handling skills with confidence.

Soccer goalkeeping drill to prevent rebound shots

How often do you see young [goalkeepers](#) make a good save but push the ball away from their hands back to the attackers who score from the rebound. Use this soccer drill and coaching tips to work on your goalie's saves.

Soccer coaching drill tips to work on goalkeepers' hand positioning

- As the ball comes in on the ground tell your goalkeeper to put his hands down, with his little fingers almost touching to cup around the ball and take the ball away from any attacker waiting for a rebound.
- Get him to make sure his hands are down ready, fingers not quite touching, hands cupped.
- As the ball comes in, he must collect the ball, and turn his shoulder in, to protect against any oncoming pressure.

Coach protecting the ball

- Tell your keeper to be careful when turning to protect the ball after a catch. Too often, keepers attempt to bring the ball to the protected position before they have it cleanly, and end up bobbling the ball, or attempt to make a "catch" in the protected position and end up having the ball bouncing away from their chest or forearms.
- Tell your goalkeeper the catch must always be made with the hands first.
- Tell him if there is no pressure, it is not necessary to protect the ball at all.
- If the catch is secure, your goalkeeper should be able to simply hold the ball in the catching position.
- Catch and protect should be two distinct actions.

Make the catch clean

Make sure your goalkeeper knows that he shouldn't parry the ball in front of him, then catch it. The goalkeeper should be able to hold the catch using good hand positions so it sticks in their hands, using arms, back and legs to cushion the ball.

Match preparation soccer drill for goalkeepers

Ask a parent or other helper to assist with this [soccer warm-up drill](#) so you can get your goalkeeper match ready.

Soccer (ball) warm up drill for all age groups

This is a soccer warm up drill for goalkeepers of all age groups. It is best run with just the goalkeeper and a helper or yourself, but you can use a couple of outfield players to help you.

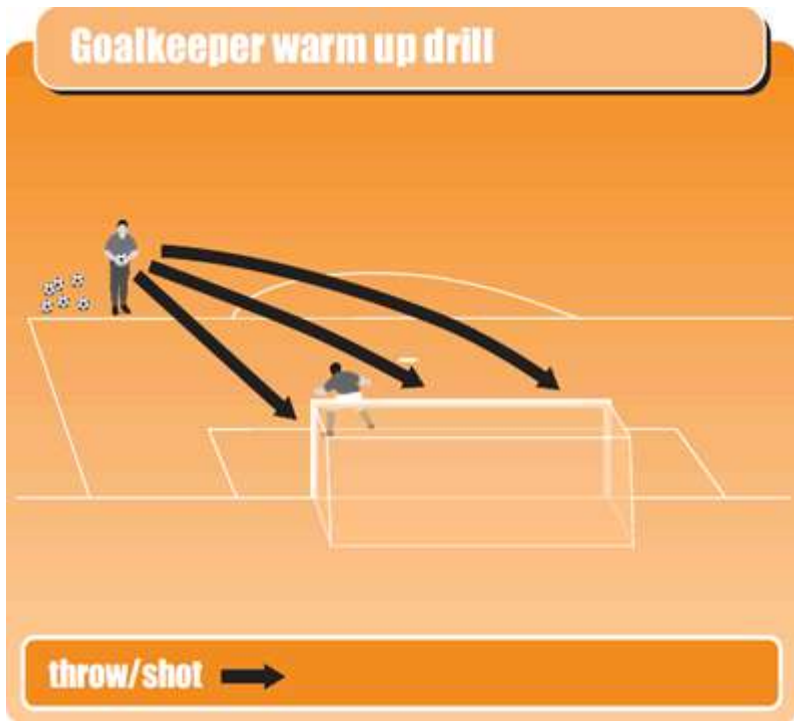
The soccer drill should last for around 15 minutes in the goal while the rest of your squad is doing other warm up soccer (ball) drills.

Set up the soccer drill

- Use the goal and a few soccer balls.
- Make sure your goalkeeper has already done light jogging, stretching and catching first.

How to coach the soccer drill

Check out the diagram. Standing to the side of the goal and about 7 or 8 yards away, you should gather 6-7 soccer balls and hold one in your hand.



In this soccer drill, tell your goalkeeper:

- To sprint out to touch the soccer ball you are holding. Then quickly back peddle towards the goal (keeping his eyes on the ball in your hand).
- As the keeper back peddles towards the goal, throw a high lofted ball at the goal which the goalkeeper must punch over the cross bar or catch.
- After the ball is caught, throw a ball towards the near post and tell your keeper he must react quickly and push the ball past the post out of touch or catch the ball.
- You then quickly throw another ball towards the far post and tell your keeper he must catch or push the ball past the post.
- After this ball is caught, you or one of the team - you can use your striker which will also warm up his shooting accuracy - shoots at the goal and the keeper must make a save again.

Make sure you use both sides of the drill area

Now move to the other side of the goal and do the drill again. There is a lot of movement for the keeper involved in this warm-up drill, so don't tire him out. It's a dynamic and fast paced exercise, so make sure your keeper has time to take a breather before the match kicks-off.

How to change the soccer (ball) drill

Move the area you are firing the ball in from and get a couple of your outfield players to fire the ball in at your keeper while you stand behind the goal and advise him how to stop the ball going into the goal. You can also get them to play more high balls where the keeper has to move backwards towards his goal-line.

Key soccer coaching tips

- Tell your keeper he needs to use quick footwork skills and movements because the ball will be moving fast.
- Point out to the keeper how shutting off the angles helps cut down the size of the target the striker has to shoot at - work on angles from both sides.
- Tell him he should keep his shoulders square to the ball.
- Look for a quick recovery from shots and tell him to be ready for rebounds.
- Make sure he is correctly judging high balls.

Soccer drill to get goalies punching the ball clear

Balls that are played high into a crowded penalty area are often hard for a goalkeeper to catch, so the most positive move is to coach your goalkeeper to use their fists to punch the ball clear. If your goalie can get both fists to the ball it will be cleared much further.

What players must think about in this soccer drill

- Place the insides of the fists together, so the middle joints of the fingers touch.
- Press the thumbs out of the way against the side of the fists, not inside.
- Hands should be close to the chest, with the elbows by the side and bent.
- Flat surface of the fists drive through the ball.
- Look for height, distance and width - don't punch the ball straight back to the opposition or into the crowd!

Run the soccer (ball) drill

- Goalkeeper and catcher position themselves around 10 yards apart with a server between them.
- The server throws a ball to the goalkeeper, (who is on their knees) and the goalkeeper tries to punch the ball over the server's head to the catcher.
- Repeat for a few turns before switching roles so every player has a go at being the goalkeeper, server and catcher.
- Repeat the soccer drill, but this time with the goalkeeper standing rather than kneeling.

How to develop the soccer drill

- Introduce a fourth player, a passive attacker, who stands next to the goalkeeper to distract them but doesn't challenge.
- Move the passive attacker in front of the goalkeeper, so the goalkeeper has to practice jumping to clear the ball when it is served over the attacker's head.
- Attacker increases pressure by moving and even jumping.

Turn the drill into a game

- Play 4v4 in a pitch approx 30x20 yards, plus two goalkeepers. Two wide players operate outside the touchline, playing for the team with the ball and are conditioned to provide high crosses from a variety of angles whenever possible.
- Wide players have three touches (control, dribble, cross/pass) while goalkeepers have to decide what to do, for example, catch, punch, allow defenders to head for each cross.

Soccer goalkeeper drill

This soccer (ball) goalkeeper drill works on improving a goalkeeper's ability to deal with a high ball over their head. This can happen when they are caught off their line, or if a cross catches on the wind.

The drill will also test a goalkeeper's basic soccer skills in handling the ball and using quick footwork. You can use the drill as a soccer warm up or for an indoor soccer drill, too.

What players should think about in this goalkeeper drill

- Fast feet – Short steps will enable the goalkeeper to cover ground as fast as possible in order to make a save without losing balance.
- When to catch / when to deflect the ball away – Sometimes it is better to deflect the ball over the crossbar rather than catching it. Particularly as the goalkeeper's momentum could take them and the ball into the back of the net!

Set up soccer goalkeeper drill

Use the penalty area and place a cone 10 yards from goal. You also need a server placed around 18 yards from goal.

How to run soccer (ball) goalkeeping drill

- The goalkeeper must be "on their toes" at their starting position and throughout the ball (soccer) drill.
- On the server's call, the goalkeeper runs off their line to the cone in front of goal.
- When the goalkeeper reaches the cone, the server throws the ball over the goalkeeper's head, trying to get it to drop underneath the crossbar.
- The goalkeeper runs backwards from the cone and tries to catch the ball or deflect it over the crossbar.

How to develop soccer goalkeeper drill

As before, the goalkeeper starts on the server's call. This time, when they reach the cone, the goalkeeper must save a shot from the server before recovering to save a ball served overhead.

Put drill skills into a game

- Play a small-sided game and encourage the goalkeepers to find a position that enables them to sweep behind the defense whilst also being able to save any shots over their head.
- Condition the outfield players to use high crosses, chips or lobbed shots.

Soccer goalkeeping drill for kicking the ball clear

Nothing takes the pressure off your defenders more than a good kicked clearance from the goalkeeper. It doesn't matter what age your goalkeeper is, if they get the technique right, then the distance will follow. Use this soccer goalkeeping drill to coach the skills.

Show goalkeeper the right technique for a kicked clearance

Start your goalkeeper off with a soccer kicking technique for clearing stationary balls from the halfway line. You are looking for good kicking skills, so the player can kick as far as possible. Distance will depend on the age of the player involved but soccer coaches should insist on a few basic points.

How to coach ball (soccer) kicking technique

- As the goalkeeper runs to the ball he must keep his eyes fixed on the ball, not on the target.

- On reaching the ball the non-kicking foot is placed around six inches from the ball pointing in the direction the kick is aimed.
- To keep the ball low in trajectory, the non-kicking foot is placed in a further forward position - if the kick is to be lofted then the non-kicking foot is slightly behind the ball.
- To kick it, tell your goalkeeper to lean slightly backwards, swing from the hip with the knee bent at first, then straighten the leg as it reaches the ball, keeping the foot down so the front of the foot contacts the ball.

Goalkeeper Warm Up

Bounce and Catch Have them hold a ball in their hands high over their heads, bounce it down to the ground and then catch it waist high. The catch should emphasize the classic 'W' shape, thumbs together, other four fingers angled out at 45 degrees.

Keepers should be moving around and changing directions during this drill. Don't let them just drop the ball and catch it. Emphasize the over the head throw down towards the ground.

A progression of this drill is to have them walk around, bounce the ball, lift their leg over the ball and re-catch it always emphasizing the 'W' catch. Do it ten times with the right leg, then ten times with the left, then alternate legs. A second progression of this warm-up is to have them hammer the ball out of their left hand with their right hand and then re-catch it with the 'W'. This is tougher because the keeper must quickly position their hands after releasing the ball.

Ball Between the Legs

Keepers stand with legs shoulder width apart. Bend over at the waist and pass a ball back and forth between their legs. Initially start out with the hands stationary, i.e. right hand in back, left in front. Ball moves quickly, through the legs, from hand to hand, first rolling on the ground, then off the ground.

After they have the hang of this they pass the ball between their legs in a figure 8. In this case the hands are switching positions from front to rear. Again start this drill with the ball remaining in contact with the ground and then progress to the ball in the air between the legs.

This exercise improves hand eye coordination and stretches the back and leg muscles.

A third and more difficult component of this exercise is to have the player lie on their back and scissor their legs up and down while threading the ball through their legs.

This works the leg and stomach muscles while improving their hand eye coordination.

Ball Bounce Between Legs

Have the players bounce the ball from the front through their legs and then re-catch it behind their backs. Both hands are used to serve the ball and catch the ball. Return the ball between the legs from the back to the front.

Ball Roll Down the Back

Have the keepers place the ball on the back of their necks. Let the ball roll down their back. They then catch it at the small of their back with two hands. Return the ball to the front and start again. Once players get the hang of it they can begin walking around rolling the ball and catching it.

The above two warm ups are good for letting the keepers get the feel of the ball in their hands even when it is not directly in their sight. The more they catch the ball in practice, the more comfortable they will be in a game.

Front to Back Switching Hands

I couldn't think of a better name for this drill. Basically the player bends at the waist with the ball between their legs. The right hand covers the ball from the front, the left hand from the back. Player releases the ball and switches hands not letting the ball fall and touch the ground. This drill is good for quickness and touch. Have the players count how many times that they can do this in a timed period and then challenge them to do one more, and then one more, and then one more, etc., etc., etc.

Sit Ups

Keeper lies on her back with arms extended over the head, a ball in her hands. Keeper executes a sit-up keeping the ball in her hands and extending her arms out in front of her. A player strikes the ball in her hands with their instep. This drill builds hand strength, abdominal strength and anaerobic condition.

A variation on this drill is to have the player throw the ball to you as they sit up and for you to chest pass it back to them at the top of the motion. This also builds hand strength, hand-eye coordination and quickness.

Shuffle and Roll

This is a drill to increase side to side quickness. Have the player bounce the ball hard on the ground. They then side to side shuffle under the path of the ball. If the ball goes high enough they might get two side to side shuffles in before the balls momentum is lost. If not, then the second movement should be a side roll under the falling ball.

One Hand Catch

This next warm up involves two people, either both keepers or a keeper and a coach.

Simply have the players stand 5 to 8 yards apart and toss the ball to each other. The catch is to be made one handed and returned the same way.

Progress by having the weaker hand use. Then run a pattern where first the left is used then the right. Finally if you have three or more in the drill add a second ball to increase the difficulty.

This teaches the player to soften the blow of the ball against the hands. It also works finger strength and hand-eye coordination.

Kneeling Catch (Railroad Tracks)

This is a drill to teach the keepers proper arm position when gathering in a low ball (scoop) or a shot below their waist.

Proper arm position can be described as both arms forming 'railroad tracks' That is the arms are parallel, the elbows are tucked in, the hands are palm up with the little finger and sides touching. The hands form a slight cupping position.

Have the player kneel in front of you with the arms and hands as described above. Start the drill by softly throwing the ball into her hands. Emphasize form! Gradually increase the speed of the throw. Make sure that you hit the arms, and not their head! The player should follow the ball into their arms with their eyes. The elbows must stay together or the ball will force its way through and be dropped. There must be a slight cushioning motion or the ball will hit and pop out.

High Ball Warm-up

This warm up also involves two people, preferably both keepers. One player bounces the ball so it will go over the head of his partner. Partner jumps for the ball and yells 'Keeper', catching the ball over head in a 'W'.

Make sure that the catcher brings their knee up to protect their midsection. After the catch the catcher becomes the server for his partner. If a coach is warming up the only keeper have the player roll the ball back to the coach just the way they would serve it to a full back in a game situation.

Add a third player to create a distraction for the catcher. This player can lightly tap or push the catcher while he is in the act of catching the ball. This simulates some of the contact the keeper will get in the goal area.

Rolling Drills

This first drill starts with the keeper in a sitting position. The keeper has a partner who will serve the ball. The keeper rolls to the right as their partner serves the ball on the ground.

The keeper traps the ball on the ground using both hands. Keeper returns ball to server and rolls to a sitting position again in one motion. Server then rolls ball to the left and the drill is repeated.

After 5 rolls right and 5 rolls left switch keeper and server. This can be an exhausting drill when done at high tempo

Coaching Points: Hands still form the 'W'.

- * Top leg bends toward the stomach to protect this area and to provide the impetus, when re-extended, to come back to the original position

- * Keepers body should be slightly curved away from the goal so that the ball cannot simply glance off them and go in

Progression

The next progression is to serve the ball in the air as the keeper rolls right and left. The catch is therefore made in the air and the keeper must cushion the ball as they hit the ground.

The next progression is to have the keeper move slightly forward each time they make a roll. The server backs up an appropriate amount with each roll so that they maintain the distance between keeper and server.

The next progression is to start this drill from the knees and repeat as above and the final progression is to do this drill from a standing position.

Dribble and Scoop

Have the team dribble in an enclosed area. On a signal from the coach, every player leaves their ball and gets another. The keeper has to scoop the ball and clutch it to their chest.

Make sure no one kicks the keeper. Have the players just place their foot on top of the ball to claim it.

Do not allow diving for the ball.

Make sure the keeper is keeping on his toes, knees flexed.

A common mistake that you should look for in a keeper is slowing down to scoop the ball. The keeper should explode through the ball and after scooping veer to a side, just like they would do in a game situation with an attacker bearing down on them.

Explosive Scoop Quick Roll Return

Have a player shoot a ground ball in to the keeper. Keeper explodes towards the ball and scoops it to his chest. He continues on and returns a roll pass to either the same player who shot it or to a third player who has gone wide.

This simulates both the explosive step towards the ball we want the keepers to employ and the quick, on the ground counter-attack which is more conducive to possession play than just punting the ball away.

It is also a good conditioning drill.

How to Stop a Breakaway in Soccer as Goalie:

Imagine a forward charging down the soccer field with only you to guard the net. The opposition managed to elude your defenders, and you appear to be helpless to prevent a goal. This sometimes happens if your team tries to draw the other team offside. Even though a breakaway in soccer is a rare occurrence, as a goalkeeper, you need to be prepared to stop the other team from scoring.

Step1

Survey the field to see how far away your teammates are once the breakaway begins. Try not to spend too much time figuring out where they are since the opposition is quickly moving toward you.

Step2

Move out of the net slowly to cut down on the angle, depending on how far away the opponent is. If the opponent kicks the ball too far out in front of himself, try to beat him to the soccer ball, as long as he isn't too far away from you.

Step3

Search for visual clues from your opponent if you haven't already been able to stop the ball. Be ready to charge the minute a mistake is made. If your opponent speeds up, then you must respond with speed. If she is patient and tries to get you to commit, return with patience. This is the best option since you have a better chance of help coming if the opposition takes her time to secure the perfect shot.

Step4

Dive for the soccer ball once the shot is taken if it's from a far distance. Drive your hands low and through the ball, catching it in front of your body. Try not to lead with your feet or knees, since this exposes a large section of the goal and raises the risk of a hard collision with the ground or ball.

Step5

Watch for rebounds once the attacker takes a shot. Your teammates should be able to help you stop the rebound in case there is one, but you should also try to hold on to the soccer ball if you get your hands on it.

* Keep your eyes on the soccer ball, not on your opponent's eyes during the breakaway. He may try to fake you out, but the ball can tell you where it should go.

* Try to stay on your feet as long as you can. If you over-commit, this can ensure an easy goal for your opponent since you won't be able to stop it. You don't want to look foolish by having the attacker simply dribble around you because you're on the ground.

* Don't second-guess yourself once you commit. It's all or nothing.

How to Be a Better Goalie Mastering the art of goalkeeping involves more than diving saves and the perfect punt. A goalie's mindset can certainly make or break a game of soccer. The ability to handle pressure, clearly communicate with your teammates, and cut a shooter's angle, are skills that differentiate the 'tenders from the impenetrable gatekeepers. Use the following steps next time you're in goal and see how your game improves.

Difficulty: Moderately Challenging

Step1 - Verbally direct your team whenever it is necessary. As the goalie, you can see offensive threats or holes in your team's defense, often more clearly than your teammates. Alert your team to these and keep them informed as to what you need.

Step2 - Concentrate on cutting or narrowing the offense's angle when they are taking a shot on goal. To do this on an offensive strike, stand on the 18-yard line. During corner kicks, maintain your position on the ball side. Lastly, when defending a penalty kick, stand on the goal line in the middle of the goal. Keep your feet moving slightly, and be ready to attempt a save on either side of the goal.

Step3 - Use your judgment when deciding whether to punt or throw the ball. Consider the number of offensive players nearby. Make sure your teammate to whom you are going to throw the ball, will have enough time to trap the ball and turn it up field before offensive players reach her/him.

Step4 - Do not hesitate in your decision-making. A split second's hesitation can mean the difference between an awesome save and a point for the opposing team.

How to Save a Penalty Kick Nobody expects the goalie to save a penalty kick, so relax and commit yourself to one side or the other.

Step1 - Stay loose and limber as your teammates argue the call and the referees get into position.

Step2 - Watch the shooter to see if she seems to be looking at a particular corner.

Step3 - Determine which foot the shooter kicks with.

Step4 - Decide which corner you're going to dive toward before the shooter approaches the ball.

Step5 - Align yourself in the center of the goal on the goal line.

Step6 - Wait for the whistle signaling the start of play.

Step7 - Dive to your chosen corner with your arms completely extended the moment the shooter touches the ball.

Step8 - Knock the ball away from the goal.

Step9 - Get to your feet immediately after you save the ball because the game is live once you touch it.

* The rules state that the goalie must wait until the ball is kicked before moving, but most goalies will move before. As long as it's not blatantly obvious, referees usually allow goalies a quick step.

* Commit yourself to the dive. As a goalie, you can't be afraid to throw your body around.

* If the game is being decided by penalty kicks, the ball is dead once you save it or once it's in the net.

* If you have any condition which would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity.

Although it's great to practice PKs before games or at practices, never try to practice before a shootout. PKs are mental, especially shootouts, so stay loose. Also, keep your mind off the shot until you get in the net for a shootout.

If you watch the way the hips are facing, it is very easy to guess which way he/ she is going. For instance, if a player's hips are facing out very wide, then expect the shooting foot to swing across his/her body.

It is impossible to kick in one direction with your hips in the other.

Try to intimidate the shooter by making yourself look big and showing him you are confident that you know where they are shooting. This will make the shooter second guess himself. If the shooter looks to intensely at one side of the goal, he is shooting it to the other side. Look for clues in the shooters eyes.

The goalie can move once the shooter's non-kicking foot has been planted. Try to watch the shooters eyes for quick flighty movements.

How to Defend Cross Shots in Soccer The crossed shot is one of the most difficult situations in soccer for a goal keeper to defend. Crossed balls can come into the box during regular play or from set-pieces like corner kicks. Both scenarios are dangerous and require the goalkeeper's utmost attention to successfully defend.

Step1 - Help your defenders get into position by directing them to cover unmarked players. The more opposing players your defenders cover, the fewer of them there'll be available to take a shot on goal.

Step2 - Position yourself in the back third of your goal. Doing this prevents the cross from passing you and meeting the head of an opposing player near the back of the goal.

Step3 - Stand about two steps in front of your goal line. If you're too close to the goal you'll have trouble coming out to meet the ball as it crosses into the box.

Step4 - Communicate clearly with your teammates as the ball nears the box. Call the ball for yourself if you can reach it. If not, direct your defenders to snatch it up and mark any incoming opponents.

Step5 - Leap off of one leg and reach for the ball with both arms. Lift the knee of your free leg into the air to increase the height of your jump and protect your body from other players in the box.

Step6 - Grab the soccer ball at its highest point. This uses your reach to your advantage and protects the ball from the other players.

How to Read a Soccer Penalty Shot on the Field It's been argued that stopping a penalty shot in soccer is one of the hardest feats to accomplish in sports. After all, during regulation, the goalkeeper relies on help from his defenders but during a penalty shot, it's just the keeper, the ball and the shooter who is a mere 12 yards away. All eyes are on the keeper, who has a split-second to stop the ball speeding at 60 mph.

Step1

Line up on the goal line. Depending on the division of play, you might only be able to move after the whistle blows, so situate yourself where you want to be. Other leagues allow you to move only along the goal line, not forward, before the whistle blows. Make sure to ask if you're unsure.

Step2

Study your opponent's eyes. Notice which area he is focusing on. Sometimes recognizing if the shooter is right-footed or left-footed can help determine which side he is aiming for. Most right-footed kickers aim toward the shooter's left or the keeper's right.

Step3

Glance at his kicking foot. Some goalies claim that noticing which direction the weight-bearing foot is facing determines which direction the kicker is shooting.

Step4

Dive in the direction you think the ball should go once the official blows his whistle. Saving a penalty shot is more often a game of chance, so you have a 50/50 shot of saving the ball. Most of the time the ball is kicked low to the ground.

- * You can try to rattle the shooter by making movements or winking at him. This is a type of psychological warfare.
- * For soccer regulations, once the penalty shot is kicked, the play is live. So if there's a rebound, be alert.
- * Don't be too hard on yourself if you can't stop the penalty shot. The odds are severely stacked against the goalie, especially since you only have a split-second to react and the net you're guarding is 24-feet by 8-feet.

How to Place a Goalie for a Corner Kick in Soccer

The placement of your goalie during corner kicks will have a direct effect on the results of the game. Goalies and coaches need to be able to read the other team and react accordingly, advancing and defending the goal based on the type of corner kick and the way the offense is running the ball.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Step1

Place the goalie to receive a far post corner kick just to the side of the goal post, at the point furthest away from the corner the ball is being kicked in from. During a far post corner kick, the ball will be long flighted toward that further goal post with runners ready to kick into the goal.

Step2

Position the goalie close to the goal on the side facing the kicker during a near post corner kick. This type of corner kick sets up a runner to deflect the corner kick into the goal, and is a fast paced play making it harder for the goalie to read the play.

Step3

Station the goalie centrally to receive a short corner kick. This kick is designed to have the corner kick received by another player and passed to a third player. It is highly effective at changing the pace of the game and throwing off the rhythm of the defense.

- * The best way to learn how to position the goalie during corner kicks is to drill corner kicks regularly. This not only helps prepare the goalie to defend against corner kicks, but also helps the goalie learn to read the plays and the field more effectively.

How to Buy Goalkeeping Gloves

Crucial for soccer performance and protection, gloves are the most important part of a goalkeeper's gear. All goalies should own a quality pair of gloves designed to help them stop or grip the ball while safeguarding their hands, wrists and bodies. Most leagues, including youth levels, require goalkeepers to wear properly fitting gloves.

Step1

Measure your glove size before you begin shopping. To ensure you properly protect your fingers, palm and wrist, determine the proper size by measuring the circumference of your hand at the widest part of the palm (without including

your thumb). Round up to the closest inch and add an extra inch on top of that. That's generally your glove size. For example, if your initial measurement is 9-3/4 inches, try a size 11. Make sure you measure both hands and buy gloves to fit the larger of the two.

Step2

Try on many pairs of gloves until you find one with optimal comfort, features and fit. Just because you measured your glove size doesn't mean that all brands in that size will work for you.

Step3

Choose a goalkeeping glove that is sufficiently cushioned, but not so bulky that it inhibits your grip. Most gloves are padded with layers of soft foam to absorb impact.

Step4

Buy gloves designed to allow your skin to breathe. Even those padded with foam to minimize ball impact should have vents or mesh that allows air to circulate.

Step5

Look for goalkeeping gloves with a wide Velcro wrist cuff. The strap should provide support for your wrist when cinched properly and securely.

Step6

Select a glove with a surface that sticks to the ball. Most soccer gloves have a foam latex palm for grasping the ball. Be aware, however, that while excellent for gripping, latex is not very durable. Replace your gloves as the latex begins to break down.

Step7

Read through the instructions for your new goalkeeping gloves. Some manufacturers suggest wetting them before play, or spritzing the glove palms frequently with a spray bottle for increased viscosity and grip.

Step8

Buy a couple of pairs of gloves if you can afford to. Use one pair for games and one for practice. When your game gloves begin to show wear, downgrade them for practice use.

Tips & Warnings

- * Inspect your gloves before practices and games to ensure their structural integrity. Goalie gloves tend to take a lot of abuse and need to be replaced regularly. Don't take a chance by stepping on the field with a defective pair.
- * When playing with extremely skilled players, you may want to consider buying gloves with finger "spines" that prevent fingers from bending backward or jamming when you deflect a ball. Be prepared to pay more for this technology, though.
- * Gloves will last longer if you maintain them properly. Clean your gloves after each use with mild dish soap and warm water. Hang them to dry so the foam does not mildew.

Drills and games that develop goalkeeping skills:

The triangle drill - develops goalkeeper agility, positional sense and shot stopping ability. It is also good for practicing other players' shooting techniques.

Soft Catch - Play game in pairs throwing and catching a soccer. Try to make no sound as the ball hits the hands (almost impossible!)

The heading game 1v1 - In 10x5 yard grid, players take it in turn to head ball over opponent's goal line by pulling ball back and using their own momentum to head the ball. The player who is attempting to stop the ball can use their hands or dive if necessary. They can also advance as far as they like so if they stop ball they are in a better position to score. Then make it competitive and play for 1 minute and then the winner moves up the ladder, the loser moves down. If tied use 'rock, paper, scissors' as a tiebreaker. Do 8-10 rotations to establish a championship!

The heading game 2v2 - Players are paired up to play 2v2 in a 10x10 grid. One pair has ball and tries to advance down field heading to each other. Once they get near the other teams goal line then one of them can attempt to head it past their line to score. The other team stays on their goal line and attempt to save ball. Once the ball hits the ground or is saved, the two heading retreat to their goal line and the other 2 begin to try to keep the ball in the air and advance up the field to score. Can do as a competitive ladder as above.

American Ball - Create a playing field of 15 x 30 yards, but make the last 5 yards of each end an end zone. A touch down is scored by keeping possession and creating an opportunity to dribble into the end zone. If this is done with the ball under control, then a touch down is scored.

Death on the Nile! - 20 x 30 grid. 3 teams of 4 players, and 3 balls. Each team get one minute in the middle as goalkeepers (they are the crocodiles in river trying to intercept the ball!) Count the number of interceptions. Other 2 teams have to play the balls across the 'river' back and forth.

Introduce calling for the ball, then passing to a teammate on same side to open 'channels'. Goalkeeping techniques being used include – anticipation, setting position for shot, receiving balls, etc. If ball is intercepted have keeper distribute back to coach on sideline.

Keeper's Nest - One player (the keeper) guards, but cannot touch the ball. The keeper may stand over the ball. The objective is for the other three players to get to the ball away from the keeper (using hands, feet or either), without being tagged and frozen by the keeper. The keeper's goal is to freeze the other three players. Once a player is frozen, he can remain frozen until all players are frozen, or until the ball is snatched away by the other players, or until the player counts to 10.

Keeper's Nest 3v1 - Place three cones in a triangle 10 yards apart. One player is inside the triangle as the keeper. The other three try to possess the ball and score goals by moving the keeper out of position and playing through the triangle. If the keeper intercepts the ball, the player who played the ball last becomes the new keeper.

3v3 or 4v4 'American Ball!' - Play 4v4 but players use their hands to pass. Concentrate on proper hand position under pressure. If a player has the ball in his or her hands then they cannot move their feet. Players cannot grab the ball if it is in a player's hands! Instead of making goals for the teams to score in, create an end zone at either end of the small field. A team can score a 'touch-down' (6 points) if they pass the ball to a team-mate standing in the end zone. Think up any number of variations for an extra point! Then restrict a player waiting in the end zone to staying in there a maximum of three seconds and then has to get out similar to basketball.

Advance the game by not allowing any player to stand still in the end-zone, or then limit access to the zone to 3 seconds at a time for any player.

Numbers Up - Play with one goalkeeper in a goal. Add pressure - (i.e. 2v 1, v2). Provide a target for the defender if they win the ball. Encourage the players to shoot as quickly as possible, having their body in the correct position. Make sure they show good 1st touch when receiving the ball. 1st touch should be away from pressure. Disguise your shots.

Quick Fire! - Pull one goal all the way up the field to the outer edge of the 18 yard box. Play 5v2 in an area 18x36 yards with two full size goals 18 yards apart. Play for 1 minute at a time, with the 5 having to make 5 passes before shooting. If the defenders steal the ball they go for goal also.

You can add goalkeepers at any time.

Cone Ball! - Can play 4v4v4. Put large cone (or similar) in middle of the field. The three teams play against each other. To score a team simply has to hit the target (the cone). Add a 5 yard exclusion zone around the cone and introduce a goalkeeper to this area. Kids will play this game forever!

Triangular Goals - Create triangular goals (3 flags 2 yards apart in a triangle shape) in the middle of the penalty area. Play 4v4 in penalty box.

One team has 4 attackers, the other 3 keepers and 1 defender. If the ball goes out of the box, or the keepers/defender makes a save, switch. Let each team captain keep scores.

Then go to larger area - 6v6 or 8v8 in between halfway line and edge of 18 yard box. Open goals up to 6 yards wide.

Advance the activity appropriately by asking players to play 3 passes before shooting or chip over goals to teammate! Have to score with a volley or half volley, etc.

Finish with 2 fields of 4v4, with a different method of scoring on each field.

Group 1: Head to score.

Group 2: All 4 have to be in opponents half of field for their goal to count!

Option: Have to go around the back of goal and dribble/pass through cones the opposite way.

Basic goalkeeper Footwork:

Footwork training starts off every season. Basic footwork drills and warm-ups are used throughout the rest of the season for warm-ups and repetition. Even when training other topics, don't let them forget good footwork.

Warm Up (10 min) - After jog & stretch, and introduction of basic steps (shuffle and crossover) if necessary, do footwork mirroring. Coach or leader move back and forth with good footwork, varying speed and with quick changes of direction, players mirror the leader. Using a speed ladder can also be a great warm-up for this or any other session.

Make sure players stay light on their toes, knees bent, and keep their shoulders square to the leader.

For beginners, here's a great demonstration of why keepers need to be on their toes. First, have the players stand lightly on their toes and tell them to jump as high as they can. They should easily be able to get off the ground. Then, tell them to put their weight on their heels and jump again. This time they won't go anywhere!

Ready Position (5 min) - Do footwork mirroring again, but now the coach or leader will call "Shot!" every so often. When he does, keepers must instantly come to the ready position. Then keep moving. Then, the leader gets a ball and dribbles back and forth with the players tracking the ball; occasionally the leader fakes a shot and the keepers must come ready. Make sure keepers are still light on their toes when in the ready position, not on their heels.

Footwork to cones (20 min) - Players in pairs, each pair with two flat cones. Place cones 6 paces apart. Players face each other across an imaginary line between the two cones; one player is the leader, the other is the follower. Leader uses good footwork and attempts to touch just outside either of the cones before the follower can touch just inside; if they are successful, they get a point. After a set length of time (30 sec for younger players, 60 sec for older), rest, and then switch leader and follower. Winner has the most points after the two rounds. Rotate winners so players get different match-ups.

Keep shoulders square. Do not stretch for the cones -- keepers should use quick footwork to get all the way behind the cone. Use the crossover step to accelerate away from the follower. This is an exhausting drill, so allow a good amount of time between rounds for rest.

Warm Up Hands (5 min) - Now we get the goalkeeper's hands involved. Again in pairs, with a ball, players simply shuffle back and forth over about 10-15 yards tossing the ball back and forth. Simple throws for the first couple of minutes, then have the players intentionally throw the ball just off to the side of the other keeper.

Don't allow poor hand position on catches. Adjust shuffle steps so the body is behind the ball; even if the keeper has to reach for the ball, they should quickly use the feet to get the body behind it.

Footwork Through Cones with Catch (20 min) - Set up a line of 6-8 cones (use multiple lines if you have more than three or four keepers). Coach or server is 5 yards from end of the line; players at other end. Each player quickly shuffles side to side through cones, finishing by saving a ball hand-served slightly off target. Next, move the cones into a zigzag with 2-3 yards in between. Now keepers must use a crossover step between cones, with a quick shuffle around them, finishing with a save. Progress to finishing with a save off a out-of-hand volley or shot off the ground.

Footwork should be quick, and keepers should come ready for the shot as they round the last cone. Once ready, keeper should be light on their feet and able to still quickly get their body behind the ball for the save. Balls should be served within "footwork" distance; do not allow dives.

Mirroring with Saves (15 min) - Players in groups of three (each group in front of a net, if possible). One keeper stands in front of net, or cones marking an 8-yard long line. Shooter stands 10 yards away with ball on the ground, third player stands behind shooter. Third player begins side-to-side footwork with the keeper mirroring. At a random point, shooter strikes ball at the keeper. Keeper, while moving, must time the shooter, come to the ready position, and make the save. Keeper gets three shots, then rotate positions. You can make this a competition to see who gets the most saves.

Shooter should serve the ball within "footwork" distance of the keeper; do not allow dives. Similar coaching points to previous exercise.

Shots on Goal (15 min) - Take shots on goal from 14-16 yards out and have keepers make saves using good footwork (no diving). For young keepers, you can stipulate that shots must be below waist level, or even on the ground. Give each keeper one or two shots, then rotate keepers/shooters. Challenge the keepers as a group to see how many saves they can make.

Encourage quick feet, and insist the keepers get all the way behind the ball -- no reaching out, and if they must, they should finish the motion by ending with the body behind the ball. Make sure keepers start on their toes before the shot comes; small "training bounces" will help.

POSITIONING

Simply being in the right place at the right time is critical for successful goalkeeping. The positioning demo can be dropped (or briefly reviewed) for more experienced keepers; use the time for more of the game-like exercises at the end.

Warm Up (10 min) - Jog and stretch, light footwork mirroring exercise, simple catch in pairs to warm up the hands.

Positioning Demo (15 min) - Have three ropes set up beforehand; one tied to a stake at the center of the goal line, one tied to each post. Place a ball out near the edge of the penalty area, off center, and explain the center line and covering the posts. You can move the ball and ropes around the edge of the penalty area to demonstrate the goalkeeper's arc (see the Positioning page for a brief description of this). Don't forget to point out they need to be "outside" the near post on shots from an angle.

Make it clear that this positioning is a general starting position for facing shots; crosses and breakaways are handled a bit differently. It is helpful, but not absolutely necessary, to have the field markings on the grass for this demo.

Two-Sided Saves (15min) - Keepers in groups of three, with two cones 6 yards apart. One keeper stands between the cones, the other two players are about 8 yards away, one on each side of the cone "goal", with balls. Keeper faces one player, who shoots a ball at keeper who makes the save. While the keeper is making the save, the player behind them is moving their ball to a new position. After keeper makes the save, they must turn, find the ball and the other shooter, get in good position and save the shot from the second shooter. The keeper immediately turns and find the other ball and shooter, who has also moved to a varied position, and save the next shot. Each keeper makes 5 saves in succession, then rotate positions. Encourage shooters to serve balls from all angles.

The keeper's arc for this 6-yard "goal" is smaller, but keepers need to quickly check the posts and find good position, along the center line and far enough out to cover the posts. Make sure the keepers, after turning, move through and out in front of the cones, off the goal line, to make the save.

Color-Coded Shots (20 min) - Place four differently-colored cones, bibs or other objects in an arc around the goal, about 16-18 yards away from the goal. At least one should be at an acute angle close to the goal line. At each cone, there is a shooter and several balls. Keeper starts at one goalpost. The coach calls a color. The keeper must quickly find that color object, get in good position along the arc, and make the save. Coach calls next color, and so on until the keeper has faced four shots. Then rotate keepers. First time through, have the shooters evaluate the keeper's position and help adjust them if they are not properly positioned. The second time through, the color call and the shot come immediately after the previous save. If the shooter thinks the keeper is out of position, they should try to take advantage of it.

Make sure the keepers check the posts as they move to be sure of their positioning. Keepers need to be off the goal line and outside the near post, along their arc. Footwork comes into play here too; the keeper should try to be in proper position before the shot is taken, if possible. Don't hesitate to "freeze" the keeper after a shot and correct their position if necessary.

Follow the Bouncing Ball (15 min) - This is similar to Color-Coded Shots, except now the keeper must track a moving ball. Put 3-4 players in a similar arc around the penalty area, and one keeper in the net. There is one ball. Players pass the ball around the arc; the keeper must use footwork and positioning to track the ball. At any point after 3-4 passes, a player may elect to take a shot, particularly if they feel the keeper is out of position. Each keeper saves three or four shots, then rotates out.

Similar coaching points to the previous exercise. The field players should try to quickly move the ball side-to-side to try to get the goalkeeper out of position.

Moving Ball plus Defenders (15 min) - Take the "Follow the Bouncing Ball" exercise, and now add one or two players as defenders who can pressure the ball but not tackle it away or intercept it. This adds a match-related condition to the exercise.

This exercise is a good one to use in a team training environment, and make it a more match-condition exercise, by adding more players in a larger area. The offence should always be numbers up (e.g. 5v2+K or 6v3+K) and encouraged to quickly switch the point of attack.

How to Support a Youth Soccer Goalkeeper

A keeper making a save can be the hero of the game, but if he or she lets in a goal, it can be devastating. For this reason, a youth keeper needs special support.

Step 1 Be careful not to specialize too early. A young player should experiment by trying all positions in the game, at least until the age of 12.

Step2 Stress physical fitness and conditioning. While there is a lot of standing around, a good keeper must be fit. Youth players often need to take special measures to acquire and maintain this fitness.

Step3 Consider specialty training and camps. Goalkeeping can be hard to pick up in regular team practice.

Step4 Do your homework. Read up on the position, and consider taking a goalkeeping coaching course to assist your player.

Step5 Emphasize on-field communication. Young keepers need to develop the ability to talk to their teammates. Let them practice by shouting at you.

Step6 Invest in good goalkeeping gear. Young players should wear padded clothes to give them confidence and protection when they dive or slide.

Step7 Layer up. Young children have less body fat and need to stay warm during long stretches of inactivity. Particularly in cooler climates, wearing extra layers (like long underwear) is helpful.

- * Be extra supportive. Remind your keeper, and yourself, that when the opposition scores, the ball had to get through all the other teammates before it got to the keeper.

- * Videotape your keeper. This is a useful instructional tool.

- * Find a goalkeeper mentor. An older sibling, relative, or friend can provide inspiration and hand-me-down equipment.

- * Cross train. Encourage your keeper to participate in other sports or fitness activities.

- * Get ready for the bumps and bruises. You must accept the physical risks that a keeper faces.

Use your knowledge of the field positions to stay involved in the game. The more you talk to your defense and control the pace of the game, the easier your job becomes. A well-positioned defense stops more shots before they're taken; and fewer shots on goal means a higher rate of success at all levels.

Goalkeeper kicking practice plan:

Although young goalkeeper often kick the ball away in the interest of getting the ball away from the goalmouth, throwing the ball is much more accurate and is a great way to start the counterattack.

Warm Up (10 min) - Jog and stretch, putting more emphasis on upper body and arms: large arm movements (windmilling, etc.) will get the shoulders loosened up. Have goalkeepers throw & catch in pairs or facing lines, but make the distance a bit larger than usual.

Make sure the arms and back are thoroughly warmed up.

Rolling the Ball (5 min)

Demonstrate or review basic rolling technique; have them roll the ball back and forth in pairs; then have the target player moving so the roll must lead them, like a good pass. Keepers should receive the ball with their feet, like a field player, then pick it up for their throw.

The release point of the ball should be low, so the ball rolls smoothly. Rolls shouldn't be slow and lazy; they should get there as quickly as possible, so put some zip on the ball! A moving receiver should be able to take the ball in stride.

Baseball/Sidearm Throw (5 min) - Demonstrate or review techniques for these throws. Again in pairs, practice the throw first to a stationary partner, then to a moving one.

As before, the release point should be low. The ball should not be high and looping; it should hit the ground half- to three-quarters of the way to the target so it has time to settle. Some backspin on the ball will help this happen. Again, the throw should have some pace on it. Keepers receive the balls with their feet.

Same/Switch (5 min) - This activity needs four keepers in a square about 20 yards on a side. One player rolls the ball an adjacent teammate. As this is happening, the player diagonally across the square will call "Same" or "Switch". If the call is "same", the goalkeeper returns the ball to the player it came from with a roll. If the call is "switch", the keeper sends the ball to the opposite side with a baseball or sidearm throw. The player diagonally across from the keeper receiving the ball calls "Same" or "Switch" and the sequence repeats.

Rolls are used for close distribution, which might typically be a teammate on the same side of the field as where the ball is. A baseball or sidearm throw is used for longer distances, as when the keeper might want to quickly switch fields. The diagonally opposite player should call "same" or "switch" before the keeper across from them has received the ball, so the keeper must quickly distribute the ball in the proper direction and with the correct technique. Make sure they keep up a quick pace in this exercise.

Overhand (Sling) Throw (5 min) - Demonstrate or review the overhand throwing technique. Keepers should practice in pairs at a distance of 25-30 yards.

Once again, look for a low release point with a low trajectory throw that hits the ground a ways in front of the receiving player. Three common problems I see with this throw: 1) Bent elbow. The arm needs to be straight, elbow locked, throughout the throw. 2) Ball not locked in. The ball must be held securely between the hand and the forearm with a bent wrist, not just held in the palm of the hand. 3) Sidearm throw. This throw should be straight over the top for better accuracy.

Throwing square (10 min) - Four keepers in a 25-yard square, with one defender in the middle. Keepers throw the ball around the square, using a roll, baseball or sidearm throw to teammates on either side, or an overhand throw to the player across diagonally, keeping the ball away from the defender. Keepers receive the ball with their feet before picking it up to throw; if the ball can't be received cleanly the defender may challenge for the ball. If the defender in the middle are keepers, they can exchange places with an outside keeper if they win the ball. You can vary the number of players outside and number of defenders based on ability and the number of players available.

Encourage quick decision making -- find the open player fast, before the defender closes down. Throws should find their teammates feet and be on the ground (not bouncing) to prevent loss of possession.

"Ultimate" Throwing (15 min) - Divide keepers into two groups, and mark out a field a bit larger than you would use with a similar number of field players. Add an 8 yard deep "end zone" at each end. This game is similar to Ultimate Frisbee, except that players receive the ball with their feet. One team throws the ball to the other to start; a team advances the ball by throwing to a teammate, who receives it with their feet and controls it. Once they have, they may not move, but must pick the ball up and throw it to another teammate from that spot. Score a point by throwing to a teammate who controls the ball in the end zone. Defenders on the other team may intercept the throw or win the ball using their feet if the thrower's teammate does not control the ball. The thrower may not be closely marked; defenders must stay at least two arm-lengths from the thrower.

Find open teammates quickly and hit them in the feet. Enforce good goalkeeper throwing techniques; often players begin to simply lob the ball up towards the end zone. Using a neutral player or two who is always with the team in possession will make this game easier.

Throwing Distribution Game (20 min) - This game uses two keepers in goals at each end (cone goals are fine for this activity) and field players in the middle, one or two of whom are neutrals who always play with the team in possession. Minimum in the middle is 1v1+1 (1v1 plus neutral), it can go all the way up to almost full sides if you like (8v8+2). Field size varies with the number of players, but it should be on the large side. Play like a regular game, except that the objective of the offence is not to score goals -- it's to "shoot" the ball right to the goalkeeper so they can then distribute. The neutrals make this work by giving the attackers a couple extra players to get "shots" on goal, and giving the goalkeeper a couple more distribution options. Defenders can play less than 100% as well to give the keepers more work. Keepers should look to distribute quickly when they receive the ball -- look long first, and if there is nothing there go shorter. The longer they wait, the harder it will be to find an open player as the defense gets organized. Make sure throws are two feet and easy to receive, and have enough pace to get to the receiver before the defense can pick off the ball.

Soccer Golf (Throwing Only) (15 min) - Soccer golf is one of the most popular activities with my goalkeepers every season. Before practice, chart out a "golf course", noting "tees" and "holes". Tees just need to be a grassy location; holes should be 75 to 150 yards in length with an object at the end to hit. Please use objects nobody will mind getting hit with a soccer ball! Trash cans, street signs, goalposts, and fence posts are some items that are usually acceptable. You can also mark out your own course using corner flags or coaching sticks. Then play "golf", using throwing technique to get the ball near to, and then hitting the "hole" object, in the fewest throws.

Use the appropriate throw -- tee off with a long overhand throw, then a more accurate baseball throw to get close, and a roll to finish it off.

BASIC CATCHING

This session on basic catching can work for any level of keeper: as an introduction for young keepers, review and repetitions for intermediate level keepers, and warm-ups or review for more experienced keepers. I will note variations on the drills you can use to adjust the session for various skill levels.

Warm Up (10 min) - After jog & stretch, have players in pairs doing simple tosses back and forth at shoulder height. For beginners, demonstrate the basic "W" or contour hand position. Then move to basket catches -- again, demo the proper catching technique for beginners. Finally, move to rolling ball pickups. If you have four or more players, have them get in two lines facing each other about 6-7 yards apart; players in one line have balls and the first player serves to the opposite line; players then switch lines. This serving technique reinforces the need to move forward when receiving a ball. With older keepers, I will use a goalkeeping medicine ball for part of the warm up.

Check proper hand position and make sure keepers are using good footwork to get behind the ball and are moving forward to meet the ball. Remind them that anything above the waist requires a "fingers up" ("W") catch, below the waist is a "fingers down" (basket) catch.

Two-Ball Circle (10 min) - This activity needs six to ten players, but is a very popular exercise. I often incorporate it into other training sessions as a warm-up. Have the players stand in a 10- to 12-yard diameter circle. Start with one ball being passed around the circle at shoulder height; it can be passed to anyone except the player next to you. After a minute or so, add a second ball being passed simultaneously. For beginners, keep the passes going slowly; for more advanced groups see how quickly they can move the balls and still keep things going smoothly. For advanced groups, you can also

allow balls served at the knees or rolled balls to be mixed in, or a larger circle with balls thrown intentionally a bit off target so good footwork is required. You can also use two different balls (e.g. make one ball a mini-ball or a rugby ball).

Keepers must be on their toes for this, both physically and mentally. They need to be scanning constantly with their eyes to keep track of both balls, while maintaining good catching technique. Focus is a key!

Ground Ball Pickups (10 min) - Scatter as many balls as you can inside a 15x15 yard area. (You need at least one or two more balls than keepers, preferably more. If you don't have a lot of balls or have lots of keepers, have some of the keepers resting while others are working.) Keepers wait outside the area until the coaches signal. At the signal keepers move in and pick up the balls, one at a time, each time securing the ball with a proper moving ground-ball pickup and then placing the ball on the back of their neck before releasing it (this assures the proper pickup). Keepers try to pick up as many balls as possible in 60 seconds (30-45 seconds for younger keepers). Challenge keepers to beat the count of other keepers, or do several rounds and beat their own previous count. For advanced keepers, reduce the number of balls in the area so they have to compete to get them.

Keepers should not stop when picking up balls, but should bend at the knees and move through the ball as they gather it in. This is the key to getting as many balls as possible. Watch for proper hand position (pinkies together, behind and under the ball, not grabbing the top of the ball). Keepers should have their heads up throughout the exercise. This is a high-intensity exercise, so allow rest in between rounds.

Small Goal Saves (20 min) - Have keepers in pairs with one ball and two cones or coaching sticks. Place the cones or sticks about 6 paces apart. One keeper stands in the "goal", the other 8-10 yards away (adjust size based on age and ability) with the ball. Server attempts to roll or throw the ball (head height or below) past the keeper through the small goal; keeper must use proper footwork and catching technique (do not allow dives). As the exercise progresses, widen the goal and move the server back. You can make this a game by having each save count as a point; a save or a miss by the server allows the keeper to stay in the goal, and if the server scores they get to become the goalkeeper.

Servers should vary the height, angle and pace of the balls. The reduced size of the goal allows for more catches and fewer balls out of reach. Insist on good, quick footwork and proper hand position.

Triangle Goal Game (20 min)

This introduces more movement into the session and we add balls served off the ground. Place three cones or coaching sticks in an equilateral triangle with sides about 6 yards long. 10 yards from each side of the triangle is a server with balls; one keeper is in the triangle. The keeper moves out beyond the cones or sticks to face the first server, who strikes the ball at the keeper. The keeper then quickly moves to the next side of the triangle and saves a shot there, etc. You can do this as a timed activity (who can make the most saves in two minutes) or a counted activity (most saves per a fixed number of shots faced).

The keeper needs to move quickly from one "goal" to the next, finding good position and being ready to face the shot as soon as possible. Ask servers to vary their shots -- on the ground, low or high (but not over the keeper's head). Don't let the fact that the keeper is moving keep them from using proper hand position and getting their body behind the ball.

Shots on Goal (20 min) - For the last part of the session, go to live fire. You can simply put shots on goal (I like to have the keepers come off one post, touch the middle of the 6-yard line or a cone in an equivalent spot, and then make the save). Or, you can put it into a more game-like situation (albeit with fewer shots) by playing 2v2 or 3v3 in a 35- to 40-yard field with two full-size goals. If you only have one frame, you can play "World Cup" style, with teams of two all attacking one goal against everybody else and the keeper. Rotate keepers every few shots.

I feel a small "pressure cooker" field like this, 40x30 yards or so with two full-size goals and a small-sided game in the middle, is a great way to end just about any goalkeeper training session. It allows for two keepers working at once with lots of shots in a match-like setting, and as a coach you can focus your coaching points on whatever the training topic is for that day.

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CUSHIONING THE BALL

I usually devote one training session near the beginning of the season exclusively to cushioning the ball with all my keepers. It helps develop soft hands, and is something a keeper should always focus on getting better at. To practice this skill properly requires well-paced balls right at the goalkeeper, so it is helpful to have a coach or field player who can strike a ball hard and accurately to serve balls.

Warm-Up (15 min) - Start with a jog, some footwork and stretching. Warm up the hands with some catching in pairs. For beginners, I like to demonstrate cushioning by using an imaginary egg: pantomime tossing an egg high in the air, the players must pretend to catch the egg without breaking it. They will instinctively use their arms to cushion. Have them play catch in pairs a bit more, using the same cushioning motion. Then move to a two-ball circle as above, with emphasis on softly cushioning the ball. If you have a goalkeeping medicine ball, this is a good session to use it: the extra weight of the ball forces good cushioning technique.

Cushioning is done with the arms (elbows) and a bit with back and legs. Make sure the keepers start with their arms extended, almost elbows locked, and then pull the ball in to their chest. Don't let them catch it with elbows already bent 90 degrees, which leaves no room for cushioning. Remind them a good goalkeeper has "soft" hands -- soft means like a cushion or pillow, but also quiet. All catches during the warm-up should be as quiet as possible.

One-Handed Catches (10 min) - One handed catching is a good way to reinforce using the arms to cushion the ball. In pairs, players toss the ball back and forth using just one hand to catch and throw. Throws should be about head high, catches made with fingers pointing up. Work the weak hand as well as the strong hand, then have them throw to either hand. Move the keepers apart until it is not always easy to make a clean catch, then challenge them to see how many consecutive one-handed catches they can make.

Again, this should be a very quiet activity. The arm should be extended and the elbow should bend to take the pace off the shot. Make sure they don't forget to keep their feet moving to adjust body position if necessary.

Sitting, Volley Serves (10 min) - Now that they have the basic arm motion down, isolate it by having the keepers sit on the ground with their legs out in front of them. A server volleys the ball from their hands, right at the keeper, who must use arms (and a little back) to cushion. Volleys like this can be hard to control for some U12 and younger players, so you might want them to serve the ball with an underhand throw. Increase the pace of the served balls as you go.

Again, the keeper's arms start extended and the elbows do most of the cushioning. Make sure the keepers don't lean too far back (afraid of the ball); they should sit up and even lean a bit forward to prepare for the catch.

Standing, Volley Serves (10 min) - Now stand the keeper up and make more straight-on saves off a volleyed serve. Make the serves harder as you go.

Don't let the keepers step backwards to take pace off the ball. They must, if anything, step forwards, and let their arms do the cushioning.

Balls and Strikes (20 min) - Mark two lines from 4-8 yards apart (smaller for younger keepers, larger for older). Two keepers face each other across this separation; keepers must stay within a yard or so of the line. Each keeper has a "strike zone", from top of head to the waist, and as wide as the elbows stick out with hands on hips. The objective is to throw the ball at the other keeper within this strike zone hard enough that they drop it. If the other keeper catches it, they can then throw at the first keeper. Any ball thrown outside the strike zone is a "ball" and the other keeper gets possession. If the other keeper drops a ball in the strike zone, it's a strike; three strikes and you're out -- the other player wins. For younger keepers, start off limiting them to two-handed throw-in style throws; with older keepers anything goes and it can get very intense!

Keepers must stay within a yard of the line; they can't back up and cheat. Balls will be coming close, hard and fast, so keepers must be on their toes with arms out and ready to pull the ball in. Make sure keepers don't cushion by turning sideways and using rotation -- they must pull the ball in to their chest so their body is behind the ball.

Shots on Goal (20 min) - Now move to shots on goal, either with a coach serving or in a game-like situation. Focus on catching hard shots and cushioning them. This is where a server who can strike hard, accurate balls is very helpful.

In addition to getting the elbows extended and softly bringing the ball in to the chest, make sure the keepers are still moving forward to the ball and demonstrating good footwork.

Water Balloons (5 min) - If you have extra time to prepare them (and a hot day!), catching water balloons can be a fun way to finish off the session. Have a catching contest with water balloons -- who can catch the most without breaking any; obviously, good cushioning is essential to keep them from breaking.

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HIGH BALLS AND CROSSES

Learning to judge high balls takes lots of repetition. Add in pressure from attackers and congestion in the box, and controlling high balls becomes one of the more difficult (but important) goalkeeping skills. For younger keepers, focus on the basic technique and make sure they get the ball as high as possible -- don't introduce too much pressure right away. For older keepers, review the basics and move quickly into the higher pressure drills and serve driven, crossed balls rather than simple lofted ones.

Warm Up (15 min) - Jog, stretch, a little catch to get the hands warmed up. Then do some high-knee skipping to get the knees up and the body ready for jumping, and finally have the keepers leaping to touch the crossbar (no ball). As the final part of the warm up, have the keepers moving and bouncing the ball, then throwing it high on the coaches call, and catching it.

It's important to be well warmed up for this session, as the keepers will be doing explosive jumping technique. Make sure the hips, quads and hamstrings especially are warm and loose. Make sure the players call "Keeper!" loudly when going up.

Basic High Balls with Increasing Pressure (15 min) - Review basic high ball catching technique if necessary. Now have keepers move within a constricted area, throw their ball high on the coaches signal and catch it. The smaller area will create traffic. Then have the keepers pair up (each will still have a ball). Now, increase the space a bit, but when the coach calls, they now must throw the ball up and catch their partner's ball. As the final step, have the keepers all throw the balls at once at the coaches command and catch any ball they choose. This will be pretty chaotic at first. Challenge the keepers to let as few balls hit the ground as possible. For younger keepers, spend more time on the first few parts of this exercise; they need more work on basic jumping and catching without the pressure. Older keepers can use this to get warmed up for the next exercise.

To successfully handle balls in the air, the goalkeeper's focus must be on the ball, and not on the traffic or other players. As the pressure increases, more balls will hit the ground, and balls will not be caught at the highest point, not because they were uncatchable or difficult to handle, but because players were worrying more about the other people than the ball. Stress focus on the ball, and don't forget to have the keepers maintain good technique.

Pairs with Increasing Pressure (15 min) - Now we want to practice using the proper leg for protection. Have keepers in pairs with one ball. Server faces away from keeper and tosses the ball straight up and slightly to one side or the other. The keeper then gets the ball at the highest point, with the knee closest to the server going up (taking off of the far leg) to protect the keeper. The next step is to have the server give the keeper a slight push in the hip as they gather the ball. Increase the pressure by allowing the server to step to the side the ball is thrown to and put their hip/shoulder into the keeper, then move directly underneath the ball (no jumping), and finally maximum pressure -- the server attempts to head the ball before the keeper can catch it. Young keepers should simply do the first part of the exercise, practicing taking off the proper foot, without much pressure. For experienced keepers, you can start with some level of pressure right away.

Again, focus needs to be on the ball, and not the pressure. In this type of environment, the goalkeeper should be able to catch almost every ball with good form, high in the air. They may occasionally end up on the ground after getting bumped, but they ought to be able to hang on to the ball. Make sure the proper takeoff leg is used, that the knee is up, and that keepers are not waiting for the ball to descend too much before catching it.

Moving Through Traffic (10 min) - This exercise needs 5-6 players besides the keeper who is working. Have the players stand in a small group with about an arm's length minimum between them. Keeper stands at the back of the group, with the coach on the other side. Coach serves the ball high towards the front of the group; the keeper must come through the crowd and get the ball as high as possible. Once this has been worked for few minutes, have the group move around in a small area as the keeper has to come for the ball. This is a good exercise for learning to judge the ball in traffic, and is a good exercise for beginners to learn to deal with congestion in the area.

A saying for goalkeepers is, "Last to leave, first to the ball". The goalkeeper should not start for the ball too soon, but should take a beat or so to judge the ball before moving. Then, once they've got it tracked, go hard and be the first to the ball. Don't let keepers take the long way to the ball by going around part of the group of players. They must come hard right to the ball with a determined run, moving players out of the way with a shoulder if need be, and get the ball while it's still high in the air.

Crosses, Keeper+1v1 (20 min) - One keeper in goal, plus one defender and one attacker. Coach or server is out wide beyond the side of the penalty area serving crosses; all three players play just as they would in a game when the cross comes in. Serve balls from both sides of the penalty area.

This is a more match-related exercise. Make sure the goalkeeper calls either "Keeper!" or "Away!" on every ball so the defender knows what the keeper is going to do, and that the keeper uses the proper leg to protect themselves from the pressure. Do not allow many "Away!" calls, except on mis-hit balls; this is the opportunity for the keeper to try and extend their range. A coaching point for experienced keepers is to have a stance slightly open to the field, and not facing the cross directly -- crosses are usually targeted to land around the penalty spot, so the keeper will more likely be going forward than towards the crosser.

"500" (15 min) - A fun game that everyone likes to play to finish off this session is "500". Have keepers in groups of 5-6 (divided by height or ability if you have a larger session). Server stands about 30 yards away and kicks or throws the ball towards the group, where everyone is trying to catch the ball. Give 100 points for a catch out of the air, 50 points for a catch on one bounce, and 25 points for a clean moving pickup of a ball that has bounced twice or more (no points if they dive on the ground; this prevents pile-ups). When a player hits 500, they have won and are out of the game, continue until there is only one player left. Vary the service: lofted, floating balls, driven balls, in front of the group, over the group, etc.

This is a difficult game because everyone's hands are in the air, unlike a soccer match where the keeper is the only one who can handle the ball. Insist on good catching technique, as high as possible in spite of the traffic. You might wish to deduct points from anyone who just slaps at the ball to prevent someone else from catching it -- and then again, maybe not!

THE COLLAPSED DIVE

The collapsed dive is the foundation for all diving, and proper technique is critical for the goalkeeper to dive both effectively and safely. Goalkeepers should have this technique down solidly before moving on to extension and aerial diving; with U11 and younger players I often skip extension dive training entirely, depending on the players' ability level.

Warm Up (10 min) - After jog & stretch, get the feet going with footwork mirroring; coach or leader doing shuffles and crossovers back and forth with the keepers facing them and mirroring the footwork of the leader.

Make sure the keepers are comfortable with the basic footwork steps, and that they stay on their toes with weight forward.

Down and Up (5 min) - Now we add going to ground and recovering to the footwork mirroring. As players shuffle back and forth, leader will call "Forward", "Back", "Right" or "Left". At each call, the players will quickly go down to the indicated position (forward on stomach, on their back, or on their right or left side) and recover to a standing position as quickly as possible. Increase the speed of the calls as you progress.

Encourage keepers to not use their hands to recover, if possible (this is most difficult when on the stomach). Hands need to be kept free to make the save. Recovery must be almost immediate; the sooner the keeper is back on their feet the better off they will be.

Collapsed Dive Demo, Collapsed Down and Up (10 min) - Introduce or review the basic steps of a collapsed dive: step towards the ball at an angle, hands to the ball and make the catch, ball to the ground, finish on hip and shoulder with the ball/arms and top leg protecting. Then do Down and Up as above, but the calls will only be "Right" or "Left". When the call is made, keepers go to the ready position, then perform a collapsed dive with an imaginary ball to that side. After a few minutes, if the technique is sound, have the keepers hold a ball and do a few more minutes getting used to taking the ball to ground and using it to cushion the fall.

Make sure the keepers do not forget to step forward in the direction they are diving. In fact, the goalkeepers should be steadily moving forward during this exercise, and the leader backing up, as each dive should take the goalkeepers few feet forward. When the ball is introduced, make sure they finish the dive with the ball in front of them, one hand on top and one hand behind, and that they don't lift the ball off the ground after the save is made.

Sit/Kneel/Squat/Stand (15 min) - Keepers in pairs, one is the server. Other keeper is sitting about 5 yards away, legs out in front of them with knees slightly bent. Server rolls a ball to the side of the keeper; keeper has to go over onto their side with proper diving position to make the save, then give the ball back to the server who serves it to the opposite side. Each keeper takes 3-4 serves to each side, then switch places. Then the keeper moves to a kneeling position. Again, server rolls 3-4 balls to each side and keeper goes over to make the saves. Next, keeper goes to a squatting position. This time, add a small "step" (here just a small movement of the foot) towards the ball before going over to field the rolling ball. Finally, make 3-4 saves to each side from a standing (low, knees bent) position. Then, do the whole sit/kneel/squat/stand progression again, this time with the server softly tossing the ball in the air at about keeper's shoulder height for sitting/kneeling/squatting and about waist height for standing.

All this really should take only 10 minutes unless you are working with young or inexperienced keepers who need lots of correction. A series of 3-4 serves on each side to one keeper should only take 20-25 seconds if they are working hard. Make sure the keepers go forward to the ball, even when sitting and kneeling. When squatting and standing, make sure they step towards the ball. This is a key -- don't let them get away with no step! And it should be a step, not a fall onto one knee. Make sure they finish in good position, on their side square to the ball, ball (and arms) out in front and top leg up for protection. Make sure they reach out to the ball, so the elbows stay out and don't get caught under the body when they land. Finally, make sure they finish with their body square to and behind the ball, not on top of or rolling over it. You can extend this portion of the session if you need to correct basic technique -- don't move on until you are sure they have it down. If they don't, not only will they not get anything out of the rest of the session, but they run the risk of injuring themselves.

Two-Sided Saves and/or Triangle Goal Game (20 min) - You can use the Two-Sided Saves game or the Triangle Goal game to work on the basic diving technique, with servers tossing balls between waist and shoulder height. Adjust the size of the "goals" based on player's ability. As they progress, the servers should throw the balls with a bit more pace and closer to the cones. For more advanced players, have servers stand farther back and either strike the ball from the ground (if they're accurate enough) or volley it out of their hands.

Make sure the basic technique remains sound: step towards the ball, forward at an angle, make the catch first, ball to ground, soft and square landing. Now that we have a "goal" as a reference, keepers should be going forward with the dive, out in front and away from the goal. Correct them if they end up going "backwards" with their head towards the goal. Younger keepers will sometimes flop and roll with the ball after the save; encourage them to remain on their side and behind the ball, not exposing their back to the field and the attackers.

Mini Keeper Wars (20 min) - You can use cone goals for this game, but corner flags work better. Set cones or flags about 6 yards -- collapsed diving range -- apart; set another goal facing it, 12-14 yards away (adjust goal size and separation for keeper age and ability). A keeper is in each goal. One keeper starts on their goal line with the ball and attempts to throw it past the other keeper (throws over shoulder height do not count). The keeper must make a collapsed dive to save if necessary. If the keeper makes the save, or the thrower misses, the keeper gets the ball and tries to score on the other goal. You can either play most goals in a set period of time, or first player to a set number of goals wins. Make sure the game set-up encourages collapsed diving with proper goal size and good serves.

Shots on Goal (10 min) - Although the keepers will probably want to play mini keeper wars for the rest of the practice, I feel they should finish with shots on a full-sized goal. You should have servers, if possible, who can place the ball accurately within collapsed diving range for a keeper.

You will find that younger or less experienced keepers will often have their technique go right out the window when they get in a real goal. Encourage them to make the effort of the dive, not just turn and bat at the ball. Diving is the only way, on hard shots to the side of the keeper, to get the body down and behind the ball. Also, at this point, encourage good decision making -- if a keeper doesn't have to dive to get a ball, they shouldn't. Make the easiest save possible.

EXTENSION AND AERIAL DIVING

Extension and aerial diving can be hard on a goalkeeper. As much as we try to cushion the impact of landing, it's still going to hurt a bit. Make sure your keepers wear long sleeves and pants if they have them to save on the scrapes, even if it's hot out. If you have access to large crash mats, or a sand pit, use them! You can train much harder if you don't have to worry about beating your goalkeepers to a pulp. Mats or a sand pit are also useful if you want to introduce extension diving to younger players. Otherwise, find the softest patch of grass you can, and don't push too hard. However, a few bumps and bruises will be part and parcel of this kind of training.

Warm-Up (15 min) - Jog and stretch, warm up the hands with some easy catch, then review collapsed diving technique with the sit/kneel/squat/stand progression from above (balls served in the air).

Keepers need to be well warmed up for the explosive activity that will follow. Basic collapsed diving technique needs to be sound.

The Power Step (10 min) - Set up a row of 6-8 cones (preferably ones with some height) with 1 to 3 yards between them (smaller spacing for younger, smaller keepers). Keepers stand a few feet from the first cone, facing perpendicular to the row, take a small step towards the cone, then push hard with the near leg, drive the opposite knee up and get as much height over the cone as possible. Repeat down the row of cones a few times, then start at the other end and go the opposite direction. Next, set up a zig-zag row of 8-10 cones: a cone, another a yard or two away and a few feet forward, another in line with the first cone and another few feet forward, etc. Keepers start to the side and slightly behind the first cone, shuffle and power step over the first cone and try to get enough distance to clear the second cone. Then they back up, and power step over the second cone trying to clear the third cone (now going to the opposite side), etc. Go through the cones several times. The distance between cones should challenge the keepers. Use taller cones, balls or other obstacles to make it more difficult if you want.

Goalkeepers must have a good step and explosive drive if they want to get height and distance. The step should be low, with the knee bent to provide the power. The opposite knee should drive up to provide height. The shoulders and hips should stay "square to the field" -- that is, face forward, perpendicular to the direction of the jump. Don't let them turn forward and face the direction they are jumping.

Extension Diving: Rolling and Low Balls (15 min) - Work in pairs, one server and one keeper. Have the keeper mark their range with three cones: one as a starting point, then step low to the right and push out as if diving far for a low ball. Mark that with the second cone, then mark the same way to the left with the third cone. (The left and right cones, naturally, should be forward from the starting cone.) Keeper stands at the starting cone, and saves balls rolled by the server just inside the right/left cones, then gradually increase the distance to just beyond the cones. Start in a squatting position to emphasize staying low for low balls, then move to a more natural standing position. Once the keeper has taken repetitions with balls on the ground, move to balls served in the air but low (knee to waist high). The server should start these a little closer to the keeper, then work out towards the left/right cones.

Starting with low balls lessens the impact of the dive and keeps things from getting too intense early in the training session. On the step, the keeper should get low with the knee bent to put themselves at the level of the ball right away. Make sure all the basics are there: the initial forward step, the push with the near leg, hands to the ball. Now that the keepers are extending, their weight needs to be transferred over the near leg. Often, a keeper will step forward, but then fall backwards (and not get much extension) because their body weight is still behind the stepping foot. This happens particularly when the keeper is diving to their weaker side.

Ground-to-Air Missile (15 min) - This exercise works on generating height for aerial dives. Again, have a keeper/server pair. The keeper kneels, with one knee on the ground and one knee up. The "up" knee is the side the keeper is diving to

(the "near" leg). Server holds the ball in the palm of one hand, about head height, a few yards away from the keeper and a bit in front of them. The keeper pushes hard with the near leg and drives to the ball, catches it off the server's hand, and then lands properly. Repeat to the right and left side. As the exercise progresses, challenge the keepers by holding it higher and farther away. When they have this down, server then serves a soft toss in place of the stationary ball, then move to harder served balls.

Don't let the keepers worry too much about the landing. Focus needs to be on driving to the ball and catching it cleanly. If possible, the keepers should dive through the ball. Only then should they think about landing -- ball down first, use it to cushion, and come down on hip and shoulder. Goalkeepers need to get their body up to the level of the ball, if possible. Timid goalkeepers will attempt to "catch" themselves with the near foot -- that is, the body will not get up in the air, and the near foot will be the first thing to hit the ground. Tell them to focus on getting airborne and making the catch; the landing will take care of itself. Crash mats, if you can get them, are invaluable for helping reluctant keepers get their technique right.

Aerial Diving Over Obstacles (20 min) - This is the drill that old goalkeepers remember fondly: diving over cushions, bags, trash cans, or even other people. Obstacles should be about a yard long and 1-2 feet high (depending on the skill of the players); soft and non-pointy obstacles are preferred for obvious reasons. I like to use 5-foot long sticks (3/4-inch PVC or coaching sticks), with a third person holding it at the desired height. (In the old days, we used to use another player, on hands and knees with their head down. Visions of lawsuits have made me abandon that practice.) Keepers start a little bit away from the obstacle, then shuffle and power step forward and dive over the obstacle, trying not to touch it, and make the save. As with Ground-to-Air Missile, above, start with servers holding the ball in their palm, then move to soft tosses, then harder serves and balls further away. Work both left and right sides.

The point of the obstacle is to force the keeper to get height and distance to clear it; this won't happen unless the technique is all there. The initial shuffle should get the keeper into position to take their first step right next to the obstacle, get low, push hard with the near leg and drive the opposite knee up and over to get to the ball. If the keeper doesn't get their near leg up or tries to "catch" themselves with it to break the fall, it will be obvious because they will hit the obstacle. Again, encourage keepers not to think too much, but drive up and to the ball and just let the landing happen. Get the body up to the level of the ball and the feet will come along for the ride.

Shots on Goal (15 min) - Finish with shots on goal, either taken by coaches or players, or in a game-like situation.

Here, encourage good decision making as well as correcting technique. A goalkeeper should always make the easiest save possible, so they shouldn't dive unless they have to. The only thing worse than a keeper who doesn't dive when they should is a keeper who dives when they shouldn't!

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Uncatchable Balls:

PARRYING

I usually do not teach parrying extensively until keepers have some experience and have already shown they can catch the ball. After all, the first choice for the goalkeeper should always be to hang on to the ball whenever possible. Parrying should be reserved for balls that are too hard, high, or wide or are otherwise truly uncatchable.

Warm Up (Shuffle Catch) (10 min) - Get the goalkeepers warmed up; make sure to include some simple catching exercises to get the hands going. A good simple warm-up is the "shuffle catch": Two keepers, each with a ball. They face each other 2-3 yards apart, then both step sideways about 2 steps. They should now be facing past each other's left shoulder. At once, they throw their ball straight in front of them (to the other keeper's left), and then shuffle to their own left and catch the ball thrown by the other keeper. Immediately throw the ball straight ahead (this time to the other keeper's right) and shuffle right to catch the ball thrown by the other keeper. Continue for 30 to 60 seconds. Balls can be served high, medium height, or low, or even rolled on the ground.

For the shuffle catch warm-up, make sure the keeper gets all the way behind the ball if possible; no reaching out to the side.

Parrying Around the Post (15 min) - We assume here that the goalkeepers already know at least how to do collapsed diving, and preferably have worked on extension diving. We use the same basic technique, except instead of catching the ball, use the heel of the hand to direct the ball to the side, past the post. Do a sit/kneel/squat/stand progression, except have them parry the ball instead of catch it. Serves should be towards the edges of the goalkeeper's range so they must parry.

Getting fingers to the ball is okay if that's all that can be done, but preferably the keeper should use the heel of the hand - it's much stronger and can't be bent backwards like the fingers. Keepers should simply deflect the ball wide, not try to bat it or swat at it. Let the momentum of the ball do the work; all the goalkeeper needs to do is change the direction of the ball. The ball should not be deflected right out in front of the goal, in case an attacker is there waiting, but deflected wide.

Parrying over the Bar: Footwork (10 min) - Have keepers start about 6 yards out from goal. The coach points a direction, and the goalkeeper does the basic footwork to that side, as if a ball is going over that shoulder: drop step to that side, crossover back towards the goal, and power step up. Repeat several times to each side. Then add a ball, with the serves not too far over the keeper's head; have them do proper footwork, power step and simply catch the ball. Again repeat to both sides. As they progress, throw the balls a little farther behind the keeper.

The crossover step should be used to get behind the ball as quickly as possible. Once the ball is added, keepers will forget to keep going back and stop and jump at the ball going over their head. If they can get back quickly enough, they will be able to make an easier catch. Also make sure they catch the ball as high as possible -- above the crossbar if they can.

Parrying over the Bar: Hands (15 min) - Now we work on the hand technique for parrying over the bar. Work in groups of three, with one keeper and two servers. Keeper kneels in the middle, facing one server 6-8 yards away with the other server 6-8 yards behind them. Have the keeper raise one hand above their head to show where the service should be. The first server throws a fairly flat-trajectory ball (not a high arching ball) to the server on the opposite side such that it passes over the head of the keeper at about the height where the keeper had their hand raised. As the ball passes over, the keeper should bring up their hand and deflect the ball upwards so it goes to (or perhaps even over) the server behind them. Keeper then turns around and takes a ball from the other server. Have the goalkeeper do this with both hands, and then rotate goalkeepers. Next step, have the keeper kneel with one knee raised (this will be the "push" leg). The keeper raises their hand again to indicate height, but this time the server throws the ball a few feet over where the keeper's hand was, to the side with the raised leg. The keeper must push off with the raised leg, get to the level of the ball, and use the opposite hand to deflect the ball upwards. (For example, if the keeper is kneeling with the left knee raised, the server throws the ball so it is going to the keeper's left, the keeper pushes upwards with the left leg, and bring the right hand up to parry the ball.) Repeat to both sides and rotate keepers.

When deflecting the ball, the palm of the hand should face forwards the whole time. Don't allow keepers to swat the ball sideways, or turn their hand and "dunk" the ball backwards. A simple upwards push is all it takes; the momentum of the ball will do the rest of the work. In the second part of this exercise when they are elevating off the ground, keepers may turn in the air as the ball is deflected, and land on their side. This is okay, but don't let them start to twist until the ball is already gone. They need to stay square to the ball and facing the field as long as possible.

Parrying over the Bar: Putting it Together (20 min) - This can be done without a goal, but it is difficult for coach or goalkeeper to gauge success unless you have a frame with a crossbar. Have goalkeepers come off of one post, touch a cone about 6 yards in front of the center of the goal, and serve a ball over their head to one side. Keepers now must do the proper footwork, and this time instead of catching the ball on the power step, they should use their opposite hand to deflect it upwards. At first, use easy tosses that aren't too high and aren't too far over the keeper's head, and indicate the direction before the throw. As the keepers get more comfortable, increase the difficulty of the throws. The serves should be more flat than high and arching, especially at first.

Don't expect a lot of success with this at first, especially with younger keepers. This is a very difficult feat to perform successfully, especially if the keeper isn't very tall. Just make sure the footwork is good, that they get back quickly, jump high, use the correct hand to parry with, and simply push the ball upwards rather than swatting or dunking it.

Parrying Game (20 minutes) - Use four corner flags or coaching sticks, set on the goal line one yard outside and one yard inside of each goalpost. This makes a 10-yard wide "goal" with a 2-yard zone at each side. Then mark out a line across this 10-yard goal four to eight yards from the goal line (depending on the size/skill of the keeper) using flat cones. Now play 3v2+keeper attacking the goal, with these restrictions: the goalkeeper must stay in front of the line of flat cones until a shot is taken; shots must be taken from outside the penalty area; goals scored in the 2-yard side zones or over the keeper count for three. If you have two goals and can get eight poles, you can work out two keepers at once on a small field (use a neutral player who is always on offense to encourage lots of shots). You can adjust the number of field players used in this exercise based on the space you have to work with.

The wide goal, shooting distance and extra points awarded should encourage shots that must be parried, either around the post or over the crossbar. The line restricting the goalkeeper will require them to parry balls over their head. Encourage good decision making: if the keeper can get back quickly and catch the ball, rather than parry it over for a corner, so much the better.

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PUNCHING

Punching is distinct from parrying - punching is reserved for crosses and is used to get the ball away from the goal, not to divert the ball around the frame.

Warm Up (10 min) - Jog, footwork and stretch, do some simple catching to warm up the hands.

Two-Handed Punching: Technique Demo/Review (5 min) - Introduce or review basic technique, with proper hand position. Serve the keeper a few balls and have them punch them right back to the server's hands.

Make sure the fingers make a nice flat surface, with thumbs out of the way but not tucked into the fist. Knuckles should be together such that they are not pointed out, but positioned to make one large, flat surface that covers both fists. If they hit the ball with their knuckles, you should be able to hear the difference in sound -- and it will hurt! Hands should start in close to the keeper's chest, elbows in comfortably and bent, and then the hands should drive through the ball to provide maximum power.

Two-Fist "Juggling" (5 min) - Each goalkeeper has a ball. They throw it up and then, using two handed punching technique, punch it upwards in a controlled manner, and try to keep the ball up as long as possible, with as many "juggles" as they can before it hits the ground.

The ball will have to be struck above the keeper's head for this to work effectively; if the keeper waits for the ball to fall too far they won't be able to extend their hands to give the ball sufficient momentum. This is a good opportunity for the keeper to work on finding the right spot in their punch for maximum effect.

One-Hand Punching: Technique Demo/Review (5 min) - Use groups of three, with the goalkeeper in the middle and the servers about 10 yards to either side. One server throws a ball so it is going just over the keeper's head; the goalkeeper uses a one-handed punch to continue the ball in the direction it is going, to (or even past) the other server. Ball then is thrown by the other server so the keeper punches it using the opposite hand.

Again, check for good hand position (flat surface, thumb out of the way). Hand should start low, and drive up and threw the ball. This is a punch, not a slap.

One-Fist "Juggling" (5 min) - As two-fist juggling, above, but Using only one hand. Try right only, left only, and alternating. The keeper will need to drive through the ball to get sufficient power to keep the ball in the air.

Group "Juggling" (10min) - If you have two or more goalkeepers, you can "juggle" in a group. Mix both one-handed and two-handed punching. Players should call "Keeper!" before coming for the ball, both to develop good habits and to prevent collisions. With more advanced keepers, spread the group farther apart. Keep track of the maximum consecutive juggles.

Encourage keepers to go for height and accuracy to keep the ball in play as long as possible.

Punching Crosses (15 min) - Work on punching without any pressure. Serve balls (either kicked or thrown) to a keeper, varying the service: floating, driven, short of the keeper, over the keeper's head, etc. The keeper must judge the ball, decide whether to use a one- or two-handed punch, call for the ball, then perform the technique. Goalkeepers should work on getting height and distance on their punches. For variation, add targets (either other players or cones) around the field for keepers to reach with the punch. For advanced keepers, spend less time without pressure and more time on the following exercises that add field players.

This works on decision making as well as technique. For this exercise, have keepers work on punching balls even if they might normally catch them. Judging the balls is crucial; keepers should not leave too early. If a keeper absolutely cannot get to a ball, they should call "Away!".

Crosses, Keeper+1v1 (15 min) - Use the keeper+1v1 exercise as for high balls, adding an attacker and defender to the crossing activity, except have the keeper work on punching the ball rather than catching it.

The keeper should be aggressive and try to increase their range in practice.

Crossing Game (20 min) - This is a match-condition game that needs a number of field players: you can run it with just two per team, but three or four works better. Mark out "free" channels wide, from the edge of the penalty area to the touch line. Place several cone targets across the field about 35 yards from the goal line (reduce these dimensions for younger players). Team A attacks the goal with team B defending. Team A takes the ball to one of the channels and sends in a cross, attempting to score. Goalkeeper tries to punch the ball, and scores a point if they can either 1) do a two handed punch to a cone target, or 2) do a one handed punch that reaches the opposite wide channel. If the keeper cannot get to the ball, they should call "Away!" and be ready for a shot if the attackers win the ball. After a clearance or goal, the defending team retrieves the ball and starts the attack, with the other team now defending. If you have enough players, and/or an additional goal frame, there are a couple of variations which work well. One, use a third team, who stations themselves in the wide channels and at the cone targets. If the goalkeeper or defense successfully clear, team C collects the ball and immediately begins the attack against team B who was just attacking; team A takes up positions at the channels and targets to continue the cycle. Or two, use a larger field (up to full size) with keepers in goals at both ends. When the keeper clears the ball, the defending and attacking team switch roles and the attack goes at the other keeper.

Decision making again is very important. Keepers need to be able to judge the ball and decide whether to come out ("Keeper!") or stay home ("Away!") as early as possible.

BASIC BREAKAWAY PRINCIPLES

There are some basic principles for handling breakaways that a goalkeeper must have down before they should go sliding into an attacker's feet. With younger keepers, I often will spend a whole session on handling breakaways without sliding at all. If a keeper grasps these principles, they can often make breakaway saves without ever leaving their feet. Goalkeepers should always stay on their feet as long as possible, and only slide when they are 100% sure they will get the ball.

Warm Up (10 min) - Jog and stretch, then do some basic footwork exercises like mirroring or footwork to cones. Finish with some 15-20 yard sprints.

Footwork and sprinting are very important for good breakaway technique. Keep them light on their toes and quick off the line.

Close-down Technique (5 min) - Introduce and practice proper close-down technique. The keeper needs to come off the line hard, then slow as they approach the attacker, get low with hands wide, and leave about two-arm lengths of cushion between themselves and the attacker. First, have keepers close on a stationary attacker, then have them work against an attacker running at them at various speeds.

A good approach is the key to handling a breakaway. Make sure keepers do not get too close to the attacker and stay on their toes with their weight forward.

1vK in Lanes (15 min) - Use cones to mark lanes 6 yards wide and about 25 yards long. Attacker starts at one end with a ball; keeper starts at the other end. The attacker has 15 seconds to try to dribble over the far end line; the keeper must prevent the attacker from reaching the end line by holding them up for 15 seconds or forcing them out of bounds over the side of the lane. The keeper may use their hands and must stay on their feet. If the goalkeeper can get the ball with their hands, they may knock it back a few yards but cannot pick up the ball or knock it out of bounds.

Use good close-down technique and close quickly; the sooner the keeper closes the attacker the less further the attacker has to go. Quick side-to-side footwork is needed to stay in front of the attacker, specifically using the fast crossover step if the ball carrier starts to get around the corner. The keeper needs to stay in a low crouch with hands near the ground, and must maintain this position.

1vK to Goal, no Sliding(20 min) - Similar to the previous activity, but now to goal with shots. Use a lane the width of the goal (8 yards).

Now with the threat of a shot, goalkeepers may "pull out" (stand up out of their crouch and lean back) as the attacker gets close, allowing the attacker to either dribble them or score on a quick shot on the ground. This is often compounded when the keeper gets too close -- make sure they leave that two arm's-length cushion. Many saves, if the keeper has closed to within proper distance of the shooter, will simply require a small movement of the hand or foot to deflect the ball wide. Give credit if the keeper forces the shooter to either miss or kick it right into them.

1v1+K to Goal, no Sliding (20 min) - Widen the area of play to 20 yards (width of the goal area). Now we make things more match-related by adding a defender. Attacker and defender play 1v1. At coaches signal (if necessary), defender allows the attacker to "beat" them and go in on the keeper. Again, the goalkeeper must stay on their feet and use footwork, positioning and reaction to make the save. A variation for older keepers is to allow the "beaten" defender to chase down the play after a second or so has elapsed.

We've added two main elements here: the goalkeeper must maintain proper starting position, and must have a quick reaction off the line when the attacker comes free. Once an attacker is in the clear with no defenders, the keeper must immediately be ready to come hard off the line. In the variation, we also add more of the decision-making process: the keeper must decide if the defender will catch up and make the play or not, or even if they should call the defender off.

Breakaway Game, no Sliding (20 min) - Play a small-sided (3v3 or 4v4) game with full-size goals. Divide the field into thirds. All players start in the middle zone, and no player on either team may enter a goal zone until after the ball does. This arrangement encourages through balls and breakaways. If necessary, you can add a restriction that only one or two defenders may enter their defensive zone.

This game adds decision-making to the technique. When a ball comes through, the goalkeeper must decide whether they should come out immediately and intercept a through ball, come out and challenge the ball carrier, or stay on the line.

THROWING DISTRIBUTION

Although young goalkeeper often kick the ball away in the interest of getting the ball away from the goalmouth, throwing the ball is much more accurate and is a great way to start the counterattack.

Warm Up (10 min) - Jog and stretch, putting more emphasis on upper body and arms: large arm movements (windmilling, etc.) will get the shoulders loosened up. Have goalkeepers throw & catch in pairs or facing lines, but make the distance a bit larger than usual.

Make sure the arms and back are thoroughly warmed up.

Rolling the Ball (5 min) - Demonstrate or review basic rolling technique; have them roll the ball back and forth in pairs; then have the target player moving so the roll must lead them, like a good pass. Keepers should receive the ball with their feet, like a field player, then pick it up for their throw.

The release point of the ball should be low, so the ball rolls smoothly. Rolls shouldn't be slow and lazy; they should get there as quickly as possible, so put some zip on the ball! A moving receiver should be able to take the ball in stride.

Baseball/Sidearm Throw (5 min) - Demonstrate or review techniques for these throws. Again in pairs, practice the throw first to a stationary partner, then to a moving one.

As before, the release point should be low. The ball should not be high and looping; it should hit the ground half- to three-quarters of the way to the target so it has time to settle. Some backspin on the ball will help this happen. Again, the throw should have some pace on it. Keepers receive the balls with their feet.

Same/Switch (5 min) - This activity needs four keepers in a square about 20 yards on a side. One player rolls the ball an adjacent teammate. As this is happening, the player diagonally across the square will call "Same" or "Switch". If the call is "same", the goalkeeper returns the ball to the player it came from with a roll. If the call is "switch", the keeper sends the ball to the opposite side with a baseball or sidearm throw. The player diagonally across from the keeper receiving the ball calls "Same" or "Switch" and the sequence repeats.

Rolls are used for close distribution, which might typically be a teammate on the same side of the field as where the ball is. A baseball or sidearm throw is used for longer distances, as when the keeper might want to quickly switch fields. The diagonally opposite player should call "same" or "switch" before the keeper across from them has received the ball, so the keeper must quickly distribute the ball in the proper direction and with the correct technique. Make sure they keep up a quick pace in this exercise.

Overhand (Sling) Throw (5 min) - Demonstrate or review the overhand throwing technique. Keepers should practice in pairs at a distance of 25-30 yards.

Once again, look for a low release point with a low trajectory throw that hits the ground a ways in front of the receiving player. Three common problems I see with this throw: 1) Bent elbow. The arm needs to be straight, elbow locked, throughout the throw. 2) Ball not locked in. The ball must be held securely between the hand and the forearm with a bent wrist, not just held in the palm of the hand. 3) Sidearm throw. This throw should be straight over the top for better accuracy.

Throwing square (10 min) - Four keepers in a 25-yard square, with one defender in the middle. Keepers throw the ball around the square, using a roll, baseball or sidearm throw to teammates on either side, or an overhand throw to the player across diagonally, keeping the ball away from the defender. Keepers receive the ball with their feet before picking it up to throw; if the ball can't be received cleanly the defender may challenge for the ball. If the defender in the middle are keepers, they can exchange places with an outside keeper if they win the ball. You can vary the number of players outside and number of defenders based on ability and the number of players available.

Encourage quick decision making -- find the open player fast, before the defender closes down. Throws should find their teammates feet and be on the ground (not bouncing) to prevent loss of possession.

"Ultimate" Throwing (15 min) - Divide keepers into two groups, and mark out a field a bit larger than you would use with a similar number of field players. Add an 8 yard deep "end zone" at each end. This game is similar to Ultimate Frisbee, except that players receive the ball with their feet. One team throws the ball to the other to start; a team advances the ball by throwing to a teammate, who receives it with their feet and controls it. Once they have, they may not move, but must pick the ball up and throw it to another teammate from that spot. Score a point by throwing to a teammate who controls the ball in the end zone. Defenders on the other team may intercept the throw or win the ball using their feet if the thrower's teammate does not control the ball. The thrower may not be closely marked; defenders must stay at least two arm-lengths from the thrower.

Find open teammates quickly and hit them in the feet. Enforce good goalkeeper throwing techniques; often players begin to simply lob the ball up towards the end zone. Using a neutral player or two who is always with the team in possession will make this game easier.

Throwing Distribution Game (20 min) - This game uses two keepers in goals at each end (cone goals are fine for this activity) and field players in the middle, one or two of whom are neutrals who always play with the team in possession. Minimum in the middle is 1v1+1 (1v1 plus neutral), it can go all the way up to almost full sides if you like (8v8+2). Field size varies with the number of players, but it should be on the large side. Play like a regular game, except that the objective of the offense is not to score goals -- it's to "shoot" the ball right to the goalkeeper so they can then distribute. The neutrals make this work by giving the attackers a couple extra players to get "shots" on goal, and giving the goalkeeper a couple more distribution options. Defenders can play less than 100% as well to give the keepers more work.

Keepers should look to distribute quickly when they receive the ball -- look long first, and if there is nothing there go shorter. The longer they wait, the harder it will be to find an open player as the defense gets organized. Make sure throws are two feet and easy to receive, and have enough pace to get to the receiver before the defense can pick off the ball.

Soccer Golf (Throwing Only) (15 min) - Soccer golf is one of the most popular activities with my goalkeepers every season. Before practice, chart out a "golf course", noting "tees" and "holes". Tees just need to be a grassy location; holes should be 75 to 150 yards in length with an object at the end to hit. Please use objects nobody will mind getting hit with a soccer ball! Trash cans, street signs, goalposts, and fence posts are some items that are usually acceptable. You can also mark out your own course using corner flags or coaching sticks. Then play "golf", using throwing technique to get the ball near to, and then hitting the "hole" object, in the fewest throws.

Use the appropriate throw -- tee off with a long overhand throw, then a more accurate baseball throw to get close, and a roll to finish it off.

KICKING DISTRIBUTION

Long distribution kicks often become 50/50 balls, but a goalkeeper who can punt or drop kick the ball both far and accurately is a great asset to the team, and can even contribute the occasional assist on a goal!

Warm-Up (10 min) - Run, do some footwork exercises and stretch, making sure to especially warm up the hip flexors and quads with large movements.

It's important to be fully warmed and ready before starting to punt the ball.

Punts and Drop Kicks Into a Net (10 min) - The easiest way to get lots of repetition on punts and drop kicks without having to chase balls is to kick into a goal with a net. Review basic technique and carefully watch -- and listen! -- to the keepers' form. Not only can you see good technique or mistakes, but you can hear them. A good kick has a definite "solid" sound.

Make sure they've got the basics: starting with two hands, dropping (not tossing) the ball, keeping everything in a straight line, and following through. This activity can be shortened or lengthened depending on the amount of technical correction the players need.

Kicking for Accuracy (10 min) - Keepers work in pairs (or with a coach). Starting 20-30 yards apart, keepers punt and/or drop kick back and forth, with emphasis on accuracy and putting the ball right in the hands of their partner. As the activity goes along, gradually increase the distance, ending up near the limits of the keepers' range.

If the technique is sound, a keeper will get good distance simply by letting their technique do the work. Focus on accuracy, and let the kick be smooth and easy.

Target Kicking (10 min) - Add some "pressure" by having the goalkeeper serve several long balls one after the other, trying to hit targets at varying distances and locations. Coach should serve a ball to the keeper who kicks to the specified target; as soon as the ball leaves the keeper's foot serve them another one. You can use other players as targets (they can also chase the balls), areas marked with cones (vary the size of the target based on ability and distance), or even goal frames (if they have nets, on-target shots won't have to be chased). You can make this a competition by awarding points for targets hit (and perhaps fewer points for getting close, or for kicks that fall short but roll or bounce into the target area).

Although we are trying to go quickly, make sure the keeper doesn't rush. This is a matter of "going as fast as you can, not as fast as you can't". Punts and drop kicks need to be consistent; rushing will throw off the timing.

Save & Serve (10 min) - Just like Target Kicking above, but this time the distribution to the target comes after making a save of a shot on goal. Targets should be near (or beyond) midfield, depending on the ability of the keeper; after making the save, the keeper should sprint up to the edge of the penalty area and distribute to the target called by the coach, then backpedal to the goal line to make another save and distribute again. You can make this a competition as well, adding points for the initial save. You can also add an "attacker" or two just outside the penalty area to get in the way and make things more realistic and game-like.

Technique suffers when players are tired. After three or four sequences of save, sprint, & serve, the keepers will tire. Don't let the technique start to slide, and make sure they still don't rush. This would be a good time to go over the six-second rule, perhaps even counting the six seconds aloud so the keeper gets a good idea of how long they have to distribute the ball.

Game-Like Service (20 min) - This game requires 8-12 field players and two keepers on a full size field (perhaps a bit smaller for young players). Players are divided into two teams; half of each team is stationed on one half of the field, the remaining players on the other half (so if you had 8 players, 4 red and 4 blue, you'd have 2 red and 2 blue in each half of the field). One keeper starts with the ball, and as the field players move for position, the goalkeeper punts or drop kicks it, trying to pick out a player from their team in the opposite end of the field. If the keeper's team wins the ball, they can turn and attack the opposing goal, trying to score (other team defends). If the opponents win the ball, they simply pass the ball back to their own keeper, who will then attempt to distribute to the players in the other half of the field. (Players who are in

the same end of the field as the keeper who is distributing simply rest.) Points scored for a successful distribution, and for goals scored off a distribution.

The goalkeeper will now have to pick out moving targets and targets who have opposition.

Soccer Golf, with Kicks (20 min) - Set up a "golf course" like the throwing version of soccer golf above, but lengthen the holes to 100 to 300 yards. "Tee shots" on these long holes should be punts or drop kicks; keepers should then use throwing distributions when they get close to the "holes".

It's probably better to be accurate and a little short than have the ball land off in a tree, lake or yard. Players will tend to over-kick the ball to get distance on long holes; they should relax and let the technique work for them to get the distance they want.

REACTION TRAINING

Quick reflexes are something good keepers are born with, but any goalkeeper can improve their reactions. Keepers must learn to react to subtle cues: visual, like the drop of a striker's head; auditory, like the strike of a foot on the ball or a teammate's shout; and tactile, like the feel of the ball on a toe or fingertip. There are many small exercises here that can be moved through quickly if you want to. These exercises are not only fun, but develop a keeper's ability to focus, block out distractions, and react quickly to input rather than having to take extra time to think. When a keeper can do this, they are in the zone!

Warm Up (10 min) - Do some running, footwork and stretching. The Two-Ball Circle is a good exercise to warm up with, as it really gets the concentration level of the players up.

Make sure the keepers zero in on the ball and focus during the warm up.

Head/Catch, Right/Left (5 min)- Now we move into some mental reaction drills, with players working in pairs.

1) "Head/Catch". Players face each other, just a couple of yards apart, and the server easily tosses the ball head high to the other keeper and says "Head" or "Catch". The receiver must either head the ball back or catch it, respectively. After a minute of this, switch the commands -- if the thrower says "Head" they must catch it, and if they say "Catch" they must head it. If it's easy, shorten the amount of time the keeper has to react to the call of "Head" or "Catch"; if it's too hard, give the keeper more time.

2) The second exercise is "Right/Left". The server faces the keeper just a yard apart, holding two balls, one in each hand, about shoulder high. The server drops the balls simultaneously and says "Left" or "Right"; the keeper must catch the ball specified (use the keeper's left and right). After a minute or so, catch the opposite of the ball specified. Again, the server can increase or decrease the amount of time the keeper has to react to adjust the difficulty.

The trick with many of these sorts of exercises is to think, but not too much. Let the words get processed almost subconsciously and learn to simply let yourself react.

Tactile and Auditory Reaction (15 min) - 1) Now we move to tactile input. Again in pairs, with the working keeper facing away from the server, who stands 3-4 yards away. Without saying anything, the server gently tosses the ball at the goalkeeper, striking them anywhere in the back, rear, arms or legs. The keeper must react, turn, and cover the ball as quickly as possible. The server can move to one side or the other to vary the direction the ball is coming from. With older keepers, the throws can be a bit harder to produce a farther rebound.

2) For an auditory input exercise, place two balls 6-8 yards apart with the goalkeeper in between them. Coach or partner stands behind the keeper and calls "Right" or "Left". The keeper must quickly save the ball on their right or left. To increase the difficulty, then have the keeper save the opposite ball from the one called out.

3) Same setup as 2, except now the coach or partner, who is still standing behind the goalkeeper, moves to the right or left side and slaps a ball they are holding in their hand. The keeper must react to the sound and save the ball in the direction the sound came from. Increase the difficulty by having the keeper save the ball opposite the location of the sound.

The keeper should learn to use the tactile and auditory clues to figure out where the ball is and where it's going. Focus in on the feel of the ball striking the body and use that to predict where the ball will end up: which side of the body, landing nearby or bouncing away and in which direction. Concentrate on the sound of the partner's voice or of the ball being struck. The keeper needs to try to block out all other distractions. When the goalkeeper covers the ball on the ground, make sure they use proper form.

Visual Reaction (15 min) - Here are a few visual reaction exercises you can use.

1) Server holds a ball in each hand, at shoulder height, a yard in front of the keeper. The server will fake dropping one or both balls, but the keeper must not move until the server actually drops one of the balls, and then must attempt to catch that ball before it hits the ground.

2) Set two balls about five yards apart, five yards in front of the keeper. A partner stands on the opposite side of the balls, and attempts to fake the keeper as to which ball he will attack. The keeper must not move until the partner actually goes to attack a ball, and then must make a sliding save on that ball, trying to beat his partner to the chosen ball.

3) Like 2, except the keeper must save the ball his partner does not attack.

4) Have a keeper in goal, with two balls placed 12-16 yards out, one even with each goalpost, and one shooter for each ball. Shooters agree which one will actually take the shot, then both make as if to strike the ball but only the one actually puts the ball on net. Keeper must make the save. In this exercise, the shots ought to be savable -- we are working on the goalkeeper's ability to process the visual cues to react to the correct ball, not necessarily his ability to make the save.

The trick with all of these exercises is not to try to outguess the server(s) and go too early. The goalkeeper must simply relax and wait for the action, then just react to it.

Numbers Games (20 min) - Similar to the Head/Catch and Right/Left exercises, these games work on the keeper's ability to concentrate, process and trust their instincts. The first few are variations on the theme of "Odd/Even", then we add some simple math problems to try to occupy the brain while the body is attempting to react to the ball.

1) Server holds two balls at shoulder height, a yard in front of the keeper. Just before dropping both balls, server calls "Odd" or "Even". If "Odd", keeper must catch the ball on their left before it hits the ground; if "Even", they must catch the right-hand ball.

2) Next, server says a number between 1 and 9 just before dropping the ball. If the number is even, the keeper must catch the ball on their right; if odd, they catch the ball on their left.

3) Once they've gotten that down, we make it harder. Just before dropping the balls, the server states a simple addition or subtraction problem using single digits (e.g. "2+3" or "7-4"). If the result is Odd, catch the ball on the left; if Even catch the ball on the right. Leave a bit more time between announcing the problem and dropping the balls.

4) Have one keeper in goal, with two balls 12-16 yards out, one even with each post, and one shooter for each ball. The shooters each aim for their half of the goal (right or left) and shoot simultaneously. Just before the shots, the coach or one of the shooters calls a number between 1 and 9. If the number is even, the keeper saves the ball on their right; if odd, they save the ball to their left.

5) Like number 4, except now call out a simple arithmetic problem and save the correct ball based on whether the result is even or odd.

Many keepers will have some difficulty with these exercises. Try not to let the conscious brain distract them from making the reaction. The keeper should hear the number or problem, let it process, and then simply react. Let them repeat these exercises a number of times in succession quickly so they have a chance to get into a kind of rhythm.

Dynamic Reaction Exercises (15 min) - These exercises get the keeper moving and force them to track balls while the positions of the keeper's body and the ball are constantly changing.

1) Throw-Down-Up-Catch. Keeper stands with a ball in their hands. They throw the ball straight up, lie down on the ground on their back and put their arms straight out, then quickly get up and attempt to catch the ball before the second bounce. For more difficulty, the keeper must lie down on their stomach and put their arms out before getting back up.

2) Throw-Tumble-Catch. From a standing position, keeper throws the ball straight up, does a somersault, then gets to their feet and catches the ball before the second bounce. A variation is to do a backwards somersault, cartwheel, or other tumbling maneuver before the catch.

3) Throw-Catch-Throw-Catch. This exercise requires a keeper and a partner, each with a ball. To start, keeper stands a couple of yards from their partner, facing away from them. The sequence looks like this: 1. Keeper throws ball straight up; 2. Keeper turns 180 degrees to face partner; 3. Partner tosses ball to keepers hands; keeper makes clean catch and throws it back; 4. Keeper turns 180 degrees to starting position; 5. Keeper finds original ball and catches it before it hits the ground. This one is lots of fun, but younger keepers may find it difficult because they have trouble getting their original throw consistent.

The key to all of these exercises is to worry about only one thing at a time. Make a good original throw; if the first throw is off the keeper will never complete the sequence. Then once the throw is made, forget about it and focus on the next step; if the keeper tries to track the original throw while turning or tumbling, they will likely not be very successful. The sequence for exercise 3 is laid out in five very specific steps, and for the best chance of success those steps must be done in that order and separated. Another vital piece, especially for the first two exercises, is to make sure the goalkeeper gets completely to their feet and balanced before trying to track down the ball. Do not let them lunge after it from their knees! This kind of training for focusing on one piece is vital for a keeper -- think about the situation where a ball slips through the keeper's hands because they were already thinking about the upcoming distribution, or because they were distracted by the actions of a defender, or they were still trying to regain their feet when the second shot came. Although simple-seeming, these exercises mimic things that can trip up a goalkeeper in a real match.

Shots on Goal with Arithmetic (10 min) - Finish with shots on goal from 14-16 yards out -- with a twist. Just before each shot is taken, give the keeper a simple arithmetic problem to solve. They have to save the shot and come up with the correct answer as quickly as possible. If you have never heard a 15-year-old come up with the wrong answer to "What is 2+2?", you just might while doing this exercise!

The keeper needs to focus and trust their body reactions, and try to separate out the part of their mind doing the arithmetic problem.

How do I manage a player with ADHD? The child with ADHD needs to be treated the same as any other who becomes disruptive. Exclude them from the group for a few minutes. There's no need to make a big fuss. Just bring them over to stand by you or send them away with an assistant. Ask them to let you know when they think they are ready to join in again. Reward the behavior you want to see. If a disruptive child stays focused for a few minutes, tell them 'well done' and ask them if they want to do something you know they like to do. Make sure you don't ignore the rest of your players, though, and reward them for staying focused too.

How do I cope with teams that play dirty? At the end of the day, the sole arbiter of fair play is the referee. He or she will penalize players who break the rules and report coaches who step over the line, both figuratively and literally. If you believe a referee is not competent, they should be reported to the body that appoints them. Of course, if your referee is not appointed by the league and is not neutral (for example, is an official of the home team, or worse, a parent of one of the players) you are in a different ball game. In that case, you should make your feelings known to the other coach in a calm and reasonable way. If you are unhappy with the outcome of this meeting, your only recourse is to make a complaint to the league who should send an official to monitor the offending team's behavior.

Rules, Communication and Other:

Links: [Flat ball](#) | [Handballs, Restarts Etc](#) | [Off sides](#) | [Tactical Instructions / Communication](#) | [Glossary of Soccer Terms](#) | [Abbreviations](#) | [Awards / Patches](#) | [Sportsmanship](#) | [Motivational Quotes](#) | [Positions & Formations](#) | [Aggressiveness](#) | [Losing Season](#) | [Support Play](#) | [Referee's & Laws of the Game](#) | [Coaching Pearls \(Positions, Discipline\)](#) |

Flat / leaky ball?: There are several ways to repair the leak.

Step #1: Put some contact cement in a tube and blow it through (or attach a 30ml syringe) into the ball. One can also hook of a car flat repair pressurized can (Fix-A-Flat etc) and put a small amount in. Others suggest injecting egg white to seal it.

Step #2: Inflate ball to normal pressure. Bounce ball on ground 30 times. Keep in warm (indoors) room overnight to allow it to dry.

Step #3: Only if above fails: Locate hole by spraying (or submerging) ball with soapy water. Use a razor to cut a flap over the hole. Put a rubber inner tube patch over the leak the same way one would patch a bicycle tire leak.

How to call a handball: Calling a handball during a soccer game can be tricky. Contact must be intentional. You can't read a players mind but you can go by the general guide lines below.

Step1 - Characteristics of clear handball offense: A player deliberately carries, strikes, or propels the ball with the hand or arm. It is the players action that initiates contact with the ball.

Step2 - Characteristics of ball contact that are clearly not a handball offense: The ball initiates contact. The contact is not the result of the player. The contact is the result of a purely reflexive effort at self-protection.

Step3 - The standards of judgment that the referee should apply when the handling offense is not immediately clear: The distance or time within which the player had time to react to avoid contact- if there was time to avoid contact, the likelihood of an offense is greater. The position of players arm or hand is in an unnatural/ unusual position at time of contact, the likelihood of an offense is greater. Directing the ball with arm or hand after accidental or reflexive contact, a handball offense has occurred.

Step4 - If a handball offense has occurred, the referee will and should signal a direct free kick to the other team.



OFFSIDE

The flag is held above the head to signal for an offside offense.



OFFSIDE POSITION

A high flag is for far offside, a horizontal flag for middle, and a low flag for near offside.



SUBSTITUTION

A flag is held above the head with both hands to indicate a substitution.



THROW-IN

A flag is held out to one side, pointing in the direction of play of the team awarded the throw.

How to Practice Soccer Using a Wall:

There may come a time when you want to improve upon your soccer skills but can't find anyone to practice passing or shooting with you. As long as you have access to a wall made out of a sturdy material such as brick, you can work on the basics of soccer all by yourself.

Step1 - Stand close to the wall and kick the ball gently against it, alternating between the sides and tops, or shoelaces, of your shoes. This step can help to get you more touches on the ball and can help you be more comfortable handling the ball.

Step2 - Move away from the wall about 10 to 15 feet. Use single touches to simulate passing the soccer ball to a teammate. Use the inside of your foot on these kicks. Aim for the middle of the ball, as this can ensure it hits the wall straight. Otherwise, the ball may soar into the air or carom away from you.

Step3 - Trap the soccer ball after you work on your passes. Control the ball by stopping it with your feet, and then kick the ball back against the wall. As you get more comfortable, incorporate speed by running up to meet the ball.

Step4 - Work on one-touches after you've mastered the trap. This means you kick the ball back against the wall without stopping it. One-touches require you to react quicker and have more control over the ball; otherwise you may be chasing after it.

Step5 - Practice shooting the soccer ball, using the shoelace part of your shoe. It's best to have a bigger wall to do this, as the ball may come back to you quickly. Using a larger wall gives you more area to shoot against.

Step6 - Turn so your back faces the wall. Throw the soccer ball into the air, turn back toward the wall and volley the ball toward the wall. This simulates a game-time play where you would control a ball through the air.

Restarts:

All restarts are an opportunity for your players to position themselves correctly and start another attack but very often, players just mill about, wondering what to do when their team has a goal kick, free kick, throw in or corner and the advantage is lost.

- The best way to teach this is to play small-sided games where the restart you're working on is repeated over and over again. This is easy to do. Just play 4v4 and begin play with the restart in question every time the ball goes out of play.
- This gives you the chance to suggest simple restart tactics during the game and gives your players lots of opportunities to have a go at what you've suggested or come up with some ideas of their own.

How to Know Beginning Soccer Fundamentals

If you're a beginner to the sport of soccer or if you need to refresh your memory on the basics, there are skills that are important to get you started. By mastering these fundamentals, you build a strong foundation on which to learn more advanced skills.

Step1 Practice dribbling--the most basic move in soccer. You must be able to jog down the field while keeping the soccer ball with you. Different dribbling techniques help you outsmart your opponent so you can get past them with the ball. As a beginner, you need to feel comfortable traveling with the ball, then move on to learn more advanced techniques.

Step2 Learn to trap and control the soccer ball. If the ball is rolling on the ground, step on it or use the inside of your foot to trap it. For balls coming at you in the air, stop them with your chest, thigh or foot depending on how high it's soaring. Get control of the ball so that you can pass or score effectively.

Step3 Improve your skills with both feet, no matter which is your dominant. As a beginner, you'll most likely use your dominant foot all of the time, but if you practice kicking the ball into a wall with your weak foot constantly, it gives you better opportunities during your soccer games to evade your opponent or score.

Step4 Get comfortable passing with the inside of your foot. It has the most area and gives you more control. If you're passing short, you'll follow through after the kick, letting your foot guide the ball for as long as it's near you. For long passes, kick the ball sharply and stop before you follow through.

Step5 Do ball touches in practice to teach yourself to be light on your feet and to stay in control of the ball. Place the ball on the ground in front of you, and lightly tap it with the ball of your foot, and quickly alternate to the other foot. The ball shouldn't move, but you should be able to move around the ball while doing the ball touches.

How to Teach Basic Soccer Skills

As in most games, the key to teaching basic soccer games is to make the players learn the skills while having lots of fun. The basic soccer skills include dribbling, shooting, heading, tackling and goalkeeping. Focus on one skill at a time and move on to the next one after some practice. Don't linger on one area for way too long, or boredom will set in and the players will start losing interest and focus.

Step1 Teach the students about the role of players in each of the three positions; forward, midfield and fullback. Split the players into three groups and line them up one behind the other. Each group plays one position for a game and then the groups switch position. This way, each of them gets to play in every position.

Step2 Introduce dribbling. This is, by far, the most important basic skill in soccer, as dribbling is how players move the ball across the field while keeping it under their control. Explain the importance of keeping the eyes on the ball, never letting the ball move more than a couple of feet away from the body, shielding the body between the ball and opponent players and always keeping an eye on the positions of other players around.

Step3 Teach shooting, which is kicking the soccer ball over a long distance, either into the opponents' net or to another player of the same team. Demonstrate and let the players practice the basic shooting steps of keeping the eye on the ball, approaching at a slight angle, placing the non-striking foot on the side of the ball, maintaining the knee of the striking leg over the ball, making contact at the center of the ball and following through with the full swing of the leg.

Step4 Introduce the idea of heading, but understand that it can be tricky to teach and trickier to master. Though there are intricate details to the technique, start with the basic skill of making contact with the ball with the forehead, eyes open until contact and mouth closed.

Step5 Practice slide tackling, where the defender must stop an opponent player. Instruct and practice slide tackling only and leave block tackling to more experienced players.

Step6 Ensure that all players practice goalkeeping. At the basic level, focus on proper catching techniques and avoid teaching diving.

How to choose the player of the year: think about how you define "player of the season". Is it the most skilful? Or is your "best player" the one who trains hard, shows respect and sets an example for the others? Once you've decided what "best" really means in this context your choice should be easy.

How to Use Soccer Slang

Step1 Bounce a ball off the top of your head and call it a "header." Headers are a popular way to score a goal or gain control of the ball. Headers can come as diving headers or standing.

Step2 Watch for "worm burners" during a tight game. This is a low, powerful shot that a player uses to catch the defense off guard. It gets its name from the fact that it blazes across the field, just above the grass, close enough to burn a worm.

Step3 Know that "dribbling" is completely different than in basketball. Everyone knows that soccer players can't use their hands, so in order to move the ball, a player must kick the ball gently in front of him.

Step4 Understand that an "attack" has nothing to do with physical violence. Attacking another team simply refers to the time when the offense moves into the other team's side of the field with the intention of aggressively scoring a goal.

Step5 Keep an eye out for "bicycle kicks" during a game. This is the most dramatic move in all of soccer and has nothing to do with two wheelers. A bicycle kick happens when a player jumps up and does a back flip to kick the ball, practically spinning himself in order to knock in a high ball. The shot gets its name from the body's similarity to a bicycle pedal spinning around.

Field Position: - Maximize space to teach team shapes

Demonstrate the need for space.

First, you need to show your players that it is easier to play soccer surrounded by space rather than other players. You can do this by setting up a very small pitch (about 20 yards by 10 yards), splitting your squad into two teams and getting them to play soccer in it.

After they have played for a few minutes, stop and ask your players if it is easy playing soccer in this space? If not, why? Someone will say it is too crowded.

Similarly, create a circle about eight yards across, spread your players around it and ask one of them to stand in the middle. Tell the players around the circle to pass to each other across the circle, keeping the ball away from the player in the middle (the 'defender').

Ask them if it is easy or hard? Then make the circle bigger and try again. Is it easier now there is more space between the players?

Make the circle really big (about 30 yards across) and repeat the exercise. Discuss why it is now easy for the 'defender' to intercept the passes. The answer is because the outside players are too far apart.

Gradually make the circle smaller again until your players discover the distance between them that makes it hard for the 'defender' to intercept the ball, but not so far apart that they can't pass accurately to each other. This is the distance you ideally want your players to be spaced apart during matches.

Shape is the key, not fixed positions

Now you have demonstrated to your players the need for space between them to play soccer effectively, you might be tempted to place them in traditional positions - defender, midfielder and attacker.

