



ENGLAND FOOTBALL
LEARNING

Running a team: guide



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Welcome to the Introduction to Coaching Football

This document will help you run a team – from planning, through to delivery and review. It's also a chance for us to say thank you. Developing yourself and your players takes time and effort, and we value your contribution.

OUR GOAL

1. Skilful players

Football is for everyone – and players of all ages, ability and positions demonstrate moments of skill. As a coach, your role is to notice and nurture these moments. Getting this right will engage your team and help you to develop more skilful players.

2. Inspirational opportunities

This is about giving your team the chance to play football, solve realistic in-game problems and hone their skills. It also involves matching your players' needs to the 'right' type of opportunity or experience. While this can feel tricky, it's a critical factor in successful development.

3. Transformational coaches

These individuals unleash a player's unique potential. A transformational coach creates a positive environment, builds quality relationships and empowers their team.

Engaging players

How do you want your players to feel?

Use the top tips below to engage your players at training.

1. Keep games and activities short
2. Don't stop players too often or for too long
3. Give players individual challenges
4. Use rewards and scoring systems
5. Play tournaments



TYPES OF TOURNAMENTS



Round robin

Every team plays each other. Following each game, teams are allocated points. For example, three points for a win, two for a draw and one for a loss. The winner is the team who finishes with the most points.



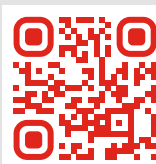
Ladder

Multiple playing areas. If a team wins, they move up to the next pitch. The aim is to play on the top pitch.

4 - 2
AGG

Aggregate scoring

Goals from a minimum of two games are added together. The team with the most goals wins. If there's a draw, a penalty shootout can decide the winner.



Check out more top tips for engaging your players on the England Football Community

Good coaching

Our ambition is to develop **skilful players** through **transformational coaches** providing inspirational **opportunities**.

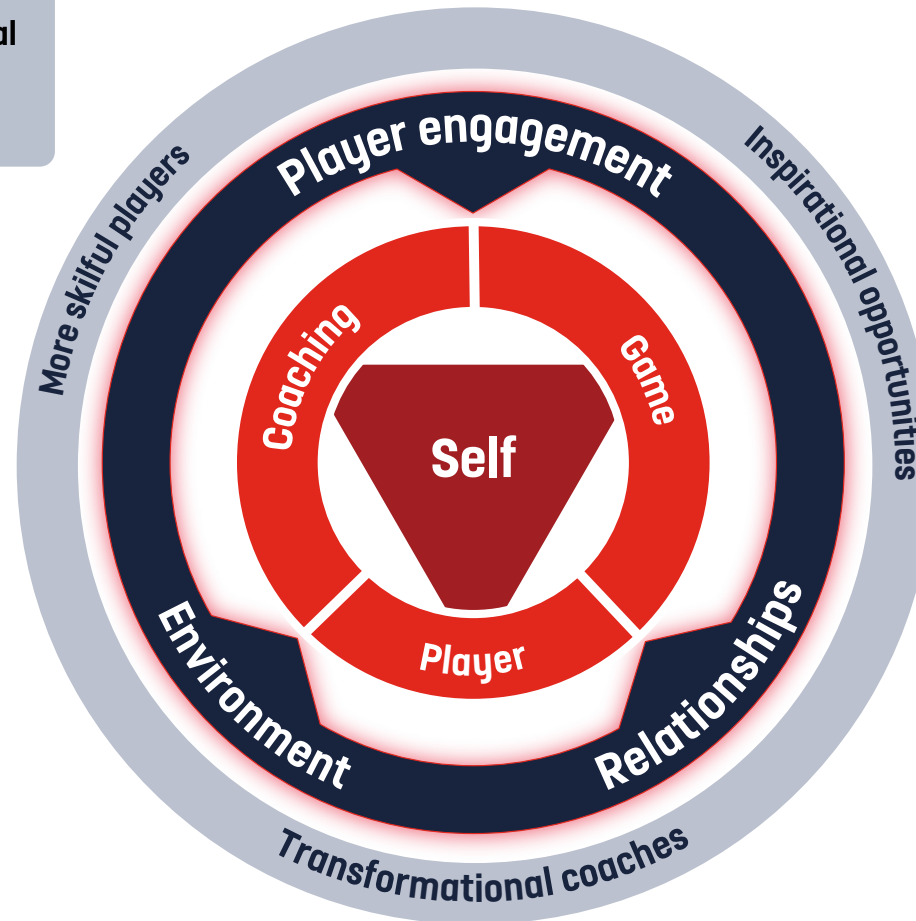
To fulfil our ambition, you must create a positive **environment**, build trusting **relationships** and maintain **player engagement**.

Self

You need to understand yourself, your motivations, values, beliefs, and the skills and attributes you bring to the coaching role.

Coaching

You need to use methods, interventions, strategies and tactics to help your players. For example, using the STEP framework to challenge every player in the session.



Game

You must understand the key principles and have technical and tactical knowledge.

Player

You need to understand who your players are, and know their motivations and interests, to help them enjoy the game and fulfil their potential.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Take a look at the personal attributes below. As a coach, what are your top three strengths and two areas for development?

Selfless

Curious

Self-control

Positive and
engaging

Committed

Strong
integrity

Driven

Visionary
(planned)

Adaptable

Caring and
empathetic



The game

Football is an emotional rollercoaster: a social event that provides both a mental and physical challenge. Ultimately, it's about scoring and stopping goals – invading and protecting 'territory'. Players must connect and combine to 'punch holes' in defences while trying to maintain their own. It's a game of cat and mouse, with teams constantly trying to outwit, outrun and outscore their opponents.

SIMPLE PRINCIPLES

Score goals

Try to go forward – either on your own or with your teammates. If you can't go forward, keep the ball (either on your own or with your teammates) until you can.

Core technical skills:

- Receiving
- Finishing
- Moving with the ball
- Turning
- Passing

Stop goals

Try to win the ball back quickly. If you can't, move to a position to help you or your teammates do so.

Core technical skills:

- Intercepting
- Pressing
- Marking
- Challenging
- Covering/recovering

The next few pages give ideas on how to help your players become more skilful.



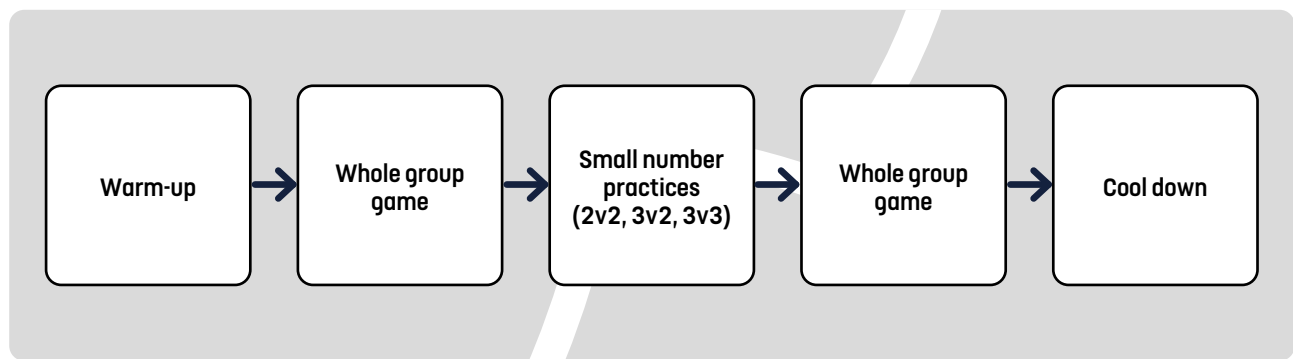
Find more session plans on the England Football Community

Structuring sessions

A good way to start a session is with a match. It gets players instantly engaged, excited and eager to get involved. It also encourages them to arrive on time and can free up the coach to connect with parents and the team.

WHOLE-PART-WHOLE

The session starts with a whole group game, and the practices that follow focus on something picked up in that game. This could be an individual skill like turning or a team move like spreading out. The players then play another whole group game to see if they've improved.

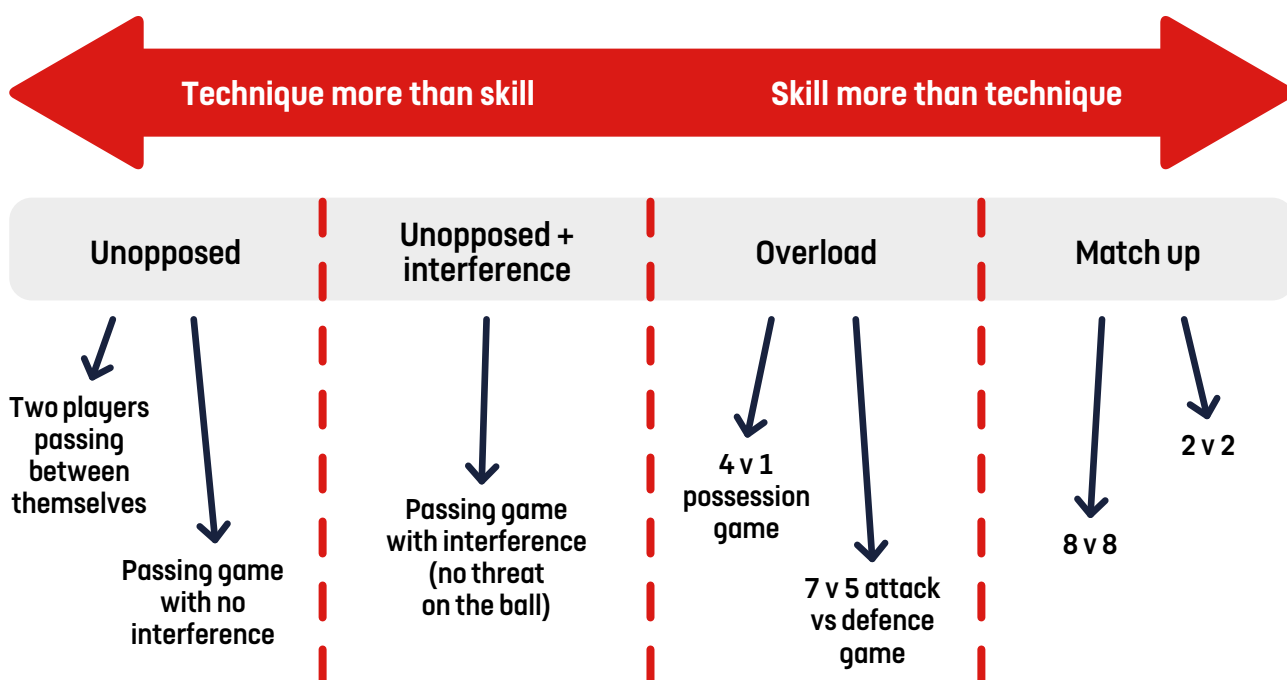


THE PRACTICE SPECTRUM

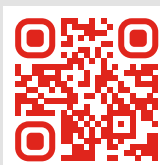
Practices sit on a spectrum. They all have particular benefits for players across various areas: technical, tactical, physical, mental, emotional and social.

