

EasiCoach

SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18



David Clarke

SOCCER COACH WEEKLY

Part of the **EasiCoach Skills Curriculum** – helping grassroots coaches teach core soccer skills to young players

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By David Clarke

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to EasiCoach™ Soccer Skills Activities – a survival guide to coaching soccer

Dear Beginner Coach, Volunteer Dad or Mum, or “Roped-In” Helper

If the world of soccer coaching seems a little daunting, don't worry, you are not alone! Like many parents involved in coaching their children:

- You volunteered to help, or were volunteered!
- You don't want to let the side down.
- You want to do the best you can but don't have time to go on a course.
- You're worried about coaching “the wrong thing”.

EasiCoach provides ready-made, age-appropriate, safe training activities, set out clearly on a single page, that even a child could understand.

For each activity there is also a relevant game, so the players learn a skill in an activity and then use that skill in a game. This helps to implant the skill into a player's DNA for them to use throughout their playing adventure. The activities and games are simple and easy to follow, and will make your life easier.

How does this help you? EasiCoach coaching activities will help you to:

- Quickly understand what it is you're trying to achieve.
- See what you need to do from just a few words and pictures.
- Grasp the key dos and don'ts at a glance.
- Check you have all the equipment you need (never more than basics).
- Cater for more or fewer players at your session.
- Speak to your players with confidence.

But here's what's really great about the EasiCoach approach. Follow all the materials in this manual and your players will be learning the right skills for their age group. They will be having more fun, and be on a gradual development pathway that will make them better, more skilful, players and continue playing soccer for longer.

Yours in soccer,



David Clarke

GETTING STARTED

Your EasiCoach Activity Sheets

Each of the activities in this manual covers a simple soccer skill appropriate for U15-U18 age groups.

Most players in these age groups will have been playing soccer for a good few years but many things are new to everyone involved, and the main objective is for the players to have fun as they develop to their full potential.

Here's what you do to help them.

- Read the Beginners' Guide below.
- In your one or two hour sessions, we suggest you run two or three activities from this book, and then play a game.
- Details on how to run a game are below.

The EasiCoach Beginners Guide to U15-U18

Here are the main things you need to know about coaching and organising U15-U18 soccer. Don't worry, it's not as hard as you think. The good news is that coaching the game has just got simpler!

Length of the session: The coaching, training, games or matches combined should last for no more than 2 hours at the U15-U18 age groups. At a typical training session you should plan for no more than three EasiCoach activities, each taking 25-30 minutes including setup and water breaks, followed by a game for 30-40 minutes.

Set up: Arrive earlier than the players, if you can, to set up the playing area for the chosen activities for the session. Set up two or three EasiCoach activities and be ready for the players to arrive.

Shin pads: Every player wears shin pads or they cannot take part.

Getting Started

Parents: The most influential people in terms of a child's psychological and sociological development are his or her parents. A child's beliefs, values, perceptions, attitudes and goals are shaped by their home influences and have a profound effect in later life. Evidence suggests that interest and support from the home are vital in a child's overall development. With this evidence, engaging parents in the learning experience of their children, if guided and educated correctly, can lead to positive effects in reinforcing messages of support you offer to the players during the sliver of time you have with them.

Keen though they are to make a difference, unless they are helping, parents are now recommended to stand at least 3 yards back from the edge of the pitch. If space allows, your pitch set up



should incorporate a cone or rope barrier to show parents where to stand. Encouragement of players is welcomed and criticism frowned upon.

Tips for dealing with parents

- Organise a pre-season meeting for players and parents.
- Talk to the parents before/after coaching and explain what you are doing and why you are doing it; explain the benefits.
- Use a questionnaire to get the views from the parents, what else can be improved.
- Hold a Parents' Evening – hold evenings when parents can come along with their child and discuss how they are getting on.
- Set them basic tasks – this could be asking for support around setting out equipment or keeping a record of playing time for you.

SOME QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK PARENTS:

Do your actions on game day:

1. Demonstrate trust in the coach?
2. Centre around the players' needs?
3. Help or confuse the player(s)?

Refereeing and Game Coaching

You might hope not to have to get involved in refereeing, or you might be dead keen to try. At these age groups the referee is important for keeping control and keeping the game flowing.

Hints and tips for matches

- Find a piece of grass the appropriate size.
- Use flat markers to highlight the goal area to help the goalkeepers.
- Move the portable goals to the right place.
- Maybe look at using a 3G pitch or commercial provider as a venue.
- Put up the Respect barrier for the parents to stand behind.
- Mark out a small technical area for the coaches and subs near the halfway line.

Using the whistle: Although the emphasis at this age is on using the whistle as little as possible, it's still valuable to start and stop games, highlight dangerous play, stop for injuries or when serious infringements occur. And it's helpful for getting attention, too!

Goalpost safety

Several serious injuries and fatalities have occurred in recent years as a result of unsafe or incorrect use of goalposts. Safety is always of paramount importance and everyone in soccer must play their part to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future.

Guidelines for U15-U18 Soccer

PLAYING AREA

Halfway line: The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The centre mark is indicated at the mid-point of the halfway line.

Goal size: In the UK and US, the distance between the posts is 24 feet and the distance between the lower edge of the cross bar and the ground is 8 feet.

The ball: The UK and the US play with a size 5 ball. It should be safe and made of leather or other suitable material.

Number of players: UK and US play 11v11.

A match may not START if either team consists of fewer than seven players. The minimum number of players in a team required for a match to CONTINUE is also seven. Players must play with and against players only from their own age range (check with local authorities). Each team must not have a squad greater than double the size of the team per age. Any number of substitutes, without being named, may be used at any time with the permission of the referee. A player who has been replaced may return to the playing area as a substitute for another player.



PLAYING EQUIPMENT

Players must wear shin pads and goalkeepers must wear a distinguishing playing top. Shin pads must be covered entirely by the socks. Players must wear the appropriate clothing dependent on the weather.



Correct footwear must be worn for the surface of the pitch e.g. no metal studs on artificial grass pitches.

REFEREES

The Authority of the Referee: Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws for Youth Soccer in connection with the match to which they have been appointed.

DURATION OF THE GAME

In any one day, no player shall play more than 100 minutes. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer or organisation to ensure the child does not exceed this. Each league/competition will determine its own playing time within the maximum time permitted, however, the maximum duration will be two halves of 45 minutes. The half time interval must not exceed 15 minutes.

A 1-2-3 of Coaching Children

1. Use the 30 Second Rule

The 30 second rule works because children learn best by doing, not listening, and 30 seconds is about as much as most of them can take. So, with that in mind, let them do as much as possible and listen as little as possible. After 30 seconds, many of your audience will have stopped listening anyway, and very

little if any of what you go on to say will be heard, let alone understood. Don't waste your time!

Only having 30 seconds to talk can make life easier if you are privately anxious about speaking, or concerned about saying the wrong thing, as it reduces the chance of making a mistake. Being time limited forces you to think carefully beforehand about what you are going to say. The outcome should be reduced waffle and getting to the point more quickly. Children like this simplicity. It is also worth bearing in mind that in chillier climates, players will get cold very quickly if they are standing round listening to you for more than a short period.

Just 30 seconds really only gives you the chance to pick up one point from the activity the players have been doing – a good thing in itself. While you are observing them, think about what you want to say. This can be praise or encouragement, or it can be to offer a suggestion to a common problem that is occurring. Use your 30 seconds to laser in on just one. That single message is far more likely to get through into their little heads if it is on its own.

One trick to increase attention levels is to get young players as attentive as possible before you start talking, simply by asking them to be quiet, or standing silently waiting for them to quiet down. The rule is not always practical, though. Sometimes, when you are introducing something new, you will have to talk to the players for longer. In these situations, make sure you involve the players either by asking questions, giving them a break from your voice – or by getting volunteers to demonstrate. But if you can do it in 30 seconds – congratulations!

2. When and how to correct mistakes

If a young player is making a mistake, we feel duty bound to do something about it. However, we shouldn't always step in. Young people learn from their mistakes by themselves and from feedback from their peers. They don't want or need an adult telling them every time they don't get something right, or as good as it should be – they know!

You may notice as you start coaching young children that youngsters can be intimidated by corrections. The action of correcting can be counterproductive in itself, with some players not taking on board what they need to change.

There are some things that we must correct. Anything that can harm the player or someone else, such as kicking, punching, verbal abuse or any other sort of foul play. These are non-negotiable. Do not hesitate to blow the whistle to stop play and highlight the actions of the offender, so that everyone is aware of the issue and can learn.

Other areas we might correct are discretionary. Technical errors, such as taking the ball behind the head for a throw-in, for example. More difficult might be decision-making errors such as wrong options. This is problematic because there are often a number of options.

Most people don't like criticism or corrections at all, let alone in front of others, and children are no different. If at all possible, take the player aside on a one-to-one basis to make a comment. If parents are nearby, you might feel it is appropriate to make the point in their presence. One or two words may be enough, but the key is to "talk" and not raise your voice.





3. Coach by gentle questioning

Research shows that learning comes from self-discovery. This means players realise how to solve problems and react to situations by finding their own solutions. Coaches should try to reduce the amount of time they spend “telling” the players what to do. Instead, through questioning, they should look to empower their players.

To aid good learning the coach needs to communicate well verbally. The choice of words is often not as important as the way they are told. Remember:

- Don't use jargon or sarcasm.
- Promote positive comments.
- Back up criticism with a way forward.
- Keep sentences short.
- Don't make too many points.
- Summarise at the end – some players may not have understood the first time around.

Gentle questioning

Asking questions is useful because it:

- Gains the attention of the players.
- Lets the coach learn what the players know.
- Involves the players in the learning process.
- Allows the players to express their opinions.
- Helps the coach check for understanding.

Asking the best questions

- Use open questions – questions that cannot be answered with just “yes” or “no”. Start questions with words, like “what”, “how” or “where”.
- Don’t use “why”, because it can be construed as negative.
- Wait for the answer, don’t hurry the player.
- Listen, don’t anticipate the answer. Try not to rephrase the answer once given.

When to “tell” and when to “question”

Tell when:

- You have a short period of time to get your point across.
- Specific instructions are needed. For instance, health and safety issues or laws of the game.
- A larger group makes question and answer sessions unwieldy.

Question to:

- Check your players’ understanding.
- Gain feedback.
- Improve your players’ learning.



USING YOUR EASICOACH ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

6 STEPS TO EASICOACH SUCCESS

1. Find the activity and game you need.
2. Look at the pictures and read the text.
3. Check what equipment you'll need when you get to the club.
4. Take the book to training.
5. Set up your activity.
6. EasiCoach it!

The second page is a game that will enable your players to put into practise what they learned in the activity

Each game is explained clearly, giving you all the elements required to run the game successfully

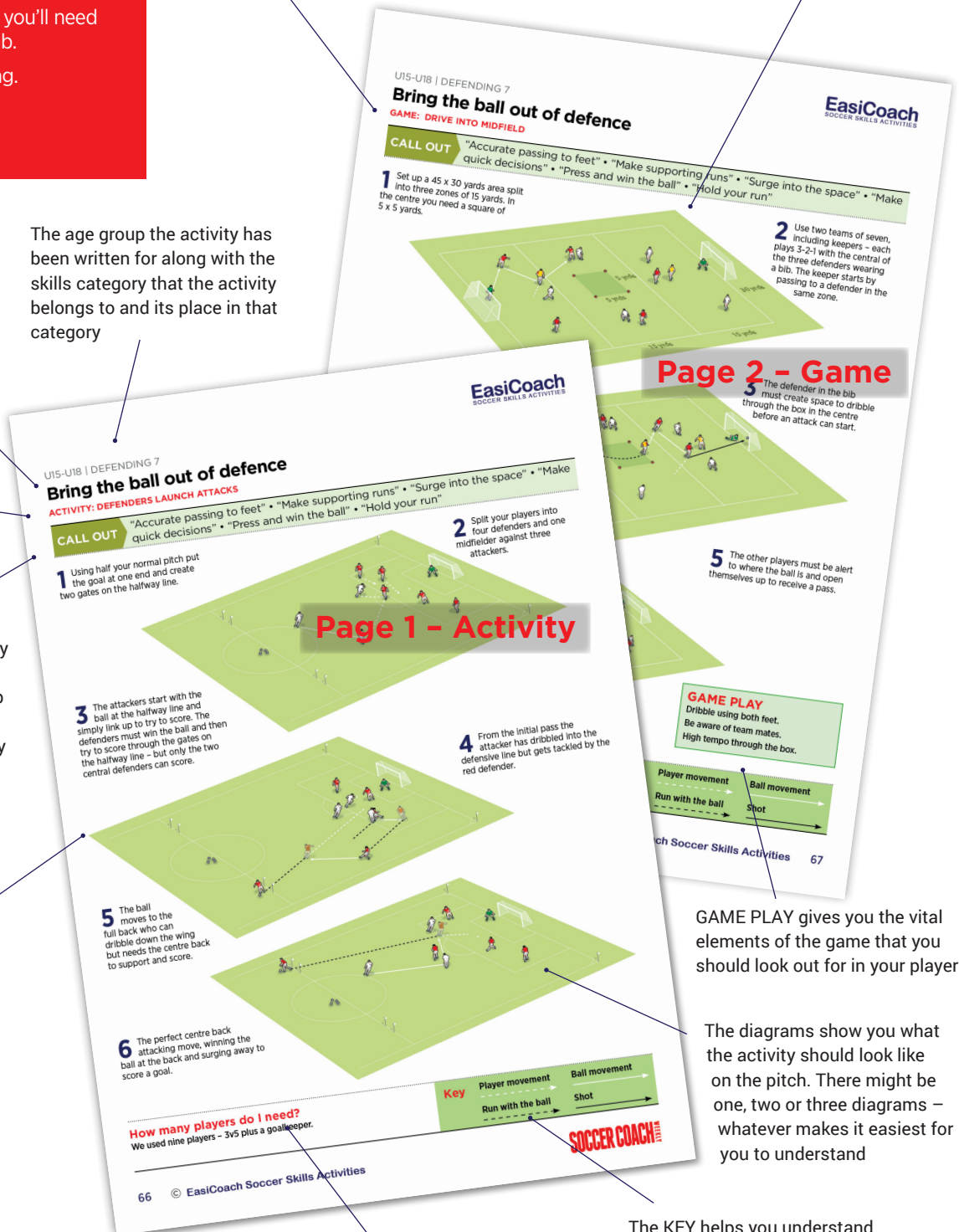
The first page is the activity. The title tells you the skill that the players will develop by doing this activity

The age group the activity has been written for along with the skills category that the activity belongs to and its place in that category

The name of the activity – you can tell this to your players: "Today we're going to play..."

CALL OUT gives you some key phrases to tell your players as they do the activity, to help them understand what they should be doing and how they should be doing it

Each activity is explained simply and clearly, step by step



GAME PLAY gives you the vital elements of the game that you should look out for in your players

The diagrams show you what the activity should look like on the pitch. There might be one, two or three diagrams – whatever makes it easiest for you to understand

The KEY helps you understand the diagram – which way the players are running and where the ball is going

HOW MANY PLAYERS DO I NEED tells you the ideal number of players required to run the activity, but you can adapt it to suit the number players who arrive at training

EasiCoach

SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18

BALL CONTROL

Receive, control and pass

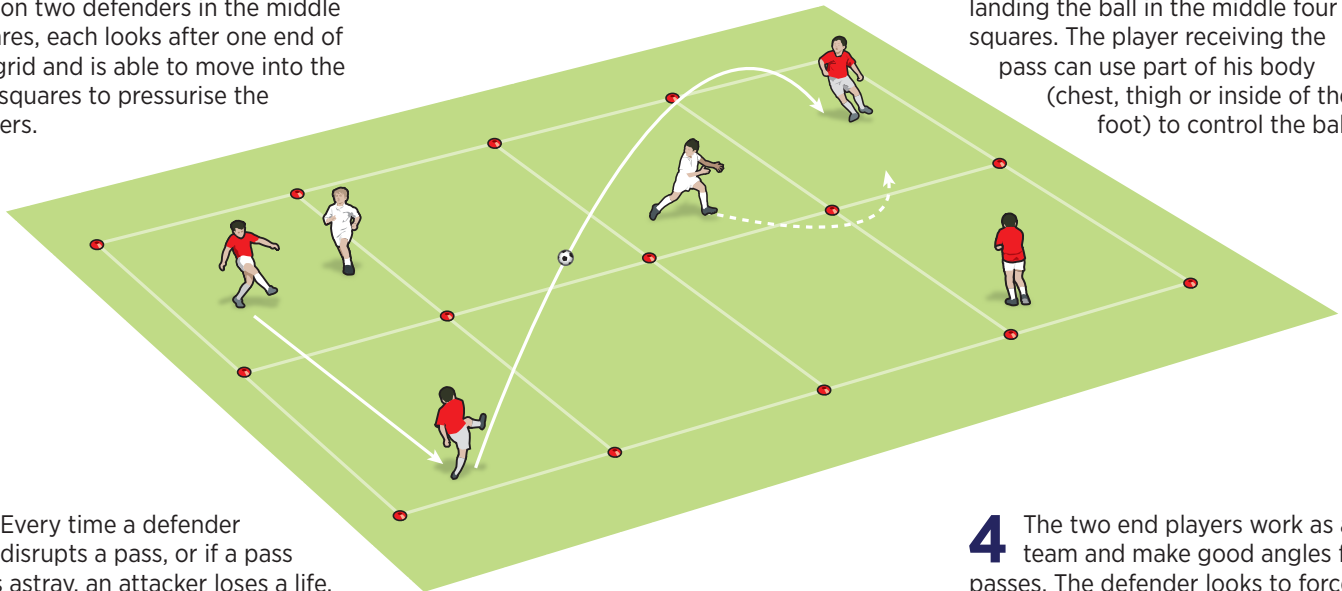
ACTIVITY: FIND A TEAM MATE UNDER PRESSURE

CALL OUT

“Call for the ball” • “Keep your eyes on the ball” • “Use part of your body or the inside of the foot to control the ball”

1 Mark out eight 10 x 10 yards squares arranged in 4 x 2 grid. Put a passing player in each of the end squares. Station two defenders in the middle squares, each looks after one end of the grid and is able to move into the end squares to pressurise the passers.

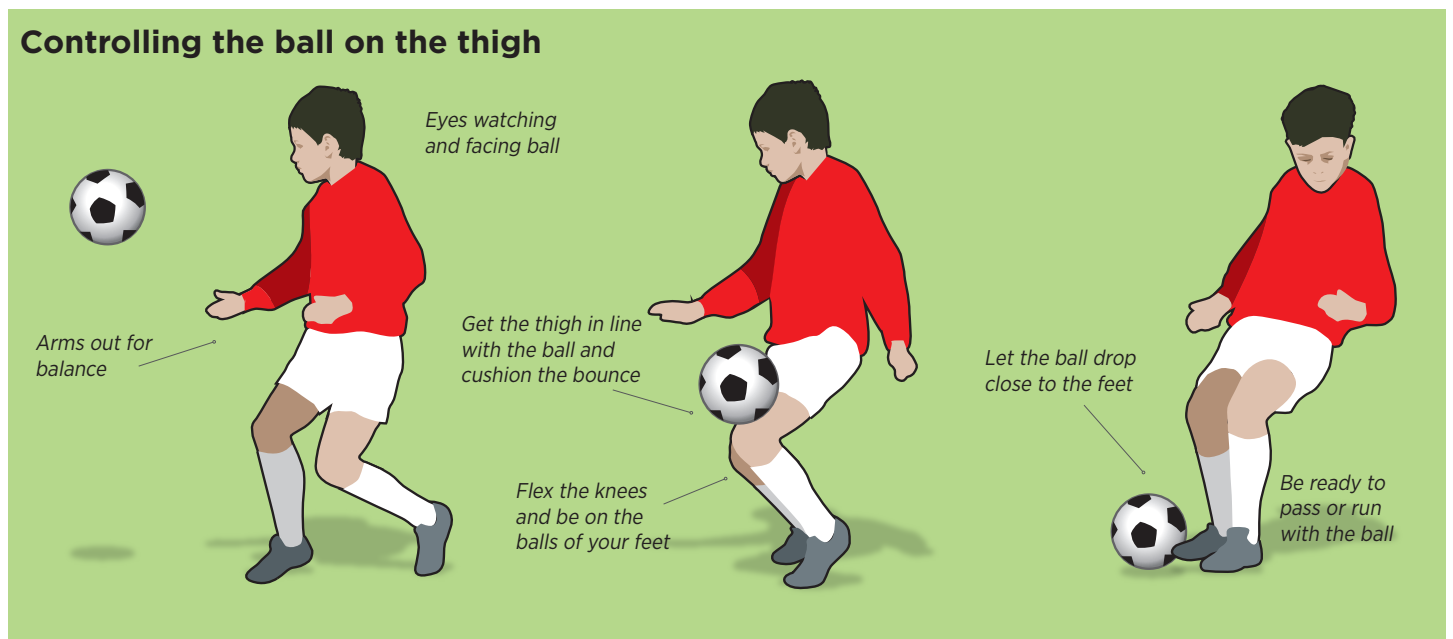
2 The passing players aim to make lofted passes to team mates at the other end of the grid without landing the ball in the middle four squares. The player receiving the pass can use part of his body (chest, thigh or inside of the foot) to control the ball.



3 Every time a defender disrupts a pass, or if a pass goes astray, an attacker loses a life. When an attacker completes a pass, a defender loses a life. First to lose three lives loses the game.

4 The two end players work as a team and make good angles for passes. The defender looks to force a player to use his weaker foot and make mistakes.

Controlling the ball on the thigh



How many players do I need?

We used six players for this activity

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

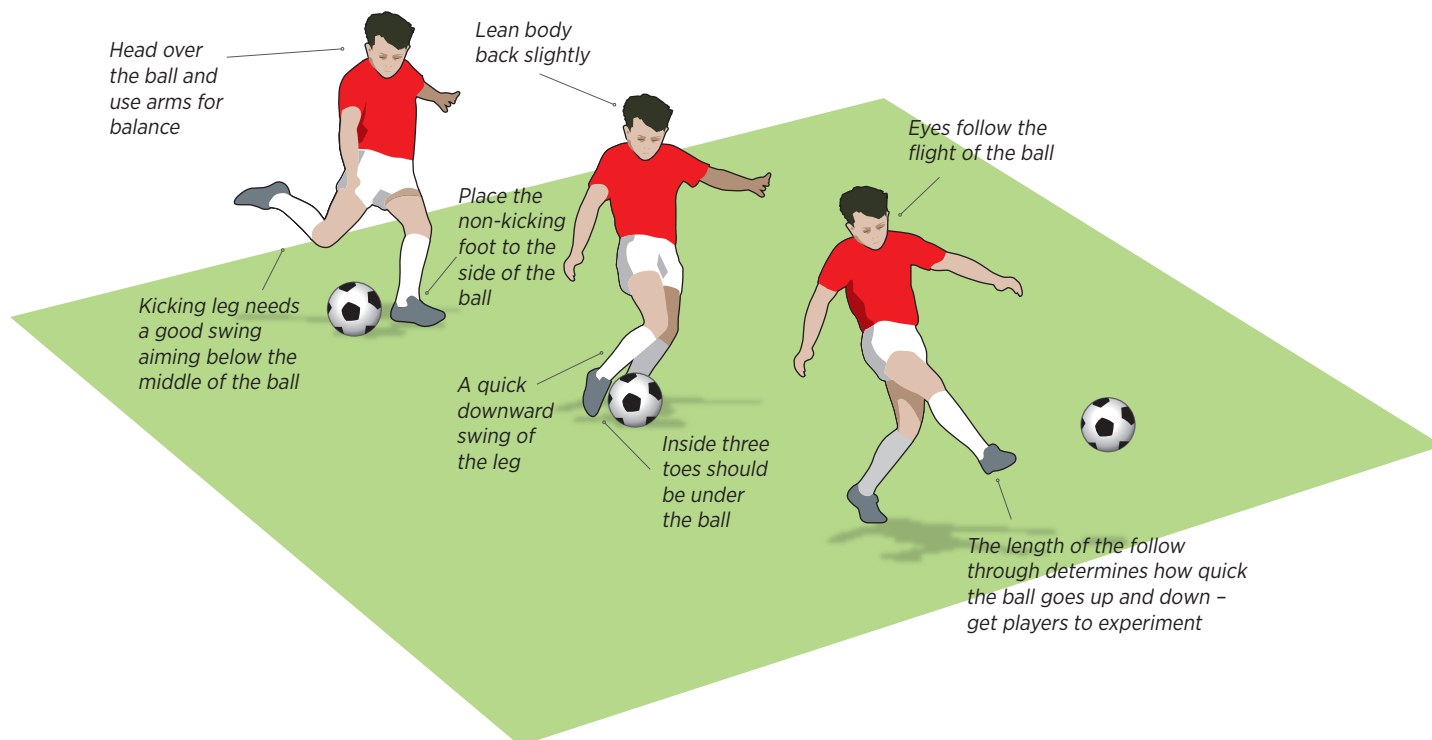
Receive, control and pass

GAME: MAKE A LOFTED PASS

CALL OUT

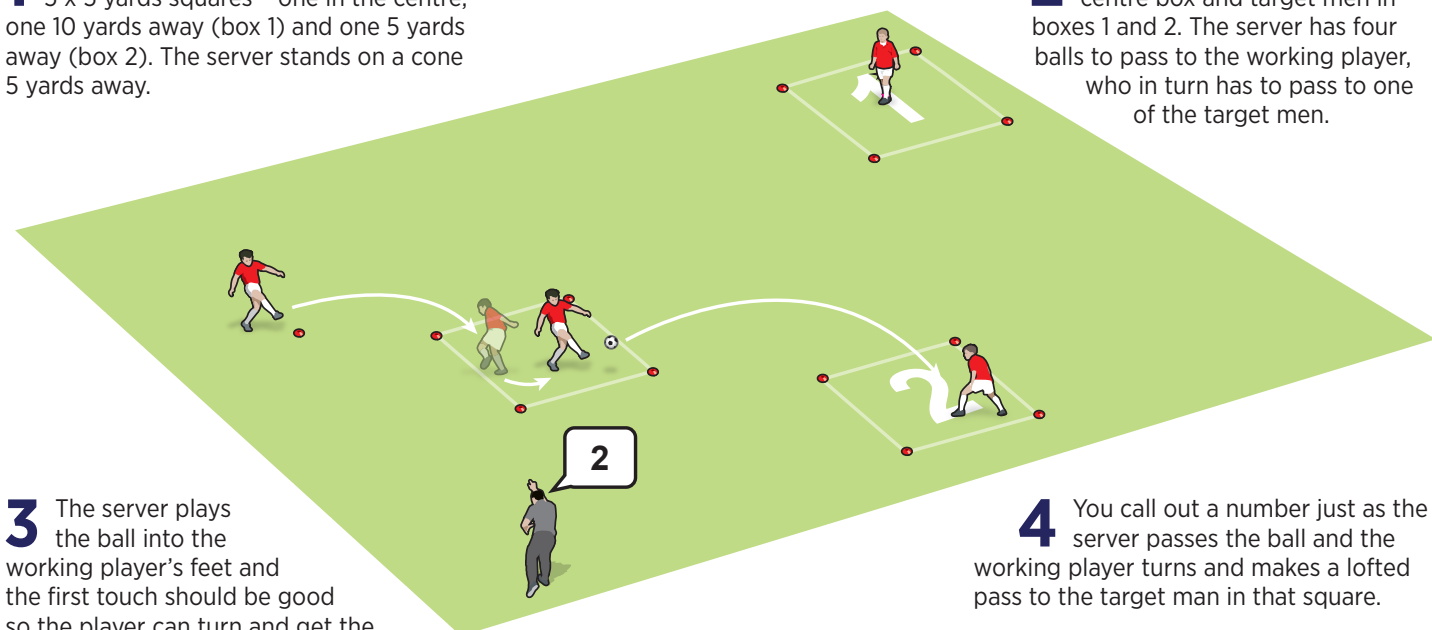
“Look to where the pass is going” • “Use the inside of the foot near the toe to lift the ball over the cones” • “Be accurate with both feet”

Making a lofted pass



1 You need balls and cones and three 5 x 5 yards squares – one in the centre, one 10 yards away (box 1) and one 5 yards away (box 2). The server stands on a cone 5 yards away.

2 Put the working player in the centre box and target men in boxes 1 and 2. The server has four balls to pass to the working player, who in turn has to pass to one of the target men.



3 The server plays the ball into the working player's feet and the first touch should be good so the player can turn and get the pass away.

4 You call out a number just as the server passes the ball and the working player turns and makes a lofted pass to the target man in that square.

How many players do I need?

You need four players for this session.

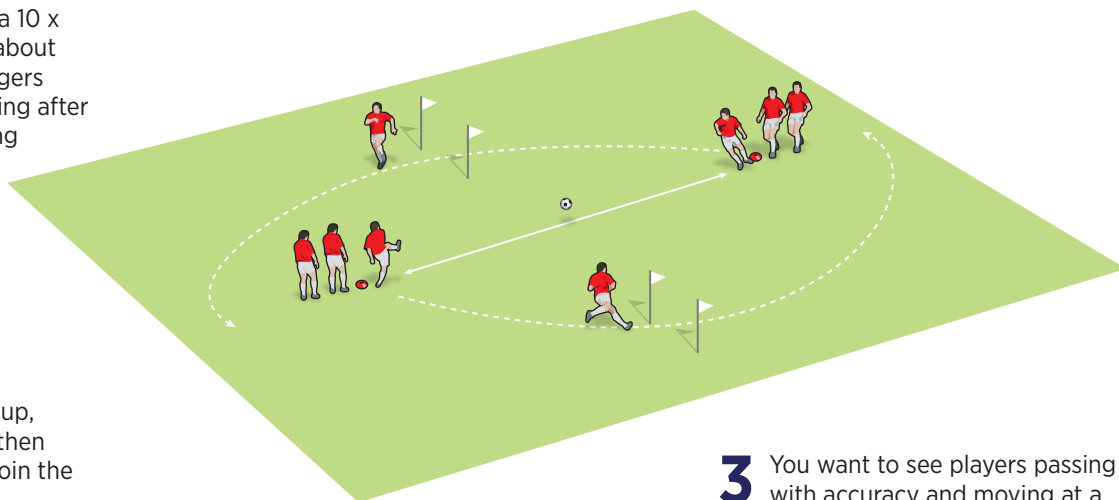
Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

Shape out wide

ACTIVITY: PASS AND MOVE TO SUPPORT

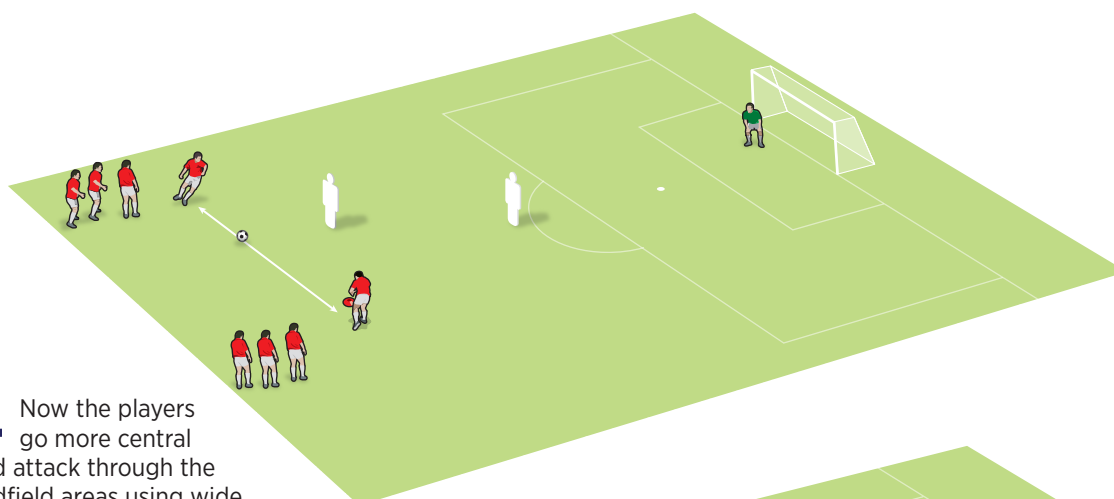
CALL OUT "Pass to feet and move quickly" • "Call for the ball" • "Keep your eyes on the ball"

1 The warm up is in an area 10 x 10 yards. This session is about controlling the ball with wingers going wide and central moving after passing, to create goalscoring opportunities.

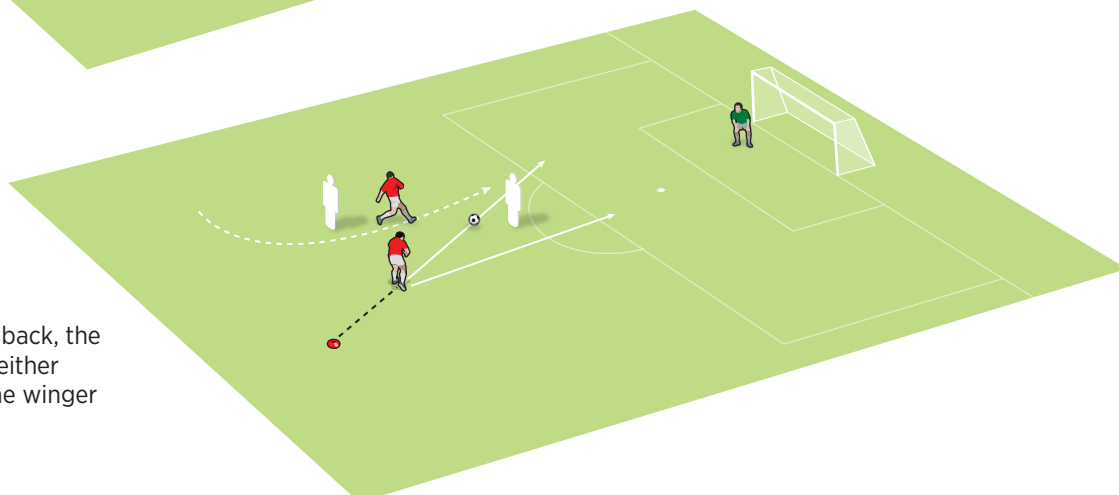


2 In the two-touch warm-up, players play a one-two then sprint through the poles to join the back of the other line.

3 You want to see players passing with accuracy and moving at a high tempo to get to the other side.



4 Now the players go more central and attack through the midfield areas using wide players running in from the wings.



5 Upon receiving the ball back, the start player lays a pass either side of the mannequin for the winger to run on to.

How many players do I need?

We used nine players for the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement

U15-U18 | BALL CONTROL 2

Shape out wide

GAME: PASS AND MOVE USING FULL WIDTH

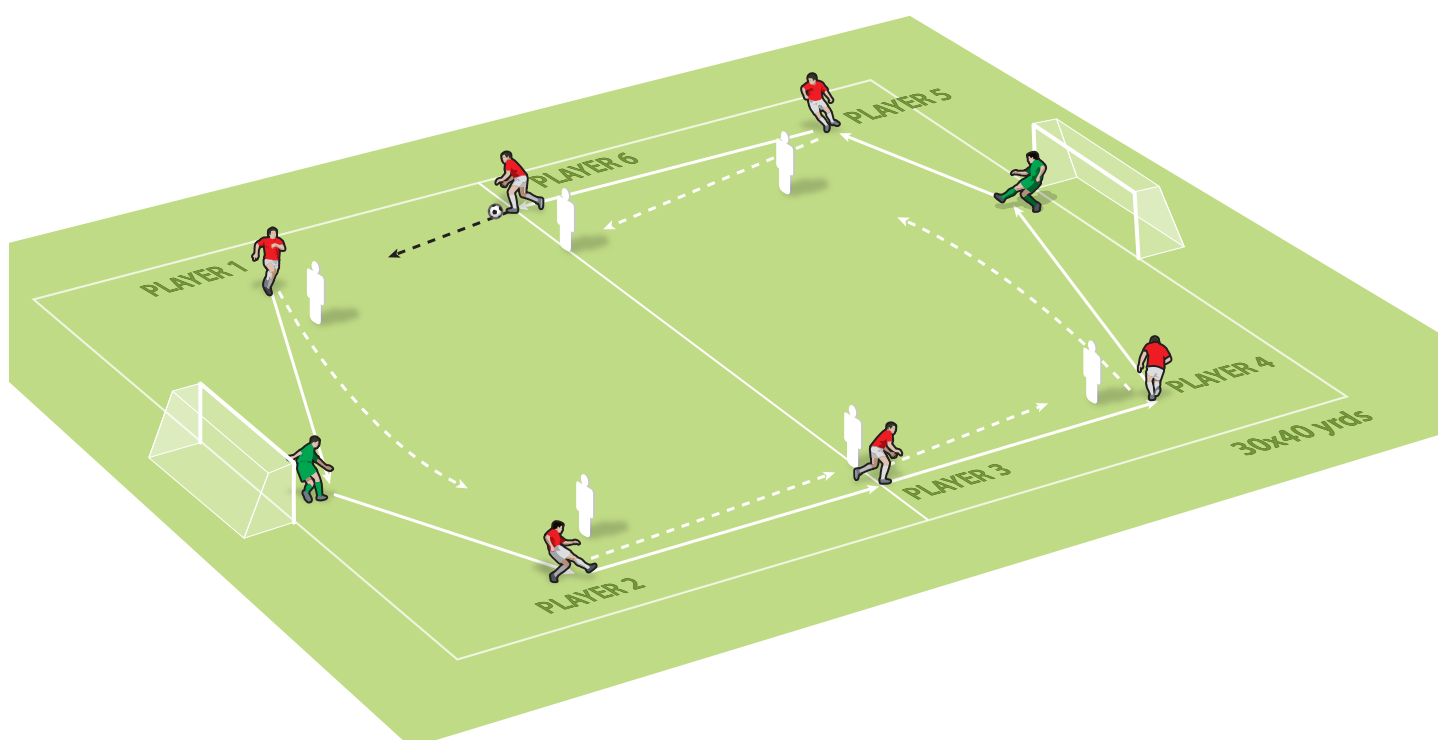
CALL OUT

“Look to where the pass is going” • “Use the inside or outside of your foot to pass” •
“Follow the pass to the next cone”

1 You need balls, bibs, cones and goals. Set up an area of 40x30 yards or use a 5v5 pitch with six players on mannequins and two goalkeepers.

2 This session starts with player 1 passing to the keeper and running to the next mannequin. The keeper then passes to player 2.

3 Each player must open up to receive the ball, play it to the next player and then follow his pass to the next mannequin.



4 Keepers have to learn how to receive the ball with both feet and hands, so make sure players try different kinds of pass.

5 To complete the passing sequence, player 6 dribbles to the starting mannequin and begins the sequence again with a pass to the keeper.

GAME PLAY

Receive with good first touch.
Good weight on the pass.
Movement to follow the pass.

How many players do I need?

We used six players on mannequins and two goalkeepers in this session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	--->	—>

Success in 1v1 battles

ACTIVITY: FIRST TO THE BALL AND SHIELD

CALL OUT "Be first to the ball" • "Keep your balance" • "Make a decision and go for the ball"

1 Set up a 10 x 10 yards area with two cones at one end that the players race to and goals on both sides. The goals can be moved further away or closer – it's a good idea to experiment with distance.

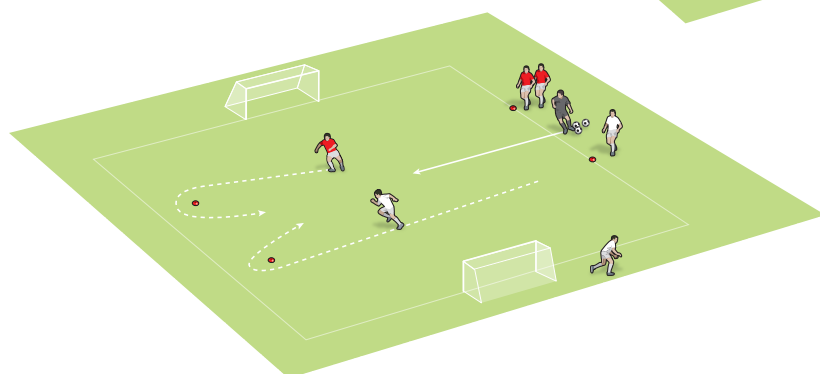
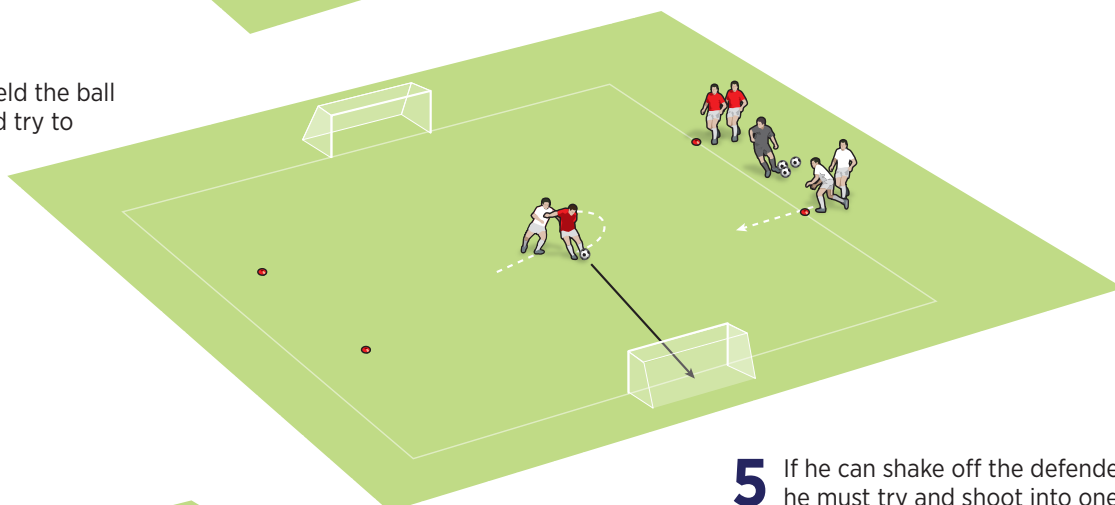
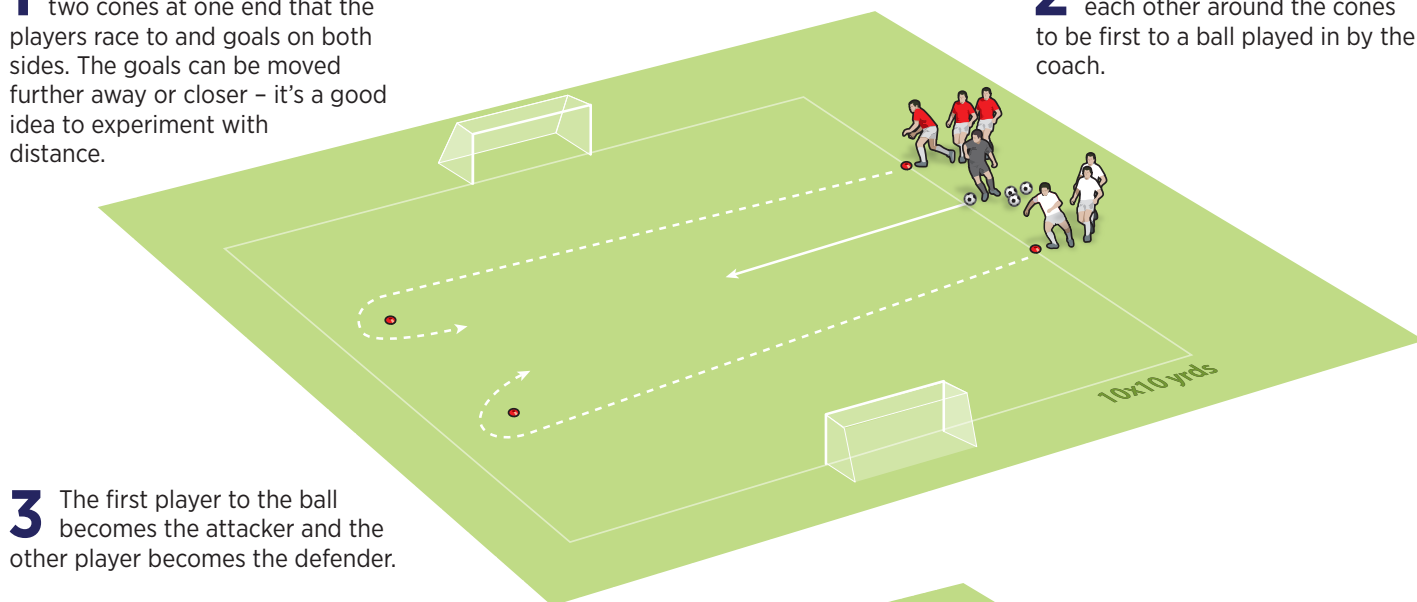
2 The first two players race against each other around the cones to be first to a ball played in by the coach.

3 The first player to the ball becomes the attacker and the other player becomes the defender.

4 The attacker must shield the ball from the defender and try to use a trick to fool him into going the wrong way.

5 If he can shake off the defender he must try and shoot into one of the target goals.

6 The attacker must shield the ball from the defender and try to use a trick to fool him into going the wrong way.



How many players do I need?

We used six players for the session, playing in pairs 1v1.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

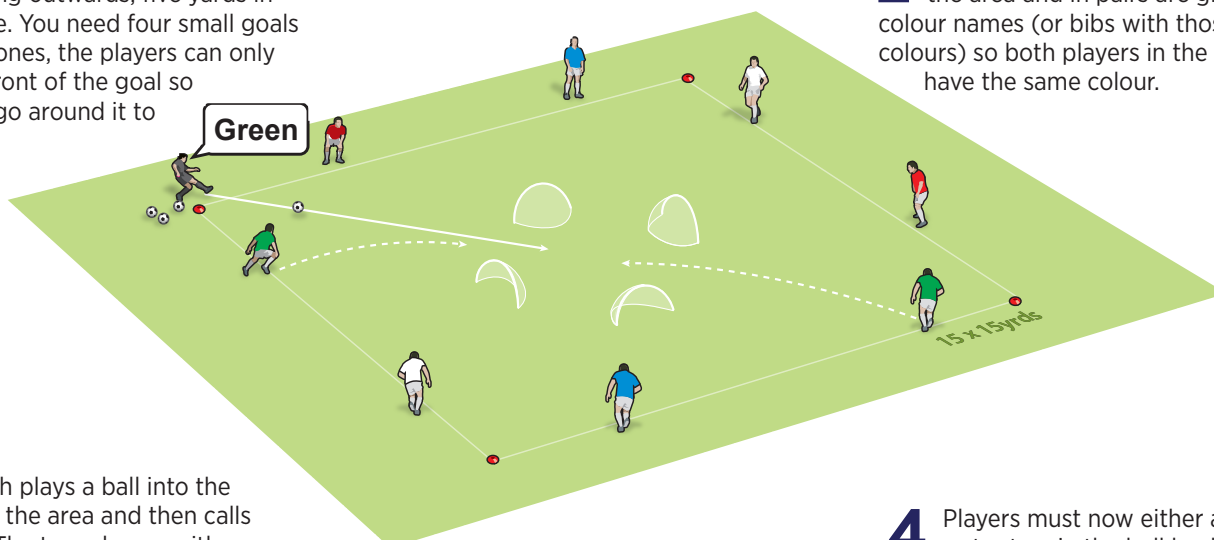
U15-U18 | BALL CONTROL 3

Success in 1v1 battles

GAME: WIN THE BALL, SCORE A GOAL

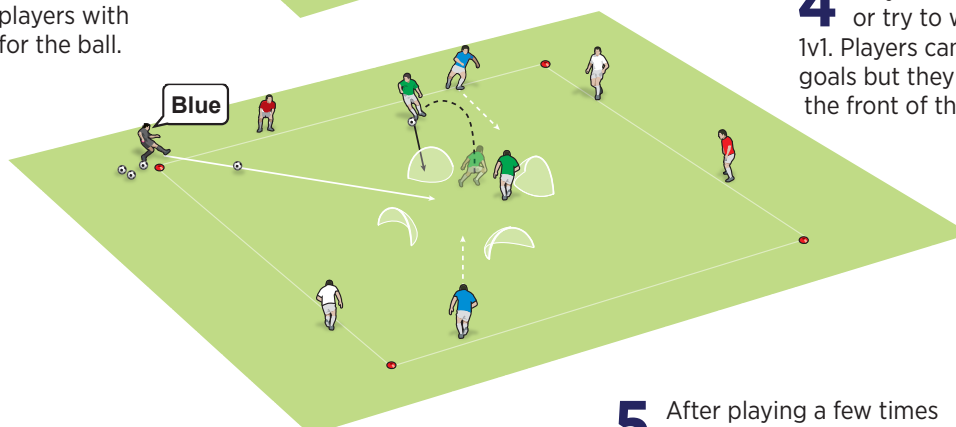
CALL OUT "Be first to the ball" • "Keep your balance" • "Make a decision and go for the ball"

1 Set up a 15 x 15 yards area with four goals facing outwards, five yards in from the edge. You need four small goals – if you use cones, the players can only score in the front of the goal so they have to go around it to score.

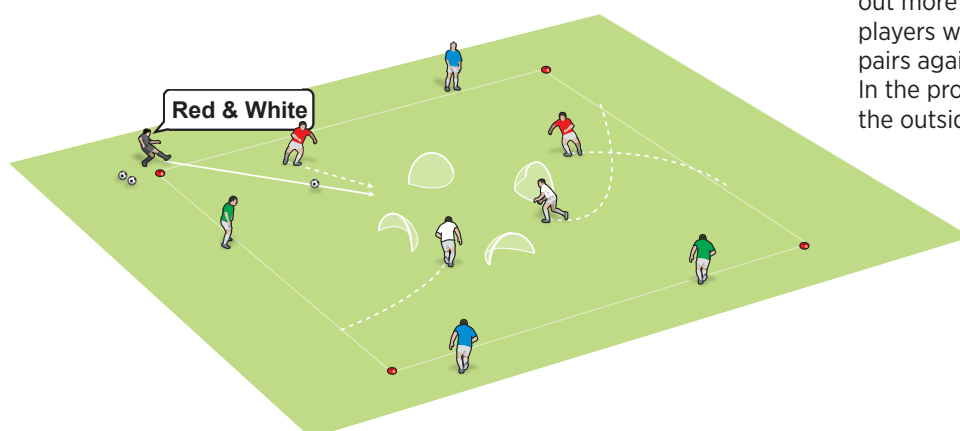


2 Players are positioned around the area and in pairs are given colour names (or bibs with those colours) so both players in the pair have the same colour.

3 The coach plays a ball into the centre of the area and then calls out a colour. The two players with that colour challenge for the ball.



4 Players must now either attack or try to win the ball back in a 1v1. Players can score in any of the goals but they have to get around to the front of the goal.



5 After playing a few times change it so the coach calls out more than one colour and the players with that colour work as pairs against the other coloured pair. In the progression they can also use the outside players.

GAME PLAY

Determination to win the ball.
Pair like for like players.
Shoot with accuracy.

How many players do I need?

We used eight players in this session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

First touch control

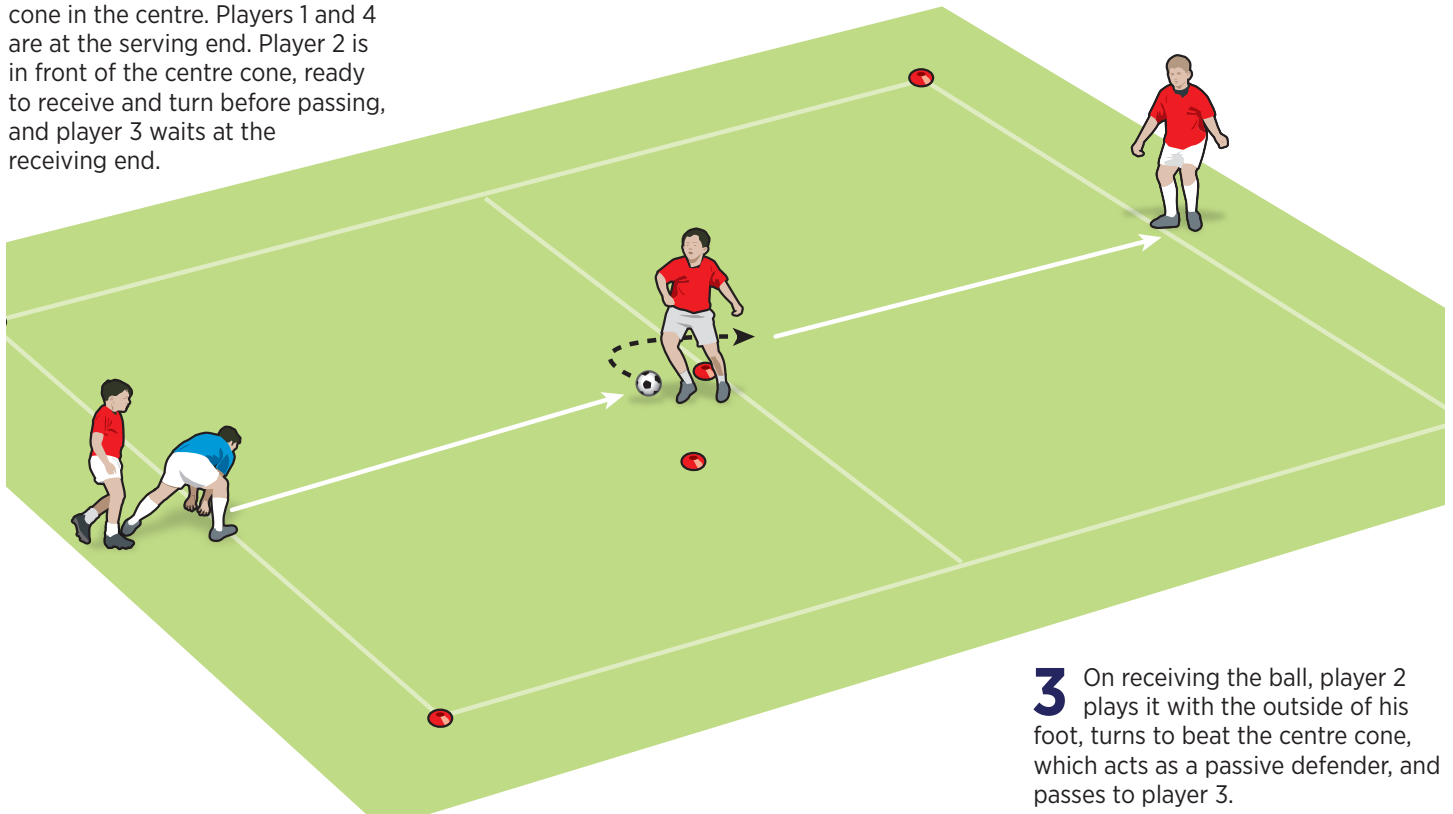
ACTIVITY: TURN WITH THE BALL AND PASS

CALL OUT

“Cushion the ball with a light touch” • “Turn and pass first time” • “Listen for the call”
• “Accuracy”

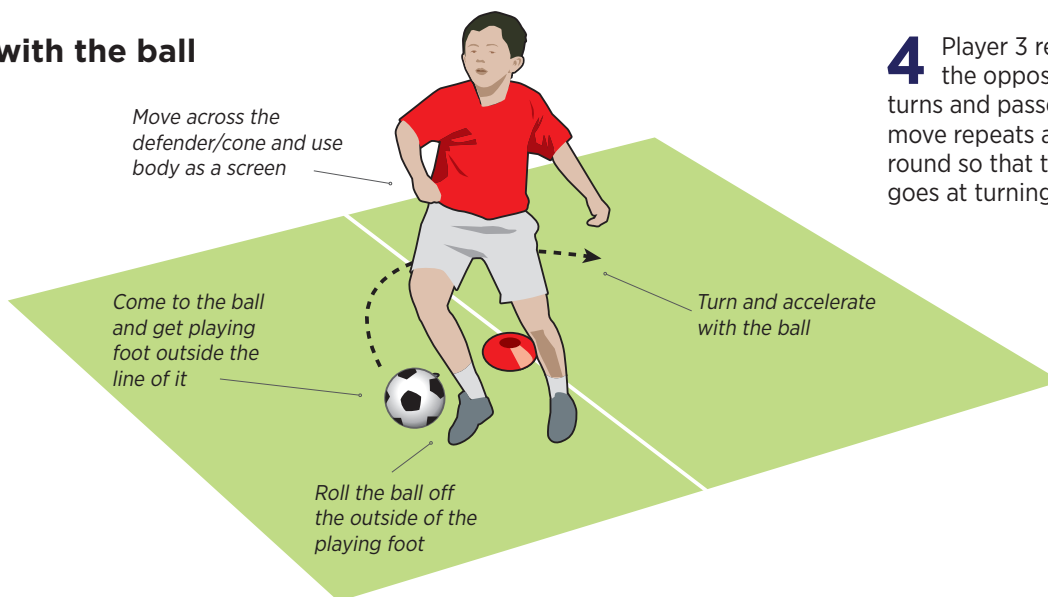
1 Set up a 20 x 10 yards area divided into two halves with a cone in the centre. Players 1 and 4 are at the serving end. Player 2 is in front of the centre cone, ready to receive and turn before passing, and player 3 waits at the receiving end.

2 When you say “go”, player 1 rolls or passes the ball to player 2.



3 On receiving the ball, player 2 plays it with the outside of his foot, turns to beat the centre cone, which acts as a passive defender, and passes to player 3.

Turning with the ball



4 Player 3 repeats the move in the opposite direction. Player 2 turns and passes to player 4 and the move repeats again. Swap the players round so that they all have several goes at turning with the ball.

How many players do I need?

We used four players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | BALL CONTROL 4

First touch control

GAME: CONTROL AND CATCH

CALL OUT

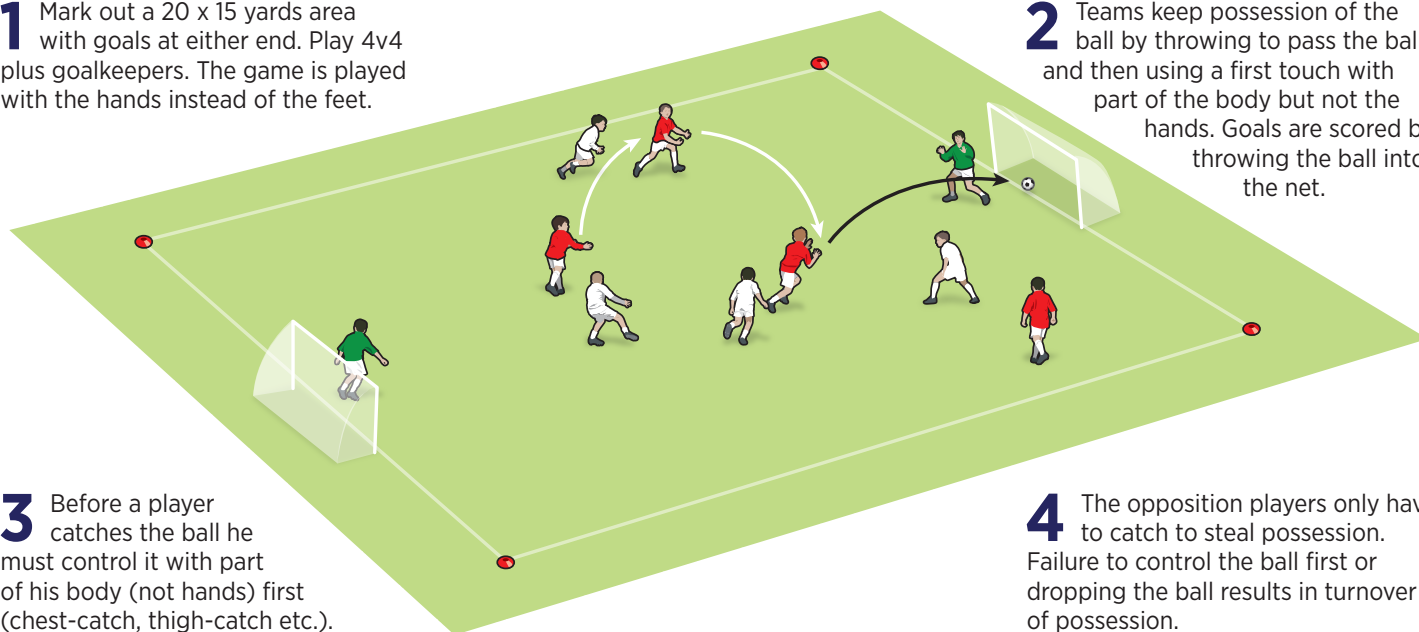
“Keep your eyes on the ball” • “Look up to see where to stop the ball” •
“Make a good first touch”

1 Mark out a 20 x 15 yards area with goals at either end. Play 4v4 plus goalkeepers. The game is played with the hands instead of the feet.

2 Teams keep possession of the ball by throwing to pass the ball and then using a first touch with part of the body but not the hands. Goals are scored by throwing the ball into the net.

3 Before a player catches the ball he must control it with part of his body (not hands) first (chest-catch, thigh-catch etc.).

4 The opposition players only have to catch to steal possession. Failure to control the ball first or dropping the ball results in turnover of possession.



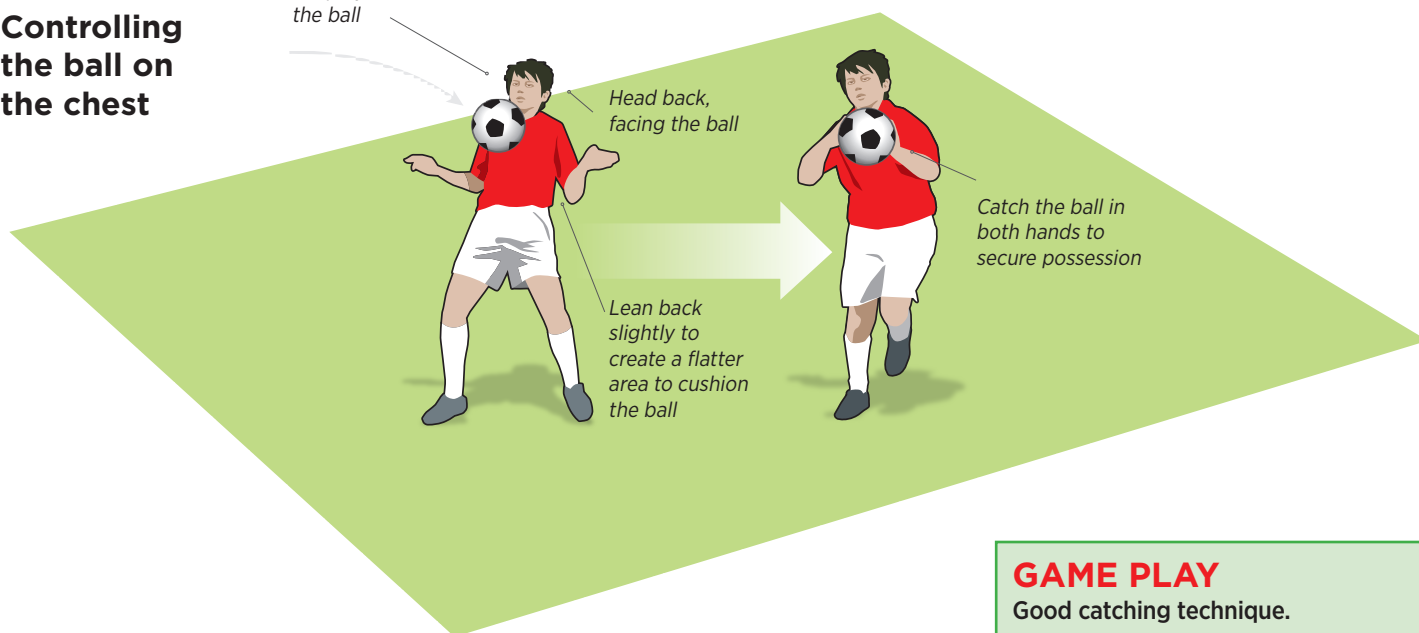
Controlling the ball on the chest

Keep eyes on the ball

Head back, facing the ball

Lean back slightly to create a flatter area to cushion the ball

Catch the ball in both hands to secure possession



GAME PLAY

Good catching technique.
Accurate passing and shooting.
Look for match-like pressing.

How many players do I need?

We used 10 players in this game.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

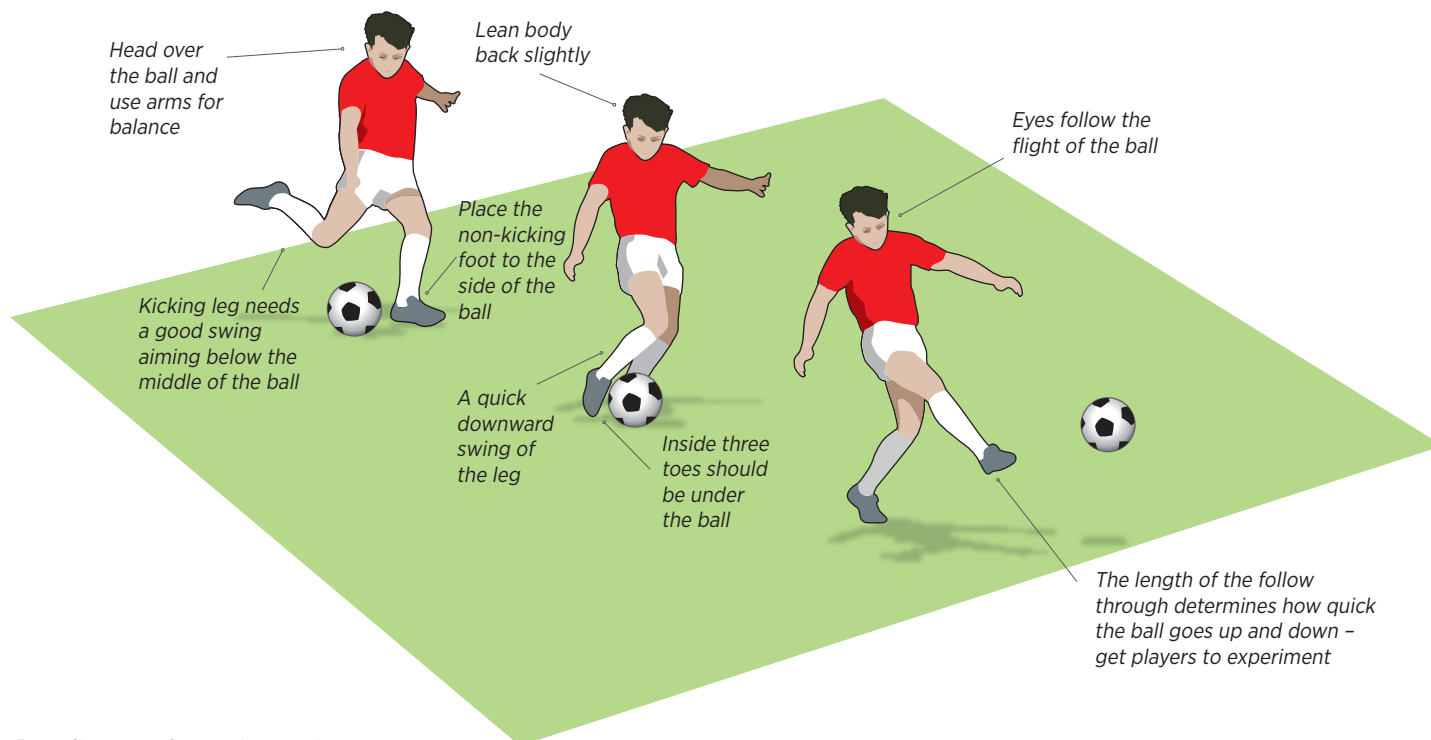
Pass 10 yards to a team mate

ACTIVITY: MAKE A LOFTED PASS OVER CONES

CALL OUT

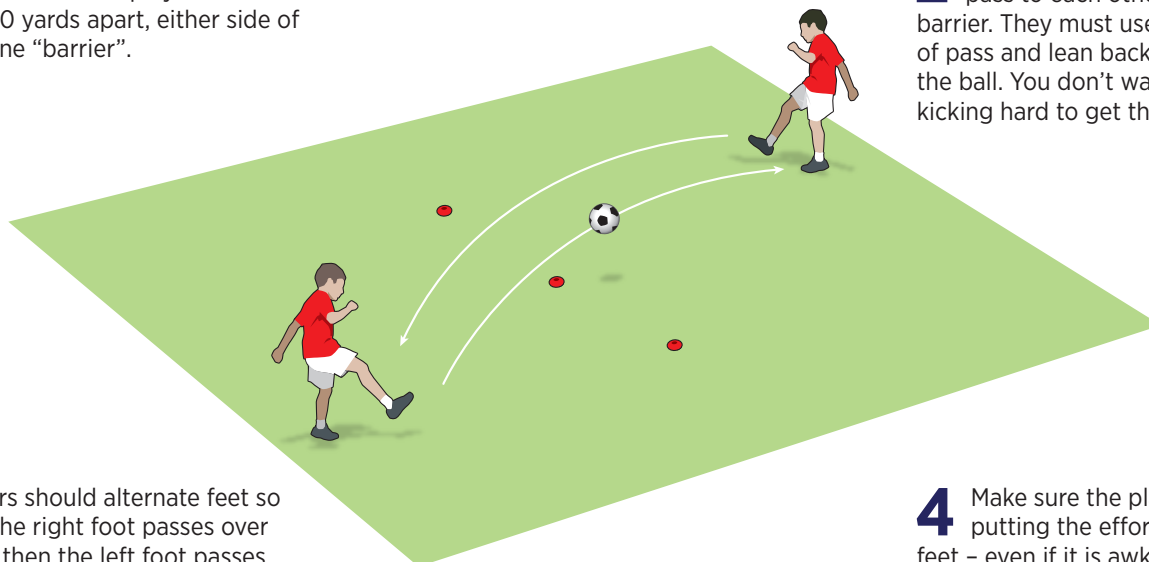
“Look to where the pass is going” • “Use the inside of the foot near the toe to lift the ball over the cones” • “Be accurate with both feet”

Making a lofted pass



1 Split your players into pairs. Set up so that the players are standing 10 yards apart, either side of a three cone “barrier”.

2 The aim is for the players to pass to each other over the cone barrier. They must use a good weight of pass and lean back slightly to lift the ball. You don’t want to see them kicking hard to get the lift.



