



YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.



3

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY:

COACH'S TOOL KIT STAGE THREE – LEARNING TO TRAIN





CANADA SOCCER BELIEVES EVERY PLAYER DESERVES THE BEST POSSIBLE SOCCER EXPERIENCE.

Whether they dream of playing for Canada's National Teams or simply want to have fun with their friends, taking the right approach to the game when children are young sets the stage for a lifetime of enjoyment.

The Canada Soccer Pathway provides a roadmap for players of all ages and aspirations who want to play soccer at the recreational, competitive or high performance EXCEL levels, with the aim of encouraging lifelong participation. The Pathway is built around the principles of Long-Term Player Development (LTPD).

For players under the age of 12, many of whom are lacing up cleats for the first time, the goal of this approach is simple:

GET KIDS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GAME.

3

STAGE THREE:

LEARNING TO TRAIN

(U-8/U-11 F, U-9/U-12 M)

This “golden age of learning,” when children become less self-centered and are more able to reflect on their actions and learn from mistakes, provides an optimal window for further development of skills. The focus is on learning by doing, building a larger repertoire of soccer movements and teaching the basic principles of play in a fun and challenging environment.



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THE ROLE OF THE COACH

**Teacher. Mentor. Role model.
Cheerleader. Parent.
Occasional disciplinarian.**

Soccer coaches wear many different hats, particularly when they're training young players, many of whom are lacing up their cleats for the first time. You might find yourself leading a fun activity one minute and reining in a distracted player the next.

You must be flexible, because a session or drill that was meant to last 10 minutes might need to be switched up after half that time to keep the players engaged.

Above all, make sure everyone is enjoying the session—including you.

Being a coach is demanding, but it's also incredibly rewarding. There's nothing quite like witnessing the thrill a young player gets when they score their first goal, or make a fantastic pass. And the lessons a child learns from a good coach can last a lifetime.

The objective isn't just to develop better soccer players—it's to develop well-rounded people who are disciplined, persistent and able to work well with others.

Shaping the lives of young people is a tremendous responsibility. As a coach, you must do everything you can to foster a player's love for the game, and to help them achieve their potential.

Good coaches seek out new ways to develop their knowledge of the game and how players learn. This toolkit is designed to get you started.

But it's not just about what you teach. It's about how you teach.

Ultimately, it's your personality and enthusiasm that will have the biggest impact on your players.





CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY: COACHING TIPS

Every soccer player is unique and it's important to understand and appreciate the differences between players at various age levels.

When you're planning a training session, consider the group of players you're

working with and the outcomes you want to achieve, and choose your coaching method accordingly.

In no particular order, here are five coaching techniques that will give you some options to help meet the needs of individual players:

1

COMMAND:

The coach tells the player what to do and demonstrates it ("I want you to pass the ball to your partner.").

2

QUESTION & ANSWER:

The coach leads with a question and requests an answer from players ("Which one of your teammates could you pass the ball to?").

3

OBSERVATION & FEEDBACK:

The coach and players observe an activity and discuss the outcome ("Let's watch and see what happens.").

4

GUIDED DISCOVERY:

The coach asks a question and issues a challenge ("Can you show me how you would get the ball past the defender?"). The player then demonstrates how he/she would do it.

5

TRIAL & ERROR:

The players and/or coach decide on a challenge, and the players are encouraged to find their own solutions with minimal support from the coach.

Remember, a method that works well with one player may not be effective with another. So it's important to be flexible, to set realistic goals and to give positive feedback as often as possible. It's also important to remember that, no matter

how wonderful a coach you are, it's very difficult to force a player to be interested in your training session when he or she really doesn't want to be there. Make the experience lots of fun and all your players will want to come back the next time.

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY: OUR PREFERRED TRAINING MODEL

Canada Soccer recommends a “station” approach to training. Players move from one skill-building activity to the next at regular intervals. The time spent on each activity varies based on the age of the player (see “Training Template”).

This method is not only more fun for young players—who tend to have short attention spans—but also allows training sessions to be tailored to a team’s individual needs, depending on the number of players, the number of parents

and coaches present, and the available facilities.

Each training session is built around four activity stations, one focusing on **General Movement** skills, one on **Co-ordination**, one on **Soccer Technique** and another on **Small-Sided Games**. Addressing all four of these training “pillars” at each practice session will help develop well-rounded young players with a foundation in physical literacy, solid soccer skills and, ideally, an enduring love of the game.

TRAINING TEMPLATE

FOR PLAYERS AT THE LEARNING TO TRAIN STAGE (U-8/U-11 GIRLS; U-9/U-12 BOYS), TRAINING SESSIONS SHOULD BE 75-90 MINUTES LONG AND COMPRISED OF:



This tool kit will give you ideas for specific activities under each of the four training pillars. How you set up your training sessions is entirely up to you. For example:

One coach or parent working with a single group of players on a half field can simply switch up the “pillar” activities throughout the session.

If you have a full field, two or more coaches/parent volunteers and 12 or more players, you may choose to divide the players into two or more groups and have them rotate through stations being run simultaneously.

3

STAGE 3—(U-8/U-11 F, U-9/U-12 M)



SOCCER TECHNIQUE

A player's soccer technique—which revolves around core skills such as dribbling, shooting, fakes, turns, controlling the ball, and passing—will improve through:

- Getting lots of touches on the ball.
- Fun competitions that motivate players to use different techniques.
- Opportunities to make quick decisions about the best technique to use in a given situation.
- Plenty of positive feedback.

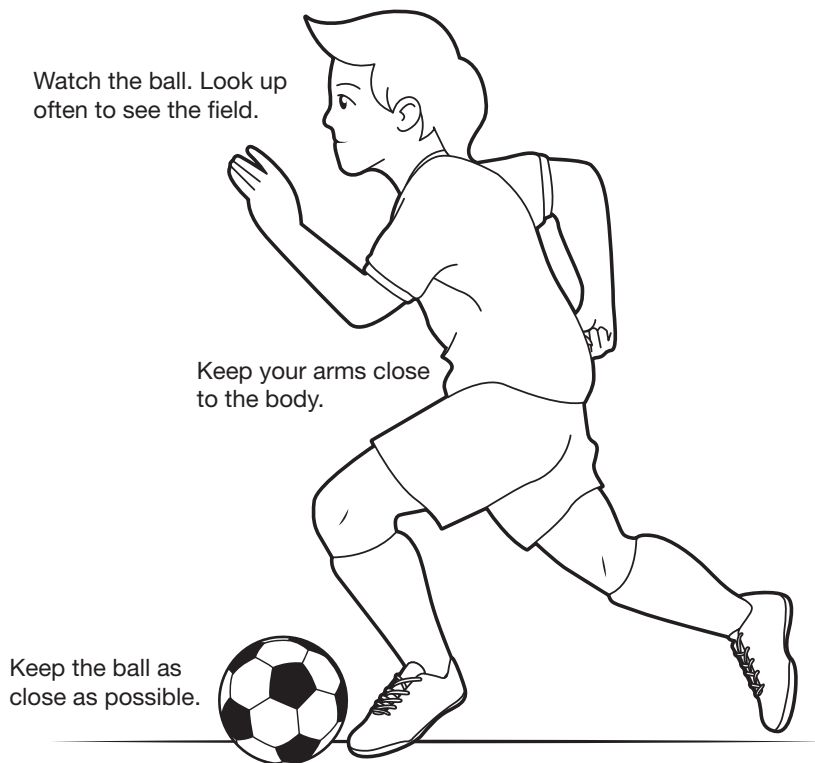
At the Learning to Train stage (U-8/U-11 Girls; U-9/U-12 Boys), technique drills should make up about 40% of practice time (i.e., roughly 35 minutes of a 90-minute training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, control, passing, shooting, and heading.

TIP

These activities will help players develop a feel for the ball in increasingly large areas by continuing to work on fundamental techniques like dribbling, shooting, faking, turning, and passing. While having fun is still a key motivator, discipline will become more and more important as players transition from “game-playing” to “training.”

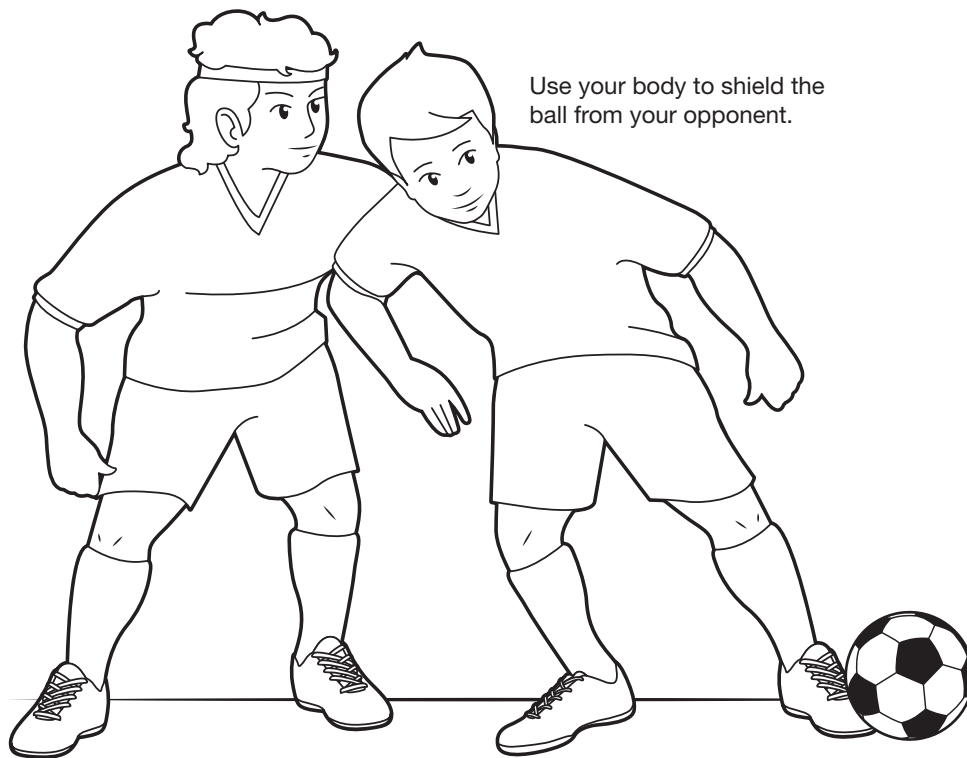
DRIBBLING

“DRIBBLING” MEANS USING YOUR FEET TO MOVE THE BALL IN A CONTROLLED WAY.



SHIELDING

“SHIELDING” IS WHERE THE PLAYER KEEPS POSSESSION OF THE BALL BY PUTTING HIS/HER BODY BETWEEN THE BALL AND THE DEFENDER.



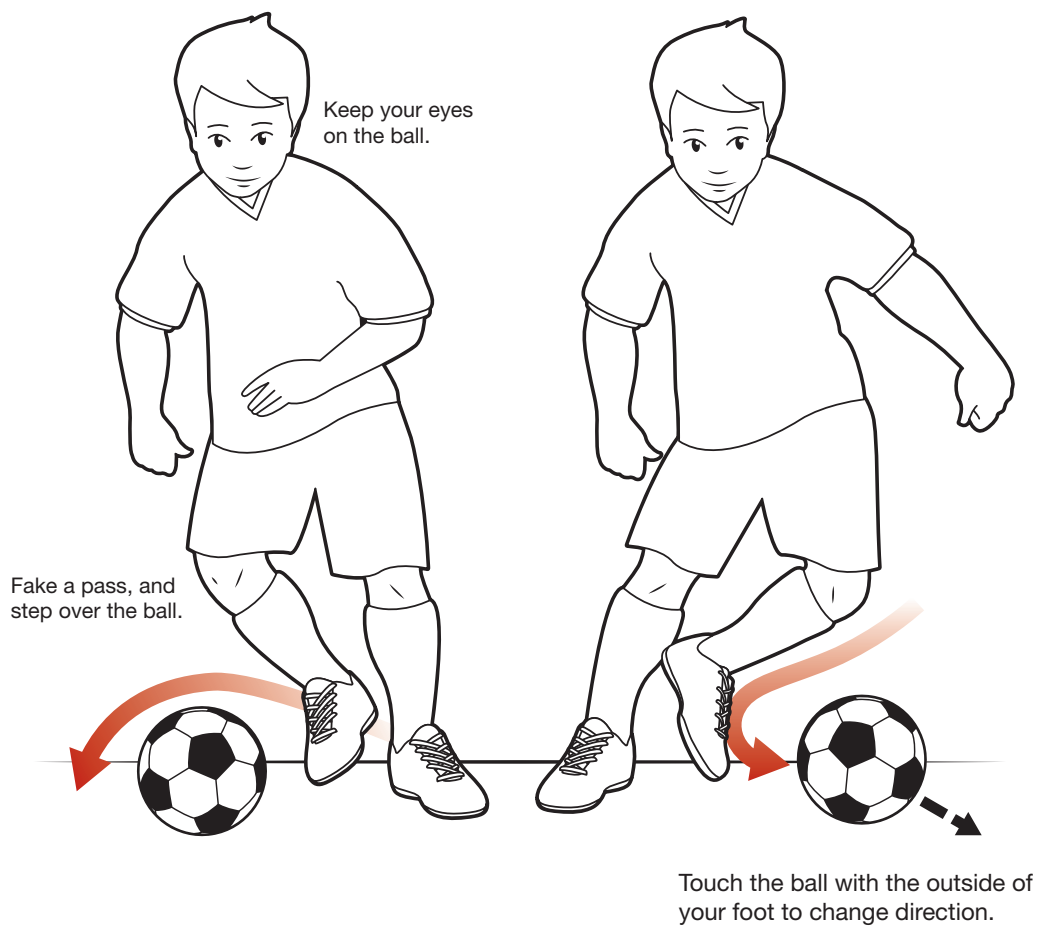
Use your body to shield the ball from your opponent.

Keep your body low and your feet wide apart for stability.

Maximize the distance between the ball and your opponent.

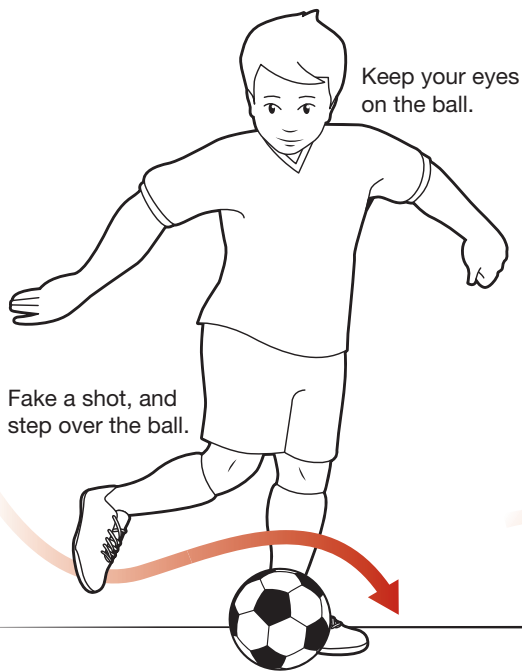
FEINT

“A FEINT” (OR FAKE) IS A SLIGHT MOVEMENT OF THE HIPS/SHOULDERS THAT SUGGESTS A MOVE IN ONE DIRECTION BEFORE YOU MOVE SHARPLY IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.



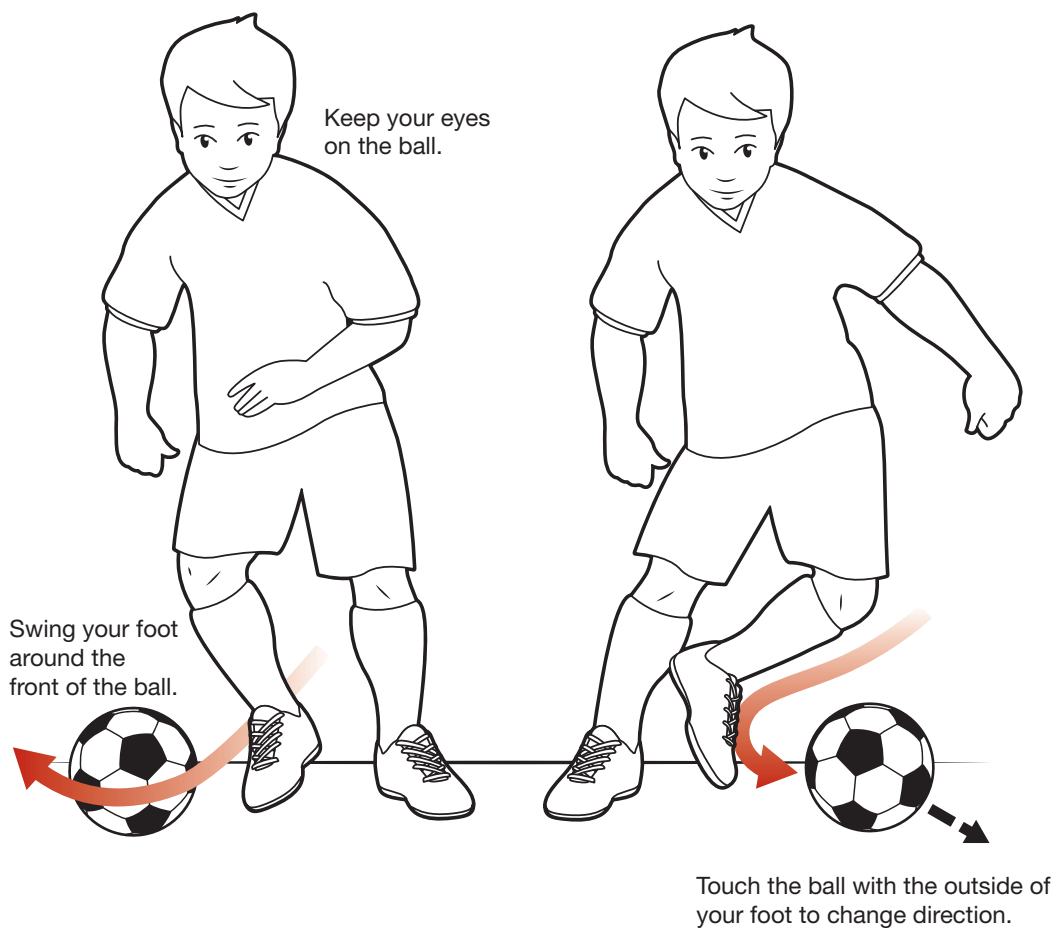
STEPOVER

“A STEPOVER” IS A TURNING MOVE WHERE YOU STEP OVER OR AROUND THE BALL IN A WAY THAT MAKES THE DEFENDER THINK YOU’RE TURNING IN ONE DIRECTION BEFORE YOU PIVOT THE OTHER WAY.



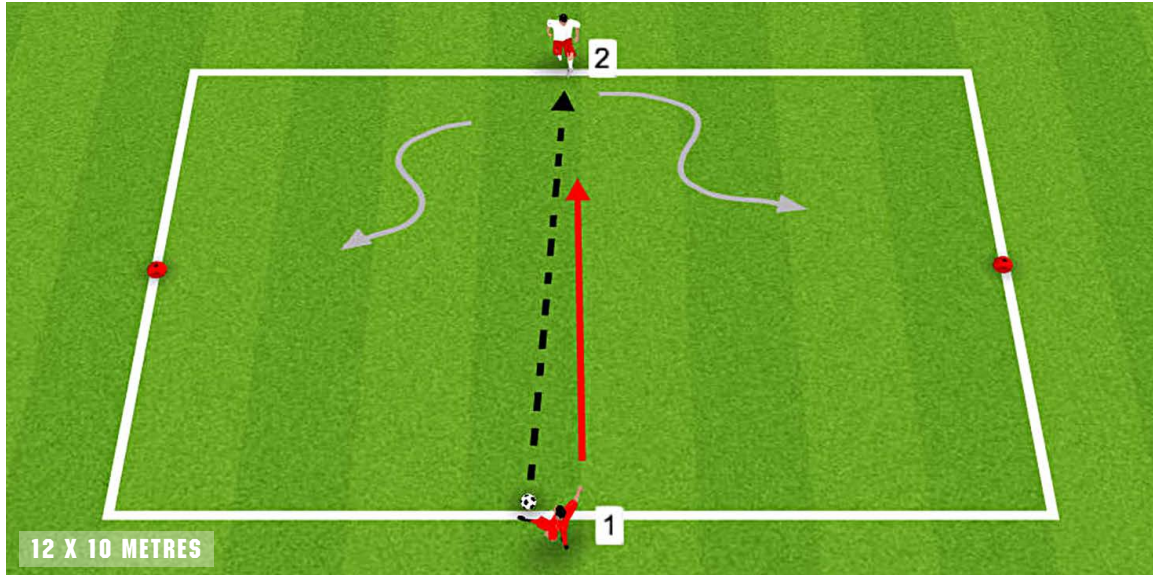
SCISSORS

“SCISSORS” COMBINES THE FEINT AND STEPOVER: ALONG WITH THE MOVEMENT OF YOUR HIPS/SHOULDERS, YOU STEP OVER OR AROUND THE BALL WITH ONE FOOT TO MAKE THE DEFENDER BELIEVE YOU’RE GOING TO MOVE THE BALL ONE WAY, BEFORE PIVOTING SHARPLY PAST THEM IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.



DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 1: “SOCCER 1 V 1”



SET UP:

- Up to 6 players, working in pairs;
1 ball per pair.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – Player 1 passes the ball to Player 2 who uses dribbling skills (e.g., turning, accelerating, faking, and shielding*) to move the ball to either target cone. Player 1 tries to take the ball away. Player 2 scores 1 point by dribbling the ball over a target cone by shielding and evading the pressure from Player 1. Player 2 scores 3 points by moving right away to accelerate past Player 1 and dribble over a target cone.

- “Switch!” – after 3 turns, Player 2 starts with the ball.