When choosing a practice, you need to understand the benefits, the effects on players and the cause of these effects.

Opposed practices focus more on skill than unopposed practices, which mainly focus on technique.



In most cases, players will experience practices across the spectrum. However, a greater understanding of practice design will help you to provide the best support.



Check out more top tips to maximise training on the England Football Community.

PLANNING MODEL

Consider these four things when planning sessions.

Intended outcomes

Who are you working with?
What are you trying to help them get better at?

We always want players to have fun and develop. But are we working on passing, turning, intercepting or another skill?

Practice design

What practices will help achieve the intended outcomes and player engagement?

Possible options include tag games, ball-manipulation practices (pirates), target games, line-ball games, two-goal games and four-goal games.

Player engagement

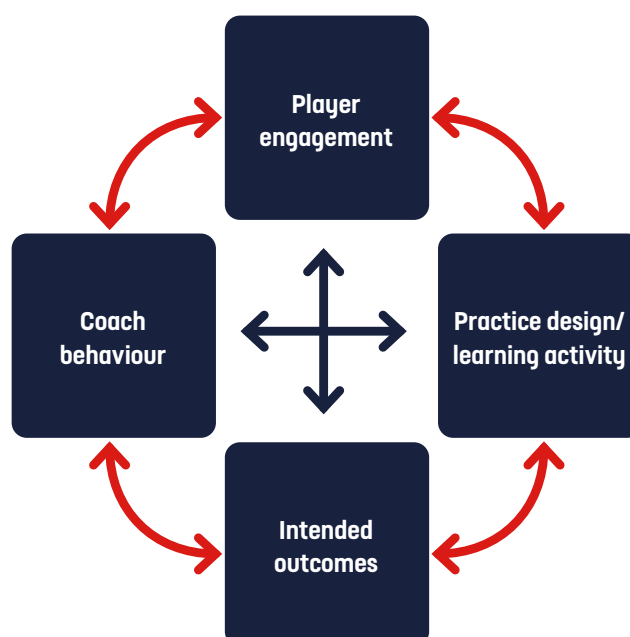
How do you want the players to feel?

Included, energised, excited, curious, experimental? Do you want them to problem-solve?

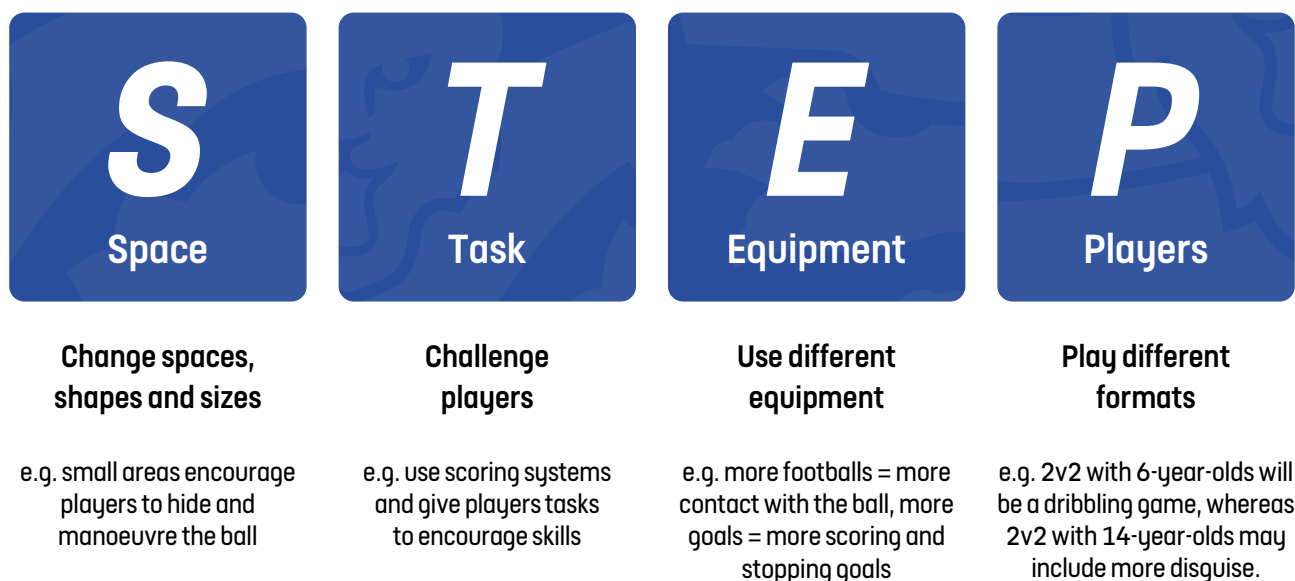
Coach behaviour

How can you provide added value?

Consider standing back and observing, providing feedback and catching players doing things well.



STEP FRAMEWORK (YOUTH SPORTS TRUST, 2002)



STEP stands for space, task, equipment and people. It's used to:

1. increase and decrease the level of challenge for the group or individuals – this enhances enjoyment, motivation and learning
2. ensure activities are inclusive and accessible.

Space

- What size is your area?
- What shape space works best for you?
- What surface are you playing on?
- Can you ensure players are covering match-realistic distances?

Task

- What are the rules of the format you play?
- How long will your games and activities be? Find the right balance between working and resting.
- What targets can you set? How about awarding points for tasks completed? Whatever you do, start small.

Equipment

- What equipment have you got?
- What happens if you use more or less footballs?
- What happens if you use more or less goals?

People

- How can you involve all players?
- How often do you play small-numbered games (1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 2v1, 3v2 etc.)?
- How often do you rotate target players?

STEP: SPACE – AREA SHAPES AND SIZES

Small

- Less space (relative to the number of players)
- Less time on the ball
- High intensity

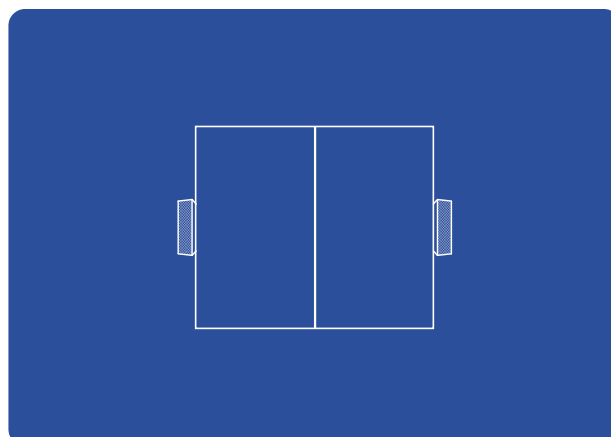
What effect does this have on the players?

It allows for:

- more ball contacts
- more physical contacts
- more turnovers in possession.

It's great for:

- practising individual ball skills and ball manipulation
- using your body to either protect or win the ball
- quick decision-making.



You might notice:

- it'll be harder for those with less technical ability
- the ball will go out of play a lot
- the players may tire quickly – play for short periods with a rest in between.

Long and narrow

- More space in front and behind defenders
- Less space down the sides
- Less intense

What effect does this have on the players?

In possession, it allows for:

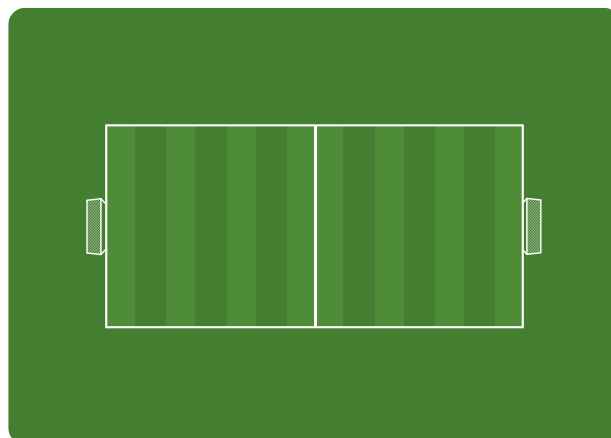
- more forward and backward passing (both over and through)
- more direct dribbles and runs
- playing with depth.

Out of possession, it allows for:

- teams to be compact
- a physical challenge of 'covering the spaces'
- more space for the GK to cover and play in.

It's great for:

- helping players to think, look and play forward.



You might notice:

- players try to play forward too quickly
- straight passes and runs
- a lack of backward passes to help go forward.

Wide and short

- More space down the sides (wide)
- More movements and actions across the pitch

What effect does this have on the players?

In possession, it allows for:

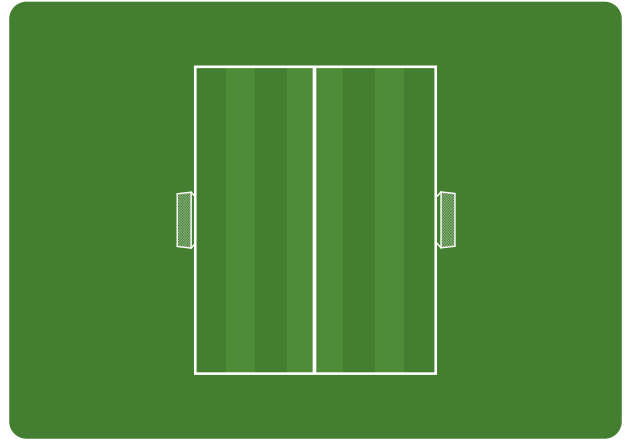
- playing with width (spreading out)
- more chances of 1v1s down the sides
- dribbling and running across the pitch.

Out of possession, it allows for:

- learning how to get and stay compact
- more sideways movements to cover and balance
- more chances of 1v1s down the sides.

It's great for:

- learning how to be patient in attack
- learning how to use the width to create gaps to play forward.

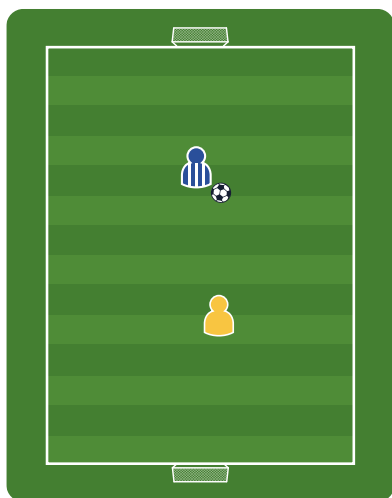


You might notice:

- defenders not getting close enough together
- attackers playing in front of the defence too much (not trying to penetrate through or behind).

STEP: PEOPLE – PLAYER NUMBERS

Individual



- Individual practise
- 1v1

What effect does this have on the players?

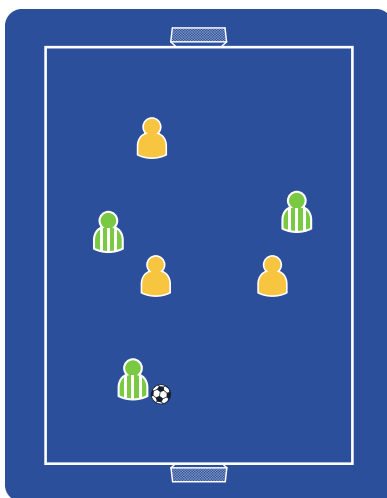
In possession, it allows for:

- high repetition on the ball
- decision-making related to the individual, opposing player, space and goal
- playing forward individually.