Planting players in these positions may work in the short term. But I suggest you would be better getting your players to understand the concept of 'shape' first. It's not difficult - providing your players understand why they need to have some space around them.

The most common and effective shapes in soccer are the triangle and the diamond. As your players move around during matches and practice, you should be able to see these shapes everywhere.

But let's begin with just one triangle.

Take three of your players and stand in front of them holding a ball. Ask them to form a triangle shape with two 'defenders' at the back and one 'attacker' in front. They need to be spaced the ideal distance apart (see above).

Ask them to look around and recognize the shape they have made. Now hold the ball out and move slowly around them, getting closer and further away. Get your players to keep their triangle shape pointing at you as you move around and make sure they remain the correct distance apart.

Once they have mastered the triangle, create a diamond shape by adding a fourth player behind the two defenders (in a sweeper position). Again, move around with the ball while your players maintain their shape. As you move, different players become the point of the diamond but the shape is the same.

Now put the ball on the ground and dribble it slowly around the players. See if they can stay in the diamond formation. If they can, congratulations! Your team has a 'proper' shape.

All soccer teams have defenders, midfielders, attackers and a goalkeeper.

Certainly in 11-a-side soccer you will need players in all of these positions. But in mini soccer, you could decide to play without midfielders. It depends on which formation you favor.

You could, for example, play 3-3 (three defenders and three attackers) and encourage one or two defenders to join the attack whenever they can. Your defenders have to be fit, but it can give your team an edge. Why not give it a try? If it doesn't work, you can always revert to a more traditional formation such as 3-2-1.

If you do decide to play with defenders, midfielders and attackers (I'll get to the goalkeeper later) how are you going to pick them?

Do any of your players 'naturally' fit a position? Very often, young soccer players pick their own positions. They simply emerge out of the swarm and gravitate to their preferred role. In my own U8 girls team, for example, I have players in every position but I haven't had to tell any of them where to play. They have decided for themselves.

If you are within range and you can see the goal - shoot! It's okay to miss and, if you don't shoot, you'll never score. Follow your shot. Goalkeepers often drop the ball, so make sure you are right in front of them if they do.

If you can't get a shot in, try to pass to someone who can. It's just as good to help someone else score a goal as it is to score one yourself.

If the other side get the ball, you are the first line of defense. Work hard to win the ball back.

When it's our goal kick, stand in a place where you can get the ball. Don't just hope the ball will come to you.

When it's the other team's goal kick, get to the ball before their players do. Watch the goalkeeper - where are they going to kick the ball?

Have fun!

However, other children are more visual and like to see their role explained on a whiteboard. While some (more than you might think) don't need to have their job explained at all. They have learned by playing.

The hardest position of all - the goalkeeper: Most children want to play outfield and very few want to spend much time in goal. There is nothing wrong with that, except it can give you a headache!

So unless you are very lucky, you're going to have to rotate players in this vital position.

The easiest (and fairest) way is to do it alphabetically. Aaron goes in goal for the first game, Ben goes in next and Zak goes in last. For this to work, you're going to have to spend some time coaching basic goalkeeping techniques to all your squad.

If you do have a player who wants to play in goal, make a big fuss of them and ensure they get plenty of one-to-one coaching - they are worth their weight in gold!

Be patient - Finally, you have to be patient. As long as your players are old enough, you've shown them the importance of correct spacing, demonstrated how to maintain a good shape on the field and fully explained their individual roles, they will play in the positions you want.

How to Teach Speed in Soccer:

There's a cliché in coaching: "you can't coach speed." But that's not true--there are lots of ways to build speed in soccer and to create faster individuals and a faster team. Any soccer player and any soccer team can become faster.

There are 3 types of speed in soccer:

--speed of foot (your ability to run and accelerate)

--speed of execution or technique (ability to quickly control the ball)

--speed of thought (how fast you recognize or read the game, spot opportunities or threats and adjust to changes in the game).

A player can be fast on the feet and yet play slowly (because of poor technique and an inability to recognize what is going on. The fastest players are good at all three elements. This article will give you tips on how to coach (and improve) all three elements of speed.

Step1

Build Pace or Physical Speed. Regardless of how fast your players are, you can make them faster with a lot of activities and specialized drills. The key is to do them consistently and make them interesting so that players don't just go through the motions ("oh, another stupid drill by the coach!"). Contests, drills that finish quickly, rewards, direct observation by a coach--all of these contribute to players training at full intensity.

--Interval training: jog, sprint, jog, sprint, jog, sprint, jog, sprint. Besides being great conditioning for the sport, it builds recovery (which allows players to run faster later in the game).

--Technique work: there is a science developed now to sprinting, about using longer strides, using arms correctly. There are lots of sites online with more details about this. But the idea that some people are just born fast is a lie. Work on stride, starts, muscle development, and coordination all play major roles in building speed.

--Paired bungee work. Pair players with a bungee connecting the two by Velcro. The first player tries to outspurt the second (who must keep up).

--Racing downhill (which results in a longer stride which improves speed).

--Ladder drills and cavelletti's or jumping boxes all help in this area as well.

Step2

Improving Technique and Control Speed. The faster a player can execute a move or control a ball, the quicker they can act. Conversely, a fast footed player who takes two touches to control a ball is actually a slow player who is minimizing her speed advantage. All ball control activities and juggling helps here but there are some specific challenges to improve speed.

--Work on first-time passes and shots. Who doesn't like to score goals? Send players in close to goal where they must first-time/one-touch a pass onto goal.

--Hold mini-games in tighter space or smaller fields (so players feel pressure sooner).

--Teach technique that isn't isolated. Don't teach me to control the pass. Teach me to control the pass by pushing it to the foot I'm going to shoot with (so I set my shot up quicker). Don't teach me to just trap the ball. Teach me to trap it so I've sent it to the direction I want to move.

--Penalize forwards or attackers who receive the ball and then stop and stand to pull a series of moves (which allows the rest of the defense to track back and regain shape).

--Footwork is important here. I can do a chest trap successful but be unprepared to move quickly to my left. Or I can position my feet to pivot left, chest the ball down and be instantly ready to go.

Step3

Build Speed of Thought. You can teach your players to do a better job recognizing the game and seeing things as they develop.

--Don't teach them to rely totally on the coach. After 20 minutes of scrimmage, stop and before you coach the players ask them "what did you learn? what did you see out there?" Get them so they start to see soccer as a chess match and they all have responsibilities to be on-the-field coaches.

--Teach recognition skills. When you break up to scrimmage or do mini-games, tell one side to use a specific tactic (ignore outside plan, or use a high backline to force an offside trap, or to play directly--lots of long balls forward). Then after 10 minutes and ask the other team what they saw. If no-one gets it right, make them do interval drills while dribbling (building both speed of foot and speed of execution and also provides an incentive to focus on the other team).

--Watch soccer with players and ask them to critique what they see as spectators (of a live or televised game).

--Working on movement off the ball helps build quickness of thought (because a teammate will start a diagonal run and after he takes 2 steps I know what he's trying to do).

How to Follow Sideline Etiquette for Soccer Parents

While enthusiasm and cheering can be inspiring, and it is natural to get caught up in the emotion of the game, soccer parents should take care to follow proper sideline etiquette.

Cheer, don't coach. Avoid yelling specific instructions and issuing commands. This can be extremely confusing for a child and possibly contrary to the coach's instructions.

Step2 Avoid running up and down the sidelines shouting. If you want to follow the action, make sure that you don't distract the players or block the view of other spectators.

Step3 Keep some comments to yourself. Do not speak out to the referee or linesmen. Unless they are complimentary, do not direct comments to members of the opposition.

Step4 Stay away from the goals. In most youth leagues, standing behind the goal is prohibited.

Step5 Stand, or sit, at least 3 to 5 yards back from the sidelines (touchlines). This allows the players on the field space and protects them from dangerous collisions on the sidelines.

Step6 Demonstrate good sportsmanship by applauding exceptional moves by the opposition.

Coaching tips to help manage soccer parents

The following essential soccer coaching tips will help you involve your team's parents effectively and deal diplomatically with any problems that they present.

Parents are, obviously, necessary. Sometimes they can even be useful! You can, for example, get them to transport children, fetch balls during soccer drills and provide financial support.

There will, however, be occasions when you have difficulty with one or more parents. Some may want their child to play more, while others may question your judgment as a soccer coach. You can minimize the number of times you have to deal with an angry or upset parent by following these basic soccer coaching guidelines:

1. Have a pre-season meeting before the first drill session to discuss your plans and expectations for the season.

Encourage questions from the parents and let them know that you have given a lot of thought as to how you're going to coach their children.

2. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.

3. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement.
4. Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not to the parents. No soccer coach can please everyone!
5. Know the club and game rules. Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents.
6. Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking. Listen to their viewpoint, then thank them for it.
7. Resist unfair pressure. It is your responsibility as the soccer coach to make the final decision. This doesn't mean you can't still listen to parents.
8. Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show towards you.
9. Ask parents not to criticize their children in front of anyone else. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
10. Don't blame the players for their parents' actions.
11. Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change as soon as possible.
12. Most importantly, be fair! If you treat all your players fairly and equally you will gain their respect and that of their parents as well.

Key soccer coaching tip: Remember that your children (and their parents) are not all the same. They will have a wide variety of backgrounds, beliefs and ideals. This diversity is to be valued. The challenge for you as a soccer coach is to address these differences in a positive manner so that the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved.

How to deal with complaints from soccer mums and dads

Almost every parent occasionally disagrees with your decisions as a soccer coach (whether or not you hear about it). Usually, the parent is simply putting the interests of the child first - and seeing things from the child's point of view. The following soccer coaching tips can help if this situation arises in your team.

Most parents don't complain, and are more likely to leave the team if they are unhappy with how things are handled. So, it is good to have parents who will bother to give you feedback (even if it can be painful to hear).

Most of the time, this feedback is well-intentioned - and the parent simply wants an explanation for what has happened or wants to offer some suggestions about alternative ways to do things. Most of the time, this advice is well-intentioned (and the parent had no desire whatsoever to take over the team - or to try to order you around).

What parents want Most parents have two objectives when they sign the child up: for the child to succeed and for the child to be happy. If you praise the child in front of the parent, you can rest assured that the child will give you a big grin - and you earn points in both columns. Do this as often as you can - and you will keep gripes to a minimum.

Any time that you start resenting the time that it takes to give this positive feedback, tell yourself that you could easily be spending double this time - and a lot less happily - talking to just one upset parent! In short, a good soccer coach makes the parents believe that they have wonderful, successful and happy offspring - which causes the parents to believe that the coach must be an absolutely brilliant judge of children.

Time to discuss problems But, of course, you cannot please all of the people all of the time - and you may end up with a complainer or advice-giver despite your best efforts. If this happens, listen briefly to find out what the problem is, then schedule a time to talk about it. NEVER discuss any serious problem right before a drill session (or before a game). You have work to do, and don't need the distractions (and certainly don't need to be upset yourself if any harsh things are said).

Furthermore, if the parent is really upset, you don't want any confrontation to occur in front of your players or other parents. So, set the discussion for the end of drill practice - or schedule a time to call the parent later (if this is something where the child does not need to hear the conversation).

NEVER discuss any problems or complaints right after a game. If a parent comes to you with a complaint right after a game, make up any excuse that you can and get out of there. Usually, these complaints come after a hard game and a hard loss, when everyone is upset. Give everyone time to cool off - so that things are not said which are regretted later.

Soccer coaching communication skills When you do talk to the parent, listen carefully to the parent's problem. Be calm. Try to get them to see things from your point of view. If at all possible, lavish some praise on the child during the meeting (remember parental objectives). Try to verify their reports that the child is unhappy (for instance, some parents want their child to be the goal-scoring star, while the child truly is happiest as a keeper or sweeper).

Volunteer to have a meeting with the parent and the child to talk about the situation. If the child truly is upset (for instance, he wants to be a forward, while you have rotated him to the back because he sorely needs to develop some defensive skills), talk about why you think that this is best. Usually you will be able to resolve complaints by open communication, and a calm approach to the problem.

Involve the club However, some parents simply will not be satisfied, no matter what you do. This happens quite commonly with parents who were athletes, and ended up with non-athletic children, where it is easier to cast blame than to face reality about the child's lack of skill and talent. If it is clear that you are not getting anywhere, suggest that you set up a joint meeting with club officials to talk about the problem. In the meantime, call the club to give them a “heads-up” that they might hear from this parent, if it appears that the parent is truly irate.

If worse comes to worse, take heart that “parents-from-hell” tend to stick around for only a short time. Usually, you will find that they have been very unhappy with every coach whom their child has ever had - so they go back in the pool every season. In fact, don't be surprised if, when you call the club, you hear a large sigh come out of the phone - along with a comment of “Oh, no. Not them again.”

Soccer coaching tips to handle disruptive players

It is rare for even professional teams not to have at least one player who has disruptive tendencies. In youth soccer, this form of distracting behavior can be particularly acute. The following soccer drill tips and tactics will help you tackle the problem.

Avoid long lines in drills The unwritten Law of Children Waiting in Line says that with more than three players in a line, even the most well-behaved youngster starts to mess around. For a more disruptive child, certainly those with the lowest concentration threshold, this can lead to pushing, shoving and even bullying. It is irresistible. It is also hard to control when you are further up the field watching the action. Instead, have more than one starting point, so the queues are shorter. Alternatively, have players sit down on the side when a soccer drill is completed, before returning to the queue. Ideally though, the level of activity in your soccer drills should be such that queues rarely form, but this might not always be possible.

Big groups, short chats When talking to a big group, there is a danger of disruption due to the close proximity of players. The disruptive child will often be at the back. Sit them all down, and bring the worst offenders to the front. Watch out for the players who wander behind you when you are talking. Any group situation must be on your terms. With big groups, anything more than a one-minute chat can be an ideal breeding ground for a disruptive player.

Organization, action and fun A well-organized soccer drill session, which means a lot of activity for the players, will reduce the opportunity for disruption. Too many drills, too little time for games, will mean players get bored. And the greater the action, running around, the more likely that players will become tired. A physically tired player will be less likely to muck around – they will be recovering!

Possible causes of disruptive behavior:

- Boredom – the drills and training are not challenging enough.
- Challenged – there are learning difficulties that need to be addressed sensitively.
- Influenced – the player can be easily goaded or wound up by others.
- Tired and hungry – players have simply not had enough sleep or food.

Avoid negative feedback Instead of criticism, use the “feedback” sandwich instead. Combine positive feedback with corrective feedback will make a player think about the practice or soccer drill, rather than feeling the focus is on his or her behavior.

If a player can repeat back the instructions, this shows that they understand. The worst thing you can do is use a phrase like “Well, if you had been listening and not mucking around...”. A better approach would be to say: “Good weight on the pass, Johnny, and try to improve your support play by keeping close to the first ball carrier” – this is to a player who was chatting in the line, and didn't keep up.

Excluding a player If you have tried all the tactics to keep a player in the drill session, send him away for a short space of time to “cool down”. This should never be an empty threat and be adopted only as a last resort. It should be used very sparingly and if a child has to repeatedly sit out, then you are in a situation which goes beyond normal practice management. In this case refer to your club or school's policy.

The “sit out” should take place away from the other players' eye line as much as possible, away from equipment, and in a place where you can see them. Bring them back with a quick word from you (which should look at the positives), with a response from them to indicate they understand. Then on with the drill, so a line has been drawn under the incident.

Soccer coaching tips to give players a winning mentality

Soccer teams with winning reputations, such as Barcelona, Juventus or Bayern Munich have a serious approach to the mental game. They think victory, and positive thinking dominates the club. They are winners and winning inspires positive thought. But even if you coach a losing team, you can inspire your players to victory with these essential soccer coaching tips.

That good feeling To create a winning attitude, individuals in the team must all be working with the same aim, both in training and in matches and your players must all appreciate that soccer is fun. The way to win at soccer is to enjoy it. Get

your players to realize this and they are more likely to play confidently, especially on the ball. This atmosphere creates a mental strength throughout the team which should not be underestimated.

Key soccer coaching tip: It's important your players feel proud when they pull on the team shirt, important that they go out onto the pitch thinking about the one thing they are there for, soccer. Remember to make your players feel special and individual.

Build winning teams with leadership skills It's important that your captain supports you on the field. Negative thinking can spread quickly, particularly if the one who represents the negative thinking is the captain.

Six tips to creating a winning soccer mentality

- Your soccer drills and training sessions should be fun and get everyone pulling in one direction.
- The team has a common goal but not one that is too unrealistic or ambitious like "our goal is to win the league". Our goal is to play well for each other and have a chance to win every game.
- Let the leaders lead and the others play out secondary roles because some are natural leaders and some players like to be led.
- Put players who do not see the team as a whole on the bench. You may be tempted to play your prima donna but team spirit will suffer. NO ONE WINS MATCHES ALONE.
- Everyone accepts mistakes as long as players do their best. Encourage risks, let everyone express themselves within the framework of the team: If a defender wants to run out of defense with the ball let that player do it and let them learn from it.
- Your players will appreciate the responsibility you have given them and respond to you far more than if your rules strangle their creativity.

Make your training sessions SMART If you want to make sure you're giving your players targets that they have to meet, do it the SMART way.

SPECIFIC

MEASURABLE

AGREED

REALISTIC

TIMED

So you make the target Specific: Defender will not tackle. His target therefore is 3 tackles in the first half of a match. Is it Measurable? Yes. Have you Agreed it with your player? Yes. Is it Realistic? Three tackles is not a lot but if he will not tackle at all maybe it is too much. You decide. And yes it is Timed because it is in the first half.

How to Get Better at Soccer: Not everyone is blessed with super soccer skills. It takes days, months and even years of practice. There are ways to have a better chance of making the team or seeing more playing time.

#1 - Practice daily, with your friends or by yourself. If you can recruit friends, set up a mini scrimmage. Immersing yourself in game-like situations can help your reaction time. If you're by yourself, work on perfecting moves or dribbling techniques.

#2 - Find a wall that you can kick a soccer ball against to improve your clears and shots. Be sure to ask permission first. Many professionals claim that kicking a ball against a wall was a key to their success.

#3 - Increase your stamina by running and staying in shape. Soccer players are constantly running on the field, with or without the ball, so it helps to have a high endurance.

#4 - Ask coaches on what skills you need to work. Take this as constructively as possible, as the coach just wants to see you get better at the game. If the coach thinks you need to work on your dribbling and ball control, set up cones or obstacles to dribble around. If the coach thinks you need better kicks, go back to Step 2.

How to Understand The Offside Rule in Soccer

The rule for offside in soccer is very challenging. The reason this soccer rule is so challenging is that it really is up to the main referee's opinion on how to apply the offside rule. Basically the rule could read if the referee says so you are offside.

You can't be offside from a goal kick, throw-in, corner kick, if you're in your own half or if the ball is passed backwards.

You are ALWAYS Onside When:

- > Running from the player's own half.
- > Level with the second last opponent.
- > Level with or behind the ball.
- > Not actively involved in play in front of the offside line.
- > Receiving the ball from a goal kick, a throw-in or a corner.

Step1 The soccer rule for offside has a set in stone formula. According to FIFA' laws(Federation International Ball Association, "A player is in an offside position if he is nearer to his opponents goal line than both the ball and second last opponent."

Step2 The position of offside is easier to determine than breaking the rule. A player can be in an offside position and not break the rule. The rule involves where the player is when the ball is kicked not received. This means if it is kicked while the player is onside he can step offside to receive the ball.

Step3 The offside rule cannot be broken if: 1) the player is on his side of the field. 2)has at least two opponents between the player and the goal(the goalie counts as one). 3) The player receives the soccer ball from a goal kick, corner kick or throw in. A free kick can cause an offside call.

Step4 The penalty for making this error in soccer is a free kick for the other team. This is most controversial rule in soccer, because it is very subjective to the referee and the league. That is the offside rule in soccer.

How to Know the Soccer Offside Rule:

The rules of soccer are easy to understand for players and fans alike, except for the dreaded offside rule. An offside call is one of the most difficult soccer calls for players and fans to understand. Explore the offside rule and attempt to gain an understanding of this complicated soccer rule.

Step1 - Stay on your team's side of the soccer field and you will never be in an offside position. To be offside, a player must be in active play and on the opposing team's side of the field.

Step2 - Look to see which players on the opposing team's side of the field are in active play. See who is interfering with the players on the opposing team, trying to gain an advantageous position on the field or actively engaged in moving the soccer ball.

Step3 - Watch the opposing team's defense. Look for two defensive players between the soccer ball and the goal. If only one defensive player, normally the goalkeeper, is between the ball and the goal, conditions are right for an offside call.

Step4 - Position yourself between the ball and the goal when only one defensive player from the opposing team is on the opposing side of the field with you. This is a potential offside situation.

Step5 - Distract the goalie, block an opposing player from taking a defensive position or look the wrong way at the ref and force an offside call. A penalty call gives the defending team an indirect free kick.

Step6 - Stay behind the soccer ball or even with the last defender to prevent an offside call. A goal made while offside does not count. Remember, you are offside if you are closer to the goal than the ball and the second last defender.

How to Stay on Sides in Soccer

In soccer, an important element of the game is to understand the rules of staying on side. Breaking these rules results in an off-side situation. This may or may not be an offense, depending on the circumstances. You are off side if you are closer to the goal of the opposing side than the ball and any of their players (excluding the goalie).

Step1 Learn the rules of soccer regarding how to stay on side and follow them to the letter during all practices.

Step2 Avoid running ahead of the ball when playing at an offensive position, like the center forward. You could end up with a situation where you are ahead of every other player in the opponent's side of the field.

Step3 Stay on your side of the field if your position is one of defense. You cannot break the staying on sides rules when you are on your half of the field.

Step4 Make it a habit to stay a couple of steps behind the last defender of the opposing team to ensure that you are not called offside.

Step5 Remain three or four steps behind the ball if you are supporting another player who has the ball and is on the offensive. You can easily push ahead should the other player pass the ball back to you, but otherwise, this will keep you safely on side.

Step6 Watch out for defenders moving forward, away from their own goal, to trap you behind them in an offside position. If you don't have the ball under your control, constantly watch for your position vis-a-vis those of the last line of defense. It could be a hard thing to notice in the middle of the game. However, don't get so worried about staying on sides that it affects your game. Remember that offside, by itself, is not an infringement.

Step7 Ensure that you are on side during a free kick. Offside rules are in effect during a free kick and one could easily step over to the other side without realizing it.

* Staying on side is a difficult element to remember. Offensive players will have this challenge. Maintaining certain standard rules of thumb like staying behind the ball will cut down the chances of breaking the rules.

* Don't argue a linesman's call on off side. It's a very hard call to make and during an offensive around the goal, it's fairly easy to make a mistake. However, questioning a referee's call on the soccer field breaks the spirit of the game and creates an unsavory situation.

Players Who Are Repeatedly Committing Fouls:

Perhaps they watch too much professional soccer. The pro game is full of players who think that it's perfectly OK to trip, push and kick opponents. "Taking one for team" (i.e. being booked for fouling a player who is about to score) earns tacit approval from commentators, and managers are regularly heard defending players who are dismissed for dangerous and repeated fouling. It's not so surprising, perhaps, that even children as young as nine or 10 can believe the rules of soccer are flexible and there's no shame in breaking them.

- You must take immediate corrective action. If you don't, your team will get a reputation that will be hard to shake off.

- Explain that without rules, soccer would cease to be a game of skill. Instead, it would become a battle that the strongest, biggest players would always win. Do they want to play the "beautiful game" or would they prefer to win matches by kicking their opponents off the pitch?

- In training, remove any player who commits a deliberate foul. Put him in a "sin bin" for two minutes. If he does it again, put him in the bin for longer. If that doesn't work, tell your players that cheating in training (for that is what fouling is) will be punished by missing the next match.

- Also, tell your players that if anyone commit a deliberate foul in a match, they will be subbed immediately.

How to pick the Team Captain:

The captain is the leader and the most important link between the players and the coach, so picking the right candidate is essential to every team. The role of team captain remains one of the most influential jobs in soccer and it is a position that can be vital to a team's performance. The leadership qualities were identified as being important in the selection of a good captain. These included good communication skills, a sound knowledge of the game, effective decision-making, and the ability to both motivate and offer a consistent level of performance on the pitch. There are two different approaches to leadership that make for effective captains – either an aggressive and commanding attitude or a technically skilled leader who can inspire others when leading by example. A combination of both was deemed to make for the ideal candidate.

- The leader on the pitch, the captain is the principle communicator with the referee and the most important link between the players and the coach.
- An influential voice during the game, an effective captain is able to dictate the mood and play of team-mates and should set an example. For instance, if the captain becomes angry with the ref and constantly questions decisions, teammates cannot be expected to accept refereeing decisions themselves – and as a result, team discipline will fall apart.
- When deciding on the captaincy, a coach also has to ensure he selects someone mentally strong enough as it's a job with responsibilities. A captain needs to remain focused under pressure during the game in order to make the correct decisions at the right time, and this can take considerable mental fortitude.
- While some coaches allow the players to choose their own captain, or vote for a shortlist from which the coach selects, an effective coach will know the importance of the role and how much of an impact the appointment of a good captain can make to a team's attitude and discipline.
- You can sound out the opinions of your players, but ultimately the final choice should be down to you. The most important thing to remember is that every captain is an individual and very different personalities can be successful wearing the armband.

Mental Strength: As the team's leader the captain will be always criticized, even by team-mates. A captain will have to possess the mental toughness to ignore criticism and remain focused on making the right decisions on the pitch.

Team Knowledge: A good captain knows the players inside out. Understanding what makes them tick and what makes them explode, the captain will have the power to either fire them up or rein them in as the situation requires.

A soccer Brain: An effective captain should be able to teach team-mates by sharing a knowledge of the game. It also helps to be able to spot what's going wrong on the pitch and make others understand how to put it right.

A Good Ear: A good captain should take in what the coach is saying, whether it's on the training ground or in the dressing room. It helps to have an understanding of what the coach requires from the team on the pitch, particularly if it's time for Plan B.

Communication Skills: Every captain needs to be able to communicate well, both to team-mates and to the referee. That doesn't mean the captain has to have the loudest voice on the pitch, but being able to inspire others with just a few words is a vital skill.

Heart: Great captains have 'heart'. If players get the feeling that their skipper would run through the pain barrier for the sake of the team, they're far more likely to dig deep to find the strength and fortitude to do it themselves.

Discipline: A good captain has to fire up the team but must never lose emotional control on the pitch. Leading by example is important, as is making clearheaded decisions under intense pressure.

Confidence: Confidence is a contagious quality and a self-confident captain can inspire a sense of confidence in other players. It's a quality that will also help enable the captain to play at an extremely high level of performance consistently.

Playing Ability: The captain doesn't have to be the best player on the pitch but has to be able to justify a place in the starting line-up. There's no point in picking someone who struggles to make the team, as he won't command respect.

Strong Work Ethic: Whether it's encouraging team-mates to give that extra focus in training, or cajoling them to give 110 per cent on match day, a good captain is often the hardest working member of the team.

The 100 Percenter: Able to run through the pain barrier and lift team-mates with an unmatched work rate. Steven Gerrard.

The Warrior: A captain who battles for the team and who can inspire better players to greater heights. Carles Puyol.

The Commander: A vocal leader, shouting instructions and commanding team-mates to raise their game. John Terry.

The Star: Neither vocal nor demanding, The Star captain tends to lead by his own example on the pitch. David Beckham

The Voice Of Experience: Respected because of experience and appointed because of seniority. Iker Casillas.

The Hard Man: A combative leader who can inspire team-mates by intimidating the opposition. Nemanja Vidic.

Six attributes to look for in a team captain

The role of team captain has the potential to be both the most challenging and the most rewarding role of all for a player. If you're about to appoint, consider the following soccer coaching tips on qualities to look for.

Even today, with leadership roles and responsibilities shared amongst the players, the skipper's role remains central to the team's performance.

Not only must captains be competent in their playing, they need to inspire confidence in their players, evaluate the game plan and change it if circumstances dictate. They need to handle pressure well, make tactical decisions and communicate effectively with the referee as well as the team.

Not only is the captain a player, he is a leader, communicator, key decision maker, and important link between team and coach. What, then, should you as a coach be looking for in your captain?

1. Each captain is different The first thing to remember is that there is no one set of characteristics possessed by effective captains. Very different personalities can be successful captains.

2. Mentally strong The mental part of the job is arguably the hardest part. All captains should be mentally strong. Inevitably, the captain will be criticized at some point, both within and outside the team.

Equally, the captain needs to remain focused and aware while under intense pressure during a game, so that he can make the correct decisions at the right time. To cope with this requires considerable mental fortitude.

Some captains say the mental aspect of captaincy is the hardest part, because there is so much more to think about, as well as playing.

3. Excellent communicator KISS – Keep It Simple Stupid

This is a skill required by all captains. The captain will need to encourage and manage on-field communication between all the players, as well as maintaining effective communication both with players and between players and the coaching staff off of it. However, this does not mean that the only voice to be heard on the field should be that of the captain.

Indeed, the captain should only speak when necessary, being able to keep his communication concise and to the point.

4. Emotionally disciplined “Fire in the belly but ice in the brain.”

This is important for three main reasons:

a) As a role model the example set by the captain must meet every expectation he has of the players. For example, if the captain becomes angry with the referee and constantly questions his decisions, he cannot expect his players to accept refereeing decisions themselves.

b) If the captain loses self-control and vents his anger or frustration (whether against an opponent, teammate or the referee), he will have lost the ability to make rational decisions. His own performance will also suffer; a loss of emotional control will affect timing, co-ordination and the ability to “read” the game as awareness becomes more narrowly focused.

c) A loss of emotional control will be seen as a sign of weakness by the opposition, boosting their confidence whilst undermining that of the team. This does not mean that your captain becomes an emotionless robot, devoid of passion.

5. Knows the players The first thing you have to remember as captain is while soccer is very much a team game you are dealing with individuals who are all different in attitudes, temperament and experience. Thus you have to find out each person’s strengths and weaknesses... And you have to find out which players best respond to the carrot and which to the stick.

The captain should have the ability to deal with each player as an individual. Consequently, he will know what motivates different players and how they prefer to prepare themselves mentally for a game (not all players respond to being shouted and/or sworn at!).

He or she should observe players both on and off the field in order to learn how best to deal with them.

The captain needs to know which players are best left alone, which require a quiet reminder of expectations and which need a more forceful articulation of what is required.

The captain that also takes time to get to know his teammates as people and not just players will ultimately achieve far more respect and effort from them.

6. Self-confident “Don’t ask me how I played. I always think I played well.” A self-confident captain inspires confidence in others. It also helps him maintain his own performance.

This is easy when things are going well, it is harder, but arguably even more important, to do so when the going gets tough. The captain needs to make sure he at least gives the impression of confidence in these circumstances.

Looking and acting confident will, sooner or later, lead to being confident.

Guide your players, don't kick every ball yourself

Many coaches have an 'instructor' style, constantly telling players what to do and when to do it. This is not the best way to teach children how to play soccer (or anything else for that matter). It's much better to act as a 'facilitator' and help your players find their own answers to soccer problems.

Objective: To encourage players to pass correctly.

Skill level: Beginner to intermediate.

Number of players: The whole squad.

Set up: Create a 20 yards by 30 yards playing area with one dozen cones spread equally around the edge. Divide your players into pairs with one ball between each pair.

How to play: Players dribble within the playing area, passing to their partner. After every pass, the passing player runs around one of the cones and back into the playing area. The receiver is limited to a set number of touches. On the second or third touch (depending on how experienced your players are), they have to return the pass regardless of where their partner is.

You can make the game competitive by challenging your players to make a set number of passes or see which pair can make the most number of successful passes in two or three minutes.

What does the instructor do? The instructor will tell their players to pass towards feet or space if their partner is running towards them, and to pass into space if they are running away. The instructor may also tell their players that they know their partner is ready to receive a pass if they are making eye contact with them. They will tell their players not to pass the ball so hard that their partner can't control it.

While the instructor's players may look like they are passing correctly, they are not learning why they are doing it. So the exercise is largely wasted. The instructor's players aren't learning anything except how to follow orders.

It's little wonder these coaches get frustrated and send me emails saying, "they can do it in training, so why can't they do it on match days?"

What does the facilitator do? A coach who is using the 'guided discovery' method will ask questions such as:

"If your partner is running towards you, where should you pass the ball?"

"If your partner is running away from you, where should you pass the ball?"

"How do you know your partner is ready to receive the pass?"

"Why do you think your partner couldn't control that pass?"

"Which foot should you use for your first touch?"

"What part of your foot should you pass with?"

And so on.

There may be no right or wrong answers to these questions. But by asking a question and waiting for an answer, instead of simply telling them what to do, you are forcing your players to think the problem through. It also means you won't continue talking until they have come up with the answer.

There will be times when your players are unable to come up with an answer. If that happens you will need to tell them, and it's fine to do that. However, if the game and questions are well thought out, your players should be able to answer by themselves.

You may find your players are resistant to this kind of learning. Many are used to being told what to do and expect it, so you need to be patient. But the pay-off is worth it.

If you can create a team of youngsters who can come up with their own answers to problems on the field, you will have a strong, confident team that will learn quickly and solve problems on match days without any intervention from you.

How to Play Well With Others: Soccer Teamwork Tips Part I

Think soccer stardom is won on technical skills alone? Think again. Beyond individual ability, scouts at international soccer schools look at how players work with their team. They don't want to sign a player who's going to disrupt harmony within the squad. They're going to research, talk to coaches and parents, and get background information about team attitude. What they want is a well-rounded soccer player, someone whose teamwork skills will fit into their system from day one. That's a big part of what scouts look for, and it's the same thing we tell players in our international soccer schools.

A lot of players show individual ability. Good team players take the game to the next level.

Step1 Dedicate one training session per day to team-oriented play. Set up scrimmages and organized positional plays.

Let players know where they should play a specific position on the field. Make it a priority to interact with teammates.

Develop an instinct for how each player reacts.

Step2 - Participation is key. It's important for all players to attend the practice sessions. You build relationships with your teammates, the same as players in international soccer schools. It's almost second nature, a sort of inbuilt telepathy. You know where people are going to be on the field. You know what they're going to do with the ball. You build those relationships through many hours of practice as a team.

Step3 - Building better teamwork off the field. Chemistry for teams works the same at home as it does in international soccer schools. You have to learn to live with the good and bad about everyone. When you step over the line on the field, you're as one. You've got to be as one off the field as well.

Social activities bond teams together so you can understand each other's personalities. Activities can be simple: a hiking trip, paintball, laser tag, or something similar. It doesn't have to be soccer-related.

Step4 - Training like a pro. Players in international soccer schools concentrate on teamwork as well as technical skills.

Don't forget to implement that at home. Coaches and parents talk about players showing better organizational skills, reading the game better, and helping organize their teammates into different positions on the field.

How to Play Well With Others: Soccer Teamwork Tips Part II Sometimes it happens. You end up playing on a team with less ability than you. You're facing different levels of skill and motivation, and you have to work with what you have.

Step1 - Set the pace. Lead by example, and pull the team together with you. Work hard during practice, and let everyone see you're committed to the team. During games, don't let yourself shine above and beyond the team. Instead, focus on bringing everyone together to get the best out of every player.

Step2 - Don't tear down your teammates. Sometimes on amateur teams, a player with more technical ability than others will berate their teammates for mistakes. Players in international soccer schools learn positive reinforcement, encouraging fellow players when they do well to bring them up. Practice this positive reinforcement at home.

If a teammate makes a mistake, it's not a problem. Give them a pat on the back, and say, "Let's not make this mistake again. We're all in this together." Players who do that make a difference with their attitude towards their own teammates.

Step3 - Training like a pro. Coaches and parents talk about players showing better organizational skills, reading the game better, and helping organize their teammates into different positions on the field.

How to Play a Soccer Conditioning Game

There are a variety of ways to build coordination, stamina and endurance for soccer. Because traditional methods like jogging and running tend to be boring, soccer coaches are constantly searching for new drills that are fun, as well as challenging. Here's a good conditioning game for you to try out with your players that keeps their reflexes sharp and their bodies in shape.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Step1

Divide your soccer players into groups of two. If you've got an uneven number of players, put them in pairs and keep the remaining player out as the first chaser.

Step2

Appoint one of the players to be the chaser. The conditioning game is a variation of tag, so one of them will have need to be "It" to start.

Step3

Position the pairs of players in a large ring. The ring's size depends on the group's age and their fitness level, but aim for one at least 20 feet in diameter. This gives them plenty of room to run.

Step4

Blow a whistle or give a shout to signal the beginning of the game. The chaser must now run toward one of the pairs of players.

Step5

Make sure one of the players in the first pair breaks off and sprints away from the chaser.

Step6

Have the chased player run toward another pair. When he or she reaches this pair, one of the new players breaks off and tries to elude the player who's "It" by running toward another pair.

Step7

Allow the chaser to join one the groups when he or she tags her opponent. Once a player is tagged, he or she is now it and must continue chasing the others until he or she tags one of them.

Step8

Keep the conditioning game going until each of the players has had the chance to run around and get good exercise.

How to Play The 4-4-2 Formation in Soccer

There are different formations used in the game of soccer. One of the more popular formations is the 4-4-2. This formation is commonly used in Europe and played by a lot of the bigger English Premier League clubs. What follows is simple way of looking at this formation.

Step1

In the back, the four defenders will be set up with two central ones and two outside defenders. The two central defenders are usually tall and stronger (not always) than the two on the outside. On the other hand, the two outside defenders are usually quick and able to run up and down the sidelines.

Step2

The coach has the option of using a few different variations in the midfield. The midfield will be composed of four players. There is the diamond formation with a holding midfielder (a player with more defensive responsibilities), two outside wing players, and an offensive midfielder. This is one option. The other common option is with two holding midfielders and two creating midfielders in front of them.

Step3

Finally, there are two forwards or strikers. Again, depending on how the coach's preference the forwards duties might be a little different. There can be all out strikers going for the goal or just one with the other one right behind him or her.

Playing soccer is not that difficult and having a proper formation on the pitch is ideal. With practice all the players should be on the same page.

How to Read a Soccer Player Reading a soccer player takes hours of practice and hard work. The goal of a soccer player is to keep possession of the ball and score his goal. This means the soccer player will send out miscommunications about where the ball and player are going to achieve his ultimate goal. The key to defense is to read the soccer player in advance of his moves.

Step1 - Watch the player's eyes. A player can't make a blind move. He will look in the direction of the move at some point. Pinpoint when the player usually looks into the direction of his next move. Watch his eyes.

Step2 - Observe the player's body movement. There are a few tricks soccer players use to fake one direction and go another. Observe how often the player in question uses these moves, when she uses these moves and which direction she usually goes.

Step3 - Watch the position of the player's body. A body facing right can't all of a sudden go left. Watch where the body is facing and think logically if an alternate move could be made. Let reason dictate your action.

Step4 - Play it safe. Keep your body "square" to the player you are trying to read. Place your feet at 1 and 7 o'clock and then switch to 11 and 5 o'clock. Bounce back and forth between these two positions. Move backward with the player you are trying to read. Stay light on your feet, ready to sprint in either direction.

Step5 - Make a choice. Most goalies learn how to read a player because sometimes that is all they have. Play it safe and stay with the player as long as possible. When you need to make a choice about which direction you are to run or the ball is to go, do it. Don't second-guess yourself. Make a decision and go hard. * Watch the player you want to read in action. Watch videos of your opponent's playing in games and his team's style.

Why certain positions are best for your child: All children have different qualities. Some are good at passing, some are 'natural' goal scorers and some are brilliant athletes. Goal scoring isn't everything. Make sure your son knows that other qualities are just as important, if not more so.

Discipline problems? When children don't turn up to training sessions to study soccer, but want to kick a ball, chat with their friends and generally have what they think is fun. That's not misbehavior, it's natural. A coach who demands eight-year-old children should listen to them 100% of the time is definitely going to get frustrated and anxious. Whereas, a coach who wants to be liked by their players is going to worry that they are not going to be liked when they need to correct poor behavior. Good planning is vital

1. Age appropriate activities Trying to make six-year-olds do things more appropriate to 12-year-olds (and vice versa) is guaranteed to create frustration among your players and cause you a lot of stress. You need to challenge the more experienced players, but you must also make certain all your players have the necessary core skills before moving on to more complicated moves and tactics.

2. Standing in lines Nothing will likely result in young soccer players turning off as using drills that involve them standing in lines. There are no lines in matches so there shouldn't be any lines in training. Use small-sided games (SSGs) instead. You can't expect children to obey rules if: They don't know what they are. They don't understand why they have to obey them. They are imposed without any discussion.

Coaching tip: If your players persist in talking while you're talking, be silent and wait until they stop. Usually, peer pressure will prevail and the offenders will be told to 'shut up' by their team mates. If this doesn't work, walk away. Tell them it's their team, not yours, and if they want to chat instead of work then that's okay. But you won't waste your time listening to them.

The carrot is more effective than the stick: Another mistake some coaches make is to punish but never reward. When a player, or players, make an effort to master a skill, tell them how pleased you are. But you must be sincere - children see through false flattery very easily.

Boost support play with this quality session

Length of session: 45 to 60 minutes.

Suggested age range: Under-8s or older (the session can be used with younger players if the One Touch game is modified, as described below).

Number of players: The whole squad.

Equipment: Flat cones, two mini soccer goals or poles, a few balls and bibs to differentiate teams.

Preparation: Using the flat cones, set up a 40 yards by 30 yards playing area for every 8 or 10 players in your squad.

Warm-up and get ready

1. Players warm-up after a brief discussion of the session objective. Younger players can play a game that involves gentle movement and ball work. Anatomy dribbling and/or Sharks and minnows are ideal. Older children will benefit from a warm-up that includes ball work and stretches.

Pass, pass and pass again

2. Split your squad into teams of four or five and play netball. Have two teams per playing area. The standard netball rules apply. For instance, there is no physical contact, players cannot run with the ball, a maximum of three seconds are allowed between catching and passing, and defenders have to stand a minimum of three feet away from the player with the ball (this stops players crowding around each other).

Players score by either throwing the ball into the goal or by passing to a player stationed on the end line. The first team to 10 goals, or to make 15 successful passes, wins.

COACHING POINT: Encourage fast, decisive passing, and give and go's. Tell your players to pass back and start again if they can't pass forward, and to use the full width of the pitch.

Use space wisely

3. Keep your players in their teams of four or five. If you have an odd number, it doesn't matter if one team has an extra player. Have two teams per playing area. Position the teams either side of a goal at each end and ask the players to give themselves a number 1 to 4 or 1 to 5 (this can take some time!).

You stand on the side of the playing area with a couple of balls. Throw a ball into the middle of the playing area and call out a number. The players with that number chase for the ball, compete for it and, whoever wins it, must score in the opposite goal.

The team that is scored against adds another player, so it is now 2v1. Every time a team concedes they add another player. Eventually, the game will end up 4v4 or 5v5.

COACHING POINT: The team with the numerical advantage must use it! Supporting players need to find space, stay the right distance from the ball carrier (within passing range but not too close) and tell the ball carrier where they are - not just shout 'pass'.

4. Play the One Touch game. This is a normal soccer game played by teams of three, four or five with one condition - goals can only be scored with a player's first touch. You can allow two or three touches for younger players.

COACHING POINT: The one touch condition requires players to support each other in attack, get their heads up when they have the ball, and it rewards 'unselfish' play.

Using the Video:

Why not use your video camera as a teaching aid? Camcorders can be incredibly helpful in analyzing practice technique as well as match play. Each player has a built-in ignorance to the faults that he or she possesses. These same players can recognize when their teammates make mistakes, but rarely believe that they are capable of these same mistakes themselves. Of course this is obvious, after all, it is pretty-much impossible to view yourself while playing the game. This is where the camera comes in.

As soon as a player is sitting in front of a television watching him/herself play, the player is forced to view him/herself as a teammate would, instead of as the player's own mind views it. (It was quite embarrassing when I had my first run-in with videotape action: There I was, chasing the imaginary gophers in the backyard and having a great time...but what I didn't notice was that my daily food suppliers were videotaping the event from the living room window. It wasn't until a few weeks later that I heard uproarious laughter coming from the television room. When I got there to see what was going on, I saw eight people watching a goofy dog run around like a bonehead in the backyard. That dog was me. It occurred to me then, just because it felt perfectly normal to me at the time, it wasn't necessarily normal in someone else's eyes.) The point being: much can be learned when viewing one's own actions as an outsider via videotape.

I used to go to the park with one of the goalkeepers that I was coaching at the time. We would set-up the camcorder and videotape the practice session. It was very helpful for the keeper to watch himself on video and to be able to make the same comments that I would normally offer. It was in this way a very useful coaching tool.

Analyzing matches. Spend time mapping out soccer games: Example: The game is between two teams, the Sharks and the Jets. The blue marker represents the Sharks, the red marker represents the Jets. You'll want to use the slow-mo option on your VCR. Every time a player from the Sharks touches the ball, a blue dot is placed on the paper. If a player is dribbling, each touch is a blue dot with a connecting line between each dot. A string of blue dots with a space and then another blue dot means a successful pass. If a red dot after the space, the ball changed possession.

It is necessary to write notes above the dot notations as reference. Things such as fouls, shots, saves, free kicks, throw-ins, goals, and the times that each of these occurred can be very helpful in later analyzing the match.

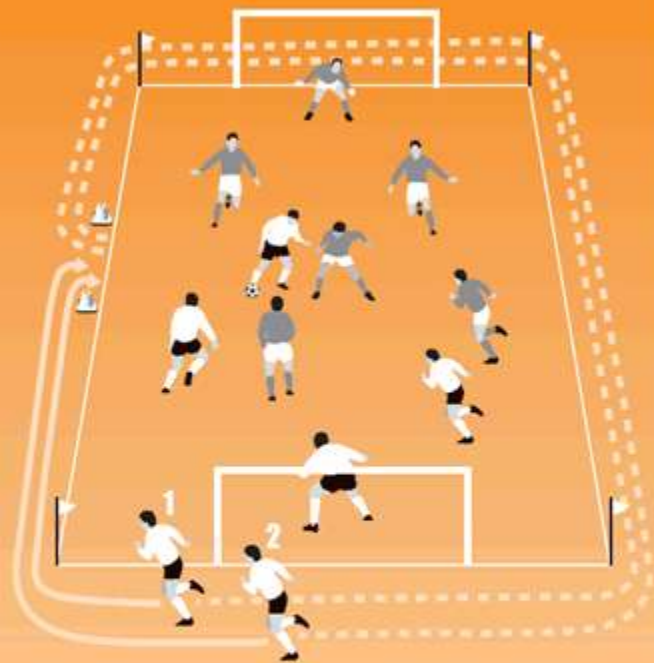
Once the match is mapped, it is very easy to quickly determine game statistics. In addition to being able to count shots, fouls, throw-ins and the like, the number of consecutive passes, team possession and the play leading up to scoring opportunities can also be determined.

Videotape is also an excellent way to show your players things they are doing wrong with proof to offer right before their eyes. "Kevin, notice how in this play, Chris was wide open to your left, but your head was down and instead you forced the ball inside where it was intercepted by our opponent." Even the best player on the team will be able to notice mistakes that he/she made during a match. Video will offer humility to your team. It is also a lot of fun to show at pizza parties.

direction of run \Rightarrow pass \Rightarrow shot \rightarrow

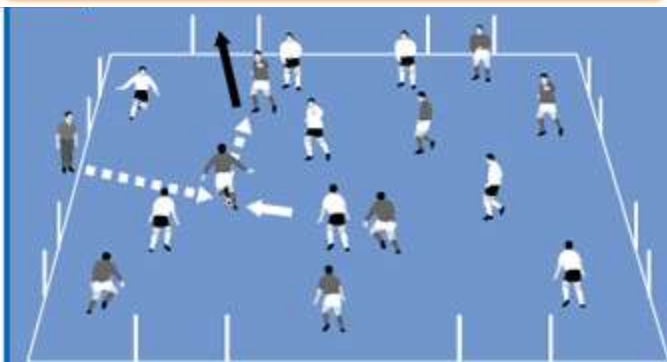


Adapting to more or less players on the pitch



Two teams, A and B in a 6v6 formation on the training pitch. Players 1 and 2 from team A leave the pitch to run around it. Team B have more players and try to attack. Team A have to defend with less players.

ground covered \Rightarrow direction of run \Rightarrow



Pass through one of your team's gates to score in this game.

Prepare your team for playing one man down

Get your players practicing the following soccer training drill to help them cope in match situations when the team is one player short.

In preparation for matches where the team is one player short, I tell my defenders to play a tight line and not get pushed and pulled out of position by the extra man. I cut the front two down to just one and tell my midfielders I want them to run at the opposition and create as many chances as they can.

When you're coaching your players in this situation, save your key coaching points until the end of the soccer drill before talking them through with the players.

How to set up the drill

Set up a 6v6 game on a small-sided pitch. You can either use two small, coned goals at each end (four goals altogether) or large goals with goalkeepers.

Every player on each team has a number.

How to run the drill

Start and play as normal, then after a couple of minutes shout numbers one and two, and the team - in this case team A. Those players must leave the field and jog/run around the boundary of the field.

They then re-enter the match at the exact point they left. After they have returned, the coach tells players 1 and 2 of team B to exit and run around the field.

The next players to leave are 3 and 4 of team A, etc.

Key soccer coaching tips: the coach may want the team with the extra numbers to speed up play to capitalize on their numerical advantage. However, a more conservative build-up to find the "holes" may be the coaching preference. Defensively, the team with numbers may want to play high pressure, looking for double teams and providing adequate support to the ball.

Change direction soccer drill

Use this soccer coaching drill session to get your players moving the ball in different directions to build an attack. Defenders must also be able to react to different angles of approach.

Soccer drill set up

Set up a 30x30 yard square, divided into quarters with two goals on each side of the square.

How to run the drill

- The white teams play against the grey teams on horizontal half-pitches. To score, the ball must be passed along the ground between the poles at either end.
- Switch so that the teams are playing new opponents 4v4 on the vertical half-pitches. Whenever the coach calls "switch" the players must quickly take up positions in relation to the new direction of play.

Develop the soccer drill

All of the players are now on the pitch and play 8v8 with the center lines taken out. Each team is given four gates to score

in. The coach continuously passes balls onto the crowded pitch and the players must try to open out and make a good, grounded pass through one of their gates to score.

Soccer drill tips for new player try outs

Whether you are putting together a new soccer team, getting in players to strengthen it during the season, or the next-door neighbor is badgering you to let his child join the team, you need to be able to assess playing ability. Use these soccer **coaching** tips to guide you.

Here's the ball - show me what you can

When you give trials to players who want to join your team, find out if they have a (soccer) brain by using a series of simple test soccer drills.

Set up a soccer drill: Use two defenders a goalie for this drill. Three midfielder/attackers. Defenders on the goal attackers on the halfway line.

Run the soccer drill: On your whistle, sets of players move off. The defenders' is to win the ball and stop a shot; the attackers' aim is to create a goal. Give the to the player you are trialing, let him use brain to take the 3v2 situation to a conclusion. If he is any good he will create goal-scoring chance.

Change the drill

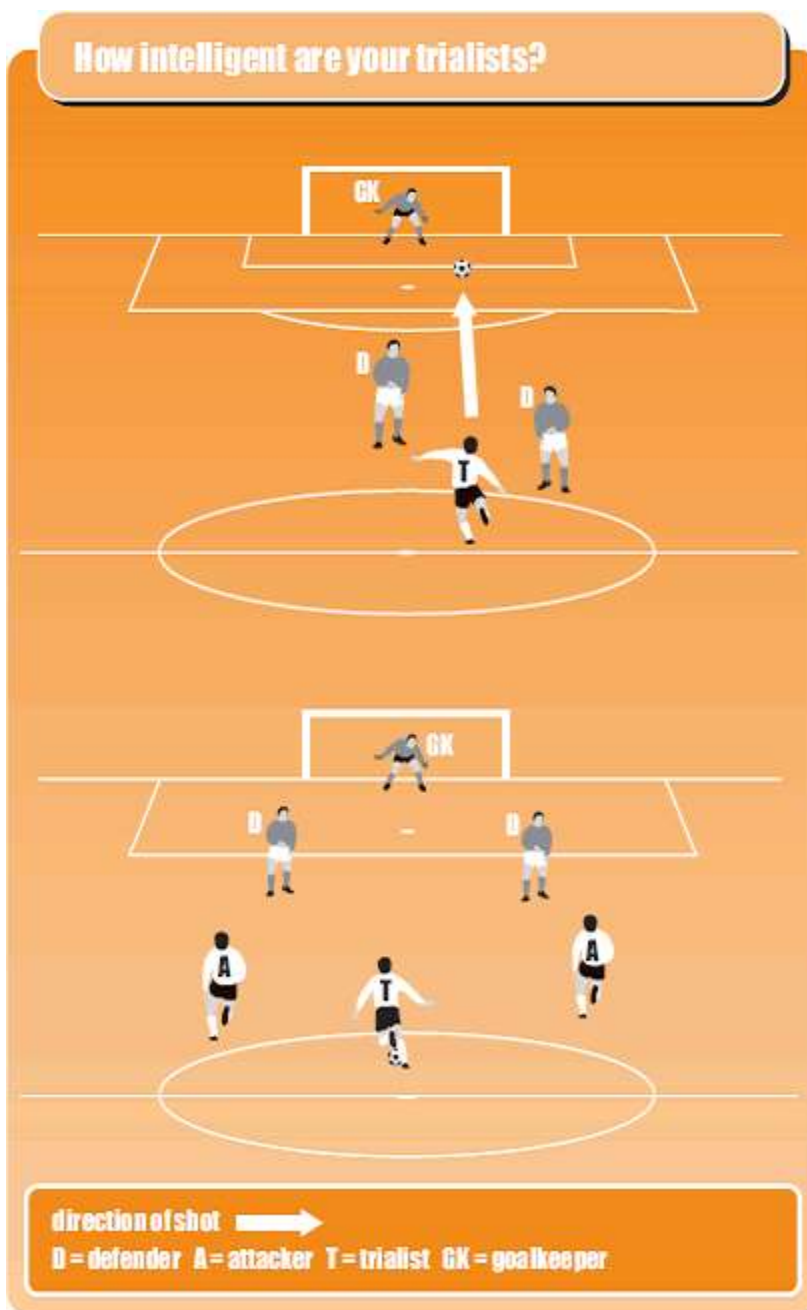
After each run-through, take away one of attackers in the soccer drill, so you now 2v2, then let your prospective new player at the defenders on his own. Watch how he deals with the situation of having more players, then less players than the defenders he is facing.

Stack the odds against the trialist

On the final run, when he is faced with two defenders, what should he do? I would shoot from a distance over the advancing defenders and try to catch the goalkeeper guard. But maybe there is a better way.

Give your trialist a second chance

During this trial soccer drill, where a player not made the best decision about the pass has chosen, you can stop the game. The goes back to the player who made the pass. Now at this point you, the soccer coach, ask the question "What was the better pass?" Give your trialist a chance to shine.



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Refereeing:

There are over 70 soccer rules. The official soccer rules are called the "Laws of the Game" and are revised annually by FIFA, the world soccer governing body. See [Free Kicks and Shootouts](#) | [Penalty Kicks \(PK's\)](#) | **See:** <http://www.watchandwhistle.org/> and <http://www.fifa.com> and askasoccerreferee.com and InTheOpinionOfTheReferee.Com

The Laws of the Game are organized as follows:

- Law 1 – The Field of Play
- Law 2 – The Ball
- Law 3 – The Number of Players
- Law 4 – The Players' Equipment
- Law 5 – The Referee
- Law 6 – The Assistant Referees
- Law 7 – The Duration of the Match
- Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play
- Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play
- Law 10 – The Method of Scoring
- Law 11 – Offside
- Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct
- Law 13 – Free Kicks
- Law 14 – The Penalty Kick
- Law 15 – The Throw-in
- Law 16 – The Goal Kick
- Law 17 – The Corner Kick

 Caution or Expulsion Referee holds Yellow card Or Red card above head	 Play On / Advantage Referee indicates with his hands That the Advantage Rule Applies and play should continue	 Direct Free Kick Referee points in The direction of kick	 Indirect Free Kick Referee raises his hand Until ball is kicked And Touched by another player	 Goal Kick Referee points to a corner Of goal area from Which kick is to be taken	 Corner Kick Referee points towards corner Of the field from which Kick is to be taken	 Goal Kick Assistant Referee Points his flag at goal area From which kick Is to be taken
 Penalty Kick Referee points To penalty mark From which kick Is to be taken	 Substitution Assistant Referee Signals to the referee By holding his flag Overhead	 Throw-In Assistant Referee Holds The flag out To his side, Pointing in the direction The throw is To be taken	 Corner Kick Assistant Referee Points his flag At corner area From which kick Is to be taken	 Offside Assistant Referee Points his flag straight up Above his head To signal offside Violation to	 Offside Location After Assistant Referee Signals offside, He then shows location of infraction By holding his flag out In front of him -- flag held high Indicates infraction occurred At far side of the field, Middle =	

On every free kick, the first judgment call for the referee is whether the ball has been kicked. In most circumstances, a tap on the top of the ball with the bottom of the foot is not a kick. But, the wise referee also observes the players, the level of play, and uses a feel for the game to make that decision.

The problem, of course, is that the players do not know if the referee has judged that the first tap was not a kick. The second player who approaches the ball may think she can kick the ball directly into the goal on an indirect free kick (IFK). But, if the first tap was not a kick, a goal cannot be scored directly by the second player on an IFK. The wise coach will set up the play so

that the first player do more than tap the top of the ball - - she should kick it.

The second judgment call is whether the ball has moved. A minimal movement is enough. There is no requirement that the ball make a specific rotation. An inch will suffice. So, the wise coach can set the player so that first player kicks the ball a very short distance so that the second player can shoot it quickly.



Field Markings

The field of play must be rectangular and marked with lines. These lines belong to the areas of which they are boundaries. The two longer boundary lines are called touch lines. The two shorter lines are called goal lines.

The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line, which joins the midpoints of the two touch lines.

The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of 9.15 m (10 yds) is marked around it.

Dimensions

The length of the touch line must be greater than the length of the goal line.

Length: minimum 90 m (100 yds)

maximum 120 m (130 yds)

Width: minimum 45 m (50 yds)

maximum 90 m (100 yds)

All lines must be of the same width, which must be not more than 12 cm (5 ins).

The Goal Area

Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 5.5 m (6 yds) from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of 5.5 m (6 yds) and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the goal area.

The Penalty Area

Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 16.5 m (18 yds) from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of 16.5 m (18 yds) and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the penalty area.

Within each penalty area, a penalty mark is made 11 m (12 yds) from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them.

An arc of a circle with a radius of 9.15 m (10 yds) from the center of each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

The Corner Arc

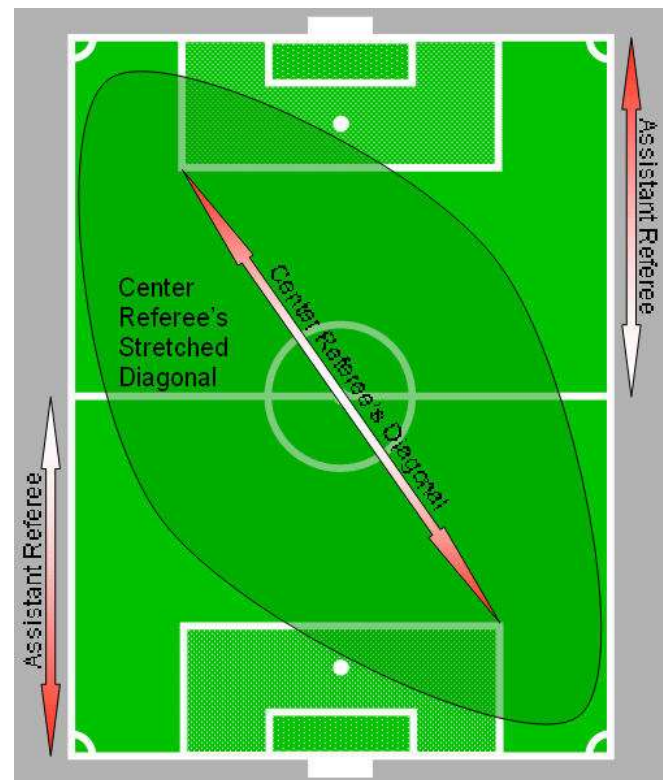
A quarter circle with a radius of 1 m (1 yd) from each corner flag post is drawn inside the field of play.

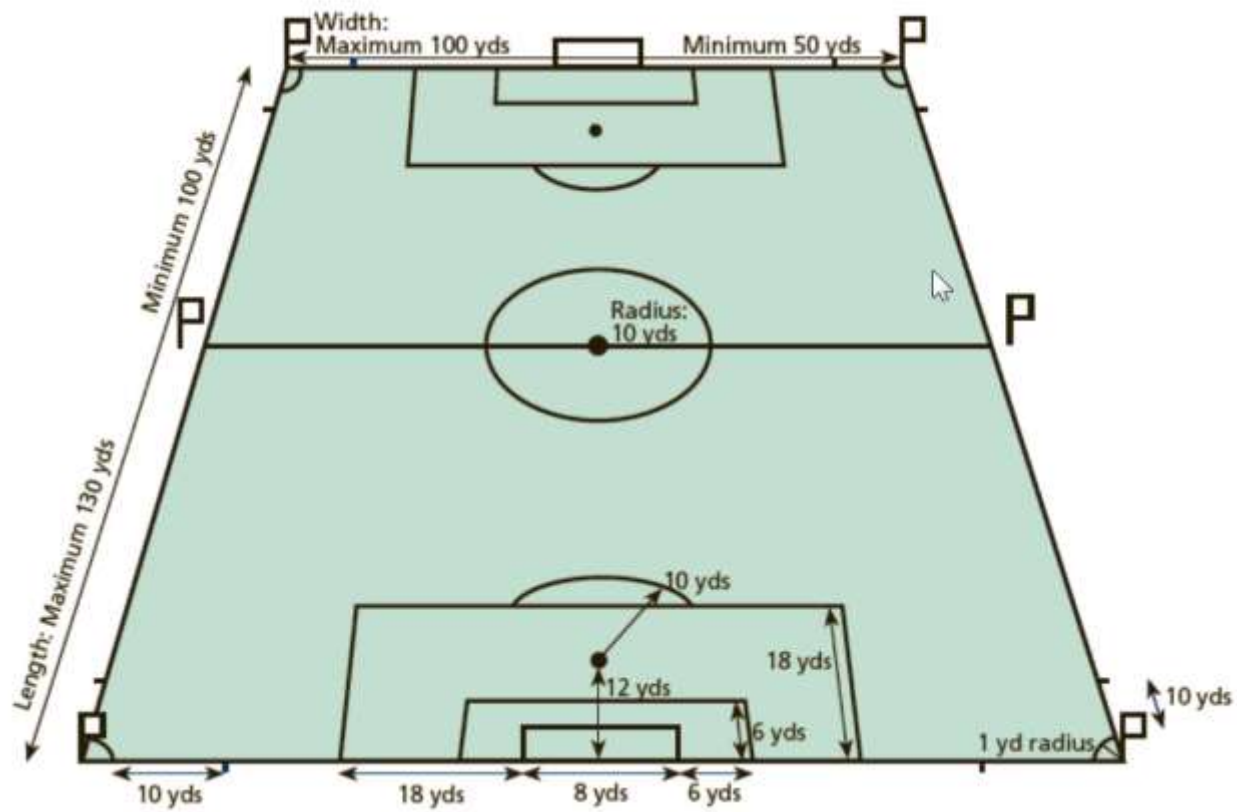
Goals

A goal must be placed on the center of each goal line.

The distance between the posts is 7.32 m (8 yds) and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is 2.44 m (8 ft).

The goalposts and crossbars must be white.





Whistles

- Short or medium beep: to restart play. Think "go!"
- Quick short beeps: to prevent a restart, like when a substitution is taking place or the throw-in is from the wrong direction. Think "but but but but..."
- Medium: to stop for a foul or injury; to bring players on the field at the start or after halftime. Think "stop."
- Long: to start the game very ceremoniously. To stop for a serious foul. Think "stowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwp!"
- Medium then long: half time. Think "half tiiiiiiiime"
- Twice medium then long: game over. Think "that's the gaaaaaaaame!"

Substitutions:

Youth soccer generally permits unlimited substitutions, which means players can be swapped in and out many times during the course of the game. This can only happen with your approval (which should not be unreasonably withheld), and generally only at the following times:

1. A kick off
 2. A goal kick
 3. A throw-in for the substituting team
 4. An injury: if play is stopped the injured player and anyone else can be substituted.
- Different competitions may allow substitutions at other times.
 - When a coach wants to substitute players, he's supposed to line them up at the halfway line. The assistant (Sideline) Ref's (ARs) are then supposed to signal the substitution at the next appropriate stoppage by holding the flag horizontal above their heads (with one AR mirroring the other if needed), until you see it. For low-level play, where substitutions are numerous and players and coaches undisciplined, one often hears the cry of "sub! ref! sub!" from the coach.

Referee Terminating the Match: Their ultimate control over the game is the ability to terminate the match. That's where they say, "I'm terminating the match" and walk off with the game card. They might do so because they are unsure or unsatisfied with their ability to control the players, coaches, or spectators. A perfect example of this is when an expelled coach refuses to leave.

One can also abandon a match, sometimes to be played later, because the condition of the field, light, or weather has deteriorated to the point that play is no longer safe. Lightning is a great reason to stop.

The ball is:

- spherical
- made of leather or other suitable material
- of a circumference of not more than 70 cm (28 ins) and not less than 68 cm (27 ins)
- not more than 450g (16 oz) in weight and not less than 410g (14 oz) at the start of the match
- of a pressure equal to 0.6 -1.1 atmosphere (600 - 1100 g/cm²) at

Number of Players

A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eleven players, one of whom is the goalkeeper. A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than seven players.

Number of Substitutions

Official Competitions: Up to a maximum of 3 substitutes may be used in any match played in an official competition organized under the auspices of FIFA, the confederations or the member associations.

In national "A" team matches, up to a maximum of six substitutes may be used. In all other matches, a greater number of substitutes may be used provided that:

- the teams concerned reach agreement on a maximum number
- the referee is informed before the match.

If the referee is not informed, or if no agreement is reached before the match, no more than six substitutes are allowed.

Shinguards

- are covered entirely by the stockings
- are made of rubber, plastic or a similar suitable material
- provide a reasonable degree of protection.

Allowance for Time Lost

Allowance is made in either period for all time lost through:

- substitutions
- assessment of injury to players
- removal of injured players from the field of play for treatment
- wasting time

- any other cause.

The allowance for time lost is at the discretion of the referee.

Kick Off: A goal may be scored directly from the kick-off.

Before a kick-off at the start of the match or extra time

- a coin is tossed and the team that wins the toss decides which goal it will attack in the first half of the match or extra time
- The other team takes the kick-off to start the match or the extra time
- the team that wins the toss takes the kickoff to start the second half of the match
- in the second half of the match or extra time, the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals.
- all players must be in their own half of the field of play
- the opponents of the team taking the kickoff are at least 9.15m (10 yds) from the ball until it is in play
- the ball must be stationary on the center mark
- the referee gives a signal
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward
- the kicker must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player.

Infringements/Sanctions

If the player taking the kick-off touches the ball again before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team to be taken from the position of the ball when the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick).

In the event of any other infringement of the kick-off procedure:

- the kick-off is retaken.

Definition of dropped ball

A dropped ball is a method of restarting play when, while the ball is still in play, the referee is required to stop play temporarily for any reason not mentioned elsewhere in the Laws of the Game.

Procedure

The referee drops the ball at the place where it was located when play was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the goal area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped.

The ball is in play when it touches the ground.

Infringements/Sanctions

The ball is dropped again:

- if it is touched by a player before it makes contact with the ground
- if the ball leaves the field of play after it makes contact with the ground, without a player touching it.

If the ball enters the goal:

- if a dropped ball is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded
- if a dropped ball is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

LAW 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is out of play when:

- it has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air
- play has been stopped by the referee.

Ball In Play The ball is in play at all other times, including when:

- it rebounds from a goalpost, crossbar or corner flag post and remains in the field of play
- it rebounds from either the referee or an assistant referee when they are on the field of play.

LAW 11 – Offside

Offense

A player in an offside position is only penalized if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one of his team, he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:

- interfering with play
- interfering with an opponent
- gaining an advantage by being in that position.

No Offense

There is no offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from:

- a goal kick
- a throw-in

- a corner kick.

LAW 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Direct Free Kick

A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following seven offenses in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- jumps at an opponent
- charges an opponent
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- pushes an opponent
- tackles an opponent.

A direct free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following three offenses:

- holds an opponent
- spits at an opponent
- handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area).

A direct free kick is taken from the place where the offense occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick).

Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded if any of the above ten offenses is committed by a player inside his own penalty area, irrespective of the position of the ball, provided it is in play.

Indirect Free Kick

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside his own penalty area, commits any of the following four offenses:

- controls the ball with his hands for more than six seconds before releasing it from his possession
- touches the ball again with his hands after he has released it from his possession and before it has touched another player
- touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate
- touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate.

An indirect free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if, in the opinion of the referee, a player:

- plays in a dangerous manner
- impedes the progress of an opponent
- prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands
- commits any other offense, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player.

Disciplinary Sanctions

The yellow card is used to communicate that a player, substitute or substituted player has been cautioned.

The red card is used to communicate that a player, substitute or substituted player has been sent off.

Only a player, substitute or substituted player may be shown the red or yellow card.

Cautionable Offenses

A player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if he commits any of the following seven offenses:

- unsporting behavior
- dissent by word or action
- persistent infringement of the Laws of the Game
- delaying the restart of play
- failure to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick or throw-in
- entering or re-entering the field of play without the referee's permission
- deliberately leaving the field of play without the referee's permission.

A substitute or substituted player is cautioned if he commits any of the following three offenses:

- unsporting behavior
- dissent by word or action
- delaying the restart of play.

Sending-Off Offenses

A player, substitute or substituted player is sent off if he commits any of the following seven offenses:

- serious foul play
- violent conduct

- spitting at an opponent or any other person
- denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area)
- denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick
- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- receiving a second caution in the same match.

A player, substitute or substituted player who has been sent off must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area.

LAW 13 – Free Kicks

Types of Free Kicks

Free kicks are either direct or indirect.

The Direct Free Kick

Ball Enters the Goal

- if a direct free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal is awarded
- if a direct free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

The Indirect Free Kick

Signal

The referee indicates an indirect free kick by raising his arm above his head.

He maintains his arm in that position until the kick has been taken and the ball has touched another player or goes out of play.

Ball Enters the Goal

A goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal:

- if an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded
- if an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

Position of Free Kick

Free Kick Inside the Penalty Area

Direct or indirect free kick to the defending team:

- all opponents must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball
- all opponents must remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play
- the ball is in play when it is kicked directly out of the penalty area
- a free kick awarded in the goal area may be taken from any point inside that area.

Indirect free kick to the attacking team:

- all opponents must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball until it is in play, unless they are on their own goal line between the goalposts
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves
- an indirect free kick awarded inside the goal area must be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.

Free Kick Outside the Penalty Area

- all opponents must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball until it is in play
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves
- the free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred or from the position of the ball when the infringement occurred (according to the infringement).

LAW 14 – The Penalty Kick

Position of the Ball and the Players The ball:

- must be placed on the penalty mark

The player taking the penalty kick:

- must be properly identified

The defending goalkeeper:

- must remain on his goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts until the ball has been kicked

The players other than the kicker must be located:

- inside the field of play
- outside the penalty area
- behind the penalty mark

- at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the penalty mark.

Procedure

- After the players have taken positions in accordance with this Law, the referee signals for the penalty kick to be taken •

The player taking the penalty kick must kick the ball forward

- He must not play the ball again until it has touched another player
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward.

When a penalty kick is taken during the normal course of play, or time has been extended at half-time or full time to allow a penalty kick to be taken or retaken, a goal is awarded if, before passing between the goalposts and under the crossbar:

- the ball touches either or both of the goalposts and/or the crossbar and/or the goalkeeper.

The referee decides when a penalty kick has been completed.

Infringements/Sanctions

If the referee gives the signal for a penalty kick to be taken and, before the ball is in play, one of the following occurs:

The player taking the penalty kick infringes the Laws of the Game:

- the referee allows the kick to be taken
- if the ball enters the goal, the kick is retaken
- if the ball does not enter the goal, the referee stops play and the match is restarted with an indirect free kick to the defending team, from the place where the infringement occurred.

The goalkeeper infringes the Laws of the Game:

- the referee allows the kick to be taken
- if the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded
- if the ball does not enter the goal, the kick is retaken.

A teammate of the player taking the kick infringes the Laws of the Game:

- the referee allows the kick to be taken
- if the ball enters the goal, the kick is retaken
- if the ball does not enter the goal, the referee stops play and the match is restarted with an indirect free kick to the defending team, from the place where the infringement occurred.

A teammate of the goalkeeper infringes the Laws of the Game:

- the referee allows the kick to be taken
- if the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded
- if the ball does not enter the goal, the kick is retaken.

A player of both the defending team and the attacking team infringe the Laws of the Game:

- the kick is retaken.

If, after the penalty kick has been taken:

The kicker touches the ball again (except with his hands) before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 – Position of Free Kick).

The kicker deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player:

- a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 – Position of Free Kick).

The ball is touched by an outside agent as it moves forward:

- the kick is retaken.

The ball rebounds into the field of play from the goalkeeper, the crossbar or the goalposts, and is then touched by an outside agent:

- the referee stops play
- play is restarted with a dropped ball at the place where it touched the outside agent, unless it touched the outside agent inside the goal area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped.

LAW 15 – The Throw-In

A throw-in is a method of restarting play.

A throw-in is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball when the whole of the ball crosses the touch line, either on the ground or in the air.

A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

Procedure

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower:

- faces the field of play
- has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line
- holds the ball with both hands
- delivers the ball from behind and over his head
- delivers the ball from the point where it left the field of play.

All opponents must stand no less than 2 m (2 yds) from the point at which the throw-in is taken.

The ball is in play when it enters the field of play.

After delivering the ball, the thrower must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player.

Infringements/Sanctions

Throw-in taken by a player other than the goalkeeper

If, after the ball is in play, the thrower touches the ball again (except with his hands) before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick).

If, after the ball is in play, the thrower deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player:

- a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick)
- a penalty kick is awarded if the infringement occurred inside the thrower's penalty area.

Throw-in taken by the goalkeeper

If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper touches the ball again (except with his hands), before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 -Position of Free Kick).

If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player:

- a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the infringement occurred outside the goalkeeper's penalty area, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick)
- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the infringement occurred inside the goalkeeper's penalty area, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick).

If an opponent unfairly distracts or impedes the thrower:

- he is cautioned for unsporting behavior.

For any other infringement of this Law:

- the throw-in is taken by a player of the opposing team.

LAW 16 – The Goal Kick

A goal kick is a method of restarting play.

A goal kick is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, having last touched a player of the attacking team, and a goal is not scored in accordance with Law 10.

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick, but only against the opposing team.

Procedure

- The ball is kicked from any point within the goal area by a player of the defending team
- Opponents remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play
- The kicker must not play the ball again until it has touched another player
- The ball is in play when it is kicked directly out of the penalty area.

Infringements/Sanctions

If the ball is not kicked directly out of the penalty area from a goal kick:

- the kick is retaken

Goal kick taken by a player other than the goalkeeper

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again (except with his hands) before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick).

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player:

- a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick)
- a penalty kick is awarded if the infringement occurred inside the kicker's penalty area.

Goal kick taken by the goalkeeper

If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper touches the ball again (except with his hands) before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick).

If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player:

- a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the infringement occurred outside the goalkeeper's penalty area, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick)

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the infringement occurred inside the goalkeeper's penalty area, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred (see Law 13 - Position of Free Kick).

For any other infringement of this Law:

- the kick is retaken.

Procedures To Determine The Winner Of A Match

Extra Time

Competition rules may provide for two further equal periods, not exceeding 15 minutes each, to be played. The conditions of Law 8 will apply.

Kicks from the Penalty Mark

Procedure

- The referee chooses the goal at which the kicks will be taken

- The referee tosses a coin and the team whose captain wins the toss decides whether to take the first or the second kick

- The referee keeps a record of the kicks being taken

- Subject to the conditions explained below, both teams take five kicks

- The kicks are taken alternately by the teams

- If, before both teams have taken five kicks, one has scored more goals than the other could score, even if it were to complete its five kicks, no more kicks are taken

- If, after both teams have taken five kicks, both have scored the same number of goals, or have not scored any goals, kicks continue to be taken in the same order until one team has scored a goal more than the other from the same number of kicks

- A goalkeeper who is injured while kicks are being taken from the penalty mark and is unable to continue as goalkeeper may be replaced by a named substitute provided his team has not used the maximum number of substitutes permitted under the competition rules

- With the exception of the foregoing case, only players who are on the field of play at the end of the match, which includes extra time where appropriate, are eligible to take kicks from the penalty mark

- Each kick is taken by a different player and all eligible players must take a kick before any player can take a second kick

- An eligible player may change places with the goalkeeper at any time when kicks from the penalty mark are being taken

- Only the eligible players and match officials are permitted to remain on the field of play when kicks from the penalty mark are being taken

- All players, except the player taking the kick and the two goalkeepers, must remain within the center circle

- The goalkeeper who is the teammate of the kicker must remain on the field of play, outside the penalty area in which the kicks are being taken, on the goal line where it meets the penalty area boundary line

- Unless otherwise stated, the relevant Laws of the Game and International F.A. Board Decisions apply when kicks from the penalty mark are being taken.

- If, at the end of the match and before kicks start to be taken from the penalty mark, one team has a greater number of players than its opponents, it must reduce its number to equate with that of its opponents and the team captain must inform the referee of the name and number of each player excluded. Any player thus excluded may not participate in kicks from the penalty mark

- Before the start of kicks from the penalty mark, the referee must ensure that an equal number of players from each team remains within the center circle and they shall take the kicks.

"Law 18" Common Sense, or Spirit of the Game

There is no "Law 18", of course, but just the same you'll sometimes hear referees refer to it as the most important of all the Laws, because it overrides all the others. It's simply the application of common sense in interpreting and applying the Laws so as to ensure that a referee's decisions don't go against the spirit of the game (SOTG).

A number of factors are important:

I. **natural justice**; it's important not to penalize players unfairly by applying the letter of law when that would contravene the spirit or the intention of the law;

II. **flow of the game**; a good referee lets the players play with the minimum number of interruptions but without losing control of the match

III. letting the players determine the outcome of the match.

EXAMPLES:

18.01 I saw the referee speaking to one of our opponents as they were jogging up the field. I didn't hear what he was saying, but it looked as though he was lecturing him about something. If the player had done something wrong, why didn't the referee just stop the game and punish him?

Good referees will often have what they call a "quiet word" with a player who has committed several minor 'niggling' fouls, just to tell him that any more similar behavior will bring a caution. In this way, they try to keep the game moving while letting the offender know that they are aware of what he's doing.

18.02 One of our opponents was clearly offside as his team played the ball into our penalty area. The assistant referee had her flag up, but the referee just waved at her and didn't give us the free kick for offside. The AR told me she assumed that was because the ball had gone straight to our keeper -- does that seem right?

Yes. If your keeper already had possession of the ball near where the opponent would have been called for the offside infraction, there was little to be gained by giving a free kick. Common sense requires that the goalkeeper should simply be allowed to punt the ball back upfield or distribute as he chooses in order to restart the game with the minimum of delay.

18.03 In stoppage time, our opponents had us pinned in our own penalty area for a couple of minutes. We were under a lot of pressure and kept wanting the ref to blow his whistle for the game to end. As soon as we cleared the ball out, he did blow for the end of the game, just when we might have had a counterattack!

Most referees prefer to wait if at all possible for the ball to be in a relatively neutral area of the field before blowing the final whistle, so as not to deprive a team of a clear goal-scoring opportunity. Once they have decided that time added on for stoppages in play has expired, however, they will usually blow their whistle as soon as the ball reaches midfield, so you should not count on being able to launch a counterattack in these circumstances. Similarly, very few referees (except those in jurisdictions where a time clock supersedes their authority) will ever blow the final whistle while the ball is in the air on its way toward the net!

What about all the pushing and shoving that goes on just before a corner kick? Why doesn't the referee stop it?

When the ball is being placed for a corner kick and the players are taking up their positions, the ball is out of play. That means that the referee can't call a foul; he can only call misconduct (yellow or red card). Usually this pushing and shoving isn't serious enough for a card, although if it continues nonstop for the whole match, a referee may give a caution to get the players' attention. Another approach is for the referee to warn the players to stop, and then station himself ostentatiously near the goal, and maybe rattle his whistle as a further reminder of his presence. You will usually be able to tell if he senses possible fouls and is watching the players especially closely.

If the pushing-shoving-obstruction is being done mostly by the attackers, and persists after the actual kick, many referees will immediately award a free kick -- the ball is now in play and a foul can be called. If the pushing and shoving is being done mostly by the defense, the referee will be more inclined to let it go, in the knowledge he can award a penalty or IFK for obstruction or charging without the ball being within playing distance if it gets out of hand -- so the defenders should not infer from the referee's lack of response that he doesn't see and doesn't care.

If a particular opponent is consistently holding and concealing his action, the players should draw this to the referee's attention. The referee might act like he doesn't appreciate the advice, but he will usually look a little harder, at least for the next few minutes. Check the referee's position. If he takes a new position on the next corner kick, then he may be responding to the tip. If he always takes the same position on every corner kick, this may suggest he doesn't sense that anything is going on, and it's easier to conceal fouls from him.

(Decisions of the International F.A. Board)

(1) If the goalkeeper either intentionally strikes an opponent by throwing the ball vigorously at him or pushes him with the ball while holding it, the referee shall award a PK, if the offense took place within the penalty-area.

- (2) If a player deliberately turns his back to an opponent when he is about to be tackled, he may be charged but not in a dangerous manner.
- (3) In case of body contact in the goal-area between an attacking player and the opposing goal-keeper not in possession of the ball, the referee, as sole judge of intention, shall stop the game if, in his opinion, the action of the attacking player was intentional, and award an IFK.
- (4) If a player leans on the shoulders of another player of his own team in order to head the ball, the referee shall stop the game, caution the player for ungentlemanly conduct and award an IFK to the opposing side.
- (5) A player's obligation when joining or rejoining his team after the start of the match to 'report to the referee' must be interpreted as meaning 'to draw the attention of the referee from the touchline. The signal from the referee shall be made by a definite gesture which makes the player understand that he may come into the field of play; it is not necessary for the referee to wait until the game is stopped (this does not apply in respect of an infringement of Law 4), but the referee is the sole judge of the moment in which he gives his signal of acknowledgment.
- (6) The letter and spirit of Law 12 do not oblige the referee to stop a game to administer a caution. He may, if he chooses, apply the advantage. If he does apply the advantage, he shall caution the player when play stops.
- (7) If a player covers up the ball without touching it in an endeavor not to have it played by an opponent, he obstructs but does not infringe Law 12 para. 3 because he is already in possession of the ball and covers it for tactical reasons whilst the ball remains within playing distance. In fact, he is actually playing the ball and does not commit an infringement; in this case, the player may be charged because he is in fact playing the ball.
- (8) If a player intentionally stretches his arms to obstruct an opponent and steps from one side to the other, moving his arms up and down to delay his opponent, forcing him to change course, but does not make "bodily contact" the referee shall caution the player for ungentlemanly conduct and award an IFK.
- (9) If a player intentionally obstructs the opposing goalkeeper, in an attempt to prevent him from putting the ball into play in accordance with Law 12, 5(a), the referee shall award an IFK.
- (10) If, after a referee has awarded a free-kick, a player protests violently by using abusive or foul language and is sent off the field, the free-kick should not be taken until the player has left the field.
- (11) Any player, whether he is within or outside the field of play, whose conduct is ungentlemanly or violent, whether or not it is directed towards an opponent, a colleague, the referee, a linesman or other person, or who uses foul or abusive language, is guilty of an offense, and shall be dealt with according to the nature of the offense committed.
- (12) If, in the opinion of the referee a goalkeeper intentionally lies on the ball longer than is necessary, he shall be penalized for ungentlemanly conduct and
- (a) be cautioned and an IFK awarded to the opposing team;
 - (b) in case of repetition of the offense, be sent off the field.
- (13) The offense of spitting at officials and other persons, or similar unseemly behavior shall be considered as violent conduct within the meaning of section (n) of Law 12.
- (14) If, when a referee is about to caution a player, and before he has done so, the player commits another offense which merits a caution, the player shall be sent off the field of play.
- (15) If, in the opinion of the referee, a player who is moving toward his opponent's goal with an obvious opportunity to score a goal is intentionally impeded by an opponent, through unlawful means, i.e. an offense punishable by a free kick

(or a PK), thus denying the attacking player's team the aforesaid goal-scoring opportunity, the offending player shall be sent off the field of play for serious foul play in accordance with Law 12(n).

(16) If, in the opinion of the referee, a player, other than the goalkeeper within his own penalty-area, denies his opponents a goal, or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, by intentionally handling the ball, he shall be sent off the field of play for serious foul play in accordance with Law 12(n).

(17) The International F.A. Board is of the opinion that a goalkeeper, in the circumstances described in Law 12 5(a), will be considered to be in control of the ball by touching it with any part of his hands or arms. Possession of the ball would include the goalkeeper intentionally parrying the ball, but would not include the circumstances where, in the opinion of the referee, the ball rebounds accidentally from the goalkeeper, for example after he has made a save.

(18) Subject to the terms of Law 12, a player may pass the ball to his own goalkeeper using his head or chest or knee, etc. If, however, in the opinion of the referee, a player uses a deliberate trick in order to circumvent article 5(c) of Law 12, the player will be guilty of ungentlemanly conduct and will be punished accordingly under the terms of Law 12; that is to say, the player will be cautioned and shown the yellow card and an IFK will be awarded to the opposing team from the place where the player committed the offense. In such circumstances, it is irrelevant whether the goalkeeper subsequently touches the ball with his hands or not. The offense is committed by the player in attempting to circumvent both the text and the spirit of Law 12.

Game Control: Let Them Play vs. Let Them Fight:

Between fouls and misconduct is a good time to talk about game control. Managing the "temperature" of the game. This applies mostly to mid- and high-level play, and only to the calling of fouls -- there is no wiggling on in-and-out of bounds and offsides.

A. Let Them Play vs. Let Them Fight: You'll hear some referees describe themselves as "let them play" refs. In theory this means they allow a higher level of physical play, and in practice means they are either very good referees, or very bad ones. As players get more physical, aggressive play can escalate rapidly and turn into outright hostility. It takes a talented referee to run a game hot without letting it boil over. A not-so-talented referee who "lets them play" is inviting a fight.

B. Tight: A simple extreme is to call every foul that fits the strict definition of a foul. This is perfect for low level play, but will no doubt earn you criticism for being too "tight" in higher games. The sidelines will be crying "let them play."

C. Loose: Another extreme is to make players endure and "play through" fouls, and only call the most egregious. One standard I heard was "dispossession" -- that it was a foul if the player consequently lost the ball. To have success doing this, you also have to track the temperament of the players, because you are letting them set the standard for play. You have to heed their complaints about fouling without being overtly manipulated (and you must be able to ignore 3rd party complaints from the sidelines). It is playing with fire to call a game loose without player feedback.

D: Middle Ground -- The Minimum "Necessary": There is advice often quoted from previous editions of the LOTG: use the minimum of officiating necessary. The quote goes on to say that constant whistling for doubtful or trifling fouls spoils the pleasure of the players and spectators. Of course, this merely begs the question as to what is trifling and what is necessary.

Rules of Thumb

1. Foul means overstepping fair play. Find a component of the player's actions that is clearly beyond fair play before calling a foul. It isn't sufficient that something unfortunate happened.
2. Make calls that make a difference. If calling a foul would have negligible impact on the game or the temperament of the players, skip it. Note that the higher the level of play, the more tolerant the players and the greater their ability to render fouls against them "trifling."
3. No cheating. There is never a reason to make players endure cheating...always caution for behavior that clearly has nothing to do with playing the game.

Soccer Awards, Certificates and Patches:

Ideas For A Successful Sports Team Awards:

End-of-the-Season Certificates



Soccer Certificate

Click to Enter Comment

Click to enter Name

Click to Enter Comment

This Day of

Signature

Hyper snap to edit: Monotype corsive 18 Calibri bold 16 for Name

By giving a short speech complimenting the team on all of their hard work and effort reinforcing what a fun experience it was regardless if your team was 8-0 or 0-8. Choose something that the team did well together, honor each player. To make the speech something each player can treasure for years to come, have his achievements printed out and laminated with a personal signature from the coach. Randomly select one of the trophies. Think of one trait or special play that that player had during the season and share that special information with the team without revealing the name. Have the kids guess who the player is and the first player to guess correctly gets to select the next award to hand out doing the same process.

- The "hustle award".
- The "most dedicated award" showed up to every practice and game.
- The most valuable player
- The great defender award

- The most improved offensive player
- The most improved defensive player
- The most improved midfielder
- The "sixth man" award. (or award for the most valuable "bench" player)
- The offensive player of the year
- The defensive player of the year
- The midfield player of the year
- The most inspirational player
- The team-spirit award
- The good-attitude award
- The attendance award
- The leadership award
- The most energetic award
- The best-listener award
- The Most Enthusiastic

The Most Vocal
The Most Goals
The best passer
The role-model award
The character award
The player who had the most team spirit

Team Certificates: Ask each kid to vote on a couple of subjects toward the end of the season to give kids awards from their peers. For example, the team could vote on

The Best Fall. No matter what the sport, there is one player who was sure to take a tumble while playing it. If anyone took a picture of the event, frame it and give it to the player or adhere the image to a mug or T-shirt. If not, paste an image of the player's head on a picture of someone taking a spill and put it in a frame.

The Biggest Mouth. one person who speaks a bit louder than the rest. This child's voice can be heard above any crowd and is typically the one who is often detected cheering the most. A framed picture of the recipient doing what he does best---shouting.

The Biggest Oops. -shooting toward the wrong goal or running toward the opposing team's goal or end zone. This year, instead of chastising the player who inadvertently scores a goal for the opposing team, recognized her hilarious achievement with a Biggest Oops award. Rewarding this accident will help to show this player and the entire team that mistakes happen and oftentimes, it is just best to laugh at them.

The Most Improved. recognize players who have shown "stand-out" improvement in various areas of the game. While a player in each position could earn a most improved award, the most common cover improvements in offensive and defensive play, a goalie that has shown considerable improvement in blocking goals, or someone who has exhibited an overall improvement in their game.

The Golden Boot Award.

The sportsmanship award. These qualities consist of class and positive attitudes, as well as respect for each other, coaches, fans and opposing teams. Awards for attitude, character and leadership include such general statements as good sportsmanship, best leader or even a player who everyone else deems is the most fun to be around.

The Soccer Mom Award. team through spirit, team communications, providing refreshments, taking pictures or simply cheering the team on through victory and defeat.

The Soccer Dad Award.

The most dedicated spectators award.

Best All-Around Spectator Award

Refreshment Leadership Award.

Most Valued Sponsor Award.

Best Vocal Team Supporter.

Soccer Motivational / Reward Patch:

Greeting soccer fans.

Great first game. Always nice to start with a win and with this winning group I see no reason this will not continue so long as we keep working hard at practices and at game time.

As with last season, I am going to be passing out **soccer ball patches to motivate scoring assists, defense, hustle, competitive play, practice etc.** Not necessarily for scoring as that comes with it's own personal reward! Each week will be a different color.



Blue/Yellow

There will usually be 3-4 each week. I will announce the winners the practice after each game and pass out the patches. I am not awarding a patch to the player who scores the most goals, rather I am looking to reward than the player who tries the hardest or displays a good sporting attitude and other desirable team oriented traits.

How to earn a patch:

Practice Attendance: We all know how important it is for kids to come to practice. Soccer is a team sport. It's impossible to practice or teach some things such as formations if the kids don't come to practice. This includes kids who regularly participate well and behave at practice. Listening to the coach and follow instructions. I realize many of the kids have other commitments.

Aggressive Play and Winning the Ball: For bravery, hustle and toughness. This what make a good player great. Remember, not every kid can be a good athlete, but every kid can hustle and be brave.

Improvement: they can earn a patch for becoming more consistent or for improving their technique.

Good defense: Hustle. Clears the ball to the outside or better yet, directly to one of our players.

This week goes to: **Sean** for 2 goals and a perfect attendance at the practices. **Robby** for exceptional defense and hustle. **Sage** for hustling, good passing and defense. **Riley** for hustling and scoring. **Raymond** for our season opener score and good passing.

Next week's patches with go to those who do the most passing in the game. Back passes count. The pass needs to effectively make it to your teammate and not put them at jeopardy of losing the ball (weak pass or poorly placed).

Good Offensive Skills: Being in position for rebounds. Playing off the Far Post (ready for crosses). Stealing the ball from an opponent and then attacking the goal. Assists. Consistently being in scoring position (in front of the goal) EVEN if a goal isn't scored. Being alert, aggressive and taking a one-touch shot, even if it doesn't score.

Other: Assists or unselfish play. Players to learn good "Moves" (which they should practice at home). Juggling skill (which they can practice at home). If the can juggle to 12 they get a patch.

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Here is where to put the patch: Upper left chest area of the uniform, over the heart...same place where the military puts their ribbons. Please put the patches on promptly, *if I see that they are not being worn, that player may not be making it on the list for subsequent motivational patches.*

How to apply the patch: From the distributor. Takes about 1-2 minutes of your time.

Instructions For Ironing on Patches on cotton:

Step #1: **Place over their heart, on the left side upper chest.**

Step #2: Warm up the iron on a high (cotton) setting.

Step #3: Position the patch where you want it to permanently be with the glue side against the fabric. Press the iron firmly to the patch and hold for 10 seconds as a test. It usually takes 20-25 seconds to fully melt the glue, but irons vary, so be careful and don't burn or melt the fabric.

You MUST let the Patch set for a few minutes until it is cool before you handle it.

If the glue isn't fully melted or if you handle the patch while the patch is still warm, the patch may start to come off the fabric. If this happens, iron it on again.

Standard patch glue can be used but it does not work well.

How to apply the patch: From the distributor. Takes about 1-2 minutes of your time.

Instructions For Ironing on Patches on Polyester / Synthetic Fabrics:

Step #1: **Place over their heart, on the left side upper chest.**

Step #2: Warm up the iron on a medium (silk/wool) setting.

Step #3: Position the patch where you want it to permanently be with the glue side against the fabric.

Step #4: Then **turn the shirt inside out and iron** through the material against the underside of the patch. This allows you to see areas where the glue was not fully contacting with the material, get better heating and overall a better application. Press the iron firmly to the patch and hold for 20 seconds as a test. It usually takes 20-25 seconds to fully melt the glue, but irons vary, so be careful and don't burn or melt the fabric.

You MUST let the Patch set for a few minutes until it is cool before you handle it.

If the glue isn't fully melted or if you handle the patch while the patch is still warm, the patch may start to come off the fabric. If this happens, iron it on again.

Standard patch glue can be used but it does not work well.

Washing: wash in delicate, or hand wash and laying flat, or clothes line to dry helps. Don't wash it using extreme heat -- hot water or an extremely hot dryer can soften the glue and cause the patches to come off the fabric. After repeated washing and drying, the patches may come off. The best way to ensure this doesn't happen is to use a needle and thread to put a stitch in the patch that secures it to the fabric -- that way the patch won't fall off and you can iron it back on.

Sportsmanship:

In youth soccer leagues, one of the key ingredients to good player experience is to ensure competitive games with balanced teams. However, despite efforts to create equality between teams, there are occasions when one team is much stronger than the other. This presents a problem for both teams; the weaker team has morale issues in the face of a negative goal margin, while the stronger team does not really gain from playing a one-sided game. See [Losing Season](#) |

One of the more difficult challenges for a volunteer parent-coach is when he finds himself in this situation managing a soccer game. If you are coaching the losing team, there are a limited number of things you can do. A defensive alignment may reduce the final margin, but it will not change the reality. Keeping your strongest players on the field at the expense of the weaker players is not fair either. In the end, the only real relief will depend on the actions of the winning team's coach.

If you happen to be that soccer coach, you are not in an easy situation. In fact, many coaches will confess that being the winning coach in a one-sided game is far more awkward than being the losing coach. At least, as the winning coach, you have a chance to do something about it. But how does a coach tell his players not to score anymore, especially when that's the whole point of the game?

Reminder...please do not make sideline calls. I classify this as being un-sportsmanship-like conduct that the kids do not need to learn. A brief verbal complaint is fine but don't keep repeating your remarks. They get the picture with the Ohh's and Ahhs. Playing soccer is more than just playing a game. Everything we do is a teaching opportunity for the kids.

We need to teach them to respect authority. The referee is the representative authority during a soccer match. If you were pulled over by a police officer for speeding, would you want to start whining to the officer that it was not fair that they were pulling you over, and why didn't they pull over the guy in front whom you were following at the same speed?.....I would hope not. The best approach to teach them would be to "yes officer", "I am sorry officer"... (you are much more likely go get off with a warning). This respect for adults, teachers and others in general is what is important.....not just the sportsmanship aspect.

Same goes for winning....we can all become winners on the field and in life by training hard and wanting to win....we take our losses along with our wins....part of life. We do our best, learn from our mistakes and go on with our day. I personally have made a lot of mistakes in life and feel lucky and thankful every day for second chances. You too are all wonderful parents and I am thankful for your support.

How to manage a mismatch: "Losing 13-0 as a player makes you feel rubbish and puts the pressure on you in many ways. You want to win the next game badly... so people don't start to mock you." They are demoralizing for the losing team and do nothing for the development of the players on the winning team.

In an attempt to stop winning margins that are more appropriate to basketball than soccer, some leagues have implemented a "mercy rule" and limit the number of goals that can be scored. When one team gets eight goals ahead, for example, the match is declared over and any remaining time is played out as a friendly. Most coaches understand that youth soccer is about learning and enjoyment more than winning, and regardless of whether a mercy rule exists or not, they make sure their team does not score more goals than is necessary to win the game.

1. If you're winning: Keeping your players motivated is not very difficult if you are one of the fortunate coaches whose team wins most of its games. But scoring goals virtually at will is:

- a) Unfair on your opponents.
- b) Not going to aid the development of your players.

What you can do

It's almost unheard of for a team to come back and win a game after being five or six goals down (although I am prepared to be corrected!) so if your team is winning by that sort of margin, it is going to win the match.

Instead of allowing your players to continue banging the ball into the back of the net you could:

- Discreetly impose a two or three-touch rule or require a minimum number of passes before shooting.
- Move your players around - your goalkeeper will be getting bored by now so get her out of goal and put her up front. Move your defenders into attacking positions and put your strikers into defense.

- Use your subs - this type of match is an ideal opportunity to give your subs as much playing time as possible. So why not take off your "star players" and give your weaker players a chance to enjoy themselves?
- Implement the "mercy rule" as described above.

Whatever you decide to do, it is imperative that you respect the opposition and always keep the English FA's Code of Conduct in mind:

"Place the well-being, safety and enjoyment of each player above everything, including winning"

Make Scoring Harder: Fortunately, there are steps that you can take to ensure that the score remains reasonable and the other team is not humiliated. You should avoid "running up the score" and instead should seek new challenges for your own team within the context of the game. In the absence of a league-wide "mercy rule," when a game score margin reaches five goals (5-0, 6-1, 7-2, etc.), the winning team should take immediate measures to limit additional goals without embarrassing the opposing team.

Try some of the following tips:

- Switch players into unfamiliar positions (defenders into attack and vice-versa)
- Provide more playing time to players who pose less of a scoring threat (while still allowing all players to play at least one half)
- Require multiple passes before a goal can be scored (for example, 3 or more consecutive passes must be completed before a shot can be attempted)
- Allow players (all your players or just certain stronger ones) to shoot only from outside the penalty area (18 yard line).
- Allow players to shoot only on a volley or with a headball (suitable for older teams, younger can shoot only with a cross from the side)
- Reduce the number of players on the field (egg: by playing 7 vs. 8 or 10 vs. 11)
- Limit touches on the ball. Ex. 3 touches only then have to pass or shoot.

NOTE: Whatever you do....try to do so in secret such as not to continue to embarrass the losing team by not scoring.....just make it harder and don't make it obvious to them or the crowd.

2. If you're losing: Motivating a team that is getting hammered most weeks is a tough challenge but it can be done.

Regardless of the age of your players, you can minimize the importance of the final score by setting your players individual and/or team objectives either before the game or even during the game if it becomes clear they are going to lose by several goals.

The actual objectives will depend on the age and ability of your players but as an example:

- Defenders can be tasked with blocking one shot on goal.
- Any player can be set the objective of taking a throw-in with both feet on the ground or making a good pass to a team mate.
- Attackers could be asked to try to make two shots on your opponent's goal.
- The team can be set the objective of conceding fewer goals in the second half or conceding no goals for a set period of time.

It's important to make the objectives slightly stretching but achievable. Praise your players for trying to achieve their objectives (not just for succeeding) and change objectives from one game to the next as your player's skills change.

Embarrass the Losing Team

All of these measures must be introduced in a subtle way. Shouting instruction such as, "Stop scoring!" may humiliate the opposing team. Therefore, instructions should be passed quietly to your soccer players. For example, substitutes entering the field can quietly pass messages to the rest of the team.

Recognize that this is not an easy issue. It is not easy for a youth soccer player to be told "don't shoot" or "try not to score" when that is the fundamental key to the game they are learning and playing. Therefore, effective techniques to control the game should include skill challenges for the players requiring them to complete assigned tasks prior to shooting and scoring. These challenges should be made more difficult according to the circumstances but should always make scoring much less likely. Seeking ways to contain large goal margins also teaches players a good sporting attitude.

Finally, remember what's important. Youth soccer coaches, referees and parents are all jointly responsible to create a good experience for all of the players. When circumstances are less than ideal, work together with the coach of the other team; a few words between the coaches can go a long way to avoid misunderstandings and to resolve the situation. After all, it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.

Dealing with Teams That Cheat:

Some teams bend or even break the rules to give themselves an advantage. Ex claiming corners or throw ins when they know they touched the ball last, feigning injury to get a free kick. Youth soccer coaches falsify birth certificates, encourage their players to pull and push at corners to stop attackers getting to the ball, condone diving and teach their

players that "it's only a foul if the ref spots it". Referees who blatantly favor one team over the other. The "win at all costs" culture. Here are some handy hints to help you get the better of match day cheats.

STEP 1 RUN A CLEAN TEAM

Make sure your own team is squeaky clean and that all players understand the rules of the game and the expectations of players as stipulated in your FA's Code of Conduct. If you have to take any form of action against a team that does turn out to be cheating, it will be taken much more seriously if you and your own players have a reputation for fair play.

STEP 2 STICK BY THE RULES

Prior to kick off present the opposing coach with your list of your registered players. By doing this you should encourage them to do the same thing and you will be able to check they are using only properly registered players. It also sets out your stall as a stickler for doing things the right way and as someone who holds the rules of the game in high esteem. Remind your team to always play by the rules.

STEP 3 REMAIN DISCIPLINED

If a team you are due to face has a bit of a reputation or you have experienced problems when playing them in the past, remind your players of the need to remain disciplined at all times. Tell them not react to any heavy challenges or verbal provocation during the game but to inform you of any problems they have at half-time and at the end of the game. Don't react as emotions can easily get out of control. Confronting the other coach while the game is in progress is pointless and will add to the tension. Don't allow your players to cheat back. Recognize your players concerns but don't criticize the match official, the other players or anyone else. If your players are angry, try to channel their emotions into playing harder and faster but don't allow them to descend to their opponent's level.

STEP 4 CHECK WITH THE REF

When the referee arrives, make sure you introduce yourself and go through a few points briefly before the game. Ask that he punishes bad behaviour and foul play, perhaps letting slip you have had some problems with this in previous games. Then go to your opposing coach and relay the contents of your chat, making sure they are happy with this in advance. So if you feel you have to speak to the other team's officials, do it after the game and out of earshot of the players and their parents.

STEP 5 DON'T INFLAME THINGS

Be vocal if you see any cheating during a game but in a way that will not inflame the situation. Remind your team to play to the whistle if a decision goes against you and try and establish eye contact with the referee when you do this. If things have got really bad, speak to the ref at half-time but remember to invite your opposite number into the conversation if you do so.

STEP 6 ALWAYS SHAKE HANDS

At the end of the game make sure your players shake hands with all opposing players. Listen out for any 'under-the-breath' remarks and, if you hear any, act on it by reporting what you hear to your opposing coach first. The match may be over but your opponents will remember this before you play them next time. Remember to congratulate your team for playing by the rules.

(SOCCER COACH WEEKLY. Issue 392. 2015)

Set the standards. In matches, sub a player who tries to gain an unfair advantage and explain that: "We don't do that sort of thing". Take a hard line, never accept anything less than complete honesty from your players (or yourself) and never turn a blind eye.

Sportsmanship is one of the reasons why soccer is the most popular worldwide team sport. The idea of sportsmanship is basically 'playing the game of soccer fairly and cleanly'. Players who play with the spirit of the game in mind are giving a lot more respect as a leader than that of a player who is constantly bringing the game down by swearing, cheating, or fighting. When there is a presence of sportsmanship on the field, the game of soccer dramatically improves. You are then playing soccer for the love of the game without any intent of hurting the opponent.

How is sportsmanship really connected to the game of soccer? Consider a player who helps his opponent off the ground. Perhaps he congratulates his opponent's goalkeeper for making a great save. One common act of 'fair play' occurs when a team intentionally kicks the ball out of play to allow an injured opponent to receive treatment. The opponent then throws the ball back to the team that kicked it out, as if to say 'thanks' for letting their player get help.

Although fair play is not written into the FIFA Laws of the Game, it is implied. Match officials do their best to see that the spirit of the laws are upheld, and that fair play is practiced where appropriate.

If you are a beginner to the game of soccer, just remember the following:

Don't act any differently on the field than you would off it.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP RULES

1. The "Golden Rule" -- Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Show respect for the other players and opposition, if you expect it yourself.
 2. Have an understanding and an appreciation of the rules. The spirit of good sportsmanship depends on conforming to the intent of the rule and not look for a loop hole.
 3. Enjoy yourself and encourage enjoyment for others.
 4. Take responsibility for your actions. Don't blame others for your mistakes or find excuses for poor behavior.
 5. Recognize and appreciate good performances, especially by the opponent. Applause for an opponent's good play demonstrates generosity and courtesy. It shows a true awareness of the game and athletic ability.
 6. Exhibit respect for the officials. Referees are impartial arbitrators who perform to the best of their ability to make sure the game is played fair and within the rules. Mistakes made by all those involved are part of the game and must be accepted.
 7. Expect proper behavior from your teammates. If you allow a teammate to cheat, to play dangerously, to argue and scream at officials, you are condoning that behavior.
- Recognize that striving to win, rather than winning itself, is what is important in life. Striving to win means doing the best you can. Winning too much means only that your competition is weaker.

Advice for a coach who is having a total loss season:

"I'm coaching a local recreational league team and they haven't won a single game". "It seems that nothing I try makes a difference and now I'm wondering if I'm cut out to be a coach after all! "I am using all the positive motivating techniques I have learned from your newsletter and I really like the kids. "Any advice you could give me?"

My answer. I know what you are going through.

My first girls' team went a season and a half before they even got a draw! We started off losing 20-0, 17-0 etc. and although we managed to reduce the losing margin over time, I got very disheartened. I really didn't know what to say to the girls every week – they were trying their hardest but the other teams were just too good or we had some terrible luck (or both).

I often wondered if it was down to my poor coaching. But the girls kept coming to training sessions and matches and they didn't seem to be too upset at losing every week. We got into a sort of routine: play match, lose, say "better luck next time", go home.

I was lucky that my parents were supportive. They could see their daughters were improving and having fun at training. They told me not to worry and it would only be matter of time before we won a game.

I had my doubts, but I didn't say anything.

But, 18 months after we started, we did win a game. That was eight years ago but still remember it as if it was yesterday. We went 1-0 up, 2-0 up and I started to get nervous.

The other team pegged us back to 2-1 then 2-2. Amazingly, we scored again to make it 3-2 then with a minute to go scored a fourth. We won 4-2 and went to McDonalds to celebrate!

My message to you is to keep the faith. Make training fun and never show that you are downhearted. You say you like the kids and they obviously like you. That's great because for children, soccer is about more than winning matches. It's about having fun, being with their friends, learning new skills and being a member of a team.

Keep ticking those boxes and you can consider yourself to be a success, regardless of the score on match day.

How to restore confidence to a losing team:

Soccer is a game that is played as much in the mind as with the feet and young players who are still learning the game have very fragile self-esteem.

A few defeats or a run of bad form often convinces 10-year-olds that no matter what the coach says, they can't play soccer and every other team is better than theirs. And that attitude is a self-fulfilling prophecy - if you think you're going to lose, you will. Unfortunately self-esteem - and the belief that you are a good player in a good team - is easy to destroy but hard to rebuild. But there are some things you can do.

- Setting realistic, achievable objectives allows your players to experience success even if they lose the game. Stay enthusiastic and be confident, positive, honest and supportive. Remember that your attitude will rub off on your players. Be honest with yourself about what needs to be done in training but when you're talking to your players keep the focus firmly on what they do well.
 - Get to know your players and speak to them individually on a regular basis and consider bringing a guest coach for a few weeks. It's amazing how a new coach can motivate players to perform!
- Another factor to consider is the attitude of your players' parents. They need to understand the crucial role they play in minimizing the importance of results and encouraging players who are going through a sticky patch.

Have a chat with them at the end of a training session and remind them that their sons are good players, they just need a bit more self-belief.

With a bit of luck and a lot of hard work you will turn the situation around. But it won't happen overnight.

End Of Season Checklist

- 01 Make sure you know when training ends and the new season begins.
- 02 Work out all individual player targets and challenges and see how well your players have progressed over the season.
- 03 Go over your coaching highs and lows and write them down while they are still fresh.
- 04 Check you filled in your coaching syllabus if you have one.
- 05 Are you staying with your players next season and moving up to the next age group?
- 06 Are you going to be coaching a different age group with different sized balls and goals? Order the correct equipment in time for the new season.
- 07 Make sure all of the equipment that you use for soccer training is stacked away neatly, ready for the new season.
- 08 Check that the league you play in is aware you want to play next season.
- 09 If you have to change leagues make sure you have all the necessary information and apply at the right time.
- 10 Find out whether your league matches will be played on the same day next season.
- 11 If your games are going to be played on a different day, have you checked that all your players are available to play matches on that day?
- 12 Have you booked your training facility for next season? Can all the players make the evenings and times you have chosen?
- 13 Identify any coaching courses that you think you will benefit from over the summer.
- 14 If any soccer kit needs to be given to the team below for the next season, get it back from your players.
- 15 Has everyone paid up for the season? Don't leave it until later, when the player may have left the club.
- 16 Check you have up-to-date details of all your players so you do not lose touch when you need to get organized for the new season.
- 17 Do you have any managerial or coaching vacancies to fill at your club? If so, now is the time to advertise.
- 18 Do you have a team sponsor already in place for next season? If not, start trying to find one now.
- 19 If you intend to play in any tournaments over the close season, get an idea of who is available and when, and plan how many tournaments you can realistically take part in.
- 20 Plan some get-togethers so players see each other during the close season – things like barbecues, or maybe playing different sports. It keeps the team together and helps with team spirit.
- 21 Urge your players to watch videos of as many soccer games as they can over the close season. This will help them better grasp the flow of the game.
- 22 Make sure that you get all of your player registration cards renewed for the new season.
- 23 Check that all of your training and match day helpers are available for the new season.
- 24 Are any players leaving? Will you have to recruit over the summer?
- 25 Set up a day for trials to find new players for your club.

Tactical Instructions:

Links: [Defending](#) | [Attacking](#) | [Combined Play](#) | [Warnings and announcement](#) | [See Motivational Quotes](#) |

Tactical Communication:

Avoid yelling at the player with the ball "I'm open!" or "No!"

Attacking Messages. Here are some of the more common commands used by attackers:

--"Man on" (yelled to a teammate receiving the ball to let them know there will be immediate pressure, they don't have time to settle the ball but need to either clear it away first-time or move).

--"Time" as in "You've got time" (the opposite of "man on" to let someone know not to just mindless kick the ball away but instead, there is time to settle the ball, look up and pick out a target).

--"Switch" or "Cross" (meaning "switch the point of attack" or "cross the ball to the other side of the field."

--"Drop" (as in "drop the ball back" or "play the ball behind you to me--a support player" this is often said when an attacker is stopped, can't go forward, is facing pressure and a supporting teammate is running up. This lets the attacker know there is a safety-valve option to maintain possession).

Defensive Messages.

--"Mark up" (often used before a restart such as a corner kick or free kick, the defensive organizer is saying "pick out an attacker and put your body on him--make sure everyone is covered.")

--"Keeper" (said ONLY by the goalkeeper and no-one else, it's a way of saying "this is my ball, I'm going for it, clear out--if you try and kick it you'll likely get a piece of me!").

--"Pressure" or "close down" Asks 1st defender (closest defender to the ball) to reduce the pressurizing distance to force the 1st attacker's eyes down on the ball.

How to Teach Soccer Players to Communicate: Obviously soccer is a team game. One of the most critical elements of team play is communication among teammates. In American ball or basketball, coaches can compensate for this by calling plays and in baseball, managers can rely actions to players by giving signals. But in soccer (where there are no timeouts and play is near constant), players can't rely on the coach to provide direction and cohesion and shape. Quite simply, teammates need to talk to each other and communicate. Additionally, a team that talks to each other is a team where every play has his (or her) head in the game even if they don't have the ball. Talking to each other sounds easy but it isn't. Avoid yelling at the player with the ball "I'm open!" or "No!"

Step1 - Decide What to Teach. A common mistake (especially with coaches of youth teams) is to overload the players with information. So to begin teaching communication, start with 2-4 simple useful messages. **Simple and useful means that:** --it should be concise (so a player can yell it out quickly)

--it is something likely to be used several times a game (otherwise players, especially younger players, won't see any value in learning this).

Step2 - Attacking Messages. Here are some of the more common commands used by attackers:

--"Man on" (yelled to a teammate receiving the ball to let them know there will be immediate pressure, they don't have time to settle the ball but need to either clear it away first-time or move).

--"Time" as in "You've got time" (the opposite of "man on" to let someone know not to just mindless kick the ball away but instead, there is time to settle the ball, look up and pick out a target).

--"Show" (usually said by the player with the ball, it means "I can't get you the ball from here, I've got pressure so I can't come to you--get closer to me, "show" for the ball).

--"Drop" (as in "drop the ball back" or "play the ball behind you to me--a support player" this is often said when an attacker is stopped, can't go forward, is facing pressure and a supporting teammate is running up. This lets the attacker know there is a safety-valve option to maintain possession).

--"Switch" (meaning "switch the point of attack" or "move the ball to the other side of the field." Young players often play with their heads down and fail to see the entire field. A teammate without the ball may see the defense is bunched up around the ball but the attackers on the far-sideline are unmarked).

--"Cross" or "Square" (said to a wide attacker, instructions to cross the ball or play a square pass across goal, there is a teammate in front of goal waiting for the ball).

--"What you see" (said to the player with the ball after receiving it, it is a way of saying "there are no traps, no-one is sneaking in behind you, don't worry about someone coming in from the side, what you see in front of you is what's going on--so take time, settle and decide what to do, no need to panic or look around.")

--"Turn" or "Go" (telling a player to take off, head downfield into space, usually this is leading to the second half of a give-and-go or wall-pass between teammates).

Step3 - Defensive Messages.

--"Mark up" (often used before a restart such as a corner kick or free kick, the defensive organizer is saying "pick out an attacker and put your body on him--make sure everyone is covered.")

--"Keeper" (said ONLY by the goalkeeper and no-one else, it's a way of saying "this is my ball, I'm going for it, clear out--if you try and kick it you'll likely get a piece of me!").

--"Goalside" (instructions to defenders by a teammate to get their body between their man and the goal, to be closest to the goal).

--"Step" (an advanced command, used by defenders to put attackers offside. If a defender yells "step" and all the defenders move up 1 step, it can put an inattentive attacker in an offside position). Part of the "offside trap".

--"**Contain**" (used by defensive help to tell someone facing the ball "buy time--if you go for the tackle and miss there is no one to help out. Give space for a second or two--'contain' the attacker until I can get there and support you.")