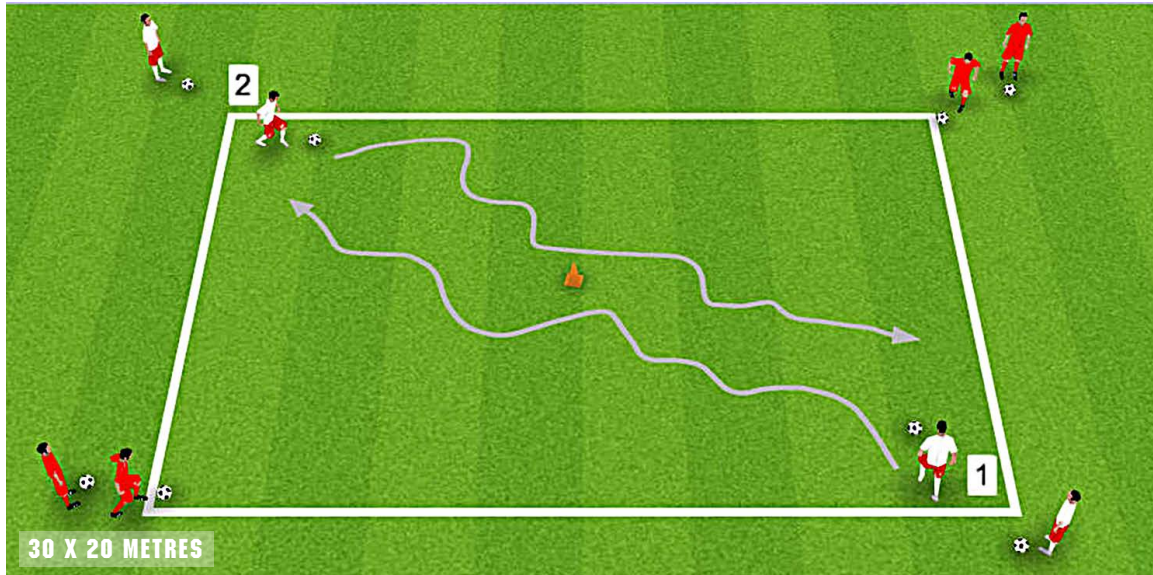
OPTIONS:

- “Shield!” – the receiving player practices shielding the ball before making a move to try and beat the defender.
- “Straight through!” – rather than shielding, the receiving player must move right away to dribble the ball past the defender.

* See illustration, p. 10

DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 2: “DIAGONAL DRIBBLING”



SET UP:

- Up to 8 players, each with a ball, working in pairs.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Partners start lined up at opposite corners.
- “Go!” – dribble towards your partner and use a feint* to dribble around and continue to the other corner.

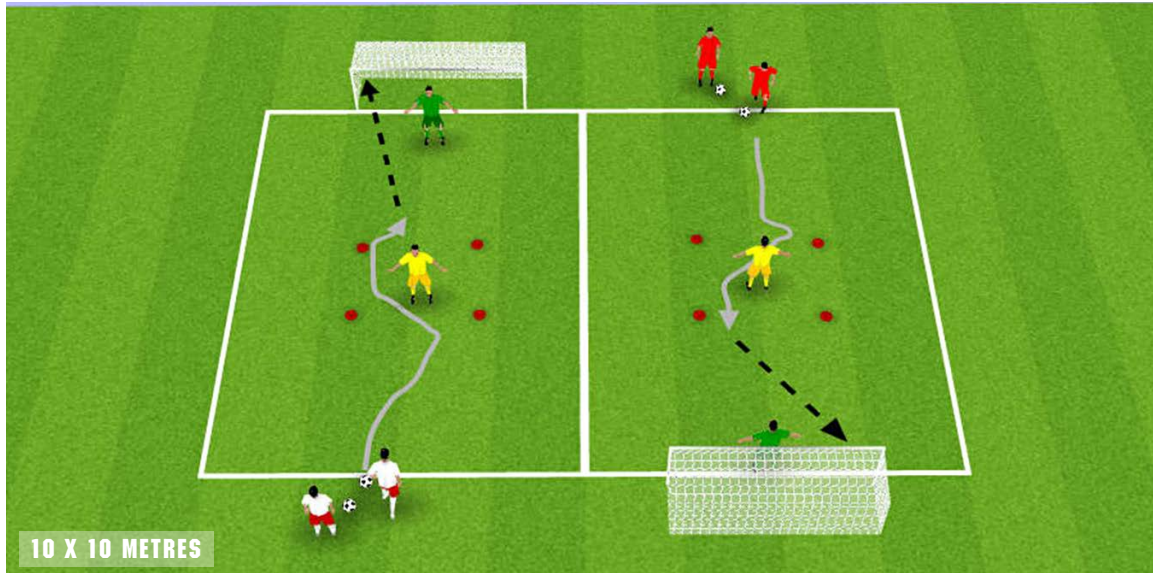
OPTIONS:

- Have players use different moves (e.g. stepover**).
- One ball per pair: Player 1 starts with the ball and Player 2 comes out from the opposite corner to challenge for it. If Player 2 wins the ball, the next player in line at Player 1’s corner comes out to challenge, and so on.
- Add goals on each end line and have players try to score once they’ve won the ball.

* See illustration, p. 10

** See illustration, p. 11

DRIBBLING ACTIVITY 3: “ON THE ATTACK”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, split into two equal teams; all but two players with a ball.
- Players without a ball (the defenders) move inside the centre square; the other players (attackers) line up opposite the goal.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – attackers dribble the ball towards the defender, and use their dribbling skills (e.g., faking, turning, shielding, and accelerating) to beat the defender before shooting on goal. The attacker then moves to the back of the line at the opposite end.

- “Switch!” – rotate defenders after each attacker has had 3 turns.
- Have players use different moves to try to beat their opponents (e.g. stepover, scissors*).

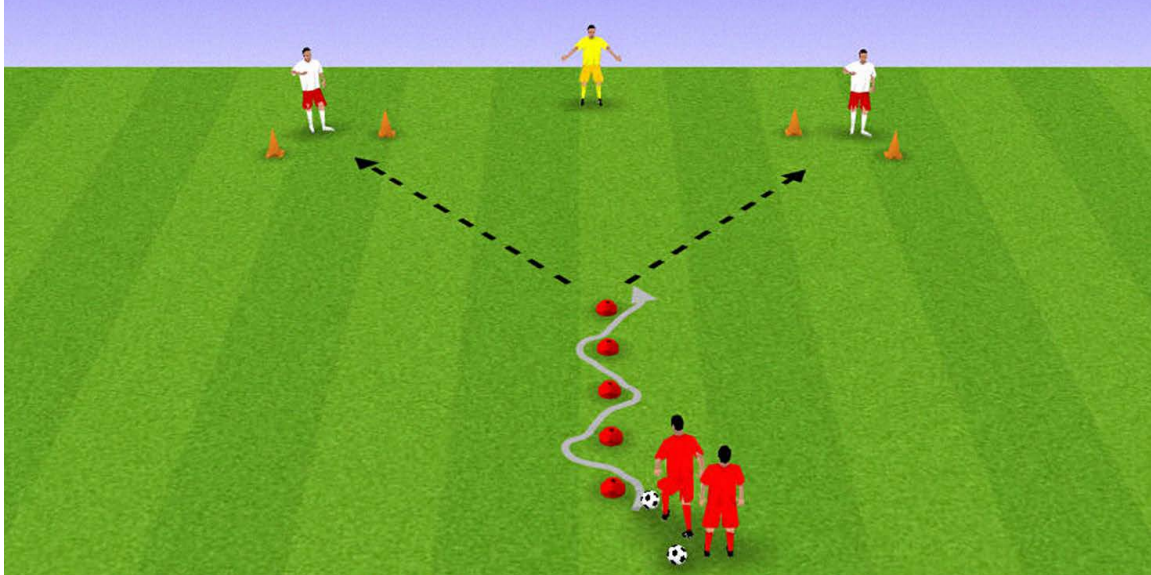
OPTIONS:

- Instead of tagging players, the defender tries to take the ball away. If successful, the other player becomes the defender.

* See illustration, p. 12

DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: “LISTEN UP!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, all but 2 of them with a ball.
- Line up cones/markers in various configurations (i.e., zig zags, different angles, straight line) with 2 gates marked out by cones.
- 1 player without a ball stands behind each gate.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – dribble your ball through the obstacle course and accelerate to take the ball through the gate of your choice.

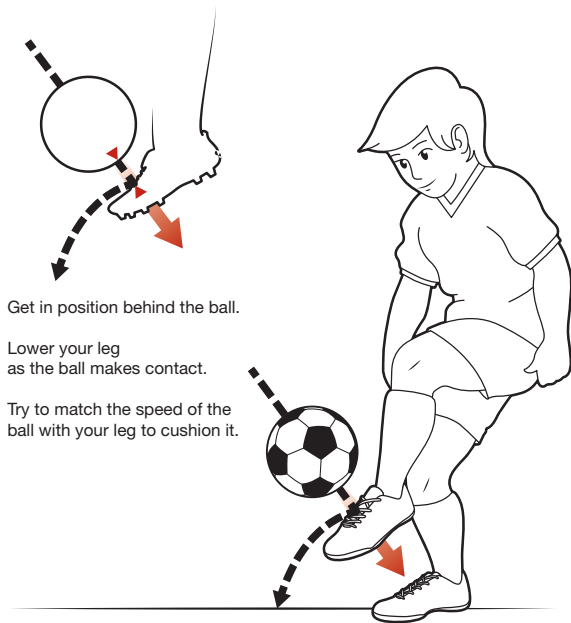
- “Left & Right!” – if your coach shouts “Left,” pass to the player on your left. If your coach shouts “Right,” pass to the player on your right. Remember to keep the ball moving and pass using the inside or outside of your foot.

OPTIONS:

- Change the angle and distance between the cones/markers to increase the challenge.
- Remove the obstacle course and have players dribble straight down a channel and through an end gate before passing on the run.

CONTROL

“CONTROL” MEANS USING YOUR FEET AND OTHER PARTS OF YOUR BODY (EXCEPT YOUR ARMS AND HANDS) TO KEEP THE BALL CLOSE IN ORDER TO THEN PASS, DRIBBLE OR SHOOT.



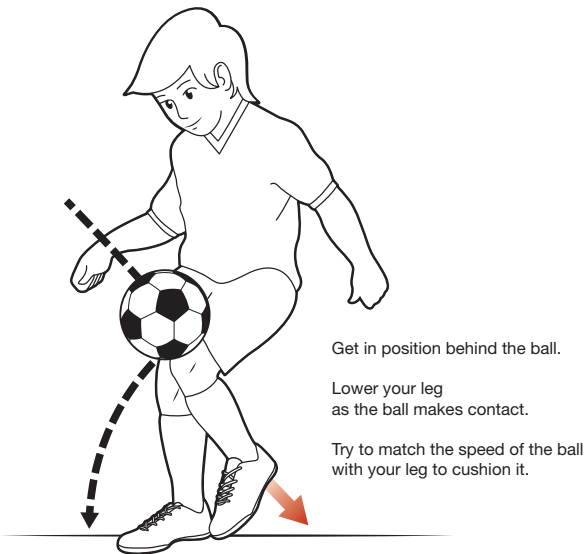
Get in position behind the ball.
Lower your leg as the ball makes contact.
Try to match the speed of the ball with your leg to cushion it.

Top of Foot (Laces)



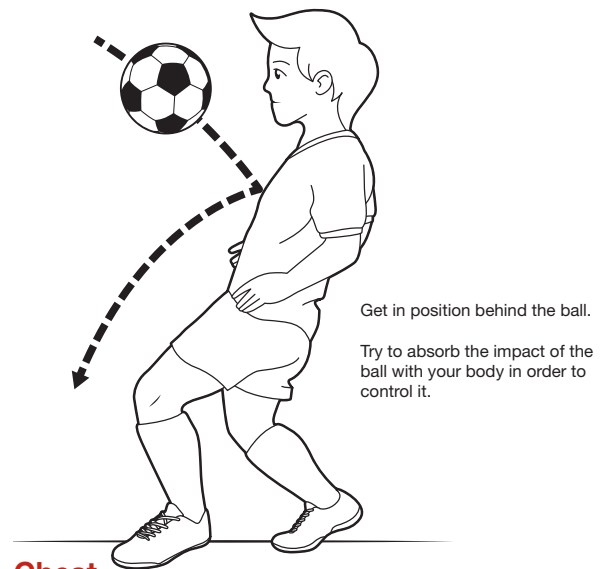
Get in position behind the ball.
Lower your leg as the ball makes contact.
Try to match the speed of the ball with your leg to cushion it.

Inside of Foot



Get in position behind the ball.
Lower your leg as the ball makes contact.
Try to match the speed of the ball with your leg to cushion it.

Thigh

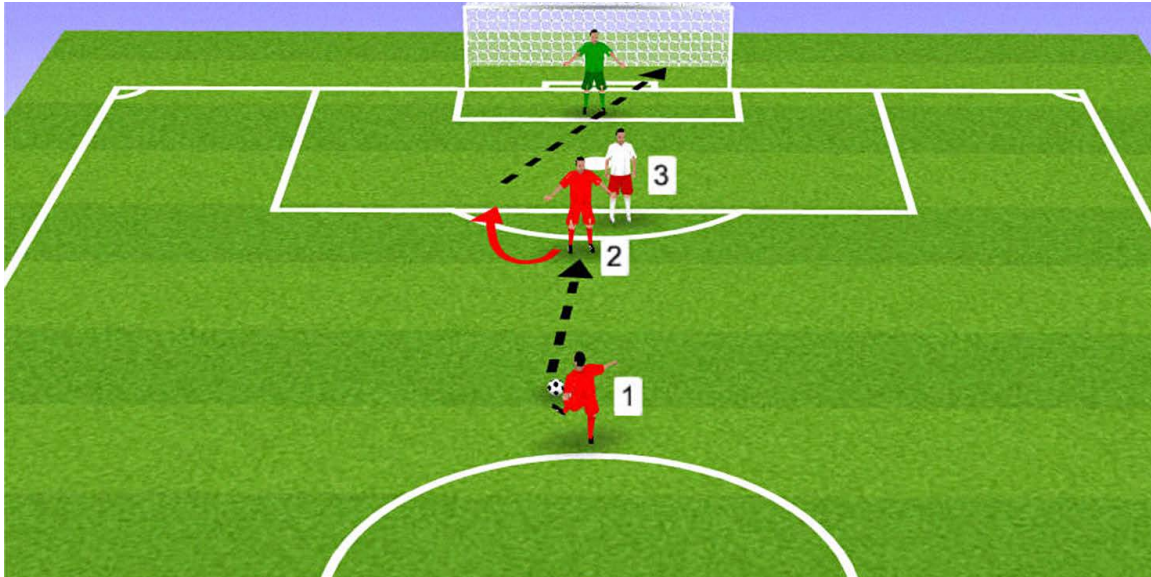


Get in position behind the ball.
Try to absorb the impact of the ball with your body in order to control it.

Chest

CONTROL

ACTIVITY 1: “CONTROL AND SCORE!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 3;
1 ball per group.
- Number each group 1-4.

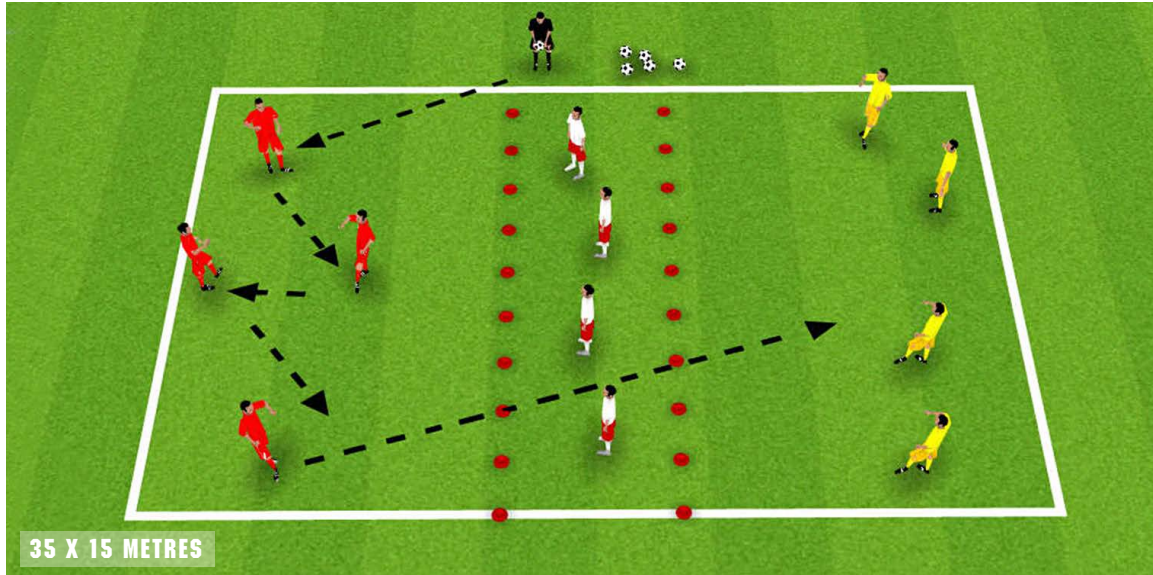
INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – when the coach calls your group’s number, Player 1 passes to Player 2, who controls the ball with their foot. Player 2 turns and tries to get past Player 3, who stands in the way, but does not try to take the ball. Player 2 shoots on goal.
- “Switch!” – players swap roles after 3 turns; rotate teams frequently.

OPTIONS:

- “Throw in!” – instead of a ground pass, Player 1 throws the ball to Player 2, who has to control it with the foot, thigh or chest before turning to get past Player 3. Player 2 must remember to shield the ball on the first touch.
- “Challenge!” – Player 3 becomes an active defender, and challenges for the ball.

CONTROL ACTIVITY 2: “MONKEYS IN THE MIDDLE”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in teams of 4.
- Defending team lines up in the middle of the field, with attacking teams lined up on either side of the field.

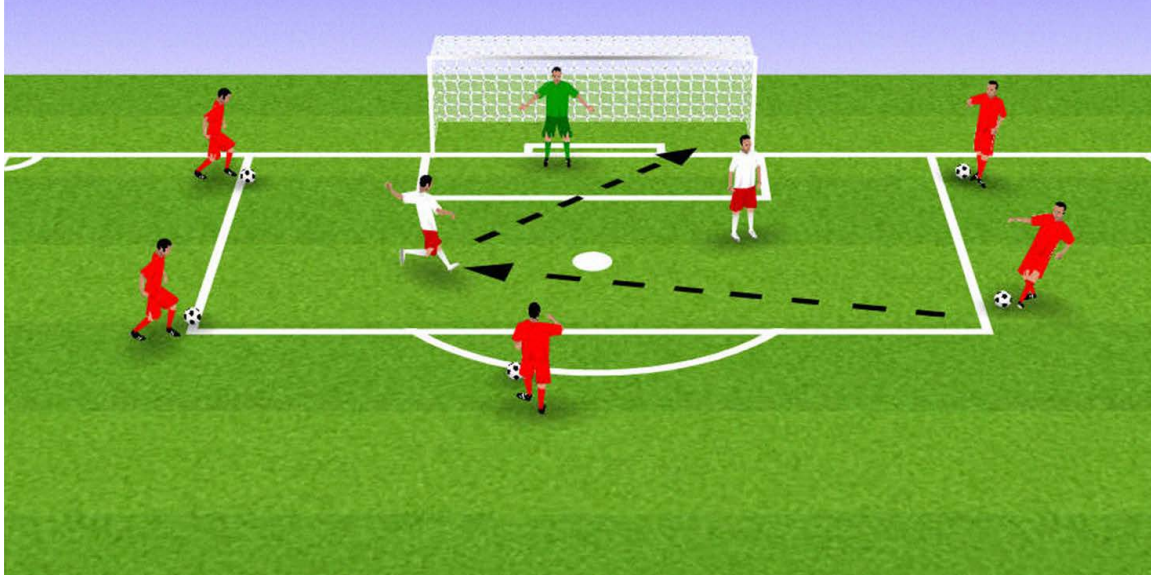
INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the coach rolls the ball to one of the attacking teams. To score a point, they must complete 3 passes and then send the ball to the other attacking team. The defending team must stay in the middle to intercept the pass. If they do, they score a point. The coach then rolls the ball to the other attacking team and the defenders spin around to face them and try to block the pass across.
- “Switch!” – teams swap roles after each attacking team has had the ball 3 times.

OPTIONS:

- “Challenge!” – the defending team sends 2 players into the attacking team’s zone to challenge for the ball.
- Each attacking team must pass 5 times before transferring the ball into the other team’s zone.
- The coach throws the ball to start so players must control with their foot, thigh or chest before passing.

CONTROL ACTIVITY 3: “PASS TO STRIKER”



SET UP:

- Up to 10 players. All of them have a ball, except 2 who are called “strikers”; 1 goalkeeper.
- Number the players with a ball (i.e., 1-7).

INSTRUCTIONS:

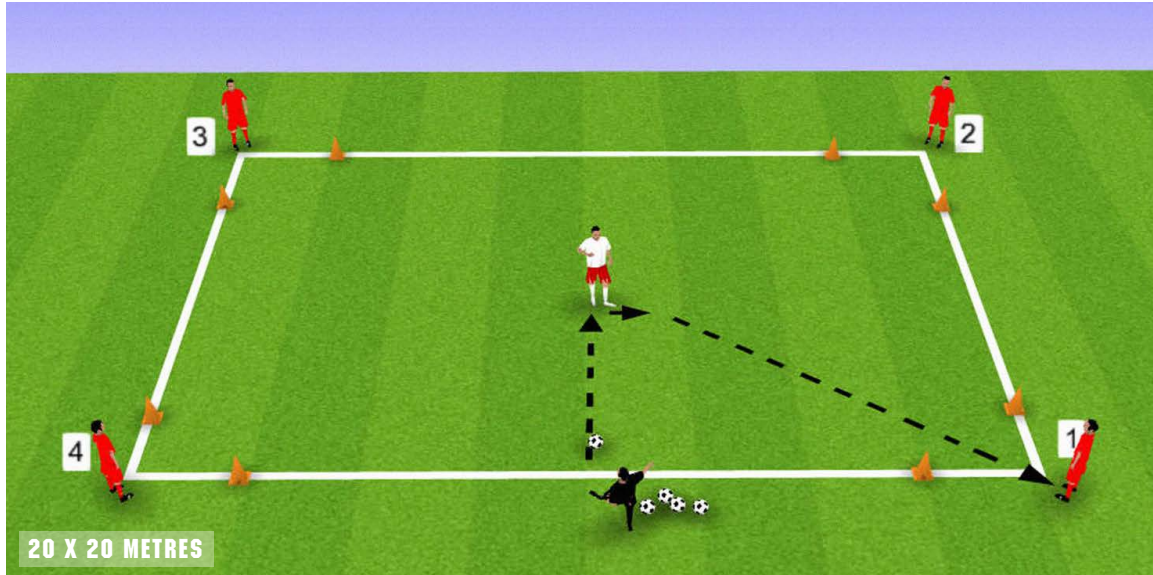
- Numbered players start outside the penalty area; strikers start inside.
- “Go!” – when the coach shouts your number, pass your ball to one of the strikers, who controls it, turns and shoots on goal. The strikers alternate shots.