Out of possession, it allows for:

- high repetition of individual defending skills
- decision-making related to the individual, opposing player, space and goal.

Small number



- Individual practise
- Connections with others
- 2v1, 3v2, 3v3, 4v4

What effect does this have on the players?

In possession, it allows for:

- decision-making related to the individual, team, opposition, space and goal
- spreading out (players creating space)
- players to connect with and support their teammates
- movement to help teammates.

Out of possession, it allows for:

- intercepting
- marking
- players to consider the balance of the team
- covering
- pressing.

Large number



- Individual practise
- Connections with others
- 5v5, 5v6, 6v6, 6v7, 7v7

What effect does this have on the players?

In possession, it allows for:

- more team than individual play
- increased game realism
- decision-making related to the individual, team, opposition, space and goal
- spreading out
- players to connect with and support their teammates
- movement to help teammates.

Out of possession, it allows for:

- more team than individual defending
- increased game realism
- intercepting
- marking
- players to consider the balance of the team
- covering.

Warm-up ideas

Tag and chase games are a great way to inject energy and excitement into the start of your sessions. Watch the videos below for some examples.

Stay on the ball – pirate game



The stadium game



Movement to receive



The basket game



Whole: start with games

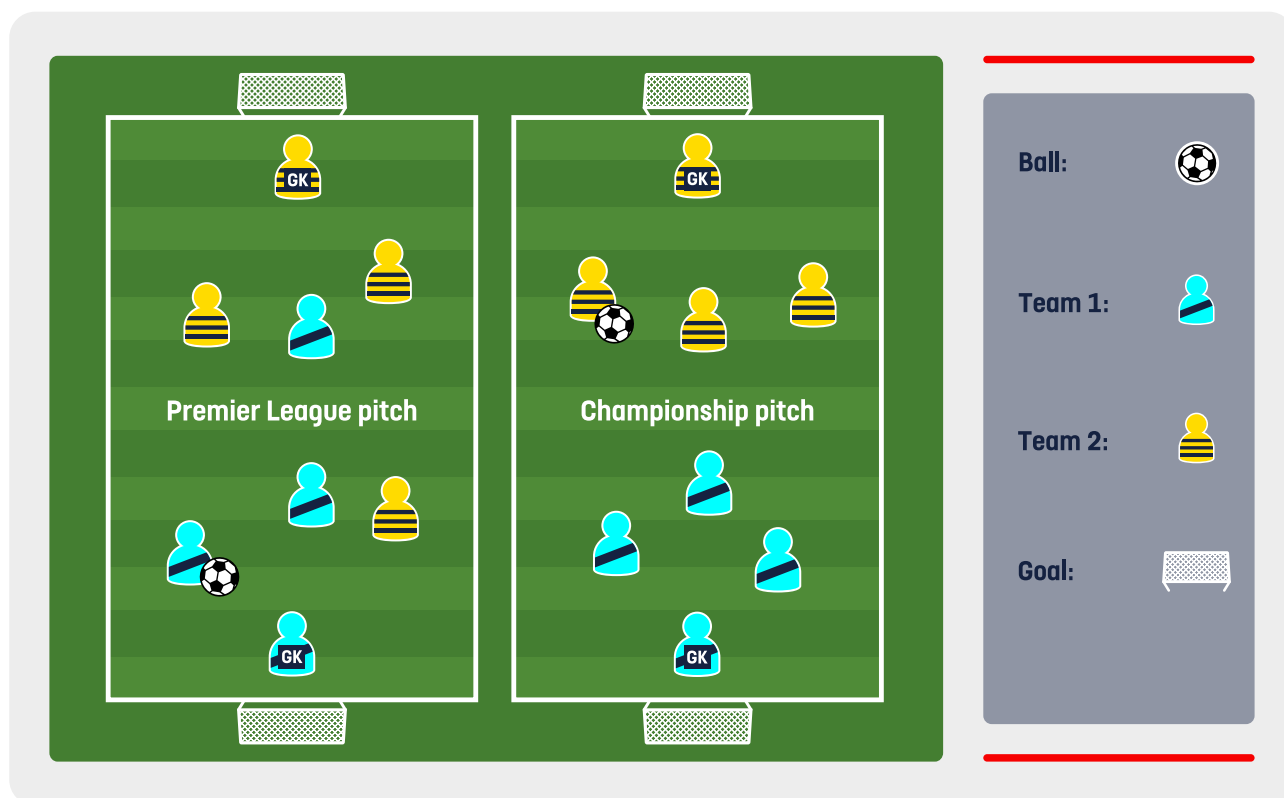
Why not start your session with a game?

FIVE GOALS, FIVE WAYS



- Set up a 6v6 game (or one that fits your numbers), and place a whiteboard and pen at the side of the pitch
- On the whiteboard, write down five different ways to score (e.g. left foot, right foot, header, volley, nutmeg)
- Play a normal match, the only difference being that players are trying to score using each of the five methods
- When they score using one of the methods, they tick it off on the whiteboard
- The first team to score using all five methods are the winners
- Instead of having to tick all five methods off, you could allocate points to each one – the team with the most points at the end are the winners
- Rotate the goalkeepers regularly

YOU WIN SOME, YOU LOSE SOME



- Create two pitches – one is the 'Premier League pitch', and the other is the 'Championship pitch'
- Split your players into four teams – you'll be playing two games simultaneously
- Play for a set period of time, e.g. four minutes
- Winning teams move onto or remain on the Premier League pitch
- Losing teams move onto or remain on the Championship pitch
- If there's a draw, the captains from each team play 'rock, paper, scissors' to determine the winners

Top tips

When scoring goals, players should try to:

- play forward
- be in a position to help their teammates
- move into a position to receive the ball
- trick the opponents.

When stopping goals, players should try to:

- win the ball back
- stop the other team playing forward
- stop the ball going in the goal
- be hard to beat.

Part: spotlight practices

Once you've played a game, why not focus on a particular skill in smaller numbers.

Watch the videos below for some practice ideas. They can all be adapted for different age groups and abilities.

Primary

Defending in small numbers



Passing and receiving



Secondary

Quick shooting



How to press smartly



Adult

3v3 one-way attack

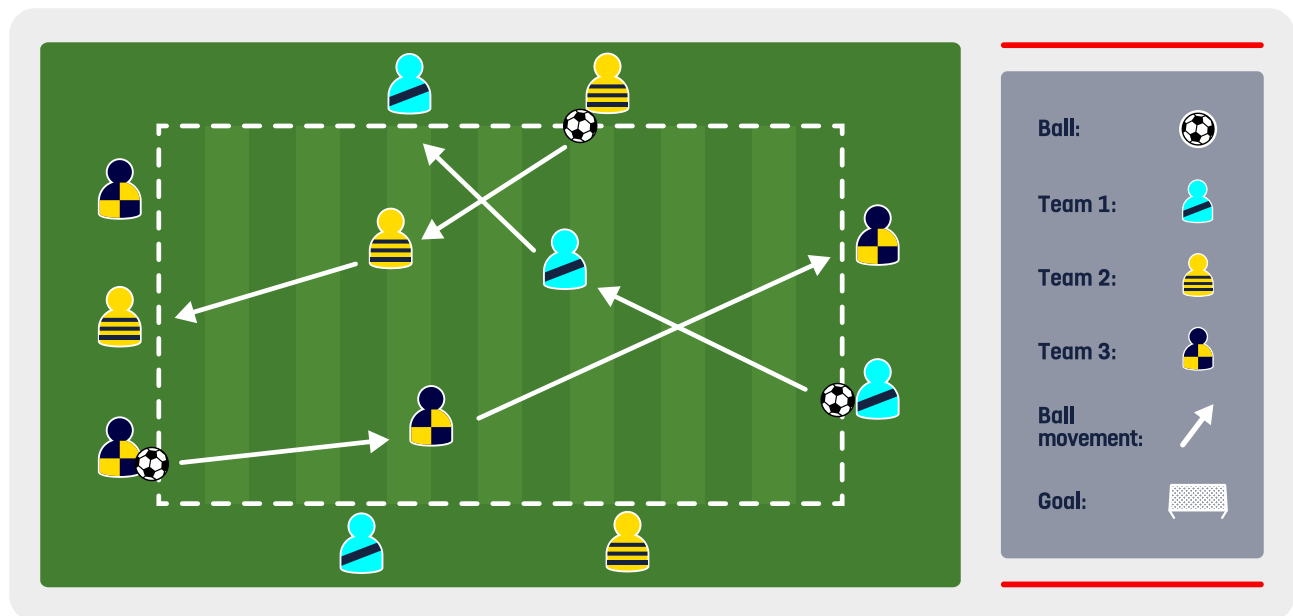


Retaining to play forward



Part: practice ideas for primary-aged players

FIND A FRIEND



Focus

Core technical skills: passing and receiving

Player engagement: praise players to increase confidence

How to play

- Set up an area appropriate in size for your players
- Put them into teams of four – one player from each team stays in the middle of the area, while the other three go to the outside
- Each team has one football, which starts with the player in the middle
- The middle player passes to an outside player (from their team) and receives the ball back – they then find another outside player and repeat

To make it harder...

- Give each team another ball – when the middle player passes out, they then go and receive the other ball, and so on
- The middle player must change with an outside player once they've passed the ball

To make it easier...

- Make the area bigger

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

Try to get your head up to see the player you want to pass to.

2. Positioning

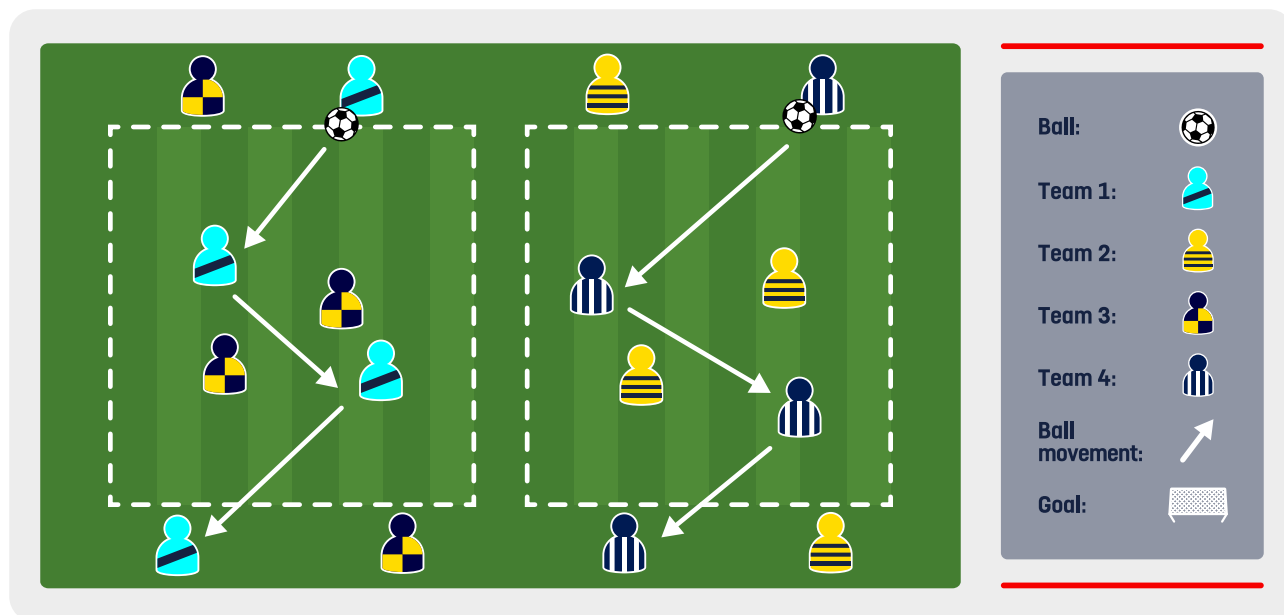
Try to move your body into a position to play forward.

