

FOOTBALL **YOUR WAY**



THE S.T.E.P. PRINCIPLE
FOUR KEY ELEMENTS WHICH CAN BE
ADAPTED TO MEET YOUR NEEDS AND ABILITIES



The S.T.E.P. principle stands for Space, Task, Equipment, People. It's used by sports coaches and PE teachers for two main reasons:

- ▶ To ensure activities are fully inclusive and accessible for everyone involved;
- ▶ To increase and decrease the level of challenge or difficulty for the participants to enhance enjoyment, motivation and learning.

We explain each element below, but we encourage you to apply the principle to whatever activity you're planning, whether it's on your own or with support from parents/carers, friends or coaches.

The S.T.E.P. principle works in any environment – inside your home, in your garden at an outdoor space, such as a park.

Parents/carers: always ensure there is appropriate support or supervision for the child or adult you're supporting.

Start points

Before going into each of the four S.T.E.P. elements, please think about these questions:

- ▶ What type of football do you play? Is it mainstream, pan-disability or an impairment-specific format such as blind, partially-sighted or powerchair football?
- ▶ What space and equipment do you currently have available?
- ▶ What's your experience of adapting activities to suit your needs?
- ▶ What other people can you call upon to play with or against you? Of course, when with others, make sure you always adhere to the latest UK Government Covid-19 guidance, which you'll find [here](#). In specific relation to football, The FA has also issued Covid-19-related guidance notes, which you can find [here](#).

Having the above in mind will help you make best use of the suggestions below to enable you to take part in a huge variety of activities.



SAFETY

Often, an S is added at the end of S.T.E.P. It stands for Safety. It reinforces the need for safety in all our games or practices, no matter how much fun they are. Here are some safety tips which apply to every activity:

- ▶ **Pre-check:** If you haven't played football or exercised for a while, please speak to your doctor to check the activities you plan are suitable.
- ▶ **Warm up:** Before taking part in any of the Football Your Way activities and challenges, ensure you warm up and have stretched your muscles.
- ▶ **Stay hydrated:** Have a drink with you. It's important to stay hydrated while exercising.
- ▶ **Make space:** Create a clear area free from obstacles and trip hazards. The area should leave plenty of space between where you'll be playing/exercising and any surrounding walls, fences or furniture.
- ▶ **Be comfortable:** Wear clothing and footwear that's right for the type of surface on which you'll be playing.
- ▶ **Take it steady:** Go at your own pace, take regular breaks and only do what you're comfortable doing.
Parents/carers: Please ensure at all times that the pace/effort is suitable for your child or the adult you're supporting.
- ▶ **Avoid pain:** During exercise you should feel no more than a burning sensation in your muscles, not a sharp pain. If something hurts, stop.
- ▶ **Warning signs:** If you feel any chest pain, dizziness or feel faint at any time whilst exercising, stop immediately and contact a doctor.
- ▶ **Don't overheat:** Take particular care exercising on a hot day. If you've any issues with regulating your body temperature, please speak to your doctor first.
- ▶ **Cool down:** After the activity stretch your muscles again to cool down.

SPACE

The amount and type of space you have will affect the way you practise or play. A courtyard, garden or park will be plenty big enough. Failing that, a small space indoors will be fine.

Things to consider:

- ▶ **What size area do you have?** Try moving furniture aside or up against a wall to create a small playing space.
- ▶ **What type of surface do you have?** A hard floor, such as wood or tarmac, may mean the ball rolls faster but is easier for you to move about on. A softer surface, such as grass or carpet, may slow the ball down but provide you with some cushioning.
- ▶ **What can you use to mark out the playing area?** Clothing and soft toys do exactly the same job as cones and markers. But make sure there's nothing breakable.
- ▶ **What distances suit the game?** When you've decided the maximum distance, try varying the distance of any targets. Or even put them behind obstacles to create interest and greater difficulty. If space is limited, change the size of the target to vary the challenge.

- ▶ **What shape space works best for you?** You don't need a perfect rectangle or circle. Create spaces that work for you.
- ▶ **How can you use the space to vary difficulty?** Generally, a smaller space makes the challenge harder. But that's not always the case if you're on your own. A bigger space may increase your overall physical exertion, but a smaller space creates more intensity. Find what's right for you.