Step4 - Teach it in Practice. You can tell your players to talk on the field. But knowing they should do it and then pulling it off coherently and timely in the process of a game are totally different situations. So you need to teach it in practice. Here are some activities you can try that help to make this instinctive (and again, this is why you start with just 2-4 basic commands until everyone has mastered them).

--one player serves balls as teammates (one by one) run to receive the pass. The player passing the ball gives a command ("man on" or "time") which tells the teammate to either first-time the ball or they have time to trap, look up and then play the ball. This is a good drill to do close to goal that works on trapping and finishing skills as well as communication.

--mini-games (2v2, 3v3) but the catch is that a score doesn't count unless the coach hears at least two specific and appropriate messages (like "square" or "drop").

--situation specific activities. For instance, you can practice defending a corner kick and instruct a defender to yell "step" after the first stop on the ball. Or practice the ball coming into the box where the goalkeeper has to decide to stay back or come out (and then yell "keeper"). Or an attacker is confronted by two defenders and a teammate commands either "drop" or "switch" (to indicate where the open man is).

--all of the defensive commands ("goal side" or "step" or "keeper" or "contain") fit easily into team defensive practice.

How to help young players to talk more during matches:

As soon as the whistle goes to start a match, two things should happen:

1. The coach stops giving instructions and advice to his players.
2. The players start talking to each other and take control of the game.

But very often young players say little, if anything, to each other during a match.

That's because:

1) Their coach is shouting instructions. If the coach is telling his players what to do, what's the point in players talking to each other? The solution: Pretty obvious! The coach must learn to let his players do the talking. Offer encouragement from the touchline by all means but resist the temptation to tell your players what to do.

In the short term, shouting "look behind you!" or "pass!" might help your players avoid making mistakes but if you constantly make decisions for them they will never learn how to play ball... and your players will be quite happy to stay quiet and let you do all the talking.

2) Your players have poor ball skills Players who have little confidence in their ability to control, protect and pass a ball will, understandably, be reluctant to call for it. The solution: Coaches need to focus their coaching sessions on improving technique, not learning tactics. Have regular refreshers on the subject and watch your players' first touch and ability to shield (protect) the ball while they are playing SSGs (small-sided games). Consider: Is their first touch of the ball too hard (the ball runs away from them) or is it correct (the ball is pushed a little way in front or to the side and in a good position to make a pass or shoot)? Remember, the ball very rarely needs to be stopped dead.

More on improving first touch How to teach your players to shield the ball

3) Your players don't know what to say It's not much good simply telling your players you want them to talk to each other more, you have to tell them what you want them to say. The solution: Help your players learn a few key phrases. Discuss your chosen team words with your players and see if they can remember them. Then encourage them to use the team words in a small-sided game. Praise players (especially the quiet ones) who use them. Then play a "no talking" SSG in which players are not allowed to talk to each other. Ask them which way of playing is better: Talking or no talking?

4) Your players' personality stops them from communicating New or timid players don't shout for the ball because they either don't want it or are afraid of calling attention to themselves. They are happy to blend into the background. More experienced players might not risk passing to players they perceive as being weaker and likely to give the ball away. The solution: Lots of work on your players' ball skills and reinforcing the message that ball is not just about scoring or making great tackles - it's about working together to achieve a common goal. You can help your players appreciate the importance of teamwork and sharing the ball with all their team mates (not just the most skilled) by playing games that reward them for helping other players to score. A SSG in which players can only score with their first touch works well, as does playing a game with the condition that to win, every player on the team has to score.

Abbreviated Version:

Defensive Tactical Instructions:

"Got you" You can go forward; I'll cover your position.

"Away" Used by GK to instruct teammates to clear the ball immediately without attempting to control it.

"Pressure" "close down" Asks closest defender to the ball (the 1st defender) to reduce the pressurizing distance to force the attacker's eyes down on the ball.

"Push up" Asks fullbacks to move up the field to support our attack.

Attacking Tactical Instructions:

"Carry" or "Time" You have room to dribble forward; stay composed don't play a low-percentage pass

"Cross" Play the ball across the field toward the opponents' goal.

"Far post" 1. Tells teammate to go there for a cross; 2. Tells 1st attacker where to direct the cross...to the goal post farthest from the ball.

"Man coming" You will be under pressure very soon.

"Man on" Warns of immediate pressure from a blind side.

"Switch" Play the ball to the far side of the pitch in order to switch the point of attack to the "weak side"; see also "switch off" "1-2" Suggests a wall pass or give-and-go.

"Drop" Asks for a drop or heel pass, i.e. a pass made directly behind the player on the ball

"Feed me" Used by a player making a run into space behind defenders to request a through or lead pass so he can catch up to it and continue his run to goal

"Square" Indicates support in a position to one side of the player on the ball.

Support for teammates:

"Unlucky" The idea was right, even if the outcome was not what we wanted (e.g. teammate's shot hit the post or keeper was forced to make a spectacular save)

"Well done" Recognizes good effort.

Defensive:

Away	Used by GK to instruct teammates to clear the ball immediately without attempting to control it
Clear	See "away"; not recommended by some coaches because it can be confused with a shout of "keeper"
Close down	Asks 1st defender to reduce the pressurizing distance to force the 1st attacker's eyes down on the ball
Contain	See "jockey"
Double [up]	Tells teammate to assist in double-teaming the first attacker (i.e. defenders combine to win the ball)
Drop off	Retreat toward
Goalside	Get between the opponent and our goal
Got you	You can go forward; I'll cover your position
Help [him/her/N]	Asks teammates to provide defensive support for an unsupported 1st defender
Hold [him/her]	See "jockey"
Into touch	Tells recovering defender to play the ball into touch if possible rather than trying to control it
Jockey	Tells teammate to delay the attacker until defensive support arrives so he can tackle
Lock in	See "double"
Lock on	See "mark"
Make a wall	Used by GK to tell teammates to line up between a dead ball and the goal before a free kick.
Mark "#"	Used to tell teammate to mark a particular opponent
Mark up	Used to tell teammates to be sure they have taken responsibility for marking an opponent man-to-man, especially on free kicks and corners
No foul	Used when opponent is shielding in a field position where we do not want to give up a free kick, i.e. in our defending third
No turn	Get tight to the opponent to keep him facing his own goal
Pressure	See "close down"
Shift (right or left)	Moves the defensive formation to mirror the movement of the ball
Squeeze in	See "tuck in"
Stay	Don't leave your mark

Stick	See "tackle"
Switch off	Used to exchange marking assignments as opponents criss-cross (exchange positions)
Tackle	You have support now and can attempt to tackle the opponent in order to win the ball
Take ball	Used to ask teammate to take 1st defender role so you can track your mark
Track [him/her/#]	Follow (continue to mark) the designated opponent as he or she makes a run toward our goal
Tuck in	1. Asks weakside defenders to take up a position closer to the middle of the field; 2. Asks teammate to provide support to 1st defender
Two here	Advises teammates that you are marking two players, and requests assistance
Wall [# in the wall]	Used by GK to specify the number of players he wants in the defensive wall on free kicks
Attacking	
"N's on"	He or she is open for a pass
All the way	1. You can take the ball all the way to the opponents' goal; 2. It's a 50/50 ball, but you can win it if you go in hard
Bring it	See "carry"
Byline	Tells teammate to carry the ball to the goal line before playing it back
Carry	You have room to dribble forward; stay composed don't play a low-percentage pass
Check	Come back toward the teammate with the ball
Corner	Play the ball toward the corner
Cross	Play the ball across the field toward the opponents' goal
Far & wide	See "spread out"
Far post	1. Tells teammate to go there for a cross; 2. Tells 1st attacker where to direct the cross...to the goal post farthest from the ball.
Have it	Take a shot rather than looking to pass
Home	See " http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/Pages/Basics/communication.html - keeper keeper's on"
If you like/want/need (me)	See " http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/Pages/Basics/communication.html - support support" (2)
Keeper's on	Play back to the keeper
Leave it	See " http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/Pages/Basics/communication.html - dummy let it run"
Let it run/go	Tells teammate to "dummy" a pass, i.e. let the ball continue on to a more distant player rather than receiving it himself
Look at N	He's open to receive the ball
Man coming	You will be under pressure very soon
Man on [hard]	Warns of immediate pressure from a blind side
N's gone	He is making a run to space behind the defense
Near Post	1. Tells teammate to make a run to the near post; 2. Tells teammate to cross the ball to the near post
Open up	Tells receiving teammate to take "open" body position so as to be able to see as much of the field of play as possible; normally suggests that ball should be received across body to the far foot.
Right away	Play the ball as soon as possible
Send [it]	1. Instruction by overlapping teammate to tell player on the ball to release it; 2. Suggestion to play "over the top" to a teammate making a run behind the opponents' defense
Shoot	Take a shot now

Spread [out]	Spread out so as to ensure maximum depth and width on attack and stretch the opponents' defense ("use the whole field")
Switch	Play the ball to the far side of the pitch in order to switch the point of attack to the "weak side"; see also http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/Pages/Basics/communication.html - off switch off"
Switch field	See Switch
Stretch out	See spread out
Support	You can take on your defender; if you lose the ball, I'm here to win it back; if you want to play back, I'm here
Take it down/in	You have time to control the ball (normally used as player is about to receive a difficult or high pass)
[Put it] through	Look to split the defenders with a pass into space for a teammate making a run off the ball
Time	You are not under pressure; get your head up and assess your options
Turn	Used to tell a teammate receiving ball with back to opponents' goal that he can turn and go forward
What you see	You are not under pressure from your blind side
Wing	Look to play the ball wide
Yes	You can play to me now: I'm ready to receive
Combined play	
1-2	Suggests a wall pass or give-and-go
Drop	Asks for a drop or heel pass, i.e. a pass made directly behind the player on the ball
Feed me	Used by a player making a run into space behind defenders to request a through or lead pass so he can catch up to it and continue his run to goal
Flick	Requests that the ball be "flicked" on by the receiver to a running teammate, either with the front foot (in the case of a pass played on the ground) or with the head (typically on a throw-in)
Go	Tells teammate to sprint forward and look for a return pass
Give-'n'-go	See "1-2"
Heel	See "drop"
Hold or hold it	Used by overlapping teammate to tell player on the ball not to release it until he has passed him
Line	Play the ball to me down the touchline
Set me up	Play the ball back to me on my preferred foot so I can play a long ball forward
Square	Indicates support in a position to one side of the player on the ball
Touch [me/N]	Play the ball to me (or to a named teammate) with your first touch
Wall pass	Asks for a pass on the ground which will be returned with the first touch as the teammate who made the first pass makes a run past a defender
Warnings and announcements	
"M's ball"	Used by field players to call for the ball to teammates will get out of their way; use in preference to "Mine!" which some referees will penalize as unsporting conduct
"M's up"	Used by field players to warn off teammates as they go up for a header
Cover	1. Used by 2nd defender to tell 1st defender he has support; 2. Used to tell teammate to become 2nd defender
Easy	Stay composed; don't panic; don't boot the ball away
• I got ball	I will take the 1st defender role
• Keeper	GK uses this to call for the ball so teammates will get out of his way
Mine	See "M's ball"
Move	Keep your feet moving; don't get caught ball-watching
No	Don't play the ball to me, because I'm too tightly marked and the pass would be intercepted

Out	See "push up"
Pull up	See "push up"
• Push up	Asks fullbacks to move up the field to leave opponent in an off-side position and/or support our attack
Step out/up	See "push up"
Trap	1. See "push up"; 2. See "double"
You	Tells teammate he or she is in a better position to play the ball than you are (used when two teammates are converging on a ball); NB: rather than asking teammates to take responsibility, it is better for one player to take responsibility by calling for the ball
Support for teammates	
Unlucky	The idea was right, even if the outcome was not what we wanted (e.g. teammate's shot hit the post or keeper was forced to make a spectacular save)
Well done	Recognizes good effort
Well in	Recognizes a strong challenge
Well up	Recognizes a strong effort in the air

Two Ball Soccer:

This SSG (small-sided game) will improve your players' ability to keep the ball as a team. To succeed, they will need to support each other, communicate effectively and pass the ball accurately.

It will also improve their ability to play with their heads up and press their opponents quickly and effectively.

Age range: U8s to U14s.

Number of players: 3v3 (for eight to 10-year-olds) up to 6v6 (11 to 14-year-olds).

Equipment required: Some flat cones to mark out the playing area, four balls, training vests.

Set-up: Create a quarter pitch size playing area, e.g. 20x15 yards for eight-year-olds, 40x30 yards for 14-year-olds.

Divide your players into the appropriate size teams and give them training vests to aid identification.

Each team is given one ball.

How to play:

- Both teams attempt to maintain possession of their ball and, at the same time, try to capture their opponent's ball.
- When a team has possession of both balls, the game is stopped and the team in possession is awarded one point.
- The captured ball is returned to the team without possession and the game restarts.
- Play for a set time or the first team to X points wins the game.

Note: If your players struggle to maintain possession of the ball, add a neutral player who supports either team or add two "safe zones" - small, coned-off areas where a player under pressure can take the ball and stay for up to five seconds without being tackled.

Progression

Increase the intensity of the game by reducing the size of the playing area.

Reduce the number of touches. Three-touch for younger players, two (or even one-touch) for older players.

Variations

Add two more balls. Now each team must keep and try to steal two balls. Award a point when one team possesses three balls.

Younger players can play Two Ball Soccer as a tag game. If the player in possession is tagged the ball goes to the opposition.

It's Good to Talk:

Effective and timely on-field communication is a feature of successful soccer teams at all levels but a lot of young players, even the most experienced and skillful, become very quiet as soon as they step on to the pitch on match days.

This frustrates youth soccer coaches who are used to watching professional players talking non-stop to each other and I get lots of emails asking me: "Why don't my players talk to each other?" and "why won't they tell each other what is going on?".

I tell them that it takes time for young players to build the confidence required to be noisy on the field on match days but there are some things you can do to speed up the process.

1. Explain why it's good to talk. You should tell your players that they can really make a difference to the team's performance by using their voices as well as their feet.

Make it clear that the "best" players on the pitch are not necessarily the players who score the goals or make the saves – it's the players who help the team play as a unit by warning players who are about to be tackled, telling the player on the ball what their options are and encouraging team mates who make mistakes.

2. Focus on the key players. Everyone on the team should contribute but certain players need to be more vocal than others and it's these players you should really work on. They will encourage others to follow their example. Your *goalkeeper* cannot be a shrinking violet. She has to call – loudly – for the ball when she comes to get it, tell defenders that she can't get it and they must deal with the situation and organize defenders at free kicks and corners.

Your *central defender* also has a key communications role. She can see the whole play: who is in a good position to receive a pass, who is about to run the ball into trouble and where the threat lies when the other team has the ball.

This knowledge needs to be shared. Explain this to your central defender and give her the objective of giving a running commentary on the game during your end-of-session scrimmages or pre-season friendlies.

Your *captain* has to lead by example when it comes to talking to players. Her job includes picking up players who make mistakes and helping others by giving them direction.

Make sure she knows that you want to hear her doing this at training sessions and on match days.

If you can get all three of these players to use their voices effectively on match days, it won't be long before all your players are doing the same.

3. Tell your players what to say. It's not much good simply telling your players you want them to talk to each other more, you have to tell them what you want them to say. This is where you need to keep it simple and jargon free. Decide on three or four messages you want your players to exchange and leave it at that.

"Man on!" – you're about to get tackled.

"Shoot!" – you're in a great position to score.

"I'm behind you" – you can turn and pass to me.

"Look left/right/behind you" – a warning to a defender that danger is lurking.

4. Barriers to effective player communication.

New or timid players don't shout for the ball because they don't want it or are afraid of calling attention to themselves.

They are happy to blend into the background.

More experienced players might not to risk passing to weaker players.

You can remove these barriers by working on your players' ball skills and reinforcing the message that soccer is not just about scoring or making great tackles. It's about working together to achieve a common goal.

5. How to practice on-field communication.

Play The Sound of Silence – a 4v4 or 5v5 game where players are not allowed to say anything. Anyone who speaks has committed a foul and a free kick is given to the other team. This game really brings home the importance of communication, both to you and your players.

Ask your players if it is difficult it is to play if they have to be silent.

Now play the same game but allow communication. Stop the play and congratulate any player who gives one of the three or four vocal commands you've chosen for your team. If you have spoken to your central defender, goalkeeper or captain about the importance of their role, make sure you give them lots of positive reinforcement when they make their calls.

Glossary of Terms:

See [Abbreviations](#) | [Motivational Quotes](#) |

50/50 ball: A loose ball contested by a player from each team and which may be won by either one of them (a frequent cause of injury as players collide in attempting to be first to the ball).

Abandon the game: Occasionally the referee will stop the game with no chance of resuming it; in that case, the game is said to have been abandoned. Seriously inclement weather or bench-clearing brawls are typical reasons.

Advantage: A discretionary judgment which allows an official to permit play to continue rather than stopping play to administer a foul. This is because the foul did not put the offended team at a disadvantage, or the foul, should it have been called, may take away a favorable opportunity for the offended team. (Law 5)

Assist: One player passes the ball to a second player, who scores as a result of the pass.

Assistant referee: One of two assistants to the center referee. Their duties include: Calling the ball out of play, determining the team that is awarded a corner kick, goal kick or throw-in, calling offside, notifying the referee of a pending situation, monitoring for misconduct and any duty that the referee deems necessary. Formerly called "**linesman**". (Law 6)

Association ball: The original name of soccer.

Attacking half: Generally considered the offensive half. The half of the field where one particular team is trying to score.

Attacking third: Some coaches prefer to divide the fields into thirds in setting tactical goals for their team. The attacking third is the third of the field where one particular team is trying to score. The other two thirds are called the defensive third and middle third.

Away: Instruction issued by a goal keeper to teammates to tell them to clear the ball without attempting to control it.

Away strip: See strip. (Law 4)

AYSO: American Youth Soccer Organization. A recreational youth soccer program.

Back: 1. Movement by players towards their own goal; 2. Communication to a teammate, who is carrying the ball, for a pass back; 3. Communication to a teammate letting him know that he has support behind him; 4. Another name for fullback.

Back pass: A pass made to a trailing player (one who is behind the ball carrier).

Balance: Used to describe the concurrent presence of coverage by a team in all important areas of the field of play. See shape.

Ball side: A player who is closer to the ball than to the opponent he is playing against is said to be "ball side" of the opponent. See goal side.

Bench: The physical structure or area for the substitutes and coaches.

Bicycle kick: A technique whereby a player kicks a ball while leaving his feet, and with his back to the intended target. Both feet are in the air, hence the reference to riding an imaginary bicycle. Also called a "scissors kick".

Booking: Terminology used to indicate that a player has had his name/number recorded, by the referee, for receiving a yellow or red card. The player is said to have been "booked". (Law 12)

Boots: See footwear. (Law 4)

Box: See penalty area.

Breakaway: An attacker who gets behind all field defenders, with possession of the ball, is said to have a breakaway.

Captain: One player who has been designated by the coach to be the one person who can communicate with the referee, while on the field. While FIFA doesn't give captains an official designation, youth soccer can utilize two or three captains. A captain is designated with a distinctive arm band.

Caught in possession: A player who neither moves forward with the ball nor passes to a teammate after receiving the ball, and who is then tackled by an opponent, is said to have been "caught in possession".

Caught square: When two or more defenders have been beaten by a through ball because they were positioned square to one another (in other words, in a line across the field parallel to the goal line) because one or more failed to drop off and provide support, they are said to have been "caught square".

Caution: When the referee shows a yellow card to a player and records that player's name because of misconduct, he is said to have "cautioned" the player. (Law 12)

Center circle: A circle of 10 yard (9.15 meter) radius, drawn with the center mark as its center. (Law 1)

Center mark: The mark that is placed on the half-line, designating the midway point on the line. (Law 1)

Center: Or "centering." See cross.

Channel: 1. An imaginary lane about 10 yards wide running the length of the field and located about ten yards in from the touch line; often exploited for diagonal runs by wing- and center-forwards, who look for a through ball to be played along it. 2. To 'channel' an opponent is to steer him or her into a more predictable, easily defended direction.

Charging: The initiation of contact with an opposing player. Not all charges are illegal. (Law 12)

Check away: To move away from a teammate who has the ball; frequently used before checking back to the ball in order to create space and confuse a defender.

Check to: An offensive player runs toward the ball carrier, usually to call for a pass; frequently used immediately after the player has checked away from the ball in order to create space and confuse the defenders.

Check run: See check to and check away.

Chop: A forceful redirection of the ball used to flee a defender. Similar to a cut, but a stronger action is required.

Clear: A term used by defenders to send the ball rapidly upfield. This term is yelled out by defenders to alert the defender with the ball that he has impending pressure.

Clearance: Usually a long, flighted ball used by defenders to clear the ball upfield.

Cleats: Specialty footwear worn by soccer players. So called for the studs or cleats on the soles of the shoes. These are frequently permanently molded as part of the sole but may also be removable. See also footwear. (Law 4)

Close down: The technique whereby a defender gets as close as possible to an attacker, usually the ball-carrier, without letting the attacker get past.

Compress the field: As defenders push out toward the ball, thereby reducing the area in which attacking forwards can move without being in an offside position, they are said to "compress the field".

Corner arc: The quarter-circle marking, with a radius of one yard, located at each of the four corners defining the field of play. (Law 1)

Corner flag: Flagposts positioned at each of the four corners defining the field of play. (Law 1)

Corner kick: A method of restart, awarded to the attacking team when the ball, having last been touched by the defending team, crosses the goal line without entering the goal. (Law 17)

Cover: 1. A defender who is supporting a teammate facing the attacking player on the ball is said to be providing cover; 2. A defender moving into such a position will call "Cover!" to let his or her teammate know of the presence of support.

Cross: The term used to describe a ball that has been kicked or thrown (from a throw-in) from near the touch line towards the goal.

Crossbar: The structure of the goal that connects the two upright goalposts. (Law 1)

Cut: A subtle adjustment made when carrying the ball. The ball carrier moves the ball in a different direction to avoid being tackled. Similar to a chop, but the action is not as forceful.

D: Abbreviation referring to the penalty arc. (Law 1)

Dead ball situation: Any situation when the ball is being put back into play by the attacking team, especially a direct or indirect free kick or a corner kick. (Laws 13, 17)

Defensive third: See attacking third.

Deflection: 1. An uncontrolled rebound off a player or the referee. 2. A save attempt by a goalkeeper (usually with the hands) where the ball rebounds away (see parry).

DFK: Abbreviation referring to a direct free kick. (Law 13)

Diagonal: Any action (pass, kick or run) that moves corner-to-corner with respect to the field of play. The player doesn't have to use all the space between the corners, which are simply a reference to a diagonal.

Direct free kick: A method of restarting play, where the player taking the kick may shoot the ball directly into the net. Indicated by the referee when he points in the direction of the kick. (Law 13)

Direct play: A tactical system in which a team attempts to play the ball forward into the attacking third as soon as possible after recovering possession, frequently by playing long balls over the top. Often contrasted with possession play. (Law 13)

Dissent: Expressing disagreement by word or action with any decision of the referee. (Law 12)

Dive: An exaggeration of the effect of contact, including falling to the ground, intended to influence the referee to award a free kick in favor of the player's team. This is considered unsporting behavior, possibly punishable by yellow card. Also a technique used by goal keepers in an attempt to stop a shot on goal.

Dive in: To attempt to tackle an opponent without first slowing one's own or the opponent's forward progress, thereby making it easy for the opponent to beat the defender with a dribbling move. See jockey.

Draw: Also called a tie. When both teams score an equal number of goals, including no goals scored by either team. (Law 10)

Dribble : The practice of controlling the ball with the feet while moving on the field of play.

Drive: Typically a low, hard shot on goal, taken with the instep.

Drop ball: A method of restart in which the referee 'drops' the ball to the ground. The players may not kick the ball until the ball touches the ground. (Law 8)

Drop kick: A punting method the goal keeper uses where he drops the ball to the ground, then punts the ball just after it hits the ground.

Drop off: To move farther away from one's mark. Issued as an instruction to a player, from the coach or another player.

Drop pass: A player passes the ball, behind himself, to a teammate or leaves the ball for a teammate. See heel.

Dummy: To pretend to be about to receive the ball, but allow the ball to travel past oneself, in order to deceive the opponent.

Dummy run: A run by a teammate of the player with the ball, intended to draw one or more defenders away from the area under attack.

Encroachment: Being within 10 yards of the ball when a free kick, corner kick, goal kick or penalty kick is being taken by an opponent. (Law 13)

Fake: The act of a ball carrier 'faking' an action, to elicit a response from a defender, then the ball carrier performs another move. Example- faking a shot, then passing the ball off to a teammate.

Far post: The goalpost that is farthest from the ball.

Feint: A maneuver performed by a ball carrier that is intended to get the defender to react, allowing the ball carrier to move the ball the other way. Any of the step-overs and moves created by famous players constitute feints.

Field of play: The rectangular playing area, defined by two longer touch lines and two shorter goal lines. Also called the "pitch". (Law 1)

FIFA: Fédération Internationale de Ball Association: the world governing body of soccer.

Fixture: See match.

Flagposts: See corner flags. (Law 1)

Flat back: As in "flat back four". A defensive shape where the back three or four defenders move in tandem, maintaining a formation that is relatively straight across the field, as opposed to formations based on having at least one player stationed some distance behind the other defenders.

Flats: Footwear specially designed for training or indoor use. No cleats or studs are present. (Law 4)

Flick: 1. The ability of a player to use his foot to 'flick' the ball into space so that he may run onto the ball (commonly referred to as a heel flick); 2. passing a high ball on to a teammate with the top of the head, whether from a throw-in, a clearance or a high pass; 3. an instruction used to request a teammate to pass the ball on in this way.

Follow: Used as a coaching instruction to get players to follow the ball after a shot has been taken. This instruction is geared to preparing the players to get a second (or more) shot should a rebound occur.

Ball: See association ball."

Footwear: Any of the specialty shoes that are developed especially for soccer players. See cleats, flats, turf shoes, screw-ins. (Law 4)

Formation: Often used to describe the number of players positioned by a team in the different areas of the field of play. Normally, the keeper is not included; thus a 4-4-2 formation is one with four fullbacks, four midfielders and two forwards, while a 3-5-2 refers to playing with three backs, five mids and two forwards. See balance and system of play.

Forward: An offensive player, playing closest to the opponent's goal.

Foul: An offense against an opponent or against the spirit of the game that results in a free kick.

Fourth official: In FIFA-sponsored competitions, an official with responsibility for supervising substitutions, keeping order in the technical areas and so forth.

Free kick: A method of restarting play. Can be either direct or indirect. (Law 13)

Front foot: 1. The foot closest to the ball. 2. "Front [of the] foot" refers to the outside part of the foot near the shoe laces and just above the little toes.

Fullback: A defensive player, playing closest to one's own goal.

Get turned: See turn.

Give-and-go: A tactic used when one player passes to a teammate, the first player then sprints into an open area, then the second player returns the pass to the first. Also called a "wall pass."

Gloves: Handwear that is specifically designed for the goal keeper and field players. These differ in that the keeper's gloves provide padding and protection, the field player's gloves provide warmth and a rubber palm used to grip the ball for throw-ins. (Law 4)

Goal: 1. The structure defined by two upright goal posts and one crossbar that is set on the goal line, an equidistant from each corner. 2. To score (Law 1)

Goal area: The box that is formed when a line is drawn six yards out from each goalpost, along the goal line. The lines extend six yards into the field of play and are connected by line that is parallel to the goal line. (Law 1)

Goalkeeper: The one player on the field who is permitted to use his hands while the ball is in the field of play.

Though the goal keeper can only use his hands within his own penalty area. (Law 12)

Goalkeeper strip: See strip. (Law 4)

Goal kick : A method of restarting play, awarded to the defensive team, after the attacking team has put the ball over the defending team's goal line without scoring a goal. (Law 16)

Goal line: The two smaller boundary lines, forming the short ends of the rectangular field of play. (Law 1, Law 10)

Goalposts: The two vertical structures that support the crossbar. (Law 1)

Goal side: A player who is closer to the goal which he is defending than to the opponent he is playing against is said to be "goal side" of the opponent. See ball side.

Goalie: See goal keeper. (Law 12)

Golden goal: The goal in "sudden victory" overtime that wins and ends the game. These overtimes are sometimes given the unfortunate name "sudden death." (Law 7)

Half-line: See halfway line.: Law 1)

Half-time interval: The period of idle time between the two halves of the game. (Law 7)

Half volley: A technique where a player strikes a ball just after the ball has touched the ground.

Halfway line: Or "half line". The line that divides the field into two equal and mirror-image halves.

Hand ball: See handling. (Law 12)

Handling: Intentionally playing the ball with one's hand or any part of the arm. (Law 12)

Head ball: See header.

Header: Passing, clearing, controlling or shooting the ball with one's head.

Heel: Also called backheel. To pass the ball directly behind oneself by using either the heel or sole of the foot. The term can also be used by a player to indicate that he is ready to accept a back pass.

Holding: Intentionally closing one's hand on an opposing player or any part of his equipment in an attempt to interfere with his progress. (Law 12)

Hole player: See window player.

Home strip: See strip. (Law 4)

IFK: Abbreviation for "indirect free kick". (Law 13)

Indirect free kick: A method of restarting play, in which the ball must be touched by another player after it is kicked in order for a goal to be scored. Signaled by the referee holding one arm extended above his head until the ball has been touched by another player. (Law 13)

Injury time: See time lost. (Law 7)

Inside: 1. Refers to the part of the field closer to the mid-line, as opposed to the touchline. 2. Inside of the foot: the big toe side of the foot near the arch.

Instep: The top part of the foot corresponding to the lower part of the laces portion of the boot.

Into touch: When the ball goes into the area outside of the field of play, beyond the touch lines.

Jersey: The team uniform that distinguishes the teams as different. Also, the goal keeper must have a shirt that distinguishes himself different than his team and the opponent. (Law 4)

Jockey: 1. To delay the forward progress of an opponent with the ball by holding a position close to and goal side of the opponent so that he or she can be tackled once support arrives. 2. An instruction to a player to tell him or her not to tackle but to jockey an opponent.

Juggling: A training exercise in which the ball is kept in the air, using any legal part of the body, by one player.

Jumping: Intentionally jumping at an opponent. (Law 12)

Keepaway: A small-sided game in which the object is for one side to retain possession rather than to score goals.

Keeper: See goal keeper.

Kicking: Intentionally kicking or trying to kick an opponent. (Law 12)

Kick-off: A method of starting and restarting play. A game is started with a kick-off and a kick-off is performed following a goal that has been scored. The restart kick-off is performed by the team that did not score. (Law 8)

Lay off: To play the ball to one side for a teammate, normally when one has one's back to the opponents' goal.

Libero: Position name given to a player playing in one of the positions normally associated with a stopper, a defensive screen or sweeper. Unlike these players, however, the libero frequently comes forward to join the attack. .

Linesman: See assistant referee. (Law 6)

Man on: A term used for communicating that the ball carrier or the player about to receive the ball is going to be under pressure from a defender.

Man-to-man defense: A defensive system in which a player (usually a marking back) will be assigned responsibility to mark a specific individual opponent. Often used to neutralize a particularly dangerous and mobile attacking player; if the strategy is effective, the neutralized player is said to have been "marked out of the game". See zone defense.

Mark: 1. A defender who is guarding an opponent is said to be **marking** him or her; 2. A player guarded by another player (as in "Who's your mark?").

Mark up: Used to instruct players to guard an opponent so that all attacking players are marked.

Marking back: A fullback with primary responsibility for marking one of the opposing forwards.

Match: A game of soccer. In Britain, a regularly scheduled league meeting between two teams is frequently referred to as a "fixture", while a match in the context of a Cup competition is often called a "tie".

Micro-soccer: Any one of a number of small-sided formats (frequently 3, 4 or 5 players a side) used with very young players.

Middle third: See attacking third.

Midfielder: Player occupying a position between the forwards and fullbacks.

Misconduct: An offense that is a serious breach of the spirit of the game and results in either a caution or an ejection

Movement: 1. A player moving with the ball. 2. Players moving, who are not carrying the ball, in an attempt to move to an unoccupied area to bring defenders with them or create an area where they can receive a pass.

Near post: The goalpost that is nearest to the ball.

Nets: Netting that is attached to the goalposts, crossbar and the ground, to ensure (barring any gaping holes or loose fittings) that a goal has indeed gone through the opening created by the goalposts and crossbar. (Law 1)

Nutmeg: Describing the action of putting a ball through the space created when a defender has his legs spread. A player is said to have been "nutmegged" or "megged."

Obstruction : "Impeding a player's progress." Playing the player, not the ball. A player uses his body as an impediment or an obstruction merely to prevent a play on the ball. (Law 12)

Offside: See offside position and offside infraction. (Law 11)

Offside infraction: A player in an offside position while his team has the ball becomes involved in active play, such as by being the recipient of a pass. (Law 11)

Offside position: The situation where an attacking player, on the offensive half of the field, has put himself in a position where there are fewer than two opponents between him and the goal. This positioning does not constitute a foul, until he becomes involved in the play. (Law 11)

Offside trap: The act of the defenders moving forward in unison to place an opponent in an offside position, thereby creating an offside infraction. (Law 11)

On goal: A shot which will enter the goal if nothing stops it is said to be "on goal", "on frame" or "on target".

One-touch play: When a player redirects a moving ball with the first touch, either as a pass to another player or as a shot, without using the first touch to control the ball. See two-touch play.

Onside: Not being offside. (Law 11)

Open up: 1. To turn slightly away from the direction of an approaching ball which one is about to receive in order to improve one's vision of the field of play by having more of the field in view. 2. Issued as an instruction to a player to tell him or her to open up.

Out: Or "get out". See push.

Over the top: To play "over the top" is to send long high balls forward into the attacking third so that they drop behind the fullbacks, with the intention of creating attacking opportunities for strikers or wing forwards.

Overlap: A tactic used by the attacking team. One player will run past the ball carrier in order to put himself in a better position to receive the ball.

Overtime: If the score is tied after regulation and the rules call for more time to be played, then two periods of equal and predetermined time must be played, team changing ends after each period. Normally, the periods must be played in their entirety, regardless of the score. In some cases, provisions are made for a sudden death type overtime where the game is over once there is a score. See golden goal. (Law 7)

Own goal: A goal scored by a player into his own team's net. If a shot is taken and the ball deflects off a defender for a goal, the goal is considered to have been scored by the player taking the shot, and is not an own goal.

Parry: A controlled and deliberate deflection by the goalkeeper using the hands. The goalkeeper is considered to have been in possession of the ball at the time it touched the hands.

Pass: To transfer possession of the ball to a teammate.

Penalty: A synonym for penalty kick. Also for calling a foul that will result in a penalty kick.

Penalty arc: The arc that is present on the line, parallel to the goal line, that defines the penalty area. This arc has a 10 yard radius from the penalty mark. Also called "the D." (Law 1)

Penalty area: The box that is formed when a line is drawn 18 yards out from each goalpost, along the goal line. The lines extend 18 yards into the field of play and are connected with a line that is parallel to the goal line. (Law 1, Law 14)

Penalty kick: A direct kick, taken by a player, from the penalty mark as a result of a foul committed by the defensive team in their penalty area. All players except the goal keeper and the player taking the kick must be outside the penalty area and 10 yards from the ball. (Law 14)

Penalty mark: Also called the penalty spot. A circular mark 9" in diameter made 12 yards out from the center of the goal, where the ball is placed when a penalty kick is to be taken. (Law 1, Law 14)

Pitch: See field of play.

PK: See penalty kick. (Law 14)

Play in: To play a teammate in is to play a through ball for him to run on to.

Player: Each of the 11 (or fewer) members of a team who is legally on the field of play and taking part in the match. See substitute.

Position: 1. Any one of the names which describes where a player plays and what his or her role is; see goal keeper, fullback, sweeper, stopper, screen, wheel man, libero, midfielder, forward, wingback, striker, window player, hole player, wing. 2. Defensive position: placing oneself in a proper position to defend against attack.

Possession: Having control of the ball. For a goal keeper, control (possession) is having any part of the hand or arm touching the ball.

Possession play: An attacking system in which a team tries to retain possession of the ball while advancing toward the attacking third and while in the attacking third, with the object of trying to create scoring opportunities. Frequently contrasted with direct play.

Pressure: 1. A tactic used to attempt to dispossess an opponent of the ball. Generally refers to the close proximity of the defender. 2. Used as an instruction to tell a player to apply pressure to an opponent who has possession of the ball.

Pull: See push.

Punt: A method of kicking that goal keepers use to clear the ball upfield, wherein the ball is dropped from the hand and kicked before touching the ground or as a half-volley.

Push: A coaching instruction used to tell players to move forward, towards the opponents' goal, in order to put opponents in an offside position, as in "push up" or "push out." Also "out", "step", "step up" and "pull".

Pushing: Intentionally pushing an opposing player. (Law 12)

Recovery: The act of defenders to get back into a defensive position.

Recreational: Less competitive soccer where players have the chance to sign up to play the sport regardless of ability.

Red Card: Disciplinary action of sending a player, or players off the field of play. (Law 12)

Referee: The official who have been given full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed. FIFA matches will have one referee and two assistant referees. Other leagues may have two referees and no assistants. (Law 5)

Restart: The use of a kick, throw or dropped ball to restart play after play has been stopped because the ball goes out of the field of play or the referee stops play for any reason. (Law 8)

Reverse field: See switch field.

Save: An action that stops a shot on goal from scoring.

SAY: Soccer Association for Youth. A recreational soccer program.

Schemer: See window player.

Scissors kick: See bicycle kick.

Screen: 1. Position name (from 'windscreen wiper'); applied to a defensive midfielder playing in front of the fullbacks with responsibility for collecting loose balls across the width of the field and then distributing them; also called "defensive screen". 2. To block the keeper's view of the ball.

Screw-ins: Shoes with removable (and therefore replaceable) studs (as opposed to permanently fixed molded cleats) designed for use in wet conditions or soft ground. Often called "six-stud cleats" after the number of studs usually found on the sole of each boot. (Law 4)

Select: More competitive soccer where players are 'selected' to be on a team following tryouts or some other prearranged qualifying standard.

Set piece: See set play.

Set play: A rehearsed series of actions normally initiated in a dead ball situation to attempt to create or take advantage of a scoring opportunity. These involve misdirecting opponents, usually on free kicks, or taking advantage of positions of vulnerability, for example on corner kicks.

Shape: Refers to the characteristic placement of players in a given formation. If players wander away from their assigned roles and are not replaced by teammates, a team may be said to have "lost its shape".

Shielding: The tactic of a ball carrier putting his body between the ball and the defender.

Shinguards: Protective equipment worn by players to aid in prevention of injuries to the shin. (Law 4)

Shootout: A tie-breaking device that pits one player against the goalkeeper in either penalty kicks or a breakaway type run from 35 yards away. In both cases, the winner is determined after a best of five chances alternating with each team. If tied after five, the contest continues with different players until one team scores and the other team doesn't. See "Kicks from the Penalty Mark" supplement.

Shot: An attempt to score into the opponents goal.

Sideways-on: The body position of a player, normally on defense, such that the player is turned so the hips face one touchline or the other more than either goal line. The purpose is to allow the player to react quicker in the direction of either goal line.

Six-stud cleats: See screw-ins. (Law 4)

Sliding tackle: Executing a baseball type slide in an attempt to dispossess the ball from a ball carrier.

Small-sided game: Any one of numerous types of exercise or competition in which the number of players involved is less than (usually much less than) the "normal" 11 a side. Many different small-sided games are frequently used as training exercises with older players and as the normal competition format with younger players. See micro-soccer.

Space: Used to define an area on the field that is free from opponents and pressure. The ball can be passed into space for a player to run on to. A player can run into space to get open for a pass or to bring defenders with him to rid the area under attack of defenders (see dummy run).

Square: 1. A player situated at any point on a line parallel to the goal line with respect to a teammate is said to be in a "square" position. 2. A term used to communicate to a player that a teammate is supporting him in a square position.

Square ball: A pass played "square", in other words parallel to the goal line or perpendicular to the touch line.

Step: Or "step up". See push.

Stockings: Socks that cover the shin guards. (Law 4)

Stoppage time: See time lost. (Law 7)

Stopper: Name of a position; usually applied to a single central defender playing in front of a sweeper.

Striker: A position name given to a player in a central attacking position.

Striking: Intentional or intent to strike an opponent. (Law 12)

Strip: The uniform worn by all team members, consisting of jersey, shorts and stockings. Professional teams, and many competitive teams, will have both a **home strip** in the club colors and a contrasting **away strip**. Professional teams often have a **third strip** for occasions when a visiting team's away strip is too close a match to their own home strip. The goalkeeper wears a distinctive uniform often referred to as a team **goalkeeper strip**. (Law 4)

Studs: See cleats. (Law 4)

Substitute: Any one of a team's idle players, on the bench, waiting to enter the field of play as players. (Law 3)

Support: A player on the ball is said to have support when he has one or more teammates in position and ready to receive a pass. A defending player, challenging the player on the ball, is said to have support when a teammate is ready to cover if he is beaten by the attacker.

Sweeper: Position name; usually applied to a central defender playing behind the stopper and wing fullbacks with responsibility for "sweeping up" loose through balls which are played in behind the other defenders.

Switch: 1. Word used to notify a player that another player has left his position, requiring that the open area needs to be filled. 2. Instruction to a player on the ball to switch the point of attack to another area of the field. 3. Instruction to a teammate to trade positions.

Switch field: The act of directing the ball from one side of the field to the other (in other words, from an area near one touch line to an area nearer the other touch line). Frequently used as a tactic to catch the defense which has been drawn to one side of the field and lost its shape.

Switch off: To trade marking assignments.

System of play: A term used to describe the specific manner in which a given formation is implemented. For example, a 4-4-2 (four fullbacks, four midfielders and two forwards) may be implemented with two center backs or with a sweeper-stopper combination. The system of play will impose a characteristic shape on a team.

Tackle: A defensive player's ability to dispossess the opponent of the ball while the ball is being dribbled.

Tactics: A description of 'when' and 'why' some action, or reaction, is occurring.

Takeover: A means of transferring possession of the ball whereby a teammate of the ball carrier runs toward and past him or her; as the teammate passes by, the ballcarrier leaves the ball for him or her to take.

Technical area: A defined area in proximity to a team's bench to which the substitutes and coaching staff are normally restricted.

Technique: 'How' an activity is done.

Third strip: See strip. (Law 4)

Through ball: Also "through pass". A pass played into the space behind the defenders for a teammate to run on to.

Throw-in: A method of restart which is awarded to the team that did not touch the ball last before it went over the touch line. (Law 15)

Tie: 1. See draw. 2. See match.

Time: An instruction to tell a player as he receives the ball that he has time to gain control of the ball.

Time added on: See time lost. (Law 7)

Time lost: The referee has the ability to add time at the end of either half for time lost because of treatment or removal of injured players, wasted time, substitutions or any other cause. (Law 7)

Toe punch: Or, "toe poke." Typically used for tackling, the player is able to touch the ball with his toe, attempting to dispossess the ball carrier.

Touch: 1. Developing a 'feel' for the ball. 2. Defines the number of times a ball is touched: One-touch, two-touch. 3. A call to a teammate who is about to receive the ball to pass the ball on with his or her first touch.

Touch line: The lines forming the long sides of the rectangular field of play. (Law 1)

Transition: Going from offensive to defensive play (sometimes called "negative transition") and vice versa (sometimes called "positive transition").

Tripping: Intentionally causing or attempting to cause an opponent to fall. (Law 12)

Turf shoes: Footwear with many small studs designed for use on artificial turf or very hard ground. (Law 4)

Turn: 1. To reverse direction while in possession of the ball, normally in order to go forward or to play a cross or a shot. 2. An instruction to tell a teammate about to receive the ball that he has time and space to turn. 3. To "get turned": for the ball carrier to put himself in a position facing the defender in order to try to beat him. 4. To "turn a defender": to cause him to over commit to one side so as to dribble the ball behind him.

Two-touch play: When a player first controls a moving ball with one touch and with the next touch, passes to another player or shoots. See one-touch play.

Up: 1. Pass the ball forward, towards the opponents goal. 2. Movement of players towards the opponents goal.

Upper V: Also "upper 90". Refers to the intersection of the crossbar and goalpost.

USSF: United States Soccer Federation. The governing body of soccer in the United States.

USYSA: United States Youth Soccer Association. The youth division of the USSF.

Volley: A technique used by a player where he is able to strike the ball while it is in the air.

Wall: The players who stand between the ball and their own goal at the time a free kick is going to be taken. These players form a human barrier between the ball and their goal. (Law 13)

Wall pass: See give-and-go.

Wheel man: Central midfielder with primary responsibility for distributing the ball when team is on the attack.

Wing: Or "winger". As in "wing forward" or "wing midfielder". A player who normally plays near the touchline, often with an attacking responsibility.

Wingback: A fullback playing in a wide position with responsibility for making attacking overlapping runs down the flank.

Window player: Position name; applied to an attacking midfielder or to a forward who plays behind the striker(s) and takes advantage of balls laid off by them or played back to the top of the penalty area by the wing forwards; also receives penetrating balls from fullbacks or wing midfielders and distributes them Also called "schemer".

Yellow card: A cautionary measure used by the referee to warn a player not to repeat an offense. A second yellow card in a match results in a red card. (Law 12)

Vision: The ability to see the happenings on the field of play. Players with excellent 'vision' have the ability to see and know where their teammates are located in relation to the defenders.

Zone defense: A defensive system in which players are assigned responsibility for particular areas of the defensive third rather than for individual opponents. See man-to-man defense.

Common Soccer Abbreviations:

Link: See [Glossary of Soccer Terms](#) |

A: Goals Scored Against. Assist.

A.E.T.: After extra time

Ab: Abandoned Match

AD: Away Draw

AFC: Asian Football Confederation

AL: Away Loss

App: Appearances

ATT: Attack

AV: average

AW: Away Win

B: Back

BC: British Championship Tournament

C: Caution

C: Central

C: Center

CB: Central Back

CDM: Central Defensive Midfielder

CAF: Confederation Africaine de Football

CF: Center-forward

CAM: Central Attacking Midfielder

CM: Central Midfielder

CONCACAF: Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football

CONMEBOL: Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol

CPT: Captain

CS: Clean Sheets

CST: Central Striker

D: Defender

D: Draw

DEF: Defence

Dis: Discipline

E: Expulsion

E.T.: Extra Time

F: Forward

F: Friendly

F: Goals Scored For

F.A.: The Football Association

F.T.: Full-time

FB: Fullback

FC: Football Club

FIFA: Federation Internationale de Football Association

FTS: Failed to Score

G: Goal

GA: Goal Against

GD: Goal Difference

GK: Goal Keeper

H: Home

H.T.: Half Time

HB: Halfback

I: Inside

L: Left

L: Loss

LAM: Left Attacking Midfielder

LB: Left Back
LCM: Left Central Midfielder
LF: Left Forward
LM: Left Midfielder
LW: Left Wing
M or MF: Midfielder
min: Minute
N: Neutral
O: Outside
O.G.: Own Goal
OFC: Oceania Football Confederation
OFF: Offense
P: Matches Played
PK: Penalty Kick
pos: position
pts: Points
QF: Quarter-final
R: Right
RAM: Right Attacking Midfielder
RB: Right Back
RCM: Right Central Midfielder
RF: Right Forward
RM: Right Midfielder
Rsl: Result
RW: Right Wing
S: Suspension
SAC: South American Championship Final Tournament
SF: Semi-final
St: Start
ST: Striker
Sub: Substitution or Substitute
TFC: The Football Confederation
U: Unofficial
UEFA: Union des Associations Européennes de Football
VI: Victory International
W: Win
W: Winger
WCF: World Cup Final Tournament
WCP: World Cup Preliminary Competition
WSF: Women's Soccer Federation

Corner Kicks:

Links: [Defending Corners & Drills](#) | [Restarts](#) |

- As the corner is taken, one player runs to the **near post**, one runs towards the **far post** and one runs towards the **penalty spot**. The fourth player moves to the **clean-up position (garbage man)** along the edge of the penalty area to pick up any half cleared balls.

** The movements can be pre-arranged by position (Ex: forwards take the posts, halfbacks take clean-up and the kicks etc) or while the kicker is getting the ball your players can meet at the 18 line semi-circle and discuss.

- Your remaining two outfield players may need to stay back to mark opposing forwards but they should add pressure and uncertainty to the situation by being as close to the opposition's goal as possible.

- The kicker's job is to deliver the ball into an area somewhere between the near and far post.

Example communication strategy:

When the designated kicker is just about to kick, he/she raises their arm and holds up a finger combination as a signal.

1 finger = Standard penalty spot cross.

2 fingers = Short corner....near post person or defender makes run toward the kicker to get the ball and either shoot or pass back to the kicker.

3 fingers = Far post corner etc. See below for set play ideas.

How to score more goals from corner kicks: In contrast to the professional game where more than a third of all goals are scored from set pieces, youth soccer teams rarely take advantage of the opportunities offered by one of the most common set pieces in youth soccer – the corner kick. Corners are - or should be - a great opportunity to score.

Your players have time to choose their positions and the corner taker has time to take an accurate kick. Yet the most common outcome is either a mishit corner that goes harmlessly behind the goal or players scattering in all directions as the ball comes whizzing across the box.

The technique

1. Place the ball by the corner flag. If a quadrant is marked, remember that some part of the ball must be in the marked area or on the line. And the corner flag cannot be removed to make the kick easier!
2. Stop. Look up. Are your team mates ready?
3. Take a short run up, keep your eyes on the ball and approach at a slight angle.
4. In the last stride of the run up, place your non-kicking foot next to the ball. Make sure it's pointing where you want the ball to go.
5. Bring your kicking foot back and forward in one swift motion. Point your toe at the ground.
6. At the same time, scrunch your toes up – this creates power by locking your ankle and stiffening your foot as it hits the ball.
7. Strike the ball slightly below the mid line and keep your knee and shoulders behind the ball so that it rises.
8. Follow through in the direction you want the ball to go.

- You want all your players in your squad to be able to take a corner so don't be tempted to assign this role to just one or two of them.

Quick tip Fewer corner kicks will end up going harmlessly behind the goal line if left-footed players take them from the right corner flag (looking from your direction of attack) and right-footed players take them from the left corner flag.

The receivers: The key to scoring goals from corners is to make sure your attacking players move quickly into pre-arranged positions as the kick is taken.

- If you do not provide your attacking players with any guidance they will stand around like statues, hoping the ball will come somewhere near them. And if it does, they will be so surprised they won't be able to do anything with it!

The Two Ms: Movement and momentum is the key to scoring goals from corners. If your attackers are standing still when the corner kick is taken, they will be marked by defenders and will find it difficult to get any sort of touch on the ball when it arrives.

- To begin the practice, position four attacking players on the corner of the penalty area furthest from the ball.

Coaching notes: The player moving towards the near post will have to set off slightly before the others and all the players need to time their runs to they arrive at their designated spot at the same time as the ball. Several repetitions will be required before your players get it right. Aim for a nine out of 10 success rate.

5 Corner kick

Styles:



Penalty Spot Corner



Long Corner:



Far Post Corner:



Long Corner:



Short Corner:

- To make life harder for defenders, your players should stand close together before the kick is taken and only split up when the ball is struck.
- It is important to place the attacking players at the far corner of the box so that they have to run quickly towards the ball. This maximizes their momentum and makes them harder to mark.
- Do not add defenders until the timing of the runs is correct. When your players are consistently meeting the ball and (hopefully!) putting it into the net, you can add defenders to the drill, one at a time.
- But sometimes, especially with very young players, there is nothing you can do to stop your attackers ducking or getting out of the way of the ball as it flies across the box.
- If your players simply cannot connect with a traditional corner kick, try encouraging them to take short corners instead – it is often a killer tactic in youth soccer!

Faking a Short Corner to get a Semi-Short:

Step #1: An attacker starts at the corner of the penalty area nearest to the side the corner is being taken from.

Step #2: When the corner taker looks up the attacker moves towards them shouting their name and calling for a short corner.

- A defender will come across to try to cut out the short ball.
- The attacker slows, allowing the defender to get slightly in front of them, then quickly turns and moves towards the penalty area.

Step #3: At that moment the corner taker plays the ball into the space that the attacker is moving into.

- The defender is caught out by the move of the attacker.
- The attacker is now free to either pick out a team mate in a goal scoring position or press on into the area themselves to try and score a goal.

How to score more goals from corner kicks:

More than a third of goals in the professional game are scored from set pieces but youth soccer teams rarely take advantage of the opportunities offered by one of the most common of all set pieces - the corner kick. Corners are, or should be, a great opportunity to score. Your players have time to choose their positions and the corner taker has time to take a good, accurate kick. Yet the most common outcome is either a mishit corner that goes harmlessly behind the goal or players scattering in all directions as the ball comes whizzing across the box.

So let's have a look at why your players don't convert enough corners into goals. Common mistakes and how to correct them

1. The kick doesn't reach the penalty area. Poor kicking technique.

Correction - to get more power into your players' corner kicks teach them to run up at a slight angle, plant their non-kicking foot next to the ball, lock their ankle with the foot in the "down" position and encourage them to curl their toes into the bottom of their boot. You will also notice an improvement if the corner kick taker focuses on a particular panel of the ball and watches their foot hit the ball. Even if their kicking technique is sound, many young players won't be able to launch the ball into the box because they don't have enough strength in the legs. If that is the case with your players, encourage them to take short corners or pass the ball directly to a player standing on the edge of the box. Both techniques are very effective if used correctly.

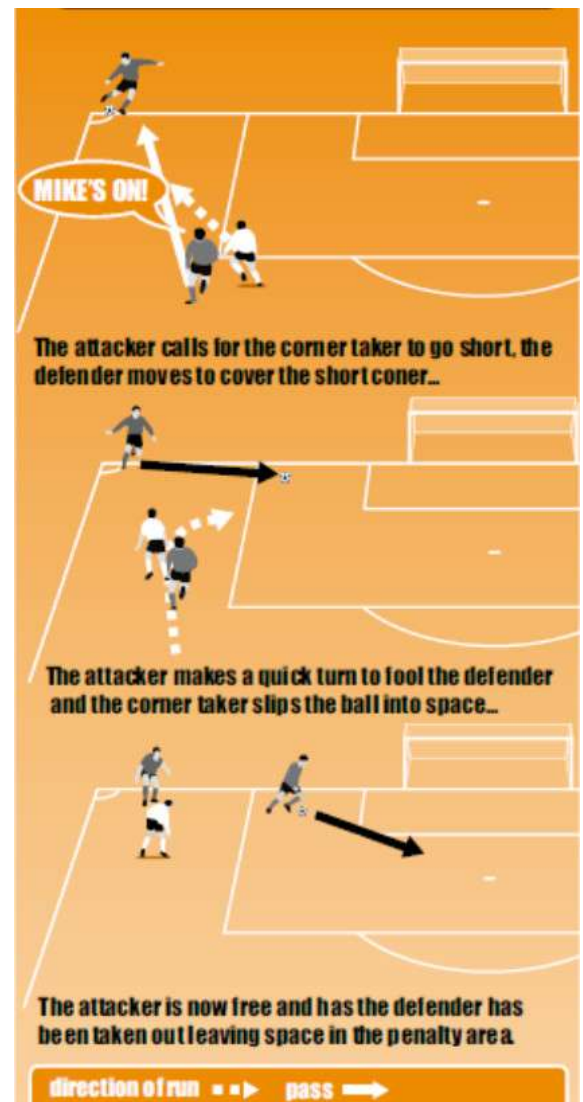
2. The corner kick is delivered correctly but your players don't attack the ball. Fear of heading the ball. **Correction** - if your players are taught to head the ball correctly there is no reason why they should shy away from corners kicks.

A simple tactic to try:



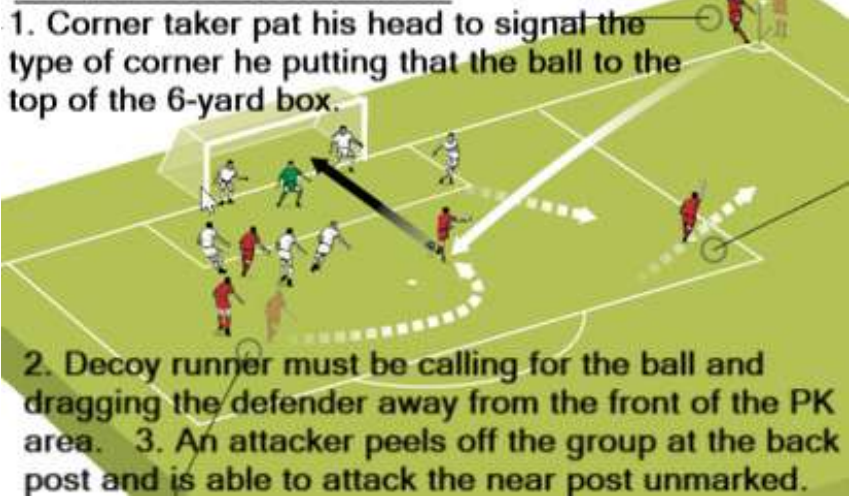
The corner taker hits a firm pass along the ground towards player A who makes a run towards the corner of the penalty area. Player A steps over the ball and lets it run to player B, who controls it. As the defenders close him down, he rolls it into the path of player C, already on the move, who runs on to it and has a shot.

Near Post Corner Poach:



Clever movement here sets up a poacher on the six-yard line. The key to making this work is the decoy movement around the penalty area. The move is signalled by the corner taker patting his head as a decoy, but it's not going to a head, it's going to the top of the six-yard box. On the far side you need a group of players marked by the opposition, making it look like a high ball is coming to the back post. To clear the penalty area send a decoy player to make it look like a short corner. The ball should be played hard and low into the box where one of the attackers has peeled off the back of the group and has gone unmarked to the near post to score. The decoy runs are vital, as is the movement of the shooter.

Near Post Corner Poach:



1. Corner taker pat his head to signal the type of corner he putting that the ball to the top of the 6-yard box.
2. Decoy runner must be calling for the ball and dragging the defender away from the front of the PK area.
3. An attacker peels off the group at the back post and is able to attack the near post unmarked.

How to take a short corner: Two players go to the corner. One player taps the ball to the second who either dribbles down the line towards the goal or passes the ball to a third player standing on the edge of the penalty box who shoots. Short corners

The traditionally taken corner kick in youth soccer, particularly for very young players, rarely results in a goal. That's because it's very difficult for children to anticipate the flight of a ball coming directly at them through a crowd of players in such a way that they can make contact with it.

- So instead of encouraging your corner taker to knock the ball in hard and fast, why not try something a little more subtle instead?
- Short corners (where the ball is passed to a player standing a few yards away from the ball who either plays it back to the corner taker or crosses/shoots himself) are often very effective.
- Or you could try passing the ball back to one of your midfielders who is standing by the half way line. This player will probably have a lot of room in front of him and can get within shooting range before he is challenged.
- Remember Manchester United's famous short corner against Chelsea in the 2008/9 season? Wayne Rooney pretended to change his mind about taking a corner and signaled to Ryan Giggs to do it instead. As he moved away from the corner flag Rooney touched the ball, putting it into play. Chelsea's defense were expecting Ryan Giggs to take a conventional corner but he ran with the ball towards goal and crossed it for teammate Cristiano Ronaldo to score with a header.

Corner Kicks:

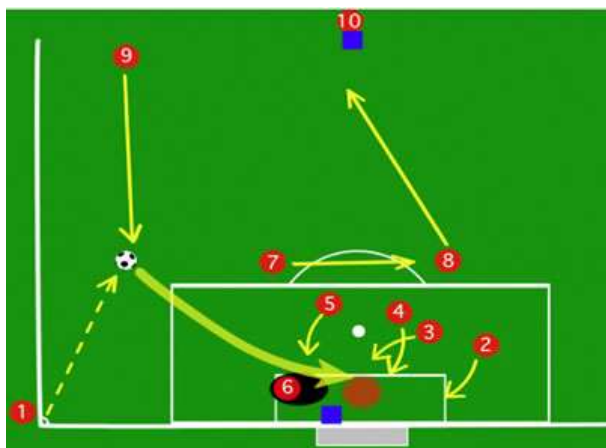


through. Players 7 & 8) –ARC TEAM- are looking for a loose ball one or two touch shot. Consider shooting at own players. Players (9 & 10) are providing double coverage on offensive player at midfield.

PLAY #1: Inswingers CORNER KICKER- kicks ball to black hole- a bending kick, head high. The ball is flicked on by player1 or 2 (in THE HOLE = Zona Rosa). He then turns to the goalie to get any rebounds that fall into the black hole.

Player (3) -CHAOS- tries to help free up player (2) then moves to goalie to distract him, get in his way and keep him from running to the ball. Players (4 & 5)-ROSA TEAM- work together to try to get a header in the area of the zona rosa. Player (6)- THE GARBAGE MAN- covers the far post. It is his job to make sure no ball gets





PLAY #2 = WALL PASS: Same as Play #1 except player (3) moves to the corner. A wall pass is made to player (1). Player (1) quickly provides a cross. The purpose of the wall pass is to simply to give the corner kicker a better angle for his corner kick. Player (1) cannot play the ball back to player (3). A good team will trap offsides as soon as 3 passes back to (1). If player (3) is not open when his run is made, player (1) simply takes his corner kick. Play #3: Wall pass with #8.

Play #3: Defender (9) slides to his right and comes forward. Player (1) fakes a corner and passes back softly on the ground so that player (9) can cross with one touch. A good opponent will try to trap offsides when the pass is made back to (9). Note that players (7 & 8) have to rotate to provide adequate defensive coverage.

The One Touch Corner Kick will begin with the strongest kicking Midfielder taking the kick. The two Forwards and two Midfielders will line up outside the far post just inside the penalty box. The remaining Midfielder will line up near the corner of the Penalty Box ball side, as a bluff. The kicker will raise his hand to indicate he is ready to kick. The Forwards and Midfielders on the far post will break towards the Goal Box as the kicker launches an Air Ball into the Goal Box.

1. Defending: One player should be positioned on the edge of the penalty area nearest to the corner taker. This stops the other team from taking a short corner and often distracts the corner taker who is forced to try to kick the ball over or around your one-man defensive wall.

Your team should also leave a player upfield and in the same position every time you concede a corner. The rest of your players now know where they can clear the ball to and start a counter-attack without looking.

2. Attacking: One player should lurk just outside the edge of the penalty area nearest to your corner taker. This player is in a good position to receive a pass and either shoot or cross the ball into the box at an angle that is difficult to defend. Another player should be positioned at the other corner of the penalty area. He or she should be encouraged to wait for the corner to be taken then either make a quick, forward run to get on the end of the cross or, as often happens in youth soccer, wait for a ball that is over hit or missed by the players in front of goal.

The Two Touch Corner Kick will align the same as the One Touch Corner Kick. The two Forwards and two Midfielders will line up outside the far post just inside the penalty box. The remaining Midfielder will line up near the corner of the Penalty Box ball side. The kicker will raise his hand to indicate he is ready to kick. The Forwards and Midfielders on the far post will break towards the Goal Box. The kicker passes the ball out to the lone Midfielder. The Receiving Midfielder then has the option to pass back to the kicker, pass back into the Goal Box, dribble, or attempt to score.

How to Set Up a Corner Kick:

If you're on the attack and a defending soccer player knocks the ball out past the goal line, your team gets a corner kick. Setting up a successful corner kick can put your team head and shoulders above the rest.

Step1 - Devise corner kick plays, keeping all possible offensive strategies in mind.

Step2 - Position players differently with each corner kick opportunity, and consider using both short and long corner kicks to keep the defense guessing.

Step3 - Position taller players near the goalie, which makes heading the corner kick into the goal a true scoring possibility.

Step4 - Watch that opponents remain at least 10 yards away from the ball until the kick is in play.

Step5 - Place the ball inside the corner arc at the corner flag nearest where the ball went out of bounds.

Step6 - Kick the ball onto the field of play.

Step7 - Consider delivering a long-floating kick toward the front of the goal. This strategy may force the goalie to play the ball far from the goal line.

Step8 - Avoid touching the ball again, if you're the kicker, until it's been touched by another player on the field.

* When defending a corner kick, make sure to cover each attacker on the field. Defenders should also know the circumstances under which the goalie will come out of the goal to make a play on the ball. * If the kicker touches the ball consecutively with his or her body (not including hands) after the kick, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team where the infraction occurred. * If the kicker touches the ball with his or her hands before it touches another player, a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team at the point of the infraction. If the infraction occurred inside the kicker's own penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded to the opposing team (unless the kicker is the goalkeeper, in which case the opposing team gets to take an indirect free kick.) * If you have any condition that would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment.

A high floating corner kick works well if the goalie is either small or just at a lower level, but good goalies at higher levels will be able to easily get to and catch a floating corner. At higher levels (high school or college) the best corner kick often is a driven ball head high. It won't look as pretty, but it will score more goals. Another option is if you can consistently get a floater 6-12 yards out from the goal line and about 5-10 yards past the goal. This is difficult for goalies to judge and often can pull the keeper off the goal line only to have the ball fly over their head leaving a great opening for a back post goal. Some try to use the swerve kick to bend the ball into the goal, or at least curving toward the goal, so that if a head or foot does get onto it, it is already spinning in the direction and has a more likely chance of going in. It also looks pretty if you score off the corner!

How to Take a Corner Kick

At higher levels of play, place kicks represent critical offensive moments. Typically, the corner kick is a result of a surge of play within the final attacking third and provides teams with a chance to convert on their forward momentum. Successful corner kicks blend both surprise and precision, catching the defending team on their heels.

Step1 Practice makes perfect. The best place to work on your corner kick is on a lined, regulation soccer field. If you can, get two or three offensive players to model potential runs that you can use as targets.

Step2 Place the ball upon the half-circle line at the corner of the field. Take three or four steps back from the ball and survey the position of your teammates.

Step3 If the defending team sets up deep in the box, it is a good idea to set up a teammate close to the corner. This way you can just play a short ground pass and draw a few defenders out. The player either has the option to dribble the ball towards the goal or play a pass in the air across the box.

Step4 Since most times the short-pass option will be covered, place your hand in the air to signal your preparation to kick. When you are ready to approach the ball, drop your hand to let your teammates know when to initiate their runs.

Step5 Now for the most important part: kicking the ball. As most professional will argue, the best corner kick is a ball driven to the area of the penalty box ranging from the back corner of the six-yard goalie box to the twenty-five yard line (depends on position of teammates). A strong velocity will not only catch the defenders off guard but will supply more force to the resulting header, volley, or re-direction. Playing to the back of the box also shifts the goalie's focus and causes him/her to move across their line, which can be devastating if the attacker can change the direction of the ball.

Step6 You can also play to the front end of the box, but the ball is better played lower of the body in this instance. This will enable the attackers greater choice in how to re-direct or possess the ball with their bodies.

Step7 Remember that after you play a corner, you also can contribute to the attack. Place yourself in a supporting position to enable an outlet pass from the congested goalfont.

* Once the ball is played, remember that you are in an off-side position. Quickly make yourself equal with the last defender.

* Many players choose to play the ball with inwardly curving spin. This is not necessary, as the velocity of the pass is much more essential.

* While lofty passes might provide opportunities, they give the defenders and goalie too much time to adjust.

Soccer coaching tips for short corners

Having problems with corners? A good tip is to take them short, it's an easy way to goal.

Two players stand near the flag

The short corner involves two players standing near the flag, with the kicker passing the ball to the second player and developing the play from there. If you follow the diagrams, you can coach your players how to create space when they are closed down by a defender.



Create opportunities from a 2v1

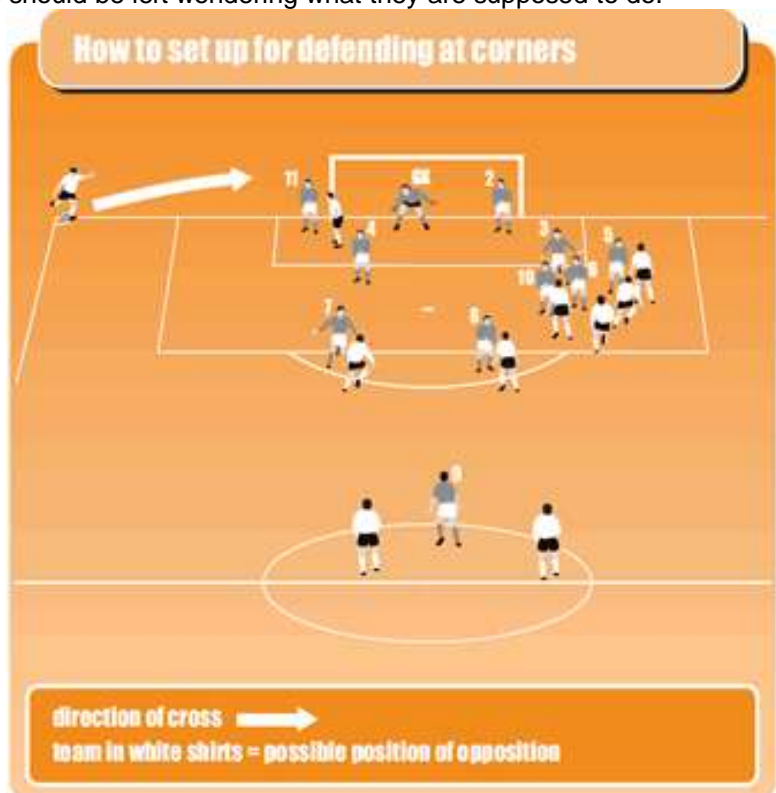
Both players should start facing the goal and should stand side by side just behind the ball. One player should pass the ball to the other, if the corner is from the attacking team's right side, the player who is strong with the left foot should touch the ball to the player who is strong with the right foot. This lets the player with the right foot dribble straight down the end line towards goal, or use the player with the strong left foot to either shoot first time or cross the ball.

If the player dribbling down the line goes right at the defender, the second player will be open. If the defender goes with the runner, the player with the ball keeps going to goal.

Strategy tips for corners

Build a defensive strategy for your team by drilling your players so they know just what they're doing at set plays, such as defending [corners](#) at 11-a-side.

Tell your players their responsibilities at corners before every match. No one should be left wondering what they are supposed to do.



Numbers 3, 5, 6 and 10 - These are your best four headers of the ball. They should mark man-to-man and their job is to mark the opposition's main heading threats, marking slightly in front, and being first to the ball.

Number 11 - Marks in front of any opposition standing on the near post or just mark the space in their absence.

Number 4 - Marks the space in front of the main markers, keeping a look out for any opposition standing in front of the goalkeeper. If this is the case he may have to adjust his position so he is standing in front of the attacker.

Number 2 - Marks the far post.

Numbers 7 and 8 - Mark any opposition on the edge of the box.

Number 9 - He stays upfield, occupying two defenders and hoping to help spring a counter attack.

Coach clever corner positions

Help your soccer players make the most of the situation when they're taking [corners](#) by coaching one or two players - depending on whether it's 7 or 11-a-side - so that they lurk just outside the penalty area on the corner nearest the corner-taker.

This soccer coaching tactic gives your team a number of options:

- The corner-taker can play the ball to them, a player can pass from inside the box to them or they are there when the ball is cleared from the corner.
- In each case the opposition will be on the back foot and often will be caught by surprise because it is unlikely they will be marking that position.
- So what you are doing is stopping counter-attacks and giving options for your players to pass the ball to.
- Once this player has the ball, they can then change the angle of the cross or have a shot themselves - they are in a great attacking position and should be creating goal-scoring chances.

Corner tactics for windy days

Coach your soccer (ball) players so that they know how to take [corner kicks](#) on match days when the weather is windy. Help your players make the most of taking corner kicks when they're playing in wet and windy conditions with these soccer coaching tips.

- If the pitch is in a bad state, tell players to look long down the wings where the pitch is likely to have some grass on it. But don't let them look long when they're taking the corners or forget to use their [short-corner tactics](#).
- Corners are not affected by the state of the pitch - they are by the wind. Playing into a strong wind, the corner should be short to change angles and get closer.
- With the wind, get your players ready to run to the far post for close-range [headers](#).
- A cross wind can curl your corners, into or away from, goal.
- Only concentrate on one thing at half time, as cold, wet youngsters take in very little.

Soccer coaching tips for zonal defending on corners

Why leave defending [corners](#) to chance when, with a bit of organization, you can improve your team's chances of keeping the ball out of the back of the net? Use these zonal defending soccer coaching tips to help.

Like any set-play in the defending third, corner kicks against your team are dangerous, but that doesn't mean that there aren't steps you can take to reduce the threat of conceding a goal...

Zonal defending soccer drill tips

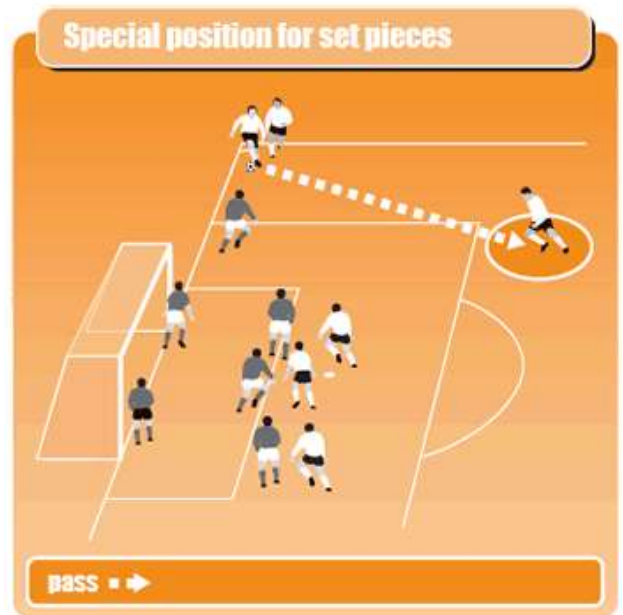
There are three ways of defending corners: zonal defending, man-to-man and a combination of these two, but whatever system you choose, every player should have a job to do.

In zonal defending, give your defenders an area to cover, and if the ball reaches them, it is up to them to clear it.

Here is a list of jobs they can do:

- **Protect the posts.** Two players, perhaps your least-effective headers, can be placed on each post to clear shots off the line that beat the keeper, and cover the keeper if they attempt to punch or catch the ball.
- **Stand on the six.** The better headers should be on the six-yard line. Put three players here, one each opposite the posts and one opposite the center of the goal, who should be the best header in the team.
- **Double up.** A further three players can be positioned in a similar arrangement but between the six- and 18-yard lines.
- **Disrupt the kicker.** One defender stands 10 yards from the player taking the corner kick to prevent the ball from being driven to the near post, or tries to block the kick by jumping, so forcing the attacker to play the ball differently. This defender also applies pressure should the attacking team try a 'short corner', where the kicker passes the ball to a nearby teammate, who crosses the ball.
- **Reinforce the near post area.** Add an extra defender in the six-yard box, outside the near post and few yards from the goal-line to guard against dangerous 'flick-ons'.
- **Lead the counter-attack.** Leave a target, possibly a shorter, faster player, say near the halfway line so when the ball is cleared they can hold it to allow team-mates to get out. A second player can also be left up, for example, between the penalty box and the halfway line.
- **Keep the ball out.** Finally, the goalkeeper should stand in a position where they can see the ball and as much of the penalty area as possible, which will mean a little forward from the goal line near the middle of the goal. They have to decide early whether or not to challenge for the ball by catching or punching.

[Click here](#) for man-to-man soccer tactics to use in defending
[Man to man defending corners tactic](#)



Zonal marking is one way of defending corners, but another soccer tactic to coach is man-to-man, which involves your defenders selecting an attacking player and following them closely.

Defenders must each pick an opponent according to their size and heading ability, and be in a position to see both the player and the ball. Defenders should also be goal side of their opponent.

Key soccer coaching tip: You may still want to leave players protecting the post and upfield to counter-attack.

A bit of both tactic

Combining zonal marking with man-to-man allows key areas to be covered while marking man-to-man the opposition's most dangerous attackers with your biggest, best headers.

There are pros and cons for each one of the three corner defending tactics we've covered, but whichever one you choose – KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Don't forget the four "gets"

- Get back – Quickly bring plenty of players back to positions in and around the penalty area to outnumber or at least equal the opposition.
- Get it together – As the game's stopped players can lose concentration, but they mustn't. Now's the time to get organized. Appoint a leader – your goalkeeper, best header, or best talker – and let them prepare the team to avert danger.
- Get there first – Players should be brave and also determined to beat their opponent to the ball. Get them to clear the ball as far, high and wide as possible to allow themselves time to move out as quickly and, if necessary, catch the other team offside.
- Get in the way – If defenders can't reach the ball first, they should stop attackers from keeping the ball in front of the goal and shooting. Win the 'second' ball!

Soccer drill to work on these skills

- Begin with no opposition apart from the corner taker.
- Take corners from both sides of the pitch.
- Vary distance, height, speed of the delivery.
- Add opposition.
- Try zone and man-to-man marking plus a mix of the two.

Key soccer coaching tip: Be careful to prevent players from getting bored or cold, so don't practice these soccer drills for too long.

Corner trickery soccer drill

Young soccer players love trickery in matches and they enjoy practicing these skills during soccer (ball) coaching sessions. This **corner** trick is clever, fun and very effective.

Coaching corner skills

Doing the unexpected can often result in a chance to score a goal. In youth soccer the unexpected can catch the whole team out. In the case of corners, the defending team will set itself up for a ball played into the penalty area directly from the corner with one player tracking anyone going short at the corner.

How to coach a corner trick

- When you win a corner, have attacker 1 ready to take it, while attacker 2 runs from the penalty area and shouts attacker 1's name loudly and makes a gesture that signals he wants the ball played to his feet.
- The defender will go with him - running with attacker 2 towards the corner.
- As attacker 2 gets near to attacker 1, get him to stop running and hold his hands up in a 'no' gesture and shake his head.
- The defender seeing this will stop as well and look back at the penalty area, totally off his guard.
- Attacker 2 then sprints into the area away from the attacker 1 who plays the ball into attacker 2's path.
- Attacker 2 then has three choices:
 1. Pass to a player on the penalty spot;
 2. Chip it to the far post;
 3. Run at the goal and shoot, also giving him a chance of winning a penalty.

Key soccer coaching drill tips

- Your players will have to practice this soccer skill so they get it right first time, you don't want them to make a mess of it and lose the ball.
- Remember when you have used this skill once, the defender will not let you make a fool of him twice - or so he hopes

Counter attack soccer coaching tips

Coaching your the near post at the ball and starting The opposition will your players react and overlap to soccer drill tips to **Creating a**

defend against with penalty area. If you disarm the opportunities at the

goalkeeper and

near post and in front into the box. And that defenders.

The player in this short corners and set

counter-attack

Once this position

use the tactics on match day so when they win the ball, you leave a player upfield in the same position at each corner and your specialist player will be able to take the ball and find that player immediately setting up an attack.

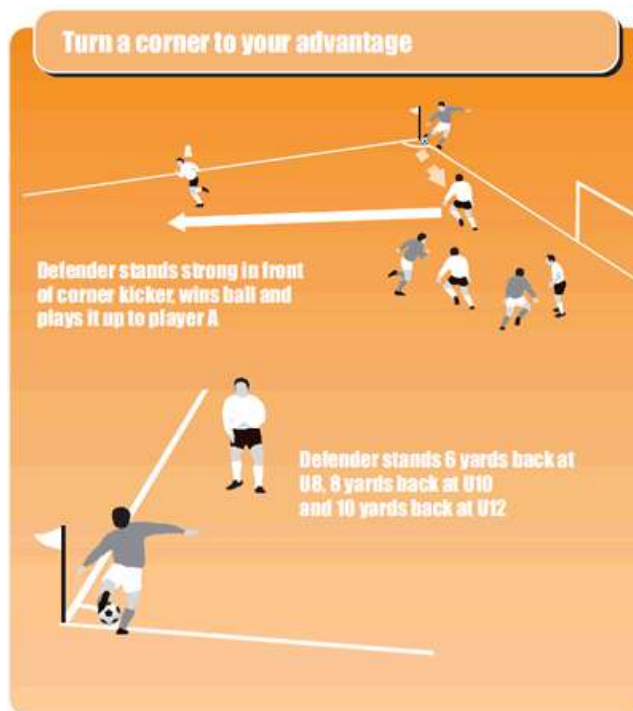
Set up corners in soccer training drills

Practice corners in your soccer drills where you try a player in positions around this near post area. They can use chest, head and feet to rob the opposition of vital balls into the box.

Use only two players, a corner taker and a defender to practice this specialist position. You can kill two birds with one stone here, the corner taker has to clear the defender and the defender needs to win the ball. You can also put an attacker in position A to be ready to get the ball won by your player.

Key soccer coaching tips

Remember not to get too close: a defender must be 6 yards back at U8, 8 yards back at U10 and 10 yards back at U12.



soccer (ball) players to stand forward of **corners** is an excellent way of winning a quick counter-attack.

have only one or two players back and if quickly they can charge out of defense outnumber the opposition. Use these show your players how this works.

specialist ball winner

Corner kicks can be a nightmare to the opposition causing chaos in your stop the ball before it gets there you can opposition and create goal scoring same time.

Soccer coaching tips to protect defenders

Standing a player slightly forward of the of any other players will cut off the supply means protecting your goalkeeper and

position can win the ball from poor or up a quick counter attack straightaway.

Soccer drill tips to win the ball for a

has been claimed by one of your players, use the tactics on match day so when they win the ball, you leave a player upfield in the same position at each corner and your specialist player will be able to take the ball and find that player immediately setting up an attack.

Defending Corners:

If there are 2 players on the ball, the outside midfielder bullets to the play. In this example, we send our RM as the bullet player. Our LD comes off the far post and takes the position on the goal box that the RM had vacated.

Tactics - Defending corners:

1. Zonal defending This is the method that Liverpool employs. The theory behind it is that there are a number of key areas (zones) that goals are scored from at corner kicks. These are the front and back post and about six yards out from the center of the goal line (the middle of the six yard box). You can probably think of others. With zonal marking you assign key players to these zones. You might want to get your two tallest players to cover the six yard box and put your smallest players on the posts. The main drawback to this system - at least as far as youth

soccer is concerned - is that it encourages static defending. Children told to guard a single point on the pitch will do it but are often reluctant to move away from their area, even if there is clear and imminent danger in another, unguarded, area.

The advantage of zonal marking is that you can make sure your best defenders are stationed in the areas that you know most goals are scored from.

2. Man marking Man marking is the traditional method of defending corners. A big advantage of man marking over zonal defense is that being told to stay with a player is easier for children to understand than being told 'I want you to defend this zone'. The main drawback of man (or woman:) marking is that children are easily distracted, lose their mark and end up doing nothing in non-vital areas of the pitch.

So you see there are advantages and disadvantages to both methods. My teams man mark at corners.

How to defend corners

Many youth soccer coaches get very nervous when their team concedes a corner.

They know that in a few seconds time the ball is going to be whizzing across the box and their defenders will either a) duck out of the way or b) swing a foot at the ball and miss it. And no one will be marking the opposition striker who calmly taps the ball into the back of the net.

But there is plenty you can do – even with the youngest players – to reduce your stress levels when the ref points to the corner.

First of all, you need to decide if you want your team to mark the opposition man to man (sorry girls) or defend zonally, i.e., ignore the opposition and put your players into key parts of the penalty area.

Zonal defending

Most teams that use zonal defending split the penalty area into several areas: the near post, the middle of the six yard box, the far post and two or three areas between the six yard box and the edge of the penalty area.

The theory is that these are the areas where most goals are scored from following a corner and if you can control these areas you will stop the opposition from scoring.

This may work with older, confident players but in my experience it's not a good method to use with young players. Man-to-man marking works better and it's a lot easier to explain.

Man-to-man marking

To man mark effectively, your players need to make sure they pick up one opposition player each... and stay with them. This requires good communication between the defending players and the person in charge – your goalkeeper.

The goalkeeper needs to understand that it's part of their job to organize the outfield players at corners. They should tell them who to mark, "Lucy, get the number 7, Ami get the number 9", and watch out for opposition players who try to creep into the box unobserved.

I tell my players they must keep their backsides facing our goal and they must not take their eyes off the player they are marking. They need to keep within two feet of their mark at all times and ALWAYS stay between the striker and our goal.

The worst mistake a defender can make at a corner is to let the player they are marking get away or get ahead of them. Should we put a player on the goalposts?



The purpose of "marking" the goal posts is to make the goal smaller. This is a sensible move when playing 11-a-side as the goalkeeper can't reach both posts from the middle of the goal. But in youth soccer the goals are small and putting players on the posts is a waste of resources.

In any case, your goalkeeper should be intercepting any ball that comes into the "hot area" just in front of the goal and the sooner they learn to do that, the better.

A good way to practice this is to use two goals, one in a normal position and the second touching the far post and at right angles to it. The goal should look like the letter 'L'. Now take some corners. The goalkeeper has to protect both goals and is encouraged to come off their line to get the ball.

Use a "blocker"

Putting one of your taller players on the line between the goal and the corner flag will often put the player taking the corner kick off their job completely. They should also be able to block any low, fast corners that are directed straight at your goal. Don't forget the short corner!

A short corner – where the ball is passed to a player standing close to the corner flag who either plays it back to the corner taker or crosses/shoots themselves – is a very effective tactic in youth soccer and your defenders need to stay alert to the threat posed by them.

If an opposition player runs to receive a short corner, your players need to close them down quickly. This may mean leaving players unmarked in the box but it's essential that the short corner is neutralized.

Leave at least one player upfield

It's important to have at least one player (and preferably two) waiting upfield to receive the ball from your defenders. If you get everyone back to defend the corner, counter attacking becomes virtually impossible.

How to stop the "duckers" and the "swing and miss"

It's no use teaching your players how to defend corners if they are afraid or unable to deal with the ball when it comes to them.

Defenders who duck out of the way as a well-taken corner comes across the box are a common sight at U9 and U10 level. They are scared that the ball might hurt them. So you need to show them that the ball ("it's only a bag of air!") won't hurt... providing they use their heads properly.

So as soon as your players are old enough to strike a corner into the box at head height, they need to learn how to head it safely.

I will go into the "is heading safe?" debate in more detail in a future newsletter. Suffice to say that irrespective of whether you teach youngsters how to head the ball or not, they're going to try to head it anyway. So you may as well show them the right way to do it. Just be sensible: use a soft ball to begin with and don't overdo the practice. This article on footy4kids will be useful.

Another common fault with young players is the "swing and miss". This applies as much to attackers as defenders and it happens because children instinctively point their body where they want the ball to go instead of getting their body in line with the approaching ball. The result is that they frequently end up kicking across the line of the ball and missing it completely.

The only way to correct this is to show them the right way to address the incoming corner and practice, practice, practice.

How to practice defending corners

A quick demonstration of the right way to mark opponents, the use of a "blocker", how to deal with short corners and, if appropriate, how to head the ball should be followed by a small-sided game where every restart is with a corner.

Leave a few balls by every corner post to make the game flow and encourage your players to take the corners as quickly as possible. Award three points for a goal scored from a corner and give a point to the defending team if they can get a touch on the ball before an attacker.



Soccer coaching tips and drills for defending corners

Giving players specialist positions during matches can be effective and if you're conceding a lot of goals from **corners**, you need a player to stand BIG at the front of your penalty area to block the corner taker. With the help of the following soccer coaching tips and drills, you need never concede from a corner again.

One of the most important positions when defending a corner is the person nearest the corner taker. Position him/her on the edge of the box right in front of the intended flight of the ball. If you put one of your strong players here, it will prevent short corners and put off the player

taking the corner. That player is then faced with a one-man wall which the ball has to get over or around.

Cutting off supply

The player in this position effectively cuts off the supply into the box. This also protects your goalkeeper and defenders. The player might also be able to win the ball from poor or short corners and set up a quick counter attack.

THE DEFENDER STANDS SIX YARDS BACK AT U8, EIGHT YARDS BACK AT U10 AND 10 YARDS BACK AT U12.

Leave a man upfield

Once this position has been claimed by one of your players, use tactics on match day so that when they win the ball you leave a player upfield in the same position at each corner and your specialist player will be able to take the ball and find that player, immediately setting up an attack.

Corner kick Counter-Attack Rebels:

An end-to-end game that trains your players to successfully defend corners and to counterattack straight out of defense while your opponents are still upfield.

Winning the ball when defending a corner is not only important defensively, it can also spark your team into a fast counterattacking move that catches opponents still upfield. To achieve this, your team must organize and capitalize on clever positioning of players.

SET UP

Set up an area of 40x30 yards split in two with a goal at each end. We're playing 4v4 plus goalkeepers using 10 players. You need cones, bibs, balls and goals.

HOW TO PLAY

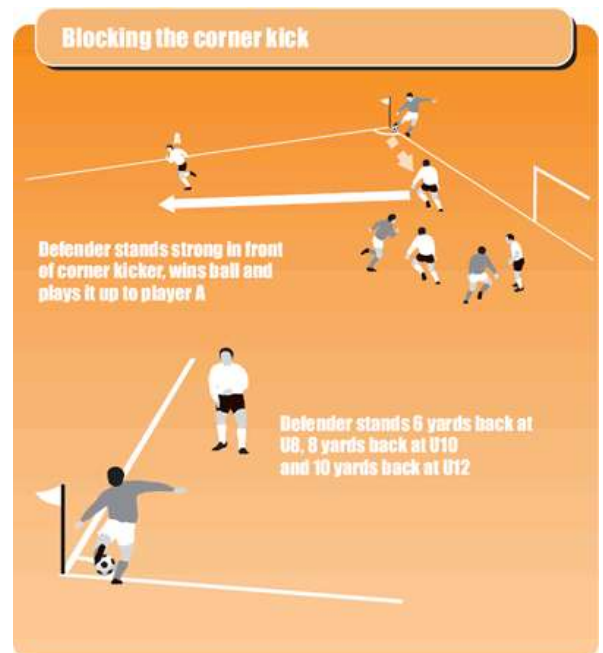
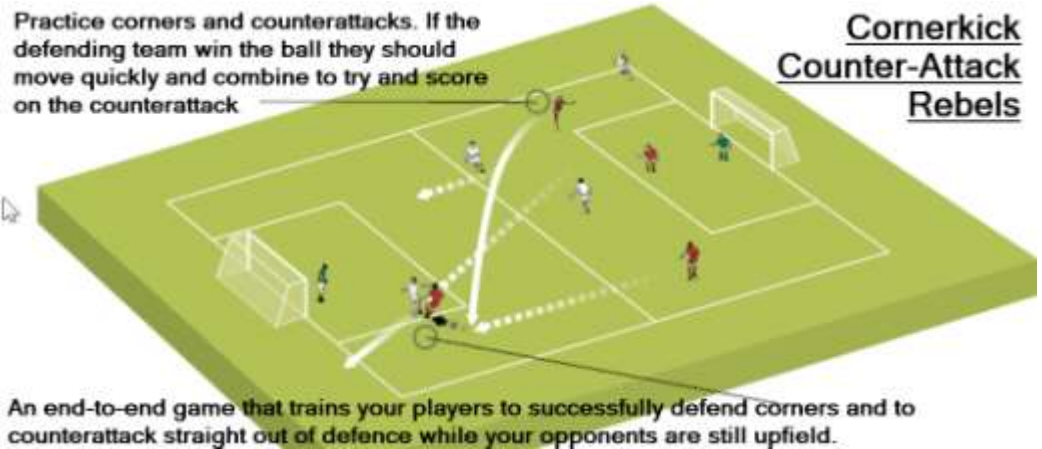
Every time the ball goes out of play it should be played back in with a corner. When the corner is taken, all players must be in the half the corner is taken in but can move out on the first touch of the ball from a player other than the corner taker.

TECHNIQUE

Getting a player to stand forward of the near post is an excellent way of winning the ball at corners, giving them a clear run out of defense to start a counterattack. With four players on a team the key defensive areas can be covered – one on each post to make the goal smaller, one covering the front of the goal and one covering the direction the ball is coming from.

Soccer drills for corners

Work on soccer drills where players are taking corners, specifically where the player in this position is constantly having the ball hit hard towards them. They can use chest, head and feet to rob the opposition of chances to put balls into the box. Use only two players, a corner taker and a defender to drill this specialist position.



For Corner Kick Defense, the Ball Side Defender will position them self 10 yards from the kicker (A1). The Far Post will be protected by the Off Side Defender (D1), While the center Defenders protect the Near Post (D3) and the center of the Goal Box (D2). The Midfielders will mark up Goal Side With the opponents. The Goal Keeper will position them self at the Far Post and move towards the ball in flight to catch or punch out of the Goal Box.

Soccer drill tips

You can kill two birds with one stone here: the corner taker has to clear the defender and the defender needs to win the ball. You can also put an attacker in position A ready to receive the ball won by your defender.

Make your corner defenders SMART

If you want to make sure you're giving your players targets that they have to meet, do it the SMART way.

- SPECIFIC
- MEASURABLE
- AGREED
- REALISTIC
- TIMED

The SPECIFIC target for your players is to clear the ball when it enters the penalty area at corners during training. Make it MEASURABLE by telling your players 50 per cent of corners must be cleared. AGREE it with them in training. Is 50 per cent REALISTIC? I think so. Make it TIMED by agreeing it for a particular training session. Tailor the SMART sessions to your individual players and get them to tell you if they have reached the drill target.

Soccer drill to help players take corners

A corner taker must be able to take corners - that means you have to coach him. This is the soccer drill session I use to coach these vital skills. Try it and see what a huge difference it makes to the way your players kick the ball. Don't waste your time on planning carefully crafted corners if you haven't got a player who can put the ball right into the mixer where your players expect it.

Get three players and get them to spend half an hour each week with a load of balls, practicing how and where they kick the corners.

Corner drill skills

Your player must first put the ball in the correct place on the corner quadrant. A key soccer coaching tip is to have a corner flag in place so your players can see how they can get in the way. Position the ball, as the diagram shows,



so your players are not hitting the flag.

Soccer drill tips

Show your players how to use their instep and kick low down and



slightly across the ball to generate lift and apply spin to the ball. They must plant the standing foot next to the ball to get maximum distance. The spin produces swerve to create an inswinging or outswinging corner. This makes it harder for the goalkeeper to cut out.

If you get your corner taker to aim at the front of the goal he will have more chance to make the corner work. At junior level it is hard to get the ball beyond the near post. If you land the ball in the middle of the goal the keeper has more chance to save it.

At the near post the defender is likely to miss a swinging ball and your players will have the chance to score.

Key soccer coaching tip: If your players struggle to make a corner work, work on kicking short corners to give them a better angle to cross.

Risky soccer tactics when your players are defending corners

It was during a match I was refereeing last season that I first came up with the idea of leaving [defenders](#) outside the penalty area when defending [corners](#). One of the teams I was refereeing managed to give away a goal at every corner they faced in the first half.

The problem was the coach called all of his players back into the penalty area to defend the corner. They were crowding out the opposition. To counter this, the attacking team played short at the corner, creating space on the edge of the penalty area.

This made it easier to get direct shots over, or through, the crowd of players. The goalkeeper couldn't see the ball until very late and had little chance of saving it.

When teams find this is happening to them, they need to change their [soccer tactics](#) to limit the number of attackers in the box.

I was reminded of this because the same thing was happening to my team at the weekend. My striker was wandering into the penalty area, rather than staying outside to counter attack.

It made us very slow to get out and allowed the opposition to put as many attackers in our area as they wanted.

It doesn't just have to be one player you leave outside the penalty area. At half time I talked to the players about leaving two or three players outside the penalty area, which makes the opposition think twice about putting a lot of players in attack.

It also gives you fantastic opportunities to counter attack.

However, it is a very attacking move to defend in this way so players must be aware of certain things:

- With fewer defenders they must identify the dangers posed by the attackers and counter them with close marking.
- The goalkeeper becomes much more important with space to come and claim the ball. Then they can launch a quick counter attack to the players outside the penalty area.
- The opposition may ignore your tactics and pack the penalty area, giving them advantage from the first ball in, but leaving themselves badly exposed at the back.
-

Defending corners:

Key coaching tip: They key is concentration and to make sure you are first to the ball!

Using the diagram show your players the positions for basic marking responsibility.

Some are man for man, others are zonal marking.

Assuming the corner is being taken on the left by a right footed player swinging the ball in towards the goal

The set up you should employ is:

- Your best four headers of the ball would man to man mark (in the diagram they would be #s 3, 5, 6 and 10) and their job is to mark the opposition's main heading threat, marking slightly in front, and being first to the ball.
- # 11 would mark in front of any opposition standing on the near post or just mark the space in their absence.
- # 4 marks the space in front of the main markers, keeping a look out for any opposition standing in front of the goalkeeper.

If this is the case he may have to adjust his position so he is standing in front of the attacker.

- # 2 marks the far post.
- #s 7 and 8 mark any opposition on the edge of the box.
- # 9 stays upfield, occupying two defenders and hoping to help spring a counter attack.

Penalty Kicks:

Links: [Intro & Strategies](#) | [How to take the perfect penalty](#) | [Building a Wall](#) | [For Goalies: PKs... By the Numbers](#) | [Who Takes It?](#) | [The Shoot-Out Game](#) | [Free-Kick Challenge](#) | [Free Kick Set Pieces](#) | See [Restarts](#) | [Free Kicks](#) | See [Goalies Defending Free Kicks and Shootouts](#) | [Penalty Kicks \(PK's\)](#) |

Free kicks: Free kicks taken close to the other team's penalty area are often kicked straight at or over the other team's defensive wall and wasted.

- Instead, practice taking a quick, short free kick to an attacker standing a few yards to one side of the ball. He or she will often have a better shooting angle and there won't be a wall in the way of the shot.
- You can even get your free kick taker to pass the ball through the legs of a team mate to the player who is going to take the shot or back heel it to someone standing a couple of yards away.



**There are 3 options when taking a spot kick:
Attempt to pass the ball into the net, try a cheeky chip, or strike the ball firmly.**



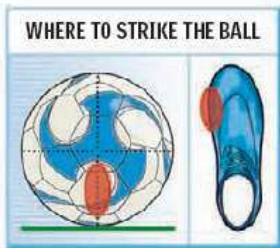
PENALTY PASS

When you place a penalty, you effectively pass the ball into the net. This provides accuracy and is a good option if the keeper has dived early.



PENALTY CHIP

This is the most audacious kind of penalty, but extremely risky. You have to rely on the goalkeeper diving before you make the strike.



A penalty struck firmly into the bottom or top corner will register a goal but there is little margin for error; you cannot kick the ball wide.

POWER SHOT

You sacrifice accuracy for speed with this option and stand a good chance of success if you don't blast the ball wide or high.

Where to shoot

Success or failure with the penalty-kick is partly determined by the strength of the shot, but if a penalty is poorly placed the goalkeeper may reach it. So where should you aim for to guarantee the greatest chance of success?



PENALTY DO'S AND DON'TS

KEY	
	Goalkeeper will save unless he overcommits
	Goalkeeper may save if shot is struck weakly
	Goalkeeper is highly unlikely to save

DO: Keep your weight over the ball. Make a plan and stick to it. Fool the keeper with your eyes. Strike the ball firmly.

DON'T: Take too long a run-up. Let the keeper psyche you out. Hit the ball at chest height or too close to the keeper.

PENALTY DO'S AND DON'TS

DO	DON'T
Keep your weight over the ball	Take too long a run-up
Make a plan and stick to it	Let the keeper psyche you out
Fool the keeper with your eyes	Hit the ball at chest height ...
Strike the ball firmly	... or too close to the keeper

Free-kick options

Sometimes the success of a free-kick is down to the skill and ingenuity of one player; on other occasions it is a team effort. Free-kicks are good opportunities to score the goals that win matches, so coaches work on them extensively with players during training.

KEY	
	Goalkeeper
	Attacker
	Defender
	Ball motion
	Player motion



CURVING SHOT

The art of bending a shot around the defensive wall and away from the dive of the keeper. Curved shots are created by striking the ball on its side and generating spin (see p.79).



DIPPING SHOT

A challenging skill that requires you to strike the ball over the wall rather than around it; if struck correctly, the dipping ball drops at the end of its flight.



THROUGH THE WALL

You have to strike the ball low so it goes under the players in the wall as they jump; or strike directly at a teammate in the wall who jumps out of the way to create a space.



CHIP INTO SPACE

You should dink the ball into an area 8-10yd (7-9m) from the goal, where the goalkeeper cannot easily claim it; the intention is that one of your teammates is then able to shoot or head at goal.

How to take the perfect penalty

Whether playing in the park with jumpers for goalposts or at the end of a tense cup final, your players need to know how to take penalties.

Successful penalty taking is not simply a case of running up and shooting. There are a number of techniques that can be taught to even very young ball players that will dramatically improve their chances of coping with the pressure and help them convert spot kick into goals.

A study by the University of Exeter found that penalty takers who looked at the goalkeeper during their run up often ended up shooting straight at the goalkeeper. Their advice to penalty takers was to try to blot the goalkeeper out to the point where he or she is not there at all. [1]

Another study by the boffins at John Moores University in Liverpool offered a more scientific approach to scoring from the penalty spot. They suggested that:

- The perfect penalty is struck at 65mph from a run up of no more than six paces.
- The taker should strike the ball less than three seconds after the referee has blown the whistle.
- The taker should approach the ball from an angle of 20-30 degrees and aim high to the goalkeeper's left or right side. [2]

The penalty king - how did he take spot kicks?

Alan Shearer scored 54 times from the penalty spot during his league career and scored a dozen for England.

The majority of his penalties were scored in exactly the same way, he ignored the goalkeeper, took a short run and smashed the ball into the top left of the goal as hard as he could. Even though goalkeepers knew how he would take a penalty, they couldn't save them.

The lesson?

- Having a set routine helps when you're under pressure.
- Confidence and focus is the key. Don't try to deceive the goalkeeper.

An interesting study by Anna Stodter & Matt Pain of Loughborough University suggests that penalty takers can overcome the pressure of the situation and score more goals if they use cue words such as 'head' (for head down over the ball), 'center' (strike through the center of the ball) or 'easy' (effortless).

This study did find that while using cue words was off putting for some players in a practice situation, they did help when the pressure was on by keeping a players' mind 'on the job' and stopping their thoughts from wandering or becoming negative. [3]

The perfect penalty in a nutshell

Timing is important - Either shoot hard and quickly (within three seconds of the whistle), or wait for more than 13 seconds. Aim just inside the post - While it is easier to shoot into the bottom corners of the goal, if the goalkeeper guesses correctly they could pull off a save. But if your players aim at the top corner, the shot is virtually unstoppable.

Make your mind up - Wherever your players are going to place the ball, make sure they know where they are going to shoot before they approach the ball, and never change their mind.

Ignore the goalkeeper - He's not there. It's just the penalty taker and the ball.

Whether you coach mini-ball or 11-a-side, your players need to work on taking the perfect penalty. It doesn't come naturally.

Discuss the points and suggestions described above, then play a small-sided game (SSG) where every time the ball goes out of play, a penalty is awarded rather than a throw in, goal kick or corner.

References

[1] Brian Quarstad, How to Take the Perfect Penalty Kick?, <http://www.insidemnsoccer.com/2010/05/16/how-to-take-the-perfect-penalty-kick/>

[2] http://www.teachpe.com/soccer_ball/penalty.php

[3] Anna Stodter & Matt Pain, Taking penalty kicks under pressure – think about It!, Loughborough University, www-staff.lboro.ac.uk/~psmap2/Penalty%20Training.doc

How to Build a Strong Wall:

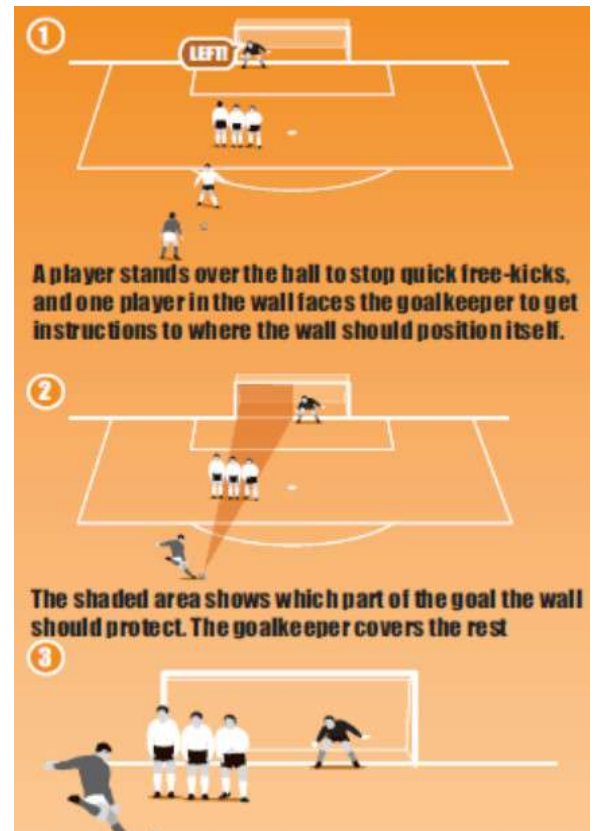
Before the match make sure everyone knows their role. All players are reminded that if they give away a free-kick in a dangerous area their first job is to stand in front of the ball. Four players are each given a number, starting with the tallest.

The player nearest the ball: When a free-kick is conceded, the player nearest the ball – usually the player that committed the foul – stands in front of the ball, stopping the opposition from taking the kick quickly.

The goalkeeper: Once the goalkeeper is sure the free-kick cannot be taken quickly, he needs to assess the position of the ball and call for players to create a wall – this is normally between 2 and 4 players. The goalkeeper will then communicate with the first player in the wall to position it correctly. To do this the goalkeeper should stand at the goalpost nearest the ball (or choose either post if the ball is positioned centrally). Once he has positioned the wall the goalkeeper should position himself in the unprotected part of the goal. Make sure he knows which part of the goal he is defending and where he should stand when the kick is taken.

The wall: The first player in the wall should position themselves about 8 paces from the ball in a direct line between it and the near post, facing the goal. The remaining players build a wall towards the opposite post. The players follow the first player's lead as he is repositioned by the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper might position this player up to a yard outside of the post to stop the free-kick being curled around the wall.

Important reminders: If the player standing over the ball is supposed to be in the wall they should call for a replacement. However, by now the referee should have informed everyone that the taker must wait for the whistle allowing the player to take up their position in the wall. If a player that forms part of the wall is substituted they must tell their replacement what number they are to take in the wall should a free-kick be conceded.



For Goalies: Penalty Kicks... By the Numbers:

Penalty kicks are a critical time of decision making for both the goal keeper and the penalty taker. Given that, for most professional games, the average number of goals scored is around 2.5, a penalty kick can have a major influence on the outcome of a match. Penalty kicks may reach speeds near 125 mph and is usually over within a quarter of a second. Thus, the goal keeper must make a decision on how to stop the shot before the ball is struck. Statistics show that goal keepers will most often jump to the left or right, hoping to guess correctly and place him (or her) self in a position to block the kick. From the penalty kicker's standpoint, 85% of the penalty shots placed on goal were successful. A bit more than half of the shots taken were placed in the lower one-third of the goal (57%). These low attempts were successful ~80% of the time. By comparison, only 13% of shots were placed in the upper third of the goal. However, all of these efforts resulted in a goal scored (100% success). Slightly more shots were placed to the goal keeper's right side compared to the center or left. In attempting to stop the penalty kick, goal keepers jump to the right or left 94% of the time. In doing this, they guess correctly only about 40% of the time (i.e. jump left, shot placed left). However, even when they guess correctly, they only stop 25-30% of the shots. The most intriguing part of the Dr. Bar-Eli's analyses is that when goal keepers remain in the center of the goal and the shot is placed in the center, they make the save 60% of the time. Given that about 30% of penalty kicks are placed in the center third of the goal, remaining stationary in the center of the goal increases the keepers chances of stopping the shot from about 13% to more than 33%. Thus, the best strategy for goal keepers is to remain in the center of the goal during the penalty kick. Thus the idea that goal keepers should jump left or right and hope they guess correctly is not supported by these numbers.

Why might there be more success when the goal keeper stays in the center of the net? When a keeper jumps in one direction, he/she is only able to cover about 1/9 of the goal area (usually the lower corner) plus a bit of the central area. Thus, if the ball is placed in the side or upper third, the keeper has very little chance of stopping the shot. The keeper is either out of position or in a poor position to stop the shot. However, if the keeper remains in the center of the goal area, he/she can cover closer to one third of the goal area (the upper-, middle- and lower-central areas).

If these numbers are correct, then why do goalies jump left or right in their effort to stop penalty kicks? Part of the decision may be based on experience, reading the shot taker's body language and to opinion that diving is indeed the best strategy. Another reason probably lies in the concept of a "bias towards action". This occurs with a decision is based on perceived need to "do something" rather than nothing. The take home message is that from a statistical standpoint, it may be more advantageous for a goal keeper to defend a penalty kick by remaining in the goal's center rather than diving to one side.

References: Bar-Eli M, Azar OH (2009) Penalty kicks in soccer: an empirical analysis of shooting strategies and goalkeepers preferences. *Soccer & Society*, 10:183-191.

Bar-Eli M, Azar OH, Ritov I, Keidar-Levin Y, Schein G (2007) Action bias among elite soccer goal keepers: the case of penalty kicks. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 28:606-621.

Penalty Kick: Who Takes It?

Your team is awarded a penalty kick in a match and it's time to decide who will be stepping up to take the penalty. Do you let the person who has earned the penalty take it? Do you have one or two designated players on the team who will always take it? Do you select a defender who doesn't get very many opportunities to score take it? What about a player who is a normal goal scorer who is in a slump, should they take it? What will it do to their confidence if the penalty is saved or worse, they miss the goal altogether? These are the decisions that as a coach you need to be prepared for and you need to be able to make a decision.

The answer to all these questions depends on the game situation. What is the score, what is the type of competition, what is the age group and how important is the match? The first factor in making your decision is the type of competition you are playing. Are you in a regular season game where the result will not change your position in the league (for example, you already clinched the title)? If so, maybe give one your players who isn't a regular goal scorer a chance to tally a goal. The same thing should be done if you are winning a game by a large margin. Give a defender or a player who doesn't get many opportunities to shoot a chance to score. What is the worst thing that could happen; they miss and you are only winning 5-0 instead of 6-0. If you are in a tournament where your destiny could be determined by goal differential, have one of your designated penalty takers step up to the spot. If you already clinched the top seed and goal differential doesn't come into play, give someone else a chance. The decision should really be made depending on the situation.

What if you have a player who is a normal goal scorer but has been in a drought? Do you let this player take the penalty to try and get him back on goal scoring form (high success rate with PK's)?

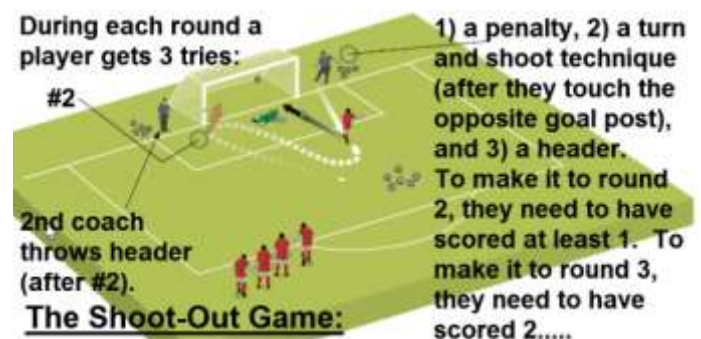
Many coaches have the philosophy that if you earned the penalty that you should get to take it. If this is your philosophy then continue with it. But remember, the player who earns the penalty is already full of emotions from getting taken down or whatever caused them to earn the penalty. Their adrenaline is flowing and they might no be in the best mental state for taking it. Keep that in mind when making your decision.

The decision on who takes the penalty should be made on a situational basis. What's the score and what's the situation of the game? For me, I have a set one or two players who are my designated penalty takers. So, when we earn a penalty everyone knows who is going to be taking it. We don't fall into the "who wants to take it" situation where everyone is looking at each other and we are unorganized. If you already have a big lead then give it to a player who doesn't normally have a chance to score. The best thing you can do as a coach is to have a philosophy, stick to it, and make sure everyone else on your team knows your philosophy. Avoid the "who wants to take it" situation. Step up, pick your spot, and hit it with confidence.

The Shoot-Out Game:

A knockout scoring game to improve the ability of your players to score from the spot and cope with the pressure of a penalty shoot-out. In this knockout game the penalty becomes just another aspect of scoring goals. The pressure is on the individual but there are three different shots to ensure that the pressure on young shoulders is not as great as it could be.

SET UP: You need a goal, a goalkeeper, two servers and plenty of balls for this session. You also need a number of players to make it a worthwhile competition.



HOW TO PLAY: Each player has three goes to get through to the next round of the competition: a penalty, a turn and shoot technique, and a header. The first shot is the penalty – then the player must run to touch the goalpost before returning to a ball played in by a server and turning and shooting with one touch. He must then follow that shot in to place a header in the net. Start by saying players must score with one of the chances, then after round one make it two – and as players are knocked out, make it all three chances.

TECHNIQUE: There are three ways of scoring but because the player has to concentrate on what follows the penalty, the pressure is much less on the actual kick. Players should show good technique and a fearless attitude that they can carry with them into a penalty shoot-out.

Soccer drills to coach the perfect free kick

Topics: How to Take a Free-Kick | How to Bend the Ball | Free-Kick Challenge Drill | See [Penalty Kicks](#) | [Restarts](#) |

Quick free kicks: Free-kicks are given so you have an advantage over your opponents - make sure your players are prepared to make the most of them. One way to do this is by catching the opposition off their guard.

How to take a Perfect Free Kick:

Keep in mind: the slow horse reaches the mill and that is why the player should take all the time he needs, so he can focus completely on his task.

- Do not let yourself get distracted by your environment. Ignore the mind games of the opposing players and also the well-intentioned advice of your team mates.
- The perfect shot is the only thing that counts right now!
- Try to develop a ritual and always stick to it, because then you will get a routine which gives you security and self-confidence.
- Do never try anything new, that is what practice is for. During practice, you can develop your personal routine; take your time for it. No player should ever perform a free kick or a penalty shot without being mentally prepared.
- If your head is into it, the shot will work out with a little talent of yours

Here we go:

1. Position the ball yourself.
2. Observe the position of the goalkeeper and in case of a free kick also the position of the defensive wall.
3. Do not yet decide on a corner or a special technique (bending, high kick...).
4. Take some steps backwards. It is good advice to always take the same amount of steps.
5. You can turn around while going backwards or go backwards facing the goal.
6. Take a deep breath and decide now, where you want to shoot the ball. Yes, take a good look at your target!
7. Imagine how the ball will hit the net. Positive thoughts are important.
8. Take a deep breath one more time.
9. Remember: you will hit the ball perfectly and the goalkeeper has no chance at all.
10. After the shot look up to watch how the ball hits the goal.

• If you want the ball to circle around the defensive wall, you need to keep in mind: the bigger the angle of your run-up, the easier it will be to perform such fine techniques. A shot from a bigger distance will be more precise, if you do not aim for a target inside the goal but a target between ball and goal. Investigations have proven this. In case of a free kick, the target can be the point at the defensive wall where the ball is supposed to fly by.

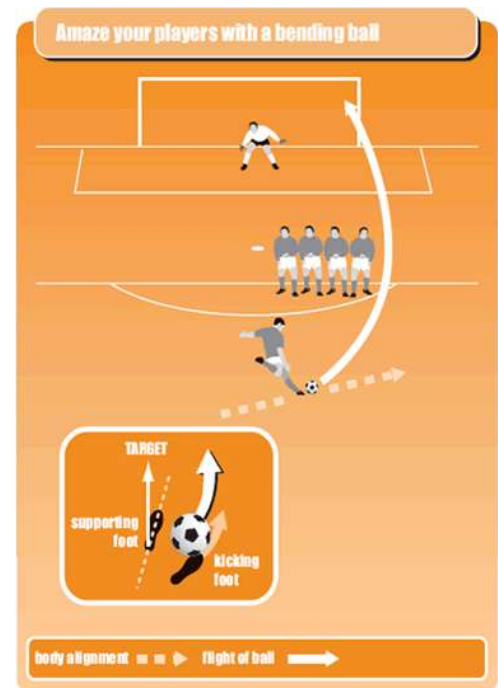
But the most important thing is: take your time while performing the shot and have an exact target. If you are unsure, concentrate anew, otherwise you won't score.