3. Technique

Try to use different techniques to receive and pass the ball.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



How to play

- Set up two pitches appropriate in size for your players – they'll be playing 2v2
- Split your players into four teams of four (or adapt to your numbers)
- On both pitches, a player from each team stands on either end – these are the target players
- The other two players from each team are the middle players
- One target player starts the game by playing to one of their teammates in the middle – they score if they can get it to the other target player
- If the opposition win the ball, they're then trying to score by playing from target player to target player
- If a team scores, they keep the ball and attempt to score again by playing it back to the other target player
- Make sure you rotate the target and middle players

To make it harder...

- Once a target player has played into one of the middle players, they can join in to make a 3v2 – when a goal is scored, or possession is lost, they must return to their starting position

FOOTBALL BOWLING



Focus

Core technical skill: passing

Player engagement: encourage players to beat their personal best score to feel challenged

How to play

- Split your players into groups of two or three
- Give each group a football, some cones and a space to work in
- Ask the players to place the cones down wherever they want in their area and to put a football on top of each one – this creates a 'bowling pin' (you can also use tall cones as pins)
- Players take it in turns to see how many pins they can knock over – whoever knocks over the most wins
- You can use a time or shot limit to provide structure

To make it harder...

- Add a defender to block pins

To make it easier...

- Place the pins closer together

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

Try to look at where you want to pass the ball.

2. Positioning

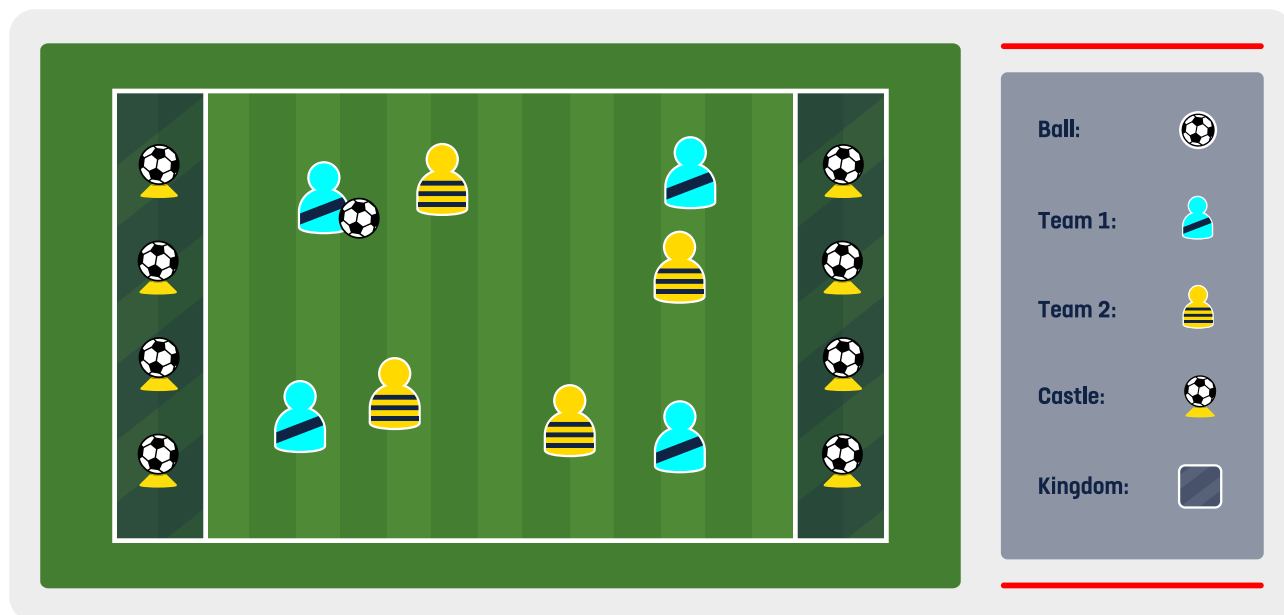
Try to position your body to help you pass the ball.

3. Technique

Try to kick the middle of the ball to stop it from bobbling.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



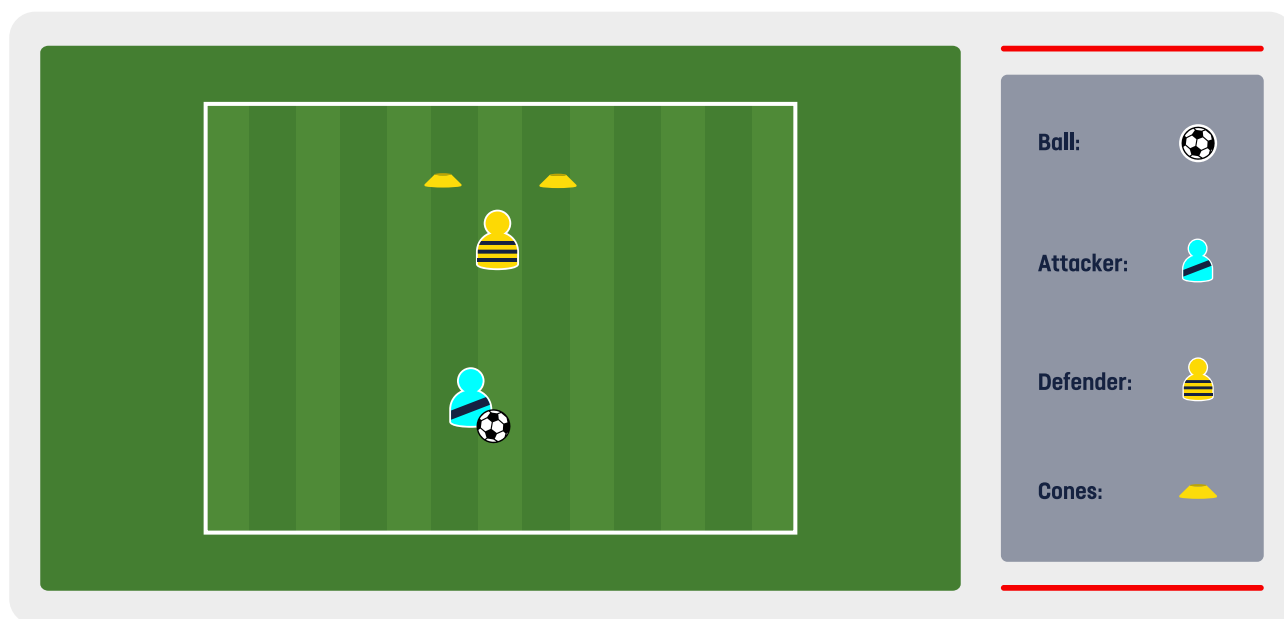
How to play

- Split your players into two teams
- Play a match, but instead of goals, use the pins as targets
- Call the pins 'castles' to capture the players' imaginations
- Each team places their castles in a line just in front of the goal-line
- Mark out an area around the castles and call it the 'kingdom' – players aren't allowed in the kingdom (to prevent close blocking)
- The aim is to conquer the opposition's castles by knocking them over with a cannonball (football)
- When a team knocks a castle over, they collect it and take it to their kingdom
- The game ends when one team has all the castles in their kingdom

To make it harder...

- Replace the castles with goals

1V1 TO SCORE



Focus

Core technical skill: dribbling

Player engagement: praise players to increase confidence

How to play

- Split your players into pairs
- Give each pair a football, two cones (to make a goal) and a space to work in
- They take it in turns to be the attacker or defender
- The defender plays the ball to the attacker (creating a 1v1), who must try to score

To make it harder...

- Add a goalkeeper

To make it easier...

- Ask defenders to hold a football to limit their movement

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

Try to look at the space you want to dribble into.

2. Positioning

Try to trick the defender with your body.

3. Technique

Try to choose the right moments to keep the ball close or further away from your feet.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



How to play

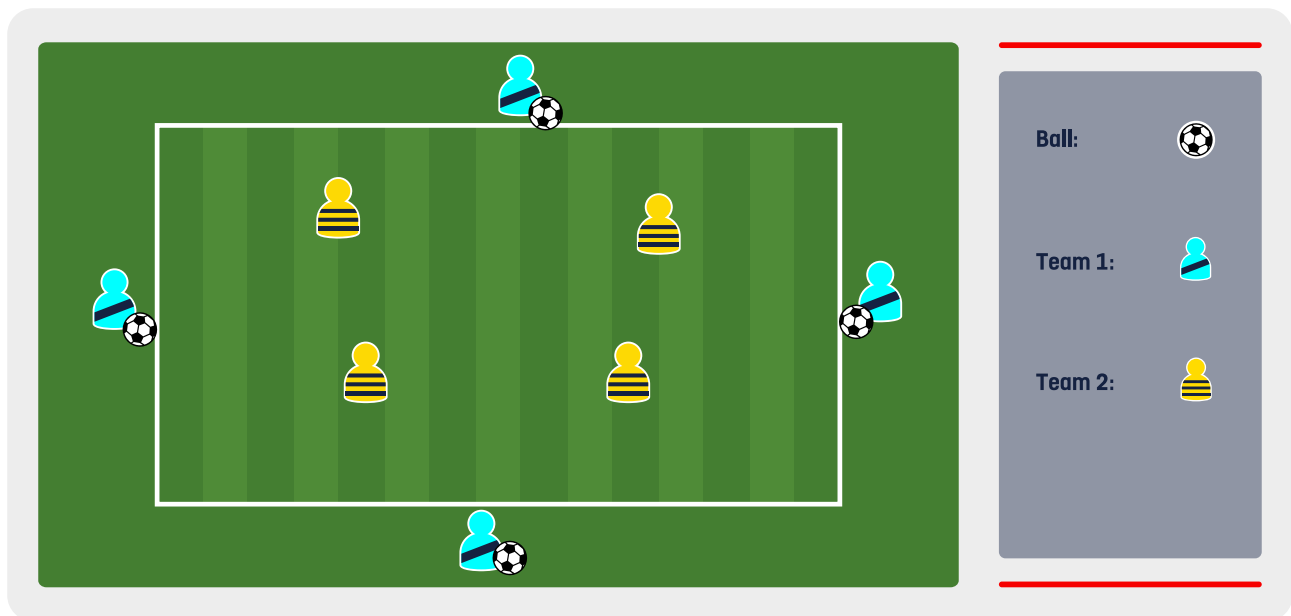
- The game is the same, but each pair is now working together against another pair – so it's 2v2 instead of 1v1
- When defending, one player acts as the goalkeeper

To make it harder...