3 Players should alternate feet so that the right foot passes over the cones then the left foot passes over the cones.

4 Make sure the players are putting the effort in with both feet – even if it is awkward for them at first.

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	→
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	→

U15-U18 | BALL CONTROL 5

Pass 10 yards to a team mate

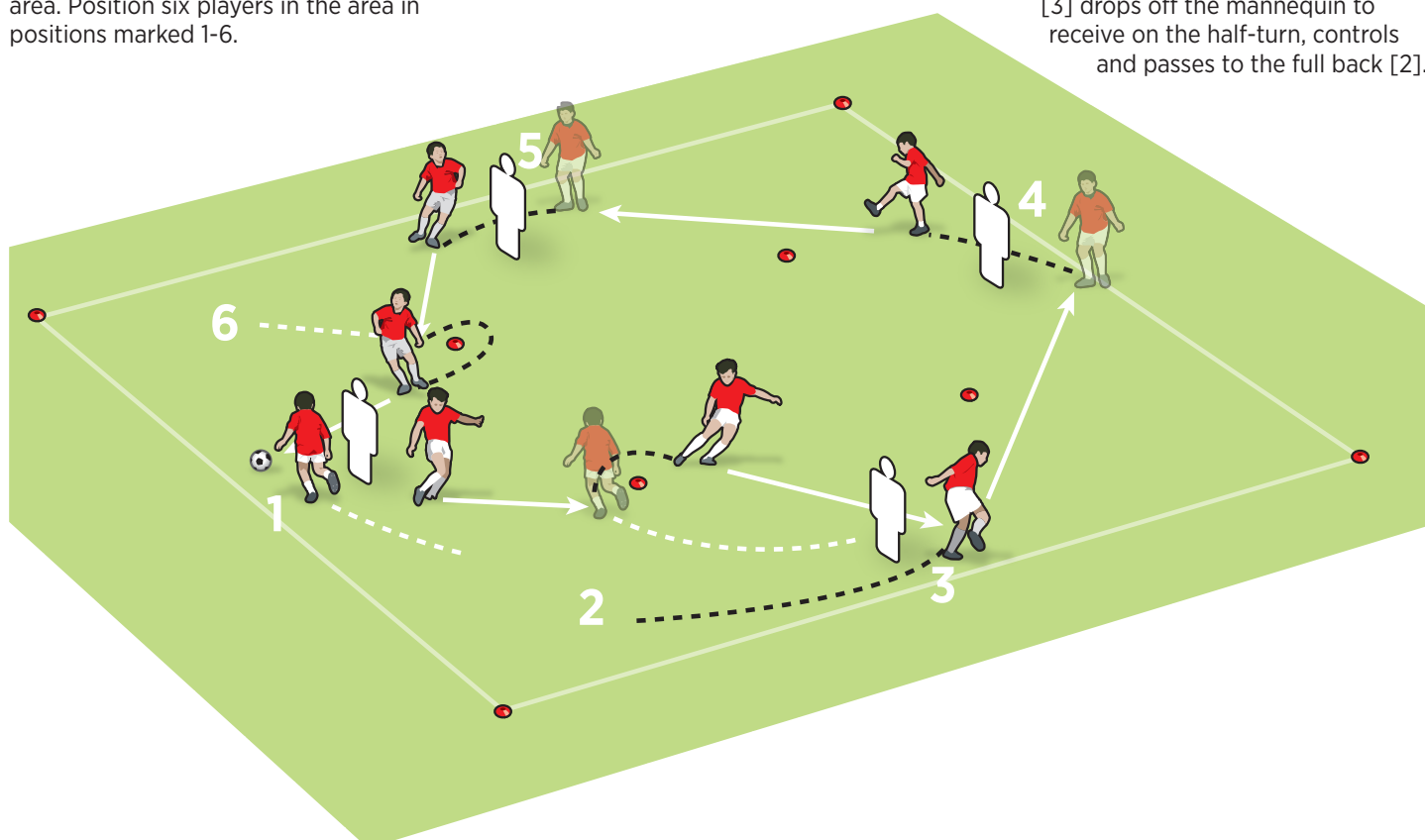
GAME: PASSING SEQUENCE

CALL OUT

“Look to where the pass is going” • “Use the inside or outside of your foot to pass” •
“Use both feet to pass”

1 Set out a 30 x 20 yards square and mannequins (or poles) in the centre of each side 2 yards from the side of the area. Position six players in the area in positions marked 1-6.

2 The right-hand sequence begins at the bottom of the practice at point 1 – The midfielder [3] drops off the mannequin to receive on the half-turn, controls and passes to the full back [2].



3 The full-back [2] moves from deep to run outside the mannequin at 3 and make a one touch pass into the forward [4].

4 The forward [4] receives a pass and moves around the back of the mannequin and passes to the winger [5].

5 The winger[5] receives two-touch and feeds to his team mate [6] who has moved centrally who then spins “around the corner” and feeds back to the target man [1].

6 Keep the sequence going until players get used to it then switch positions so every player plays each position – then add a second ball so one ball starts at 1 and another starts at the same time at 2.

GAME PLAY

Movement to receive the ball.
Receive with good first touch.
Good weight on the pass.

How many players do I need?

We used six players in this game.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

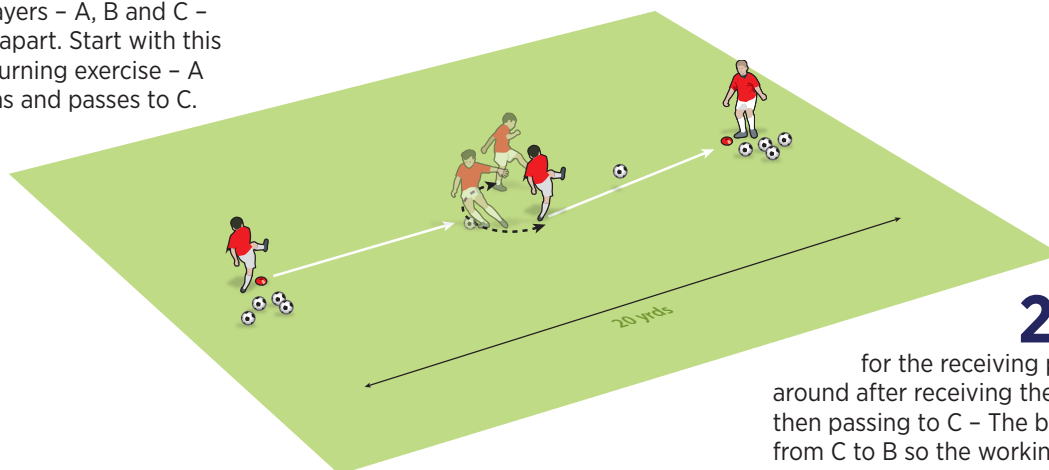
Think and control the ball

ACTIVITY: CREATE SPACE TO TURN

CALL OUT

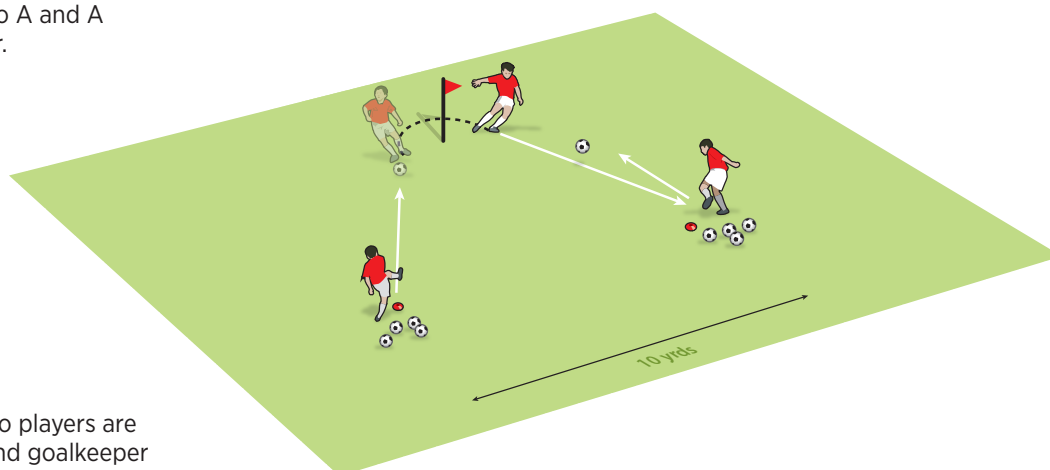
“Make quick decisions” • “Change direction to fool the defender” • “Keep your body between the defender and the ball” • “Keep control of the ball”

1 Position three players – A, B and C – in a line 10 yards apart. Start with this simple passing and turning exercise – A passes to B who turns and passes to C.

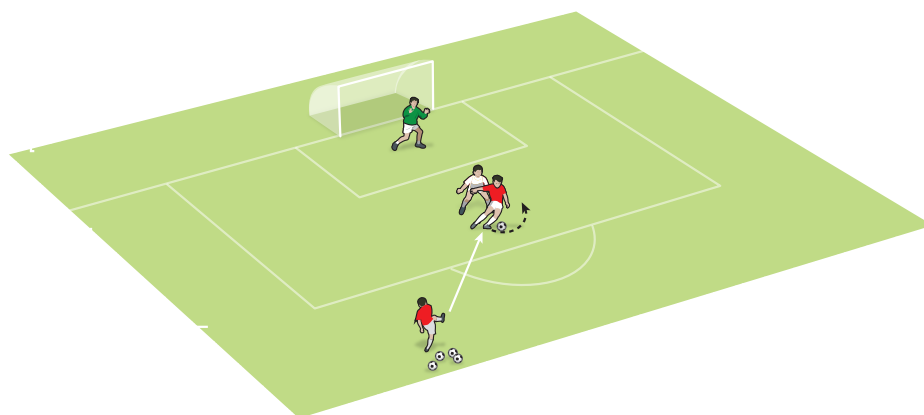


2 Then you need a pole for the receiving player to turn around after receiving the ball from A then passing to C – The ball comes back from C to B so the working player is turning both ways around the pole.

3 Move play on after four turns so B goes to C, C dribbles to A and A becomes the turning player.



4 Progress the session so players are working with a goal and goalkeeper – get them to try the turning exercise in a match-like situation.



5 While controlling the ball the player turns to the left, swinging his body around ready to take a route towards the goal i.e. away from the defender, who will struggle to make a challenge if the control and turn is made skilfully enough.

How many players do I need?

This game requires three players and a goalkeeper.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

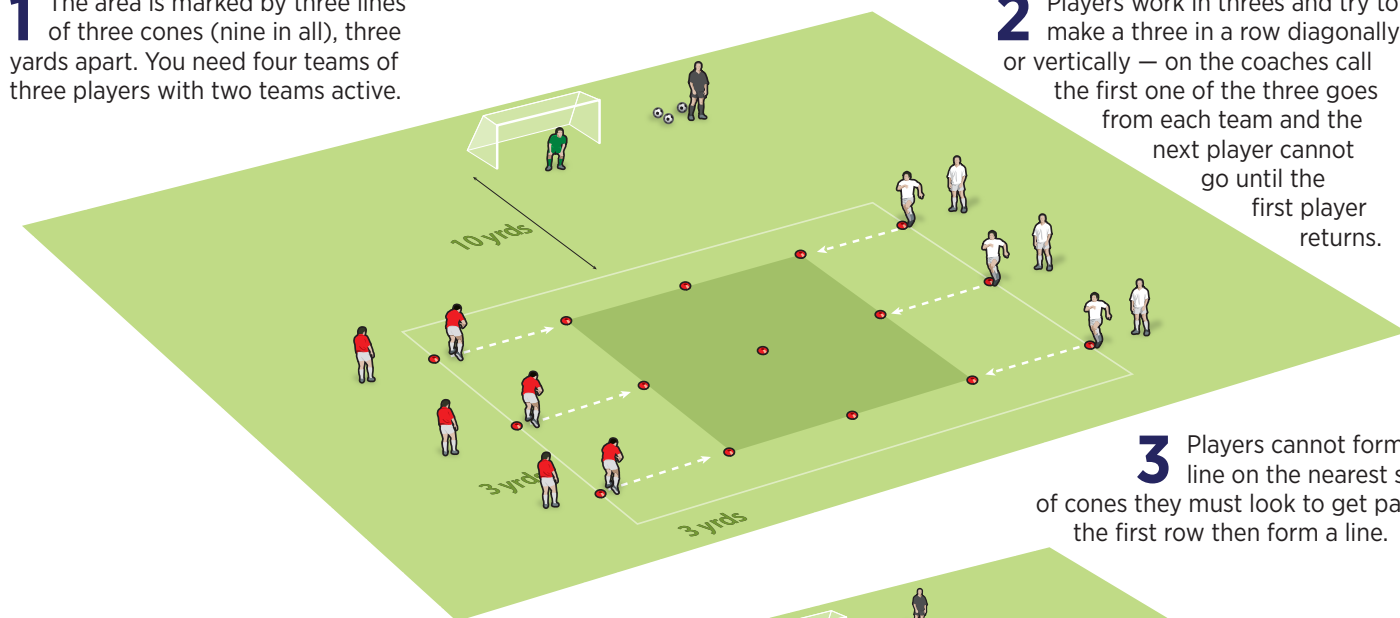
Think and control the ball

GAME: CONNECT THREE

CALL OUT

“Look for the open row” • “Out-think your opponents” • “Move quickly to get to the cone” • “Be accurate in front of goal”

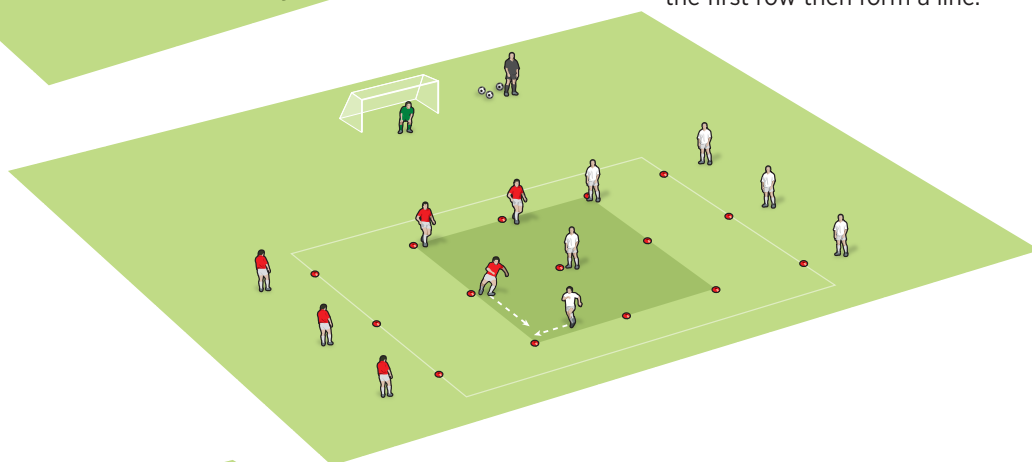
1 The area is marked by three lines of three cones (nine in all), three yards apart. You need four teams of three players with two teams active.



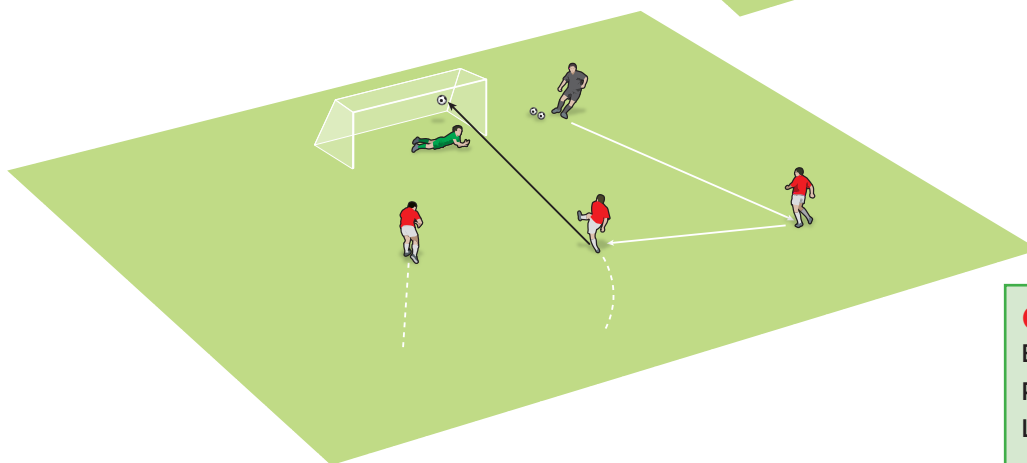
2 Players work in threes and try to make a three in a row diagonally or vertically — on the coaches call the first one of the three goes from each team and the next player cannot go until the first player returns.

3 Players cannot form a line on the nearest set of cones they must look to get past the first row then form a line.

4 When racing to create a three in a row the opposition must make sure they take note and try to get to the cone first to stop them doing so



5 Once the team has made the three in a row, they now attack the goal 10 yards away – one player runs wide and then crosses the ball for the other two to try and score in the goal against a goalkeeper. They have 15 seconds to score.



GAME PLAY

Block opponents' lines.
Play quickly and keep to rules.
Link up and score.

How many players do I need?

We used 13 players in this session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

Dribble with the ball and shoot

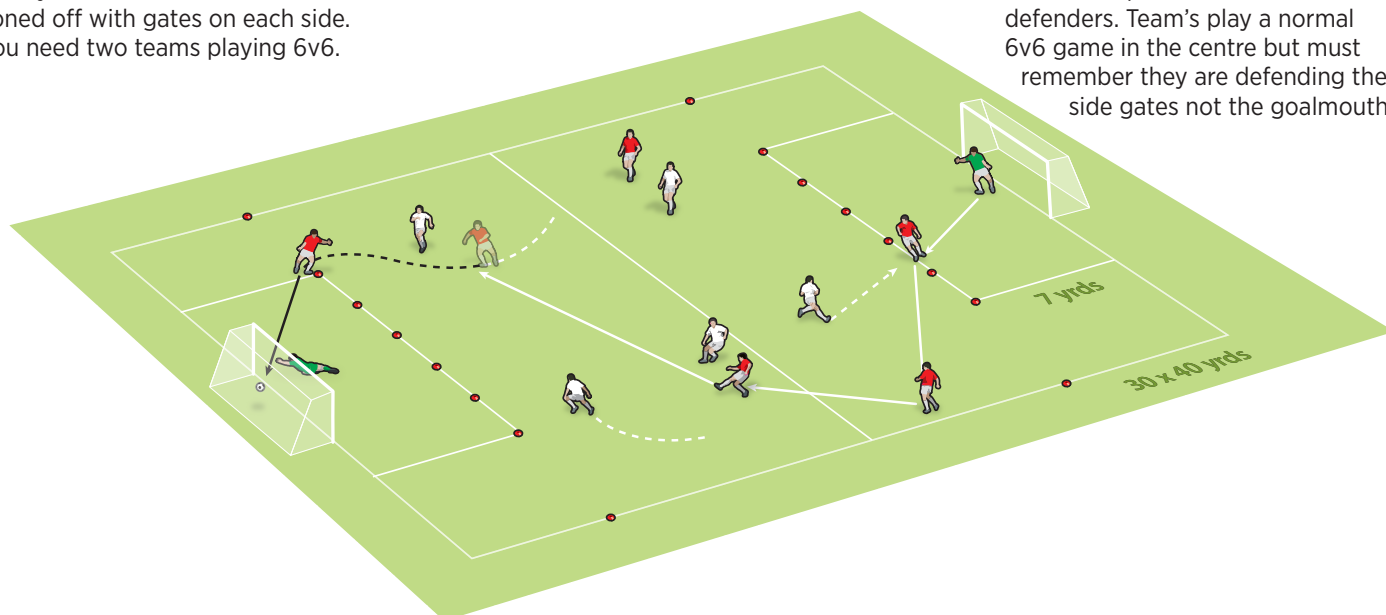
ACTIVITY: ATTACK THE PENALTY AREA

CALL OUT

“Keep the ball in front of you” • “Use both feet to dribble” • “Look up to see where you are” • “Go early or feint to shoot”

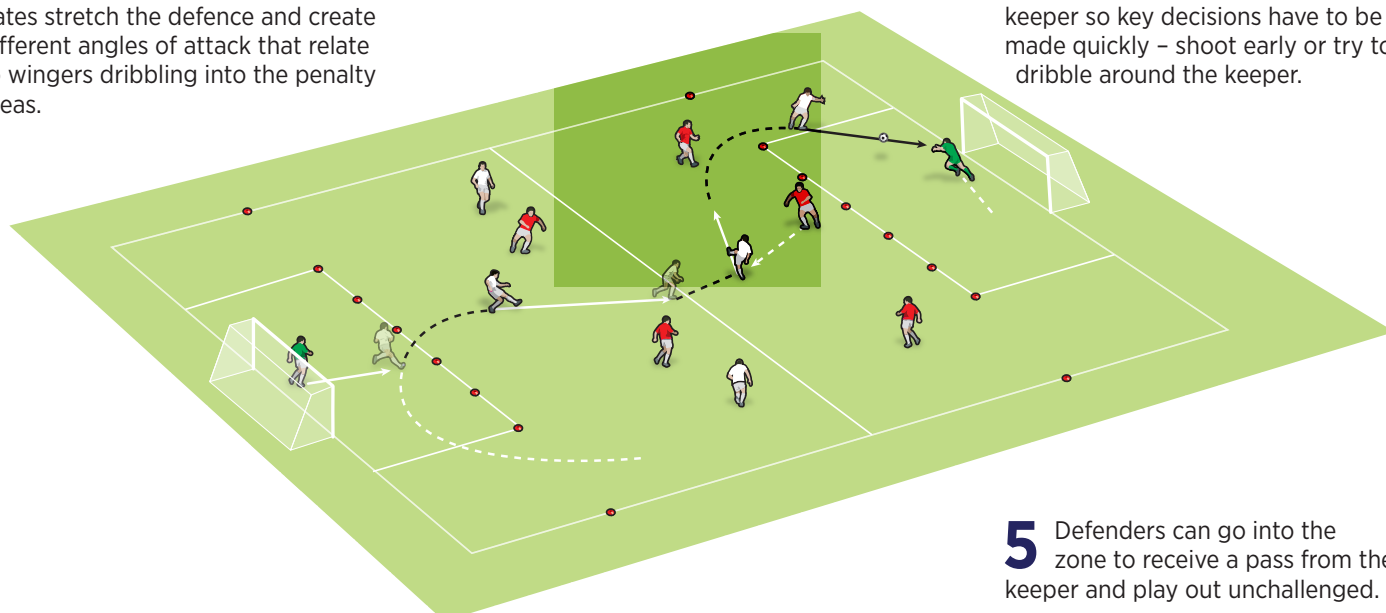
1 Set up a 40 x 30 yards area with 7 yard zones at each end that are coned off with gates on each side. You need two teams playing 6v6.

2 Goalkeepers start the session with a pass into one of their defenders. Team's play a normal 6v6 game in the centre but must remember they are defending the side gates not the goalmouth.



3 To score a goal, players dribble through the side gates then go 1v1 against the goalkeeper to try and score in the goal. The side gates stretch the defence and create different angles of attack that relate to wingers dribbling into the penalty areas.

4 No defenders are allowed to tackle the dribbler once he has got into the zone. This sets the dribbling striker 1v1 against the keeper so key decisions have to be made quickly – shoot early or try to dribble around the keeper.



5 Defenders can go into the zone to receive a pass from the keeper and play out unchallenged.

How many players do I need?

We used 12 players in the session – 6v6 including goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | BALL CONTROL 7

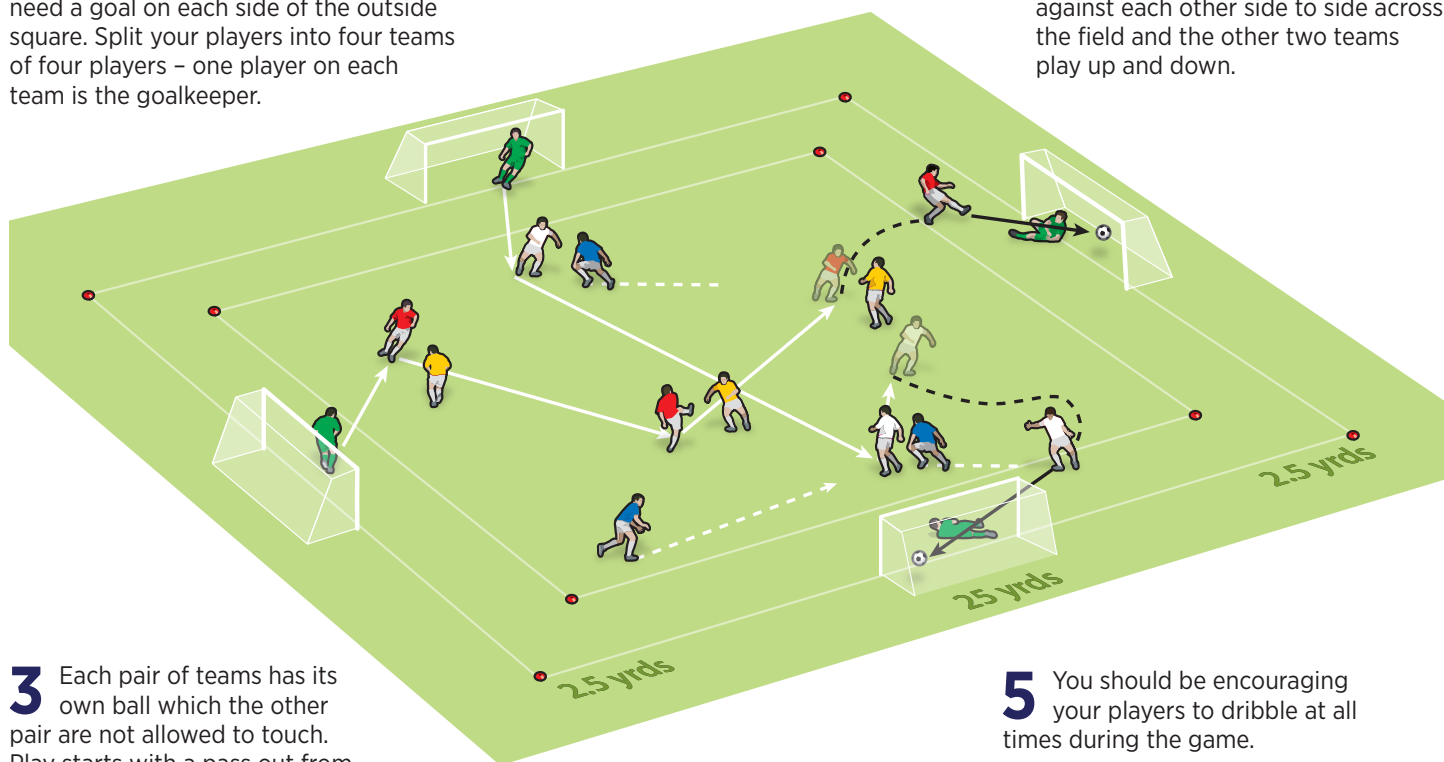
Dribble with the ball and shoot

GAME: DRIBBLE INTO SPACE

CALL OUT "Keep the ball in front of you" • "Use both feet to dribble" • "Look up to see where you are" • "Go early or feint to shoot"

1 Set up a 30 x 30 yards area with a central area of 25 x 25 yards. You need a goal on each side of the outside square. Split your players into four teams of four players – one player on each team is the goalkeeper.

2 All four teams are on the pitch at the same time. Two teams play against each other side to side the field and the other two teams play up and down.



3 Each pair of teams has its own ball which the other pair are not allowed to touch. Play starts with a pass out from the goalkeeper.

5 You should be encouraging your players to dribble at all times during the game.

4 Players play normal 4v4 in the centre square, but must dribble into the outer square to shoot at goal. Once an attacker has crossed into the outer zone defenders are not allowed to make a tackle.

GAME PLAY
Awareness and decision making.
Heads up to find space.
Use both feet to dribble.

How many players do I need?

We used 16 players in this session – four teams of four players including goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

Moving through the thirds

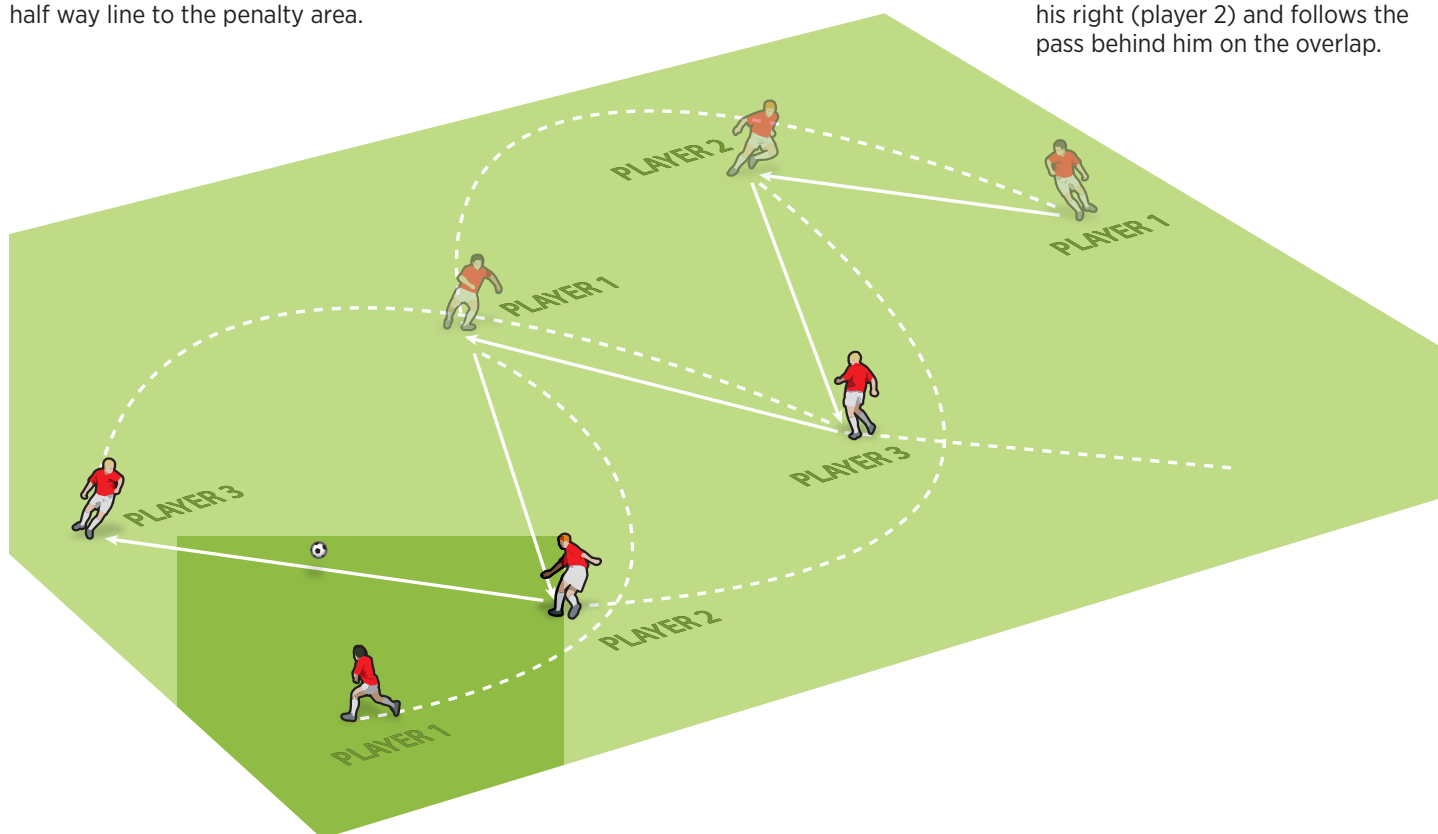
ACTIVITY: POSSESSION AND FORWARD PLAY

CALL OUT

“Keep it simple: Pass, overlap, then call for the ball.” • “Play with your head up” •
“Pass into the space just ahead of the player” • “Run diagonally into space at pace”

1 Using half your normal pitch the width of the area the players use should be 10 yards and play from the half way line to the penalty area.

2 Three players stand in a slight arc 10 yards across. The middle player (player 1), passes the ball to his right (player 2) and follows the pass behind him on the overlap.



3 Player 2 collects the ball and angles his pass left, in front of player 3, the wide left receiver.

4 Player 2 now overlaps around the back of 3, who continues the sequence by passing to player 1, who has become a wide man.

5 The tempo can be increased gradually.

How many players do I need?

We used three players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | BALL CONTROL 8

Moving through the thirds

GAME: PICK YOUR RUNNER

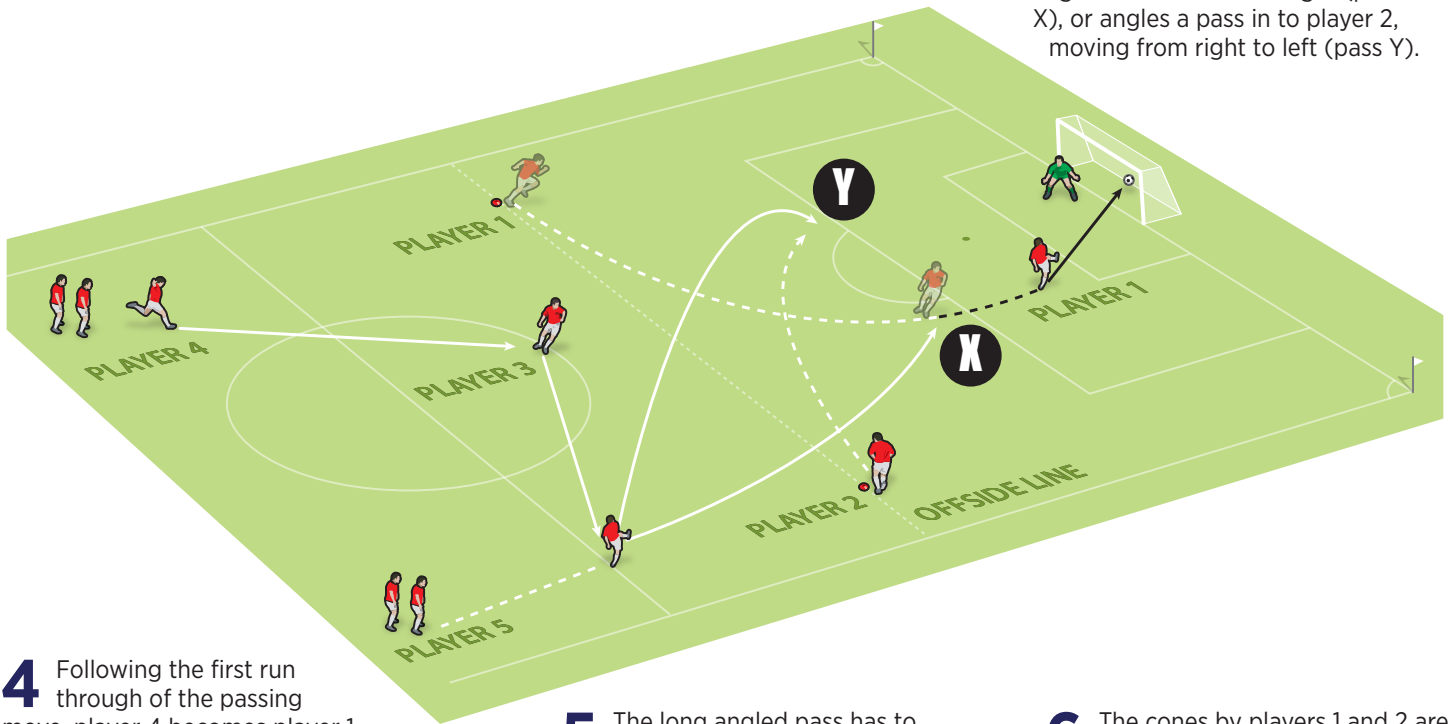
CALL OUT

“Keep it simple: Pass, overlap, then call for the ball.” • “Play with your head up” •
“Pass into the space just ahead of the player” • “Run diagonally into space at pace”

1 Use half your normal pitch. Players are linking up to get the ball into the final third.

2 Player 4, in the defensive half, passes to 3 who finds player 5.

3 He either passes straight in to player 1, who has made an angled run from left to right (pass X), or angles a pass in to player 2, moving from right to left (pass Y).

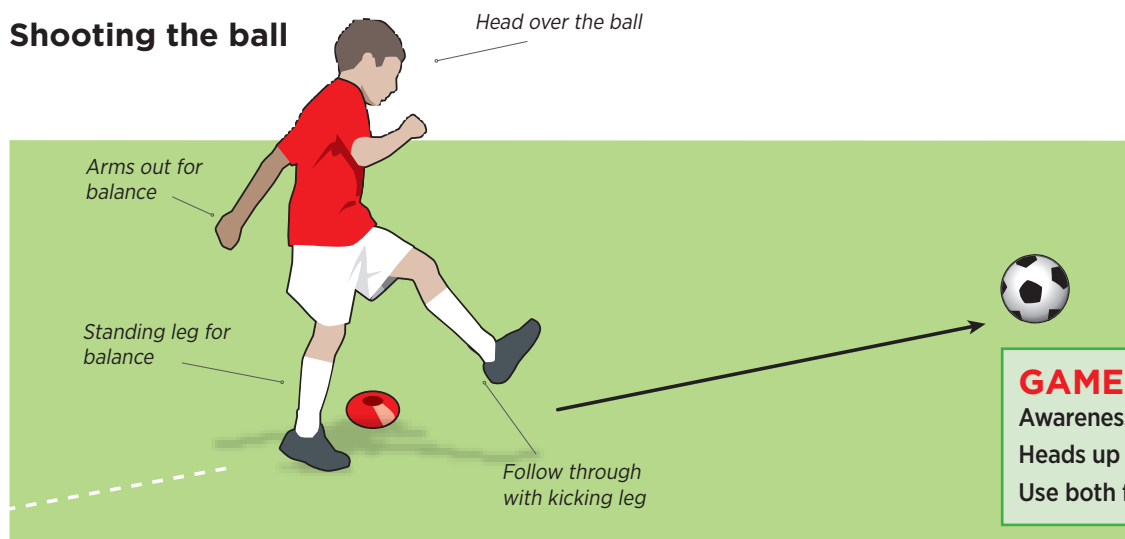


4 Following the first run through of the passing move, player 4 becomes player 1, 5 becomes 2, and 3 remains as the target. The roles of players 5 and 4 are reversed.

5 The long angled pass has to either be chipped because the ball must be lifted over defenders or driven into space.

6 The cones by players 1 and 2 are the offside line so runs must be timed.

Shooting the ball



GAME PLAY

Awareness and decision making.
Heads up to find space.
Use both feet to dribble.

How many players do I need?

We used 10 players in this session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

Running with the ball

ACTIVITY: TRIANGLE PASS AND RUN

CALL OUT

“Keep it simple: Pass, overlap, then call for the ball.” • “Play with your head up” •
“Pass into the space just ahead of the player” • “Run diagonally into space at pace”

1 Play in a 10 x 10 yards area but players can move around and go outside the initial area. Three players start in a triangle. Player 1 passes to the target (player 2) and runs wide of the pass.

2 Player 2 lays the ball off the back foot to 3, who finds the run with an accurate through ball to player 1 who has reached the new target position.

3 Players 2 and 3 then become the support players and the exercise is repeated.

5 Pass from player 3 and run from player 1 must be timed to beat the “offside line”.

4 The first target man needs to be slightly on the half-turn and able to knock back the ball with his first touch, so it can be played behind him and into space at pace.

Receiving the ball to feet

Look at the ball

Ankle raised slightly off the ground - this will “cushion” the ball

Receive and control with one touch

Inside of foot square on to the ball

How many players do I need?

We used three players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

Running with the ball

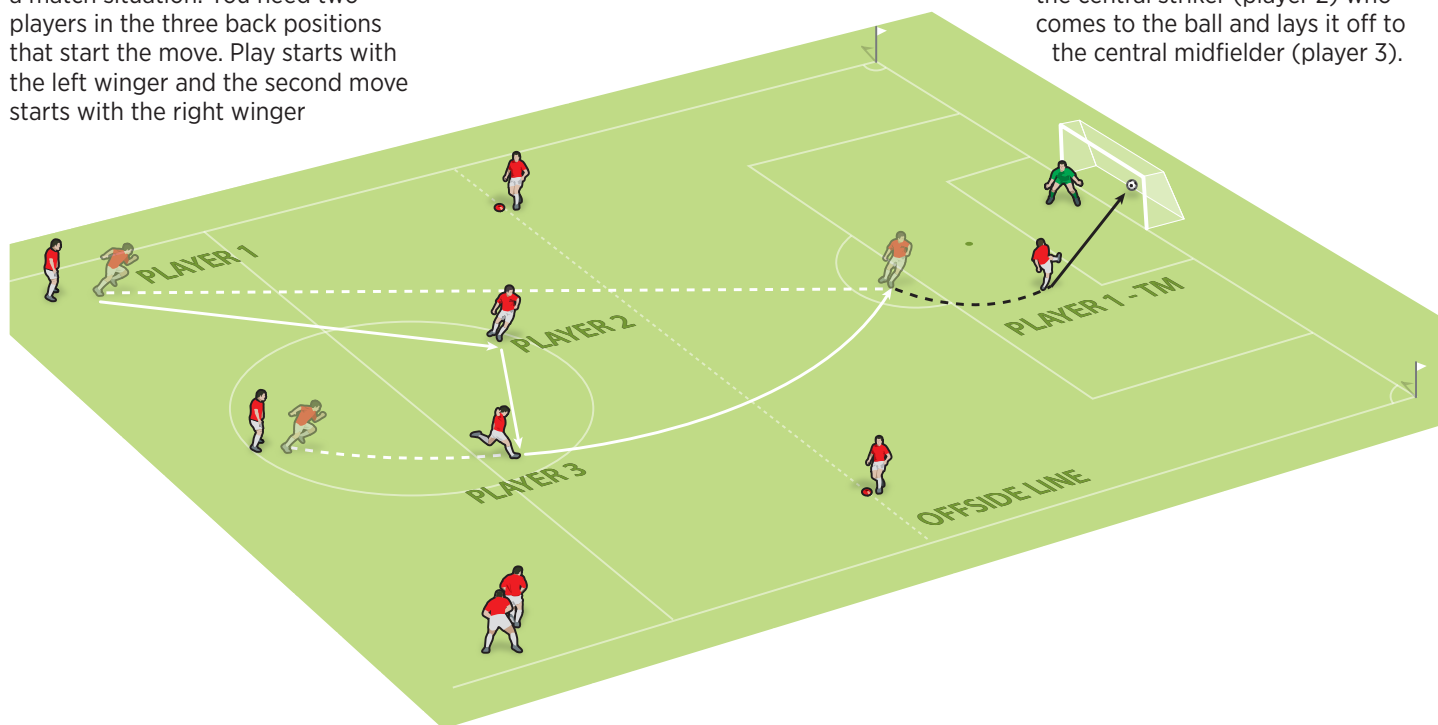
GAME: PASSING RACE

CALL OUT

“Keep it simple: Pass, overlap, then call for the ball.” • “Play with your head up” •
“Pass into the space just ahead of the player” • “Run diagonally into space at pace”

1 Use half a pitch to help illustrate how the moves would work in a match situation. You need two players in the three back positions that start the move. Play starts with the left winger and the second move starts with the right winger

2 The left-sided midfielder (player 1) passes to the feet of the central striker (player 2) who comes to the ball and lays it off to the central midfielder (player 3).



3 This player can then pass into the space behind the central striker for player 1.

4 Pass from player 3 and run from player 1 must be timed to beat the “offside line”.

5 The move finishes with a shot on goal from player 1.

GAME PLAY

Good accurate shooting
Movement of the players must be with good anticipation
Passing accuracy is a key element.

How many players do I need?

We used 10 players in the session

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	--->	—>

EasiCoach

SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18

ATTACKING

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 1

Short attacking passing

ACTIVITY: QUICK, INTELLIGENT PASSING

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” • “Keep the ball in front of you” • “Move quickly keeping an eye on the ball” • “Accuracy over power” • “Accurate passing”

1 Use a 10 x 10 yards area with a pitch measuring 30 x 20 yards for the game progression.

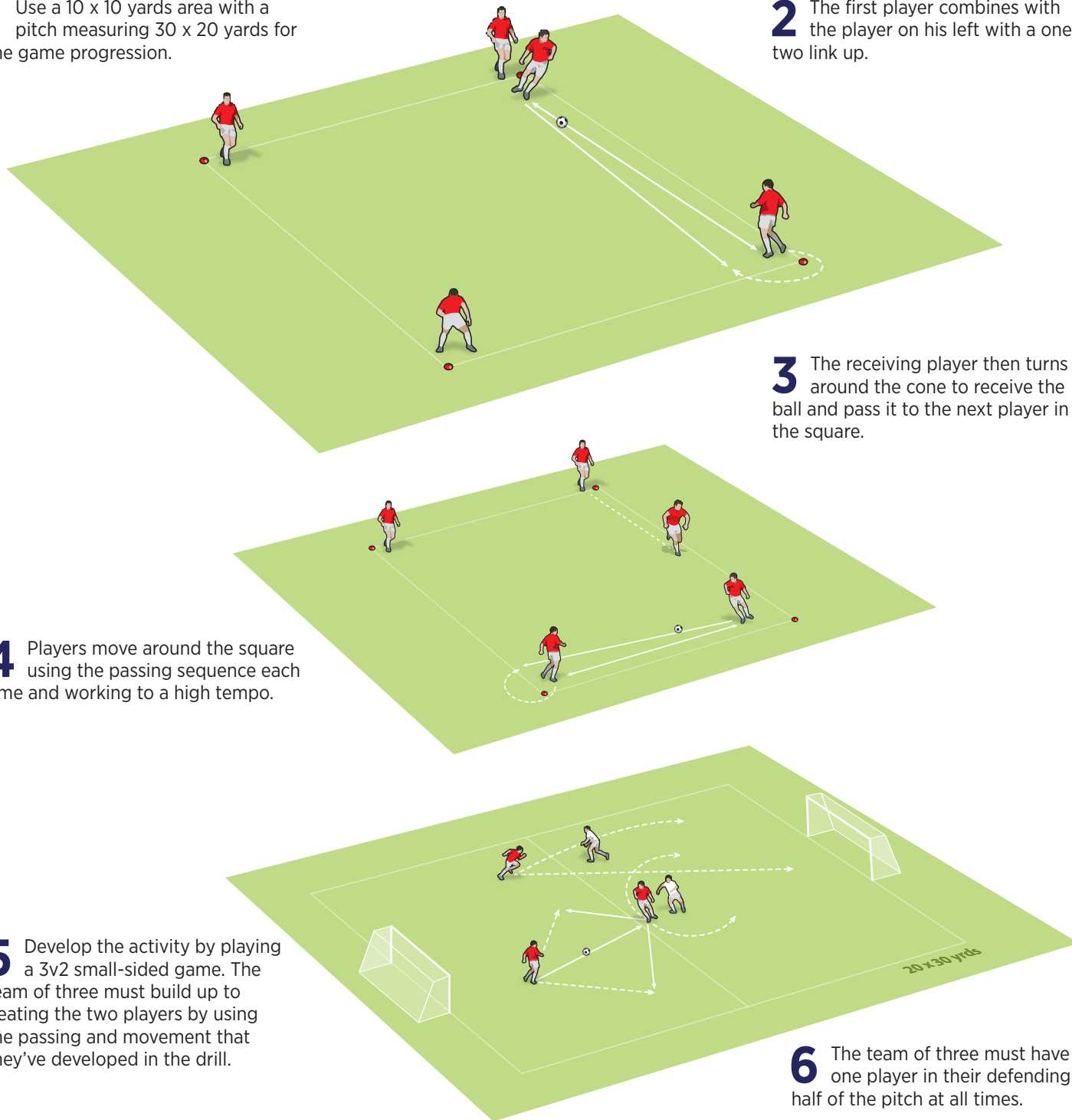
2 The first player combines with the player on his left with a one-two link up.

3 The receiving player then turns around the cone to receive the ball and pass it to the next player in the square.

4 Players move around the square using the passing sequence each time and working to a high tempo.

5 Develop the activity by playing a 3v2 small-sided game. The team of three must build up to beating the two players by using the passing and movement that they've developed in the drill.

6 The team of three must have one player in their defending half of the pitch at all times.



How many players do I need?

We used five players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 1

Short attacking passing

GAME: TURN AND GO FORWARDS

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” • “Keep the ball in front of you” • “Move quickly keeping an eye on the ball” • “Accuracy over power” • “Accurate passing”

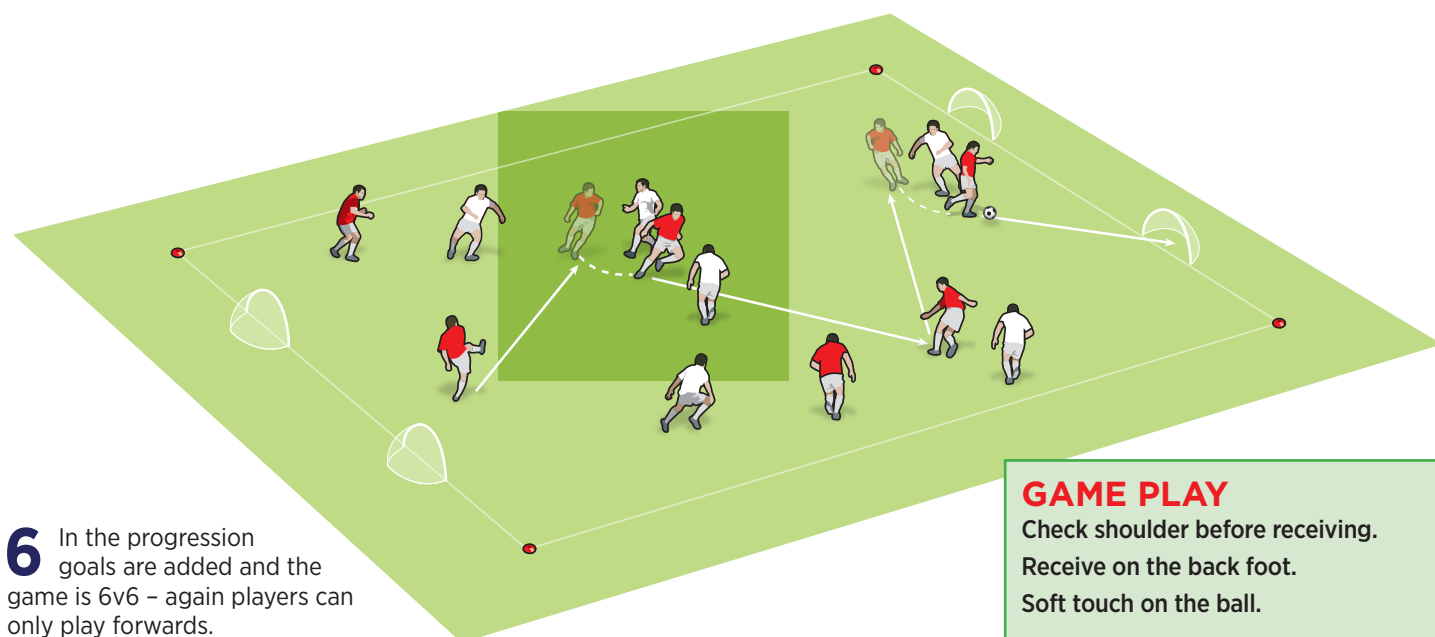
1 You need balls, bibs, cones and two small goals in a 20 x 15 yards area. Make it 5 yards longer for the game and put a goal at each end. Set up two areas for 3v3 with target players (use parents if they're available) then join the teams to make a 6v6 for the game.

2 One target man begins the practice by passing into one of the teams who must now try and get the ball to the target player at the opposite end.

3 Supporting players must move so the pass forward is easier.

4 When players receive the ball they must turn so they are playing forward.

5 When the opposite target player receives the ball a point is scored. Play then goes back up with the same team until the opposition wins the ball.



6 In the progression goals are added and the game is 6v6 – again players can only play forwards.

How many players do I need?

We used 12 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

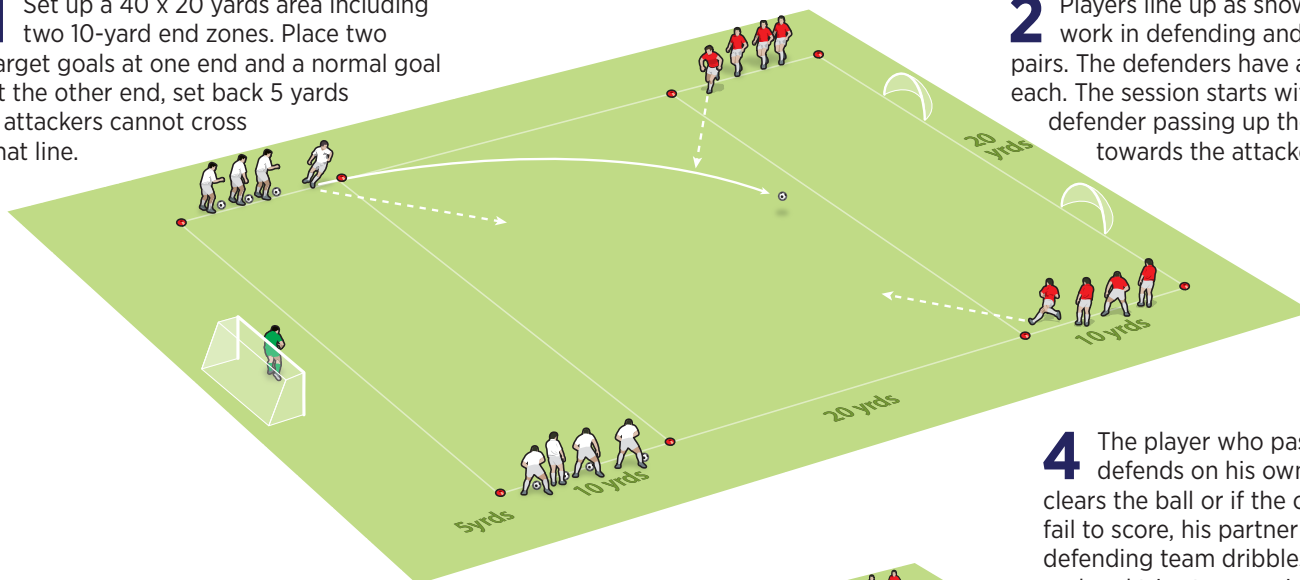
Beat a player pass or go

ACTIVITY: INDIVIDUAL 1V1 AND 2V1 SKILLS

CALL OUT

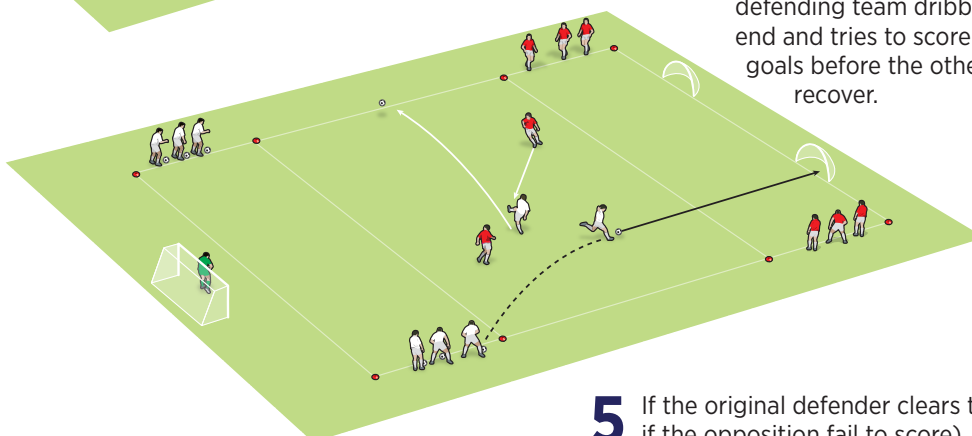
“Good first touch” • “Keep the ball out from under your feet” • “Use a skill to beat the defender” • “Pass if you are under pressure” • “Use accuracy over power”

1 Set up a 40 x 20 yards area including two 10-yard end zones. Place two target goals at one end and a normal goal at the other end, set back 5 yards – attackers cannot cross that line.



2 Players line up as shown and work in defending and attacking pairs. The defenders have a ball each. The session starts with the first defender passing up the pitch towards the attackers.

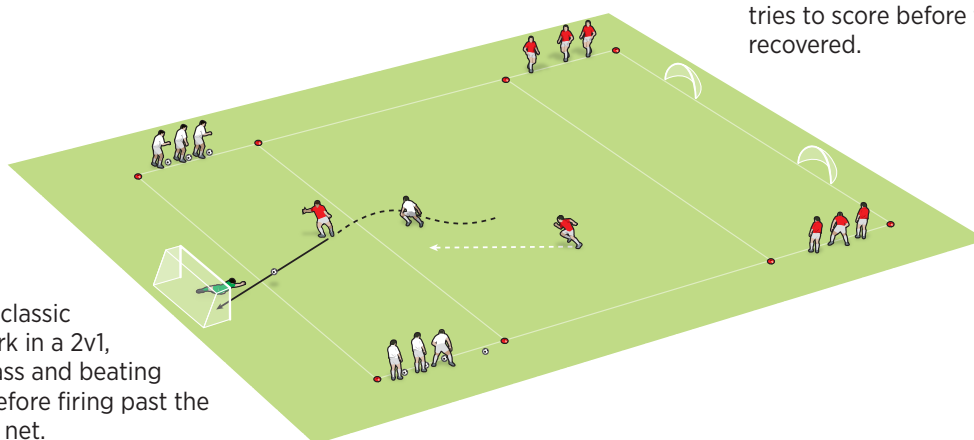
4 The two attackers are trying to score in the main goal against a goalkeeper while the defenders have target goals to practice counter-attacking by getting behind the attackers.



4 The player who passed defends on his own. If he clears the ball or if the opposition fail to score, his partner on the defending team dribbles from his end and tries to score in the target goals before the other team can recover.

5 If the original defender clears the ball (or if the opposition fail to score), his partner dribbles up the pitch with his own ball and tries to score before the attacking pair have recovered.

6 This is the classic way to work in a 2v1, dummies a pass and beating the defender before firing past the keeper into the net.



How many players do I need?

We used 17 players in the session – four pairs of defenders, four pairs of attackers and a goalkeeper.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 2

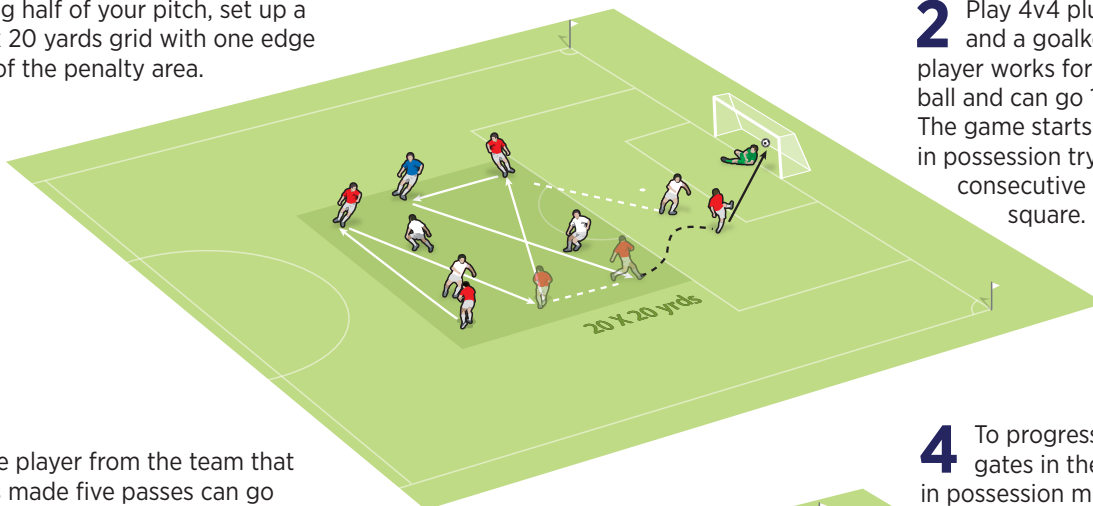
Beat a player pass or go

GAME: GO 1V1 WITH THE KEEPER

CALL OUT

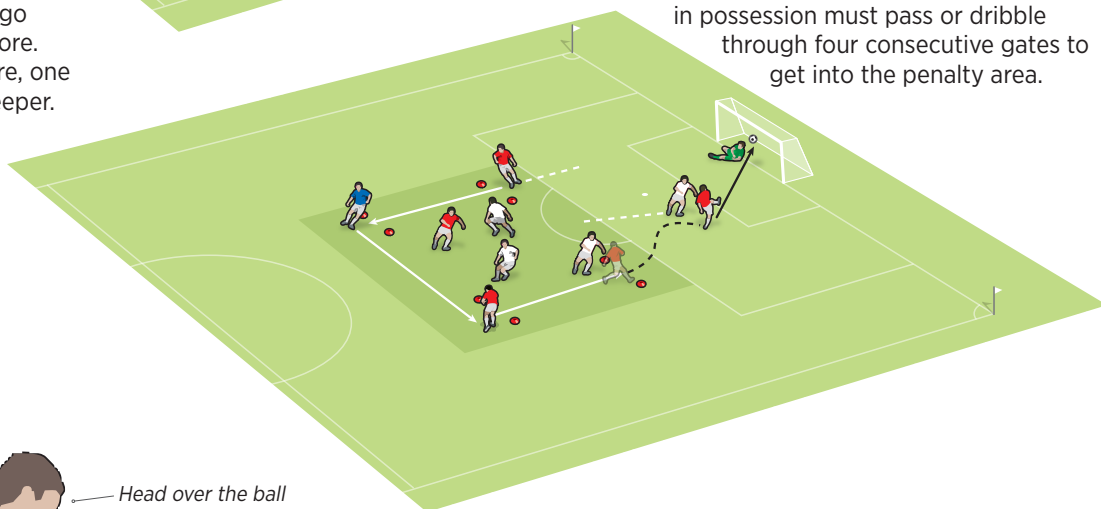
“Good first touch” • “Keep the ball out from under your feet” • “Use a skill to beat the defender” • “Pass if you are under pressure” • “Shoot with accuracy over power”

1 Using half of your pitch, set up a 20 x 20 yards grid with one edge on top of the penalty area.



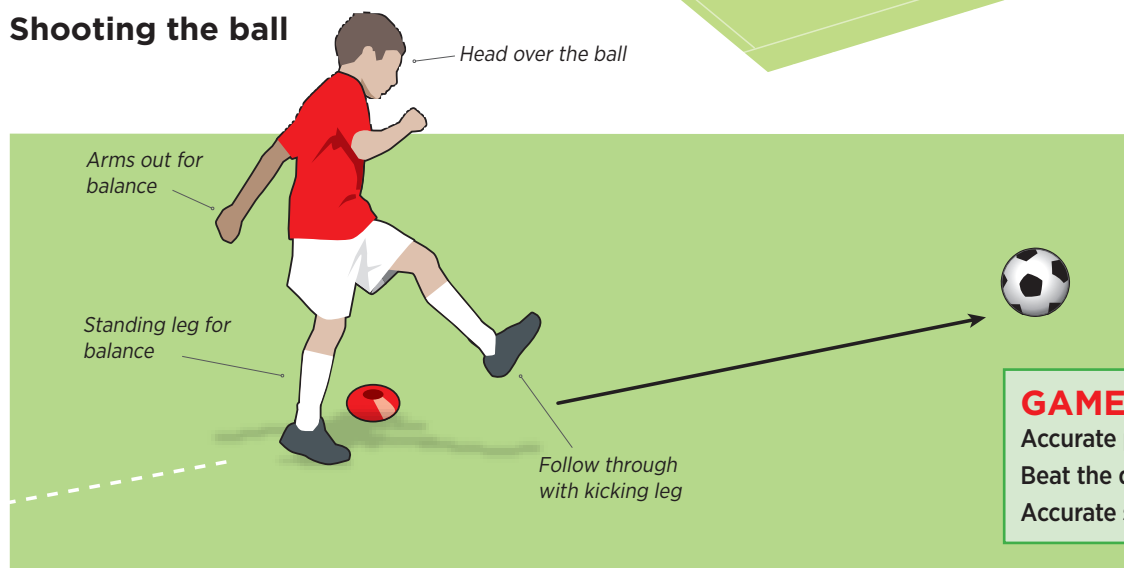
2 Play 4v4 plus one neutral player and a goalkeeper. The neutral player works for the team with the ball and can go 1v1 with the keeper. The game starts with the team in possession trying to make five consecutive passes staying in the square.

3 One player from the team that has made five passes can go 1v1 with the keeper to try to score. After the ball has left the square, one defender can go to help the keeper.



4 To progress the session, add four gates in the square. The team in possession must pass or dribble through four consecutive gates to get into the penalty area.

Shooting the ball



GAME PLAY
Accurate passing.
Beat the defender with a skill.
Accurate shooting at goal.

How many players do I need?

We used 10 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

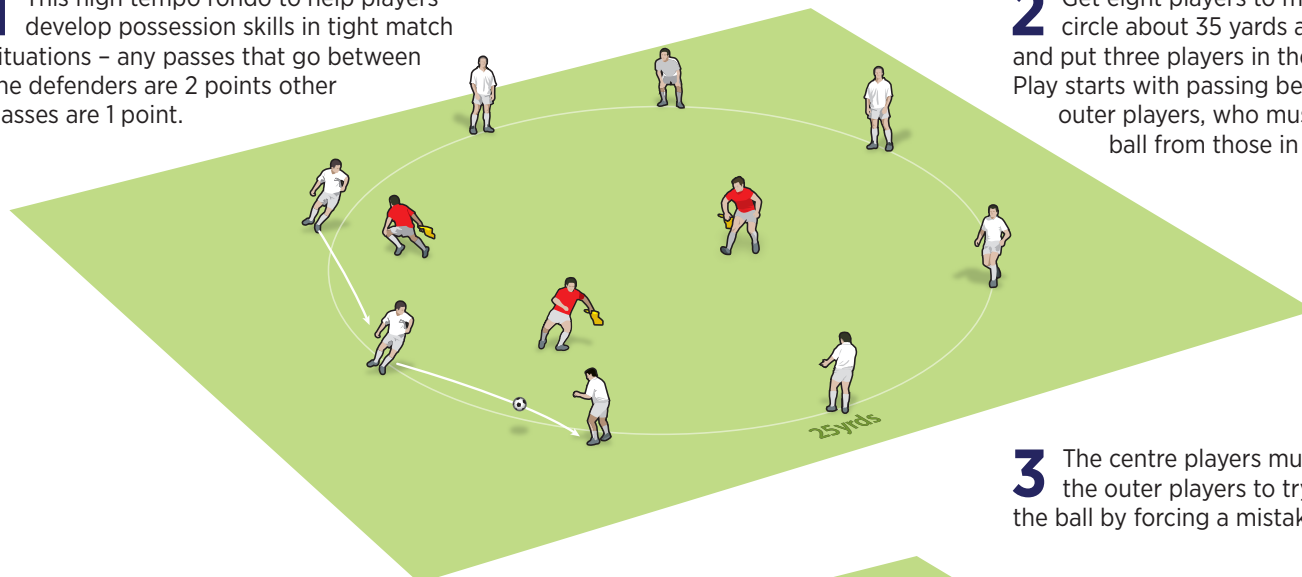
Develop possession skills

ACTIVITY: HIGH TEMPO RONDO

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” • “Try to pass one touch” • “Split the defenders” • “Pass if you are under pressure” • “Look for accurate passes”

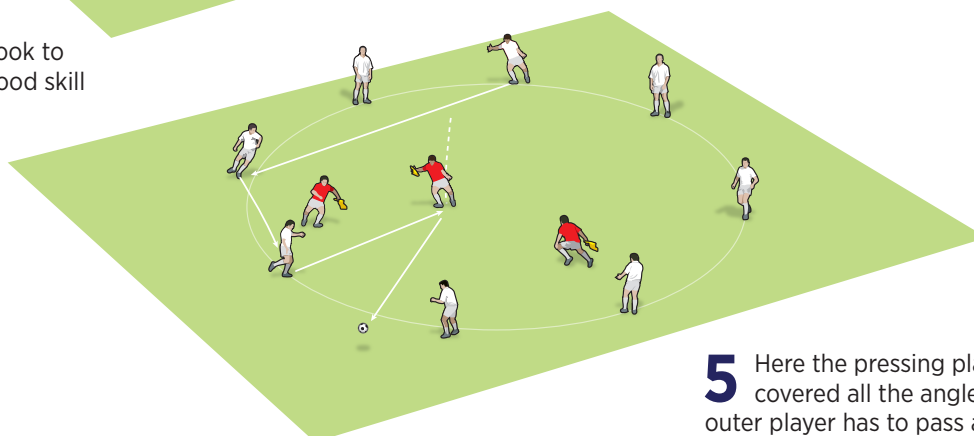
1 This high tempo rondo to help players develop possession skills in tight match situations – any passes that go between the defenders are 2 points other passes are 1 point.



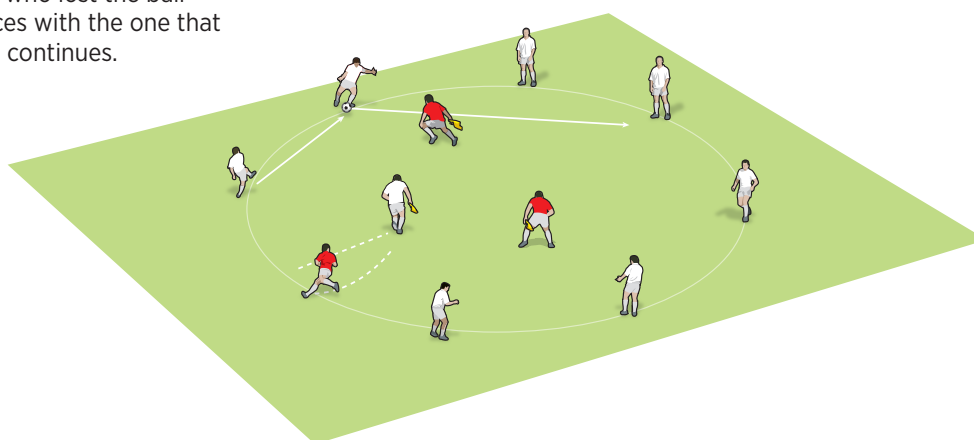
2 Get eight players to make a circle about 35 yards across and put three players in the circle. Play starts with passing between the outer players, who must keep the ball from those in the centre.

3 The centre players must press the outer players to try to win the ball by forcing a mistake.

4 The outer players must look to use simple passes and good skill to keep the ball.



6 The player who lost the ball swaps places with the one that won it and play continues.



5 Here the pressing players have covered all the angles and the outer player has to pass across the centre where the ball is intercepted.

How many players do I need?