- Strikers should control, turn and shoot using just 3 touches.
- “Switch!” – players swap roles after each striker has had 3 shots on goal.

OPTIONS:

- “Throw in!” – instead of a ground pass, numbered players throw the ball or do a bounce pass to the striker who controls with the foot, thigh, chest or head before turning to shoot.
- Add a defender and have strikers work together by passing to get a shot on net.

CONTROL ACTIVITY 4: “CONTROL TO CORNER”



SET UP:

- 5 players plus a coach; 1 ball.
- 4 numbered players (1-4), plus 1 receiver and 1 coach/server.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Numbered players stand behind gates set up at each of the 4 corners, with the receiver in the middle.
- “Go!” – coach/server passes the ball to the receiver and calls out a number from 1-4. The receiver scores a point if he/she uses only 2 touches to control the ball and pass it through the gate to the teammate with that number.
- “Switch!” – players swap roles after 5 turns.

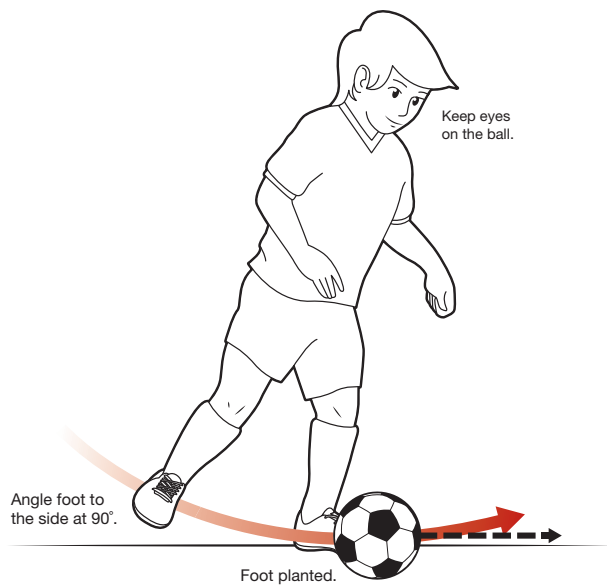
OPTIONS:

- Instead of a ground pass, the coach/server bounces or throws the ball so the receiver has to control it with the foot, thigh, chest or head before passing.
- “How fast can you pass?” – Receiver gets 10 seconds to control and pass.
- “Make it quick!” – Coach/server delays calling the number until the receiver gets the ball to force a quick decision.

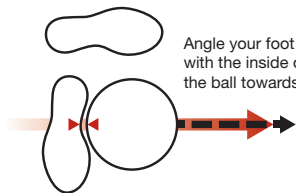
PASSING

“PASSING” MEANS USING YOUR FEET TO GET THE BALL TO YOUR TEAMMATES IN A CONTROLLED WAY.

Push Pass

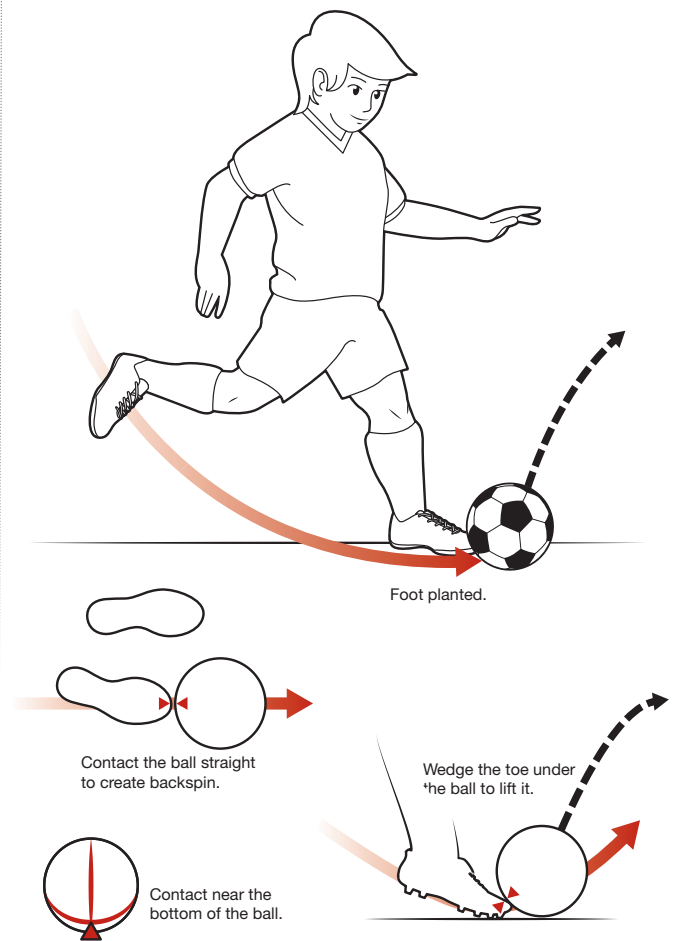


Contact near the centre of the ball.



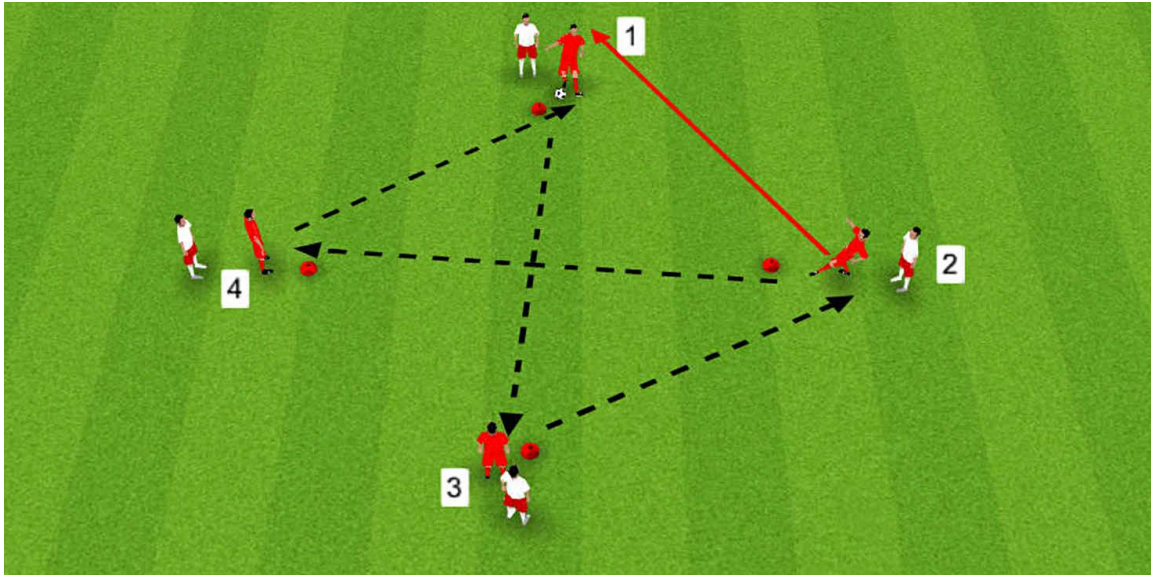
Angle your foot to contact the ball with the inside of the foot. Kick past the ball towards the target.

Chip Pass



PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: “DIAMOND PATTERN PASS”



SET UP:

- 4 players; 1 ball.
- Number the points of the diamond (1-4).

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the player on Point 1 passes the ball through the centre to the player opposite on Point 3. The player on Point 3 receives the ball and passes it to the player on Point 2. The player on Point 2 receives the ball and passes it through the centre to the player opposite on Point 4. The Player on point 4 passes it to the player on Point 1. Players move 1 point to their right and start again. Remember: try to receive and pass quickly in just 2 touches!

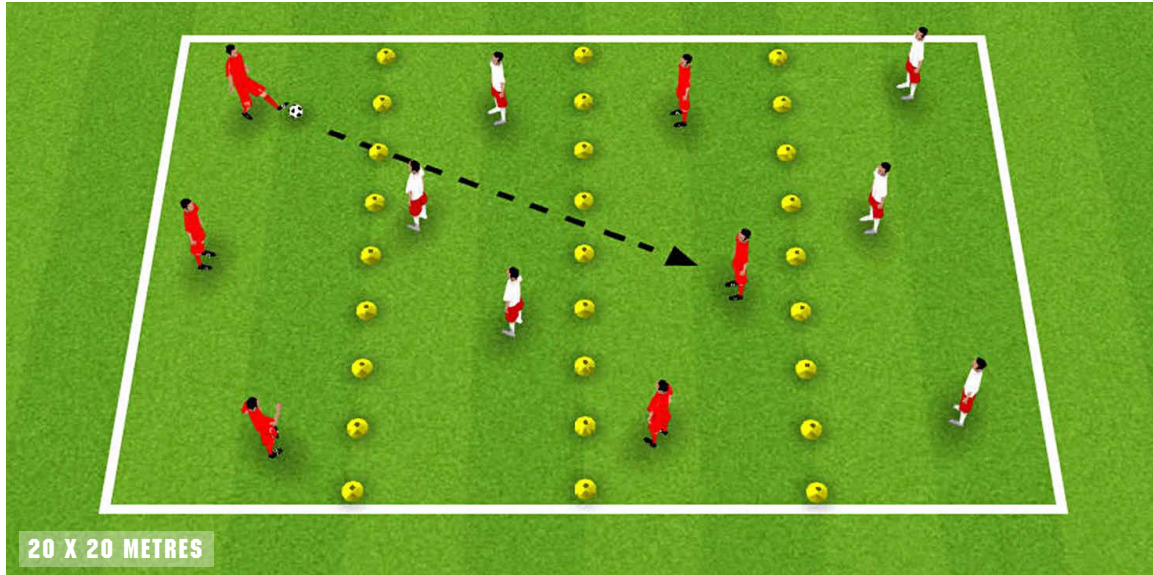
- “Change direction!” – start passing in the opposite direction (i.e., Point 4 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 1).

OPTIONS:

- Add a second ball.
- Use your other foot to pass and/or receive.
- Follow your pass to a new point.
- Pass through/around cones inside the diamond.

PASSING

ACTIVITY 2: “INTO THE ZONE”



SET UP:

- Up to 16 players, in two equal teams.
- Teams are split into two smaller groups with an equal number of players. One ball.
- Field is divided into 4 zones; team groups line up in alternate zones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – score a point by passing the ball inside your zone and then passing through the opposition to your teammates in the next zone. If the opposition intercepts the ball, it’s their turn to try and get a pass to their teammates. Remember: try to receive and pass quickly in just 2 touches!

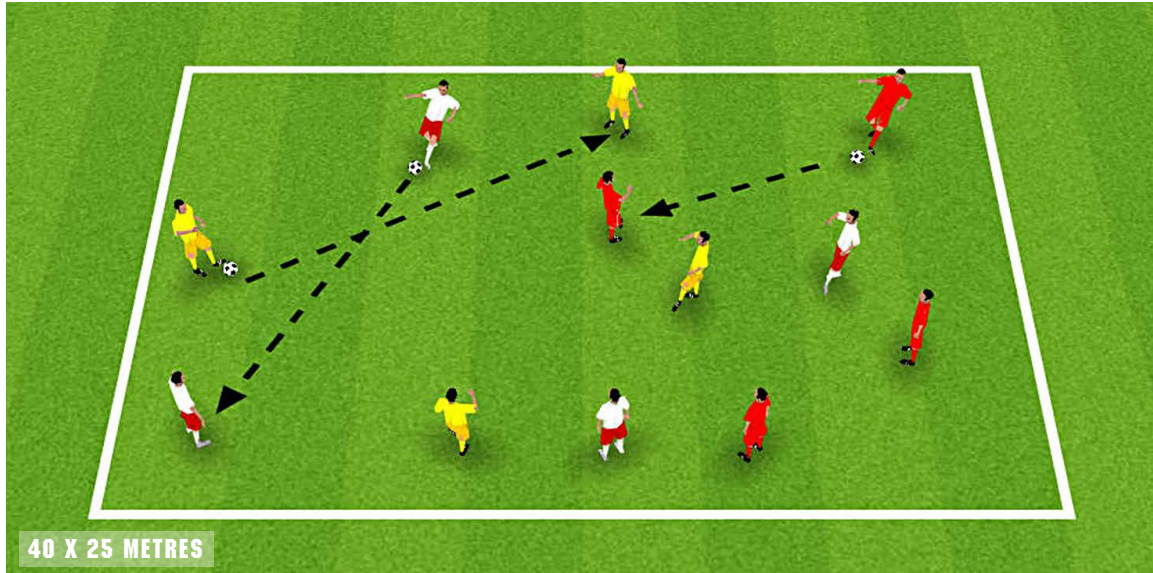
- “Switch!” – rotate groups from the inside zones to the outside zones every 3 minutes.

OPTIONS:

- Try to pass in just one touch.
- “Keep moving!” – players within a zone must move around and switch positions constantly so no one stands still.

PASSING

ACTIVITY 3: “TEAM PASSING”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in 3 teams;
1 ball per team.

INSTRUCTIONS:

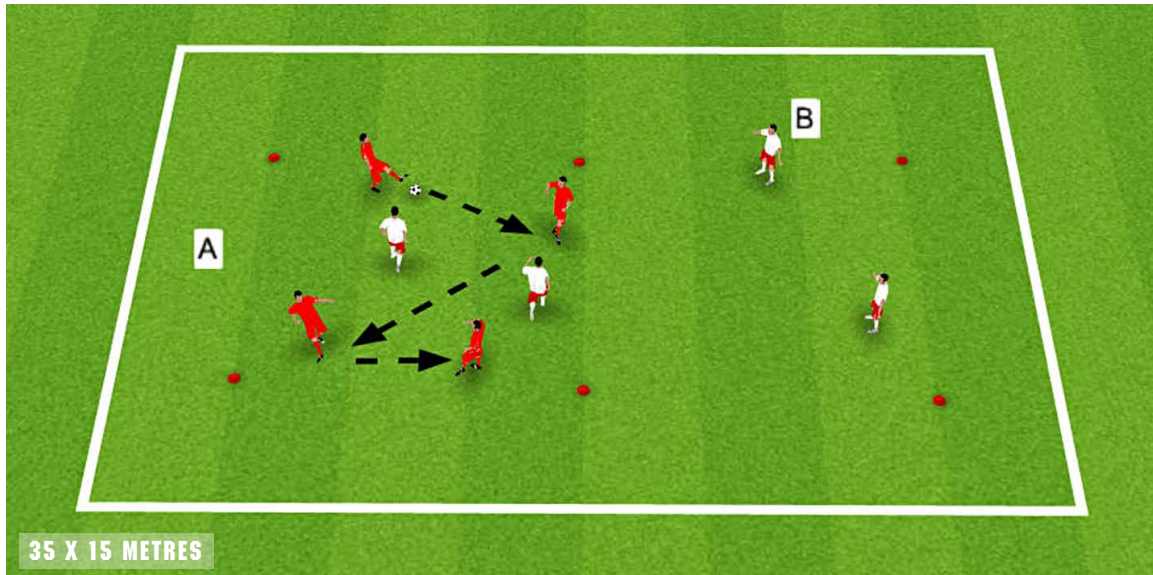
- “Go!” – move around the field and pass the ball with your teammates. Keep your head up, and try to pass both around and between players on the other teams. Remember: receive and pass quickly in just 2 touches!

OPTIONS:

- “Short, Short, Long” – on your team, make 2 short distance passes, followed by a longer one. Call out “short” or “long”, with each pass to help keep the rhythm.
- Remove one ball: the team without a ball plays defense, and tries to win the balls from the other two teams.

PASSING

ACTIVITY 4: “TRANSFER PASS”



SET UP:

- Up to 8 players, in 2 teams of 4 players each.
- Use cones to mark out 2 adjacent squares on the field, as shown.
- Name the teams: A (red) & B (white).
- Set up a 4 v 2 in one square, with 4 Team A players (attackers) and 2 Team B players (defenders); the other Team B players start in the adjacent square.

OPTIONS:

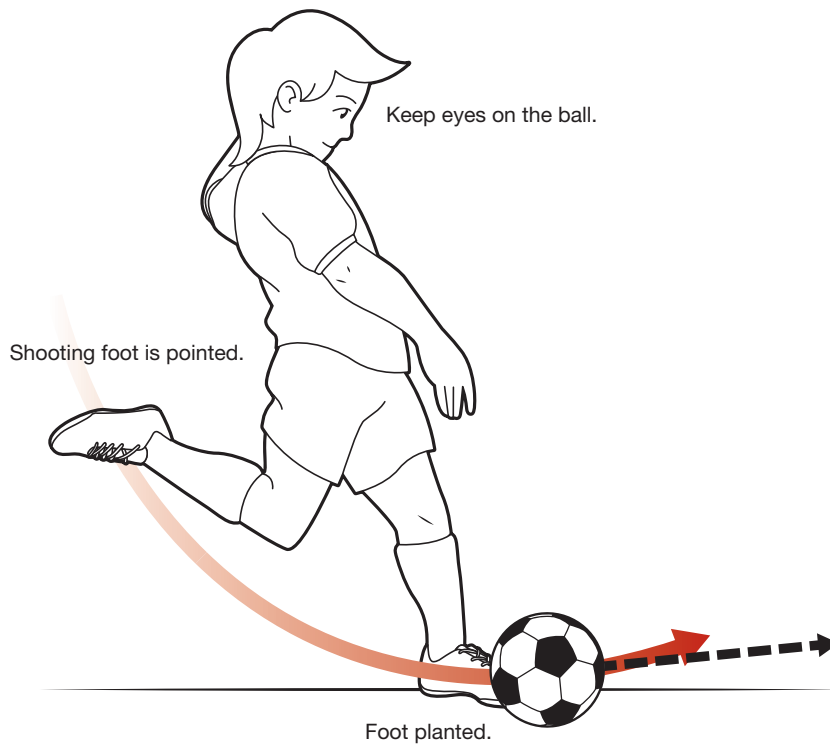
- Increase the number of passes to score a point.
- Every player on the attacking team must touch the ball at least once.
- Allow 1 additional defender to challenge for the ball, creating a 4 v 3 situation.

INSTRUCTIONS:

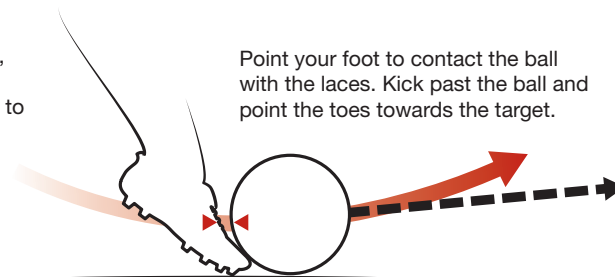
- “Go!” – Team A starts with the ball and tries to pass 5 times without Team B intercepting it. If Team B (defending) wins the ball, they pass to their teammates in the other square. Team B then becomes the attacking team and Team A must send in 2 players to try to win the ball back.

SHOOTING

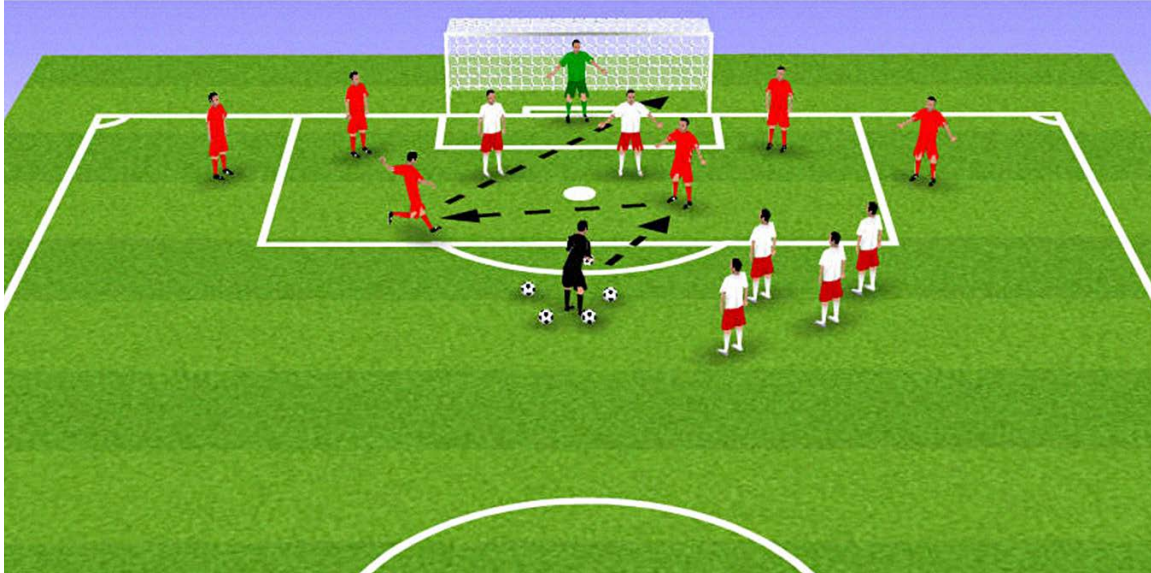
“SHOOTING” MEANS USING YOUR FEET TO SCORE.



Contact near the centre or the bottom of the ball, depending on whether you want to shoot low or high.



SHOOTING ACTIVITY 1: “CLOSE QUARTERS”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 equal teams;
1 goalkeeper.
- 2 defenders and 4 strikers start in the penalty area; 2 support players for the attacking team are on opposite sides of the penalty area.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the coach serves the ball from the top of the penalty area to one of the strikers, who tries to score immediately or pass to a teammate so they can score. A goal is worth one point. The attacking team can also pass to either of the two outside support players, who have 3 touches to pass the ball back into the strikers. If the defenders win the ball and dribble it under control out of the penalty area, they get a point.