- Make the area narrower

Part: practice ideas for secondary-aged players

RECEIVING



Focus

Core technical skill: receiving

Player engagement: use a small area to help players feel challenged

How to play

- Set up an area appropriate in size for your players, and split them into two teams
- Ask one team to stand outside the area, and give each of them a ball
- The other team stay inside the area and start without a ball
- The outside players pass their ball to an inside player who receives it, travels with it, and then gives it to a different outside player
- Remember to rotate the inside and outside players

To make it harder...

- Create gates that the middle players must travel through before passing

- Create triangles that the middle players must enter and leave before passing

To make it easier...

- Divide the group and play the same game on two pitches (parallel practice)

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

Look for the best space to receive the ball. Identify where it's coming from and where you want to play it.

2. Positioning

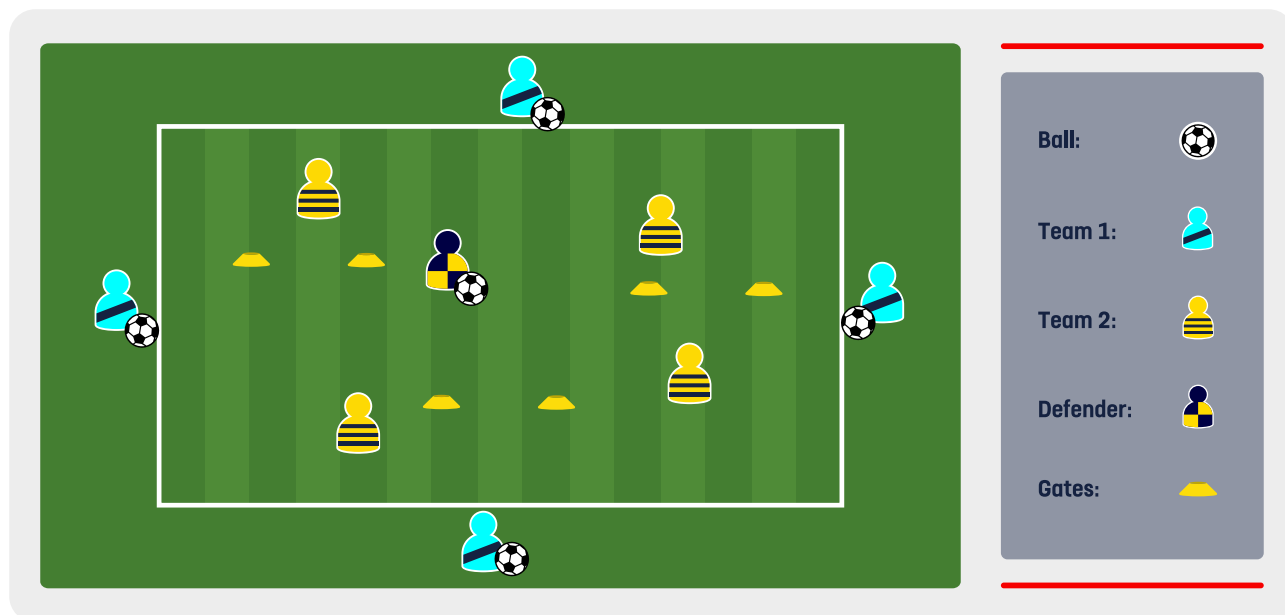
Try to move into a position where you can see the player with the ball and the player you want to pass to.

3. Technique

Try to use your first touch to move the ball to where you want to go.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



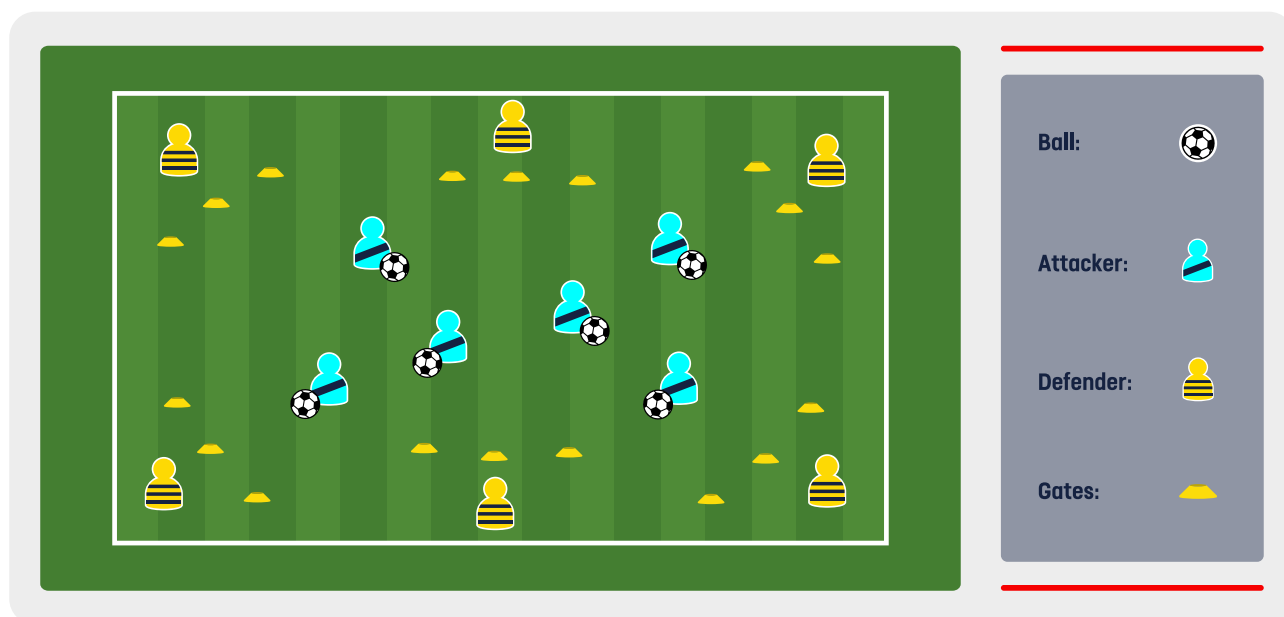
How to play

- Add a defender
- Their mission is to try and block the inside players from travelling through the gates/triangles, while dribbling their own ball
- Remove the defender's ball to make it even harder for the inside players

To make it harder...

- Create two teams of four
- Two players from each team stay on the inside, while the other two go to the outside
- An outside player stands on each side of the area – those from the same team stand on opposite ends to each other
- The inside players are aiming to play the ball end-to-end, from one outside player to the other
- You can add bonus points if the inside players travel through a gate or triangle

TURNING



Focus

Core technical skill: turning

Player engagement: use different sized gates to provide different challenges

How to play

- Set up an area appropriate in size for your players, and split them into two even teams (or adapt to your numbers)
- One team starts in the middle of the area with a ball each
- Each player from the other team guards two side-by-side gates positioned around the edge of the area
- Players in the middle must try to dribble through one of the gates, then turn to get back on the pitch
- If the defender blocks the gate, the player with the ball turns and finds another gate
- Remember to rotate the attacking and defending players

To make it harder...

- Add a time limit in which players must get through as many gates as possible

To make it easier...

- Give the defenders a football

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

Try to see the space you want to use.

2. Positioning

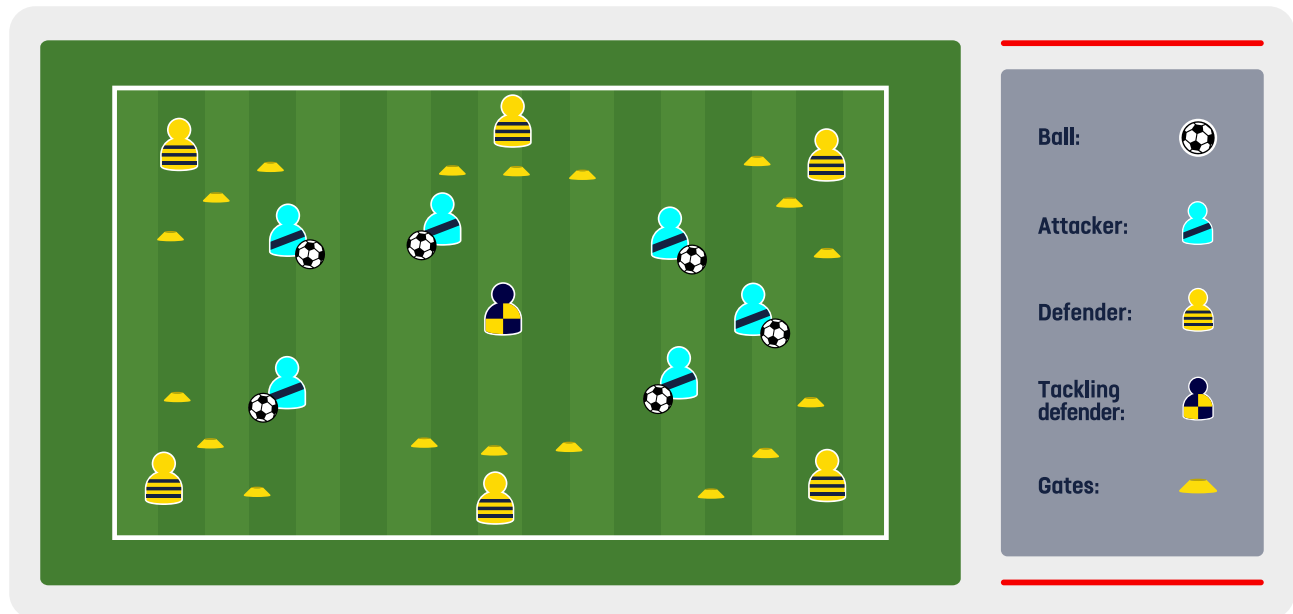
Try to use your body position to trick the defender.