We used 11 players – eight forming the circle and three inside – in the session, but you can vary it according to the number of players available.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

Develop possession skills

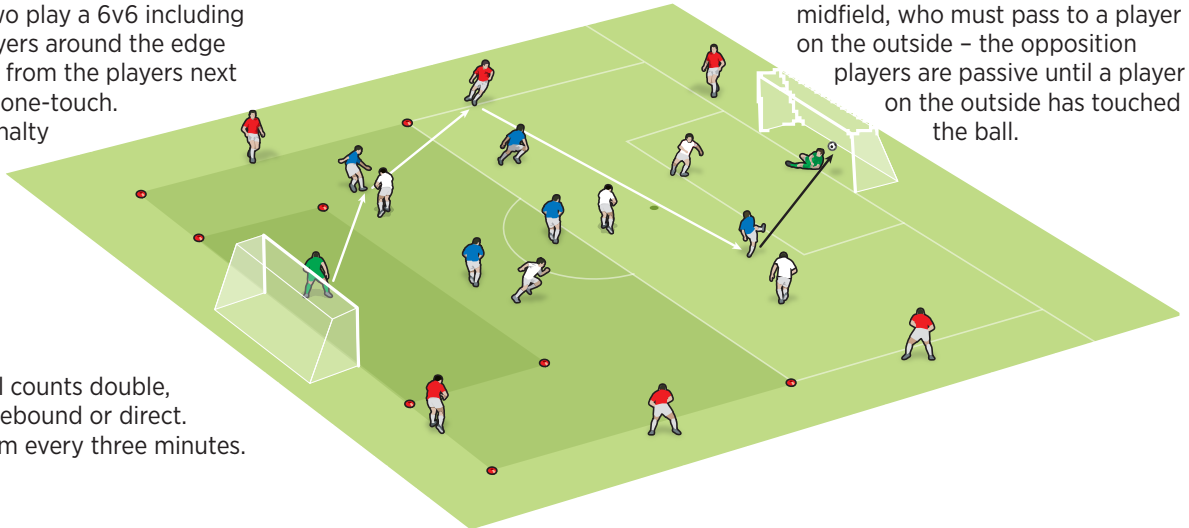
GAME: FULL SQUAD RONDO

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” • “Try to pass one touch” • “Split the defenders” • “Pass if you are under pressure” • “Look for accurate passes”

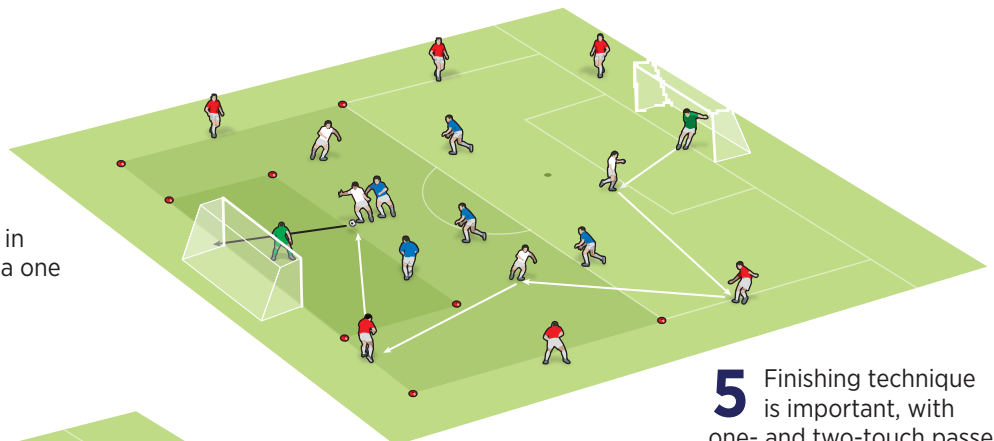
1 Split the players into three teams of six. One team is positioned around the area and the other two play a 6v6 including goalkeepers. The players around the edge play two-touch apart from the players next to the goal who play one-touch. Use back-to-back penalty areas (36 x 44 yards).

2 Play starts with one of the keepers playing out to his midfield, who must pass to a player on the outside – the opposition players are passive until a player on the outside has touched the ball.



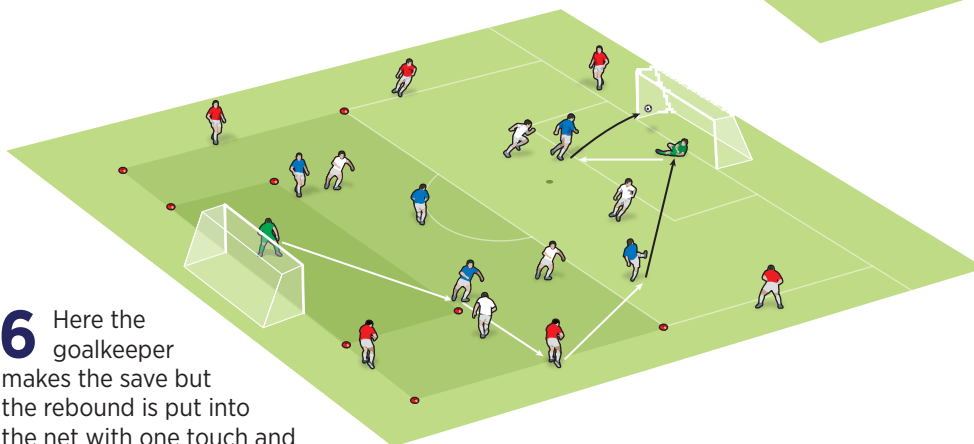
3 A one touch goal counts double, whether from a rebound or direct. Swap the outside team every three minutes.

4 The outside player next to the goal has only one touch and here he passes first time to an attacker in front of goal, who scores 2 points with a one touch goal.



5 Finishing technique is important, with one- and two-touch passes needed to create scoring chances.

6 Here the goalkeeper makes the save but the rebound is put into the net with one touch and gets double points.



GAME PLAY

Accurate passing.
One touch skills.
Accurate shooting at goal.

How many players do I need?

We used 18 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

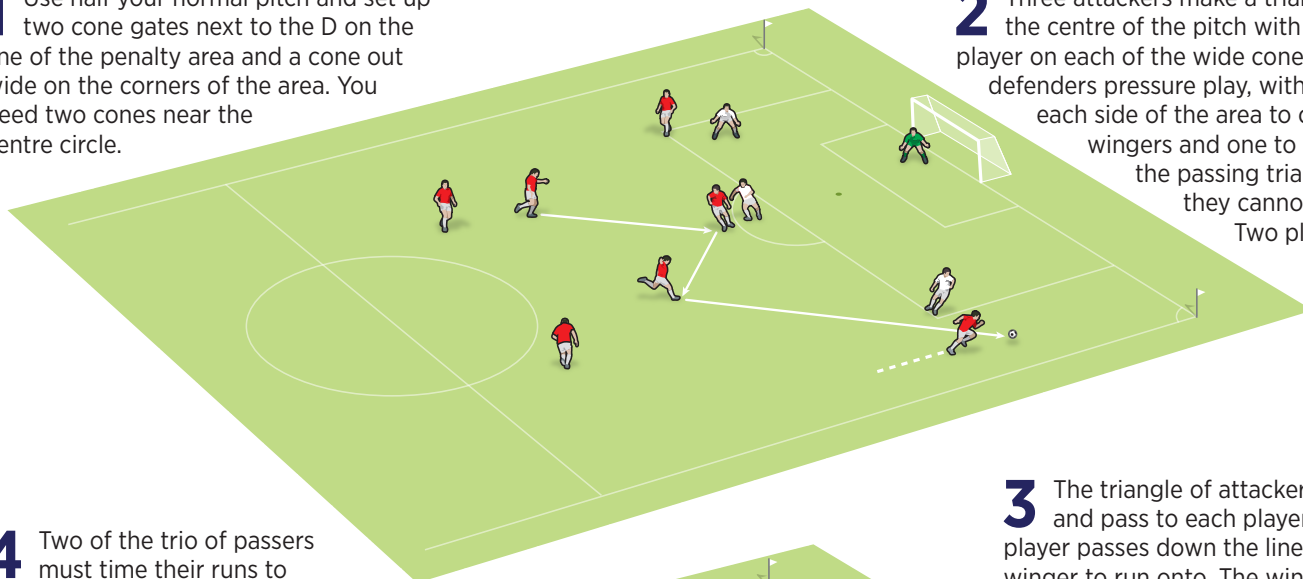
Attacking in key skill areas

ACTIVITY: CROSSING INTO THE BOX

CALL OUT

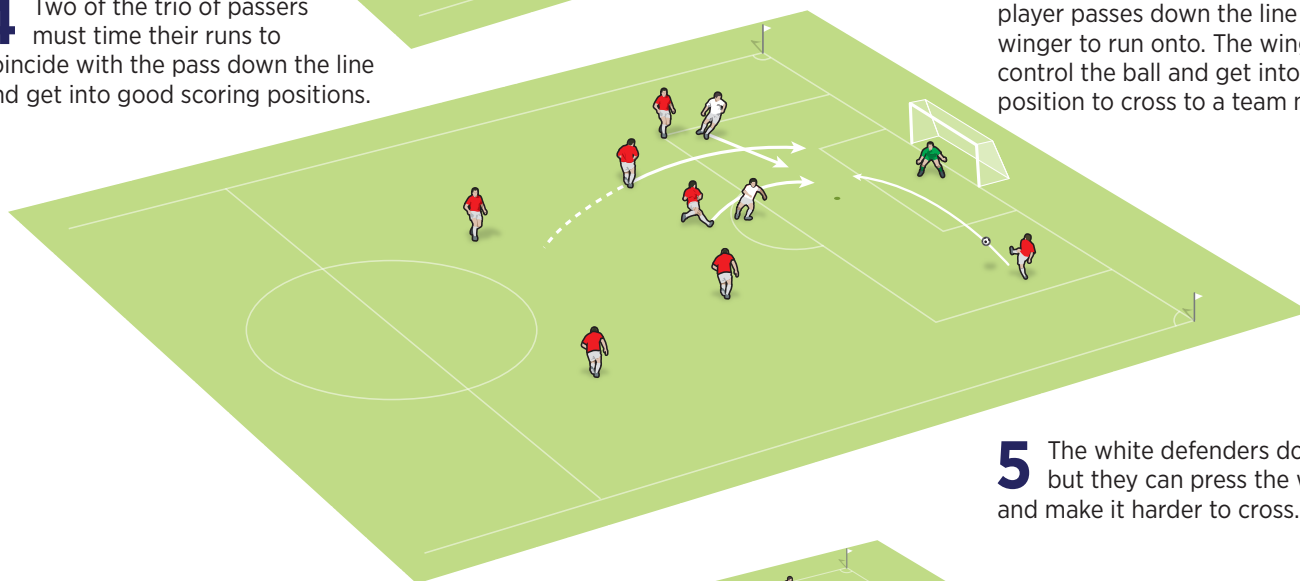
“Take the ball wide” • “Cross into the penalty area” • “Aim for the penalty spot” •
“Vary where you cross from” • “Look for team mates”

1 Use half your normal pitch and set up two cone gates next to the D on the line of the penalty area and a cone out wide on the corners of the area. You need two cones near the centre circle.



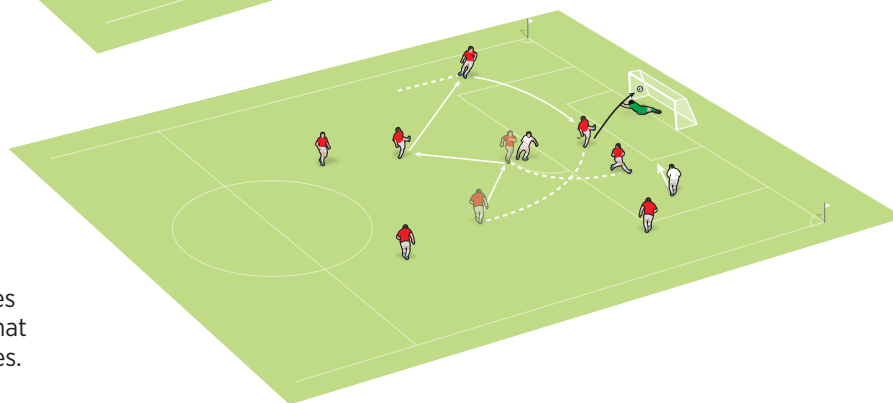
2 Three attackers make a triangle in the centre of the pitch with a wide player on each of the wide cones. Three defenders pressure play, with one on each side of the area to cover the wingers and one to pressure the passing triangle – but they cannot tackle. Two players wait.

4 Two of the trio of passers must time their runs to coincide with the pass down the line and get into good scoring positions.



3 The triangle of attackers start and pass to each player; the last player passes down the line for the winger to run onto. The winger must control the ball and get into a good position to cross to a team mate.

5 The white defenders don't tackle but they can press the winger and make it harder to cross.



6 After two attacks, play goes down the other side and that winger must now create chances.

How many players do I need?

We used 11 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 4

Attacking in key skill areas

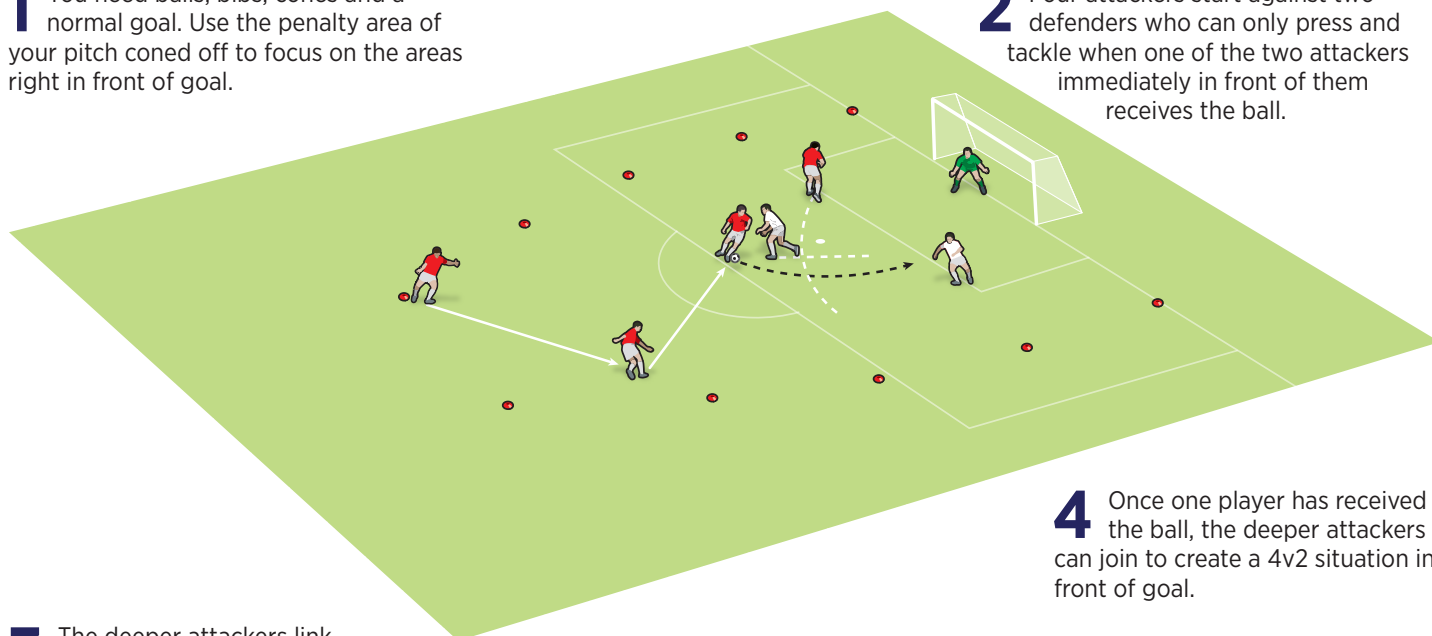
GAME: IN AND AROUND THE BOX

CALL OUT

“Turn with the ball” • “Lose your marker” • “One touch passing” • “Shoot when you can” • “Get in behind”

1 You need balls, bibs, cones and a normal goal. Use the penalty area of your pitch coned off to focus on the areas right in front of goal.

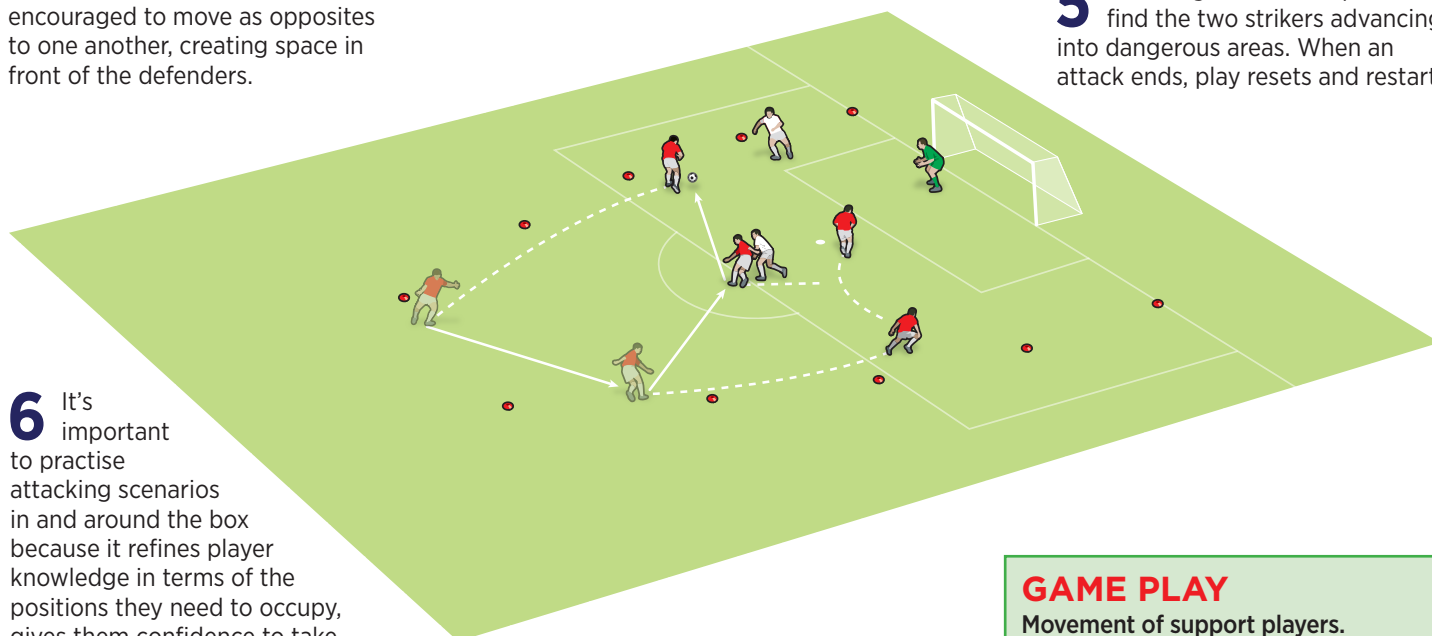
2 Four attackers start against two defenders who can only press and tackle when one of the two attackers immediately in front of them receives the ball.



3 The deeper attackers link up and feed the ball in. The attackers nearer the goal are encouraged to move as opposites to one another, creating space in front of the defenders.

4 Once one player has received the ball, the deeper attackers can join to create a 4v2 situation in front of goal.

5 The winger now has space to find the two strikers advancing into dangerous areas. When an attack ends, play resets and restarts



6 It's important to practise attacking scenarios in and around the box because it refines player knowledge in terms of the positions they need to occupy, gives them confidence to take opportunities that come their way, and also helps with getting the ball in behind the opposition.

GAME PLAY

Movement of support players.
Pressing of defenders.
Get behind the defence.

How many players do I need?

We used seven players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	→ (dashed line)	→ (solid line)
	→ (dashed line)	→ (solid line)

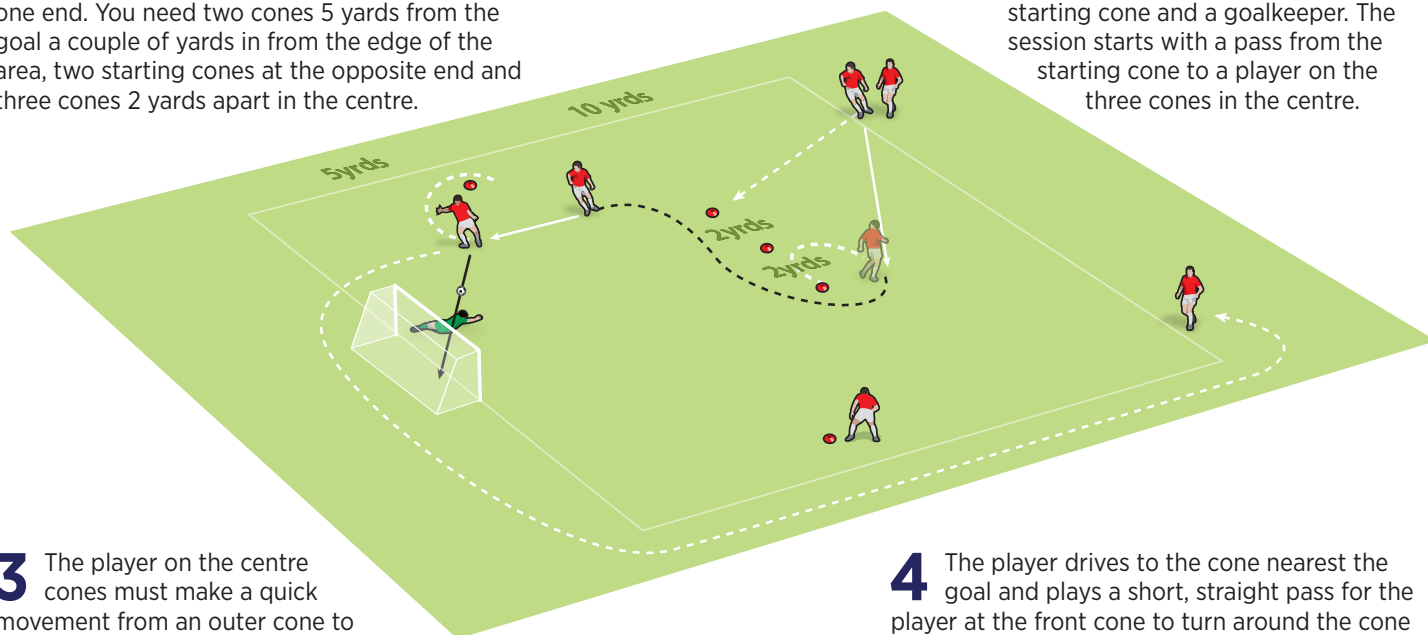
Attacking build up play

ACTIVITY: COMBINE TO FINISH

CALL OUT

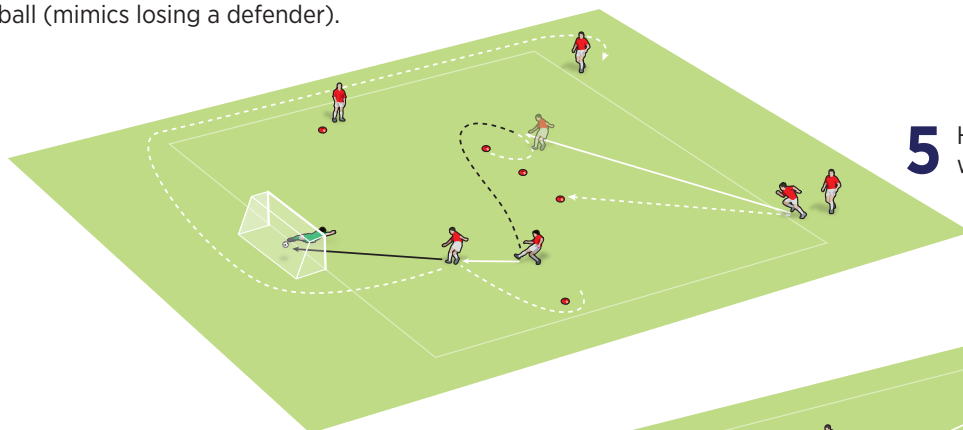
“Look up to see the pass” • “Good first touch” • “Combine and support” • “Use both feet to dribble” • “Shoot with accuracy”

1 You need balls, cones and a goal. Set up an area measuring 15 x 15 yards with a goal at one end. You need two cones 5 yards from the goal a couple of yards in from the edge of the area, two starting cones at the opposite end and three cones 2 yards apart in the centre.



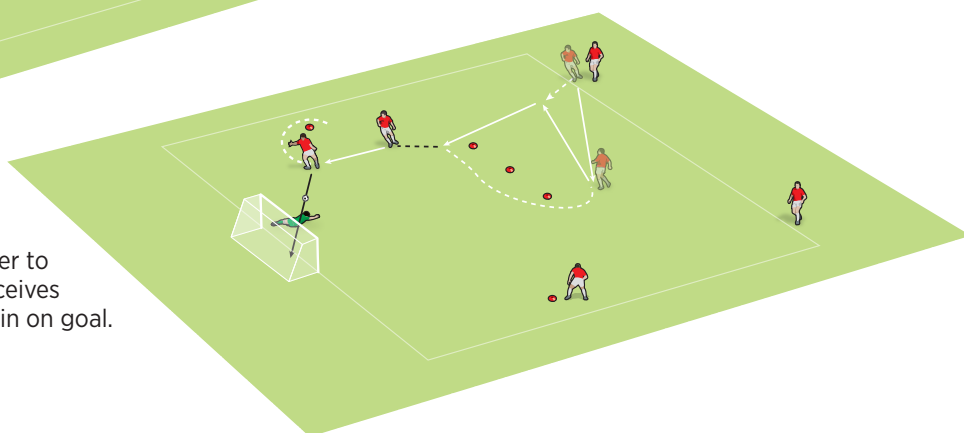
2 You need one player on each cone with an extra player on the starting cone and a goalkeeper. The session starts with a pass from the starting cone to a player on the three cones in the centre.

3 The player on the centre cones must make a quick movement from an outer cone to the inner cone and back to receive the ball (mimics losing a defender).



4 The player drives to the cone nearest the goal and plays a short, straight pass for the player at the front cone to turn around the cone and run on to and take a shot at goal.

5 Here the combination play is run the other way using the other two players.



6 Now add in a one-two from the server to the player in the centre who then receives the ball back before playing the attacker in on goal.

How many players do I need?

We used seven players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 5

Attacking build up play

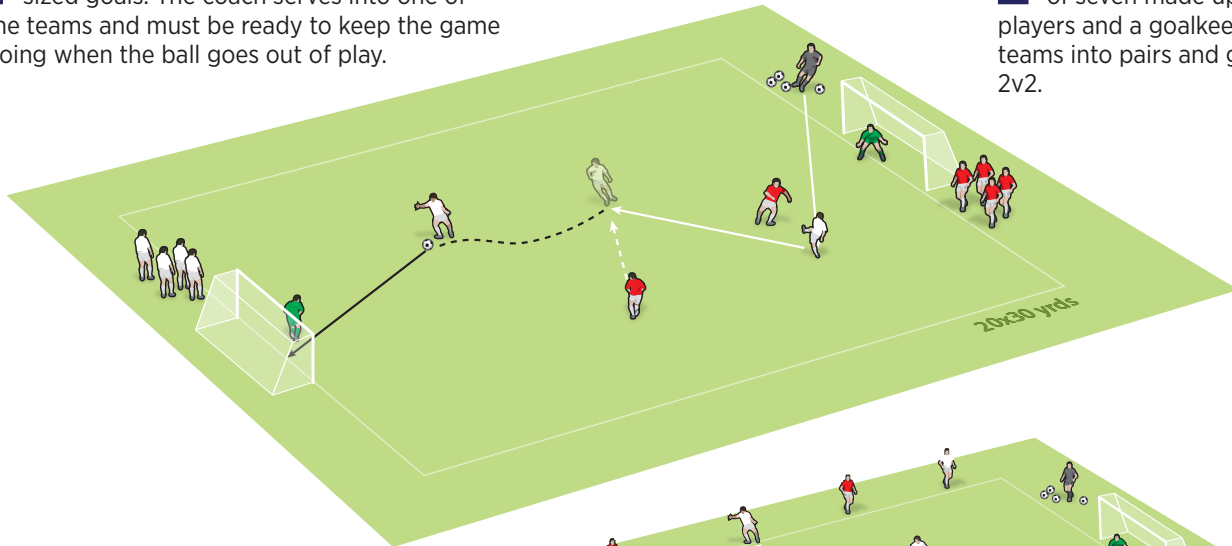
GAME: CREATIVITY IN THE FINAL THIRD

CALL OUT

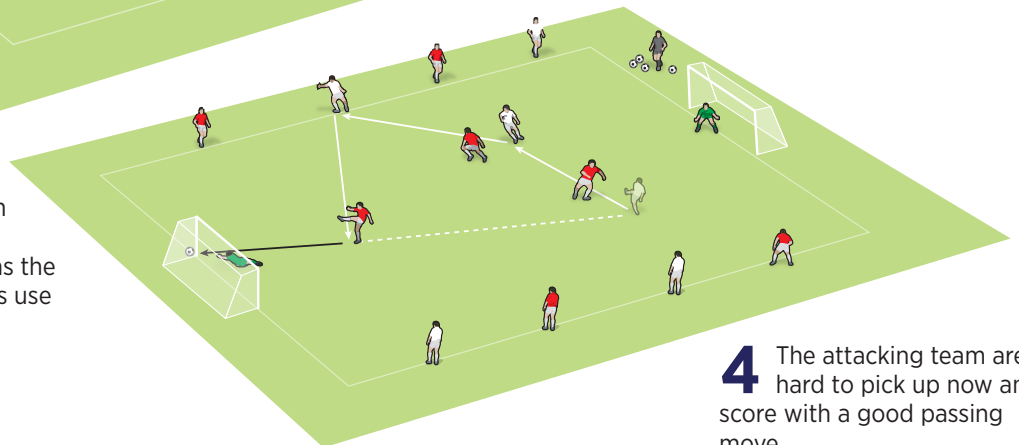
“Look up to see the pass” • “Good first touch” • “Combine and support” • “Use both feet to dribble” • “Shoot with accuracy”

1 Mark out a 30 x 20 yards area with normal sized goals. The coach serves into one of the teams and must be ready to keep the game going when the ball goes out of play.

2 Split your players into two teams of seven made up of six outfield players and a goalkeeper. Split the teams into pairs and get them to play 2v2.

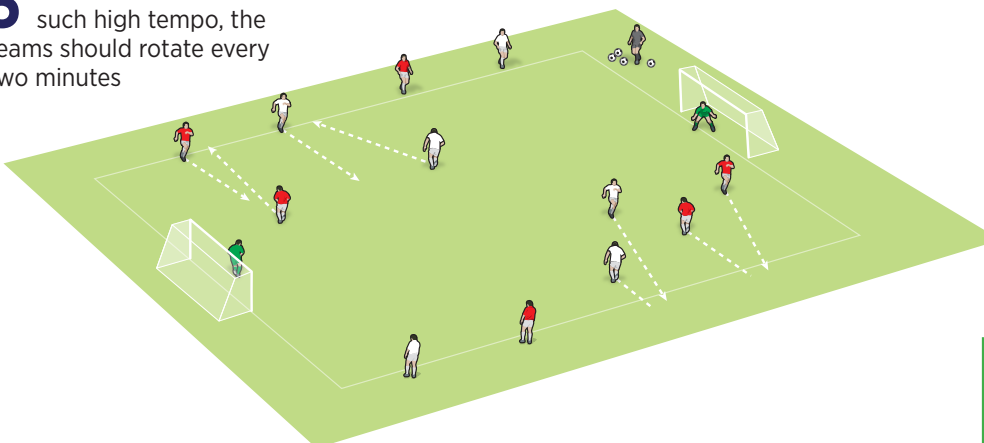


3 Now the players can use their team mates on the side of the pitch and really stretch the defenders – this means the attacking team will be 6v2 if the players use their team mates on the side



4 The attacking team are hard to pick up now and score with a good passing move

5 Because the session is such high tempo, the teams should rotate every two minutes



6 Look for strikers shooting at every opportunity and for players to be creative with the ball. It is a quick and reactive game that gets your players using the width of the pitch and quick passing to beat their opponents. Any defensive errors will most likely be punished by a goal.

GAME PLAY

Quick reactions.
Defenders supporting role.
Attackers movement.

How many players do I need?

We used 14 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

Communicate in attacking areas

ACTIVITY: DRIBBLE WITH THE BALL

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” • “Get the ball out from under your feet” • “Look up to see where you are going” • “Use both feet to dribble” • “Avoid the other players”

1 You need balls, bibs, and cones using the centre circle of an 11-a-side pitch. The game encourages players to get their heads up in spotting players and potential passes across a crowded area.

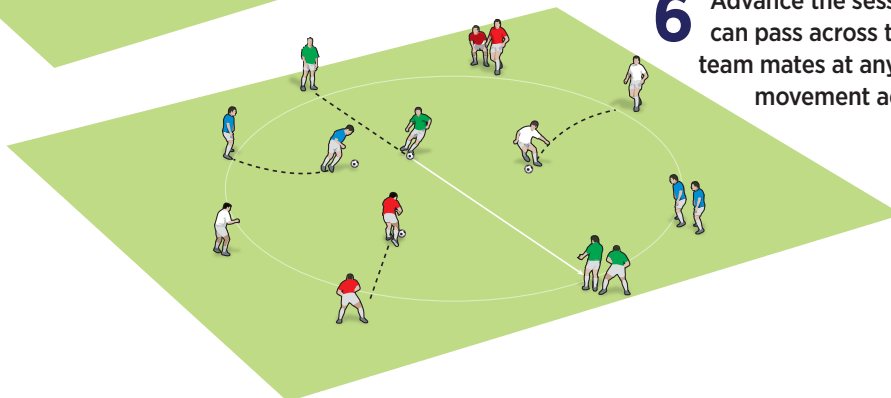
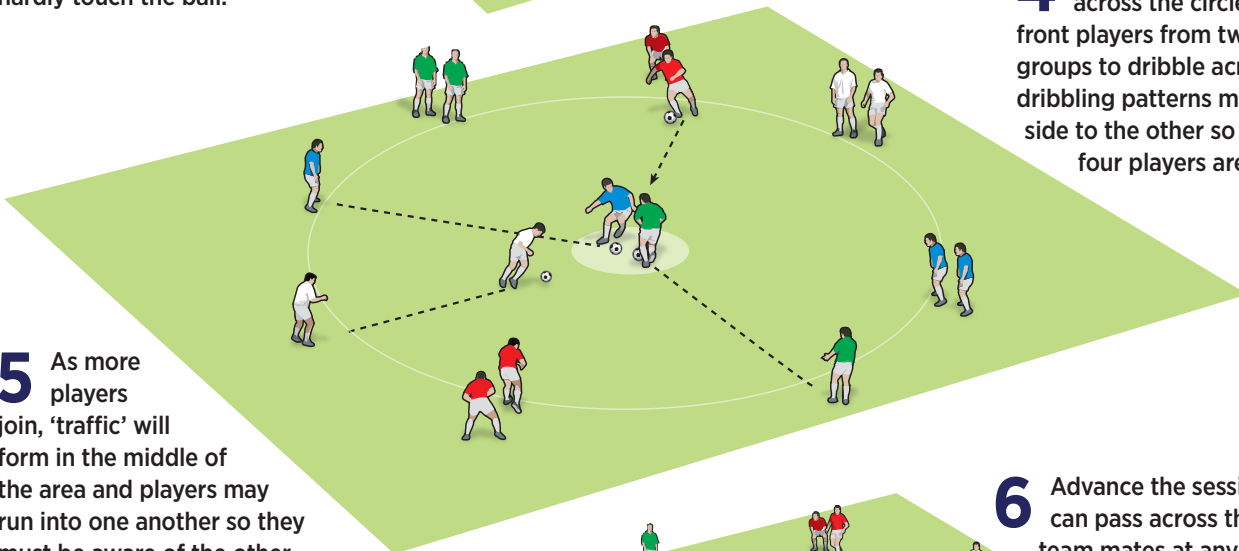
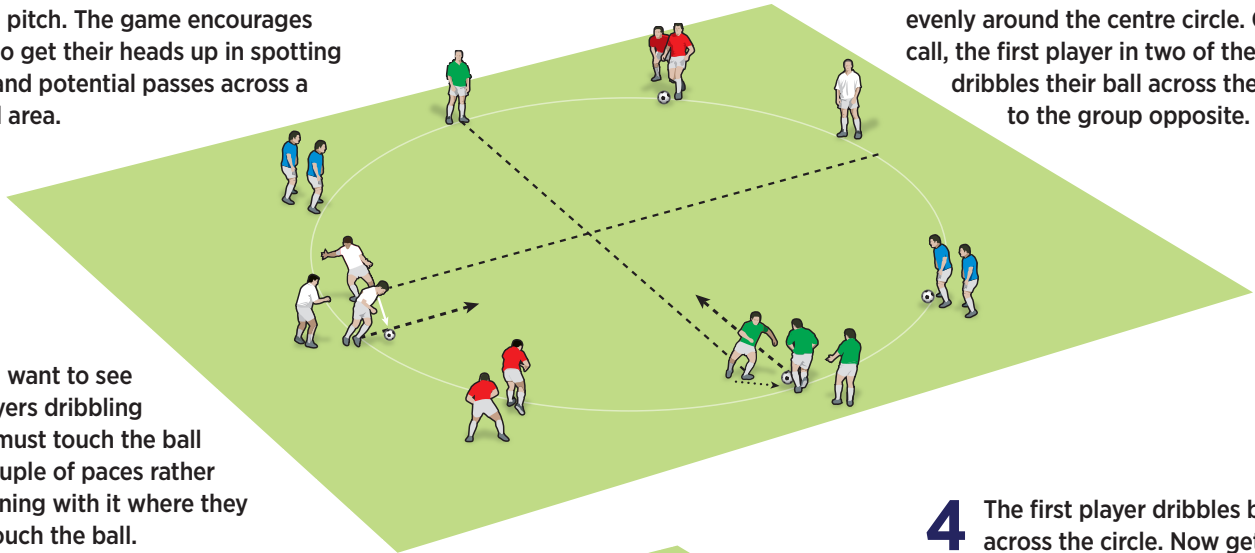
2 Divide your players into an even number of small groups spread evenly around the centre circle. On your call, the first player in two of the groups dribbles their ball across the circle to the group opposite.

3 You want to see players dribbling so they must touch the ball every couple of paces rather than running with it where they hardly touch the ball.

4 The first player dribbles back across the circle. Now get the front players from two of the other groups to dribble across. Keep the dribbling patterns moving from one side to the other so that, pretty soon, four players are moving at once.

5 As more players join, ‘traffic’ will form in the middle of the area and players may run into one another so they must be aware of the other players.

6 Advance the session so the players can pass across the circle to their team mates at any point in their movement across the circle.



How many players do I need?

We used 12 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	→ (dashed line)	→ (solid line)
	→ (dashed line)	→ (solid line)

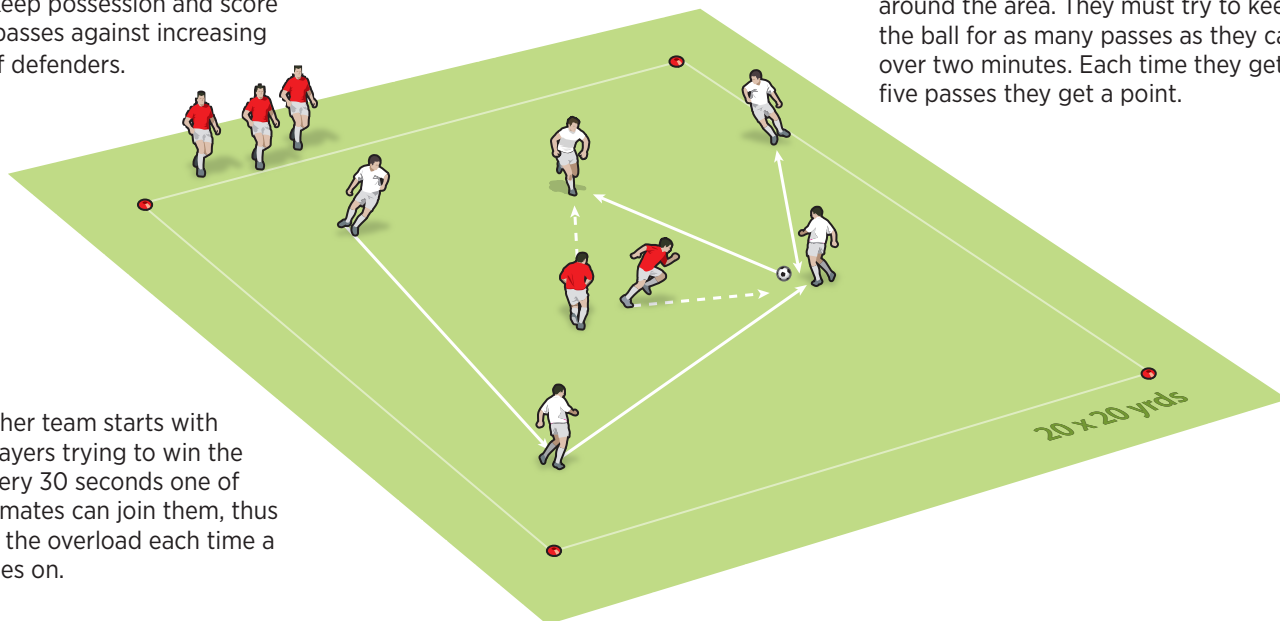
Communicate in attacking areas

GAME: PASSING WITH OVERLOADS

CALL OUT

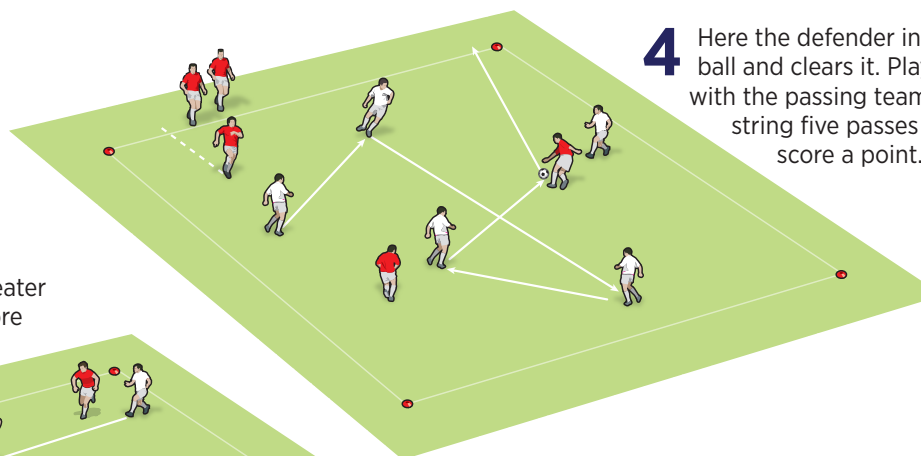
“Look up to see the pass” • “Good first touch” • “Look up to see where you are going” • “Use both feet to dribble” • “Play at a high tempo”

1 Mark out an area 20 x 20 yards. This is a good workout for the teams having to keep possession and score points for passes against increasing numbers of defenders.



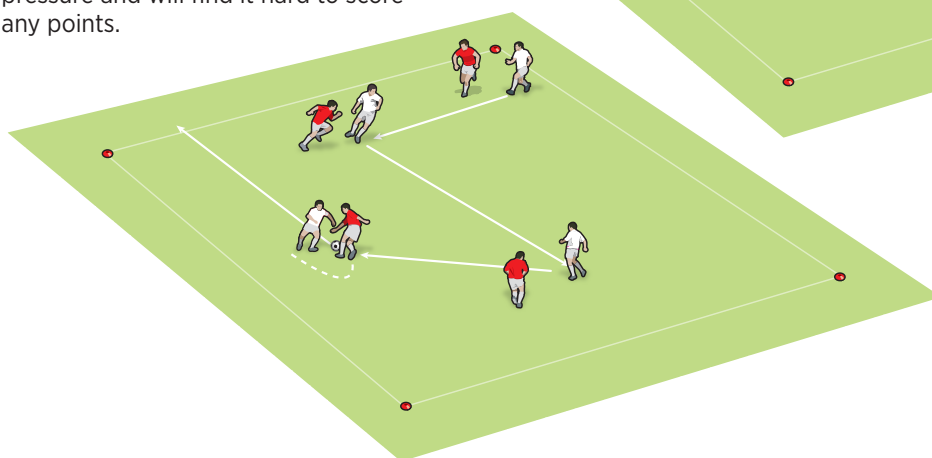
2 The game starts with the possession team passing the ball around the area. They must try to keep the ball for as many passes as they can over two minutes. Each time they get to five passes they get a point.

3 The other team starts with two players trying to win the ball and every 30 seconds one of their team mates can join them, thus decreasing the overload each time a player comes on.



4 Here the defender intercepts the ball and clears it. Play restarts with the passing team trying to string five passes together to score a point.

5 After 90 seconds it's 5v5. The passing team is now under greater pressure and will find it hard to score any points.



GAME PLAY

Communicate with good support play.
Movement key to possession.
Play at a high tempo.

How many players do I need?

We used 10 players in the session – ending up at 5v5.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

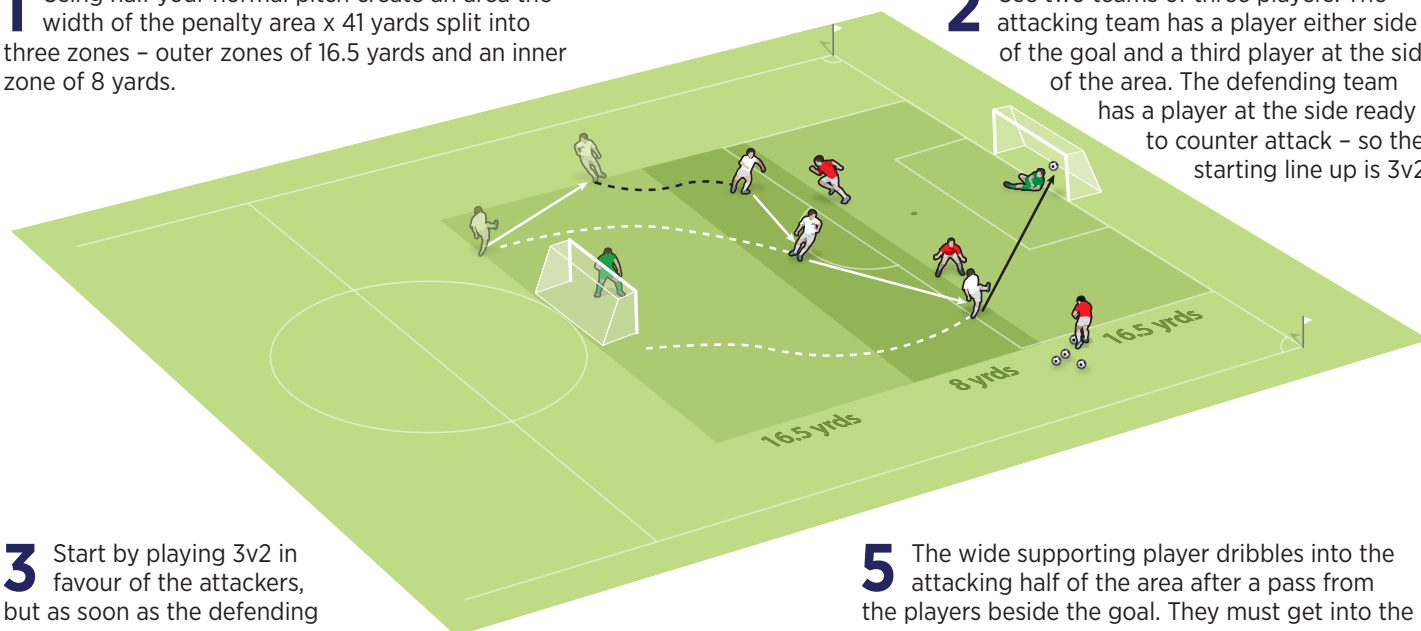
Understanding counter attacking

ACTIVITY: TACTICAL 3V2 BATTLES

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” • “Pass or dribble? You decide” • “Look up to see where you are going” • “Shoot with accuracy” • “React quickly and decisively”

1 Using half your normal pitch create an area the width of the penalty area x 41 yards split into three zones – outer zones of 16.5 yards and an inner zone of 8 yards.

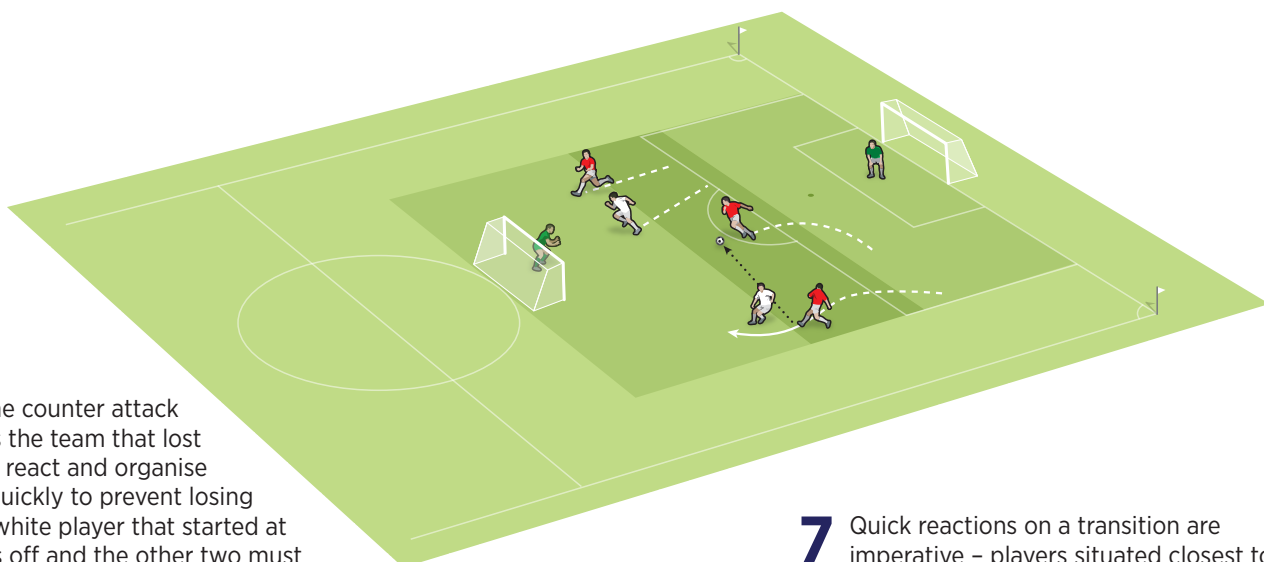


2 Use two teams of three players. The attacking team has a player either side of the goal and a third player at the side of the area. The defending team has a player at the side ready to counter attack – so the starting line up is 3v2

3 Start by playing 3v2 in favour of the attackers, but as soon as the defending team concedes a goal or clears the ball, a third player comes in with another ball on a counter-attack and it's 3v2 in the other direction.

4 The attacker that started the move cannot be the one who scores the goal so a pass must be made to the supporting player.

5 The wide supporting player dribbles into the attacking half of the area after a pass from the players beside the goal. They must get into the middle zone before they can receive a pass.



6 When the counter attack happens the team that lost the ball must react and organise themselves quickly to prevent losing a goal – the white player that started at the side goes off and the other two must defend the counter attack so it is 3v2 in the opposite direction

7 Quick reactions on a transition are imperative – players situated closest to the ball will always be the ones to press.

How many players do I need?

We used eight players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 7

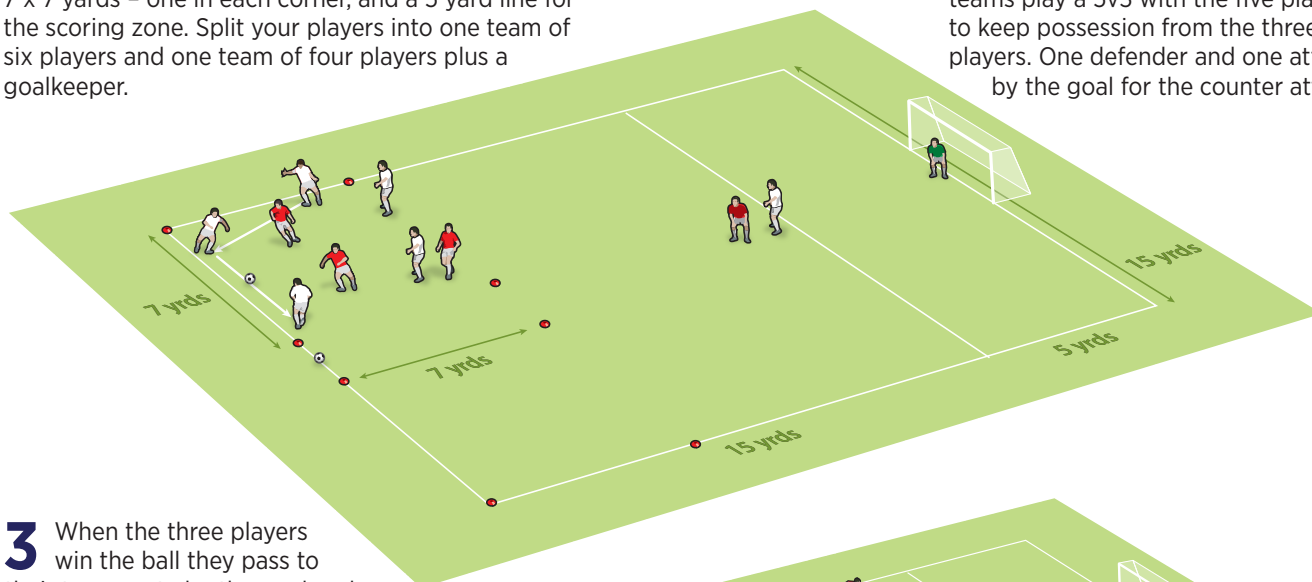
Understanding counter attacking

GAME: HITTING THE LONE STRIKER

CALL OUT

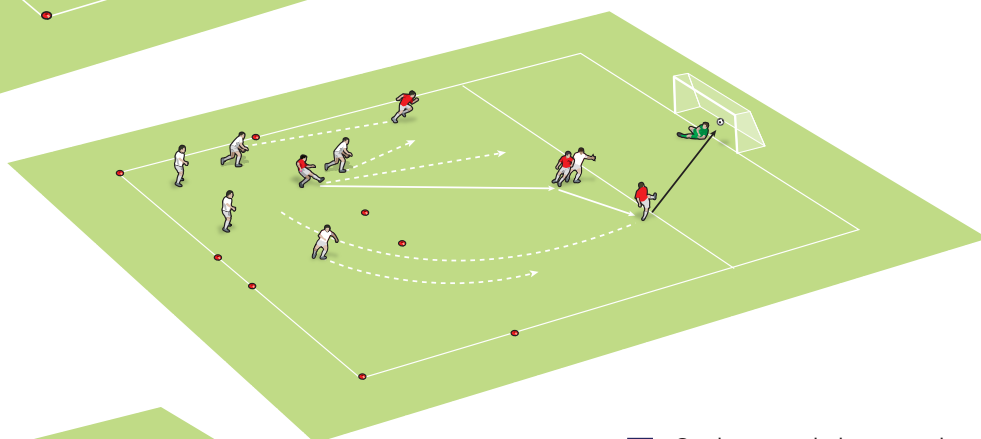
“Good first touch” • “Pass or dribble? You decide” • “Look up to see where you are going” • “Shoot with accuracy” • “React quickly and decisively”

1 Set up a 20 x 15 yard area with a goal at one end. At the other end you need two squares 7 x 7 yards – one in each corner, and a 5 yard line for the scoring zone. Split your players into one team of six players and one team of four players plus a goalkeeper.

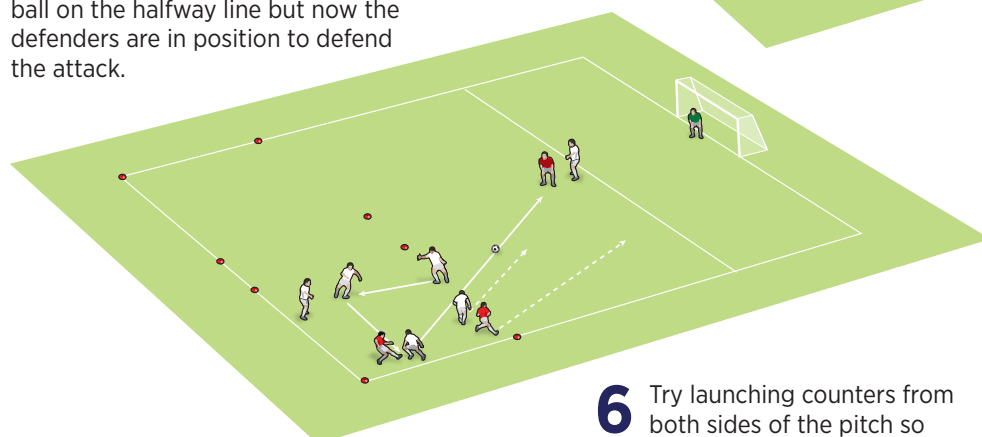


2 In the 7 x 7 yards box – which represents midfield areas of the pitch – teams play a 5v3 with the five players trying to keep possession from the three attacking players. One defender and one attacker stay by the goal for the counter attack.

3 When the three players win the ball they pass to their team mate by the goal and break out of the box to attack. Two defenders can go to try and stop the attack. Now in the counter we have four attackers against three defenders.



4 If the defenders do not win the ball but force it out of play the attacking team then use the ball on the halfway line but now the defenders are in position to defend the attack.



5 Goals can only be scored from the scoring zone after the lone striker has controlled and passed the ball.

6 Try launching counters from both sides of the pitch so players get used to attacking angles.

GAME PLAY

Communicate with good support play.
Movement key to possession.
Play at a high tempo.

How many players do I need?

We used 11 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

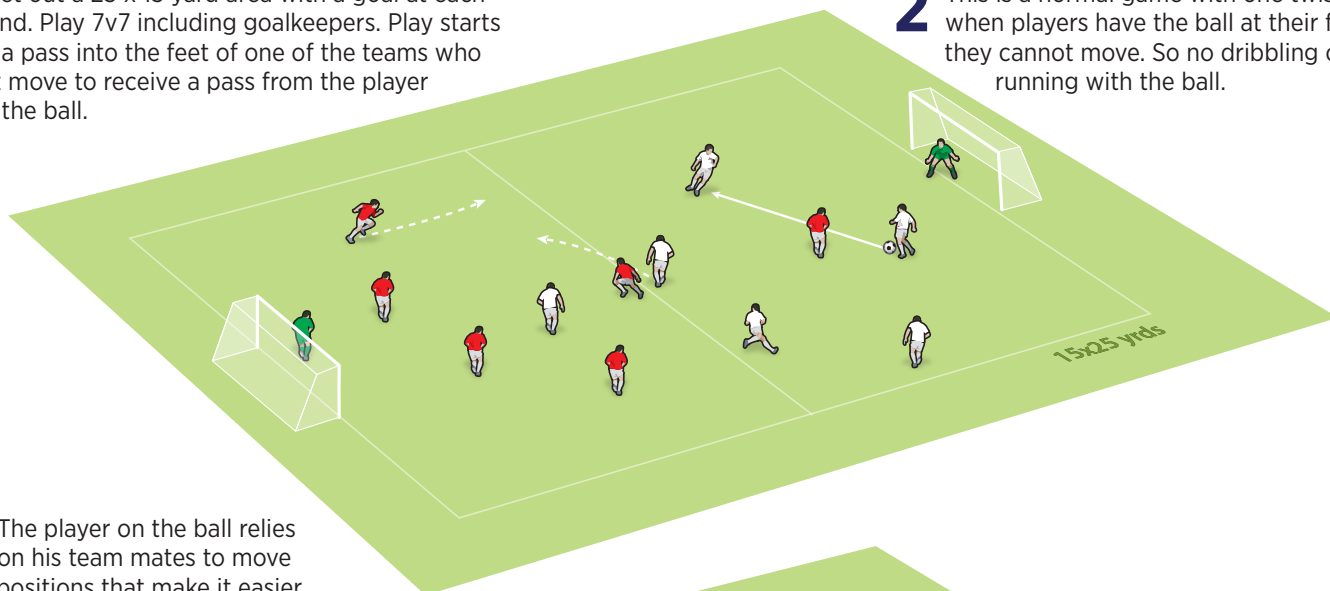
Taking control in game play

ACTIVITY: SUPPORT THE PASS

CALL OUT

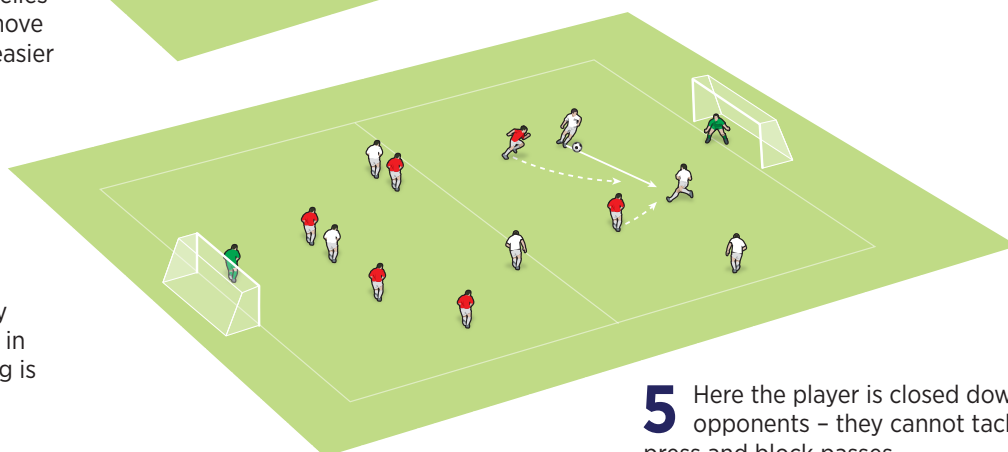
“Good first touch” • “Move to space” • “See the whole pitch” • “Know where your team mates are” • “React quickly and decisively”

1 Set out a 25 x 15 yard area with a goal at each end. Play 7v7 including goalkeepers. Play starts with a pass into the feet of one of the teams who must move to receive a pass from the player with the ball.



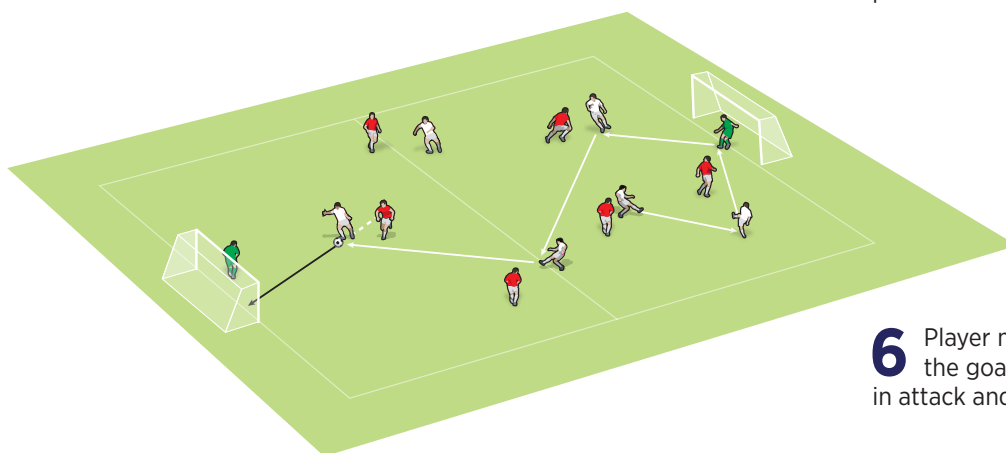
2 This is a normal game with one twist – when players have the ball at their feet they cannot move. So no dribbling or running with the ball.

3 The player on the ball relies on his team mates to move into positions that make it easier to pass.



4 Movement has to be by passing to team mates in advanced positions. Pressing is allowed but no tackling.

5 Here the player is closed down by two opponents – they cannot tackle but can press and block passes.



6 Player movement allows passing using the goalkeeper as well to create space in attack and score

How many players do I need?

We used 14 players in the session – seven-a-side with goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 8

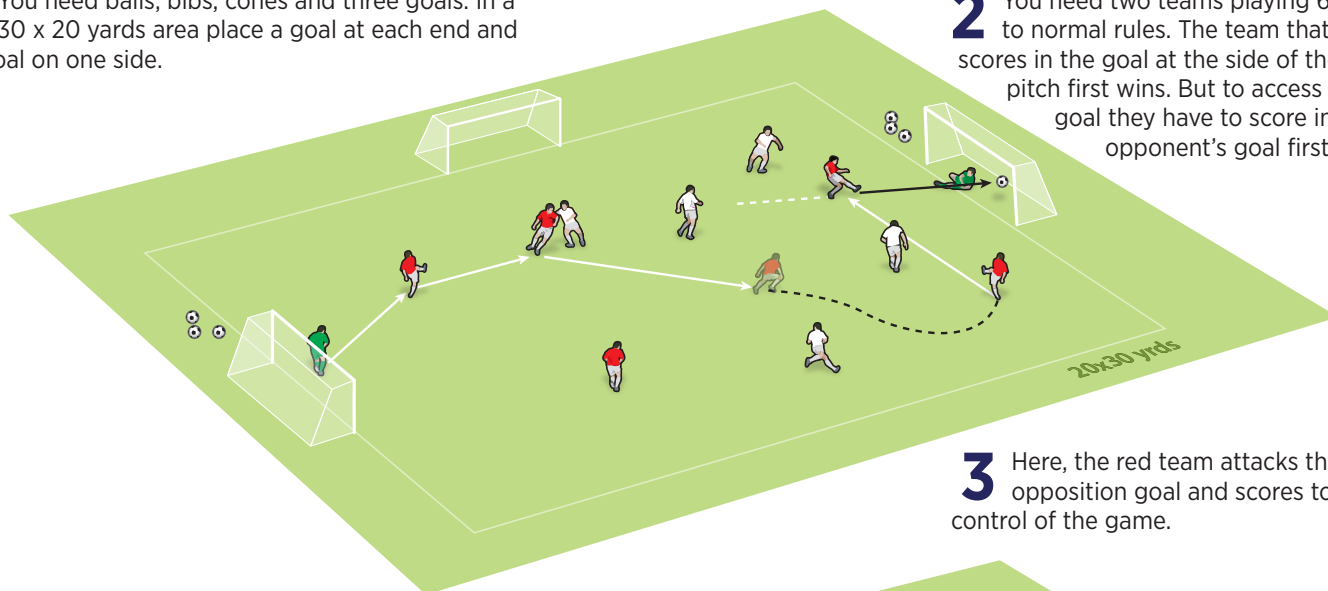
Taking control in game play

GAME: SCORE THE FIRST GOAL

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” “Move to space” • “See the whole pitch” • “Know where your team mates are” • “React quickly and decisively”

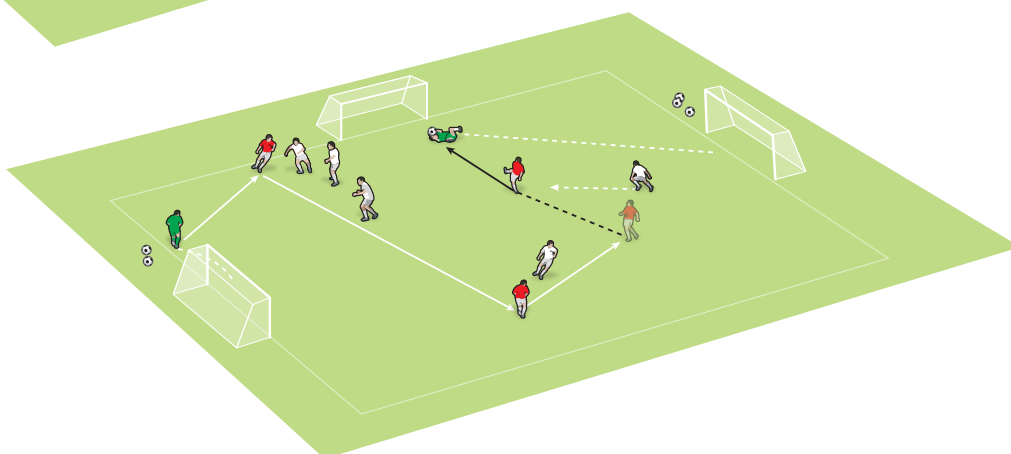
1 You need balls, bibs, cones and three goals. In a 30 x 20 yards area place a goal at each end and a goal on one side.



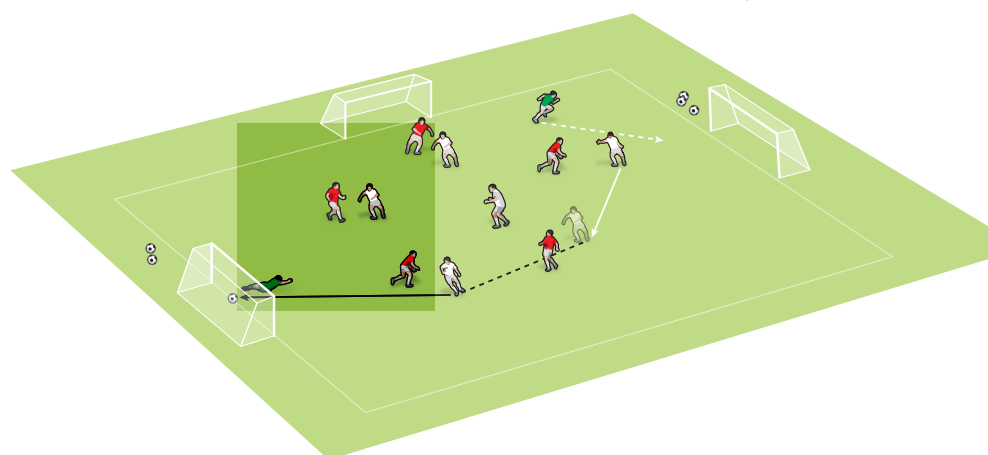
2 You need two teams playing 6v6 to normal rules. The team that scores in the goal at the side of the pitch first wins. But to access that goal they have to score in their opponent's goal first.

3 Here, the red team attacks the opposition goal and scores to take control of the game.

4 Having scored in the end goal, the red team now attacks the side goal. The white goalkeeper must quickly get across to the side goal and defend it. Here he saves and stops the red team winning the game.



5 If the white team manages to score in the end goal before the red team can score to win the game, the white team take control and can win by scoring in the side goal.