Soccer coaching tips to bend the ball

Your players will love these soccer drills. They will be able to change the direction of the ball mid-flight. Get your players to perform this skill from a free-kick. It's easiest to do when the ball is stationary. There is nothing more satisfying than bending the ball from **free-kicks** over the wall into the back of the net. Get yourself down to the soccer pitch, so that at the next soccer training session you can show your free-kick takers how it's done.

Soccer coaches – try this yourself

1. **Positioning:** Put a ball on the edge of the area, as in the diagram below. Approach the ball at an angle running across the direction of the goal, in a relaxed movement, not too fast.
2. **Contact:** If you hit the ball straight it would head for the corner flag. Instead, hit the ball with the inside of your big toe, just where your toe ends and your foot begins. The impact will roll the ball along the inside of your foot. Your foot meets the ball in the bottom corner. Always use bottom left or right depending on which foot you use.
3. **Movement:** Your standing leg should not move and should still be pointing at an angle away from the target. Swing your kicking leg in towards the goal, without bending it. Now you're doing exactly what David Beckham, Ronaldinho and Frank Lampard do day-in and day-out on the soccer training pitch.



4. **Ball flight:** Because you are hitting the ball from underneath, there will be sufficient lift to take the ball up and over the wall. As your foot comes across and around, you create ball spin which makes the ball bend and dip. You can get extra height by leaning your shoulders back.

The SMART way to bend free-kicks:

- SPECIFIC
- MEASURABLE
- AGREED
- REALISTIC
- TIMED

The **SPECIFIC** target for your player is to bend free-kicks into the goal.

Make it **MEASURABLE** by telling your players you want them to successfully bend five out of ten free-kicks.

AGREE with them that this is to happen during the training drill.

Is five **REALISTIC?** It depends on the player.

Make it **TIMED** by agreeing it should happen over three training drill sessions.

Tailor this SMART session to your individual players and get them to tell you if they reach the drill target.

Free-Kick Challenge Drill:

SET UP: Use the penalty area of your pitch and tie a couple of hula hoops to the corners of a goal and use poles to section off the goalmouth.

HOW TO PLAY: Over the course of your session, playing this with two or three players each time is a good way to take a break and have fun. Points are scored as in the diagram and if a player hits the crossbar above the 15-point sections, they score five points. Hitting the bar anywhere else doesn't score any points.

TECHNIQUE: This is all about practice.

Becks would spend a lot of time practicing his freekicks from just outside the box and this is something you could get players doing at home. Lots of goals come from free-kicks and accuracy is far more important than power in youth soccer because the goalkeeper will struggle to get to anything hit at the corners of the goal.

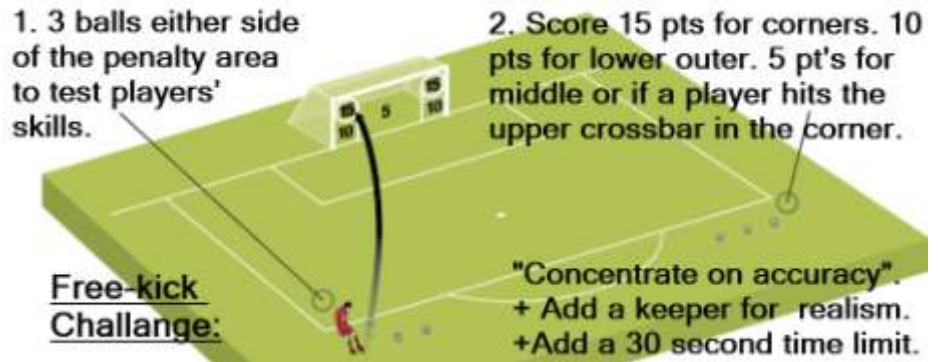
1. 3 balls either side of the penalty area to test players' skills.

2. Score 15 pts for corners. 10 pts for lower outer. 5 pt's for middle or if a player hits the upper crossbar in the corner. Hitting the bar anywhere else doesn't score any points.

"Concentrate on accuracy to score as many points as possible".

Add a goalkeeper to make it more realistic when players are shooting.

Add a time limit, giving players 30 seconds to use all the balls.



Free Kick Set Pieces:

Zanetti Set Piece:

Used by Argentina against England at the 1998 World Cup..... Javier Zanetti scored the goal.

- 1) The deep-lying midfielder approaches the ball and then runs right over it in order to distract the defenders.
- 2) The receiver only begins to move from where he is standing behind the wall once the decoy runner has passed over the ball.
- 3) The kicker plays the pass forward into the attacker inside the box.
- 4) The attacker had been lurking behind the wall but glides across to receive a pass in space and shoots.



The "Duck" (Decoy) Set Piece:

When players call for the "duck" (hunting reference), this is the code name for the decoy run.

1. The decoy runner must look like he is going to take the free-kick, looking at the goal and running (stepping) over the ball.

This decoy run distracts the defenders.

2. The receiver must be on his toes, ready to sprint across the penalty area when the decoy player reaches him.

3. The ball is played into space created on the right-hand side of the box and the receiver runs onto the ball and shoots. The receiver peels off and attacks the ball which has come low into the near post.

Good movement by the decoy and the receiver of the pass are key to the success of this freekick set piece. Attackers must be alert and ready to move, and the timing of the movement is vital – the two attackers must make sure they are appropriate distances to and from the ball to make the approach play work.

The move is triggered by the decoy attacker, who runs over the ball and into the penalty area, distracting defenders. The receiver must hold his run until the decoy has reached him. The quality of the pass must be good or the move fails. Then look for a decisive finish from the receiver: one touch to control and turn and one touch to shoot. If he fails to shoot after two touches, defenders will close him down.

Free kick soccer tips

This is how the drill works in the diagram:

1. The ball is played quickly out to the player unmarked on right-wing.

2. The winger dribbles towards goal.

3. He then crosses the ball into the penalty box.

4. The attacking team is first to the ball and scores
With a little vision and a quick pass, the defense is caught sleeping and is unbalanced with the left-back out of position. The quick pass from the free-kick allows the winger to capitalize on the poor marking. He plays in a hard, low cross which his attacker is quicker to than the defenders.

The defending team has lost concentration

At a free-kick, teams must keep their concentration to make sure that no opposition players are left free in space. In the diagram the lack of concentration is punished.

The attackers have taken the initiative

The ability to make the most of opportunities shows how important it is for teams to sometimes play free-kicks quickly (be aware of attacking possibilities) and to capitalize on a defense that is caught unawares.

Key soccer coaching tip: It's simple - tell your players to be first to the ball at free-kicks.

Soccer drill tips for taking winning free kicks

Get your players to practice tactical free-kicks on the edge of the penalty area and you can pull a defense apart, says David Clarke.

Organization is key to defense and attack

Free-kicks are a **major source of goals at any level of the game.**

When a free-kick is given **just outside the penalty area**, the opposition often spends time arranging and positioning their wall while the attackers do the same. But how often do your players stand around and argue about who will take it, then tamely hit it at the wall?

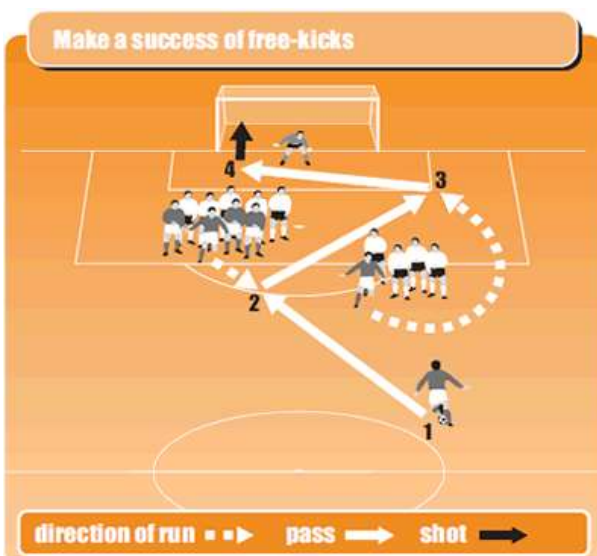
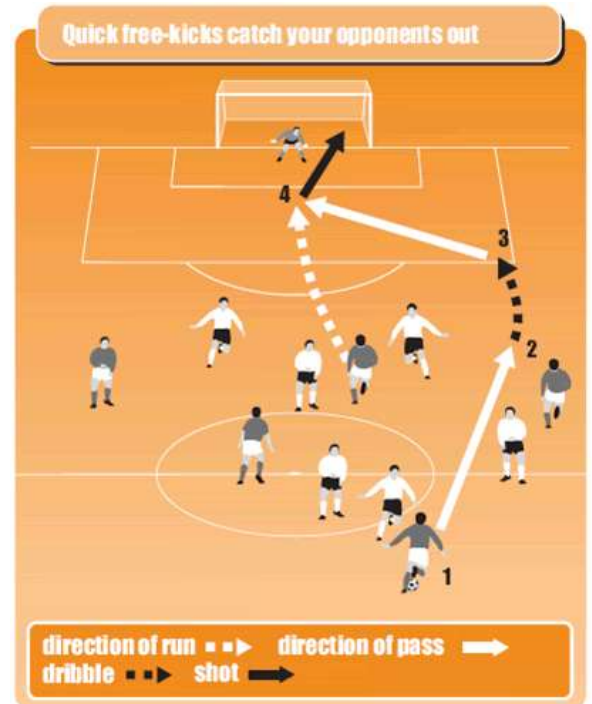
Time to follow training drill routines

Teams can make **excellent tactical use of the break in the game.**

Your attackers can get into their positions and put what you have practiced in your soccer training drills into action.

You should ensure your team **regularly practices all free-kicks situations during their soccer training drills.** This means telling your players to practice their shooting skills around a wall and **also as a group where different soccer drills are being carried out.** If you do it enough times in training drills, **your players will be able to use the skills in a match.** And kids love trying out different moves, just like they see on the TV.

Try this drill



1. In the diagram, the free-kick taker **plays the free-kick into his team-mate who has created space by moving off the defense.**
2. Your winger **breaks off the wall and makes a run behind the defense.** He receives the ball from the edge of the area.
3. Tell your winger to **cross low and hard first-time into the six-yard area.**
4. Have players **running in to finish the move.**

Score From Free-kicks:

One common place that youth teams are given free-kicks is the area just in front of the penalty area on both sides of the pitch. Good delivery of the ball is maximized by the movement of the players, making it likely a scoring chance will come from using this free-kick.

SET UP: Use the penalty area of your pitch. You must have five players in the session but you can add defenders and other players once the free-kick has been coached. Start with cones representing the positions of the defenders. You need balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: The free-kick taker must focus delivery on the corner of the six-yard box on the far side of the penalty area. On the corner of the penalty area are three attackers, who must move as the free-kick taker advances on the ball. As the ball is kicked, players must get into the area just in front of the corner of the six-yard box. This gives three angles and areas for players to head the ball and score.

TECHNIQUE: By playing the ball into this dangerous area and packing the penalty box with moving players, a goal chance is likely to present itself.

The kick taker then follows the ball and covers any misheaders or clearances from the six-yard box

Free kick soccer drill

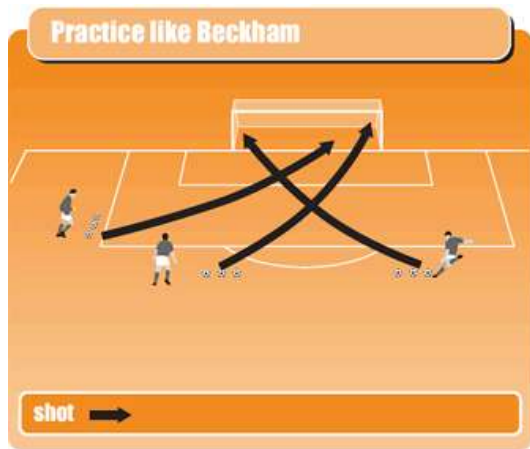
Lots of practice is the secret to taking a successful free kick and to make this fun for your young players, try the following soccer drill using either a portable wall or cones to shield the goal.



A good free-kick taker can be from any position on the pitch - except the goalkeeper who you don't want to be stranded up the pitch should the free-kick not work well. You need to get all your players to practice the kicks, over and over again.

Former England and LA Galaxy star David Beckham spent hours on this soccer drill, which involves placing the ball in the corner of the goal from varying angles and varying distances over and around a portable wall. You might not have access to a portable wall, so use a bag of balls or three cones in a row and tell your players to get the ball as high over it as they can.

Your players will enjoy this soccer drill if you tell them they are playing for their place in the World Cup Finals and the team has a last chance to score and they are the free-kick taker.



Key soccer coaching tip

A good tip to build your players' skills is to practice this soccer drill from three different angles, but tell your players not to move the angle or distance of the ball from the goal until they hit three, perfectly placed balls into the back of the net. Start without a goalkeeper then progress the soccer drill to the next skill level by performing the same series of kicks with a goalkeeper.

This soccer drill is ideal for players to try down the park in their own time.

Free kick soccer drill using nutmeg / dummy trick

Free-kicks are often wasted in youth soccer. You need to put some thought into how to set up your team to make best use of a free kick and drill the skills in coaching sessions.

Using a dummy for a free kick involves playing the ball through the legs of one of your attackers to the other side of the pitch where the defense is less organized.

I am surprised at how often teams can be given a free-kick, which is headed away by the first defender and the attacking team is suddenly caught out and find themselves under pressure from a counter attack.

You need to put pressure on the goal to take advantage of the situation your team has won for itself.

Nutmeg free-kick

The nutmeg free-kick is one of the best ways to catch out the opposition and stop your players just kicking it into the penalty box or at the wall. When they get it right, it always creates a shooting chance, whether you are playing 7 or 11-a-side and at any age group.



How the soccer drill works

- Player 1 pretends to shoot, but passes to player 2 instead. The wall will still expect a shot from the group of players.
- Instead, player 2 passes the ball between player 3's legs, to player 4 who is waiting on the edge of the area.
- Player 4 has the perfect opportunity to either shoot first time or to run into the box.
- You also ensure the ball is not lost to a quick breakaway because it usually goes in the goal or out for a corner, or a goal kick.

How to Kick a Penalty Shot in Soccer A penalty shot is a free kick by a player of one soccer team directly at the goal of the opposing team. This is awarded by the referee when someone commits a direct free kick foul inside the penalty box. There are 10 possible direct free kick foul situations. When one of these 10 occurs, the fouled team gets to kick the ball with only the goalkeeper allowed to defend. All other players must remain outside the penalty box. A penalty kick

gives the kicking team an excellent shot at scoring, since the shot has to beat only one opposing player--the goalkeeper.

Step1 - Make a firm decision on the type of penalty shot to take. Your level of comfort with a type of shot based on prior results from practice sessions will dictate your decision. You will choose from a push shot, cut shot, driven shot or a chip shot. The cut shot, which is a combination of the push and driven shots, is by far the most common one.

Step2 - Make sure the soccer ball is placed on the penalty mark. It should be firmly placed and shouldn't be rolling.

Step3 - Take three steps back, angling away from the ball. Approaching the ball from the side will provide you with the best control over the power with which you hit the ball and the direction it takes.

Step4 - Execute the shot with fluid movements and camouflage your decision on the type of shot and the direction in which you plan on shooting until the last moment. Make your initial movements towards the ball create the impression that you are planning to shoot in a direction that you are really not going to shoot. The goalie will attempt to predict the direction of the shot and will start moving laterally across the goal line and will dive in that direction.

Step5 - Keep your eyes on the soccer ball. Hit the ball either with the side of your foot or with the laces, depending on the type of shot you have chosen. A push shot is taken with the inside of the foot. While it's a very accurate shot, it lacks the power of a driven shot that's taken on the laces.

Step6 - Aim the ball to the farthest corner possible. Doing this will make it harder for the goalie to reach the ball. However, you will need precise control over the ball so that it doesn't hit the bars or sail over it.

Step7 - Hit the ball on the ground or high towards a corner. A high shot precisely directed towards the corner is almost impossible for the goalie to deflect.

* A penalty shot provides you with the best opportunity at scoring. You must frequently practice this shot with experienced goalies.

* Know the common body movements goalies look for to predict the direction of the shot, and attempt to do the opposite.

Free Kicks-This is a general guideline.

Zone 1 (up to 30 yards from goal) is a Corner play, Shot on goal, or a trick play shot on goal. Zone 2 is split up into 1-played to the L post, 2-played at goalie, 3-played to the R post. These balls are chipped over their defensive line. We will choose a "bullet man" to be the player who goes after the ball. The bullet man will get a running start and the other players will pick him free so he can get his head on the ball.

Penalty Kick-

Key Points: The kicker places the ball high on the grass. Do not let the ref place the ball in a divot in the ground. PK's are live balls. Shoot outs are not live balls. We move on PK's to fight for position. If we are on defense we box out the opponents to keep them from getting a rebound. On offense, the kicker strikes the ball with the inside of his foot, just inside one of the posts on the ground. The kicker does not kill the ball, but hits it firmly and follows through towards the goal. Our Right and Left forwards move with the kicker to get into the right and left zones to center any rebounds. Midfielders help free the forwards. The kicker follows through and covers the zona rosa.



Soccer Penalty Shot: Place a soccer ball on the penalty line, in front of the goal. Your objective is to hit a strong, accurate shot into the net. Take three big steps back from the ball. Take one step to the side. A right-footed kicker should step to the left. A left-footed kicker should step to the right. Step2 - Approach the ball by taking your first step with your kicking foot. On your third step, your nonkicking foot should be even with the ball and about

6 inches (15 cm) to the side. The toes of this foot should point at your intended target. Keep both knees bent and your arms wide for balance. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until these actions become automatic.

Step3 - Bring your kicking foot smoothly forward and strike the middle of the ball with the inside edge of your foot. Your knee should be directly over the ball when your foot strikes it. Swing your leg and foot through the ball so that your foot ends up pointing at the target. Lock your ankle in place when striking the ball to get the best power. Your shot should skim the ground and bury itself in the back of the net.

Step4 - When you have mastered steps 1 through 3, you can modify your shot for more power. Strike the middle of the ball with the top of your foot by pointing your toe down and holding your ankle locked in this position as you swing through the ball. Again, follow through so that your foot points toward the target. As you get better at this shot, your planted foot should move slightly back and farther to the side of the ball.

Step5 - Develop additional power by initiating the kick with your hips and accelerating your foot with your knee. Accuracy is more important than power, so work on this step slowly.

How to Take a Direct Free Kick in Soccer A direct free kick is one of the two free kicks possible in the game of soccer. In a direct free kick, it's possible to score a goal by kicking the ball straight into the net, with no need for the ball to touch another player. It's awarded when a serious foul such as kicking, pulling or spitting is committed. Depending on the distance from the goal, a direct free kick can be sent straight at the goal to score or passed to another player to initiate an offensive.

Step1 - Place the ball firmly and take the direct free kicks from the point where the infringement occurred. The referee will note and mark the point. Moving the ball to another location will result in a foul.

Step2 - Ensure that all opposing team players are at least 10 yards away from the soccer ball. Players from the same side can remain closer. Take a look around and observe where your teammates are positioned. Note the defensive tactic the other team is adapting. If they are setting up a defensive wall with a row of players, you will need to execute a shot whereby the ball swings around that human wall.

Step3 - Kick the ball. You have three options when kicking. If you are close to the goal, you can attempt a direct goal with a driving shot, kicked with laces of the boot. Alternately, you will hit the ball with the inside of the boot. This will make the ball spin and swing in the air, making it curl around the goal keeper. If you are further away from the goal, you might want to kick the ball towards the player in the center forward position. That player, in turn, can take the shot at the goal.

Step4 - Follow through the kick with the full swing of your leg over the soccer ball. Immediately after kicking, get into a position where you can regain control of the ball if you don't score and control of the ball is gained by the defensive team.

Step5 - Avoid touching the ball after executing your kick. It's an infringement to do so until another player has touched the ball. If you do so, the opposing team will be awarded an indirect free kick.

* Don't be over-aggressive and attempt a direct shot at the goal when you are too far away from it. Passing it to the center forward or a winger would put your team in a better position to penetrate the other team's defense and score.

How to Take Indirect Free Kicks in Soccer:

An indirect free kick in soccer occurs after the opposition commits a technical infringement, such as offside. The difference between an indirect free kick and a direct free kick is that an indirect kick requires another player on either team to touch the ball before a goal can be scored. Look for the referee to raise his arm above his head, lowering it only after someone kicks the ball.

Step1 Line up next to the dead ball. Indirect free kicks can only happen once the ball is stationary. If you're near the net, you should have a teammate position himself next to you.

Step2 Ensure the other team remains 10 yards away from the ball. If there's any question that the players aren't far enough away, ask the referee to mark the players back. There may be a wall formed by the other team, especially if the foul occurred close to their net.

Step3 Wait for the referee to blow her whistle. The referee should have her hand raised before you kick the soccer ball, reminding you that this is an indirect free kick.

Step4 Tap the soccer ball. If you're the one shooting the ball toward the net, have your teammate tap it to you. And vice versa if your teammate is the one who should shoot.

Step5 Work on set plays if you have them. One example is to have a teammate run behind a wall, staying onside, and then chipping the ball over the wall to him. Another example is to play give-and-go with a teammate after you tap the ball to him. These can fool the other team, since they most likely think you're shooting the ball right at the net.

* Remember that for an indirect free kick, someone else needs to touch the ball before you can score. This can include the goalkeeper, however. But it's best to have a teammate touch the ball first, just in case. You don't want to rely on a goalie's mistake.

* You cannot tap the ball to yourself on either an indirect or direct free kick. Another player must touch the ball next.

* If your team scores a goal without anyone else other than the kicker touching the ball, the goal doesn't count. The other team will be awarded the ball and given a goal kick.

How to Take Advantage of a Direct Kick

If you're within range, a direct kick will get the creative goal-scoring juices flowing.

When the Ball Is Too Far Away for a Shot, but Close Enough for an Offensive Play

Step1 - Ask the referee for 10 yards, if needed.

Step2 - Look for an open teammate in a position closer to the goal.

Step3 - Cross the ball in front of the goal if possible. If you "put the ball in the mixer," you never know what can happen. Goals, hopefully.

When You're Too Far Away for an Offensive Play

Step1 - Get the ball in play quickly. This gives the defense less time to get into position.

Step2 - Try to catch the other team off balance.

When You're Within 25 Yards of the Goal

Step1 - Determine if you or any of your teammates can put the ball on goal from the spot of the infraction.

Step2 - Ask the referee for 10 yards if the other team encroaches on the ball. More often than not, you'll have to ask for the distance to be walked off. Sneaky defenders.

Step3 - Wait for the referee to blow the whistle before making contact with the ball.

Step4 - Shoot the ball at the goal (see "How to Shoot a Soccer Ball With Power").

Step5 - Follow your shot in case of a rebound.

* Direct kicks are rewarded when a player kicks or attempts to kick, trips or attempts to trip, jumps at, charges, strikes or attempts to strike, or pushes an opponent.

* A direct kick will also be given if a player tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, makes contact with the opponent before touching the ball, holds an opponent, spits at an opponent, or handles the ball deliberately.

* The referee will hold her or his arm straight up to signify a direct kick.

* A foul worthy of a direct kick inside the 18-yard box results in a penalty kick.

* Remember to wait for the whistle after asking the referee for 10 yards.

* If you have any condition that could impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity.

If you curve the ball (by kicking it on the side, causing sidespin), more often than not, it will fool the goalie.

If the defending side sets up a wall (like they should), try to get some of your players to stand in the wall. Tell them that they should move out of the way just before you hit your shot, and aim it for the inevitable gap that will remain. My team does this and we usually score or come close.

How to Avoid a Yellow Card in Soccer A yellow card in soccer is akin to a yellow light on a traffic signal; it signifies caution. There are 17 Laws of the Game in soccer and a yellow card is given out for breaching the twelfth law: misconduct. It's extremely important to avoid receiving a yellow card. Multiple yellow cards will cause a player to be ejected from the game. The player may also be excluded from subsequent league or tournament play.

Step1 - Know the specific reasons for which a yellow card can be handed out as listed in Law 12 of the laws governing soccer play. Avoid a yellow card by following the Laws of the Game.

Step2 - Proceed with play in a timely fashion. Wasting time as a game tactic can result in a yellow card.

Step3 - Show respect for the decisions of the officials. Verbal or physical displays of disagreement are grounds for a yellow card.

Step4 - Stay an appropriate distance away from opposing players when they are engaged in a free kick, an indirect free kick, a corner kick or a throw in.

Step5 - Inform the appropriate official of your entry or re-entry into the game and wait for a signal allowing you to enter.

Step6 - Leave the game only with the permission of the official.

Step7 - Do not remove clothing such as your jersey in response to a goal being scored by you or your team.

Step8 - Behave in a sportsmanlike way whether you are winning or losing. Do not celebrate unduly or attempt to gain an advantage in a deceitful manner.

Step9 - An official can give a yellow card for an offense which may not be specifically listed in The Laws of the Game.

Step10 - Understand the procedure for receiving a yellow card. The official will physically hold up a yellow card while standing next to the offending player.

Step11 - Consider what happens after a yellow card is given out. Officials carry books in which they write down the name of the player who received the yellow card and the offense that was committed.

Step12 - Be aware that in some circumstances yellow cards carry over from one game to another. In some tournaments, if a player receives two yellow cards during the course of the tournament, not just during the course of a single game, he may be ejected.

* Do not assume that you have one chance at unsportsmanlike conduct. Players can be ejected from a game even though they have not received one or more yellow cards.

How to win a penalty shoot-out:

"People who fail to prepare, prepare to fail. People who prepare, prepare to win."

No coach goes into a cup match expecting to be involved in a penalty shoot-out. But many cup ties end up that way and it is sensible to get your players as prepared as they can be for the "lottery" of a shoot-out.

In this article, I'll look at ways you can help your penalty takers have the confidence to put away their spot kicks. The next newsletter will look at penalty shoot-outs from the goalkeeper's point of view.

The format of a penalty shoot-out

Penalty shoot-outs usually involve five outfield players from each team taking it in turns to take penalties.

When both teams have taken their allotted five spot kicks, the team that scored the most goals wins.

If the scores are still level after five spot kicks each, the penalties continue in a sudden-death format until one team misses and the other scores.

The rules

The shoot-out begins with the referee tossing a coin. The winning captain decides which end the penalties will be taken at or which team takes the first penalty.

Five players from each team are nominated to take the spot kicks and the rest of the players wait in the or near the centre circle.

The penalties themselves are taken in the same way as in normal play. See FIFA Law 14 for details.

Notes: Only players who are on the field of play at the end of the match can take the penalties. You can't bring on a specialist penalty taker!

And no player can take more than one penalty unless every player on his team has taken one.

The penalty taker can feint during but not at end of her run-up. If a player does stop when she gets to the ball in an attempt to deceive the keeper and she scores, she will be cautioned and the kick will be retaken. If the shot is saved anyway, the kick won't be retaken but the player will still be cautioned.

Taking a penalty - the technique

- Choose the surface - young players can kick the ball powerfully with their instep but often find it hard to be accurate. A firm side-foot shot, on the other hand, should be powerful enough from just eight or 12 yards and it is much more accurate.
- Aim just inside the post - while it is easier to shoot into the bottom corners of the goal, if the goalkeeper guesses correctly, she could pull off a save. But if your players shoot into the top corner, the shot is virtually unstoppable.
- Make your mind up - wherever your players are going to try to place the ball, make sure they know where they are going to shoot before they start their run-up and tell them not to change their minds as they approach the ball.
- Ignore the goalkeeper - imagine the keeper is not there. It's just you, the ball and an empty net.
- You've scored! - visualizing the ball smashing into the back of the net may also help.

Practice by playing a small-sided game (SSG) in which players take penalty kicks in place of corner kicks. Alternatively, play three corners = one penalty.

To encourage shooting into the corners of the goal, place small cones one yard inside the posts. A penalty scored between the cone and the post counts double.

You could also hang a target in the top corners. My girls (bless them!) like to shoot at stuffed teddy bears that are strung up in the corners of the goal.

Taking a penalty - the psychology

Effective preparation is important but there are also some key psychological issues involved in successful penalty taking. Clwyd Jones, a lecturer at Southampton Solent's Lawrie McMenemy Centre for Ball Research says that it is vital to forget about occasions in the past when you've missed a spot kick or failed to save one.

It is also important your players don't think about the future either.

Thoughts such as: "What will the coach/my parents/my team mates say if I miss?" will cause them to tense up and make a miss much more likely.

So no thinking about what happened in the past or what might happen if they fail to convert their spot kick.

Players have to stay in the present and focus on the task in hand to the exclusion of everything else.

What to say to your players before the shoot-out

The final whistle blows. It's a tied game and you're going to penalties.

Your players are looking to you for guidance and reassurance. What do you say to them?

Tell them how well they've played during the match, how well they've played all season and how the outcome of the penalty shoot-out won't change any of that.

Remind your five volunteers to pick their spot before they approach the ball and imagine that the keeper isn't there.

Conclusion

Your team's chances of winning a penalty shoot-out are, to a great extent, dependent on how well you've prepared your players.

But there are some things you can't control. Goalkeepers can make wonder saves, spot kick takers can stumble during their run-up and you never really know what's going on in your players' minds.

So if you lose, be proud of what your team has achieved. If you win, just breathe a big sigh of relief.

What to tell your goalkeeper:

- Make yourself big - standing tall and stretching your arms out wide will make the goal look a lot smaller to a nervous penalty taker.
- Look confident - try to make eye contact with the kicker as she prepares to take her run up. Show her that you are confident. Smile at her!
- Stay mobile - bouncing on the balls of your feet as the penalty taker runs up allows you to move quickly to the left or right.
- Sidestep - make a small, quick step to one side and back to the middle of the goal as the penalty taker is approaching the ball. This is often enough to make her take her eye off the ball and lose focus.
- Don't dive before the ball is kicked - in junior soccer a lot of penalties are directed straight at the goalkeeper. You might just have to stand still and wait for the ball to be kicked into your hands.
- Dive forwards - if you have to dive, try to dive forwards. This cuts down the angle and makes it easier to reach the ball.

Visual cues

Keeping a careful eye on the penalty taker will often give a keeper some useful clues as to which way they are going to shoot.

- Do they keep glancing in one direction?
- Are they left or right footed? Most right-footed players shoot to the goalkeeper's right and left-footed players shoot to the keeper's left.
- Watch the plant foot. In youth soccer, the ball will nearly always go where the plant foot is pointing.

Positioning

The law relating to penalty kicks states that the goalkeeper must be on the goal line and may not move forwards until the shot is struck.

But the keeper does not have to stand in the middle of the goal.

In fact, it has been shown that by standing slightly off centre, the keeper will encourage the kicker to shoot at the wider half of the goal.

Standing just a few inches to the left or right often does the trick - even if the shooter hasn't consciously noticed that the keeper is not standing in the middle of the goal, they will usually aim for the wider side.[1]

To catch or not to catch?

The pressure of trying to save a penalty in a shoot-out is enough, don't make it worse by trying to catch the ball.

Remember that the penalty taker in a shoot-out can't touch the ball again after she's kicked it. So if the shot is saved, that's it.

Practicing penalties

If you're about to play a cup match that could end in a penalty shoot-out or you're entering a tournament, check out the previous newsletter for penalty taking tips and devote one coaching session to penalty taking and saving.

Discuss a few of the key points with your players then play a small-sided game (SSG) where all restarts, even throw-ins, are penalty kicks.

But don't get overly concerned with penalties. Try to win the game in normal time instead!

Reference: [1] Cunning play helps goalkeepers save penalties, New Scientist, 2 March 2007

Soccer Practice Drills:

Topics: Offense Vs Defense | Cut to the Inside | Knock Out Soccer | The 1-0 Game | The Reset Game 1&2 | The Pirate Circle | Passing Name Game | Jam-Packed Dribbling | Shadow Dribbling | Extreme Tag | 4 Corners - Race to the Ball | Instep (Sweet spot) Shooting |

See Links: [Small Side Games](#) | [SSG Part 1](#) | [SSG Part 2](#) | [SSG Part 3](#) | [SSG Part 4](#) | [Making Runs](#) | [Crossing](#) | [Other Striker Drills](#) | [Shooting Drills](#) | [Defense Games](#) | [Heading Drills / Games](#) | [Training](#) |

PLAY THE GAME: Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4 v.4 up to 8 v.8. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point or can only pass with outside of foot). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

Cut Dribbling: stay in small area as cut the ball back and forth across the body and take to the outside of the opposite foot (keep going side-to-side). Try zig-zagging up the field.

Cut the ball with the outside of the foot, turning 180 deg, then carry the ball back with the outside of the foot.

Offense Vs Defense:

Give your players a thorough understanding of the tactics needed to defend solidly. Mourinho's teams have perfected the art of closing out space around their goal, breaking away on the counter to create chances against attacking teams. It is based on squeezing space in his team's half. This session is a simple way to coach that skill.

SET UP: Set up a 40x30 yard area with two small goals in the corners at one end and a normal goal at the other. You need balls, bibs and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Play a 4v4 with no passes above head height. The players defending the two goals play like a four-man midfield, while the other four defend the single goal as a defensive unit. The

team defending the single goal must be a tight unit squeezing space in front of goal because there is no keeper. The opposition do the opposite, forcing play inside by protecting the wings. Play five attacks and then swap teams.

TECHNIQUE: Both teams use defensive tactics but one plays like a four man defense and the other like a four man midfield. This covers the main areas and tactics that teams use when defending. The midfield blocks wide and forces play into the strong defensive middle, leaving nowhere for teams to penetrate.

Cut to the Inside:

Getting players used to using a skill like the inside cut is vital if you want them to use it when they are under pressure in matches. This session puts players under pressure without the physical element.

SET UP: Use an area of 20x20 yards and set up the cones like the diagram. We are using six players. You need balls, bibs, cones and a small target goal.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your players into two teams of three. Start them side by side with one team with the ball. The player with the ball and a player from the other team race to the first cone with the ball under control. At the cone the player with the ball makes the turn and dribbles towards the goal, only shooting once he passes the cone in front of goal. The other player must carry on to the next cone and try to get back and tag the player with the ball before he shoots.

Each player goes once, then swap roles – making sure the team with the ball is on the side next to the goal so they are turning away from their opponent.

TECHNIQUE: This session gives players an easy way to make a turn while keeping the ball from their opponent.

Knock Out Soccer:

Objective: to practice passing, shooting, defending, switching play, communication and teamwork.

Set-up: create a large, circular playing area. For 10-year-olds, I suggest the circle is about 40 yards across.

- Evenly space three or four goals around the edge of the playing area.
- Divide your players into teams of three or four. Goalkeepers are optional.



How to play: three or four teams (depending on how many players you have) play soccer in the playing area.

- Each team has one goal to defend and tries to score in all the others.
- Each team starts with five "lives". If they concede a goal, they lose a life.
- If they lose all their lives they are out of the game.

Coaching notes: teams that are knocked out should move to another activity. An assistant coach can work with them, perhaps they can have a juggle among themselves or they can play a 2v2 match. It doesn't matter what they do, but don't let them just stand around. Teams will often work together to knock out another team and it's interesting to see who cooperates with who and which group of players become the targets. **Warning:** this is an ultra-competitive game and feelings can sometimes run high! But Knock Out Soccer is great fun and it's a game that my 11-year-olds ask for time and time again.

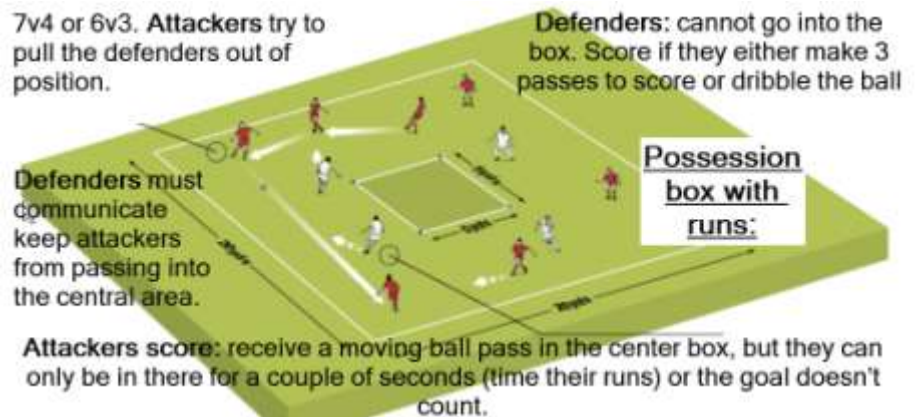
Possession Box with Runs:

Passing in small areas is vital. Get your players keeping possession and creating space for team-mates to exploit.

SET UP: Use an area of 20x20 yards with a five-yard coned off box in the centre. 7v4 or 6v3. We've used 11 players. You need balls, bibs and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Split the players into 7 attackers and 4 defenders. To score, the attackers must receive a pass in the box in the centre, but they can only be in there for a couple of seconds and they cannot stand still in the box or the goal doesn't count. Defenders cannot go into the box. If the four defenders win the ball they must either make three passes to score or dribble the ball under control out of the main area.

TECHNIQUE: When you see teams able to make four or five passes in a small area, keeping hold of the ball and creating space elsewhere on the pitch, it is because they have played games like this – and their team-mates can exploit the space created.



The 1-0 Game:

For U9s upwards. The whole squad. Great for improving communication, passing, support play and keeping possession. But with a bit of 'tweaking', the 1-0 game can be used to encourage different aspects of play.

Set up: Create a 40 yards by 20 yards playing area with five-a-side or mini soccer goals at two opposite ends. Split your squad into teams of four. You can increase this up to six-a-side if you have enough players.

How to play: The basic rule of the game is a team can only win by one goal. The game begins as a normal 4 v 4. When a goal is scored, the team that scored must try to keep possession and can't score again. If they do, the goal is disallowed and a goal kick follows.

- If the other team equalize and make it 1-1, either team can then score to make it 2-1. The leading team has to keep possession until the final whistle. Play a series of games lasting five minutes each.
- If your attackers don't take their chances quickly or are reluctant to shoot, make it a condition that all goals must be scored with a player's first touch.
- If you want to encourage passing, tell your teams that a goal will only count if they make at least five passes between them before shooting.

The Reset Game:

It really hammers home the importance of ball retention, passing, moving, target man identification and a good first touch. The reset game is a good physical workout and it will really get your players moving and thinking." Age range: U9s to U14s.

Set-up: place three small cone goals randomly in a 30-yard square playing area.

- Divide your squad into **2 teams of 3 players**.
- The teams spread out in the playing area and you give one team a ball.

How to play: the team with the ball has to complete **2 passes before they can score** in one of the goals.

- The passes must involve all three players. Ex. player 1 passes to player 2, who then must pass to player 3. If player 2 passes back to player 1 it doesn't count towards the team's two passes.
- However, pass backs may be used (and should be encouraged) if the team's third player isn't in a good position to receive the ball.
- Players must not allow the other team to touch the ball, but they can take as long as they like to make their two passes.
- If an opposing player does touch the ball, however slightly, yell "RESET". The initiative then passes to the other team, which now has to make two passes in order to score.
- As soon as one team scores, the other team gets the ball and they immediately try to make their two passes – the game doesn't stop.

Coaching notes:

- 1) Players should see the need to create angles in order to receive passes. If they don't, ask them if it's a good idea to form straight lines if there is an opponent standing between two of their own players.
- 2) After a while the better players will start to see that the last player to receive the pass is the most important and they will need to mark him harder in order to disrupt the passing sequence.
- 3) They should also begin to understand the need to control and shield the ball effectively. Ball retention is absolutely encouraged. "Hoof it and hope" definitely does not work in this game.
- 4) You need to keep your players moving – the team in which one player stops moving usually loses.

The Reset Game V2:

A modified version of the Reset Game is for **2 teams of 4 players**. It really did show them the benefits of constant movement and making angles so they can receive passes. It also sharpened up their first touch.

Set-up: Place three small cone goals randomly in a 30-yard square. Divide your squad into teams of four. Two teams per playing area. The two teams spread out and you give one team a ball.

How to play: The team with the ball has to complete **3 passes before it can score** in one of the cone goals.

- The passes must involve all four players, i.e., player 1 passes to player 2, who passes to player 3 who passes to player 4. If, for example, player 2 passes back to player 1 it doesn't count towards the team's three passes. However, pass backs may be used (and should be encouraged) if the third or fourth player isn't in a good position to receive the ball.
- Players must not allow the other team to touch the ball and they can take as long as they like to make their three passes.
- If an opposing player does touch the ball, however slightly, yell "Reset!" Possession is then given to the other team who must now make three passes in order to score.
- As soon as one team scores, it gets to keep the ball and try to make another three passes. The game does not stop.

The Pirate Circle:

Setup Build a circle approximately the size of the center circle with a Pugg net in the middle of the circle. The actual size of the circle will vary depending on the age and skill level of the players. With all players in the playing area, dedicate 9 players with the ball, and 3 players without a ball will be the "Pirates".

Instructions Instruct the "Pirates" without the ball to defend the players with the balls. Once the Pirate wins the ball, they attempt to score on the Pugg net in the middle of the circle. If the Pirate scores the goal, that player too becomes a Pirate. Play continues until the last player with the ball wins. If the pirates have a hard time getting started, the coach can help the pirates at first.

Coaching Points: Attacking: keep the ball close with head up so the players are aware of defenders and safety areas (space). If the ball is lost, recover quickly and fight to win it back.

Defending: Transition quickly from defense to offensive and stay focused once the ball is won, and find the target.

Focus: Dribbling. Passing. Defending. Attacking. FUN.



Passing Name Game:

Setup Form a circle with each of the players on your team. Only start with one ball.



Instructions To play the name game, the player with the ball passes to a player. Before the receiving player receives the pass, they must yell the name of the player they are going to pass to. Upon the next player receiving the ball, they must yell the name of the player they are going to pass to.

This is designed to make the players think a step ahead of the play. Make sure that each player has at least 2 touches on the ball; one touch to receive the pass, and the other touch to make the pass. **Must pass to different people each time.**

Variations Create a grid and play the same game as above except players are free to move about the grid.

Add a second ball.

Coaching Points Remind players to be thinking ahead to determine who they want to pass to. Good First Touch. Quality pass. Focus. Passing.

Receiving/Turning.

Jam-Packed Dribbling:

This soccer dribbling drill will give players confidence while dribbling through congested areas on the soccer field

Setup To begin this drill, create a circle with disc cones that is approximately 20 yards in circumference. Make sure each player has a ball, and instruct them to line up around the outside of the circle.

Instructions Have the players begin the soccer drill by dribbling around the outside of the circle all in the same direction. The coach should inform the players to listen for certain queues and perform those actions once the coach shouts the command. **These commands are:**

JOG - players should dribble at a comfortable speed

FULL SPEED - players should dribble at their top speed



CUT - players should cut the ball in the other direction and travel in the other direction around the circle
 CROSS - all players should cut across the grid avoiding contact with other players or other players balls.

Variations Sole drags. Backwards.

Coaching Points Since all 4 players should be entering the center area at the same time make sure players are looking ahead of them with their head up. Remind players to keep the ball close when entering the traffic area. Have players start playing with their arms up and out for balance and shielding. Instruct players to dribble with both feet and all parts of the foot. This is a fun soccer drill, so make sure to HAVE FUN!

Shadow Dribbling:

Setup Create a small grid approximately 20X20 yard grid. Instruct players to pair up each player with a ball.
Instructions The lead dribbler dribbles around inside the grid while the following dribbler attempts to mimic the lead dribbler's every move and keeping a good close distance. Change leaders after a minute.

Coaching Points: lift head, eyes up, close control, control of body movements, use all parts of their feet while dribbling (inside, outside, top, bottom), change of direction, change of pace, find space, dribble with speed, encourage players to be creative.

Extreme Tag:

This is a fun soccer drill that focuses on young soccer players dribbling and aids in player awareness. It is a great drill that causes players to change directions quickly to find space and avoid being tagged.

Setup Create a grid approximately 20X20 depending on the number of players. Each player should have their own soccer ball.

Instructions With this drill, the players are dribbling around in the grid trying to avoid a tag from the other players. However, the tag must be made below the players knee in order to receive credit for the tag. Each successful tag below the knee will result in a point being awarded to the tagging player. If the player gets tagged, a point is subtracted from their total. The first player to 5 wins that round. Play a couple rounds depending on the length of time each game takes.

Coaching Points: Make sure players are dribbling with their head up. Instruct players to find open space. Players will want to leave their ball when being chased, so make sure the players keep their ball in close control. Make sure the kids have FUN!

Focus Dribbling Fitness Warm-up FUN.



skills



4 Corners - Race to the Ball:

Setup Create a grid that is 30x30 yards. Create 4 teams and have them stand at each of the four corner cones. The coach stands outside the grid near the middle of 2 side cones with a large supply of soccer balls.



Instructions The coach plays a ball into the center of the grid and shouts out a command (such as "GO") to begin play. The first player in each of the 4 lines must sprint after the ball in attempt to reach the ball first. Once the ball is won cleanly, the player must hold possession from the other players for 5 seconds before passing the ball back to the coach. If any player steals the ball from the person in possession, that player will then attempt to hold possession for 5 seconds. A team scores a point by successfully holding possession for 5 seconds and making a return pass to the coach. The first team to reach 5 points wins.

Variations The coach can play different types of balls such as flighted balls, bouncing balls, rolling balls, balls with large amounts of top or back spin.

Coaching Points Players should be taught to go after the ball aggressively with

speed, determination and vigor.

Focus Dribbling. Receiving/Turning. Fitness.

Instep (Sweet spot) Shooting Drill:

This drill focuses on the instep drive. This is a very important method of striking a ball as it is used in shooting. The ball is struck with the shoelace part of the foot with the toe pointed down and the ankle locked.

Setup Setup a grid that is 25x25 yards and place 3-4 tall cones in the middle of the grid. Divide the team into groups of 2. Partners stand on opposite sides of the grid facing each other. Each group of 2 needs a



ball.

Instructions Players get points by knocking over a cone by driving the ball to their partners side of the grid. Any of the players on the side can return the ball by driving it with the instep of the foot while attempting to knock over a cone.

Variations * Drill can be used for younger players to work on inside of the foot passing

Coaching Points * Striking the ball with the shoelaces, toe pointed down, ankle locked, non-kicking foot should be next to the ball and slightly behind it and pointed towards the target. Players should try to land on their kicking foot to use the full transfer of **body weight**.

Focus Shooting Goalkeeping

5v2 Rotating Defenders:

Setup Start by setting up a 12X12 grid. 5 attackers wear Alternate jerseys, and the remaining players should pair up as defenders behind one cone with the supply of balls.

Instructions The first pair of defenders passes a ball into the 5 attackers, and step into the grid and become defenders. The attackers should continue passing until the defenders win the ball, or the ball is knocked out of play. Once the play is dead, the next pair of defenders plays into the same 5 attackers, and play resumes.

Variations Adjust grid (larger = easier; smaller = harder). Introduce splits (split defenders, defenders do 10 pushups every split)

Adjust the number of attackers (4 attackers vs. 2 defenders)

Coaching Points: Vision. Changes in the direction and speed of play.

Appropriate use of 1st touch. Appropriate use of short or long passing. Good passes to feet. Good first touch. Good decision making (make play easy). Speed of play/decisions.

Focus: Dribbling. Passing. Receiving/Turning. Possession. Defending. Attacking.



1v1 Attack & Defend:

Setup Make a 40X40 grid. Split your team into pairs with one ball per pair. Randomly set up small goals (approx 2-3 yards wide) with flags within the grid; one goal per pair. Each pair should begin their window.

Instructions Each team will play 1v1 using their goal only. Goals are scored by dribbling across the goal line. Goals can be scored from either of their own goal. Players play 1 to 2 minute games and rotate players.

Variations Open it up where each pair can score on any of the other goals. They are still paired up with only their partner and should not interfere with any other pairs going on. Goals can still be scored from either side of the goals by dribbling through the goal.

Coaching Points: **Attacking:** Head up and aware of other players, change of direction, close control, and change of pace **Defending:** Bent Knees, aware of attacker, tracking attackers movement and protecting goal

Focus. Dribbling. Fitness. Defending. Attacking.



at
side
the

Defend the Castle:

Setup Set up a grid that is 12 X 12 yards. Organize the team into groups of four. One of the four players should wear an alternate jersey and be the designated defender (guarder of the castle). Take a ball and place it on the top of a disc cone in the middle of the grid, this will become the "castle". If you do not have disc cones, a tall cone will work just as good.

Instructions It will be up to the 3 attackers to pass the ball around the defender in the grid in attempt to knock down the castle with a pass. The castle is considered knocked down when the ball is knocked off the cone or the tall cone is knocked down with a pass.

Variations Depending on the age level and skill of the players, you can remove the 12 x 12 grid limitations, or make the grid smaller for very skilled players. If players are standing next to the cone, you can build a 3x3 grid and not allow players to step into that small grid. Require players to complete a certain number of passes before they are allowed to knock down the castle.

Play 1v1 and focus on dribbling skills.

Coaching Points: Instruct players to get their heads up to find the pass. Make sure the players are passing the ball with proper weight on the ball. Make sure players are moving about the grid in order to find open space. Make sure players know it is ok to dribble the ball to space or beat the defender before making the pass. Make sure players are making the easiest decisions when passing.

Focus: Dribbling. Passing Receiving/Turning Possession Defending Attacking Warm-up FUN.



Soccer Gauntlet (Sharks & Minnows):

Setup Make a grid approximately 20x15 yard. Instruct one defender to stand inside the grid without a ball. The remaining players will start on the end line with a ball.

Instructions On the coach's command, all of the attacking players dribble at speed to the other side line avoiding the defender. If the defender wins the ball and kicks the ball out of the grid, that attacker becomes an additional defender (without a ball) on the next series. The last player to make it through the gauntlet wins the game.

Variations * Limit the foot the attacker can dribble with

Coaching Points: * Keep the ball close to the dribbler * Stay in control of your body and ball * Keep your eyes up to avoid pressure * Dribble into space avoiding pressure. * Dribble with speed when in open space

Focus Dribbling



Soccer Ball Smash:

Setup Set up a large grid approximately 40x50 yards. Pair up each of the players and make sure each player has a ball. The two partners should stand near to each other inside the grid but spread away from other groups of players when starting this drill.

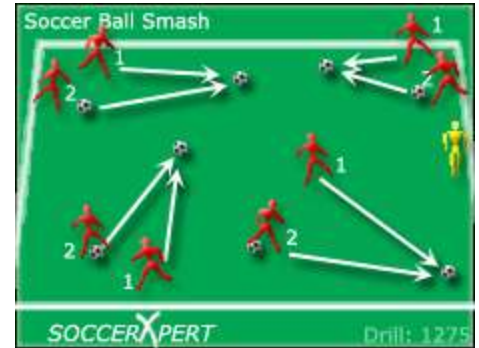
Instructions Instruct player 1 to pass his ball forward. After Player 1's ball stops moving, player 2 then passes their ball at player 1's ball in attempt to hit player 1's ball. If player 2 misses, then player 1 tries to hit player 2's ball from where it landed previously. Each time a player hits their opponents ball, they collect a point. The first player to 5 wins that match.

Variations Alternate the groups and repeat. Limit players to passing with certain parts of the foot: inside, outside, instep

Coaching Points Make sure the players are striking the ball with the correct surface of the foot.

make sure the weight of the pass is good. watch the plant foot to make sure it is pointing to its target.

Focus Passing FUN



Dribbling to Beat a Defender:

This dribbling drill is great when teaching young players when and where to dribble, and how to beat the defenders on the dribble. This dribbling drill is best for U8-U12 Soccer Players. The emphasis is on allowing the dribbling player to unbalance the defender while approaching unchallenged.

Setup Build a grid 20x10 yards with cones set to mark the halfway line. Two balls will be needed for a group of 3 players.

Instructions Position the defender in the middle line in the grid. The defender in the middle is restricted to only move side to side on the middle line in an attempt to stop the dribbling attacker. Instruct the attacker to approach the defender under control, make his move after making the defender commit, and accelerate to the other side of the grid.

Coaching Points Focus on a Controlled approach. Make sure the players changes direction. Make sure the player accelerates to the other end line once past the defender.



1v1v1 Triangle Game:

This drill will focus on the attacking in number down situations and will mainly encourage players to dribble, take players on, shielding and vision to find the open goal. Defensively this drill encourages players to stay aware of their defensive shape and tackling players on the dribble.

Setup In a triangular shape, set three 2yrd goals approximately 15-20 yards apart. With three players, instruct each player to defend a certain goal. These players can score on any of the other two goals.

Instructions Goals must be scored by "Dribbling" through the goal and will not count if passed through the gate. This will encourage the players to take on the defenders quickly to get in behind them to score the goal.

Variations: * Remove the disc cone gates and give each player one 9" tall cones. This cone will serve as the goal. Now Instruct players to knock over the cone to score the goal. This will encourage players to pass the ball into the cone and focus on passing accuracy.

Coaching Points: * On the attacking player, encourage the players to dribble at players with speed with the intent to get to the space behind the defenders. * Make sure players are looking up trying to find the most vulnerable goal. * Defensively encourage players to stay aware of their positioning and recover quickly when transitioning from offensive to defense.



Focus Dribbling Fitness Defending Attacking

1v1 Team Attack:

Setup Have the team pair up with the partners facing each other about 7-10 yards apart.

Instructions Have the defenders start the exercise by playing a ball to the attacker's feet. The defender then takes a step towards the approaching attacker, but not to defend.

The attacker should get control of the ball, move towards the defender, make a "fake", change the direction of the ball, then have a good change of pace to leave the defender quickly. It is important to make sure the defender is passive and not attempts to steal the ball at this stage in development.



1v1 Soccer (4 goal team attack)

Setup: Split the team into 2 even groups. Put one team in an alternate jersey (Diagram shows Red & Blue teams). Create a grid roughly 35X20 yards. Place 4 small goals (made by flags, cones or pugg goals) along the long side of the grid. The balls should all start with one group.

Instructions: Players 1a and 1b pass the soccer ball into two players on the opposing team marked as 2a and 2b in the diagram. Players 2a and 2b quickly attack the goals opposite them while players 1a and 1b attempt to stop the attacking players, win the ball and attack the goals opposite of their starting position. As shown in the diagram, players can attack either of the two goals opposite them. Player 1a should always go against 2a and player 1b should always go against 2b for the 1v1. Allow players 2a and 2b start with the balls after every 5-7 minutes. See variations for additional games.



Variations:

2v1 (2 attackers vs. 1 defender) – split the balls between each group. Have player 1a pass the ball to players 2a and 2b to begin. Player 1a should step out to defend players 2a and 2b. After this series is over, have player 2a pass the ball to players 1a and 1b.

2v2 – with the balls with players 1a and 1b, player 1b passes the ball into players 2a and 2b. Players 1a and 1b defend players 2a and 2b.

1v2 (1 attacker vs. 2 defenders) - split the balls between each group again. Have player 1a pass the ball into player 2a. Players 1a and 1b step out to defend player 2a.

Coaching Points: Start off with a 1v1 situation and encourage players to take on their opposition by being explosive and creative. Also focus on defensive pressure on the attacker making sure the pressure is quick while staying in control.

Crossing/Finishing Drill:

This crossing and finishing drill focuses on attacking within the 18 yard box. This drill mainly focuses on crossing, shooting, and heading.

Setup You will have five lines across the field about 5 yards from the penalty area. Place your crossing players on the outside lines and your attacking central players in the middle three lines. Instruct the middle three lines to attack a certain area of the goal (i.e. back-post, near-post).

Instructions: Have the first player in the crossing lines step out in front of the lines facing the crossers to become a passing player. The next player in the crossing line is the crosser. The crosser passes the ball to the passing player who plays the ball back to the crosser. The crosser now plays a ball past the passing player into the corner of the field and crosses into the middle players who should be running onto the cross. The crosser now becomes the passing player and play repeats. Alternate the crosses from right to left.

Variations: Play in 1-touch on every ball. Add defensive players in the middle of the field to create defensive pressure.

Specify the requested finishing style (i.e. score on headers, volleys)

Have the crossers drive the ball low. Have the crossers drive the ball in hard.

Coaching Points: Focus on proper body position from the crossing players assuring they are getting their hips facing the middle of the field. Make sure attackers are properly timing their runs and not getting in too quick or too slow. Finishers should be composed in front of the goal and look to redirect the ball past the keeper.

Focus: Passing Heading Crossing/Finishing Attacking Shooting Goalkeeping.



Soccer ZONE:

Setup In an area approximately 40X30 yards, set cones around the parameter of the grid and evenly divide the grid into three equal rectangles by aligning two vertical rows of cones approximately yards apart. Use a pug goal or flags to set up a small goal on each goal line. Divide the team into groups of 4 players and assign positions (in the shape of a diamond) 1 defender in middle zone, 1 attacker in the middle zone, one right midfielder in the right zone, and one left midfielder in the left zone. Attempt to match up equal players in each position for each team.

Instructions Play 4v4 and restrict players to their lane (zone). Players can dribble, pass, receive passes, attack and defend as long as the players remain in their zone.

Variations You can start out 3v3 with one player in each zone for younger players to simplify the game a bit.

Limit the number of touches to encourage more passing.

Coaching Points This is a great soccer game to encourage players to spread out the field and teaches positioning and spacing. You can also use this drill to focus on zonal defending or building the attack from the back. The possibilities are limitless and can be used to focus on many aspects of the game.

Focus: Passing. Position. Receiving/Turning. Possession. Defending. Attacking.



10

Shooters and Shaggers:

This drill, Shooters and Shaggers, is a great game to help improve shooting on target, leg strength and could be altered to help with the instep drive (shoe laces).



Setup Organize your team into groups of 2. One player will be the shooter while the other player will be the shagger. The Shagger will only shag balls for their shooter as they are paired up as a team in this competition. Organize an arc of cones approximately 10 yards from goal with no keeper in the goal.

Instructions Each shooter will begin at the start cone while their shagger will begin behind the goal. At the first cone, each shooter will take turns shooting on goal in attempt to score the goal with a direct shot into the goal without it hitting the ground (no bounce). If the ball bounces before scoring a goal, or if they miss the goal, the shooter retrieves the ball from their shagger and continue shooting from the same cone. However, if the player is able to strike the ball into the goal without it bouncing, the player will get to continue to the next cone. The first 3 players to successfully scored from each of the 5 cones win. Now switch and let

the shaggers shoot and the shooters shag balls.

Note: The game will seem slow to start, but as the game gets going the players are working hard and friendly competition should kick in and elevate the game.

Variations - For younger players who are unable to lift the ball very well should be modified to scoring hard shots with pace on the ball. - To get all the players participating at the same time, have each player start with their own ball (no shaggers) and have them keep up with their same ball throughout the entire shooting game. Have half of the group start on the finish cone and work backwards while the other group start on the start cone.

Coaching Points - Watch the angle of approach, make sure they come at the ball at a good kicking angle. - Make sure their planting foot is not too close or too far from the ball. - Make sure the player is locking their ankle.

2v2 or 3v3 - Get Outta Here:

This drill is a very fast paced 2v2 game that focuses on aspects of the small sided game such as dribbling, passing, and scoring.

Setup Setup a 25 x 15 yard grid with a small goal at each end, play 2v2. You can adjust the size of the field based on the skill level of the players.

Instructions The coach stands on the touchline with a supply of ball and a small line of players on each side. The coach plays a ball in and the first person from each line plays 2v2. If a player scores they stay on and the other person leaves. A ball is immediately played back into the game. If the ball goes out of bounds both players are "outta there." This should be a very fast paced game.

Variations You can start with a 1v1 before progressing to the 2v2.

Progress to a 3v3. Limit touches to encourage passing.

Enforce limitations such as beating a player before passing to encourage players taking on defenders.

Coaching Points: Promote good small group passing, early support, good skills to beat defenders and taking shots.

Focus: Dribbling Receiving/Turning Fitness Possession Defending Attacking FUN.



Numbers Attack:

Setup Create a small 1v1 field approximately 15X20 with two small goals on each endline. Split the group into two even teams and assign a number to each player in each group. For instance if you have 5 players in each group, number off 1-5 in each group. One group should wear alternate jerseys.

Instructions The coach will play a ball into the area and call out a number. Those players must then sprint onto the field and play a 1v1. The game should continue until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds.

Variations Have more than one 1v1 going at the same time. Call out two or more numbers to create a 2v2 or 3v3.

Coaching Points Encourage players to take on their opponent. Encourage players to shoot when they have a chance of a goal. Instruct the players to protect the ball when necessary.



Variations Let the defender apply a little pressure on the attacker by stepping in front of the attacker as they make a change of direction.

Coaching Points: Good Controlling touch. Good approach with the right amount of speed and control. Make sure attacker dribbles directly at the defender. Have the player "fake" by stepping over the ball, having a hard step, studder step, dragging a foot or toe, dipping their shoulders, faking a kick or using their eyes to look in a direction opposite of where they are going. Good change of direction once a fake is made to move away from the defender. Good change of pace to leave the defender once they have them off-balanced from the fake and change of direction.

Focus: Dribbling. Attacking. Warm-up.

Speed drill: Pairs about 35 m from the goal line. A server passes the ball about 15 m ahead of the front pair who immediately run to contest possession and drive forwards on goal.

Coach



Pair 5
Pair 4
Pair 3
Pair 2
Pair 1

Possession Soccer:

Links: Info | **Rondo Games** | [Other Small Sided Possession Games](#) | See [Passing](#) | [Receiving \(traps and controls\)](#) |

Players who play on their toes, open to the ball and supporting players, with head up and awareness of what's happening all around them can be exceptionally successful at holding the ball. Everyone must work hard to support the ball. Some players must check away to drag defenders out of space, others should check to ball to support it. If everyone comes to or checks away at the same time, there is no support. Supporting players should open their body shape so that hips and eyes face the field of play and the ball. Supporting players should be ready to receive the ball in a position to go forward or change direction on first touch. Players should never receive the ball with their back to support.

Creating and Using Space Players checking away from the ball, to drag defenders away and to create space, should bend their runs and look over their shoulder to be able to keep the ball in sight at all times.

Players checking back to the ball should come at an angle to the ball to create good supporting angles, rather than checking straight to the ball.

Passing the Ball Against supported defenders, all passes should be to feet. All short passes should be on the ground. Only passes over 20 or 30 yards, depending on field conditions, should be lofted. (Once the point of attack is changed to reach an unsupported defender, the final pass is to space behind the defender. However, when teaching possession, this is not a key point). Two or three short passes draw in the defenders toward the ball. A long pass, struck hard, should be used to split the defenders as they try to close down the ball. (In a match, this changes the point of attack.) Do not pass to unsupported players. For example, do not pass to a player in a corner with defenders in a position to close down the player before support can show to the ball.

Receiving the Ball The player receiving the ball should have a quick glance over the shoulder just before receiving the ball to know where the ball can be played on the first touch. The player receiving the ball should take the ball off the line of play and clean it up on the first touch, and then play it away on the second touch. Alternatively, playing the ball away accurately with one touch is good. After receiving the ball, open hips and body shape to the field to enable all passing options. Otherwise, player who received ball is limited to passing in predictable directions so that the defenders can apply great pressure to next player to receive ball.

Advantages: By keeping possession, you will eventually make the opponents more undisciplined and impatient. The other team can't score if you keep possession of the ball, so in order for them to regain possession, they will be forced to chase you all over the pitch.

Disadvantages: By playing patient build-up it may make your attacking predictable. The other team can defend by staying deep packing the penalty box reducing available space to exploit to a minimum, forcing you to shoot from long or use other tools which may increase the risk of losing possession. If teams Park The Bus they will not be easy to break down and play becomes boring and the team open to a quick smash and grab counter attack.

Support play:

How often do you see your players watching a team mate with the ball as they struggle to get away from pressure? I see it most weeks! It's frustrating - you just want to pick them up and move them a few feet to where they can provide a passing option for their team mate.

- But of course we can't do that so let's start work on support play training this week and begin forming some good habits.
- Before we can get young soccer players to take up supporting positions instead of trying to get a foot on the ball all the time, we have to introduce them to the concept of space.
- For you and me, it's easy to 'see' space on the soccer field. But it's not easy for seven and eight year olds. They are still very self-centered and find it hard to consider abstract concepts such as space - especially when all they really want to do is kick the ball!

So let's show them what space means.

- Set up a very small soccer field, about 20 yards by 15 yards, complete with goals. Then ask your players to play 5v5 or 6v6 in that area. After five minutes or so, ask them if it was hard or easy. They will say it was hard. Ask them why. Someone should say 'it was too crowded', if they don't give them a few hints.
- Now stand your players around a small circle marked by cones, about 10 yards across, and put one player (the defender) in the middle. Ask your outside players to pass to each other, keeping the ball away from the 'defender'.
- After a minute or two ask the defender if it was easy to intercept the ball. He or she should say it was easy. Now ask the other players how they could make it harder for the defender and with a bit of luck they will say 'make the circle bigger'. Get them to do that by moving the cones back three or four yards and play the game again.
- Now it will be easier for the 'attackers' to keep the ball away from the 'defender'. Get your players to recognize that (it's important that they say it's easier with more space), make the circle a bit bigger and play again. Keep doing that until they reach the point where they are so far apart from each other that the defender can easily intercept the attackers' passes.
- Stop the game and ask your players to show you the size circle that worked best for the attackers. This is the 'perfect distance'.
- Ask your players to remember that. Finish off by playing a 'match' and stopping play when they bunch. Tell them to move apart so they are at the 'perfect distance' from each other. Repeat, praising them when they keep a good instance from each other. Well done, you've taught your players a very valuable lesson!

Rondo Games:

Practice games with multiple benefits. Rondo teaches a lot about passing...but it can also teach a lot about ball control and first touch, and space & movement especially when dynamic. Rondos teach soccer intelligence.

“Everything that goes on in a match, except shooting, you can do in a rondo. The competitive aspect, fighting to make space, what to do when in possession and what to do when you haven’t got the ball, how to play ‘one touch’ soccer, how to counteract the tight marking and how to win the ball back.”

-- Johan Cruyff (Legendary player for FC Barcelona and Holland)

Definition of “rondo”: A game where one group of players has the ball while in numerical superiority (3v1, 5v2, 5v5+2 etc ...) over another group of players. The basic objective of the group in numerical superiority is to keep possession of the ball while the objective of the group in numerical inferiority is to win the ball back.

• Rondos differ from other possession games in that the rondo is a game where the players occupy a preset space as opposed to a more random space. Positional games are games where players occupy spaces similar to those in the regular game e.g., outside back, center back, center midfield etc. ...

Rondos help develop the following areas1:

COGNITIVE. In rondos the player is constantly perceiving and making decisions with respect to his teammates, opponents, position of the ball etc. ... For this reason the capacity to make the correct decisions and the speed of play are improved.

TECHNICAL COORDINATION. Due to the way that the rondo is set up, it is necessary to have control of the physical movements and technical skills with respect to time and space, the game, the ball and opponents.

TEAM BUILDING. (mini-societies) With the type of work done in rondos, the understanding between teammates is improved, and the sense of “team” is also built.

CREATIVITY AND EXPRESSION. The nature of the rondo, with its limited time and space, forces the players to use various technical and tactical abilities in order to solve constantly changing problems within the game. This helps develop creativity.

COMPETITIVENESS. In the development of the rondo, the player’s competitive nature is improved. Players have to fight to make space, learn how to counteract marking and how to win the ball back. Nobody wants to be the one making the mistake which leads to time in the middle.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING. With rondos a team may work anaerobic resistance by varying the space, time and number of players involved.

Possession Rondo Game:

The constraints are multiple, such as you must take a touch and make one soccer move such as a shield and turn, Cruyff turn, etc, before they must make a pass to their nearest link (teammate).

There are 7 or 9 players doing the keep way and there are 2 or 3 players chasing the ball, this way both the attackers and the defenders learn the fundamentals of 1st def, 2nd, 3rd, 1st attacker, 2nd attacker, 3rd attacker.

Rondo Circle Possession Game:

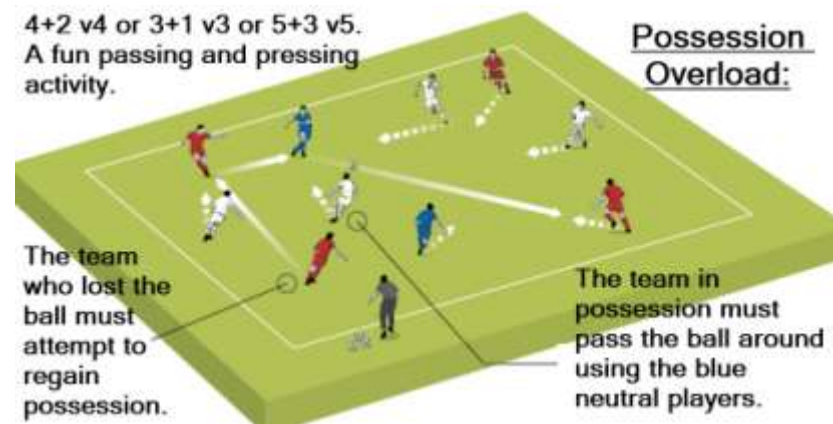
Game can be played from 3 v 1 to 8 v 3. Adjust the size of the area to suit the age and ability of the players.

Objective is for the players with the ball, to keep possession of the ball for as long as possible. Extra points are awarded if the ball is passed between defenders.

If defenders intercept the ball 3 times, they become attackers and another pair become defenders

Possession Overload:

4+2 v4 or 3+1 v3 or 5+3 v5 fun passing and pressing activity.



Possession passing using the neutral players. Having the ability to keep the ball against defenders relies on teamwork and communication. This simple game helps develop these skills and can be an excellent conditioning session.

SET UP: Use an area of 30x20 yards. We have used 10 players for this session. Split your players into two teams of four, plus two neutral players. You need balls, bibs and cones.

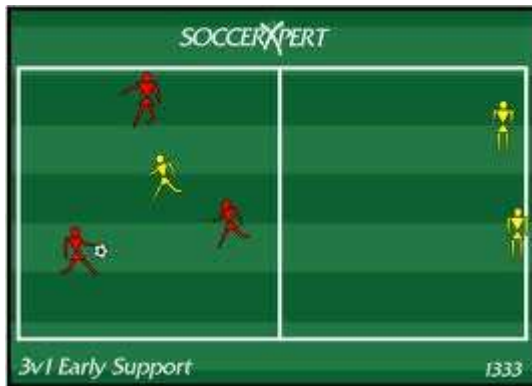
HOW TO PLAY: The coach starts the session by playing to one of the teams, who try to keep possession of the ball with the aid of the neutral players. The defending team attempt to win the ball back – should they succeed in gaining

possession, they immediately work with the neutral players to keep the ball. Restarts should come from the coach, playing the ball to the team who didn’t put it out.

TECHNIQUE: This activity focuses on encouraging teams to keep hold of the ball with good passing and movement, but you should also look for good ball control.

3v1 Early Support:

Setup: Create two 12X12 grids with one common side. Split into 2 groups of 3 players (3 red and 3 yellow). Place 3 red and 1 yellow player in one grid and the remaining 2 yellow players in the other grid. The single yellow player in the red grid will start as defender.



Instructions: Play a 3v1 in the first grid, focus on early support, good angles, good distance, and giving the player with the ball two passing options.

- The defender's objective is to gain possession and pass to a player on their team in the other grid. If this happens, that defender joins his team in the grid and the person who caused the turnover also joins the grid and becomes defender. In the new grid play 3v1 again.

Variations: limit the number of touches.

Coaching Points: Early support - start supporting before the ball is received. Good angle - support in undefended space where the pass cannot be intercepted by the defender. Move without the ball. Support both sides of the attacker with the ball. Focus on a good first touch in

space towards a supporting player. Use deception when playing.

4v2 Angle of Support:

Create two 18X18 grids with one common side. Split into 2 groups of 4 players (4 red and 4 yellow). Place 4 red and 2 yellow players in one grid and the remaining 2 yellow players in the other grid. The 2 yellow players in the red grid will start as defenders.

Instructions: Play a 4v2 in the first grid, focus on early support, good angles, good distance, and giving the player with the ball at least 2 passing options at all times.

- The defender's objective is to gain possession and pass to a teammate in the other grid. If this happens, that 2 defenders join their team in the new grid. The person who caused the turnover along with one other teammate joins the new grid as defenders.
- Play 4v2 and repeat this pattern. This game should be very dynamic and players should be moving at all times. Even the players waiting in the opposite grid should be moving to put themselves in a good supporting role.

Variations: limit the number of touches

Coaching Points: Early support - start supporting before the ball is received. Good angle - support in undefended space where the pass cannot be intercepted by the defender. Move without the ball. Support both sides of the attacker with the ball. Focus on a good first touch in space towards a supporting player. Use deception when playing.

Exercises:

In any of the exercises, you will find that it will be more effective to have the opponents work to win possession of the ball, not just to kick it away. Make the rules such that this is required. Otherwise, you will be chasing cleared balls and players will be standing around.

Game 1: Possession game – simply make five passes to get a goal.

Game 2: Four-goal game – try to score in the small, wide goals.

Game 3: Time –score by one team holding possession 15, then 20, 30 sec.

Possession Box Warm-up:

This warm-up prepares our players for the main part of the session, introducing principles of possession.

Organization: 1). 2 teams of 4 players.

2). 2 players from each team work inside the area. 2 players from each team work on /the perimeter of the area on the opposite side to their teammate. 1 ball per team.

3). Play begins with the ball with one of the outside players. He must play it into 1 of his teammates inside the area who then plays it to the other teammate on the inside of the area.

4). The ball is then played back out to the 2nd teammate on the outside.

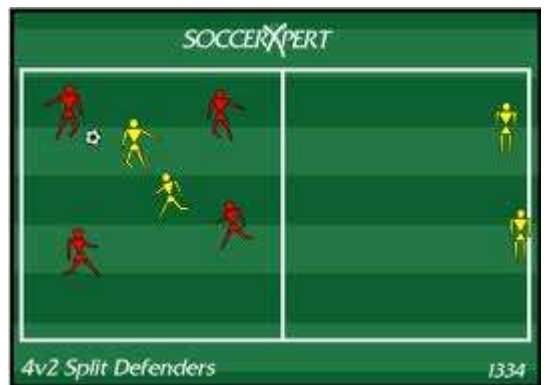
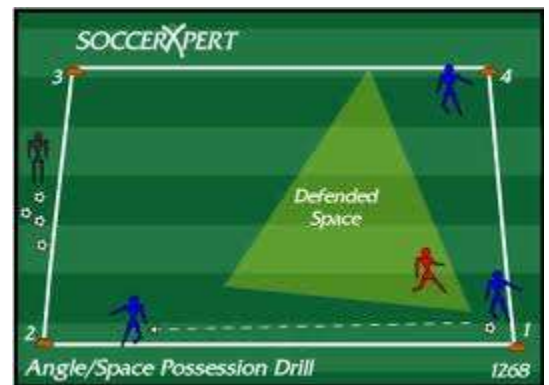
5). Repeat sequence without stopping. Rotate players after 6 -10 good passes.

Progression: Allow teammates on the outside of the area to play directly to each other when they choose to.

Skill Development: Control, communication, weight of pass, turning.

Coaching Points: Movement to receive.

Create supporting angles.



Combination play.
Spatial awareness – always checking.

Win or Sub Out:

Players do anything they can to keep the ball or they get substituted – watch how creative your players become so they don't get subbed.

This is all about players getting out of tight situations with possession of the ball. After a few games watch how creative your players become when faced with losing the ball.

SET UP You need balls, bibs, cones and goals. Mark out a 40x30 yard area with a goal at each end. We used 10 players in the session.

HOW TO PLAY Split your players into two teams of five players. You need a keeper, 3 outfield players and a substitute on each team. Play a normal game but the twist is that if a player loses the ball – it goes out of play, a pass is intercepted, gets tackled – they are immediately switched with the substitute. Play continues while changes of players are being made so one team could have only 2 competitive players if the changeover is slow. Score a point per goal and an extra point for 5 passes. You can add rules like if a player is tackled he has 10 seconds to try and win the ball back before being substituted.

TECHNIQUE The session involves intelligent passing, dribbling and shielding, as well as clever ideas such as playing the ball off an opponent to win a throw-in and keep possession.

3v3 + 2 goalies and 2 subs. Play a normal game but if you lose possession (pass intercepted or tackled), you sub off.



6-Ball Possession:

A fun race against the clock – how long can the team in possession keep hold of the ball? See which players keep the ball the longest. Players learn to play away from pressure and to battle to keep possession. Extra pressure due to the clock. Transitions are quick and players are put in game like pressure scenarios.

SET UP You need balls, bibs and cones, in a 20x15 yard grid which is expanded to 20x25 as the session progresses. We used 9 players in the session.

HOW TO PLAY You need three teams of 3 players. The coach has 6 balls and serves them one at a time. The coach times how long it takes for all 6 balls to be used. When the defender clears the ball out of the grid he needs to run to tag the next defender in line who goes to try and win the next ball. This goes on until all 6 balls are used.

The other two teams take their turns to try and beat the time in possession. Then try the same session with 2 defenders in a 3v2 and finally try different combinations like 4 attackers versus 3 defenders.

TECHNIQUE The coach is looking to see if players are executing proper technique and making good tactical decisions. How is their first touch? Are players communicating? Are players confident on the ball?

3v3v3 1) Start clock as pass ball (1st of 6) to the possession team with the first of six balls and start your watch.

2) One "defender" from other team(s) comes in at same time.

3) If ball gets cleared by defender, they run to swap in another as another ball goes in. Stop clock after 6th ball. Later add 2 and 3 defenders.

The other two teams line up and go one at a time to pressure the defending team

Now play the session with defenders working in pairs giving the attackers more pressure

Experiment with different numbers try 4 attackers with 3 defenders pressing to see what difference it makes

Make the area slightly bigger so the attackers have more of a chance

3v3v3 1) Start clock as pass ball (1st of 6) to the possession team with the first of six balls and start your watch.



Numbers Passing:

Players pass the ball to the player with the number one higher than their own. (egg. 5 passes to 6, 11 to 1). Ball travels through the entire team. First, allow unlimited touches, then two touches, not allowing the ball to stop, then one touch. Try playing with left foot only, outside of foot only, without talking.

Coaching Points: Eye contact. Good passing technique. Angles of support. Proper weight of passes. Keep body open to the field of play

To increase the difficulty: reduce the space. Make the space more soccer - shaped, not open, not square. Add players without increasing the space. Level the sides to make it more even. Eliminate restrictions on opponents...for example with passers outside a grid and defenders inside trying to win the ball, allow the defenders to go outside the grid increase the number of teams in the exercise - like 3 instead of 2. Add psychological pressure by adding a goal - like 10 passes to win. Add psychological pressure by adding a penalty for the losers. Challenge the team with the ball to keep it against pressure for a set period of time - count down out loud as the time nears. Add restrictions - for example - if one player uses two touches, the next may only use one touch. Give direction to the exercise - play to goal lines or goals. Add goals and shooting - require possession before shooting. Increase the number of balls in play to force thinking and vision.

Pass and Chase - Groups of 6 in circles, each circle with one ball. Player with ball passes the circle to another player, chases pass to pressure passer into one or two touch pass. Play continuously.

Two Balls - Two teams in medium size space (like 30 x 40 yards for U14 boys playing teams of 6) each start with a ball. Each team works to maintain possession of one ball, win possession of other team's ball. Point for every success, play to 3 or 4 points, move on. For 18 players, use up to 4 balls. Encourages small group play, decision making in support of possession.

Keep Away - Groups of 4, playing 3 v 1 possession with 1 ball in 10 yard grid.

5 v 1 - Play possession, 5 v 1 in free space. Move to 10 yard grid. With 12 players, run two groups at once.

4 + 1 v 1 - Play possession in 10 yard grid. Four passers on outside, one supporting player in grid, one opponent in grid. Player who loses ball takes opponents place. Try for 20 passes without losing possession. With 12 players, run two groups at once. Encourage the passers to work to split the defenders.

7 + 2 v 3 - Play possession in 20 x 10 yard grid. Three opponents and 2 possession players in middle of grid with seven possession players around grid edges. Possession team tries to keep ball in grid and to complete 20 passes without losing possession. Rotate players every few minutes.

Splitting Defenders - Play 8 v 4 in a large space, 30 x 40 yards. Work to keep possession and to complete several short passes in order to draw defenders in, then split defenders or make lofted pass to space away from pressure. Push the pace so it happens quickly. Adjust the numbers to get some success and some difficulty.

Two Zones - Play 4 v 2 for team with ball in each of two zones, like 30 x 40 yard space. Players have to stay in their own zones, can pass with team mates in other zone. Team with ball tries for continuous possession. Add restriction, team must make 5 passes in one half before passing to other half to get point. Defenders get point for every ball one. Change defenders. If it's too easy for possession team, reduce the space.

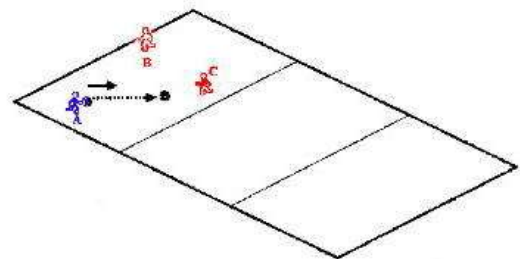
Three Zones - Play 4 v 2 for team with ball in their defending half, 2 v 4 against team with ball in their final (attacking) third. Leave a 5 yard empty zone between the two halves. Play to goals without goalies. Two opponents in first zone try to pressure possession team into mistake. Possession team tries to hold ball until its "strikers" in the final third can get away from their four opponents.

Game - Play 6 v 6 to goals. Coach players to keep possession and to switch the point of attack quickly to create a good isolation situation (1v1) to create a shooting opportunity. Can add restriction, like 6 passes before any shot, to encourage possession.

Pass and Defend: Groups of 3, one ball per group. Player A rolls the ball (ground ball) or tosses the ball to **either** player B or player C.

In this example, player C must control the ball and get a completed pass to player B. While this is occurring, player A immediately challenges player C and tries to win the ball back. After successful pass, player C would then pick up the ball and repeat the activity as the defender. The defender is awarded a point for winning the ball back and gets to throw again.

Coaching Points: Encourage defender to pressure quickly after the toss. Defender needs to work hard at closing down the space while the ball is in flight. Receiving player's first touch should be away from the pressuring defender. Player receiving the pass should move to create a clear passing lane. Do not allow the receiving player to one touch the incoming toss. This is a receiving drill, as well as a drill that serves as a good warm-up for practices dealing with defenders.



4 Corner Goals Passing Game Played on half a field. Set up 10 yard squares in each corner of the field. These act as goals. A goal is scored when the ball is passed into the square and then out to a teammate. Each team can attack any of the four goals. Instruct the teams to pass among their team to keep possession while attempting to score a point by passing the ball to a teammate that is inside one of the smaller grids. The teams can score in any of the corners, however, they cannot score in the same corner twice in a row.



Coaching Points: Focus on the weight and accuracy of the passing. Make sure players without the ball are supporting the player with the ball at all times. Make sure the timing of the runs and timing of the pass are in sync.. Make sure players change the point of attack and are not forcing passes into congested areas. Keep

the team balanced in attack and defense. Don't bunch up around one goal. Look to attack the goal that is open. See if players can recognize where the pressure is. It should be easy to keep possession since the defense has so many goals to defend. Be patient in attack and don't take unnecessary risks. In defense, look to create opportunities to double team. **Variations:** Do not allow players to stand inside the grids waiting for a pass. Instead, instruct the players to work on timing of the runs and timing of the pass to connect inside the grid. Change the scoring rule to where the goal is scored only when a give and go is performed with the player that is in the grid. Play with two balls to open game up. Allow a goal if player dribbles in and out of square. Insist that passing goals require three players. Limit players to 2 touches.

Three key skills to play as a team

If your players are aged seven or older, they are old enough to understand that ball is a game best played as a group rather than as individuals. But it's no good just shouting 'spread out!' to them - you must give your players the skills they need to play as a team.

The good news is there are only three key skills to teach, plus one (admittedly big) learning point that you need to teach your players.

Key skills 1 and 2 - Key skills 1 and 2 - Pass and receiving

This sounds obvious, doesn't it? If a player can't pass or control a pass they won't be able to play ball at all, will they? You would be amazed at how many coaches fail to make sure their players have mastered this basic skill.

First, make sure your players are using the correct techniques.

Passing

If the pass isn't accurate, this usually means one of two things. Either the ankle of the passing foot is 'wobbly' (not locked), or the toe of the plant foot is not pointing at the target. Watch the front of the player as this is easy to spot.

If the pass has no power, this usually means the plant leg is too straight or stiff, which reduces the ability of the hip to swing through the pass. Sometimes, the plant foot will be planted too wide, or too close, which can also reduce power.

This also can lead to inaccurate passes.

Receiving

If the ball is bouncing away from your player, make sure they are getting into the line of the pass early and not reaching for the ball. They must also choose the correct body surface to control the ball. But whichever part of their body they use, they should practice withdrawing it just as the ball makes contact - for example, having 'soft feet'.

Now... practice, practice, practice!

Work one-to-one with your players and play games that reward good ball control, such as the end zone game. Keep practicing until you are confident that all of them are able to pass accurately, receive the ball and play it on without having to chase after it.

Key skill 3 - Shielding the ball

The ability to keep hold of the ball under pressure ('shielding the ball') is perhaps the most important skill your players can have.

If your players aren't confident that they can keep the ball away from the opposition, they will try to get rid of it as soon as they can. Any thoughts of passing are ignored and some players begin to panic before the ball even reaches them!

But shielding the ball is not a difficult technique to teach and this article on the footy4kids website tells you exactly how to do it.

Learning point

Why should I move away from the ball?

Once the basic passing, receiving and shielding techniques have been mastered, it's time to explain why it's in your players' best interests to find some space of their own, rather than share the same small patch of grass.

Gather your players together in a circle about three yards across, with one player (a defender) in the middle. Give your players a ball and ask them to pass it around, but not let the player in the middle touch it. They won't be able to do this for more than a second or two.

Ask them why it was easy for the defender to get the ball? Hopefully, they will say 'it's because we are so close together'. If they don't say that, guide them.

Now make the circle a bit bigger (about eight yards across) and play the game again. Ask your players why it is now easier to keep the ball from the player in the middle?

Now make the circle really big, maybe 20 yards across. Your players won't be able to keep the ball away from the defender for very long because they are too far apart. Discuss this with your players and ask 'is there a best distance to be apart?'. The answer is yes - they mustn't stand on each other's toes, but they also need to stay within their maximum passing range.

Now play a match and stop the game when the players start to bunch up. Remind them why they need to be the 'best' distance apart.

Tip: Use four goals, one in each corner of the pitch. Being able to score in an unguarded goal when all the other players are gathered around another one helps reinforce the benefits of spreading out.

Your players won't suddenly spread out and pass the ball to each other. It takes time and patience on your part, plus repeated demonstrations of WHY they should move away from each other.

Technique: combination play

Soccer players up to age of about eight or nine tend to be rather self-centered. That's not to say they're selfish - they just lack the ability to see the pitch in 3D like you or I and find it hard to see spaces and team-mates to pass to, unless they're virtually standing on their toes!

That's why they all seem to be trying to get as close to the ball as possible.

This can be a source of frustration to coaches who don't understand how children develop.

You'll see them on match days, shouting 'pass!' over and over again and wondering why their players seem to be ignoring them.

But as young soccer players get older they begin to see that there is more to a soccer pitch than the patch of grass they're standing on.

That's when you can start thinking about teaching some simple combination play.

At its most basic, combination play is simply passing the ball. So that's where you should begin: practicing passing between groups of players as they move up and down the pitch.

It's easy to do. Split your squad into two groups of four or five (if you have more than ten players divide them into three groups and have one group play a game of keepaway while they're waiting).

Then put a group of players at each end of a 30yd x 40yd grid.

Ask the groups to spread out so that they make a diamond shape. If you have four in a group it's one back, two wide and one up front. If you are playing with five it's one back, three in the middle (two wide and one in the middle) and one up front. Ask your players why they should always try to keep this shape while they're playing (clue: it gives them passing options and provides cover if one player loses the ball to the opposition).

One group has a ball.

Ask the group with the ball to move it quickly from one player to another and from one end of the playing area to the other while they maintain their positions and the diamond shape.

Then they leave the ball for the other group to do the same exercise.

Make it competitive by timing each group and give them objectives such as 'every player must touch the ball twice before you get to the other end' or 'make two short passes followed by a long pass' etc.

When they have mastered this, start each group off at the same time so that they play through each other. Again, make it competitive - who can get to the other end first - without making a mistake?

This is just the beginning of combination play. We will build on this in future editions of the newsletter by looking at how wall passes, through balls and overlaps can unlock defenses and win you more games.

1v1 soccer drill for possession skills

When you want to start [coaching](#) your ball (soccer) players to develop a competitive edge, I find it best to work them in 1v1s where they are concentrating only on their opponent and the ball. This is a good soccer drill to use for a [warm-up](#) exercise, too.

1v1s force young soccer players to use all their basic ball (soccer) skills to try to win the ball. In this soccer coaching session, players need fast reactions as they are forced to engage in a physical confrontation to win possession. This is where the competitive edge comes in.

Possession soccer drill

- For this soccer [drill](#) you need a goal, a goalkeeper and players divided in pairs.
- Start off around 20 yards from goal.



The players start with their backs to goal.



The players race to get to the ball.



The defender must be strong to stop the attacker getting shot away.

Run possession skills drill

- The players stand either side of you and face away from the goal.
- The players must react to your throw and race to the ball.
- The first player to reach the ball becomes the attacker. The second player is the defender and must use their strength to compete physically to win the ball.

Technical Warm-ups for Possession Exercises

- Checking Away - Partners 5 yards apart with one ball. Player checks away 5 yards, comes back to ball, receives pass to feet. Passer checks away to continue exercise.
- Off Line of Play - Partners 5 yards apart with one ball. Pass to feet. Receiver takes ball off line of play with outside cut (little toe pushes ball) and cleans up ball with first touch, passes with second touch.
- Sideways On - Partners 5 yards apart with one ball. Pass to feet. Receiver stands at slight angle to line of play, receives ball and plays behind standing leg with one touch, returns ball with second touch.
- V Move - Partners 5 yards apart with one ball. Pass to feet. Receiver stops with front foot, reaches across with opposite foot, pulls ball with sole of opposite foot to position in front of opposite foot, plays away with inside of same "opposite" foot.
- Pressured V Move - Same as V Move, except passer chases own pass. Receiver must stop ball, use V move to play ball off line of play, accelerate into space left by passer, turn around, and pass ball to continue play.
- Turning Ball English Style - Partners 5 yards apart with one ball. Pass to feet. Receiver stops ball firmly with front foot, turn hips 180 degrees in a quick turning move, play ball sharply forward a foot or two, like short pass to self, accelerate a step. Turn and pass to partner to continue exercise.
- Turning Ball Brazilian Style - Partners 5 yards apart with one ball. Pass to feet. Receiver slows and turns ball with inside of foot with smooth slicing motion while turning body open to new direction of play, all the time pivoting away from the standing leg that did not touch ball.
- Holding Against Pressure - Partners with one ball. Player with ball tries to use turning moves, change of pace, shielding, and ball control to hold ball in 5 yard grid. Partner tries to win ball. Don't bother marking grid with cones, just ask players to hold in small space. If you are blessed with an excellent ball handler, add a second opponent.
- Wall Passing - Partners with ball executing wall pass in space.
- Wall Passing in Grid - Put the whole team into a 20 yard square, let partners with a ball do wall passes around other pairs.
- Takeovers - Partners with ball executing takeovers with overlap and pass.
- 1-2-3 Touch. Partners at 5 yards with ball, one touch passing as hard as possible. Change to two touch passing. Push the pace. Finally, change to three touch passing. First touch to stop ball, second touch push ball forward a couple of steps to attack, third touch pass. Passer must retreat several steps immediately after passing. Partners move up and back together very quickly, very demanding physically on the quads.
- Robbie Johnson's Drill - Team in space with 4 balls. Players check away into space, turn, call for ball, and check to ball to receive pass. After receiving pass, players must stop ball on front foot, turn away with ball, look to pass. Can only pass to players who have checked away and are just turning to come back to ball, no passing to stationary players or players who have already killed their space by checking back to ball too early.

Team skills for U10 and Above: the pre-requisites that have to be in place before children can be reasonably expected to maintain a good team shape. **These are:**

To be able to control a pass without the ball bouncing away from them.

To be able to pass the ball accurately over 10 yards.

To be able to shield the ball from pressure.

To understand WHY players need to have empty space between each other on the pitch, and to sometimes move away from the ball, not towards it.

Three key skills to play as a team If your players are aged seven or older, they are old enough to understand that soccer is a game best played as a group rather than as individuals. But it's no good just shouting 'spread out!' to them - you must give your players the skills they need to play as a team. The good news is there are only three key skills to teach, plus one (admittedly big) learning point that you need to teach your players.

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Tip: Use four goals, one in each corner of the pitch. Being able to score in an unguarded goal when all the other players are gathered around another one helps reinforce the benefits of spreading out. Your players won't suddenly spread out and pass the ball to each other. It takes time and patience on your part, plus repeated demonstrations of WHY they should move away from each other.

But if you make sure your players are old enough to understand what a 'team' is, and that they have mastered the key skills of passing,

Game Day Soccer Team Warm-ups:

Links: [Basic Game Day Plan](#) | [Game Day Warm-up Drills](#) | [Various Small Side Games](#) | [Half Time, Pre-Game Pearls and Player Mistakes](#) | [Getting Players Ready for Matches](#) | [Training](#) |

Warm-ups before the soccer match present a wonderful opportunity for you to coach and improve your soccer team. Much of the soccer coaching on game day is mental preparation, rather than soccer skills, soccer tactics, or fitness. Successful soccer coaching depends on managing the time carefully, creating a positive, confident, and fun state of mind for each of the soccer players, and giving the players a chance to get their pulse rates up and get their touch on the ball under control.

Main reasons for warming up before a game

- Elevate body temperature
- Increase muscle temperature
- Reduce muscle tightness
- Decrease risk of injury
- 'Potentiate' neuromotor performance
- Rehearse game skills
- Raise arousal levels
- Familiarize with the environment

The intensity and duration of the warm-up should be reduced when the weather is hot.

Stretching: The static stretches of the older days are not necessary. Warm ups however are critical to get the muscles and tendons loosened up. It's much better to stretch the major muscles while the players are moving. This is called dynamic stretching.

Some examples of **dynamic stretches** are:

- **The lunge walk** - large steps keeping the chest up, looking straight ahead and moving the arms and legs together.
- **High knees:** Jog in place: lift each thigh to a parallel position with the ground as you move forward, swinging the arms.
- **The calf walk** - extending the ankle on each step.
- **Side and front hops**.....each player hops over an imaginary line 10 times side-side then 10 times front-to-back.
- **Other:** Butt kickers (jog in place). Jumping Jacks.

Coaching During the Game:

Ok to give a few tactical commands (man-on, pressure them, push the defense up etc)....but don't be that remote control coach that tells them what to do like "pass", "shoot", "throw it to Billy-Bob", "have a shot"....let the kids learn this on their own.

By all means, be the coach that praises them like: great shot, nice pass, good pressure, great effort.

Be the coach that encourages them: Nice try. Your getting better. Keep up the effort. We'll make up for the score. Don't worry about it. Let's go team, keep up the energy.

Basic Pre-Game warm up plan:

The only way to get "too much" before a match is if they're asked to turn up an hour before the game starts and go through a full coaching session.

- The object of any warm-up – be it before a coaching session or a match – is to get the players ready both physically and mentally for the task ahead... not exhausted!
- **How soon arrive before kick off?:** U10 players to get to the ground and be ready for action 30 minutes before. U11+ players arrive 45 min prior to the game.
- Check for injuries. Start with a slow jogging "weave passing" in groups of 3 with one ball. If the field is open, start from the center circle.
- Then move on to 7v2 keepaway in a small area. Challenge them to move after every pass, call for the ball and complete 20 passes before the ball is intercepted or goes out of the area.
- Finally, the players play a 5v5 game across the pitch for a few minutes.
- Aim to complete the warm-up no more than two minutes before kickoff. That's all the time you need to tell them who is starting and where they are playing and for your players to have a final drink.

10 minutes to kick off: Time for a quick drink and to announce the starting line-up. You should have already decided on the starting lineup and have it written down. Try to stick to it. Remember that over the course of the season, all players should have the chance to: 1) play different positions; 2) be captain; 3) start and finish games. These things are important to your players.

5 minutes to kick off: Don't bother with a long pep talk. Your players should know what they have to do and if they don't, it's too late to tell them now. Two minutes is ample time to tell them to go out and enjoy themselves.

It's time for your players to take the field and play.

- When the game is in progress, remember to keep the subs warmed up and ready to play. See [Half Time, Pre-Game Pearls and Player Mistakes](#) |

Start the Game of Right: Make Sure The Referee Is "Onside":

(Soccer Coach Weekly. Dec. 2013. Issue 345)

There is nothing worse than alienating the referee before the kick-off, so why not follow our guide to ensuring match officials are on your side from the start.

1. **INTRODUCE YOURSELF:** As soon as you see the referee arrive at the game, stop what you are doing and make a beeline towards the official, introducing yourself straight away. Make sure the ref knows your name and vice versa. Maybe draw their attention to anything that they might want to consider such as the state of the pitch – it might be a touch frosty or soggy for example.

2. **TAKE HIM TO THE TEAM:** Take the ref to your players early for the pre-match formalities, such as checking boots and shin pads. While this is being done, remind players to respect the ref's authority so he can hear you doing it. Familiarize him with your players by name in an informal way. If he's aware that your team are a good bunch, you go into the match with a ref having only positive thoughts about them.

3. **GET ON WITH THE GAME:** During the game, keep any issues you might have with the ref's decisions to yourself. If you need to talk to him urgently, have a quiet chat at half-time to clarify things. When doing this, always politely seek an explanation, no matter how wrong you feel he is. The referee won't do you any favors in the second half if you've torn into him, or told him that he's got things badly wrong.

4. **DO IT BY THE BOOK:** Throughout the match make sure you follow the correct procedures for things like substitutions and the treatment of injuries. Clearly indicate to the referee that you're making a change or about to enter the field of play, not just because it helps them do their job, which they will thank you for, but because it's in the rules. Make it quite clear you are conforming.

5. **ACT QUICKLY:** If any of your players show dissent or get involved with opposing players verbally, make sure you tell them this is wrong. With younger players and particularly with the rolling subs option, take them off for a while to have a quiet word before sending them back on once your point has been made. If the ref sees you acting to help him, he's less likely to dish out punishment.

6. **SAY THANK YOU:** Shake hands with the ref at the end of the game. Single out something he has done well, such as playing an advantage at the right time, and take the chance to commend him on the way he acquitted himself. If he had a shocker, remain polite and question the key decisions you feel he's got wrong. Always leave on good terms, as you might have him again soon.

Three-Color Passing:

Put your players into three teams, each team wears different colored training vests.

1. Have one ball to start. Tell your players to jog around in a small playing area passing to a player in a different color.

2. Then pass in a color sequence, e.g. reds pass to greens, greens pass to yellows, and yellows pass to reds.

3. After a minute or two, add a second and then a third ball.

4. A few minutes later, make one team the defenders and the other two teams try to keep the ball away from the defending team. Make it competitive by counting the total number of consecutive passes in 60 seconds then change the teams around.



Warm-up: Foot Soldiers

To use this simple warm-up session mark out a 10x10-yard square with cones. Position a cone as shown for each of the central servers. We have used 10 players in this activity, including two servers. You will need balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY: Place the two servers inside the square and arrange the remaining players around the four corners of the area. The outside players must use the central players to make one-two wall passes on opposite sides of the square and a first-time pass along the other sides. Players should sidefoot their passes to the central players, who must make sure that they control the ball and pass it back to the running players so they don't have to break their stride.

You should swap the players over regularly, changing the two central wall passers. You must have two balls in play at once.

TECHNIQUE: This is a great activity for getting cold feet warmed up and ready to play in a match or a training session. Players should pass and move quickly around the square using crisp passing movements.

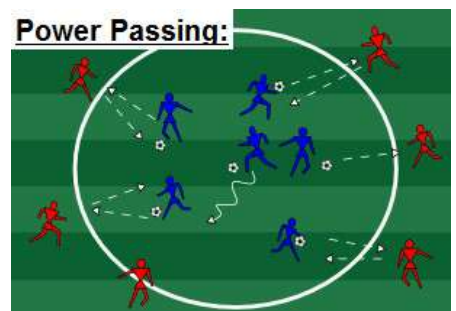
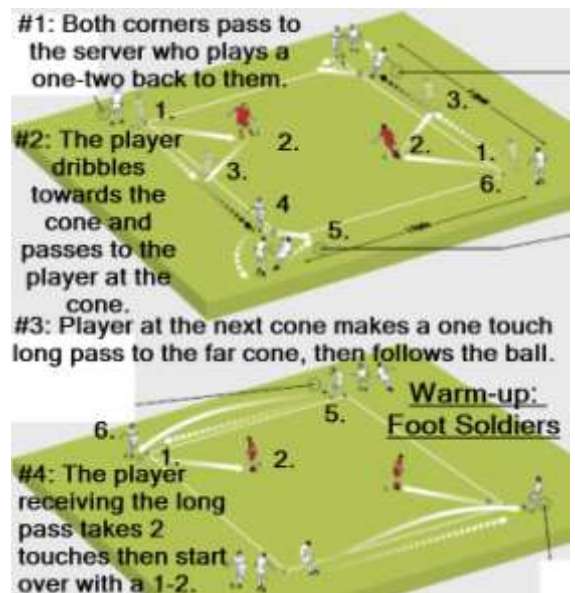
Power Passing:

This is a great warm-up to use before a training session or a match. It gets your players into the habit of moving immediately after they pass, works on their ball control and it's a good physical workout too.

Age group: U8s to U14s.

Set-up: Create a circular playing area about 25 yards across. Divide your squad in two.

Place one half of your players inside the playing area and the other half evenly spaced around the outside of the playing area. The players on the outside have a ball each.



How to play: Players on the inside run towards an outside player, receive a pass, return the ball and move quickly to another outside player and repeat the process. Switch the inside and outside players after a few minutes.

Progression/variations:

- Receive and return the ball with one touch.
- Receive the ball with the left foot, return it with the right and vice versa.
- Receive with ball with one surface of the foot (inside, outside, sole etc) and return it with a different surface.
- Add a blocker - a player who tries to block passes.
- Add a halfway line across the playing area. Now the players on the inside have to pass across the line to an outside player in the opposite half.

Coaching Points

- Discourage your players from watching their passes, they now turn and run to the next player as soon as the ball leaves their foot.
- This exercise takes place at full speed. Do not allow players to walk around.
- Encourage players to call for the ball as they approach a player on the outside.

Pass And React Warm-up:

A compact warm-up that not only helps develop passing skills and control of the ball, but it will get your players thinking on the move.

SET UP: Mark out two baselines that are set 20 yards apart and place two cones at the halfway point. Play this warmup in small groups for maximum touches – we've used four players here. You will need ball and cones for this session.

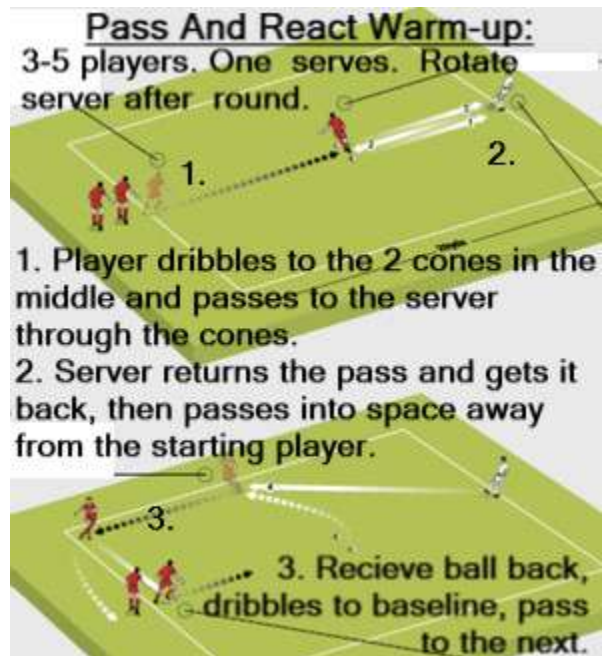
HOW TO PLAY: One player acts as the server while the other three line up to take turns dribbling and passing the ball with the server. To start the routine, one player dribbles to the two cones in the middle and then plays a pass to the server through the cones. The server returns the pass and gets it back, then plays a pass into space away from the starting player.

The starting player must react to the return pass and turn to run after the ball. He controls it and runs to the baseline, passing the ball to the next player who starts the same routine from the beginning. Swap the server when all three have gone.

TECHNIQUE: No matter what sport is played, getting a feel for the weight of the ball is essential. Good control and passing are key but this warm-up adds a running element, plus it encourages active players to use two feet and quick brains.

3-5 players. On Player serves. Rotate server after 2 rounds.

1. Player dribbles to the 2 cones in the middle and passes to the server through the cones.
2. Server returns the pass and gets it back, then passes into space away from the starting player
3. Receive ball back, dribbles to baseline, pass to the next.



How to Behave like a REAL Coach on Match Day:

1. Remember that the opposition are a bunch of kids, like yours, not the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan. Be nice, say hello to them and ask how they are.
2. Shake hands with the opposition coach before and, regardless of the result, after the game. It's irrelevant what you think of him or her. Like you, they are giving up their spare time so that children can play soccer. If nothing else, respect them for that.
3. Do not try to control your players movements. Leave the decisions to them and if they make a mistake, so what? It's a learning opportunity, not the end of the world. Let your players express themselves on the pitch.
4. Coaches who keep shouting 'PASS!!!' or 'SHOOT!!!' or 'CROSS!!!' need to have their mouths professionally zipped up. How would you feel if someone was trying to tell you what to do all the time? Make sure your parents understand this too.
5. Don't keep shouting a players' name. It's embarrassing for the child and can sound as though you're picking on them.
6. Touchline comments should be confined to encouragement. Say 'well done', 'nice pass' or 'relax', 'look around' etc. Praise good work by BOTH teams.
7. You don't need to tell your players that they should try to win the game.
8. No game is 'vitaly important'. When Duane Thomas, NFL Rookie of the Year, was asked how he felt about playing in the "Most important game of the year" the Super Bowl, he replied, "If it's so important why are they going to play it again next year?"

If you do some or all of these you're going to look like a real coach and a good guy. And that really would be a good result.

Remember....Success is a journey not a destination!

Warm-up Touches:

1.) In-betweens (Bobbles) with step-over 180 turn. First, to do the "in-betweens" stand with the soccer ball between your feet which are about shoulder width apart. Using the inside of the right foot, tap the ball softly to the inside of the left foot. Then using the inside of the left foot, tap it back again to the inside of the right foot. The trick is to keep the ball constantly moving between the feet as the player "hops" from foot to foot to prepare for the next touch. Once you get the hang of it, begin to move forward with each step by tapping the ball slightly forward with each touch. Eventually you should be able to keep the in-betweens going without a miss as you move slowly all over the place.

-Secondly, do the "step-over 180 turn. Watch the pros, you will see variations of this turn a dozen times a game.) Start with the ball between your feet, as it is during your "in-betweens". Put your weight on your left foot as you swing your right foot up and over the ball (turning counter-clockwise towards the left). Plant the right foot down on the left side of the ball and step down. (This is the "stepover" part of the move and will be used in lots of fakes and feints). Now using that right foot as a pivot, spin (turning clockwise this time) around with your left foot, back towards the ball. Once you have turned a 180, take the ball with your left foot and begin the "in-betweens" the other direction.

-Another slight variation is to take the ball back with the outside of the right foot instead of using it as a pivot foot. Here you fake the "stepover" as you turn counter-clockwise over the ball with the right foot, just as before. Then instead of planting that right foot, you just tap it down and then back up as you begin to pivot back clockwise still on the left foot. Then you take the ball with the outside of the right foot (the stepover foot) and move back in the new direction. Personally, I prefer this variation. I think it is quicker and a little easier to do the pivot with cleats on grass fields.

KEY POINTS: The move becomes effective when the "stepover" looks like a shot or pass or lunge in that direction. This "sells" the "FAKE" and then you take the ball quickly in the other direction.

2.) Toe touches moving forward and alternating feet. Begin with the ball between your feet and slightly to the front. Lift the right foot and lightly touch the top of the ball with the front (cleat side) of the shoe, underneath the toe. Replace that right foot and do the same with the left foot. Now begin to alternate touches faster until you have to make little hops back and forth with your feet while continuing to touch the top of the ball. Finally, push the ball forward a few inches with each touch as you begin to move forward with each step.

The trick is to touch the ball forward "just the right distance" and slightly in front of the other foot so you can keep the pattern going without a break. After moving forward about 10 yds. do a "pullback" turn and return to the starting spot continuing your toe touches.

3.) Toe touches moving backwards and alternating feet. This is nearly the same as the toe touches moving forward but instead goes backward. With each hop backwards touch the ball back and diagonally toward your next foot. This is a little more difficult to learn but is great for developing quick feet and pull back touches.

4.) Side hop rolls moving forward (a.k.a. side drag rolls). This is a shielding and rolling maneuver. Start by facing sideways (e.g. first face to the right) to the direction of travel, with the ball between your feet. Using the sole of your right foot, come up and over the top of the ball from right(the back) to left (the front). This gets the ball rolling to your left and down the direction of travel. After rolling over the top of the ball with your right foot, plant it down and "hop" onto your left foot and repeat. All the touches are with the right foot, rolling the ball to the left with your cleats as you "hop" down the field. You would use this to advance the ball and at the same time keep the defender to your backside. Repeat with the left foot.

KEY POINTS: Being able to roll the ball in various directions while shielding it from defenders can be crucial to finding space in tight spots. Watch a good winger use this maneuver deep in the corner to defeat a double team. Strikers often use this roll out at the 18 yd. line to protect the ball while searching for the next possible shot or pass.

5.) Outside foot touches with fast feet Push the ball to the outside with the outside of the foot then take 2 steps behind the rolling ball to prepare to touch it with the outside of the other foot.

KEY POINTS: Kids learn early how to move the ball around with the inside part of their feet but sometimes do not progress to using the outside part of the foot. This condemns them to countless failed attempts to beat the opponent since they end up in the "fruitless kicking battle" as both players stab at the ball with the insides of their feet. Many of the great fakes (lunge, scissors, Matthews, reverse Matthews, Rivelino, drag swerve etc.) will use the outside of the feet so the players should get comfortable with this touch at an early age.

6.) Speed Change with "Hop-stop" - "Half Garrincha" Have the players dribble slowly or do some "in between" and then explode up the field for about 4 steps finally coming to a turning stop. Repeat.

KEY POINTS: There is little point in making a feint if the space gained is not exploited by a burst of speed. In fact, the attempt at the feint can be poor, but it will still be effective if combined with instant acceleration. I think many young players concentrate too much on the "cut" and forget to "explode" out of the fake.

7.) Outside to inside roll right foot across body, touch forward with left foot. This is a very important maneuver that has been referred to in some circles as the "Preki". Start with the ball between your feet. Begin with a little lean or lunge out to the right side of the ball by lifting your right foot and stepping down lightly beside the ball. Do not plant weight onto this right foot. Instead, plan to shift your weight back to the left and then "scrape" your cleats over the top of the ball, from the right side to the left, to begin it rolling to the left. After it has crossed completely in front of your body, use the inside of your left foot to touch it forward. Now repeat the same starting with the left foot.

KEY POINTS: The little lunge to the right side of the ball sets up the rapid move back to the left and "sells" this fake. Being comfortable "scraping" the ball with the cleats to get it rolling in different directions is essential to close quarters dribbling to find space for shooting and passing. Follow this "inside roll" with the "outside roll" as described below.

Eventually, any time you are stopped with your foot on top of the ball, you will be able to instantly move left, right, or backwards into a pull-back and still maintain possession.

8.) Inside to outside roll right foot to the (right) side, touch forward with right foot. This is the sister move to the "outside to inside" roll. Start with the ball between your feet. Begin with a rapid movement with your right foot to the top of the ball and stop briefly with your cleats on top. This motion should make it appear like you are passing the ball, or taking the ball to your left side, across your body. Instead, keep your weight on your left foot and "scrape" from the inside to the outside with your right foot. This gets the ball rolling back to your right and slightly behind you. Then turn your hips to the right and touch it with the inside of the right foot to deflect it off to the right on a diagonal. Repeat with the right foot several times and then switch to the left. (This is the basic movement for the key feint known as a "pullback V".)

KEY POINTS: This move is the backbone of the important fake known as the "Vee" or better yet, the "fake-kick V". Emphasize the fake kick motion up to the ball at the beginning of the move, then rapidly pull the ball back and outside to the right, finally turn the hips to follow the ball and touch it with the inside aspect of the right foot and you have a classic "V".

9.) Skip touches. Start with the right foot in front of the left, and the ball just ahead of the leading foot. Begin by touching the ball forward with the (right) front foot which you then plant on the ground and do a little "hop" (or skip), while your (left) trailing leg comes to the front. When that (left) leg is in front, touch the ball ahead with it, then plant it down for a little "hop" (skip), and continue. Do this for several dozen skips.

KEY POINTS: Ever watch a basketball guard set up his move to the basket? Many times he will put a little "stutter", "skip", or "hitch" in his movement to freeze the defender and set his own feet. The same thing applies to a soccer halfback who is preparing to pick his "hole" and dive for the first down. He will literally "skip" for a stride which often times either freezes the defenders, or "wrong foots" them. This concept works in soccer dribbling as well. Next time you are practicing even simple soccer feints, (like "lunges" for instance), add a skip just before the move and watch how well the move works. Notice the extra little jump you get as you complete the move. It seems to "load the spring" in your legs, helping prepare for the quick change of pace and direction.

10.) Run Through Traps - (soon) Have the players toss the ball into the air and slightly in front of themselves. Then they should run through the bouncing ball to "push" it up the field. Contact can be made with head, chest, waist, thighs, shins or feet with just enough of a touch to begin the ball moving away. This kind of drill can be done in pairs, as well, but I think it is important enough to include in every warm-up.

KEY POINTS: How many games do we see young players standing in a circle watching a high ball bounce between them, their faces bobbing like bobble-heads, unable to take control? Of course there are many ways to trap high balls but simply running through the bounce is often times as good as any, and it begins the ball moving away from the defenders into space.

Warm Ups / Soccer aerobics: Ball touches. Jumping over ball. Step over's. Scissors. Pull backs and Gags. L-pulls.

Passing and scoring. Cone dribbling.

Ball Stretching: Roll ball around in "Figure of 8".

Extra Technical Training Time Many teams are limited by field space or league restrictions to a small number of training sessions per week. If you would be willing to have your kids show up and begin work 45 to 60 minutes prior to each match, you can have a very nice additional technical training session with your team each week.

Extra Touches Before the Match: Most kids who have average trapping, settling, dribbling, and shooting technique at U11 do not get a good touch on their first 30 to 50 balls. During the match, some players may not even receive this many balls during the entire match, so that they don't get a good touch in the entire match. So, your warm-ups should provide lots of ball touches per player. This requires one ball per player or one ball between two players. This latter arrangement works very well in practice. Partners with a ball can work through all kinds of touches, traps, settles, kills, and headers with one player serving and one playing, taking turns. With these extra touches, your players will be better prepared to play immediately.

Variety Please: How boring if they are always the same. Add some variety to increase interest so it's fun for you and the kids. Don't always use the same exercises.

As the coach, circulate in the exercises and knock a few balls around, but don't be the center of attention or the bottleneck in the exercises your kids use to prepare for the match.

the coach has to learn the words, timing of words, and body language that send a positive message to the team and its individual players. So, what do you really have to do, assuming that the team has learned the warm-up and the captains have the lead? Easy, do and say less, not more.

Intercept distractions. Collect warm-up clothing thrown down as the team warms up. Smile, be confident, be composed, laugh, and have fun. Listen to the players - don't be in such a panic to get started that you can't greet each player and help each player by listening. Compliment, in a brief but natural way, good technical performance during the warm-up "nice shot", "good trap", "your touch is really good today".

Provide positive support for each player's confidence and competitive spirit - for example.

Good: "I have noticed that you don't get upset so easily when things go wrong. This is really helping out the team a lot".

Trouble: "We are all counting on you to give us your best - we're depending on you today - you have to do it".

Good: "Thanks for playing so aggressively in the second half of last week's match".

Trouble: "You have to stick in harder - you are not as aggressive as you should be".