3. Technique

Try to move quickly out of the turn.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



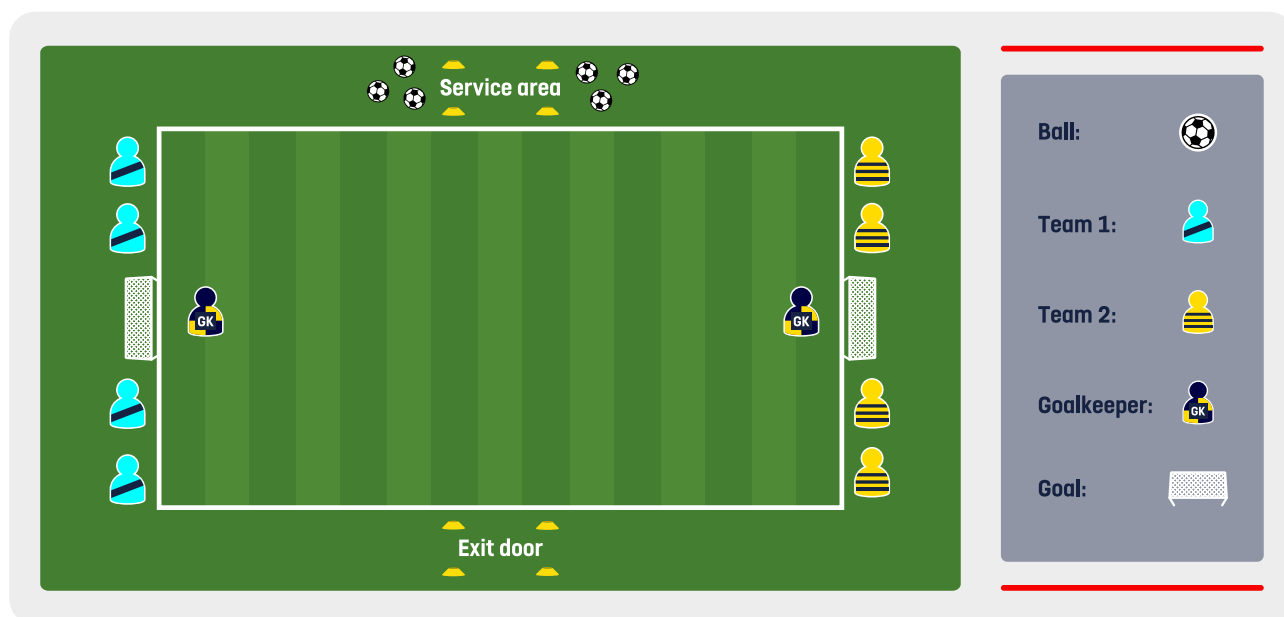
How to play

- Same game as above, but add a defender who can tackle the attackers – if they win the ball, they can dribble through any gate to score

To make it harder...

- Increase the number of defenders in the middle area

DRIBBLING



Focus

Core technical skill: moving with the ball (dribbling)

Player engagement: count goals to help players feel excited and enthusiastic

How to play

- Set up an area appropriate in size for your players (they'll be playing 2v2), with a goal at either end
- Split your players into two teams, and put a goalkeeper in each goal
- Each team starts on opposite ends behind the goal-line
- You (or another helper) serve the ball onto the pitch from one side at halfway – each team sends out two players to play 2v2
- When a goal is scored, it counts as two
- As soon as the ball goes out of play, the four players exit the pitch through the 'exit door' (marked out with cones), which is directly opposite the service area
- The first team to run through the exit door gets a goal
- While the players are exiting, serve another ball onto the pitch for the next 2v2

To make it harder...

- Make the area smaller
- Add a 'magic ball' – this is another ball that can be served at any time, meaning there may be two balls on the pitch at once

To make it easier...

- Remove the goalkeepers

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

Try to see the space you want to use.

2. Positioning

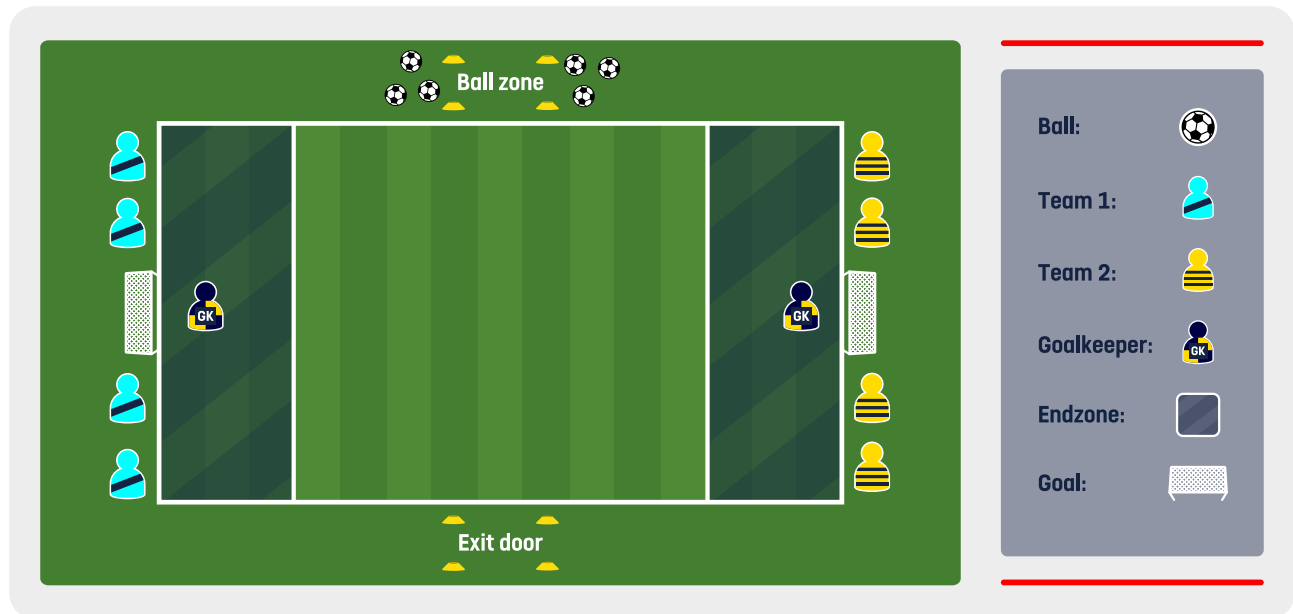
Try to use your body as a barrier when dribbling.

3. Technique

Try to use small and big touches at the right time.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



How to play

- Create two end zones
- Play the same game, but players must now be in the opposition's end zone to score

To make it harder...

- Play overloads (e.g. 2v1, 3v2, 4v3)

Part: practice ideas for adult players

PASSING



Focus

Core technical skill: passing

Player engagement: set the players individual challenges as they play the game

How to play

- Create a circle-shaped area and put two mini goals on the edge (opposite each other)
- Place four players outside of the area (greys) – these players start with a ball and can't be pressed or tackled
- Place four players inside the area (yellows) – they're looking to receive the ball from a grey and then pass to another grey (one point for doing so)
- Place another two players inside the area (blues) as defenders – they're trying to intercept and win the ball (one point)
- If a blue player wins the ball, they can try to score in the mini goals
- Rotate roles after a few minutes

To make it harder...

- Make the area smaller
- Allow the defenders to press the outside players
- Add additional defenders
- Make winning the ball and scoring worth double for the defenders
- Set time targets and challenges

To make it easier...

- Make the area bigger (but be mindful of the increase in passing range)

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

Try to see if your teammate wants the ball to feet or space.

2. Positioning

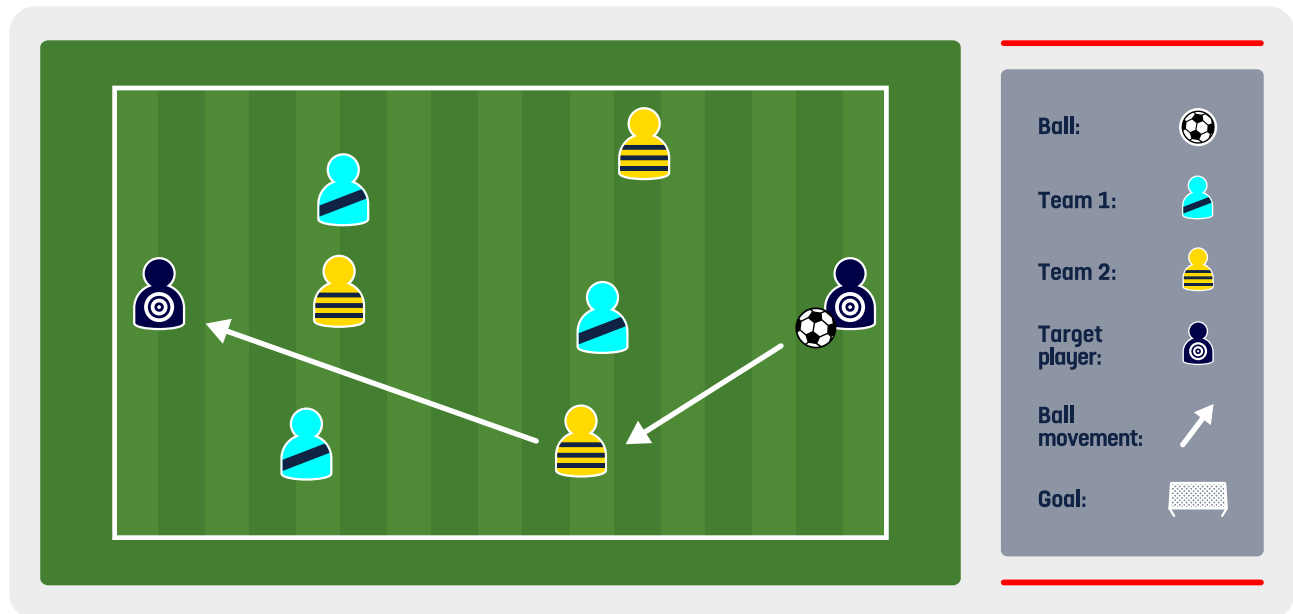
Try to get into a position to help the player with the ball.

3. Technique

Try to pass the ball in a way that helps the receiving player.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



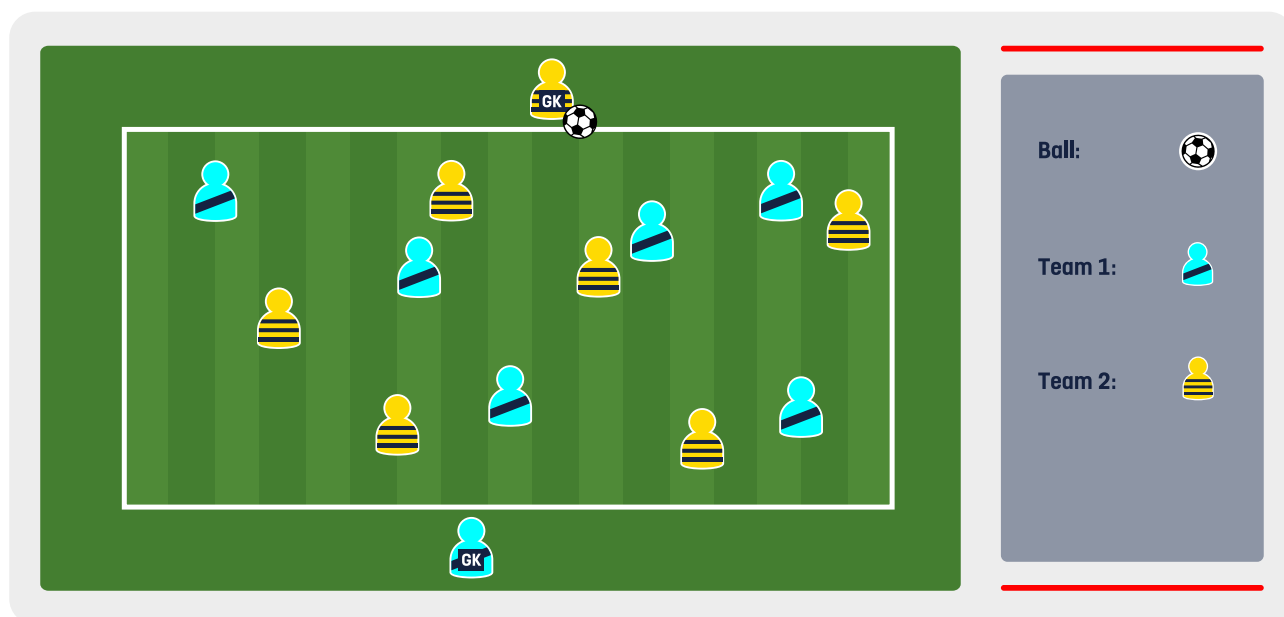
How to play

- Play a 4v4 match using target players instead of goals
- Players must get the ball from one target player to the other
- Play in three-minute blocks to encourage good intensity during play but also allow time to reflect and add additional challenges if needed

To make it harder...