GAME PLAY

Take control of the game after scoring.
React to the change of goals.
Cover, support in defence and attack.

How many players do I need?

We used 12 players in the session – six-a-side with goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

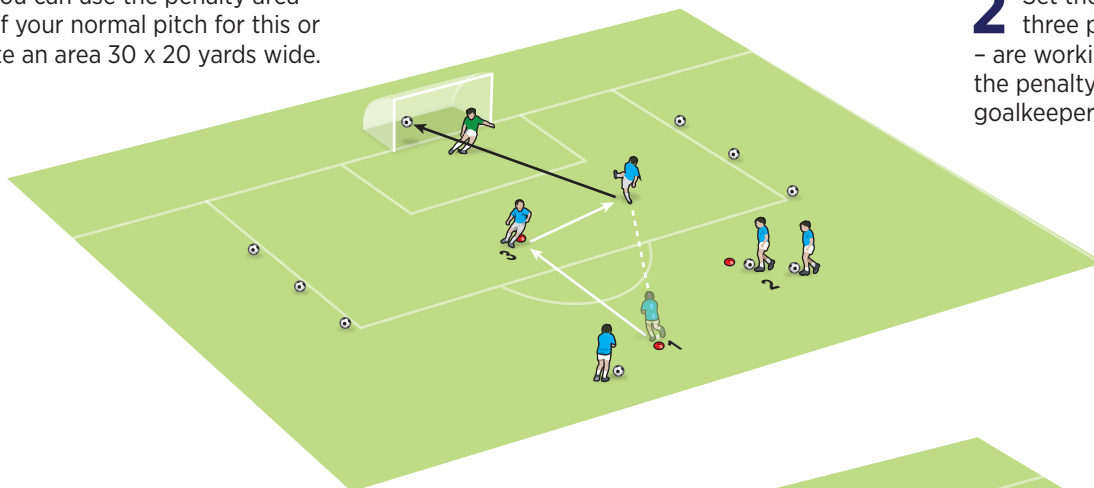
Creative in the final third

ACTIVITY: MOVEMENT IN THE PENALTY AREA

CALL OUT

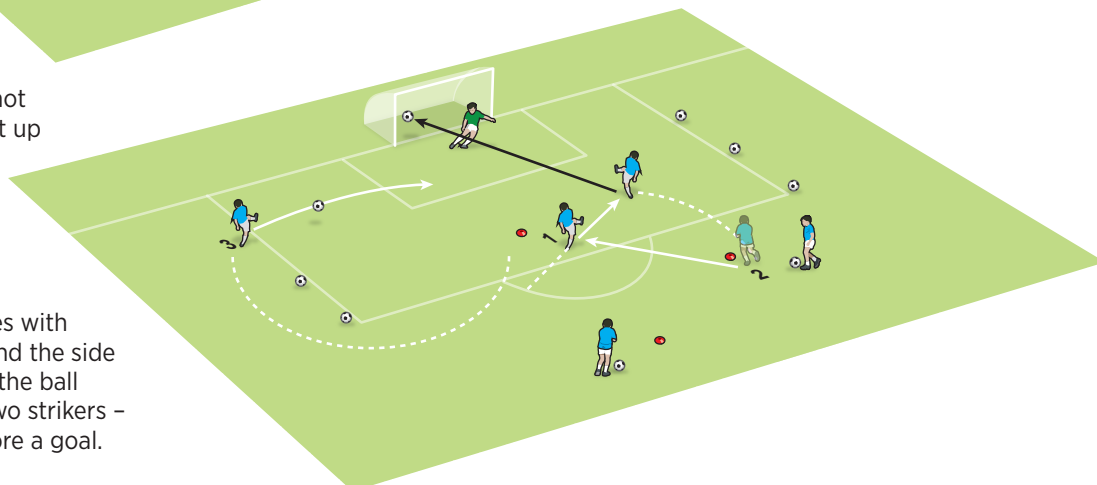
“Look at the player you are passing to” • “Good first touch” • “Look up before you shoot” • “Move at the right times”

1 You can use the penalty area of your normal pitch for this or create an area 30 x 20 yards wide.

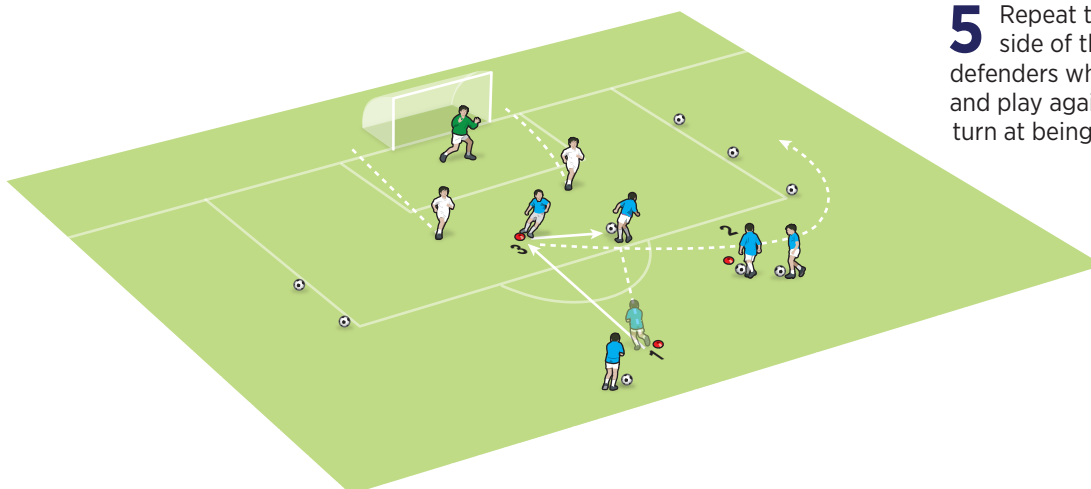


2 Set the players up so that three players – 1, 2 and 3 – are working around the D of the penalty area and there is a goalkeeper in goal.

3 Player 1 plays a one-two with player 3 and takes a shot at goal. Player 1 then turns to set up player 2 with a shot at goal.



4 As player 2 is trading passes with player 1, player 3 runs around the side of the penalty area and crosses the ball into the 6 yard box where the two strikers – players 1 and 2 – can try and score a goal.



5 Repeat this again on the other side of the pitch. Then add defenders who start next to the goal and play again. Allow all players a turn at being a striker.

How many players do I need?

We used six players plus two defenders in the progression.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 9

Creative in the final third

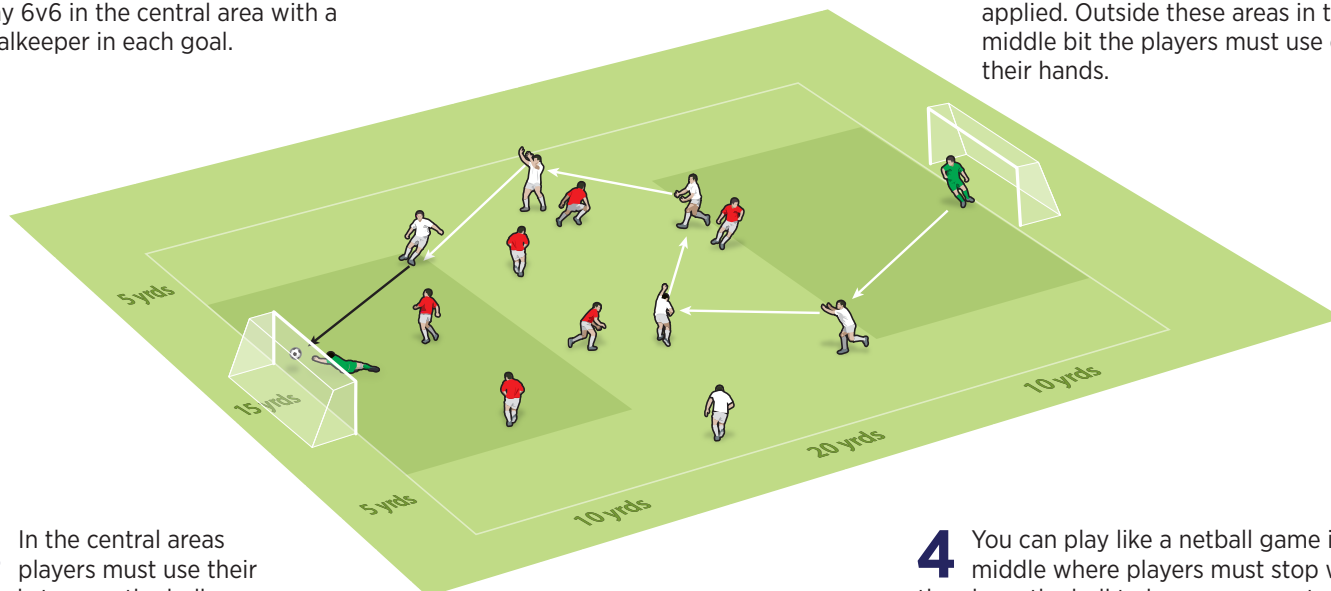
GAME: HAND BALL THROUGH MIDFIELD

CALL OUT

“Good first touch” • “One touch shooting” • “High tempo” • “Movement to find space” • “Communicate with the player in possession”

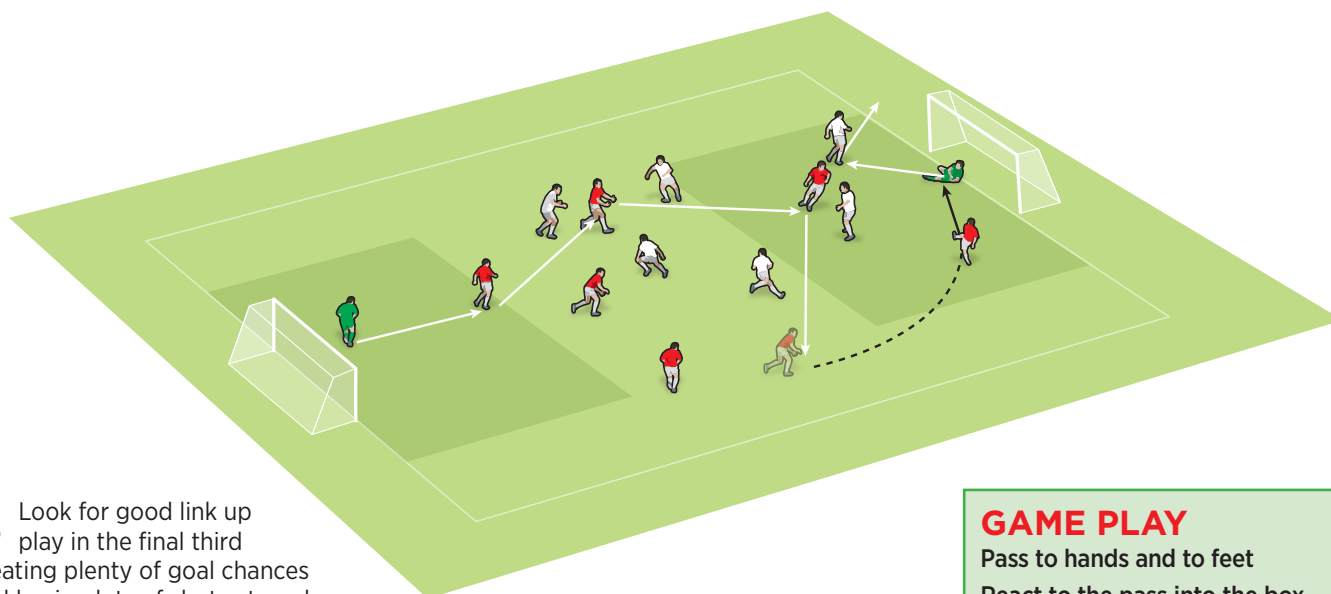
1 Set up a 40 x 25 yards area with 10 x 10 yards areas at each end. Play 6v6 in the central area with a goalkeeper in each goal.

2 In the two 10 x 10 yards areas (shaded here) normal rules are applied. Outside these areas in the middle bit the players must use only their hands.



3 In the central areas players must use their hands to pass the ball.

4 You can play like a netball game in the middle where players must stop when they have the ball to have more control over the session and to make it more realistic for movement off the ball.



5 Look for good link up play in the final third creating plenty of goal chances and having lots of shots at goal.

GAME PLAY

Pass to hands and to feet
React to the pass into the box
Think about changing from hands to feet in the boxes

How many players do I need?

We used 14 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 10

Tactical attacking movement

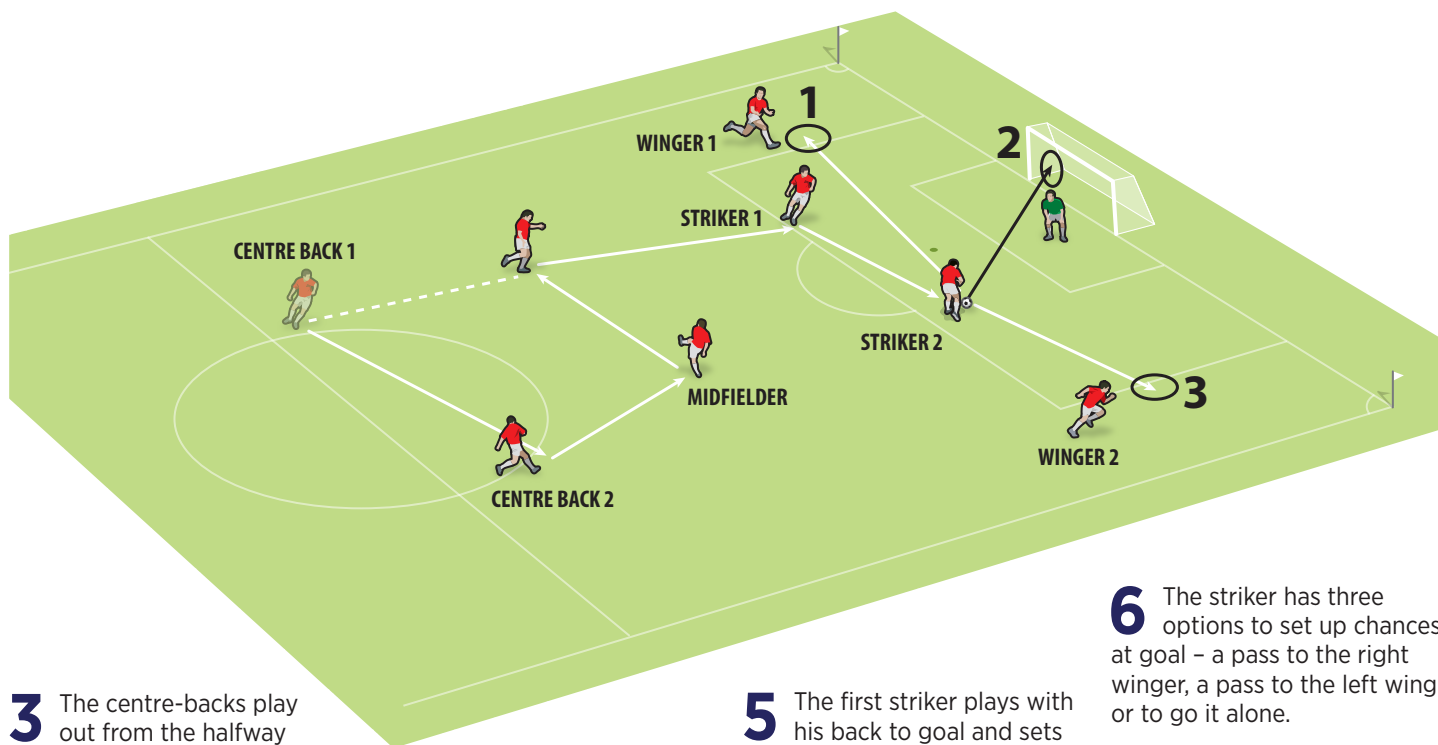
ACTIVITY: PLAYING INTO THE STRIKERS

CALL OUT

“See the whole penalty area” • “Time your runs” • “Pass and move” • “Movement to find space” • “Communicate with the winger”

1 Attackers need to think about their options in the final third – attacking support is vital and so are balls out to the wingers when the centre of the penalty area is packed tight. Use half your normal pitch.

2 Set your players up with two centre-backs on the halfway line with a few balls, a midfielder in the space between the centre circle and the D of the penalty area. Put two strikers on the edge of the penalty area, one either side of the D, and a winger on each flank.



3 The centre-backs play out from the halfway line linking with the midfielder to carry the ball up the pitch to the final third.

4 The wingers on either side of the pitch start their runs as the centre-backs start the session – The strikers link up one receiving the ball and the other looking for space on the pitch.

5 The first striker plays with his back to goal and sets up the second striker with a pass into the penalty area.

6 The striker has three options to set up chances at goal – a pass to the right winger, a pass to the left wing or to go it alone.

How many players do I need?

We used eight players in the session – seven outfield players plus the goalkeeper.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | ATTACKING 10

Tactical attacking movement

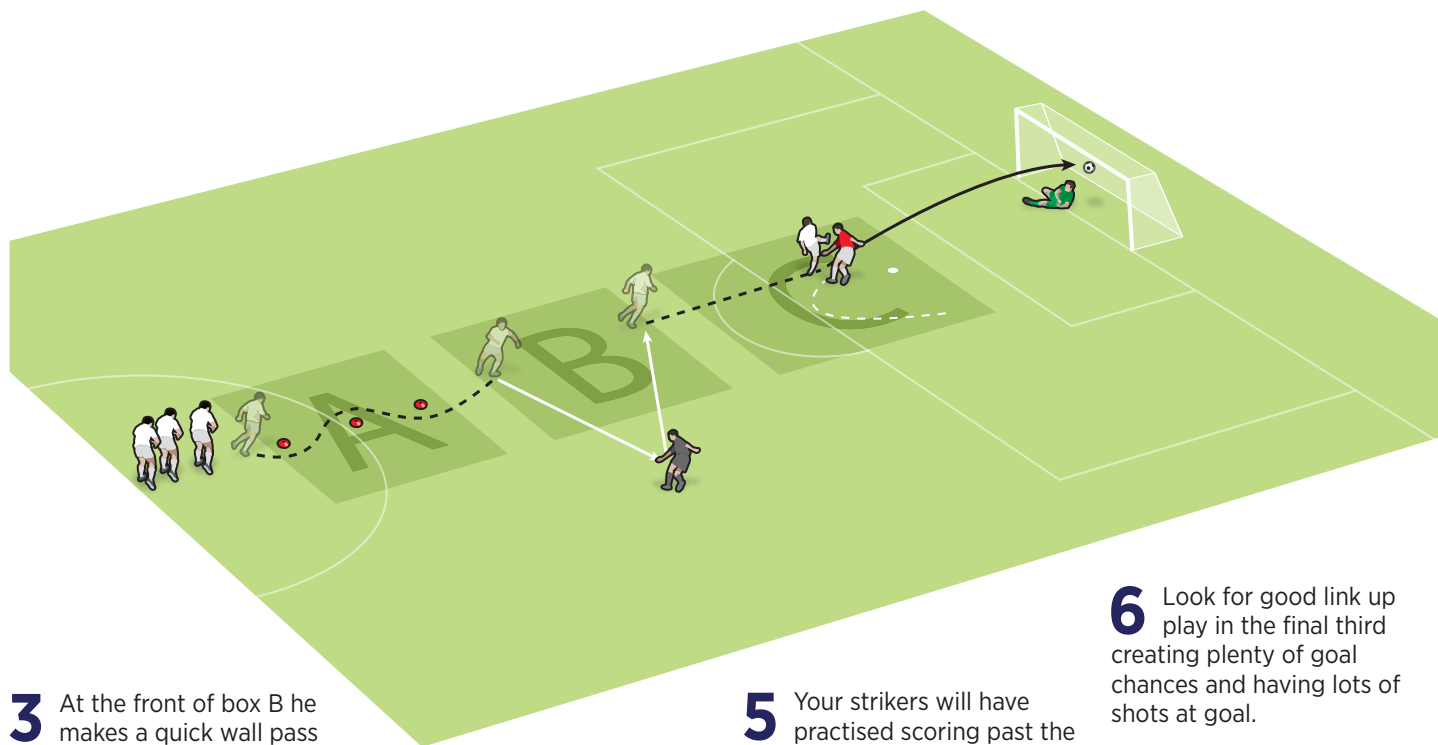
GAME: DIRECT TO GOAL

CALL OUT

“See the whole penalty area” • “Time your runs” • “Pass and move” • “Play a one-two” • “Beat the defender” • “Shoot with accuracy”

1 Use half your normal pitch set up three boxes between the goal and the half-way line with players undertaking three different skills before shooting at goal.
A = dribble, B = one-two, C = 1v1.

2 Using quick feet the attacker moves through the chicane in box A before driving at pace to the next box.



3 At the front of box B he makes a quick wall pass with the coach. As soon as the coach touches the ball the defender becomes live.

4 Still at pace, the attacker moves into the 1v1 in box C, performs a trick to get past the defender, and shoots at goal.

5 Your strikers will have practised scoring past the keeper, running into the area before but this is finishing off a solo run so in that context is important that the players get a lot of chances to fool the goalkeeper and hit the back of the net on a regular basis.

6 Look for good link up play in the final third creating plenty of goal chances and having lots of shots at goal.

GAME PLAY

Take control of the game after scoring.

React to the change of goals.

Cover, support in defence and attack.

How many players do I need?

We used seven players in this session including the coach as a server and a goalkeeper, but you can line up as many attackers as you like.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
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	--->	—>

EasiCoach

SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18
DEFENDING

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 1

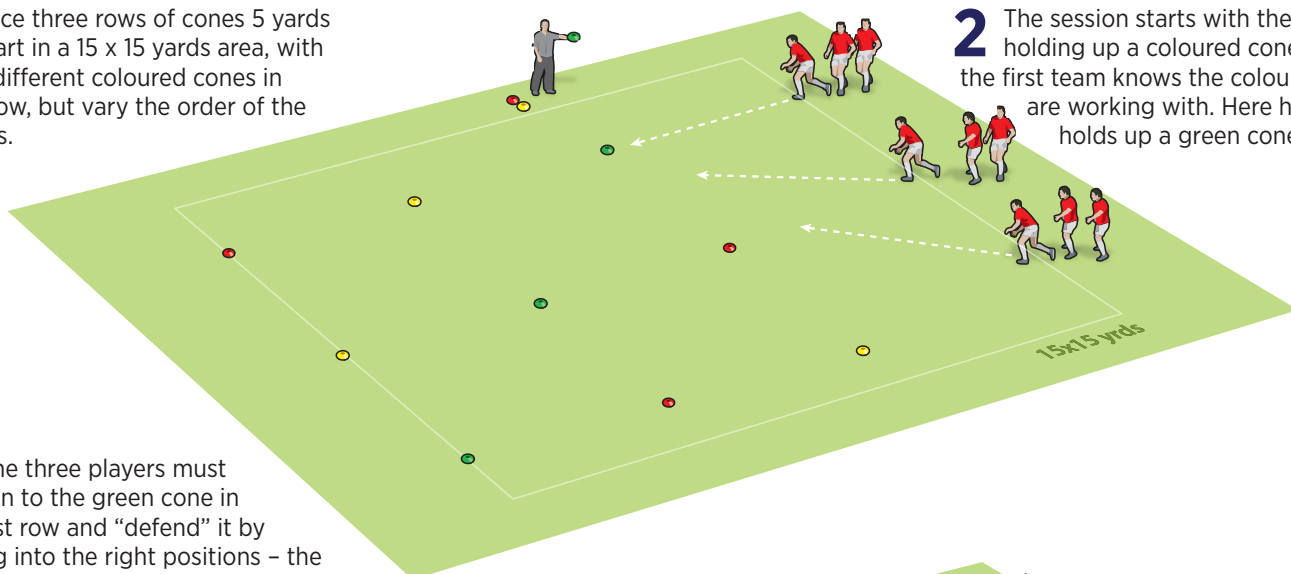
Defensive cover

ACTIVITY: WORKING AS A UNIT

CALL OUT

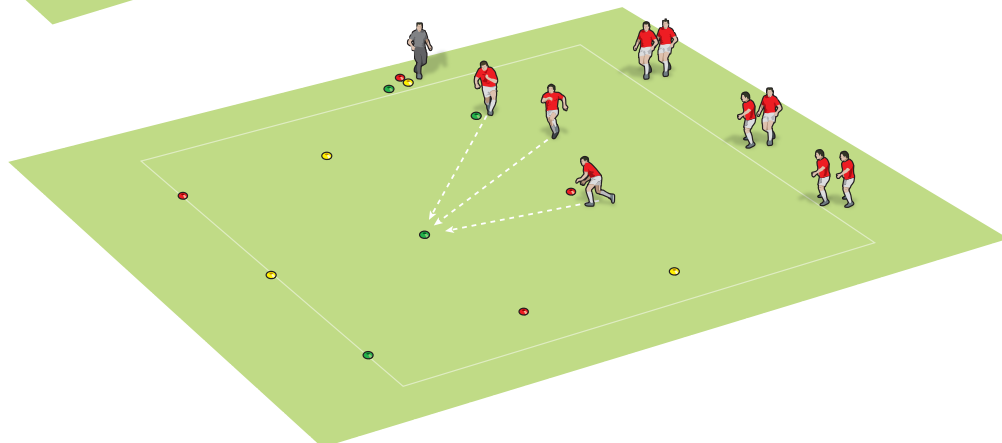
“Communicate with each other” • “Work quickly” • “Force play inside” • “Force play outside” • “Think about the support”

1 Place three rows of cones 5 yards apart in a 15 x 15 yards area, with three different coloured cones in each row, but vary the order of the colours.

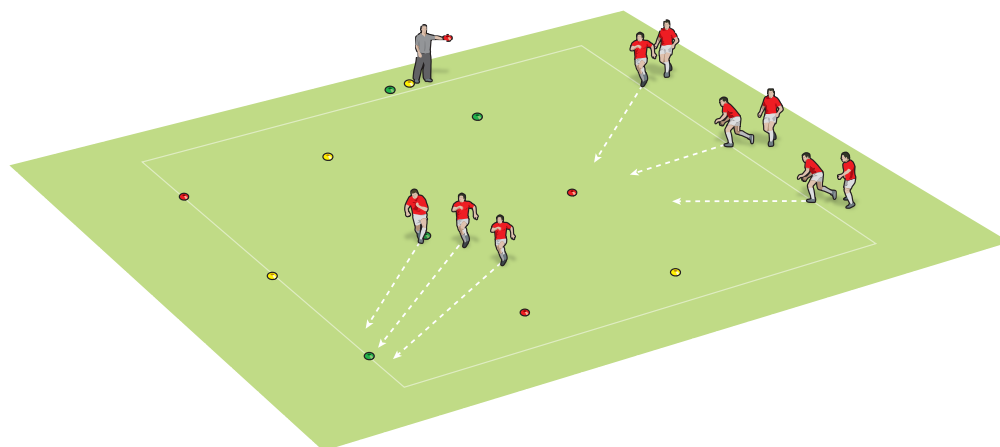


2 The session starts with the coach holding up a coloured cone so the first team knows the colour they are working with. Here he holds up a green cone.

3 The three players must run to the green cone in the first row and “defend” it by getting into the right positions – the nearest player presses, the second covers and the third supports.



4 Once they have stood in the right positions for the first cone they quickly move on to the middle row and defend the green cone, which is in the centre.



5 The players then run on to the green cone in the final row and adopt the correct defensive positions.

6 As the first team leaves the middle row of cones, the next team starts – here the coach holds up a red cone.

How many players do I need?

We used nine players in the session – three teams of three.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 1

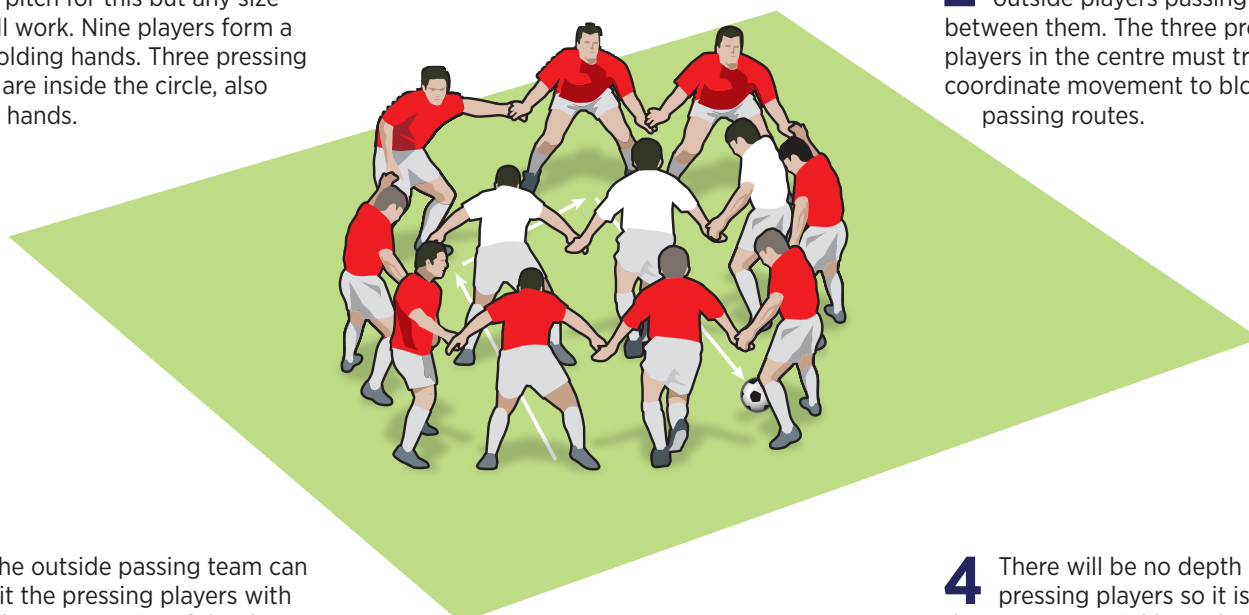
Defensive cover

GAME: HAND HELD DEFENCE

CALL OUT

“Communicate with each other” • “Work quickly” • “Force play inside” • “Force play outside” • “Think about the support”

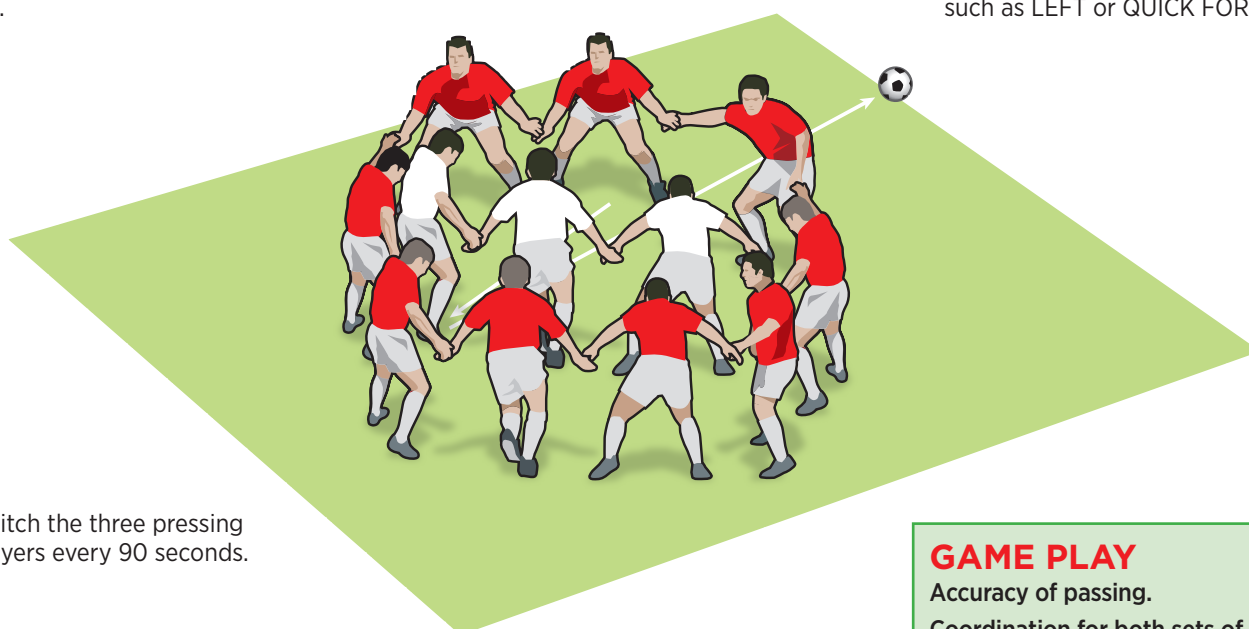
1 You can use the centre circle of a pitch for this but any size area will work. Nine players form a circle holding hands. Three pressing players are inside the circle, also holding hands.



2 The session starts with the outside players passing the ball between them. The three pressing players in the centre must try to coordinate movement to block passing routes.

3 If the outside passing team can split the pressing players with a pass they get a point. If the three pressing players can block passes they win a point every time they clear the ball.

4 There will be no depth to the pressing players so it is vital they move as quickly as they can and talk to each other about movement. They should use single instructions such as LEFT or QUICK FORWARD.



5 Switch the three pressing players every 90 seconds.

GAME PLAY

Accuracy of passing.
Coordination for both sets of players.
Communication of movement.

How many players do I need?

Use your full squad – we used 12 players but it will work for any size of squad.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 2

Working in a back three

ACTIVITY: BACK THREE TACTICS

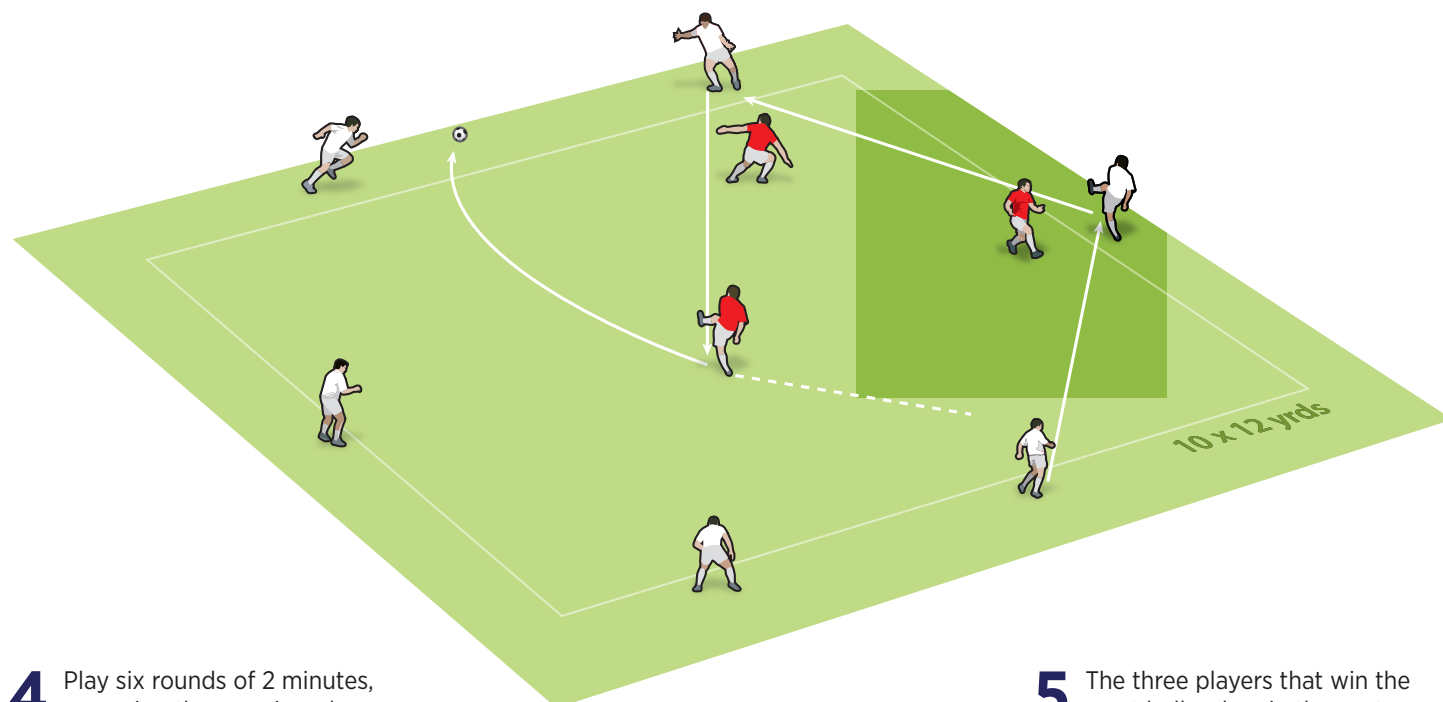
CALL OUT

“Press the player with the ball” • “Anticipate the pass and intercept” • “Cover passing routes” • “Try to block passes” • “Think about supporting positions”

1 Set up a 12 x 10 yards area. Split your players into six possession players, who are positioned outside of the area, and a team of three, who play inside the area. The team of six start each time with the ball.

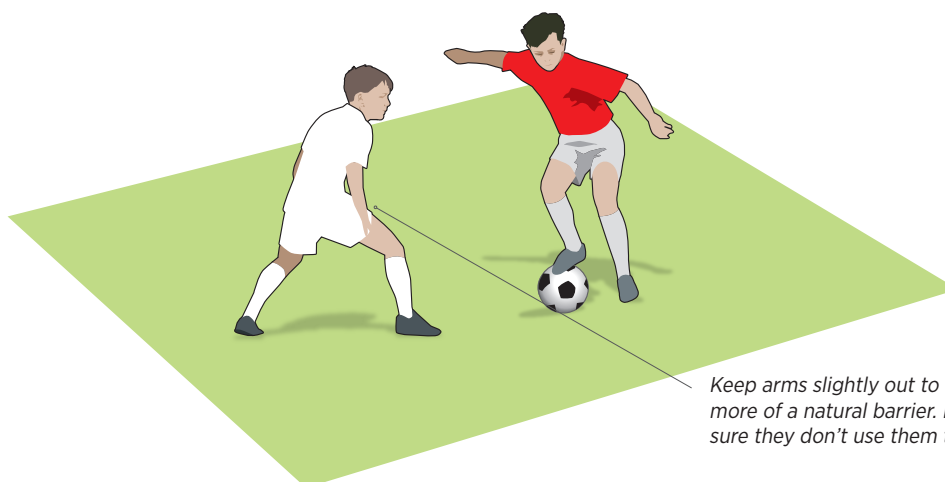
2 The six outside possession players have one touch and must pass between themselves, trying to keep hold of the ball for as long as possible.

3 The three inside players must try to press, block and intercept the passes. If they manage to gain possession, they should clear the ball out of the area to score a point.



4 Play six rounds of 2 minutes, swapping the pressing players with three outside players each time.

5 The three players that win the most balls when in the centre are the winners of the challenge.



How many players do I need?

We used nine players in the session – 6v3.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 2

Working in a back three

GAME: RECOVERY DEFENDER

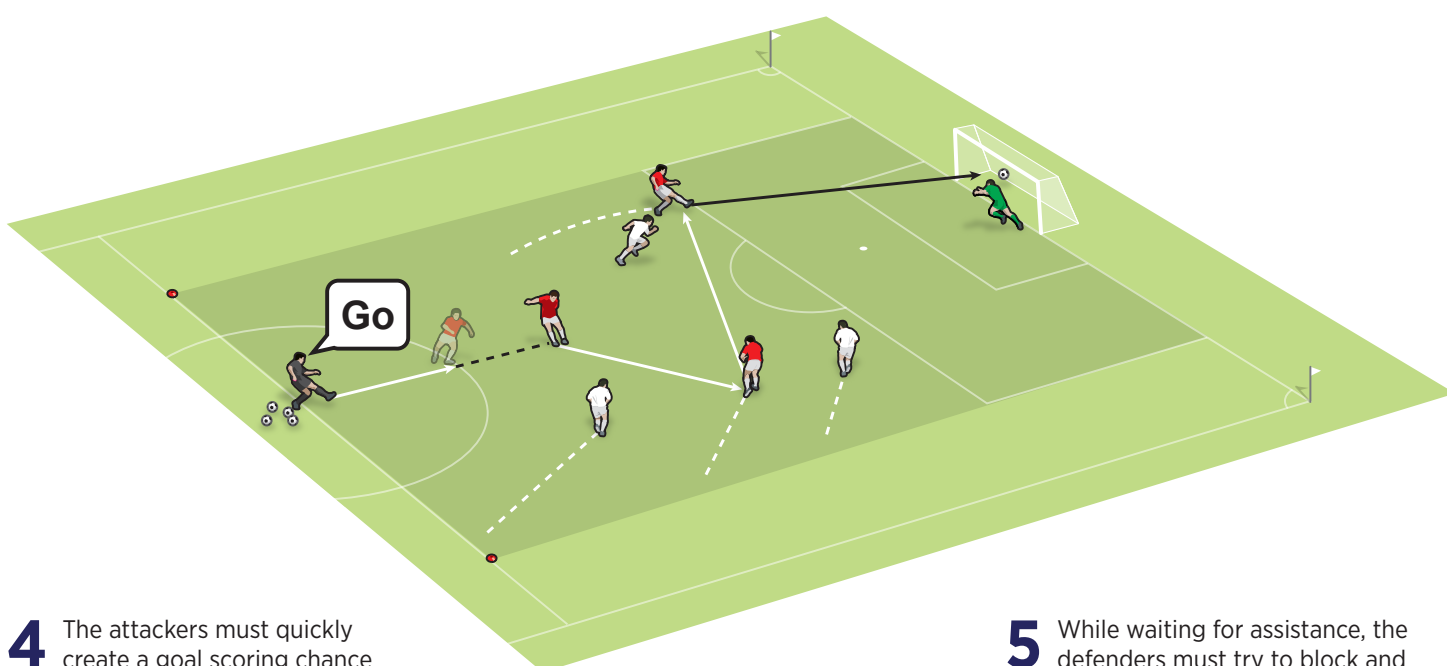
CALL OUT

“Get back quickly” • “Anticipate the pass and intercept” • “Cover your team mates” •
“Try to block passes” • “Where will you recover to?”

1 Set up using half a pitch coned off to the width of the 18-yard box, with a goal in its usual position.

2 Three players are the attackers and three are the defenders, two of whom are positioned just outside the penalty area. The third starts on the halfway line as a recovery defender.

3 The server controls the session and starts play with a pass into one of the three attackers.



4 The attackers must quickly create a goal scoring chance by taking advantage of the overload before the recovering defender arrives to help his team mates.

5 While waiting for assistance, the defenders must try to block and delay the attackers. The recovering defender goes on the server's call.

GAME PLAY

Quick recovery movement.

Good hold up play.

Awareness of team mates and the goal.

How many players do I need?

We used seven players including a goalkeeper plus a server.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

Passing out from the back

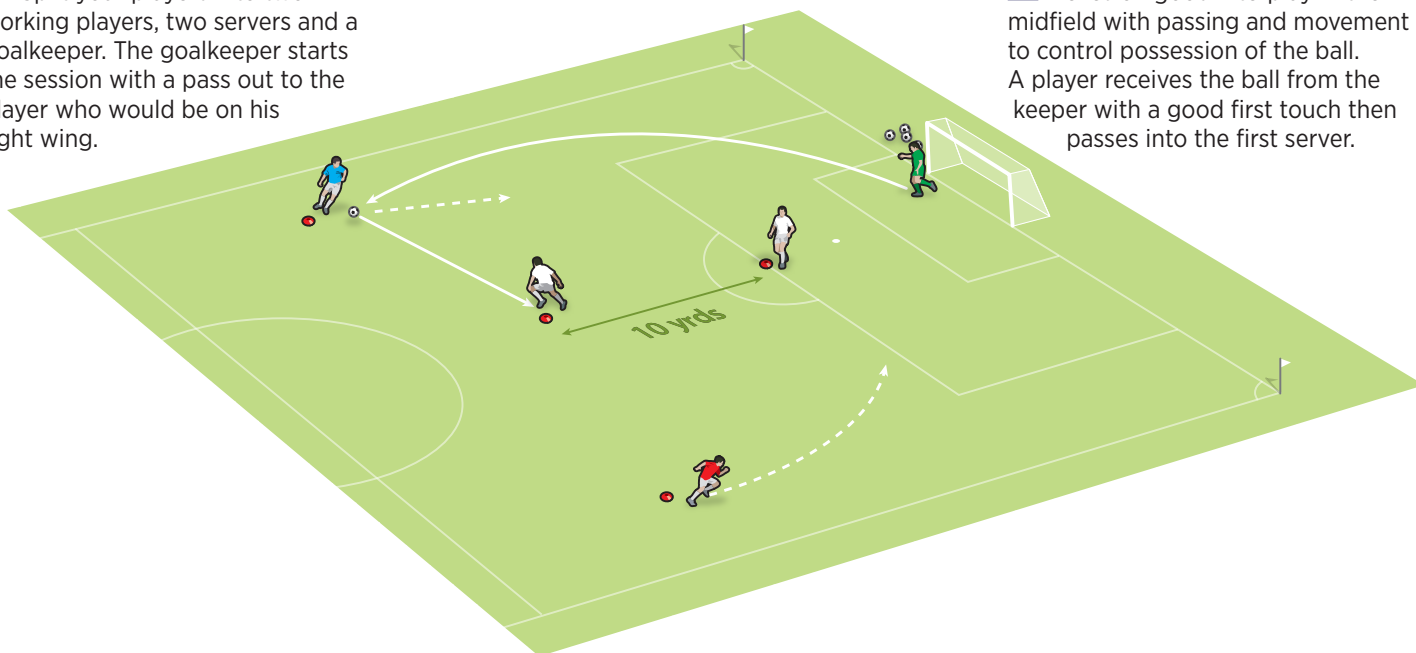
ACTIVITY: GOALKEEPER'S ROLL

CALL OUT

“Be sideways on to receive the pass” • “Good first touch” • “Accurate passing” •
“React to the pass” • “Good positioning in the 1v1”

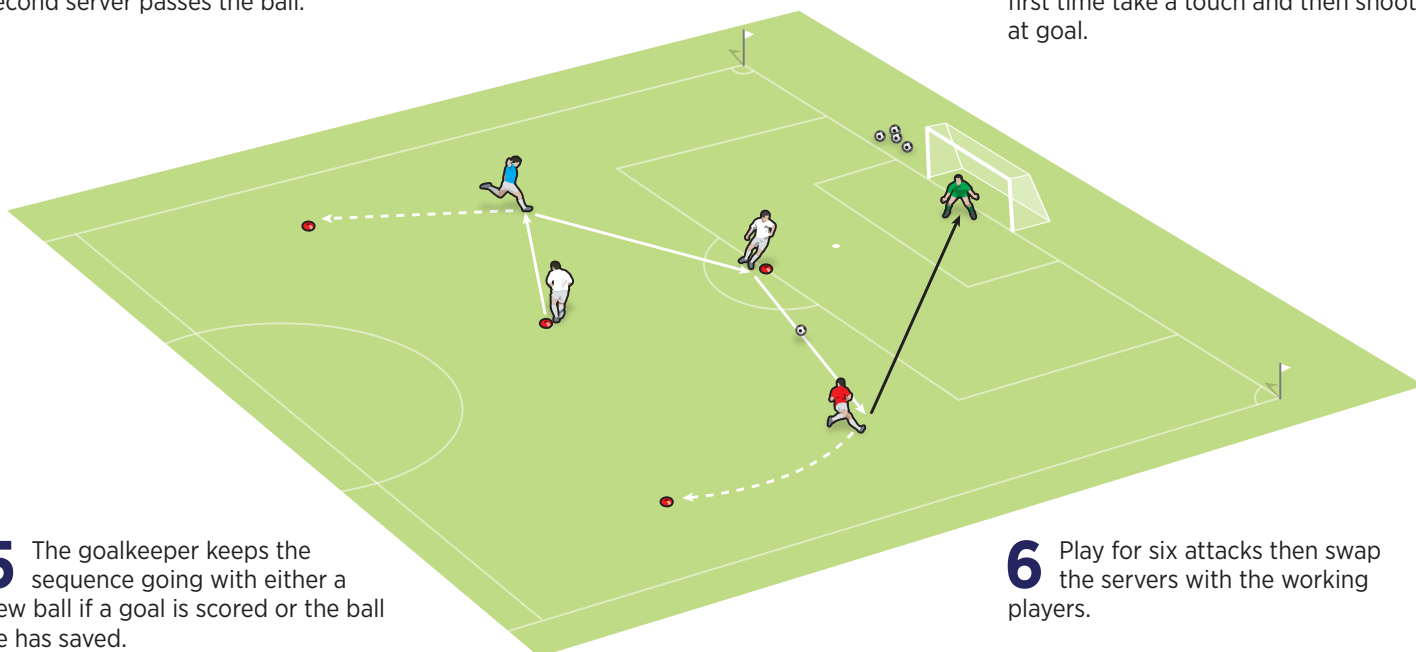
1 Use half your normal pitch. Split your players into two working players, two servers and a goalkeeper. The goalkeeper starts the session with a pass out to the player who would be on his right wing.

2 Playing out from the back relies on good interplay in the midfield with passing and movement to control possession of the ball. A player receives the ball from the keeper with a good first touch then passes into the first server.



3 The player on the opposite side times his run to arrive as the second server passes the ball.

4 On receiving the ball just outside the penalty area he can shoot first time take a touch and then shoot at goal.



5 The goalkeeper keeps the sequence going with either a new ball if a goal is scored or the ball he has saved.

6 Play for six attacks then swap the servers with the working players.

How many players do I need?

We used five players in the session – four outfield players and a goalkeeper.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 3

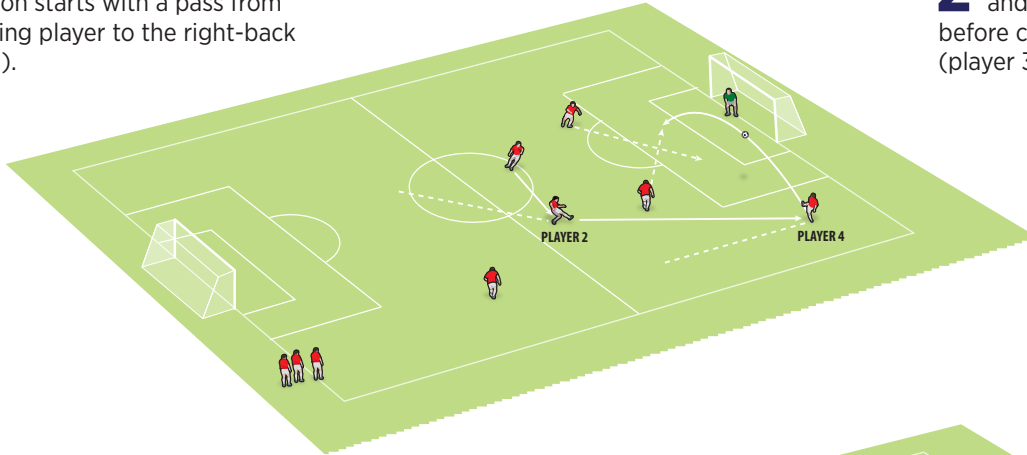
Passing out from the back

GAME: TEAM SHAPE THROUGH THE THIRDS

CALL OUT

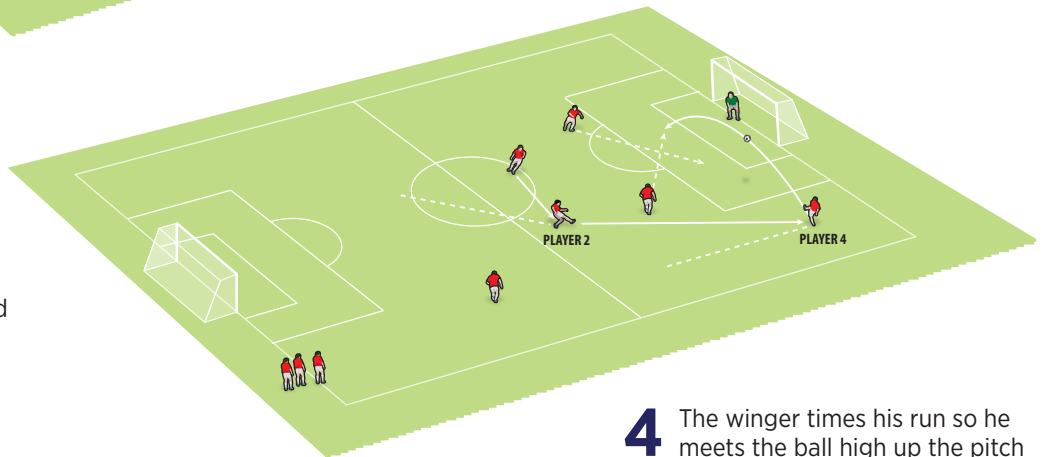
“Be sideways on to receive the pass” • “Good first touch” • “Accurate passing” • “React to the pass” • “Movement to receive”

1 Set up using your full pitch. The session starts with a pass from the waiting player to the right-back (player 1).



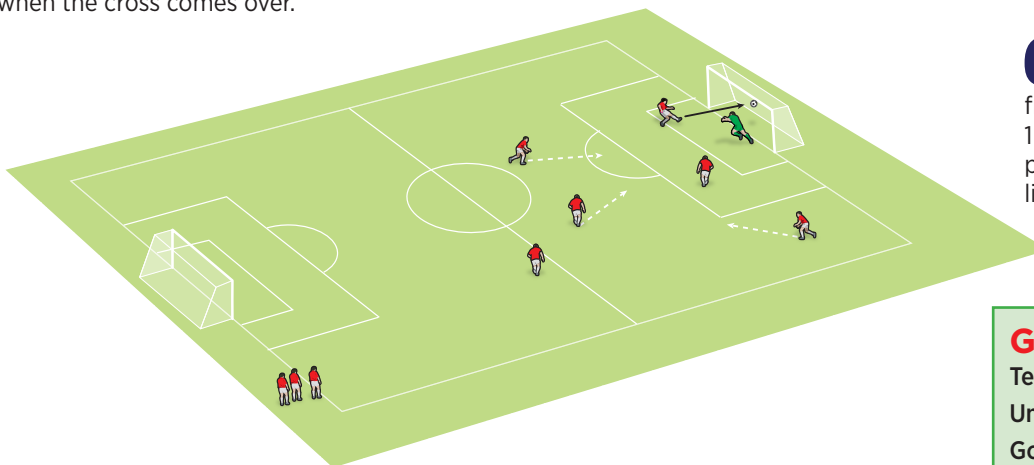
2 The right-back controls the ball and dribbles a couple of paces before chipping a pass to midfielder (player 3).

3 Deep lying midfielder (player 2) now makes a run into the opposition half to receive the ball and play a first-time pass to the winger (player 4), who is on the move.



4 The winger times his run so he meets the ball high up the pitch and crosses first time.

5 The strikers must time their runs so they are in scoring positions when the cross comes over.



6 The players then rotate positions: a spare feeder player from the queue becomes 1; player 1 becomes 2; player 2 becomes 3; player 3 becomes 4; and 4 joins the line of spare players for the next run through.

GAME PLAY

Technique is key.
Understanding movement.
Good first touch and ball control.

How many players do I need?

We used 11 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	→	→
	→	→
	→	→

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 4

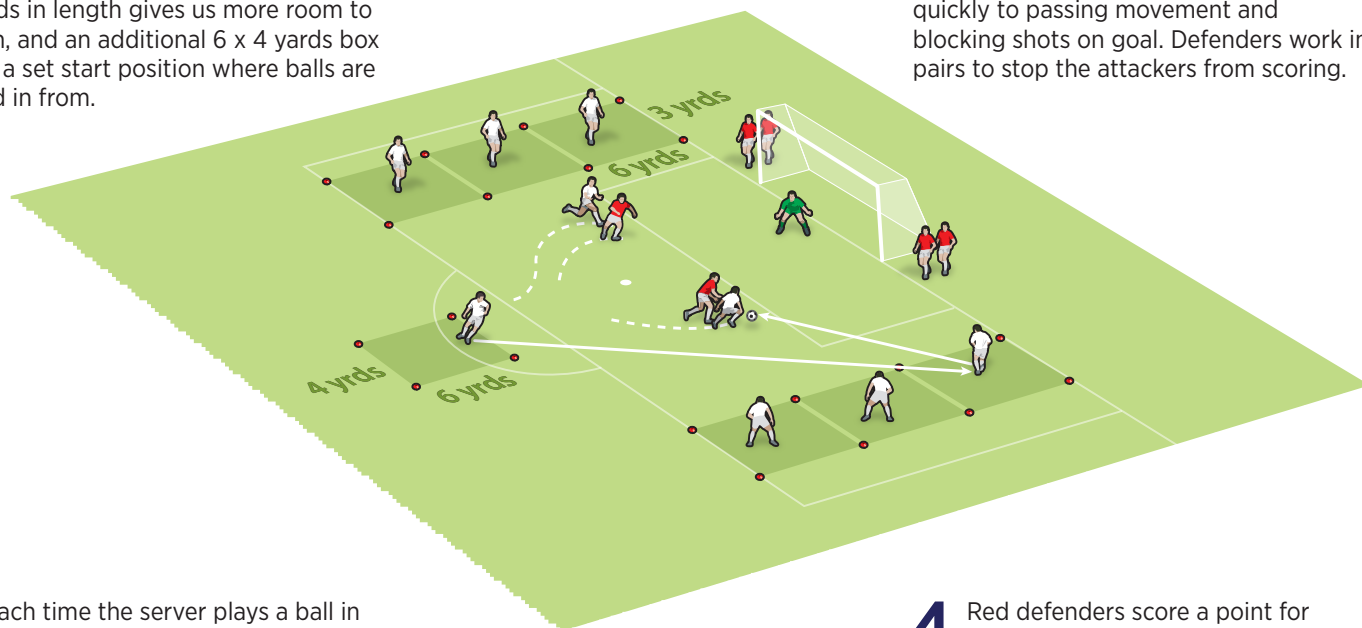
Stop dynamic attacks

ACTIVITY: DEFEND THE PENALTY AREA

CALL OUT

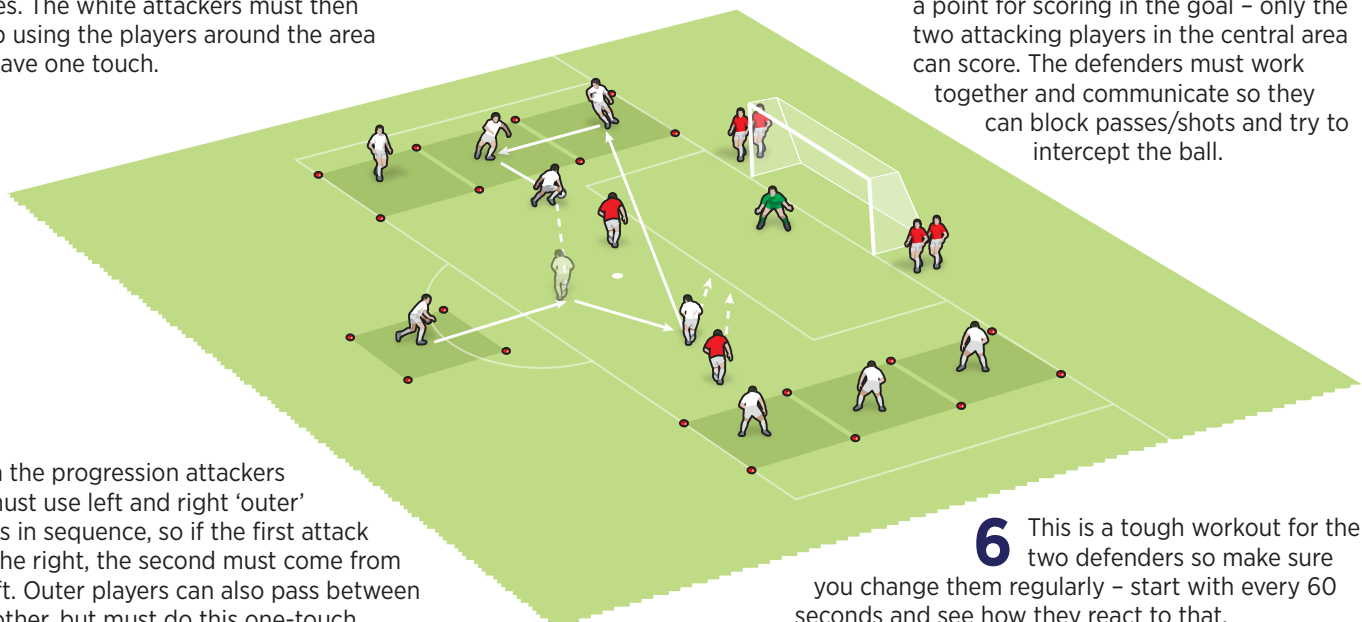
“Support your team mate” • “Get goal-side” • “Stay calm” • “Look up and pass” • “Try and intercept the pass”

1 Use your penalty area and cone down the sides of the 6 yard box to the 18-yard line, forming three small boxes. Extending the penalty area outwards to 21 yards in length gives us more room to play in, and an additional 6 x 4 yards box offers a set start position where balls are served in from.



2 It's 2v2 – red defenders versus white attackers – in the box, with free play. Whites on the outside are one-touch. Defenders must track play, reacting quickly to passing movement and blocking shots on goal. Defenders work in pairs to stop the attackers from scoring.

3 Each time the server plays a ball in from the small box you want the pass to go to a different player in the side squares. The white attackers must then link up using the players around the area who have one touch.



4 Red defenders score a point for winning possession and passing it back to the server. White attackers get a point for scoring in the goal – only the two attacking players in the central area can score. The defenders must work together and communicate so they can block passes/shots and try to intercept the ball.

5 In the progression attackers must use left and right ‘outer’ players in sequence, so if the first attack is on the right, the second must come from the left. Outer players can also pass between each other, but must do this one-touch.

6 This is a tough workout for the two defenders so make sure you change them regularly – start with every 60 seconds and see how they react to that.

How many players do I need?

We used 16 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 4

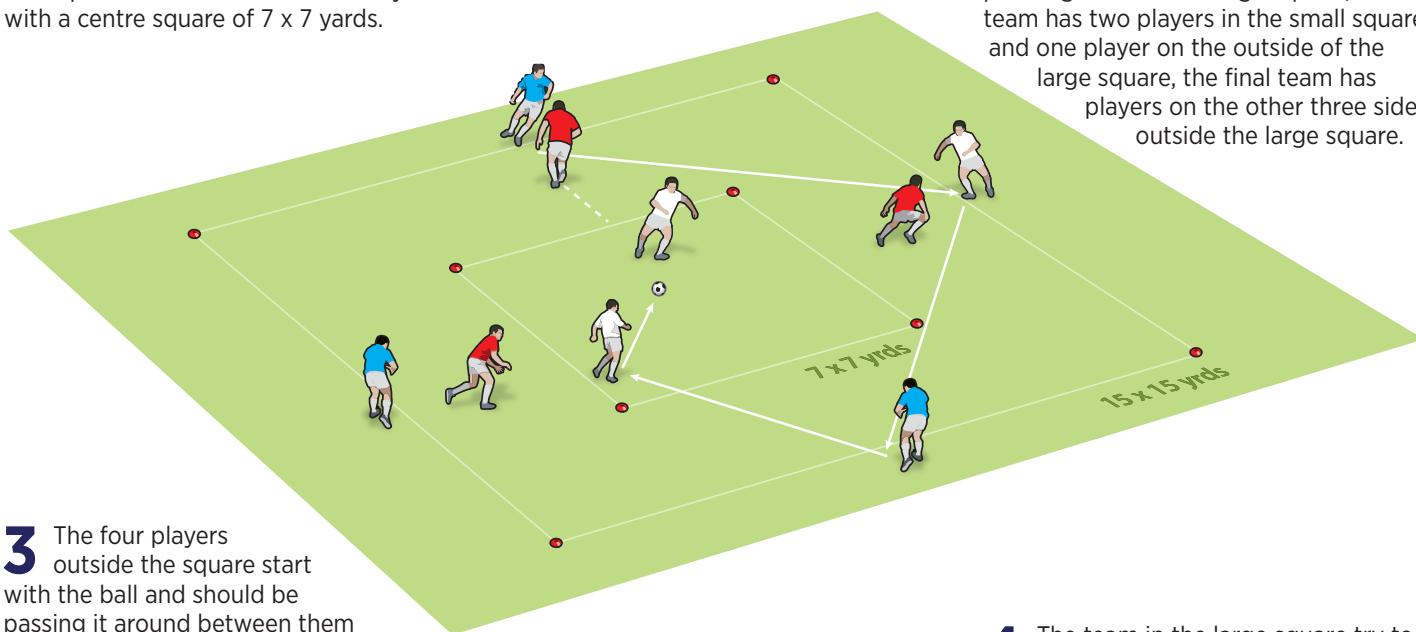
Stop dynamic attacks

GAME: DEFENDING BETWEEN THE LINES

CALL OUT

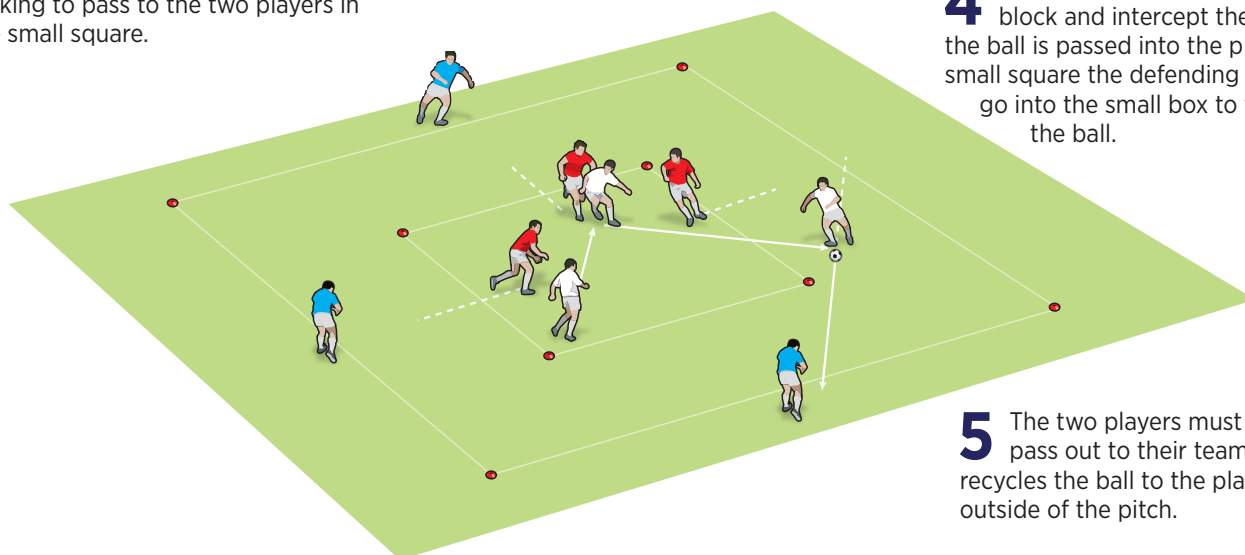
“Support your team mate” • “Stay calm” • “Look up and pass” • “Try and intercept the pass” • “Work out the best supporting option”

1 Against a team that passes between the lines teams must intercept and block passes. Use an area of 15 x 15 yards with a centre square of 7 x 7 yards.



2 Split your players into three teams of three players. One team is the pressing team in the large square, one team has two players in the small square and one player on the outside of the large square, the final team has players on the other three sides outside the large square.

3 The four players outside the square start with the ball and should be passing it around between them looking to pass to the two players in the small square.



4 The team in the large square try to block and intercept the ball. Once the ball is passed into the players in the small square the defending three players go into the small box to try and win the ball.

6 The defending players press and should win the ball in the tight area of the small box – now they link up with the outside players and take the place of the team they have won the ball from. Switch teams over every 2 minutes so all teams have a go at winning the ball back.

5 The two players must combine and pass out to their team mate who recycles the ball to the players on the outside of the pitch.

GAME PLAY

Pressing is key.
Support play.
Block and intercept.

How many players do I need?

We used nine players in the session – three teams of three.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

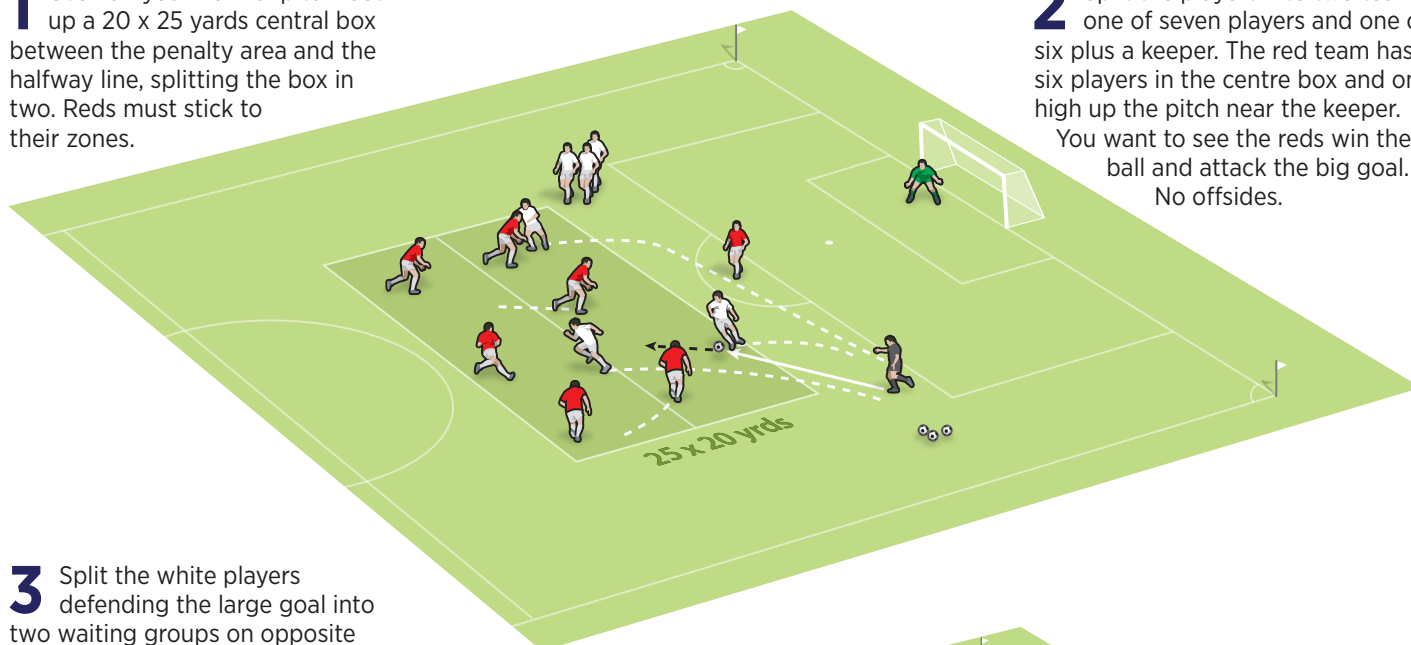
Defending in midfield

ACTIVITY: PRESS THE MIDFIELD AND COUNTER

CALL OUT

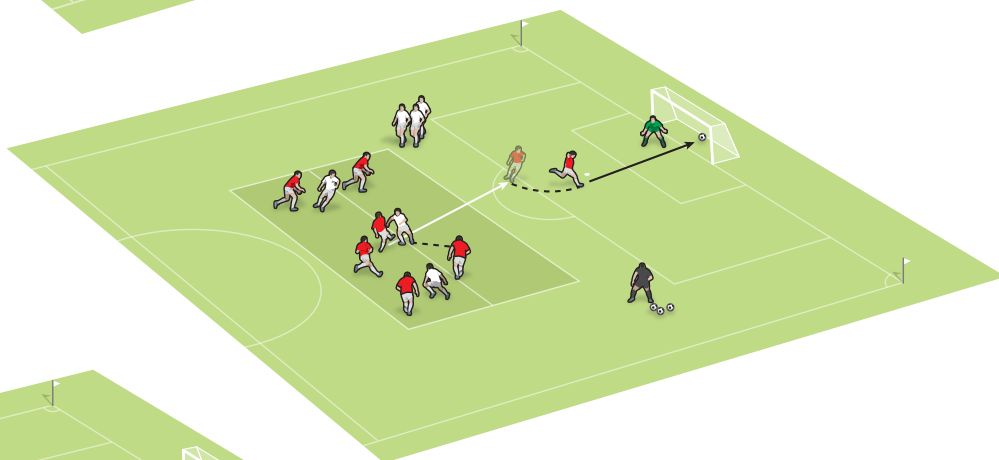
“Press and tackle” • “Block passing routes” • “Cover your team mate” • “Look up and pass” • “Try to intercept the pass”

1 Use half your normal pitch. Set up a 20 x 25 yards central box between the penalty area and the halfway line, splitting the box in two. Reds must stick to their zones.