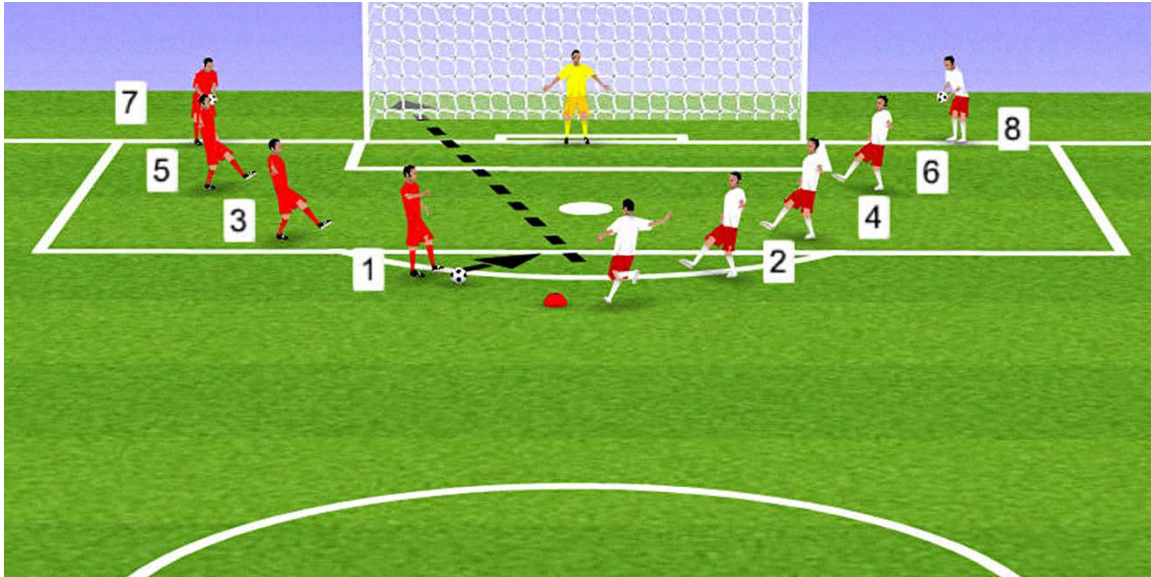
- “Switch!” – defenders will get tired, so rotate them frequently. Swap roles after 5 minutes.

OPTIONS:

- Add 1 or 2 defenders to create a 4 v 3 or 4 v 4 situation in the penalty area.
- Attacking team must pass at least 3 times before shooting.

SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 2: “READY, SET, SHOOT!”



SET UP:

- Up to 10 players (8 attackers, each with a ball, 1 striker, 1 goalkeeper).
- Number the attackers (i.e., Players 1-8), and position them as shown.

INSTRUCTIONS:

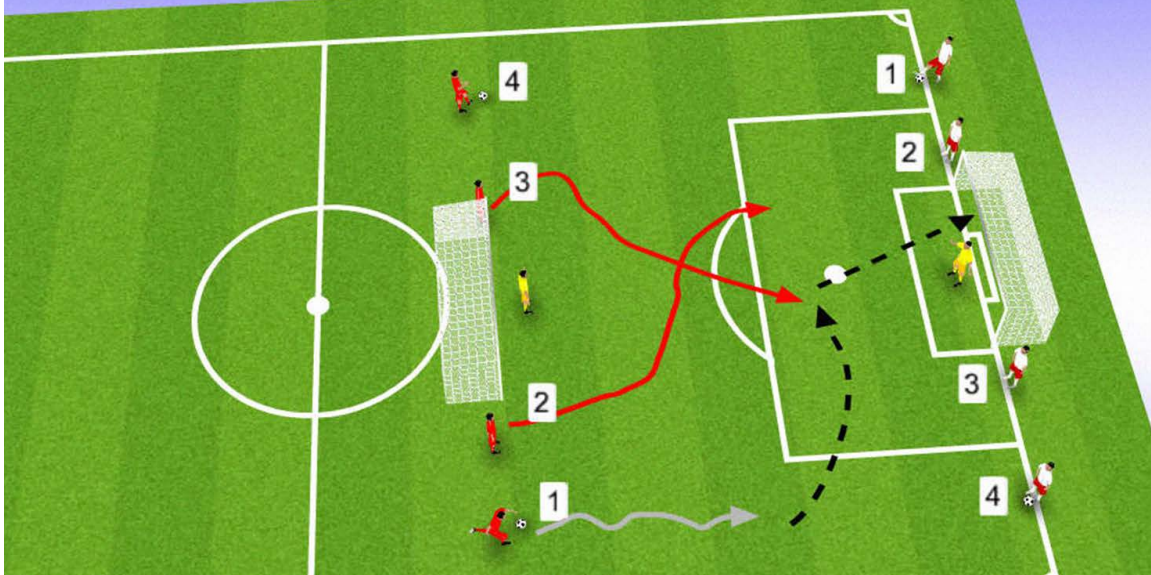
- Striker starts at the top of the penalty area and tries to shoot with just one touch on the ball.
- “Go!” – the striker runs towards the goal. Player 1 rolls the ball into the striker’s path. The striker uses his/her left foot to shoot on goal, then runs back to the start and looks for a pass from Player 2. Player 2 rolls the ball so the striker has to shoot with his/her right foot. The striker runs back to the start each time and looks for passes from the next players, in sequence.

- “Switch!” – after the striker has taken a shot from every attacker, swap roles (i.e., striker becomes Player 1, who becomes Player 2, etc. and Player 8 moves to striker).

OPTIONS:

- Have the attackers vary their passes to challenge the striker: **1.** Rolling the ball to one side or the other. **2.** Passing it with their foot at different speeds. **3.** Throwing the ball in the air so the striker has to try to volley it into the net with their foot, thigh or head.
- How fast can you shoot? Record the amount of time it takes each striker to shoot a full series. Take 3 seconds off the total time for every goal scored. The fastest time wins!

SHOOTING ACTIVITY 3: “ALTERNATE ATTACKS”



SET UP:

- In an area approximately twice the size of the penalty area – set up 4 lines of players at each end with goals in the middle, and 2 goalkeepers.
- Number the lines from 1-4. When looking at the goal, line 1 is far left, line 4 is far right.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- First player in line 1 dribbles forward and sends a pass to the top of the penalty box for players in lines 2 and 3 to attack and shoot at goal. Players then swap ends and go to the back of their respective lines.

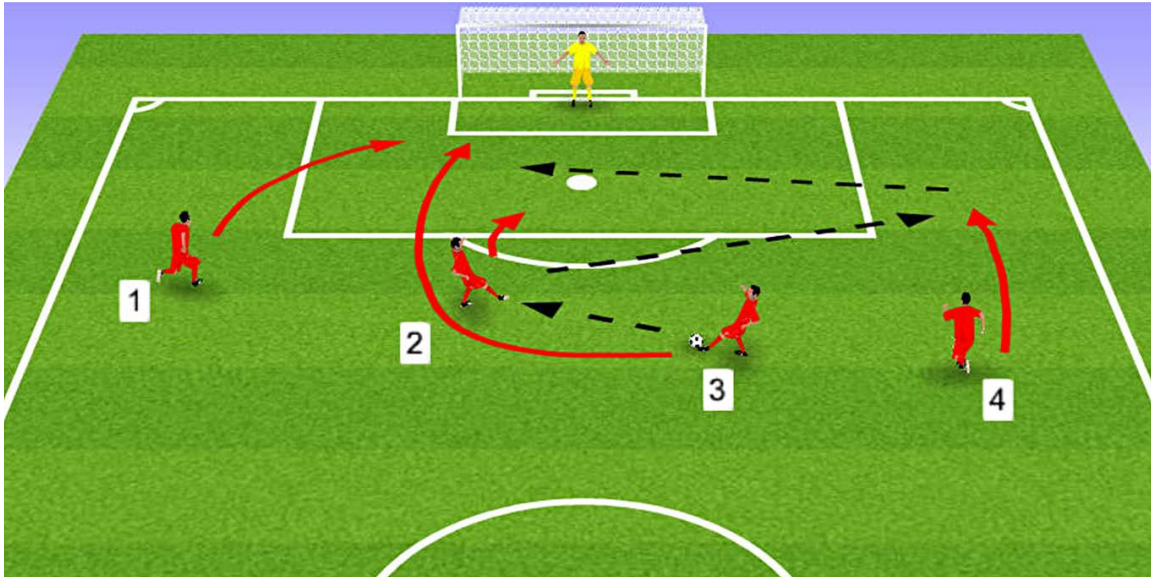
- Start the next attack from line 1 at the opposite end, Alternate attacks from line 1 then line 4. Rotate players in the central lines (2 and 3) with wide lines (1 and 4) every 10 shots.

OPTIONS:

- Players in lines 2 and 3 shoot on their first touch.
- Have all four players participate in each attack.
- Add a defender at each end.

SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 4: “1-2-3 FINISH!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 4 (2 central strikers, 2 wingers); 1 goalkeeper.
- Players 1 & 4 are wingers; Players 2 & 3 are strikers.

OPTIONS:

- Winger delivers the cross in the air so the attacker has to use a controlling touch with the chest, thigh or foot before shooting on goal.
- Add 1-2 defenders to challenge for the ball.

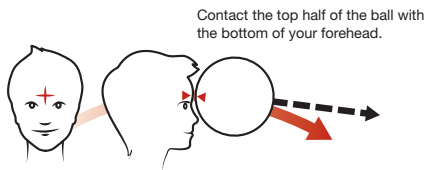
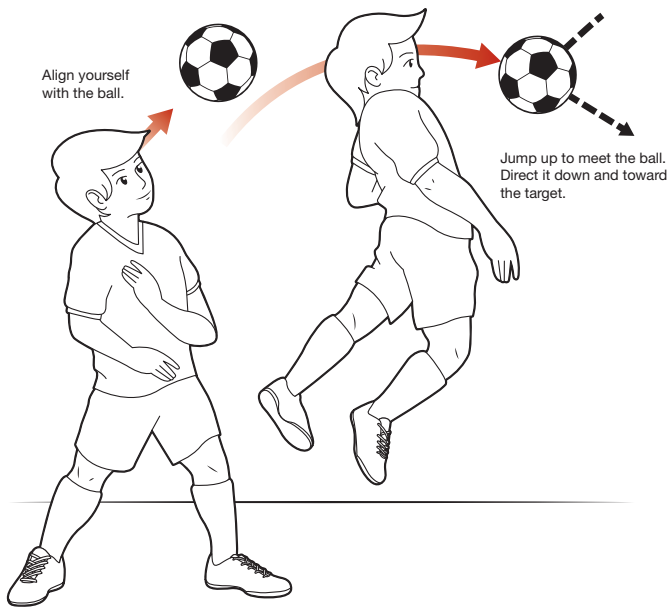
INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – Player 3 passes to Player 2, who passes wide to Player 4. Player 4 makes a cross into the penalty area for Player 3 to receive and shoot on goal, with Players 1 and 2 running in to provide support. Repeat with Player 3 passing wide to Player 1, and Player 2 shooting on goal.
- “Switch!” – have players swap positions frequently.

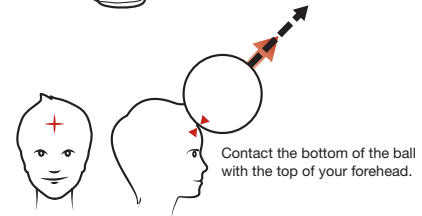
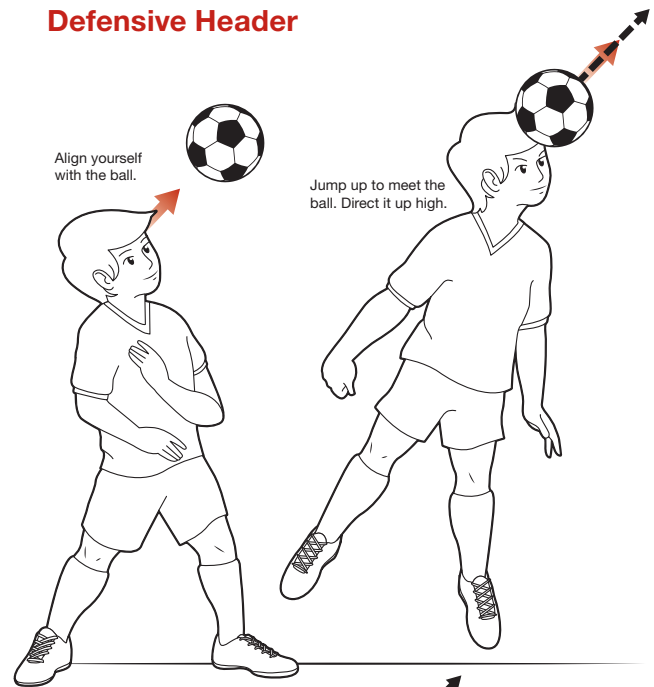
HEADING

“HEADING” MEANS USING YOUR FOREHEAD TO CONTROL THE BALL, TO PASS TO A TEAMMATE, TO CLEAR THE BALL FROM IN FRONT OF YOUR NET, OR TO SHOOT.

Attacking Header

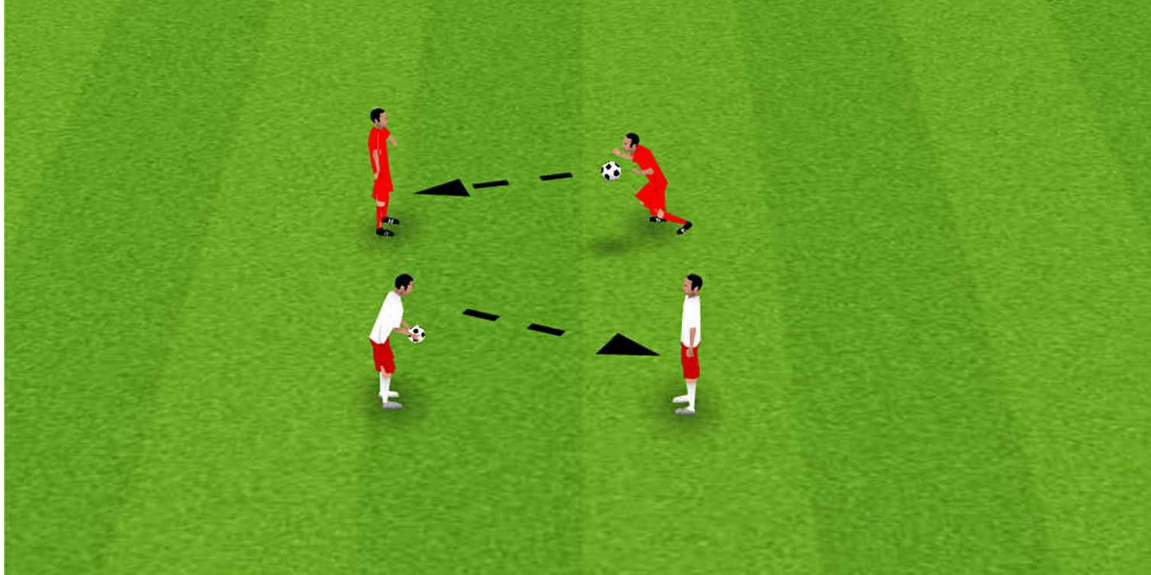


Defensive Header



HEADING

ACTIVITY 1: “HEADING 101”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs;
1 ball per pair.

INSTRUCTIONS:

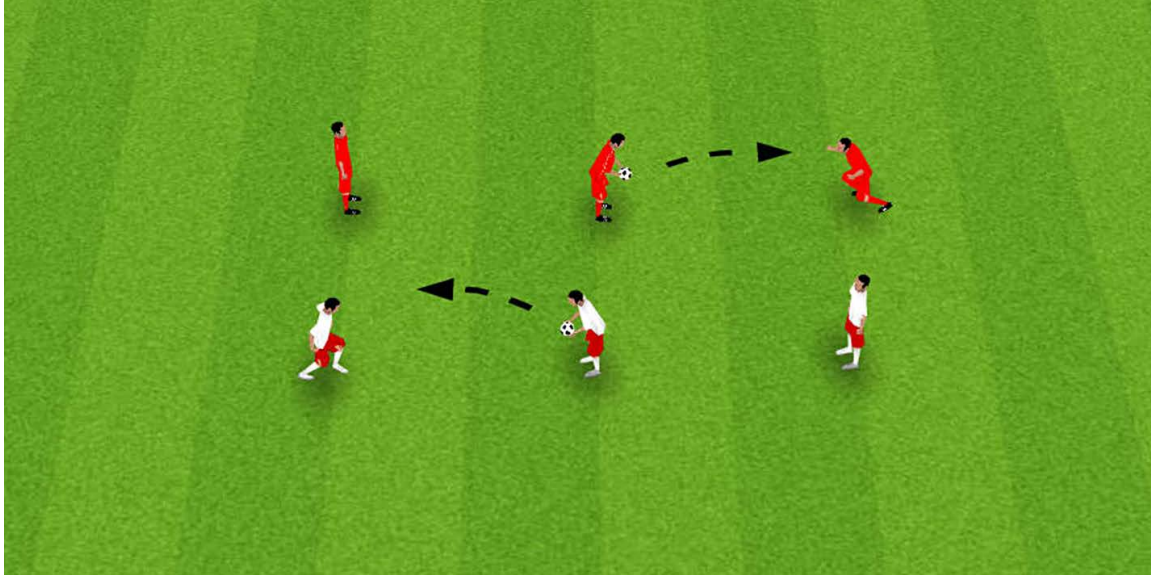
- “Go!” – hold the ball with both hands then pull it back towards your forehead. Head it through your hands to your partner, who catches it. Take turns heading the ball back and forth. While you’re learning the skill, do not throw the ball. Concentrate on generating power by using your legs, hips and upper body.
- After 10 turns, each player takes 1 big step backwards.

OPTIONS:

- Players toss the ball lightly in the air before heading it, but keep their hands close to help guide the ball to their partner.
- One partner throws the ball gently to the other, who heads it back. Repeat 10 times, then switch.
- “Direct the ball!” – head the ball down to your partner’s feet (“attacking header”), or up and over their head (“defending header”).

HEADING

ACTIVITY 2: “SERVE IT UP”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in groups of 3; 1 ball per group.

INSTRUCTIONS:

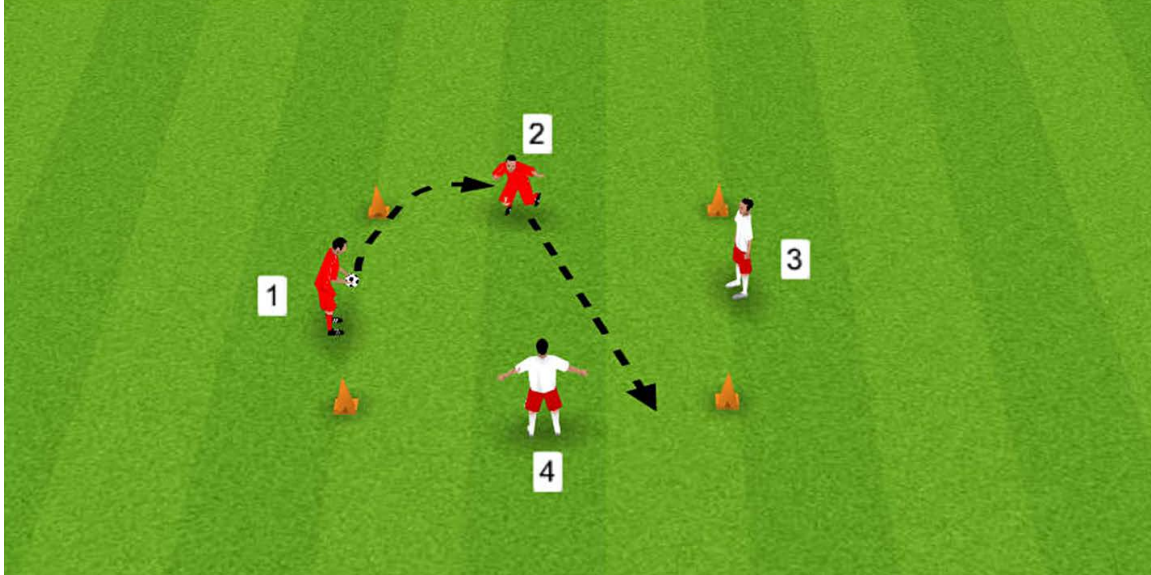
- The player in the middle is the server, and starts with the ball.
- “Go”! – the server gently tosses the ball to a teammate, who heads it back. The server catches the ball, then turns to toss the ball to the other teammate, who heads it back. Repeat.
- “Switch!” – when each player has headed the ball 5 times, swap roles.

OPTIONS:

- “Direct the ball!” – head the ball down to the server’s feet, or up and over the server’s head to your other teammate, who catches it and throws it back to the server.
- Have the server toss the ball slightly short of each player, so the player has to run and head the ball back while in motion.

HEADING

ACTIVITY 3: “USE YOUR HEAD!”



SET UP:

- Four players, working in 2 teams; 1 ball.
- Number players (1-4); Players 1 & 2 are on one team, Players 3 & 4 on the other.

INSTRUCTIONS:

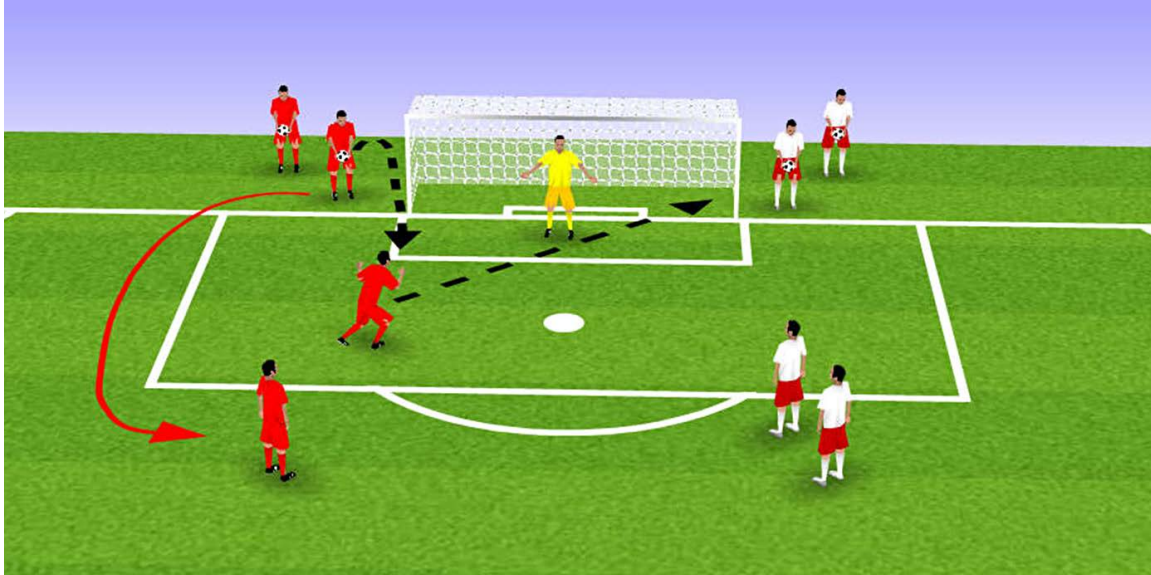
- “Go!” – Player 1 holds the ball and serves it to Player 2, who tries to head it past Player 4 on the opposite side of the square. Then Player 4 serves the ball to Player 3, who tries to head it past Player 1. Continue until Players 2 & 3 have each headed the ball 3 times, then switch roles so that they become the servers and Players 1 & 4 head the ball.
- Rotate players frequently.