Manage warm-up time carefully

Think about including these elements:

Greeting to the players - Thank each player for coming and acknowledge each one. Present your goal to team. You have the lesser of 3 sentences or 30 seconds.

warm-up running - playing a relay or tag game might be more fun

Fun warm-up games - These should be fun and provide movement. Ultimate Frisbee, relays, juggling in small groups, ball tag and other games.

Touches on the ball - Partners with a ball, working all surfaces, settling, trapping, kills, volleying, heading.

passing with partner - Many different sequences possible, Karrie Miller 1-2-3 touch sequence very fun for kids and effective. 1 **Touch passing** is at 10 feet, 2 touch allows player to receive and clean up with first touch, pass with second, and 3 touch allows receive, push forward to attack, then pass. At 3 touch, both players move together back and forth, as the passer has to back up quickly after passing. Work toward getting ball off line of play quickly when received as this is needed in the match.

small group passing exercises - Like lines facing with one touch passing, sometimes with a bending run to the back of a line opposite, takeovers, wall passes. Passing groups of 3 and 4 moving and passing and communicating. Full team passing exercises with 3 or 4 balls, players checking away and then to the ball, again with communication, receiving and turning ball or taking ball off line of play.

Possession games - Pass across the circle and chase your pass, defender in middle of circle keepaway, or 7 v 7 possession. You don't have to have bibs, just start two circles each playing keepaway with a defender in the middle, ask kids in one circle to pull their shirts out and go take the ball away from the other circle.

Small sided games - Play a small match to target players or cones. Play three teams (need bibs) first time shooting in front of goal.

Shooting exercises - the usual shooting lines going to goal. Don't have the coach distributing. Make sure that the emphasis is on shooting technique. It's OK if the ball is rolling very slowly, you are not focusing on receiving, so keep the services slow. Exercises can include even 1v1 and 2v2 to goal.

Line Chase - Warm up:

A simple and fun activity is perfect for use on match days, allowing you to warm up your players with a quick burst of movement and a focus on technique.

SET UP: To set up for this simple to use and fun warm-up activity, you will need to place two cones approximately 12 yards apart. Another six cones are needed, with three positioned centrally on either side of the line between the first two cones. These additional cones should be two yards apart. We are using six players for this warm-up. You will need cones and balls.

HOW TO PLAY: Split your players into two groups of three and put them opposite each other on the main cones. Players must try to keep a passing sequence going between the two groups using one or two touches, then they must race through the line of side cones to the right of their main cone before going to the opposite end. Each player should make three trips through the cones.

TECHNIQUE: You must make sure that your players pass the ball quickly and accurately to ensure that this warm-up drill retains its momentum and motion. You can progress the session by making the distance between the two passing cones greater and by moving the side cones further away. This would require a much greater effort to complete the activity.

Example of a warm-up routine used at Premier League level

Activities Duration (minutes) or Distance (meters)

1 Ball-work in pairs (medium-length 5 min passing)

2 Jog easy across pitch 4 X 50 m

Stretching

3 Jog (cruise) across pitch 4 X 50 m

First – orthodox run

2nd – backwards (during return)

3rd – sideways/shuffle

4th – cross-steps (during return)

Stretching

4 Jog (cruise) across pitch 4 X 50 m

First – orthodox run

2nd – agility run back

3rd – orthodox run

4th – high knee pick-up on return

Stretching



5 First – cruise across pitch 4 X 50 m

2nd – faster return

3rd – cruise across pitch

4th – all-out for middle 20 m

Stretching

6 Ball-work in pairs 5 min

(15–25 ball contacts per player per minute)

Return to dressing room

Alternative warm-up routine used at Premier League level

Activities Duration (minutes) or

Distance (meters)

1 Stretching exercise (knee-joint, 5 min trunk, hamstrings etc.)

2 Fast-feet drills 'on the spot' 3 min

Stretching – individually (groin, lateral trunk flexion)

Stretching – partner-assisted

3 Jog (2 X 5-m accelerations on return) 2 X 50 m

Walk and stretch

4 Ball-work in pairs – one touch 2 min

(or ball-work in small groups)

5 Speed drills – 10-m course

(i) Run 3 m, decelerate and back, then run hard for ~6m

(short quick strides)

(ii) Sideways run along start line, 3 min then sprint forward

(iii) Players walk in line, peel off in turn for 10-m sprint back to start

(iv) Jump twice at start, then sprint 2 min ~10 m

6 Formal ball-work

Pass in triangles, pairs or juggle 2 min individually

How to get your players ready for a big match:

Developing a certain pre-match routine and that is normally a good thing - players take a certain psychological strength, and even comfort, from the fact that the team does things in a regular way. Stick to one of the three or four warm ups that my players know inside out. We all have "big matches" to prepare for occasionally.

1. Pre-match preparation. All young soccer players look up to their coach and, for many, he's a significant influence on their lives, perhaps the most significant after their parents/careers, so if they are worried about anything to do with soccer it's you they are going to look to for support.

- a little nervousness is good – the adrenaline rush sharpens reflexes and focuses the mind – if a child is allowed to worry about an impending match, their performance will almost certainly suffer.

- The first positive action you can take to reduce the pressure on your players is to speak to their parents. Make sure that they don't build a match up to something it isn't – whether it's a cup final or a relegation decider, it's not the end of the world if your team loses!

- The best advice you can give parents is to try not to mention the match at all. They should treat it like any other game and if their child brings the subject up, their parents need to emphasize that they will be proud of them regardless of the end result.

- If you feel that some of your players are worried about your big match, ask them what they are worried about. They will probably tell you that they are worried that they won't play well, that the team will lose, or that the other team is better than them. What they won't tell you is they are worried that their parents will be disappointed in them on the day. That's their big, secret fear and one that, hopefully, you will already have done your best to counter by talking to their parents as described above.

- **Tell them:** Remind your players about what they've done in training the week before and ask them to try to play the match in the same way as they play your end of coaching session scrimmages - thinking about what they've just learned and giving 100%.

- Don't think about the match result – you can't win or lose a game on your own.

- Don't think about the opposition – you can't affect the way they're going to play.

- Don't worry about what others will think about you – you can't influence the way other people think.

- To only think about what they can control – what they do on the pitch.

- Then tell them, individually and specifically, what they do well on the pitch. E.G. "Alex, you have a great shot", "Joe, you can tackle really well". This means every player can take away a positive thought they can turn to if the nerves start to bite.

- As far as training routines are concerned, stick to what you normally do and don't try to change the way your team plays a few days before the kick off. It's too late for that and it will only confuse them.

2. On the day of the big match. Make sure the team arrives in plenty of time for the warm-up but not too early that they will get bored or restless. If you have a regular warm-up routine, don't change it but try to make sure that it's fun, energetic and designed to give your players lots of touches on the ball before kickoff.

- Thirty minutes before kickoff: greet your players by name, check their kit and ask if they are feeling OK. Check for any injuries.
- Twenty minutes before kickoff: some dynamic stretching followed by passing in pairs or Three Colors Passing.
- Ten minutes to kick off: play keepaway.
- Five minutes to kick off: make sure everyone has a drink, announce your starting line-up then spend a minute or two helping your players **visualize what they are about to do on the pitch**. It's a great way to calm any last minute nerves. Tell your players to shut their eyes and count backwards from 10 while breathing in with their stomachs and out through their nose. Keeping their eyes shut they should picture themselves doing something really well – a shot that hits the back of the net or a good pass, tackle, save or throw in, etc. They need to play the move all the way through, as though they are seeing it through the viewfinder of a video camera. Now they open their eyes and share what they've visualized with the rest of the team. This builds trust and makes it more likely they will do actually go out and do what they've just seen themselves do in their mind's eye.
- Thirty seconds to kick off: a few final words from you along the lines of 'go out there and have fun', a big smile, high fives all round and send them on their way.

Take the pressure off!

There is a direct relationship between pressure, anxiety and performance. Pressure increases anxiety and heightened anxiety lowers performance. The more pressure, the more anxious your players become and the more their performance suffers.

This scenario is known as "choking" and it affects everyone involved in sport, not just youngsters – we've all seen great golfers miss the 3ft putt they need to win a tournament and top ball players blast a vital penalty over the bar.

How much harder, then, is it for young children to perform to their potential when they are put under pressure?

There are 4 types of pressure your players have to deal with on match days:

1) Peer pressure: Children can be less than supportive of team mates who make mistakes. Very often, quite cutting remarks are made after an attacker misses an open goal or a goalkeeper fumbles a simple catch.

The knowledge that there are players in the team (I call them "snipers") who are quick to criticize mistakes will raise anxiety levels among the rest of the players significantly.

If you have "snipers" in your team you have to take action. Stress to your players everyone makes mistakes. The best ball players in the world, their parents and even you, the coach, don't always get it right and team players never criticize a team mate.

Lead by example: don't criticize a player who makes a mistake in training or in a match. Publicly congratulate them for trying to do whatever it was they were attempting and privately ask them if they can think of a way they could have done it better.

Making mistakes is part of the learning process. No mistakes = no learning.

2) Parental pressure: Parental expectation is a huge influence on a child's performance. I've seen talented players freeze up completely when their dad or mum is on the touch line, even if they are only watching quietly.

While it's not easy for a coach to remove the pressure some parents put on their children to perform, we can explain to parents they should support their child regardless of how well they perform and that all you expect (and all they should expect) is that their child tries their best.

Win or lose, parents should give their child a big hug, lots of praise and let them know how much they appreciate their hard work and sportsmanship.

3) Coach pressure: The pressure a coach can unconsciously exert on a child should not be underestimated.

Your players know that you want the team to do well, they have a part to play and you are watching them. What they also have to know is that you want players to take risks and you will praise them in front of their friends if they try something new or difficult.

And remember to smile! A coach who smiles a lot and has fun with their players will get the best out of them by generating a pressure-free environment for them to play in.

4) Internal pressure: We all have a "little voice" in our heads that berates us (often very harshly) when we make a mistake or do something wrong.

For our players, fear of the little voice in their head saying "you're stupid" or "you're useless at shooting" is enough to stop them from even trying to use their skills on match day.

Also, a child's internal dialogue can set them unachievable goals. Pressure from a child's peers, parents and coaches to do well can result in their little voice telling them: "I have to be good at everything, I mustn't let my friends/parents/coach down, I must not fail."

Not surprisingly, a child who has this sort of faulty internal dialogue going on in her head is not going to risk trying anything that could set it off.

So we have to change this dialogue to a more reasonable: "I am allowed to fail. My friends/coach/parents just want me to try my best, that's all."

We can do this by consistently reinforcing the fact that they are not stupid, that they are not useless at shooting (or anything else) and that we really only want them to try hard.

If you can influence a child's internal dialogue in this way it will have a really positive impact on many aspects of their life, not just on the pitch.

Conclusion An understanding of the way pressure can affect performance is vital if you are going to get the best out of your players.

Deal with the "snipers" and educate your parents. Remain positive and cheerful in all your dealings with your players – no matter what the situation – and you will stop your players choking on match days.

Home Game Advantage:

Teams perform better when playing on the familiar surroundings of their home pitch. Visiting teams often set up more defensively. Take advantage of being home with smart running, fewer touches and swift interplay. Encourage them to get into the box and set up chances selflessly, particularly early in the game before your opponents have had a chance to settle into the contest.

The home game effect is likely more robust in amateur play, but it even holds true for the pro's.....Researchers examined 10 years of domestic league results from the top division in all 52 UEFA countries, covering the period from 2000 to 2010. This amounted to looking at the results of 111,030 matches. The results showed that the home team earned an average of 55.6% of the available points, with 32 of the 52 countries showing a significant home advantage. The strongest home advantage was found in Bosnia-Herzegovina (76.1%). Other notable countries that had significant home advantages were England (55.7%), Spain (55.5%), Germany (55.8%), Italy (56.0%) and France (56.8%).

Musical balls:

A fun soccer warm up that improves dribbling skills for U10 and younger. Your players, each with their own ball, dribble around a large grid. They should be moving at a decent pace, avoiding each other and keeping their heads up.

After they have been dribbling for a while, call out the word "CHANGE." When you do this each player must stop their ball, leave it where it is, and run around the circle looking for another soccer. It is important they get to new balls right away and continue dribbling.

After allowing them to get comfortable with the concept of the drill, remove one player's ball. This player now must run around the drill without a ball. When the next "Change" comes about that person must try and find a ball leaving another player without a ball to dribble. Any player who doesn't end up with a ball after a "Change" has to run round the grid. Just be careful that the same player doesn't lose out every time.

What to look for: Players are not allowed to swap balls with the same person two consecutive times. Make sure that the children are using the entire grid, Finally, make sure that the players are practicing moves and turns within the area. You don't want them to just be dribbling straight all the time. They should be weaving in and out of each other at a realistic speed.

Group Drill #2

1. With a group of 6-8 players split them into 2 smaller groups of 3-4 players.
2. Both groups stand in a line facing each other about 10 yards apart.
3. The player at the front of group A passes the ball and follows his/her pass to run to the back of group B.
4. The player at the front of group B who receives the ball then passes to the next player in group A and follows his/her pass to run to the back of group A and so on.
5. Each player should focus on a good first touch, an accurate pass and then an immediate sprint to the back of the opposite group.
6. Gradually close the gap between groups until it is just 1 yard apart. Players literally will have one touch and they must quickly get into position for the next pass.
7. You can also lengthen the gap to 20-30 yards and have the players run with ball half way before passing and sprinting to the back of the opposite group.

Group Drill #3

1. Have the team make a circle about 20 yards in diameter (roughly the size of the center circle).
2. Four players get into 2 pairs and stand in the center of the circle.
3. One pair is nominated attackers the other pair are defenders.
4. The attacking pair start with the ball. They must keep possession between themselves while the defending pair try to intercept the ball.
5. The attackers can use the outside players (who should be alert and ready to receive) to pass to.
6. The objective is for the 4 players in the center to work hard - moving and closing down for 90 seconds. Change to another 4 players every 60-90 seconds.

With a group of more than 12 players, it is better to split them in to 2 smaller groups. In this case only 2 players go in the center and must work together to dispossess the players on the outer edge of the circle who have the ball.

How to Do Jog, High Knees and Sprint Drills in Soccer:

Before a soccer game or practice, you need to warm up. Some coaches like their players to jog slowly and stretch, but soccer is a dynamic game with short bursts of speed. A good soccer warm up should account for this and allow players to prepare for running at various speeds. Check out the following drills for a well-rounded warm up routine.

Step1 - Set two cones or balls on the field. These can be far apart or close together, depending on how much room you want to run.

Step2 - Begin your warm up by jogging back and forth between the objects. Run fast enough to elevate your heart rate, but slow enough to let your muscles loosen up.

Step3 - Perform a high knees drill between the two objects. This is just like jogging, except you thrust your knees high into the air after taking each step.

Step4 - Make sure your muscles are warmed up and comfortable, then run a few sprints using the cones or balls as finish lines. These don't have to be full speed sprints to be effective, but aim for at least 75 percent of your maximum effort.

Step5 - Cool down with a slow jog after completing these three drills. The sprints are especially demanding, so give yourself time to relax before heading onto the field.

* Build speed gradually during the high knees and sprint portions of the drill. This is a warm-up drill and not a race, and overexertion can easily lead to injury.

How to Do Soccer Tracing Soccer drills are common way to prepare a player for a game. Drills differ greatly and work with different techniques from those involved in actually playing soccer. One such soccer drill is tracing, which encourages the player to get control of the ball with her feet. The drill teaches a player to be light on her feet and ready for anything involving personal control of the ball.

Step1 - Place the ball on the ground and your foot on top of the ball. Place your dominant foot on top of the ball first. Place the toe of your cleat on the top. Leave the ball and heel of the cleat free dangling off the ball, close to your body.

Step2 - Picture the shape you are to trace. Start with a square. Picture the square in your mind. Look on the ground and determine where the ball will go if you move it in a square.

Step3 - Place tape or a rope on the ground if you are having trouble picturing where the square is. Use the tape or rope to follow as you accomplish step 4.

Step4 - Make a square with the ball. Remain light on your foot that is on the ground. Bounce with the ball as you make short taps on top of the ball with your dominant foot. Gently tap the ball several times to make each side of the square. Complete the square and move onto another shape.

Step5 - Switch feet and work with your other foot. The dominant foot will be easier so give yourself extra time with the other foot. Master ball control with the tracing drill to be ready for the game.

How to Do Soccer Plyometric Slalom

Learning how to perform plyometrics in soccer can increase your speed, balance and power. Plyometric slalom exercises stretch muscles quickly, and help you explode toward the soccer ball. Ultimately, these exercises enable you to win the battle for the ball against your opponent. Since the exercises deal with jumping, if you practice your plyometric slalom exercises correctly, you can have one step up on your opposition.

Step1

Warm up with 5 to 10 minutes of light aerobic activity and another 5 to 10 minutes of stretching before attempting your plyometrics.

Step2

Set up two soccer balls about 20 feet apart. These will be your starting and ending points. Stand next to the soccer ball that's your starting point.

Step3

Move your feet like you're completing a slalom. Keep your feet together as you zigzag your way down to the other soccer ball. You should try to do small, quick jumps. When you get to the end, turn around and slalom the way back. Do this one more time.

Step4

Turn sideways and slalom side-to-side. Keep your feet together, just like you did with a regular slalom. Turn around once you reach the end, and side-to-side slalom the way back. Do this one more time.

* Make sure you perform plyometrics at the start of practice before you begin endurance training.

* Rest between sets of plyometrics for proper recovery since it's a high-energy exercise. You should be able to do these drills without feeling fatigued if you're doing the exercises correctly.

* Don't use weights when doing plyometric slalom drills. Your own body weight provides the perfect amount of resistance to do these exercises.

How to Do Soccer Plyometrics High Knees and Lunges

Soccer plyometrics high knees and lunges help strengthen the legs for more power in practice and on the playing field. The high knees and lunges involve coordination and balance, which assists in even further muscle advancement.

Difficulty: Easy

Soccer Plyometrics High Knees

Step1 Stand with your feet slightly apart.

Step2 Extend your arms out in front of you and bend the arms slightly.

Step3 Jump up while pushing forward. As you do each jump, bring your knees above your hips or pelvic area.

Step4 Land your feet on the ground and immediately jump up with your knees going as high as possible, at least beyond your hip and pelvic area.

Step5 Balance each jump by keeping your arms in front of you slightly bent.

Step6

Continue the jumps across a marked off area of about 10 feet, back and forth about five times with a total of 25 high knees.

Soccer Plyometrics Lunges

Step1 Mark off an area of about 10 feet to go back and forth as you do your lunges.

Step2 Stand at one end of the area marked off with feet together.

Step3 Take a long step with your right knee bent, and at about 3 feet out, lower the body to the ground.

Step4 Bend the left knee to the ground as you place the body weight to your right foot and left foot toes.

Step5 Lift our body by starting from the left heel foot and come to a standing position with feet together.

Step6 Take a long step, about three feet in length, with our left leg bending at the knee. Bring the body down to the ground.

Step7 Bring the right knee close to the ground as you place the body weight on your left foot and right foot toes.

Step8 Push up from the right foot heel to the original standing position.

- * Go back and forth on the marked off area five times for a total of 25 lunges.

- * Make sure you keep your knees on the same plane with your toes as you bend down.

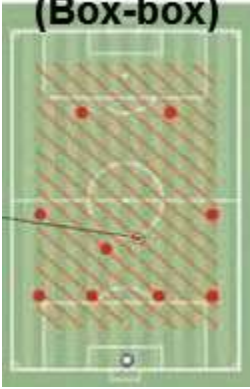
- * Keep the back straight the whole time with no leaning.

Midfielders (Halfbacks):

Links: Subtypes | [Essential Skills](#) | [Positions & Formations](#) | [Throw in](#) |

Job descriptions - Midfielder In youth soccer, midfielders are usually just that, a player who plays in the middle of the field. But as their ball skills improve (and especially as they move into eleven a side soccer) they can fall into different types:

Central (Box-box)



Central Midfielder (Box-box): Actively involved in every part of the game. Has great stamina and technical ability. A true all-rounder, the 'box to box' midfielder is so called because he plays his football at both ends of the field, literally filling in everywhere. Usually in possession of exceptional stamina with remarkable defensive and offensive skills, the position is typically associated with the Premiership, where most of the great modern players have flourished.

Outside midfielder: When his team is defending, the left or right midfielder marks the opposition winger on his side of the field. If he has no-one to mark when his team is defending he should concentrate on keeping the team shape compact by moving in towards the middle of the field.

In attack, the outside midfielder stays wide and makes supporting runs up the line. Even if he doesn't have the ball, his presence on the flank will stretch the opposition defense and thus provide space

in the center for his team's attackers to exploit.

So the outside midfielder has to be fit, have excellent ball skills and be confident in taking on the opposition 1v1.

Defensive (Holding) midfielder: The defensive midfielder holds the team together. He operates between the attackers and the central defender or sweeper. His job is to put pressure on the opposition ball carrier and provide cover for any of his team mates who lose the ball in his 'patch' - the midfield.

Advanced Playmaker



When your team is attacking, the defensive midfielder stays behind the attackers, ready to pressurize the opposition and grab any loose balls. He should be in position to provide the attackers with the option to pass back. The defensive midfielder sits just behind the center circle and is primarily required to break down opposition attacks and augment the defense. However, because he is often in possession of the ball when the opponent has committed players to an attack, the defensive midfielder also initiates his team's own attacks.

Playmaker: The playmaker can be found in the same area as the defensive midfielder but this is to enable better protection for the player himself, whose role is to influence his side's attacking game. Comparable to a sweeper in midfield, the playmaker takes advantage of the extra support to spray passes up to the attackers and instigate quick offense.

Advanced Playmaker: Turns defensive moves into attacking ones.

Withdrawn Playmaker: Plays next to the holding midfielder but is exceptionally good at launching long passes and through balls.

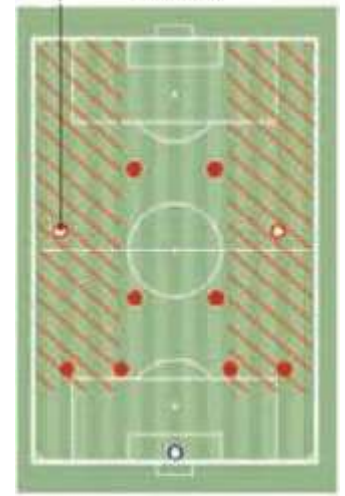
Central Attacking



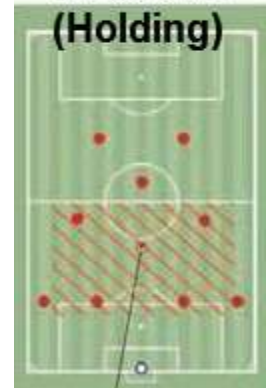
Offensive midfielder / Attacking midfielder/ 'Hole' player: The attacking midfielder is situated in the space between the midfield and the strikers, directly influencing the attack high up in the field. Attacking midfielders are often called on to fill in as forwards due to their potency in front of goal. Offensive midfielders are the playmakers of the team and are often the fittest as they are involved in every attack. Their job is to move the ball quickly from defense and join the attackers to create a numbers up position.

All midfielders need to have sufficient ball skills so that they don't have to think about the mechanics of controlling the ball but can concentrate on how best to distribute it instead. They also need to be able to anticipate what is about to happen next. All that requires experience so don't try to introduce specialist midfield positions until your players are ready.

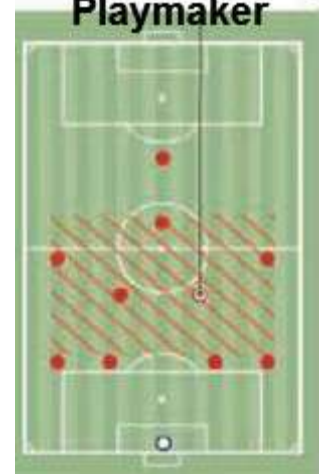
Wide



Defensive (Holding)



Withdrawn Playmaker



How to Play Halfback in Soccer:

Halfbacks in soccer find themselves between the fullbacks and the forwards. They are called upon to hold the midfield

and to be the link between the defensive and the offensive ends of the pitch. Halfbacks must be fast and energetic, with legs that will last a whole game. Although mostly used to hold the ball and feed it to the offense, halfbacks may at times move up to play a more aggressive role. At times a halfback may even be called upon to score. More often, though, they will play the important role of overseeing the game from midfield. Astute halfbacks become the center point of the game, exercising a full field control.

- Step1 - Take possession of the center of the field, and play offense or defense as required by the flow of the game.
- Step2 - Move up to support the offense. The halfback mainly feeds the ball to the forwards but may occasionally be asked to take a shot at the goal.
- Step3 - Fall back to assist the defenders in protecting the goal.
- Step4 - Hug the sidelines. The so-called wingers pick off loose balls and steer them to the offense. Wingers also use their speed to dribble the soccer ball forward.
- Step5 - Divide the field up and play by zone. More sophisticated teams have left, right and center halfbacks. They stay in their own areas and facilitate the movement of the ball around the pitch.
- Step6 - Read the defense as an offensive halfback. Relying upon superior speed and an ability to pick out the overall defensive scheme, an offensive midfielder sets up many of the shots of the forwards.
- Step7 - Grab the ball from the other team as a defensive halfback. The defensive halfback acts as a conduit from the purely defensive players who surround the goal to the offensive halfbacks.
- Step8 - Cover the center of the field aggressively. The halfbacks who cover the dead center of the field are often the nerve center for the entire field.
- Step9 - Recognize that some of the most important plays on the field will be accomplished by halfbacks. The majority of many games is played in the middle of the pitch.

Five Essential Skills for Midfield Players:

When your players become old enough to play eight, nine or 11-a-side, the midfield becomes the engine room of the team - if your players don't have the skills required to pass and cross the ball accurately, shield the ball, and spot the "killer" pass your defenders will constantly be under pressure from opposing forwards and your strikers will be starved of the ball. And even if your players are still playing mini soccer and you don't have a recognizable midfield just yet, your players still need to work on and develop these key skills.

1. Shielding the ball Shielding the ball means putting your body between the opponent and the ball to gain time to give the ball to a team mate or take advantage of a mistake by the pressuring player to get past him.

How to teach players to shield the ball: The technique of shielding the ball can be split into four parts (A-D). Each part should be practiced in sequence by players working in pairs, following a brief demonstration.

Part A: The stepover One player passes then follows the pass, putting pressure on the receiver who steps across it in order to put her body between the ball and the other player. The receiver's back foot rests on top of the ball so that it can be rolled from one side of the body to the other.

Part B: The posture Once the ball is being controlled with the back foot and the receiver's body is side-on to the pressuring player, it's time to get the body position right. The receiver has to make her body as stable as possible so that she is not knocked off the ball. To do this, she should bend her knees a little and keep the arm nearest the pressuring player tucked in. Her other arm can be held out to help her keep her balance.

Part C: Timing Once the stepover and the posture have been practiced, it is important to emphasize that the receiver should move towards the ball as it is coming towards her. Tell your players that if they don't do this, an opposition player will probably nip in and take the ball away from them before they get a chance to shield it.

Part D: Use your strength The player shielding the ball also needs to become comfortable with using her shoulder to keep the opposition player as far from the ball as possible. She should lean into the challenging player's shoulder or chest but make sure she does not use her hand to fend them off as in a match this would probably be called a foul.

How to practice shielding: Once you have gone through the above sequence with your players, they can practice by playing a series of 1v1 competitions in which the player shielding the ball earns a point if she can hold off her team mate for five seconds. Gradually increase the number of players involved (2v1, 3v2 etc) in a playing area that is small enough to put pressure on the players with the ball.

- Another way to practice is to set up a circle of cones. Each player is assigned one cone. Balance a ball on top of each cone and put one player in the middle who tries to knock the balls off the cones. Play for one minute or until all the balls have been knocked off. Give every player a turn in the middle and see who knock the most balls off the cones in their 60 seconds.

2. Concentration: Midfield players have to maintain a high level of concentration throughout matches. That's relatively easy at the start but as the game goes on, it's common to see midfield players "switching off", following the ball and getting out of position.

How to practice: Small-sided games (SSGs) are the most efficient and effective way to build your players' ability to concentrate. SSGs duplicate the mental aspects of match play (competition, co-operation, transition) in a way that drills and exercises don't.

• To get the most out of SSGs, it's important to make the teams uneven (4v2, 5v3 etc) so players are constantly having to either deal with being outnumbered (in soccer parlance, being numbers down) or use their numerical superiority (numbers up) to score a goal.

3. Link up play: Midfielders are, obviously, the link between your defense and your attackers. They have to be able to keep the ball when under pressure and combine with other players to move the ball up the field. The ability to spot the "killer pass" (a pass that splits the opposition defense) is also very useful!

How to practice Place five players in a 30x20 yards playing area as shown below:

How to play: The game begins with defender D1 or D2 standing on the end line with attacker A3. One of the defenders passes a ball to attacker A1 or A2.

- As soon as the attacker touches the ball, the defenders can close the attackers down (as shown in the image above).
- The attackers must now combine to take the ball past a line marked with two traffic cones and attempt pass the ball to attacker A3.

Coaching points:

In order to succeed, the attackers and the defenders must communicate with their team mates.

Progression: The attackers are restricted to two or three touches of the ball.

Play a 4v4 or 5v5 SSG on a pitch divided into thirds and a goal at each end. Place one or two players from each team into the thirds. Players are not allowed to move out their third of the pitch.

4. Crossing the ball: Players who play on the left and right of midfield need to be able to deliver crosses into the penalty area that your strikers can convert into goal scoring opportunities. See [Crossing |](#)

Hit the channel Game: When your team steps up to eleven-a-side soccer, it is vital they make good use of the larger playing area. This game should help.

Objective: To encourage your players to use the full width of the pitch.

Age group: U10 upwards. Number of players: Whole squad.

Set up: Create an 80 yards by 40 yards playing area with goals at each end and a center line. Mark out a 5 yards-wide channel down both sides of the pitch. Divide your squad into two teams.

How to play: Place a wide player from each team into one of the 5-yard channels on either side of the pitch. Play normal soccer with the condition that goals can only be scored from a move that includes the team's wide player. The wide players cannot leave the channels and cannot be tackled. The rest of the players cannot enter the channels.

Remember to rotate the wide player from time to time. This could be done when a goal is scored or every few minutes.

Variations: You can restrict wide players to a limited number of touches, or encourage them to cross the ball from the attacking third. Impose the condition that goals can only be scored from a cross from a wide player. Limit all players to two touches. Goals can only be scored from headers.

5. Vision What is "vision"? It's knowing what is happening around you on the pitch, to spot team mates in open positions, to see and anticipate danger from opponents. See [Soccer Vision, Tactics and Style |](#)

[Soccer coaching tips for midfielders:](#)

You often find in youth soccer that one of the most active roles on the pitch is playing in midfield and that these players need high levels of concentration to do the job. Use the following soccer coaching tips to help your players.

The problems begin after you've launched an attack - the forwards lose the ball and a counter-attack is on. Your team is fine as long as the midfielders get back to mark their opposite numbers.

• The longer the game goes on and the more tired your midfielders become, the more you will need to remind them they have to defend as well as attack.

• In diagram 1 the player 4 is caught upfield when the white player 3 passes out to player 8. One of midfielder 4's basic tasks is to mark his immediate opponent. He cannot do this from this position.

• He has created a problem for his team - who should pressure player 8? Players 4 and 7 are doing the same job in closing down the defender on the ball. Players 2 and 5 are already marking someone. Player 4 is too far out of position which leaves his team vulnerable to the pass.

• In diagram 2 player 4 is in the correct position. He can pressure his immediate opponent or support player 7. Each player can concentrate on his own job. The rest of the team are in the correct position and are concentrating on the game rather than trying to get player 4 back. It eliminates calls like "somebody mark up" or "I have two men over here" or the coach having to shout in panic "GET BACK!".

[Midfielder soccer coaching tips](#)

When you have a strong player who is good at winning the ball and can make accurate long **passes**, your reaction might be to play them in **defense**. I tend to put the player in front of the defense into midfield, however, to protect the defenders and make use of their kicking ability by turning them from hopeful defensive clearances into penetrating attacking passes.

Midfielder coaching tips

It may seem you are losing a great defender, but what you are doing is adding backbone to the team so that all your natural tackles are not in the back line.

It is a very central position for the team, someone who can win the game for you by defending in the middle of the pitch, breaking up attacks before they get anywhere near to the penalty area.

This is what you want to see from a match-winning **midfielder**.

Midfielder soccer drill tips

- Tell your player to play just in front of the central defenders.
- Get them to close down any player running at the defense and stop them in their tracks.
- You've seen games where the opposition kicks off and runs right through your team to score. This player stops that. They target the man with the ball and make sure they get it.
- And when they do get the ball, they immediately look to open up the opposition defense.
- The rest of the team has to be ready to support this role and be open for the pass.

Soccer drill to defend against midfield passing

Stopping opposition midfielders from **passing** through balls to their attackers is a vital part of a team's defense skills. In this soccer drill session, the nearest midfield player must pressure the ball while the others stop a forward pass.

Set up soccer (ball) drill

Use a 30 yards by 20 yards area divided into two halves with one ball and three sets of three players.

How to run the soccer drill

- One team of players starts in each half. The third team starts along the center line and must try to stop passes from crossing the line.
- The players on the two outside teams are only allowed to use two touches of the ball before passing to each other or across to the opposite side.
- One player from the central team can apply pressure in each half to try and cut out the pass.
- The players defending the center line must stick together and shift across the line as a group to ensure they cover the gaps and stop passes. If they stop a pass, then they switch positions with the team that loses possession.

Strong midfielder tactics

There is one problem with possession soccer and that is how are you going to play it if you haven't got the ball or you keep losing it! The best way to get the ball back is to have a strong midfielder whose job it is to tackle the opposition, win the ball back and get your team passing again.

A strong tackler in the middle

If you're playing possession soccer, one of the things you have to take into account is winning the ball back. Sure, all your players know how to **tackle** but every team should have a player who gives his all to win the ball back.

Use your best tackler in midfield

What you have to do is take your best tackler and show him how to stop attacks and hit the opposition hard with some good **passing** skills. When the opposition loses the ball they will be at their most vulnerable and your midfielder will be able to put them on the back foot with a good pass.

He will become a key player in your match day tactics - a player the rest of the team rely on when you lose the ball.

Midfield ball winner soccer drill

- Tell your player to play in the hole in front of the central defenders.
- Get him to close down any player running at the defense and stop them in their tracks.
- You've seen games where the opposition kick off and runs right through your team to score. This player stops that. He targets the man with the ball and makes sure he gets it.
- And when he does get the ball, he's off running, passing, opening up the opposition defense.
- The rest of the team have to be ready to support his role and be open for the pass.

Soccer drill to get your midfielders defending then attacking

Teams play better when a strong midfielder is winning the ball off the attackers and creating opportunities for a counter attack. Try these soccer coaching tips and drills to see just how effective this can be.

I did a terrible thing this season. I dismantled my all-conquering under-11s team and scattered them to the four corners of the soccer globe. I put my son into a team that was struggling and told him to use all that he had learned in the seven years I had coached him, all the goals he had scored and give them to a new team.

He had to become the player the team revolved around. There was a lot for him to learn through having to fight for every ball and every tackle. But he has taken a lot of satisfaction from it.

Find a good midfielder

It's a position I think every team needs. The central midfielder wins the ball and distributes it left, right and plays through balls to the attackers. It's a very hard role to play, but if you can get one of your players to do it, your team will benefit.

Think Roy Keane, Claude Makelele, Steven Gerrard, Michael Bradley, Gennaro Gattuso. These guys can do that.

It's a difficult position to coach. Give the job to the wrong player and he's giving away free kicks all over the pitch. Give it to the right player and coach him into holding his position and you're on to a winner.

Soccer coaching drill tips

- In this drill, tell your player to play in the hole in front of the central defenders.
- Get him to close down any player running at the defense and stop them in their tracks.
- You've seen games where the opposition kicks off and runs right through your team to score. This player has to prevent that happening.
- He targets the man with the ball and makes sure he gets it. And when he does get the ball, he's off, using his soccer skills to run, pass and open up the opposition defense.
- **The rest of the team have to be ready to support his role and be open for the pass.**

Key soccer coaching tip: The midfielder must be equipped with sliding and block tackles, be able to make a through pass to the attackers, and be the fittest player in the team.

Small sided game to get midfielders linking defense with attack

The **midfield** is the engine room of your soccer team, it makes everything else tick. The following soccer coaching tips and small sided game should help link your defenders to your attackers, so when the defense clears the ball into midfield it is moved quickly on to the attackers to fire at the goal.

Watching the best teams around the world you will see they all have good midfielders who can get the ball from the defense and be creative with it for the attackers. The Messis and Kakas of this world are more than just link players but they also have to be able to play that role, to hold onto the ball and get a pass to the attackers to keep the move going.

I use this drill session, which is a small-sided game with no goals in an area around 40 yards x 20 yards. You need two teams of four players, and two floating players who are the midfielders.

It is essentially a possession game but once you have played it you can add two small goals to give extra focus to the session.

The main point of this soccer coaching session is that the two midfield players are on the side of the team in possession. They need to string a series of six passes together to score a point. Play is normal except the team in possession must pass to one or other of the midfielders every third pass.

What you want to see is movement from the players, the team in possession playing the ball quickly between each other and the midfielders. You also want to see the defending team making it difficult for the midfielders to get the ball by tight marking - the defenders should soon realize that by blocking the ball to the midfielders you stop the opposition scoring points.

Develop the soccer drill

Advance the soccer skills involved in the drill by using the small goals so the midfield players are looking to make passes that create goal-scoring opportunities rather than just keep possession.

You can also advance this soccer coaching session by making it one or two-touch passing.

Heading:

Links: Offensive vs. Defensive | **Power and Accuracy** | Glancing Header | [Heading Drills / Games](#) |

How to Head a Soccer Ball: Heading (hitting a soccer ball with your head) allows you to gain possession of the ball, pass, set up an attack, score goals and defensively clear the ball from the goal area.

Step1 - Start by using an under-inflated ball. Arch your back as the ball approaches, with your chin inward, neck firm and legs bent. Chin tucked in - helps keep your neck stiff.

- Keep your eye on the ball. Eyes open - if you can't see the ball coming, it could hit you anywhere.
- Keep your arms out to your sides for balance and to fend off defenders.
- The player's mouth should be CLOSED! If you don't, you could bite your tongue.
- Make contact with your forehead - the thickest part of your skull. Follow through towards the target.

Step2 - Spread your feet apart, wider than shoulder width. Keep both feet on the ground (unless you need to jump to reach the ball). **Keep one foot in front of the other for balance.** Keep eyes open and meet the ball with your upper body, tightening your neck muscles. Use your arms to balance. Use your legs to move your head towards the ball - don't let it hit you (this hurts)...instead, hit the ball.

Step3 - Snap your upper body toward the ball from the waist. Drive your head and neck forward as you make contact. Keep your head and neck moving together instead of holding your neck still while your head moves.

Step4 - Make contact with the ball squarely with your forehead. Keep your eyes open and on the ball, and keep your mouth closed. Avoid making contact with the top of your head.

Step5 - Direct the ball down by making contact with your head slightly closer to the top of the ball.

Step6 - Make contact slightly lower on the ball to send it upward.

Step7 - Follow through by continuing to drive your head forward. The strength of the header comes from the waist.

DEFENSIVE Header: As a defender, aim far & wide...going for distance and height.

OFFENSIVE Header: As a striker, aim down & in. Going for low and hard. To direct the ball downwards, the forehead must make contact with the top-half of the ball.

Coaching points: Contact with the ball should always be made with the forehead area. From time to time, a player may use the top of their head to flick the ball on from a long flighted pass or throw-in. The eyes should always be open (at least until impact) and fixed on the ball and the body positioned in line. The side of the forehead can be used to glance headers on and the middle for more direct power headers. In a stationary position, the power comes from the legs, back and neck. The player "rocks" backward and pushes his body forward to meet the ball.

Practice heading skills with Throw, head, catch: How to play: players get into groups of 3. One ball is needed. They get into a triangular shape. One person tosses the ball to another person who then heads it to the third person to catch. Every time someone is successful, they get a point.

Head with Power and Accuracy:

This is all about learning the right technique to control heading a ball and the way a player connects with the ball. It is an individual practice that will help develop a player's heading ability without the pressure of opponents and takes away the fear players may have of connecting their head with a ball.

SET UP: You need a goal with a crossbar, rope, string bags and balls. You can set up two or three balls tied to the crossbar and let players have a go during drinks breaks or during warming up sessions.

HOW TO PLAY: Create a pendulum with the ball tied to the crossbar. Adjust the height so the players can head the ball back and forth. It looks easy but it isn't – players have to make contact at exactly the right moment to get the power and direction.

Tell players they have to keep their eyes on the ball at all times. If you tie up two or three balls you can have a competition to see who can head the ball the most times without it stopping.

TECHNIQUE: Put the hours in at practice and players will be able to head with power and accuracy. Body shape and strength are both key to a good header.



Head with power and accuracy: Tie 2-3 balls with rope + string bags.

Competition: who can head the ball the most times w/o it stopping.

- Adjust the ht. to head the ball back and forth.
- Eyes on the ball at all times, contact at exactly the right moment to get the power and direction.



The Glancing Header: an important addition to any footballer's arsenal of techniques, and works by slightly deflecting the ball, altering its trajectory only a little. A glancing header can be useful anywhere on the field, particularly where a player wants to disguise his or her intentions, or when they are unable to face the direction in which they want to head the ball.

If an attacking player is close to the keeper in front of the goal, a header can be used to direct the ball into the net without giving away the player's intentions

Glancing headers do not require a great deal of force – usually they are used when a cross already has sufficient power but requires redirection towards the target. To execute the technique effectively, the player must strike the ball with the centre of the forehead, turning the head just before contact is made.



Trying to deflect the ball off the side of the head or allowing the head to tilt to one side will usually result in a failed header! The angle of deflection is controlled by the degree to which the player turns his or her head. It can be difficult to use a glancing header effectively if the ball is curling, or in wet conditions.

Teach your players to be safe, confident headers of the ball

Heading a soccer ball, as I've discussed in previous newsletters, is a controversial subject.

Some respected authorities state that heading a soccer ball "is dangerous for kids" 1, others that "heading a soccer ball does not cause brain damage" 2 while some say that there is only a risk if "children are not expecting the contact [between head and ball]".3

My own opinion is that heading is an integral part of soccer and as soon as children are able to kick the ball into the air they must be taught how to head it correctly and safely.

But coaching children how to head the ball has to be done carefully and in an age-appropriate manner.

When to start coaching the technique of heading

Most children up to the age of seven or eight will not be physically developed enough to head the ball correctly. They are also unlikely to be kicking the ball high enough in the air to make regular contact between a child's head and the ball a commonplace occurrence. In fact, it is very rare to see deliberate headers in a game involving children under the age of eight or nine.

It follows that coaches of young players should not be teaching their children how to head the ball until their players show an interest in heading or they begin to regularly kick the ball into the air at or above head height.

How to teach heading safely

It's very important to use an appropriate size and weight of ball when you practice heading with your players.

Common sense tells us that the lighter the ball, the less risk involved if it impacts a player's head. So you should introduce the subject of heading with a very light ball – a small beach ball or a balloon are ideal.

Using a light ball will not only be safer, it will give your players confidence that heading a ball won't hurt them. And that's vital – if your players are nervous headers of the ball they won't use the correct technique.

Heading is a voluntary activity

On the subject of nervous children, never force a child to head the ball. If any of your players are reluctant to let the ball make contact with their head, that's OK. They'll get round to it in the end.

What to tell your players about the technique

- Keep your eye on the ball.
- Place your body so that your forehead (the thickest part of your skull) will meet the ball.
- Take a comfortable stance with knees bent.
- Keep your eyes open.
- Keep your mouth closed (if you don't, you could bite your tongue).
- Use your arms for balance.
- As you make contact with the ball, impart power to the header by bending from the waist - don't bend your neck.
- Follow-through toward the target.

How to practice heading

If you're teaching heading to young children (bearing in mind the comments about "when to start" above) you shouldn't start by throwing a ball up in the air and asking them to head it.

Instead, give your players an appropriate-sized ball each, tell them to bounce it on the ground then try to head it forwards – not upwards – as it rises using the technique described above.

Bouncing the ball takes the power out of the ball, slows the whole process down and reduces the chance of a child getting hurt while they learn the correct technique.

Heading games

Head It, Catch It is a fun warm-up to a heading session for any age of player.

Put your players in a circle and stand in the middle. Serve a soft, small ball (or a beach ball) to each player in turn, calling "head it" or "catch it". The player must do the opposite: if you call "head it" they must catch it.

If a player makes an error they are eliminated.

Progress by putting players into teams. Give each team 10 points. If a team member makes a mistake their team loses a point.

Throw, Head, Catch is a classic heading game that is suitable for all ages.

Begin with having two teams moving around a playing area 30 yards long by 20 yards wide practicing the sequence: throw, head, catch. One ball per team.

Progress by taking one ball away. Now the teams play against each other and can intercept the ball by using the next part of the sequence, i.e. a thrown ball can be intercepted with a header and a headed ball can be intercepted by a catch.

The rules

Players are not allowed to run with the ball and the ball must be thrown within four seconds.

If the ball is dropped or the incorrect sequence is followed, the ball is given to the other team.

Progression

1. Place several cone gates in the playing area. Teams are awarded a point for a successful "head/catch" through a gate.

2. Place two or more goals at both ends of the playing area. Teams can score with a header.

To finish your heading session, providing your players have developed a degree of confidence in heading the ball and you are happy that they are using the correct technique, play a small-sided game where goals count double if they scored with a header.

References

[1] The Scientific World Journal, Babbs, Charles F, Biomechanics of Heading a Soccer Ball: Implications for Player Safety.

[2] Göteborgs University, Heading A Soccer Ball Does Not Cause Brain Damage, ScienceDaily, 16 September 2007.

[3] National Soccer Coaches Association of America, Robin M. Harrell, Paul S. Weinhold, Bing Yu and Don Kirkendal, Proper Heading is Safe.

Heading the ball soccer training drills

Lots of kids don't enjoy heading the ball – but by using confidence-building training drills, you can help them overcome the fear factor.

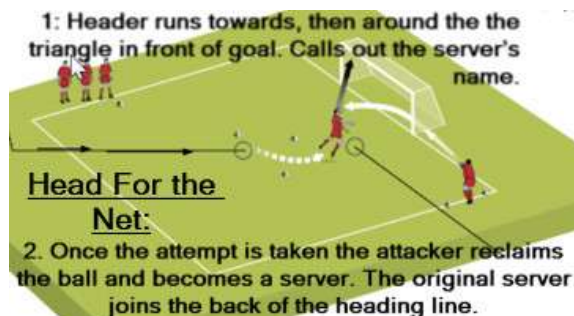
Head For the Net:

This is a great way to get players used to running onto a ball in the air and using their heads to score, generating power for the header by timing the run into the box and connecting well with the ball.

1: Starts with a run towards, then around the the triangle in front of goal.

As the attacker comes around the second cone, he calls out the server's name indicating he wants a ball thrown for him to run onto.

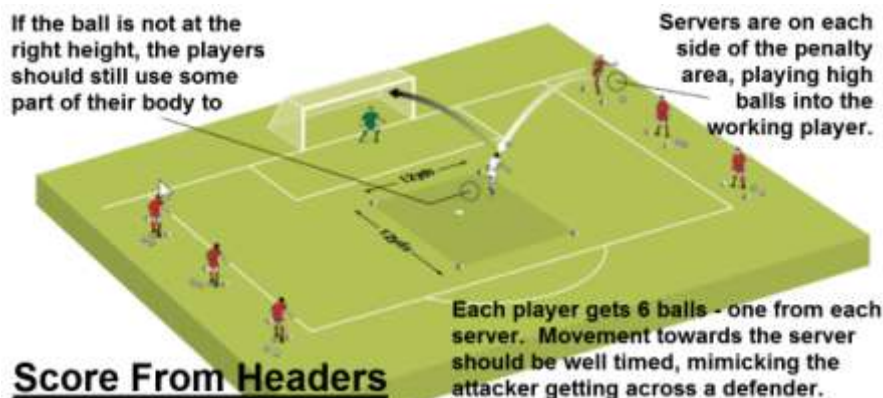
2. Once the attempt is taken the attacker reclaims the ball and becomes a server. The original server joins the back of the heading line.



Score From Headers:

This session is all about making the most of high balls in the penalty area to score more goals.

SET UP: Use the penalty area of your normal pitch and mark out a square of 12x12 yards. Set up three gates on either side of the penalty area with



servers and a few balls each, and put a keeper in goal. We've used eight players. You need balls, cones and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY: One player is working in the central box, and he will get balls played in the air from either side of the pitch alternately. The player must make the right decision to shoot using head or to chest down and shoot if the ball is not the right height. They can also volley any low balls played in but goals scored with the head are worth double. Each player gets six balls – one from each server – and the success rate can be totted up at the end to work out

who is the most accurate shot taker.

TECHNIQUE: Because the working player is so close, the session is about decisions and accuracy rather than power. The working player must observe the position of the goalkeeper, move away to create space and then attack the cross.

Header - Turn - Shot:

1. Coach (C) times his throw to the run of X.

2. X goes for a header on goal.

3. C now passes ball to the right of X who has turned after the header.

4. X receives ball and with first touch towards net sets up a shot. X goes to the end of line and next X starts.

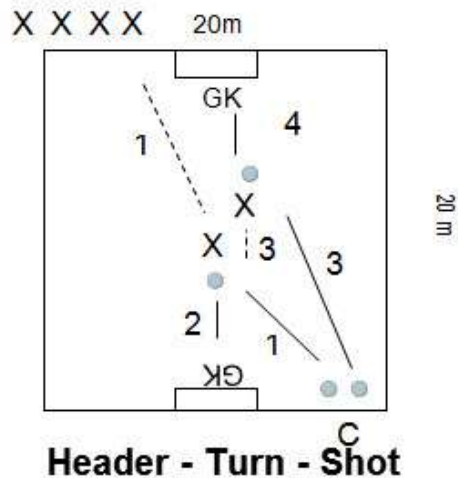
Use cones to make goals for additional groups and rotate players through goalkeeper position as necessary.

Coaching Points

1. Player needs to execute header with power, throw must be at appropriate height.
2. Coach must concentrate on timing of player run.
3. After header, players cannot stop and watch result of header, they must immediately change direction (get off ground after diving header or fall) and sprint for the shot.
4. Challenge players to finish with two goals.
5. Use your regular goalies for a group consisting of your strikers.

Game Application: Players often get opportunities to go for a second chance (rebound, ball off post, misdirected clearance, etc.) but often fail to take it. This is because they do not recover from their previous action quick enough to be in a position to take advantage of a second chance. This drill practices quick recovery and reaction to a second chance.

Players also change direction frequently - a key transition play focus. They may have taken a header and now need to turn and sprint after a loose ball.



Play it safe

As always, safety is paramount, so...

Start heading training drills when players are aged about eight or nine.

Don't overdo heading sessions with young players – keep them short.

Make the distances you're asking players to head the ball suitable for their age.

Don't introduce opposition to sessions until kids are confident and old enough to cope with physical contact.

Try a softer ball to help build confidence.

Technique and accuracy first – power can always be added later.

Finally, remember: if they're timid, it's because they're scared, so coax them gently.

It's only natural: A lot of the time a child's reluctance to head the ball – they often close their eyes and let it drop on the top of their heads

- is to do with fear. After all, it's only natural to want to keep your head out of the way of an object you think might hurt it.

Gently does it: The simplest way to gain confidence is to gradually introduce players to the feeling of their forehead meeting the ball. Begin

with asking them to balance the ball on their forehead. Then allow them to have a ball each, and just gently throw it up, head it in the air and catch again. Once they've tried that several times, ask them to try to head it twice before catching the ball. Then three times and so on.

The next drill would be to throw the ball up to themselves and then head it to a partner standing approximately 5 meters away, who repeats the exercise.

This soccer training drill is encouraging your players to:

1. Watch the ball.
2. Keep their eyes open.
3. Head the ball with the forehead.
4. Aim for the middle of the ball.

Once they're comfortable with this training drill, increase the distance to about 10 meters, and this time have the players throw the ball underarm to each other.

It's at this stage that, as well as the four points outlined in the training drill above, you should coach your players to:

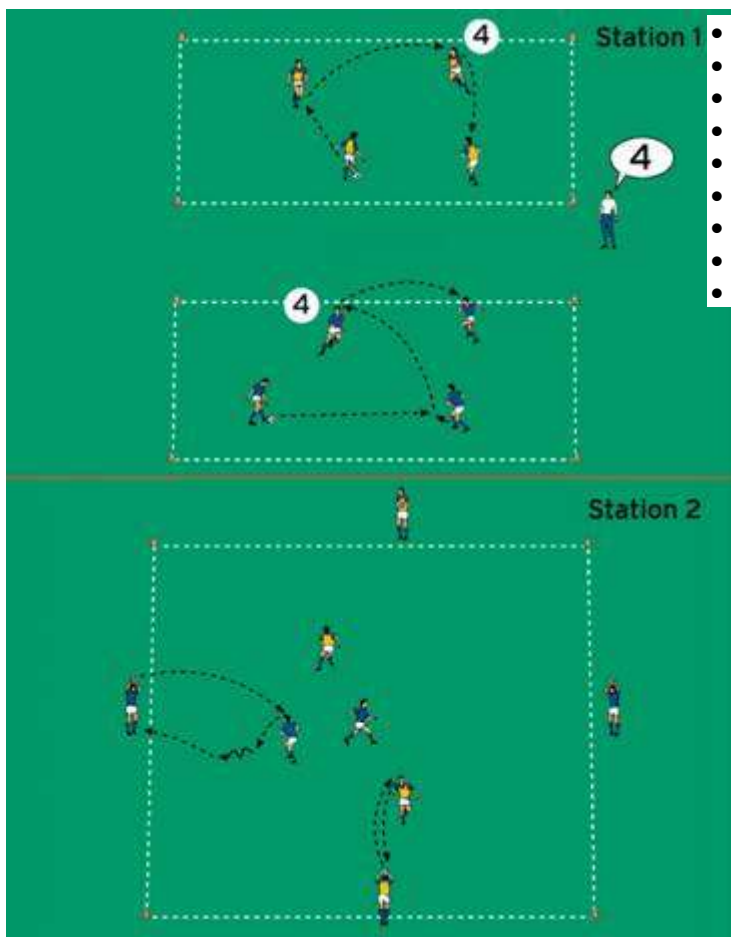
- Move into line with the flight of the ball.
- Use their neck muscles.

REMEMBER: TEACHING YOUR PLAYERS THE RIGHT TECHNIQUE WILL HELP WITH THEIR CONFIDENCE.

Head up, head down

Heading the ball from danger – The aim of defensive headers is to achieve distance and height. ([Click here](#) for a soccer drill to improve defensive headers.) Distance, to keep the ball away from the goal, and height, to give more time for the defense to become organized to repel the next attack.

To achieve this, as well as the drills already mentioned, players should:



- Keep their eyes below the ball.
- Head the bottom half of the ball.
- Be almost side-on with the body.
- “Attack” the ball.
- Take off on one foot.
- Use the arms for elevation.
- Arch the back before heading the ball.
- Head the ball at its highest point.
- Land on both feet.

Heading to score – The big difference between defensive and attacking headers is that attacking players are mostly looking

to head the ball down. That’s because heading the ball down makes it tougher for goalkeepers to make a save. For the same reason, attackers should try to be accurate and aim for the corners of the goal.

The key to the attacking header is to get the eyes over the ball and head the top half of the ball. ([Click here](#) for a soccer drill to improve attacking headers.)

Heading for success

Heading the ball is a skill that’s often overlooked. Ignore it, and you could be throwing away the chance to gain a crucial advantage over your opponents. All it takes is a little bit of patience and a lot of practice.

How to Do Soccer Heading Drills

Step1

Ask a teammate to help you with a soccer heading drill. Grab a soccer ball and stand about 15 feet apart.

Step2

Kneel on the ground, and ask your teammate to lob the ball near your head. Have her aim about 2 feet in front of you so that you have to lean forward to strike the ball.

Step3

Dive gently forward, and use your forehead to connect with the ball. This is the flattest and hardest part of your head, and it can yield better results once the ball leaves your head. If you head the ball properly, there is no danger.

Step4

Aim to head the ball back into your teammate's hands. Follow through while heading the ball, making contact with your arms to the ground to brace your fall.

Step5

Repeat the drill about 20 times and then alternate turns.

* There are many variations of heading drills. For example, you could gather your teammates and form a circle and have a player in the middle. Using 1 ball, have the teammates toss the soccer ball to the player in the middle, having him head the ball back to everyone forming the circle.

* Try to keep your eyes open while heading the ball. That way you can have a better idea of where the ball is once it leaves your head.

* Keep in mind that if the ball forms an arc, you hit the ball too soon. If the ball hits the ground too soon, your head pointed to the ground, not straight ahead. The ball should land straight into your teammate's hands.

Soccer Heading Drills:

1v1 Heading Competition:

Serve two players crosses and goal-ward throws in front of the goal. Offender vs. Defender. 1 point if offender heads it off a certain distance (marked with a cone). 1 point if the offender scores a goal.

Fig. A

Fig. A

Warm-up 1: Team heading Setup

- Station 1: Mark out two grids.
- Station 2: Mark out one grid.

- Divide players into two groups, one for each station.

Sequence (Station 1)

- Number the players in each group.
- Players pass back and forth while moving around their grids.
- The coach calls the name of one player, who prepares for a high ball in the air. This player has to head the ball to the next player in the sequence.
- The first team to complete the task scores one point.

Sequence (Station 2)

- Two players stand outside the grid with one ball each, and two more stand inside.
- The players inside the grid call for serves to their heads. They either head the ball directly back to the server or control it with their heads and then pass it back.
- Players switch positions after one minute.

Tips and corrections

- Players at Station 1 need to find the best way of passing to whichever player is called to receive.
- Because the main focus at Station 2 is accuracy, players should rest between serves.

Have fun with heading soccer drills

Players shouldn't be scared of [heading](#) a soccer ball. Use these tips and soccer drills to get them used to doing it and build up their confidence so they can do it in matches.

Tips for young players

Most cases of concussion in soccer are from heads clashing rather than from heading the ball. From under-4s right through to under-16s, your players need to practice heading. Young players from under-4s through to under-7s should practice heading by throwing the ball in the air, letting it bounce on the ground once, then trying to head the ball forward, not up again.

The grass takes a lot of the power out of the ball, and they are heading the ball from a much lower height. This heading soccer drill develops good judgment of a ball from the bounce, and confidence that the ball will not hurt them as they learn the skill.

Tips to coach heading skills

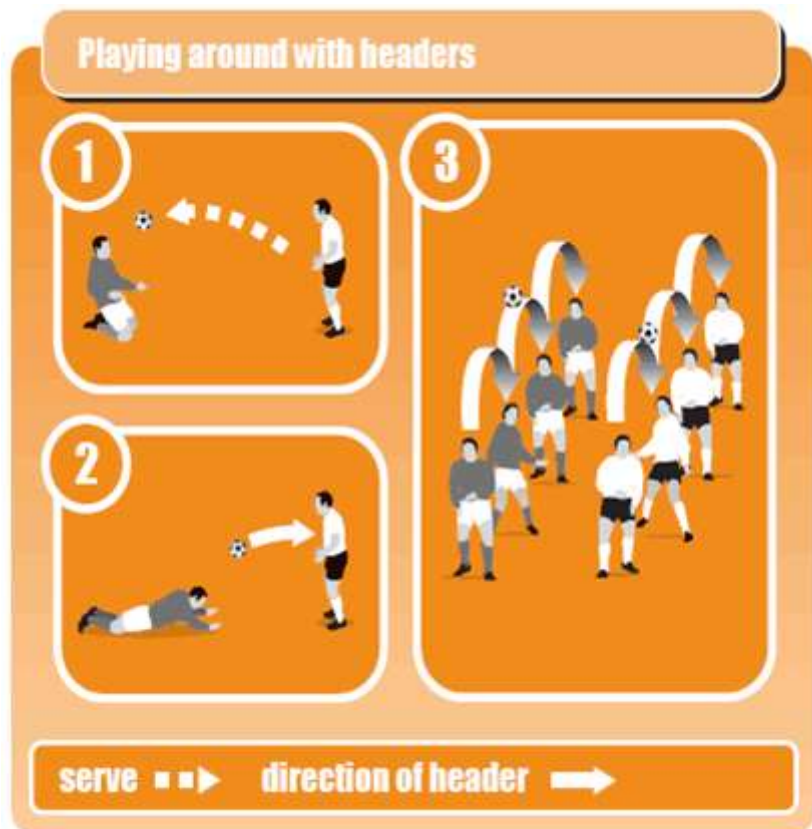
From under-7s upwards I always look for ways to coach players to be confident in heading a ball and how to make it work for team in matches. These are some very effective [drills](#) to use to work on heading skills.

- Get your players into pairs with one player the server and the other the header. The header must start by kneeling up with his arms by his sides.
- The server throws the ball and the player dives forward to head the ball, follow through and end up on his arms.
- Tell your players to try to contact the ball and not let it contact them, and hit it on the hard part of their head using their whole body to follow through.

Heading the ball backwards drill

You can also use this fun soccer drill to help with the back header, which is important at corners when your players are trying to head the ball on. It also gets them used to flicking the ball on when it is banging around in mid-air. I like this soccer coaching drill because it gets the players involved in team work as well as being enjoyable. They are going to try to head the ball back along the line and the aim is to see which team can get it from front to back quickest.

Key soccer coaching tip: Keep header drill sessions short but make sure you repeat the soccer drills often.



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Take off for a diving header



Heading is an activity you don't want to do for too long, especially with a younger player, but you do want to make sure they are comfortable with it, and that it is something they are not afraid of because it is a very important part of the game.

Soccer coaching tips for a diving header

Using the body to head the ball: The diving header is a soccer skill which uses the head to direct the ball, but involves the player's whole body. Usually only used by attacking players - but can be used defending the penalty area - the diving header requires the player to dive towards the ball, with both feet off the ground in order to make contact with the ball.

Head the ball low and on-target: Tell your players to look in the direction in which the ball needs to go and to keep their head over the ball. In this way the player can keep the ball's trajectory low and accurate.

Be brave and anticipate well: Tell your players they need to be brave, well balanced and use good anticipation. Players famed for their diving headers are fearless when diving in amongst flying boots to poach a goal in the six-yard box.

A diving header beats a thrusting foot: Tell your players when the ball is out of reach, they shouldn't jump towards it with one foot in front, because they will only have a single foot to support the jump, since the other one will be stretched out front. This won't give them much of an advantage, whereas with a diving

header, they can use both feet to propel themselves towards the incoming ball.

It gives your players an advantage: The advantage of a diving header is that it allows a player to get to the ball first and to get on the end of crosses which would otherwise be unreachable. If the ball is low or dropping, but cannot be kicked, a diving header is a good option.

Key soccer coaching tips: Get a player to lie on the ground so your players can practice diving across to gain distance and balance.

Those coaches who like to put a name to a skill will be interested to know the Portuguese and Spanish words for the technique. In Portugal they refer to it as the peixinho ("little fish") and in Spain the palomita ("little dove").

Soccer drill to get your defenders clearing high balls

A great way to put defenders under pressure during a soccer coaching session is to set up a soccer drill where players bombard your best three defenders with high balls into the penalty area, so they have to work hard to clear them using headers or volleys.

Drill to defend against aerial bombardment

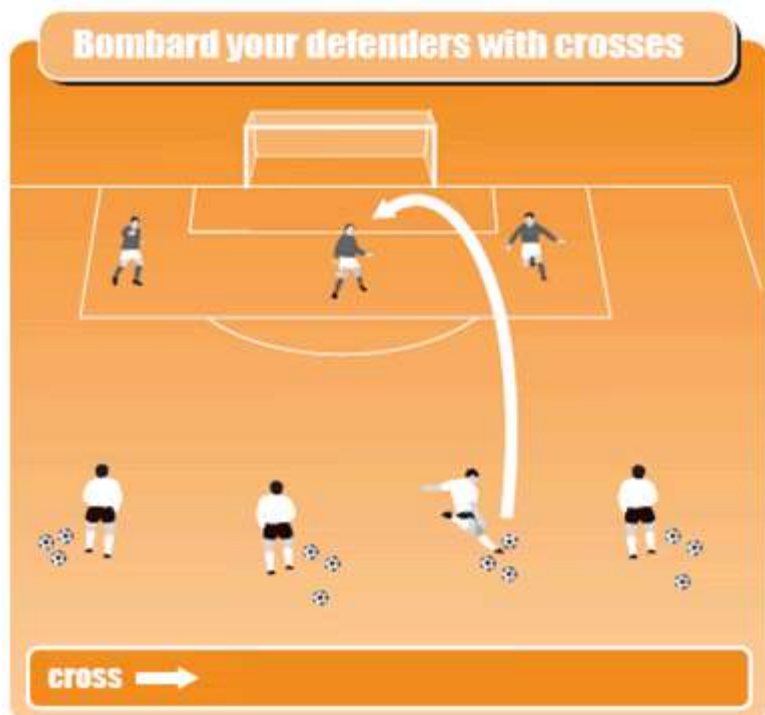
You often find on match day that you have prepared your team for everything except an aerial bombardment from a team with big, strong players who, whenever they get the chance, blast the ball into the penalty area. It's good having great defenders who can take ball off an attacker, if they cannot head it away when they are under attack.

Skills to generate power

When heading the ball, tell your defenders must have plenty of power. Tell them to arch backs and swing their heads forward to get power from their shoulders to head the ball away, or to judge the flight of the ball to volley away.

Soccer drill tips

In the diagram, the defenders are faced with coming into the box which they must prevent bouncing. This drill is good for communication,



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movement and volleying, plus building players' heading skills.

How to coach the drill

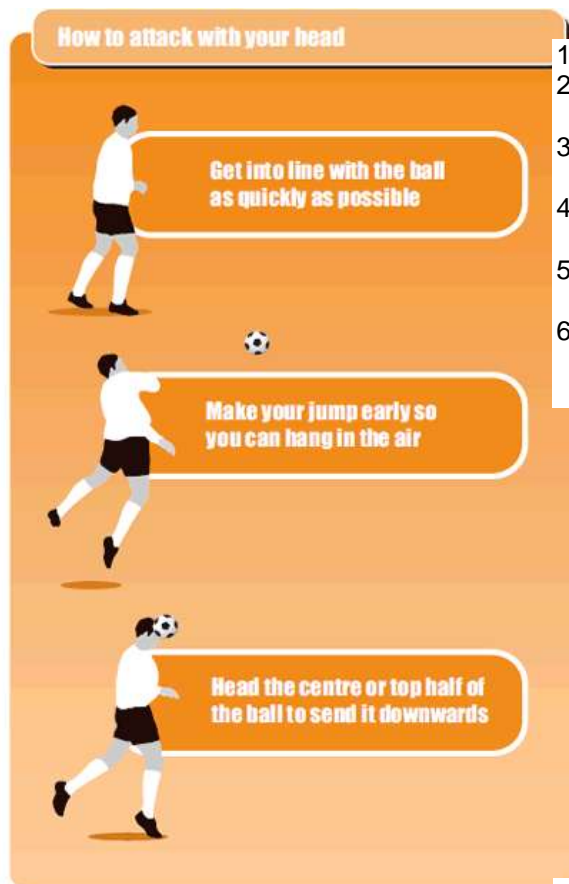
1. Use three defenders and put four other players around the 18-yard box with three balls each.
2. Players kick the ball into the box from various angles, trying to get the ball to bounce in the area.
3. They can use a drop-kick, high cross, or driven cross.
4. Defenders must not let the ball hit the ground.
5. Play until all the balls are used up, then change players.

Variation on the drill for younger players

A fun way to coach heading is to get your young players heading the ball over a tennis or volleyball net. Players need to direct the ball upwards to clear the net which is great for practicing defensive heading skills. It also helps you teach how to control and direct a ball properly.

Soccer drill to improve attacking headers

Work on your players' attacking headers with this soccer training drill and they will send fewer chances over the bar, and more into the goal.



1. Tell your players to get into line with the ball quickly.
2. They must time their run so they come from behind a defender and get in front of them just as they meet the ball.
3. If the pass - or cross - is deeper, tell them to take a step back away from the defender and create space that way.
4. In the attacking area they must be really positive to try and win the ball. Tell them that the defender has most to lose.
5. Tell your players to use their forehead, making contact with the center or the top half of the ball to send it downwards.
6. If they jump early, coach your players to 'hang' in the air. That will make it very difficult for a defender to beat them to the ball without giving away a foul.

Soccer drill to improve defensive headers

Use this soccer training drill to improve your players' defensive headers. The aim is to head the ball as high and as far away from the goal as possible.



1. It is better to head the ball out to either side of the goal, rather than into the area directly in front of the goal.
2. Try meeting the ball from a side-on position. This allows you to create more power and will give you better protection against opponents, with less chance of clashing heads.
3. Be really careful what you do with your arms. Any push in the back of an opponent could see a penalty or dangerous free-kick given away.
4. To power the ball upwards, you need to make contact with the bottom half of the ball. Arch your back so that you can thrust your forehead up into the line of the ball.

Heading skills soccer drill

Improve your team's attacking heading ability to boost their goal-scoring chances with the following coaching tips and soccer drills.

When you first start to get your players crossing the ball into attacking areas of the pitch, you add an extra attacking option. **The header.** It takes a lot of practice to get used to heading a ball, especially for young attackers when they need to react quickly to a ball at head height.

In your soccer training drill you want to see your players:

- Move into ball's line of flight.
- Take off on one foot, land on both.
- Use their arms for elevation.
- At the highest point of their jump, head the top half of the ball to direct it downwards.
- Aim for the corners of the goal.

It's a lot for them to think about but take it slowly and the skills will eventually fall into place.

How to set up heading drill

- Set up some square grids with each side equivalent to the width of a goal.
- You need four players in each group.
- Use at least two balls per group. Two players, acting as servers, stand at opposite sides.
- A third player, a passive goalkeeper, stands on one of the other side's facing into the grid.
- The servers take it in turns to throw a ball slightly ahead of the remaining player inside the grid, who heads towards goal.
- Switch positions so everyone develops heading, serving and goalkeeping skills.

Advance the drill

To extend the soccer drill, get your players to try this game:

1. Split the four players into two teams, with each player standing on a side of the square next to their team mate.
2. A player from team 'A' throws the ball slightly ahead of their teammate, who runs forward and tries to head it past the opponent acting as a goalkeeper.
3. Repeat the drill so all players have a turn each. The teams must alternate turns.
4. As the players become accustomed to the ball coming from one side, make teammates swap positions and vary the angle and height of service.

Soccer heading skills game

As a follow-on from coaching the [Heading skills soccer drill](#), try putting your players' skill into a game situation. This game gives your players more opportunity to attack with their headers but at the same time keeps the drill simple so they concentrate on their position and technique.

It is a useful tip to remember that heading a thrown ball is easier than heading a kicked one, but it is harder to get power behind a thrown ball, so your players will have to use good technique to make it work for them.

Tips for throw, head, catch game

Set up a 30 yard x 20 yard pitch with two goals. This is ideal for two teams of four.

Both teams put a player in goal when defending but have all players out on the pitch when attacking.

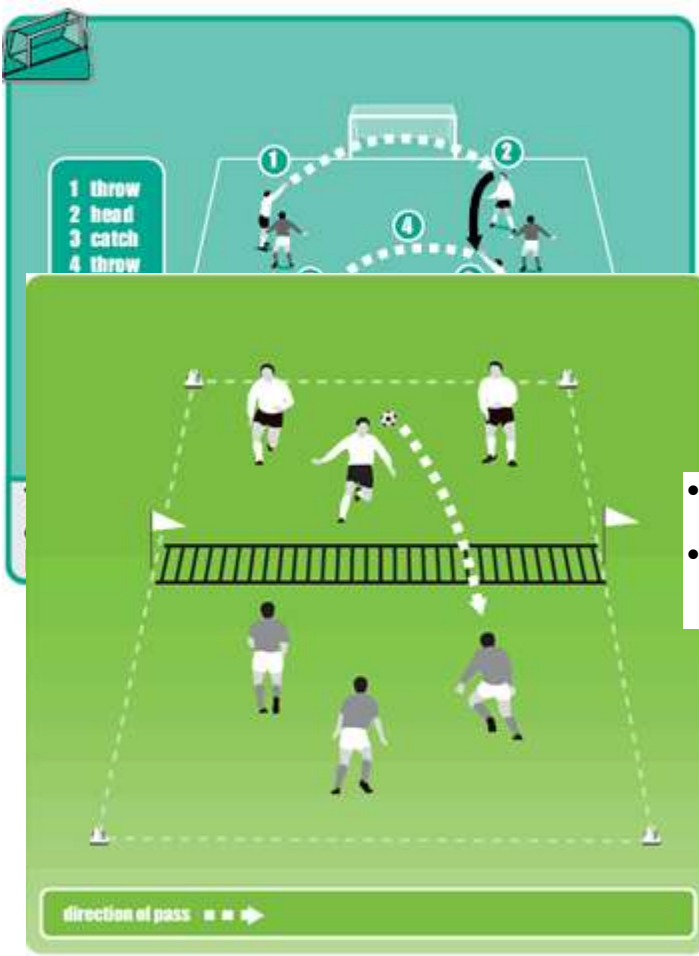
Both teams attempt to score using attacking headers but can only move the ball by using the following soccer drill sequence:

- The first player throws the ball to a second teammate who heads it to a third teammate who catches the ball.
- Once thrown, the other team can win the ball back by 'out-heading' their opponents, or intercepting the ball with their hands in the 'catching' phase.

Soccer coaching game to work on heading skills

Use this fun soccer coaching game to give your players confidence when they're heading the ball and improve their ability to anticipate headers.

With this game, players have to look before they head the ball, so they know where it is going. It also helps players anticipate when to let the ball bounce to give themselves



more time to place the header and when to play it early to catch opponents out.

Players love a game like this, you have winners and losers, skills and techniques, just like the elements of a soccer match.

After you have played this game a few times you will notice better direction and better anticipation when your players are defending or attacking with headers in matches.

How you play it:

- Arrange your players into two teams of varied ability.
- Get the players to serve the ball with a half volley.
- The teams are only allowed one bounce before returning the ball and each player is only allowed three touches.
- The game is played for a set time or until a number of points has been reached.

You can play this soccer coaching game more than one way, here are three others to use at different soccer coaching sessions:

1 Continuous rally – the players form two lines. The ball is served over and one by one they make a shot over the net and run around to join the opposite side. The aim is to try and see how long the rally lasts.

2 Wimbledon – the players form two lines. Each player plays as an individual. The players take it in turns to knock the ball over the net and then run around to the opposite side. If you make a mistake or a point is scored against you, then you're out. Eventually you have a 1v1 finale.

3 Team knock out – two teams but now if you make a mistake or happen to be the closest to the ball when a point is scored, then you are out. Therefore the game starts with equal teams but as players are knocked out it becomes an overload advantage to one team. The winning team is the one that eliminates all their opponents.

Simple throw and head the ball soccer game

In this small-sided soccer game, players throw the ball to each other to [head](#) goals.

The idea behind the game is taken from netball. The player with the ball in his hands cannot move, so the other players have to move around him.

You are looking for movement and technique in this small-sided soccer game. Movement off the ball and the technique your soccer players are using to head the ball and generate some power.

Because the ball is thrown, the headers are easy, so it also helps young soccer players who are new to heading or have been frightened by the idea of it.

Run the heading game

- Pitch size: 30 x 20 yards (minimum) up to 40 x 25 yards (maximum).
- Two teams of four soccer players.



- No keepers.
- The soccer game is played by throwing and catching the ball.
- The player in possession cannot move with the ball.
- This encourages his team-mates to make movements off the ball.
- The player in possession must not have the ball in their hands for longer than three seconds.
- This encourages quick passing and decision-making.
- A goal is scored by heading a thrown pass into the goal.
- A progression would be to allow soccer players to score by volleying a thrown pass into the goal.

How to coach a flick on header

A flick-on [header](#) is used to direct the ball to a team-mate or into a dangerous area of the pitch. The idea is to keep the ball going in a forward direction over or around the defender when passing the ball is difficult.

A good soccer [coaching](#) tip to tell your players when they're learning to do a flick-on header it is to be looking into the sky and to use their forehead. Young players can also use the top of their heads.

Coach passing with headers

One way to advance your soccer players' skills is to get them to think about heading to make a good [pass](#), rather than [heading](#) without purpose.

In this soccer drill session I explain how to get your players heading the ball directly into the path of a team-mate rather than closing their eyes and hoping for the best.

Heading skills drill

To get your players used to heading the ball in the right direction, have them line up in front of you and head for accuracy.

- You should stand five yards in front of the line.
- Throw the ball to the player at the front of the line and get them to head the ball straight back to you. They then go to the back of the line. The players should head the ball three or four times each.

How to develop the ball (soccer) drill

- Once you have got players heading straight, get them to direct the ball.
- You stand 10 yards from the heading player. Players A, B and C stand around 5 yards away in different directions.
- You throw the ball to the heading player and call out A, B or C. The heading player must head the ball to the correct player.
- Throw the ball so the heading player can keep their feet on the ground at first. Then throw so they have to jump.

How to advance the heading drill

- Set out five players in a zigzag formation about 5 yards apart.
- Player A throws the ball up and heads to player B, who heads to player C and so on, until it reaches player E.
- If the ball falls to the ground, get the next player in the sequence to throw and head on. Don't go back to the start or some players may not get many touches!
- If player E can continue, they should try to head the ball back to player D and in sequence to player A - keeping the ball in the air.

Funs Drills

Space Invaders soccer coaching game for ball control skills

Use this fun [soccer coaching](#) game to help your players control the ball under pressure when they're running in a straight line.

The name of the game is Space Invaders and the main coaching objectives are to improve [dribbling](#) and close [control](#) skills, [passing](#) accuracy and pace, and one-touch passing.

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U-8 - U10 Drills:

Links: [Quick U10 Games](#) | [Small Side Games](#) |

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 8 PLAYERS

- Attention span is a bit longer than U-6 players but still not at a "competitive" stage
- Inclined towards small group activities.
- Always in motion: scratching; blinking; jerking; rocking...
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Shout praise. Give "hints".
- They want everybody to like them.
- Developing physical confidence. (Most are able to ride a two-wheeler.)
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same "gear" as them.
- Lack sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in apparent lack of coordination.
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. make sure that they get adequate water breaks.
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. "If they try hard, they performed well" regardless of the actual performance. Thus, they need to be encouraged constantly, and asked "Now, can you do this?"
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play, and remembering what goal they are going for... but, in the heat of battle, they will sometimes still forget. They still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time.

INVOLVING THE PARENTS

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-6 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling. (Phone chains.)
- Choosing a team administrator-someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (Cleats are not mandatory.)
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-8 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

THINGS YOU CAN EXPECT

6, 7, and 8 year old players are a bit more compliant than their U-6 counterparts. They will be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to have a good understanding about what it means to play a "game". They are also starting to cooperate more with their teammates. In fact, they now will recognize that they even have teammates by the fact that they occasionally, and I mean occasionally, will pass the ball to a teammate, on purpose. Often, they will repeat the phrase "I can't do that!", but, will quickly run to you to show you that they can, even when they only think that they can. Some other things that you can expect to happen during a season with this age group are:

- There will be at least 200-300 falls during the season, but, now they will usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Keep a spare pump in your bag as the players usually do not realize that their ball is flat until they try to kick it, or the coach tells them that it is flat.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys.
- They will still want to wear a pinnie, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who is who's best friend as you try to make up teams.
- School conflicts will come up... please, let them go (they must face their teachers five days a week).
- They will wear their uniform to bed.

COACHING RATIONAL

Some of the players that are playing as a 7 year old have had two years of soccer experience and thus have already touched the ball a few thousand times in their lives. This, however, does not mean that these players are ready for the mental demands of tactical team soccer. True, they do have some idea of the game, but the emphasis still needs to be placed on the individual's ability to control the ball with his/her body. They are still there to have fun, and because some of

the players may be brand new to the sport, it is imperative that activities are geared towards individual success and participation. Following are some more items that a coach of U-8 players should consider.

- Small sided soccer is the best option for these players. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but, it is an easier game to understand.
- Because of rapid growth spurts during this age, players will go through times when they seem to have lost control of their body. What they could easily do 2 weeks ago now seems unattainable. Be patient.
- Passing is not an important part of their game, no matter how much anybody yells at them to do otherwise, it is much more fun to dribble and shoot. Let them.
- Training once or twice a week is plenty, and should not last longer than one hour and fifteen minutes.
- Each player should bring their own size #4 ball to training. Learning how to control it should be the main objective. They need to touch it as many times as possible during fun activities that will engage them.
- Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.
- Incidental things are important. They are forming the habits that will impact their future participation. Ask them to take care of their equipment (water bottle included), cooperate, listen, behave, and try hard. Realize, however, that they often forget and will need to be reminded often.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and work from there.

TYPICAL TRAINING SESSION

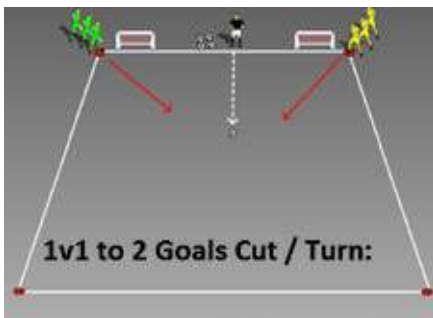
Here are some items that should be included in a U-8 training session:

WARM-UP: A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that may or may not involve the ball. They can chase their ball as it is thrown by the coach, bringing it back with different parts of their body. Or, they can chase someone with their ball at their feet. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, again, hopefully done with the ball. "Soccernastics" activities are very appropriate, like: dribbling the ball with the bottom of their feet, with their elbows, backwards, with the back of their neck while holding on to it; keeping the ball up with their thighs; keeping it up with their feet while sitting.

INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES: Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or a game where players are trying to work with a partner or small group to obtain a goal. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" (where everyone plays), instead of games where the "looser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

PLAY THE GAME: Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 1v.1 up to 5v.5. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK: Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their head, then thigh and then catch it. Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.



1v1 to 2 Goals Cut/Turn:

Organization: Coach plays the ball into the middle of the grid or coned area.
 • 1 Player from each line races to the ball and then tries to score in either goal.

Encourage players to dribble past the defender before shooting.
 • This will help develop composure on the ball rather than kicking the ball towards the goal as soon as they are in

possession.

Coaching Points: Change of Direction, Change of Pace, Deception, Dribble with foot furthest from defender

Pass & Shoot Drill:

This is all about getting the ball in the zone in front of goal and making the best decision to shoot. It replicates the striker getting a pass in the penalty area and gives him time and space to finish.

Step #1: Player 1 makes a pass to player 2 in the penalty area and then runs through the gate and around the cone.



Step #2: Player 2 controls the ball and plays a pass for player 1 to run onto and shoot at goal.

Pass & Shoot

Game:



Progression: Player 2 controls the ball, then follows the pass and tries to block the shot.

SET UP Use the penalty area of your normal pitch with a box the width of the goalmouth in front of the goal between the six-yard line to the 18-yard line.

HOW TO PLAY You need a goalkeeper, plus a working player in the penalty area at position 2. The other players stand at position 1. Player 1 passes to player 2 and after he has made the pass player 1 sprints through the gate, around the cone and into the penalty area. When player 2 receives the ball he turns and passes for player 1 to get a shot in on goal. Once played a couple of times player 2 should follow his pass into the penalty area and try to defend the goal. Also place a cone on the goal line, which you can move to make the target area smaller.

TECHNIQUE Player 1 must make up his mind whether to shoot first time or have a controlled touch before the shot. Player 2 must be aware of where the pass has to go, so it helps the striker get a good shot in at goal.

Step #1: Player 1 makes a pass to player 2 in the penalty area and then runs through the gate and around the cone.

Step #2: Player 2 controls the ball and plays a pass for player 1 to run onto and shoot at goal.

Progression: Player 2 controls the ball, then follows the pass and tries to block the shot.

Help your players make better decisions:

In soccer, decision making is the process of thinking about a certain action - such as dribbling, passing, or shooting - and then choosing the right action to take according to the situation a player finds herself in.

Soccer is a fast-moving game and this decision-making process needs to be performed quickly. But fast decision making requires experience but that's the one thing young players who are new to the game don't have.

To compound the problem, young minds are easily distracted and if coaches and parents are shouting at them while they are playing, the stress generated by the "advice" coming from the sidelines, plus their lack of experience, makes good decision making virtually impossible.

Even in coaching sessions, stress and tension can slow a player's decision-making ability especially if they have to practice new skills in games that present them with too many choices.

On match days

It is therefore, essential coaches and spectators do not try to instruct while the ball is in play.

Coaches must stay quiet while the match is in progress and only make comments during the half time interval or to substitutes who are watching the game.

Parents should be told to offer praise and encouragement (to BOTH teams) but they should also be instructed not to try to coach their child or other players. I find it is useful to confine parents to a roped-off spectators' area, which is well away from the pitch.

During coaching sessions

While young players are learning how to execute new skills, coaching games need to be designed to be as stress-free as possible. This doesn't mean they shouldn't be competitive. On the contrary, coaching activities should always involve an element of competition. But in the beginning, team sizes should be kept small and playing areas should be big.

Overloads also ease the pressure - four young players will find it much easier to make good decisions if they are the bigger team in a 4v2 practice, played in a 20-yard square than if they play 2v2 in a 10-yard square.

Only when players are clearly competent should their decision-making abilities be sharpened by adding the pressure of small playing areas and more players.

Players should be allowed to find solutions for themselves or be helped by coaches who ask questions that guide rather than instruct. For example, don't tell players that they should pass the ball back if they can't move it forwards. Instead, ask:

Q: What do you do if you can't play the ball forward?

A: Pass it to someone who can.

Games that help young players make good decisions

1. Team Tag (warm-up)

- Divide your players into pairs. Each pair, except two, have a ball.
- The two pairs of players without a ball, hold a training vest between them and try to tag a player with a ball.
- Players with a ball can avoid being tagged by passing to their partner.
- If a player is tagged, they and their partner give their ball to the pair that tagged them and both pairs switch roles.
- Play for two minutes.

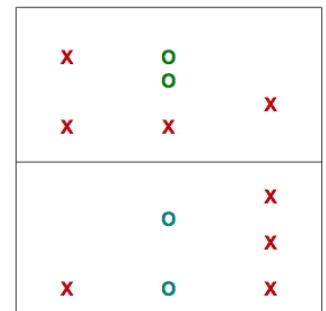
2. Dribble or pass?

- Two teams of four or five play in a 20-yard square that has lots of one-yard-wide cones goals spread about randomly.
- One team tries to score points by dribbling through a cone goal.
- The other team tries to stop them.
- Play for two minutes and change the teams round. The team that scores the most points wins. Repeat.

3. Zone passing

Create a 40x20 yards playing area with a center line.

Divide your players into a team of eight (the Xs in the image below) and a team of four (the Os).



- Play 4v2 keepaway in each half.
- Players have to stay in their own half of the playing area but if the player in possession is under pressure, she can pass to a team mate in the other half.
- Team X get a point for every five passes. Team O get a point every time they win the ball (or knock it out of the playing area).
- Play for five minutes then change the players around.

Tip: You can make this game more match-realistic by putting a couple of goals on the sidelines. Now players on team X can shoot after making five passes. Team O can shoot as soon as they win the ball.

Progress to 4v4 games, no coaching or restrictions

Cross and Score Side Kicks:

Players run the drill. There are 4 lines (at side of goal post and at 18 yard line on opposite side of goal), two teams. Each team alternates and tries to accumulate the most goals. The player by the goal post passed diagonally across the goal and their teammate receives the pass then shoots...advance to one touches.

I Need a Doctor!

A fun game for six to eight-year-olds. It improves their co-ordination, dribbling skills and ability to make decisions.

Set-up: Create a 20-yard square with two 4x4 "hospitals" marked within the square with flat cones.

Divide your players into two teams. Every player has a ball.

How to play: One team dribbles in the playing area while the other team of attackers attempts to hit them with their ball below the knee.

Players who are hit become "patients" and call "doctor!" while holding their ball above their head.

The dribbling team has two "doctors" who are based in the "hospitals". They can save any of their patients by leaving the hospital and touching them but if either doctor is hit below the knee by a ball, the game is over and the attacking team wins.

Play two minute rounds. If the doctors aren't hit by a ball, the team with the least number of patients when time is called is the winner.

Milan triangle:

A simple game that will improve your players' agility and passing skills. It is commonly used as a warm-up but can also be used as part of a session on passing technique.

Set up: Two players take three cones and spread them about one yard apart in a triangle.

How to play: One player passes the ball through a pair of cones. The receiving player has a set number of touches (depending on their age and ability) to take the ball around a cone and then pass back through another pair of cones for their partner to repeat. Every time they do this successfully, they win a point. Any time they hit a cone or the pass isn't completed, a point is not awarded. First to 10 points wins.

Triangle Passing:

To practice support play, passing and receiving. Create a 20 yards by 20 yards grid for every five players in your squad. Place a triangle made of poles or flags in the center of each grid. Split your players into groups of five (four attackers and one defender). Note: You can play this game with three attackers and one defender if necessary.

How to play: The attackers pass the ball around the grid, keeping the ball away from the defender. They score a point every time they can pass through the triangle to a team mate. Make the game competitive by challenging each group to reach a certain number of points first, or see how many points they score in a set time.

Coaching points: Good communication (both oral and visual) is important. Attackers must "stay out of the defender's shadow", pass the ball rapidly and make decisions quickly if they are to succeed.

Triangle Drills: The player on the inner tries to steal the ball as 3 players on the outer side pass it.

Cone run:

Simple warm up to set up and explain, and it's suitable for all ages. Objective: To practice passing and receiving. **Skill level:** Beginners upwards.

Set up: Create a number of 10 yards square grids with a cone at each corner. Divide your squad into pairs. One pair per grid. Players stand opposite each other on the center of the end lines of each grid. One player has a ball.

How to play: The player with the ball (player one) passes to the other player (player two), runs around one of the cones and back to his starting position in time to receive a return pass. He passes back to player two and runs around the opposite cone. Now it's player two's turn to run around the cones.

Coaching points: Focus on the correct passing technique, accuracy and power. Have your players work at pace and don't allow them to give wayward passes. Make the game competitive by seeing which pair can continue for two minutes without making a mistake. **Progression:** If your players find this exercise easy, reduce the number of touches and/or make the grids bigger. If they are finding it hard, do the opposite - make the grid smaller and allow them to take two or three touches before passing.

Cone Wall:

This is a simple game that forces your players to play the ball wide and receive passes from wide areas to score goals.

Objective: To encourage players to use the full width of the pitch. **Skill level:** Intermediate. **Number of players:** The whole squad divided into teams of three or four.

Set up: Create a mini soccer pitch (about 40 yards by 30 yards) with goals at each end. Place a line of flat cones across the middle of the pitch - these should not extend to the edges. Leave a 5 yards-wide channel on both sides of the pitch. Split your squad into teams of three or four. Have two teams and one ball per playing area.

How to play: Play soccer with one condition - the ball cannot cross the line of cones in the middle of the pitch, but has to be played down one of the channels. Players are allowed to cross the cones and receive a pass from the channel in the opposition half. The first team to score five goals wins.

Coaching points: Encourage your players to draw the opposition away from the channels by switching play quickly.

Variations: Play with two balls. Mark the channels with a line of cones and make it a rule that players in the channel cannot be tackled. Open another channel in the middle of the pitch.

Transit:

This simple game will encourage your players to move around the playing area and communicate with one another to receive passes or tackle.

Objective: To improve passing and receiving skills, and the transition between defense and attack. **Skill level:** Intermediate or advanced **Number of players:** Two teams of seven is ideal, but you can adjust the numbers to suit your squad.

Set up: Have a 40 yards by 20 yards playing area and split the area into two 20 yards by 20 squares.

How to play: In one of the squares, one team attempts to keep the ball away from three members of the other team. The remaining four players from this team wait in the adjoining square. When the three players win the ball, they pass or dribble the ball to one of their four team mates and join them to make a full team of seven in their square. The team that lost possession send three of their players to try to win the ball back (a different three players every time). Play continues. If a team can make five passes, they are awarded one point (adjust to suit your players' abilities). Five points wins the game. **Note:** A ball that ends up out of play, equals lost possession.

He's on my team!:

Neutral player games – where two players play for the team in possession – encourage young players to use the full width of the pitch, play with their heads up and make quick, decisive passes. Age range: U8 upwards.

Set-up: The game is played by teams of four or five players on a 30 yards long by 20 yards wide pitch with four goals – two on each end line. Each team attacks and defends two goals.

How to play: The two neutral players take up various positions depending on the coach's objective.

- To encourage switch play from right to left: place one neutral player just outside the left hand edge of the playing area and the other neutral player on the opposite side.
- To encourage forward and backward passes: place the neutral players on the sidelines between the goals.
- To encourage fast, short passing: place the neutral players inside the playing area.
- Play each game for 10 minutes or until a specified number of goals have been scored.
- The neutral players cannot be tackled and can't score goals.
- Encourage neutral players to actively support the team in possession by calling for the ball. Don't let them stand around hoping that someone will pass to them.
- Change the neutral players in every new game.

Progression: restrict neutral players to two touches or give them a maximum of four seconds to release the ball. This encourages the team that passed to the neutral player to move quickly into a place where they can receive a return pass.

Attack v Defense:

Objective: To improve defending and attacking skills. **Age group:** U6s to U10s.

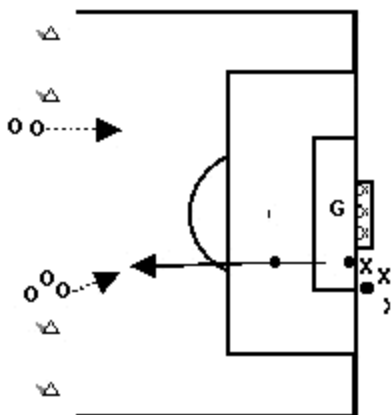
Number of players: Maximum of eight, minimum of four plus a goalkeeper.

Set-up: Use half a pitch with a goal at one end and two cone goals at the other. Divide your players into two teams - defender and attackers.

How to play: A defender (X), standing beside the goal, kicks the ball out to two attacking players (O), who are standing at the far end of the playing area. The defender follows the pass and tries to win the ball back and score in either of the two cone goals on the halfway line. The attackers try to score in the normal-sized goal.

The attackers get five attempts to score before team roles are swapped.

The team that scores the most goals with its five attacks wins the game.



If the ball goes out of play, the defender scores or a shot is saved, the attack is over.

Coaching points The attacker not in possession should be in an open position ready to receive a pass. Tell him not to get in the defender's shadow.

The defender should close the ball carrier down quickly and try to channel the attacker with the ball towards the sideline, away from the other attacker.

Progression: Restrict attackers to a set number of passes (or a time limit of, say, 30 seconds) before they must shoot.

- Allow another defender to enter play once the first pass is made.
- Require a one-touch shot from an attacker who receives the ball in front of the goal.

Musical Chairs:

For children aged from five to about 11. It's good as a warm-up or you can use as part of a session that focuses on dribbling the ball. It's fast, fun, competitive, easy to explain and easy to play. Number of children: Six to 16.

Equipment required: Twenty or so flat cones and a ball for each player.

Set-up: Create two concentric circles with your flat cones. The inner circle should be big enough for all your players to dribble around comfortably. The outer circle should be between 10 yards away from the inner circle (for six-year-olds) and 20 yards (for 11-year-olds). Players have a ball each.

How to play: All the players dribble inside the inner circle. On your command of "cone!" they leave their ball, run round one of the cones in the outer circle, go back to their ball and start dribbling again.

- Repeat two or three times.
- Then remove one of the balls while they are running to the outer circle of cones.
- The player who doesn't get a ball on his return has to complete a small forfeit (such as running around the inner circle) before being given his ball back.
- Repeat several times.

Coaching points: encourage young players to dribble with their heads up and try not to bump into each other. Include commands such as "turn left/right", "stop" and "go" before calling "cone!" Older players can be asked to perform a move such as a stepover.

Quick U10 Games:

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 10 PLAYERS:

- Gross and small motor skills becoming more refined and reliable. " Boys and girls begin to develop separately.
- Ability to stay on task is lengthened. They have the ability to sequence thought and actions.
- Greater diversity in playing ability and physical maturity.
- Skills are emerging. Becoming more predictable and recognizable.
- Some children begin moving from concrete thinking to abstract thinking.
- Able to pace themselves, to plan ahead.
- Increased self-responsibility. They remember to bring their own equipment.
- Starting to recognize basic tactical concepts, but not exactly sure why certain decisions are better.
- Repetition of technique is very important, but it must be dynamic, not static.
- Continued positive reinforcement needed.
- Explanations must be brief, concise, and mention "why".
- Becoming more "serious". Openly, intensively competitive, without intention of fouling.
- Still mostly intrinsically motivated. " Peer pressure starting to be a factor.
- Adult outside of the family may take on added significance.
- Prefer identification with a team. Like to have good uniforms, equipment, balls.
- More inclined towards wanting to play instead of being told to play. Will initiate play more.

INVOLVING THE PARENTS

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-10 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling. (Phone chains)
- Choosing a team administrator, someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards cleats or sneakers.

- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-10 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

THINGS YOU CAN EXPECT

Some coaches say that the 9 and 10 year-old players are beginning to "turn the corner" and starting to look like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and unpredictable for the most part. These players are starting to find out how much fun it is to play the game skillfully, but they will still stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during a game. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They start to understand offsides, but still forget themselves when the goal is in front of them.
- They will really beat up on each other during practice... especially boy's teams.
- During a game, the parents will scream out "HAND BALL" or "COME ON REF, CALL IT BOTH WAYS" at least fifteen times. Strongly discourage this or any other negative comments.
- They might cry after the game if they lose, but will forget it if you ask them if you want to go out for burgers and fries.
- You might actually catch them practicing on their own without you telling them to do so.
- Their parents are telling them to do one thing during the game, you are telling them another thing, but what they end up doing might be what their friend is telling them to do.
- You will see a pass that is deliberate. You might even see a "back pass".
- You will see your first \$100 pair of cleats during practice. They will call the other team bad names... really bad names.

COACHING RATIONAL

Some of the players that are playing as U - 10's are seasoned veterans of the youth soccer scene. Some of them may have already been involved in traveling to play in tournaments. As a result, some of them might be very nervous about the whole process. It is our job to keep things in perspective for these young, developing players. True, some of them are becoming quite skillful and are seeing how fun it is to play the game when they can really control the ball. However, many of them are still learning the ropes. Even the more experienced players need to have the game be fun!!!

Emphasis is still placed on having players learn how to control the ball with his/her body, but now, they need to find themselves in more game-like situations. Training is more dynamic and starting to have players make simple, basic decisions such as "Which way is there more space?" or "Who should I pass to?".

Following are some more items that a coach of U-10 players should consider:

- Use small sided games as the main teaching vehicle. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but the full 11-a-side game is still too complicated for them to understand.
- How we group players during training takes on even added significance because of the wide margins of ability levels. We need to mix players up often.
- Stretching is becoming more important, along with a good warm-up. Since the game is faster, make sure that they also have good shin guards. Safety and preventive measures take on added significance.
- Training twice a week is plenty. Sessions need not go longer than one hour, fifteen minutes.
- They should all come with their own size #4 ball. In fact, they still need to be encouraged to play with it by themselves.
- Put them into competitive environments as much as possible. This will not only keep them focused, but, it will allow the game itself to teach them. It also will keep things fun for them, and allow you to deal with issues such as 'winning' and 'loosing' which is now a very big concern for them.
- Now it is possible to teach them positional play with the expectation that they will get it some of the time. However, it is absolutely necessary that you do not allow players to specialize in any one position. They need to learn basic principles of the game, first. Having them play all of the positions is best for their individual development. Remember, our first responsibility is to develop players and let them have fun.

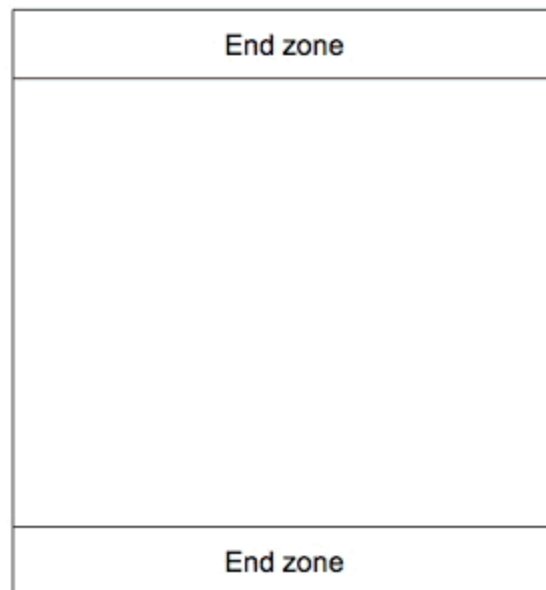
Whenever possible, allow them to solve their own puzzles. Don't immediately give them solutions on how they can play better.

The End Zone Game:

A great for improving passing and receiving skills, finding space to receive a pass and supporting off the ball. Encourages young players to find a place on the pitch where they can receive a pass, get out of defenders' "shadows", support each other and make quick decisions as well as rewarding accurate passing and good ball control.

Age range: U8-U12s and upwards.

Set-up: Create a 30x20 yards playing area with a 5 to 7-yard wide channel at each end marked out with flat cones. These are the end zones.



Divide your players into teams of five or six. You can make the End Zone game easier by making the playing area bigger or reducing the number of players in the playing area.

How to play: Start by allocating a target end zone to each team. Each team scores a "goal" by dribbling or passing the ball from their target end zone to the opposite end zone.

Note: Tackling is not allowed in end zones.

Tip: You will need to tell your players which end to attack first and explain that tackling is not allowed in the end zones. The first team to score five points wins the game.

Progression:

A. Each team scores a point by dribbling or passing the ball into one end zone and back to the opposite end zone without losing possession.

B. Put a neutral player or players in the end zones. Now the ball cannot be dribbled into an end zone, it must be passed to a neutral player who has to control the pass.

The neutral player returns the ball to the team that passed to them so it they can attack the other end zone. If you have enough for 3 teams you can have 2 at each end as receivers and 1-2 on each side as neutral wide passers (the pass back to the team the passed to them). Some call this variation "The Dutch Possession Game".

NOTE: One particularly good thing about this game is that since teams end up attacking in two, different directions, it forces players to play in different positions. They are at the back of the team when their team attacks one end-zone, while they will find themselves at the top of the team when they attack in the other direction. This is great for their development.

- Once a goal is scored, immediately attack going in the other direction. Do not give the ball to the other team. The 'End-Zones' are free, only the attacking team can enter these areas.

This game also encourages players to "SPREAD OUT" and work together, which, players are starting to be able to do at this age. At first, players will be tempted to just kick the ball up the field instead of passing. With patience, and demonstration of what is possible, this game could have a dramatic impact on their ability to play attractive, skillful soccer.



"RUNNING BASES"

Here is another game that emphasizes dribbling that is fun and challenging for players. Again, primarily, it is an individual game that could lend itself to small group cooperation if the players are ready.

THE GAME: Each player will need a ball, except those that have been designated as "It".

Players that are "It" need to carry a colored pinnie or flag in their hand.

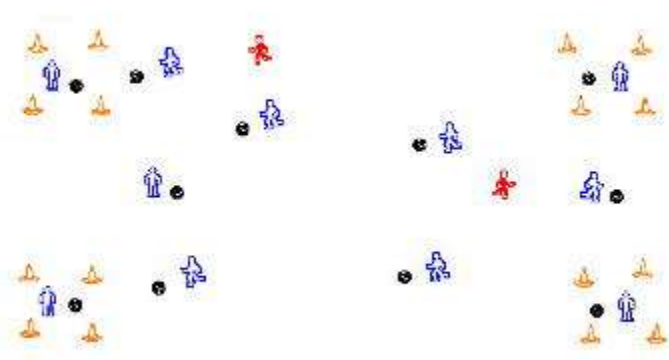
Players with a ball try to dribble without being tagged. If they are, they exchange places with the "tagger" (The "tagger" hands the pinnie to the dribbler and takes their ball).

Dribblers are safe in one of the designated bases. Only one player is allowed in a base at a time. If a new player enters a base, the old player must leave the base.

Add "taggers" when the players find the game to be easy. It seems about right to have one base for every 3 players, but, this number can be adjusted either way to make the game constantly interesting.

This game can **also be played by** only allowing the "tagger" to "get" someone by **kicking** their ball away, not just "tagging" the person.

Experiment with different combinations of "taggers" and bases to keep the players engaged.



No Man's Land:

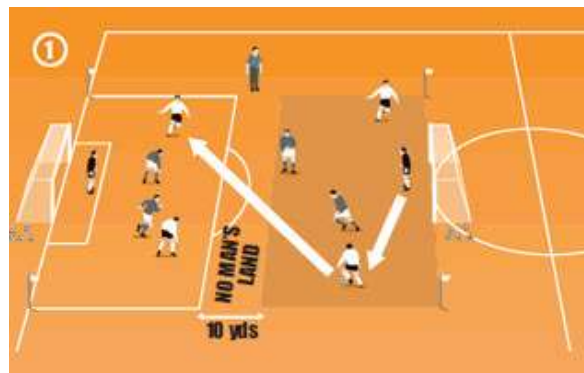
To practice passing, receiving, good movement and quick decision making. U9s and upwards.

Set-up: Mark out a wide, 40 yards long by 20 yards wide, playing area with a goal at each end.

Create a No Man's Land – two lines of flat cones about five yards apart across the center of the pitch.

Divide your players into two teams of four or five (greens and reds) plus goalkeepers.

How to play: Split each team up and place some greens and some reds in each half of the pitch.



Coaching note: The numbers can be varied to produce different problems for your players to solve. For example, you could put three greens and two reds in one half and two greens and three reds in the other.

Play a game with two conditions:

1. Players must stay in their half of the pitch
2. No player is allowed in No Man's Land – the exclusion zone in the middle of the pitch. These conditions force players to pass the ball across No Man's Land to reach their team mates on the other side. Success requires good movement on the part of the receiver and good, quick decision making on the part of the player in possession.

Progression: The ball has to cross No Man's Land in the air.

Shoot, Save, Shoot, Save:

Objective: To improve fitness, shooting and goalkeeping skills.

Age group: U6s to U10s. Number of players: Whole squad.

Equipment required: Five or six balls, a mini goal (or cones/poles as goalposts), some flat cones.

Set-up: Use the penalty area of a full-size pitch or mark out a 20-yard square with flat cones.

- Position a mini goal at one end of the area.
- Place a "turning cone" about 18 yards from the goal (on the edge of the penalty area if you're on a full-size pitch).
- Divide your players into two teams.
- Team 1 stands on the goal line about six yards from the left-hand goal post. Team 2 lines up about six yards from the right-hand goal post.
- You stand to one side of the playing area with a supply of balls.

How to play: On the coach's signal two things happen:

1. The first player in team 1 runs to the turning cone and back into the area in front of the goal.
 2. The first player on team 2 runs behind the goal, around the left post and enters the goal area to become the keeper.
- As the player from team 1 rounds the cone and starts toward goal, you play a ball in front of her. The player controls the ball with her first touch and shoots with her second.

As soon as the shot is taken the next player on each team start their runs - the team 1 player around the turning cone, the team 2 player around and into the goal - so we end up with a new keeper and a new shooter.

Note: If the shooter misses, he has to retrieve her ball and return it to you. If she scores, she runs in to the net to retrieve and return the ball.

If the keeper saves the shot, she kicks the ball into the field for the shooter to retrieve.

Keep track of the goals scored and change the teams around after a set time OR when you run out of balls to serve to the shooters.

Coaching note: While this sounds like a line drill, it isn't. Very soon all the players in the shooting team are moving, chasing down balls and returning them and getting back into line before their next turn.

Progression: Players must shoot with their first touch. Shoot with their "wrong" foot. You serve a bouncing ball.

The 3-2-1 Small Sided Game:

To improve passing and speed of play. Age range: U8-U13s.

Set-up: Create a 40 yards long by 30 yards wide playing area with a goal at both ends.

- Divide your players into teams of four or five (no goalkeepers).
- Begin by restricting your players to three touches of the ball before they must pass or shoot.
- When a team scores, it must go to two-touch but their next goal is worth two points.
- Teams that score while playing two-touch must go to one-touch. But their next goal is worth three points.
- The first team to score three goals (and earn six points) wins the game.

The Yo-Yo Game:

Objective: To encourage rapid counter attacking, to encourage your attackers/midfield players to get back and defend when the other team has the ball and to encourage your defenders to move up rapidly and support attacking moves.

This game can also be used with older players to practice setting and beating an offside trap.

Age group: U9s and upwards.

Number of players: Ideally 10 (five-a-side), but can be used with more or less players. If you have more than 14 players, set up two games.

Set-up: Create a playing 30x20 yards area with goals at each end and a halfway line.

Divide your players into two teams, including goalkeepers.

How to play: Goals only count if all the attacking team (except the goalkeeper) is in the opponent's half when the ball crosses the goal line.

Also, goals count double if any of the defending team fail to get back into their half before a goal is scored.

Progression: Add neutral players who stay on the sidelines and receive passes and pass back to the team that passes to them. Attacking moves now have to include at least one pass to a neutral player.

Behind Enemy Lines: U8-12 Year Olds

Objective / Set-up: To improve passing/receiving skills. Create a 45x30-yard playing area divided into three 15-yard-wide zones. Divide your players into three teams of four. If you have an odd number of players, it's OK to have teams of three. Place one team in each of the zones. One ball per game.

How to play: The game begins with you giving the ball to a team in one of the end zones.

- The players in that end zone pass it among themselves while looking for an opportunity to pass it through the team in the middle third to the team at the opposite end of the playing area.
- If they succeed in passing the ball through the middle zone, they get a point and the team they passed to tries to pass it back.
- If a pass from a team in one of the end zones is intercepted or kicked out of the playing area, it switches places with the team in the middle.
- The first team to make five passes through the middle zone wins.

Coaching points: Encourage players to play with their heads up, looking for an opportunity to get a pass in. Congratulate players who make quick decisions. Progression for older, more experienced players: Use a spare player as a defender who can move all over the playing area trying to steal the ball.

Tag Team Scrimmage:

Objective: To improve communication, teamwork and attacking/defending skills.

Age range: U8s and upwards.

Set-up: Create an appropriate-size pitch for 3v3 or 4v4 play.

- Divide your players into teams of three or four plus one extra player.
- The extra players stand outside the pitch, near to the center line.
- Place spare balls around the outside of the pitch to keep the game flowing.

How to play: If the ball goes out of play or if a goal is scored, the player that touched the ball last must leave the field of play, run around the goal she is trying to score in and tag her team's "extra" player.

When the extra player is tagged, she can join the game immediately.

The player that ran round the pitch is the new extra player.

Coaching notes: Play continues while this player exchange is occurring so, for a short time, one team will have a "numbers up" advantage. Play two/three minutes games, with a different starting extra player each time. Encourage the team gaining possession, when the ball goes out of play, to attack as quickly as possible while it has a numerical advantage. This game is excellent for teaching quick transition and analysis of the game situation. It is especially effective for identifying 2v1 and 3v2 situations and attacking accordingly.

No-Go:

Objective: **To encourage your players to use the full width of the pitch.**

Age group: U8s to U14s

Set-up: Divide your players into teams of four or five.

Create a playing area with a goal at each end for every two teams.

The size of the area depends on the age of your players. For U10s, 40 yards long by 30 yards wide is about right.

Cone off a 10-yard square or a 20 yards long by 10 yards wide No-Go area in the middle of the pitch.

How to play: Play a small-sided game (SSG) with the condition that players are not allowed to enter the No-Go area but the ball may pass through it.

If a player does set foot in the No-Go area, award a free kick to the other team at the point where they entered the area.

Progression: Award a bonus point for a successful pass through the No-Go zone. All attacking moves must include a pass to a neutral player who stays inside the No-Go zone.

The Three Stages of Youth Soccer:

1. The basic beehive: When every player tries to get as close to the ball as possible.
2. The expanded beehive: When some players begin to realize that they can keep the ball for longer if they can find their own space to play in.
3. The co-operative beehive: When children start to understand that they can achieve more, and have even more fun, by working together.

How to teach them to support the player on the ball: Very young soccer players rarely pass the ball deliberately. They cluster around the ball like bees round a honey pot move it around with dozens of collective prods and kicks and if the ball manages to break loose they quickly chase it down and smother it again. But once players have learned basic passing/receiving skills and how to shield the ball from an opponent, they can be shown that it's easier to keep the ball away from the other team if they spread out a little.

Simple keepaway games are the best way to do that.

The next stage in a young player's development is to learn how to help the player on the ball by being in a place where he can receive a pass.

This is known as supporting "off the ball" and it's a key ingredient in the creation of a team.

You can help your players begin to understand the basic principle of supporting the player in possession - moving after passing the ball - by **playing**

4v0 Game:

Place four players in a 20-yard square. Number them 1 to 4. One ball per group.

How to play: The players pass to each other in sequence, 1 to 4. Every time the ball is passed, all the players (except the player receiving the ball) must move to a different space.

Coaching notes: This sounds like an easy game. But it isn't. 4v0 requires a lot of concentration. It's also quite hard work and for that reason, it's probably not suitable for players aged under 10.

Progression: If your players are passing and moving correctly, add a defender and remove the requirement to pass in numerical order.

Every player takes it in turn to be the defender and you can make the game competitive by awarding points to defenders for every pass they intercept. The winner is the defender who can intercept most passes in one minute.

But this is only a starting point. We are not looking for random movement: We want our players to move to a position where they can receive a pass from the player who has the ball and help his team keep possession for prolonged periods. You can encourage this by playing small-sided games (SSGs) such as

The Liverpool Game:

A 4v4 or 5v5 match played on a 40x30 pitch in much the same way as in 4v0 - players must move after they pass the ball to a team mate.

If they fail to move, a free kick is awarded to the other team.

But the emphasis should now be on movement with purpose - to support the player on the ball.

So before you play either the 1-0 game or the Liverpool Game, ask the following questions:

- What might happen if you stand still after passing?
- How close to a team mate do you need to be to receive a pass?
- If you're standing right next to the player on the ball, can they pass to you?
- If you are the "right" distance away, how can you make sure the player on the ball knows where you are?
- If the player you've just passed to is under pressure, should you ask them to give the ball back to you?
- Should you always try to pass forwards? Why?

Try to get your players to think: "If she goes there, then I'd better go over here."

By sowing these seeds of "soccer intelligence" in the minds of your players you are helping them to understand both WHY and HOW they should to support the player who has the ball.

Gang Up!

This small-sided game (SSG) is excellent for practicing 1v1 defending and attacking skills - dribbling, running with the ball, tackling, shooting and shielding the ball - as well as rewarding good teamwork and passing skills.

Age group: U8s to U12s. Number of players: 12.

Set-up:

- Place a small goal at each end of a 30x20 yards playing area.
- Divide your players into three teams of four - teams S, X and O in the diagram below. Spare players can be used as goalkeepers.
- Teams X and O are paired up and given one ball between each pair.
- Team S waits on the outside of the playing area, two players on each side.

How to play:

The players in teams X and O compete for the ball and try to score in one of the goals. Team S act as supporting players. They can receive a pass from a player in possession and pass back to them. Supporting players cannot be tackled.

If a player in team X or team O scores a goal, the ball is left in the net and the players are now free to support one of their team mates and create 2v1 and 2v2 situations.

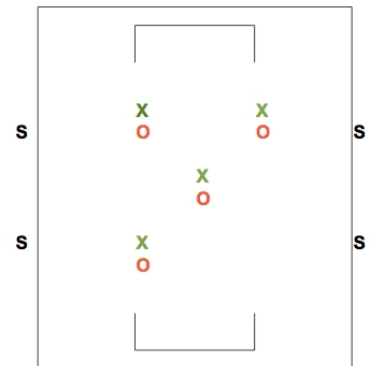
So at the beginning of the game, you start with four 1v1s.

When the first goal is scored, you get two 1v1s and one 2v2 or one 1v1 and two 2v1s. When the second goal is scored, you can have one 1v1 and one 3v3 or two 2v2s and when the third goal is scored, you have a 4v4.

The first team to score in the 4v4 game wins and the losing team become the supporting players in the next game.