Finally... as you progress, make changes to the space or shape to make things easier or harder.



TASK

Altering the tasks in a game makes activities more inclusive and varies the difficulty level.

Parents/carers: ensure you give your child or adult you're supporting a variety of tasks to keep them motivated. Be creative and make it fun. For example, how about having three different levels of the game?

Things to consider:

- ▶ **What are the rules for the format of football you play?** For example, if you play blind or powerchair football, use the game's rules to apply to the activity you've devised.
- ▶ **What's the right physical position for you?** If you can, experiment with standing, sitting, balancing or laying down to vary the challenge and find what's comfortable for you.
- ▶ **What is the best movement for the activity?** If you can, try moving at different speeds or change the way you move to say, hopping or jumping. Maybe using one side of your body is appropriate and/or challenging enough, but don't be

afraid to raise and lower the difficulty to suit you. Try to find a movement that makes the activity hard but not too difficult. It should be a challenge but not impossible.

- ▶ **What ways can you move the ball?** Consider bouncing, carrying or pushing the ball as varieties of dribbling with your feet.
- ▶ **How long will you play?** Find the right balance for you between working hard and resting. Try and gauge the point where you feel challenged to keep going before resting again.
- ▶ **What targets can you set?** For example, how about awarding yourself points for tasks completed? Whatever you do, start with small targets and complete them. For example, if practising shooting, your first target might be to score three goals and next time double that and so on. Or you could award yourself three points per goal.

The overall aim is to create a game or practice that's just a bit difficult for you, so it's a challenge that keeps you motivated to do better.

EQUIPMENT

There will be loads of things you can use to make your game or practice fun and challenging. Of course, you should always use a football if you have one, and football equipment, like cones, to mark out areas. But don't worry if you don't have a football or any football-related equipment. For example, some rolled-up socks can become a ball, while towels or blankets can take the edge off hard surfaces – or see some more suggestions below.

Parents/carers: Check the equipment you're going to use is suitable before the activity starts.

Things to consider:

- ▶ **What can you use instead of normal football equipment?** For example, a football can be a balloon or a scrunched-up newspaper. Or use a different type of ball, such as a tennis or foam ball. Chalk markings or masking tape can replace cones whilst different colour t-shirts can act as bibs in team games. Jumpers for goalposts is still a perfect swap.
- ▶ **What can you aim at?** Cereal boxes, clothing and even cuddly toys make great targets. Or perhaps some chalk or tape markings on a wall or garage?

▶ What can become obstacles?

For example, garden equipment, chairs, tables and empty plastic plant pots can be obstacles you need to move around or get past.

Numerous household and garden items can be used for a football activity with a bit of creative thought. But if they're not yours, make sure you ask permission to use them. Whatever you use, always keep yourself and others safe.



PEOPLE

Many games and activities can be played on your own, but involving another family member or a trusted friend can make it more enjoyable and challenging.

Parents/carers: always ensure there is appropriate support or supervision for the child or adult you're supporting.

Things to consider:

- ▶ **Do you have to be in the same room?**
No – you could set up a video call with someone playing the same game at the same time. That'll add a competitive element too. Perhaps you could set challenges for each other and keep scores?

Parents/carers: Whether online or offline, always ensure there is appropriate support or supervision for the child or adult you're supporting.

- ▶ **How can you involve other people?**
Why not use them as non-tackling defenders to dribble round? As long as it's safe, other people can block your path. There's no need for them to tackle you or stop you scoring if that's not the point of the game.

- ▶ **How many people do you need?**
It depends on the game, but a 1v1 game can be just as interesting and challenging as 5v5. Or you can have different numbers on each side. For example, in a goalscoring game, two attackers v. four defenders increases the difficulty for the attackers.

Clearly, the number of people involved has a huge bearing on the game or practice you play. But the beauty of football is you can reduce the numbers and still create interesting formats that will help you on the journey back to the bigger-sided version.

Parents/carers: always ensure there is appropriate support or supervision for the child or adult you're supporting.