OPTIONS:

- Allow players to head the ball past either opponent so they have to choose which goal to aim for.
- “No hands!” – goalkeepers cannot use their hands to save the ball; instead, they try to head their opponent’s shot back into the opponent’s goal.

HEADING

ACTIVITY 4: “INTO THE NET!”



SET UP:

- Up to 16 players, working in 4 groups; 1 goalkeeper.
- 2 groups of servers, each with a ball, line up on either side of the goal.
- 2 groups of attacking players line up opposite the servers at the top of the penalty area.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the first server throws the ball to the first attacking player, who tries to head it past the goalkeeper. The server then runs to the back of the attacking line, and the attacking player runs to

the back of the serving line. Repeat with the players on the other side of the net. Continue until all players have had a turn as both server and attacking player.

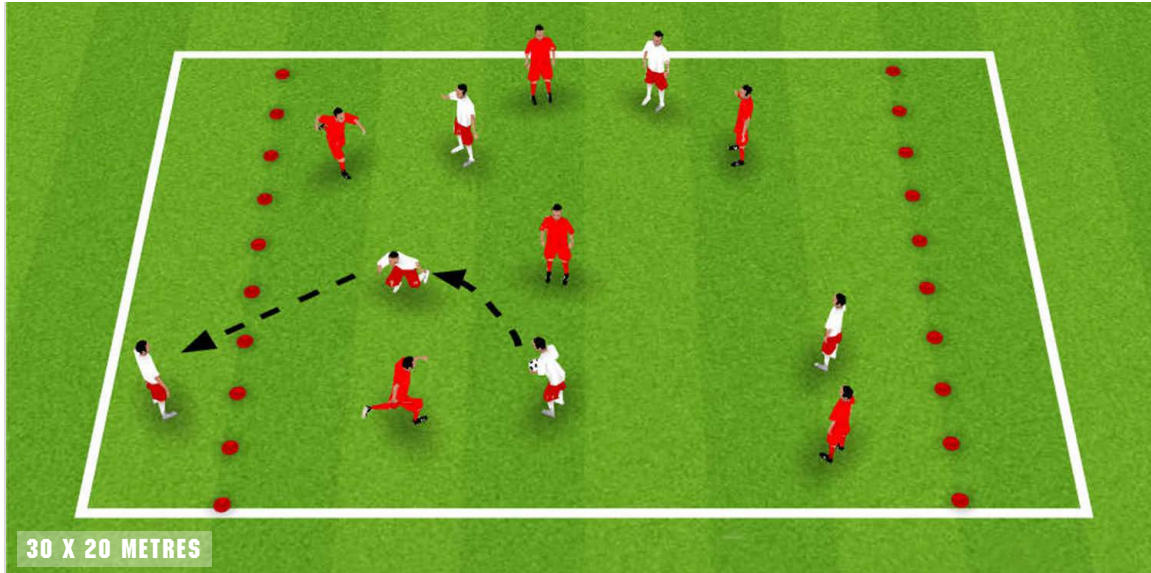
- “Switch!” – players on the right move to the left, and vice-versa.

OPTIONS:

- Have the servers on the left throw the ball to the attacking players on the right, and vice-versa.

HEADING

ACTIVITY 5: “THROW, HEAD, CATCH”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in 2 teams; 1 ball.
- Use cones to mark out 2 end zones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the object of the game is to get the ball into the other team’s end zone. Players move the ball up the field by throwing it to a teammate, who heads the ball to another teammate to catch. Then that player throws the ball to another teammate to head, etc. Continue the sequence of throw, head, catch. Players have to stand still when they’re in possession of the ball. If the other team intercepts the ball, it’s their turn to try and score a point.

- Introduce the offside rule: players can’t stand in the end zone to wait for a pass, but can only run to receive when the ball is thrown or headed into the end zone.

OPTIONS:

- Add goals and goalkeepers. Continue the sequence of throw, head, catch, but now the players try to head the ball into the other team’s net.

3

STAGE 3—(U-8/U-11 F, U-9/U-12 M)



GENERAL MOVEMENT

General Movement activities include:

- Agility – running, changing direction, speeding up / slowing down, and stopping.
- Balance – hopping, jumping and landing.
- Coordination – combining different movements, moving with the ball, falling and getting up safely.

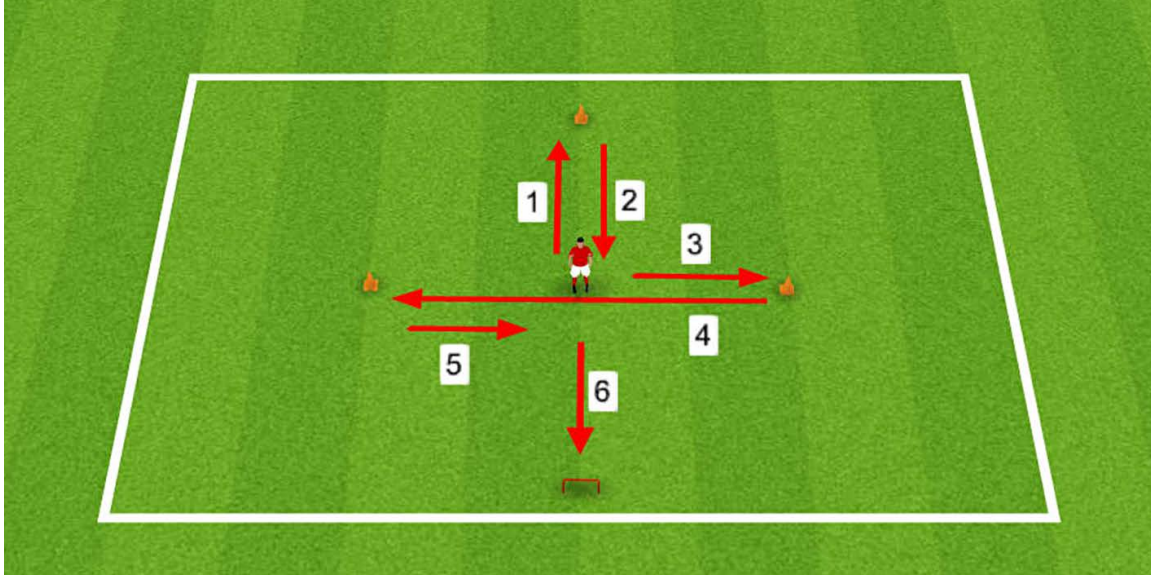
At the Learning to Train stage (U-8/U-11 Girls; U-9/U-12 Boys), general movement activities should make up about 10% of practice time (i.e., roughly 10 minutes of a 90-minute training session). At this age, general movement drills can be integrated into the warm-up at the start of each session.

TIP

At this stage, the continued development of players' agility, speed and coordination is crucial. It's important to challenge them often to move in different ways and at different speeds—and circuits are a terrific way to do this. Every few minutes, introduce a twist that goes beyond the basic drill: introduce time restrictions, for instance, or have them hop on one foot for part of the drill.

GENERAL MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY 1: “ACROSS THE FIELD AND BACK AGAIN”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players.
- Use cones to mark out a circuit, as shown.

INSTRUCTIONS:

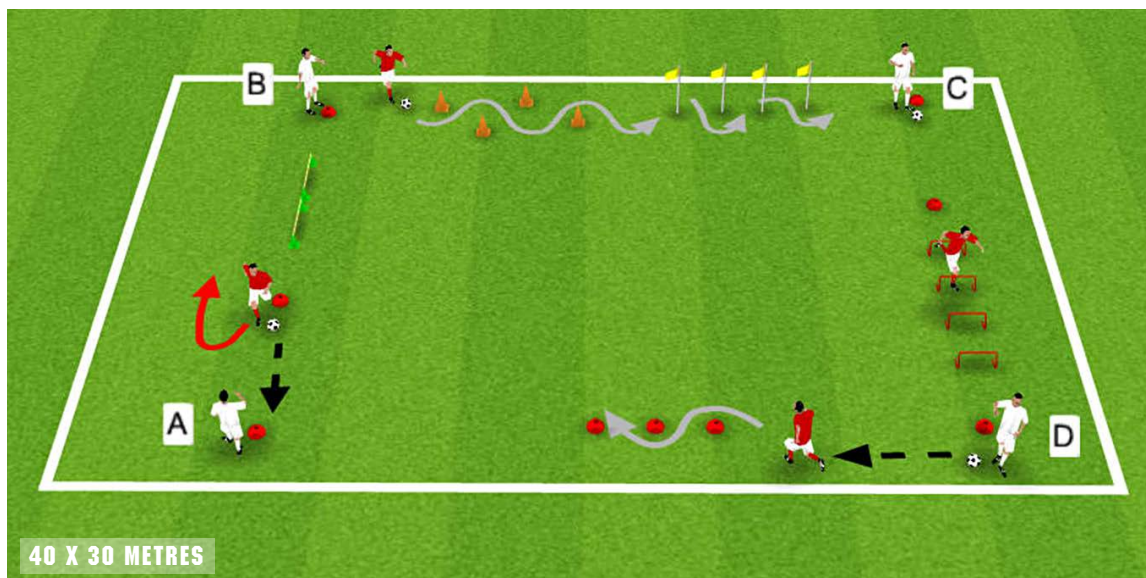
- Players start at the middle cone, and move through the circuit one at a time.
- “Go!” – run through the circuit as fast as you can: **1.** Run backwards from the middle cone to the cone behind. **2.** Sprint forward to the middle cone. **3.** Shuffle sideways to the cone on your left. **4.** Shuffle sideways through the middle all the way to the cone on your right. **5.** Shuffle sideways back to the middle. **6.** Sprint forward, jump over the hurdle and finish!

OPTIONS:

- Challenge players to move in different ways, i.e. hopping on one or both feet, crab walking, etc.
- Drop and do 3 push-ups at every cone.
- Make it a race by timing players as they move through the circuit. The player with the best time wins!

GENERAL MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY 2: “4-CORNER CIRCUIT”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players.
- Use cones, hurdles and/or flags to mark out a circuit, as shown.
- Modify the circuit depending on the equipment available.
- Players move through the circuit one at a time, supported by teammates stationed at the 4 corners (Players A, B, C, and D), each with a ball.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – move through the circuit as fast as you can. **1.** Dribble the ball forward, then turn and pass to Player A. **2.** Pivot and continue, jumping over the pole from side to side with your feet together, until you get to the end. **3.** Receive a pass from Player B and dribble the ball in and out of 4 cones set wide apart, then set closer together. **4.** Pass the ball to Player C. **5.** Sprint forwards and jump

over the hurdles with your feet together. **6.** Receive a pass from Player D, then turn and dribble the ball in and out of the next cones. **7.** Pass to Player A to finish.

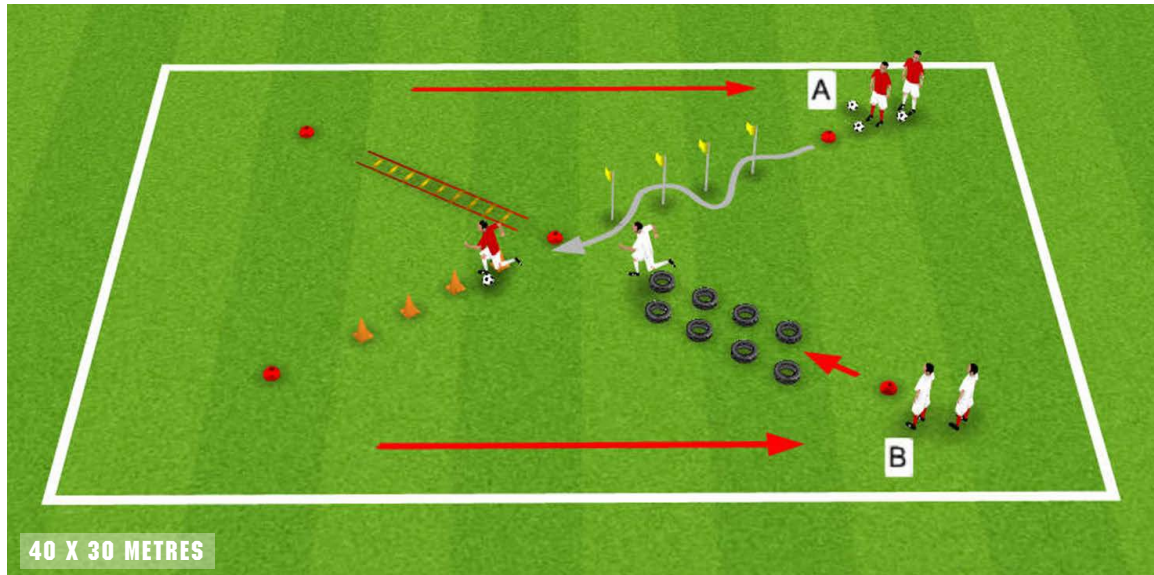
- “Switch!” – when the first four players have finished the circuit, Players A-D line up for their turn, and new players take their place at the corners.

OPTIONS:

- Make it a race by timing players as they move through the circuit. The player with the best time wins! Praise those players who improve from one attempt to another.
- Challenge players by increasing (or decreasing) the distance between cones and/or hurdles at each station, and by having the players move in different ways (i.e. crawling under hurdles, hopping on one foot).

GENERAL MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY 3: “X MARKS THE CIRCUIT”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players.
- Use cones, rings, a ladder and/or poles to mark out an “X”-shaped circuit, as shown.
- Modify the circuit depending on the available equipment.
- Players move through the circuit two at a time. Player 1 starts at Point A with a ball, Player 2 at Point B.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – move through the circuit as fast as you can. Player 1 dribbles a ball in and out of the poles, then cones, along one arm of the X. Then he/she leaves the ball at the last cone and runs to Point B. At the same time, Player 2 bounds through the rings, then through

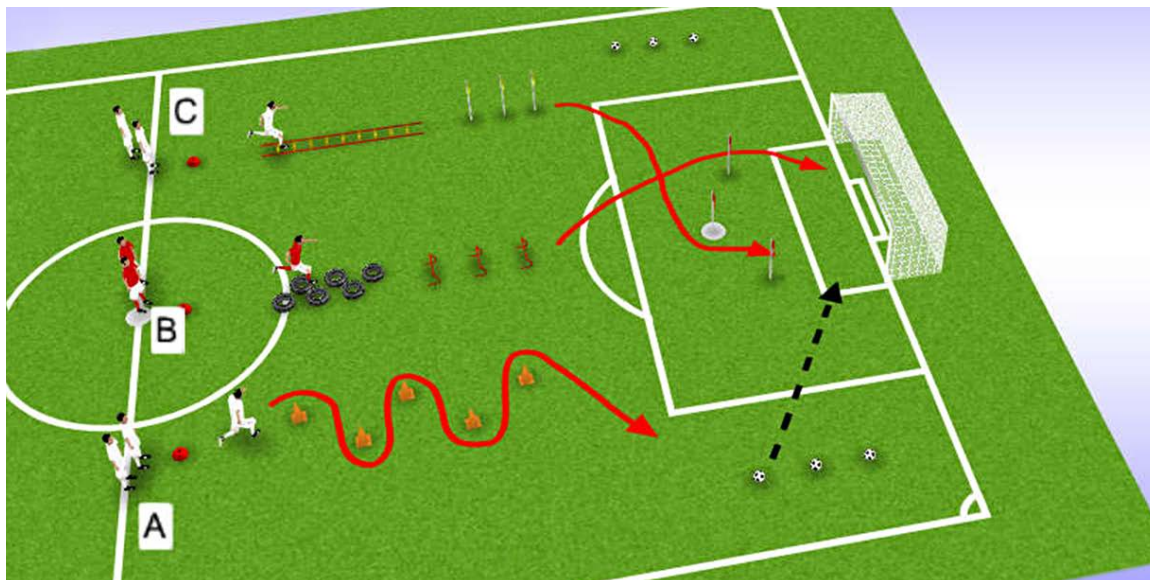
the rungs of the ladder on the other arm of the X. Then he/she runs to Point A and picks up a ball. Player 1 and Player 2 repeat each other’s original movements through the circuit before running back to their start line. The first player back wins!

OPTIONS:

- Increase the challenge by increasing (or decreasing) the distance between obstacles.
- Have the players move in different ways, i.e.: **1.** Hop through the ladder with your feet together. **2.** Jump and turn through the rings. **3.** Hop on one foot back to the start line.

GENERAL MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY 4: “RACE TO THE FINISH!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 3. Line up 3 balls on both sides of the penalty area, as shown. Use flags in front of the goal line to represent “defenders”.
 - Use cones, ladders, hurdles, rings, and/or poles to mark out 3 parallel obstacle courses, as shown, between the centre line and the goal line.
 - Modify the obstacles depending on the available equipment.
- the goal line. **2.** Same sequence, but with Player C taking a shot on goal and Players A and B running through to finish. **3.** Player A passes to Player B, who shoots on goal while Players A and C run through to finish. **4.** Same sequence, but with Player C passing. Continue until all players have had a turn.
- “Switch!” – rotate players so everyone has a turn through all 3 obstacle courses.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – carry out in threes: The first players in line in each group (A, B & C) start at the same time, and move through their obstacle courses as fast as they can. **1.** When Player A gets to the end, he/she runs to a ball and shoots on goal from outside the penalty area; Player B and C run around the “defenders,” as shown, to finish past

OPTIONS:

- Add a goalkeeper.
- Remove the flags and place only one ball in the penalty area. The first player through the obstacle course earns a chance to shoot and score. When the other 2 players get to the end of their obstacle courses, they can challenge for the ball.

3

STAGE 3—(U-8/U-11 F, U-9/U-12 M)



COORDINATION

A player's coordination will improve by:

- The use of fun competitions to motivate players.
- Getting lots of touches on the ball.
- Using all parts of the foot and different parts of the body to control the ball.
- Learning to combine different movements (i.e., control with your chest and kick with your foot).

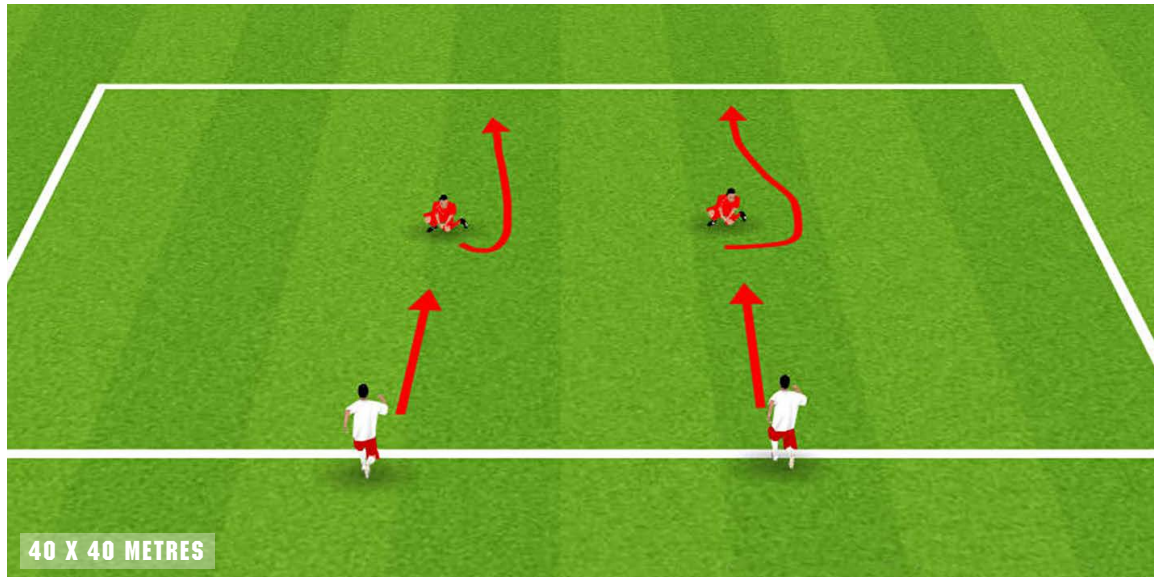
At the Learning to Train stage (U-8/U-11 Girls; U-9/U-12 Boys), coordination drills should make up about 10% of practice time (i.e., roughly 10 minutes of a 90-minute training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, controlling the ball and passing to improve coordination.

TIP

At this stage, players are ready to further their physical development—including endurance, strength and multi-directional speed—through a variety of games and activities. Players should be challenged to combine different movements (volleying with the thigh and foot, for example) and to maintain control of the ball while under pressure from opposing players.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 1: “THE CHASE IS ON!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs.
- One partner starts at the end line, the other sits facing them in the middle of the field.

INSTRUCTIONS:

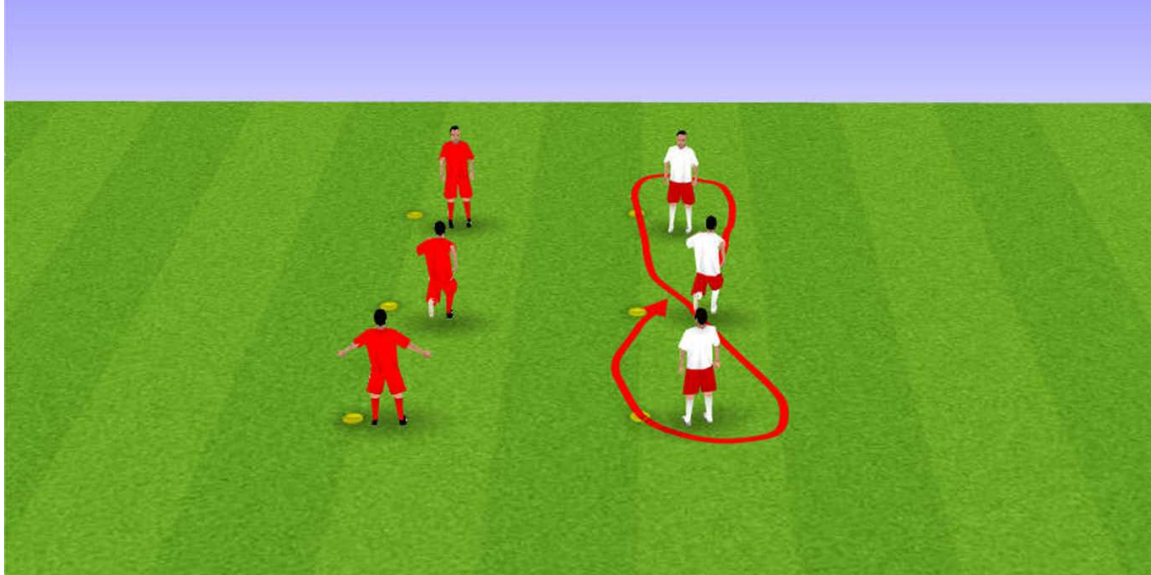
- “Go!” – you’re the standing player, also known as “the chaser.” When the coach yells “Go!” you run as fast as you can to catch your partner. He/she has to stand up, turn and sprint to the end of the field to avoid being caught by the “chaser.”