Coaching notes Encourage the support players to move along the side lines to receive a pass.

Keep the game flowing by having a supply of spare balls handy. Throw one in if a ball goes out of play.



"GET EM"

Here is a game which involves both passing and dribbling that is fun and engages players quickly. Also, although primarily an individual exercise that allows for differences in ability level, if the players are ready, it can quickly become a cooperative game where players work together to solve a challenge.

THE GAME: Each player will need a ball. Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. All the other players around the outside of the gridded space.

Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'.

The game is over when all of the players have been caught.

The last player caught starts with the ball for the next game.

If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It".

Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard.

Encourage deceptive passing of the ball: look one-way and pass the other; use the outside of the foot.

Players not caught should run, jump, and use zig-zag movements.

TYPICAL TRAINING SESSION

Here are some items that should be included in a U-10 training session:

WARM-UP: A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that involve the ball. Since there can be one theme to the session, hopefully, the warm-up will lead into the theme of the day. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time after the players have broken a sweat, again, hopefully done with the ball. Again, the warm-up should get the players ready to play. It should be lively, fun, and engaging as well as instructional. There is nothing like a good, fast paced activity to grab the player's attention and make them glad that they came to practice.

INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES: Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not necessarily a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals or cooperate in small groups in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or a keep-away game. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "looser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

PLAY THE GAME: Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4 v.4 up to 8 v.8. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK: Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their head, then thigh, then foot, and then catch it. Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? Can they do that with their heads? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

U-10 TRAINING IDEA

'TEAM KNOCK OUT'

Here is a game to use in the 'Small Group Activity' phase of the practice. It is an engaging game that is fun to play and challenges players in almost all aspects of the game.

THE GAME:

- Divide the squad up into two teams.
- To start, each player on the team that is inside the field will need a ball. Those on the outside of the field do not need a ball.
- When ready, players on the outside run into the grid, attempt to steal any ball they can and put it through any one of the goals that are marked by the cones.
- Players with the ball attempt to keep the ball away from the defenders by dribbling or passing to a teammate that has lost their ball.
- If an attacking player loses a ball, they immediately try to 'steal' it back.
- The game stops when all of the balls have been kicked through the goals. Then the two teams switch roles.
- Keep track of how long it takes each team to steal all of the balls.
- If a ball is kicked out of bounds it goes over to the other team for a throw-in.

This game is good for teaching dribbling skills as players find themselves in situations where they have to dribble to keep possession as well as dribble to beat an opponent. Also, they find themselves in situations where they may have to pass to a teammate as well as find themselves playing defense as well. because there are so many balls, and so many goals, it is just a crazy enough game to be appreciated and enjoyed by a typical nine- year-old.

U12 and U15 Drills:

Links: [Various Drills & SSG's](#) | See [Attacking / Strikers \(Forwards\)](#) | [Defense](#) | [Circle Drills, Warm-ups & Conditioning](#) | [Dribbling, Tricks & Moves](#) | [Kick – Chip - Shoot - Volley](#) | [Passing](#) | [Receiving \(traps and controls\)](#) |

Hit The Cone:

Lots of fun, it's so simple that even four and five-year-olds can play it yet 15-year-olds will get a lot from it too.

Objective: To improve shooting technique, passing and communication.

Set-up: Use a circular or rectangular playing area about 30 yards across.

- Place a large traffic cone (or a flat cone with a ball balanced on top of it) as a target in the middle of the area.
- Mark out a circular five-yard exclusion zone round the cone.
- Divide your players into teams of three or four.
- Three teams per playing area.

How to play: Each team tries to score a point by hitting the target. Players cannot enter the exclusion zone. First team to five wins.

Variations:

- Make the game easier for very young players by placing a number of targets within the exclusion area.
- Make the game harder for older, more experienced players by reducing the size of the playing area.
- Add a goalkeeper or a defender to work in the exclusion zone protecting the cone.
- Play with two balls.

Soccer dribbling drills, part 1

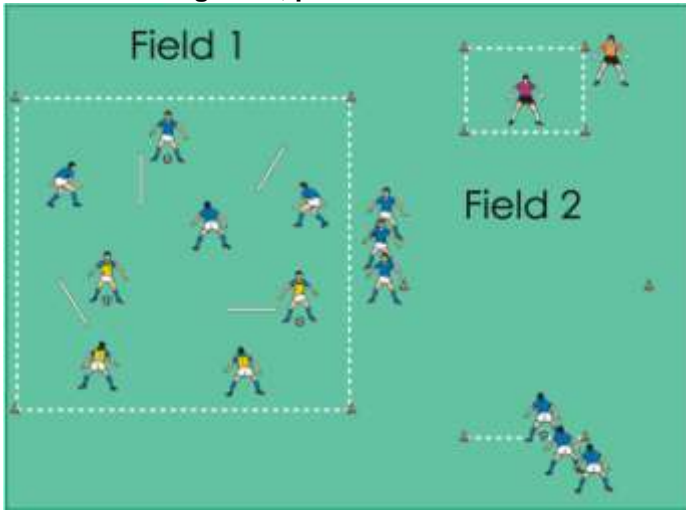


Fig. A: Soccer dribbling and faking exercises

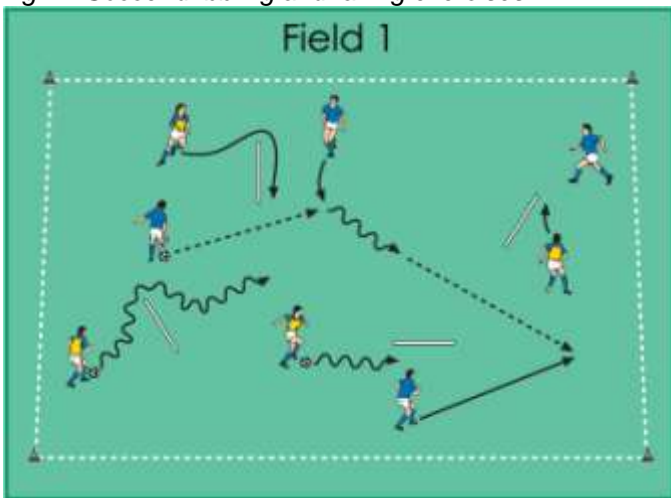


Fig. B: Soccer dribbling exercise

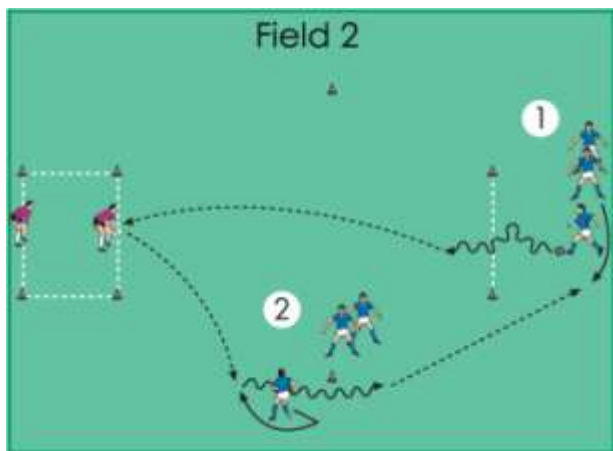
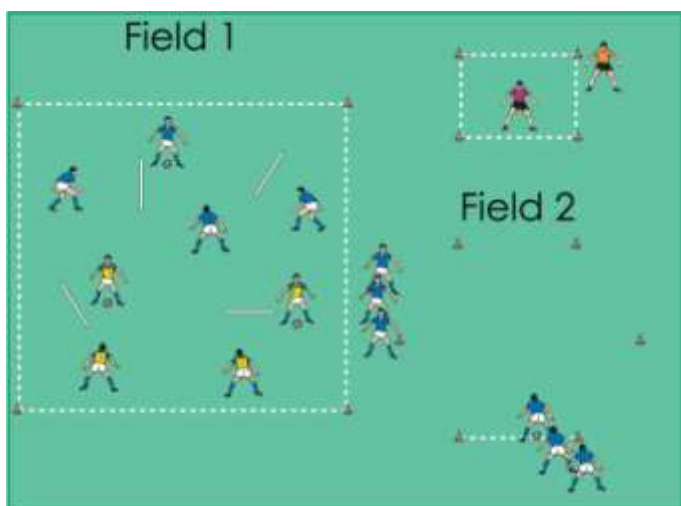


Fig. C: Soccer dribbling and faking exercise



Main focus group

- U12 - U14 players'

Fig. A

Soccer dribbling and faking exercise

Warm-up 1: Obstacle course

Setup

- Mark out two fields.
- Field 1: Lay out four poles on the field.
- Field 2: Using cones, mark out a starting line in front of a square and one station on each side
- Divide players into two equal groups and assign one to each field.

Fig. B

Sequence: Field 1

- Divide players into two teams, A and B.
- Team A's players pass to each other.
- Two of Team B's players dribble around; the other two move around the field without a ball.
- Groups switch roles after one minute.

Fig. C

Sequence: Field 2

- Two goalkeepers stand inside the square; the other players line up at the starting line and at one of the side cones.
- Player A starts by dribbling onto the field and executing a fake of his choice between the cones.
- Next, he passes on the ground or in the air to the goalkeeper.
- The goalkeeper passes or throws the ball to Player B, who checks away before showing for the ball. After controlling it, he passes back to the starting line.

- Each player moves to the other station. The goalkeepers switch positions as well.
- Groups switch fields after a few repetitions.

Tips and corrections

- Players are not allowed to touch or jump over the poles.
- Team A's players are limited to three touches. Make sure all players are constantly moving.
- Players should try to incorporate the poles in a creative way.

Fig. D

Soccer tag game and passing exercises

Warm-up 2: Obstacle tag

Setup

- Setup is the same as for Warm-up 1.

Fig. E

Sequence: Field 1

- Divide players into two teams, taggers and runners.
- One of the taggers holds a ball in his hands and tries to tag the runners with it.
- He may pass the ball to a teammate at any time. As soon as he tags a runner, he must pass. Whichever player he passes to becomes the next tagger.
- Which team can tag more players within 90 seconds?

Fig. F

Sequence: Field 2

- Divide players into two teams; each team has a goalkeeper who stands inside the square.
- On the coach's command, Player A passes to Player B, who drops the ball back; A passes in the air to the goalkeeper.
- Next, A moves to B's position and B runs back to the starting line.
- If the goalkeeper fails to catch the ball, B has to run around the cone on the side.

Tips and corrections

- The exercise on Field 2 allows you to integrate your goalkeeper warm-up with your field player warm-up.
- Before you start, however, you should give your goalkeepers a chance to warm up without the ball.
- You can also do this warm-up without goalkeepers: Two field players stand inside the square and use their thigh or chest to control the ball.
- Groups switch fields after a few repetitions.

Station Training



Station Training

Little space - lots of options

Very often teams have to share their space with other teams so your team ends up playing on a small field. Look at it as a positive because your players get to play small sided soccer games which are, especially for younger teams a good thing.

Combine your training once a week with another team of the same or older age group and improve the effectiveness of your training session.

Organization

- A clear structure for planning your training program

Sequence

- Five stations with six to nine players each
- Time per station up to two minutes

Objectives

- Variable technical-tactical requirements by changing fields
- Intensive one v one situations
- Quick short passing games and finishing with the courage of taking risk
- Offensive defense: quick transition to gain possession
- Tactics with numbers up or down
- Communication and coaching each other
- High pace

General objectives

- Intensive exchange between coaches and teams
- Learning by playing
- Having fun and enjoying the games
- Many eyes see more: the coaches can identify progress and mistakes not only from their own players
- Players learn how to judge themselves by comparison to other (older) players
- Simple organization

Tips

- Stay involved in the games and motivate your players to create a competitive and passionate environment.
- Challenge your players to constantly act rather than react.
- A high paced game will force more errors so be patient with your players so they can learn from their mistakes.
- Explain to them that these games are the basis for their ability to learn how to play successful soccer.
-

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 12 PLAYERS:

- They begin to develop the abilities to sustain complex, coordinated skill sequences.
- Some of the players have reached puberty. Girls, in general, arrive earlier than boys.
- Most players are able to think abstractly and are thus able to understand some team concepts that are foundational to the game.
- They are beginning to be able to address hypothetical situations, and to solve problems systematically.
- They are spending more time with friends and less time with their parents. " They are susceptible to conformity to peer pressure.
- They are developing a conscience, morality and scale of values.
- Players tend to be highly self-critical. Instruction needs to be enabling. Show them what can be done instead of telling them what not to do.
- Although they are more serious with their play, they are still mainly involved because it is fun.
- They are openly competitive. A few may foul on purpose.
- They are looking towards their role models and heroes in order to know how to act.
- They have a more complex and developed sense of humor.

INVOLVING THE PARENTS

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-12 player still relies on their parents for support and encouragement. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling. (phone chains)
- Choosing a team administrator, someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club. " Discuss the laws of the game.

- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards cleats or sneakers.
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-12 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do, they probably will too.

THINGS YOU CAN EXPECT

Some coaches say that the 10 and 12 year-old players have "turned the corner" and are looking like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and a bit unpredictable for the most part. These players know how much fun it is to play the game skillfully. As a result, we begin to see some the players drop out who recognize the importance of skill and become discouraged with their lack of it. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They will yell at their teammates when they make a mistake.
- They will openly question the referee's decisions.
- Players will encourage each other.
- They will pass the ball even when they know that they will not get it back.
- Team cooperation is emerging. They will run to a spot, away from the play, even when they know that they might not get the ball.
- They will point out inconsistencies between what you say and what you do. They are "moral watchdogs".
- The difference in skill levels between the players is very pronounced.
- Some players might be as big as you are, some might be half your size.
- Not only will some of the players come to training with expensive cleats, but some will also come with matching uniforms, sweatsuits, and bag.
- Parents, during games, can be brutal. Some will yell at the referee at almost every call.
- They will get together with their friends and be able to set up and play their own game.

COACHING RATIONAL

Coaching at this age level is a challenge because many of the players view themselves as real soccer players, while others are at the point where it is not as much fun as it used to be because they feel that their lack of skill development does not enable them to have an impact on the game. They see their skillful friends able to do magical things with the ball and since they cannot do this themselves, they start to drop out. Our challenge then, if the players are willing, is to keep all of the players engaged, involved, and make them feel important. (as though they are improving.) Skills still need to be the primary focus of training and players need to be put into environments where they are under pressure so that they learn how to use their skills in a variety of contexts. Here are a few other considerations as we think about working with this aged youngster:

- Our goal is to develop players in a fun, engaging environment. Winning has its place but must be balanced with the other goals of teaching them to play properly. Some decisions will need to be made that might not necessarily lead to wins (i.e.: having players play different positions, or asking players to try to play the ball "out of the back".)
- Smaller, skilled players cannot be ignored. Although it may be tempting to "win" by playing only the bigger players in key positions, the smaller, skilled players must be put into areas of responsibility.
- Small sided games are still the preferred method of teaching the game. This makes learning fun and more efficient.
- Flexibility training is essential. Have them stretch after they have broken a sweat, and, perhaps most importantly, at the end of the workout at a "warm-down".
- Overuse injuries, burnout and high attrition rates are associated with programs that do not emphasize skill development and learning enjoyment.
- Playing 11-a-side games is now appropriate.
- Single sexed teams are appropriate.
- Train for one and one-half hours, two to three times a week. Training pace needs to replicate the demands of the game itself.
- They are ready to have a preferred position, but, it is essential for their development for them to occasionally play out of their preferred spot, in training, as well as during games.
- Training is now best if it focuses on one, perhaps two topics a session. Activities should be geared to progressing from fundamental activities that have little or no pressure from an opponent to activities that are game like in their intensity and pressure.

TYPICAL TRAINING SESSION

Here are some items that should be included in a U-12 training session:

WARM-UP: A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual or small group activities that involve the ball. Since there can be one theme to the session, hopefully, the warm-up will lead into the theme of the day. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, after the players have broken a sweat, again, hopefully done with the ball. The warm-up should get the players ready to play. It should be lively, fun, and engaging as well as instructional. There is nothing like a good, fast-paced activity to grab the player's attention and make them glad that they came to practice.

INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES: Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not necessarily a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals or cooperate in small groups in a game environment. An example would be a kind of keep-away game, or small sided games that bring out or emphasize a specific skill or topic. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "looser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

PLAY THE GAME: Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4v.4 up to 8v.8. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible. Finish this stage with a real game with regular rules. Players need to apply their newly learned abilities to the real game.

WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK: Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Challenge them with some ball trick. Can they complete a juggling pattern? Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? Can they do that with their heads? How many times can they do it back and forth? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

U-12 TRAINING IDEA

'NUMBERS PASSING'

Here is a good warm-up that will get players prepared for a session on passing and receiving skills. It is an example of how players can be challenged in an environment that is dynamic and can demand specific, targeted technique that has direct implications to the demands placed upon players during the real game. Since there is no pressure from an opponent, it is appropriate to use this activity during the warm-up.

THE GAME:

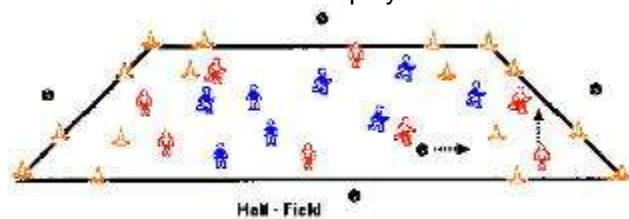
- Assign each player a number.
- Players pass the ball to the player with the # one higher than their own # (egg: 5 passes to 6, 11 to 1.)
- All balls travel through the entire team.
- After they pass a ball, they must run to a different spot on the field.
- Players are first allowed unlimited touches, then only two touches, then one touch if they are able.
- Ask the players not to let the ball stop, or to let their pass hit other players or balls.

TRY THESE VARIATIONS:

- Left foot only.
- Outside of foot only.
- No talking allowed.

ASK THE PLAYERS TO:

- Make eye contact with the person they are passing to.
- Perform good passing technique.
- Keep their body and vision open to the field of play.
- Keep the person they are passing to in their line of sight.
- Be active. Look like a soccer player.



U-12 TRAINING IDEA

'CORNER GOAL GAME'

Here is a game that can be used in the middle phases of the training session. This game involves passing and receiving skills and is also a good activity for showing players the benefits of 'spreading out'. It is a dynamic game with a lot of running. It provides a lot of 'puzzles' for players to figure out and demands that they cooperate.

THE GAME:

- Set up the field as shown on approximately half-field, depending on how many players are on your team. (16 players shown. It is OK if one team has an extra player. If there is an odd # of players on the team, that gives the players a different puzzle to solve.)
- 10 yd. 'squares' are set up in each corner.
- Goals are scored when the ball is passed into the square and then out to a teammate.

- Each team can attack any one of the four goals.
- Whoever has the ball is on offense until they lose possession, or if they kick it out of bounds.
- Score can be kept.
- Play with two balls at once to make the game exciting. (This will actually make the game two, separate smaller games going on at the same time.)

Ask the players to keep spread out and to try to attack the goal that is 'open'. Keep possession, make the other team earn the ball. See if the players can recognize where pressure is coming from.

U-13 and U-14: DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SKILLS, INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP TACTICS.

HIGH PRIORITY: The importance of possession: DO NOT GIVE THE BALL AWAY!!!

Development of individual skill.

All practices must challenge the player in competition.

Understanding of combination play:

1. Support
2. Takeovers
3. Wall pass

Individual and small group defending.

One session in three devoted to 1v1's, 2v2's, 3v3's.

Develop an understanding of:

1. Delay
2. Tracking back
3. Depth
4. Balance

LOWER EMPHASIS Functional play, Team play, Set Plays.

All activities should be challenging, motivating and involve **TRANSITION!!!**

U-16 TRAINING PRIORITIES

U-15 and U-16: DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP SKILL / TACTICS.

HIGH PRIORITY: Development of individual skill should be covered in the warm-up.

Understanding of combination play:

1. Support
2. Takeovers
3. Wall pass
4. Third man running
5. Overlap

DO NOT GIVE THE BALL AWAY!!!

One session in three devoted to 3v3's, 4v4's, 5v5's.

Develop an understanding of:

1. Depth -- role of strong side defenders.
2. Balance -- role of weak side defenders
3. Compactness
4. Communication -- who, what, when.

LOWER EMPHASIS: Functional play, team play, set plays.

All activities should be challenging, motivating, and involve **TRANSITION!!!**

U-17 TRAINING PRIORITIES.

U-17: DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIONAL PLAY.

Individual and group skill should be covered in the warm-up.

Functional Play:

1. Attacking roles and responsibilities
- 2.
- 3.

a) b) Defending roles and responsibilities. One in three practices devoted to defending principles of play.

Match - related practice: offense vs. defense.

Crossing: Develop a complete understanding of:

1. Crossing angle.
2. Overlaps.
3. near and far post runs.
- 4.

Set Plays: Develop a complete understanding of:

1. Attacking and defending responsibilities at corner kicks and all other restarts.
2. The importance of possession from throw-ins in defensive and midfield third of field versus possession and creativity in the final third

All activities should be challenging, motivating, and involve **TRANSITION!!!**

U-18 TRAINING PRIORITIES

U-18 DEVELOPMENT OF TEAM PLAY.

Individual and group skill should be covered in the warm - up.

Functional play. Training players for specific positions and roles.

Team Play:

1. Match - related practice ; offense vs. defense
2. Match conditioned. One in three practices devoted to the defensive aspects of the game. Players should have a complete understanding of the principles of team play.

Practice - Shooting

Warm Up 5 - 10 minutes. Activity level - Mild ramping up. Space: General. 1 - 2 Players per group.



Instep Warm Up

The Game

A good warm up for sessions dealing with insteps. Start with players sitting down and kicking the ball out of their hands. Look for good technique - ankle locked, toe pointed, strike ball with laces, plant foot facing target, leaning forward, no spin on ball, head position.

Progression

- Sitting
- Two insteps in a row
- Kick ball, stand up and catch it.
- While standing (moving), kick ball and catch it.
- Have the ball bounce in between touches, keep ball going.
- Two touches without ball hitting ground.



Instep Passing

The Game

In pairs, players make instep passes back and forth.

Progression

- Start with ball being kicked after a bounce, dropped from hands..
- Ball kicked from the ground.
- Increase distance.
- Restrict player to 2 touches.

Small Game 20 - 25 Minutes. Activity level: Medium progression to high. Space: Defined space "smaller". 3 - 5 players per group.



Instep Squares

The Game

Two squares are set up with two players in each square who are teammates. The more skillful the players, the smaller the squares are and the further apart they are. The game starts when one team kicks the ball into the others' square. The receiving team must control the ball without it going outside of their square. Each player is allowed to play the ball with one touch. The team has 3 touches to get the ball into their opponents square. The ball may not stop at any time. Play stops when a shot misses the other teams grid or is not controlled. Decide beforehand how high a ball may be played to be considered fair.

Coaching Points

- "Drive" the ball into the other teams grid to make it difficult to control
- Good shooting technique
- Encourage an aggressive "shooting mentality"
- To receive the ball, get in the line of flight, taking the first touch to "kill the ball" for your partner.
- Prepare the surface that will receive the ball early
- Keep the body balanced, weight on toes.

Team Game 30 Minutes plus. Activity level: High. Space: Defined for the game = larger space. 7 - 11 players per team.



Steal The Bacon

The Game

Two teams, each player is designated a number. The coach calls out the numbers of the players. These players then run out from the endline to play the game. The coach serves balls from the sideline if the ball goes out of bounds or into a goal. Each group should play for a minute and a half of continuous action. Players waiting to come on should return loose balls to the coach, or act as "support" players, returning passes back to the team who made them. The number of players playing at one time depends on the coach's objectives. This game is best played 2 v. 2 or 3 v. 3.

Coaching Points

- Combination play
- Seeking and taking shots
- Attacking and defending principles of play



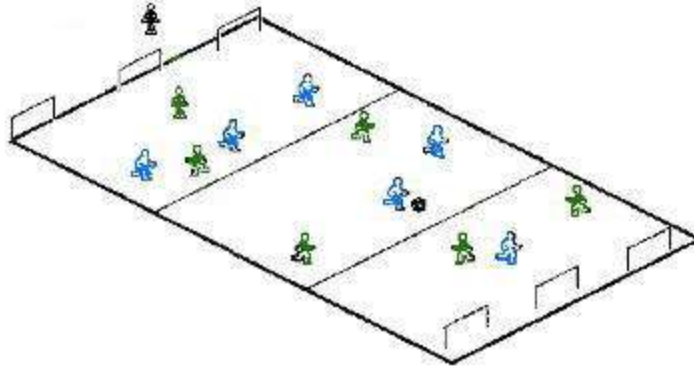
Bread & Butter

The Game

Three teams of 4 (A, B, C) and two keepers (X, Y). Team A attacks against keeper Y. If they score, they then quickly try to attack keeper X. At this time, team B leaves the field and takes the place of team C who were the supporting players on the endlines, supporting both teams. The supporting players support for both teams and can move along the end line. They are limited to one touch one the ball. Have an ample supply of balls ready in each net.

Coaching Points

- After scoring a goal, attacking players look to play quickly before the other team has a chance to come on and get organized.
- Try to play the ball to target players.
- Attacking and defending principles of play.



3 Goals

The Game

Start with two teams of equal number. Each team has 3 goals to defend and attack. Each team has one keeper who must defend all 3 goals. Play regular soccer rules.

Coaching Points

- Attacking team should try to change the point of attack away from the keeper, then proceed to get a quick shot off.
- Defending team must try to force the attackers in one direction so their keeper knows which goal to defend.

Warm Down 5 - 10 Minutes. Activity level: Low ramping down. Space: General, No specific boundaries. 1 - 2 players per group.



Central Goal Shooting

The Game

Player 1 starts in goal. Player A dribbles at speed to cone, stops the ball and shoots with the next step. After the shot, player A runs to become the new keeper waiting for player 2 to shoot. Player 1 gets ball and goes back to his side.

Coaching Points

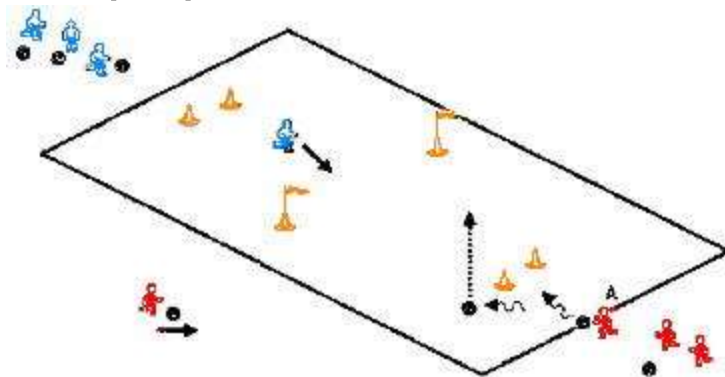
- Watch for players backing up or moving to the side before they shoot. There should be no extra steps.
- Set up several fields and have contests.
- Teams should not wait to advance ball to cone and shoot immediately after the opponent shoots.
- The drill makes players follow their shot, and the group will coach and remind the players. If they do not get to the goal, the opposition will have an open goal to shoot at.
- Teams can keep score themselves. A goal counts if only below the height of the keeper and in between the markers. First to 5 wins or 3 minutes. Players should get quality repetition in short periods of time.
- Coach can vary repetition by the number of players in each line.
- Vary distance to goal and size of goal so players have success, then make it harder by increasing the distance and making goal smaller.
- Encourage players to hit hard.



Same game as before but the shooter must strike the ball before the cone and on the move.

Coaching Points

- Watch for the plant foot being too far behind the ball, this will send the ball over the keeper's head.
- Make sure starting position to cone distance is great enough to allow other player time to get to goal.
- Progress further, allow players to dribble around the cone and then shoot.
- Hips and plant foot should be facing goal when shooting.
- Players should strike the ball with a smooth swing. Don't allow swing to be a sickle motion.
- Players should look at ball when making contact.
- Follow through on kicking foot and get to goal.



Player **A** now dribbles directly between cone markers simulating a defender (cones about one step apart). Player chops ball to either side and shoots ball back to far post.

Coaching Points

- Kicking foot and hips should be pointing toward far post.
- Follow through onto kicking foot.
- Eyes on ball during shot.
- Get to goal after shot.



4 v. 4 The Basic Game

Size of Field

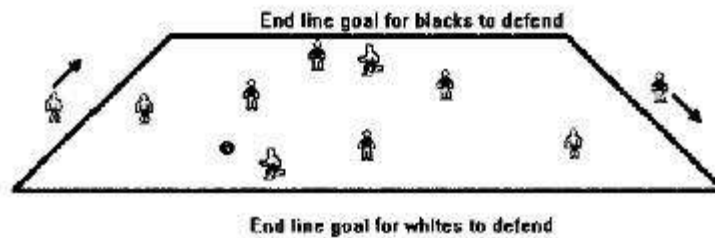
Depends on the age of players. Can vary from 30 yd. x 20 yd. up to 40 yd. x 25 yd.. The goals are 8 feet wide.

The Team In Possession of the Ball

- Can employ buildup by using the entire playing area in terms of length and width (spread out, possession).
- Can learn and determine team shape, which, in a group of 4 resembles a diamond.
- Can create goal scoring opportunities by taking action either individually or collectively.

When the Other Team Has the Ball

- The aim is to prevent goals from being scored by getting behind the ball and to regain possession of the ball.
- Simple principles of defending are reinforced and amplified since there is no spare defender or goalkeeper.



4 v. 4 Line Soccer

Variations of the 4 v. 4 Game

Using slightly different sizes of goals, differing methods to score, and slightly altered size and shape of field can guide players to solve problems by emphasizing certain aspects of play.

4 v. 4 Line Soccer

- Each team has a line to defend and attack.
- Score a goal by dribbling the ball over any portion of the line that your team is attacking.
- The size of the field is the same as a standard 4 v. 4 game, but it is turned sideways. The wider, shorter field allows for maintaining good shape (diamond), but also creates many good 1 v. 1 situations which challenges the player's dribbling skills.
- Players need to evaluate and identify when to dribble and pass. This variation highlights: The correct attitude (when to take a risk aggressively) and the technical development and execution of dribbling.



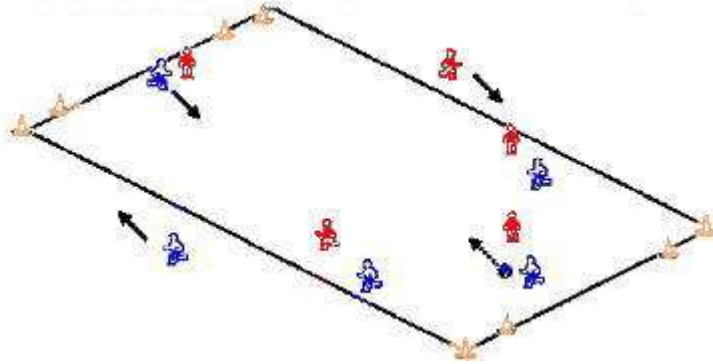
4 v. 4 The Dribbling Game

The Game

Same field as the "Line Soccer" game, a wide, short field. teams can score in one of 2 ways. Passing into an open goal or by stopping the ball on the endline between the two goals they are attacking.

What The Game Incorporates

- Vision
 - Changes in the direction and speed of play due to the shape of the field and presence of multiple goals.
 - Decision making skills because the player has a variety of options at his disposal (dribbling, passing, "shooting", changing directions)
-



4 v. 4 The Passing Game

The Game

Since the playing area is longer than it is wide, the emphasis is on creating length (height) in the game. In this game, there is a premium placed on playing the ball forward early. The ball can be played early:

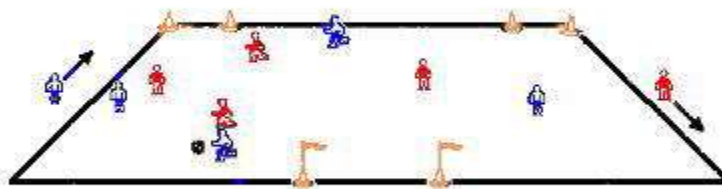
- To a target player who is coming back for the ball with a defender behind them (as shown in diagram).
- To a player running forward away from the server.

Scoring

- Stopping the ball anywhere on the line.
- Passing the ball through an open goal.

This Game Emphasizes

- Vision
 - Changes in direction and speed of play.
 - Appropriate use of firm touch.
 - Long and short passing.
-



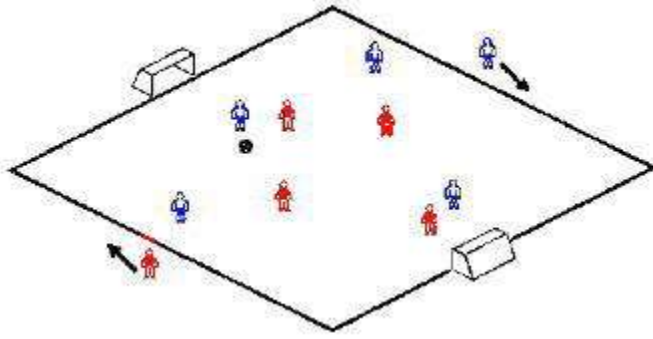
Transitions

The Game

While one team attacks the large goal, the opposition attacks either of the two smaller goals. When the team scores in one of the two smaller goals, they must change directions and take a turn at attacking the larger goal.

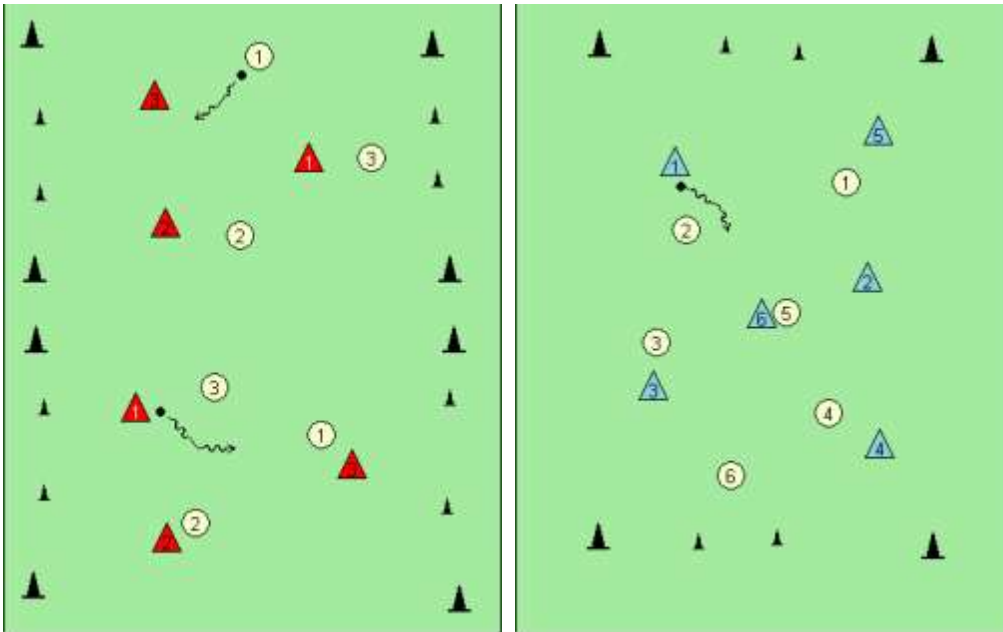
This Game Emphasizes

- Attitude and confidence that is essential for scoring goals. (Large net)
 - Passing, shooting and dribbling skills required in the other 4 v. 4 games.
 - Transition awareness since the team can attack quickly in the other direction.
 - Team shape and the roles of each player because when there is a transition, the back becomes the front and vice versa.
-



4 v. 4 The Shooting Game

The priority of this game is shooting and scoring. Since the field is wide and short, players should be looking to shoot almost whenever they get the ball. Game played like a regular 4 v. 4 match.



The biggest advantage for small sided games- **players will touch the soccer ball more**. In example #1, there are two players touching the ball compared to only 1 player touching the ball in example #2.

In both examples, all the basic soccer principles are there (offense, defense, 1st attacker, 2nd attacker, etc) but in example #1, those principle are easier for the players to recognize, identify and learn from.

In example #1, ALL players are one pass away so all players are in the game.

In example #1, more players will get opportunities to score which **creates excitement**.

Motivational and Inspiring Soccer Quotes!

“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.” – Pele (arguably the best soccer player the world has ever seen)

“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of will.”- Vincent T. Lombard

“Every kid around the world who plays soccer wants to be Pele. I have a great responsibility to show them not just how to be like a soccer player, but how to be like a

man.” – Pele

“To be the ultimate team, you must use your body and your mind. Draw up on the resources of your teammates. Choose your steps wisely and you will win. Remember, only teams succeed.”- Jose Mourinho (2011 manager of Real Madrid)

“I play with passion and fire. I have to accept that sometimes this fire does harm”.- Eric Cantona

‘I eat soccer, I sleep soccer. I breathe soccer. I’m not mad, I’m just passionate’.- Thierry Henry

“Fail to prepare, prepare to fail.” – Roy Keane

“If I walked on water, my accusers would say it is because I can’t swim.”- Berti Vogts

“The goalkeeper is the jewel in the crown and getting at him should be almost impossible. It’s the biggest sin in ball to make him do any work.” – George Graham

“Pressure? What pressure? Pressure is poor people in the world trying to feed their families. Working from dawn till dusk just to feed their young. There is no pressure in ball”- Jose Mourinho

‘A person who is never pushed to do something he cannot, will never truly deliver all he is capable of’ - John Stuart Mill

“The minute you start talking about what you’re going to do if you lose, you have lost.”
George Shultz

“Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.”
Thomas Edison

“Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to error that counts.”
Nikki Giovanni

“So if you make a mistake on the pitch, it’s not the end of the world. If you can gain experience from it you can move your game forward. You gain experience”
by learning from mistakes”
Wina

Five days shalt thou labor, as the Bible says. The seventh day is the Lord thy God’s. The sixth day is for ball. ~Anthony Burgess

Sweat plus sacrifice equals success”. Charlie Finley

“Don’t wish for it, WORK for it”. Unknown

“The minute you start talking about what you’re going to do if you lose, you have lost.”
– George Shultz

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime. -Babe Ruth

It’s not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog. – Archie Griffen, two-time Heisman winner (5ft 9)

The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital. – Joe Paterno

The great players practice until they get it right! (Even if it means staying late to

master something.) ~ Mog Tivata

Stick with it! Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing till it gets there. ~Josh Billings

Can't make the team? Keep being overlooked for a place in the starting lineup? The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't. ~Henry Ward Beecher

The greatest oak was once a little nut who held its ground. ~Author Unknown

Trying to impress the team coach – here's a good one to help you stand out... Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did. ~Newt Gingrich

You can't go through life quitting everything. If you're going to achieve anything, you've got to stick with something. ~From the television show Family Matters

It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer. ~Albert Einstein

There is no telling how many miles you will have to run while chasing a dream. ~Author Unknown

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them. ~G.B. Shaw, Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1893

Do it now, not tomorrow, not next week, next month...DO IT NOW!
Mog Tivata

Don't Quit! Never quit! Don't even think about quitting. Don't Go There!
Wina

If you're attacking, you don't get as tired as when you're chasing.
Kyle Rote, Jr.

The rules of soccer are very simple, basically it is this: if it moves, kick it.
If it doesn't move, kick it until it does.
Phil Woosnam

The goalkeeper is the jewel in the crown and getting at him should be almost impossible. It's the biggest sin in ball to make him do any work.
George Graham

Some people say soccer's a matter of life or death, but it isn't. It's much more important than that.
Variation of a famous saying

"Winning isn't everything, wanting to is".
Unknown

Show me a guy who's afraid to look bad, and I'll show you a guy you can beat every time.
Lou Brock

We know the key to soccer success – it's, get off your butt, throw the remote, put on your trainers and get out there practicing!
Wina
Or as someone once said...."He who wants to get to the top must get off his bottom."
Mog Tivata

"I've missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot...and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Michael Jordan Professional Basketball Player

Do your best. Play fairly. Embrace every activity with integrity, honesty and discipline. Be responsible for your actions. And above all, have fun.

Tiger Woods

"Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming

'Wow – what a Ride!'"

Peter Sage

"If you have a positive attitude and constantly strive to give your best effort, eventually you will overcome your immediate problems and find you are ready for greater challenges."

Pat Riley Professional Coach

"If you always put limits on everything you do, physical or anything else.

It will spread into your work and into your life. There are no limits.

There are only plateaus, and you must not stay there, you must go beyond them."

Bruce Lee

Five days shalt thou labor, as the Bible says. The seventh day is the Lord thy God's. The sixth day is for ball.

~Anthony Burgess

Concerning ball playing, I protest to you it may rather be called a friendly kind of fighting, rather than recreation.

~Author Unknown

If you're attacking, you don't get as tired as when you're chasing.

~Kyle Rote, Jr.

"A champion is afraid of losing. Everyone else is afraid of winning."

Billie Jean King

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships."

Michael Jordan

Life and The Beautiful Game: 7 Lessons Soccer Can Teach Us About The Real World and Vice-Versa

1. We miss 100% of the shots we don't take. In life and soccer we have to take risks otherwise there is no progression, no goals scored or accomplished, and no glory. If you don't take risks in life you will live with regret and that is a horrible feeling.

2. Sometimes, you have to be a little selfish.

In soccer, usually this is in reference to making the decision to pass instead of trying to score on your own. Me being more of a midfielder and my friend being a striker who has made finding the back of the net a habit as much as an obsession, he has always been quick to remind me of this anytime I decided to dish a pass instead of shoot myself. Yes it is important to be a generous soccer player and human being. I feel strongly about giving love to those with whom we share the field and universe, however, over the years it has become apparent that we have to take care of numero

uno. Taking care of number 1 means that we have to put ourselves first because if we don't, no one else will... not in soccer, and not in life. Plus, if we are struggling as individuals, how much can we really empower others? Not much. Strengthen yourself, and you can strengthen others. It's funny isn't it that after someone scores a goal they are more inclined (and more capable) to give an assist.

3. Our favorite coaches are the ones who played us a lot.

Everyone's favorite coach is the one who let them play the most minutes and praised them the most as a player. Of course, because we all want to be loved. Now imagine a championship game where the coach's job is on the line and he suddenly has access to 11 players all much better than yourself. Where often you would be starting, you find yourself side-lined. "Damn this coach! What is wrong with him today!? Idiot!" Oh how our opinions can change. For many players those thoughts would soon turn inwards against ourselves and we would start to question if we are any good at all. "Maybe the coach is right" we might think. Where am I going with this? Well a few points to be taken from this example:

A. We all want to be loved and that is fine, but be honest with yourself at all times. Don't lie to yourself about who you are and how far you have to go just to avoid discomfort. Sure, love yourself as a player and as a human being, but do your best to have a clear picture of yourself and not one based on ego.

B. Put yourself in other's shoes before you start holding things against them. If you were the coach what would you do? Your boss? Your mom?

C. Yes, I would be mad too in the example situation. But hey, ain't nothing wrong with wanting to prove someone wrong every now and then. Like strength coach Joe DeFranco says tauntingly, "tell me I can't!". Although it can be done negatively and mostly we should be proving things to ourselves, wanting to show others what we know we are capable of can be very motivating and will help us in our pursuit of excellence.

4. Mistakes, bad games, injuries, sometimes they are inevitable.

Everyone can be a rock star when life is good (just got the job you wanted, finally got a hot date with the girl or guy you've been eying, scored a goal, made a team, etc.) but it is who we are when life is not on your side that allows us to live the life we want and get the results we want. Shit happens. What matters is how we react and our attitude is something we can always control. I never said it was easy, nor will it ever be, but the ability to control our thoughts is probably the greatest of all abilities worth attaining. Injured and frustrated? What are you going to do about it? Complain, or impress people with your toughness and fast recovery? Just suffered a loss or played a bad game? Are you going to blame the field conditions, the playing style of your team, the coach? Or are you going to keep your mouth shut, learn from the experience, and work to get better? I think you get the idea. Everything starts with attitude.

5. There are no shortcuts to success.

In soccer, you cannot take days off at a time, eat whatever you want, stay out all night, etc., and expect to perform at your best. Similarly in life, if you don't study for a test, or you procrastinate at work, or if you think you can lie and cheat your way out of tough situations, you have another thing coming. Anything worthwhile has to be earned and constantly looking to take the easy way out usually ends up biting you in the ass.

6. How hard do we train when no one is watching us?

Getting better at anything takes tons of practice. Going from average to good and ultimately being one of the best takes more practice than is probably healthy. In the book *Talent Is Overrated*, author Geoff Colvin calls the concept of working on things

to get better by ourselves even when it is not fun as “deliberate practice”. Who says practice is limited to scheduled practice times with the team or when you are feeling extra motivated? What about training by yourself when you don’t even want to? Working on weaknesses when you are mentally and physically tired? Are you pushing yourself?

6. Soccer is a simple game, often made complicated.

Life is similar. Many people find ways to complicate their lives by focusing on things that are really not that important. When we do that, we take for granted the simple things that can and should be bringing us joy on a daily basis. In my younger days I was so obsessed with playing well that any mistake or bad game would literally bring me into a temporary depression. I had my priorities wrong. I did not play soccer with a healthy desire to be great, instead I turned the game into my identity. Where and how we place our values is a huge. We have to keep our perspectives in check. When you show up to play, are you appreciating the different aspects of the game such as the smell of the grass, the fact that you have teammates, or the fact that you have two legs that function? We are on this planet for a limited time and from that awareness should come at least a certain level of gratitude. Live with purpose, sure, but that does not mean life or soccer has to be so serious.

7. When you are struggling, you can always work harder.

Many times in a soccer game you can feel lost within the game or your might be thrown off by the flow of the game and you can’t seem to find your rhythm. If we play it safe and wait for the game to come to us we may be too late. Instead, make a conscious effort to push beyond what comes to you naturally.

Tips for Mental Soccer Training:

It’s common knowledge that soccer is just as much a mental game as it is a physical game. Even if players have the best grasp of fundamentals and the best soccer training, it’s worth nothing if they crack under pressure, or if they have mental, emotional and lifestyle issues outside of soccer that mess with their head in-game.

Bouncing back from a poor performance or handling negative emotions is something that comes from having your head on right, not just practicing drills up and down the field. If you want to get ahead of the game, you should spend as much time training your mind as you do your body.

By learning to manage stress, anxiety and other psychological aspects of the game, you can excel faster than your peers who just focus on the mechanics of soccer. Here are a few soccer training tips to help you do just that.

Soccer tip #1: Visualize the ball

Sure, you kick the ball around every day. But do you imagine yourself doing it, or do you just do it? Even when you’re not on the field, use mental imagery to “practice” your soccer training. There are two ways you can do it: external visualization, where you imagine watching a movie of yourself playing soccer, or internal visualization, where you imagine playing as though you are actually doing it. This concept will help familiarize you with your task until you could do it half-asleep, with both hands tied behind your back.

Soccer tip #2: Relax, chill out, and calm down

Everybody gets nervous before something like a game or a performance. Unfortunately, anxiety can also muddle your thinking, which can cause you to make bad judgments on the field. If you're alert, but relaxed, you can make decisions better and faster when you're under pressure. Controlling your anxiety will go a long way to making you feel more confident in your game, because you'll know that it won't affect your performance. Take some time to relax before each game, and you'll find yourself a lot less stressed.

Soccer tip #3: Focus on your goals

Having both short-term and long-term goals for your soccer training will motivate you and give you something to strive for. If things don't seem to be improving and you don't have any goals, it's easy to get discouraged and consider quitting. The goals shouldn't be impossible, but they should definitely challenge you and force you to step up your game. Challenging yourself is the only way to consistently improve.

Soccer tip #4: Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate

Yes, it's easy to get distracted during a game. However, part of being a good player is overcoming that. Concentration drills can help you to improve your concentration and focus completely on the game. Not every drill works the same for everybody else. Some people are visual learners, some are audible learners. Find a drill or a pre-game ritual that works best for you.

By mastering your mental game, you can reduce your anxiety, overcome negative emotions, bounce back from a bad mistake, and make playing soccer a more enjoyable experience all around. The mental soccer training is just as important as the physical, so don't neglect it. You may be surprised at how you improve.

Joey Bilotta is the vice president of EduKick, a cultural immersion soccer training program. Every EduKick soccer training program puts an emphasis on sports psychology to help their players get the most out of their camps. For more information on EduKick programs and how a top-notch mental game can help you, visit <http://www.EduKick.com> today.

The Power of Affirmations:

What you tell yourself becomes your reality because your unconscious mind does what you tell it to do.

Affirmations are positive statements you make to yourself, which consciously program the unconscious part of your mind and set the stage for self-fulfilling prophecy. They can be extremely powerful in producing results .”

Affirmations can be said aloud, done silently, written or even chanted. A few guidelines:

When creating affirmations word them in the present tense as though what you are affirming is already reality. I am an incredible striker instead of I want to be an incredible striker .

Always word your affirmations in the positive. I have a great touch with the ball rather than I am no longer clumsy with the ball .

The shorter and simpler the better.

Always choose affirmations that feel right to you. What works for one person may not always work for another.

Create a feeling of belief that your affirmations can be true. When doing affirmations temporarily suspend any doubts you may have had, and put you full emotional and mental energy into them. Remember that you have the power to create your reality and you are in every moment.

Add visualization. This makes your affirmation even more powerful. Use as many senses as possible when doing affirmations and turn those senses up high. Make it in

color, with movement, 360 degrees around you. Add sound and make it appealing and melodic. Feel the way you want knowing that what your saying is true and then double that feeling. See yourself in your imagination doing what you are affirming then step in so that you're seeing it through your own eyes.

Some examples of affirmations:

I am an incredible soccer player.
I do fast footwork easily and effortlessly.
I am a great keeper.
Every day my skills are getting better.
I feel great about my abilities.
I am one with the ball.
I am an excellent keeper.
I am great at passing and shooting.
I am great at tackling the ball.

Coaching Pearls:

Links: Practice Set up, Ball Hogs | Ways to improve Players etc | [Improving Your Team](#) | [Coaching Styles](#) | [Discipline](#) | [Attendance & Parent Issues](#) | [Good vs. Bad Coaches](#) | [Soccer Vision, Tactics and Style and Mistakes](#) | [Positions & Formations](#) | [Rules & Communication & OTHER \(Tactical, Terms, Awards, Sportsmanship, Quotes\)](#) | [Indoor](#) | [Game Day - Warm-ups](#) | [Team Shape](#) | [Coaching Girls & Team Names](#) | [Boredom / In a Rut](#) | [Half Time, Pre-Game Pearls and Player Mistakes](#) | [Soccer intelligence and Competitiveness](#) | [Various Small Side Games](#) | [Sportsmanship](#) | [Losing Season & End Of Season Checklist](#) | [Restarts](#) | [Team Captain](#) | [Team Building Games](#) | [Other \(3v3\)](#) |

There is a fine line between aggressive and competition. We all enjoy competition. Those players that are overly aggressive may need anger-management counseling as sometimes it can get out of bounds when someone steps over the line and somebody gets hurt.

COACHING: Don't talk every minute of the practice. Let them play. Combine fun and the drills.

- Players should be busy at all times. If drills keep players inactive, break team into smaller groups and run parallel drills.
- Look for your coaching points in play, freeze action, make one point. Keep corrections short. Encourage, correct, encourage, restart. Keep moving to good positions to observe.
- Coach the group doing your topic, not their opponents. For example, in teaching shooting, coach the shooters, not the defenders.
- Coach in sequence, first things first. Teach in a progression. Keep it moving - move on to the next stage when you get success. Adjust the space or conditions if you are not getting success.
- Compliment good play (aim for 3 compliments for every correction). Incorporate all the elements in your practice for efficiency.
- Show is better than Talk, and Do is better than Show.
- The goal for the team is to play excellent. To play truly great soccer, the team has to be more than a group of great individual players. They have to play great as a team. It does no good to be the best player on a team that plays poorly.
- Failure is part of the process toward perfection.
- It does not matter who scores the goal. It is team play. The team scores the goal. The best part of a play may have occurred 5 seconds before the shot was ever taken.
- The goal is to develop soccer players so that in the future, they can excel in varsity soccer. What they learn from this experience will help them excel in high school and in life after high school. Winning is not the only thing. Pride, confidence, dedication, sacrifice, hard work, physical fitness, mental toughness, sportsmanship and leadership are what I emphasize.

1. TECHNICAL SKILLS before Decision Making.
2. DECISION MAKING SKILLS before Tactical Training.
3. TACTICAL TRAINING as an individual and as a team.

All the above is supported by Physical Ability and Speed to accomplish them.

- Try to instill the value of practice by showing how all the successes on the field directly relate to the amount of hard work and effort put in. Remind players of what they were like when they first started or what happened when they first tried a fancy move they since mastered; and explain how all these same principles, regardless of soccer, can apply to other areas of their life. To achieve dreams, set goals and work hard; but to really enjoy achievements, they should follow the path of a good person.

Learning Everyone's Name: At the recreational level, it is common for coaches to know only a few of their players by name or face. The same is true for the players who will tend to cluster near the teammates they know and ignore the ones they don't know. Your goal is to get everyone to learn everyone's name as quickly as possible. At the youngest age levels, you might want to bring stick-on name tags for players and coaches. Some teams have even made inexpensive scrimmage/practice shirts using plain cotton T's and fabric markers to draw on a name and number. At the very least, keep a 3x5 "cheat sheet" listing the player's name and 2-3 identifiers (e.g. Caitlin C./long blonde ponytail and orange shorts). Repeat the names as often as possible throughout the practice, and have your players do the same, switching partners and teammates for various activities. Repeat this process as necessary through the next several practices.

What if only a few kids show up?: Say it's early in the season, spring vacation etc. Don't cancel practice or cut out early....let them have a fun day! Think of it as a reward those who showed up.

- Play shooting games (pass them balls at different angles and locations around the goal to touch it in).
- Play small sided games. Use any odd man as a neutral player.
- Play "Hit the coach": Score if they hit you with a pass as you dodge them in the center circle area.
- Races: With the ball: Dribbling, roll-overs (sole drag)- L foot, R foot, passing ball between feet, backwards dribbling, left foot only.....
- Play Coach (Simon) says.....(touch ball with heal. Jump over the ball. Throw the ball up high and catch it.....thigh trap it.....cushion trap. Flick it as far as possible. Run with the ball between your knees. Run/hop with ball between ankles. Juggle the ball 5 times. Touch your ear to the ball. Sit on the ball. Do a push up on the ball. Dribble the ball like a basketball. Dribble with your head. Dribble with your knees. Dribble backwards..
- Play "Head or Catch": two players stand in front of a coach who alternates tosses to them at head level and says "head" or "catch".....they have to do the opposite. Mentally challenging, helps them think on their feet and gives them a fun training break.
- Cone Races: Split your players into teams (or individuals). Place a cone obstacle course and see who completes it the fastest.
- Race to Score: Set up back-to-back goals, dribble to front of goal then shoot then to side for another ball to shot on the opposite goal. Fastest time wins.
- Play [Soccer-Related Games \(Croquet, Golf, Tennis etc\)](#) |

Basic Practice set up pearls:

My main recommendations are 3 things and you will keep the kids engaged / happy to see and will maximize their coaching (as 95% comes from the practices). One can get a lot in during 1.5 hours with good organization. Changing things up makes the time go fast, prevents boredom and keeps them working hard (active) such that you don't have to utilize as much time stretching, toning and doing aerobic training as much.

1. Run one or more SSG's each day. I am not against scrimmages.....If the kids (and coaches) have worked hard treat them to full group scrimmage for the last 15-20 min....they like as it fun but easy some of the kids to slack off with and they don't get them darn touches in.
2. Limiting drills to a max of 10-15 minutes (prevents boredom ... and for a bit of psychology, when you cut them off while still having fun....they will want to do it again). Do not spend more than 10 minutes per drill, not only will drills start to become boring, the kids will loathe them.
3. Add regular skills sessions. They may not like it but we all need it and too much is boring. 15 minutes each practice if possible. This is to work on dribbling, heading, passing, volleys or whatever the seems to be weak on in the past weeks game.

Other:

- Before you can work on "Soccer Tactics" such as awareness - positions - team shape and making runs, the players need the basics such a receiving and crossing. This need to be done before you can learn tactics.
- Players need a verbal communication relationship and often just eye contact.....watch each other and know what they are going to do and what they can do....do you play a through ball to the person (not a good dribbler) or put it to their feet.
- Soccer (the beautiful game) is about creativity, keeping rigid positions is not helpful....if a defender dribble halfway into the striking half during a strike and passes the ball....then runs back to his defense position.....NO.....stay up and support the person they passed to.....make a run.....one of the halfbacks should drop back and cover this defender until the play is over.

TYPES OF PRACTICE:

SMALL SIDED GAME (SSG): A small version of the game, can have conditions to allow for more opportunity for topics to occur. May include starting points.

FUN SESSION: A fun session that players want to do. Often great for team building. Soccer tennis.

'EL RONDO' (Rondo): Possession game, ratios and space can vary. Keep ball away from defenders.

SQUAD PRACTICE: A session that allows all players with the squad to participate and improve. Can be opposed or unopposed.

MATCH PLAY: Allowing players to play, showing what they can and can not do with no coach interventions. Fully opposed and age specific.

WAVE: A session structured to allow reputation of a topic/theme. Can be opposed, semi-opposed or unopposed. Gives players the opportunity to assess, think and try again.

SKILL: A practice that allows participants to develop and improve a specific element off their game. A skill is opposed or semi-opposed.

POP: A practice that simulates reputation of phase of the game either attacking or defending. Allows players to understand roles, responsibilities and units. The defending team are motivated by target players or goals. May include starting points and opportunity for coach controls tempo

ATP: The teaching of an advanced or specific skill or technique

FUNCTION: Focusing on a specific area of the pitch to allow the coach to build understanding of the role.

e.g. Center forward combination play

TECHNICAL PRACTICE: An unopposed session that allows participants and coaches to focus on individual technique or technical ability. May be position specific, e.g. Diamond Passing

How to correct "Ball Hogs" on your team:

- Encouraging your players to value assists (helping another player to score a goal) as much as scoring a goal themselves.
- Play SSGs (small-sided games) with the condition that goals can only be scored from a player's first touch or that every player on a team has to score before a player can score again.
- In matches, give your star dribblers the objective of providing at least one assist in each half and consider giving a Player of the Match award to players who play in the way you want them to play.
- Showing your players that sometimes it is necessary to pass back towards their own goal and start an attack again - "recycling the ball" in soccer jargon. Play SSG: Play Pass Back to Score. Put players on 2 teams in 1/3's of the field. The only way a player can advance from their third of the pitch into the next third (towards the opposition goal) is by receiving a back pass from a player in front of them.

Better Player Communication:

(Soccer Coach Weekly. Issue 385. Sept 2014)

AVOID ASKING WHY? If you start any question with "why", it rarely elicits the response that you want. Indeed, your players could well put the barriers up and become defensive and offer just excuses. For instance, if you ask "why did you not make that pass?" it forces your players to justify themselves rather than just admit to making a mistake or volunteering a better solution.

ASK OPEN QUESTIONS Open questions are the best kind of questions. Using words such as "what", "how", "where" and "when" will give you much more information and engagement from your players than starting a question with a verb, such as "do" "is" "are" and "have". For instance, asking, "Did you see the space?" would give you the answer yes or no, whereas if you ask, "Where was the space?" it opens the question up and forces players to consider what you mean and to think before giving an answer.

DON'T EXAGGERATE Words like "everyone", "all", "always" and "never" can create a block in communication between a coach and the players, because the statement tends to be dramatic rather than accurate. The players knows this and won't listen with the same enthusiasm. So soften a sentence to encourage the players to hear what you're saying: "You're often late for training..." or "Almost all of the defending was poor".

"YOU" CAN BE NEGATIVE When addressing your players, try to avoid starting any sentences with the word "you". This can sound like you are accusing someone. For example, if you say: "You missed too many tackles", it points a finger of blame at a particular player. Be more constructive in your statement to help make the player listen, even if it's criticism that you're dishing out. Instead try saying something like "It would be much better if you didn't miss so many tackles".

DON'T USE ASSUMPTIONS Before you jump in with a statement, try to establish the facts. For instance, don't say: "You three weren't at training and there was no message, so you'll start on the bench today". Instead, try saying: "You three weren't at training and I didn't get a message. Is there a reason for that?" They might have had a valid reason and asked a team-mate to pass on the message – and he forgot.

SOFTEN THE MESSAGE Don't be definitive with your answers. It can turn an opinion into a fact. If you say something like, "That was our poorest training session we've had for a while", it sounds pretty direct. So look at softening the message by using expressions like "I think", "I would" or "I feel" and ask them to think about your statement. For example, you could say to the players: "I think that was possibly our poorest session."

How To Gain The Trust Of Your Players:

01 CARE FOR THEM: It is a challenge for any leader in any sport to be both liked and respected. Popular psychology suggests that one trades off with the other – be their mate and they won't respect you, demand intensity or performance and they won't like you. However, while it's difficult to blend the two together, it's surely possible. To bring players into your coaching culture you have to care for them and develop an interest in the person behind the player. With young footballers you learn about their challenges at school; with adult players, learn about their interests outside of soccer. By knowing a little about each player you show you care – and you make it tougher for players to harm team spirit or destroy team unity and togetherness.

02 COACH THEM: There is no better way to win the hearts and minds of your players than to coach them – as individuals and as team-mates. Avoid judging their natural ability and focus your attention on the development process. As a local coach you can win plaudits for developing the best coaching process in your area. Have a firm eye on achieving this, more so than winning games. Above anything else players want to improve, develop and learn. They want to be taught and they want to be inspired through great coaching. Trust is delivered through your expert eye and your guiding voice.

A promise to players that they will develop their game under your tutelage will win their trust and loyalty more than anything.

03 TAKE THE BLAME: Your players and your team are merely a reflection of your coaching ability and your coaching culture. Never blame players for a defeat – merely offer them correction. If they've made mistakes, red flag these as areas to coach and to improve upon in the future. Mistakes happen, so avoid making a big deal of them. It's fair to say that if your players aren't making mistakes, they probably aren't trying hard enough (or taking enough match-winning risks). Make the mistake 'we' rather than 'him' or 'her' or 'you'. Certainly never blame the players in public. If there is a correction to be made, do so away from the match. Do it on the training ground or in the changing room – and mark it as an area of challenge for the both of you to improve upon.

04 GIVE FEEDBACK: Having worked in many different coaching cultures, I often find that the least successful ones are found where the communication is poor between coaching staff and players. You will find that open lines of communication will always win player loyalty. It shows that you're engaged with them as players and as people. It also shows you're invested in their game. Make sure your conversations with players are always specific to them – be specific with both your instructions and your feedback. You should never compare a player to a team-mate but always make your feedback target-oriented. Research has shown that feedback is most effective when it addresses a learner's advancement towards a goal, rather than less meaningful aspects of performance.

Do Red Uniforms Affect Match Outcome?

Two articles suggest that the answer may be yes (The "color effect" for team sports. J Sports Sciences 2008;26:569-76 & 577-582). Research at the Universities of Plymouth and Durham in the United Kingdom examined team the records of English professional leagues in an effort to determine if jersey color impacted match outcome. They found that teams that wore red at home won more games than those who wore other colors. As for league championships, red teams also won the trophy nearly 60% of the time while playing only ~25% of the total home matches. In a second study, investigators from the University of Portsmouth and the Chelsea School report that the jersey color of a penalty takes affected goal keepers expectation of saving a penalty kick. Red jerseys reduced the keeper's confidence.

Ways to Improve Your Team:

Four ways to improve 'weak' players

1. Keep it simple Many young players are pushed too hard, too soon. All too often they are made to practice complicated moves and tactics before they can pass the ball accurately. This failure to embed the basics can produce players who always seem to struggle to control, receive and pass - the so-called 'weak' players. See [Coaching Pearls \(Positions, Discipline\)](#) | [Team Building Games](#) |

So make their skill foundations really strong. Take however long you need to get all your players passing comfortably and accurately with either foot. Make sure they know how to shield the ball and receive it softly before you move on to more complicated skills.

2. Motivate, motivate, motivate Youngsters who are struggling know they are struggling. They don't need you to tell them they aren't as good as their friends. What they do need from you is praise. Quiet congratulation for effort - not necessarily achievement - works wonders. You can even consider awarding motivation patches to reward your players as they improve. It's often all a child needs to make their day and make them try harder in the future.

But praise has to be genuine. Children aren't stupid - they know when it's deserved and when it isn't. So don't go overboard.

3. Players need to play None of your players will improve if they don't get the opportunity to practice their skills on match day. If you keep your 'weak' players on the subs bench week after week, you shouldn't be surprised that they don't improve. Ideally, you should have an equal playing time policy - all players play for the same length of time on match day, regardless of the match situation.

But that's a difficult position to defend when you start losing games you know you could have won. To make this policy succeed requires good communication with parents and, sometimes, a thick skin.

So if you do decide you need to win matches and can't risk putting on certain players if the game is tight, fine. But don't kid yourself that you have the best interests of all your players at heart. It will be kinder to release the players you know won't get much of a game rather than keep them on the bench.

4. Improve yourself first I know you want to be a good coach. You're reading this newsletter now in the hope that you might pick up a tip or two to help you become even better. But it's important to take every opportunity to learn. Watch other coaches - you will benefit as much by noting and avoiding mistakes as from watching good practice - read widely, join forums and go on courses. Invite feedback from players and their parents and change the way you coach if you have to.

Team Building:

1. Agree on team goals.
2. Encourage and support one another.
3. Communicate with one another, as well as the coach.
4. Every player knows their role in the team.
5. Mutual respect among the players and coaching staff.
6. Use statements such as "we" when referring to the team – don't allow an "every man for himself" mentality.
7. Individual contributions of each player should be recognized (regardless of whether he/she is a starter or not a starter).
8. The team as a whole should be committed to improving performance.

How to Turn A Defensive Game / Team Into an Attacking One:

Try Three At The Back: Playing in a back three, as I did at stages of my career, seems to be more conducive to a team starting attacking moves from the back. It allows one of the centre backs to step forward and it also encourages your fullbacks to operate higher up the field. The player that goes forward always has the security of two defenders behind.

Play A High Line: Playing a high line will help teams attack from the back more quickly and effectively. The obvious downside to this is that it can leave your defence exposed if an attack breaks down. To play a high line, clearly you need defenders with good pace both to make attacks work and also to chase back if the attack breaks down.

Move The Ball Quickly: Attacking from the back isn't only about defenders coming forward with the ball. Being able to move the ball quickly and accurately is really important too and if you have defenders that can pick out a team-mate in an advanced position in space, this will instantly help to start an attacking move. One-touch passing exercises are good training for this.

Train FULLBACKS To Attack: The role of both fullbacks and centre backs has certainly evolved and fullbacks especially are being used as a first line of attack. Speed, strength and crossing ability are all important attributes for modern fullbacks, so plenty of gym work, sprinting and endurance running are all vital in training, as well as practising crosses.

If you want your team to score more goals, attacks are best started by playing the ball out of defence...

- Defenders must be wary and keep their shape until the goalkeeper has the ball in his hands.
- The defenders should move into space so the goalkeeper has options to play the ball.
- The center backs move wide and the fullbacks push up towards the halfway line, creating space for players to move and pass into.
- Goalkeepers must look for players who 'want the ball'. They will be side on open to the pitch, so when they receive the ball they can see both their own goal and their opponent's goal.

Should coaches play with the players?

A youth soccer coach's primary responsibility is to ensure the health and safety of his or her players and adult coaches playing soccer with children is obviously unsafe (Steve Watson, editor, footy4kids).

- So you should explain the risks - broken bones, bruises, etc. - and insist that your colleagues stop playing soccer with the youth players.
 - They might say that children enjoy playing soccer with and against their coaches. But, actually, the players will have much more fun if they are left alone to play with their team mates. Would you want a hulking great giant bearing down on you while you are trying to control the ball?
 - They might also say that they've been playing soccer with young players for years and nothing has happened. But should you wait for a serious accident to happen before deciding that 6 ft adults playing against 4 ft children is not a very good idea? If your fellow coaches really want to play soccer they should join a club and play with people their own size!
- That being said,** it is often helpful to have a parent coach fill-in when short players at practice.....they can help pass / cross the ball, fill in as goal keepers....just realize they are there to assist and not play competitively.

Make Your Players Feel Valued:

- Perhaps the most simple and effective way to make your players feel valued is to greet them by name when they arrive for practice sessions and matches.
- Make the effort to know them as individuals, not just as players. Find out what they like to do outside of soccer, what their interests are, their likes and dislikes. Know the names of their siblings, their pets and ask your players about them when you see them.

How should I deal with a sulking player? Soccer is a team game. Unfortunately, seven year olds may not see it that way! Most children of that age are still very much at the "it's my game" stage of their development and they struggle to understand the concept of "a team". This young lad needs to be told that he has to take his turn as sub like everyone else but be prepared for him to continue looking miserable when you take him off. Eventually he will get used to the idea.

- I suggest you try to enlist the help of his parents. Have a chat with them about their son's attitude to being subbed and explain that you have a policy of rotating all your players on and off the pitch regularly. They will probably be able to influence their son's behavior more effectively than you can.

A small word of warning: all children (even seven year olds) have an acute sense of fairness and will notice if you give some players more playing time than others. And so will their parents! So just make sure you sub all your players regularly, not just the "weaker" ones. It will pay dividends in the long run, I assure you.

Coaching with Your own kids on the team:

- **Do:** Try to separate the roles of parent and coach. When you step onto the field, you're his coach, not his father. When the practice or game finishes, you're his dad again.
- **Do:** Bear in mind that your son's "misbehavior" could be due to him wanting to please you and feeling the pressure of having his father as coach. If he thinks you are displeased with him, he may think "why should I try?" and channel his energy into inappropriate behavior - throwing mud or arguing with his team mates.
- **Don't:** Be inconsistent. Apply team rules to everyone, without favor. Your son shouldn't be treated any differently to anyone else.

Don't: Make life any harder for your son than it already is. Being the son of the coach can be a millstone for a child. Make sure that he gets what he deserves, be it praise, an award or to be captain of the team.

Don't put the cart before the horse:

Many youth coaches spend a lot of time teaching their players quite advanced skills.

These include: how to move quickly from defense to attack, how to defend in zones, how to score from set pieces... some even try to explain the intricacies of the offside rule!

But some also "put the cart before the horse" and neglect to ensure that their players' basic skills are up to scratch first. Result? A lot of needless frustration and a lot of wasted time for coaches and their players.

Spending time going back over the basics is always a good investment, especially if you focus on your players' first touch of the ball.

Without a good, safe, first touch, your players will struggle to keep the ball. They'll also find it hard to pass accurately, receive passes or shoot and they certainly won't be able to defend in zones or score from set pieces.

First touch: common mistakes and how to put them right

Good anticipation and alertness are pre-conditions of having a good first touch so watch your players during games: are they alert at all times and reacting to what's going on around them?

If your children look more like spectators than players, try reducing the size of your training groups. Playing games in teams of three or four (or even two) requires much more involvement than playing in large teams where it's easy to hide. You can even force movement in training games by giving a free kick to the other team if a player fails to move after they pass. But be careful – this condition makes playing ball hard work (you try it!) and it's really not appropriate for very young players.

It's also important for a good first touch that your players play with their heads up so they know where the passing options are before they receive a pass. You can help them to do this by warming up with games that require them to look before they pass the ball. Colors Passing is a good example.

Colors passing

Half your players wear one color bib (pinny) and the other half wear a different color. As they jog round in a playing area they pass a ball to one another in alternate color sequence, i.e., red to blue to red to blue etc. Once they can do this without making a mistake change the sequence to, for example, red to red to blue to blue.

Do your players choose the wrong surface to control the ball?

A good first touch is impossible if the wrong part of the body is used to receive a pass so give your players plenty of practice using different parts of their body with games like **Inside Out:**

Put half of your players in a fairly large, circular playing area. The other half spread themselves out along the outside of the circle. The players on the outside each hold a ball.

The players on the inside run to an outside player who serves a ball at them. The inside players control the ball with the correct body part, pass the ball back to the outside player, turn and run to another player on the outside.

Switch the inside and outside players regularly.

Note: with very young players you may wish to replace the outside players with assistant coaches or even parents.

Does the ball bounce off your players?

A poor, uncontrolled first touch is often the result of failure to anticipate the play or choosing the wrong part of the body with which to receive the ball (see above) so put these things right first.

If your players are in the right place at the right time and using the right part of their body but the ball is still bouncing off them as though they are made of concrete you need to do some one-to-one work with them.

Take a player out of a training exercise and show him/her how to withdraw the receiving surface of her body at the moment of impact with the ball. Serve a ball at them at varying heights/speeds and see if they can absorb the impact. Tell the player you want to see the ball dropping to their feet regardless of how the ball is served.

Conclusion

There aren't any shortcuts in youth ball coaching. Skills and techniques need to be learned in a logical and progressive way and the basics – like a good first touch – have to be thoroughly embedded before you move on.

Dealing With High Performers On The Team:

Talented players usually are aware of their special position and this often leads to arrogance.

In every team, there are one or two players who stand out from among their team mates in their athletic performance. This affects all age groups and is not always of advantage.

The performance of these players is often accepted as is, and every coach is happy to have such players on his team as their abilities lead to additional victories.

Most coaches let the issue go at that and get back to business as usual. A bad mistake, since a soccer trainer is responsible for fostering the development of talented players in an appropriate manner, and this also includes building character.

What does "talent" matter? The problem is to recognize talent. Among the very young, exceptional players are often those who are physically superior to their peers. In later years, this will be reversed and often, the player who had been the „star“ of U7, U8, U9 or U10 because of his early physical development, is now only a mediocre performer. A bad mistake has been made in case one has supported this player and thus lost out on talented late bloomers.

Let's take, for example, FC Barcelona, probably the world's best soccer team. During scouting, only the technical and creative skills of the players are considered, and the edge of their physical development has not been a criterion for many years, as it eventually disappears. In other countries, this is still completely different, even on national teams. There, of course, coaches are under pressure to succeed and therefore accept those players who can bring about short-term success.

Supporting gifted players: When a coach thinks he has a talented player on his team, his work is only beginning. Gifted players must be trained independently. Ideally, the club commissions one or two trainers to take care of these talents. The coach himself might be able to implement this on his own but often time is the problem when he works as a volunteer.

In case individual training is not possible, one should consider transferring the players in question to a club which can offer the required conditions. Possibly, there could be a team in the player's own club on which talent is demanded and supported. Nobody likes losing their best performers but the main thing is not the coach's ego – the sports personality of individual players is at stake.

A coach is fooling himself if he thinks that he will be able to keep real talents on a team that is not performance-oriented. Either will these players eventually transfer anyhow, or they will discontinue because they are not sufficiently challenged.

Flying high, arrogance and disrespect for team mates: Often talented players are aware of their special position, and this frequently results in arrogance. In these situations, it is important that the coach does not overrate a player's capability but moderates his response. From the sidelines, these players are often hailed while their team mates are criticized or being told to take an example from player X. During practice, the gifted player is mostly the one to demonstrate drills and in a worst case scenario is permitted to break rules, something for which his team mates are scolded right away. In addition, a gifted player is always deployed, not matter whether he attended practice or not. When the talent is in possession of the ball, the other players start turning away as they cannot expect to receive passes. At an early age, this refusal to pass may be correct and even show resolve. But the "team" slowly dissolves, and jealousy appears.

Another creeping process begins: As the young player's character is still developing, such behavior frequently triggers a flight of fancy. Arrogance, disrespect for fellow players and the awareness of occupying a special position are results for which the coach is responsible, too.

A gifted player is part of a team and should be treated accordingly! Again and again, the coach should talk to players individually and make it unequivocally clear to them that they belong to a team and that the team is one. But explanations to that extent are not enough, and the trainer must adjust his behavioral approach accordingly.

In case negative behavioral patterns repeat themselves, the coach must take action. Already being replaced or not considered in case there is a lack of respect for practice can send a clear signal to the entire team as well as to the player in question.

The adults are those who carry the responsibility: After having read the last paragraphs, you could be under the impression that a gifted player is the „boogeyman“. But such a player is not responsible for the development of his character – it is controlled by the behavior of the adults. Especially the coach, but also parents and fans, should give this some thought.

Coaching Styles:

The four main youth soccer coaching styles are:

- 1. Tell** This style of coaching could best be described as "old school". The "tell" coach makes all the decisions and doesn't allow his players any involvement in decision making. His players are told what to do and how to do it.
- 2. Sell** A "sell" coach decides what his players need to do in much the same way as a "tell" coach. However, unlike a "tell" coach, he will explain his decisions, attempt to persuade his players that it is in their best interests to do what he says and he'll also encourage questions.
- 3. Share** This coaching style is more of a "this is the problem, what shall we do about it?" style than the previous two, although the coach will still make the final decision based on the feedback from his players.
- 4. Allow** This is the most open style of coaching. An "allow" coach talks about how the team plays and asks his players what they think they could do better. He is open to suggestions and usually allows his players to make their own decisions regarding what to do at training sessions.

Which is the right style? There is no one best way to coach – each style of coaching has advantages and disadvantages. Some coaches are comfortable with the "telling" style of coaching, for example, as it allows them to plan, set the pace and control their coaching sessions.

"Telling" may also be the only way to manage a large group or if it is important that your players act immediately without thinking, i.e. in an emergency.

However, "telling" is not a motivating style of coaching. In fact, it could easily demotivate young soccer players who like to take an active part in their learning.

At the other end of the spectrum, adopting an "allow" style of coaching can build a team that has strong, intelligent players but it could also result in disorganized and chaotic coaching sessions.

How do I decide which style is best for me? Your choice of style will depend to a certain extent on your experience and ability to coach. It will also be influenced by the age of your players and their maturity.

Less experienced coaches might feel more comfortable telling their players what to do or trying to sell their opinions but they are ignoring the fact that coaches don't have all the answers.

More experienced coaches are more likely to be able to make a success of the "sharing" or "allow" styles but it would be a mistake to adopt either of these styles with very young players who lack the emotional maturity to analyze their own ability.

With U4s to U6s, for example, "telling" – providing you don't do it in a military fashion – is probably an appropriate style whereas older, more mature players – say from U12s upwards – are likely to respond well to sharing or allowing.

Whichever style you adopt – and there's nothing wrong with adopting a range of styles during the course of a single coaching session – the important thing is to reflect on the way you coach your players and if you are coaching them in a style that meets their needs.

The importance of positive feedback:

Feedback on performance can also make a player feel valued or, if you get it wrong, make them feel pretty bad about themselves.

- So make sure your feedback is always positive. "Well done, that was hard, and you managed it," is music to young ears. When someone does something really well - a pass, shot, tackle or save – stop the play and tell everyone: "That was great work! Exactly how it should be done!"

- If a player is getting something wrong, don't stop the game and make everyone watch while you correct them. Take them aside after the session and begin by praising them for making the effort to get it right. Then show them how they could do it better. Then praise them again.

- Tip: It is important not to praise your more skilled players for what they do rather than their work rate. If you do, they will come to believe that their success is guaranteed, that all they have to do is turn up and their performance will be good enough. These are the children who start off by being your "best" players but they will stop improving when the going gets tough.

- On the other hand, if you praise children who try hard (and praise your high fliers for their effort, not their achievement), your players will work hard regardless of the difficulty of their task. And they won't give up on match days, either.

The Practice Attitude: Put on your cleats, put on your shin guards, and most importantly put on your practice face. "What is a practice face" you ask? Well, two-legged, your practice face is your practice attitude. But more specifically, it's your "I'm ready to play, I'm serious, I'm focused and I'm ready to kick some serious booty in the soccer world" face.

How To Achieve: through Self-Training & Self-Discipline: Get to practice early. Get your shoes on and get ready to play. Dribble a ball, juggle a ball, or pass a ball with your friend as you wait for the coach to start practice. Use proper technique. Concentrate on your technique. When the practice starts, your focus is on practice. Listen to your coach. Don't talk to your friends while you are listening to instructions. Don't let your friends talk to you while you are listening to instructions. Keep eye contact with your coach when he/she is talking. Pay attention to demonstrations. Apply yourself 110% during all drills. This will develop good habits. Keep your intensity. If you stay focused and work hard, practice should never need to be more than an hour and a half. Make your sprints fast. Don't cut corners on laps. When the coach calls you in, JOG, don't walk. Don't pout when you mess-up, just shake it off. Don't laugh at your teammates if they mess-up, be supportive. Expect your teammates to work hard, and make sure your teammates expect you to work hard as well. Keep your work ethic strong even when you are not under strict supervision. You HAVE TO be your own coach. If you get in the habit of cheating when the coach isn't watching, you will lose your competitiveness. You will convince yourself that it is acceptable to cheat, and each time after, cheating will become easier. Just like running a 10K. The first time you allow yourself to give-up will be the last time you are competitive. Once you get accustomed to giving-up, it gets easier to do each time. Don't give-in to peer pressure. Aspire to be better. If practice is cancelled, make time to run on your own to stay in shape. Practice improving your weaknesses on your own time. Give 110% always, and you will always be a winner.

How to correct errors: In the early stages of learning a skill, the coach must remember to praise, praise and praise. The player must feel that the coach is positive that the player CAN do it. Thus, as the coach makes the rounds, constant comments should be made to reinforce successes. Even if a player has messed up 3 out of the 4 elements of a skill, he

still got one right. The coach needs to grasp onto this one right element, and build from there in order to get the player to keep on trying even when the skill is difficult for him.

How is this done? By pointing out what he did right, then pointing out a SINGLE correction which needs to be made, then getting him to try to make this correction, and praising the dickens out of his effort. Older players may be able to take multiple corrections at once, but young players do better with one step at a time if they are having trouble. So, using the example of the push pass, let's say that the only thing that the player is doing correctly is getting his plant foot pointed at the other player - but he is not turning his pass foot outward; he isn't locking his foot; and he is hitting the ball underneath with a floppy foot, so it is going airborne and flying wildly into the next grid. Overall, not having much success, right?

What's your coaching style?

There are two ways to approach the task of coaching youth ball players.

Some coaches adopt a "PE instructor" style and design their practice sessions in the same way every week: a warm up, a lesson (that comprises a demonstration followed by individual and small group practice) and finally a few minutes of free play.

This style of coaching assumes that ball is composed of many, separate pieces of skill that can be taught in a structured way then re-assembled by the players on match days and that if the players learn how to dribble, how to pass, etc. they will become better players.

It also considers young soccer players to be passive receivers of information whose problems on the pitch will be solved as long they do what they are told.

The advantages of this model are that everything is controlled and success is easily measured. The coach can tell just by looking if his players have learned how to pass, dribble etc. And having children working on structured tasks makes it easier for coaches to maintain order and discipline. And it looks professional.

One disadvantage of the PE style of coaching is that the lesson involves static lines and positions that are rarely, (if ever), found on the pitch on match days. Another disadvantage is players are not encouraged to think for themselves and so they come to rely on their coach to do their thinking for them, even during matches.

Critics of this style of coaching say that it teaches children how to train, not how to play soccer.

An alternative style of coaching assumes that children learn best by playing the game.

The "Street Soccer" model actively encourages children to make their own decisions about what they need to learn and the role of the coach is to act as a facilitator, guide and/or participant.

If you watch a Street Soccer style of coaching session, you won't see players engaged in traditional coaching drills. You won't hear the coach telling the children what to do either. What you will see is the children playing soccer, (maybe with a condition added), and the coach either watching from a distance or joining in.

The condition chosen by the coach encourages players to work out problems for themselves. For example, the condition that goals can only be scored with a player's first touch helps them to work out ways to provide close support for each other when they are attacking.

The coach does not tell them how to do it but he might play the game with them to show how the objective could be achieved.

The advantage of the Street Soccer style of coaching is the players become independent learners and the skills they teach themselves are immediately transferable to match situations. They also learn to take responsibility for their actions and how to work together to achieve a goal.

The disadvantages of this model are that the children may not learn what you want them to learn. Also, the sessions can appear chaotic and unprofessional to an observer. This might be uncomfortable for some coaches.

Which is the right way?

That depends on you. You may think that your players need to have a solid technical foundation and your job is to teach them. Or your priority might be to develop a team of free-thinking players who do not look to you for guidance. Or perhaps there is a middle ground – technical work one day, games the next.

If you do decide to use games, I recommend that they are small-sided games (SSGs), simply because your players will get far more touches on the ball, take more shots and score more goals if they play in teams of three or four compared to larger teams.

How to Build a Soccer Team

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime." Babe Ruth

Many youth soccer coaches are "skills based".

They spend almost all their time teaching skills and techniques to their players or planning their next turbo-charged coaching session. If they have a few spare minutes they might use them to manage their players' parents, arrange fixtures and complete the other mundane tasks that we all need to do.

They spend very little time, if any, turning their skilful players into a "team".

Skills-based coaches will justify their focus on skills by saying if you want to succeed (i.e. win matches), you must have skilful players. And to a certain extent that is true. Soccer is, after all, a game of skill and your players must be able to dribble, pass, tackle and shoot.

Underpinning their approach is the belief that if you train your players to a high standard you're bound to end up with a great team that will win everything in sight.

But, as certain Premier League clubs in England have found out to their cost, that isn't necessarily so.

All teams – mine and yours included – need a bit more than just talented players.

What is a "team"?

According to Katzenbach and Smith, a team is "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose and approach... the performance of a team is greater than the sum of the performance of its individual members."

Certain key words of this definition stand out: "complementary skills... committed... common purpose".

Does that sound like your team?

Or does your team only perform as well as its better players?

If your star players are having an off day – or you're facing a team that has even more skillful players than yours – will your team lose?

Or can your team punch above their weight when they're faced with a challenge?

The difference between a group of players and a team.

1. Teams don't have "stars" who think they are better than everyone else. Many players are influenced by parents who think their child is the best player to ever set foot on a soccer field and even very young players are, sadly, influenced by the antics of professional players who are bursting with self importance.

But it's essential to make your players realize that no single player is more important to the team than any other.

The way to do that is simple: treat all your players exactly the same. For example:

- a) Don't start every game with the same set of players. By doing that you're sending a clear message that these players are more important than the others.
- b) If you have a policy of rewarding effort at coaching sessions with more playing time, make sure it's applied consistently.
- c) Similarly, if players who miss coaching sessions for no good reason are left out of the team on match day, don't make exceptions for players you think you can't do without.

Ego management should be a compulsory subject for all youth soccer coaches!

2. Teams don't have "teams within teams". At coaching sessions and matches, watch out for cliques.

Small groups of players who think they are the "best" players can try to take over games and drills to the detriment of the rest of the team. They can also freeze out other, less talented, players and very quickly you can end up with a fragmented group of players who don't trust each other... or even pass to each other!

If you spot such behavior, split the cliques up immediately. Make sure they are not on the same team in coaching games and try not to let them start matches together.

Be tough with this one. You will not succeed if you allow players to set up their own team within the team.

3. Teams have shared objectives. The obvious objective for a soccer team is to win matches.

But that shouldn't be the only objective you set your players. For one thing, it ignores the fact that your team can play well and not win. For another, telling your players that their objective is to win matches can instill a fear of failure and stop your players from taking risks.

In fact, setting objectives for your team should not be part of your job at all.

Instead, you should help your players to set their own objectives. If you let your players decide the team's goal(s), they are more likely to take ownership of them, share the responsibility equally and work harder to achieve them.

4. Teams have their own rules. The same principle applies to team rules.

Allowing your players to suggest team rules – and the sanctions for breaking them – will encourage them to take collective responsibility for their behavior, which is an important feature of a team.

It will also make your life easier. Your players are much more likely to conform to self-imposed rules than rules you impose on them.

A word of caution: you might be surprised at how severe your players want the sanctions to be. I had a team that wanted to expel anyone who was more than 10 minutes late at training! So take care not to agree to anything that you can't enforce.

5. Teams have dress codes. Finally, but not unimportantly, your players should wear team kit to training and matches. Dressing alike reinforces the notion that they are a team, minimizes individualism and makes it easier for players who come from a relatively poor financial background to fit in.

If your players are old enough, try to make sure that they take responsibility for cleaning their own kit, including their footwear, and don't forget to set an example by wearing the team kit yourself.

Conclusion: Spend some time thinking about how your players interact with each other and make it easy for them to become a Team with a capital T.

You'll not only have a more successful season, you'll also help your young players learn life skills that will help them succeed at whatever they do, whether it be on the soccer pitch, at home or at school.

"A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together will become reality." John Lennon

How to give really good coaching sessions – every time!

The main reasons why some coaches don't always give their best was they:

A) Didn't have a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve.

B) They were feeling rushed, stressed and generally in the wrong frame of mind to give a coaching session. A bit like you and me after a hard day's work!

Top Tip 1: Mental imagery. Take a moment to think about what you look like when you're having a bad day on the training ground.

How would your players describe you? Impatient? Cross? Disorganized? Frowning?

Now think about how they would describe you on a good day. Happy? Smiling? Playing games? Having fun?

- If you want to give a massive boost to the number of good coaching sessions you deliver, all you have to do is spend two minutes before each session visualizing yourself as showing your "good" traits.
- Get to the practice field a few minutes early and do this simple exercise before any of your players turn up.
- Picture yourself as "happy", "having fun", etc.
- Run a short video in your mind of you greeting your players with a smile on your face and then watching them play games that are going really well.
- This kind of mental imagery is very effective and you will find that just two minutes spent putting yourself in a positive frame of mind before coaching sessions will pay big dividends.

Top Tip 2. Setting individual and team objectives

- "Many people fail in life, not for lack of ability or brains or even courage, but simply because they have never organized their energies around a goal." – Elbert Hubbard, philosopher
- The second way that you can help make every one of your coaching sessions purposeful, organized and effective is to take the time to agree individual and team objectives with your players.
- Agreeing and monitoring team and individual goals requires commitment but – done properly – it's amazingly motivating for everyone concerned and can turbo-charge the performance of your team.

The benefits of setting objectives

- If you don't know what you want to achieve, how will you know if you're successful?
- When the season comes to an end, it's great to be able to look back at the targets you set at the beginning of the campaign and say "yes, we did that". And even if you didn't hit the target(s), you and your team will be better for having had something to aim at.
- Having objectives also makes young players accountable for their performance and encourages them to keep going regardless of the strength of the opposition.
- But you have to put some thought into the process. Poorly designed goals won't do anything to help your players improve and are more likely to demotivate than inspire them.

What are objectives? Objectives are, typically, short sentences that describe targets for one player, a group of players, the coach or the team. Objectives need to be S.M.A.R.T. and in youth soccer terms this means that they should be:

S – Specific and stretching.

M – Measurable and meaningful.

A – Agreed and achievable.

R – Realistic and relevant.

T – Time based and trackable.

How to set objectives – some guidelines. Team and individual objectives, or goals, should be based on performance rather than outcomes.

- "We will win the league", for example, is an outcome goal – it describes an end state. It is also a poor objective for another reason: It doesn't tell your players how to achieve it.
- Of course, there's nothing wrong with wanting to win the league. But you could be stopped by factors outside of your control. Key players might leave or get injured, you might come second to a team full of academy players or just have a lot of bad luck.
- Performance goals – goals that are within your players' control – are better.
- So instead of having an objective of winning the league, you could agree with your attackers that they will each contribute five goals and assists in the next 10 games. That's a performance goal that is time based, specific, trackable, realistic but stretching (probably) and relevant.
- And combining goals with assists is much better than setting an objective to score a set number of goals. If you do that, don't be surprised if your attackers refuse to pass until they've hit their target!
- Your defenders might be happy with an objective to limit the number of shots on your goal to less than three per half in the next two games. Don't say: "Stop the other team from scoring", that's unrealistic and if your defenders and attackers both hit their targets through the season, you will win the league!
- Objectives also need to be agreed. Sit down with your players individually and as a team and ask them what they want to achieve or get better at.
- Guide them towards S.M.A.R.T goals and when you've agreed on an objective with an individual, write it down on a card and give it to the player. Keep a note of what it is and when it's due for review – remember that all objectives need to have a deadline.
- The same applies to team objectives. Agree them, (you can have three or four objectives for a team) write them down on an A4 sheet of paper and get all your players to sign underneath them. Then produce a copy for each player to keep. This will encourage buy-in and make the objectives much more motivating and powerful.
- When the team or a player achieves an objective, make sure you take time out to celebrate and reward the player(s), then consider:
 - Was it too easy to achieve? If so, make the next objective harder. Did it take too long to achieve? If so, make the next objective a little easier.

10 Essential Rules for Effective Communication:

Getting your players to understand what you want requires a bit more than simply telling them what to do! Here are 10 essential rules for creating effective communication between you and your players:

1. Keep it simple. Young children cannot remember complicated instructions. If you tell a five-year-old to do X, then Y and then Z, they will do X and stop. Older children can remember instructions with two or three components but will struggle to remember four. So keep your instructions short and simple.
2. Talk to the players on their level. Get down on one knee and make eye contact as you communicate. Don't wear sunglasses or tower above them.
3. Always be polite. Using words like "please", "sorry" and "thank you" sets a good example. It also makes your players feel important. Never shout.
4. Tell them, and then tell them again. Once is never enough. Repeat your instructions using slightly different words and check your players' understanding before you move on. One of the best ways of doing that is to ask a child to repeat what has just been said.
5. Listen carefully. Don't interrupt players when they are trying to tell you something. Show them you are listening by maintaining eye contact and remember... their opinions are just as valuable as yours.
6. Avoid inconsistent or confusing body language. Don't, for example, shake your head while telling the player "nice try".
7. Be consistent, firm and fair. No means no. Don't waver or you will become a doormat. Treat everyone equally and don't bend or break the rules for anyone.
8. Never criticize a child in front of others. This will result in resentment and hostility, and not the improvement you're hoping to achieve.
9. Focus on the behavior, not the child. Make sure your player knows that it's their actions that you're not happy with, not them.
10. Make sure you know and use your players' names. Nothing is more damaging for a child's self esteem as not knowing their name.

Note: All children need acceptance, encouragement, discipline, consistency and positive attention. As a soccer coach, you are in a unique position to supply all of these. Please don't waste the chance!

Five ways to invigorate your coaching sessions

Do you have trouble keeping your players focused during training sessions? Do they mess about? Complain about warm ups being "boring"? Turn up late? Take ages to get their boots on? Chat incessantly? Throw water/mud/cones at each other? Do they move so slowly it drives you mad? Well, you're not alone – it happens to a lot of youth soccer coaches every week.

The first positive action you can take to put your coaching sessions back on track is to gather everyone together – players and parents – and ask your players why they seem to have lost interest in being coached.

It may be that they feel they are not improving. It could be that they find your games/drills boring or hard to understand. Whatever they come up with will be useful when you are planning future coaching sessions.

The meeting will also provide you with an opportunity to let your parents know what is happening. They could be completely unaware of the problems you're facing and may well decide to have a "quiet word" with their son or daughter about their behavior.

How to invigorate your coaching sessions

1. Allow time for socializing. Soccer coaching sessions are social occasions for all young players. As anyone who coaches girls will tell you, girls absolutely have to catch up on the latest news and gossip before they can even think about getting their boots on!

Boys also need to have a few minutes to themselves before the session starts so whichever gender you coach, consider starting a few minutes earlier and leaving your players to their own devices for five minutes or so before getting started.

You can even set up a small pitch and make it known that your players can have a "match" if they turn up early.

2. Vary the warm ups. It is important to start your sessions in a dynamic, energizing way, not with a few shuttle runs and a lap of the pitch. Your players want to get on with the action, not jog around aimlessly.

But warm ups don't need to be boring.

All young (and not so young) players will enjoy Sharks and Minnows, Swedish Handball, Freeze Tag, Anatomy Dribbling and Kick it **Kick it Out:**

Everyone dribbles a ball around trying to keep their own and kick out everyone else's ball. If a player's ball is kicked out, he must retrieve it then perform ten sole taps on the ball before getting back into the game. A player earns a point for every ball he kicks out.

Your warm-up routine should be changed every week or so. But whatever warm up you choose, make sure it involves a ball, lots of action and a game.

Do not use shuttle runs and laps.

3. Keep the tempo high. I've said before in this newsletter your coaching sessions should gradually build in intensity, not lurch from high tempo to low and back to high.

The reason for this is if you go from warm up to scrimmage or small-sided game (SSG) then go back to demonstrating a skill, you'll have a lot of energized players who suddenly don't have an outlet for their energy. So they will start throwing mud or kicking each other.

However, some coaches have had success with a SSG "sandwich": a SSG then a technical session followed by another SSG. Some have also managed to reduce boredom and engage their players with "back to front" sessions: scrimmage, SSG, technical. It's certainly worth trying.

4. Have guest coaches. If you have been in charge of your players for several seasons, it is a good idea to invite a fellow coach or club official to take charge of one of your coaching sessions.

For one thing, you can get his or her opinion on the behavior of your players. A fresh pair of eyes can often spot critical issues that simply haven't occurred to you.

You should also watch how your colleague handles all the little disputes and problems that crop up. How do they deal with them? What do they do differently to you?

Handing over your players to another coach occasionally also allows you to observe your players from a distance. How are they interacting with each other? Are there any relationship issues that are stopping your players from concentrating on the coaching?

5. Make every activity a competition. While it may be true that competitiveness is a learned behavior and children are not "naturally" competitive, as soccer coaches we know that if our players are playing a team game they want their team to win. If they are involved in a 1v1 game, both children want to come out on top.

A good youth soccer coach will make sure all his players can be winners (even if they are not very good at soccer) by praising effort, setting objectives that are attainable and making sure teams and individuals are engaged in fair contests. But nothing is more likely to discourage effort than being asked to take part in an activity that seems pointless so – providing the above criteria are met – all your coaching activities should be competitive.

Points are important!

To sum up, if your players are difficult to motivate in coaching sessions:

- Ask them what is wrong.
- Engage your parents.
- Vary the structure of your coaching sessions.
- Start with a fun warm up and maintain a high tempo.
- Invite a guest coach to run a session for you.
- Keep the emphasis of your coaching sessions on fair, achievable competition.

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do". Pele

20 top tips for youth soccer coaches:

- Utilize the K.I.S.S. principle (Keep It Short and Simple) when introducing new skills.
- Plan your coaching sessions carefully.
- Always be positive - focus on what the player does correctly ("catch them being good") rather than what they are doing wrong.
- No static line drills! Play fun, soccer-like games instead.
- Don't play "elimination games" – the players most in need of improvement and repetitions are usually the first to be eliminated.
- Don't play large sided games for more than 10 minutes per hour. In 8 v 8 or 10 v 10 etc, players don't get enough touches on the ball, the weaker players tend to get the fewest touches and bad habits are reinforced.
- Be firm, fair and organized.
- Give credit where it is due and give help where it is needed.
- Be consistent.
- Provide learning experiences: in other words, teach.
- Make practice and competition fun; but it shouldn't be silly.
- Recognize the value of friendships between children.
- Show your approval whenever you can.
- Listen to the children.
- Relax and enjoy yourself!
- Emphasize learning skill, not competing.
- Reward children for effort.
- Build confidence by being positive.
- Reduce competitive expectations.
- Remember that without mistakes there can be no learning!

Ten simple ways to boost your players' self esteem

1. Greet every player by name as they arrive for practice and matches - it's the easiest way to make them feel wanted.
2. Take an interest in your players - find out what they like doing when they're not playing soccer.
3. Make sure every player starts matches - don't start with the same line up every week.
4. Acknowledge effort - you want your players to give 100% so say 'well done' when they do.
5. Give your players responsibility - you don't have to run every training session, let them choose what to do sometimes.
6. Be kind - never criticize a player in front of their team mates.
7. Encourage risk taking - don't stifle creativity. If a player wants to dribble the ball out of defense, praise them. They will learn by the results.
8. Give players individual, achievable targets - i.e., for a player who doesn't like to tackle you can set them the target of making two tackles in a match. That way all your players can be winners.
9. Make every player a key member of the team - there's something special about every one of your players. Tell them what it is.
10. Rotate your captain - all young soccer players like to be captain for a day.

15 soccer coaching sins

1. Failing to consider the health and safety of the players - not being aware of players' medical conditions, playing on an unsafe pitch, mixing players of widely differing ages and abilities, ignoring children who say they are injured..the list is long.

2. Not planning a coaching session in advance - if you think you can make it up as you go along, you're wrong.
3. Boring players with long-winded speeches - if you can't explain what you want your players to do in thirty seconds, don't do it.
4. Not having enough balls - your players need a ball each, not two under inflated, peeling balls between ten.
5. Criticizing individuals - a good coach focuses on the behavior, not the child.
6. Shouting at players - there's no excuse for shouting, it just shows you have no self control.
7. Skills practices turning into tests of endurance - 45 minutes passing a ball round a couple of cones will kill any child's enthusiasm for the game.
8. Using drills that involve children standing in lines for more than a few seconds - some line drills are OK but you must keep the lines moving quickly as bored children will start to invent their own, non-soccer, activities.
9. Forgetting to agree rules with your players - and then criticizing them for failing to observe 'the rules'.
10. Sticking rigidly to a session plan that isn't working - if an activity is not working, stop doing it. Play a SSG (small sided game) instead or ask your players what they want to do.
11. The coach acting as ball-boy - you're not there to chase balls. That's what parents are for.
12. Not demonstrating skills or demonstrating them badly - if you can't do it, find someone who can!
13. Not involving parents/careers - ignoring the wishes and feelings of the people who bring your players to practice and matches is simply not sensible.
14. Allowing spectators to shout and 'coach' on match days - you're responsible for the actions of your parents so agree the ground rules and enforce them.
15. Blaming players for 'not trying' when really the session is pitched at the wrong level - don't ask your players to do things they not ready to do, emotionally or physically.

How to create team spirit

Team spirit: what is it? "The spirit of a group that makes the members want the group to succeed." Team spirit is a very desirable attribute for a group of young soccer players to have. With it, a team is more than the sum of its parts. It plays 'above itself'. Without it, a team is no more than a group of individuals.

But is it possible for us, as soccer coaches, to build teams with 'spirit' in the same way that we teach our players to dribble and shoot?

Yes, we can.

First, we have to make sure that every player knows they are an indispensable part of our team and that no single player is more important than the rest.

We can reinforce the notion that every player is a key player by making sure we treat all our players fairly and alike; we must not have favorites.

Secondly, although I've mentioned in previous newsletters that setting individual objectives is a useful way to motivate and reward young soccer players, a coach should also set team objectives that every player contributes to, e.g. 'to score more goals than we concede' rather than 'to score more goals'.

A powerful way to use objectives

One very powerful way to use objective setting is to let the players choose the objectives themselves. Ideally, this is done before the season starts but it can be done at any time.

Ask your players what they would like to achieve as a team. Get six or seven suggestions. Then ask your players how they going to achieve their objectives and write these down as well. Produce an A4 sheet (with the name of the team at the top) with the objectives in one box and the way they are going to be achieved in another. At the next training session all your players take responsibility for achieving the team objectives by signing the bottom of the sheet. Produce a copy of the signed sheet for every player and make sure their parents know what they have agreed to.

Training sessions should now be designed with the team objectives in mind.

How can you best equip your players with the individual skills they need to achieve team objectives?

Team rules are important too. Again, it is best if the players decide what they should be. Your role is to make sure they are applied consistently and that the penalties for not observing rules can be applied to the team as a whole, not just individuals. For example: persistently talking while the coach is talking will result in less time for the end of session scrimmage.

Watch out for cliques. If you notice a small group of players bonding among themselves at the expense of other players, act quickly. Split the group up in all your coaching activities.

Don't forget the details.

Players should turn up on time and dress smartly for matches. Never let a player get away with turning up late or being dressed inappropriately. Apply the sanction.

Group activities away from the soccer field are also useful in forging team spirit. Go bowling together or take the team to a restaurant. My girls teams enjoy going to our local pub after home games for chips and soft drinks. It might not be very healthy but they (and their parents) enjoy it.

Creating team spirit (or team building) cannot be achieved by one action alone. It is a reflection of the way you and your team interact in every way, both at training and at matches.

If you follow these suggestions you will create a team worthy of the name and lay the foundations for long term success.

How to tell if that new drill will work

This checklist will help you decide if a drill or game is going to work with your players before you try it at a training session. Ask yourself:

- Is the drill appropriate for the age of my players?
- Is it too easy or too hard?
- Can I use this drill with all my squad?
- Can I use it with odd numbers of players?
- Is this drill competitive?
- Is the drill 'soccer-like'?
- Can I make it harder or easier if I have to?

Five golden rules to keep your players happy

1. Play games, don't use lots of drills. There is a place for drills in youth soccer coaching when introducing new skills or techniques. But they should be used sparingly.

The coaching sequence should be: warm up, demonstration (five minutes), then unopposed or 1v1 practice for another five minutes. If appropriate, continue with small group activities (groups of three or four players for 10 or 15 minutes).

Then set up a conditioned small-sided game (SSG).

What's a conditioned SSG?

It's simply a 3v3, 4v4 or 5v5 match where you change the rules to allow your players to practice a skill or technique in a game-like situation. For example, if you've been working on improving your team's goal kicks, play a SSG where every time the ball goes out of play, the game is re-started with a goal kick.

Note: Don't forget to finish every session with a free for all match with no coaching from you. Playing soccer is what your players came to do!

2. Use age-appropriate activities. Young soccer players should always be challenged to improve, but you have to be realistic.

Don't expect six-year-olds, for example, to master the wall pass! Equally, 12-year-olds who play to a good standard should not be spending too much time practicing the side foot pass. They need to be working on more advanced skills. Combination plays (for example, overlapping runs) and more advanced skills, such as step overs, should be on the agenda for these guys.

3. Be aware of relationships. Young players are not just learning soccer skills at your sessions. They are learning social skills - how to interact with one another, self control and how to resolve conflicts. This inevitably leads to situations where children will be seen to fall out with one another.

Emerging egos and raised hormone levels can also lead to bullying. And that's not easy to spot if you're totally focused on what your players are doing with their feet. The child who no one passes to, or is always the one no one wants in their team, is being bullied and you have a duty to do something about it.

So be sensitive to what is going on around you. If you feel that cliques are being formed and some players are being left out in the cold, it's time to take action.

Talk to your players about teamwork, why they should be nice to one another ("treat others as you would like them to treat you"). Split groups of friends up when you play SSGs and end-of-session matches.

4. Treat your players with respect. Children are people, with feelings and emotions. Just like you! You wouldn't be happy if you were being ordered around and expected to do things without being told why. So don't treat your players like that!

Explain to your players why you want them to play a certain game and invite their feedback. Ask them if they are enjoying your coaching sessions, what they like best and what they don't like. Then act on what they say.

5. Smile a lot! If you try to follow these guidelines you will have a happy bunch of players, I assure you. And, ultimately, that's what youth soccer coaching is all about... happiness.

Which of these golden rules of communication are you breaking?

1. Know your players' names – and use them!

I find it hard to remember names. But I've worked on it because it's so important. How would you feel if you went to a meeting every week, took an active role but the person in charge didn't know your name? It wouldn't make you feel very good about going to that meeting, would it?

It's the same for young soccer players. You should get into the habit of greeting every player by name as they arrive at training or matches and asking how they are doing.

Being friendly and interested in your players as people – not just as players – is the first step to successful communication.

Tips for remembering names:

Drop the excuses. Telling yourself you can't remember names because you have a bad memory is like telling your dentist you haven't been brushing your teeth because you lost your toothbrush – it's rubbish!

Concentrate hard on players' names. Listen to them and use them during the training session or match.

If you forget a name, apologize and ask the player to tell you what it is. Don't worry about seeming forgetful – you need to know!

Repeat names to yourself, silently.

Address players by their names during the session and when they leave.

Write your players' names down afterwards.

2. K.I.S.S – Keep It Simple, Stupid!

The easiest way to lose a group of young soccer players is to make them listen to long-winded instructions. Think about how you are going to explain a drill or game before you go to training sessions – not when you get there – and if you can't explain it in thirty seconds or less - don't use it!

And never use jargon.

3. Telling is good but showing is better.

Demonstrations are a great way to communicate with your players and I suggest you try showing your players what you want them to do instead of talking to them about it. But the demonstration has to be good! If you can't perform the skill or technique yourself, don't be embarrassed, just find someone who can. It could be a fellow coach, a parent or a player.

4. Ssssh.....

Perhaps the most important part of communication is listening. Take the time to find out what your players want from your coaching sessions. Ask them what they think of the drills and games you use and find out what they want to play. You need to have your own objectives for a session but you can let your players choose a game occasionally.

If your players are old enough it's good practice to let them run a whole session sometimes. Let them design a session that works on the skill or technique they think they need to be better at.

5. Tell your players what you expect of them – and what they can expect of you.

We all want hard work, concentration and focus from our players but have you explained to them why you want them to work hard?

Explain that you will help them become the best soccer players they can possibly be but they have to help you in return by listening to you and giving 100% effort.

Don't expect good behavior if you haven't explained what good behavior is.

6. Toddlers are people too!

These golden rules apply to coaches who work with all ages of children. Three and four year olds will understand your objectives, what they must and must not do and can they can choose which games they want to play. You just need to keep your questions short and use very simple language.

Summary

Good coaches don't need formal qualifications but they do need to be skilled communicators.

Think about how you speak to your players. Do you use their names? Are you friendly? Are you clear? Do you listen to them and let them speak to you whenever they want to? Do they know what you expect of them and what they can expect from you?

If you want your coaching sessions to run smoothly, be productive and fun for everyone concerned (including you!) you have to plan and learn how to communicate.

How to lose and still have a team of winners:

Young children equate winning with success so, unless they win every match, they will often feel like failures.

As coaches, and parents, it's in the interests of the players, the team and ourselves to try to remove the link in a child's mind between losing and failure. If we don't, players will struggle to perform to the best of their ability.

The fear of failure will make them reluctant to take risks. It will also stop them even trying to win. Giving 100% effort and still being labeled a loser is a profoundly demoralizing experience!

Being labeled a loser in youth soccer may also adversely affect other areas of children's lives. Failing to get 100% in tests, not having a lot of friends, or not getting the job they want could make them feel that they've failed and are unworthy.

So it is important to redefine success on the soccer field in terms of individual and team performance, not the match result. To do this, set your players objectives that do not include the word 'win'.

Why set objectives?

Children like being set targets to aim for. They also enjoy having yardsticks to measure themselves by. But be warned - your players' objectives will be your objectives, so be careful what you ask them to do!

Guidelines about objectives

- Be specific. Your players' objectives should identify exactly what they need to do. 'We need to stop the other team getting crosses in', for example, is not a specific objective as it doesn't tell the players how they are going to stop the other team crossing the ball.
- Set goals that are measurable. Telling your players to 'try your best' or your team to 'attack more' are vague and not measurable. Instead, you should set simple, clear targets such as 'Johnny, I want you to try to get one good tackle in', or 'Sophie, let's see if you can get one of your hard shots on their goal in the first half'.
- Help your players achieve their goals. When you've decided what your players' objectives are, work on the skills they need to achieve them. Johnny needs to be shown how to direct opposition forwards towards the touch line and wait until the chance arises to make a tackle. Sophie needs to be taught the correct shooting technique.
- Set realistic, but challenging goals. Aim high, but be reasonable.
- Set goals for practice AND matches. In training, for example, I often ask my players to perform a drill for a set length of time without making a mistake. Then I reward them for either achieving it or trying to achieve it. Get your players used to success. It's a nice feeling!
- Remember. A lot of little wins can add up to a big win!

At half time and after the match praise your players. Not just for achieving their objectives, but also for the effort they've made to achieve them. It doesn't matter if they won or lost, it's the objectives that matter. That way your team will feel like winners, even if they've just been hammered.

When you reflect on the match result, analyze winning and losing honestly. If your team lost, don't make excuses. Was the other team better? If so, why? Was your preparation inadequate? Or did your players make mistakes that you can correct at next week's training session? If you won, what can your players do better in the next match?

Advice for parents

It shouldn't matter if your child makes a critical mistake or scores the winning goal. If you allow your child's performance on the pitch to mould your own self image, you will, inevitably, put unfair pressure on them to succeed.

It's only a game!

Youth soccer is about learning social skills, teamwork, patience, fair play, having a sense of belonging, being united in a common goal, having fun, discipline, exercise, linking success with hard work and how to deal with winning and losing.

It's not about the score.

While it's impossible to remove the importance of match results completely, you need to make them as irrelevant as possible by focusing on effort and achieving individual and team objectives. That way your players will always be the winners, even if you lose 10-0!

Surely you don't want to win that much?

Have high expectations. It's vital to have high expectations and to communicate them to your players.

As a minimum, you should require concentration, effort and hard work. If you are prepared to settle for anything less than that's what you'll get.

If you tolerate laziness, players turning up late, talking while you're talking, over-aggressive play or bad language then you are going to have problems with discipline regardless of how good your planning is.

Tell your players what you want to achieve

Your objective for a coaching session should be each player's objective, too. So tell your players what you are trying to achieve, why it is necessary and what you want to see by the end of the session.

Be specific, check they understand the objective before you start and revisit the objective of the session with your players while you're cooling down at the end.

Did you/they achieve it? If you didn't, did something go wrong or do you just need a bit more time?

Giving your players something to think about while they're training is a sensible way to keep their young minds focused.

Agree a set of rules (and sanctions) BEFORE you need them.

It should go without saying that a disciplined team works within a framework of rules.

But it is also important to:

A) Ask your players what they think the rules should be. If you simply impose an arbitrary set of rules you cannot expect your players to buy into them.

B) As well as agreeing the rules you need to agree what will happen if a player breaks them. Be careful here! The sanctions for breaking a rule should be progressive and logical. My players know that if one of them breaks a rule I will have a quiet word with them first. If that doesn't work we will work our way down this list:

For a second infringement the player concerned will sit out the end of session game. If that doesn't work, they will not be selected for the next match. Further infringements will result in a meeting with the player's parents and, ultimately, a player could be banned from training and even asked to leave the club.

Whatever sanctions you decide on, make sure your players (and their parents) know what they are before you need to implement them.

WARNING! One of the most effective sanctions is forcing the misbehaving player to sit out during an activity but be careful. Watch for players deliberately seeking a time out to avoid an activity they don't like. If you suspect that, make them sit out the next activity as well.

What's the most important rule?

Your players' health and safety is your top priority so make sure rule number one is designed to protect them from harm. "No talking when I'm talking" is an example of such a rule. If your players do not listen to your instructions, they could hurt themselves or others.

Suggested code of conduct for players

Get some eyes in the back of your head!

Be observant and challenge inappropriate behavior immediately. If you ignore it, hoping it will go away, you are sending a message to your players that you don't care what they are doing. This encourages the children who are not following the rules and demotivates the children who are.

Be consistent and don't use your ammo up too quickly

Rules and sanctions must be applied consistently, regardless of who the "offender" is.

If a player deserves to miss a match because of their misbehavior, it doesn't matter if it's your star attacker or one of your weaker players... they miss the match.

And don't waste your ammo. If you overreact to a little bit of misbehavior, (for example, making all your players miss an activity for breaking a minor rule), your players will quickly realize that you don't have anything left for when things really get out of hand. They will take advantage of that fact and you'll wish you saved some bullets!

Draft in another coach

During time you can get too emotionally involved with a set of players. This makes it hard to be objective, especially with your "best" players.

Ask a colleague (or even a coach from another club) to take one or more of your sessions and watch how your players react to the change. You will learn a lot just by seeing how a new coach manages your players.

You are not your players' friend, you're their coach

A coach who wants to be friends with players and parents can easily find excuses not to make the hard choices. By all means be friendly but don't fall into the trap of wanting to be liked. That's not what you're there for.

If you've got bad apples, get rid of them.

Do not put up with persistent misbehavior or laziness. If you have players who are really difficult to motivate, ask colleagues to observe them and give you feedback.

If they have had ample opportunity to improve, you must tell their parents that their son or daughter needs to find a different team to play for.

That's not an easy conversation to have. But you (and the rest of your players) will feel a lot better when the "bad apples" move on.

Catering for all abilities

Part 1: what is "success"? We need to understand how our players define "success".

Definition: Differentiation is how we adapt experiences and activities to meet the developmental needs of individuals or groups of children.

For young children up to age of about 10, it is simple. Effort equals success, regardless of the end result. That is called being "task orientated".

From the age of 11 or 12, children understand effort will only help them up to a certain point. A 12 year old, for example, may believe that no matter how hard they try they will not be as good at, say, shooting as the team's star attacker.

This new knowledge forces them to choose to either continue to be task orientated ("if I try hard I will be successful") or to redefine success in a more adult way where success means being the best. This is called being "ego orientated".

What does this mean for us as youth soccer coaches?