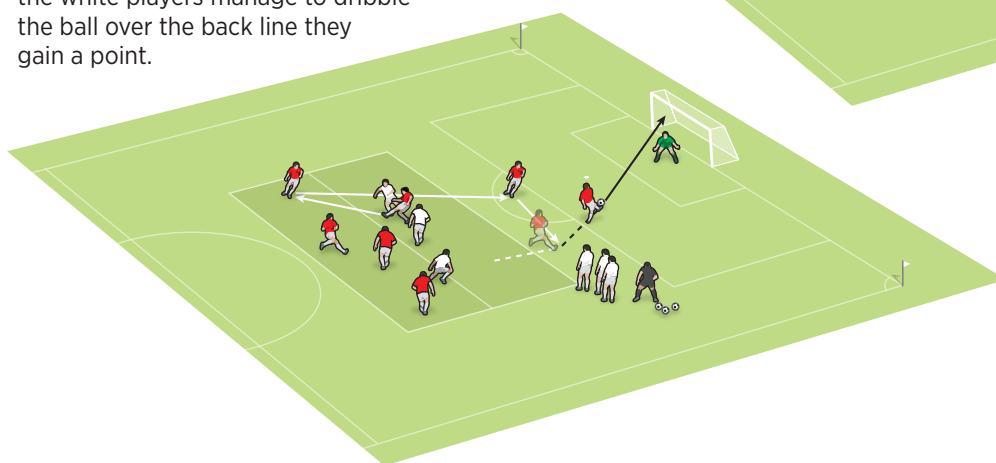


2 Split the players into two teams one of seven players and one of six plus a keeper. The red team has six players in the centre box and one high up the pitch near the keeper. You want to see the reds win the ball and attack the big goal. No offsides.

3 Split the white players defending the large goal into two waiting groups on opposite sides. They start with the ball.



4 The coach plays a ball into the first group of three white players, who enter the centre box and try to dribble through it. The six red players must press and win the ball back to counter attack quickly. If the white players manage to dribble the ball over the back line they gain a point.



5 The reds win the ball and link up to play a good pass into the forward, who has three touches to score. Play four three-minute games.

6 Progress this game by adding a central defender to the white team, but allow one of the red defenders to burst out of the centre box to support the forward and make it 2v1.

How many players do I need?

We used 15 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 5

Defending in midfield

GAME: COMPACT THE MIDFIELD

CALL OUT

“Press and tackle” • “Block passing routes” • “Cover your team mate” • “Look up and pass” • “Try to intercept the pass”

1 This session places an emphasis on midfield units staying compact and being hard to penetrate when out of possession. It identifies specific defensive roles for midfield players making them more compact and difficult to penetrate. Set up a 30 x 22 yards area with a grid made up of 5 x 5 yards boxes.

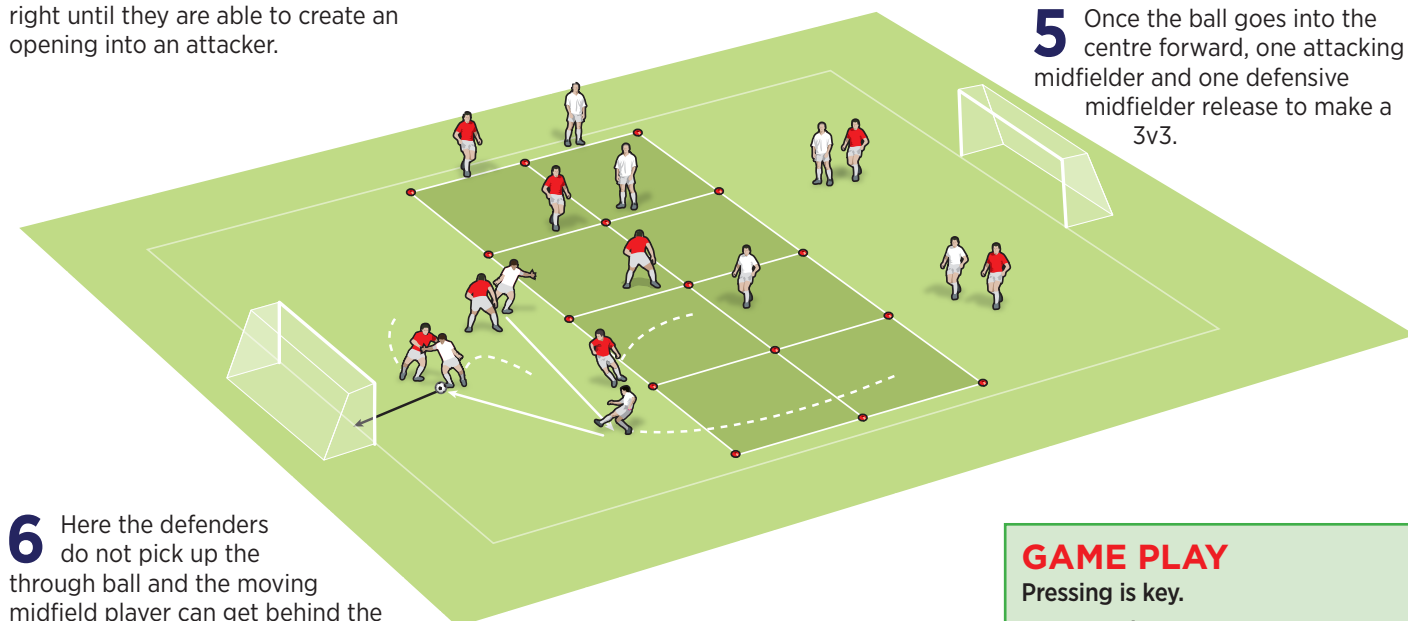
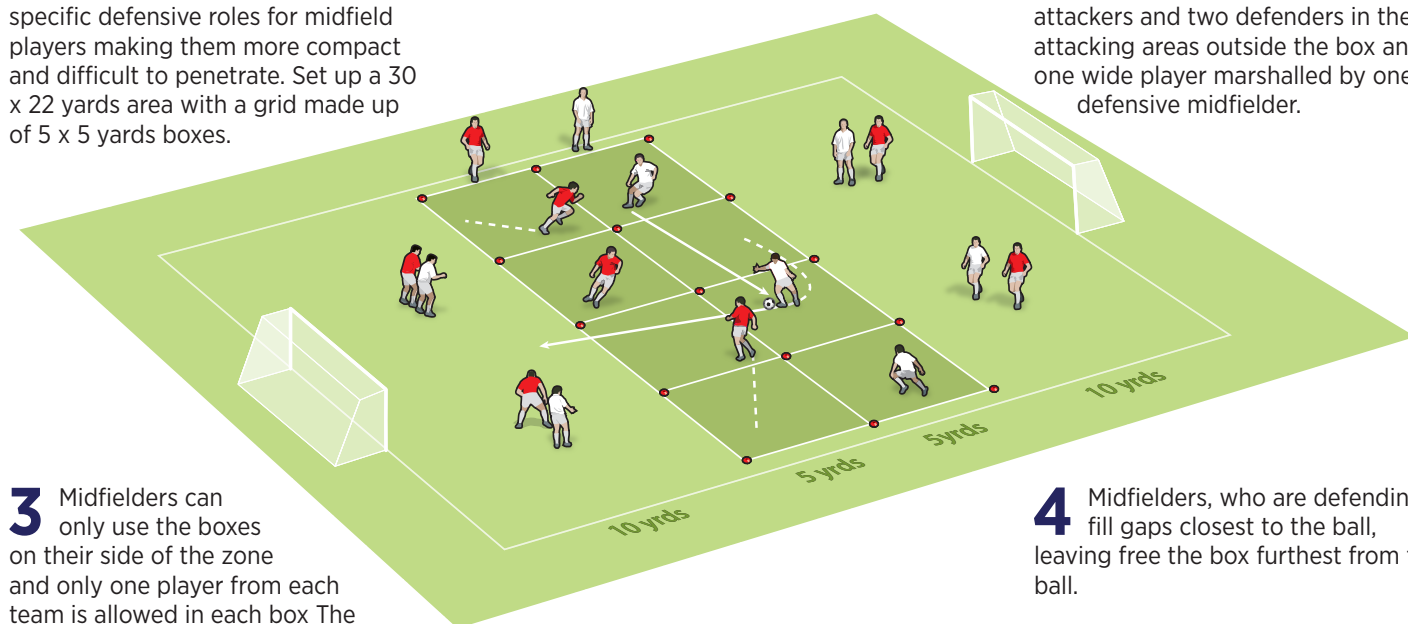
3 Midfielders can only use the boxes on their side of the zone and only one player from each team is allowed in each box. The task is for midfielders to pass left and right until they are able to create an opening into an attacker.

6 Here the defenders do not pick up the through ball and the moving midfield player can get behind the defence.

2 In the session you have three midfielders positioned in four squares, patrolled by three defenders in front of them. You also need two attackers and two defenders in the attacking areas outside the box and one wide player marshalled by one defensive midfielder.

4 Midfielders, who are defending, fill gaps closest to the ball, leaving free the box furthest from the ball.

5 Once the ball goes into the centre forward, one attacking midfielder and one defensive midfielder release to make a 3v3.



GAME PLAY

Pressing is key.
Support play.
Block and intercept.

How many players do I need?

We used 16 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

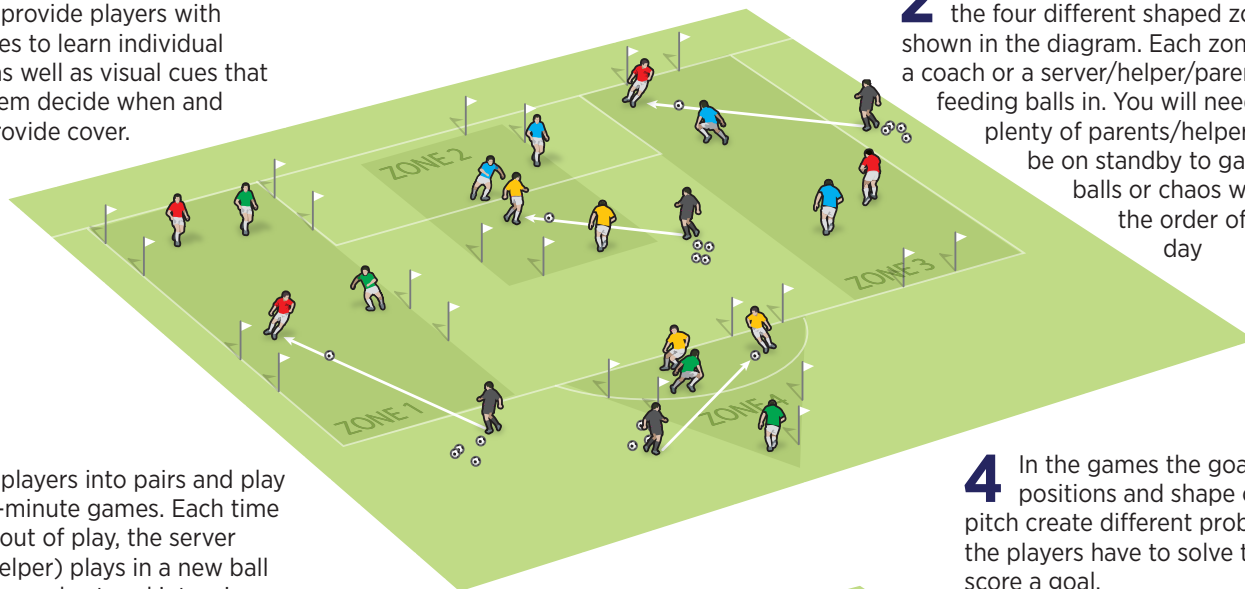
Defending in small groups

ACTIVITY: WHEN AND WHERE TO COVER

CALL OUT

“Press and tackle” • “Block passing routes” • “Cover your team mate” “Look up and pass” • “Try and intercept the pass”

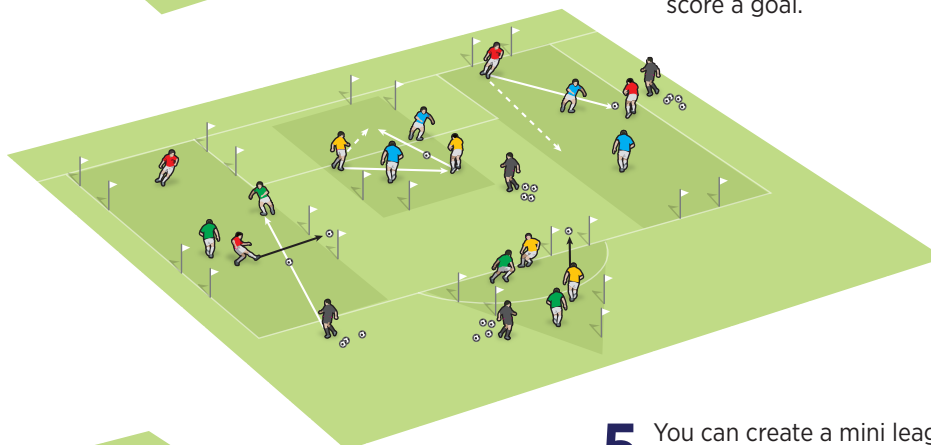
1 The four games in this activity provide players with opportunities to learn individual technique as well as visual cues that can help them decide when and where to provide cover.



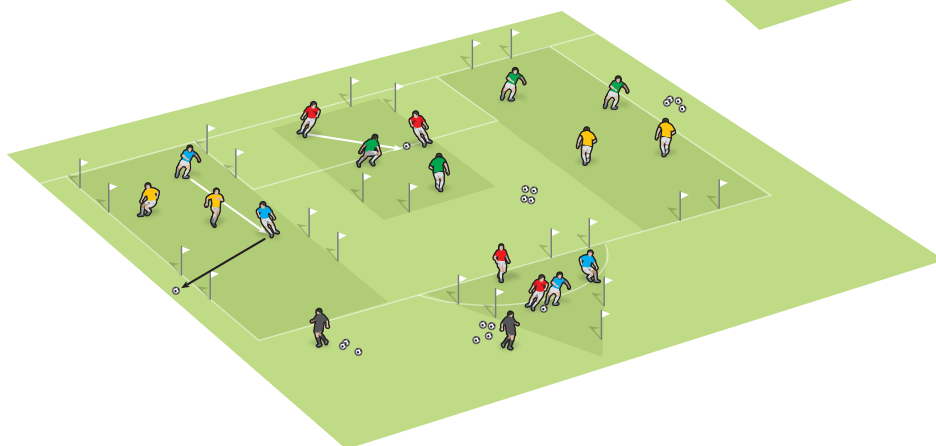
2 Play a series of 2v2 games on the four different shaped zones shown in the diagram. Each zone has a coach or a server/helper/parent feeding balls in. You will need plenty of parents/helpers to be on standby to gather balls or chaos will be the order of the day

3 Divide players into pairs and play eight 1-minute games. Each time a ball goes out of play, the server (coach or helper) plays in a new ball to make games short and intensive.

4 After each game rotate players to a different zone and play different opponents. Each zone provides a unique mental challenge, so soccer intelligence is activated too.



4 In the games the goal positions and shape of the pitch create different problems the players have to solve to score a goal.



5 You can create a mini league for all the teams and see which one wins the most games or alternatively give the losing team a forfeit – clearing up balls or putting the equipment away

6 This encourages players to apply pressure straight from the receiver’s first touch, with defenders adopting an angle of approach that denies options and protects vulnerable areas such as the goal and the passing lanes.

How many players do I need?

Up to 16 players in a series of activities.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 6

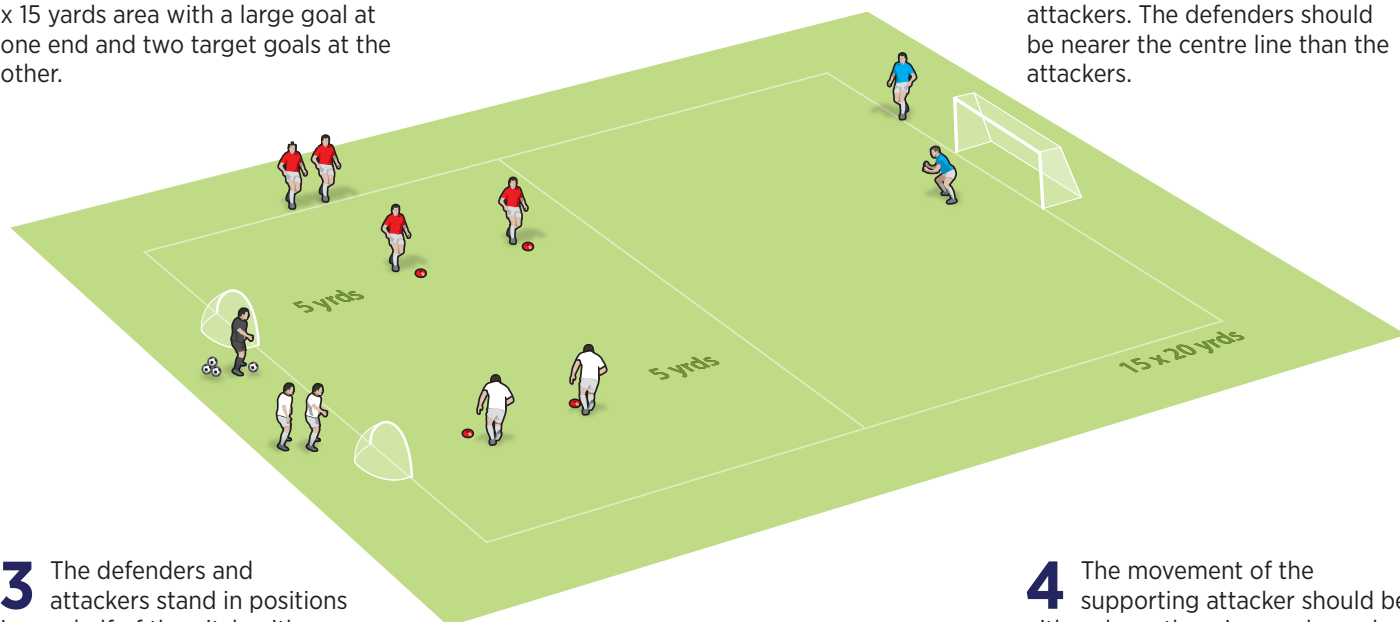
Defending in small groups

GAME: 2V2 COVER AND SUPPORT

CALL OUT

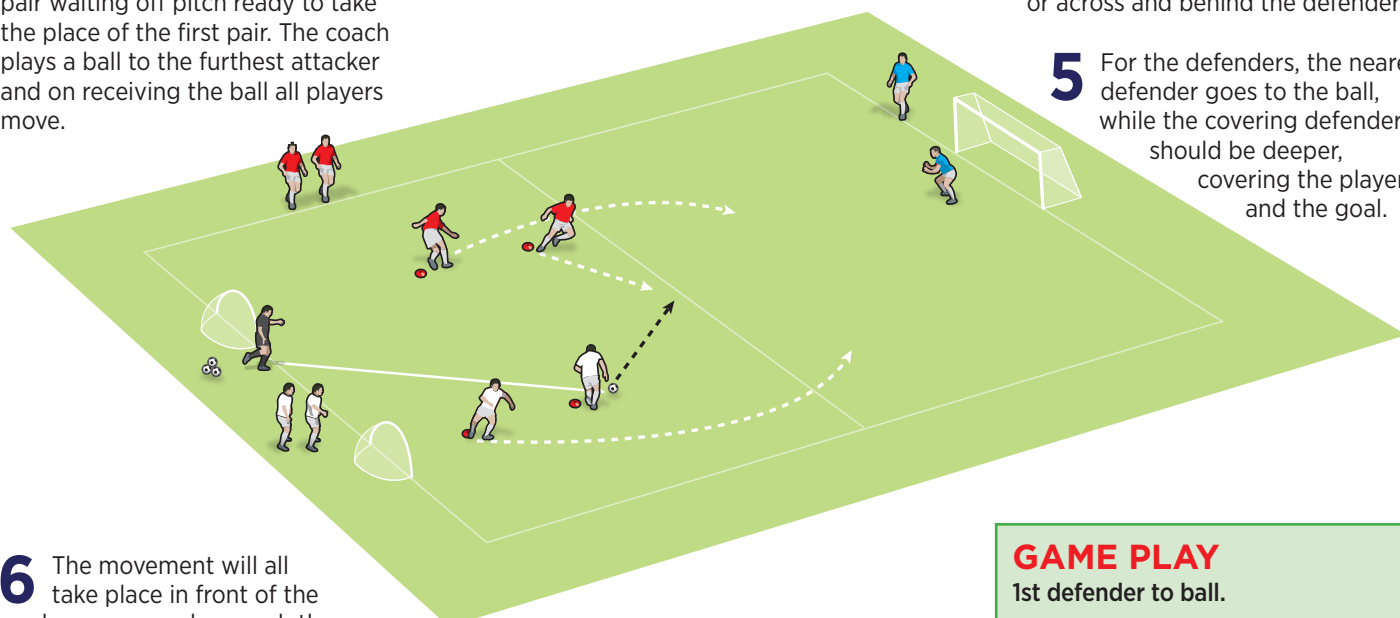
“Press and tackle” • “Block passing routes” • “Cover your team mate” “Look up and pass” • “Try and intercept the pass”

1 Moments of transition from a defensive point of view are a common problem especially 2v2 out of balance in defence. Set up a 20 x 15 yards area with a large goal at one end and two target goals at the other.



2 Split your players into five groups of two players with one group the goalkeepers and two groups are defenders and two are attackers. The defenders should be nearer the centre line than the attackers.

3 The defenders and attackers stand in positions in one half of the pitch with one pair waiting off pitch ready to take the place of the first pair. The coach plays a ball to the furthest attacker and on receiving the ball all players move.



4 The movement of the supporting attacker should be either down the wing as shown here or across and behind the defenders.

5 For the defenders, the nearest defender goes to the ball, while the covering defender should be deeper, covering the player and the goal.

6 The movement will all take place in front of the goal so you can also coach the goalkeeper to move into positions to cover the movement of the ball.

GAME PLAY

1st defender to ball.
2nd defender to cover.
Hard work.

How many players do I need?

We used 10 players in the session, split into five pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

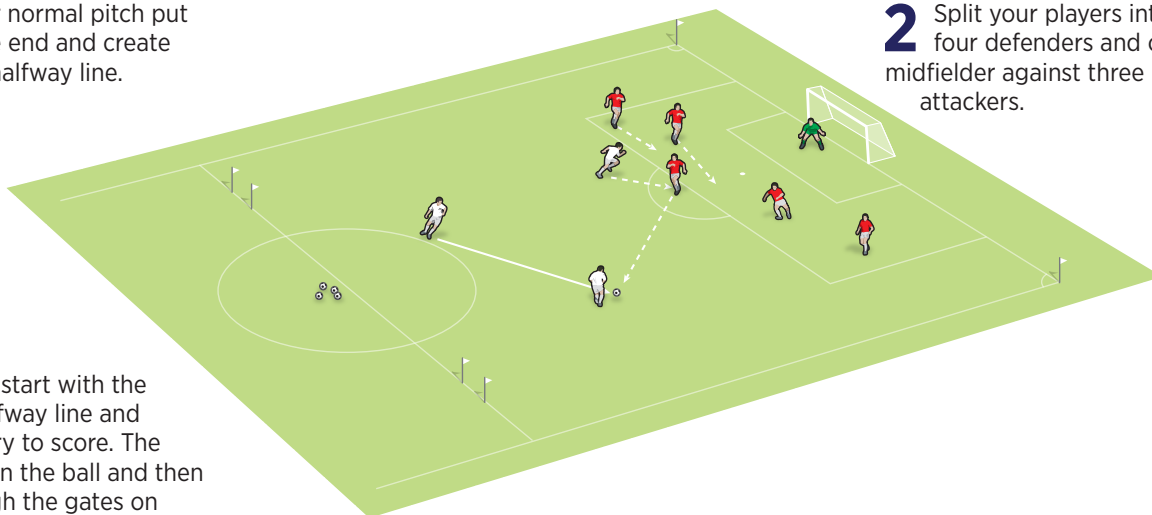
Bring the ball out of defence

ACTIVITY: DEFENDERS LAUNCH ATTACKS

CALL OUT

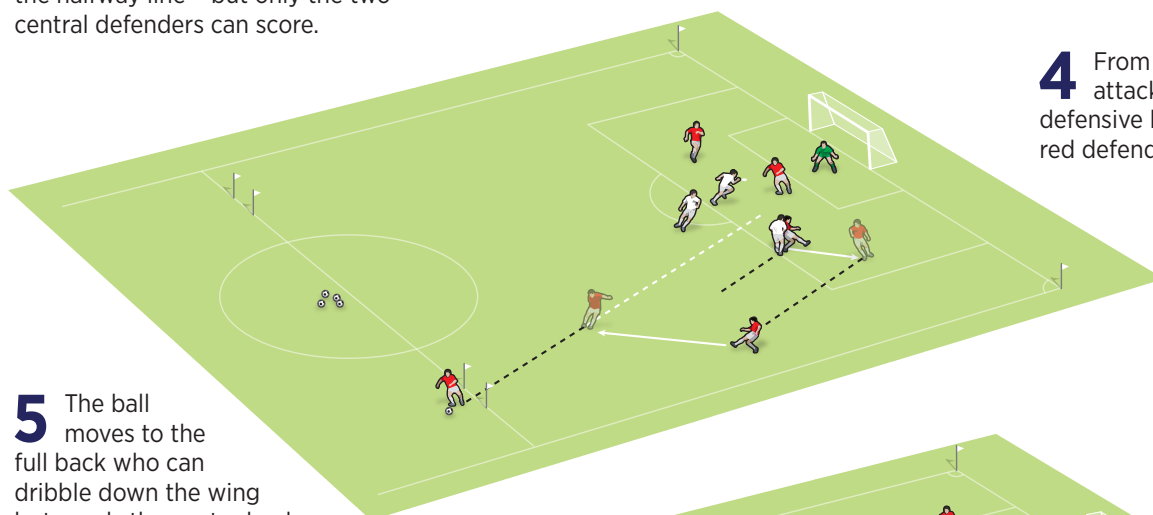
“Accurate passing to feet” • “Make supporting runs” • “Surge into the space” • “Make quick decisions” • “Press and win the ball” • “Hold your run”

1 Using half your normal pitch put the goal at one end and create two gates on the halfway line.



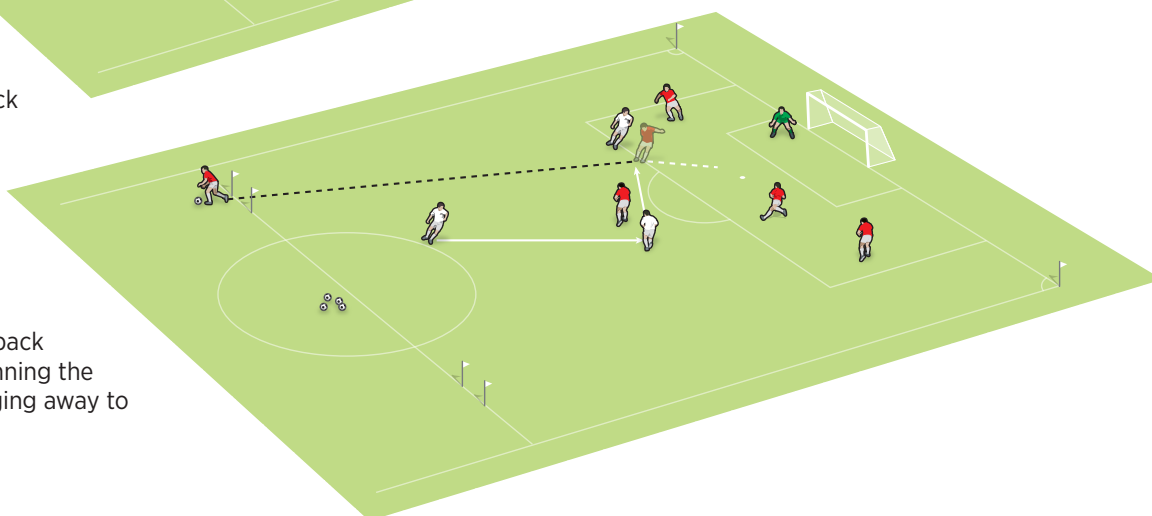
2 Split your players into four defenders and one midfielder against three attackers.

3 The attackers start with the ball at the halfway line and simply link up to try to score. The defenders must win the ball and then try to score through the gates on the halfway line – but only the two central defenders can score.



4 From the initial pass the attacker has dribbled into the defensive line but gets tackled by the red defender.

5 The ball moves to the full back who can dribble down the wing but needs the centre back to support and score.



6 The perfect centre back attacking move, winning the ball at the back and surging away to score a goal.

How many players do I need?

We used nine players – 3v5 plus a goalkeeper.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 7

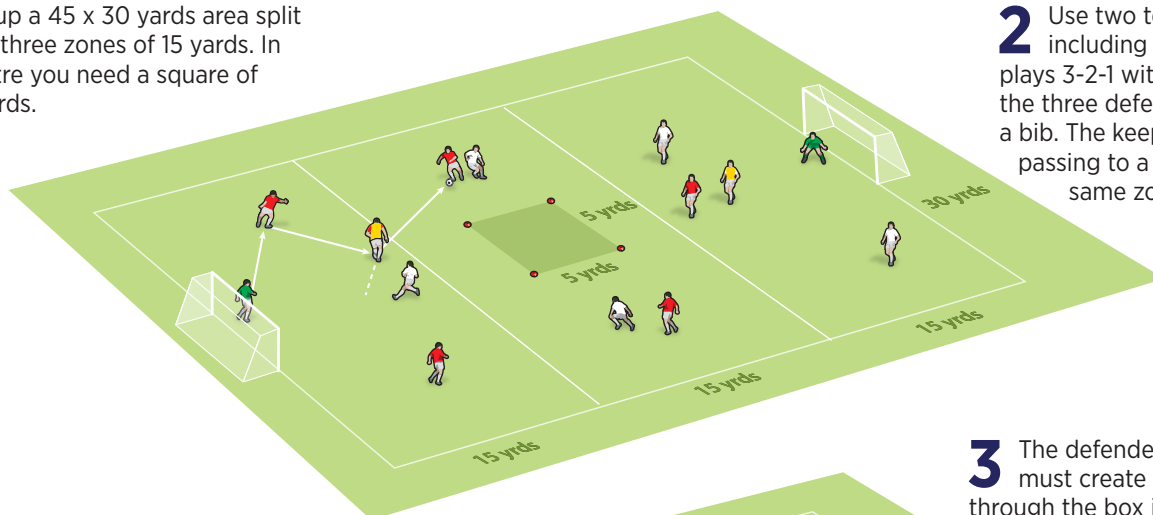
Bring the ball out of defence

GAME: DRIVE INTO MIDFIELD

CALL OUT

“Accurate passing to feet” • “Make supporting runs” • “Surge into the space” • “Make quick decisions” • “Press and win the ball” • “Hold your run”

1 Set up a 45 x 30 yards area split into three zones of 15 yards. In the centre you need a square of 5 x 5 yards.



2 Use two teams of seven, including keepers – each plays 3-2-1 with the central of the three defenders wearing a bib. The keeper starts by passing to a defender in the same zone.

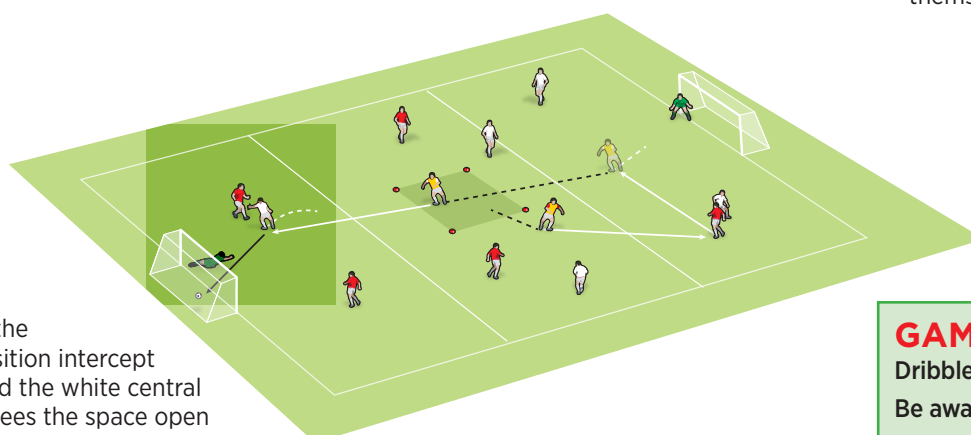
3 The defender in the bib must create space to dribble through the box in the centre before an attack can start.

4 He can dribble straight from the back or pass and support the pass, but he must be the one who goes through the central box, going into it whichever way he chooses.



5 The other players must be alert to where the ball is and open themselves up to receive a pass.

6 Here the opposition intercept the ball and the white central defender sees the space open up in front of him to dribble the ball right up to the attacking zone



GAME PLAY

Dribble using both feet.
Be aware of team mates.
High tempo through the box.

How many players do I need?

We used 14 players in the session, playing 7v7.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	→ (dashed line)	→ (solid line)
	→ (dashed line)	→ (solid line)

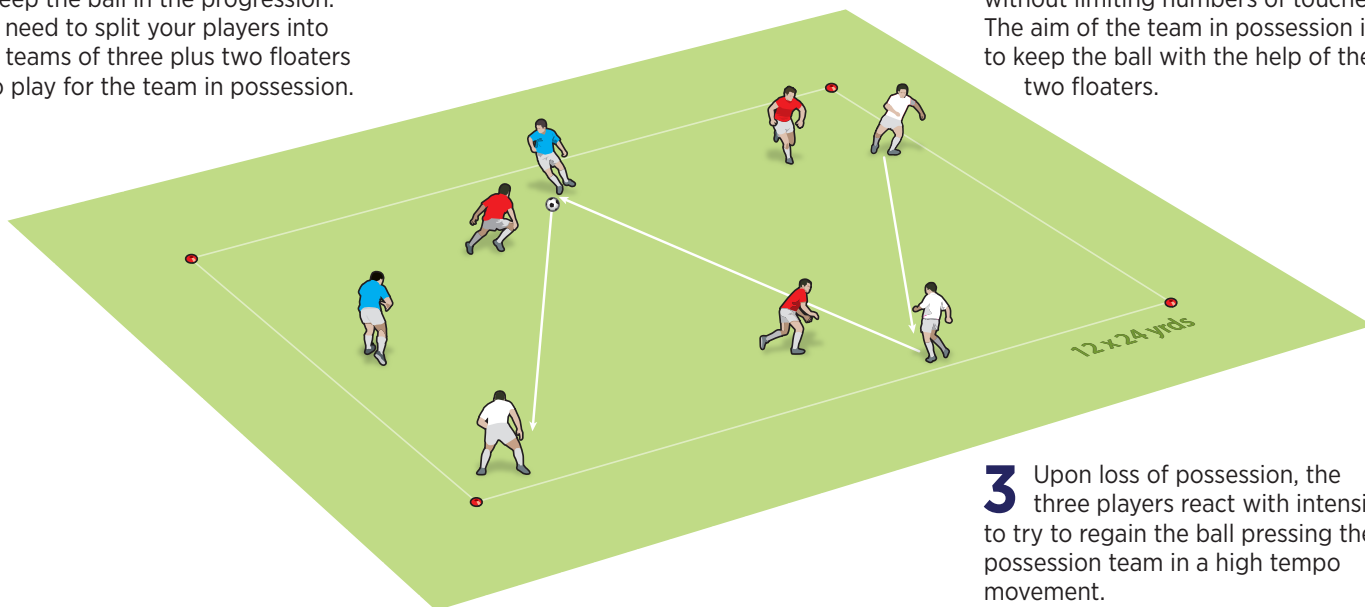
Defending tactics

ACTIVITY: DEFENDERS LAUNCH ATTACKS

CALL OUT

“Accurate passing to feet” • “Make supporting runs” • “Surge into the space” • “Make quick decisions” • “Press and win the ball” • “Hold your run”

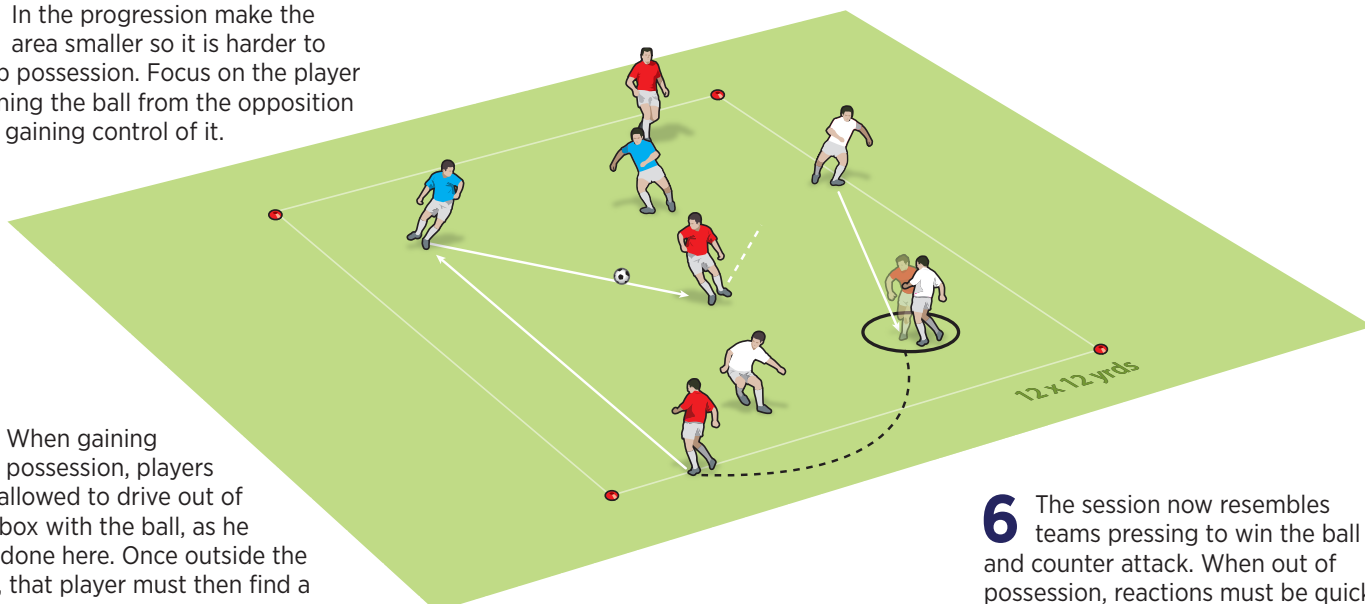
1 Set up a 12 x 24 yards area – cut down to 12 x 12 to make it harder to keep the ball in the progression. You need to split your players into two teams of three plus two floaters who play for the team in possession.



2 Play for 1 minute working then 30 seconds resting – start without limiting numbers of touches. The aim of the team in possession is to keep the ball with the help of the two floaters.

3 Upon loss of possession, the three players react with intensity to try to regain the ball pressing the possession team in a high tempo movement.

4 In the progression make the area smaller so it is harder to keep possession. Focus on the player winning the ball from the opposition and gaining control of it.



5 When gaining possession, players are allowed to drive out of the box with the ball, as he has done here. Once outside the box, that player must then find a pass back into the square and a point is scored.

6 The session now resembles teams pressing to win the ball and counter attack. When out of possession, reactions must be quick, and closing down of opponents needs to be positive and intense.

How many players do I need?

Up to eight players in a series of games.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

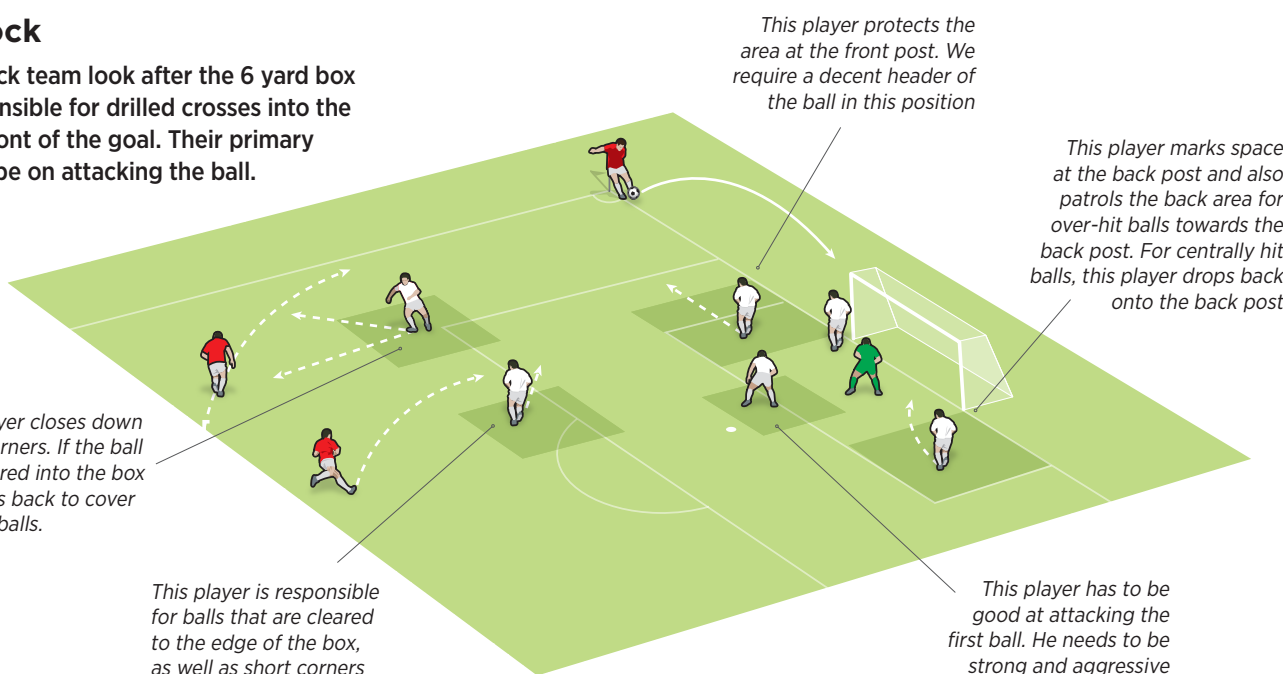
Defending tactics

GAME: HOW TO DEFEND AT CORNERS

CALL OUT “Cover positions” • “Pick up the loose players” • “Stick with your man” • “Watch the runners” • “Close eye on the ball”

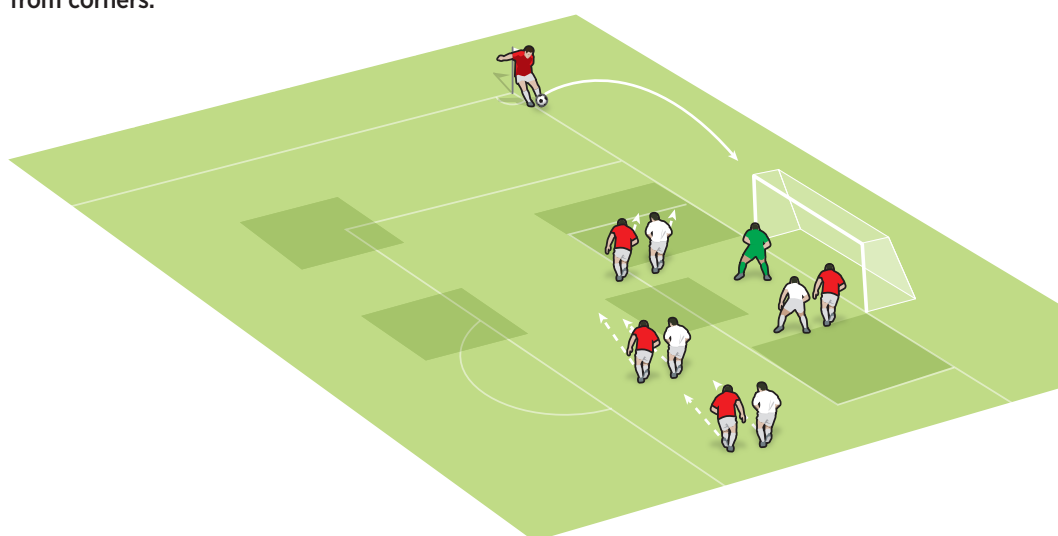
Zonal block

The zonal block team look after the 6 yard box and are responsible for drilled crosses into the key zone in front of the goal. Their primary focus should be on attacking the ball.



Man marking

The man markers approach from the edge of the penalty area at the same time as attackers. Defenders will be skin tight and responsible for the opponents' main attacking threats from corners.



GAME PLAY

- If the attacking team puts a player on the keeper, that man becomes the keeper's responsibility, providing he's comfortable on crosses and can rely on his centre-half marking the zone. If the keeper doesn't want to take responsibility for the player, the man at the back post area moves in to mark him.
- Clearances should be high and wide with applied pressure from designated players at the edge of the box.

How many players do I need?

We used 14 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

Full team pressing

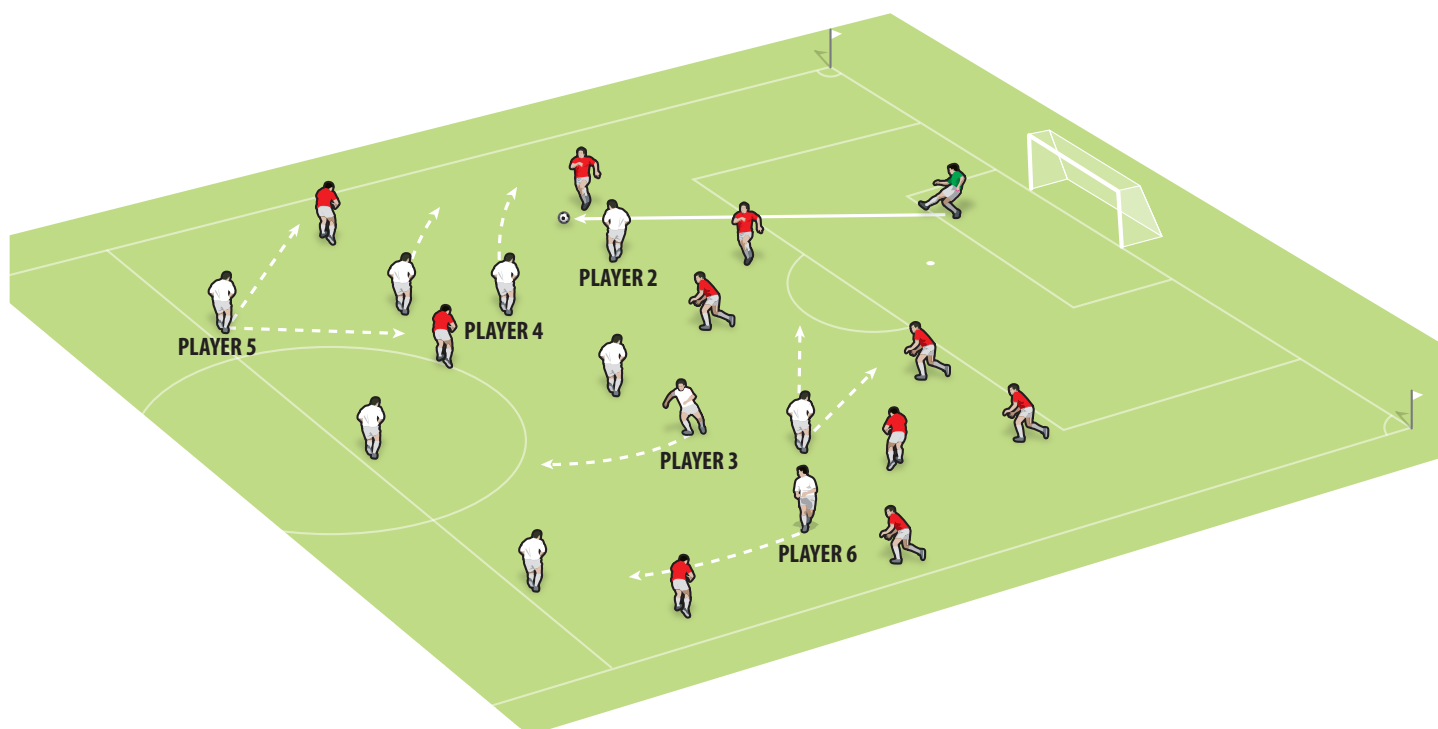
ACTIVITY: PRINCIPLES OF PRESSING

CALL OUT “Work as a team” • “Remember your role” • “Watch your opponents’ movement”

1 Use half your normal pitch – this is a scenario to help coach players in full team movement and should be used in a stop-start style of coaching.

2 The red team plays out from the back with the opposition taking up good pressing positions all over the pitch. Start with a pass from the goalkeeper [Player 1].

3 The closest attacker [2] presses his man and closes down space... his fellow attacker must stay aware of a potential pass infield across the back four. He must be ready to press.



4 The role of the central midfielder [3] is essential – as he recovers he must stay aware of changing game elements around him, being ready to cover a pass infield or a switch.

5 The attacking winger [4] moves into a wider position to cover any run in that area by the right full-back. The yellow full-back [5] covers to press the wide man to block any passes out of defence. The midfielder [6] recovers to a central area in order to cover any switched ball, as well as to aid his team defensively.

How many players do I need?

Use full 11v11 in this activity.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 9

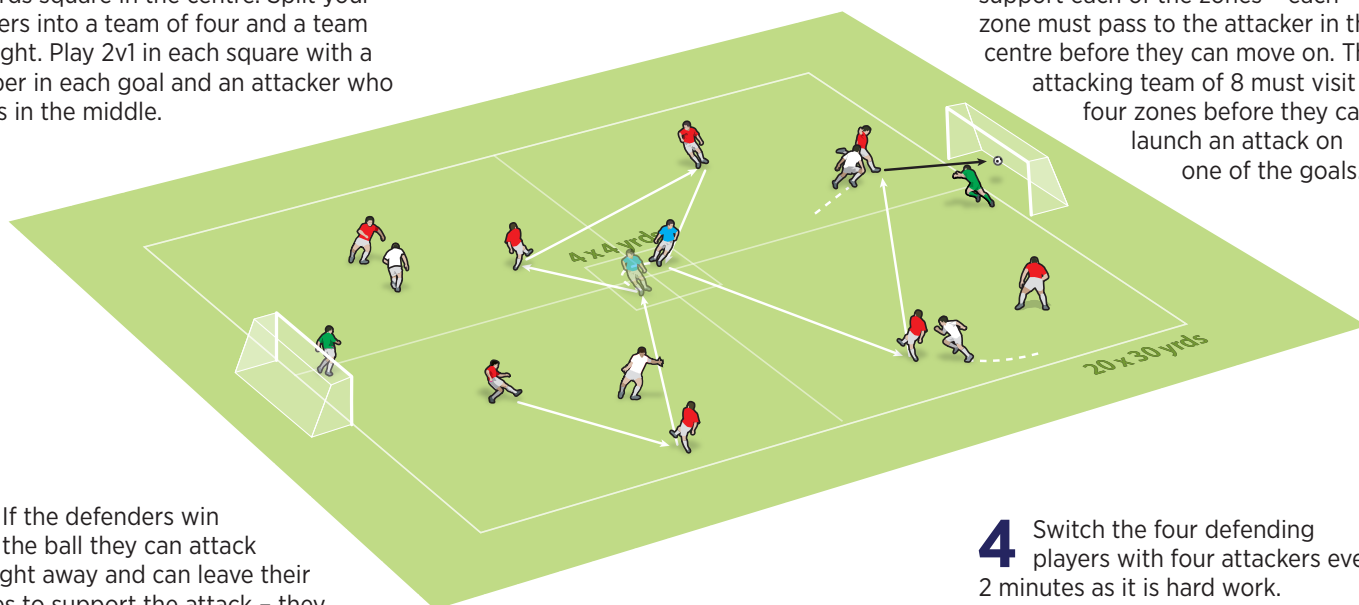
Individual pressing

GAME: PRESSING IN ZONES

CALL OUT "Work as a team" • "Remember your role" • "Watch your opponents' movement"

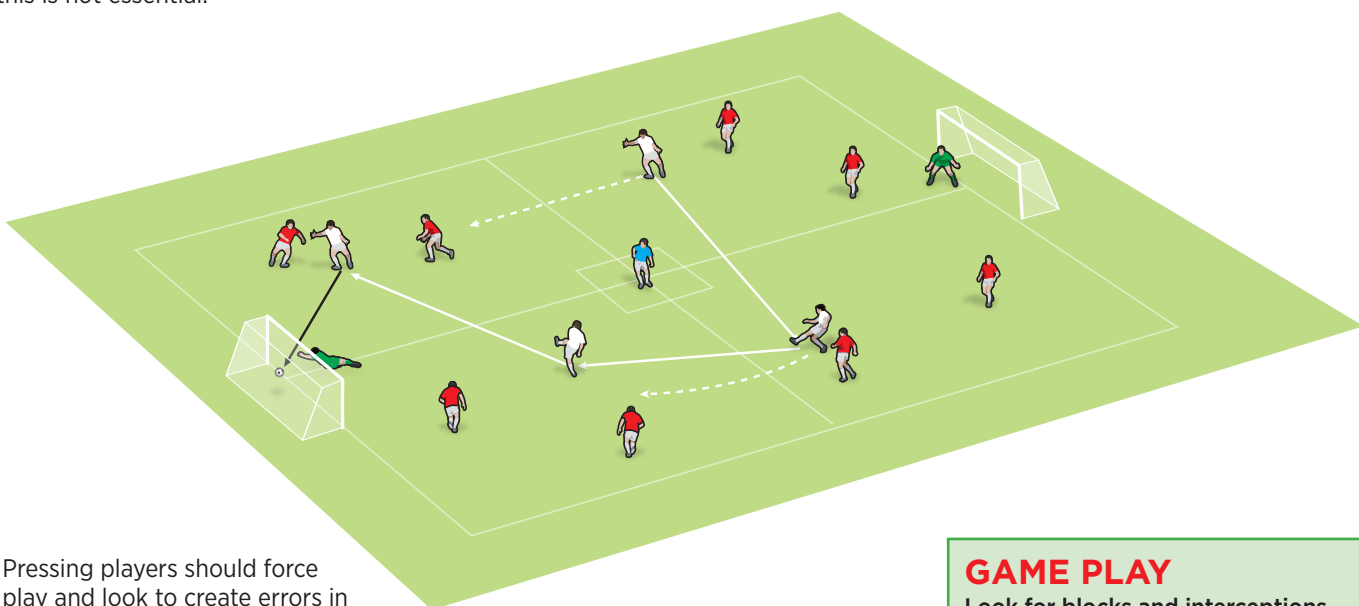
1 Create a 30 x 20 yards area divided into four equal squares plus a 4 x 4 yards square in the centre. Split your players into a team of four and a team of eight. Play 2v1 in each square with a keeper in each goal and an attacker who stays in the middle.

2 The attacker in the centre cannot leave the square and must support each of the zones – each zone must pass to the attacker in the centre before they can move on. The attacking team of 8 must visit all four zones before they can launch an attack on one of the goals.



3 If the defenders win the ball they can attack straight away and can leave their zones to support the attack – they can use the attacker in the centre zone but this is not essential.

4 Switch the four defending players with four attackers every 2 minutes as it is hard work.



5 Pressing players should force play and look to create errors in the attacking play.

GAME PLAY
Look for blocks and interceptions.
Press hard when ball is passed.
Try and control interceptions.

How many players do I need?

This uses 10 players in the game, split into a team of six and a team of four.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 10

Control without the ball

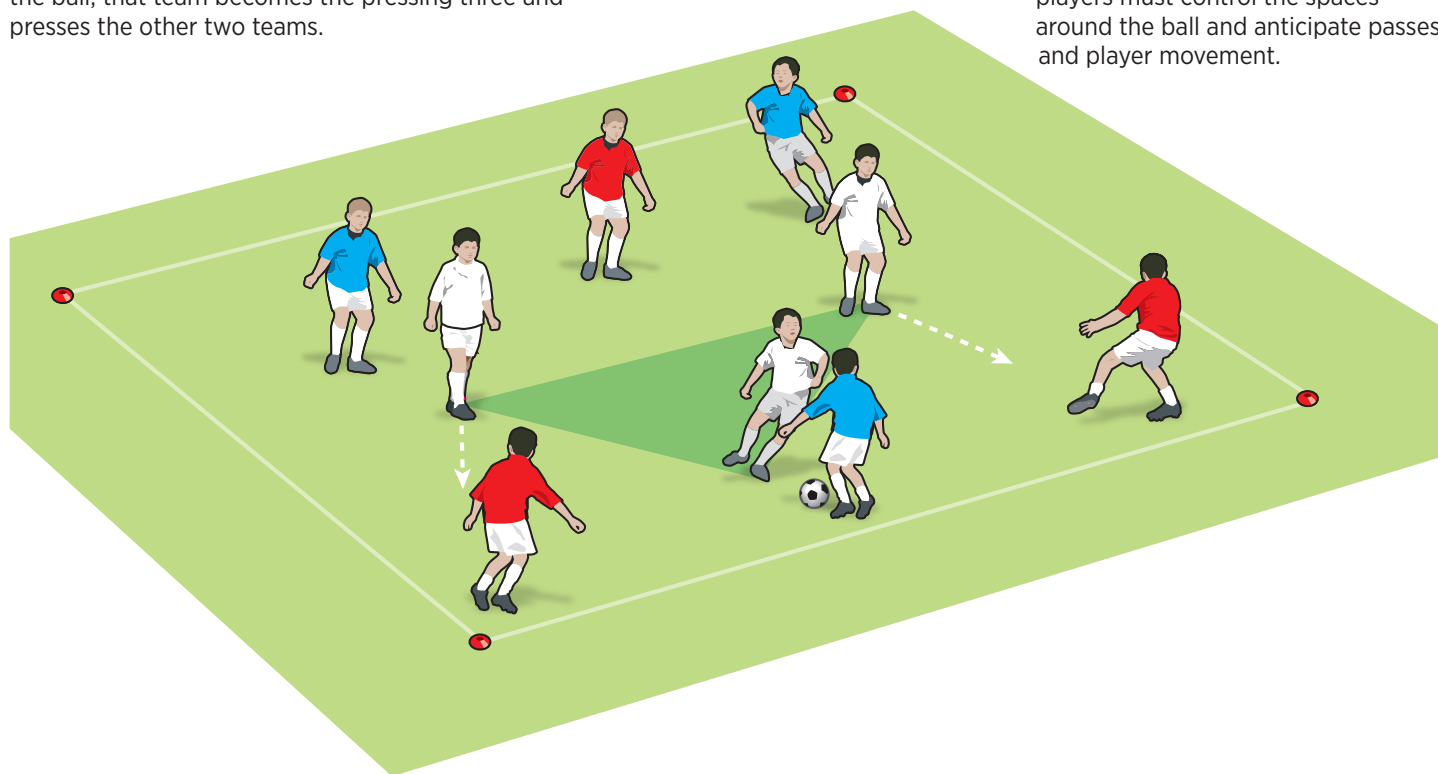
ACTIVITY: PRESSING THE BALL

CALL OUT

“One player goes to the ball” • “Support your team mate” • “Move across to cover space” • “Watch the angle of attack and respond”

1 In a 12 x 12 yards area, use three teams of three playing a 6v3 possession game – one team presses and the other two teams keep possession. There is no limit on touches. When a team loses the ball, that team becomes the pressing three and presses the other two teams.

2 The team of three defends in a triangle with the closest player to the ball applying intense aggressive pressure. The other two players must control the spaces around the ball and anticipate passes and player movement.



3 This is all about ball recovery, creating chaotic moments and controlling these moments by reacting quickly with skill, precision and communication – anticipation of where the next pass will go is a key coaching point.

4 Players must anticipate by blocking lines and keeping in the triangle shape to cause the most damage to the opposition possession game.

5 Expect the players to lose the ball a lot in this game as it is fast and needs good touches of the ball – counter-pressing will happen often.

How many players do I need?

We used nine players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 10

Control without the ball

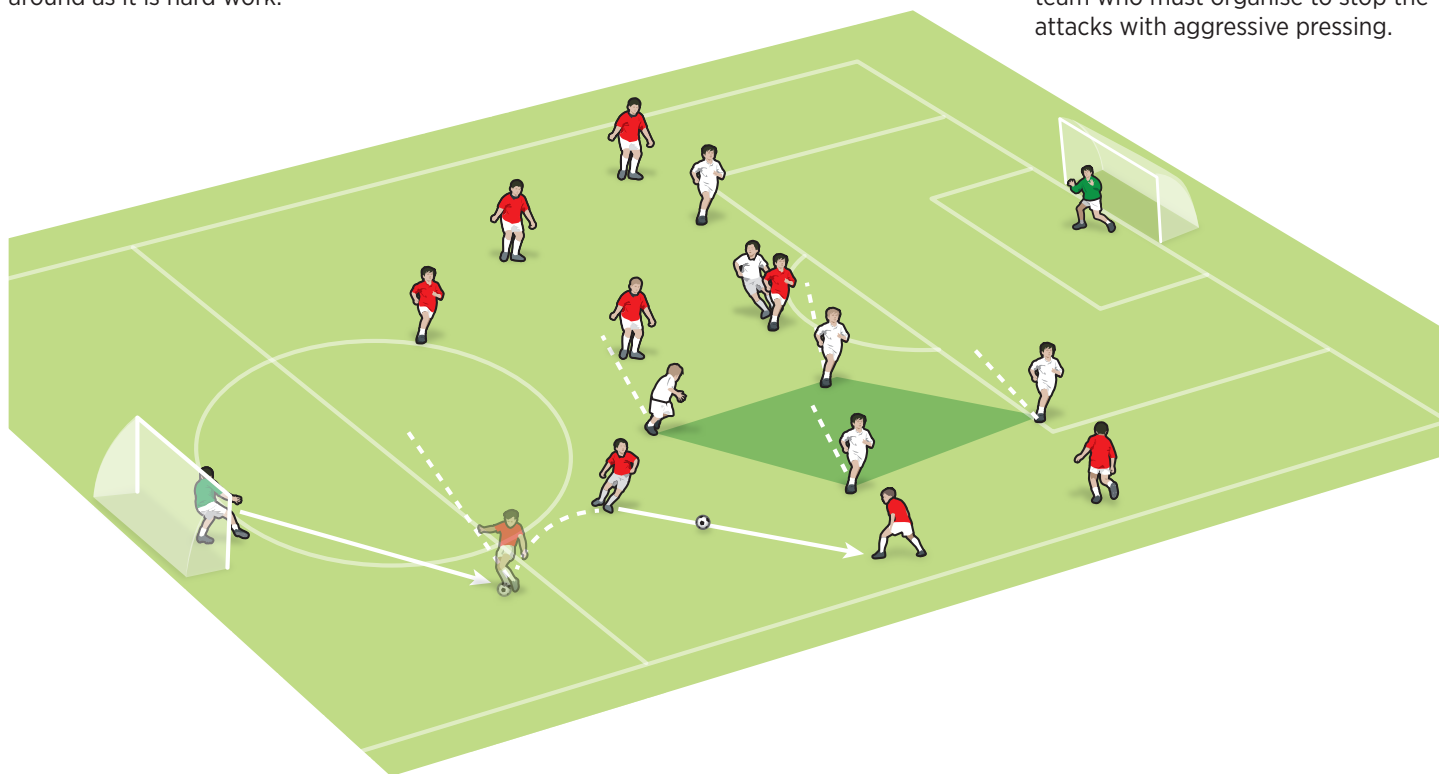
GAME: COUNTER PRESSING

CALL OUT

“One player goes to the ball” • “Support your team mate” • “Move across to cover space” • “Watch the angle of attack and respond”

1 Use three-quarters of an 11-a-side pitch playing a team of eight against a team of six with two goalkeepers – play for 6 minutes then change the pressing team around as it is hard work.

2 The team of eight must organise to attack the goal using the full width of the pitch – you need to concentrate on coaching the pressing team who must organise to stop the attacks with aggressive pressing.



3 Players work in the triangle pressing formation they focused on in the last activity.

4 If the team of six wins the ball they can hit the attackers on the counter.

5 You want to see the pressing team try to unbalance the attack and the attacking team to use the pitch to try and pass quickly past the triangle of pressers.

GAME PLAY

One player goes to the ball.
Players support the press.
Work rate must be high.

How many players do I need?

We used 16 players in this session but it is easy to adapt it to fewer players.

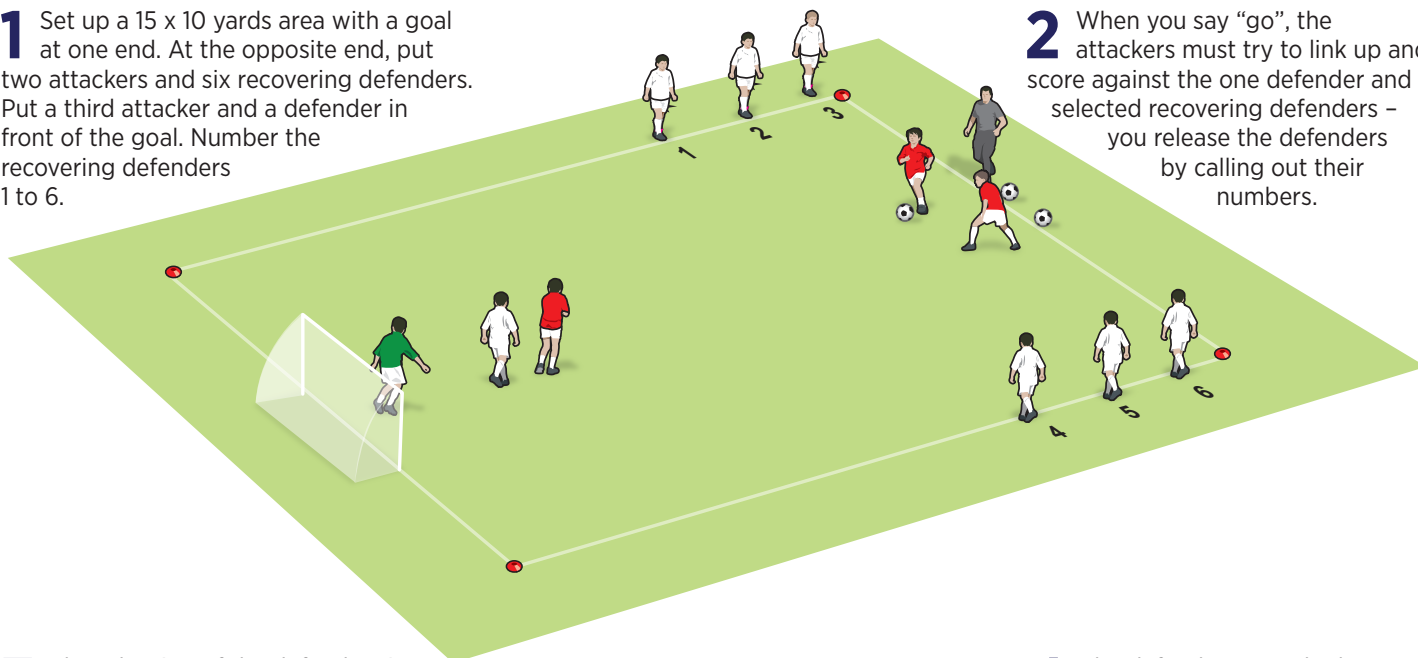
Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	--->	—>

Recover to a defensive position

GAME: BACK IN NUMBERS

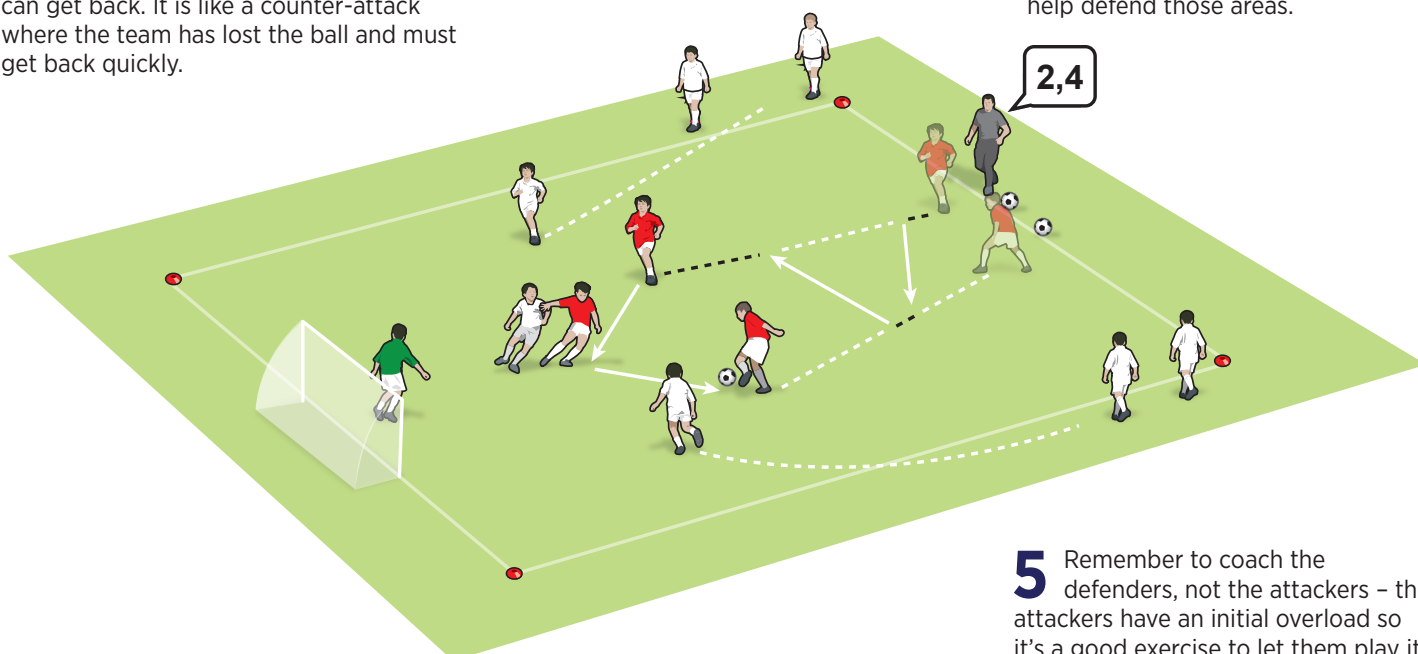
CALL OUT "Try to get back behind the ball" • "Get back to where you should be" • "React quickly" • "Can you delay the play?"