OPTIONS:

- Gradually decrease the distance until all partners eventually get caught.
- Have players start in different positions, i.e., laying flat on their back, on their belly, or in a push-up position.
- Each player has a ball: chasers have to dribble their ball over the finish line before their partner gets up, turns, and dribbles to the finish.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 2: “OFF TO THE RACES”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in teams of 3; no ball to start.
- Teams line up parallel to each other on the field, with one player in the middle (the “racer”). Players’ positions are marked out with cones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – middle players (racers) have to sprint to one end, run around a teammate, sprint to the other end and run around the other teammate. Repeat 3-5 times, then run back to the middle cone and strike a funny pose. The first player to pose gets a point for their team.

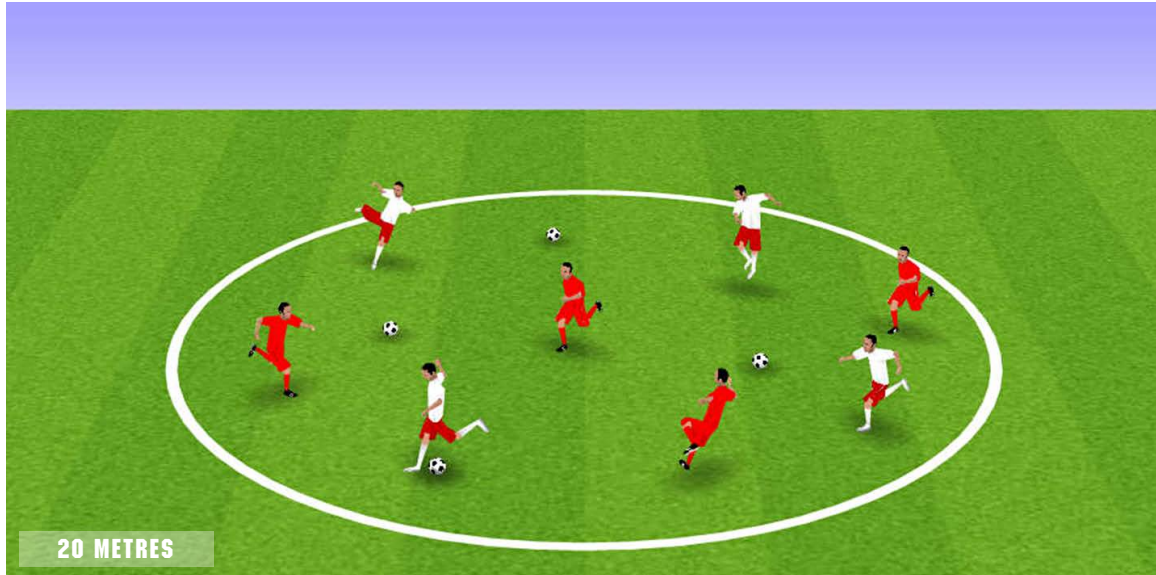
- “Switch!” – players switch positions until all 3 have had a turn as the racer.
- Instead of running, racers can hop on one foot or both feet together, skip, crab walk, shuffle to the side, etc.

OPTIONS:

- Racer has a ball and dribbles around both teammates 3 times and strikes a funny pose with their foot on the ball at the end.
- Each end player has a ball: racers receive a ground pass and then pass back before running around them.
- “Volley!” – end players hold the ball in their hands and throw it to the racer to volley back with the foot, thigh or head.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 3: “IN THE ROUND”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players in a circle; enough balls for half the players randomly spaced around the playing area.

INSTRUCTIONS:

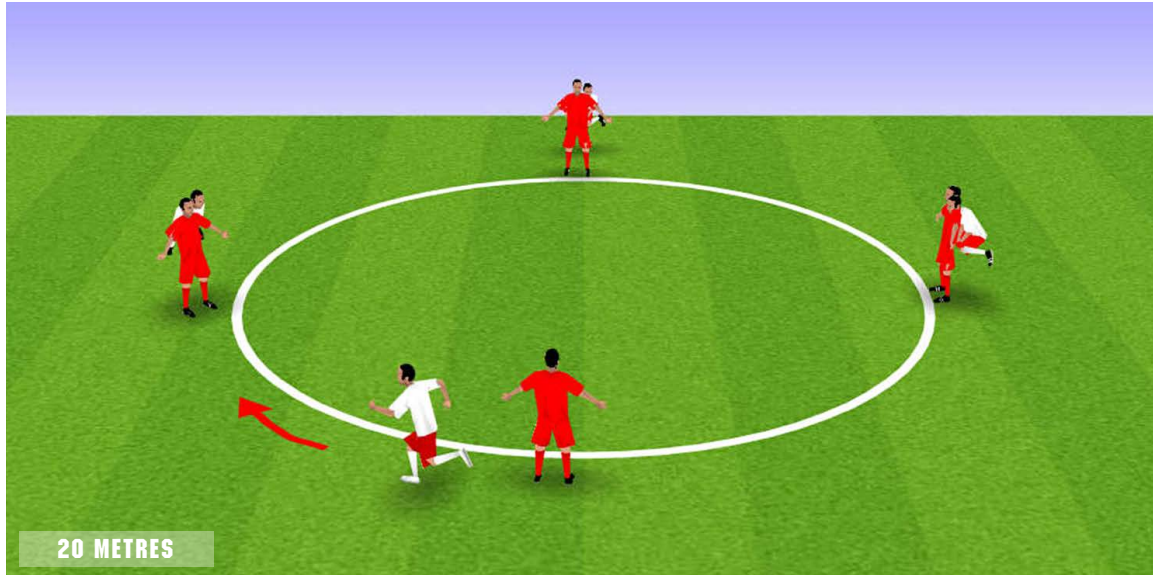
- “Go!” – players start running around the circle and perform tasks at the coach’s command:
 1. Jump in the air and touch your feet with your hands.
 2. Knees up and jog on the spot.
 3. Hop around and over the balls without touching them.
 4. Weave in and out of the balls without touching them.

OPTIONS:

- “Pass!” – run to a ball, find any partner and pass the ball back and forth 3 times. Leave the ball and keep running.
- “Volley!” – run to a ball, find any partner and throw the ball so he/she volleys it back with the foot or thigh. Drop the ball and keep running.
- Each player has a ball: dribble around the circle and perform different skills at the coach’s command:
 1. Juggle with your foot or thigh.
 2. Head it from your hands and catch it.
 3. Jog in place while making alternate touches on the ball with the soles of your feet, etc.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: “YEE-HAW, GRANDMA!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs around the perimeter of a large circle.

INSTRUCTIONS:

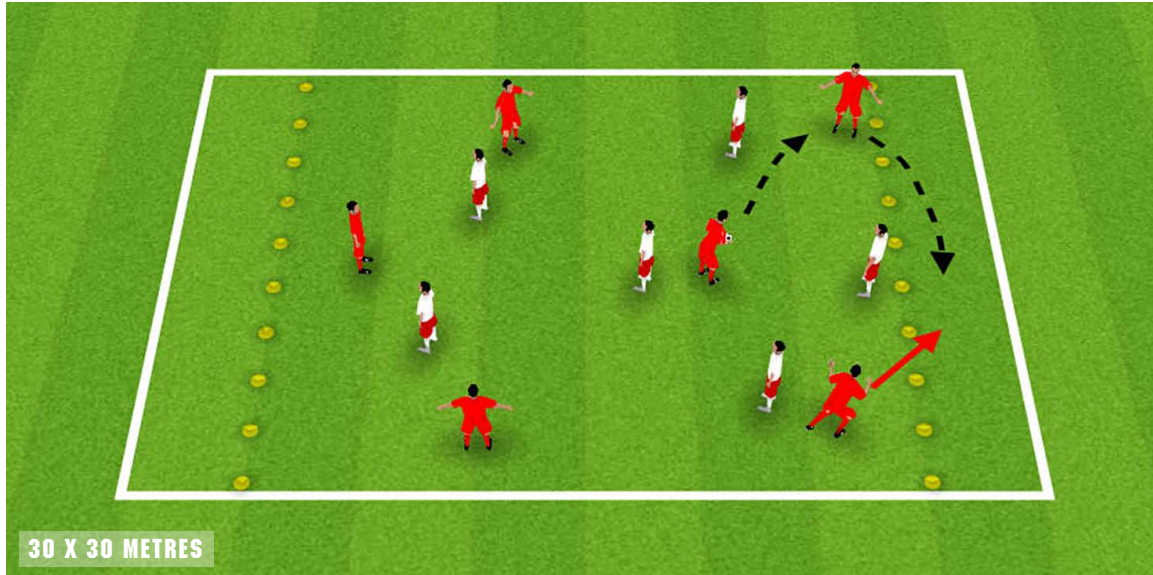
- One partner picks up the other in a piggyback.
- “Go!” – jump off your partner’s back and run around the circle as fast as you can. When you get back to your partner jump back on, piggyback, and shout, “Yee-haw, Grandma!” as loud as you can. The first player to shout scores a point for the team. Swap roles after each turn. The pair with the most points wins!

OPTIONS:

- Increase the challenge: **1.** The runner jumps off the piggyback and crawls through his/her partner’s legs before running around the circle, and does the same before jumping back on. **2.** The runner jumps off the piggyback, leapfrogs their partner and crawls through his/her legs before running, and does the same on the way back.
- Each pair has a ball: the runners perform the same exercises as above but have to dribble a ball around the circle.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 1: “HANDBALL”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams; 1 ball.
- Use cones to mark out 2 end zones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

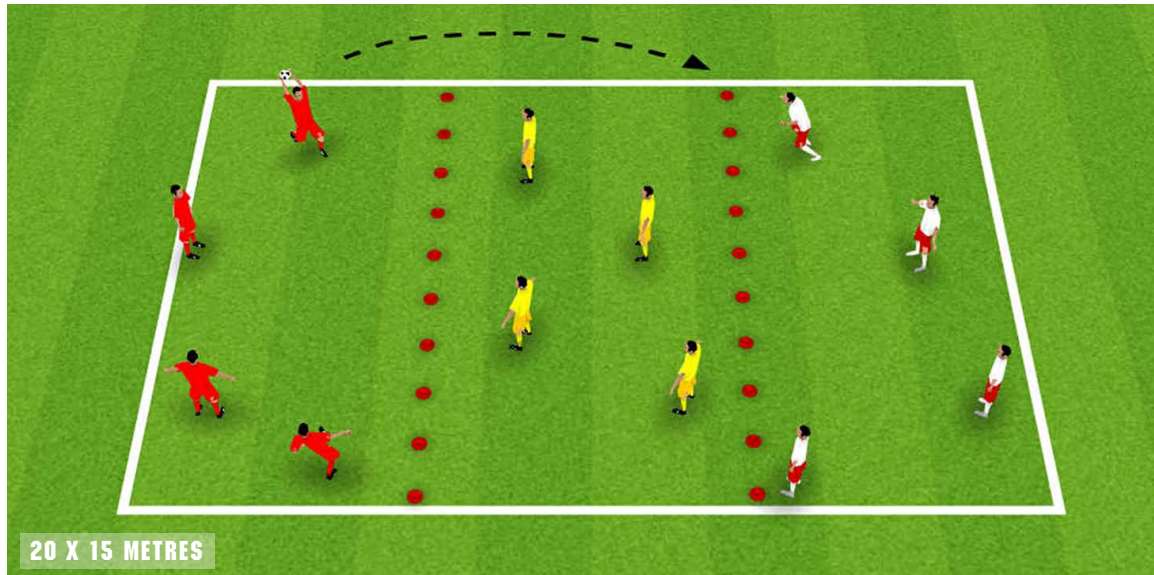
- “Go!” – move the ball up the field by throwing it back and forth with your teammates. Score a point by throwing the ball to a teammate in the other team’s end zone. If you have the ball, stand still until you pass it.
- Introduce the offside rule: Remember, you can’t wait in the end zone to receive a pass, but you can run past the opposing team’s line to receive it after the ball is thrown.

OPTIONS:

- Instead of throwing to pass, have players throw the ball up and volley it with their foot for their teammate to catch.
- Instead of simply catching the ball, receiving players must control/juggle it with a part of their body (i.e. foot, thigh) before catching it. If the ball hits the ground, the other team takes possession.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 2: “PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 3 teams; 1 ball.
- Use cones to divide the field into 3 equal zones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

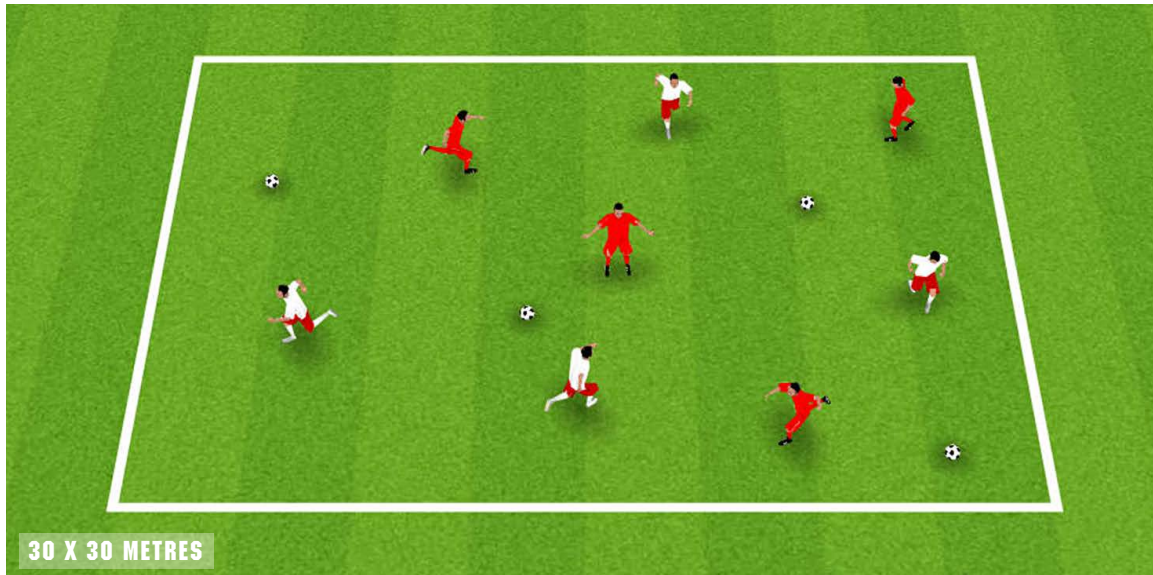
- The defenders are in the middle zone.
- “Go!” – the end-zone teams try to throw the ball back and forth to each other, while the defenders try to intercept each pass.
- If an end zone team catches a pass, they score a point. If they drop the ball, they switch places with the team in the middle.
- “Switch!” – after 5 passes, swap roles so that each team has a turn in the middle.

OPTIONS:

- Instead of simply catching the ball, set different control challenges: **1.** Control the ball with the foot before it hits the ground. **2.** Control with your thigh. **3.** Control with your chest. Remember: use the controlling touch to move the ball across your body (i.e. left thigh to right foot, etc.).
- Instead of throwing, have players drop the ball and volley it over to the other side with the foot; receiving players have to control the ball with the chest, thigh or foot before it hits the ground.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 3: “GET TO WORK!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players; enough balls for half the players, distributed randomly around the field.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – run around the field without touching any balls. Keep your head up to avoid running into anyone!
- “Listen!” – follow the coach’s instructions so you know what to do:
 1. Knees up.
 2. Kick your heels back.
 3. Bunny hop.
 4. Drop for 5 push-ups.
- When the coach shouts, “Ball!” race to a ball as fast as you can and pick it up. If you get one, you’re a “server.” Those without a ball become “workers.” Each worker has to visit 3 different

servers, who will “serve” the ball for them to volley back 3 times on each foot.

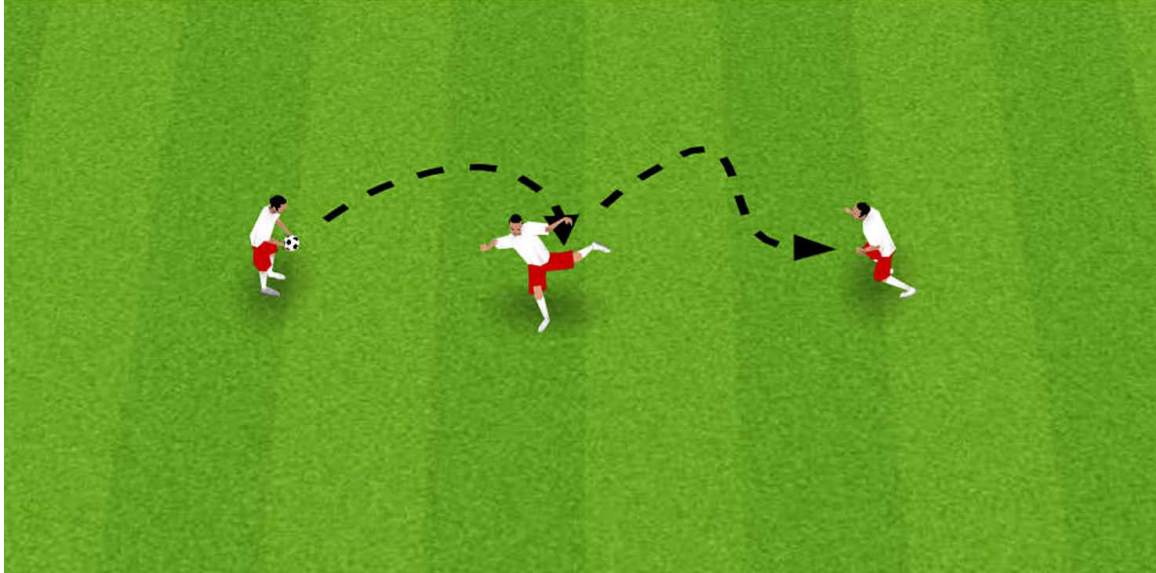
- “Switch!” – servers and workers swap roles so that everyone gets a turn to volley before the next race to the ball.

OPTIONS:

- Have workers volley with the outside of their foot or their laces, or control with the chest, thigh or foot before passing back. Remember to control across your body (i.e. left side of chest to right thigh, etc.)

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 4: “MISSION: CONTROL”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 3; 1 ball per group.
- Players stand about 5 metres apart.

INSTRUCTIONS:

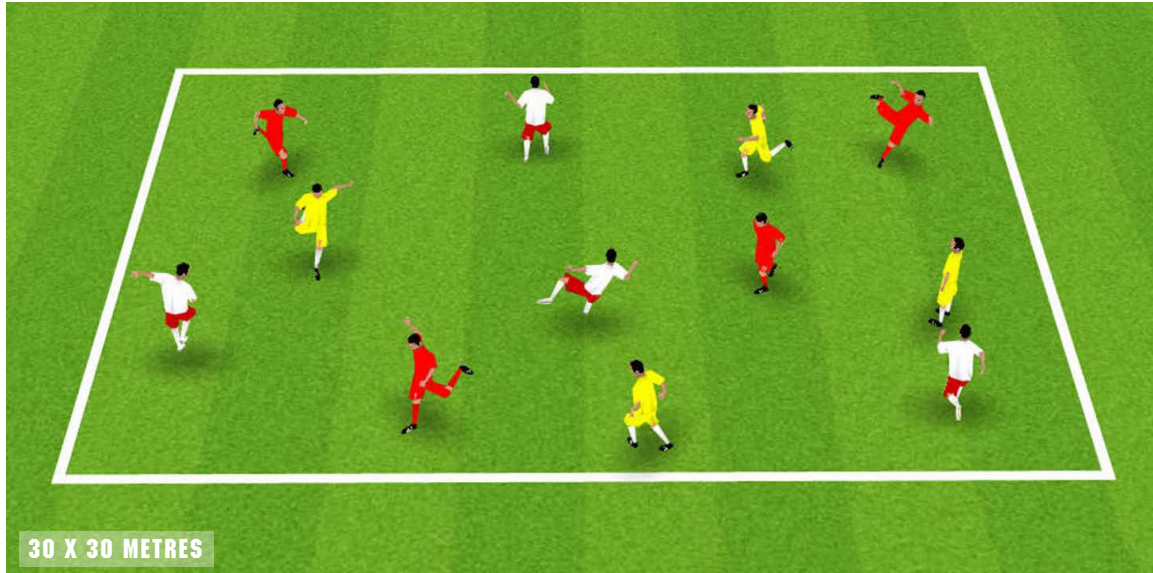
- One of the outside players starts with the ball in their hands. The middle player stands sideways.
- “Go!” – the outside player throws the ball to the middle player, who uses the outside of his/her thigh to volley it to the third player. The third player catches the ball and throws it back to the middle player, who uses the outside of his/her other thigh to volley it back to the first player.
- “Switch!” – players swap roles after 5 volleys back and forth along the line.

OPTIONS:

- Set new volleying challenges for the middle players: **1.** Volley across your body with the inside of your thigh (i.e. left thigh to the player on your right). **2.** Volley with the outside of your foot. **3.** Volley with the top of your foot across your body as you do when shooting.
- Work in a triangle: Player 1 throws to Player 2, who volleys to Player 3, who catches the ball and throws to Player 1, who volleys to Player 2, etc.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: “READY, STEADY, ACTION!”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 3 teams.
- Number teams 1-3.