- If a team gets the ball to one target player, reward them by feeding them another ball to play to the other target player

RECEIVING



Focus

Core technical skill: receiving

Player engagement: encourage players to make decisions on how to beat or entice their opponent with receiving skills

How to play

- Set up an area appropriate in size for your players
- Split your players into two even teams (or adapt to your numbers), each with a goalkeeper
- Place the goalkeepers on either touchline
- Choose one goalkeeper to begin the game by playing the ball to a teammate
- To score, a team must complete a set number of passes (e.g. six)
- The opposition must try to win the ball back
- The goalkeepers can help both teams by moving along the touchline and receiving passes

To make it harder...

- Award an extra point if a team plays the ball into the opposing goalkeeper's hands after completing the set number of passes
- If this happens, the scoring team keep the ball and restart the game

To make it easier...

- Make the area bigger
- If a team is struggling, give them more players

Top tips for players

1. Scanning

- Try to make sure you can see the path of the ball and the defender.
- Try to make sure you can see the movement of your teammates.

2. Positioning

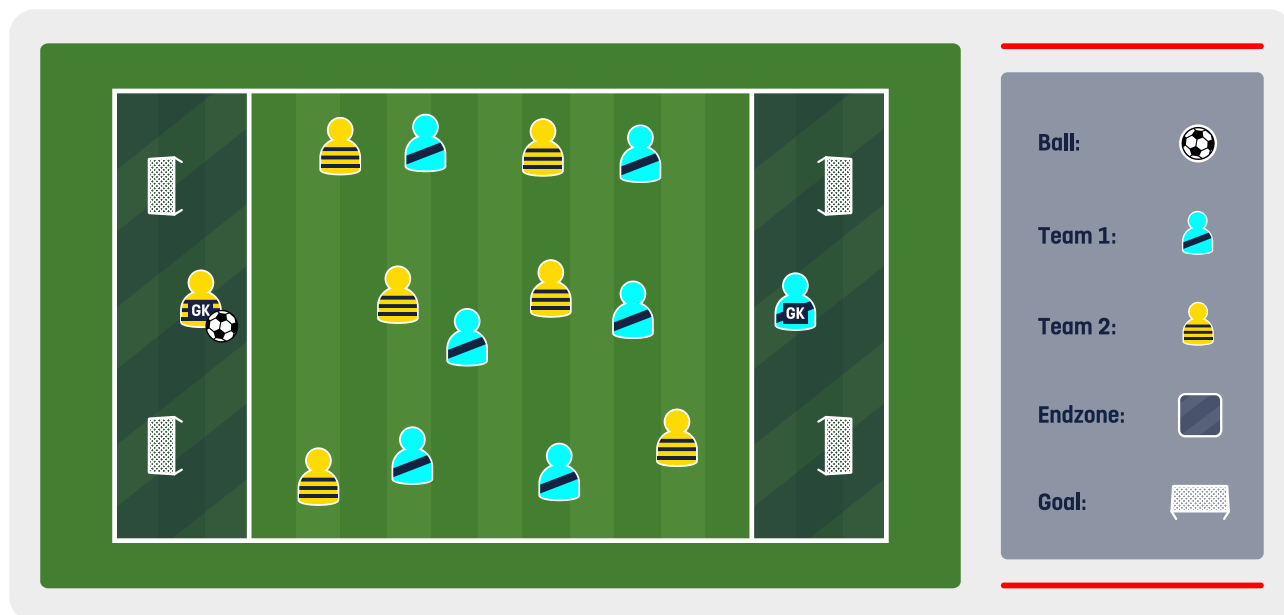
- Try to move into a position to play forward.
- Try to take up positions to support players.

3. Technique

- Try to use different receiving techniques.
- Try to take the right amount of touches.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



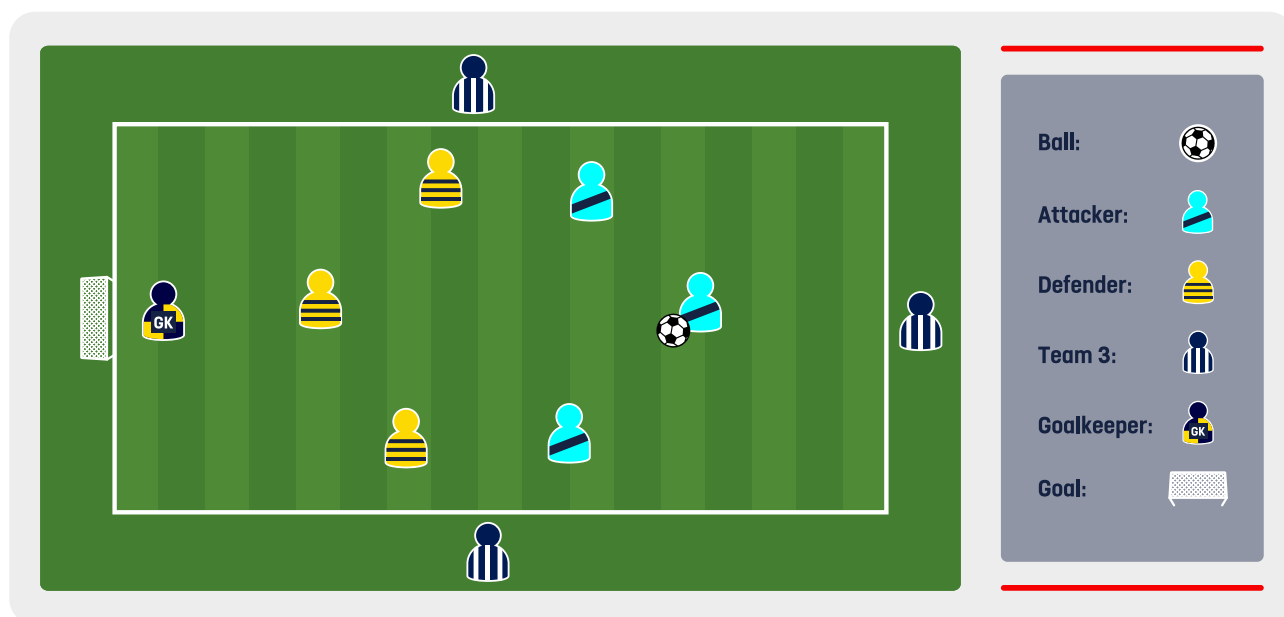
How to play

- Using the same area, create two end zones, both containing two mini-goals
- Place the goalkeepers in either end zone
- Now, each team is trying to score in the opposition's mini goals, which the goalkeepers are trying to defend
- The outfield players must stay in the middle zone, and can't tackle the goalkeepers

To make it harder...

- Award extra points if the scoring team completes a set number of passes
- If the goalkeeper needs a challenge, allow one opposition player into the end zone to press

DEFENDING



Focus

Core technical skill: covering/recovering

Player engagement: involve players in working out tactics to delay the attack and win possession

How to play

- Create an area suitable in size for your players (they'll be playing 3v3)
- Place a goal at one end and mark a halfway line
- Split your players into three teams of three (create more areas if you've got more players)
- Place a goalkeeper in the goal
- Two teams start in the area – one attacking and one defending
- The third team stand around the outside of the area
- The attacking team are trying to score in the goal and start from the halfway line
- If the defending team win the ball, they pass to a player on the outside, who returns the ball back to defenders – they then become the attackers
- The focus is on the attacking team's ability to cover and recover
- Make sure each team has a chance to attack, defend and be on the side

To make it harder...

- Add more defenders
- Get the defending team to play out from the back if the GK wins or saves the ball

To make it easier...

- Have more attackers than defenders
- Use a time limit for when the defenders can attack rather than a transition
- Get the defenders to run the ball over a line to score

Top tips for players

1. Delay

Try to put pressure on the ball as quickly as possible to stop a forward pass.

2. Positioning

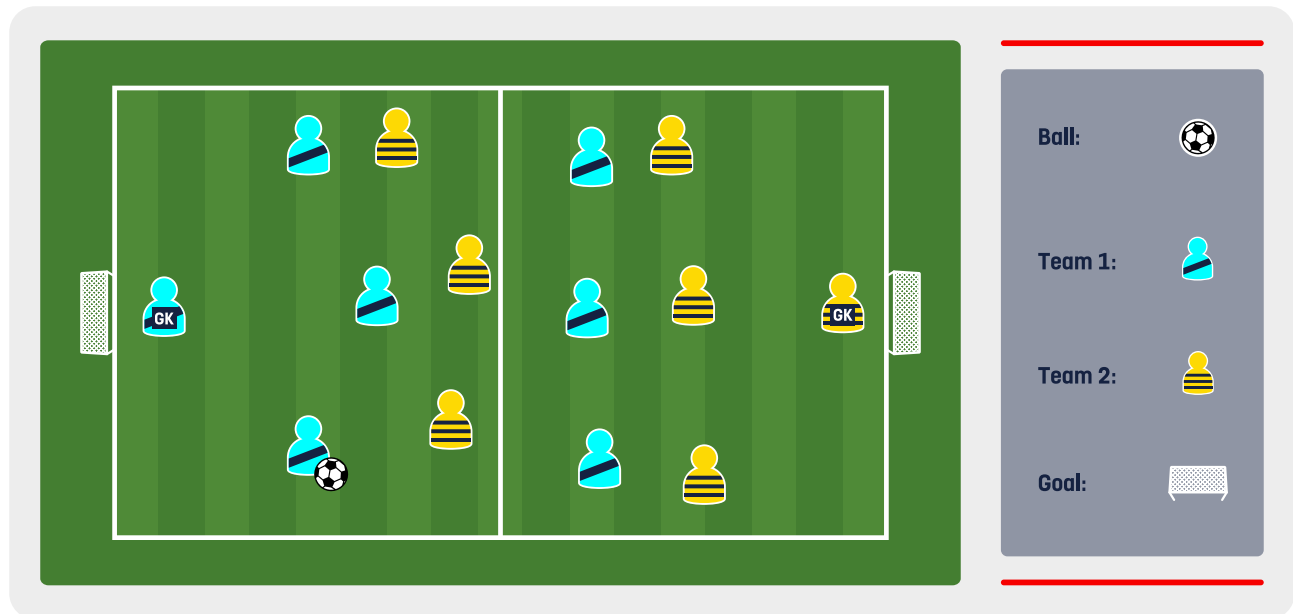
Try to get into a position behind the ball to support your teammates.