How your players measure their own success and whether they are ego or task orientated is very important.

A task-orientated striker, for example, will always work hard, running into spaces and trying to reach crosses even if they are not scoring goals.

On the other hand, an ego-orientated striker who hits a dry spell will stop trying in order to protect their view of themselves as successful. They may also blame their team mates for not providing them with chances to score or drop into midfield and say they want to "build up from the back".

Clearly, most youth soccer coaches would like a team full of task-orientated players. I know I would!

We can manage the way our players define success (and if they work hard or not, even when they are not achieving good results) by being careful about the messages we send out to them about success, hard work and winning.

If we focus on the importance of winning matches, design training sessions that do not cater for players of differing abilities, if we congratulate our players when they win regardless of how hard they had to work to do it... we are encouraging them to be ego orientated.

If, on the other hand, we design practice sessions that allow all our players to experience success, applaud effort rather than achievement and react to winning and losing matches in the same, calm way, we will be telling our players that we value hard work and effort more than being the best.

This will encourage them to move away from ego orientation ("I am only successful if I'm the best!") to the more useful task orientation.

PS. A coach who values effort and doesn't compare players in terms of ability will also encourage the less able players to stay in the game for longer and for many coaches and clubs, player retention is a key indicator of how well they are doing.

Part 2: how to differentiate your coaching sessions

1. A quick tweak works wonders!

Most coaching games can be adjusted to allow players of all abilities to be challenged and experience success.

Three Team Attack: involves three unequal teams who defend three goals. One team can have a goalkeeper and one defender, another can have a goalkeeper and two defenders and the third can have no goalkeeper and four outfield players. The variations are almost endless.

Each team attacks the two other goals and the first to X number of goals wins. Or the first team which loses X number of lives is out.

To allow all your players a chance of being on the winning team, put the weaker ones in the larger teams or with the stronger players.

A popular Small-sided game involves having two teams play with a neutral player on each touch line who either receives a pass and passes back to the team that passed to them or crosses the ball into the goalmouth.

Tell players that the side player can't be tackled and they must use the side player at least once in each move before they can shoot.

To make this game suitable for all abilities, offset the goals so one is, say, 30 yards from the touch line and the other is 15 yards away. Better players work on the long side and the others play on the short side.

If you play games that involve tackling, you can have "safe" zones or allow players to go outside the playing area to avoid being tackled. This will allow the weaker players to hold on to the ball for longer.

2. Give players individual objectives. While a game or activity is going on, have a quiet word with individuals and ask them to do something more challenging than the others.

You could, for example, ask the players who find it easy to juggle the ball (keepie uppies) to catch a ball or clap while they do them. They could also try ball juggling while sitting down (you try it... it's not easy!).

If you are playing a game of keepaway (or any other small-sided game) ask your most skilled players to move to one or two touch if they can.

Just remember to do it sensitively and whatever you do, don't tell the player(s) in question that you're asking them to do something harder than the others because they are more skilled.

3. Separate them. Separating children into groups of ability groups and giving them different tasks to do is the traditional and easiest way of differentiating.

It is, however, also a quick and easy way to stigmatize the weaker of your players and reinforce the ego orientation of the more skilled.

So try to avoid separating your children in this way and use multi-layered games or give individual objectives as described above.

To sum up, it's important to cater for children of differing abilities in your coaching sessions if you are to avoid having a lot of ego-orientated players who are easily discouraged if they make mistakes or fail to score.

Successful differentiation will also keep your team together for longer and help you become what you want to be – a successful coach!

But you can stop these misunderstandings from arising in the first place if you follow these simple guidelines:

1. Have a pre-season meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. Encourage questions from the parents and let them know that you have given a lot of thought to how you're going to coach their children. At this meeting it's a good idea to discuss and agree codes of conduct for everyone in the club - the parents, the players and the officials.
2. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Encourage parental involvement, don't try to keep them at arm's length.
3. Know what your objectives are and explain them to your parents. Make sure they know and understand that you are working to a long term plan - the development of their children, both as players and as people. Explain that results are not as important as performance and encourage them to minimize the importance of matches when talking to their child.
4. Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Begin by letting the parent talk while you listen as often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking. Listen to their viewpoint, thank them for it and respond appropriately. Be assertive - don't accept abuse and make sure you explain your point of view as well. At the end of the day, you can't please everyone!
5. Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you.
6. Ask parents not to criticize their children (or anyone else's) in front of anyone else. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
7. Don't blame the players for their parents' actions.
8. Be consistent! Don't change a rule or philosophy during the season if you can help it. If you have to, inform players and parents of the change and the reason for it as soon as possible.

How to measure your players' ability

A core soccer skills checklist, courtesy of the Oak Mountain Academy.

This checklist has been designed for youth soccer coaches who want to measure how much their players' core skills have improved over a period of time.

You need to establish a "baseline" by producing a score for each of your players at the beginning of a season. Repeat the test at the midpoint or end of the season to see how each player has improved.

It's up to you to decide if the players are going to be made aware of their scores. Personally, I would keep them to myself.

Points should be awarded as follows:

- 5 - The player is able to perform this skill at will with a high rate of success
- 4 - The player is able to perform this skill or technique much of the time
- 3 - The player is willing to attempt this skill and has mixed success
- 2 - The player rarely attempts this technique but is aware that it is possible
- 1 - The player is not aware of this technique

Passing

- Can the player pass with either foot?
- Does the player pass with the appropriate part of the foot?
- Does the player pass accurately and with proper pace?
- Does the player disguise his or her intention when appropriate?

Receiving

- Can the player control a ball passed to feet without rebound?
- Can the player use the body to receive a ball in the air?
- Can the player control the ball with any body part?
- Can the player use the first touch to set up their next move?

Dribbling

- Can the player dribble with either foot?
- Can the player dribble without watching the ball?
- Does the player use soft touches on the ball when dribbling?
- Can the player change speed and direction with control?
- Does the player use fakes and feints?
- Does the player shield the ball to maintain possession?

Shooting

- Can the player shoot with either foot?
- Can the player strike a moving ball consistently and accurately?
- Can the player volley the ball?
- Can the player shoot accurately with power?
- Does the player shoot to the open part of the goal?
- Does the player shoot every time they have a reasonably good chance?

Heading

- Will the player try to head the ball when appropriate?
- Does the player strike the ball rather than the ball striking him or her?
- Can the player head with power and accuracy?
- Can the player flick the ball on?

Tackling

- Does the player break down the opposition attack or contain play when approaching a ball carrier?
- Does the player delay the attacker until the appropriate time to tackle?
- Does the player tackle with 100% commitment?
- Is the player willing to use the body and go shoulder-to-shoulder to win the ball?

Use feedback to become a better coach

Most youth soccer coaches think they are doing a good job. They train their players to the best of their ability, take them to matches and train them again. They win some games and lose others. They don't get many grumbles from parents and their players seem happy enough.

So it is reasonable to assume they are doing okay. But are they really? The only way to find out for sure is to ask the 'customers' - the players and their parents - for their opinion.

At the end of every season I send out two questionnaires. The questions are designed to be answered yes/no but also include a text box for comments. You can choose whether or not to ask players and parents to put their names on the questionnaire. Personally, I don't as I think I get more honest answers.

A questionnaire for parents:

- Does your child enjoy coaching sessions and matches?
- Do you feel able to approach me with questions or concerns?
- Could my communication with parents or players be improved?
- Is hard work and effort recognized properly?
- Is match playing time allocated fairly?
- Do you feel your child is a better soccer player now than they were at the start of the season?
- Do you think enough emphasis is given to the importance of working as a team and respecting one another?
- Any other comments?

A questionnaire for players:

The players' questionnaire needs to be tailored to the age of your players. These are the questions I ask my 10-year-olds.

- Do you like playing soccer?
- What's the best part of training sessions?
- What is the worst part?
- Is there anything you would like to learn that we haven't covered yet?
- Do you enjoy playing in matches?
- Do you think I am fair with everyone?

- If you could change one thing to do with your soccer team, what would it be?

If your players are very young (aged six to eight) you can ask similar questions to those above. But it is probably easier to get a response orally, in a group. Once you've got your feedback, you have to act on it.

How to react to feedback

If the results of your questionnaires reveal problems that need urgent action, (for example, if several players say you're not fair or some parents tell you their children aren't learning any new skills) you should call a meeting to discuss the issues.

If the feedback is mostly positive, simply summarize the answers in a letter (leaving out names if you have them) and send it out. Whatever the results, you will know if you're doing a good job or not and - more importantly - you'll be an even better coach next season!

A definitive guide to coaching best practice

In 1996, the US Soccer Coaching Education Department published Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States, a 70-page report that explains how to coach youth soccer and what coaches can reasonably expect from U6 to U18 players during practice sessions and matches.

The US soccer Federation calls the report a 'definitive [and] invaluable training guide', and it has certainly been a major influence on coaching guidance in the US and elsewhere over the last 14 years.

There is more than one way to teach soccer

At the core of the report is the belief that there is not just 'one way' to teach soccer to players. Nor is there just one style of coaching. It does, however, criticize the way many coaches want to control everything their players do, both at training and at matches.

"Coaches often focus on keeping the players under control and teaching what appears to be the basics of the game: organization, positions, tactics, how to prepare to win games. We choose order over apparent chaos.

"It is tempting to strive to have the youth games look like adult games, with kids holding their own in set positions, organized and disciplined. The magic of the Dutch players of the early 70s, or Brazil's great players of the 60s, however, was not created from an organized practice routine.

"It began when they were children, in pickup games where the player and the game were the dominant factors. There were neither adults nor a set schedule of mandatory practices and games.

"That said, we live in a different world today. Adult supervision is often necessary to ensure proper safety. The presence of adults, however, does not have to inhibit the opportunity for children to be creative and experimental in their approach to learning soccer... set up a game and let the kids play.

"Keep most of your comments for before and after practice and during water breaks. Comments should be kept short and simple. Be comfortable organizing a session that looks like pickup soccer."

As well as general advice, the USCED offers useful guidance to coaches of specific age groups. For example:

"At the younger ages (up to the age of 10) soccer is not a team sport. It is a time for children to develop their individual relationship with the ball. The fact younger children are placed into team environments is not their fault.

"Do not demand that the more confident players share the ball. Encourage them to be creative and go to goal. Do the same with the rest of your players. Work to bring all of them up to that level of confidence and comfort with the ball.

"Coaches should avoid the impulse to 'coach' their players from 'play to play' in order to help them win the match.

Coaches should not be telling young players to 'pass rather than dribble', 'hold their positions' or 'never' do something (like pass or dribble in front of goal)."

Structure sessions for different age groups

The report also suggests how practice sessions should be structured for different age groups. It also makes the important observation, often overlooked, that a child's 'soccer age' may not always be the same as their biological age:

"A player's 'soccer age' is unique to the individual [and] depends on several factors. The rate of each individual's emotional and physical growth. The frequency that they are playing soccer. The soccer environment they are in (encouraging or discouraging individual creativity and comfort with the ball).

As a coach, therefore, it is critical that you are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating your players' soccer ability. In some cases, for example, this may mean that a 16-year-old player spends time addressing skills, or playing in numbers that seem more appropriate for a 12-year-old."

The physical and mental characteristics of seven- to ten-year-old soccer players

Children in the seven- to ten-year-old age range:

1. Have a limited attention span. They will listen to you for longer than four- to six-year-olds but you still need to use simple games, drills and play activities for a maximum of 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Seek out adult approval. So be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you their skills. They need reassurance. If you are dismissive or off hand with them, they won't have the confidence to try new things.
3. Are able to take another's perspective – they now have a sense of how others are feeling. This means you need to consciously treat all your players in exactly the same way. If you don't, your players will think you have favorites.
4. Can now pace themselves. Many seven- to ten-year-olds have incorporated a speed or two between standing still and running as fast as possible.
5. Are still unable to think abstractly. Most children in this age group cannot conceive of anything they cannot see or touch. For example, 'space' is an abstract concept; it does not have physical form and you can't touch it. Therefore, you are unlikely to be able to teach techniques such as the 'through pass' or 'zonal defending' to children in this age group. Be patient.
6. Much prefer playing to watching. Keep everyone active and do not use drills that involve children standing in lines for more than a few seconds.
7. Are more co-operative than six-year-olds – they tend to play well in pairs. 2v2 games are popular but it's a good idea to set up the pairs yourself. If you ask the players to pair up by themselves, it can take a very long time and there will be personality problems.
8. Have less active imaginations than U6 players. Seven- to ten-year-olds still have an active imagination by adult standards, but some of the silliness that six-year-olds enjoyed will not be appreciated by this group. So games that require your players to imagine they are pirates or elephants may not work so well any more.
9. Begin to become aware of peer perception – a social order starts to develop. Be sensitive to this.
10. Begin to show competitive tendencies – some will keep score. You can use games that have winners and losers, but continue to minimize the importance of the result on match days.
11. Still don't have very efficient cooling systems – you still need to plan for frequent breaks during your training sessions.

If you bear these limitations in mind when creating coaching sessions for seven- to ten-year-olds, both you and your players will have a great time!

Having a Dominant Player: U6-U10

Often these are players who keep their heads down and don't like to pass the ball.

- They are often perceived as "the star" because of their goal scoring in small sided games (especially by their parents) and/or they are more developed physically and don't realize that they need their team mates because they are able to dominate on the small pitch.
- This can present a problem when moving to U10 (9v9) or 11v11 because they cannot dominate on the larger pitch. It's something most of us have seen at one time or another.
- There is one particular game you to play that really helps with this.

The Playmaker Game:

The idea is that you play a normal small-sided game but with one player - the playmaker - in a neutral colored bib who plays for whichever side is in possession. The attacking team has to use this player in order to score a goal but the playmaker is not allowed to score himself.

The game works well on several levels. Obviously the main purpose is to encourage the player concerned to get his head up and look for passing opportunities.

The defending team will recognize that the playmaker cannot score so will look at how they can stop the pass which makes the playmaker think about his pass selection. The attacking team will start to think about movement to receive a pass and also about the value of communication.

This game encourages your "star" players to pass more but without them realizing that they have been singled out. In fact, they feel special as they have been chosen for the role of "playmaker".

Confidence + Skill = Results:

Confident young soccer players will bounce back after making a mistake, keep working hard when the going gets tough and, on match days, they'll be keen to use skills they have learned on the training ground.

A player who is not confident, on the other hand, will dwell on small mistakes and her performance usually gets worse if she makes an error. Players lacking in self-confidence will also be easily intimidated by tough opponents and they'll be reluctant to try new skills for fear of making themselves look "silly". So it makes sense to spend as much, if not more, time working on the self-confidence of your players as teaching them new skills.

You can do this by:

1. **Allowing players to succeed.** Many coaches teach a new skill or technique and then expect young players to be able to use it immediately in even-sided games.

They forget that many seven to 11-year-olds do not have the composure or experience required to cope with 4v4 or 5v5 coaching games and continually giving the ball away in 4v4 keepaway, for example, is not going to help them learn how to keep possession on match days.

And continual failure is not going to give them the confidence they need to even try to keep possession when the going gets tough.

It is much better to help young players experience success by allowing them to embed new skills in 4v1, 5v2 or 7v3 situations and only gradually building up to even-sided contests once the skill in question has been mastered.

2. Make sure your players feel safe. As young players try, fail, try again, fail again, and then finally succeed, they develop ideas about their own capabilities. At the same time, they're creating a self-concept based on their interactions with the "significant others" in their lives. And you - as their coach - are a VERY significant person, second in importance only to their parents.

If, for example, criticizing a young player in front of her team mates and making her feel stupid and/or incompetent creates a negative self-image in the player, she will be very reluctant to do anything that could lead to being publicly humiliated again. She will "play safe".

On the other hand, a coach who consistently praises effort and hard work more than successful outcomes will create a set of players who are not afraid to try to win the ball, to make the difficult pass or score a goal from an acute angle.

Never forget that children remember positive and negative interactions with adults for a long, long time.

3. Be a role model. While many factors influence how confident or insecure a young player feels, one of the most important is the presence of a role model. And on the training ground and on match days, that's you.

So you need to have and maintain a strong, healthy self image. As a soccer coach you are doing a really important and useful job. You are helping your players learn, grow in confidence, make new friends and learn life skills that will stand them in good stead in the classroom and, later, in the workplace.

You may make mistakes but so what? We all make them! The important thing is to you learn from them and go back again next week to have another go.

And you should never forget that while all your players look forward to your coaching sessions, for some it's the highlight of their week.

So you are quite entitled to feel good about yourself.

And if you display confidence in your own abilities... so will your players.

References:

National Network for Child Care: Self-Esteem and Children

KidsHealth: Developing Your Child's Self-Esteem

Management and Discipline for Soccer Coaches:

The first trick in learning to handle players is to establish your authority early. If players do not get the idea that you are the "boss", and that you will insist that they follow your rules, it will be very difficult to control them. Here are some time-honored ways to get this message across early.

Tips on Asserting Your Authority: Using "the Voice" and "the Look". It's important for players to be able to recognize by your tone of voice and your manner when you intend a no-nonsense directive, or are drawing a boundary which they try to cross at their peril. Yelling does not work. Use a firm voice and a firm look, and DEMAND attention. Make it clear that this is non-negotiable - and your chances that they will listen increase substantially. Watch for their reaction, however. It is easy to scare little ones with a tone of voice which might induce teenagers to slowly think about complying - so adjust to your audience.

The Art of Refocusing Attention: Sometimes a quick, firm word in passing is enough to get things back on track without stopping an ongoing activity. If this doesn't work, don't try to yell or frantically run around to get the attention of the players. STOP the group, DEMAND that they all stop talking and look at you, and WAIT until everyone does so before even trying to start with the substance of your remarks. Using "the Voice", say something like: "**Eyes on me. Now.**"

- If someone starts clowning or chatting in the background after you start trying to talk substance, STOP! Firmly re-demand silence before continuing. Keep doing this until they shut up, even if you spend 20 minutes on a 30 second announcement. Eventually, the other players will start to tell this player to be quiet, because they will get bored standing around. When the disruptive one starts to get negative attention from his peers, the behavior tends to cease quickly.

- **Choose Your Battles Wisely:** Remember that all young kids misbehave at times. If the child is not normally disruptive or if the disruption is not serious - and is quickly abandoned with a quiet word from you, there is no reason to make a big deal over it.

If you are too stern, and use the proverbial cannon to deal with a small gnat of an offence, this causes two problems. First, the compliant players will start to fear you - and will become so upset by any correction from you that they will tend to freeze up and become afraid to make mistakes for fear of displeasing you (so they won't learn very well). Secondly, the more spirited or defiant players will figure out that you have already used up all of your ammunition on a trivial offence - so they won't see any reason why they shouldn't commit HUGE offences if the punishment is going to be the same anyway. As a result, it is not uncommon to find utter chaos when the coach is not using good judgment on when/how/why/where to punish offences.

How to discipline effectively: When misbehavior seriously disrupts the activities of the other players (either because it is persistent minor stuff or because of one egregious act), the coach needs to use "the Voice" and "the Look" to stop the behavior instantly.

- It is a good idea to talk in terms of Rules - because players tend to remember Rules better. So, tell them that "Hitting a team-mate is against our Rules".

- Then, get the offender to tell you WHY this is against the rules. Forcing the offender to verbalize why other players might not like to be hit serves two purposes. It shows the other players that this kid knew better AND it causes the offender to suffer some humiliation in front of everyone by admitting that he knew better.

- Once the player admits that he knew better, make him apologize. Sure, the apology is likely to be grudging - and delivered under his breath in the general direction of his belly button. But, by forcing him to apologize (and making him go sit out until he does apologize, if he initially refuses) helps to breed good sportsmanship down the line - and helps him to recognize that other players have rights too.

- Sometimes, of course, a player may not understand why something is against the Rules. For instance, the little brother of a HS-level player may have seen lots of slide tackles in games, and truly may not understand why you got upset when he took out the ankles of a team-mate with a reckless tackle. In those cases, it is important to explain why you are upset, and to explain what you want in the future.

- What if one team-mate started it, and the other finished it? Easy. Make them both apologize, then make the retaliator explain to you how he plans to handle things next time (e.g., come to you; use his words instead of his fists; etc.). However, the instigator should not get off scot-free. Consider giving him an extra "punishment" for starting things. Often, especially with arch-rivals, making the instigator say 5 good things about his adversary is quite effective in healing the wounds all around.

- **Some Tips on Using "Punishments":** Be careful in using physical activity as punishment. Especially with younger players, learning to associate running or exercise with punishment can cause them to resent that activity when you need them to do this work. Nonetheless, there are times when a quick set of jumping jacks or push-ups may help to refocus the player. As long as these are not onerous (no more than 5-10), the players usually accept the penalty with good humor and no lasting effects. However, if the player is looking for attention and wanting to clown around (or wanting to challenge the coach in some fashion), he will use the penance as an opportunity to have fun at the expense of the coach. As a result, if the coach already knows that he is dealing with a defiant player, the best bet may be to tell the player to go sit out until he can behave.

- ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE sanctions is forcing the misbehaving player to sit out during an activity. Giving a time-out can often be very effective. Most players want to be with everyone else - even if they are being disruptive.

- Usually, the coach will give the player the option of returning when the player decides to behave. However, if the player is refusing to participate in an activity which he doesn't like, then the better course is to sit the player out for the remainder of the practice. Otherwise, the coach will send the message to the team that, if you don't want to do an exercise, just go sit

down - and you won't suffer any penalty. Once the players discover that you don't get to pick and choose what you do, and you don't get to scrimmage if you don't work, the incentives will be reduced to seek a time-out simply to avoid doing work.

- Okay, so where should the player be sent to sit out? The ideal spot for a player to sit out is where you (or some responsible adult) can keep them in view, but where they are far enough removed they cannot easily create further distraction for the rest of the group. Where and how far will depend on the player, the setting, and the available supervision. (Don't let a buddy join them for company; if two players must be sent out, send them to opposite ends of the field).
 - Sometimes carrots work better! It's important to not forget to use carrots as well as sticks. Just as in making corrections, good behavior should be praised and rewarded to reinforce behaviors you want at practices and games. One of the most effective ways to shape up a whole team that's half-hearted and distracted about whatever subject is the focus of the day's activities is to make most players' favorite part of the practice, THE SCRIMMAGE, contingent on the extent they get with the program. "The sooner we learn to do this, the longer we can scrimmage".
 - **"Full Moon" Days:** Sometimes, your players' energy and mood simply isn't a good match for the well-intended practice plan you designed. They're hopelessly restless, with unbounded energy. If the normally cooperative players are exceptionally wild, and none of the adjustments which you make seem to work, consider simply abandoning the plan for the day - and playing nothing but games (the winners of the last game get to pick the next one). As long as the games are soccer-related, the practice session is probably doing more good than you realize. The kids are getting lots of touches on the ball; team morale is soaring because coach is a good guy (and we got a free day); and coach is able to relax and enjoy watching the players act like a bunch of puppies. Consider it a vacation to recharge the batteries, and just have fun.
- Other Less beneficial approaches:** if a player repeatedly asks how much time is left, at the end of the practice session have the team run lane sprints "compliments of the player asking about the time. For personal infractions, have the player run a lap around the field or jump in place 10 times or perform 3 pushups.

How to deal with players who don't listen at practice:

First, it is important to tailor your practice to your players' ages.

If the player or players in question are under eight years old, they are probably just exhibiting personality tendencies common to that age group: short attention spans, high energy, sociability, an inability to understand certain detail-oriented explanations, etc.

It has been shown that it is fairly unproductive to attempt to teach players under eight years old the technicalities of soccer such as corner kicks, goalkeeping skills, throw-ins, etc.

At this level, the kids just want to have fun and get touches on the ball. This is why small-sided soccer is so important at this level.

Playing with less players on the field results in more children getting touches on the ball, and consequently, more learning and more development.

For players eight and up who have been playing soccer for at least one previous season and who should be accustomed to how a soccer practice is "run," discipline problems can be treated as such. Unfortunately, these discipline problems can range from not listening to being disrespectful to other players and coaches.

Try not to be too hard on the player who won't listen to you - after all, these kids have been listening to an adult all day at school. At soccer practice, out in the fresh air, the kids may feel compelled to just run around and burn excess energy, which is OK to an extent, but can become detrimental when it's affecting your ability as a coach to teach the other players important soccer concepts.

Coaching tip: Let your players play a 'match' for a few minutes as soon as they arrive at training. That achieves three things - it allows them to burn off some excess energy, you can discuss how the rest of the session is going to go during the drinks break after the 'match' and it encourages your players to get to practice on time!

You need your players respect, not their friendship. A few coaches have the ability to act like their players' best mate and still manage to earn their players' respect. Some do not. If you are in the latter category, it is important to earn their respect first. Be nice, don't be stern, but be firm.

Never tolerate rude or disrespectful behavior. This should result in a "time-out" for the player who is acting up. And please make sure you punish the behavior NOT the child. Make it clear that it is the behavior that you find unacceptable, not the player.

You also need to be aware that some medical conditions can cause children to behave in seemingly disruptive ways.

Before the season starts, send a letter home to parents describing your coaching philosophy — what you expect from your players and what they should expect from you.

Explain that the first "incident" will result in a time out, the second in sitting out practice and a letter home and the third incident will result in an invitation to their parents to discuss their future with the club.

Examples of good soccer practice behavior:

- Everyone follows all directions given by the coaches and assistant coaches
- Everyone does their best
- When coaches talk players are still and listen
- No-one swears or calls names
- Everyone keeps their hands to them self

The most important thing to remember when dealing with ANY young soccer players is that they are at practice mainly to have fun and play the game of soccer which is just that - a game. Taking the game too seriously or making practice too much like school will result in your players becoming disinterested, bored and restless.

Finally, please remember that players do NOT learn by listening to a coach lecture them. In fact this is the best way to make sure the kids tune out and do NOT listen. Let them dribble, shoot, pass and run to their heart's content and they'll come back to practice next week, next month and next year.

How to deal with discipline 'problems'

Coaches may complain about a range of problems: Players not showing them any respect, mudslinging, chatting during team talks and even players who would rather fight each other than play soccer.

While there are several control techniques that will help coaches with "difficult" players (see below for an example sent in by a footy4kids subscriber), they do not address the real cause of the coaches' frustration, which include:

1. False expectations. Many new youth soccer coaches walk onto the field expecting their players will turn up ready and eager to be taught how to play soccer.

These coaches spend a lot of time and effort planning their coaching sessions and they expect their players to reciprocate by hanging onto their every word and to do exactly what they are told. That is their perception of what coaching should be like.

It doesn't take long, however, for these eager new coaches to become disappointed and frustrated by their players' lack of attention and apparent refusal to engage with their carefully crafted plans.

But they have forgotten soccer is a child's game. It is "play time" for the players and they really don't want to be told what to do.

If the coach and the players are unable or unwilling to adjust their expectations there can only be one result: Frustration and anxiety for all concerned.

2. I want to be liked! New and inexperienced youth soccer coaches who are worried they are not controlling their players also want to be liked but these two interests are seen as incompatible.

"If I am friendly, I can't control them," and "I can control them but they won't like me." Thus many coaches think they have to choose between being friendly and not in control or tough disciplinarians who are disliked.

Unfortunately, both of these approaches have undesirable consequences.

Friendly coaches may feel that their players are taking advantage of them while tough coaches usually cause young players to feel resentful and make them want to fight back.

3. It's all my fault... As my email inbox proves, some inexperienced coaches who have difficulty managing their players place the blame squarely on the players: "They just won't listen to me!"

Others, after several unsuccessful attempts to restore discipline, become increasingly frustrated, start to think that it's all their fault and that they will never become a good coach.

That's why many youth coaches decide that coaching children is too stressful and they pack it in.

So what's the answer?

As we have seen, discipline problems are often the result of the coach and the players having different expectations and needs.

It would be unreasonable to expect your players to adjust their expectations in line with yours so the answer is obvious: Realize that young players play soccer because they want to play, not listen to lectures or be regularly stopped from behaving in a child-like way.

Your job is to help them enjoy their play by teaching them skills, not trying to force them to conform to what you think soccer coaching should be look like.

So relax and fun with your players!

Stop wasting your time!

Do you have trouble keeping your players focused during training sessions?

Do they regularly mess about?

Do they complain about warm-ups being "boring"?

Do they turn up late and sometimes miss coaching sessions without letting you know?

Do they take ages to get their boots on?

Do they never stop chatting?

Do your players often throw water/mud/cones at each other?

1. Failure to tell players what is expected of them. Children need and want clear guidance regarding behavior. They want to know what is acceptable and what is not and, most importantly, they want to everyone on the team to stick to the rules.

Without a behavioral framework to work within, children will feel free to do whatever they want to do. And the children who want to work hard and learn will soon become demotivated and disillusioned.

Whatever your team rules are (read more about rules here), don't just say "you must behave like this" - your players need to understand why rules are necessary.

You should also provide a positive reason to observe rules and negative consequences if they are ignored.

I've found that the best way to do that is to tell your players that the starting line-up for matches will be determined by a player's general attitude and that players who repeatedly break the rules (or don't turn up for training without a good reason) will start matches on the bench - regardless of how skilful they are.

That's the "stick".

My players also have a "carrot" - extra playing time.

Every player is guaranteed a minimum amount of playing time but I set aside some spare minutes to give to players who show the right attitude (or "hustle" as US coaches would say).

In a seven-a-side game, for example, every player will get a minimum of 20 minutes on the pitch but some will get 30. And if you break the rules you shouldn't expect to be one of them.

Tip: A quick word (or phone call or even a text) to a parent whose child is on the verge of being benched can often result in a rapid improvement in behavior without you having to do anything!

2. Turning a blind eye. Getting too emotionally involved with your group of players is a common mistake and one that almost always leads to behavioral problems.

Try to take the view that your players are not your friends and your team is a temporary assignment that needs to be approached objectively and without sentiment.

Looking at your players more carefully and critically. What are they doing? Are they supporting their team mates or "having a go" at each other? Are they trying hard or are they regularly giving less than 100%?

You must make allowances for normal childish behavior but if a player or players are slacking or deliberately disrupting your sessions, clamp down immediately.

If normal sanctions don't seem to deter the offenders and discussions with their parents don't bring about any improvement, you need to bite the bullet and ask them to move on. If you don't, hardworking players with good attitudes - and their parents - will become disillusioned and angry with you. One bad apple can destroy a team in no time if you don't have the courage to act decisively.

3. Coaching that lacks intensity. Most coaches plan their sessions but many don't realize that all sessions should gradually build in intensity, i.e., from low concentration to high concentration, low pulse rate to high pulse rate work, and from low competitiveness to high competitiveness.

For example: If you warm up and go to playing 2v2 with small cone goals, the action is intense and competitive and the physical demands are great. If you follow this with some boring tactical walk-through, many of your players will switch off completely or start wrestling behind your back. So if you have to cover off something that is less than exciting, do it first and get it out of the way.

4. Don't be predictable. Young children like routine (and learning new techniques does require repetition) but you also need to have a variety of fun, competitive games "up your sleeve".

Keep distractions out of sight and the sun behind you: Make sure your players are facing away from potential distractions (such as a training session on the next pitch) and that they are not squinting in the sun. Young players listen and learn with their eyes as well as their ears - don't make it difficult for them to see your non-verbal messages and demonstrations.

Don't speak until everyone is quiet and looking at you: Never compete with players who are chatting by raising your voice. Wait for them to be quiet, even if it takes minutes rather than seconds.

Keep it simple: Only deliver one message at a time. Don't start talking about one topic then allow yourself to get sidetracked or suddenly introduce a completely different subject.

Mind your language: Soccer has its own, peculiar language. "Hitting the channel", being "caught square", "compressing the play", "dead ball", "diving in" and so on might mean something to you but they will only serve to confuse young players.

And six-year-olds won't know that playing "in the hole" means playing in the gap between a team's midfield players and its front strikers, they'll be looking for a hole in the pitch to stand in!

Planning age appropriate coaching sessions:

What to expect from five to 10-year-old players: Don't lecture. Your players will stop listening very quickly if you stand in front of them and demand that they listen to your words of wisdom. Remember, they've just spent a day being told to sit still and listen. They don't want you to turn their soccer coaching session into an extension of school.

Don't spoon feed: Ask questions that are designed to get your players to work out the answers for themselves. If you're talking to your players about supporting the player on the ball, for example, don't simply tell them to move after passing. Ask them: "How can you help a team mate who has the ball?"

- When they say move to a place where you can receive a pass, ask: "Where should you move to?" and "how far away should you be?"

- And don't assume you have all the answers! Listen to what your players tell you.

Do not tolerate rude or disrespectful behavior: Remember you are dealing with children who are probably excited and keen to get on with kicking a ball about. So don't immediately crack down on innocent, childish behavior even if it seems inappropriate to you.

- Persistently disruptive, rude or disrespectful behavior (directed at you or another player) is another matter. Explain why you find the behavior unacceptable ("if you're talking when I'm talking, you can't hear me") and what will happen if it continues.

- Time-outs can be effective but make sure the player knows why he or she is being excluded, keep them short and never threaten a time-out then not carry it out. If you appear weak-willed and "soft", your players will take advantage of you.

- I find that telling young players there won't be time for a game at the end of practice if I have to spend a long time getting my point across works wonders.

- Never punish misbehavior by making players run laps or perform press-ups. It's inappropriate, a waste of time and will cause resentment.

What should I do about the clowns?

They may just be going through the "growing-up, testosterone-fuelled" period with a few of them displaying silly antics, showing off and back chatting. The few clowns of the group are distracting for the others but we don't want to lose them or their respect as we've had the core of the team since they were five years old.

Answer: Every youth soccer coach sometimes finds it hard to keep their players focused during coaching sessions.

First of all, you need to react to normal, childish behavior and behavior that is uncalled for and disruptive in different ways. All children will sometimes chat among themselves and play their own little games during coaching sessions. That is to be expected and should be tolerated, providing it does not disrupt the group.

Deliberately disruptive behavior, however, needs to be dealt with by reference to the team rules.

If you haven't done so already, sit your players down (preferably with their parents) and discuss how they should behave at coaching sessions.

Don't be prescriptive. It's best to get your players to suggest the rules and the sanctions for breaking them.

You don't need too many rules but the rules you do adopt should have a direct link to the health and safety, development or management of your players.

"No talking while I'm talking", for example, is a rule that, if ignored, could impact on your players' health and safety and/or their development as players.

Try not to crack down too hard (youth soccer is only a game, after all) but when you apply sanctions, make sure they are applied consistently. "Three strikes and you miss the next match" should be applied to every player, regardless of who they are or how much you need them in your team.

Providing you are fair, consistent and reasonable you should find keeping good order during coaching sessions isn't difficult and you should also gain the respect of your players and their parents.

How to avoid discipline problems with young soccer players

Here's an uncomfortable fact for those of you who often have problems keeping your players in order - the vast majority of discipline problems on the training field are the result of poor planning by the coach.

Mistake #1 Trying to get children to do things that are too difficult for them.

Some coaches expect their players to master skills or techniques that they are simply not capable of at their age.

For example, children up to the age of about ten may lack the physical ability to lock their ankle; a skill that is necessary to accurately strike a ball. There's not much point, then, to get frustrated with a bunch of eight year olds who can't hoof the ball from one end of the pitch to the other! If you do, you'll only make them frustrated, confused and ultimately irritable. And that's a recipe for poor behavior.

Coaches whose players are aged up to six or seven years old should also bear in mind that young children are very egocentric; they see the world only from their perspective. As a result, they are not going to want to pass the ball to their team-mates. They're worried they might never get it back! So don't be surprised that it's difficult to get six year olds to stop swarming round the ball.

Also, young children lack the ability to "look ahead" and see what is about to happen. This is a limiting factor that coaches need to bear in mind when teaching how to attack the ball at corner kicks, for example.

Learn from this mistake

When designing practices coaches need to take into consideration the age characteristics of their players. Activities should be picked that fit the developmental needs of the children, rather than trying to make the children participate in activities that are developmentally inappropriate for them.

Mistake #2 Putting children in lines

All your activities on the training field should be 'soccer-like' or, in other words, NO LINES!!

If you put children in a line and expect them to patiently wait their turn to kick the one thing they're come to play with - the ball - you've got another thing coming! They will get bored and bored children will start messing about and causing you problems.

Learn from this mistake

There is always a game you can use instead of a static drill. For example, you can teach simple push passing by having your players stand opposite each other and pass the ball to each other. But how boring is that? And how unlike anything they're going to encounter in a real game. A much better alternative would be a quick demonstration of the technique followed by the turning cone game:

The Turning Cone Game

Set up

Divide your players into groups of two or three. One ball per group. Each group stands next to a cone and facing a second cone about 10 or 15 yards away.

How to play

On your command, one player runs with the ball to the second (turning) cone, turns, passes back to a team mate and follows their pass back to the starting cone. The receiving player meets the ball, controls it, runs to the cone, turns and passes.

First, watch your players. Is their technique good? Do your players push the ball in front of them when running, make a quick turn, get their head up and look before passing? Does the receiver stay on his toes?

You can teach the push pass with this game and a lot more! And there's no waiting in line.

Mistake #3 : no competition

Children are naturally competitive. If a coach doesn't introduce competition into the games the children play they will very quickly get bored and by now you know what bored children equal, don't you?

Learn from this mistake

How do we make the turning cone game a competition?

Very simply - the first group to make five completed passes wins the game.

Now we not only have engaged, hard working players but we have got them thinking as well. How can they complete the activity in the shortest time? The answer is quick, accurate passing, tight turns, being ready to receive a pass, getting their head up before passing. Everything, in fact, that you would want them to do in a match!

Mistake #4: firing blanks

Remember that all children misbehave at times. If the child is not normally disruptive or if the disruption is not serious - and is quickly abandoned with a quiet word from you, there is no reason to make a big deal over it.

If you are too stern, and use the proverbial cannon to deal with a small offence, this causes two problems. First, the compliant players will start to fear you - and will become so upset by any correction from you that they will tend to freeze up and become afraid to make mistakes for fear of displeasing you (so they won't learn very well).

Secondly, the more spirited or defiant players will figure out that you have already used up all of your ammunition on a trivial offence - so they won't see any reason why they shouldn't commit HUGE offences if the punishment is going to be the same anyway.

Learn from this mistake

Wherever possible use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior alongside sensible sanctions for poor behavior.

Always label the behavior instead of the child. Incorrect: "Billy, you are a bad boy." Correct: "Billy, it is wrong to kick the ball when I am talking."

Try to start your statements with a reinforcer, such as, "Sarah, you are a very good soccer player; now let's talk about why you need to put 100% effort into this game." But make sure your compliments are truthful. Children, as well as adults, will see through false flattery.

You cannot make a child want to play:

Your job is to teach your players skills and try to encourage them to enjoy playing soccer. But you can't MAKE them love the game! Children who enjoy success at soccer train hard, play hard and have the unconditional support of their parents. This child, sadly, doesn't have the latter and she will, eventually, give up the game for good. All you can do is to try and make her experience of the "beautiful game" as enjoyable as possible while she is with you. If you make him/her play in matches when he/she clearly doesn't want to, you are failing in your duty of care towards her. So have a word with the parents. Tell her that you will try to make soccer enjoyable for their child but you won't add to the pressure this poor child must be feeling.

Why children stop playing soccer: A study asked almost 700 children who stopped playing organized sport (including soccer or soccer) what it is was that made them give up. The main reasons the kids gave for quitting were: I lost interest, The coach treated some children more favorably than others, I was not having any fun or I developed other non-sport interests. Of these, only the development of non-sport interests was related to the age of the child. This means that as children get older they are more likely to drop out because they become interested in activities outside of sport. **Often a combination of factors:** Their coaches were not doing a good job. There was too much pressure to win. The members of the team did not get along well with each other. Parental disinterest (or active discouragement) that results in difficulty getting to practice, matches etc. (affects younger children most). Not fitting in - this is more common in girls where the importance of being in the 'gang' becomes important as children get to about ten years old. Joining a peer group that do not play soccer

Reasons for losing interest:

But you might be surprised. The parents might have a problem with the way you coach, or their children might not be happy for reasons you haven't noticed. Maybe there's bullying going on. Maybe they don't like the drills and games you use. Or maybe the children have simply found other interests. It happens!

The only way you are going to put your mind at rest is to find out. If you can do something about it, great. If you can't, then move on. But don't beat yourself up about it. You have done the best you can, but sometimes it just doesn't work out.

How to coach players with ADHD:

All youth soccer coaches have days when some or all of their players run around like headless chickens and won't listen to a word they say.

But that's normal. Every child has days when they can't control their natural "childishness".

Some children, however, never seem to listen. They are on the move all the time, interrupting activities and generally causing a disturbance.

These are the children that cause coaches to write to me asking what to do about players who are disruptive, impossible to coach and are upsetting other players.

My advice to these coaches includes a suggestion that they need to find out if the player has ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), a condition that could affect more than one million soccer-playing children.[1]

The same coaches often go on to say they would like to expel "difficult" children like these but that really isn't necessary. Whether the child has ADHD or not, there are some simple strategies that will help you manage the situation and restore order to your coaching sessions.

What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is not caused by poor parenting, family problems, too much TV, allergies or excessive sugar. Children with ADHD have differences in the parts of their brains that control attention and activity. This means that they find it hard to concentrate and are easily distracted.

Their impulsiveness makes it difficult for them to control what they're doing or saying and they appear restless and fidgety. They are constantly on the move.

Why playing in your team is good for a child with ADHD

Playing soccer has many benefits for children who have ADHD.

Learning soccer skills helps them improve their motor skills and being a member of a team helps them learn how to communicate and make themselves understood.

If their coach applies the guidelines below, a child with ADHD will also become better at listening, following instructions and taking turns.

Why a child with ADHD is good for your team

Because of their high energy levels, children with ADHD can often become terrific little players - once their energy is channeled appropriately.

How to coach children with ADHD

First of all, never assume a child has ADHD without talking to their parents but be tactful. Tell them that their child has been very "lively" and ask if you should be aware of anything that could explain it.

If the player does have ADHD, be aware that stress, over-complicated instructions, pressure to do well (or to avoid making mistakes), can result in the player losing their self-control and "misbehaving".

So you need to keep the focus firmly on fun during your coaching sessions and make sure you give immediate, positive feedback when the player does something well, even if something as simple as listening to you for a few seconds.

You also need to establish rules and sanctions for inappropriate behavior and apply them consistently. And remember your team rules must apply to every player - don't treat a child with ADHD any differently to anyone else.

- Keep instructions simple (one thing at a time) and plan your coaching sessions so the downtime between activities is kept to a minimum.
- Don't use drills that involve players standing in lines. ADHD children are guaranteed to become restless if they are asked to stand still. As in all coaching activities, movement should be praised, and ADHD kids are experts at moving!
- Keep the emphasis off results, don't compare your players with each other (they all have a unique talent) and praise effort as much, if not more, than achievement.
- Never shout at an ADHD child (or any other young player) who becomes "difficult". Take them to one side, get down to their level and make eye contact. Once you have their full attention, you should explain why you find their behavior inappropriate and what will happen if it continues. Keep it short and simple and follow through on what you say. Never threaten a sanction (such as a time-out) and fail to carry it out.

These coaching guidelines are not just for coaches who have ADHD players. All young players will enjoy no-pressure coaching sessions from a coach who is well organized and helps them to learn via game-based activities rather than boring drills.

Conclusion

ADHD players deserve a chance to have fun and learn new skills while playing - just like any other child and they can be an asset to your team - if they are coached correctly.

Restarts:

See: [Corner Kicks](#) | [Goal Kicks](#) | [Throw in](#) | [Penalty Kicks](#) | [Free Kicks](#) |

All restarts are an opportunity for your players to position themselves correctly and start another attack but very often, players just mill about, wondering what to do when their team has a goal kick, free kick, throw in or corner and the advantage is lost.

So you should talk about, and practice, restarts in training. The best way to do this is to play small-sided games where the restart you're working on is repeated over and over again. This is easy to do. Just play 4v4 and begin play with the restart in question every time the ball goes out of play.

This gives you the chance to suggest simple restart tactics during the game and gives your players lots of opportunities to have a go at what you've suggested or come up with some ideas of their own.

Corner kicks:

1. Defending. One player should be positioned on the edge of the penalty area nearest to the corner taker. This stops the other team from taking a short corner and often distracts the corner taker who is forced to try to kick the ball over or around your one-man defensive wall.

Your team should also leave a player upfield and in the same position every time you concede a corner. The rest of your players now know where they can clear the ball to and start a counter-attack without looking.

2. Attacking.

One player should lurk just outside the edge of the penalty area nearest to your corner taker. This player is in a good position to receive a pass and either shoot or cross the ball into the box at an angle that is difficult to defend.

Another player should be positioned at the other corner of the penalty area. He or she should be encouraged to wait for the corner to be taken then either make a quick, forward run to get on the end of the cross or, as often happens in youth soccer, wait for a ball that is over hit or missed by the players in front of goal.

Goal kicks If your goalkeeper has a weak kick, improve it. But while he or she is getting better at kicking a dead ball, you might want to consider an insurance policy. You could place one of your quicker and more confident defenders on the goal line whenever you get a goal kick. This player will be able to challenge for the ball if it's kicked straight to an opposition forward and give the rest of your defenders time to regroup.

When the other team has a goal kick, tell your forward players to watch the goalkeeper closely, try to work out where he or she is going to kick the ball then make sure they get to the kick before the opposition players.

Being stared down can be very off-putting for the 'keeper who will often panic and kick the ball straight to one of your players who will have an easy shot on goal. But don't overdo it. If it becomes clear that this tactic is going to work every time, tell your team to drop back and give the goalkeeper a break.

Throw-ins Your team will get lots of throw ins during a match and, like all restarts, every one of them should be an opportunity to start a new attack. But very often the ball is thrown straight to an opponent and possession is lost.

If there is no one within throwing distance and in open space, encourage your players to make a sudden run towards the thrower, receive the throw (which should be directed at the oncoming player's feet) and pass it straight back. As soon as they've hit the return pass they should turn and run, either towards goal or into space.

You can practice this by putting half your players around the edge of a playing area with a ball in their hands. The rest of the players run around the area, receiving a throw and passing it back to the thrower.

Progress by adding defenders whose job it is to put pressure on the throwers and receivers.

Then split the players into teams of four and play a small-sided game where the game is restarted with a throw in whenever it goes across a line or a goal is scored.

PS. During matches, please don't tell your players where to throw the ball. Even if you can see that a throw down the sideline would be effective, resist the temptation to shout: "Down the line!" Let your players make their own decisions.

Free kicks Free kicks taken close to the other team's penalty area are often kicked straight at or over the other team's defensive wall and wasted.

Instead, practice taking a quick, short free kick to an attacker standing a few yards to one side of the ball. He or she will often have a better shooting angle and there won't be a wall in the way of the shot.

You can even get your free kick taker to pass the ball through the legs of a team mate to the player who is going to take the shot or back heel it to someone standing a couple of yards away.

Conclusion. These are just a few examples of what your team can do to make the most of the opportunities presented by restarts.

By all means practice them in training but don't forget to encourage your players to be creative and come up with some ideas of their own.

- If the player is late more a few times, talk to the parent and find out why. Suggest other transportation options. Suggest a carpool. But, make sure that the parent understands what happens to YOUR schedule when the player is late - as it is very unfair to expect you to run parallel practices or to disrupt others.
- Take attendance at each game, and give a star (or small treat) to anyone who made all of the practices for the week on time and who showed up for the game on time (give a reduced award to the ones who were tardy). Allocate any extra time to those with perfect attendance. If your best efforts at persuasion do not work, then your primary objectives are: trying to get the other parents/players not to follow in the path of the irresponsible parent; and, if you cannot cut the child at the end of the season, trying to convince his parents to take him to another team.
- Some coaches try to achieve these objectives by benching the absent player. However, this option often is not available to Rec coaches (because Club rules may require the coach to play a player for one-half game if he shows up, even if the child never comes to practice). Besides, if the team has to play short if the player is benched, it is difficult to do this without upsetting the other parents.

Even where benching is possible, it may be very hard to punish the child (who doesn't drive) for the irresponsible behavior of the parents. The child often looks so miserable that other parents and players will feel sorry for him (which can cause a backlash). Likewise, angry confrontations with the parents whenever they show up do little good (as this scares all of the other kids; tend to upsets the other parents (who won't really understand what has gone on before or why you are so upset with this group of parents); and tend to affect how the coach comes across in the practices and games (because an irritated coach usually lacks a sense of humor and doesn't seem to be having a good time)).

So, what can you do? First, talk to the Club and make sure that they know that you could use an extra player. Often, where a team is having to play short, the Club will bend the rules on signups and allow the other players to find a classmate to come to the team late. If you can get a replacement, it may be easier to diplomatically offer to let the other child drop off so that his parents won't be bothered by having to bring him when it obviously is so much of a burden.

In most cases, you also will want to hold a team meeting to talk about how to handle the attendance problems (in order to place the spotlight on the problem and bring any complaints or problems out into the open). Some coaches are afraid to hold meetings to discuss attendance problems - because they fear that the irresponsible parents will claim that it is the coach's fault that the child doesn't come to practice. However, if someone is going to make these claims, there is a good chance that they already are doing it behind the back of the coach anyway - so it makes sense to get these complaints out in the open where the coach has some chance of giving a rebuttal to the back-biting.

Remember that, if the majority are not happy with your coaching, this is something that you need to know (as either you are wasting your time or you haven't done a good sales job on your philosophy on player development). Quite often, parents with little involvement in team activities will blame the coach when what they really mean is "we don't like the win/loss record" or "my child should be playing more". This is why it is a good idea to address your definition of "winning" and your philosophies on playing time at the Preseason meeting - and to continue to give regular updates to the parents on the progress of the children, so that they will realize that the players actually are learning new skills in practice, which will help to improve their win/loss record over time.

Also understand that, to some parents, the only thing that matters is that their child is on a "winning" team (even as a bench-sitter). There also are parents who truly believe that they are entitled to drop in and out of any activity without penalty, and it is your job to be an unpaid babysitter for times when it is convenient for them to drop the child off. If most of the parents do not agree with your coaching philosophies, then you are the wrong leader for this particular group - even though you are a good person and may be a terrific coach. If you are the wrong person for the job which is being offered, then you need to know this - or you will be beating your head against the wall in frustration.

In most cases, the vast majority of parents have no interest in coaching; are very grateful that you are doing the job; and will be supportive once they understand the problems which you face when players are tardy or absent. Often, they can help to bring pressure to bear on the Club to provide another player to your team and/or help to locate an extra player. If this isn't possible, they may be able to help you to talk the Club into disbanding your team and placing the responsible kids on other teams. So, the chances are good that you will manage to work things out in a manner which suits the majority. However, if you are offered a job by the majority which you just don't want, don't be afraid to turn it down.

Pre-Season Meeting:

The most important meeting you will ever have

Much as we might like to eliminate parents from youth soccer all together, it's not possible or desirable. They have an important role to play. Parents are the reason children come to soccer in the first place. And without their financial and practical support you would have no one in your team.

So you must respect them. But it's important that you educate them too.

Parental education may not stop the anti-social touch line incidents that often blight youth soccer, but it's a coach's duty to at least try to explain to parents how to behave at matches.

You will also need to make sure the players' rules are communicated and understood. For example, one of my rules is, 'players must bring a drink to training and matches'. In my opinion, it's a good rule. But like all rules, it needs to be properly explained. That is if you want to avoid a difficult conversation with a player's parents when their child is left on the bench because they forgot to bring a drink.

Similarly, you need to explain how you are going to pick your teams. Will you give equal playing time to all your players? Or will you always start with your strongest team and give the rest of the players as much playing time as you can? The choice is yours, but it's vital that parents are given the chance to have their say on your coaching philosophy before the season starts. Not at half time during the first match! The place to do all of this is the coach/parent pre-season meeting.

Look at the following agenda for some ideas you can use at your meeting.

An agenda for a pre-season meeting

- Hand around a sign-in sheet that includes parents' telephone numbers.
- Introductions. Tell parents a bit about yourself. Include your coaching background and qualifications. If necessary, ask the parents to introduce themselves too.
- Describe your coaching philosophy. Be specific about how you will pick the team for matches, your views on playing children in fixed positions, how you will develop players' skills and your approach to player discipline. Include the sanctions you will apply for disruptive behavior.
- Your objective(s) for the season. How will you define 'winning'? In terms of matches won/lost? Or the number of smiles on your players' faces? Or both? Again, be specific.
- Discuss the need for a code of conduct for players, parents and yourself. Make sure parents know that they must not yell instructions to players from the touch line or criticize players or officials.
- Tell parents how you will keep in touch with them during the season. If you choose text messaging or email, make sure you have the right details on file.
- If the team needs equipment or kit, ask for two or three parents to form a fundraising committee and set a date for their first meeting.
- Questions and answers.
- Finally, hand out fixture lists (if available), paper copies of your code of conduct and thank everyone for their time.

Parent Concerns and Complaints:

Explain your coaching philosophy but also that you are the coach and you decide where their children play on the field. Also make it clear that you are happy to discuss any concerns they might have - but not in front of other parents or players.

There's nothing worse than seeing a coach get into a lively debate with a parent while the players are watching. It kills respect for the coach and it doesn't do much for the reputation of the "concerned parent" either.

Seven Soccer Coaching Mistakes:

1. Don't be a PE instructor: Children come to coaching sessions to have a bit of fun and play games with their friends - not to be bossed around by a coach who wants everyone to know that he (or she) is in charge. Shouting, giving orders and imposing rigid discipline are the characteristics of a coach with no self confidence and no real understanding of why they are coaching.

So try to be relaxed, smile a lot and don't try to impress anyone.

2. Don't talk too much: The quickest way to take the fun out of soccer is to make a child listen to a two or three-minute lecture. They will just switch off, get bored and you will get frustrated. If you don't think you will be able to explain what you want your players to do in less than 60 seconds, do something else.

3. Don't impose drills on your players: Another way to bore the pants off young soccer players to make them stand in a line, wait to get a touch on the ball for a second or two then go back to the end of the line again. Children learn how to play soccer by playing the game, being exposed to the problems they will experience on match days and finding solutions to those problems - with or without your help. So don't make young players stand in lines. Play games (preferably small-sided games (SSGs)) instead.

4. Don't try to pack too much in: Many new coaches try to include too much in their coaching sessions. You also need to allow time in your sessions for adequate drinks breaks and socializing.

5. Don't "wing it": It is essential to plan your coaching sessions.

6. Even the best session plans don't always work - the activities might turn out to be too demanding, more or less players turn up than you were expecting, the weather might be against you....have some "back pocket" games handy - games that you know your players love to play. Such as War!

7. Children want to compete: Games and drills that don't involve competition are OK... for about 30 seconds.

If you make your players perform non-competitive drills for longer, they will get bored and they'll soon start to compete among themselves in ways that you might find inappropriate. Always try to satisfy the competitive instinct of your players. Even in 1v1 games, keep score and challenge your players to improve.

How can we distinguish between a good coach and a mediocre one?

Good Coach - Technical knowledge of the sport, which he/she incorporates into a highly organized, 12-month coaching plan.

Mediocre Coach - Has a superficial knowledge of the sport, but often thinks he/she knows it all.

Good Coach - Is capable of helping the player achieve their full potential.
Mediocre Coach - Cannot gauge athletic potential because they lack evaluative ability.

Good Coach - Builds the team on a foundation of individual skill teaching.
Mediocre Coach - Frequently becomes so obsessed with the overall team goal that they ignore basics.

Good Coach - Keeps up-to-date on technical and scientific advances in the game.
Mediocre Coach - Has no scientific curiosity and continues using antiquated ideas for the sake of expediency.

Good Coach - Is capable of adjusting their approach to fit their players' intellectual and skill levels.
Mediocre Coach - Continues using strategies that have worked for them in the past, regardless of the specific abilities of their players.

Good Coach - Hates to lose, but will not win at all costs.
Mediocre Coach - Hates to lose, but will not be circumspect about how their team wins, disregarding the cost to their players and themselves.

Good Coach - Teaches the long-range values of sports participation.
Mediocre Coach - Pays little attention to these considerations.

Good Coach - Does not let their ego distort their professional motives for coaching.
Mediocre Coach - Is highly egotistical and this is one of their prime motives for coaching.

Good Coach - Is proud to talk about all the players on the team and how they are developing.
Mediocre Coach - Talks about themselves and how the team's development is due to their coaching skills.

Good Coach - Gives full credit to everyone involved.
Mediocre Coach - Takes all the credit when the team wins and blames everyone else when they lose.

Good Coach - Is respected by all.
Mediocre Coach - Demands respect but seldom gets it.

Youth soccer coaching:

What are you trying to do?

It is comparatively easy to construct a team of young soccer players who can win matches. All you have to do is teach them the basics, ensure they obey your instructions to the letter and (most importantly) don't let them think for themselves.

However, it is better to:

- a) encourage your players to recognize and solve the challenges of the game on their own and
- b) be as concerned with developing their life skills as their balling ability.

Following such a policy will, in the short term, mean that you will lose matches that you could have won. However, in the long term you will produce a set of clever, confident players who can go out and win a game without being told what to do.

And more importantly, they will enjoy their soccer regardless of the match result.

Do I need any special attributes to be a good youth soccer coach?

Of vital importance is the coaches personality and character. Working with children requires patience, kindness and respect.

How should I go about it?

The most fundamental skill in soccer is individual mastery of the soccer and the creativity that comes with it. This should be a priority in training and games, especially in the early years. As this skill is mastered, the rest of the game becomes easy - both to teach and to learn.

Practices should be built around facilitating the development of the skills necessary to move and control the ball well. As these individual skills and the creativity to make them come alive in the game are developed to a level of competence, the finer points, first of passing skill and later of team organization can be taught. You need a plan.

Some tips:

- 1) Set up situations where the players can learn by playing the game. Avoid the three Ls - lines, laps and lectures - and remember that the game is the best teacher for young players.
- 2) Communication is key. Coaches can often be more helpful to a young player's development by organizing less, saying less and allowing the players to do more. Set up a game and let the kids play. Keep most of your comments for before and after practice and during breaks. Comments should be kept short and simple. Be comfortable organizing a session that looks like street soccer. Communicate your coaching philosophy and expectations to parents and players at an early stage.
- 3) Teaching and learning the game of soccer is a process: make your goals seasonal, as well as daily and weekly. Often, at the younger ages, the developmental efforts of one season are not noticeable in children until sometime in the next season.
- 4) Set age-appropriate goals i.e., know what the child is able to do at that age.
- 5) From a developmental standpoint, the young ages are the best ones for learning skills. Spend the time now encouraging this growth. By the age of 17 the capacity to pick up new motor skills begins to wane, while the ability to conceptualize team organization, tactics and strategy increases. As a coach, work with these strengths, not against them.
- 6) Do not expect games and practices to look like professional soccer. If you want to use high level soccer as a teaching tool, focus on the individual skill level of professional players, not their organization. Give your players opportunities to see what older, more skilled players, i.e. a high school, college player or an older brother or sister, can do with the ball. On occasion, invite some of these players to participate in your practice. Use them to model good soccer qualities. Let your players learn by experiencing the game alongside or against these better players. Older players can also be used as "neutral players." In this case, the neutral player helps whichever team has the ball i.e. he or she never defends. Maybe the neutral player has limited touches and/or can't score, but he or she gives the team with the ball a better chance of keeping the ball. By helping to maintain possession, the neutral player(s) helps the game maintain some rhythm, and gives the kids a clearer picture of the game's possibilities.
- 7) Recognize and understand how the skills learned at each age are connected to preparing the player to move into the next phase of his or her development. Know what the next level of play is, and the general tools that your players should carry with them as they move on. Help them to be prepared.
- 8) Allow your players to develop these requisite skills in an environment where the main goal is to have fun with the ball.
- 9) The value of matches is that they provide youngsters with an opportunity to showcase their newly acquired skill and creativity. It is always nice to win, however that should not be your focus at the younger age groups.
- 10) Have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish at practice. Create exercises/games that replicate and repeat the movements and situations that are found in soccer and that allow the player to grow comfortable and confident with the ball at his or her feet. Encourage players to move with the ball at his or her feet and deal with boundaries, opponents, teammates and goals. Keep in mind that soccer is a pretty simple game. If you're involved in soccer long enough, you begin to realize that all the many little that work are really just variations on the same basic concepts. As long as the parameters that you have established in your exercises/small-sided games are true to soccer (goals for scoring and defending), creates the problems that you want the kids to solve (protecting the ball while dribbling, etc.), and allows your players to be challenged and find some success, you're on the right track.
- 11) Don't be afraid to experiment to find what works best.
- 12) Remember that the game is the best teacher for the players. Coaches and parents should think of themselves more as facilitators, monitors, guides or even participants, to provide a rich environment for the kids to learn from and enjoy. Your coaching style is important.

Are you a WAAC (Win At All Costs) Coach?

Coaches, parents and players all want to win matches. That's only natural. But enjoyment is replaced by stress if natural competitiveness gives way to a 'Win At All Costs' (WAAC) attitude.

But you're not a WAAC coach, are you? Hmm...let's see shall we?

Please answer the following five questions HONESTLY. Assume your team is aged between six and eleven and you're playing seven-a-side mini-soccer in a league that allows roll on, roll off substitutes.

1. The opposition turns up with six players. Do you:
 - a) Offer to start with six yourself; or

b) Put out your full team. It's not your problem if they can't field a full team, is it?

2. One of your players is new and not as skilful as the rest of your team. He has been on the subs bench since the start of the match. There's ten minutes to go in an important league game and you're leading 1-0. The only player on the pitch who hasn't been subbed yet is your star defender. Do you:

- a) Pull off your star defender and put the new player on; or
- b) Leave the sub on the bench.

3. In the scenario above, you put the new player on and he makes a couple of mistakes that cost you the game. After the match you are confronted by parents who say that 'you lost us the game' by putting on the new player. Do you:

- a) Remind the parents that your main concern is developing ALL your players, not winning matches, and players won't improve by sitting on the bench; or
- b) Apologize and mentally kick yourself for making a bad decision.

4. At half time you're winning 7-0. Do you:

- a) Rest your goal scorers in the second half (or put them in defense); or
- b) Do nothing - it's going pretty well and you want to improve your teams' goal difference.

5. Your main striker gets a kick on her shin and wants to come off. You're losing 2-1 with five minutes to go. Do you:

- a) Take her off and hope your depleted forward line can get you a point; or
- b) Ask her to stay on for the last five minutes. It's only a little knock, she'll be OK.

The 'correct' answers are pretty obvious but what would you really do?

If you answered mostly 'A's you're clearly not a WAAC coach. If you answered mostly 'B's you need to ask yourself another question:

Is what I'm doing in the best interests of all my players or am I more concerned with accumulating points and trophies?

Putting too much emphasis on results will cause you and your players stress and makes everyone afraid to take risks.

The resulting 'safety first' culture stifles player development and may well result in more losses in the long term.

Furthermore, if your answer to question 5 was B, the English FA (and I assume most other associations) would view this as child abuse. Remember, your first priority as a coach of children has nothing to do with the game itself. Your first priority is to protect the welfare of your players.

So please - don't worry if you lose the odd game as a result of a risk that you or one of your players took that didn't come off. It's a learning opportunity, not a disaster!

Try to give all your players an approximately equal share of match time and respect the opposition.

Treat them as you would like to be treated if you were in their shoes.

That way we'll put the enjoyment back into match days!

What children want from their soccer coach:

Everyone involved in soccer coaching needs to understand what children want from their 'ideal' soccer coach. Most importantly, it is important to treat children with respect and not as if they were objects. They like you to listen and take notice of their feelings and opinions. A recent series of interviews with 140 young athletes in different sports gives an idea of those aspects of coaching which young athletes think are important. The opinions, which were given, may change according to sex, age, and sport; these are just the general comments.

Knowledge. Coaches should know their sport well and most children prefer coaches who have participated in the sport. It provides them with credibility.

Personality. Children like coaches who are friendly, happy, patient, understanding and have a sense of humor.

Authority. Children like coaches to be firm but fair, and while boys, particularly, like to be worked hard they don't like to be shouted at.

Taking personal interest. As they get older and more able, many young athletes like coaches to take an interest in the things they do besides sport.

Reaction to performance. When they do well, children like the coach to say "Well done" but they don't like them to "go over the top." (OTT) When they do poorly, they like to be given some encouragement and told what went wrong. They want to be told how to correct mistakes and not to be shouted at or ignored.

Encouragement. Most children, particularly in team sports, like to have the coach shout encouragement to them when they are competing.

Decision making. Few young children express a wish to have a say in the decisions which affect them; they expect coaches to coach and trust them to make the right decisions. As they get older and more experienced, they are more likely to want to be consulted. This may be the case with 13+ children

Organization. Children like coaches to be organized and present structured coaching sessions. They also like them to take responsibility for seeing that they are in the right place at the right time

Instruction and feedback. Children do like to be shown what to do, how to do it and to have mistakes corrected. In short: teach them!

DO:

- Be aware of the effect you have upon growing children.
- Find out what the kids expect to get out of sport with you.
- Be firm, fair and organized.
- Give credit where it is due and give help where it is needed.
- Be consistent.
- Provide learning experiences: teach.
- Make practice and competition fun; it needn't be silly.
- Set challenging goals tailored to the individual.
- Recognize the value of friendships between children.
- Show your approval whenever you can.
- Listen to the children
- Relax and enjoy yourself with the kids.
- Emphasize learning skill, not competing.
- Reward children for effort.
- Help children over the realization that they might not have the ability of others.
- Build confidence by being positive.
- Reduce competitive expectations.
- Help those who do not want to compete.
- Tell children about how outcomes are affected by things other than their own ability.
- Remember that mistakes are part of learning.

DON'T:

- Put kids down for not doing as well as you wanted.
- Shout and humiliate them.
- Ignore them when they need some support.
- Blind them with science they don't need.
- Overdo the praise; they won't believe you.

Youth soccer coaching's six cardinal sins:

1. Failing to consider the health and safety of your players. Nothing is more important than the health and safety of your players.

Playing areas, pitches and equipment, (especially portable goals) should be inspected for defects before you use them and if the defects cannot be corrected, you should not use them.

Tatty training balls, for example, should be discarded before a piece of the outer covering catches a player's eye and you should make sure players do not play with anything that has a spike on the end - slalom poles should not be used as javelins!

And children should not be exposed to extreme weather conditions. I sometimes get asked what is the best way to keep players warm on freezing match days. My answer is that if it's freezing, you shouldn't be playing!

Similarly, if your players are very young you should not train or play if it's very hot – small children do not have an effective cooling system and will quickly dehydrate in hot weather.

2. Making players wait in lines and/or giving lectures. Young soccer players come to training sessions to play soccer, not stand around waiting to get a touch on the ball or listen while you lecture them.

You can get away with using games or drills that have an element of waiting in lines if you keep the lines very short and fast moving but bear in mind that the younger your players, the shorter and faster the lines have to be.

When introducing an activity, try to remember that you have 20 seconds at most to gain your players attention when introducing a new task during training sessions. If you fail to make the task meaningful or understandable in that time, they will begin to tune you out and you will need to start again.

So think carefully about how you explain games and drills.

It's best to start by telling your players why you want them to do something ("we need to do this because it will help you become better at... ") followed by a demonstration. Then check their understanding ("does everyone know what to do?") before starting the exercise.

How long should games/drills last?

The younger the players, the shorter your games need to be. For five year olds, for example, I like to change the activity every five to 10 minutes. Older players should be able to maintain focus on an activity for longer but you should always move on within a reasonable period of time – do not turn training activities into tests of endurance!

3. Being late and/or tolerating lateness. Youth soccer coaching is all about having standards.

As a minimum, you should expect your players to turn up for training and matches on time and ideally they should arrive early. There is nothing worse than having to repeat yourself to a player who turns up late – it's a waste of your valuable time and is also disrespectful, both to you and the rest of the squad.

You need to lead by example so get to the training ground or pitch before your players, set up your equipment and start your sessions dead on time. Don't wait for anyone and tell latecomers to stand to one side until the next activity begins.

Tip: encourage good timekeeping by setting up a couple of goals and letting anyone who arrives early play a game before the session officially starts.

4. Not giving game time to players who train. Players who turn up at training sessions deserve to play in matches, end of story.

Saying that they're "not good enough" or "the score is too close, I can't make any changes" is never an excuse for keeping a young player on the bench. Your players are children, not professionals, and they all deserve a chance to play in matches with their friends.

5. Not communicating your coaching "philosophy" to parents. You can't run a youth soccer team without the support of parents. And you won't have their support if you don't tell them what approach you are going to take to your coaching. Before the season starts you need to have a meeting with parents to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. Encourage questions and let them know that you have given a lot of thought to how you're going to coach their children. Listen to their suggestions – you do not have a monopoly on the best ideas – ask them to help you by bringing their children to coaching sessions and matches on time (see sin number 3), help you prepare pitches for match days and raise funds for new kit and equipment.

The more involved your parents are, the more time you will have to actually coach their children and the less likely you are to suffer defections to rival teams.

6. Not smiling :(Don't be afraid to smile. A smile lets your players know that you are happy coaching them and that soccer is a game to be enjoyed, not a life or death struggle.

So be happy in your coaching. Enjoy the time you spend with your players.

Be a better coach- don't go Barking up the wrong tree!

Most youth soccer coaches explain games and drills verbally. They stand in front of their players and tell them "you run there, the ball goes there, then you run there". This often results in a sea of blank faces.

The coach then repeats the instructions in a slightly different way or tries a walk through with a couple of players who look as though they just might have a clue what he is going on about. Eventually, the coach gives up and says "OK, let's just have a go, shall we?"

Sometimes this approach works but sometimes it doesn't and the poor old coach is often left scratching his head and wondering if he is talking in a foreign language!

But he isn't talking in a foreign language. It's just that he hasn't taken the various learning styles of his players into account.

Learning styles

Young player learn from their soccer coaches (and others) in a variety of different ways.

The ELT model by David Klob, experience-driven model by Honey and Mumford, mind perception model by Anthony Gregorc and the Sudbury Model of Democratic Education are examples. However, the simple VARK model proposed by Neil Fleming is widely accepted and the most useful as far as youth soccer coaches are concerned.

What is VARK?

V: Visual - the child's preferred style of learning is by seeing the visual aspects of a task.

A: Auditory - the child's preferred style of learning is by listening and following vocal instructions.

R: Reading/writing - the child's learning style centers around reading and possibly writing and making notes.

K: Kinesthetic - the child's learning style is exploratory. She learns by doing and playing.

How to use VARK in your coaching sessions

Your aim should be to get your messages across in as many different ways as possible, taking the VARK model into account. But it won't be possible to use them all - explanations need to be brief and your players will get restless if you spend 20 minutes going through the mechanics of a game in four different ways!

Just try to use as many styles as possible and don't just stick to the one or two methods you are most comfortable with.

Be brave - experiment!

Visual: Tactics boards are a simple and very effective way of engaging young players. I know one coach who stuck photos of his players faces on the little magnetic discs. They loved them!

You could also use printouts of diagrams, show videos on a laptop or use an iPad.

Auditory: Auditory learners like listening to you! But they like your verbal instructions to be structured and orderly so always try to plan your explanations so they are clear. Use a few, simple words and ask your players to repeat your instructions back to you.

Reading/writing: It's not easy to accommodate this style of learning during coaching sessions but you could try giving out cards that describe what you want specific players to do or giving out session plans in advance.

Kinesthetic: Kinesthetic learners just want to get a ball and play. They respond well to being asked to demonstrate a skill or technique. These players will also appreciate being allowed to work games out for themselves after being given the briefest of introductions.

Conclusion

Before your next coaching session, think about how you're going to get your message across. Try something different. Hand out diagrams, show a video or just give your players a task to perform without telling them how to do it.

Remember that understanding your players' preferred style of learning is an important part of getting to know them as individuals and it's vital if you want to create the best possible environment for learning.

Giving feedback on players at the end of the season:

This is a good idea - parents like to know that their son or daughter has improved and it's useful to give some suggestions regarding areas for further improvement.

But simply measuring the number of time a player can juggle or how quickly a player can run X yards with the ball or how many goals they can score from the penalty spot is not particularly useful.

For a start, you need a baseline. How good were the players at these tasks at the beginning of the season?

Secondly, measuring technical ability is not the same as measuring how good a child is at playing soccer. Sure, we can say that Mary can run 20 yards with the ball in seven seconds but it doesn't shed any light on her ability to run with the ball in matches.

Separating technical ability from skill (the ability to use technique in a match situation) in this way is pretty meaningless.

It would be better to arrange an appointment with each parent and player and begin by asking the player if he or she thinks they have improved as a player during the season. You can talk about the player's technical ability but also discuss their work rate, ability to get on with team mates, take instruction and performance in matches.

At such a meeting you can also get feedback on your performance. Give your parents and players advance notice that you will be asking questions such as:

- Do you enjoy training sessions?
- If no, why not?
- Do you enjoy playing in matches?
- If there was anything you could change about training sessions or matches, what would it be?

Then act on what they tell you!

Bullying in youth soccer - tackle it head on

Youth soccer coaches need to look out for signs of bullying and be prepared to take quick, positive action to nip any problems in the bud. It's our duty as the temporary guardian of children in our charge to know what bullying is, how to recognize it and how to prevent it, preferably before it happens.

What is bullying? Behavior by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. •

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Bullying manifests itself in a variety of forms. It ranges from teasing and spreading rumors to pushing someone around and causing physical harm. It usually happens in front of other people.

Name calling, mocking, kicking, taking or messing about with personal belongings, writing or drawing offensive graffiti, gossiping, excluding people from groups and threatening physical violence, are all forms of bullying.

The effects of bullying

Bullying makes the lives of its victims miserable. It undermines their confidence and destroys their sense of security. It can cause sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem, fear, anxiety, poor concentration and lead to self-harm, depression, suicidal thoughts and, in some cases, suicide. (NHS UK, <http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/bullying/facts.aspx>)

Bullying will certainly result in players leaving a club. And not just the ones who are being bullied. A soccer field where bullying is allowed is an unpleasant place for everyone, not just the victims.

Who are the bullies?

The bully can be any person. For example, a bully could be:

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy.
- A player who intimidates other players or officials.
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person. (www.activesurrey.com)

How do you know if children on your team are being bullied?

There are several tell-tale signs of bullying and, as a coach, you are in a good position to spot them. If one or more of your players,

- Suddenly decides they don't want to take part in activities they used to enjoy.
- Becomes anxious or lacking in confidence.
- Appears distressed.
- Has bruises, cuts or scratches, and gives improbable reasons for them.
- Has possessions regularly damaged, lost or "go missing".
- Appears nervous of walking to or from training.
- Appears frightened of a particular individual or group.
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Starts bullying other children.
- Is frightened to say what's wrong...

you should find out if they have become a victim of bullying.

What can you do about bullying?

Ensure your players know what bullying is and that it will not be tolerated. Tell them that it's okay to complain if they are being badly treated by one of their team mates or anyone else. And, just as important, they should tell you if they see someone else being bullied. After all, you don't have eyes in the back of your head and bullies can be very secretive.

If you spot behavior that can be classified as bullying, you should take prompt action but don't dive in. You could do more harm than good if you identify a child as the victim of bullying in front of his or her peers. So be sensitive. Take the victim to one side (but not out of sight of everyone else) and ask the child to tell you about the incident.

You then have to discuss the incident with the bullies and their parents. This will probably be difficult, but it has to be done. It will be a lot easier to talk about bullying with an 'offender' and parents if your club has an up-to-date and well communicated anti-bullying policy.

What to include in your anti-bullying policy

- A reminder that players must play within the Laws of the game.
- What bullying is and the forms it can take - name calling, making racist remarks, threats, hitting, kicking, unwelcome physical contact, exclusion from groups, making unwelcome remarks on social networking sites.
- That bullying is unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated at any time.
- How to complain about a bullying incident (to the coach if it involves players, to a named club official if it involves the coach).
- What will happen when a complaint is made (there will be written feedback to the complainant and how long the process will take).
- Who to complain to if the process is not followed.
- What sanctions will be taken against bullies (verbal warning, written warning, temporary ban from the club, permanent ban from the club).
- Links to websites where bullies, their victims and parents can find more information (see 'useful links' below for some suggestions).

This policy should be reviewed and issued once a year to all parents. It should be included in the welcome pack your hand out to new players and be displayed.

Cyber bullying

It's never been easier for a child to bully another child. Social networking sites such as Face book can be a fun way to exchange messages, but they have been misused by some children who post spiteful comments with a quick click of a mouse.

You should discuss cyber bullying with your players and make sure that they know that you consider this to be as serious as any other form of bullying.

The ideal youth soccer coach

Knowledge. Coaches should know their sport well and most children prefer coaches who have participated in the sport. It provides them with credibility. The fact that you are a footy4kids member tells me that you want to increase your coaching knowledge and there are plenty of resources in the footy4kids shop if you're hungry for more.

Personality. Children like coaches who are friendly, happy, patient, understanding and have a sense of humor.

Authority. Children like coaches to be firm but fair, and while boys, particularly, like to be worked hard they don't like to be shouted at.

Taking personal interest. As they get older and more able, many young athletes like coaches to take an interest in the things they do besides sport.

Reaction to performance. When they do well, children like the coach to say "Well done" but they don't like them to "go over the top." (OTT) When they do poorly, they like to be given some encouragement and told what went wrong. They want to be told how to correct mistakes and not to be shouted at or ignored.

Encouragement. Most children, particularly in team sports, like to have the coach shout encouragement to them when they are competing.

Decision making. Few young children express a wish to have a say in the decisions which affect them; they expect coaches to coach and trust them to make the right decisions. As they get older and more experienced, they are more likely to want to be consulted. This may be the case with 13+ children.

Organization. Children like coaches to be organized and present structured coaching sessions. They also like them to take responsibility for seeing that they are in the right place at the right time.

Instruction and feedback. Children do like to be shown what to do, how to do it and to have mistakes corrected. In short — teach them!

DO:

- Be aware of the effect you have upon growing children.
- Find out what the kids expect to get out of sport with you.
- Be firm, fair and organized.

- Give credit where it is due and give help where it is needed.
- Be consistent.
- Provide learning experiences: teach.
- Make practice and competition fun; it needn't be silly.
- Set challenging goals tailored to the individual.
- Recognize the value of friendships between children.
- Show your approval whenever you can.
- Listen to the children.
- Relax and enjoy yourself with the kids.
- Emphasize learning skill, not competing.
- Reward children for effort.
- Help children over the realization that they might not have the ability of others.
- Build confidence by being positive.
- Reduce competitive expectations.
- Help those who do not want to compete.
- Tell children about how outcomes are affected by things other than their own ability.
- Remember that mistakes are part of learning.

DON'T:

- Put kids down for not doing as well as you wanted.
- Shout and humiliate them.
- Ignore them when they need some support.
- Blind them with science they don't need.
- Overdo the praise; they won't believe you.

How to Develop "Soccer Vision":

Links: Info | See [Soccer intelligence and Competitiveness](#) | [Various Small Side Games](#) | [Sportsmanship](#) | [Coaching Pearls \(Positions, Discipline\)](#) | [Formations \(Systems of Play\)](#) |

This key quality is only gained by experience. There are no shortcuts.... you must play lots of different SSGs with your players and keep working on your players' receiving and passing skills. If the basic skills are weak, your players will be totally focused on the ball and will not have the confidence to get their heads up and see what is going on around them. "No matter what position you play -- Everyone defends and everyone -- and I mean EVERYONE -- attacks." Even the keeper, because every time you make a save or take a goal kick or punt the ball you are beginning our attack." Soccer vision is the ability to find solutions to the many problems (such as "where is the ball going next?" and "what is that player going to do?") that appear during the course of a game.

- It requires the interpretation and understanding of rapidly changing visual cues and is a complex process that requires a lot of experience. For that reason it may be beyond the capabilities of most players under the age of 10.
- Keep their heads up and are aware of what's going on around them.
- Can spot and execute a pass (or shoot) before being challenged by an opponent.
- Regularly move to a position where they are supporting a team mate on the ball.
- Reach scoring positions before the ball gets there.
- Can step in front of an opponent and intercept a pass.

Great! They have interpreted the visual cues, spotted the problems and worked out their own solutions. They know what they have to do to get the ball and do something useful with it – in short, your players have got soccer vision.

Step 1. Good basic ball skills are a pre-requisite. They buy the time your players need to get their heads up and see what is going on around them. So if your players' first touch is too hard or if they struggle to pass accurately and with the right amount of pace on the ball you need to address these issues.

This is a game that will help your players develop good "head up" passing skills.

FOCUS ON THE PLAYER

- Let him - make his own decisions - experience (own experience)
- Support him, be patient and give him confidence
- Help him - to make the right decisions - to find a solution - with a positive coaching

Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day ...

Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime !

Top player requires 6 basic competences that are equally important:

1. Winner's mentality
2. Emotional stability
3. Personality
4. Explosivity
5. Insight in the game
6. Ball and body control

Players who don't reach potential:

- Find excuses not to work
- Feel entitled
- Take criticism personally
- Lack passion
- Want it easy

How To Use Tiki-Taka In Soccer Practice:

"Tiki-Taka" is the latest phrase used to describe how the game is played by the Spanish national soccer team and FC Barcelona. "Tiki-Taka" is the Spanish term for clackers, a pair of balls on a string which swung up and down so they banged together, making click-clacking noises or, as the Spanish say, "tiki-taka." Andrés Montes, Spanish commentator for the 2006 World Cup 2006, is attributed with having been the first to use this phrase for soccer play to describe his enthusiasm for the Spanish passing game.

• Tiki-taka is easy to describe: it's a fast passing game, started if at all possible upon first contact with the ball, and then straight into the goal. The opposing team finds itself running after the ball constantly and gets worn down by the action.

Training Tiki-Taka: We know from FC Barcelona that children up the age of 12 are always playing 4-on-4. This type of game promotes short passing and automatic triangular formations. All players are constantly involved in both offense and defense.

• In Germany, this style of playing has also become familiar and has been promoted as the "small game." This "small game" is the cornerstone of Tiki-Taka and there have been calls to add 4-on-4 tournaments to the official game schedules. The Dutch have also placed a lot of emphasis on 4-on-4 play in their practice training since the mid-1980's.

• In Spain, Tiki-Taka is seen as a new game with origins in five-a-side soccer. Iniesta, Xavi, and many other players, had their first official competitive experiences as children playing five-a-side.

Triangular play, fast tempo, short reaction times, always being ready to be passed to--all of these have been brought to the field by five-a-side soccer.

• If the basic tactical formation in a team of four is 1-2-1, then that is already the diamond or rhombus shape with its standard passing positions and the ability to play the ball into the deep.

Training Exercise for Tiki-Taka: A practice formation typically used by Barcelona:

Play 2 against 2, 3 against 3, or 4 against 4 without goals.

What you'll find is that not just one game will be played, but three, four, or even more.

Everybody plays in a single, limited field and it's not only the opponent, but also the players in other pairings who cause interference in Tiki-Taka.

The Real Madrid Game:

Objective: To develop soccer "vision". To encourage quick passing and take goal scoring opportunities.

Age range: U7s to U14s.

Equipment: Some flat cones, training vests in two different colors, two poles, one ball.

Set-up: Place a goal made with two poles (or cones) in the center of a 30-yard square. Divide your players into two teams plus one goalkeeper.

How to play: Both teams try to score in the goal. Goals can be scored from either side. The goalkeeper is neutral and tries to save shots from both teams. Play for a set time or until one team scores a certain number of goals.

Progression/variations: Play with uneven teams (i.e. 5v3) to encourage players to make use of a numerical advantage. Play with three teams instead of two. Each team has a target player. These are the only players who can score.

123 pass! Game:

Set up: use a 10-yard square grid for every three players in your squad. Use one ball for each group.

• Two of the three players (players 1 and 2) are positioned on one side of the square. Player 1 has a ball.

• The third player (player 3) is on the opposite side of the square.

How to play: Player 1 passes to player 3 who receives the ball with the inside of the foot, takes the ball a couple of yards to the side and passes the ball to player 2, who passes back to player 3.

After two or three minutes change player 3.

Coaching points: Ask your players: what is a good pass? Answer: one that is directed towards the receiver, not hit so too hard that they can't control it or hit so softly that it doesn't get there. Remind the receiving player to move towards the ball. Make this drill competitive by seeing how many passes each group of three can make in a minute or how long they can go without making a mistake.

Progression: Player 1 (the player with the ball) passes to the opposite player (player 3) and sprints around him. Player 3 taps the ball to the side, first touch, as the sprinting player 1 comes around him. The sprinting player passes first or second touch to the player facing him (player 2) who repeats the action. After a couple of minutes change player 3.

Step 2. Assuming your players have a reasonable first touch and can pass the ball accurately over short distances you can move on to activities that will begin to develop their soccer vision.

1. Inside/outside: All players dribble a ball inside a grid. When you raise your hand, players must move outside of the grid with their ball and continue moving with it. When the coach puts his hand up again they must move back inside the grid. Players try not to be the last one in or out.

2. Two Color Passing: Put your players into two groups identified by different colored bibs (pinnies). In this example they are red and yellow.

How to play: the players move around a grid passing the ball to each other in the sequence of red player to yellow player. This requires players to take a mental snapshot of the area before receiving the pass.

Coaching points: your players should be constantly moving around the grid, calling for the ball and should not let it stop moving. Limiting the number of touches your players are allowed will force them to move their heads up quicker but it may also reveal technical weaknesses. If that happens, go back to step 1.

3. Four Goal Game: Set up: divide your players into teams of three or four and create a 40 yards long by 30 yards wide playing area for every two teams. Place a goal in each corner of the playing area.

How to play: each team defends two goals at one end and attacks the two goals at the other end.

Coaching point: if all your players are clustered around one goal, stop the play and ask them to look around - is there an opportunity to score in an unguarded goal?

Pass to the End Player: An excellent game for improving your players' first touch, passing skills and playing with their heads up.

Tip: Watch how your players control the ball. It should never be "trapped" as this makes the player look down at her feet and she won't be able to see any passing or shooting opportunities.

Instead, the first touch should push the ball slightly away from the body and away from pressure. This allows the player a second to assess the situation.

Conclusion: Don't expect very young players to have soccer vision. They have to give all their attention to the ball and don't have enough experience to see the problems or find the solutions.

As your players gain experience and develop good ball skills you can help them develop vision by playing lots of games that a) require them to keep their heads up and b) reward them for finding solutions to problems.

When it comes to soccer vision, the game really is the teacher.

Soccer Training:

Soccer-specific training:

Flexibility exercises form an essential component of the warm-up, although the order in which exercises are done is a matter of choice.

Cross-Training: Thought of as a supplement to a formal training program. Can also help reduce the risk of 'overtraining injuries', and minimize player boredom. Sports such as volleyball entail regular jumping and anticipation of ball flight have great relevance. Cycling and swimming are also useful activities for soccer players develop aerobic capacity and muscle strength at the same time.

Assistance drills

Run with the wind. The coach may take advantage of prevailing weather conditions and get the players to run with the wind behind them. Players should run in small groups to ensure a competitive element and maximal training stimulus. There should be a smooth build-up over 25–30 m to produce top speed for a further 30 m. Six to ten repetitions per session can be adequate.

Downhill running

Uphill runs are utilised for muscle strength training. Downhill running on steep declines induces severe 'delayed onset muscle soreness' as a result of the eccentric contractions in the lower limbs to decelerate the body and maintain balance. A small decline of about 2–3 degrees will allow players to go faster than normal without the braking effect of eccentric muscle contractions. There is therefore a requirement to seek out natural terrain for conducting this kind of session. Performance of about eight repetitions would constitute a good training stimulus.

'Wind-sprints'

These runs are so called because they allow the player to 'wind-up' to top speed. They are also referred to as 'flying starts', being preceded by a maximum acceleration. Players should move smoothly at progressive speed over 15–25 m up to top speed and maintain running all-out for 15–35 m. They can recover fully by decelerating, turning round and repeating. Typically, 8–10 repetitions are performed.

'Fast-feet' drills

Such drills might include running on the spot at a cadence much faster than normal running. Emphasis can be placed on the maximum number of ground contacts (foot-tapping) or on lifting the thigh more quickly than normal (high knee pick-up). Lateral and diagonal movements to negotiate flat discs or cones can be incorporated into these drills. Sessions are best conducted in sets, for example 10 sets of 6-s efforts.

Contrast drills

'Resistance' drills are performed with a partner providing tension by means of an elastic cord attached to the player and acting as a running harness. After two or three repetitions the drill is performed without resistance, the contrast between the two designed to improve speed of movement. The drill is more appropriate for work on acceleration than for top speed and is relevant to the kind of speed 'off-the-mark' needed in soccer.

Plyometric routines: Help maintain or develop further muscular power. Controlled runs over 30 m can be repeated but with knee pick-ups faster than normal and pushing off the toes.

Bounding The player springs off the ground into the air. Vigorous arm action and use of the free leg can enhance the leap. Five bounds on each leg form one set.

Hopping The player hops for distance on one leg for five hops, turns and repeats the sequence with the other leg. These 10 hops form one set.

Bunny hops The player hops on both feet for distance five times. The total distance may be used as a performance measure

Hurdle jumps The player jumps from both feet over obstacles such as low hurdles. Ten jumps form one set.

Side hops The jump is performed sideways over a bench and immediately back to the initial position. One set is comprised of five jumps in each direction.

Run and jump The player takes a short run before jumping vertically for maximum height, as if to head a ball. Five jumps off each leg form one set.

Drop jumps The player drops 20–40 cm off a bench or box onto the ground and rebounds to reach a maximum height.

Ten jumps form one set **Lift jumps** A short run onto a box-top or bench (20–40 cm high) is followed by a vigorous jump off one leg into the air as if to head a ball. On landing on both feet, a second jump into the air is performed for maximum height. Ten jumps represent one set.

Rebound jumps The player starts on top of one box (20–40 cm high) and drops onto the ground, to jump immediately on to a second box nearby. Sets are comprised of 10 jumps.

Ricochets The player stands on the perimeter of a marked circle 1 m in diameter with set points marked along the circumference. The player jumps with both feet onto another point at random and continues to do so until 10 jumps are completed.

Agility:

The best distinguishing feature of the elite individuals. Agility is a function of the nervous system, incorporating proprioception and co-ordination of muscle activity in both lower limbs and in upper body for control of balance.

Typically they entail zig-zag runs, fast tracks through a maze of obstacles or negotiating low hurdles in alternating directions. Partners may be included with the object of mimicking the shuffling actions of the opposing player. Activities may be specific to soccer, as in getting up quickly from sitting on the ground, or performing zig-zag runs with the ball. Agility may be combined with fast-feet drills in movements specific to soccer. A series of cones may be placed over 10–12 m with players first maneuvering their way through with strides shorter but faster than normal. The movements are then performed backwards, sideways to the right and sideways to the left. Players can do the sequences in pairs to provide an element of competition between them.

Passive exercises can incorporate the principle of proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF). There are various PNF procedures, most notably contract–relax, and contract–relax agonist–contract.

Warming (or ‘cooling’) down after strenuous exercise is regarded as essential in sports such as running, swimming and cycling.

Functional overload: Various forms of natural resistance may be provided to overload the active muscles. These include running uphill, on sand dunes or ankle deep in water. Running harnesses may be employed to create resistance against the athlete attempting to accelerate from a standing start. The amount of resistance can be controlled by a partner or trainer. Alternative means are attachment to a sled or similar load by means of an abdominal belt. For optimal effects the normal vigorous running action should not be unduly modified. Parachutes have been advocated to increase air resistance when running but their efficacy has not been seriously addressed.

Physiological changes associated with heat acclimatization

- Earlier onset of sweating
- Sweat becomes more dilute
- Increased sweat rate at the same core temperature
- Reduced heart rate at a given exercise intensity
- Improved pacing of effort

It is possible for acclimatization to heat to be achieved relatively quickly and a good degree of adaptation takes place within 10–14 days of the initial exposure. Further adaptations will enhance the athlete’s capability of performing well under heat stress. Ideally, therefore, players should be exposed to the climate of the host country for at least 2 weeks before the competitive event.

An alternative strategy is to have an acclimatization period of 2 weeks or so well before the event with subsequent shorter exposures as training is tapered before competition. If these are not feasible, some degree of heat acclimation should be attempted before the players leave for the host country. **This goal may be achieved prior to exposure to the competitive environment in various ways:**

1 The player seeks out exposure to hot and humid environments, choosing the hottest or the most humid time of day to train at home.

2 Players may seek access to an environmental chamber for periodic bouts of heat exposure. The players must exercise rather than rest under such conditions for the exposure to be effective. About 3 h per week exercising in an environmental chamber provides a good degree of acclimation.

3 Heavy sweat suits or windbreakers may be worn in training to keep the microclimate next to the skin hot. This practice will add to the heat load imposed under cool environmental conditions and induce a degree of adaptation to thermal strain.

4 Exposure to heat is itself a learning experience. The individual gauges how exercise performance is affected and how to pace the effort so that the conditions can be tolerated.

5 The player may make repeated use of a sauna or Turkish bath, but this procedure is only partially effective. Players should be encouraged to drink copiously to maintain normal hydration status when first exposed to a hot climate. They should drink much more fluid than their thirst dictates and not rely solely on their subjective sensations of thirst.

Sunbathing after arrival in the hot country should be discouraged as this itself does not help acclimatization except by the development of a suntan

It is good practice to measure body weight each morning and players should try to compensate for weight loss with adequate fluid intake when attempting to acclimatize to heat.

Competing and training in cold:

Core temperature and muscle temperature may fall and exercise performance will be increasingly affected. Experimental studies indicate that muscle power output is reduced by 5% for every 1 deg C fall in muscle temperature below normal levels. A fall in core temperature to hypothermic levels is life-threatening: fortunately the body’s heat gain mechanisms are designed to arrest the decline and true hypothermia is a rare occurrence in match-play. It is more common for players to experience thermal discomfort due to a fall in body temperature to a level that impairs performance.

Some effects of cold on human performance

- Increased peripheral vasoconstriction
- Periodic shivering
- Muscle spindle sensitivity falls

- Reduced conduction velocity of nerve fibers
- Manual dexterity deteriorates
- Muscle strength and power decline
- Errors and injuries increase

Clothing made with natural fiber (cotton or wool) is preferable to synthetic material in cold and cold-wet conditions. Sweat produced during exercise in these conditions should be able to flow through the garment. The best material will allow sweat to flow out through the cells of the garment whilst preventing water droplets from penetrating the clothing from the outside. Fabric that becomes saturated with water or sweat loses its insulation and the body temperature may drop quickly in cold-wet conditions.

The trunk area of the body should be well protected when training is conducted in the cold. The use of warm undergarments beneath a full tracksuit may be needed. Dressing in layers increases the insulation provided: the outer layers can be discarded as body temperature rises and if ambient temperature gets warmer. In matches, a t-shirt worn underneath the team jersey will help to keep the player warm whereas the goalkeeper may need a full track-suit.

The outer layer of clothing should be capable of resisting both wind and rain, while the inner layer should provide good insulation. The inside layer should also wick moisture from the skin to promote heat loss by evaporation.

Polypropylene and cotton fishnet thermal underwear has good insulation and wicking properties and so is suitable to wear next to the skin.

In the period immediately prior to competing in the cold, players should stay as warm as possible. A thorough warm-up regimen (performed indoors if possible) helps in this regard. Cold conditions are thought to increase the risk of muscle injury in sports that involve intense anaerobic efforts and a systematic warm-up may afford some protection in this respect. Players may need to wear more clothing than they normally do during matches.

Preparing for altitude

Players due to compete at altitude or to stay for a long time at an altitude training camp must consider the physiological consequences of such a visit. Individuals suffering infection or having low iron stores are unlikely to benefit from altitude training camps as their ability to increase red blood cell production is limited. It is thought that about 14 days should be allowed before matches for acclimatization to altitudes of 1,500–2,000 m and 21 days before matches at 2,000–2,500 m. These periods may be shortened if the players have had previous exposure to altitude in their build-up to the tournament. Individuals without previous exposure to altitude need about 1 month to adapt to locations above 2,500 m and may lose match fitness in the process. Fortunately, soccer play at this altitude is uncommon for sea-level dwellers.

REF: The Science of Training – Soccer. Thomas Reilly. 2007. Routledge
The Science of Soccer. John Wesson. IOP Publishing Ltd 2002.

Other:

3v3 Games & Tips

3v3 is a skills game, hence focus on 1v1 skills that teach touch, because touch is key in 3v3. If players can't receive the ball and control it quickly, they waste valuable time collecting the ball, which allows the defense to come closer and reduces the time for scanning the field for options. Controlling the ball quickly makes your team faster and more effective.

- Learn to perform 1v1 moves fast or on the move so the defense doesn't catch you from behind.
- On defense, contain and wait for separation; don't stab.
- Forwards shouldn't stand behind their opponent's back player for a cross. If the back player stops the ball, your forward is now out of the play. Instead, be ready to collect any rebound off the back player.
- Let the ball go out if your momentum will take you off the field. Trying to keep the ball in while you leave the field sets up a 3v2 scenario for the other team.
- For really young teams, your back player should stand offset of the goal, so a missed back pass doesn't accidentally roll in.
- Shots on goal from opponent's free kicks or kick-ins that aren't touched twice can be allowed to go directly into your goal rather than risking a missed touch that accidentally deflects into your own goal. If they kick the ball in, it's a goal kick. If your player touches it, it's an own goal.
- Refrain from shots or crosses from your opponent's corner as intercepted balls mean a 3v2 scenario for your opponent.
- If you see a foul, continue playing (or kick the ball out) until you hear the ref's whistle.
- For 2v1 backdoor plays, dribble wide to open the back door.
- If a forward loses the ball, they must RUN back on defense.
- Forwards don't stand wide when the other team kicks off or your opponents can simply dribble up through the middle.
- On defense, if a player is chasing a ball and coming toward you, if you can time your lunge to get to the ball first, cut to either side. Some players kick the ball into the opponent's legs and the ball bounces behind the defender.
- If two defenders are on you, what does that mean? A teammate is open!
- On sideline restarts, your back player should not take the kick, especially sending a crossing pass. I've seen far too many balls intercepted and shot on open goals.
- Don't get down if your opponents score. 3v3 Soccer is a fast-paced, high-scoring game.
- Each 3v3 tour has its own set of rules with some differences. Be sure your players know the differences.

3v3 formations ideas:

- If you play a 1-1-1, put your best athlete at the midfield position, so she can help on both defense and offense.
 - Put your best scorer at Forward -- this is probably a player with some speed who is aggressive or alert enough to win the ball, and who either has a quick shot, or can make a move to get off a shot. Teach this player to be alert, aggressive and to watch for rebounds.
 - Put a tough, brave player at Fullback -- one who is not afraid to block a shot with her body and who can clear the ball. It sounds as if your defense is good, so don't change it.
 - Tell your Forward to NOT come any closer to your own goal (the goal your goalie defends) than a long kick from the ball, and to shift with the ball, so she is in position to win cleared balls, and tell your 2 other players to clear it straight ahead, so the Forward knows what to expect and can be in position to win the ball.
 - Passing to Space" **instead of** "Passing To Feet", it will greatly improve your attack.
- Play the "Dribble Across" game 3 times to start every practice and play "Dribble Around Cone & Pass Relay Race" a lot -- these 2 games are self-teaching and your players will improve a lot by playing them.
- The good teams pretty consistently play 1 in the back, 2 at forward. The back player is always conscious of the goal. Doesn't mean he can't get forward ... he can, with caution. But he always must be positioned between goal and the ball if the opposing team has possession, so they can score a cheap goal from a long shot.
 - The defense is zonal. Ball is one the wing, one defender man marks, the other two defenders seek to cut off the passing lanes, with of course the final defender always guarding against that long shot. Savvy teams will pick their spots for the double team in this situation, but carefully, oh so carefully. Pressing against good teams can be very dangerous.
 - If the opposition seeks to take the ball up the middle against your defense, the two forwards pinch inwards and deny the penetration, forcing the pass wide.
 - Offensively, don't make turnovers unless you are very near the opposing goal! Easiest way to lose in 3v3 is get stripped of the ball and concede a cheap counterattack goal. So be careful with the ball until you are close enough to the opposing goal where all 3 opposing defenders will be back, so they can't hit you with the counter.
 - Having a strong dribbler who can unbalance the defense is very helpful offensively. Against good teams, it's tough to crack them simply by passing the ball.
 - One-touch passing and "follow your pass" is a winning method. Obviously 2 up front and one in the back is good, following the pass allows fluid movement and avoids an unproductive "back".
 - Passing is good, but teams that try to score on passing alone will eventually lose to teams that also move the ball well, but which have a solo artist to deliver the coup de grace.
 - The 3v3 format forces at least one player into a defensive role, otherwise the opponents will play 2v3 on defense, send a quick pass over the top after blocking your shot, and will score on a tap-in. They will stop you 2v3 much more often than you will stop them 0v1, which is approximately "never."
 - Rotate the kids in every 2 minutes.

How to Build Soccer Teams:

How teams go from 'good' to 'great'. Consider a "team building" day. Team building activities should never encourage the team to split into winners and losers, teach them to follow direction blindly or leave one player to blame for a loss. Instead have activities where success for all depends on working together and everyone can contribute to the overall success.

Blob Tag: two players lock arms and have to chase the other players who are dribbling around an area. If tagged, the ball goes out and they join the blob until you have 10 players with locked arms trying to maneuver to catch the last couple of players.

Swedish Handball: Two teams, pass the ball with their hands but can't run with the ball, and try to throw it into the Pugg goals to score. Defenders can intercept passes but can't take the ball away from a player already in possession. Kind of like ultimate frisbee. Helps with learning spacing and teamwork. To score, the team with the ball has to move it down the field and then pass to a teammate in the end zone. Then they turn around and try and score on the other side. Add another element for older teams in which teams score by heading a thrown ball to another teammate. If they can combine multiple headers in a row, multiple points.

Human Knot: This is a great game because it doesn't require any extra materials, and it challenges kids to work together and communicate. The team stands in a circle and everyone joins hands with someone else. Players should join hands with someone positioned across the circle and not the person standing next to him or her. Each person must hold hands with two different people. Without letting go of anyone's hand, everyone must work together to untangle the knot.



Pass the Hula-Hoop: it's fun, and it promotes listening, executing instructions and teamwork. Ask the kids to form a circle. Place a Hula-Hoop over one kid's arm, and instruct everyone to join hands. Without letting go of anyone's hand, the team must find a way to move the Hula-Hoop all the way around the circle.

Pass the Egg (Egg toss): This is a fun, messy way to work on coordination, communication and trust. This game is played in teams of two so you'll need enough eggs so that every team has one. Pairs will line up across from each other. The first player throws the egg to his teammate. If the egg doesn't crack, each player will take a step back so that they are farther away from their partner. Once your egg breaks your team is out. On a hot day, or if you prefer, use water balloons instead of eggs.

Standard plays: having each kid introduce themselves and tell something about them.

Having the kids choose a name for the team; choose a team cheer.

Come up with team objectives: keep your discussions in terms of the "team" rather than individuals; and preventing cliques from forming by managing how you assign people to groups.

Other: Team trip / outing to a local game of higher level (college, pro etc). Day at the beach. Picnic / Barbeque. Relay races. Wheelbarrow (2 person) race.

- Allow talking and joking during practices as long as its respectful and not disruptive. The social interaction is especially important to girls. Make a simple rule....you can make fun of them.....They can make fun of you. They can't make fun of their teammates. Exceptions are made for players who are friends.

The normal soccer activities are inherently group activities. Even when practicing individual skills, do it as a group. Even circuit training can feel like a group exercise. So as long as you don't allow cliques to form the team identity will develop in a positive way.

End practices by dividing the boys up into two teams to shoot PK's. The teams rotate shooting and each shooter becomes the goalkeeper (Shooter-keeper game). The winning team shoots at the coaches or losing team in game of "redass" ("target practice" for our kids) afterwards. The kids enjoy rooting for and against each other and especially shooting at the coaches.

Blindfold Minefield:

Scatter a number of flat cones (mines) in two areas, each 20 yards long by 10 yards wide.

Split your players into two teams, making sure the groups are mixed in terms of ability and length of time the players have been on the team.

Each team appoints a leader whose job is to guide their team, one at a time, through the minefield of cones while a team mate wears a blindfold.

The leader can only give verbal instructions ("two steps left", "one step forwards", etc.) while standing behind the blindfolded player.

If a blindfolded player touches a cone, one penalty point is awarded to the team.

The team that gets all its players through the minefield with the least penalty points wins the game.

- Split your team into pairs and join each pair with a training vest tied around each player's wrist.
- One team member is blindfolded and the other is not.
- The blindfolded person leads while the person who can see follows.
- The follower can only provide information - egg there is a cone in front of you, there is a cone to the left or affirmations - great we got past the cone.
- They cannot direct or tell the leader that they have made a mistake - just provide information (the cone is in front of you).
- If the team hits a cone they must do something (appropriate for your groups age - sing a song, stand on one foot for 30 seconds, etc).
- The goal of the game is to get the whole team together - you start with all the pairs spread out around the minefield and ask them to find each other.
- When pairs join up, they join hands to form a longer string and those without blindfolds must work together to help their chain find another chain.

"Once the whole team is together, the team must wend their way back out of the minefield."

Half-time Breaks: Make the Most of it:

The half-time period at matches is an important time for you and your players and you must use it wisely. This is the one chance we coaches have to impact the game significantly. See [Game Day / Pre-Game Warm-ups](#) | [Coaching Pearls \(Positions, Discipline\)](#) |

During the match: When the whistle blows to start the game, stay quiet. Let your players make their own decisions on the pitch and if they make a mistake, make a note of it, don't criticize or tell them what to do.

Confine your comments to words of encouragement such as "well done", "nice pass" or "relax".

Please make sure your parents understand that their role is to support and praise both sets of players, not yell and scream "advice".

Step #1: Closely observe the first half of play so that you are familiar with all aspects of the game: the field, the weather, the referees, the opponent, and your own team.

Step #2: Be prepared. Make a mental or written notes of what you want to say when the whistle blows. Having carefully observed and analyzed the first half, know precisely what you will say. Bear in mind that your half-time comments should always be 90% positive so - regardless of the match situation - your focus of your notes should be about what the team is doing well rather than what they doing not so well.

Save the problems for the next training session!

- Be brief, don't ramble. The temptation is great to say too much during this critical break. There is much to accomplish in a very short time, don't muddle it all by lengthy lectures. You will not be able to teach players new habits, or break them of old ones, during half time. Remember, the half time interval is foremost a break for the players.

The following are a few tips for maximizing the usefulness of the interval:

- Don't be caught off guard, know exactly when half-time is coming, know where you will take the team.

Step #3: Allow for rest. Get the players quickly away from the bench, parents and spectators. Get them off their feet and out of the elements, if possible. Try to make them comfortable and get them sat down (if the ground is not wet) facing you and check that there are no distractions behind you.. Find somewhere sheltered and out of earshot of the opposition and your parents for your half-time team talk.

- **Water.** The universal elixir. Make sure that all players get plenty of water. Avoid soda completely. Dilute sports drinks with water.

Make sure everyone has a drink

- **Assess any injuries.** Once your players are settled, the first thing to do is to check for injuries. Is everyone OK? Take a moment to examine recent injuries, ask about chronic injuries. Make adjustments as necessary.

- **Allow for player discussion.** Players will be excited, allow them the opportunity to blow steam or congratulate each other, etc. Give them a few moments of their own.

- **Then it's time for some 'well dones'.** But be truthful. Your players will know if you are giving them false praise and if you are going to pick out individuals make sure you mention everyone, not just your star players!

- **Errors Corrections:** If you feel you can correct any simple errors with a short comment then do so. But don't try to introduce any new concepts or embark on a lengthy lecture.

Limit all your comments to two or three points for nine year olds and older and just one point for younger children. Any more than that and you will run out of time or they stop listening to you.

Tip: don't ask for players' opinions. All you'll get is a time wasting chorus of comments and complaints.

Part A: Team adjustments. Keep it simple, keep it brief. A good guideline is to make one overall offensive and one defensive correction. Players cannot handle too much instruction under the duress of playing. Never introduce new concepts at half-time.

- Individual adjustments. In some situations it may be desirable to give individual instructions to certain players. Do this sparingly and only with those players who need it and are capable of processing the information.

Part B: Substitutions and alignment changes. The break is an ideal opportunity to make substitutions or to move players about on the field. Make sure your instructions are clear and that the proper number of players re-enter the field. If you're not sure which players to take off then don't make any changes until the second half is a few minutes old. But if you do that, make sure your subs know they are going to get on soon.

- Calm them/excite them. A good rule of thumb is that the coach's job is in part to calm down those players who are over-excited and to excite those players who are under-motivated. Use the moment prior to re-entering the field to get your team and the individual players in the proper frame of mind.

Finally: some more words of encouragement and send your team out for the second half. A quick team cheer works well for this.

Important: never forget you are a role model for your players so don't criticize the match officials at half-time or at any other time. Even if they've clearly made a mistake that has cost you a goal or two!

Tip: count the players on the field before the whistle goes. I've often tried to start with one player more or less than the rules allow!!

Strategy: What to do in the 2nd Half:

Avoid the temptation of making large changes.

IF YOU'RE 1-0 UP: You don't want to give a goal away, so why not go for a counterattacking style and let opponents make the mistakes that your team can exploit. However, if you feel you are hanging on to a 1-0 lead against a team that has been well on top, you will obviously need to do something to try to keep hold of the lead. The answer can be a simple case of bolstering the midfield. If you're playing two up front, put one of them in midfield. This strengthens your defense higher up the pitch, gives you a better chance of obtaining and retaining possession, but still gives you attacking options.

IF YOU'RE 1-0 DOWN: You have to be more attacking in the first 10 minutes of the second half, so move a player up front and get some balls in behind the defense to try to cancel out the goal. A solution can be as simple as moving a midfielder further forward to play in 'the hole' behind the main striker or strikers; or you could make a difference by pushing a defender into midfield to boost numbers there and add to your creative options without significantly weakening the back line. (Soccer Coach Weekly. Issue 350. Jan 2014)

How to Pick Player of the Match and a Team Captain

Player of the Match in each game: tell the players that the award is given for effort and/or improvement on previous performances, not necessarily the best performance. That way even the least skilled player has a chance of winning it. Captains: Most suggest rotating the role until the players are aged U12. After that, tell the players that you will be looking for a player who has real commitment and the right attitude during pre-season training and he or she will be captain for the season.

Avoid asking your players to pick their own captain.....The most popular player will be voted in and he/she might not be the best choice. Also, it could be divisive in terms of team cohesion.

How To Turn a Lackluster Performance Around At Half-Time:

1. As soccer coaches, we have all experienced a lackluster first-half performance. Whether the scoreline reflects it or not, the players will know themselves that it hasn't gone well. Acknowledge that it was poor and make your players know they can play better. Do not blame them or belittle them. Dismiss the first half by looking ahead, saying something like: "Right, we did not perform like we should and we know that – let's put it right but you need to work harder in these areas of the game....."
2. Try to keep your team talk short and simple, using focused messages. Repeat the key points and deliver them with energy – and make sure there are no more than three messages for the players to take in.
3. Chop down your message into what should happen in terms of pressing the play, or how you want them to defend, or maybe how they should attack from the kick-off.
4. Half-time is not the moment to introduce any new tactical concepts to the team. You might adjust a plan, but only if the players have used it before. It's better to give the players confidence in their ability than mess up their minds with new patterns.

After the Game:

Make sure your team shake their opponents by the hand and you congratulate your opposite number.

- Thank the referee (even if he or she had a stinker!).
- If you won the game, celebrate quietly. If you let your players celebrate loudly it's not only poor sportsmanship but it will make your opponents even more determined to beat you in the return match.
- If you lost, don't analyze the reasons or let your players blame each other. Praise them for what they did well and save the corrections for your next coaching session.
- Remind everyone of when the next practice session is going to be.
- Finally, make sure your players and parents help you put the goals and other equipment away!

How to Manage Mistakes

Learning can be an empowering experience. But for some children, learning new skills can be scary and sometimes seem impossible - much depends on the sort of day they had at school or at home but even more depends on the attitude of their coach to players who make mistakes.

What are "mistakes"? Young players learn in three ways: Practicing, experimenting and competing.

Practicing skills such as passing, shooting and dribbling is important but while practicing skills unopposed (for example, by passing in pairs or dribbling around cones) can make your players technically proficient, it doesn't help them execute the skill in a match situation.

So after some initial practice, players need to experiment, for example, by using their weaker foot or trying to perform the skill in a different way.

Experimenting in competitive situations such as matches reinforces skills, develops creativity and makes players stronger but it will, inevitably, also result in mistakes. If you send the message that mistakes are "bad", you are stopping your players from completing the learning process and they won't develop as you would like them to.

What your players need and how to do it

You need to create a supportive learning environment where mistakes are seen as inevitable and where players are not criticized for trying something new, even when it doesn't come off.

We can do that by:

a) Explaining and reassuring: Players have to understand the relevance of a new skill or technique to the game of ball. If they don't, they could see the risks involved in learning as too great and not bother to even try.

So, as coaches, we need to motivate our players to learn by explaining why we are asking them to execute a particular skill.

We also need to make sure they know that we expect them to make mistakes, e.g. "sometimes in matches we are going to receive the ball with our weaker foot and sometimes there won't be time to get the ball onto our strong foot before we shoot. So we're going to work with our weaker foot today.

"I understand that you're going to find it difficult but that's OK. We're just trying to make our weaker foot a little bit stronger."

b) Recognizing that fast learning is not necessarily the best learning. It's always tempting for coaches to step in as soon as they see a player make a mistake and tell them how to do something better. After all, that's how we're taught to pass coaching exams - by spotting mistakes and showing off our knowledge - and parents expect us to teach their children, not sit back and watch. So we're conditioned to intervene when in fact, it might not be necessary.

But instead of jumping in and stopping play as soon as you see a mistake, sit back for a minute or two and watch. The player or players who are making the error might self-correct, i.e. solve the problem for themselves.

If the same mistake is repeated over and over again, it might be necessary to step in. But even then you should not give your players the answer. Instead, recreate the situation that leads up to the mistake and ask if someone can think of a way to do it better. Encourage creativity and never assume you know the best way to do something.

c) Setting a good example. Your attitude and reaction to mistakes will influence how your players react to the mistakes of people around them. If you jump on every error your players make, don't give them the opportunity to self-correct and give the impression that mistakes are "bad", your players will react in a similar way when their team mates misplace a pass or mishit a shot on goal. And team morale will crumble.

Summary

In training, challenge your players to improve and learn but also give them the time and space they need to work things out for themselves.

In matches, put the needs of your players to make mistakes before the "need" to win a game that no one will remember in a week or two's time.

Do both and your players will become confident, quick learners who will never be afraid to try something new.

The answer to the question: How much money did Lucy have left?

The player who said "45p" might have been right because we don't know how much money Lucy took to the shop. She could have taken one week's pocket money or she could have been saving her pocket money for two or three weeks.

So the right way to react to the player who said "45p" was not to say "that's wrong" - it would have been to ask how she arrived at that figure and congratulate her for having a go.

References:

John Allpress, *Managing Mistakes to the Player's Advantage*, The Ball Association, July 2007

Dave Piggott, *Psychology of Learning and 'Smart Coaching': the theory behind 'managing mistakes'*, retrieved from <http://boskone.lboro.ac.uk/>, 10 June 2012

How can I stop a child getting angry with other players' mistakes?

Many highly competitive players get angry or frustrated with their own or other people's errors. Let the player know that angry outbursts will result in:

- a) A loss of concentration on his own game which, in turn, will make him likely to make mistakes and make him even more frustrated.
- b) Being shunned by his team mates who, understandably, don't want to be blamed every time the team concedes a goal.
- c) The fun going out of the game altogether.

Instead of thinking "mistakes are bad, people who make mistakes are useless", he needs to think: "It's OK to make mistakes". Make him realize that all players, no matter how skilled, make mistakes.... "If you don't make mistakes, you aren't really trying."

How to help your players cope with mistakes

All soccer players - even top professionals - miss shots on goal, mishit passes and make poor decisions occasionally.

Professional players know that mistakes are a part of life and can put these minor disappointments behind them without too much trouble. Children, however, sometimes find it harder to ignore the mistakes they make on the field.

Mistakes often make young players upset, frustrated and even angry with themselves and these negative emotions can have a damaging effect on their game. One common reaction to what they perceive as letting their team mates down is to hide on the pitch, to stop wanting the ball and to stop making runs into promising positions for fear they might fail again.

So it's important that you know how to pick players up after they make a mistake and help them to understand that, in the words of John Wooden: "If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything."