INSTRUCTIONS:

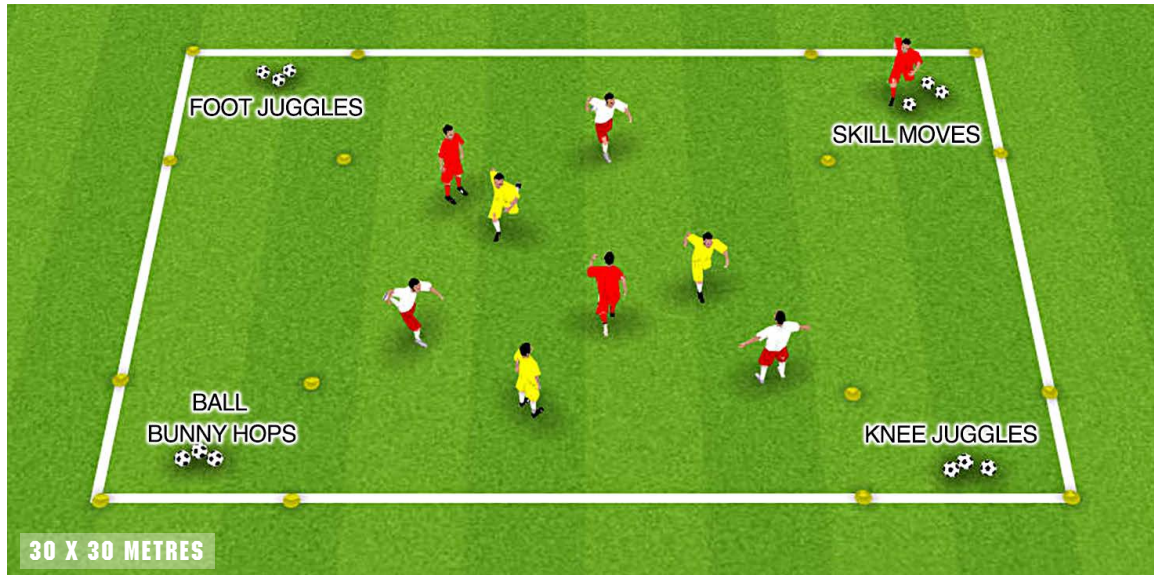
- Team 1 is the “action” team.
- “Go!” – all 3 teams start running around the field. On the coach’s command, Teams 2 and 3 freeze and stand on one leg while Team 1 performs a task:
 1. Hop in place.
 2. Bound around the field in between the “frozen” players.
 3. Skip.
 4. Shuffle to the side.
 5. Drop and do 5 push-ups, etc.
 When the coach says, “Run!” everyone starts running around the field again.

- “Switch!” – another team becomes the action team. Continue until all 3 teams have had a turn.

OPTIONS:

- All 3 teams are “action” teams and perform 3 different tasks at the coach’s command. Keep your heads up to avoid bumping into anyone!
- Incorporate a ball into all tasks:
 1. Individual dribbling rather than running around the field.
 2. Passing in pairs.
 3. Bunny hops holding the ball between your knees.
 4. Juggling with feet or thighs.
 5. Heading from your hands and catching the ball, etc.

COORDINATION—PASSING ACTIVITY 2: “TASK TAG”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 3 teams.
- Number teams 1-3.

INSTRUCTIONS:

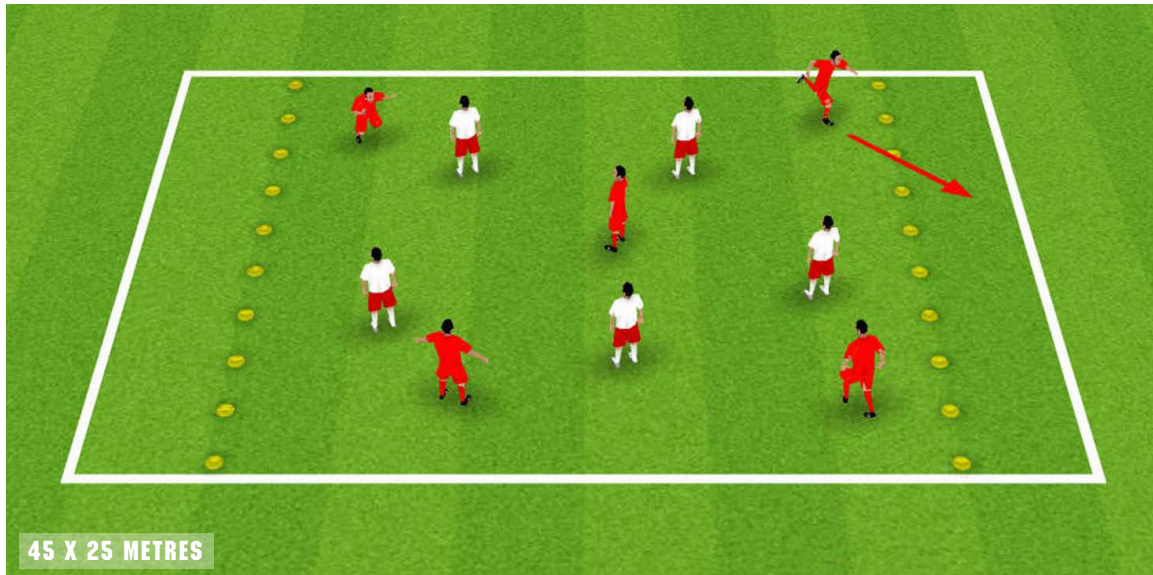
- Team 1 is the “tagging” team.
- “Go!” – all 3 teams start running around the field, with Teams 2 and 3 trying to avoid getting tagged by Team 1. If Team 2 and 3 players get tagged, they go to the closest task corner and perform that task.
- “Switch!” – another team becomes the tagging team. Continue until all 3 teams have had a turn.

OPTIONS:

- Players on the tagging team each have a ball, and have to dribble while they try to tag players on the other teams.
- Instead of tagging with their hand, players on the tagging team have to pass to hit players below the knee in order to send them to a task corner.
- Non-tagging teams have one ball each, and have to dribble and pass with their teammates while avoiding the taggers.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 3: “INVISI-BALL”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams.
- Using an imaginary ball, players learn to keep their heads up and listen to each other.

INSTRUCTIONS:

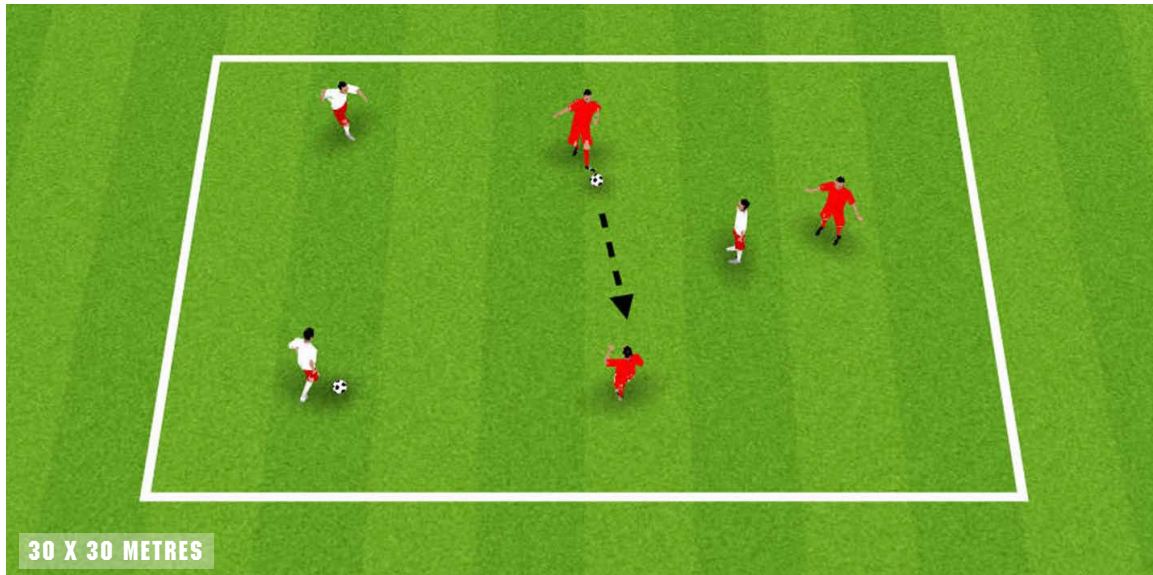
- “Go!” – if the coach shouts your name, that means you have the “ball”! If a player on the other team tags you when you have the “ball,” it’s their “ball.” You can “pass” by shouting a teammate’s name. You score a point by running with the “ball” into the other team’s end zone without being tagged.

OPTIONS:

- Have teams “pass” to a player in the end zone to score a point.
- Introduce a real ball: players shout a teammate’s name before passing, and lose possession if they get tagged while holding the ball, or if a pass is intercepted by the other team.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 4: “THREE-WAY PASSING”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in teams of 3;
1 ball per group.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – start to move around the field, and pass the ball back and forth with your teammates. Keep your head up and avoid bumping into anyone!
- “Listen!” – follow your coach’s instructions: **1.** Pass with the inside of each foot. **2.** Pass with the outside of each foot. **3.** Dribble, then do a short pass. **4.** Dribble away, then turn and do a long pass. **5.** When receiving, control the ball with the outside of your foot, then the inside.

OPTIONS:

- Try a one-touch pass.
- Number each player (i.e., 1-3) and have teams pass in that sequence.
- Introduce a second ball for each team.
- Increase the pace with changes of speed and direction after every pass.

3

STAGE 3—(U-8/U-11 F, U-9/U-12 M)



SMALL-SIDED GAMES

- Are FUN!
- Will motivate your players more than any other activity.
- Should involve an age-appropriate level of decision-making (i.e., what to do when I have the ball, what to do when I don't, and how to work well with my teammates).
- Provide players with the best chance to practice individual skills.

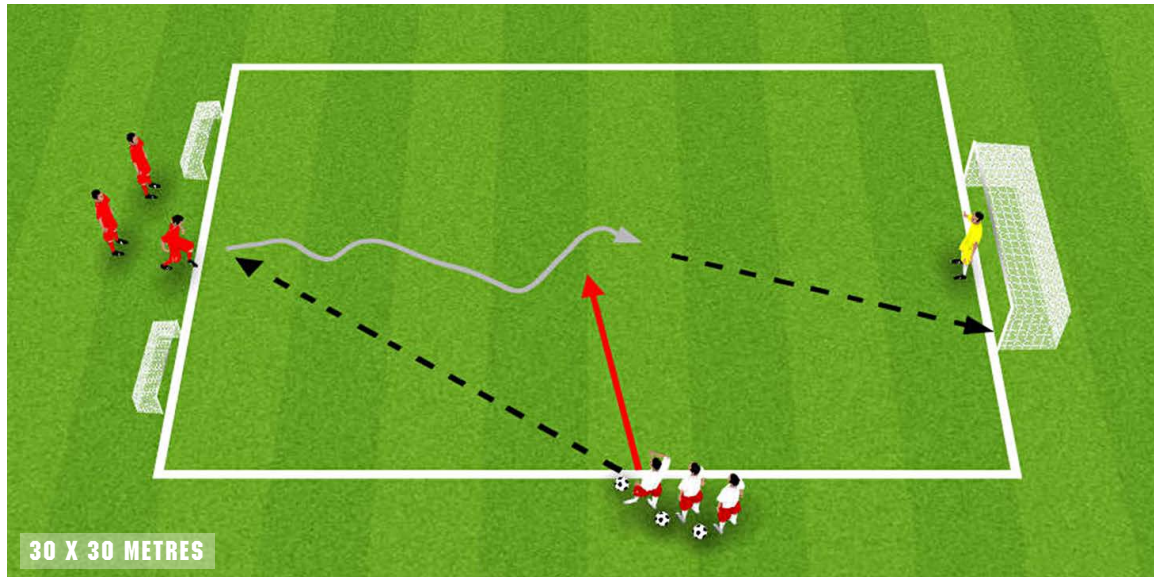
At the Learning to Train stage (U-8/U-11 Girls; U-9/U-12 Boys), small-sided games should make up about 40% of practice time (i.e., roughly 35 minutes of a 90-minute training session). The following games are designed to develop dribbling, passing and shooting skills.

TIP

Many of the activities in this Tool Kit revolve around individual or group competitions. If pinnies aren't available to distinguish competing players from one another, old t-shirts in colours that differ from the team's uniform work too!

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 1: “ONE ON ONE”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs (1 attacker, 1 defender); 1 goalkeeper.
- One large goal; 2 smaller goals (or gates marked out with cones) at the opposite end of the field for defenders to aim for.

OPTIONS:

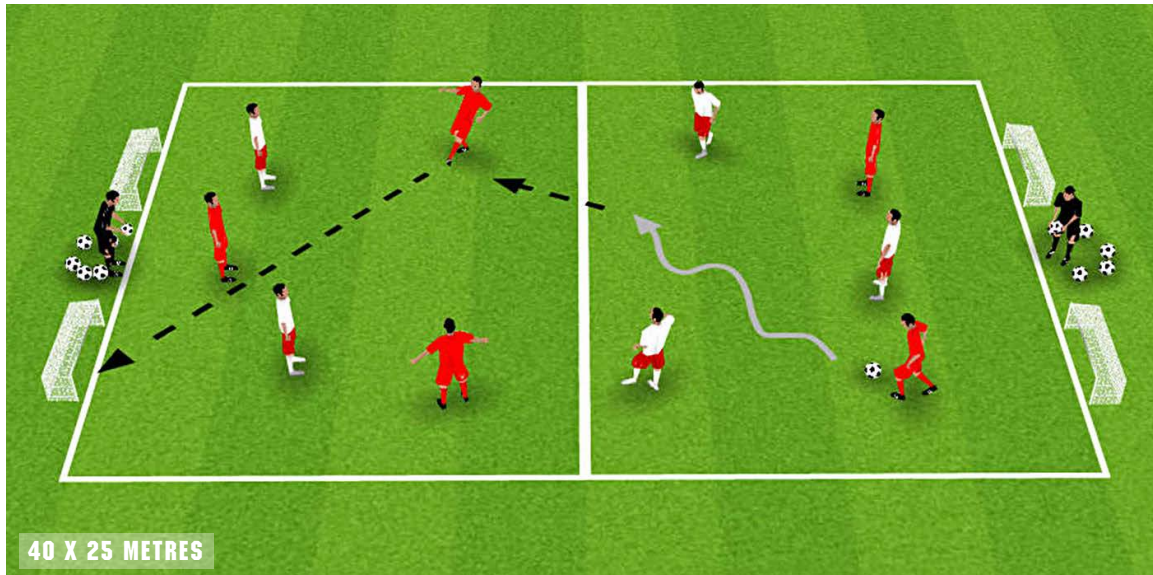
- If the defender wins the ball, he/she can dribble out or try to score a point by passing the ball into one of the two smaller goals.
- Add players to create a 2 v 2 or 3 v 3 game.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Attackers line up at the end line opposite the goalkeeper. Defenders line up on one side of the field.
- “Go!” – the first defender passes the ball to the first attacker then runs onto the field to challenge for the ball. The attacker tries to dribble past the defender and shoot on net to score.
- “Switch!” – players swap roles. Continue until all players have had a turn as both attacker and defender.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 2: “ATTACK IN THE BOX”



SET UP:

- Up to 10 players, in 2 teams; 2 coaches/parents at opposite ends.
- Two small goals (or gates marked out with cones) at each end.

INSTRUCTIONS:

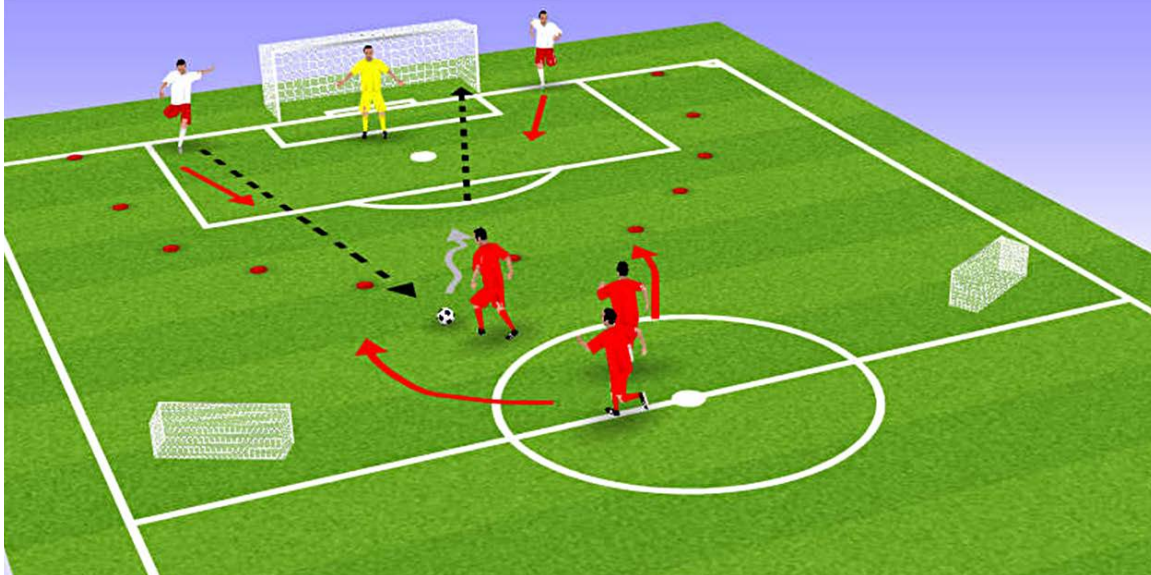
- Two defenders and 3 attackers in each half of the field. Players have to stay in their “boxes.”
- “Go!” – both teams try to score on their opponent’s 2 goals. Players move the ball up the field by dribbling to the centre line and passing to a teammate on the other side. If a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the coach/parent at that end serves the next ball immediately.
- “Switch!” – players swap roles every 3 minutes.

OPTIONS:

- Have players dribble into the goal with the ball under control, rather than shooting to score.
- An attacker must dribble past at least 1 defender before shooting.
- Allow one attacking player to drop into their team’s half as a defender to create a 3 v 3 situation.
- Remove restrictions and allow free 5 v 5 play.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 3: “ATTACK ZONE”



SET UP:

- Five players (3 attackers, 2 defenders); 1 goalkeeper.
- Work on a half field, with 1 large goal, 2 small goals (or gates marked out by cones). Use small cones in a semi-circle to mark out the “attack” zone around the large goal.

OPTIONS:

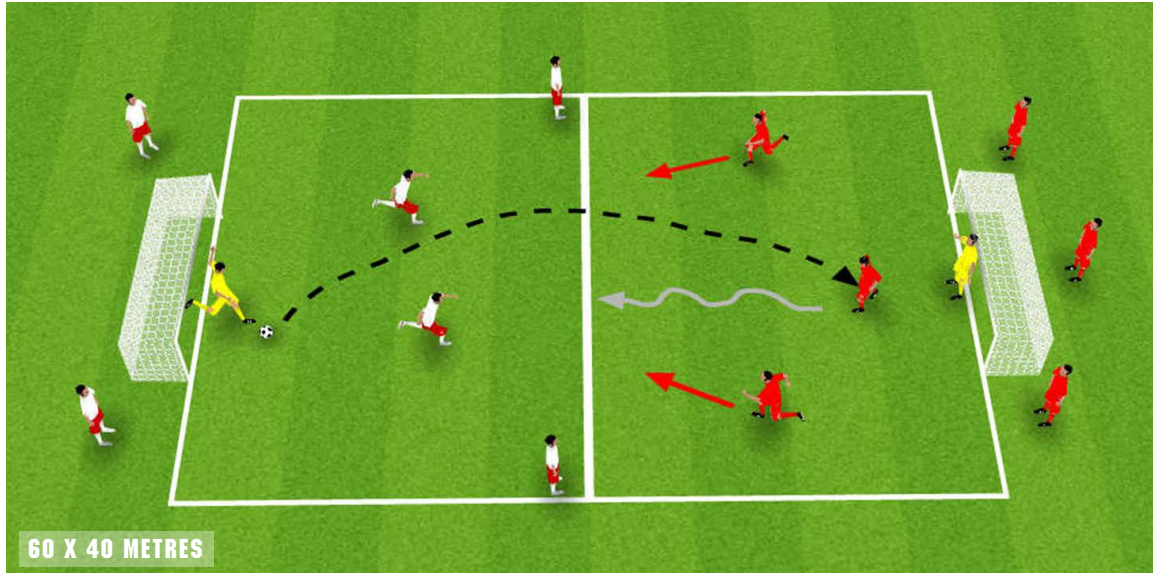
- If defenders win the ball, they can score on either small goal.
- Add another defender to create a 3 v 3 situation. The 3rd defender starts behind the attackers, and is “released” when the ball moves into the attack zone.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- The defenders start on opposite sides of the large goal. The attackers form a line between the small goals.
- “Go!” – a defender passes the ball to an attacker and both defenders run out on to the field to challenge for the ball. The attacker who receives the ball dribbles it into the attack zone and tries to score, supported by his/her 2 teammates.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: “3 V 2 TO 4 V 3”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams;
1 goalkeeper per team.
- Team 1 starts as the attackers, with 3 players on the field. Team 2 starts as the defenders, with 2 players at the top of the penalty area, and 2 support players positioned wide at the halfway mark. Relief players wait behind their team’s goal.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the Team 2 goalkeeper serves the ball to the Team 1 attackers, who dribble and pass the ball up the field and try to score.

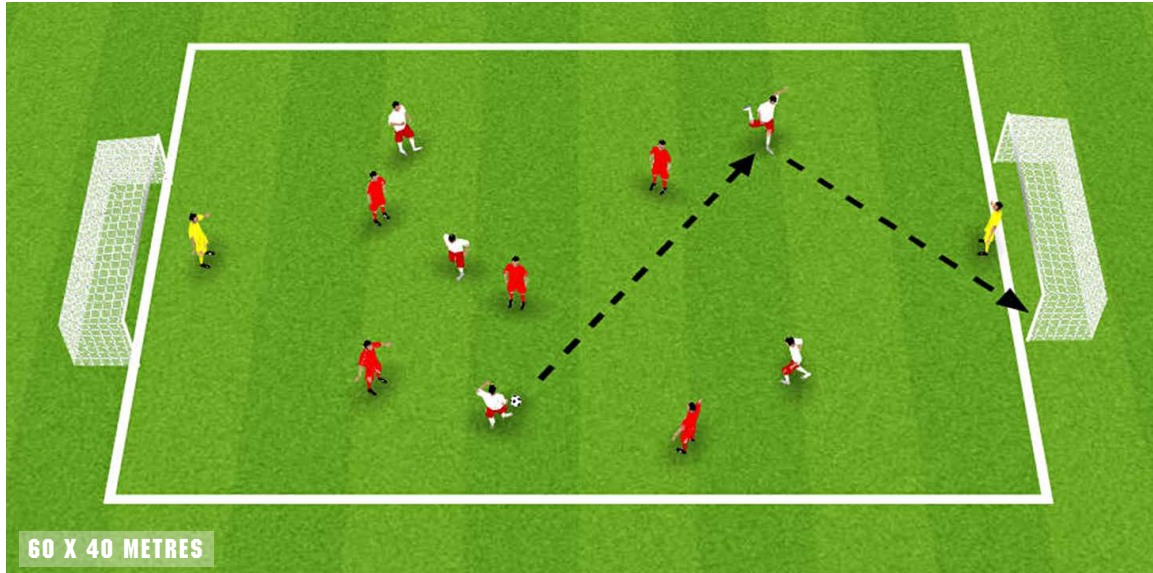
- If Team 2 defenders win the ball, the 2 wide support players can join them as they try to score on Team 1’s goal, creating a 4 v 3 situation.
- “Switch!” – rotate players frequently, and restart the game with new attackers and defenders.