1 Set up a 15 x 10 yards area with a goal at one end. At the opposite end, put two attackers and six recovering defenders. Put a third attacker and a defender in front of the goal. Number the recovering defenders 1 to 6.



2 When you say "go", the attackers must try to link up and score against the one defender and selected recovering defenders - you release the defenders by calling out their numbers.

3 The releasing of the defenders is key to the success of the game - the quicker you release them the sooner they can get back. It is like a counter-attack where the team has lost the ball and must get back quickly.



4 The defenders must look at where the danger is coming from and look to get into positions to help defend those areas.

5 Remember to coach the defenders, not the attackers - the attackers have an initial overload so it's a good exercise to let them play it how they want.

How many players do I need?

We used 11 players in this game.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement

U15-U18 | DEFENDING 11

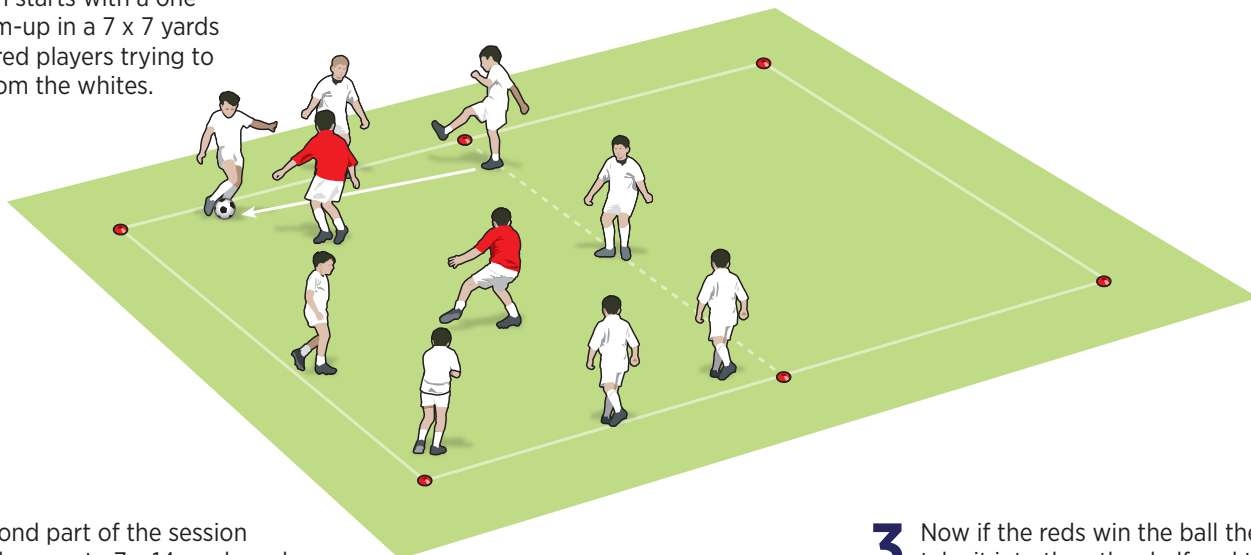
Recover to a defensive position

GAME: BACK IN NUMBERS

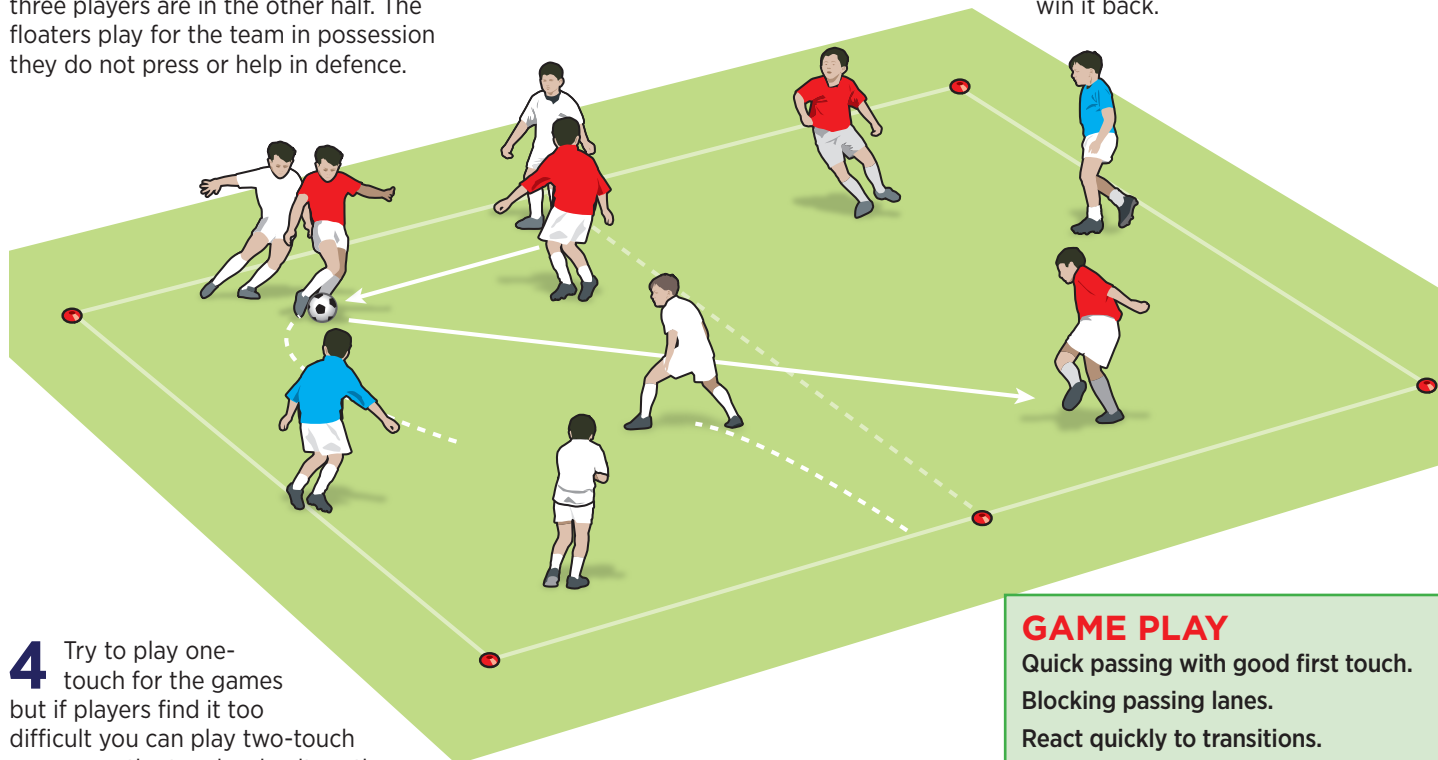
CALL OUT

“Try to get back behind the ball” • “Don’t stop running” • “Know where the ball is” • “Block shots if you can”

1 The session starts with a one-touch warm-up in a 7 x 7 yards area with the red players trying to win the ball from the whites.



2 In the second part of the session increase the area to 7 x 14 yards and players are split so there are two teams of four players plus two floaters. Play a 5v2 overload in one half and the other three players are in the other half. The floaters play for the team in possession they do not press or help in defence.



3 Now if the reds win the ball they take it into the other half and the two reds who have won possession must recover and support quickly. Two white players follow to try and win it back.

4 Try to play one-touch for the games but if players find it too difficult you can play two-touch or remove the touch rule altogether.

GAME PLAY

Quick passing with good first touch.
Blocking passing lanes.
React quickly to transitions.

How many players do I need?

10 players are needed for this game.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

EasiCoach

SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18

SKILLS

U15-U18 | SKILLS 1

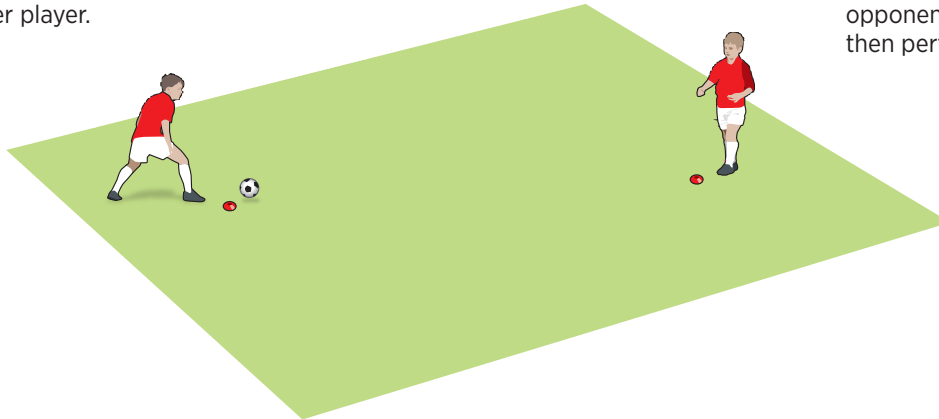
180° Spin

ACTIVITY: SKILLS SESSION

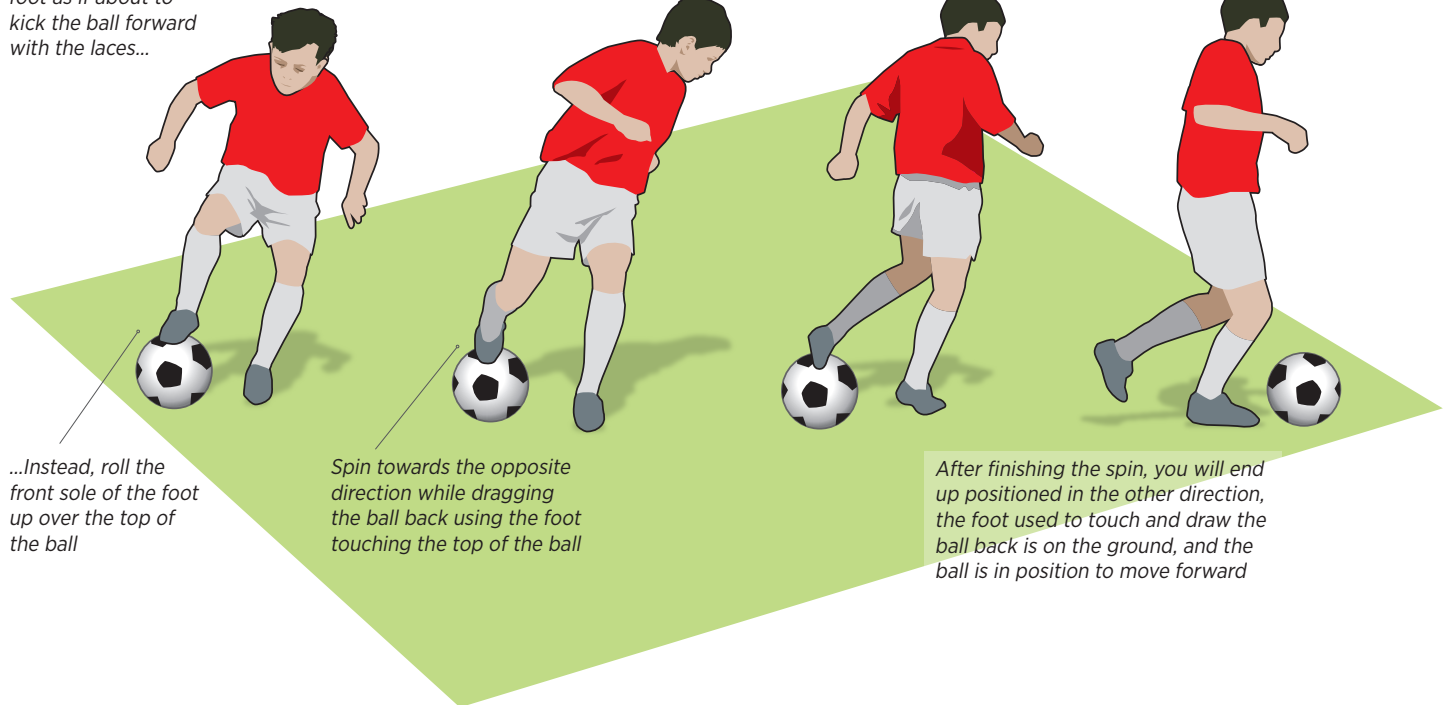
CALL OUT "Fake to kick but roll the ball" • "Spin to face the opposite direction"

1 Set up two cones 10 yards apart. One player has a ball and moves towards the other player.

2 When the players meet, the ball player shields the ball from his opponent to the outside and front, then performs a 180° spin.



Fake with the near foot as if about to kick the ball forward with the laces...



...Instead, roll the front sole of the foot up over the top of the ball

Spin towards the opposite direction while dragging the ball back using the foot touching the top of the ball

After finishing the spin, you will end up positioned in the other direction, the foot used to touch and draw the ball back is on the ground, and the ball is in position to move forward

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	→
	--->	→

U15-U18 | SKILLS 2

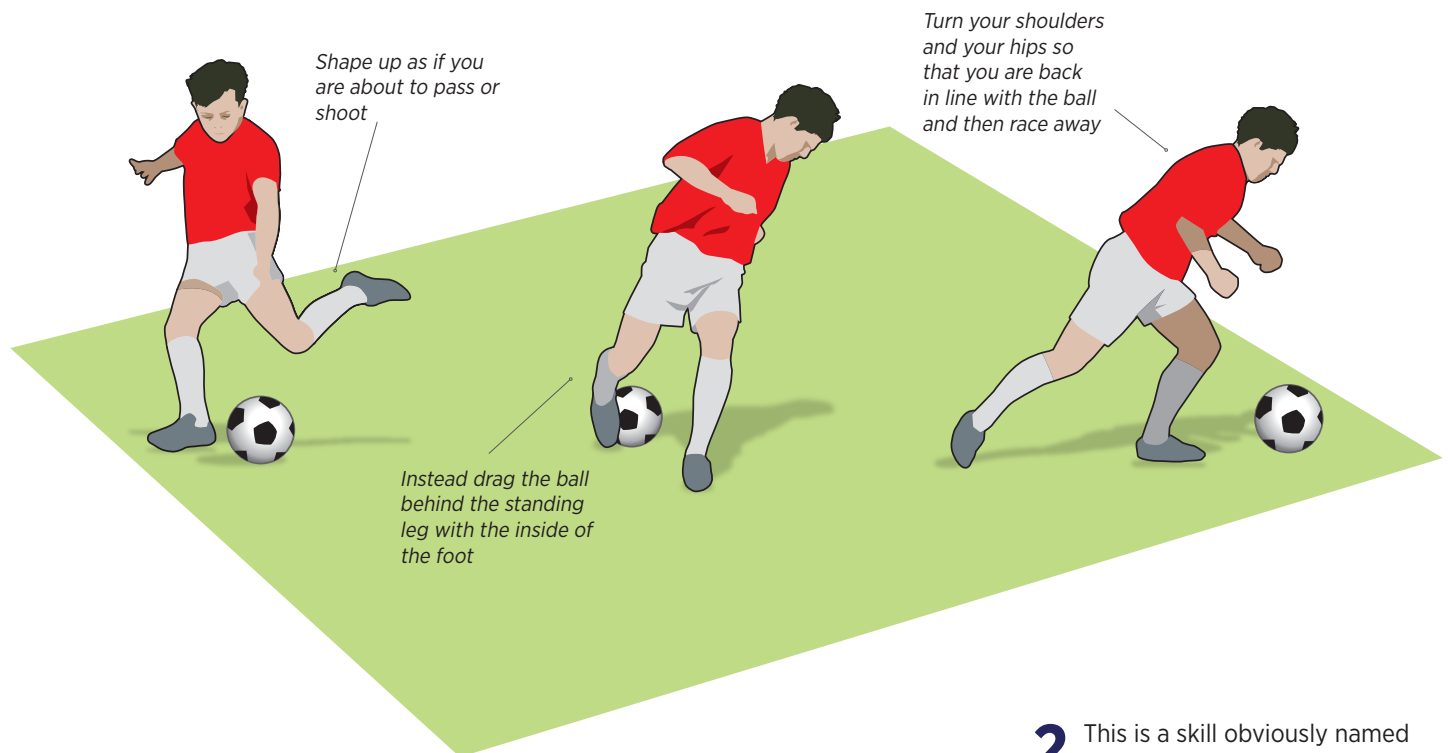
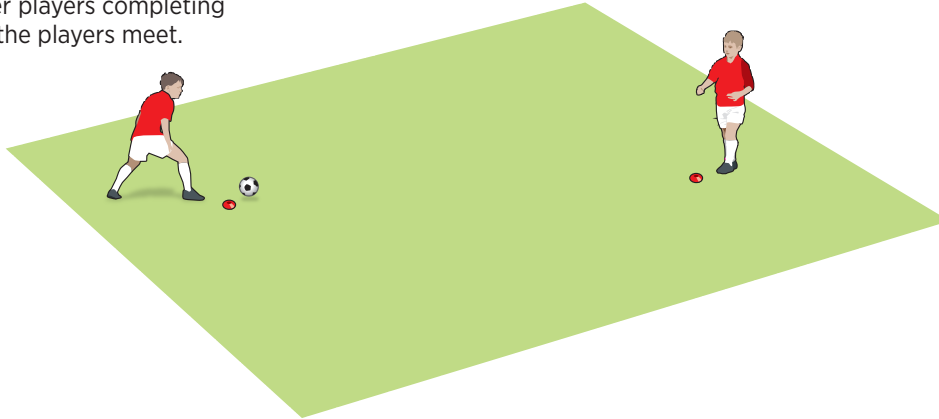
The Cruyff turn

ACTIVITY: SKILLS SESSION

CALL OUT

“Shape up as if you’re going to pass or shoot” • “Drag the ball back behind your leg”
• “Turn and go”

1 Set up two cones 10 yards apart. One player has a ball and moves towards the other players completing a Cruyff Turn as the players meet.



2 This is a skill obviously named after the brilliant Dutchman Johan Cruyff. Get your players to give it plenty of practise, use lively feet and they will soon be the envy of their team mates. This trick is great for losing an opponent.

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	Run with the ball	Shot
	----->	----->

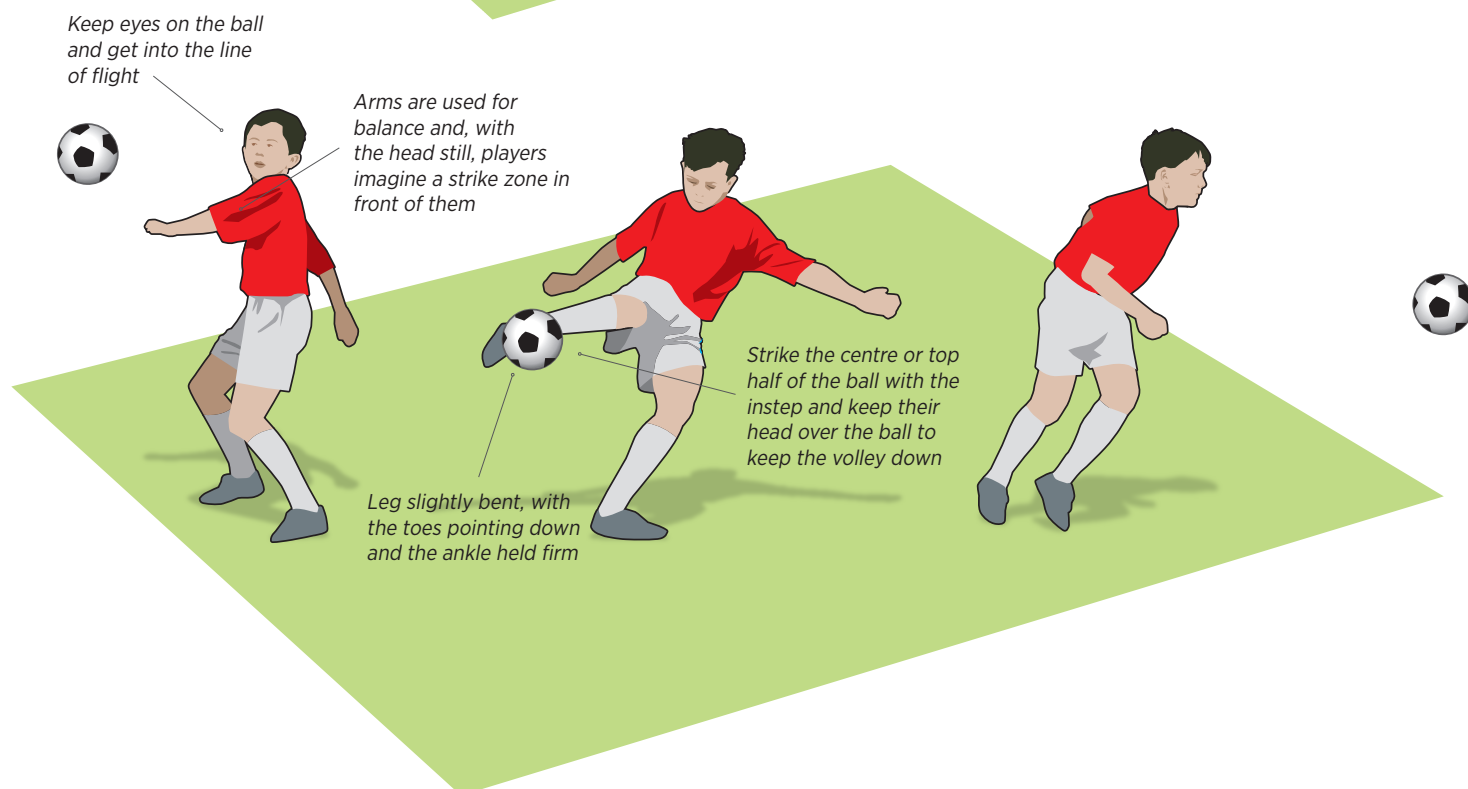
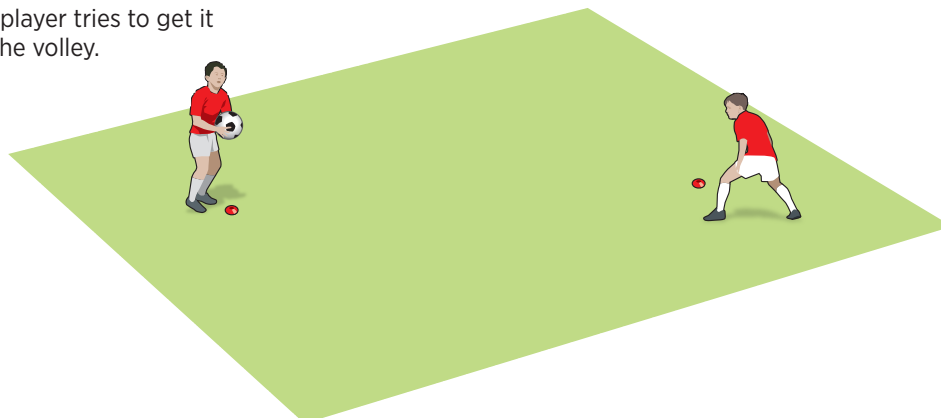
U15-U18 | SKILLS 3

Volley

ACTIVITY: SKILLS SESSION

CALL OUT "Focus on the ball" • "Point your toes down" • "Hold your ankle firm" • Strike the centre of the ball"

1 Set up two cones 10 yards apart. One player serves the ball with a throw and the player tries to get it back to him on the volley.



How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | SKILLS 4

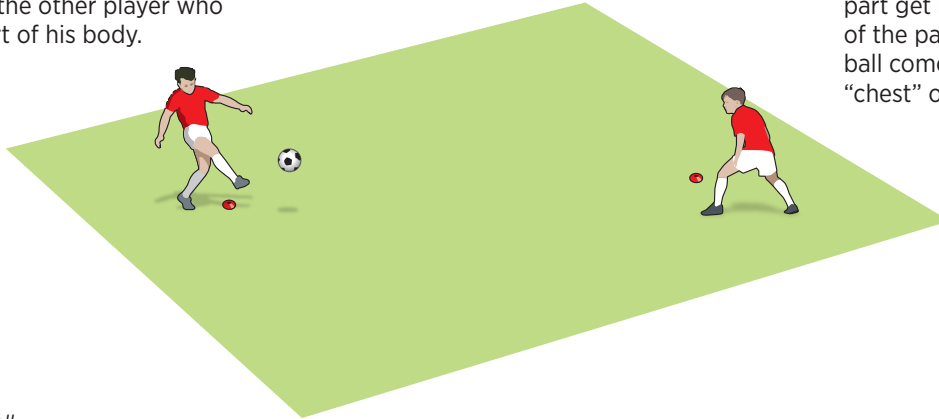
First touch

ACTIVITY: SKILLS SESSION

CALL OUT

“Good first touch important!” • “Get into line with the flight of the ball quickly” • “Relax the contact area to cushion the ball”

1 Set up two cones 10 yards apart. One player has a ball and serves lofted passes to the other player who controls with part of his body.



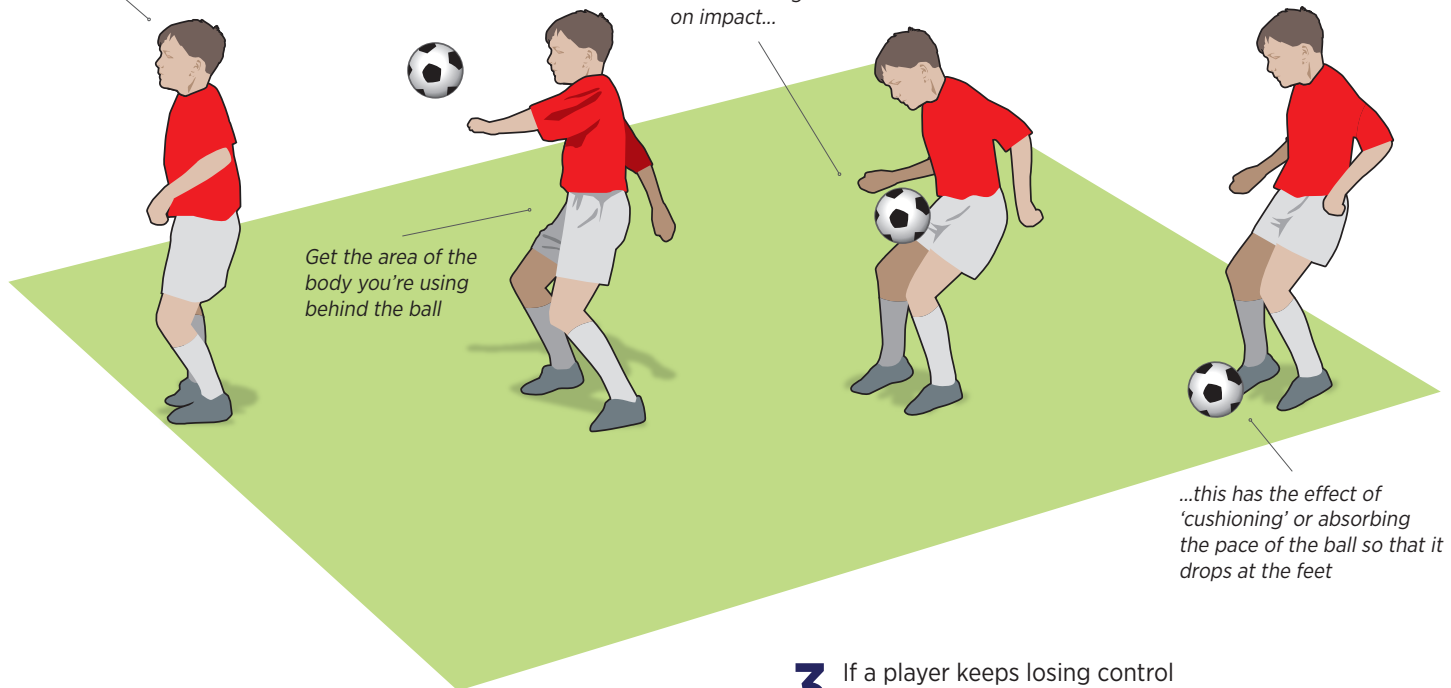
2 If a player is indecisive when choosing the controlling body part get him to shout out the name of the part he intends to use as the ball comes to him, for example “foot”, “chest” or “thigh”.

Keep eyes on the ball and get into the line of flight

Take the ‘sting’ out of the ball by pulling back the controlling surface on impact...

Get the area of the body you’re using behind the ball

...this has the effect of ‘cushioning’ or absorbing the pace of the ball so that it drops at the feet



3 If a player keeps losing control because the ball keeps bouncing off them, encourage them to relax and exaggerate the movement.

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	Run with the ball	Shot
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | SKILLS 5

Jockeying

ACTIVITY: SKILLS SESSION

CALL OUT

“Keep your eye on the ball” • “Get side on to the ball” • “Get in a good position to block the route”

- 1 Set up two cones 10 yards apart. One player has a ball and moves towards the other player.



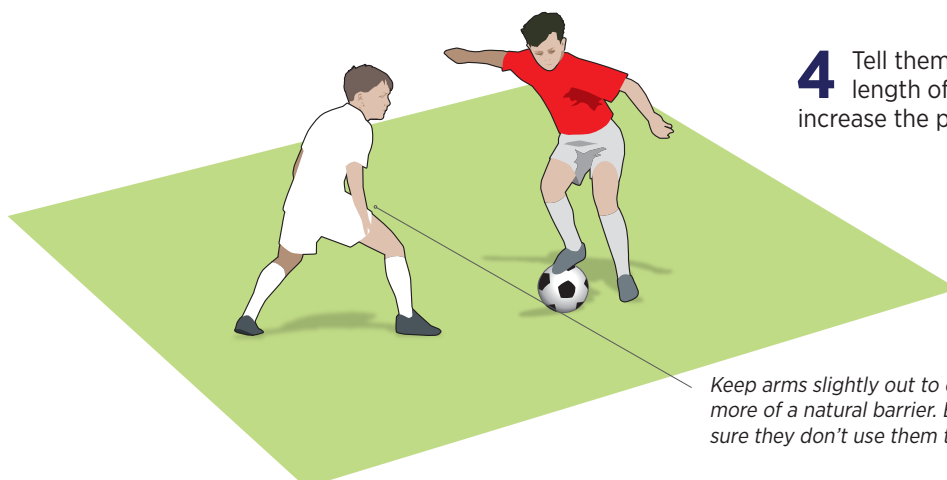
Adopt a side-on position with shoulders opened out like a barrier. This keeps the opposition in front where they can be seen

- 2 You don't always need to tackle an opponent to dispossess them or slow their progress. Jockeying denies your opponent time and space, and it's a good tactic to allow your team mates to get back in position.

Keep knees slightly bent, with weight on the front of the feet, which makes it easier to change direction while they move backwards



- 3 Make sure your players stay goal-side, and also in front of your opponent. They do this by turning off their back foot as they move backwards.



- 4 Tell them to stay within an arm's length of their opponent to increase the pressure on them.

Keep arms slightly out to create more of a natural barrier. But make sure they don't use them to push!

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	→
	--->	Shot
	--->	→

U15-U18 | SKILLS 6

The stop turn

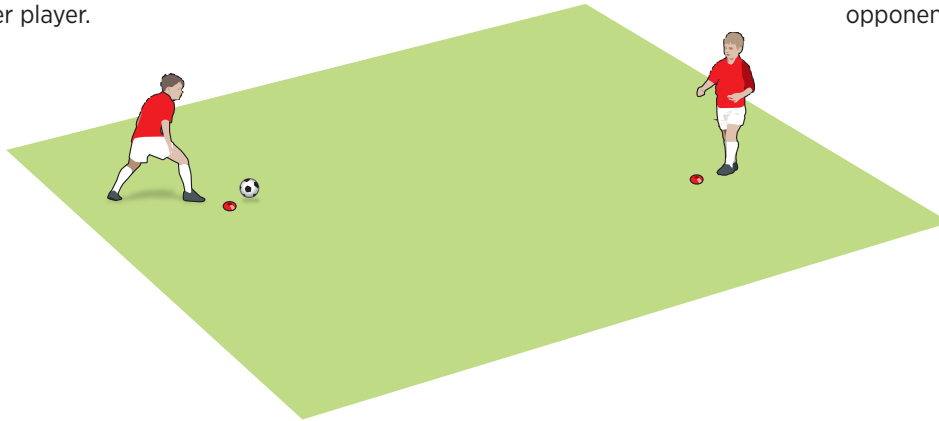
ACTIVITY: SKILLS SESSION

CALL OUT

“Use the ball of your foot to stop the ball” • “Turn quickly” • “Get the ball out from under your feet”

1 Set up two cones 10 yards apart. One player has a ball and moves towards the other player.

2 When the players meet, the ball player shields the ball from his opponent and performs a stop turn.

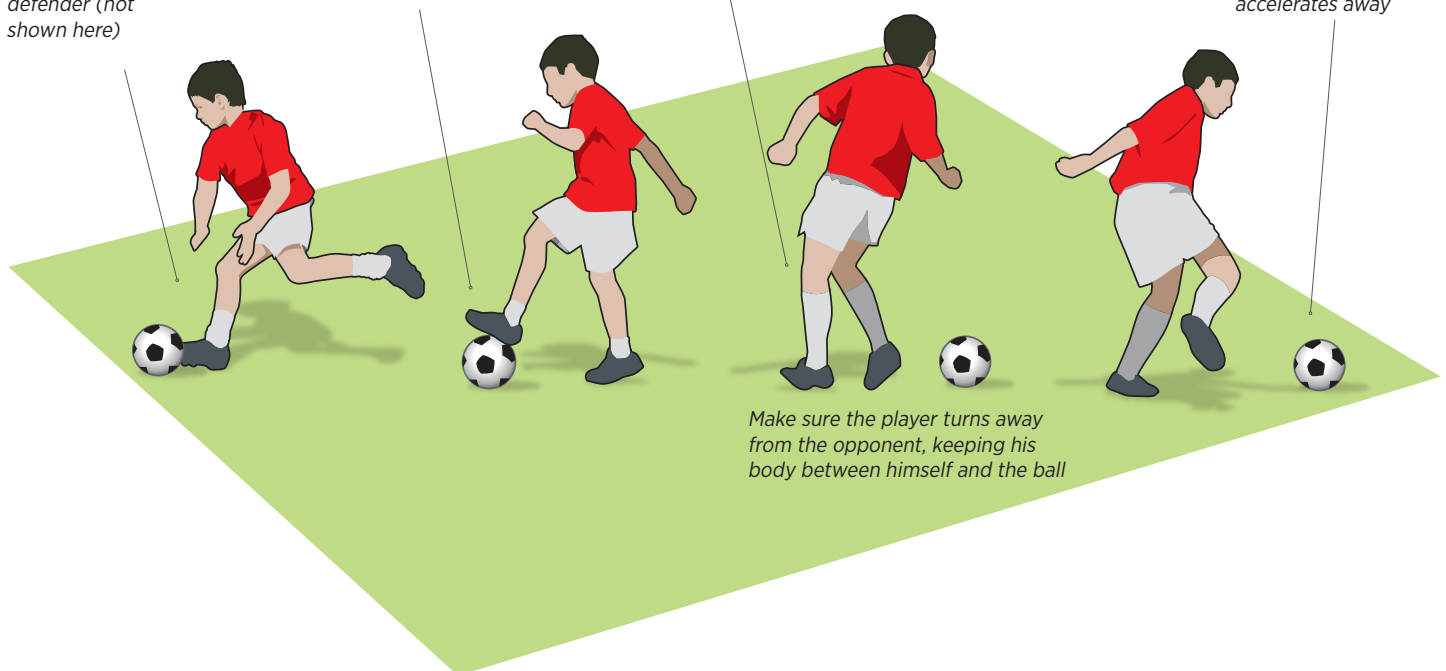


The player dribbles the ball at speed under pressure from a defender (not shown here)

He stops suddenly, halting the ball with his foot

The player pivots on his standing leg to move off with the ball in the opposite direction.

Pushing the ball out from under his feet he pushes off on his standing leg and accelerates away



Make sure the player turns away from the opponent, keeping his body between himself and the ball

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

Making a slide tackle and a block tackle

ACTIVITY: TACKLING SKILLS

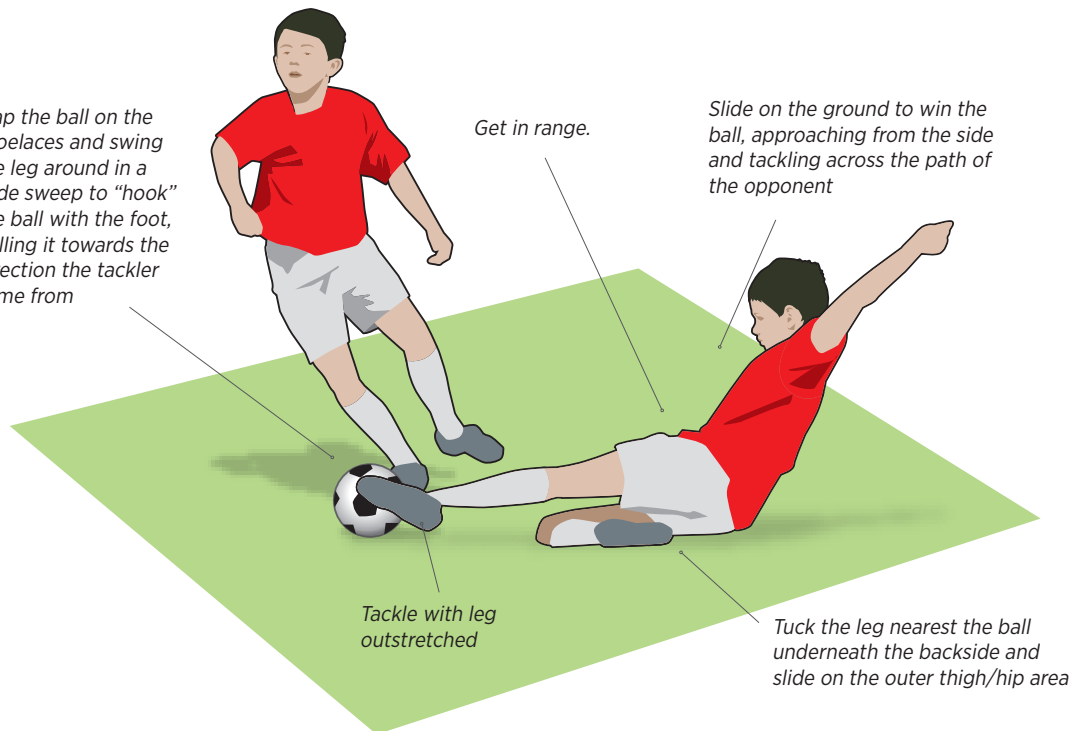
CALL OUT "Head over the ball" • "Bend your knees" • "Lock your ankle"

The slide tackle

1 Set players up in pairs with a ball between them and two cones that are 10 yards apart. One player passes to the other then tries a tackle to win the ball back.

2 The tackler must get on his feet quickly whether the tackle is successful or not.

Trap the ball on the shoelaces and swing the leg around in a wide sweep to "hook" the ball with the foot, pulling it towards the direction the tackler came from

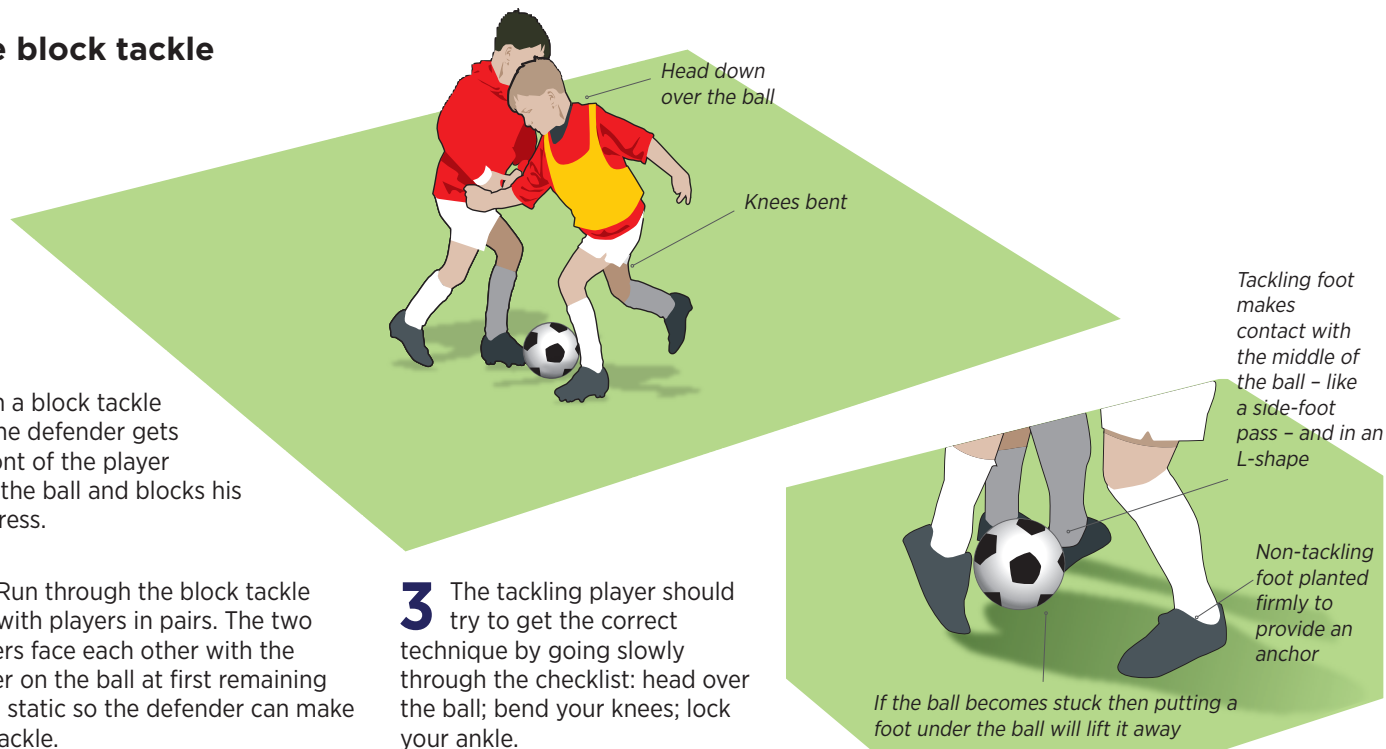


The block tackle

1 In a block tackle the defender gets in front of the player with the ball and blocks his progress.

2 Run through the block tackle with players in pairs. The two players face each other with the player on the ball at first remaining fairly static so the defender can make the tackle.

3 The tackling player should try to get the correct technique by going slowly through the checklist: head over the ball; bend your knees; lock your ankle.



How many players do I need?

Players practise in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	Run with the ball	Shot
	----->	----->

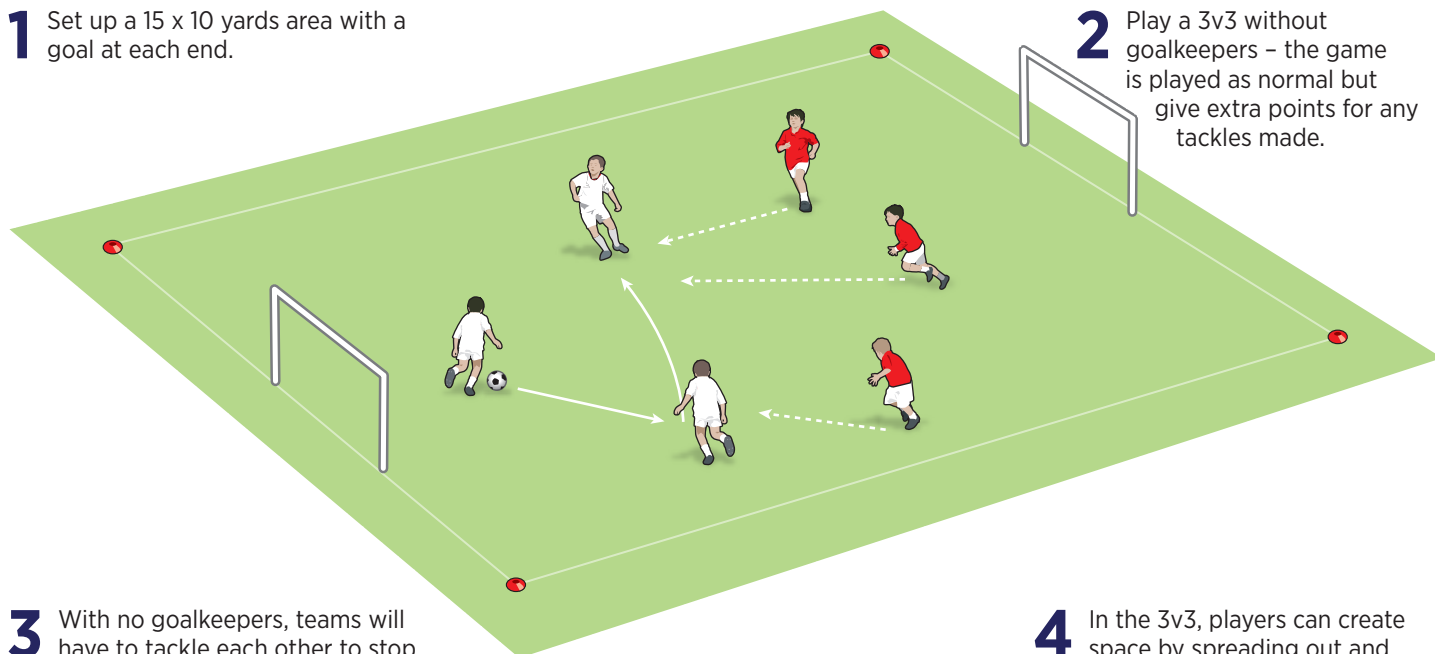
U15-U18 | SKILLS 7

Making a slide tackle and a block tackle

GAME: TACKLE IN A 3V3

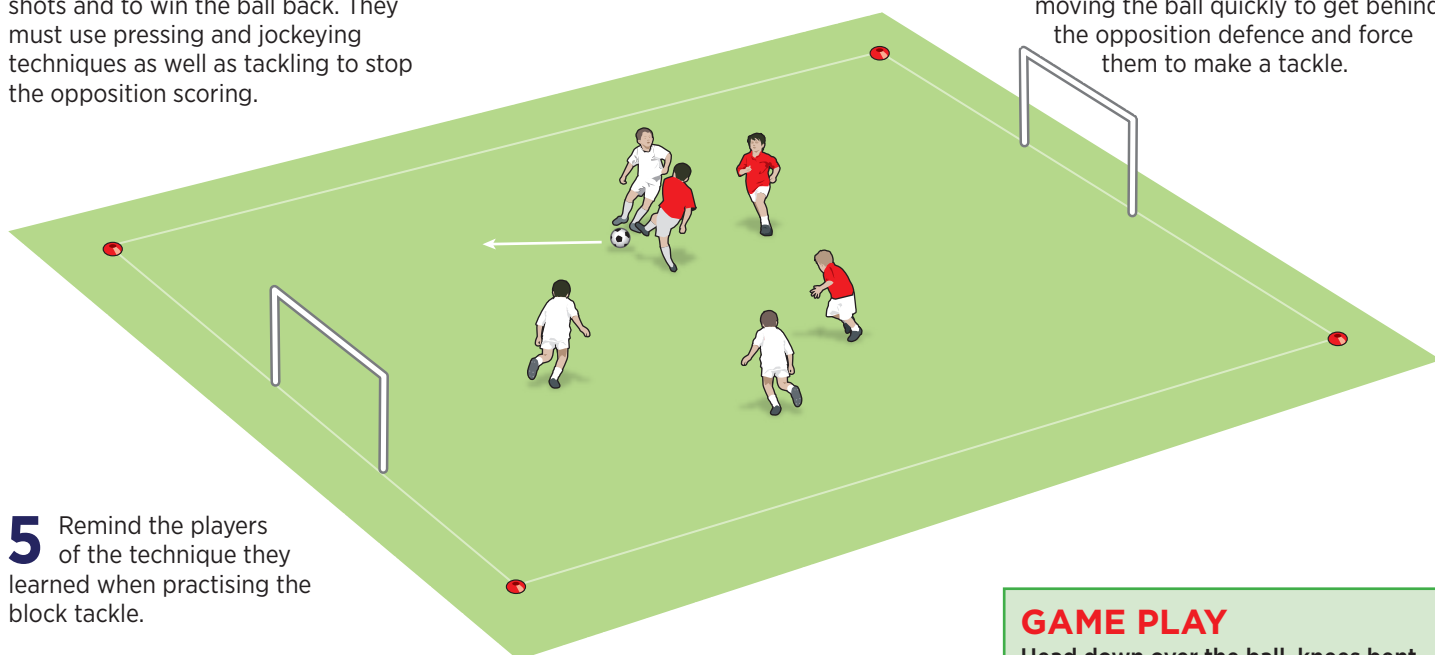
CALL OUT "Head over the ball" • "Bend your knees" • "Lock your ankle"

1 Set up a 15 x 10 yards area with a goal at each end.



2 Play a 3v3 without goalkeepers – the game is played as normal but give extra points for any tackles made.

3 With no goalkeepers, teams will have to tackle each other to stop shots and to win the ball back. They must use pressing and jockeying techniques as well as tackling to stop the opposition scoring.



4 In the 3v3, players can create space by spreading out and moving the ball quickly to get behind the opposition defence and force them to make a tackle.

5 Remind the players of the technique they learned when practising the block tackle.

GAME PLAY

Head down over the ball, knees bent.
Firm standing leg.
The knee and ankle locked so the leg is strong.

How many players do I need?

This game uses six players.

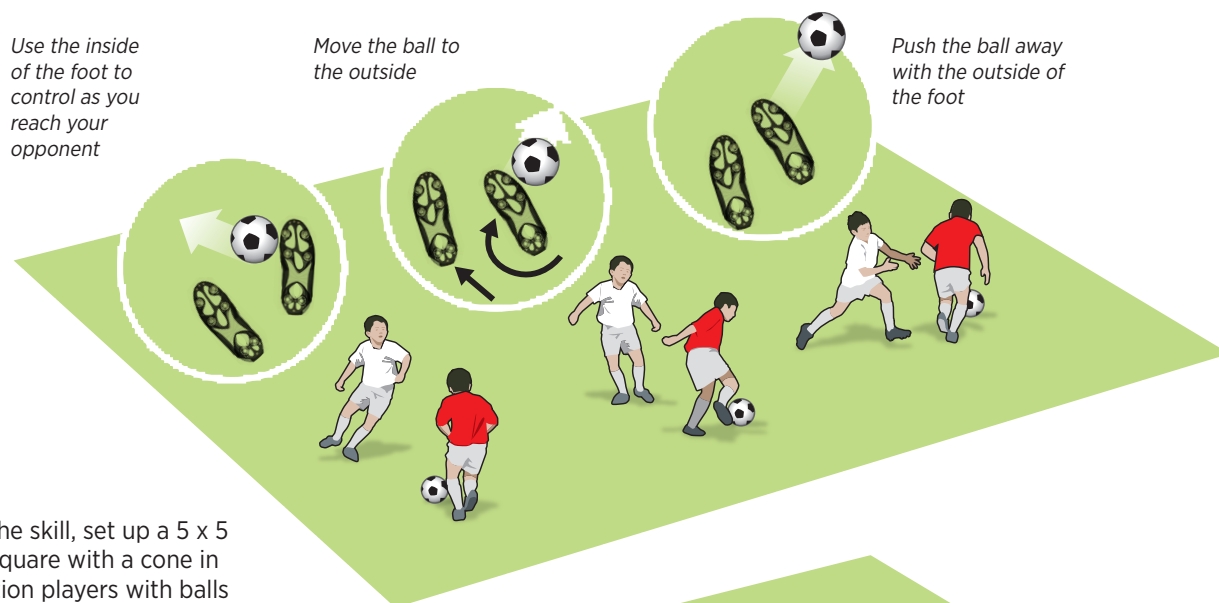
Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

The feint

ACTIVITY: SKILLS SESSION

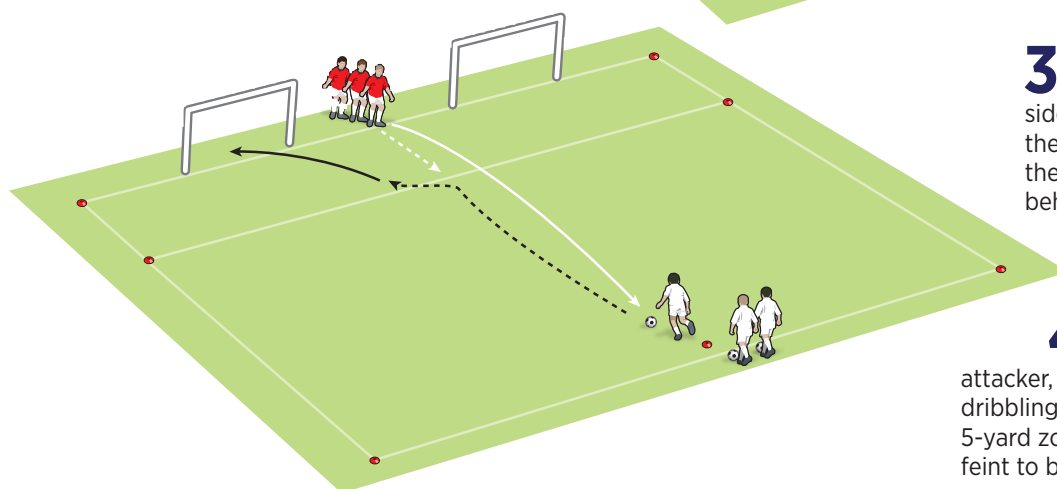
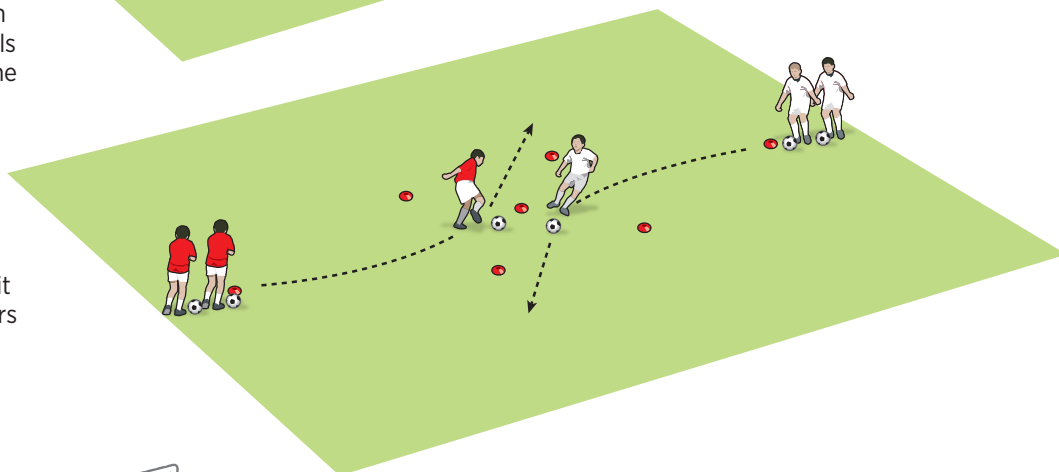
CALL OUT

“Lean one way and go the other” • “Use the outside of the foot to push the ball away”
• “One touch to get out the square” • “Choose the goal you are aiming for early”



1 To practise the skill, set up a 5 x 5 yards cone square with a cone in the centre. Position players with balls in two lines, 8 yards either side of the square.

2 Players run towards each other into the cone square and feint one way (here it's left) when they hit the centre cone. Practise with players feinting both left and right.



3 Set up a 45 x 20 yards area with two goals on one of the long sides and a 5-yard zone in front of the goals. Defenders line up between the goals and attackers line up behind a cone on the opposite side.

4 The ball is played from a defender to an opposing attacker, who runs towards the defender dribbling the ball. The defender stays in the 5-yard zone and the attacker must play a feint to beat him, then score in either goal.

How many players do I need?

Players practise in pairs. We used three pairs for the two games, but you can change the numbers to suit.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

EasiCoach

SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18

RESTARTS

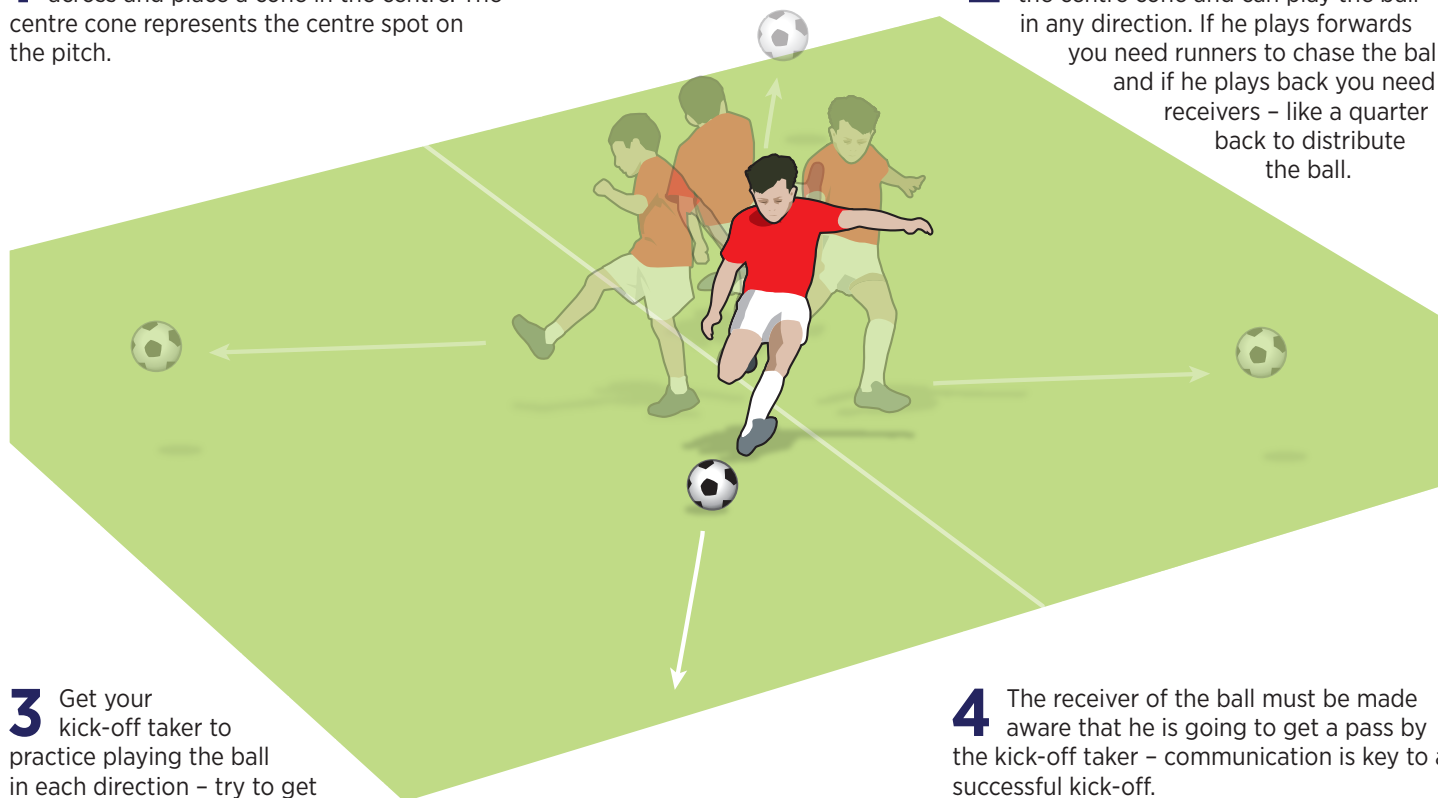
Kick-off

ACTIVITY: THE LAW

CALL OUT "Pass the ball to a team mate" • "Support the player with the ball"

1 Mark out a circle measuring 10 yards across and place a cone in the centre. The centre cone represents the centre spot on the pitch.

2 The player taking kick-off does so from the centre cone and can play the ball in any direction. If he plays forwards you need runners to chase the ball and if he plays back you need receivers – like a quarter back to distribute the ball.



3 Get your kick-off taker to practice playing the ball in each direction – try to get him to disguise where he is going to kick the ball. A lazy pass back can cause problems for the team.

4 The receiver of the ball must be made aware that he is going to get a pass by the kick-off taker – communication is key to a successful kick-off.

5 Remember: The ball can go in any direction from kick-off, it doesn't have to go forward.

LAWS OF SOCCER

Start and restart of play

A kick-off starts both halves of a match, both halves of extra time and restarts play after a goal has been scored.

All players must be in their own half.

The opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 10 yards from the ball until it is in play.

The ball must be stationary on the centre mark.

The referee gives a signal.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves.

A goal may be scored directly against the opponents from the kick-off.

How many players do I need?

You need a main kick-off taker.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | RESTARTS 2

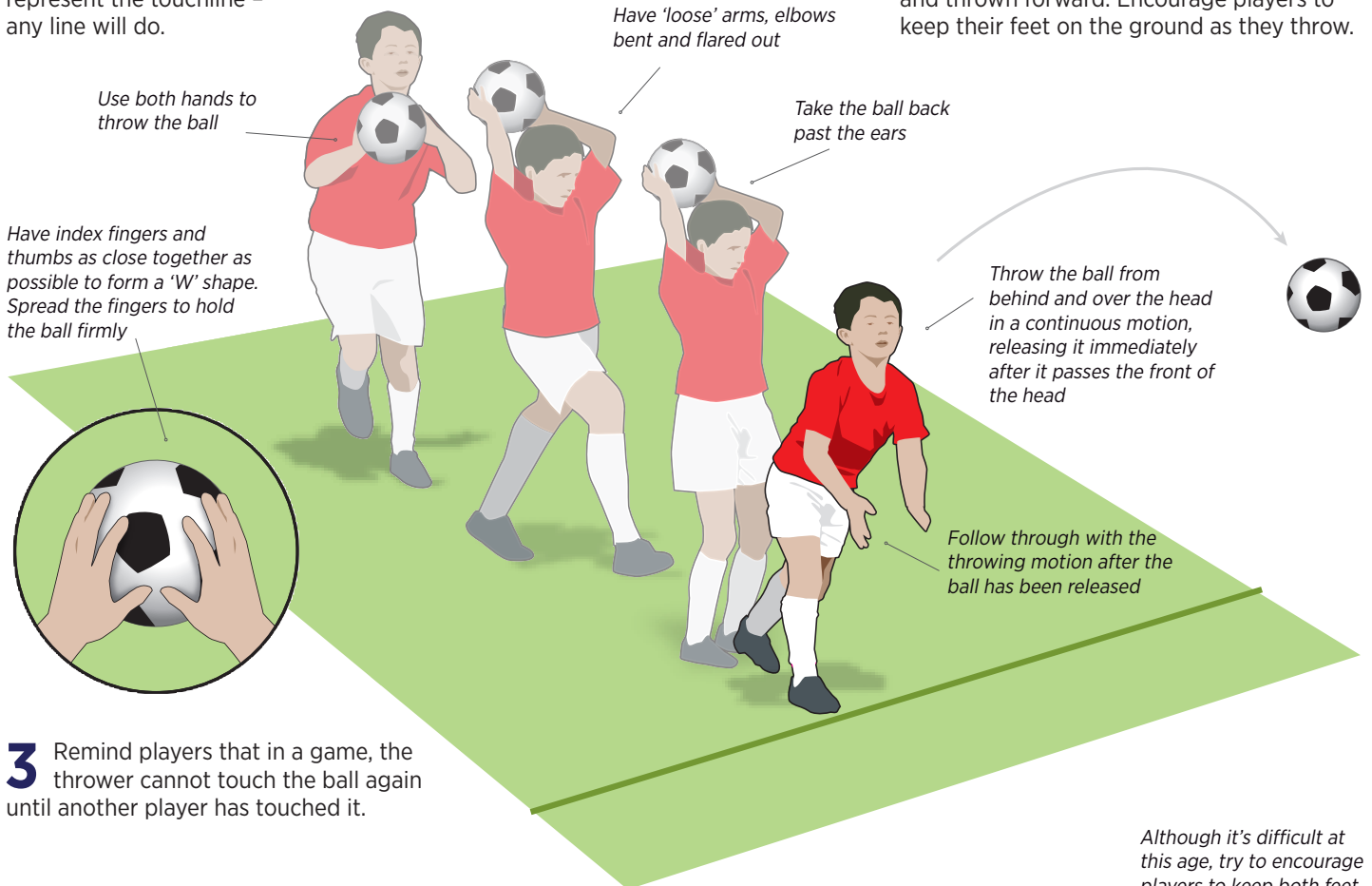
Throw-in

ACTIVITY: THE LAW

CALL OUT "Ball behind your head" • "Feet on the ground"

1 Line your players up on what would represent the touchline – any line will do.

2 Get each player to practise throw-ins. You want to see the ball behind the head and thrown forward. Encourage players to keep their feet on the ground as they throw.



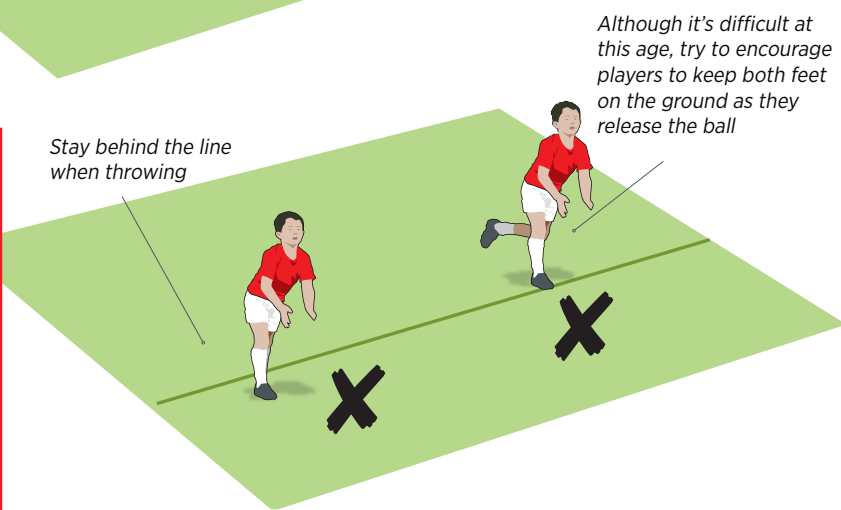
3 Remind players that in a game, the thrower cannot touch the ball again until another player has touched it.

LAWS OF SOCCER

Throw-ins

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower:

- Faces the field of play.
- Has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line.
- Uses both hands.
- Delivers the ball from behind and over their head.
- The thrower may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player.



How many players do I need?