Who makes mistakes?

The short answer is, of course, everyone. Teachers, parents, policemen, judges... even youth soccer coaches sometimes make mistakes!

Young players are no different but some are more affected by mistakes than others.

Most teams have at least one player who is a "soccer perfectionist". They work hard at training, listen to every word you say and are regularly the "player of the match" on match days. But they often have unrealistic expectations of themselves, their self-esteem is low and they are prone to being overly self-critical.

For these players, making a mistake, especially during a match, is a big deal. Even the smallest mistake is seen as confirming their worst fear: That they aren't very good at soccer.

In contrast, children who have learned that mistakes are unavoidable and expected, will be more resilient and have more confidence in their own ability.

These tips should help you get all your players to that level.

Stay composed

How we respond to our players' mistakes will teach them how they should respond to their own.

If your striker sees you shaking your head in despair when she misses an open goal, don't be surprised if she hesitates before "pulling the trigger" the next time she has a goal scoring opportunity.

If your goalkeeper sees you throwing a drink bottle to the ground when she fumbles a catch (and yes, I've seen that happen), don't be surprised when she doesn't even try to save the next shot.

In matches, nothing should cause you to lose your composure and in training you should take the attitude that "it doesn't have to be perfect, it's the effort that counts".

Don't use words such as "what on earth were you thinking?" or "you can do better than that!". And please don't tell players "to try harder" when they are probably already trying as hard as they can.

Even saying that "it was just bad luck" or "you did OK, they just didn't understand", can confuse a player who knows full well that they did make a mistake and it wasn't someone else's fault.

Make mistakes a learning point by acknowledging errors calmly and explaining to your players what they should do if they find themselves in that position again - not what they shouldn't do.

Encourage realistic expectations

You can help minimize the importance your players give to their mistakes by giving them sensible objectives.

Players who go into a game thinking that: "I must score today", are setting themselves up for failure. Talk to your players about what they expect to do when they step onto the pitch and replace any hard-to-achieve outcome objectives with more sensible, process objectives such as:

- To tackle hard.
- Get into the box for every cross.
- Move into a good position to receive a pass.

Share the mistakes of famous players: YouTube has dozens of video clips of famous players making some really amazing mistakes.

Goals missed from 2ft, goalkeepers throwing the ball into the back of their own net, defenders scoring stunning own goals... the list is endless. I have some of the more amusing examples downloaded onto a laptop that I take to training sessions and show them to my players during drinks breaks. It does their self-esteem no end of good to see famous players falling on their backsides!

Conclusion

Persevering when the going gets tough and being able to bounce back from mistakes are not just important skills for a young soccer player to possess, they're essential life skills.

Your players are going to encounter many setbacks before they're much older: College rejection letters, failing exams, not getting the summer job they've set their hearts on and more.

You can do them a massive favor by teaching them, in the words of FIFA female World Player of the Year and ex-USA star, Mia Hamm, that "failure happens all the time. It happens every day... what makes you better is how you react to it."

Soccer Intelligence and Competitiveness:

Links: [Soccer Vision, Tactics and Style and Mistakes](#) | [Positions & Formations](#) | [Sportsmanship](#) | [Team Captain](#) | [Formations](#) |

Soccer intelligence requires repeated exposure to match-related situations in training as well as many hours playing in competitive matches.

What does an intelligent soccer player look like?

1. She doesn't have to rush.
2. She knows when to keep the ball and when to pass.
3. She likes to take the simplest option but can also take calculated risks.
4. She puts in a consistent performance every week.
5. She knows what she is going to do with the ball before she receives it.

How to develop soccer intelligence in your players

Games that boost the IQ of young soccer players

The last characteristic in the list above - knowing what to do with the ball before it arrives - can be encouraged with coaching games such as Number Passing:

Take a group of four players, give them each a number (1 to 4) and spread them a good passing distance apart. Place a cone a few yards from the group. The players pass a ball to each other in numerical order and immediately run to the spare cone.

Once the basic principle has been mastered, you can reverse the number order and/or reduce the number of touches each player can have before passing. If your players are good enough, progress to one-touch.

Similarly, you can help young players to think while they are playing by putting different colored training vests (e.g. white, red, green and blue) on four teams of two players and playing 4v4. To begin with, red and blues could play against whites and red. Then change the teams by calling out, for example, "green and red v white and blue". After a couple of minutes, change the teams again.

All small-sided games (SSGs) will help develop your players' brain power and even something as simple as placing two goals at each end of the pitch in the end of session scrimmage, so that players have to decide which goal to attack, is sufficient to get their brains working as well as their feet.

General principles

- Play coaching games that resemble soccer matches.
- Don't instruct. Suggest ways of doing things.
- Don't give answers. Help players find the answers for themselves instead.

Conclusion: As coaches we have to teach our players skills and, if they're old enough, help them understand soccer tactics.

But it's also vital to help them become confident, independent thinkers by playing games that involve choices and, crucially, not making the choices for them, either during coaching sessions or on match days.

Teach your players to be competitive:

Competitive: "Having or displaying a strong desire to be more successful than others." When faced with strong, aggressive opponents, your players need to be confident in their ability to withstand physical challenges.

A competitive player is not one who will do anything to get the ball. It is a player who has a "me first" mentality. It's a youngster who really wants to get to 50/50 balls before the opposition, to win headers in the box, etc. But she doesn't break the rules. Help develop their competitiveness with these simple games.

1. 1v1 Battles

Get your players to stand shoulder to shoulder in pairs facing away from you and about 20 yards from a goal. Throw a ball over their shoulder and let them fight each other for the ball (legally) and try to score.

Vary the game by getting them to start from different positions: Sitting, kneeling, locked together, back to back with crossed arms, eyes closed, etc.

2. Anything Goes:

This is a SSG (small-sided game) where normal soccer rules regarding physical contact are suspended. Defensive players can use their hands to push their opponent off the ball. Shirts can be pulled. Basically, anything goes, except deliberately trying to hurt someone.

- It's great for getting young players used to the idea that there's more to soccer than passing, shooting and teamwork. Just be careful that it doesn't get out of hand.
- Boys, typically, will throw themselves into Anything Goes with abandon but girls usually need to be encouraged to pull and push their opponent off the ball.

But ultimately, a lack of aggression on the pitch may come down to personality. Some girls (and boys too, for that matter) are just too "nice" to fight hard for the ball and for many winning the match - or even the ball - isn't as important as having fun, making friendships and playing the game by the rules.

And that's something that really should be encouraged, not criticized.

3. Shoulder Pad:

First, demonstrate how to use the shoulder to ease an opponent off the ball. Note that I don't use the term "shoulder barge". Barging implies charging at a player and that is a foul punishable by a direct free kick or a penalty.

Your players can't use their shoulders as a battering ram and they can't make shoulder contact with another player's back or ribs. They can, however, use shoulder to shoulder contact to destabilize a player on the ball.

Now play a small-sided game (4v4 or 5v5) with the condition that players cannot tackle one another, they can only use their shoulders to nudge the opponent off the ball.

This game also gets them used to physical contact generally. But be careful: Match the teams evenly in terms of physical size and don't allow your players to get carried away

2. Four Corners:

Age group: U7s to U11s. Number of players: 16

Set-up: Create a 30-yard square playing area.

Divide your players into four teams of four and stand each team at a corner of the playing area.

You stand outside the playing area with a supply of balls.

How to play

- Serve a ball into the playing area and shout "Go!".
- The first player in each of the four teams tries to reach the ball first.
- Once the ball is won cleanly, the player tries to hold possession from the other players for five seconds before passing the ball back to you.
- If a player steals the ball from the player in possession, that player will then attempt to hold possession for five seconds.
- A team scores a point by successfully holding possession for five seconds and making a return pass you.
- The first team to reach five points wins.

Help them with this with a couple of simple games.

Young players should know the following mantra:

“Training is training.

Eating is training.

Studying is training.

Sleeping is training.”

- While many young players see the obvious in that “training is training.” Being a top athlete requires much more.
- The first meal after training is vitally important. In general, what you eat is either fuel or isn't. Eating poorly harms your chances of reaching your potential.
- Formal learning is the best training for the brain. Letting those synapses fire on subjects from culture to cooking is a commitment to power your main motor between the ears. In doing so you not only take a healthy break away from the field, you also develop an intellect that sports (and life) demands.
- Sleeping and its profound effect on performance. Athletes need sleep. If you do not get enough sleep, you are showing up to training less than your best. Sleeping embeds what you learn and it is the best form of recovery from the physical and emotional demands on the game.

Perfect Practice:

“Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.” Vince Lombardi

Putting footballers through a series of drills is not automatically a productive session. Practice implies that you are engaging in activity that helps improve player's skills – Ball Control, Movement, or Position Play. Drills are only a means to an end and too often we assume they are the “be all and end all” of coaching.

- Limit the number of drills and emphasize precision. We are not running a circus where the players need cotton candy practices. Select activities that reinforce a proper technique or proper position play. Keep it simple enough that the boys are not spending all of their “practice” listening to us explain the drill and then watch us figure out why it is not working the way we uploaded it.

Repetition of proper form is “perfect ball control practice”.

Focus on efficient running technique is “perfect movement practice.”

Execution of simple principles of play is “perfect position play practice.”

Demonstration of excellent habits is “perfect behavior practice.”

Studying, sleeping, and eating well make a “perfect preparation practice.”

Ambition, dedication, and resilience make a “perfect mindset practice.”

How to Motivate Your Players:

Young soccer players all want to play as well as they can, win matches and generally enjoy the 'beautiful game'.

But that natural enthusiasm can be quickly knocked out of them if their coaches and parents don't understand and apply the basic principles of player motivation.

And if that happens, you need to look at yourself and what you can do to reignite their passion.

To begin with, we need to remind ourselves why children want to play soccer:

- To learn and improve their skills
- To have fun
- To be with friends
- To experience the excitement of competition
- To enhance their physical fitness
- To demonstrate their competence

Ref: Dr. Colleen Hacker, NSCAA National Academy Staff Coach and Professor of Sports Psychology

These motivating factors are all internal motivators as opposed to external motivators (those coming from other people).

• It's useful for soccer coaches to understand that internal motivation is a stronger motivator than external motivation, (as you know, a child that wants to play soccer will do better than a child who is told to play soccer) but internal motivation can disappear if external motivation is absent or external factors are actively de-motivating. When that happens that child will stop playing soccer and the resulting loss of self esteem ("I thought I could be a good soccer player but now I know I can't") may well affect the child in other, more important, areas of their lives.

So, what can you do to motivate your players?

1. Plan interesting, varied and fun training sessions A disorganized training session can easily de-motivate players as can a session that's pitched at the wrong level. And remember that variety is the spice of life! Don't use the same old drills every week. There's loads of ideas and inspiration on footy4kids.

2. Set objectives. Having realistic and achievable targets is a motivator, so set a simple target for your players at every training session and. Keep the objectives simple and reward achievement and/or effort. Patches are great for this.

3. Define success. What's the first question a six or seven year old player asks as he or she comes off the field? If it's not "What's for dinner?" it will be "did we win?" There are many studies that have shown that children under the age of ten do not 'understand' winning and losing in the same way that you or I do. Because of this, they will not feel sad that they lost a match until a parent or coach tells them that they lost and accompanies this information with a positive or negative emotional reaction. So if you have mention the result, do it with a smile!

• Whatever the result, it is better to talk about the positives and keep the negatives to yourself. In that way, you are rewarding the effort your players put in and are motivating them to keep trying to improve.

4. Reward and recognition One of the most important ways to motivate your players is to reward and recognize effort and/or success following a training session or match. Note that I said 'effort and/or success'. It's just as important (and maybe even more important) for a young soccer player to work hard as to have a wide variety of skills. You can improve the skills of a worker who is prepared to work hard but it's very difficult to coach a skillful player who doesn't put the effort in.

• And lazy players can de-motivate the other players in your team, especially if they see them getting praised for their skills regardless of their lack of effort. Tangible rewards such as patches are better than saying 'well done' because children can take patches home (or to school) where they can show them to their friends and parents. And that's very important to them.

It's worth remembering that positive reinforcement works best when it isn't a once-in-a-while thing; the more it happens, the more effective it is.

5. The role of parents. Parents should be interested in their child's performance but focus on effort and attitude rather than skill level. During matches they should support and encourage, never criticize.

6. The role of the coach (you!).

- Be enthusiastic, positive and honest: Your enthusiasm and positivity will rub off on players.
- Highlight the positive, minimize the negative.
- Always encourage.
- Maintain discipline by focusing on the behavior, not the child.
- Be supportive and respect players as individuals.
- Speak to them individually every week.
- Listen to and act on their concerns.
- Be nice!

The Beautiful Game:

Soccer is sometimes called 'the beautiful game' because at it is best it is free-flowing and fast-paced; a game of skill, strength, and close teamwork. A game that can be intensely exciting, even if the final result is 0-0. Many times, a collaborative, cohesive and committed team will defeat a group of individual superstars. One of the fundamental skills in soccer teamwork is anticipation – getting into the heads of teammates as well as those of opposition players. The best players can assess the possibilities in situations quickly, identify the best possible outcomes, and put themselves in positions that make those outcomes a reality. There are opportunities to attack even when defending heavily (the fast

counterattack), and good players can anticipate and be prepared for such opportunities. The player that anticipates the next move is the one who is going to be in the right place at the right time. Whatever position on the field you play, what can you do to support teammates and achieve best results? As an attacker or midfielder, how can you help close gaps in defense, and as a defender or midfielder what can you do to push the attack forward?

Individual training is important for players who are not practicing with their team every day.

Teamwork: The team is everything. There is no "I" in "team." Individual brilliance is useless unless it is harnessed for the good of the team. A player needs to bear five things in mind on the field: find space so that teammates can pass to him; offer his teammates support whenever they are on the ball; guard possession of the ball; move to a new position after he has made a pass; and keep teammates informed of his intentions.

Teamwork takes a lot more energy and effort than being a good individual. Here are few qualities that I think of when I ponder what it takes to be a team:

Intention: I have to choose to be a part of a team. Creating an intention can be a very taxing venture. Lots of things can come along to deflect it. Holding it firm in the face of opposition and distraction is key.

Commitment: Stick to it until it is done. Opposition will come, but you have to be willing to do what it takes to overcome the opposition - especially when there is no apparent reward for doing so.

Discipline: Limiting yourself always takes discipline. You have to say No to things that look and sound fun in order to do what is needful but maybe not glamorous. This is all about discipline.

Unselfish: Ultimately a team is about something other than me. Something bigger than me. Granted, I benefit when the team does, but only to a fractional degree. So I have to stop being selfish and pursuing a course that benefits me more in order to help the team realize its goals and achieve its own glory.

SUPPORT: Players must support their colleagues by joining them in attack, running back to help out in defense, or filling in for a teammate who has left his playing position after joining an attack. Forwards must follow up shots looking for rebounds off the goalkeeper.

COMMUNICATION: Communication on the field is vital. A player in possession of the ball isn't always aware of his teammates' intentions. Therefore, it is essential they let him know where they are, where they are heading, and where they want the ball to be played. This can be done by using one of a number of calls.

Tactics during a game situation:

General principles of attack and defense

Width and depth are both principles of offence and defense as follows:

- *Width in attack*- Mainly using wingers often gaps are made between defenders using the width. These gaps can be used to feed the ball to strikers.
- *Width in defense*- the defender tries to contract and deny width and space
- *Depth in attack*- the attacker uses depth by moving men up from the rear, but may use a constant "target striker" or front man to always be present deep in the defense.
- *Depth in defense*- the defender also uses depth by marking supporting players in the opposing team, therefore the player with the ball won't have anyone to pass to, but may abandon depth temporarily to set an offside trap.
- *Balance in defense*. The defense attempts balanced coverage of vulnerable space. Players do not simply cluster on the right side for example, just because the ball is there at the moment.

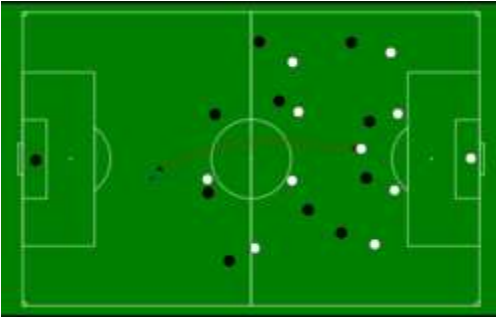
Offensive tactics: attacking

- **'Pass and move'**: This is the most basic team tactic — as soon as the ball has come into possession of the player, they need to be quick to decide whether to pass it or not. If they don't pass it immediately, they need to move with it; if they do pass it, they again need to move along, following the general ball movement. This can also be used to mean that once a player has passed the ball he does not remain stationary but moves into a position where he can receive the ball again and give more options to the player in possession.
- **'Give and go'**[or **'combination passing'**]: This is a basic tactic which is essentially the same as 'pass and move', and is an essential part of the 'target man' style of play (see below). The player in possession of the ball plays a pass to a teammate and then immediately seeks to move into space. If the player who passed the ball can 'lose' his defensive marker (either through pace, movement, superior fitness or a lack of awareness on the part of the defender) he could then be free to receive a return pass and advance towards and possibly threaten the goal. When the ball is played by the receiving player immediately back to the first player this is known as a 'One-Two' (in British parlance)



Switching sides

- **Switching the attack**: Using a 'square' or 'cross' pass across the whole width of the pitch to a player in plenty of space is a very effective way of both relieving pressure and building a fresh attack. The defending team will be required to adjust its positions and this usually creates spaces which can be exploited. In this example, the player numbered 1 has moved out of position, allowing more space for the opposing player. By playing the ball to the other side (the curved line represents an aerial pass), the recipient of the pass finds themselves in space which can be exploited.
- **The 'through ball': Using the space behind the opponent's defensive line**: Passes into this area have a number of pros: If an attacking player reaches the pass, taking care to avoid offside, he may get a 1-on-1 challenge with the goalkeeper, or be in an excellent position for a flank attack. Even if a defender reaches the pass first, the outcome could still be good for the attacking team. The defender will face his own goal, which could prompt him to give away a corner kick or a throw-in, make a risky pass to his team's goalkeeper, or being put under heavy pressure near the corner flag. Typically, teams with faster attackers than the opponent's defenders will try challenging this space, while the defending team in these cases will want to keep their defenders low when defending in order to give away as little space as possible between the defenders and the goalkeeper.



The long through ball

- **The long through ball:** This is a long, and usually high, pass from a team's own half, over the heads of the other team's defense. It is intended for the attacking players to chase and it is important that they remain in an onside position until the ball is kicked. The tactic works best with strong and fast forwards who will have a good chance of winning back the ball, taking control over it, and eventually getting a shot on goal. In the diagram, the ball (red line) is played in front of the furthest forward, the dotted blue line showing their run. In this example, a through-ball pass along the ground would be picked up by one of the defenders (black team) because the gap between the two central defenders is too small.
- **Using the space between the opponent's defensive line and midfielder line ('the hole'):** A common build-up of attacks is to pass the ball into the space between the opponent's defenders and midfielders. Normally, an attacker with his back to the goal will receive the pass. He will seek to turn with the ball, or distribute it to a player facing the goal, who optimally also is in front of the opponent's midfielders - or even on the move into the space behind the opponent's defenders.
- **Triangular movement:** This is a movement tactic that allows a safe and quick shifting of the offensive flanks while maintaining control of the ball. In a triangular play the ball is passed between three players to form a triangle. The triangle is then shifted to a different position when a new player is added. Many triangles can be created with various combinations of players with the intention of slowly moving the ball forward and never really compromising possession. This tactic works well when trying to gain control in the midfield. However, it can also be used for pure attacking purposes. The effectiveness of this tactic lies in the fact that defenders are unable to quickly 'adapt' to the other attacker's style of play.
- **Swapping of the wing men:** Sometimes, a team with two flexible (position wise) wide men will allow them to interchange as the game progresses. The aim of this is to confuse the defenders who are assigned to mark them, thus maybe leading to opportunities as the defender tries to find their man in set pieces (corners, free kicks etc., where the man may be in a totally different position and thus evade his grasp). Also, if the wingers are different types of player (one favoring crossing from deep positions whilst the other is prone to trying to dribble past their marker for example), then it might be to exploit a weakness in the opposing defender.
- **Strong Side Overloads:** An offensive attack can pressure the defense on to one side of the pitch by running most of its attackers and midfielders to one side letting a wing player or defender come to the opposite side with little or no coverage. The ball is then crossed or passed to that unmarked player for a free or near free shot.
- **Using a target man:** This tactic is useful when the team possesses a quality striker who has the ability of taking on the whole defense on his own. He will usually occupy two defenders, thus making the defense more vulnerable. Combined with two fast wingers, this tactic may give the 4-man defense potential problems. The team may also benefit from a target man at set pieces. The target man, can use give/go tactics described earlier, can attempt to "knock down" high passes to teammates or can simply try to overpower and outmuscle opposition defenders to create scoring opportunities for himself. Alan Shearer, Duncan Ferguson, Chris Sutton, Emmanuel Adebayor, Luca Toni, Emile Heskey, Jan Koller, Nikola Žigić, Zlatan Ibrahimović, Peter Crouch, Didier Drogba and Miroslav Klose are all examples of strikers adept at playing this role.

Styles of play

1. Counter-attacking soccer The aim of this type of soccer is to catch the opponent on the "break". When they give away possession in midfield or attack, opposing players will tend to be further up the field than usual and may not be able to quickly adjust to a defensive mindset. Counter-attacking soccer may involve leaving one or two strikers near the half-way line in the hope that a through ball can be played to catch the opponent off guard. This parallels the long through ball tactic explained below. In the example, an attack by the black team has broken down and ended up in the hands of the white goalie. By kicking a long through ball for the furthest white player (left up there in the hope of this situation - this is the "break" mentioned above), the player has a chance of scoring as he should have evaded the defense if he is fast enough.

In other cases, defenders and midfielders may join in the counter-attack, trying to outnumber or otherwise overtake the opposition by quick and intelligent movement and fast passes. Speed is an important factor both in offense and defense, as the probability of scoring decreases sharply when the opponent has managed to organize their defense. This type of game was displayed well by the quick, counter-attacking play of Germany in the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

2. Possession Soccer: In soccer, possession is nine-tenths of the law. Barring own-goals, no one can score against you if they don't have the ball. Chasing the play also tires and frustrates opponents. Possession soccer has developed into a full-fledged tactic, and one that is related to the "pass-and-move" philosophy.

Teams that aim to retain control of the ball over longer periods of time, in the process making a large percentage of passes that give low risk of losing the ball, are said to play possession soccer. Utilizing this tactic demands players skillful in ball control and precise passing. If successful, it will tire opposing players because they have to run and tackle more. A style of possession soccer originating from Spain is "tiki-taka", where a large number of primarily short passes are deployed by multiple players of the team before culminating in a definitive strike on the opposing team's goal. It was effectively employed by the UEFA Euro 2008 and 2010 FIFA World Cup champions Spain, managed by Luis Aragonés and Vicente del Bosque respectively, and the sextuple-winning 2008-09 FC Barcelona side managed by Josep Guardiola.

3. Direct soccer: More often associated with counter-attacking soccer than with possession soccer, direct soccer means that players spend little time with the ball before passing. In order to achieve this, each player frequently uses only one or two touches. The direct attack is sometimes associated with the long-ball style. Long ball is the term used in association soccer to describe an attempt, often speculative, to distribute the ball a long distance down the field via a cross, without the intention to pass it to the feet of the receiving player. It is a technique that can be especially effective for a team with a tall striker to get in the box.

Pass and move: The pass-and-move philosophy is based on the idea that if a player is static it is easy for opponents to pick him up. The great Liverpool teams of the 1970s and early '80s were masters of pass-and-move soccer, exhausting opponents and keeping possession with constantly shifting triangles. The pass-and-move philosophy is based on the idea that if players are constantly on the move, they are more difficult to mark.

Substitutions

In competitive 11-a-side matches, teams are allowed to bring on up to three substitutes. The rules of the competition must state the maximum number of players allowed to be named as a substitute, which may be anywhere between three and seven. In non-competitive matches, the use of substitutes must be determined before the match begins, except in friendly international matches, where no more than six substitutes may be brought on.

The most tired players are generally substituted, but only if their substitutes are well trained to fill in the same role, or if the formation is transformed at the same time to accommodate for the substitution.

Coaches often refrain from substituting defensive players in order not to disrupt the defensive posture of the team. Instead, they often replace ineffective attackers or unimaginative midfielders in order to freshen up the attacking posture and increase their chances of scoring.

For a team that is losing a game, a fresh striker can bring more benefit in circumventing an opposed defense line composed of relatively tired players. For a team that is winning a game, a fresh midfielder or a defender can bring more benefit in strengthening the defense against the opposition's attackers (who may be fresh substitutes themselves). In this situation, it is usually imaginative attacking flair players who are replaced by tough-tackling defensive midfielders or defenders.

Injured players may also need to be substituted. For each injured player who must be substituted, the team loses one more opportunity to influence things later in the game in their favor.

Substitutions can also be used as a time consuming tactic to hold a one goal lead in the last minutes.

Positions Overview:

Links: Positions: See | [Defense](#) | [Midfielders \(Halfbacks\)](#) | [Attacking / Strikers \(Forwards\)](#) | [Goalies](#) |
See [Formations](#) | [Team Shape](#) | [Team Captain](#) |

What is a "formation"? A team formation is the combination of defenders, midfield players and attackers that you use when playing matches.

- Some coaches get **"formation" and "team shape" confused**. The shape you want your team to play in stays the same, regardless of the formation you choose.

If you like your players to play in the most common team shape - the diamond - they will play with a player at the top of the diamond to provide penetration, players on the side to provide width and a player at the base of the diamond to provide depth.

- While you shouldn't place very inexperienced players in positions that they don't have the skills to cope with, a coach who is more concerned with developing his players than avoiding defeat will take the occasional risk. He will play a relatively weak player in a key position and ask the players around him to take care of their team mate.



Left/Right Midfielder: Good crosses in the offense are a requirement to perform well as right or left midfielder. You will also carry the ball up the field because left/right midfielders have more room compared to the center midfielders.

operate in front of your defense line. You must force yourself to perform to the maximum requirement.



Defensive Midfielder: As a defensive midfielder your job is to have enough strength to Strong character is also a



Central midfielder: Playing as the central midfielder requires good

passing and ball handling skills. You must also distribute the ball safely among the offenders while doing everything to stop or slow down your opponent's offensive attacks before they reach your last defensive line.

as winger you should be able to sprint away able to run 40-50 yards up and down the field, serve your teammates with quality crosses. lot of energy which means that your fitness



The Winger: To succeed from your opponents, be score goals and also This requires of course a needs to be at the top.



Striker: The soccer striker is a type of position where you must be good at scoring goals. Simply, if you don't score, then you are not performing well. I would say that playing striker is the toughest and most painful position to play.

This is because you need to have great soccer dribbling and soccer shooting skills but also because defenders will do everything in their power to stop you. There is no greater feeling than scoring a goal, so don't give up so easily; instead, try your best and the goals will come.



Goalkeeper: Your job as soccer goalie is to prevent your opponents from scoring. But you need also to encourage your teammates, steer your defensive line and organize attacks.

You will also need to be good at heading and score goals. Beside that you need to be strong opponents and shield the ball while waiting for up.



Second Striker: To succeed as second striker you will need to have exceptional ball skills (e.g. shooting, dribbling, passing and dribbling). even know how to in order to hold off your your teammates to catch



Center Forward: To succeed as center forward you will need be aggressive, brave and be able to maintain your focus during the whole game. You also need to be prepared to work hard without the ball, know how to dribble your opponents and be able to score goals from any situation.

midfielder you will need excellent skills with the intelligent, know how to score goals and also teammates during the games. You also need to because you'll surely receive plenty of that score goals and utilize the attacking strategies your coach.



Attacking/Offensive Midfielder: To succeed as offensive ball, be creative be able to encourage your be prepared on criticism when your team fails to that are determined by

Player Responsibilities:

When you call a young soccer player a defender, for example, they think that is their only job - to defend.

That's because players up to the age of about eleven find it hard to grasp that they can have more than one job to do at the same time.

And labeling players 'defender', 'attacker' etc. is one reason you see youngsters playing statues on the pitch instead of running around, learning how to play the game.

The other reason that children play statues instead of soccer is poor quality coaching and/or coaches who are trying to win games rather than encourage their players to learn in the most effective way - by making mistakes.

So over the years I've found it useful to move away from labeling players as 'defenders' or 'attackers' and give them jobs to do instead.

The only fixed position in my teams is goalkeeper (and even she has been known to dribble the ball to the half way line!).

To begin with, we discuss the jobs that the team as a whole has to do:

- Create as much space as possible, both width and depth;
- Keep possession! So if you can't pass the ball forwards easily, play square or back - don't force a pass that isn't really on. If you do, you'll lose possession. It's better to pass square or back and start again;
- Try to maintain good team shape.

We then move onto individual responsibilities.

These guidelines are designed for teams who play 7-a-side but should still be useful for 8/9 or 11-a-side teams.

1. Goalkeeper. Positions himself in relation to the defender. Restarts play (roll, throw, kick). Also acts as an extra outfield player whenever possible - don't be afraid to take risks!
2. Full-backs. Position well apart, make the playing area as wide as possible. Play the ball to the midfield or the attackers. If there is room in front of you move forward with the ball and participate in the attack. If you're playing left back, play to the left of the rest of the team. This might mean you're in the middle of the pitch when the rest of the team is playing on the right but you're always playing on their left. The same goes for the right back. Don't let the opposition score. Be brave.
3. Central Defender. When the opposition has the ball you should be the last player back. You should be able to see every other player on the pitch apart from your own goalkeeper. When you have the ball and there is space, go forward and attack. Try to score if the opportunity arises but you will need to get back quickly if we lose the ball. Don't let the opposition score. Be brave.
4. Midfield players. Take the ball towards the opposition goal as quickly as you can or pass to a teammate who is in a better position than you. If you're playing left mid or right mid play to the left or right of the rest of the team (as described above). Try to score.
5. Attackers. Position as far forward as possible (make playing area long), while still being in a position to receive a pass. Try to score but don't forget you are the first line of our defense if we lose the ball in the opposing third. Don't let their ball carrier get past you.

Tell your players that when we have the ball EVERYONE is attacking. When the opposition has the ball EVERYONE is defending.

Formations (Systems of Play):

Topics: [4-4-2](#) | [4-4-1-1](#) | [4-5-1](#) | [4-3-3](#) | [4-3-1-2 \(Diamond\)](#) | [4-2-3-1](#) | [5-3-2, 5-4-1 & 3-4-3](#) | [3-5-2/5-3-2](#) | [1-4-3-2 \(Catenaccio\)](#) | **Old Formations:** [2-3-2-3](#) | [3-2-3-2](#) | [4-2-4](#) |

There is no "best formation". A formation is supposed to make optimal use of your player's abilities. Since these abilities vary from one squad to another, the "best formation" is the one which most suits your available players. Soccer is all about scoring and stopping goals. But there are many different tactics that can be used in pursuit of these aims. It might be better to play more defensively to hold on to a lead. Or if the team are losing, a more attacking set up that allows the players to push further forward may be required. To alter the way the team is playing requires a change to the structure. Traditionally, teams play in a 4-4-2 formation. But as the game has progressed and developed, coaches and players have experimented with many variations of team formations. Adaptability is the key and the best coaches can change formations as the game progresses. See [Team Shape](#) | [Coaching Pearls \(Positions, Discipline\)](#) |

4-4-2 (Four Four Two) Formation:

It's the most common formation in soccer. Four defenders, four midfielders and two forwards. It is an adaptable system where you have strength in midfield and plenty of width. Having two forwards means that the front line has extra support rather than having to wait for the midfield to reach them.

- This formation, like others, tends to free up the full-backs who will have more time on the ball than midfielders, particularly if the opposition is playing 4-4-2 as well.

- In fact some coaches have deemed the two central midfielders in this formation as defenders and the full backs as forwards.

- This formation also offers the chance for one of the two central midfielders to get forward and support the forwards.

- Sometimes the two midfielders will take turns in pushing forward to keep the defenders guessing.

- But some teams favor a more solid approach, assigning a defensive midfielder to cover the defense. This variation of the 4-4-2 formation has been called the diamond formation as the four midfielders form a diamond-like shape. This favors a team which doesn't have strong wingers. The basic modern formation, the 4-4-2, places a burden on midfielders: one of the central pair must go up and support attacks, while the other drops back. Wide players help out in defense and attack, creating a temporary 4-2-4. The two strikers work in tandem and need to have a good understanding of each other. Must have outside defenders and midfielders who are in exceptional aerobic shape as they will both make deep runs to attack and then need to chase back in the team's transition to defense. The zonal system requires a high degree of verbal and visual communication, particularly when defending, to ensure that opposing attackers are challenged and covered.

This system relies on the off-side trap and that is where defenders need to be alert to ensure they step up just before the ball is played in behind them. This requires almost automatic mechanisms because there is little time to provide each other with instructions.

Lining Up:

1. Defenders and midfielders generally stay on their side of the field (zone).
2. D1 & D4 challenge attackers on their side, cover for D2 & D3, overlap when attacking.
3. D2 & D3 mark central attackers if play is in middle.
4. M1 & M4 are wingers when attacking, defend against overlapping defenders or outside midfielders.
5. M2 & M3 control play, attack and defend centrally.
6. F1 & F2 make runs to near/far post or to wings.

Defending:

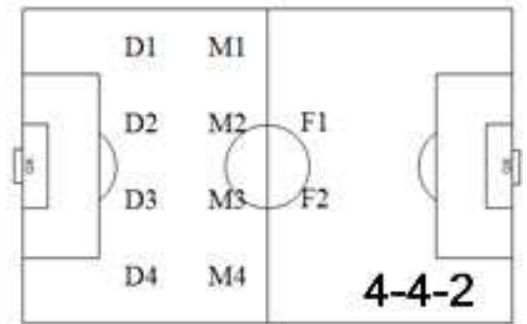
1. D4 challenges overlapping midfielder.
2. D3 provides support to D4.
3. D2 marks central attacker.
4. D1 shifts to mark second central attacker.
5. M4 marks overlapping defender.
6. M2 & M3 pick up central midfielders.
7. M1 marks outside midfielder.
8. F1 & F2 cover remaining three defenders.

Transitioning:

1. M4 gets ready to make overlapping run.
2. F2 gets ready to make diagonal run.
3. M3 comes to ball for a pass.
4. D3 supports D4 for a back pass.
5. D4 has option of passing to D3, M3 or deep to right. Depending on where on the field the play is, the player in possession should have at least three passing options to players either coming towards the ball or making runs into space.

Attacking:

1. Ball has been played down the right wing with M4 in possession.
2. M4 can go 1v1 and cross the ball in or
3. pass it to overlapping defender D4 who will then cross. If ball were in center of field with M2 in possession, then M2 could pass through defenders diagonally to F1 or F2 making runs into space. M2 could also pass wide to overlapping M1/D1 or M4/D4. Again, it is important to provide passing options for player with ball.



- The weakness of 4-4-2 is the gaps between the central defenders, midfielders and the strikers. As such, a huge burden is placed on the central midfield to augment defense and attack. Precisely because of this all-round contribution, the wings play a vital role in spurring on attacks and supporting the strikers.

Variation: 4-4-2 with Sweeper: D2 plays behind D3 in the middle. This system is very popular and used by school, college and youth teams with a short pre-season. It is a very effective and versatile attacking system based on coming down the sides as well as spreading the defense and then penetrating through the center. With overlapping outside defenders and midfielders the 4-4-2 quickly converts to a 4-2-4 or 3-4-3 putting immense pressure on the opposing defensive units. The sweeper provides permanent security and cover for the marking defenders. It does not rely on the off-side trap and therefore is not vulnerable when the trap fails.

Variation: 4-4-2 with diamond midfield: popular with professional teams in the late 90s. It relies on two midfield specialists: a defensive midfielder sweeping behind the midfield, and an offensive playmaking midfielder. The diamond midfield provides attacking flexibility down the sides and through the middle. The defense is strengthened by the defensive midfielder. At the same time, it is a more predictable system to defend against due to the more static positional play of the central midfielders. The vulnerability of the 4-4-2 lies in its flat back defense which can be torn apart by diagonal runs through its center.

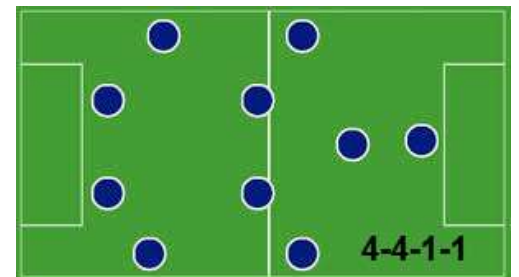


Variation: 4-4-2 with sweeper and diamond midfield: a rarely used version of the popular sweeper/flat midfield 4-4-2 used by school, college and youth teams. It offers a very versatile attacking system based on an attacking playmaking midfielder and attacking down the sides thus spreading the defense and penetrating through the center. It has defensive risks being vulnerable when attacked through the central midfield. The sweeper provides a permanent security and cover for the marking defenders.

4-4-1-1 Formation:

This formation is not as confusing as it looks. It is a simple variation of 4-4-2 in which the second forward plays just behind the main forward but ahead of the midfield.

- If a player plays ahead of the midfield but behind the forward it causes problems for the opposition because they will find it hard to mark them.
- The midfield already have four midfielders to mark and if a defender takes up the job, he will get pulled out of defense.
- This formation allows a creative player a bit more freedom to operate, he has more options - to pass short or long, dribble, cut wide or bear down on goal. If he fails to create an opening for himself, more often than not he will create goal scoring chances for others. And the added advantage is that if he creates something further forward, he can arrive late in the box to join the attack.



4-5-1 (Four Five One) Formation:

Traditionally favored by European teams, the 4-5-1 formation is becoming ever more popular in the English Premiership. This system is a very defensive system designed to stop a superior opponent from scoring, while relying almost exclusively on a fast transition to attack in numbers. It is recommended to only use this system with experienced teams who understand the concept of closing down spaces, absorbing pressure and counterattacking quickly. When attacking the 5-4-1 should convert to a 3-4-3. It is also commonly seen when a team is holding a one-goal lead in a two-legged match.

- The 4-5-1 - that is four defenders, five midfielders and one forward - is often seen in European games where teams face a tough away fixture and the coach chooses to pack the midfield. This is essentially a defensive formation, with a packed midfield and a lone striker left to fend for himself, or hold the ball up, until support arrives, usually from the wide players. English team Chelsea used this system to great effect during its back-to-back Premier League title successes in 2005 and 2006.



- It can be very effective, particularly at keeping possession, and with five midfielders covering the defense it provides a solid base. Sometimes you will see 10 men behind the ball.
- But it also means that attacking options are limited. The forward often has a lone battle up front.

- It works best with a big, strong front player who can win the ball in the air and hold it up until support arrives. The central defenders need to have the experience and ability to communicate with each other to decide who marks and who supports and when to release to support the midfield.

When attacking, the outside players as well as the forward all need to be able to play 1v1. Central midfielders must have goal scoring technique and capability for heading the ball.

The lone forward needs to be in superb aerobic shape as he/she will put pressure on whichever opposing defender has the ball.

- Otherwise it can produce relatively few goal-scoring chances. This system has a lot in common with the 4-3-3 formation, which the 4-5-1 becomes when the wide midfielders join the lone forward. Put simply, you play 4-3-3 when you have the ball and 4-5-1 when you do not.

The 4-5-1 is fundamentally defensive, but can be tweaked to provide more of an offensive threat. The essential qualities of the 4-5-1 are a three-man central midfield and a lone striker, typically a target man. By packing the midfield, a technically strong passing side will come unstuck and provide opportunities for counter-attacking football. When on the attack, the 4-5-1 is heavily dependent on the wingers supporting the lone striker.

Perhaps the best illustration of 4-5-1 in full flow is Jose Mourinho's system. Both as manager of FC Porto and Chelsea, Mourinho founded his sides on strong defensive line-ups and an excellent holding midfielder, while the attack relied on a hard-working front man and a goal-scorer in midfield. At Chelsea, his defensive stalwarts were the captain and central defender John Terry and the holding midfielder Claude Makélélé. Alongside the Frenchman, Frank Lampard provided the bulk of goals from central midfield, ably supported by Joe Cole and Arjen Robben on the wings and Didier Drogba's efforts up front.

Variation: 4-5-1: sweeper; flat midfield.

4-3-3 (Four Three Three) Formation:

There are four defenders, three midfielders and three attackers. This formation is quite an attacking one. Recommended only for mature, competitive teams. The benefit is that the width of the field is covered in all areas. The risk is that attacking becomes too static if the forwards stay in their position making them easy to mark. The forwards need to change positions and shift towards the middle to set up 3v2s while opening the side for overlapping defenders/midfielders. When defending, this system almost always converts into a 3-4-3 because a defender needs to step up. The system allows you to have three forwards whilst still having a strong midfield. The three midfielders will normally play quite closely together to give protection to the defense and so they cannot be passed around by the opposition.



- The three forwards will split across the pitch to provide width to the attack. Usually you would have a central forward with one each side of him.

- If a coach needs a goal late on in a game then he may opt to move to three up front. Essentially a more defensive version of the 4-2-4, the 4-3-3 was first pioneered by Brazil at the 1962 World Cup. The three midfielders could be staggered in various ways and tended to move across the field as a unit. Few teams now start with this system, but many adopt it late on in a match if they're chasing a game.

In some ways, the 4-3-3 is covered in the description of the 4-5-1. However, whereas the 4-5-1 starts with the wingers supporting the central midfielders, the 4-3-3 encourages the wingers to act as true forwards and the formation generally emphasizes attack more than defense.

This theory was put into action by Frank Rijkaard as manager of Barcelona. Faced with the problem of how to accommodate Ronaldinho, Samuel Eto'o and Lionel Messi, as well as a host of central midfielders, Rijkaard adopted a 4-3-3. The triangle up front of the aforementioned players was supported by a creative and defensive midfield backbone of the playmaker Xavi, the holding midfielder Edmílson and either Andrés Iniesta or Thiago Motta as an all-rounder. The side was hugely successful, picking up back-to-back La Liga titles in 2005 and 2006 and the Champions League trophy in 2006.

Variations: 4-3-3: sweeper; flat midfield.

The 'Diamond Formation' (4-3-1-2 – Four Three One Two):

The diamond in the formation refers to the midfield, with an attacking midfielder and a holding midfielder employed and flanked by two wingers, who move in-field slightly to shore up the gaps in the center. To cover for the



lack of width in the side, the full-backs become wingbacks and start slightly higher up the pitch.

The diamond formation is typically associated with the World Cup-winning English national team in 1966, christened the 'wingless wonders'. In recent times though, the employment of the diamond usually revolves around a single player. The Argentinian national side in the 2006 World Cup held an extremely fluid diamond formation which gave Juan Roman Riquelme space to instigate attacks, while AC Milan under Carlo Ancelotti in 2004 used the diamond to assist the Brazilian playmaker Kaká.



4-2-3-1: This was arguably the dominant formation on either side of the millennium. It revolves around the midfield, with two of the central players in holding roles and the other one concentrating on attack. France beat Brazil 3-0 in the 1998 World Cup final using this formation. It is popular in continental Europe. It is a very effective and versatile attacking system based on four attackers. With overlapping outside defenders and midfielders it converts to a 4-2-4, 4-3-3, 3-4-3, 3-3-4 or 2-4-4 putting immense pressure on the opposing defensive units who must be extremely alert and in constant communication.

The vulnerability of the 4-2-3-1 lies in its flat back defense which can be torn apart by diagonal runs through its center. Transition to defending is easily forgotten with the mindset on attacking. This system relies on the off-side trap and that is where defenders need to be alert to ensure they step up just before the ball is played in behind them. When attacking, the offensive midfielders and the forward need to be able to play 1v1 and place accurate crosses into the penalty area. Both forwards and midfielders must have goal scoring skills.

5-3-2 (Five Three Two) Formation:

This formation was popular a few years ago and can be an effective way of switching between defense and attack.

The 5-3-2 formation has five defenders, three midfielders and two forwards - although two of the defenders are expected to play attacking roles. So you could almost call it a 3-5-2 formation if you wanted to.

- Across the back line there are three central defenders - occasionally with one acting as a sweeper - so it provides good cover at the back if the two central defenders are vulnerable.
- The two wing-backs who operate up the flanks (sides), play a key role in this line-up and it allows them to attack.
- It is their job to work the full length of the pitch, supporting both the defense and the attack by getting crosses in and tackling back respectively.
- If these two attacking defenders struggle with the pace of the game the team can be left short of support - be it up front or at the back so they need to be very fit.
- In theory, the 5-3-2 is a purely defensive-minded line-up. The three central defenders provide extra resoluteness, while the three in midfield are all located around the centre circle. There is also a notable gap between midfield and attack, and the wing-play is the sole responsibility of the fullbacks.



However, the most famous modern practitioners of this system, the 1990s West German national side. As a result, the 5-3-2 is something of a tactical enigma, though rarely seen today.

5-4-1: a very defensive system designed to stop a superior opponent from scoring, while relying almost exclusively on a fast transition to attack in numbers. It is recommended to only use this system with experienced teams who understand the concept of closing down spaces, absorbing pressure and counter attacking quickly. When attacking the 5-4-1 should convert to a 3-4-3. The 5-4-1 can shut down any other system and good teams will respond by converting to a 3-5-2 or even a 2-5-3. Must have outside defenders and midfielders who are in exceptional aerobic shape as they will both make deep runs to attack and then need to get back in the team's transition to defense.



The central defenders need to have the experience and ability to communicate with each other to decide who marks and who supports and when to release to support the midfield.

3-4-3: The benefit is that the width of the field is covered in all areas. The risk is that attacking becomes too static if the forwards stay in their position making them easy marks by the opponent. The forwards need to change positions, shift towards the middle to set up 3v2s while opening the side for overlapping midfielders. It is vulnerable to being caught on

opposing counterattacks and can be outnumbered on defense if the midfielders and forwards do not transition back fast enough. Teams employing this 3-4-3 system must have outside midfielders who are in exceptional aerobic shape as they will both make deep runs to attack and then need to get back in the team's transition to defense.

Variation: 3-4-3: sweeper; flat midfield; zonal system.

3-5-2/5-3-2 Formation:

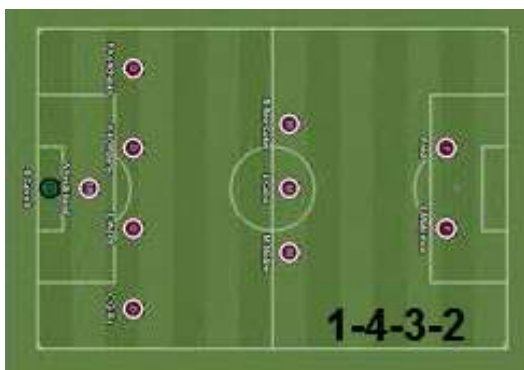
The difference between 3-5-2 and 5-3-2 is one of emphasis, with the former being more attack-oriented than the latter since it has more midfielders. In either variant, the key men are the wide players, usually described as wingers, who are expected to help out with both attack and defense. 3-5-2 is an attacking minded system for teams with time and player skills to develop the zonal systems. Defenders mark opposing forwards in their zone and play the off-side trap.

The central midfielders close down the middle. When in possession, the 3-5-2 offers five attackers.

Two outside midfielders become wingers; the attacking central midfielder is a playmaker with complete freedom of movement, which makes defending them very difficult.

Variations: 3-5-2: sweeper; modified diamond midfield; attacking midfielder. 3-5-2: flat back 3; flat midfield; defending midfielder and 3-5-2: flat back 3; flat midfield; defending midfielder.

Catenaccio (1-4-3-2): Catenaccio, which means "door bolt" in Italian, relied on a libero, or sweeper stationed in front of the goalkeeper to counter the risk of an opposing forward breaking through the main line of defense. It was fundamentally a defensive system, but by forcing opponents to commit extra players forward, it left them vulnerable to rapid counterattacks.



Old Football Formations:

(<http://www.football-bible.com/soccer-info/old-football-formations.html>)

1-2-7: the most popular formation in the 1860-70s. With only one center back, two halfbacks, and seven forwards, it reflects the all-attacking nature of football in that era.

2-3-5: 1880 – 1925. Popularly known as the "pyramid" because of its triangular shape on the blackboard. It was popularized by English football team Preston North End, which had many Scottish players on its lineup.

(The arrival of Scots in English clubs in the 1880s led to the dominance of the passing strategy over the dribble and long ball type of play.) Considered the first formation that relied on teamwork rather than individual effort. In defense, the left and right halves mark the opposition wingers and the center backs mark the inside forwards. The key player is the center half, who marks the opposition striker and is in charge of pivoting the team from defense to offense. After retrieving the ball in defense, he organizes his team's attack and feeds the ball to the forwards.

2-3-2-3: 1925 – 1945: W-M formation. was popularized by Arsenal manager Herbert Chapman in 1925 when the offside rule was changed. Chapman countered the increased pressure on defense by putting an equal number of players on the offensive and defensive ends. Three defenders (two fullbacks, one center back) and two halfbacks make up the defensive end while two inside forwards, two wingers, and one striker make up the offense. This 3-2-2-3 formation was more popularly called as the W-M formation because the defenders' arrangement on the field forms a "W" while the forwards form an "M." A formation that is not usually seen these days. At its heart is an attempt to balance attack and defense in terms of player numbers, with the arrangement normally affording 5 players in defense and 5 players in attack at all times. This formation was sometimes used by the Argentina teams of the mid-1980's, as well as Liverpool of the 1990's. It is a formation that requires a lot of fitness on the wings as well as a good understanding of midfield play and an ability to possess the ball as a team.

3-2-3-2: 1950s. The M-U formation. It places equal number of players on both halves of the field and was popularized by the Hungarians in the 1950s. The formation works with three defenders, two halfbacks, three forwards (two inside forwards & one withdrawn striker), and two wingers. The key player is the deep-lying striker, who draws out the opposing center back to make room for the other forwards. **3-2-3-2 is just another way of calling a 3-5-2 formation basically.** Not a very common formation nowadays. A variation on the 3-5-2 formation in soccer, is a formation that is not usually seen these days. At its heart is an attempt to balance attack and defense in terms of player numbers, with the arrangement normally affording 5 players in defense and 5 players in attack at all times. This formation was sometimes used by the



Argentina teams of the mid-1980's, as well as Liverpool of the 1990's. It is a formation that requires a lot of fitness on the wings as well as a good understanding of midfield play and an ability to possess the ball as a team.

Build from the back. All good teams and formations need a strong goalkeeper. This is doubly true for teams that play with 3 central defenders. The keeper has to be an aggressive player in this formation, playing the role of sweeper when the central defenders push up towards the halfway line.

Have fast defenders. The key to playing 3 defenders in a formation is to make sure they are fast enough to be able to recover if they fail to win their 1-on-1 battles against the opposition attackers. Slow defenders will create gaps in the defense and allow the other team opportunities to initiate attacks.

Ensure that the two wing-backs on the outside are super-fit. There will probably not be any players on the field who will do more running than these two players. They must get forward with the attack and make crosses, and drop back with the defense and prevent crosses or protect the back post.

The attacking midfield player must be the most creative player on the team. The majority of attacks will filter through this player, therefore they should possess high levels of skill and vision. The two defensive midfielders must know how to stay back and hold the midfield space in front of the defense. Good ball skills and an ability to play accurate long passes are a bonus.

The two forwards must work in tandem with each other, making criss-cross runs, takeovers, knock-ons and other combination plays in order to further their chances of scoring.

4-2-4: Late 1950s. 4-2-4 is the predecessor of modern football formations and was developed by the Hungarians and Brazilians independently in the late 1950s. It is the first formation that featured a four-man backline.

In defense, this formation can become a 4-3-3, with one forward dropping back to defend in midfield. The two halfbacks are tasked to block off counterattacks. Because of a weak middle, much of the defending will be left to the back four. The defenders should look to passing the ball as quick as possible to the forwards to exploit their numeric advantage.

When attacking, the formation works as 3-3-4, with one defender going up to push the ball. The two strikers give depth to the attack while the two wingers give width.

Brazil brought 4-2-4 to prominence by winning the 1958 World Cup. Since then, it has evolved to different four-back formations like 4-3-3 and 4-4-2.

Team Shape: What shape do I want my team to have?

See [Formations](#) | [Coaching Pearls \(Positions, Discipline\)](#) |

It doesn't matter if you're playing 4v4, 7v7 or 11v11. The shape you're looking for is a diamond. A diamond is a simple shape that most can visualize. The top of the diamond provides a focus for your team's attacks, the two points on the side provide width and the base of the diamond provides stability and a platform to mount attacks.

- They should mirror your movements as a unit and maintain the diamond shape, no matter where the ball is.
- Every player should move forwards, backwards and sideways as though they are joined together with string.
- Progress to playing a 4v4 match with both teams starting in a diamond shape.

The instructions are simple: To move the ball to the sharp end (the point of the diamond nearest the opponent's goal) as quickly and directly as possible. If a direct pass isn't possible, the ball should be passed around the other points of the diamond until it is.

• Tell your players that if they can't pass the ball forward, they should try to pass it sideways. If a sideways pass isn't on either, pass the ball back to the base of the diamond.

• Don't be tempted to put your players in set positions. It's easy to tell Susie she is always at the right point of the triangle or tell Mary she is always at the top of the diamond but the emphasis should be helping your players to understand that it doesn't matter who is playing on the right side, left side, or at the top and bottom points of the diamond... as long as someone is.

They should be encouraged to look around and fill spaces, not get totally focused on maintaining their own position.

Be patient: Don't expect your team to abandon the swarm and begin playing like Barcelona overnight.

Many hours of practice will be required before young players start to play with anything like a recognizable shape. The maturity of your players will have an impact too. For team shape to "work", your players have to be able to put the interests of the team before their own desire to get close to the action. But some of your players will mature faster than others and it only takes one or two children to lag behind the rest in terms of putting the team before self to force you to postpone your plans until every player is ready. But if you are patient you will, one day, have a team of players who know where they should be at any given point in the game and what they should be doing when they are there.

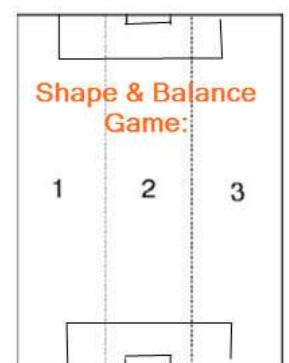
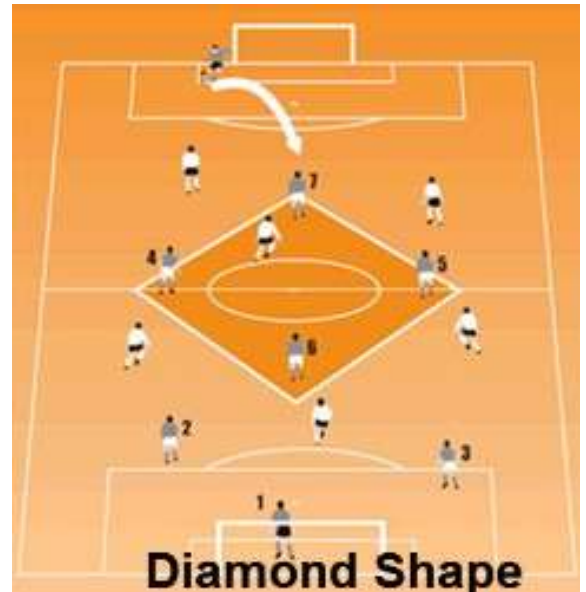
Shape & Balance Game:

Here is a way to work on both offensive and defensive shape at the same time.

How to Play: break the field into thirds as shown in the diagram. Play a regular game of soccer (if possible, actually play 11 v 11 or if that doesn't work get as many players on the field as you can).

- A goal counts as 4 points.
 - Anytime the team with the ball DOESN'T have a player in each of the three sections, they lose a point. (the key here is that it shouldn't always be the same players out wide).
 - As an additional incentive a team can win points by quickly switching the ball. The way this works is that anytime the ball is in section 1, if the defense has any players in section 3, the attacking team gets a point. If the ball gets switched to section 3 and the defense has anyone in section 1, the attacking team gets a point. When the ball is in the middle (section 2), all defensive players must be in the middle section or the attacking team gets a point (you have to give a 1 second period from the time the ball gets played from the outside to the middle to give the defense time to shift).
- NOTE: This activity encourages the attacking team to provide proper support with width and also it encourages them to switch the ball through the midfield as well as around the back. Defensively, this works on proper defensive rotation as well as proper support and balance.
- The size of the sections can be changed depending upon the numbers you are working with as well as their understanding of the concepts.

Variations: rewarding a team for switching the ball from one outside section all the way across to the other (this will help a team switch the ball quickly but will also help them learn when NOT to do it).



- For the more experienced teams, one of my favorite things to add is that no player can be in either of the two wide sections for more than 5 seconds without the ball. This means that if a player is out wide and not being used, she must get out of that section and someone must take her place in that section (or the team loses a point). If you implement this, the players must understand the roles of different positions or else it turns into pure chaos.

Remember, this activity is best with 7 a side or more and should also be done after a team has gone through a fair bit of shadow training to understand the proper responsibilities of the different roles.

Variation: Add 8 yard wide goals (made with cones) at the center of each of the 3 zones.

- You play a regular game of soccer. If a ball is dribbled through any of the three goals at midfield, it's worth 1 point each time. If a ball is PASSED through any of these goals and received by a teammate it's worth 2 points.
- A goal scored into the regular goal (at the end of the field, remember we are still playing a regular soccer game here) is worth 5 points. A team can score as many points at a center goal as they want and a point can be scored going in either direction (young players will get caught up going back and forth through the side goals for points so it becomes important to remind them that the ultimate goal is to score in the real goal). There should be a keeper in each of the regular goals.
- This game will encourage teams to stay spread out offensively and will also encourage them to try to compress the field defensively (it's hard to be chasing from side to side in defense when the attacking team simply has to play a long switching ball to get either 1 or 2 points).
- If you are fortunate to have three keepers, two keepers play in the regular goals and the third keeper is responsible for the goals on the midfield line. Any time a regular goal is scored (the 5 point goals) the keeper who gets scored on switches with the keeper in the middle. This should encourage the keepers to do whatever they can to not let in goals because the keeper in the middle is responsible for three goals in both directions. This will require a great deal of conditioning on the keepers parts but again, they need to know how important it is to NOT give up goals in a game.
- This game can be played for time (for example it could be a 20 minute game) or it could be played to a certain score (first one to 20 wins).

Get your team into shape!

No, it's not an article about physical fitness. This is an article about getting your team into another kind of shape – their shape on the field.

The basic principles are simple:

1. When your team has the ball When your team is in possession you normally want your players to spread out and attack using the full width of the pitch.[1]

Using the wings to launch your attack may drag opposition defenders out of position, leaving gaps in the middle of the pitch that your strikers can exploit.

You also want your players to move upfield as a unit, with some players providing options for the ball carriers to pass back if they run into trouble.

I tell my players that when they're attacking they want MORE: more space, more passing options, more shots and more goals.

2. When the other team has the ball When the opposition has the ball your players should try to deny them space, passing options and shooting opportunities by compressing the play.

Your wide players should "tuck in" and if the other team does attack down the wings, your players should try to keep them there by sliding across as a unit.

As well as having players in the right part of the pitch, you want them to be spaced correctly and as long as they are old enough (at least eight). This is quite easily achieved by demonstrating the "ideal distance".

Tip: You will find it a lot easier to keep your team in good shape if you can get your players to discard the notion that little Jimmy is a "defender", Tommy is a "midfielder" and Lucy is an "attacker".

Defender, midfielder and attacker are just labels that identify a particular place on the pitch, not a person. The team should understand that it doesn't matter who is in defense, midfield or attack... as long as someone is!

You can teach the basic concepts of team shape by playing a game between two teams of five or six players and emphasizing the following coaching points:

- The defending team should keep together and stay compact. The gaps between defending players should be smaller than the gaps between players when their team is attacking.
- When attacking or defending, all the players should move as a unit. If one player moves to a new position, the other players will need to adjust their position, too.
- As soon as possession is lost, the defending team should try to force the play wide then add more pressure and try to keep the ball on the wings.

- Encourage your players to recognize when an attacking player is not under much pressure and has the option to make a long pass. In such circumstances, your players should make sure they control the center of the pitch. Conversely, if the ball carrier is under close pressure and cannot get their head up, further pressure should be added.

Conclusion:

Team shape is determined by what is happening on the pitch – does your team have the ball or not?

Correct spacing is as important as shape.

Individual players are not responsible for being in one particular position, all the time.

Notes

[1] Unless you're counter attacking, in which case your team should move directly towards the opposition goal at pace.

Maximize space to teach team shapes:

First, you need to show your players that it is easier to play soccer surrounded by space rather than other players. You can do this by setting up a very small pitch (about 20 yards by 10 yards), splitting your squad into two teams and getting them to play soccer in it.

After they have played for a few minutes, stop and ask your players if it is easy playing soccer in this space? If not, why? Someone will say it is too crowded.

Similarly, create a circle about eight yards across, spread your players around it and ask one of them to stand in the middle. Tell the players around the circle to pass to each other across the circle, keeping the ball away from the player in the middle (the 'defender').

Ask them if it is easy or hard? Then make the circle bigger and try again. Is it easier now there is more space between the players?

Make the circle really big (about 30 yards across) and repeat the exercise. Discuss why it is now easy for the 'defender' to intercept the passes. The answer is because the outside players are too far apart.

Gradually make the circle smaller again until your players discover the distance between them that makes it hard for the 'defender' to intercept the ball, but not so far apart that they can't pass accurately to each other. This is the distance you ideally want your players to be spaced apart during matches.

Shape is the key, not fixed positions

Now you have demonstrated to your players the need for space between them to play soccer effectively, you might be tempted to place them in traditional positions - defender, midfielder and attacker.

Planting players in these positions may work in the short term. But I suggest you would be better getting your players to understand the concept of 'shape' first. It's not difficult - providing your players understand why they need to have some space around them.

The most common and effective shapes in soccer are the triangle and the diamond. As your players move around during matches and practice, you should be able to see these shapes everywhere.

But let's begin with just one triangle.

Take three of your players and stand in front of them holding a ball. Ask them to form a triangle shape with two 'defenders' at the back and one 'attacker' in front. They need to be spaced the ideal distance apart (see above).

Ask them to look around and recognize the shape they have made. Now hold the ball out and move slowly around them, getting closer and further away. Get your players to keep their triangle shape pointing at you as you move around and make sure they remain the correct distance apart.

Once they have mastered the triangle, create a diamond shape by adding a fourth player behind the two defenders (in a sweeper position). Again, move around with the ball while your players maintain their shape. As you move, different players become the point of the diamond but the shape is the same.

Now put the ball on the ground and dribble it slowly around the players. See if they can stay in the diamond formation. If they can, congratulations! Your team has a 'proper' shape.

Four Goal Game:

To help your players find 'useful' space and see the "big picture" on a soccer field. This gets them to shift their focus away from the ball long enough to see and move into a space where they can receive a pass is. A good U10-U12 game to help them learn to avoid the swarm.

Set up: Set up a 30x20 yards playing area with two goals on each end line. The goals should be set nearer to the side line than to each other in order to develop their spatial awareness.

- Divide your players into two small teams of 4 to 5 players on each.
- Each team attacks and defends **two** goals.

The team in possession will be rewarded with a goal if players look up and make the right choice as to which goal to attack, i.e. which goal is not being defended.

But if the attacking team sticks close to the ball and misses an opportunity to score in an undefended goal, stop the game briefly and ask players if it might be a good idea if one of them moved away from the swarm into a position where they could receive a pass in front of the open goal.

Your players won't catch on immediately but you can help them learn by blowing a whistle when they bunch in front of one goal and ask them why they are ignoring the other goal.

Stay in Lane!

Objective: To help young soccer players understand they don't need to bunch round the ball.

Set-up: Mark out a 30x20 yards playing with a goal at each end. The pitch is divided into three channels (lanes) running from one end line to the other with flat cones. Play 3v3 to begin with and put one player from each team in each lane. Goalkeepers are optional.

How to play: Players can pass, tackle and dribble but they can't go out of their channel.

- If they leave their channel (even if it is just by stepping over the line), they concede a free kick where the infringement took place.
- Swap the players to a new zone every two or three minutes.

Progression: 1. After playing 3v3, widen the center lane and play 4v4 (2v2 in the center lane).

2. When playing 4v4, allow two players of each team to be in any lane at one time. If a third player from that team wants to enter that same lane, one of the two players from that team must leave the lane before he can enter it.
3. Set up three teams of four players. Two teams play "winner stays on". (1 play one goal wins the game).

When playing winner stay on, add these conditions for balls played out of bounds:

- Balls kicked over the end line result in a corner kick or goal kicks in the usual way but balls kicked across the side line mean an automatic loss for team that last touched the ball.
 - This encourages the waiting team to stay alert and be ready to start playing as soon as the ball goes into touch.
4. Do not assign players to a specific zone. Instead, allow movement between zones provided at least one player from each team is in each zone.

Why your players might never see the point:

The diamond shape is the most important shape in youth soccer. And it should be the easiest topic to teach.

Children from the age of six or seven know what a diamond looks like and can easily appreciate why their team, when in possession, should always have one player up front, two providing width on the wings and one 'sweeping' at the back.

- So once you've explained this simple tactic, why don't they maintain a diamond shape in matches?
- If your players are aged up to about eleven, it's probably not because you haven't explained it properly. And it's not because they are willfully refusing to 'see the point'. It's almost certainly because they aren't ready to learn about tactics just yet.
- This is due to the fact that children simply can't think in abstract terms until they reach a certain stage in their mental development.
- So, even though a seven or eight year old player can dribble around players and can learn to pass a ball to another player, they don't see the space behind and beside players and they can't understand or visualize passing a ball or running into empty space to receive a pass, or even the basic concept of a wall pass, because such ideas involve abstract thinking.

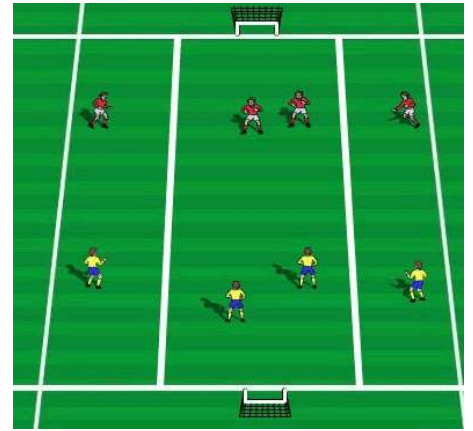
It's also important to remember that players mature at different rates.

Importantly for the youth soccer coach, young players are also ego-centric, which means they consider things only from their own point of view and imagine that others share this point of view because it is the only one possible.

So a late developer in your U11s or U12s will not be able to understand the concept of sharing the ball and they will not cognitively be able to understand the concept of, or see the opportunities for, passing.

It follows that shouts of 'pass the ball!' or 'get your shape!' will be lost on such players, so please don't waste your breath.

And try to take mental and physical development of your players into account when designing your practice plans.



Don't expect them to run when they are only just learning to walk!

How to Coach Girls & Team Names

Coaches who have girls and boys in their team often wonder about the implications of coaching the "fairer sex".

They want to know:

Do I have to treat girls and boys differently?

Do I need to plan coaching sessions for girls in a special way?

Do girls want to win as much as boys? Will they work as hard?

This article will help you answer these questions. But before we look at the differences between girls and boys and the implications these differences have for youth soccer coaches, let's see what girls and boys have in common.

Firstly, boys and girls want to play soccer for largely the same reasons.

Almost 900 children playing soccer in a tournament in the USA children were asked a series of questions relating to their attitude to soccer.[1]

Their responses to the statement: "I play soccer because I want to..." were summarized as:

	girls	boys
Have fun	99%	94%
Improve at my sport	98%	94%
Learn new skills	95%	89%
Be competitive	94%	94%
Get in shape	92%	88%
Be with friends	92%	87%

The same survey asked questions relating to winning. And that's where a significant gender difference emerged.

In answer to the question: "How important is winning when playing soccer?" 80% of the boys said that winning was "important" or "very important" compared to just 61% of the girls.

A similar gender difference emerged when they were asked how important playing fairly was to them. 72% of the girls said that playing fairly was "important" or "very important" while only 48% of the boys tried not to break the rules.

Of course, we don't know how much the attitude of the players' coaches influenced these responses. Could it be that the coaches of the girls' teams placed less emphasis on winning than the boys' coaches?

Interestingly for those of you who have been following the playing time debate on footy4kids, 78% of boys – but only 54% of the girls – agreed with the statement that it is more important for key players to play in order to win than for everyone to get equal playing time.

Similarly, 53% of girls agreed it was important "that everyone gets a chance to play" compared to 34% of the boys.

These results back up my own experience of coaching boys and girls teams over the years.

I have learned – often the hard way – that:

1. Girls are more analytical than boys and will not accept what a coach says at face value. They will want to know why they should do something a particular way more than boys will. If you try to be dictatorial, girls will simply switch off whereas boys may accept what you say because you're "the boss".

2. Team unity is more important to girls than boys. So if you coach girls you have to make sure that you give more or less equal playing time to everyone in the squad, regardless of their ability, even in the most important games. If you don't, the girls won't thank you if they win but they will remember that you were "unfair" to their friends.

Also, a girls' coach has to be constantly on the lookout for the emergence of little cliques. Small groups within teams are always damaging whether you coach boys or girls but they can permanently split a girls' team in a matter of days. If you coach girls, listen carefully to their conversations and watch how they interact with each other

Girls usually place more emphasis on "fair play" than boys who are more likely to bend the rules. So girls' matches are often more pleasant, stress-free event... as long as you can keep their parents under control.

Boys are more likely than girls to blame outside factors (the referee, the weather, the coach) if they lose whereas individual female players will often blame themselves for a poor team performance, even if it is unjustified. So you need to spend a lot of time with girls reinforcing the notion that it's effort that counts, not results.

As far as their capacity for physical work is concerned, there is no difference between boys and girls until they reach puberty.

From the age of about 10 the anaerobic capacity of boys – their ability to work hard in short bursts – quickly outstrips girls and coaches who have both boys and girls in their team should be careful to plan their coaching activities accordingly.

To sum up. If you're coaching girls you have to be: People oriented and democratic.

Very aware of the relationships between players.

Give lots of positive encouragement.

Get player input, ask for suggestions and never lecture.

Treat every player in the squad exactly the same.

Plan relatively low intensity training sessions that include lots of games and several rest breaks.

To be honest, this is a good way to coach boys too. But you can often get away with telling boys what to do and not paying much attention to their relationships.

Gender differences: attitude

Ask any coach who has coached both boys and girls if you can coach them the same way and he (or she!) will say 'no - girls and boys have to be coached differently'.

That's because girls and boys have different attitudes to soccer. Generally they play soccer for different reasons.

For boys, soccer is all about winning matches and being a better player than their mates. It's a testosterone sport.

For girls, being a member of the team is the most important aspect of playing soccer.

They want to belong to the team and are much better than boys at supporting players who make mistakes or who are not as skilled as they are.

In addition: Girls are better at multitasking from a very early age while boys work on one, at most two, tasks at a time. Boys learn by doing and they are stimulated by taste, touch, and smell. Girls use their eyes and ears to learn. A study of 1,000 eleven to eighteen year old athletes in the USA turned up some very interesting differences between girls' and boys' attitudes to winning and losing:

"I would do almost anything to win"

	Almost		Sometimes		Frequently	Almost always
	never	Occasionally				
Female	20%	23%	27%	15%	14%	
Male	11%	15%	26%	20%	29%	

"It is more important for key players to play in order to win than for everyone to get equal playing time"

	Almost		Sometimes		Frequently	Almost always
	never	Occasionally				
Female	25%	21%	30%	14%	10%	
Male	11%	12%	36%	21%	21%	

"I get very upset when my team loses"

	Almost never		Occasionally		Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Female	21%	28%	33%	10%	8%		
Male	10%	23%	26%	21%	21%		

Source: Mary Healy Jonas, Do Boys and Girls View Competition in Different Ways?

Note: rows may not add up to 100% because of rounding

It is essential to take these differences between the sexes into account when planning youth soccer practice sessions.

How to structure a practice plan for girls:

Boys tend to be much more result orientated than girls who often consider the 'social' aspects of belonging to a team more important than the match scores. Girls also interact with you, the coach, in a different way to boys.

They are not as concerned as boys are that you are an 'expert'. They won't think any less of you if you can't do 100 keep ups or a scissors while running at full speed. But they will be unhappy if you don't bear in mind that the team 'ethos' is more important to girls than it is to boys.

Allow them time to bond (i.e., chat) during drinks breaks - if you don't they may start socializing on the pitch instead of playing!

Remember that girls will close ranks around individuals who are struggling.

That's great for building team spirit but it makes it vital that you do not single out individuals for criticism, however constructive and well intentioned it may be.

And you will recall from my last newsletter that girls are better at multi-tasking than boys (at least, that's what my wife tells me!) so you can focus on more than one aspect to their game during training sessions. With boys, you need to keep it very simple (sorry, guys!).

The practice plan below is one that I have used with my U10 girls team.

You will see that I have used the technique of guided discovery throughout. This is best practice for both boys and girls but especially for girls who are more analytical than boys.

Guided discovery is a simple process - begin by asking questions and then encourage the players to work out the answers for themselves. It is a proven and more effective method of learning than simply telling children what to do.

A word of warning - guided discovery requires you to really know and understand what you want to get out of the training session. You need to think carefully about the type of questions you need to ask.

Warm-up: passing in pairs

Players get in pairs and pass and move within a designated area.

Begin with free-style passing then make it more directed by telling them to run around a cone that is on the outside of the grid after they pass and before they receive the ball back from their partner.

Key coaching points

- Technique of passing ball
- Eye Contact
- Passing to correct foot
- Passing to feet or space
- Pace of pass

Some of the questions that can be asked during this activity are:

- If a player without the ball is running toward you, where should you pass the ball? Answer: To their feet. As the coach, you may have to give them the choice of saying either "feet or space".
- If a player without the ball is running away from you, where should you pass the ball? Answer: To space. As the coach, you may have to give them the choice of saying either "feet or space".
- How do I know my partner (team mate) is ready to receive a pass? Answer: Because they are looking at me. (Eye contact).

These are questions that will encourage your girls (or boys) to think for themselves.

Then play a small-sided game (SSG). One of my favorites is the 1-0 game that was described in newsletter 2. If you missed it, the 1-0 game is very simple - it's ordinary soccer with the condition that you can only win the game by a margin of one goal, i.e. 1-0, 2-1 etc. It is played for a set time, usually five minutes.

The point of this game is to get into a winning position and then keep the ball away from the opposition for the rest of the game. It provides young players with many opportunities for making decisions relating to running into space or a supporting position.

While they are playing this game, you will be able to ask them the following questions:

- If a player with the ball is under pressure, where do you run: Support or space? Answer: Support.
- If a player with a ball isn't under pressure, where do you run: Support or space? Answer: Space.

By doing this, you are planting a seed in their minds of how they need to move during a match.

For the last ten minutes I let my girls play a game among themselves. It's their favorite part of any coaching session!

Soccer Team Names:

A _____

ABYSS
ACCELERATOR
ACORNS
ADRENALINE
AFTERSHOCK
AIRBORNE
AIR FORCE
AJAX
ALIEN INVADERS
ALIEN PREDATORS
ALIENS
ALL AMERICANS
ALLEY CATS
ALLIANCE
ALLIGATORS
ALMOST ANGELS
AMAZONS
AMBASSADORS
AMBUSH
AMERICAN BEAUTY
AMERICAN EAGLES
AMERICAN GIRLS
ANACONDAS
ANGELS
ANGELS GONE BAD
ANGELS WITH ATTITUDE
ANIMOSITY
ANNIHILATORS
ANTEATERS
APACHES
AQUA ARMY
ARCTIC WOLVES
ARISTOCATS
ARISTOCRATS
ARMY MEN
ARROWS
ARSENAL
ARSENALS
ARSON
ASSAULT
ASTERIODS
ASTROS
ATLAS
ATOMIC FIREBALLS
ATOMIC ICE
ATOMS
ATTACK
ATTACK SQUAD
AVALANCHE
AVATARS
AVENGERS
AWESOME BLOSSOMS
AWESOME KICKERS
AZTECS
AZTEC WARRIORS

B _____

BACKDRAFT
BAD BOYS
BAD BOY BENDERS
BAD GIRLS
BAD GIRLZ
BAD NEWS
BAD NEWS BOYS
BAD TO THE BONE


BADDITUDE
BADGERS
BALL BLASTERS
BALL BUSTERS
BALL HOG
BANDITS
BANSHEES
BANZAI
BARBARIANS
BARBIE DOLLS
BARRACUDAS
BARRAGE
BASHERS
BEARCATS
BEARS
BEAVERS
BEEHIVE
BEND IT!
BENGALS
BERZERKERS
BEWARE!
BIGFOOT
BIG DUCKS
BIG GREEN
BIG GREEN GATORS
BIG GREEN LIZARDS
BIG RED
BIG RED MACHINE
BIG STAMPEDE
BLACK & BLUE CREW
BLACK COBRAS
BLACK DRAGONS
BLACK ICE
BLACKJACK
BLACK KNIGHTS
BLACK LIGHTNING
BLACK MAGIC
BLACK PANTHERS
BLACK RAZORS
BLACK THUNDER
BLACK WIDOWS
BLACK HAWKS
BLACKBEARD
BLACKBURN
BLACKOUT
BLAST
BLASTERS
BLAZE
BLAZERS
BLAZIN BABES
BLAZING BAMBIS
BLAZING RAZORS
BLAZING ROSE
BLEW BY YOU
BLING BLING!
BLINK
BLITZ
BLITZKRIEG
BLIZZARD
BLOODY RAD
BLOODY SCORPIONS
BLOW BY BLOW
BLUE
BLUE ALIENS
BLUE ANGELS
BLUE ATTACK
BLUE BABES
BLUE BANG
BLUE BARRACUDAS

BLUE BEARS
BLUE BEETLES
BLUE BELLS
BLUE BIRDS
BLUE BLASTERS
BLUE BLAZERS
BLUE BLIZZARDS
BLUE BLOSSOMS
BLUE BOMBERS
BLUE BRATS
BLUE BULLETS
BLUE BUTTERFLIES
BLUE BY YOU
BLUE CHEETAHS
BLUE CHICKS
BLUE CHAOS
BLUE CHEETAHS
BLUE COBRAS
BLUE CREW
BLUE CRUSH
BLUE CRUSHERS
BLUE DEMONS
BLUE DEVILS
BLUE DIAMONDS
BLUE DOLPHINS
BLUE DOTS
BLUE DRAGONS
BLUE DYNAMITE
BLUE EAGLES
BLUE ELIMINATORS
BLUE EXPLOSIONS
BLUE EXTREME
BLUE XTREME
BLUE FALCONS
BLUE FEVER
BLUE FIRE
BLUE FIRE BALLS
BLUE FLAMES
BLUE FREAKS
BLUE FROGS
BLUE FUSION
BLUE GALAXY
BLUE GATORS
BLUE GECKOS
BLUE GIANTS
BLUE GIRLS
BLUE GLADIATORS
BLUE GOBLINS .
BLUE GRASSHOPPERS
BLUE GRENADES
BLUE HAWKS
BLUE HEAT
BLUE HORNETS
BLUE ICE
BLUE ICE BREAKERS
BLUE IMPACT
BLUE JAGUARS
BLUE JAYS
BLUE JETS
BLUE KNIGHTS
BLUE LAZERS
BLUE LIGHTNING
BLUE MACHINE
BLUE MARBLES
BLUE MARLINS
BLUE MEN
BLUE MEANIES
BLUE MOUNTAIN KICKER KIDS
BLUE PAIN

BLUE PANTHERS
BLUE PIXIES
BLUE PONIES
BLUE PUMAS
BLUE PSYCHOS
BLUE PYTHONS
BLUE POWER
BLUE POWER GIRLS
BLUE POWDER PUFF
BLUE PRINCESSES
BLUE RAGE
BLUE RAPTORS
BLUE RATTLERS
BLUE RAZORS
BLUE ROBINS
BLUE ROCKETS
BLUE SCORPIONS
BLUE SHARKS
BLUE SMASHERS
BLUE SNAKES
BLUE SONICS
BLUE SPARKS
BLUE STARS
BLUE STORM
BLUE STRIKERS
BLUE STRINGGRAYS
BLUE SWARM
BLUE TEAM
BLUE TERMINATORS
BLUE THUNDER
BLUE TIDAL WAVES
BLUE TIGERS
BLUE TORNADOES
BLUE TSUNAMIS
BLUE TWISTERS
BLUE UNICORNS
BLUE VENOM
BLUE VIPERS
BLUE VULTURES
BLUE WARRIORS
BLUE WATER SNAKES
BLUE WAVES
BLUE WHALES
BLUE WIZARDS
BLUEBELLES
BLUEBERRIES
BLUEBIRDS
BLUES BROTHERS
BOA CONSTRICTORS
BODACIOUS BABES
BOMB SQUAD
BOMBERS
BONE CRUSHERS
BOOMERANGS
BORG
BOYS IN BLACK
BRAT ATTACK
BRATZ!
BREAKAWAY
BREAKERS
BREAKOUT
BREEZE
BRONCOS
BRUINS
BRUISERS
BRUISIN BABES
BUBBLE GUM CREW
BUBBLE BEES
BUBBLES

BUCCANEERS
BULL DOGS
BULLETS
BULLFROGS
BULLS
BUMBLE BEES
BURGUNDY BLAZERS
BURGUNDY BOMBERS
BURGUNDY BULLDOGS
BURN
BURNING BABES
BURNING ICE
BURNING MAN
BUTTERFLIES

C

!!!! CAUTION !!!!
CALIFORNIA CHAOS
CALIFORNIA KICKERS
CALIFORNIA ROLLERS
CALIENTE
CANNONBALLS
CARDINALS
CARNIVORES
CASCADE
CATERPILLARS
CAVALIERS
CELTICS
CENTAURS
CENTURIONS
CHAOS
CHALLENGE
CHALLENGERS
CHARGERS
CHAMPIONS
CHAMELEONS
CHEETAHS
CHERRY BOMBS
CHICKS ON FIRE
CHICKS WITH A TUDE
CHILI PEPPERS
CHIEFS
CHIVAS
CLASH
CLASSY CLEATS
CLEATS ON FIRE
CLIFFHANGERS
CLIPPERS
COBRAS
COMETS
CONDORS
CONSTRUCTORS
COOKIE MONSTERS
COOKIES N  CREAM
COOL CATS
COOL CHICKS
COOL CRUISERS
COOL KICKS
COOLNESS
CORSAIR
CORVETTES
COSMOS
COTTON CANDY
COTTON CANDY KICKERS
COUGARS
COWBOYS
COYOTES
CRANBERRIES

CRACKERJACKS
CREW
CROCODILES
CROSSFIRE
CRUNCH
CRUSH
CRUSHERS
CRUSADERS
CUTTERS
CUTE BUT DEADLY
CYBER PSYCH
CYCLONE
CYCLONES

D _____

DADDY ♦ S ANGELS
DALMATIONS
DANGEROUS DOLPHINS BOOMERS
DANGEROUS ROCKS
DAREDEVILS
DARING DEVILS
DARING DINOSAURS
DARING DIVAS
DARK ANGELS
DARK LIGHT
DARK THUNDER
DARLING ANGELS
DAZZLING DAFFODILS
DAZZLING DAISIES
DEEP IMPACT
DEEP BLUE SEA
DEFEATERS
DELTA FORCE
DEMOLITION
DEMONS
DEPUTY DAWGS
DESERT FLAMES
DESERT STORM
DESPERADOS
DESTROYERS
DEVASTATION
DEVIL RAYS
DEVILS
DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH
DIAMOND GIRLS
DIAMONDBACKS
DIAMONDS
DINOS
DINOSAURS
DIRT DEVILS
DIRTY DEVILS
DIRTY DOZEN
DISASTER
DISCO DUCKS
DIVAS
DIVAS IN BLUE
DIXIE CHICKS
DOLPHINS
DOMINATORS
DONS
DOVES
DOWN N ♦ DIRTY
DREAM TEAM
DRAGO
DRAGON LADIES
DRAGON SHARKS
DRAGON SLAYERS
DRAGON ♦ S FLAME

DRAGONFLIES
DRAGONITES
DRAGONS
DUCKS
DYNA-MIGHT
DYNAMITE
DYNAMITES
DYNOMITE
DYNAMO

E _____

EAGLES
EARTHQUAKE
EARTHQUAKES
ECLIPSE
EDGE
ELECTRIC BOMBS
ELECTRIC EELS
ELIMINATORS
ELITE
ELITE CLEATS
EMERALD ANGELS
EMERALD DEVILS
EMERALD GIRLS
EMERALD STARS
ENERGIZERS
ENFORCERS
ENTITY
EXCELSIOR
EXPLOSION
EXPRESS
EXTERMINATORS
EXTREME
EXTREME ATTITUDE
EXTREME EAGLES
EXTREME HEAT
EXTREME TEAM

F _____

FALCON
FALCONS
FANTASTIC 12
FEAR
FEAR THIS
FEISTY CHICKS
FEVER
FEVER PITCH
FIGHTING FIREBIRDS
FIGHTING IRISH
FIGHTING TIGERS
FILLIES
FIRE
FIRE & ICE
FIRE ANGELS
FIRE ANTS
FIRE BLAST
FIRE BLASTERS
FIRE GIRLS
FIRE ROCKETS
FIRE STRIKERS
FIREBALLS
FIREBIRDS
FIREBOLTS
FIRECRACKERS
FIRE CRACKER
FIRESTORM
FLAMING CHEETAHS

FLAMING DRAGONS
FLAMING HOT CHEETOS
FLAMING TIGERS
FIREHAWKS
FIRE KRAKERS
FIRE ROCKETS
FIRESTORMS
FLAME
FLAME KICKERS
FLAME THROWERS
FLAMES
FLAMIN♦ LIZARDS
FLASH
FLASH BACK
FLOWER CHARMS
FLOWER POWER
FLYERS
FLYING DRAGONS
FOOTLOOSE
FORTY-NINERS
FORCE
FOXES
FOXY LADIES
FOX TROTTERS
FRAZZLE DAZZLE
FREEDOM
FROGS
FROST
FUGITIVES
FULL FORCE
FURY
FURY GIRLS
FUSION

G

G.T. TIGERS
GALACTIC GIRLS
GALAXIES
GALAXY STARS
GALLOP
GANGSTERS
GARFUNKELS
GATORS
GATOR GIRLS
GALAXY
GALAXY GIRLS
GATORS
GAZELLES
GECKOS
GENERALS
GENESIS
GENIES
GHOSTRIDERS
GIANTS
G.I. JANES
GIRL POWER
GIRLS IN GREEN
GIRLS ON FIRE
GIRLS WITH ATTITUDE
GLACIERS
GLADIATORS
GLITTERING DRAGOFOLIES
GLORY GIRLS
GO-GO GATORS
GOALS-R-US
GOAL BUSTERS
GOAL CRUSHERS
GOAL DIGGERS

GOAL RUSH
GOAL KICKING POWER PUFF GIRLS
GOALIE SMASHERS
GOALIE'S NIGHTMARE
GOBLINS
GODZILLAS
GOLD RUSH
GOLD STRIKERS
GOLDEN ALL STARS
GOLDEN ANGELS
GOLDEN BEARS
GOLDEN BEES
GOLDEN DRAGONS
GOLDEN EAGLES
GOLDEN GATORS
GOLDEN GECKOS
GOLDEN GIRLS
GOLDEN HAWKS
GOLDEN WARRIORS
GOLDEN WAVES
GOLDFISH
GOONIES
GOT MILK?
GRAPE BALLS OF FIRE
GRASS RATS
GRASS STAINS
GRASSHOPPERS
GRAVEDIGGERS
GRAY SHARKS
GRAY HAWKS
GREAT WHITE SHARKS
GREATWHITES
GREEN ALIENS
GREEN ANGELS
GREEN ATTACK
GREEN BABES
GREEN BANG
GREEN BERETS
GREEN BLAZERS
GREEN BOMBERS
GREEN BLASTERS
GREEN BLASERS
GREEN BLIZZARD
GREEN BLOSSOMS
GREEN BRATS
GREEN BULLETS
GREEN BUTTERFLIES
GREEN CHEETAHS
GREEN CHICKS
GREEN CHAOS
GREEN COBRAS
GREEN CREW
GREEN CRUSH
GREEN CRUSHERS
GREEN DEMONS
GREEN DEVILS
GREEN DIAMONDS
GREEN DOLPHINS
GREEN DRAGON
GREEN DRAGONS
GREEN DOTS
GREEN DYNAMITE
GREEN EAGLES
GREEN ELIMINATORS
GREEN EXPLOSION
GREEN EXTREME
GREEN FALCONS
GREEN FIRE
GREEN FLAMES

GREEN FREAKS
GREEN FROGS
GREEN FUSION
GREEN GALAXY
GREEN GATORS
GREEN GECKOS
GREEN GIANTS
GREEN GLADIATORS
GREEN GOBLINS .
GREEN GRASSHOPPERS
GREEN GRENADES
GREEN HAWKS
GREEN HEAT
GREEN HORNETS
GREEN IMPACT
GREEN JAGUARS
GREEN JETS
GREEN KNIGHTS
GREEN LAZERS
GREEN LIGHTNING
GREEN MACHINE
GREEN MARBLES
GREEN MARLINS
GREEN MEN
GREEN MEANIES
GREEN PAIN
GREEN PANTHERS
GREEN PIXIES
GREEN PONIES
GREEN PUMAS
GREEN PSYCHOS
GREEN PYTHONS
GREEN POWER
GREEN POWER GIRLS
GREEN PRINCESSES
GREEN RAGE
GREEN RAPTORS
GREEN RATTLERS
GREEN RAZORS
GREEN ROBINS
GREEN ROCKETS
GREEN SCORPIONS
GREEN SHARKS
GREEN SMASHERS
GREEN STINGRAYS
GREEN SWARM
GREEN TEAM
GREEN TERMINATORS
GREEN THUNDER
GREEN TIGERS
GREEN TORNADOES
GREEN TURBO TURTLES
GREEN TSUNAMIS
GREEN TWISTERS
GREEN UNICORNS
GREEN VENOM
GREEN VIPERS
GREEN VULTURES
GREMIO
GREY SHARKS
GREY WOLVES
GREYHOUNDS
GRIFFINS
GRIZZLYS
GRINCHES
GROOVY GIRLS
GRRRR
GUADALAJARA
GT

GUNNERS
GORGEOUS GRIZZLIES

H _____

H2O
H. B. WAVE
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS
HAMMERHEADS
HAWKS
HEARTBREAKERS
HEAT
HEATWAVE
HELLIONS
HER-ICANES
HEROS
HIGH ENERGY
HIGHLANDERS
HIGH VOLTAGE
HIGH SURF
HONEYBEES
HONEY BUNCH
HORNETS
HORSEPOWER
HOT CHIKCS
HOT SHOTS
HOT STUFF
HOT TAMALES
HOT TIGERS
HOTSHOTS
HOTSPUR
HOTT N SPICIE
HOTTER THAN HOT
HOT WHEELS
HUMMINGBIRDS
HURRICANE
HURRICANE RUSH
HURRICANES
HUSKIES
HUSTLERS
HYDRA
HYENAS
HYPE
HYPERACTIVE
HYPERGIRLS

I _____

ICE ANGELS
ICE BREAKERS
ICE CRYSTALS
ICE STORMS
ICEMEN
IGUANAS
ILLUSION
IMPACT
IMPERIALS
INFERNO
INFINITY
INTENSE
INTENSITY
INTERNATIONAL
INTREPID
INTRUDERS
INVADERS
ILLUSION
INDEPENDENCE EAGLES
IFECTION
NFLICTIONS
INK SPOTS

IT'S ALL SKILL

J

JADE TIGERS
JAGGED EDGE
JAGUAR
JAGUARS
JALAPENO PEPPERS
JAMMERS
JAWS
JAZZ
JEDI KNIGHTS
JETS
JUICE
JUNIOR
JUNKYARD DOGS
JUST PEACHY

K

KAMIKAZE
KANGAROO KICKERS
KANGAROOS
KAOS
KICK
KICKERS
KICKIN' CHICKS
KICKIN' QUEENS
KILLER BEES
KILLER CARDINALS
KILLER COBRAS
KILLER CROCS
KILLER INSTINCT
KILLER KICKERS
KILLER KLEATS
KILLER SHARK
KILLER SHARKS
KILLER WASPS
KILLER WATERMELONS
KILLER WHALES
KILLIN' MACHINE
KINGS
KING COBRAS
KLINGONS
KNIGHT RIDERS
KNIGHTS
KNOCKOUT
KOALAS
KOMETZ
KOMODO DRAGONS
KRAZY KIWIS
KRYPTONITE
KRYPTONITES

L

LAVA GIRLS
LAVA DESTROYERS
LADY BUGS
LADY HAWKS
LADY PUMAS
LADY LEPRECHANS
LADY SCORPIONS
LADYBUGS
LAKER BABES
LANCERS
LANCERS
LAND SHARKS
LARKS

LASERS
LAZERS
LEAPIN LIZARDS
LEAPING LEPRECHAUNS
LEAPING LIZARDS
LEGEND
LEMON-LIME
LEMONDROPS
LEMONHEADS
LEOPARD TIGERS
LEOPARDS
LEPRECHAUNS
LETHAL
LIBERTY
LIBRE
LIGHTNING
LIGHTNING BOLTS
LIGHTNING DOLPHINS
LIGHTNING STRIKERS
LIGHTNING STRIKES
LIL  DEVILS
LIL  PUMPKINS
LIL  RASCALS
LIME TWIST
LIONS
LITTLE FOOTS
LITTLE GIANTS
LITTLE GREEN MONSTERS
LITTLE KICKERS
LITTLE RASCALS
LOCO
LOCOMOTION
LONGHORNS
LOS LOBOS
LUNA
LUNA CHICKS
LURKERS
LUCKY
LUCKY CHARMS
LUCKY LADYBUGS
LUCKY LEPRECHAUNS

M _____
MACHINE
MAD DOGS
MAGENTA RAVENS
MAGIC
MAGPIES
MAJOR TROUBLE
MAMBAS
MANARCHS
MANCHESTER UNITED
MANGLERS
MANTIS
MAQUINA GRLS
MARAUDERS
MARLINS
MAROON MADNESS
MAROON MONKEYS
MAROON ROCKETTES
MATADORS
MATRIX
MAVERICKS
MEADOWLARKS
MEAN GREEN ALIENS
MEAN GREEN FIGHTING MACHINE
MEAN GREEN GECKOS

MEN IN BLUE
MENEHUNES
MENTAL CASE
MERCENARIES
MERCURY
MEDUSA
MEGABYTES
MENACE
MERCURY
MERMAIDS
METEORITES
METEORS
METRO
MIDNIGHT EXPRESS
MIDNIGHT MADNESS
MIDNIGHT RAGE
MIDNIGHT RAIDERS
MIGHTY ANGELS
MIGHTY BLUE ANGELS
MIGHTY BLUE DRAGONS
MIGHTY DRAGONS
MIGHTY DUCKS
MIGHTY GRASSHOPPERS
MIGHTY LIONS
MIGHTY MANIACS
MIGHTY MERMAIDS
MIGHTY PANTHERS
MIGHTY PEACHES
MIGHTY RAPTORS
MIGHTY ROCKETS
MIGHTY SONS
MIGHTY STINGRAYS
MIGHTY WARRIORS
MILAN
MILLENNIUM GIRLS
MILLENNIUM JUMPERS
MILLENNIUM MADNESS
MILLION DOLLAR LADIES
MIND TRIP
MINERS
MINUTEMEN
MIRAGE
MISSILES
MIST
MOHAWKS
MOHICANS
MO' MONEY
MOMENTUM
MONARCHS
MONARCH BUTTERFLIES
MONARCHS
MONSTERS
MONEY
MONKEYS
MONSOON
MOTHERLODE
MOUNTAIN LIONS
MUD DOGS
MUSTANGS
MUTINY
MUNICH
MUD GIANTS
MUD HOPPERS
MUD SHARKS
MYSTIC KNIGHTS
MYSTICS
MYSTERY
MIGHTY MOOVERS

N

NALAS
NAVY SEALS
NEMESIS
NET BUSTERS
NET RIPPERS
NET STUFFERS
NET SURFERS
NIGHTHAWKS
NIGHTMARE
NINJAS
NITRO
NO FEAR
NO HOLDS BARRED
NO RULES
NO SYMPATHY
NOMADS

O

ODYSSEY
OLYMPIANS
ORANGE
ORANGE ALIENS
ORANGE ANGELS
ORANGE ATTACK
ORANGE BABES
ORANGE BANG
ORANGE BARRACUDAS
ORANGE BEARS
ORANGE BEETLES
ORANGE BLASTERS
ORANGE BLAZERS
ORANGE BLIZZARDS
ORANGE BLOSSOMS
ORANGE BOMBERS
ORANGE BRATS
ORANGE BULLETS
ORANGE BUTTERFLIES
ORANGE CHEETAHS
ORANGE CHICKS
ORANGE CHAOS
ORANGE CHEETAHS
ORANGE COBRAS
ORANGE CREW
ORANGE CRUSH
ORANGE CRUSHERS
ORANGE DEMONS
ORANGE DEVILS
ORANGE DIAMONDS
ORANGE DOLPHINS
ORANGE DOTS
ORANGE DRAGONS
ORANGE DYNAMITE
ORANGE EAGLES
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ORANGE EXPLOSIONS
ORANGE EXTREME
ORANGE XTREME
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ORANGE FEVER
ORANGE FIRE
ORANGE FIRE BALLS
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ORANGE FREAKS
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ORANGE FUSION
ORANGE GALAXY
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ORANGE GRASSHOPPERS
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ORANGE HEAT
ORANGE HORNETS
ORANGE ICE
ORANGE ICE BREAKERS
ORANGE IMPACT
ORANGE JAGUARS
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ORANGE MACHINE
ORANGE MARBLES
ORANGE MARLINS
ORANGE MEN
ORANGE MEANIES
ORANGE MOUNTAIN KICKER KIDS
ORANGE PAIN
ORANGE PANTHERS
ORANGE PIXIES
ORANGE PONIES
ORANGE PUMAS
ORANGE PSYCHOS
ORANGE PYTHONS
ORANGE POWER
ORANGE POWER GIRLS
ORANGE POWDER PUFF
ORANGE PRINCESSES
ORANGE RAGE
ORANGE RAPTORS
ORANGE RATTLETS
ORANGE RAZORS
ORANGE ROBINS
ORANGE ROCKETS
ORANGE SCORPIONS
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ORANGESMASHERS
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ORANGE SONICS
ORANGE SPARKS
ORANGE STARS
ORANGE STORM
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ORANGE STRINGGRAYS
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ORANGE TEAM
ORANGE TERMINATORS
ORANGE THUNDER
ORANGE TIDAL WAVES
ORANGE TIGERS
ORANGE TORNADOES
ORANGE TSUNAMIS
ORANGE TWISTERS
ORANGE UNICORNS
ORANGE VENOM
ORANGE VIPERS
ORANGE VULTURES
ORANGE WARRIORS

ORANGE WATER SNAKES
ORANGE WAVES
ORANGE WHALES
ORANGE WIZARDS
ORCAS
OREOS
ORIOLES
OUTLAWS
OUTBREAK
OUTER LIMITS
OUTTA CONTROL
OVERLORDS

P

PACIFIC SHARKS
PANTHER ATTACK
PANTHERS
PAPA'S BOYS
PATRIOTS
PEACH PANTHERS
PEACH POWER
PEACH POWER PUFF GIRLS
PEACH PULVERIZERS
PEACH SLAMMERS
PEACHES-n-CREAM
PEGASUS
PELICANS
PENGUINS
PEPPERS
PEPPERMINT PANTHERS
PG-13'S
PHANTOM MENACE
PHANTOMS
PHOENIX
PHOENIX RISING
PICK AND PURPLE RAINBOW
PILOTS
PINK
PINK ALIENS
PINK ANGELS
PINK ATTACK
PINK BABES
PINK BANG
PINK BARRACUDAS
PINK BEARS
PINK BEETLES
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PINK DRAGONS

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PINK VIPERS
PINK VULTURES
PINK WARRIORS
PINK WATER SNAKES
PINK WAVES
PINK WHALES
PINK WIZARDS
PIONEERS
PIRANHAS
PIRATES
PIXIE CHICKS
PIZZAZZ
PLAYERS
PLAYERZ
POISON
POISON IVY
POD RACERS
POKEMON
POKEMON MASTERS
POLAR BEARS
POLTERGEIST
POWDERPUFFS
POWER KICKERS
POWER PUFF GIRLS
POWER PUNKS
POWERFUL PANDAS
POWERPUFF GIRLS
POWER STRIKERS
PRAYING MANTIS
PREDATORS
PRIDE
PRINCESS THIS
PROPULSION
PSYCH!
PSYCHO CHICKS
PSYCHOS
PULVERIZERS
PUMAS
PUNISHERS
PURPLE
PURPLE ALIENS
PURPLE ANGELS
PURPLE ATTACK
PURPLE BABES
PURPLE BANG
PURPLE BARRACUDAS
PURPLE BEARS
PURPLE BEETLES
PURPLE BLASTERS
PURPLE BLAZERS
PURPLE BLIZZARDS
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PURPLE BUTTERFLIES
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PURPLE CHAOS

PURPLE CHEETAHS
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PURPLE CREW
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PURPLE CRUSHERS
PURPLE DEMONS
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PURPLE DOTS
PURPLE DRAGONS
PURPLE DYNAMITE
PURPLE EAGLES
PURPLE ELIMINATORS
PURPLE EXPLOSIONS
PURPLE EXTREME
PURPLE XTREME
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PURPLE HAZE
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PURPLE ICE BREAKERS
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PURPLE E JAYS
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PURPLE MEANIES
PURPLE MOUNTAIN KICKER KIDS
PURPLE PAIN
PURPLE PANTHERS
PURPLE PEOPLE EATERS
PURPLE PIXIES
PURPLE PONIES
PURPLE PUMAS
PURPLE PSYCHOS
PURPLE PYTHONS
PURPLE POWER
PURPLE POWER GIRLS
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PURPLE TWISTERS
PURPLE UNICORNS
PURPLE VENOM
PURPLE VIPERS
PURPLE VULTURES
PURPLE WARRIORS
PURPLE WATER SNAKES
PURPLE WAVES
PURPLE WHALES
PURPLE WIZARDS
PURE INSANITY
PUNISHERS
PULVERIZERS
PUMPKIN MUNCHKINS
PYROS
PYTHONS

Q _____

QUAKES
QUAZAR
QUEST
QUICK DRAW
QUICKSILVER
QUICK SILVERS

R _____

RACCOONS
RACERS
RADICAL CHICKS
RADIOACTIVE REPTILES
RAGE
RAGING BULLS
RAGING PANTHERS
RAGING STORM
RAIDERS
RAINMAKERS
RAMPAGE
RAMS
RANGERS
RAPIDS
RAPTORS
RAT PAK
RATTLERS
RATTLE SNAKES
RAVENS
RAZORS
RAZZLE BERRIES

RAZZLE DAZZLE
RAZMATAZ
REAPERS
REBELS
RED ATTACK
RED ANACONDAS
RED
RED ALIENS
RED ANGELS
RED ATTACK
RED BABES
RED BANG
RED BARRACUDAS
RED BEARS
RED BEETLES
RED BELLS
RED BIRDS
RED BLASTERS
RED BLAZERS
RED BLIZZARDS
RED BLOSSOMS
RED BOMBERS
RED BRATS
RED BULLETS
RED BUTTERFLIES
RED BY YOU
RED CHEETAHS
RED CHICKS
RED CHAOS
RED CHEETAHS
RED COBRAS
RED CREW
RED CRUSH
RED CRUSHERS
RED DEMONS
RED DEVILS
RED DIAMONDS
RED DOLPHINS
RED DOTS
RED DRAGONS
RED DYNAMITE
RED EAGLES
RED ELIMINATORS
RED EXPLOSIONS
RED EXTREME
RED XTREME
RED FALCONS
RED FEVER
RED FIRE
RED FIRE BALLS
RED FLAMES
RED FREAKS
RED FROGS
RED FUSION
RED GALAXY
RED GATORS
RED GECKOS
RED GIANTS
RED GIRLS
RED GLADIATORS
RED GOBLINS .
RED GRASSHOPPERS
RED GRENADES
RED HAWKS
RED HEAT
RED HOT
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
RED HOT TAMALES
RED HORNETS

RED ICE
RED ICE BREAKERS
RED IMPACT
RED JAGUARS
RED JAYS
RED JETS
RED KNIGHTS
RED LAZERS
RED LIGHTNING
RED MACHINE
RED MARBLES
RED MARLINS
RED MEN
RED MEANIES
RED MOUNTAIN KICKER KIDS
RED PAIN
RED PANTHERS
RED PIXIES
RED PONIES
RED PUMAS
RED PSYCHOS
RED PYTHONS
RED POWER
RED POWER GIRLS
RED POWDER PUFF
RED PRINCESSES
RED RAGE
RED RAPTORS
RED RATTLERS
RED RAZORS
RED ROBINS
RED ROCKETS
RED SCORPIONS
RED SHARKS
RED SMASHERS
RED SNAKES
RED SONICS
RED SPARKS
RED STARS
RED STORM
RED STRIKERS
RED STRINGGRAYS
RED SWARM
RED TEAM
RED TERMINATORS
RED THUNDER
RED TIDAL WAVES
RED TIGERS
RED TORNADOES
RED TSUNAMIS
RED TWISTERS
RED UNICORNS
RED VENOM
RED VIPERS
RED VULTURES
RED WARRIORS
RED WATER SNAKES
RED WAVES
RED WHALES
RED WIZARDSREDHAWKS
REDS
REGULATORS
REIGN
RENEGADES
REVOLUTION
RHINOS
RICOCHET
RIOT
RIP GIRLS

RIPTIDE
RIP TIDES
RIPPIN♦ RED HOTS
RIPTIDE RUSH
RIVER RATS
RIVETERS\
ROADKILL
ROADRUNNERS
ROARING TIGERS
ROBINS
ROCKERS
ROCK YOUR WORLD
ROCKETS
ROCKETEER
ROCKETTES
ROCKIES
ROCKIN BLUE BERRIES
ROCKIN RUBIES
ROCKIN♦ RASPBERRIES
ROCKIN♦ ROADRUNNERS
ROCKIN♦ ROCKETS
ROCKY POWER
ROLLING THUNDER
ROUGH BOYZ
ROUGH RIDERS
ROVERS
ROWDY ROCKETS
ROX
ROXY CHICKS
ROYAL KNIGHTS
ROYAL PRINCESSES
ROYAL ROCKETTES
ROYAL STRIKERS
ROYALS
ROYALTY GIRLS
RUBY RED ROCKETS
RUBY GIRLS
RUFF RIDERS
RULE BREAKERS
RULZ
RUNAWAY TRAIN
RUNNING RAPIDS
RUNNING REBELS
RUSH
RUSH HOUR

S

SABOTAGE
SAINTS
SALAMANDERS
SALSA
SANTOS
SAVAGES
SCORCHERS
SCORING ANGELS
SCORPIONS
SCREAMERS
SCREAM♦N BLUEBERRIES
SCREAMING EAGLES
SEA HAWKS
SEAHORSES
SEA WOLVES
SEALS
SERPENTS
SHADOWS
SHAMROCKS
SHARK ATTACK

SHARK BUSTERS
SHARKS
SHARP SHOOTERS
SHE DEVILS
SHE WOLVES
SHOCK
SHOCKERS
SHOCKWAVE
SHOOTING COMETS
SHOOTING STARS
SHOTGUN
SHRAPNEL
SIDEKICKS
SIDEWINDERS
SILVER
SILVER ALIENS
SILVER ANGELS
SILVER ATTACK
SILVER BABES
SILVER BANG
SILVER BARRACUDAS
SILVER BEARS
SILVER BEETLES
SILVER BELLS
SILVER BIRDS
SILVER BLASTERS
SILVER BLAZERS
SILVER BLIZZARDS
SILVER BLOSSOMS
SILVER BOMBERS
SILVER BRATS
SILVER BULLETS
SILVER BUTTERFLIES
SILVER BY YOU
SILVER CHEETAHS
SILVER CHICKS
SILVER CHAOS
SILVER CHEETAHS
SILVER COBRAS
SILVER CREW
SILVER CRUSH
SILVER CRUSHERS
SILVER DEMONS
SILVER DEVILS
SILVER DIAMONDS
SILVER DOLPHINS
SILVER DOTS
SILVER DRAGONS
SILVER DYNAMITE
SILVER EAGLES
SILVER ELIMINATORS
SILVER EXPLOSIONS
SILVER EXTREME
SILVER XTREME
SILVER FALCONS
SILVER FEVER
SILVER FIRE
SILVER FIRE BALLS
SILVER FLAMES
SILVER FREAKS
SILVER FROGS
SILVER FUSION
SILVER GALAXY
SILVER GATORS
SILVER GECKOS
SILVER GIANTS
SILVER GIRLS
SILVER GLADIATORS
SILVER GOBLINS .

SILVER GRASSHOPPERS
SILVER GRENADES
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SILVER MACHINE
SILVER MARBLES
SILVER MARLINS
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SILVER MOUNTAIN KICKER KIDS
SILVER PAIN
SILVER PANTHERS
SILVER PIXIES
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SILVER PUMAS
SILVER PSYCHOS
SILVER PYTHONS
SILVER POWER
SILVER POWER GIRLS
SILVER POWDER PUFF
SILVER PRINCESSES
SILVER RAGE
SILVER RAPTORS
SILVER RATTLERS
SILVER RAZORS
SILVER ROBINS
SILVER ROCKETS
SILVER SCORPIONS
SILVER SHARKS
SILVER SMASHERS
SILVER SNAKES
SILVER SONICS
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SILVER STRINGRAYS
SILVER SURFERS
SILVER SWARM
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SILVER TERMINATORS
SILVER THUNDER
SILVER TIDAL WAVES
SILVER TIGERS
SILVER TORNADOES
SILVER TSUNAMIS
SILVER TWISTERS
SILVER UNICORNS
SILVER VENOM
SILVER VIPERS
SILVER VULTURES
SILVER WARRIORS
SILVER WATER SNAKES
SILVER WAVES
SILVER WHALES
SILVER WIZARDS
SIRENS
SLAM IT!

SLAMMER
SLAMMIN'
SLAYERS
SLICK
SLICK CHICS
SLIME GREEN SCORPIONS
SLIME SPEEDERS
SMASH MOUTHS
SMASHING CLOVERS
SMASHING PUMPKINS
SMURF-U
SMURFETTES
SNAPDRAGONS
SNAPPY DRAGONS
SNIPERS
SNOT ROCKETS
SNOW DEVILS
SNOW QUEENS
SOC-R-MON
SOCCER ANGELS
SOCCER BEES
SOCCER BOMBS
SOCCER BOPPERS
SOCCER BRA TS
SOCCER CHICKS
SOCCER DIVAS
SOCCER ROCKETS
SOCCER SISTERS
SOCCER SLAYERS
SOCCER SOLDIERS
SOCCER STARS
SOCCOLOCO
SOL
SOLAR ECLIPSE
SOLDIERS
SONICS
SOUR GRAPES
SPACE BABES
SOUL TAKERS
SPARKLE GIRLS
SPARKETTS
SPARKS
SPARK PLUGS
SPARTA
SPARTANS
SPECTRE
SPEED
SPEED DEMONS
SPEED OF LIGHT
SPEEDY TURTLES
SPICE GIRLS
SPIDERS
SPIRITS
SPITFIRE
SPITFIRES
SPLASH
SPRINTERS
SPURS
STALLIONS
STAMPEDE
STARBLAST
STAR BURSTS
STAR SHOOTERS
STAR BURSTS
STARFISH
STARFIRE
STARLINGS
STARLITE WARRIORS
STARS

STATIC X
STEALERS
STEELERS
STEALTH BOMBERS
STEAMROLLERS
STING RAYS
STINGERS
STINGGRAYS
STOMPERS
STONE CRUSHERS
STORM
STREAKS
STREET SHARKS
STRIKE FORCE
STRIKERS
STRIKING CANDY CANES
STRIKING COBRAS
SUBLIME
SUBZERO
SUGAR BEES
SUGAR N SPICE
SUGAR PLUMS
SUNS
SUN DRAGONS
SUNFLOWER GIRLS
SUNKISSED
SUNS
SUNSHINE KICKERS
SUNSHINE SHOOTERS
SUPAFLY
SUPERBAD
SUPER GIRLS
SUPERMEN
SUPER POWER GIRLS
SUPERSHOOTERS
SUPER SISTERS
SUPER SONIC SOCCERS
SUPER SONICS
SUPER SPACE MONKEYS
SUPERSTARS
SURF'S UP
SURF MONKEYS
SURFERS
SURGE
SWARM
SWAT
SWORDS
SYNDICATE
SYNERGY
SWEET PEAS
SWEETHEARTS

T _____

T -BIRDS
T -DAWGS
T -REX
TANGERINES
TARANTULAS
TARZANS
TAZ
TAZMANIACS
TAZMANIAN DEVILS
TEAL TERMINATIORS
TEAL TITANS
TEAL TORNADOS
TEAM AMERICA
TEAM BLUE
TEAM BUBBLICIOUS
TEAM DYNAMITE

TEAM KAOS
TEAM ORANGE
TEAM PINK
TEAM RED
TEAM ROCKETS
TEAM SHRED
TEAM USA
TEAPOTS
TEEIE WAHINES
TEH DRAGONS
TEMPEST
TERMINATORS
TERMITES
TERRIFIC TIGERS
TERRIFYING TIGERS
TERROR
TERRORIZERS
THE BIG GREEN
THE DONS
THE FIRE
THE FORCE
THE JACKALS
THE MAGIC
THE MEAN GREEN KICKING MACHINE
THE STORM
THE TROJANS
THE WALL
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YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE

Z _____

ZEPHYR
ZEPHYRS
ZOMBIES
ZEBRAS
ZOOM
ZOOM ZOOM

Get the Team out of a Rut:

When they are not working hard at games or practices....Create new practice plans, split teams up differently, even change the time you train, or maybe the location – do anything to stimulate their minds and get the team out of this rut.

Are players warming up properly?

Are they stimulated mentally and physically for soccer?

Are there sufficient rewards and incentives that will keep effort levels high?

Many coaches who are guilty of repeating the same drills/games to the point of boredom....If players know they're going to turn up to training to perform a passing square, a shooting drill, heading, a small-sided game and a penalty shoot-out each week, where is their mental expectation of development? Coaches should always be looking to evolve and change what is being offered. 'Familiarity breeds contempt'. There are many different styles, tactical ideas and innovations in soccer coaching. Let's not get stuck in a rut – let's reach out and really enjoy soccer coaching's diversity. (SOCCER COACH WEEKLY. Dec. 2013. Issue 344)

How to stop players from getting bored:

A lack of concentration is quite normal among very young soccer players - they seem to spend as much time inspecting flowers or bird watching as playing!

- Plan age appropriate activities. Your players will get bored if the session is too easy or too difficult for them. You have to tread a fine line between challenging players to improve and learn new skills, and reinforcing the skills they already have.
- Repetition. Too much repetition is boring, but some repetition is necessary to embed skills. Just be careful not to overdo it. If players look bored, move on to something else.
- No lines. Try to use drills that don't involve players standing in lines. If you have to have lines, make sure they move quickly. Or split the squad so the lines are shorter.
- No lectures. Children get bored quickly if they have to listen to long lectures from their coach. If you can't explain what you want them to do in 60 seconds or less, think of something else to do.
- Play small-sided games (SSGs). Children learn soccer skills more quickly if they practice them in game-like situations. You can coach the players during the game (but don't stop too often), and add conditions to reinforce the technique or skill you want them to get better at.

Resources:

<http://www.soccercoachingnotes.com/coaching/tactical/tactical-training-for-youth-soccer.html>

<http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/>

http://www.nasl.com/drills/manuals/passing_and_receiving.htm

<http://www.nasl.com/drills/manuals/u10soccer.htm>

http://www.finesoccer.com/finesoccer_drills_archive.htm

<http://www.soccerxpert.com/drills.aspx?drillID=1215>

<http://www.bettersoccercoaching.com/>

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