OPTIONS:

- Introduce a time restriction, so that attackers must shoot on goal within 10 seconds of gaining possession of the ball.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: “PASSING FOR POINTS”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 equal teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.

INSTRUCTIONS:

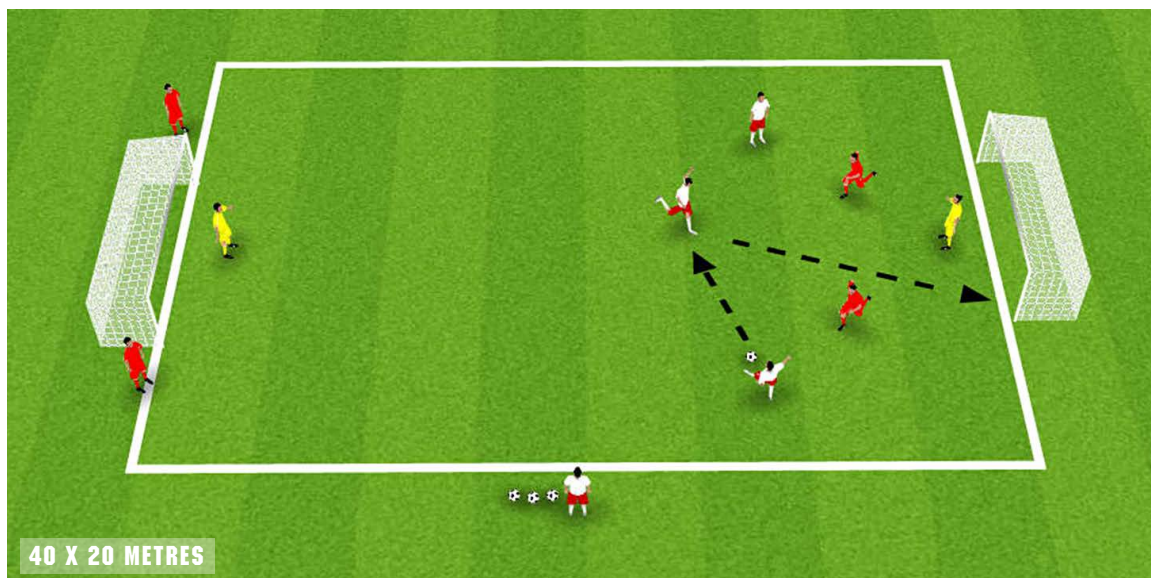
- “Go!” – proceed with a normal game, but players are limited to only three touches before they have to pass to a teammate. More than three touches means the other team gets the ball.
- Use kick-ins rather than throw-ins if the ball goes out of bounds.

OPTIONS:

- Team scores an extra point if at least 3 players touch the ball before a shot on goal.
- The number of passes leading up to a goal adds to team’s total points (i.e. 3 passes before a goal equals 4 points).

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 2: “WAVES OF ATTACK”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 equal teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Team 1 starts as the attackers, gathered on one side of the field with a supply of balls. Team 2 starts as the defenders, with players split evenly beside the goals at both ends of the field.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the coach shouts a number from 1 to 4 and Team 1 attacks with the corresponding number of players. Team 2 sends out one less defender each time (e.g., if the coach shouts “3” then Team 1 sends out 3 attackers and Team 2 responds with 2 defenders).
- Team 1 can score on either goal. After each goal, the goalkeeper serves the

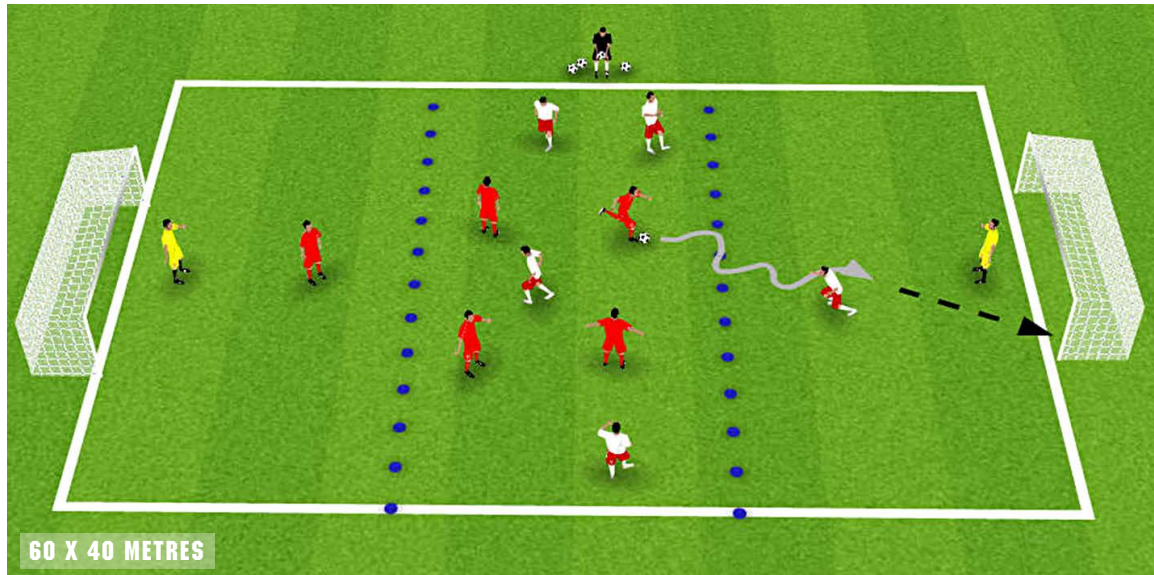
ball to an attacker and Team 1 can try to score again at the opposite end of the field with the same ball.

- If Team 2 wins the ball, Team 1 players have to return to the sidelines and attack again with a new ball.
- “Switch!” – rotate players frequently and have the teams switch roles after 5 balls have been played so that everyone has a turn attacking and defending.

OPTIONS:

- Attacking team has to pass at least 3 times before shooting on goal.
- Award points based on the number of attackers on the field (i.e. attackers in a 4 v 3 situation get 4 points per goal).
- Players can only touch the ball 3 times before passing, or their team loses possession of the ball.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING ACTIVITY 3: “3 ZONE ATTACK”



SET UP:

- Ten players, in 2 equal teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Four players from each team start in the middle zone; one defender from each team has to stay in the outer zones to support the goalkeeper.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – the coach serves the ball into the middle zone. Players pass the ball in that zone until a teammate has the space to dribble out. The player with the ball then goes 1 v 1 against the defender in the outer zone and tries to score. If the defender or the goalkeeper wins the ball, they play it to their teammates in the middle zone.

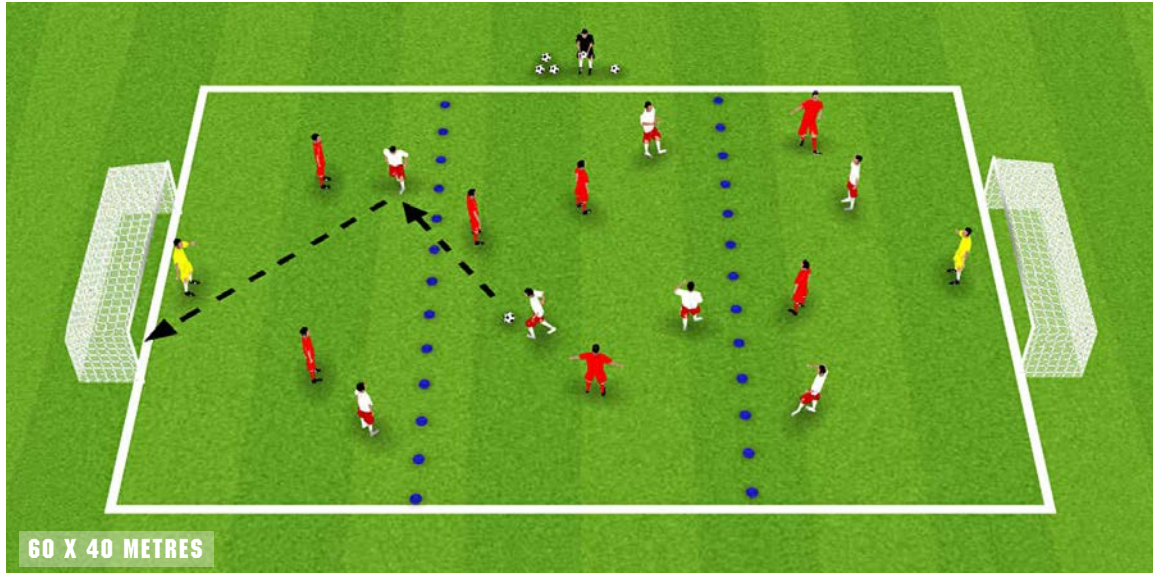
- “Switch!” – rotate players frequently so that everyone has a turn in the outer zones.

OPTIONS:

- Allow a second middle zone player to support the attacker dribbling the ball to create a 2 v 1 situation in the outer zone.
- Add a second defender to cover the support player.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 4: “THROUGH THE THIRDS”



SET UP:

- Up to 14 players, in 2 equal teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Three players from each team start in the middle zone; 2 players from each team start in the outer zones, creating a 3 v 3 in the middle and 2 v 2 situations in the outer zones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

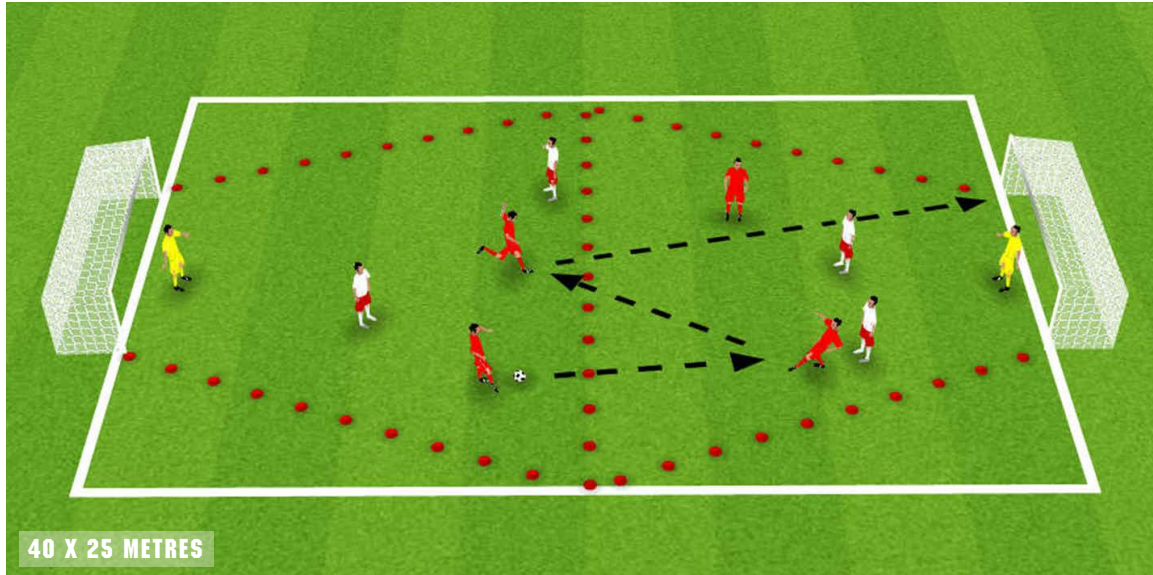
- “Go!” – the coach serves the ball into the middle zone. The team in possession passes to one of their teammates in the outer zone. From there, the attackers shoot to score on the other team’s goal. All players have to stay in their own zones.

OPTIONS:

- Try to pass in just 2 touches. Then introduce one-touch passes.
- Allow players from the middle zone to support their teammates in the outer zones, creating a 5 v 5 situation.
- Modify the numbers based on available players (i.e. 4 v 4 in the middle and 3 v 3 in the outer zones if you have more players; or 2 v 2 and 1 v 1 if you have fewer players).

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 1: “A SCORING COMBINATION”



SET UP:

- Eight players, in 2 teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Use cones in diagonal lines on both sides of the field to narrow the playing area from the halfway mark to the goal posts, and to mark out the halfway line.
- Two players from each team must stay in their designated half of the field.

OPTIONS:

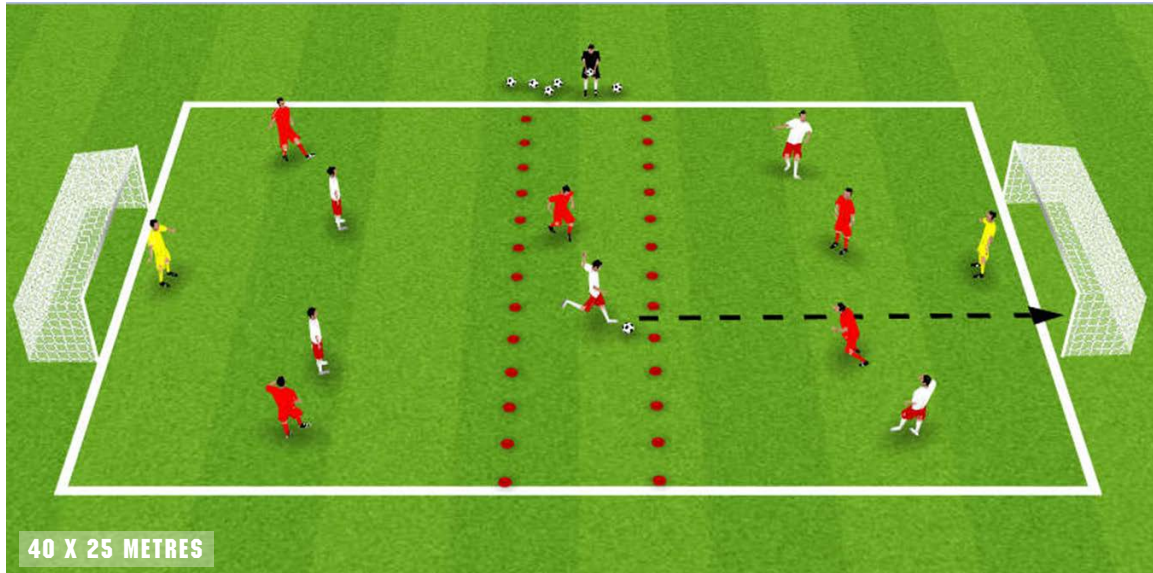
- Only players in the opposing team’s half of the field can shoot on goal (i.e. the attackers).
- Players get an extra point if they complete a one-touch goal (i.e. without controlling the ball first).
- Allow players to move from one half to the other and allow any player to shoot from anywhere in the playing area.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – players try to score on the opposing team’s goal. Only players in their own team’s half of the field can shoot (i.e. the defenders). Their teammates in the other half can pass back to create shooting opportunities.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 2: “OUT OF THE NEUTRAL ZONE”



SET UP:

- Ten players, in 2 teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Use cones to mark out a narrow neutral zone in the middle of the field.
- Three attackers and 2 defenders in each half.
- A coach/parent stands on the sidelines with a supply of balls.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – Players can move into the neutral zone when shooting, but otherwise must stay in their designated half of the field. The coach/parent serves the first ball into the neutral zone and both teams try to score. Shots on goal can only be taken from the neutral

zone. When the ball goes out of play, the coach/parent serves the next ball immediately.

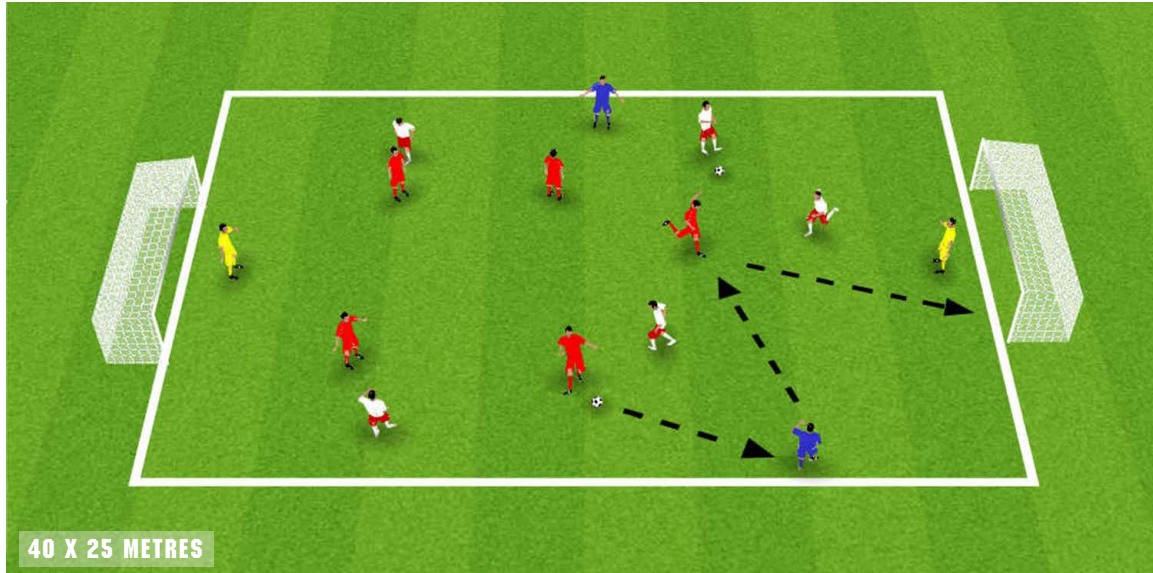
- “Switch!” – rotate positions after 6 balls have been played.

OPTIONS:

- The coach/parent alternately serves the ball to each attacking team.
- Add a time restriction: players must shoot from the neutral zone within 10 seconds of taking possession of the ball.
- Players get an extra point if they complete a one-touch goal (i.e. without controlling the ball first).

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 3: “SHOOT IN 4”



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 equal teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.

INSTRUCTIONS:

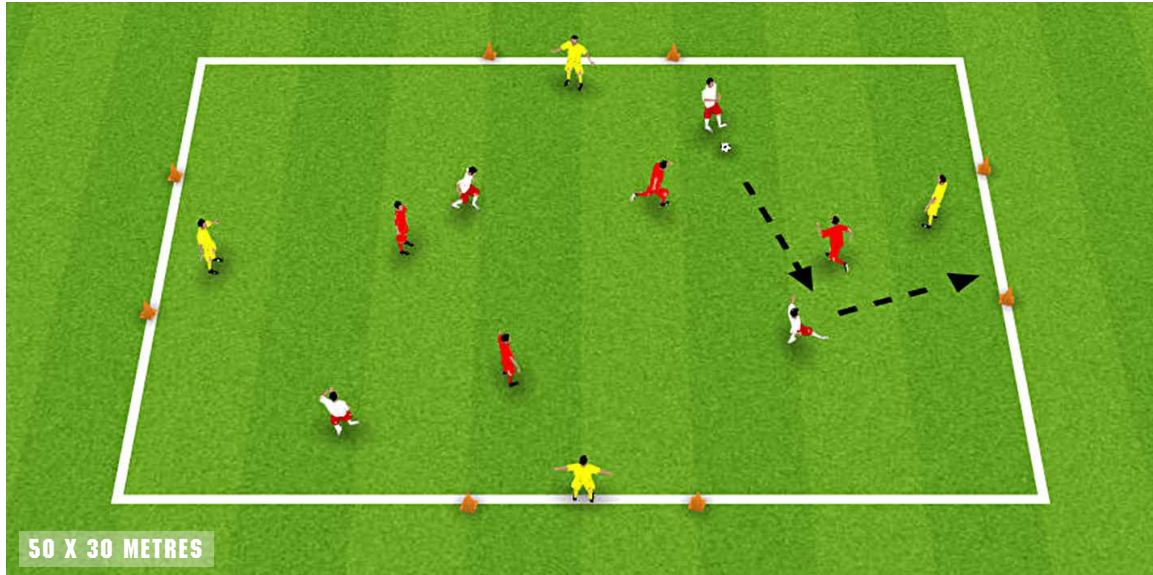
- “Go!” – proceed with a normal game, but players have a maximum of four touches on the ball before shooting.
- Players get an extra point if they complete a one-touch goal (i.e. without controlling the ball first).

OPTIONS:

- Add neutral players (in different coloured pinnies or t-shirts) positioned wide on opposite sides of the field to support whichever team has the ball.
- Players who complete a one-touch goal on a cross-pass from one of the neutral players get 3 points.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 4: “4 GOAL GAME”



SET UP:

- Eight players, in 2 equal teams; plus 4 goalkeepers.
- Place a goal (or mark out a goal with cones) on all 4 sides of the field.

OPTIONS:

- Allow both teams to score on any one of the 4 goals.
- Players get an extra point if they complete a one-touch goal (i.e. without controlling the ball first).

INSTRUCTIONS:

- “Go!” – one team tries to score on the 2 goals on the end lines, while the other team tries to score on the 2 goals on the sidelines.
- The first team to score 2 goals wins! Players from the losing team switch places with the goalkeepers.



CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY IS A ROADMAP FOR PLAYERS OF ALL AGES WHO WANT TO PLAY SOCCER AT THE RECREATIONAL, COMPETITIVE OR EXCEL LEVELS. IT IS BUILT AROUND THE PRINCIPLES OF LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AND ENCOURAGES LIFELONG PARTICIPATION.



LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT STAGES

LEVEL OF PLAY	
	EXCEL
	COMPETITIVE
	RECREATIONAL

PHYSICAL LITERACY	
1	Active Start AGE 4-6
2	FUNDamentals AGE 6-8 AGE 6-9
3	Learning to Train AGE 8-11 AGE 9-12

4	Training to Train AGE 11-15 AGE 12-18
5	Training to Compete AGE 15-19 AGE 19-20
6	Training to Win AGE 18+ AGE 19+
7	Active for Life ALL AGES



YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY AND LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT, PLEASE VISIT CANADASOCCER.COM/PATHWAY



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