Players work individually.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

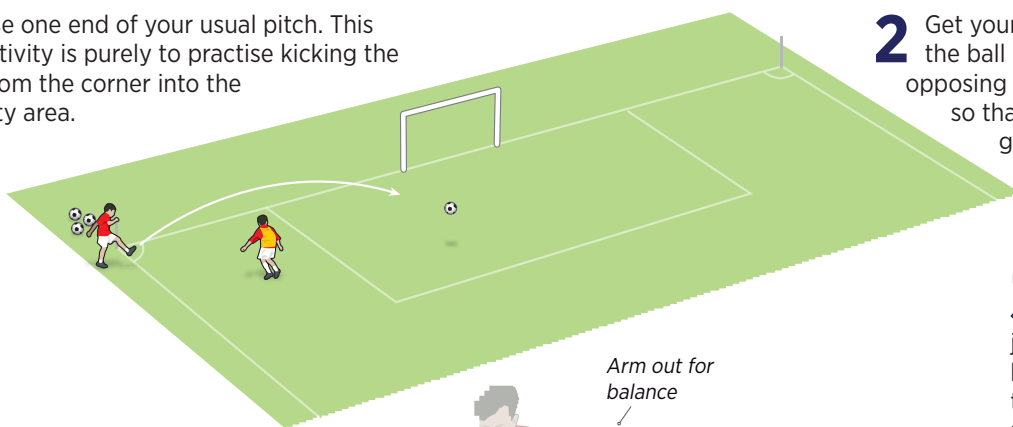
Run with the ball Shot

Corner kick

ACTIVITY: THE LAW

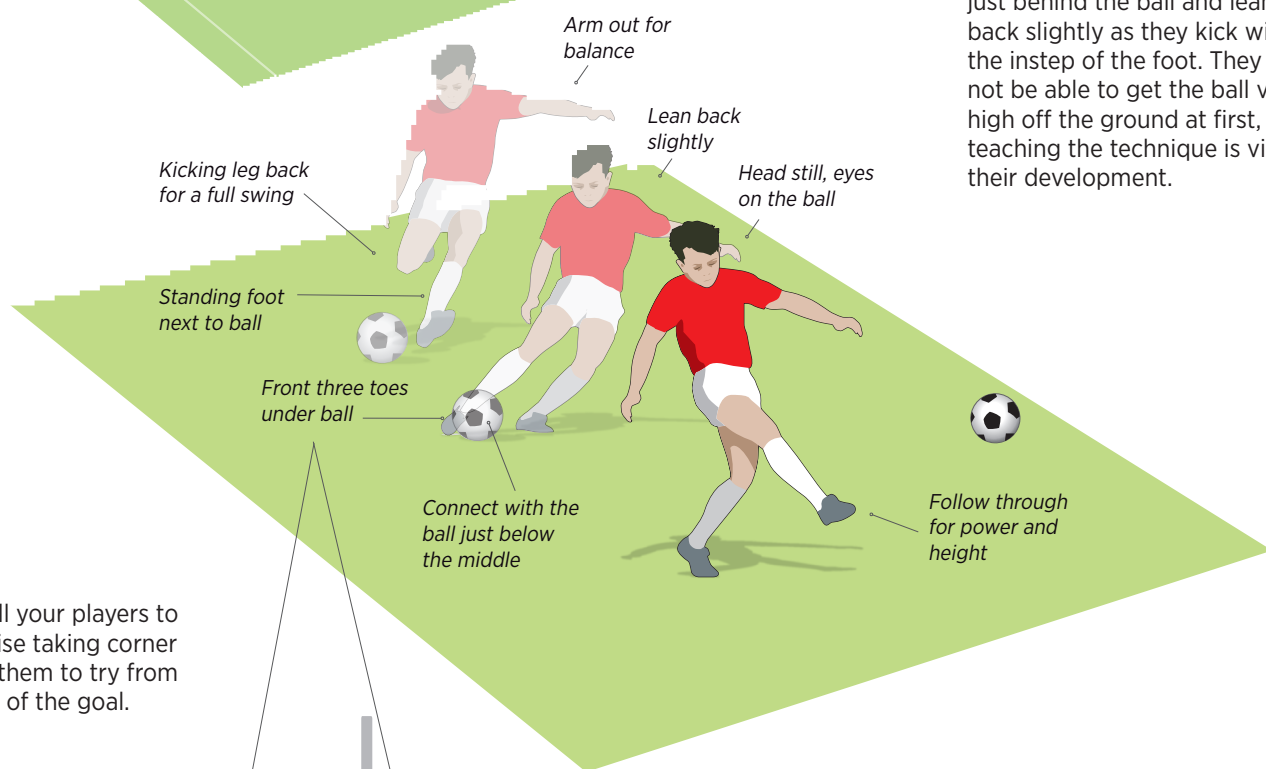
CALL OUT "Place the ball near the corner" • "Kick towards the penalty area"

1 Use one end of your usual pitch. This activity is purely to practise kicking the ball from the corner into the penalty area.

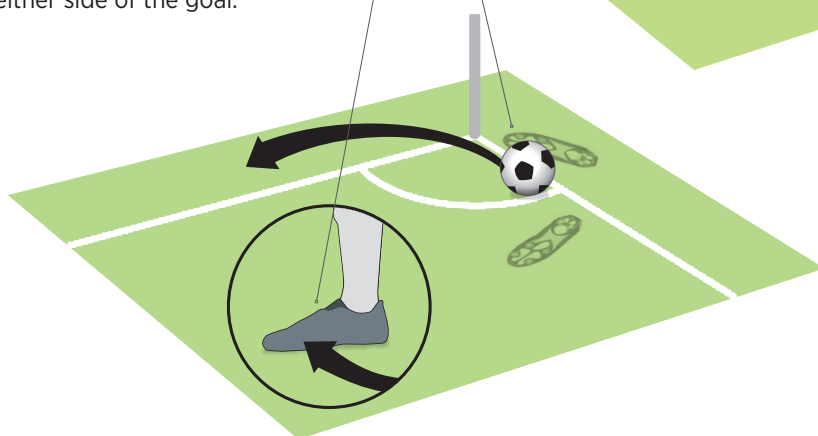


2 Get your players to take turns crossing the ball in from the corner. Put an opposing player 10 yards from the corner so that the kicker has to think about getting the ball over or past him and into the area.

3 Show players the technique of putting the standing leg just behind the ball and leaning back slightly as they kick with the instep of the foot. They may not be able to get the ball very high off the ground at first, but teaching the technique is vital to their development.



4 Get all your players to practise taking corner kicks. Get them to try from either side of the goal.



LAWS OF SOCCER
Corner kick
The ball is placed inside the corner arc – or touching one of the lines – at the corner nearest to where the ball went out.
The corner flag post cannot be moved.
Opponents must be 10 yards from the corner flag until the ball is in play.
The ball is kicked by a player of the attacking team.

How many players do I need?

Get all your players to have a go.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | RESTARTS 4

Free kick

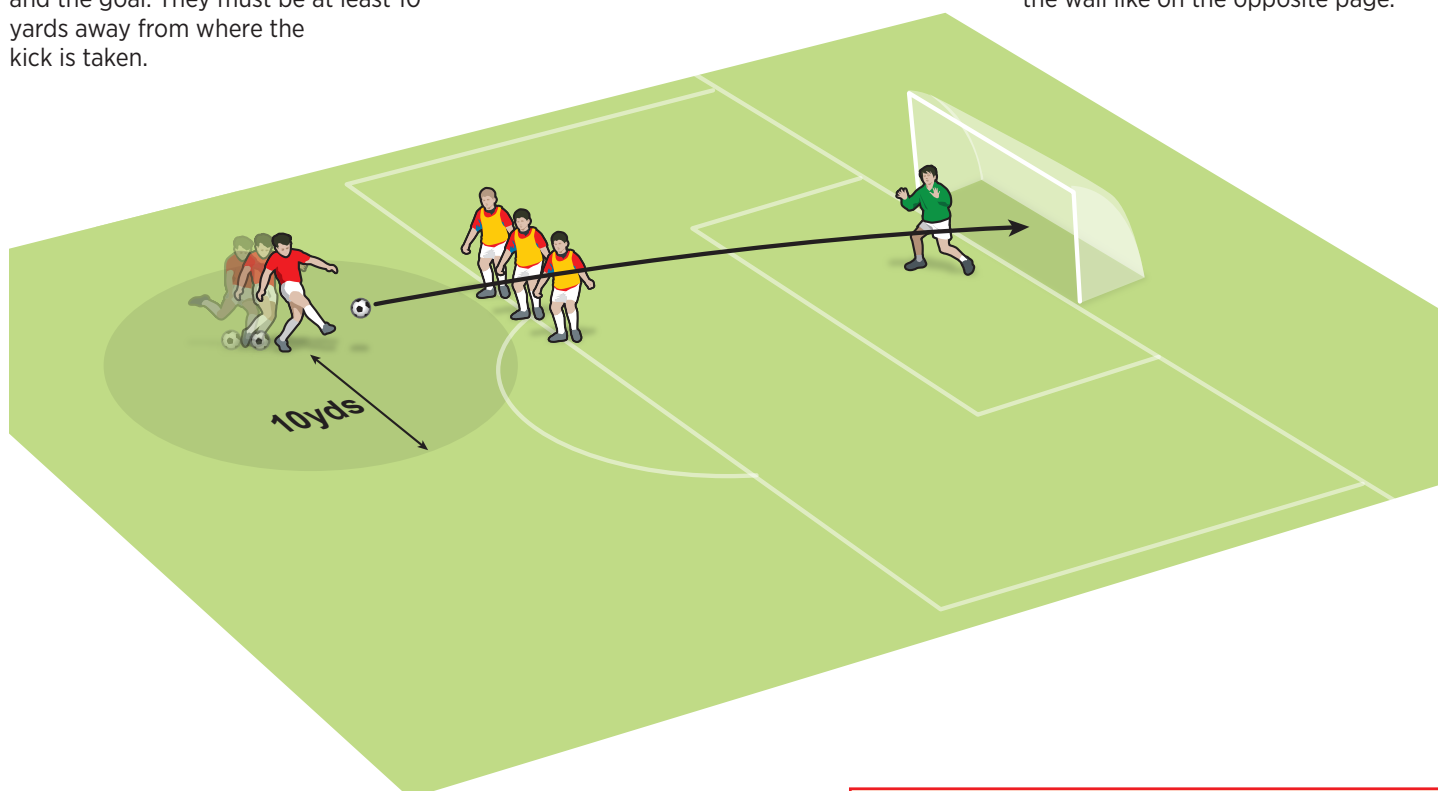
ACTIVITY: THE LAW

CALL OUT

“Understand the ball must be still when it is kicked” • “Understand one player takes the kick” • “The ball can go in any direction”

1 Set up a free kick situation in front of goal, but not in the penalty area. You will need a player to take the kick. Put three defending players between the ball and the goal. They must be at least 10 yards away from where the kick is taken.

2 When you say “go”, the player takes the kick. Practice single free kick takers to start with then get your players to come up with clever ways to pass the ball around the wall like on the opposite page.



3 Whether the free kick taker chooses to pass the ball or shoot at goal, the important thing is to avoid hitting the players directly in front of him, as this may prompt a counter-attack.

4 Once the free kick has been taken, the kicker cannot touch the ball again until another player has touched it.

5 The ball: must be stationary and the kicker must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player.

LAWS OF SOCCER

Free kick

Direct and indirect free kicks are awarded to the opposing team of a player guilty of an offence or infringement.

BALL ENTERS THE GOAL

If a direct free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal is awarded.

If an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded.

If a direct or indirect free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded.

Until the ball is in play all opponents must remain:

At least 10 yards from the ball, unless they are on their own goal line between the goalposts.

How many players do I need?

We've used five here, but get all your players to have a go. Remember to change round your attackers, defenders and goalkeeper.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	Run with the ball	Shot
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | RESTARTS 5

Penalty kick

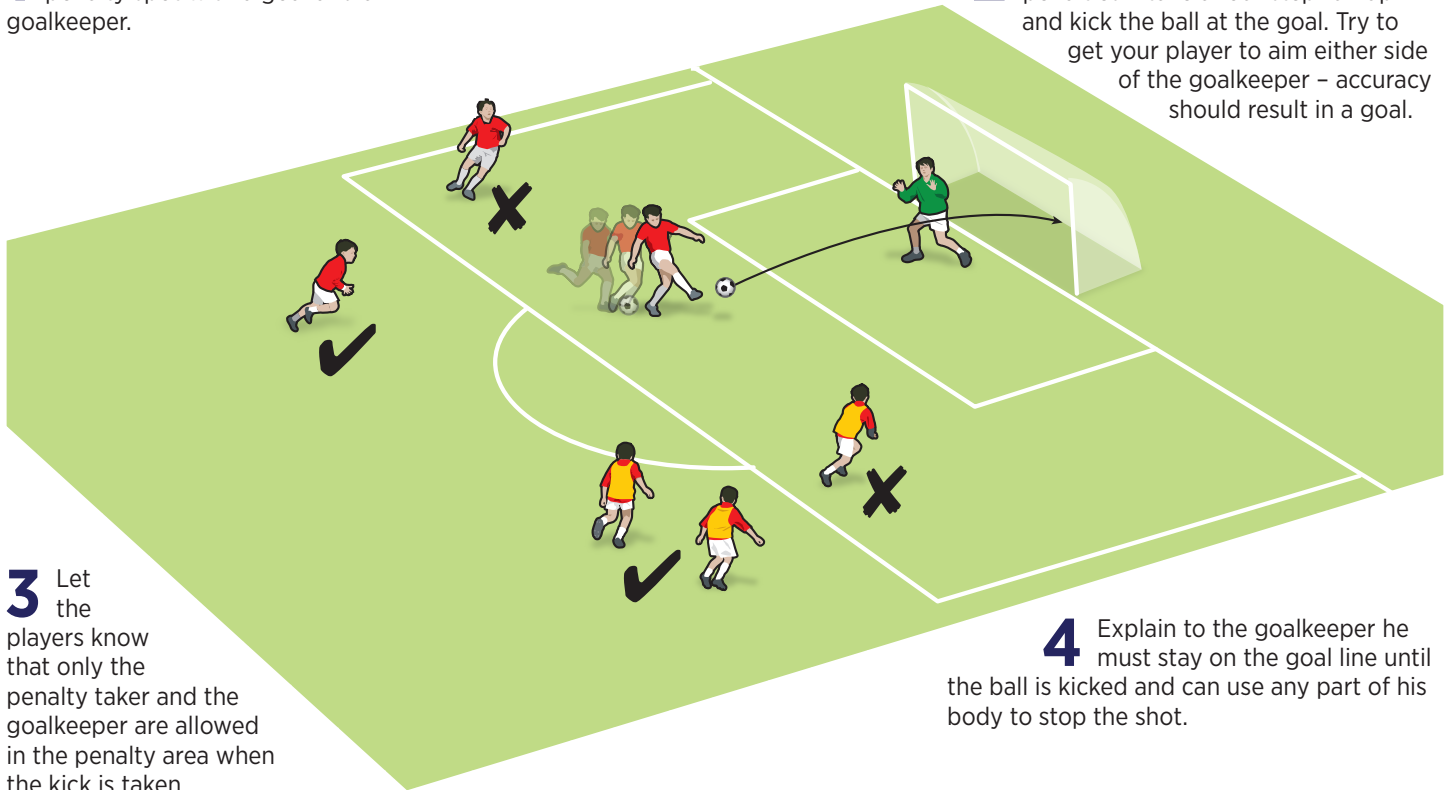
ACTIVITY: THE LAW

CALL OUT

“Understand the ball is kicked from a static position” • “Understand one player takes the kick” • “Kick the ball forwards” • “Only kick the ball once”

1 Set up using a penalty area, a penalty spot with a goal and a goalkeeper.

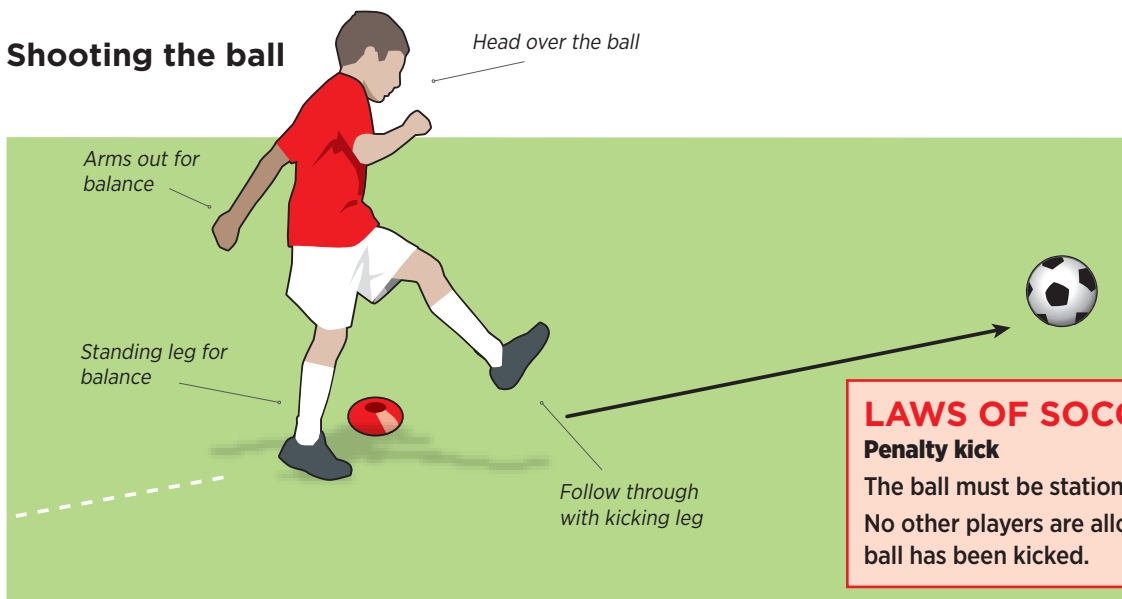
2 The players should take turns to take penalties – take a four step run up and kick the ball at the goal. Try to get your player to aim either side of the goalkeeper – accuracy should result in a goal.



3 Let the players know that only the penalty taker and the goalkeeper are allowed in the penalty area when the kick is taken.

4 Explain to the goalkeeper he must stay on the goal line until the ball is kicked and can use any part of his body to stop the shot.

Shooting the ball



LAWS OF SOCCER

Penalty kick

The ball must be stationary when kicked.

No other players are allowed in the area until the ball has been kicked.

How many players do I need?

Get all your players to have a go.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | RESTARTS 5

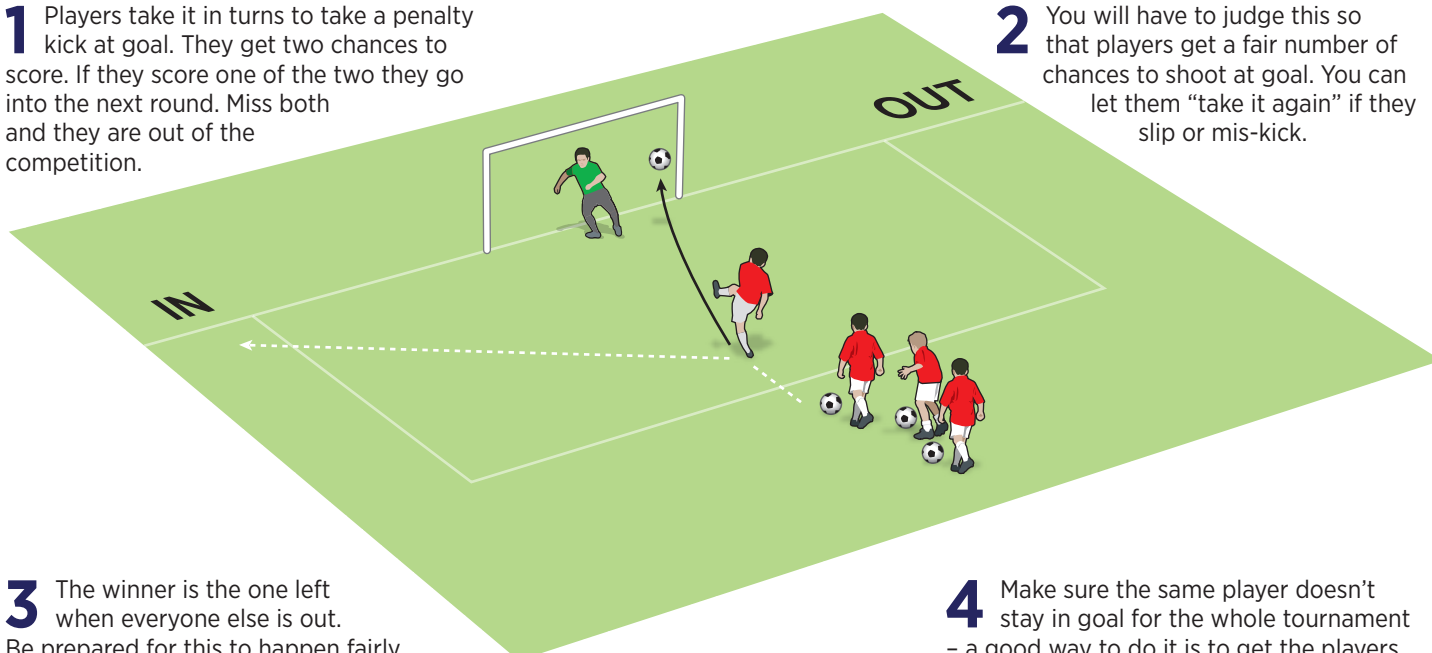
Penalty kick

GAME: IN OR OUT

CALL OUT

“Understand the ball is kicked from a static position” • “Understand one player takes the kick” • “Kick the ball forwards” • “Only kick the ball once”

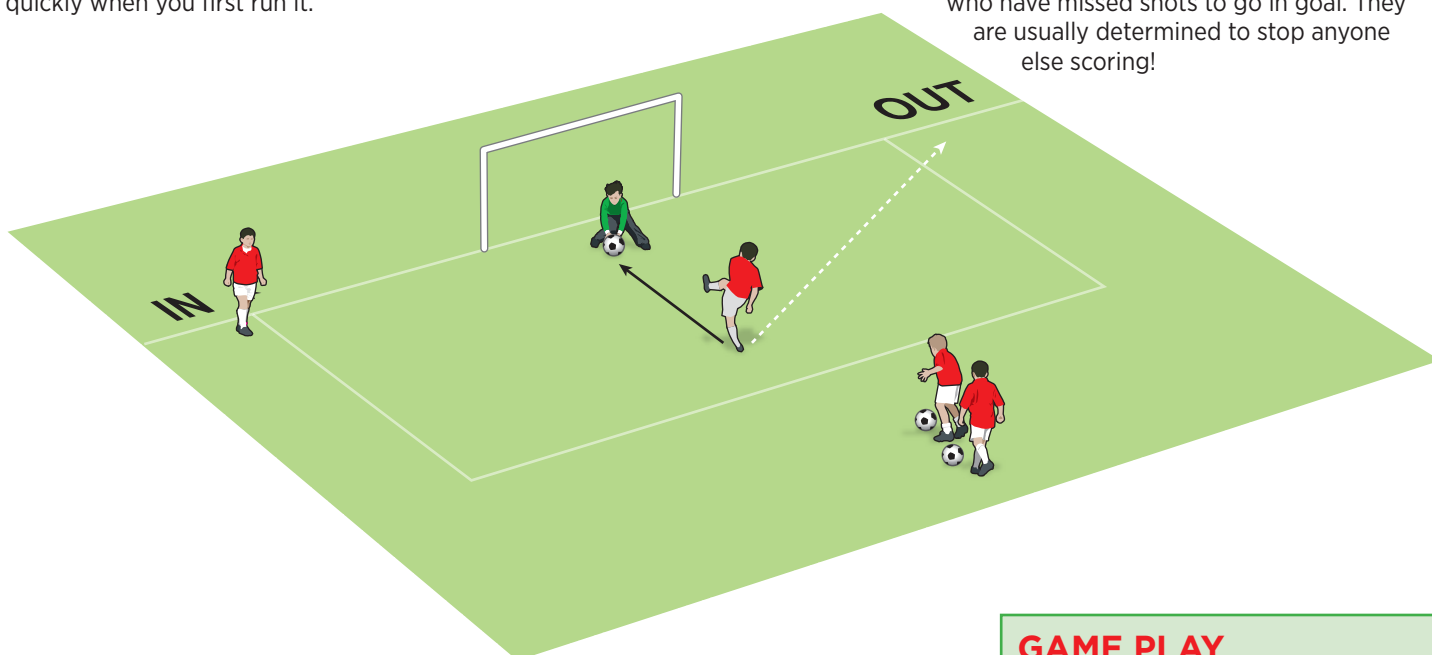
1 Players take it in turns to take a penalty kick at goal. They get two chances to score. If they score one of the two they go into the next round. Miss both and they are out of the competition.



2 You will have to judge this so that players get a fair number of chances to shoot at goal. You can let them “take it again” if they slip or mis-kick.

3 The winner is the one left when everyone else is out. Be prepared for this to happen fairly quickly when you first run it.

4 Make sure the same player doesn't stay in goal for the whole tournament – a good way to do it is to get the players who have missed shots to go in goal. They are usually determined to stop anyone else scoring!



GAME PLAY

Accuracy above power.
Every player takes one.
React to a rebound.

How many players do I need?

Get all your players to have a go.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

EasiCoach

SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18

GOALKEEPING

Correct diving technique

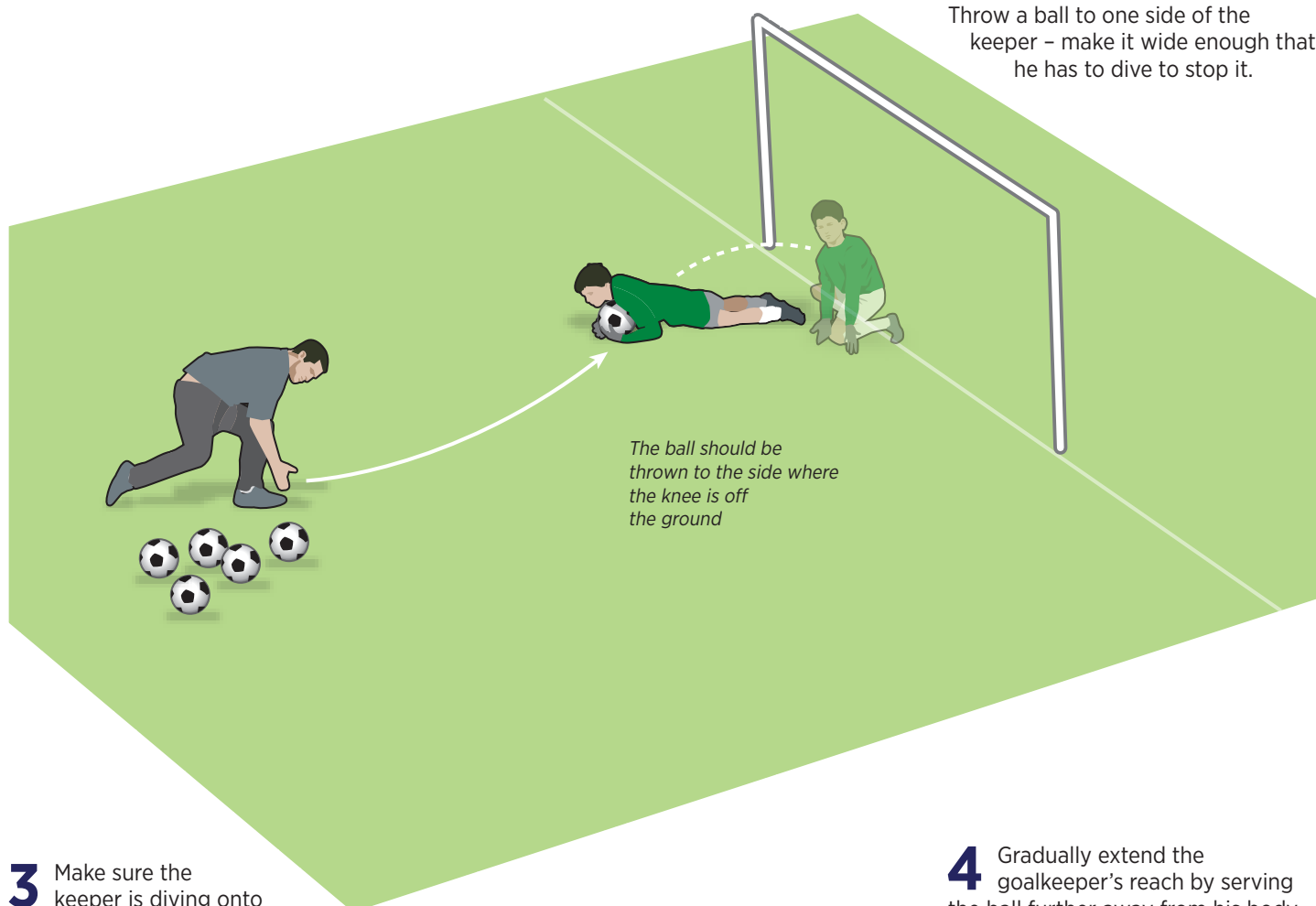
ACTIVITY: CORRECT DIVING TECHNIQUE

CALL OUT

“Stretch for the ball” • “Time your dive” • “Arms in front of you” •
“Land on your side”

1 Use the penalty area of your pitch
- have a good number of balls
ready to be thrown to the keeper.

2 The goalkeeper should kneel
on one knee and face you, the
coach, or a nominated server.
Throw a ball to one side of the
keeper - make it wide enough that
he has to dive to stop it.



3 Make sure the
keeper is diving onto
the side of his body so he
can see the ball clearly.

4 Gradually extend the
goalkeeper's reach by serving
the ball further away from his body
so he has to react more quickly and
improve his diving.

How many players do I need?

Individual work with goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | GOALKEEPING 2

Punching the ball

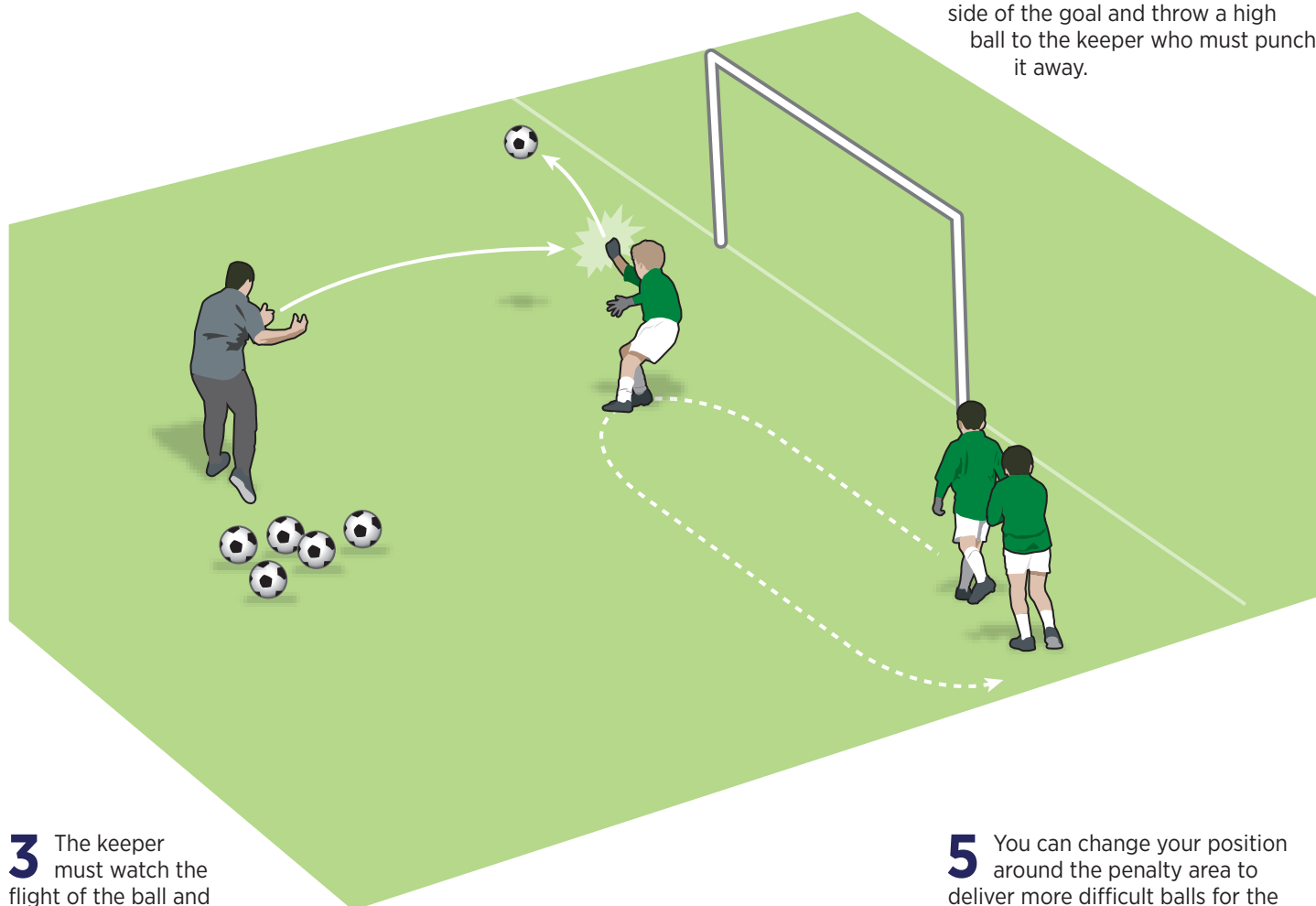
ACTIVITY: PUNCHING THE BALL

CALL OUT

“Punch high and far” • “Watch the flight of the ball” •
“Punch with one or two hands”

1 Use the penalty area of your pitch
- have a good number of balls ready to throw to the keepers.

2 Line up your keepers to the side of the goal. Get them to come forward one at a time. Stand to one side of the goal and throw a high ball to the keeper who must punch it away.



3 The keeper must watch the flight of the ball and propel himself towards it to punch right through the bottom part of the ball so it travels far and high out of the danger area.

4 After making the punch, the keeper must get to his feet quickly and run round to the back of the line.

5 You can change your position around the penalty area to deliver more difficult balls for the goalkeepers to deal with.

How many players do I need?

Work with your goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	—>

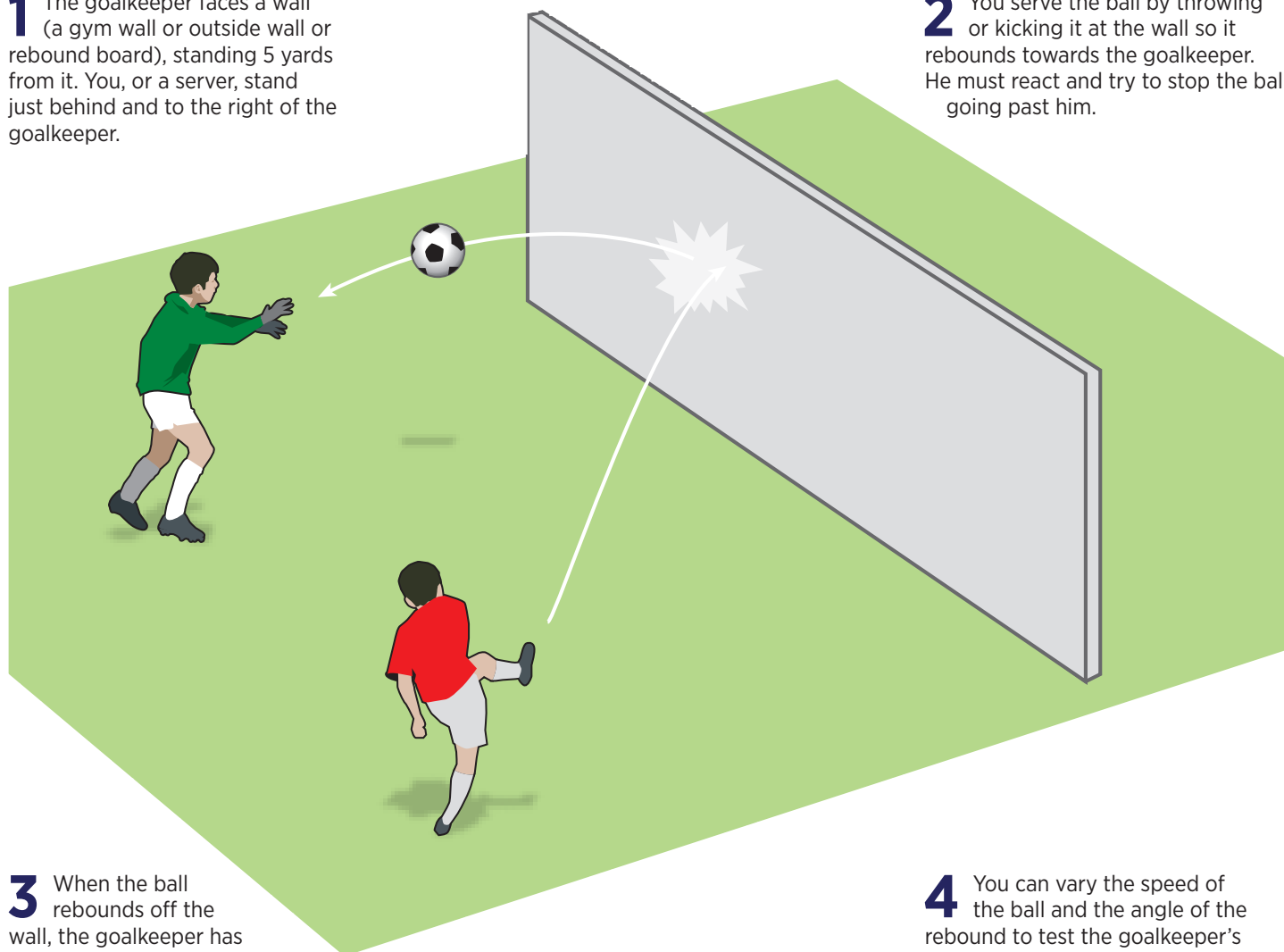
Shot stopping reactions

ACTIVITY: SHOT STOPPING REACTIONS

CALL OUT “Concentrate on the ball” • “React to the bounce” • “Don’t let the ball beat you”

1 The goalkeeper faces a wall (a gym wall or outside wall or rebound board), standing 5 yards from it. You, or a server, stand just behind and to the right of the goalkeeper.

2 You serve the ball by throwing or kicking it at the wall so it rebounds towards the goalkeeper. He must react and try to stop the ball going past him.



3 When the ball rebounds off the wall, the goalkeeper has to move or dive quickly to stop the ball by catching it or by pushing the ball away. After each save, the keeper must return the ball to you and prepare for the next rebound.

4 You can vary the speed of the ball and the angle of the rebound to test the goalkeeper’s reactions fully. You can also move him closer to the wall to give him less time to react.

How many players do I need?

Individual work with goalkeepers – or goalkeepers can work in pairs and alternate roles of keeper and server.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | GOALKEEPING 4

Quick reactions and positioning

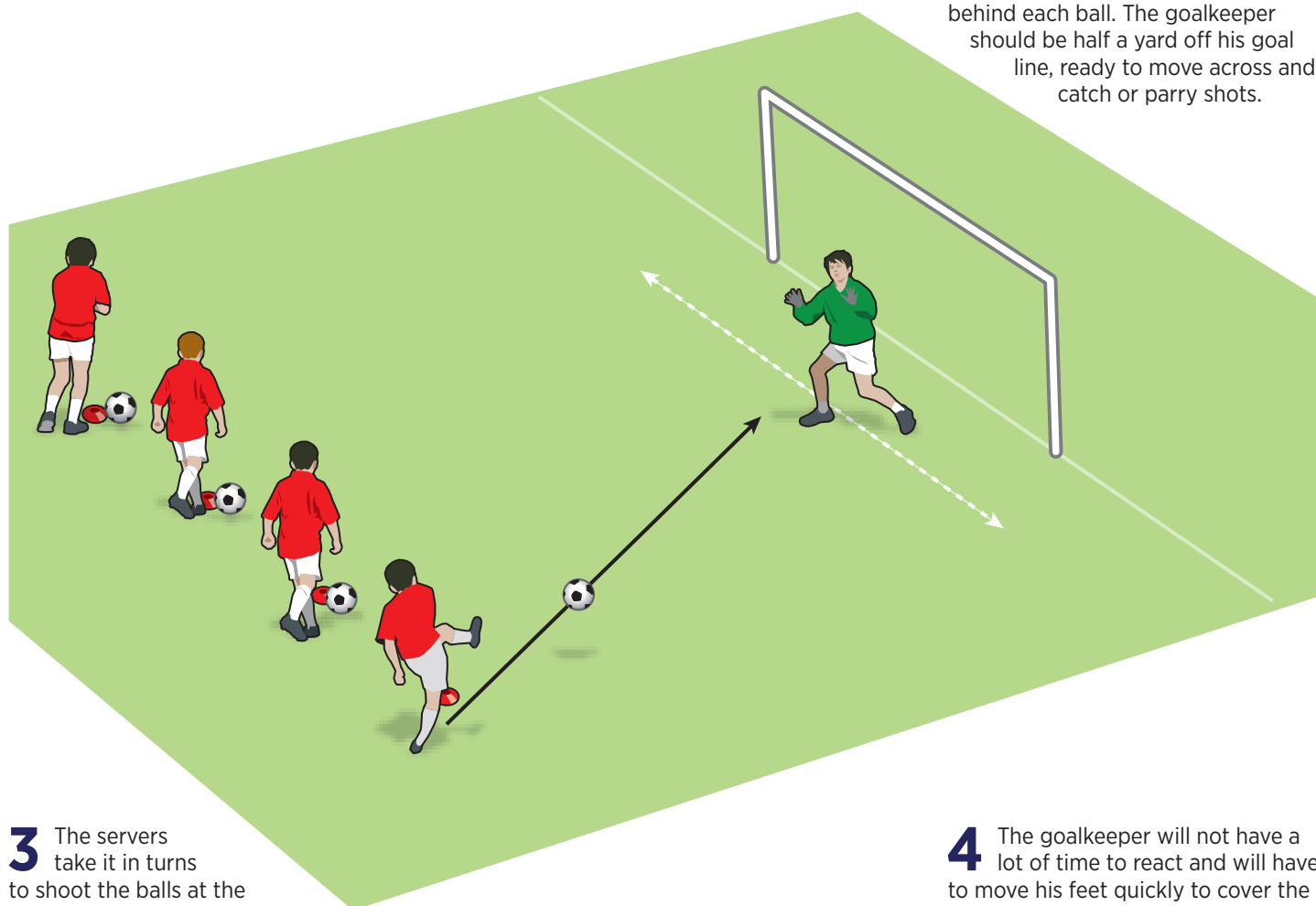
ACTIVITY: QUICK REACTIONS AND POSITIONING

CALL OUT

“On the balls of your feet ready to pounce” • “Block the shot with hands or feet” • “Don’t let the ball beat you”

1 Set up in the penalty area of your normal pitch. You need a goal and several balls.

2 Line up the balls across the width of the penalty area, about 8 yards from the goal. Put a server behind each ball. The goalkeeper should be half a yard off his goal line, ready to move across and catch or parry shots.



3 The servers take it in turns to shoot the balls at the keeper until all the balls have been used – they can choose any of the balls when it is their turn to shoot.

4 The goalkeeper will not have a lot of time to react and will have to move his feet quickly to cover the shots coming in at different angles.

How many players do I need?

Individual work with goalkeepers plus servers – this is a good opportunity for your strikers to practise their shooting.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | GOALKEEPING 5

Gather a rolling ball

ACTIVITY: THE LONG BARRIER

CALL OUT

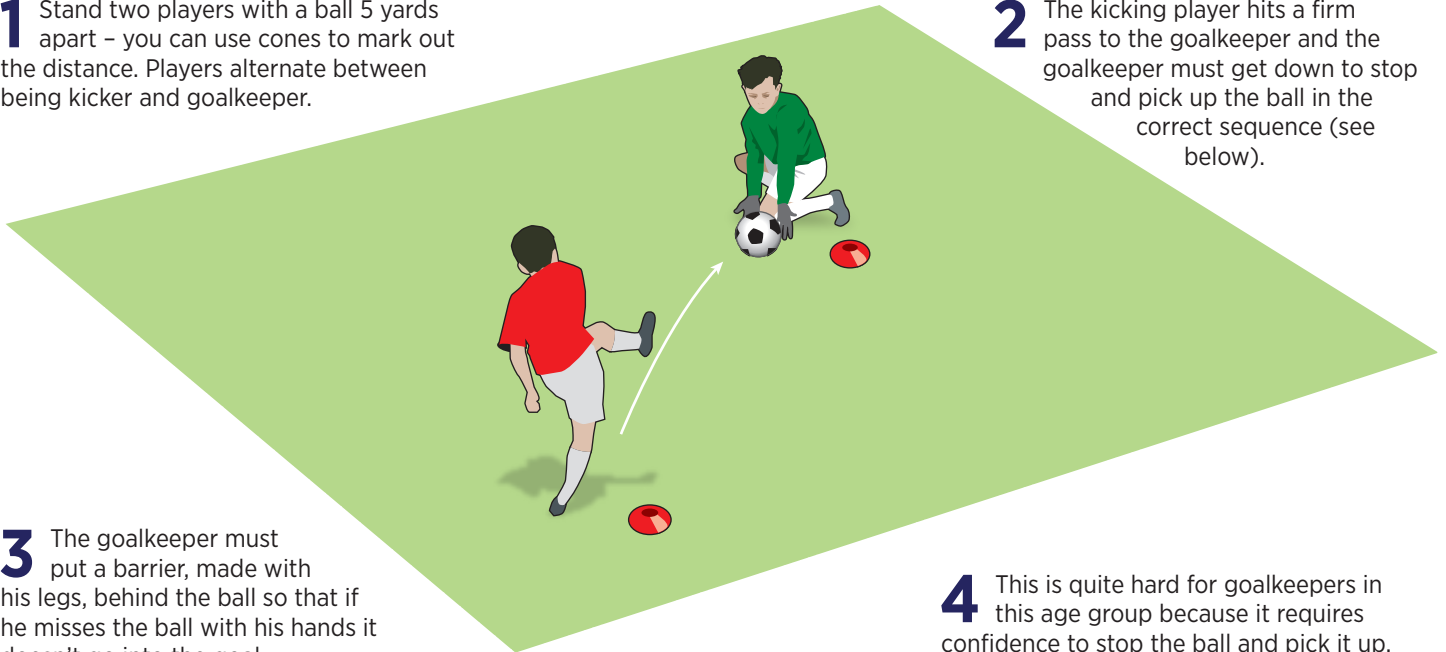
“Use a long leg as a barrier behind your hands” • “Pick the ball up” •
“Clutch it to your chest”

1 Stand two players with a ball 5 yards apart – you can use cones to mark out the distance. Players alternate between being kicker and goalkeeper.

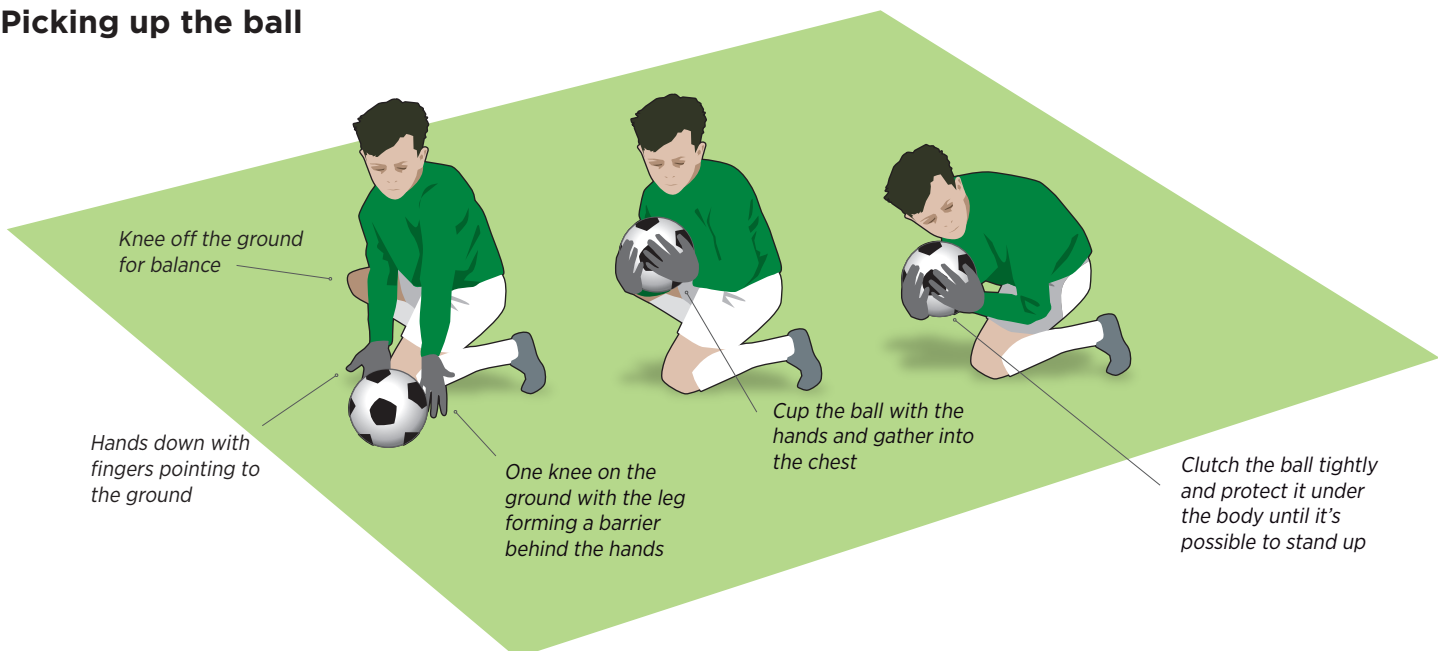
2 The kicking player hits a firm pass to the goalkeeper and the goalkeeper must get down to stop and pick up the ball in the correct sequence (see below).

3 The goalkeeper must put a barrier, made with his legs, behind the ball so that if he misses the ball with his hands it doesn't go into the goal.

4 This is quite hard for goalkeepers in this age group because it requires confidence to stop the ball and pick it up. When in a crowd of players it is difficult to judge when to pick the ball up.



Picking up the ball



How many players do I need?

Individual work with a goalkeeper and a server.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

Run with the ball Shot

U15-U18 | GOALKEEPING 6

Goalie wars

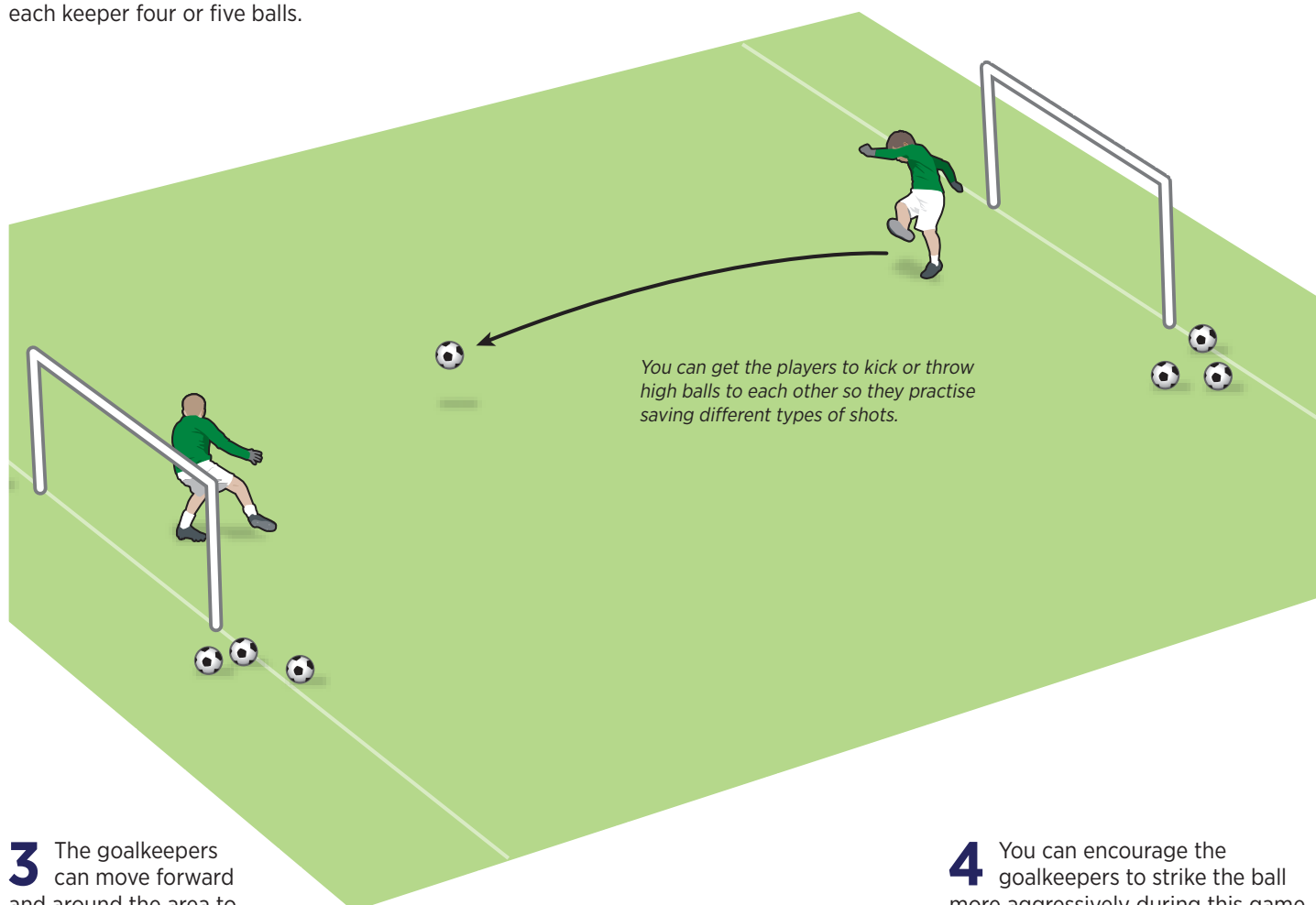
GAME: SAVE AND DISTRIBUTE

CALL OUT

“Kick with accuracy” • “Try to score” • “Use good gathering technique” •
“Remember the long barrier”

1 Set up a 10 x 10 yards area with a portable goal at each end. Put a goalkeeper in each goal and give each keeper four or five balls.

2 The goalkeepers take turns to kick towards the opposite goal and try to score.



3 The goalkeepers can move forward and around the area to retrieve any wayward balls. If they gather one close to the goal they can try and throw it into their opponent's net.

4 You can encourage the goalkeepers to strike the ball more aggressively during this game, which not only gives them good shot stopping practice but also helps with goal-kicking technique.

GAME PLAY

Cover the goal.
Try power shots.
Use good technique.

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key Player movement

----->

Run with the ball

----->

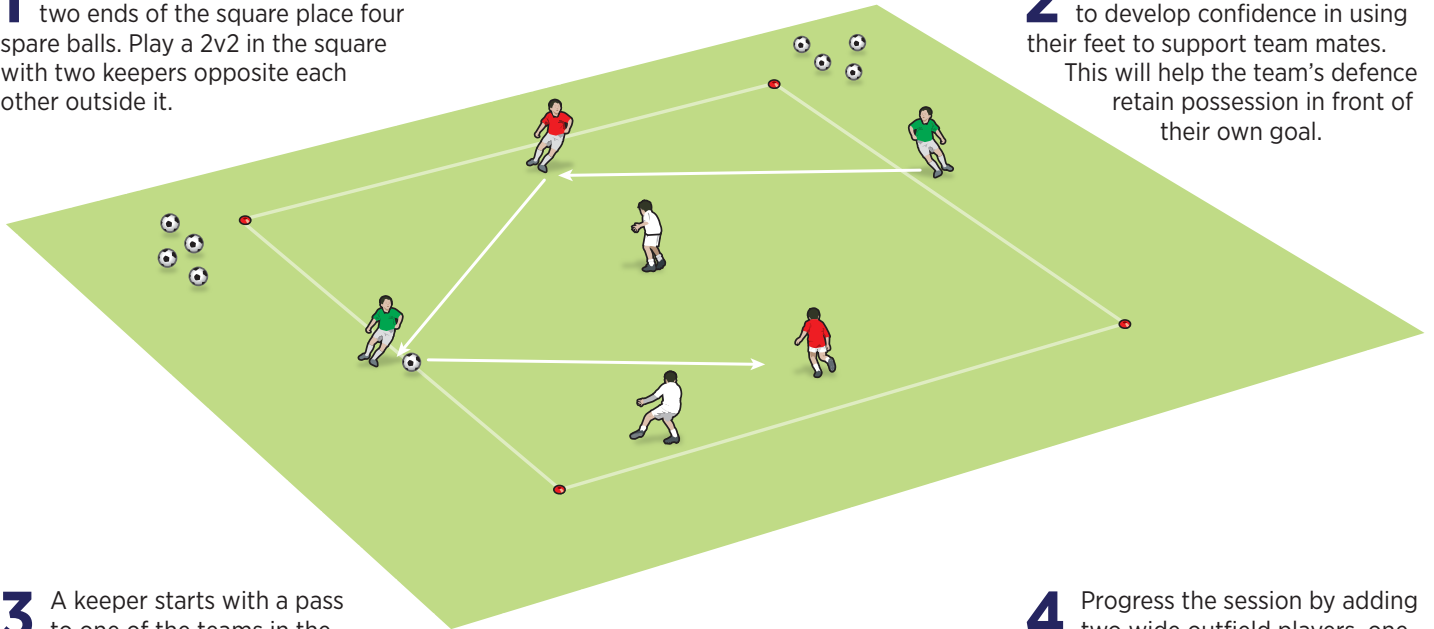
Footwork matters most

ACTIVITY: KEEPER FEET

CALL OUT

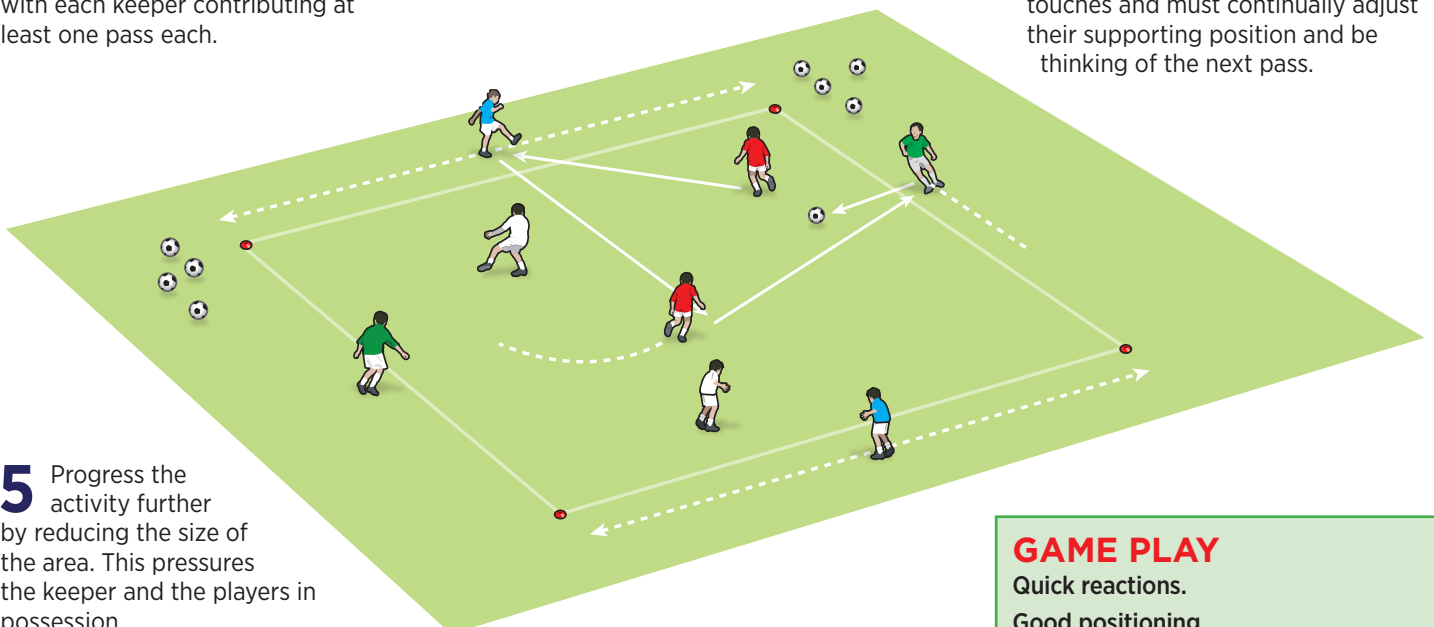
“Good first touch” • “Pass to the keeper” • “Accurate passing” • “Good weight of pass or lose the ball”

1 Set up a 15 x 15 yards area. On two ends of the square place four spare balls. Play a 2v2 in the square with two keepers opposite each other outside it.



2 The objective is for the keepers to develop confidence in using their feet to support team mates. This will help the team's defence retain possession in front of their own goal.

3 A keeper starts with a pass to one of the teams in the square – keepers play for the team in possession. Points are awarded if a team makes five consecutive passes with each keeper contributing at least one pass each.



4 Progress the session by adding two wide outfield players, one on either side. The wide players also play for the team in possession. The keepers are now limited to just two touches and must continually adjust their supporting position and be thinking of the next pass.

5 Progress the activity further by reducing the size of the area. This pressures the keeper and the players in possession.

GAME PLAY
Quick reactions.
Good positioning.
Determination to get the ball.

How many players do I need?
We used six players plus two in the development.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | GOALKEEPING 8

Playing as a sweeper

GAME: SWEEPER KEEPER

CALL OUT

“Concentrate on where the ball is” • “Move to intercept passes” • “Run with the ball if there is space” • “Recover to block long passes”

1 Set up a 35 x 20 yards area with 10-yard zones at each end and a 15-yard centre zone. Play 3v3, with goalkeepers in the end zones and two players from each team in the centre zone.

2 Play starts and restarts with the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper brings the ball out, spots a team mate in space and plays a quick pass.

3 After making the initial pass, the goalkeeper can move into the centre zone while his team has possession, to play a 3v2. If his team loses possession he must return to the end zone.

4 Players can only go into the goalkeeper zones when their team has possession. Here the red keeper intercepts the white team's attack, enabling him to set up a counter-attack before the white keeper can get back to his goal.





5 This is a great way to integrate your goalkeepers into a session, so they are involved with the attacks, but they also have to be quick to recover if they lose possession. It's a fast game so rest players often.

GAME PLAY

React to the position of the ball.
Quick play from interceptions.
Remember first and foremost
YOU'RE THE KEEPER!

How many players do I need?

We used six players in this game.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
		
		

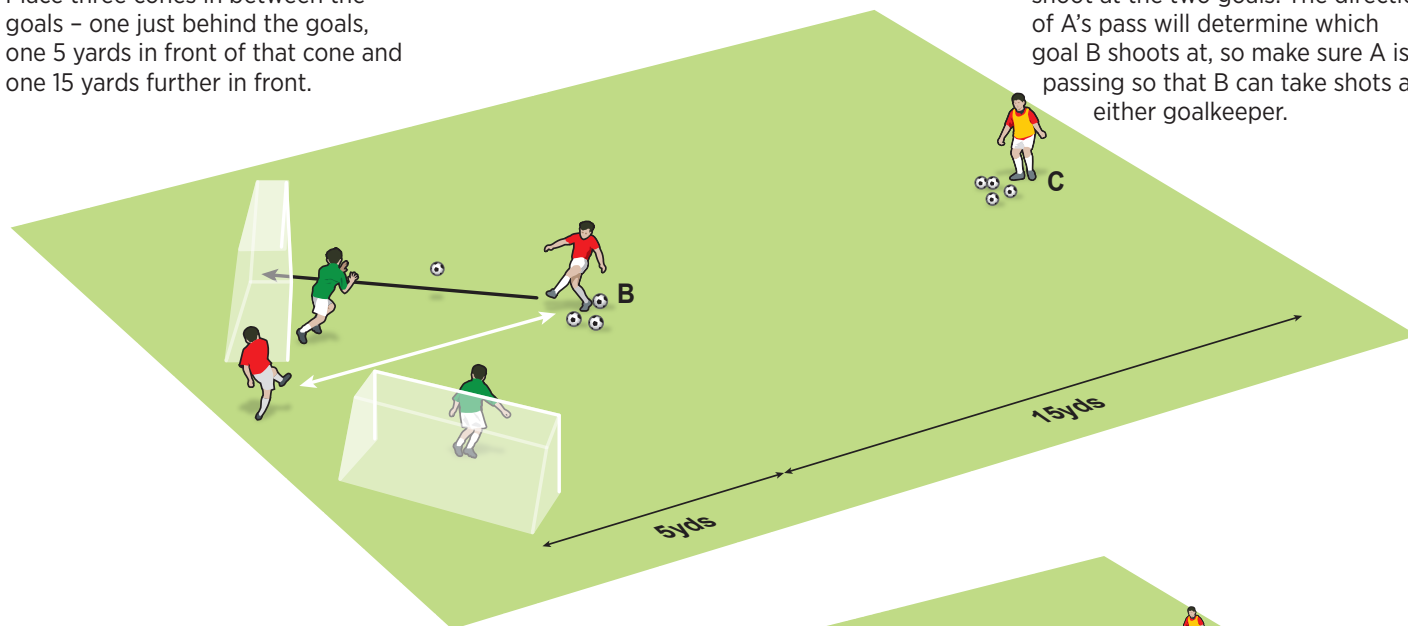
Survive the chaos

ACTIVITY: GOALKEEPER REACTIONS

CALL OUT

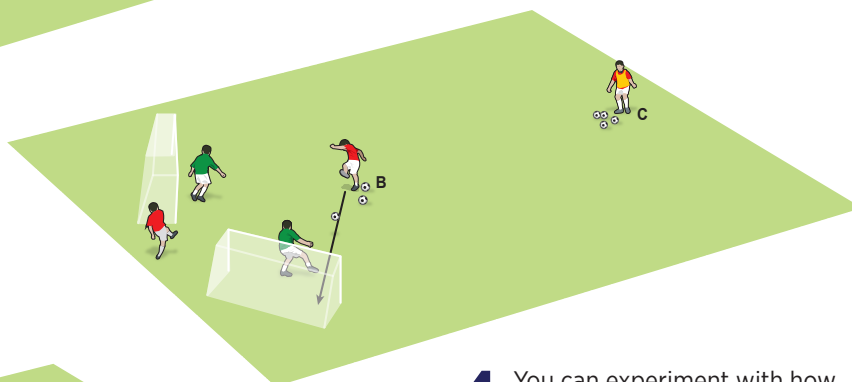
“Be aware” • “Keep your eyes on the ball” • “React quickly to the second shot” • “Be on the balls of your feet ready to react”

1 Set the two goals up at an angle with a goalkeeper in each goal. Place three cones in between the goals – one just behind the goals, one 5 yards in front of that cone and one 15 yards further in front.

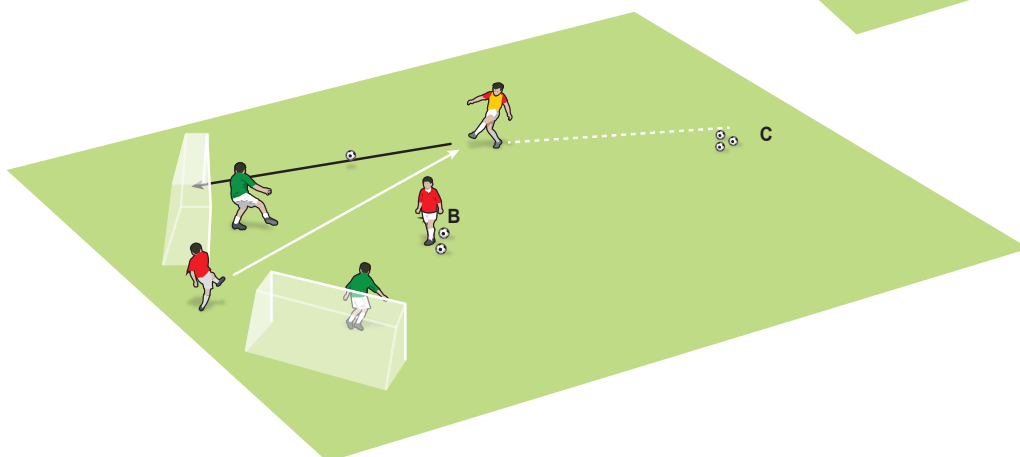


2 Player B passes a ball to player A who fires it back to B so he can shoot at the two goals. The direction of A's pass will determine which goal B shoots at, so make sure A is passing so that B can take shots at either goalkeeper.

3 The keepers must read the position of the ball and react quickly. As soon as that shot has been fired, player C moves the ball to one side or the other and takes a long shot.



4 You can experiment with how far away you want C to stand so the shots are of good power and accuracy.



5 Make sure C is shooting at both goals in turn – B can deflect C's shot at the goal to add difficulty.

How many players do I need?

We used five players – three working players and two goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

U15-U18 | GOALKEEPING 10

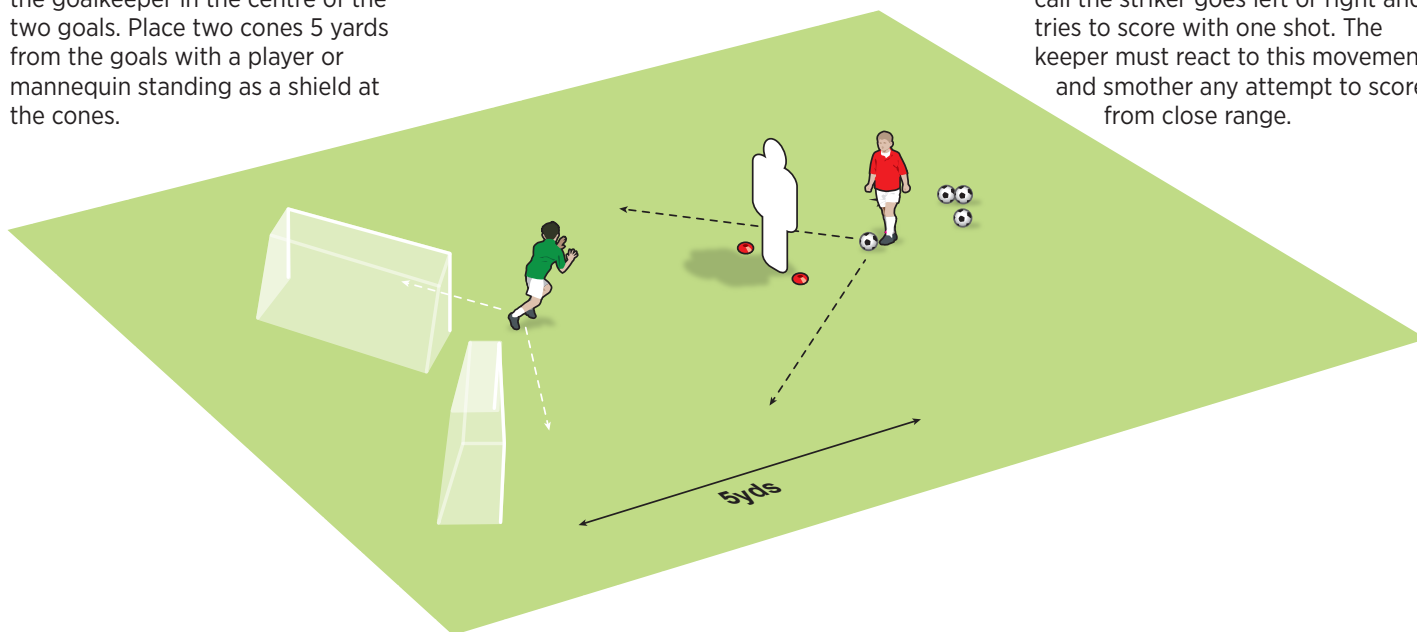
Move and block

ACTIVITY: COVER SHOTS CLOSE TO GOAL

CALL OUT

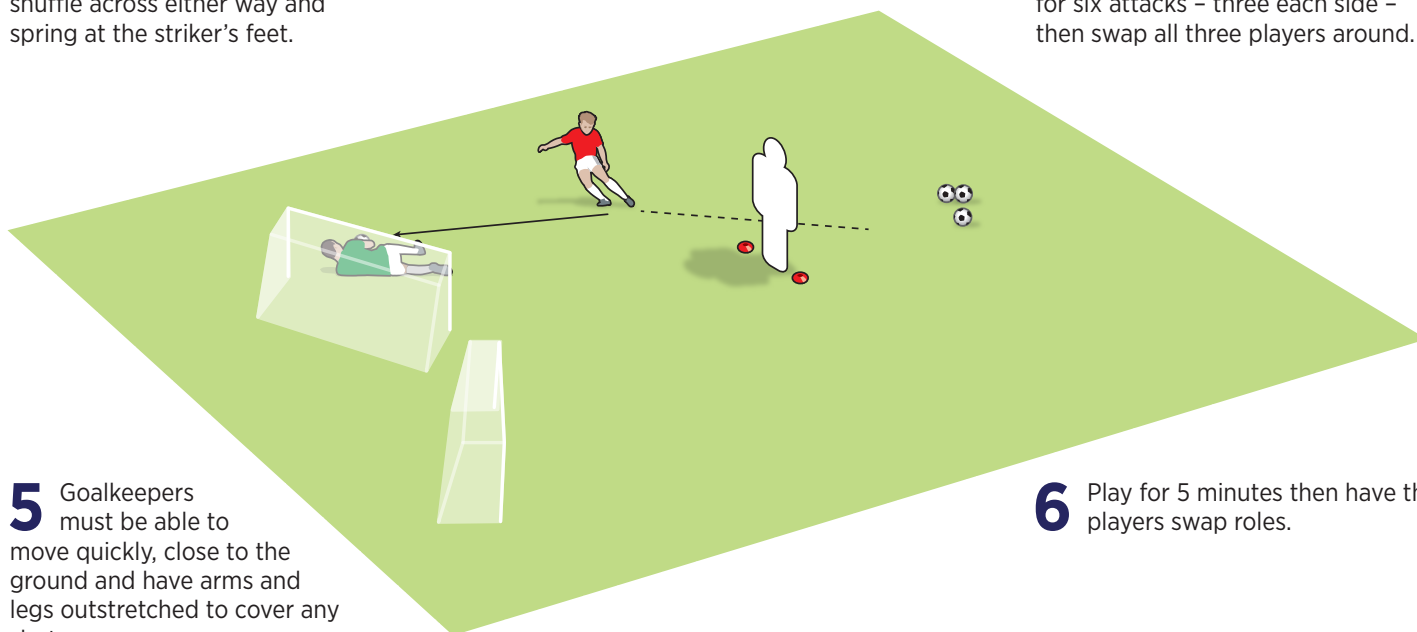
“Be aware” • “Keep your eyes on the ball” • “React quickly to the shot” • “Be in a crouching position to move across the goals quickly”

1 Set up two target goals side by side angled slightly away from the goalkeeper in the centre of the two goals. Place two cones 5 yards from the goals with a player or mannequin standing as a shield at the cones.