3. Technique

Try to think about the best way to challenge to win the ball.

Make the practice more skilful by...

Adding opposition, direction and a goal or target. Try this adapted practice.



How to play

- 6v6 or 7v7 game
- If players win the ball in the opposition's half and score, they get two goals
- If players win the ball in their own half and score, they get one goal

To make it harder...

- Make the area bigger to challenge the defenders

Whole: finish with games

Players love finishing with a game. You could revisit the game from the start of the session or play a different one. Here are two examples you could try.

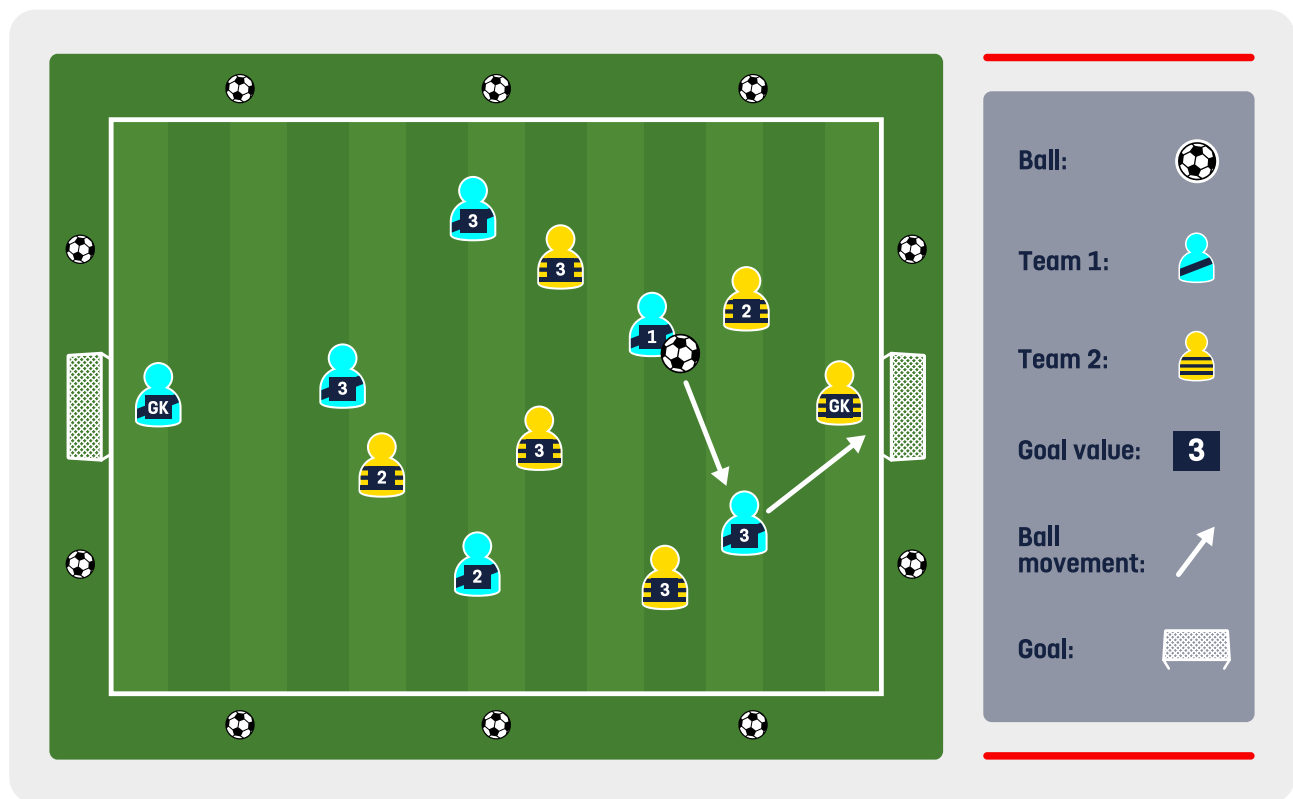
KEEP IT OR SHARE IT



How to play

- Split your players into two teams – both are attacking and defending a goal, but one has an overload over the other (e.g. 6v4)
- Encourage the team with more players to pass forward when they can
- Challenge the team with fewer players to stay on the ball for as long as possible
- If the ball goes out of play over the touchline, players pass or dribble it back onto the pitch
- If the ball goes out of play over the goal-line, the goalkeeper gets possession (no corners)

THREE, TWO, ONE



How to play

- Set up a normal small-sided game (e.g. 6v6), but use these additional rules:
 - Each player starts with a value of three, so their first goal of the game is worth three points for their team
 - After scoring their first goal, their value drops to two, so the second goal they score is worth two points for their team
 - Their next goal and any further goals are worth one point for their team

Maximising matchday

Matchday should be inspirational. It should value skilful play and support players' love, enjoyment and understanding of the game.

Every player has the right to feel safe, relaxed and valued. Everyone involved in matchday has a responsibility to instil belief in the team. They should encourage them to play with skill and freedom while being immersed in the game's challenges.

When planning, supporting and reviewing matchdays, think about these three things:

- Player engagement: how can you maximise engagement, connection and skilful moments for every player?
- Environment: how can you make every player feel welcome, empowered, respected and included?
- Relationships: how can you ensure that every player is able to grow in confidence and self-belief?

The next three pages provide some tips on creating an inspirational matchday environment. One where the needs of the players are at the heart of every choice you make. This approach will help your team remember not just how they did, but how the game felt.



Find more resources
on maximising matchday
on the England
Football Community.

BEFORE KICK-OFF

Player engagement

- Check-in with the players – how are they feeling?
- Have a consistent learning focus between training and matchdays
- Give players responsibilities – e.g. lead the warm-up, give a pre-match talk



Environment

- Create consistent routines – e.g. same arrival and warm-up times, similar warm-up activities
- Involve players in discussing how the team will play and the skilful play that'll help individuals and the team
- Select playing positions and tasks to provide appropriate challenges for individual players

Relationships

- Communicate arrival time and what kit would be useful for the expected weather
- Greet players, notice how they are and thank parents and carers for bringing them along
- Greet the opposition and match officials, letting them know the available facilities at your club



DURING THE GAME

Player engagement

- Ensure individuals are connecting to the game and others
- Support and challenge individual players
- Keep substitutes involved by asking them to encourage their teammates
- Give players fair opportunities to learn by playing



Environment

- Uphold the decisions of the match officials
- Acknowledge skilful play from the opposition as individuals and a team
- Involve players in half-time discussions – how are they doing against the learning focus?

Relationships

- Stand back to purposefully observe, encouraging the players to support each other
- Catch players doing things well, value their skilful moments and appreciate their efforts
- Offer concise, encouraging and supportive feedback



AFTER THE GAME (REGARDLESS OF RESULT OR PERFORMANCE)

Player engagement

- Recognise and appreciate individual skilful moments
- Recognise and appreciate team skilful moments
- Give players responsibilities – e.g. lead match review, lead cool down, collect the equipment



Environment

- Send players home with a positive message
- Enthuse players about the next football opportunity they have together
- Show interest in what the players are doing for the rest of the day

Relationships

- Thank players for their efforts and for sharing this time together
- Thank parents and carers for their supportive behaviours
- Thank the opposition and match officials



Parent-coach communication plan

DEALING WITH PARENTS

Working with parents can be a challenge. Scheduling, playing time, level of success, style of play and player roles can all be causes of conflict.

However, if you get your interactions right, parents can play a huge part in developing skilful players. The next two pages cover how to engage parents and provide solutions to some common problems.

ENGAGING PARENTS

1. Build relationships

It's important to invest time into connecting with parents. They know their children better than anyone and can help you understand more about your players.

2. Explain the why

When parents question a decision, calmly explain your reasoning. For example, a parent may be unhappy that their child is playing in goal rather than in midfield. If this is the case, try saying something like, "I've recognised how good Jake is with his feet, and I believe his passing skills will really help us to play out from the back."

3. Include them in the process

This helps parents feel involved in their child's experience. For example, on matchdays you could share individual player objectives with each parent. Then, ask them to pick out moments of the game where their child meets these aims.

4. Listen

Invite parents to give feedback and acknowledge their perspective and feelings. Use this information to help inform your coaching process.

COMMON PROBLEMS – AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM

1. Parents complaining over lack of feedback

Maintain open lines of communication with parents. Listen, try to understand, and consider organising 'check in' meetings to answer any questions. You could do this at the start, mid-point and end of the season.

2. Parents getting annoyed about their child not getting enough game time

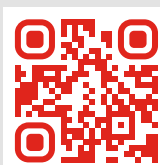
It can be useful to explain your approach to games at the start of the season. This helps manage the expectations of both your team and their parents. As much as possible, we encourage you to give equal playing time. This supports the development of everyone in your team.

3. Parents querying why their child has been asked to work on certain aspects of their game

To keep parents and players in the loop, make them part of your objective-setting process. This allows your team to influence what they work on. Plus, you get to explain the 'why' behind your suggestions. And remember: objectives should be based on a player's strengths and areas for development.

3. Parents believing that success is winning

At the start of the season, define what you mean by success. Sharing this with players and parents will help manage expectations and inform your goals. Winning is great, but success can be as simple as a player improving their passing over a season.



Find coaching discussions and more ideas on the England Football Community

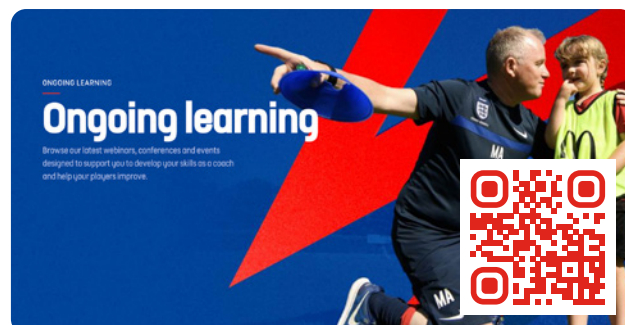
Useful links

These links will support you in providing safe, fun and inclusive football.

England Football Community



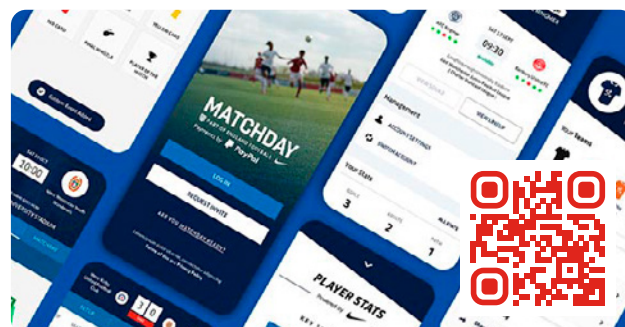
Ongoing learning



Brain health



Matchday



Female football toolkit



Inclusion and anti-discrimination



County FAs



Respect