2 The striker hides behind the shield with some balls. On your call the striker goes left or right and tries to score with one shot. The keeper must react to this movement and smother any attempt to score from close range.

3 The goalkeeper is defending two goals so must crouch low with bent knees ready to shuffle across either way and spring at the striker's feet.



4 Make sure the striker doesn't follow up as play is close to the keeper and he may get hurt. Do this for six attacks – three each side – then swap all three players around.

5 Goalkeepers must be able to move quickly, close to the ground and have arms and legs outstretched to cover any shots.

6 Play for 5 minutes then have the players swap roles.

How many players do I need?

We used two players a goalkeeper and striker.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

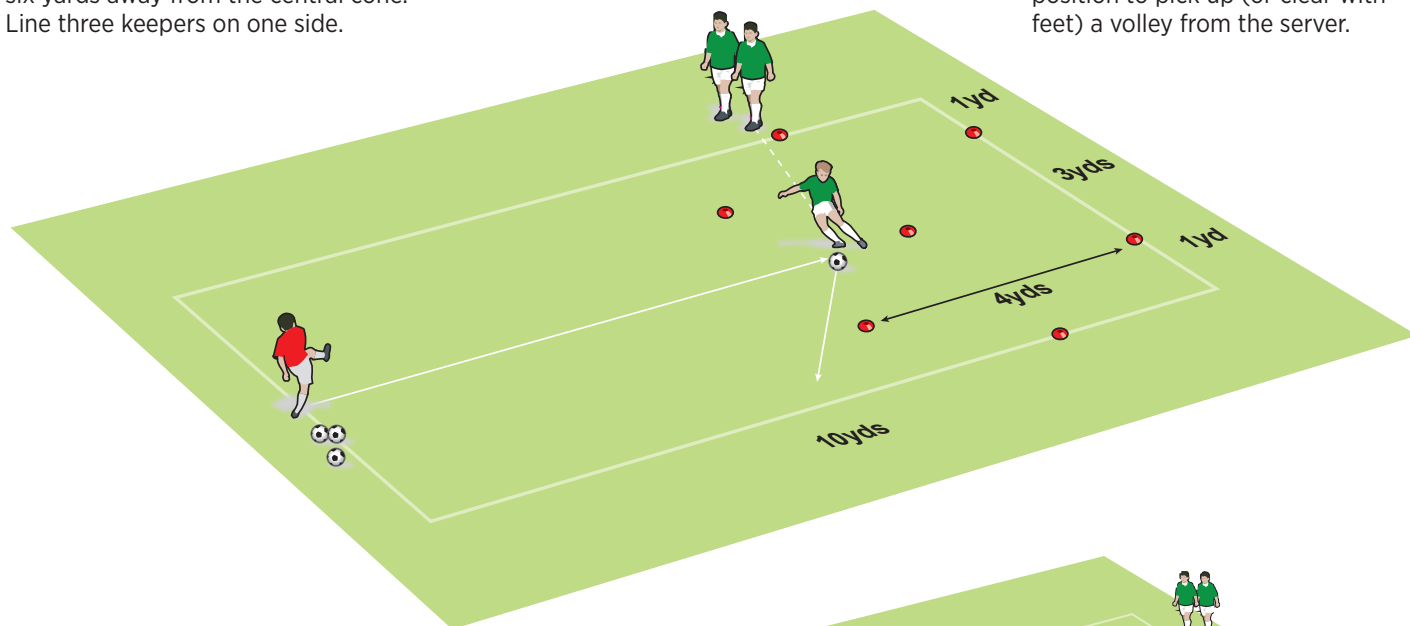
Face the striker

ACTIVITY: REACTING TO SHOTS

CALL OUT

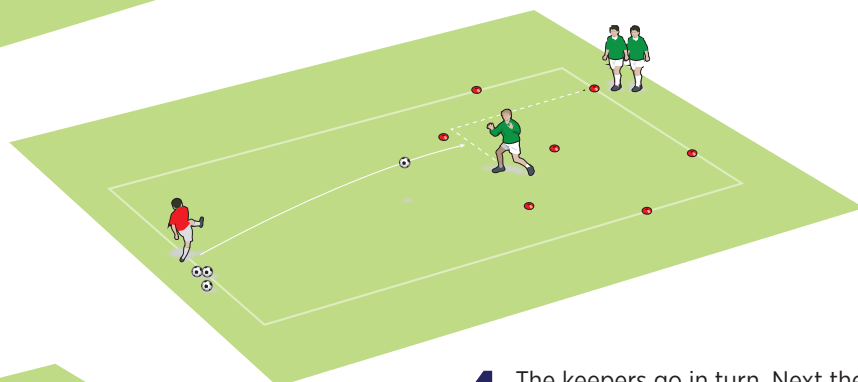
“Keep your eyes on the ball” • “React quickly to the shot” • “Get your body behind the ball to stop the shot”

1 Set up a 10 x 5 yards area, with cones as shown. A server stands six yards away from the central cone. Line three keepers on one side.

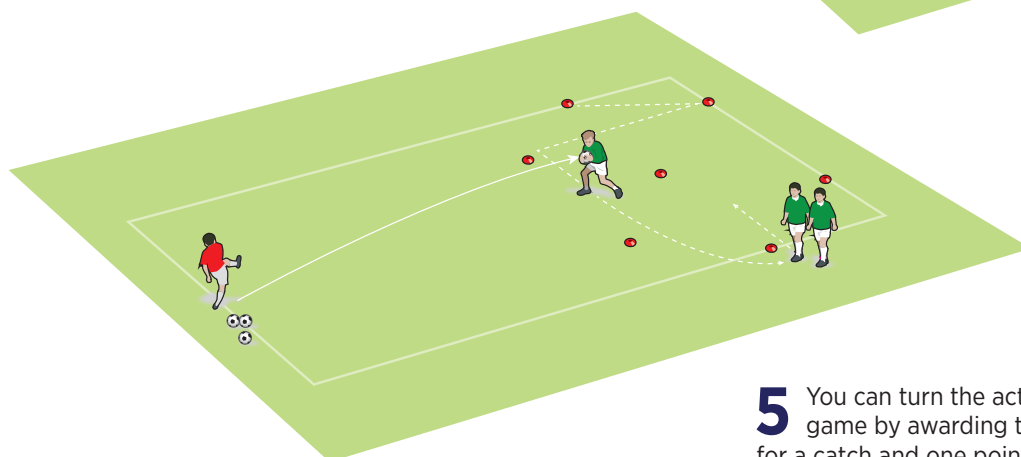


2 One keeper pushes off and moves sideways in a crouching position to pick up (or clear with feet) a volley from the server.

3 The server can hold the ball and kick that way for accuracy. The serve must be gentle at first, working up to a hard kick.



4 The keepers go in turn. Next the keeper starts on the back cone, goes forwards to the front cone and then sideways to catch or clear a shot (above). Then they start at the side cone, move to the back and then to the front before catching or clearing (left). Then the keepers go to the other side and do the same sequence.



5 You can turn the activity into a game by awarding three points for a catch and one point for a clearance.

How many players do I need?

We used four players – a server and three goalkeepers.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

U15-U18 | GOALKEEPING 12

Goalkeeper kicking

SKILLS: DRIVEN OR LOFTED

CALL OUT

“Head over ball” • “Arms out for balance” • “Kick with laces on big toe side” • “Lean back for lofted kick”

1 Position two players about 15 yards apart. One player kicks the ball to the other player and he kicks back.

2 The ball is usually kicked either using the inner side of the foot that runs along from toe to heel, or using the small area around the inside of the big toe.

Driven kick

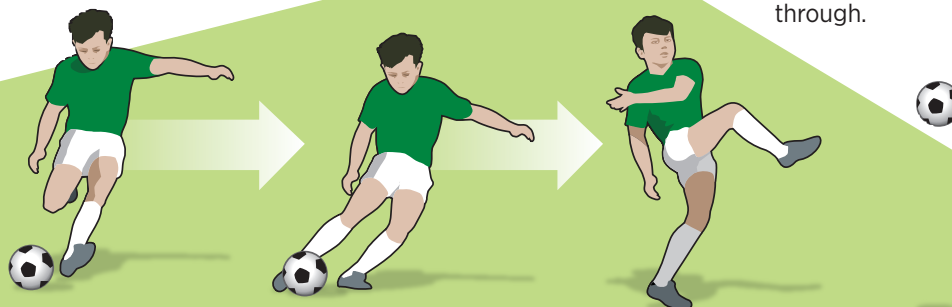


To make the ball go low and fast the body must lean forward with the player's head over the ball and facing down

3 With each technique the body will be positioned in a different way, in order to propel the ball at different speeds, strengths and heights.

4 The body will always be balanced, with the player's eyes on the ball and with the non-kicking foot and both arms providing balance and support while the kicking leg pulls back and follows through.

Lofted kick



To make the ball go high and slow, the body must lean back with the player's eyes behind the ball and his head level with the horizon

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	----->	----->
	----->	----->

Goalkeeper distribution

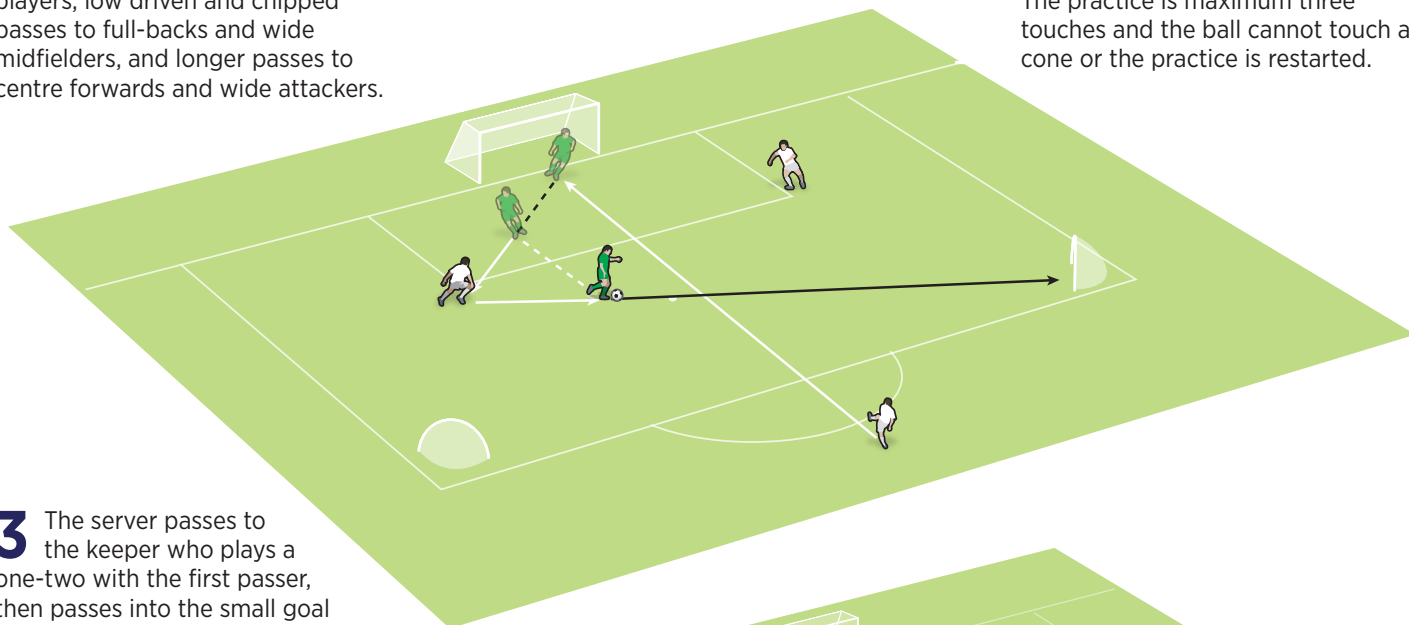
ACTIVITY: PASS OUT FROM THE BACK

CALL OUT

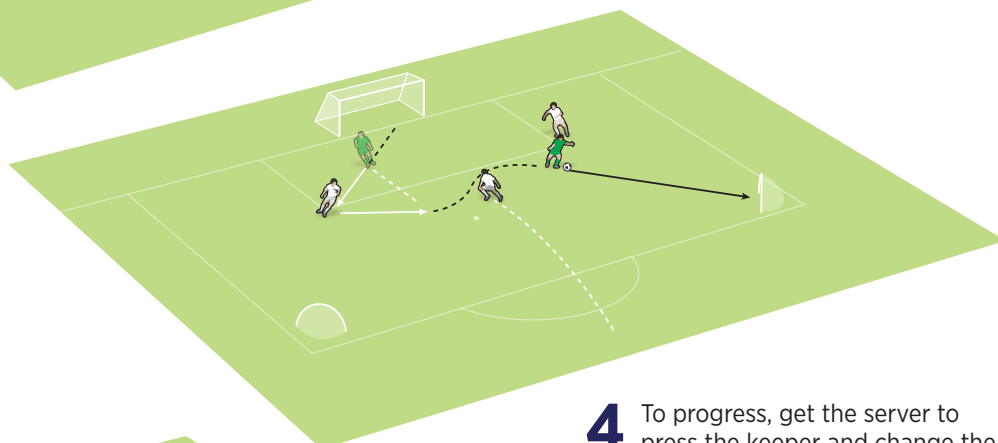
“Use your feet” • “Work quickly” • “Accuracy over power” • “Keep your eyes on the ball” • “Don’t panic”

1 This session mimics short passes to centre backs and midfield players, low driven and chipped passes to full-backs and wide midfielders, and longer passes to centre forwards and wide attackers.

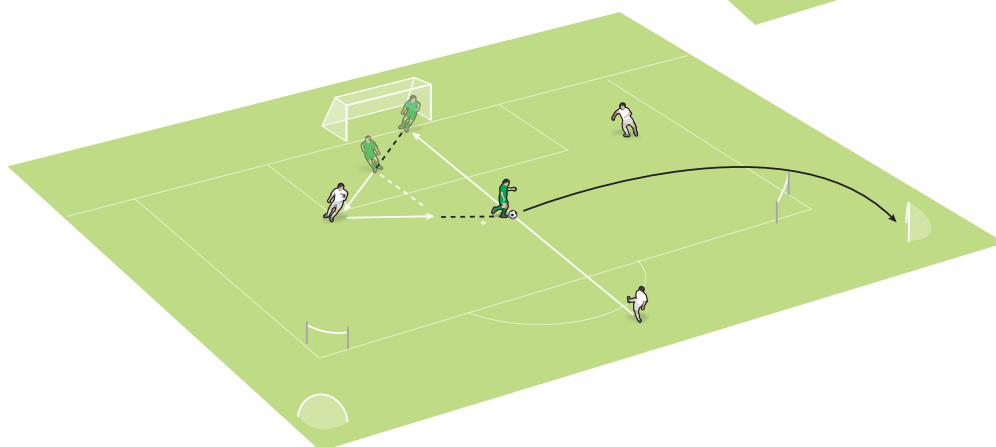
2 The four players work as a keeper, two passers and a server. The practice is maximum three touches and the ball cannot touch a cone or the practice is restarted.



3 The server passes to the keeper who plays a one-two with the first passer, then passes into the small goal in the far corner of the 18-yard box. We now repeat this process six times ensuring the keeper switches between left and right sides (thus left and right feet).



4 To progress, get the server to press the keeper and change the set up so the goals are further away with an obstacle the ball must go over. Rotate players regularly.



5 In five-a-side goals, the original rebound one-two leads to a chipped or clipped pass over the poles and into the left or right goal – this mimics a pass to a midfielder or winger.

How many players do I need?

We used four players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

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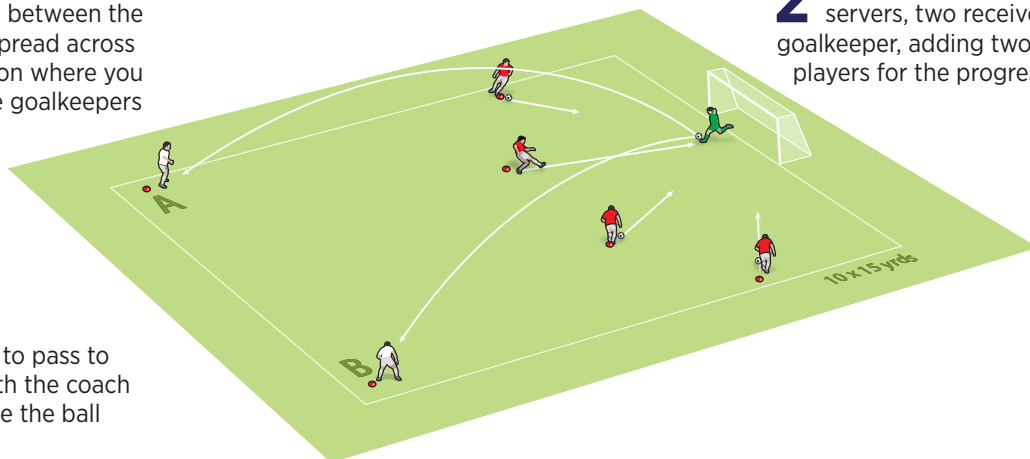
Respond to a back pass

ACTIVITY: CLEAR THE BACK PASS

CALL OUT

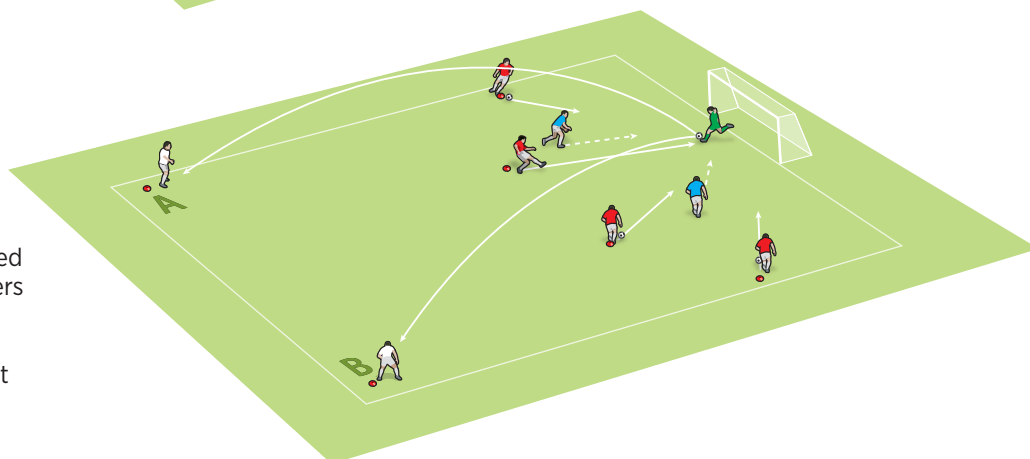
“Use your feet” • “Work quickly” • “Accuracy over power” • “Keep your eyes on the ball” • “Don’t panic”

1 Set up a 15 x 10 yards area. Place four cones half way between the goal and the end line spread across the area. This is a session where you must judge how far the goalkeepers should be kicking and adjust distances accordingly.

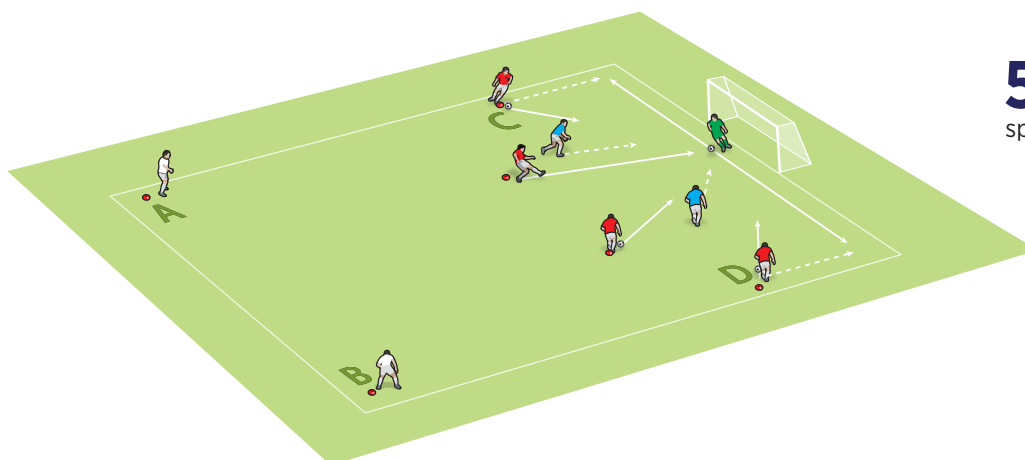


2 Split your players into four servers, two receivers and a goalkeeper, adding two pressing players for the progression.

3 Servers take turns to pass to the goalkeeper with the coach calling out A or B where the ball should be cleared to.



4 Once the goalkeeper has grasped the idea add two pressing players who follow the pass to pressure the goalkeeper. This gives match-like pressure to the goalkeeper who must remain calm and kick accurately.



5 Now the coach can call A, B, C or D where C/D is the fullback finding space for the keeper to pass to.

How many players do I need?

We used nine players in the session – seven in the first part and an extra two in the progression.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement

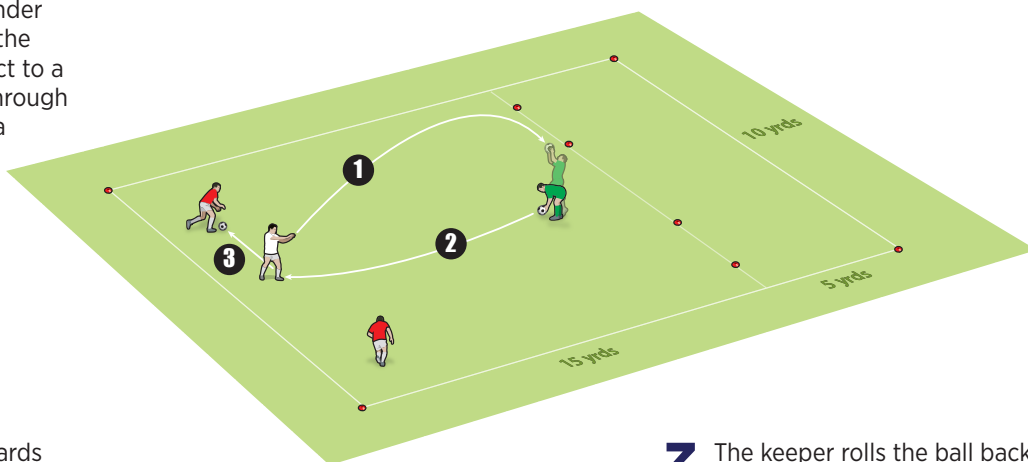
Cover through balls

ACTIVITY: PRESSURE STOPPER

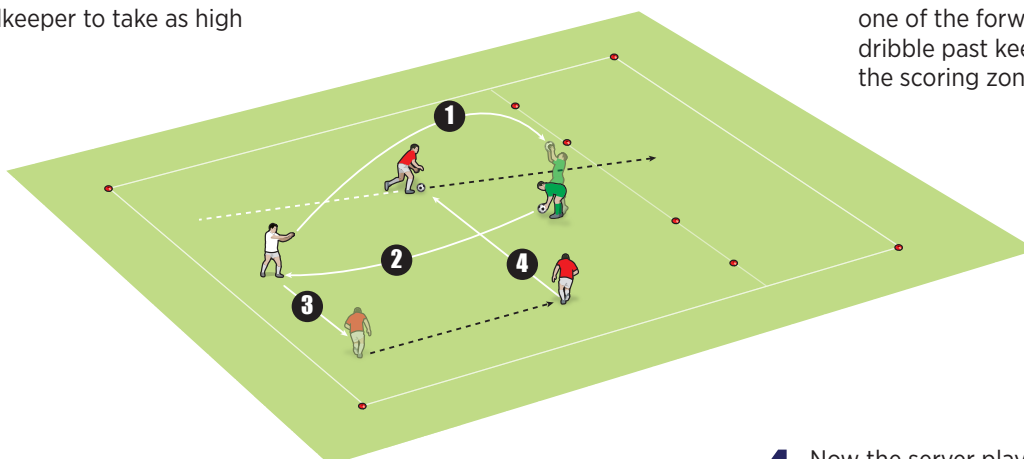
CALL OUT

“Watch the ball” • “Don’t dive in too quickly” • “Wait for the striker to make a move”
• “Anticipate the chip”

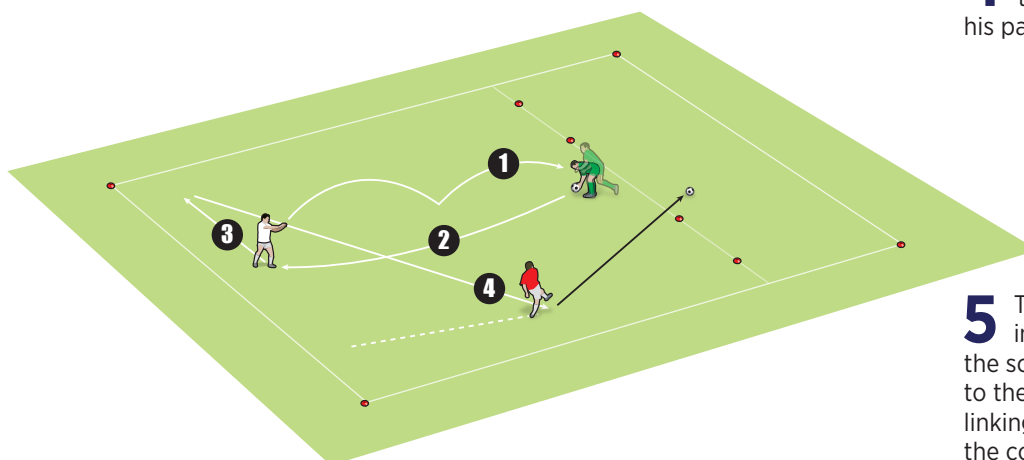
1 Youth goalkeepers often come under pressure from through balls into the penalty area where they need to react to a shot or a player or players running through 1v1 or 2v1. Set up a 10 x 20 yards area including a 5 yard end zone that includes a 4 yard scoring zone in the centre.



2 You need a server and two forwards plus your keeper. The server throws the ball up for the goalkeeper to take as high as possible.



3 The keeper rolls the ball back to the server who passes to one of the forwards to try and dribble past keeper 1v1 and into the scoring zone.



4 Now the server plays a ball to one of the two forwards who can link up with his partner to attack the goalie 2v1.

5 The forwards must try and get the ball into the end zone. If he can get into the scoring zone it counts double. It is up to the forward players to try and score by linking up and dribbling the ball between the cones while the goalkeeper has to try and save.

How many players do I need?

We used four players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

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SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18
HEADING

U15-U18 | HEADING 1

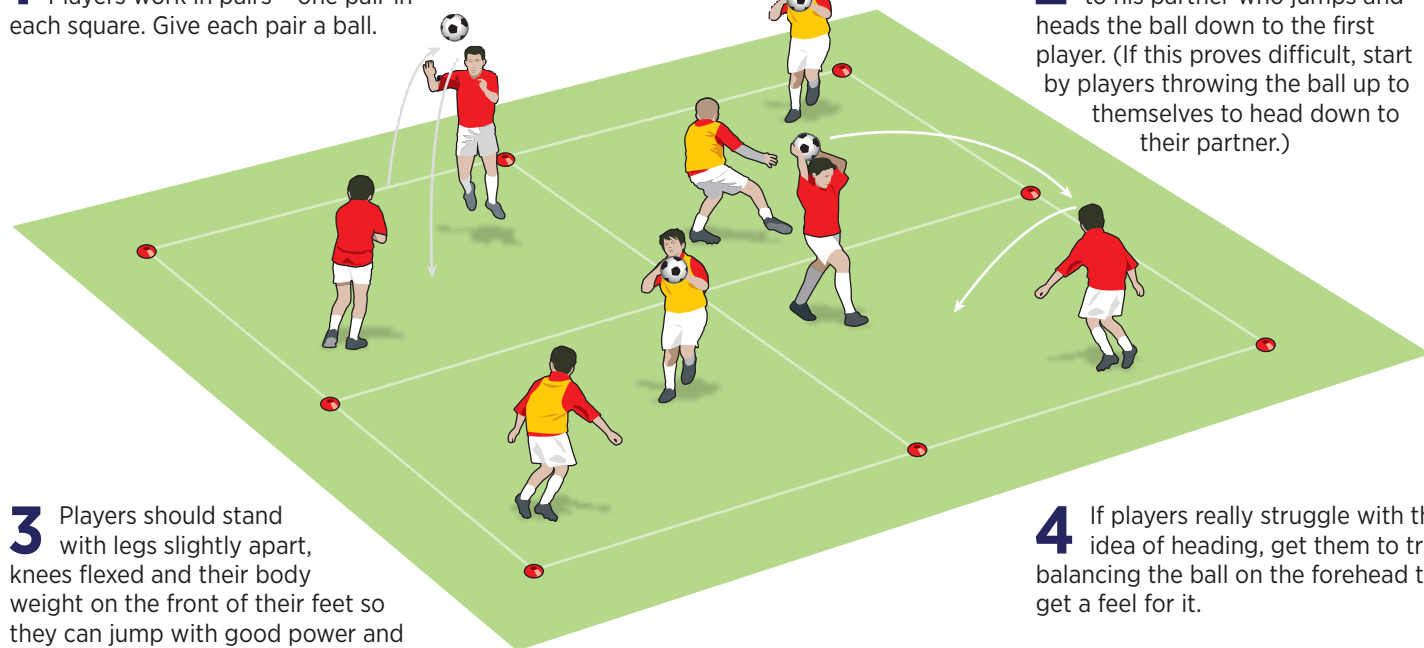
Correct heading technique in attack

ACTIVITY: ATTACKING HEADERS

CALL OUT

“Eyes open look at the ball” • “Put your weight on the balls of your feet” •
“Head the ball down”

1 Set up a grid of 5 yard squares. Players work in pairs – one pair in each square. Give each pair a ball.

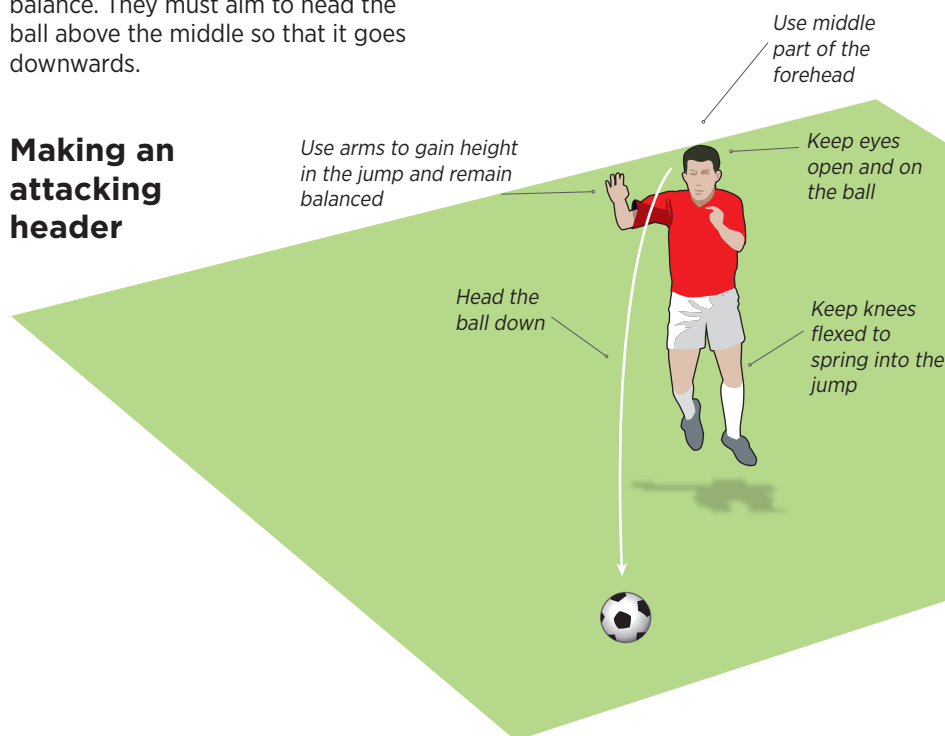


2 One player throws the ball up to his partner who jumps and heads the ball down to the first player. (If this proves difficult, start by players throwing the ball up to themselves to head down to their partner.)

3 Players should stand with legs slightly apart, knees flexed and their body weight on the front of their feet so they can jump with good power and balance. They must aim to head the ball above the middle so that it goes downwards.

4 If players really struggle with the idea of heading, get them to try balancing the ball on the forehead to get a feel for it.

Making an attacking header



Note: When starting with heading technique I tend to deflate the balls so they are not so hard when players practise heading in training. As the players get older they can practise with fully pumped up balls.

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	—>

U15-U18 | HEADING 2

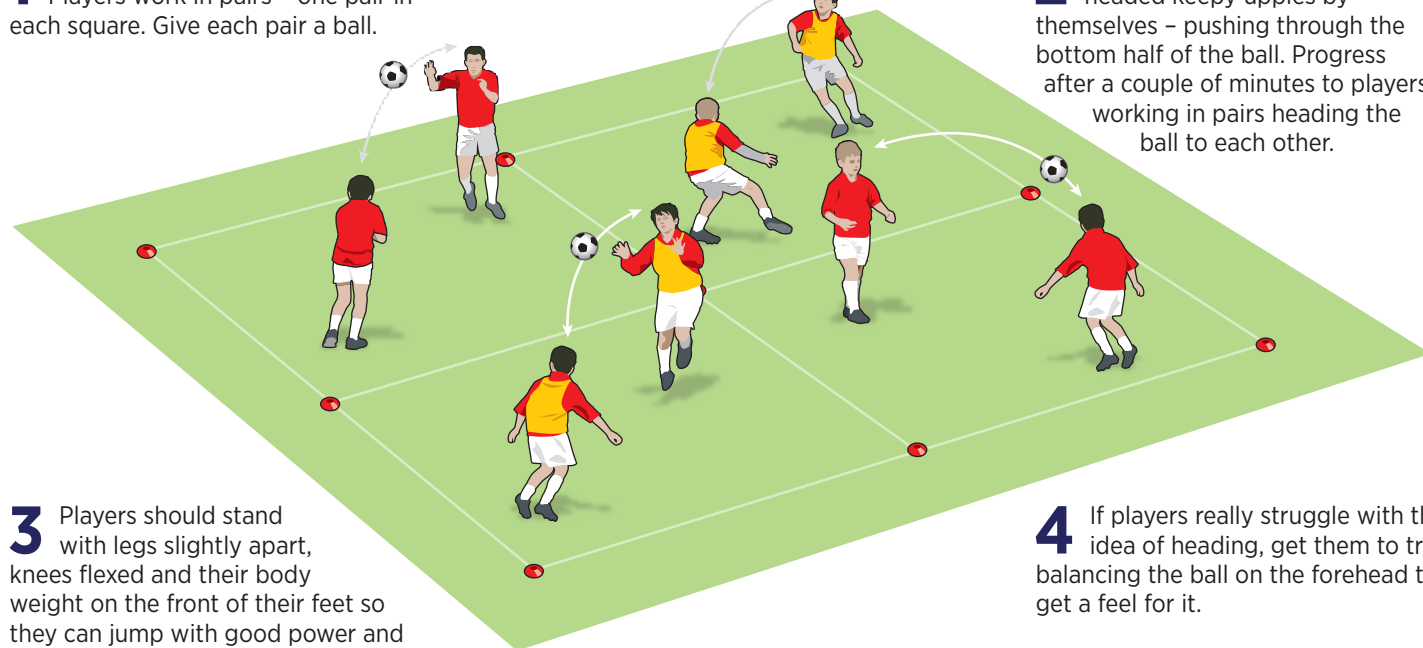
Correct heading technique in defence

ACTIVITY: DEFENSIVE HEADERS

CALL OUT

“Eyes open look at the ball” • “Put your weight on the balls of your feet” •
“Push upwards through the bottom of the ball”

1 Set up a grid of 5 yard squares. Players work in pairs – one pair in each square. Give each pair a ball.

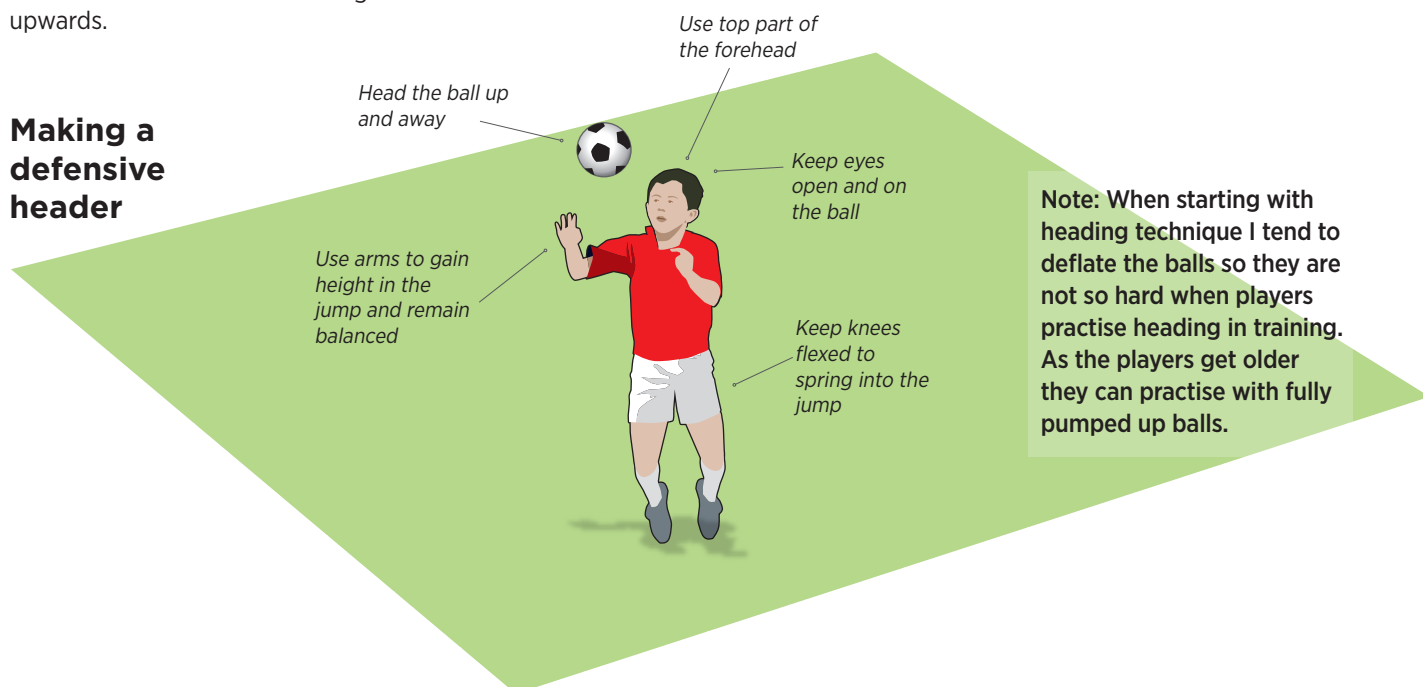


2 Start with players doing simple headed keepy uppies by themselves – pushing through the bottom half of the ball. Progress after a couple of minutes to players working in pairs heading the ball to each other.

3 Players should stand with legs slightly apart, knees flexed and their body weight on the front of their feet so they can jump with good power and balance. They must aim to head the ball below the middle so that it goes upwards.

4 If players really struggle with the idea of heading, get them to try balancing the ball on the forehead to get a feel for it.

Making a defensive header



Note: When starting with heading technique I tend to deflate the balls so they are not so hard when players practise heading in training. As the players get older they can practise with fully pumped up balls.

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	----->	----->
	Run with the ball	Shot
	----->	----->

U15-U18 | HEADING 3

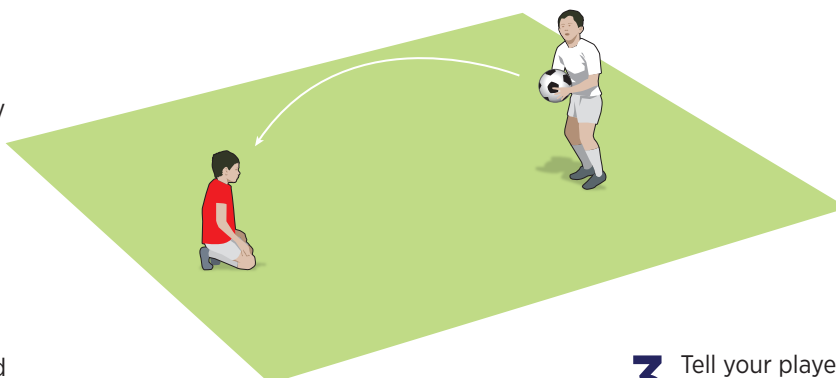
Fun heading race

GAME: HEAD TO HEAD

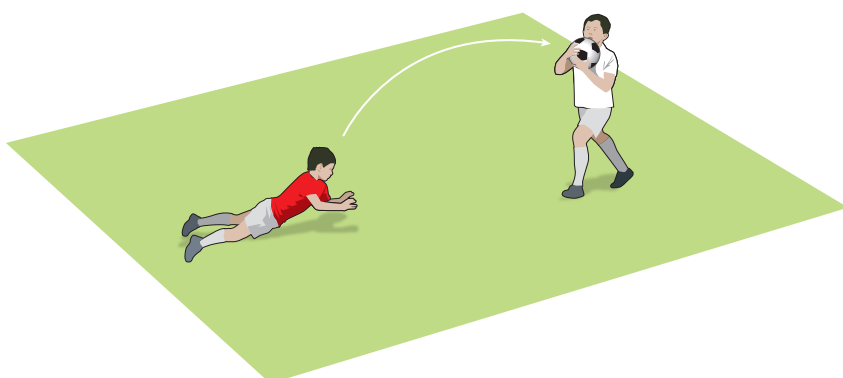
CALL OUT

“Throw the ball slightly in front of the player” • “Spring forward and head the ball back” • “Keep your eyes on the ball and mouth shut”

1 Get your players into pairs with one player as the server and the other the header. The header must start by kneeling up with his arms by his sides.



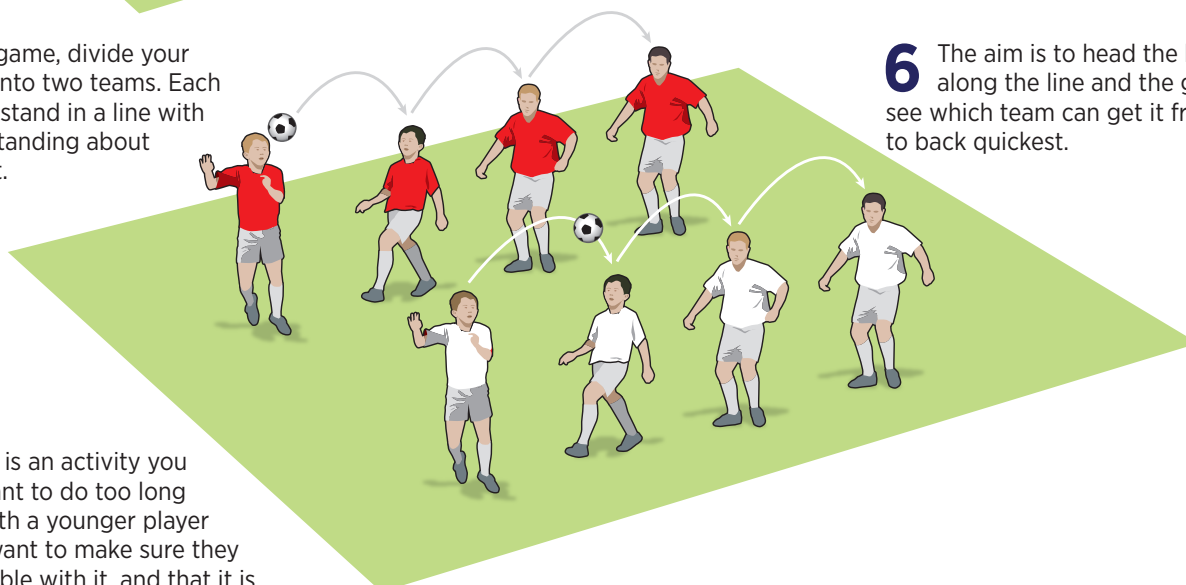
2 The server throws the ball and the player dives forward to head the ball, follow through and end up on his arms.



3 Tell your players to try to contact the ball and not let it contact them, and hit it on the hard part of their head using their whole body to follow through.

4 Make sure the players are taking turns to head and catch – try five headers then swap thrower and header.

5 For the game, divide your players into two teams. Each team should stand in a line with the players standing about 2 yards apart.



6 The aim is to head the ball back along the line and the game is to see which team can get it from front to back quickest.

7 Heading is an activity you don't want to do too long especially with a younger player but you do want to make sure they are comfortable with it, and that it is something they are not afraid of because it is a very important part of the game.

How many players do I need?

Players work in pairs to start with. We used eight players in a 4v4 for the heading race.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	Run with the ball	Shot

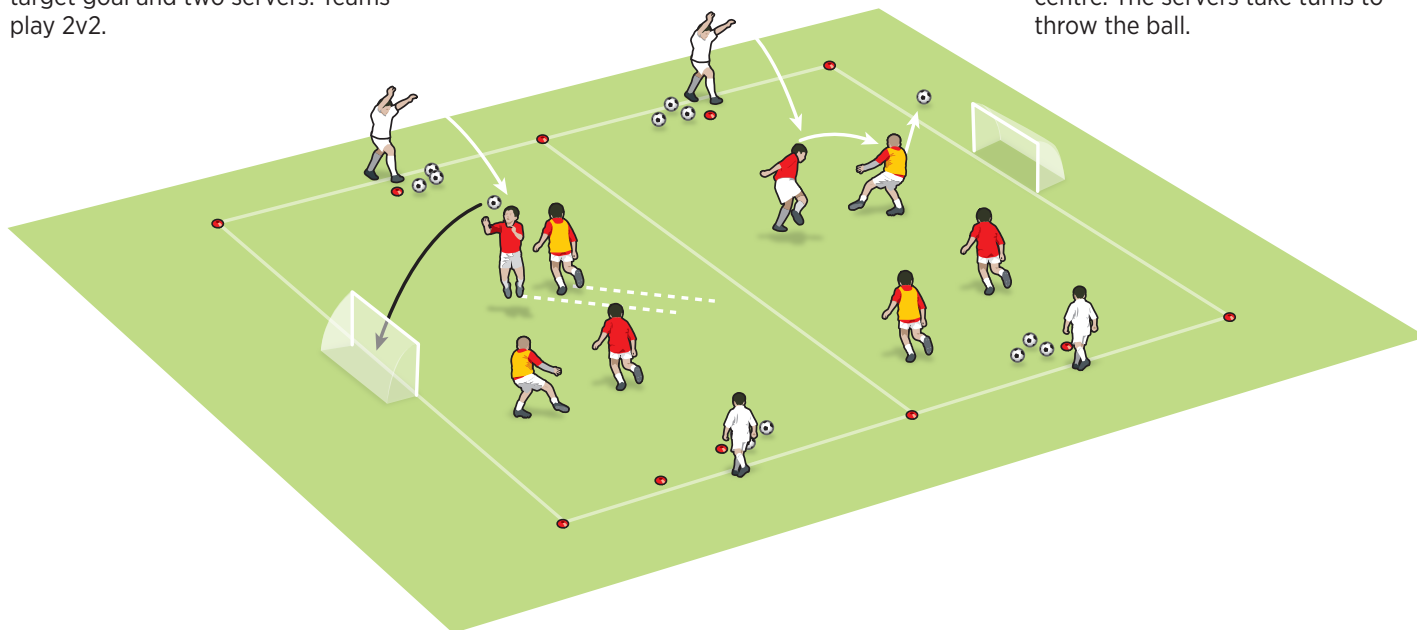
U15-U18 | HEADING 4

Win the first header

ACTIVITY: FIRST TO THE BALL

CALL OUT "Jump into the ball" • "Keep your eyes on the ball" • "Turn your head to direct the ball"

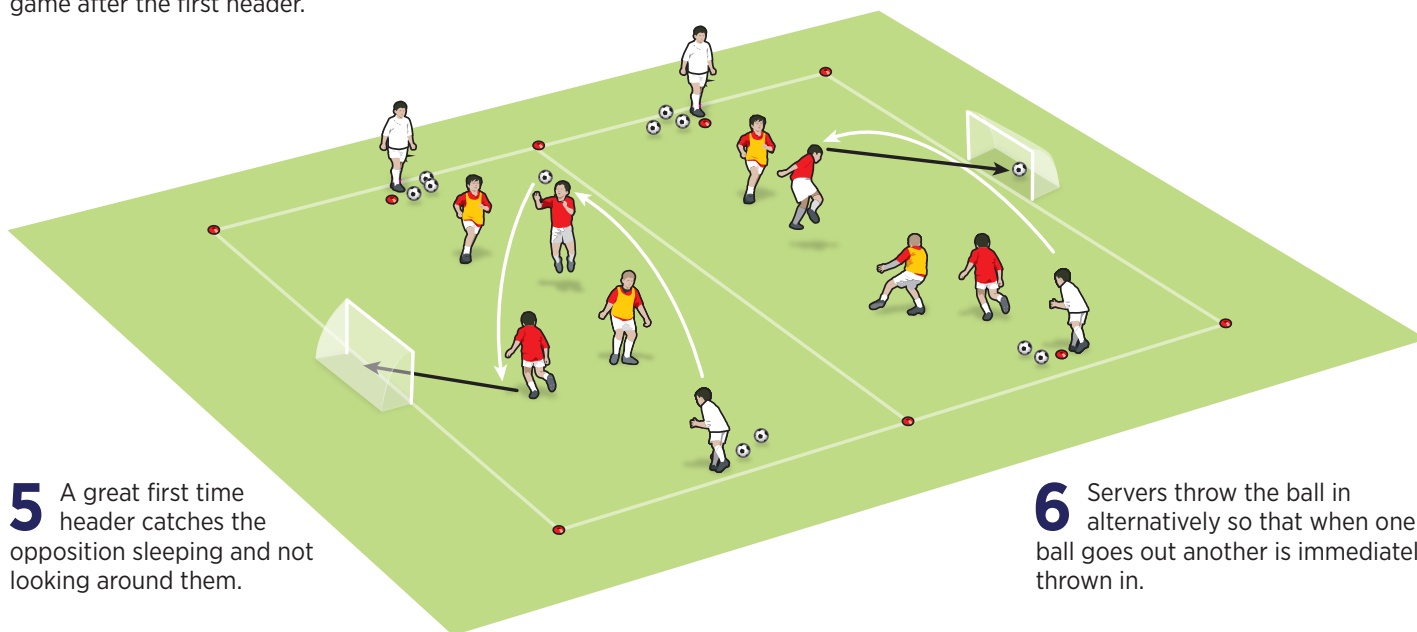
1 Set up a 20 x 20 yards area split into two zones. Each zone has a target goal and two servers. Teams play 2v2.



2 Play is started by one of the servers throwing into the centre. The servers take turns to throw the ball.

3 Players need to be first to the ball to direct the header either at goal or to a team mate. Play a normal game after the first header.

4 The session is a fast one and players soon tire and leave gaps, so swap pairs around every minute.



5 A great first time header catches the opposition sleeping and not looking around them.

6 Servers throw the ball in alternatively so that when one ball goes out another is immediately thrown in.

How many players do I need?

We used 12 players in the session.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	--->
	--->	--->
	--->	--->

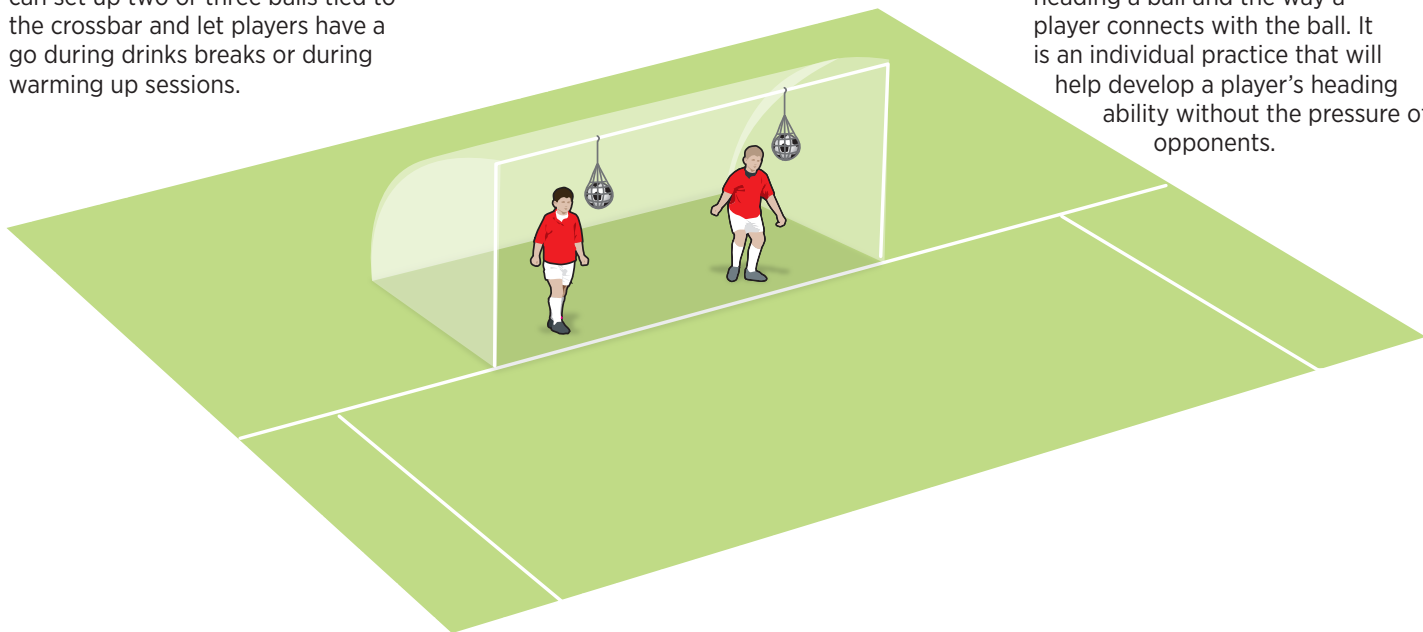
Simple heading

GAME: HEAD WITH POWER AND ACCURACY

CALL OUT

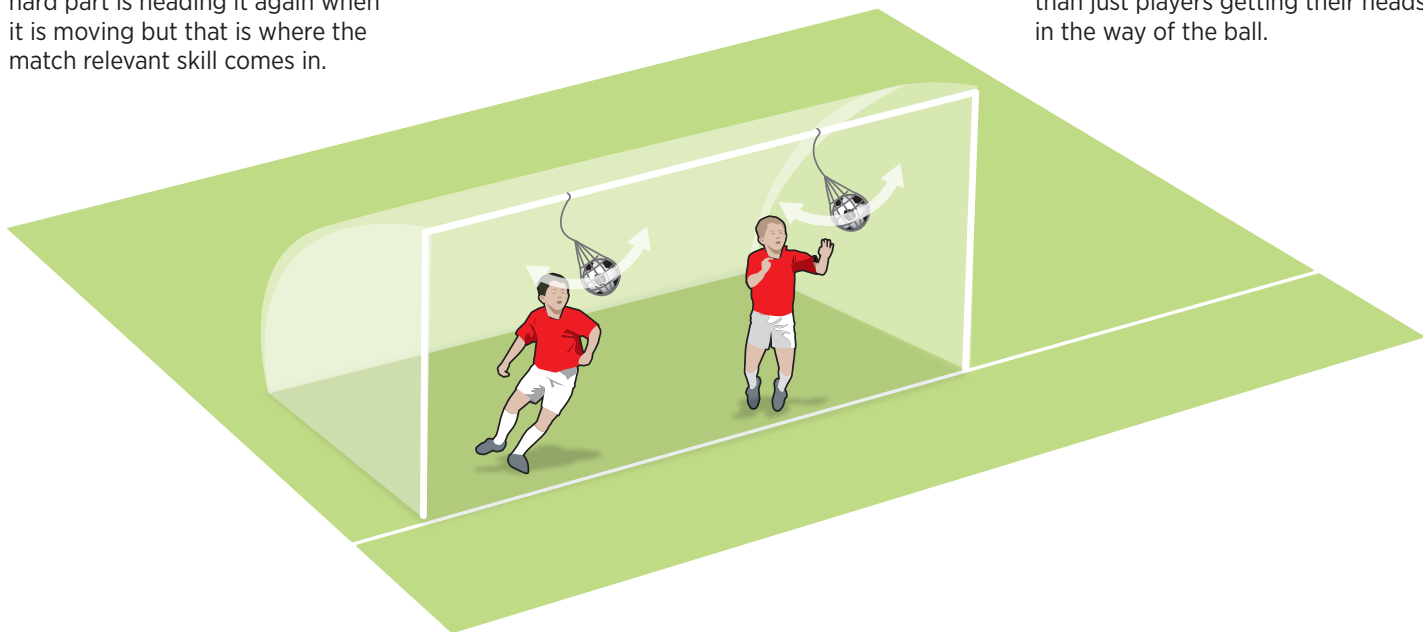
“Jump as high as you can” • “Keep your eyes on the ball” • “Head just below the centre”

1 You need a goal with a crossbar, rope, string bags and balls. You can set up two or three balls tied to the crossbar and let players have a go during drinks breaks or during warming up sessions.



2 This is all about learning the right technique to control heading a ball and the way a player connects with the ball. It is an individual practice that will help develop a player’s heading ability without the pressure of opponents.

3 Players should keep their eyes on the ball at all times and head the ball just below the centre. The hard part is heading it again when it is moving but that is where the match relevant skill comes in.



4 This is a great fun and an easy way to get used to heading a ball for pace and accuracy rather than just players getting their heads in the way of the ball.

How many players do I need?

Players work their own.

Key	Player movement	Ball movement
	--->	—>
	Run with the ball	Shot
	--->	—>

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SOCCER SKILLS ACTIVITIES

U15-U18

RESOURCES

Parental checklist: U15-U18 skills

NAME OF PLAYER:	Beginning	Developing	Mastering
DATE:			
BALL CONTROL			
1 Receive, control and pass			
2 Shape out wide			
3 Success in 1v1 battles			
4 First touch control			
5 Pass 10 yards to a team mate			
6 Think and control the ball			
7 Dribble with the ball and shoot			
8 Moving through the thirds			
9 Running with the ball			
ATTACKING			
1 Short attacking passing			
2 Beat a player pass or go			
3 Develop possession skills			
4 Attacking in key skill areas			
5 Attacking build up play			
6 Communicate in attacking areas			
7 Understanding counter attacking			
8 Taking control in game play			
9 Creative in the final third			
10 Tactical attacking movement			

Notes: This assessment checklist is intended as a guide to progress only. Assess your players' progress against the criteria above for 15-to 18-year-olds. Some skills will be mastered in a short space of time, others will take longer. Remember that children develop at different rates. Make copies of this page and regularly reassess your players' progress as a way of providing praise.

Parental checklist: U15-U18 skills

NAME OF PLAYER:	Beginning	Developing	Mastering
DATE:			
DEFENDING			
1 Defensive cover			
2 Working in a back three			
3 Passing out from the back			
4 Win the ball and pass			
5 Defending in midfield			
6 Defending in small groups			
7 Bring the ball out of defence			
8 Defending tactics			
9 Full team pressing			
10 Control without the ball			
11 Recover to a defensive position			
SKILLS			
1 180° Spin			
2 The Cruyff turn			
3 Volley			
4 First touch			
5 Jockeying			
6 The stop turn			
7 Making a slide tackle and a block tackle			
8 The feint			

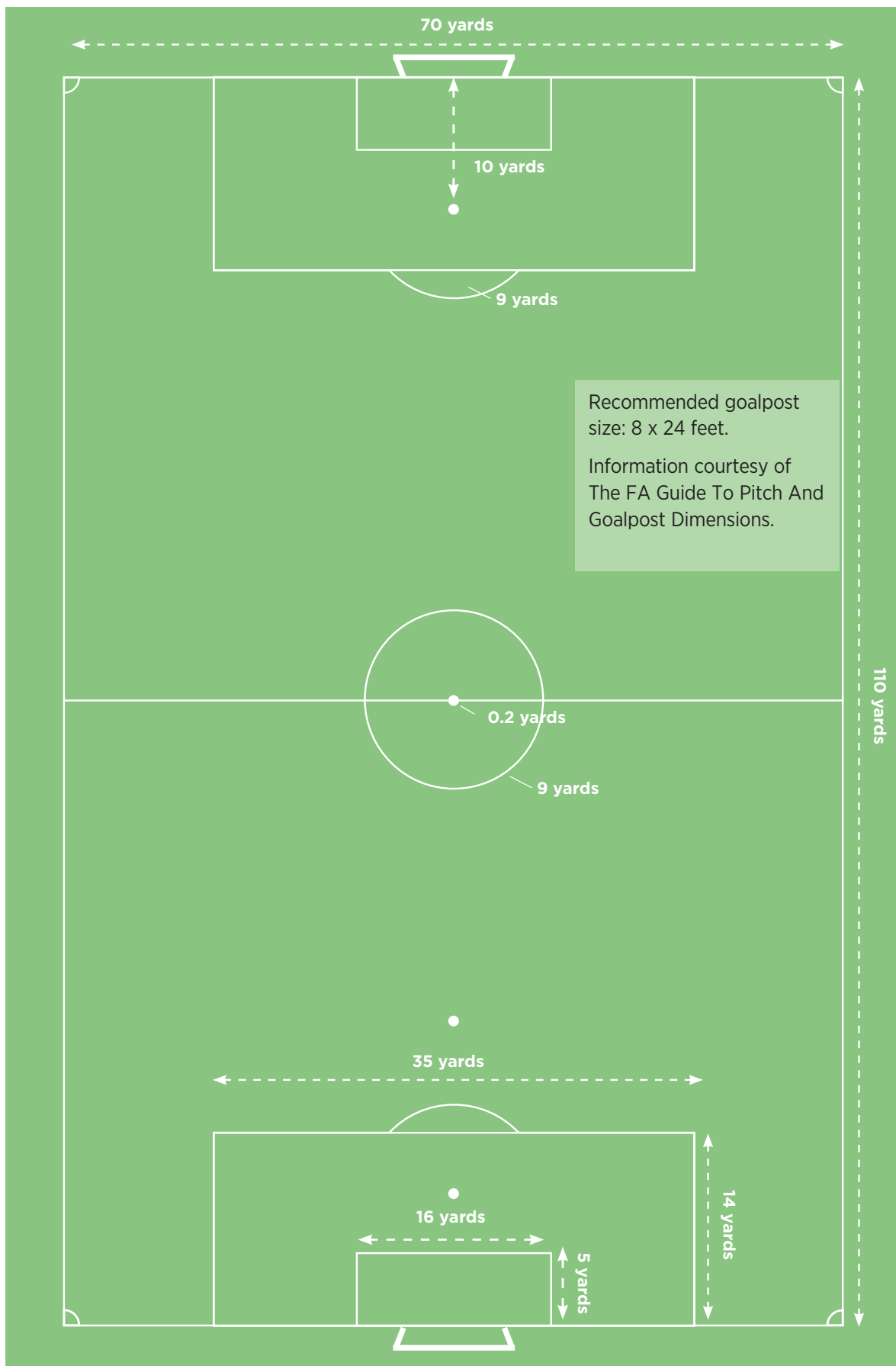
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Parental checklist: U15-U18 skills

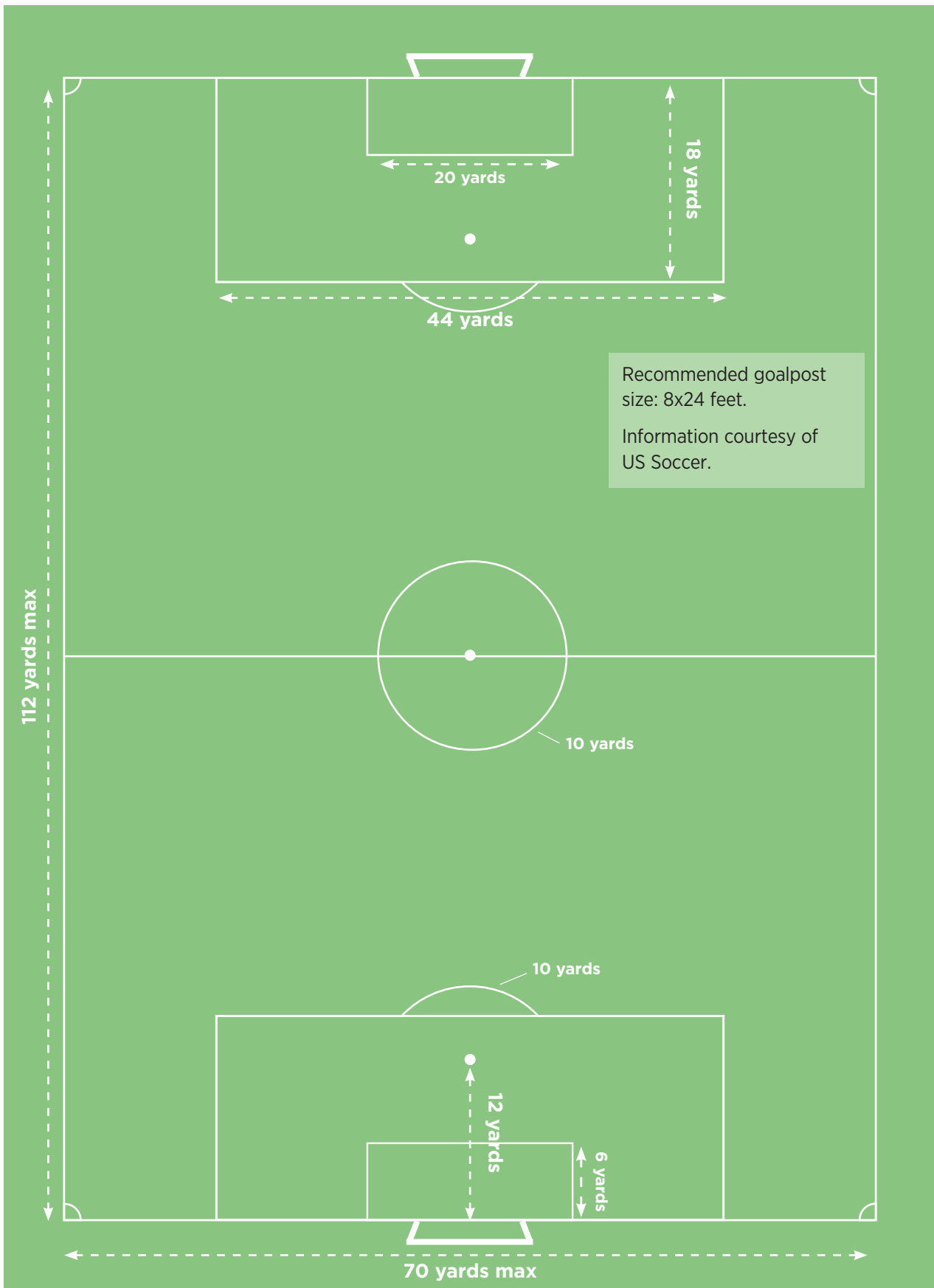
NAME OF PLAYER:	Beginning	Developing	Mastering
DATE:			
RESTARTS			
1 Kick-off			
2 Throw-in			
3 Corner kick			
4 Free kick			
5 Penalty kick			
GOALKEEPING			
1 Correct diving technique			
2 Punching the ball			
3 Shot stopping reactions			
4 Quick reactions and positioning			
5 Gather a rolling ball			
6 Goalie wars			
7 Footwork matters most			
8 Playing as a sweeper			
9 Survive the chaos			
10 Move and block			
11 Face the striker			
12 Goalkeeper kicking			
13 Goalkeeper distribution			
14 Respond to a back pass			
15 Cover through balls			
HEADING			
1 Correct heading technique in attack			
2 Correct heading technique in defence			
3 Fun heading race			
4 Win the first header			
5 Simple heading			

Notes: This assessment checklist is intended as a guide to progress only. Assess your players' progress against the criteria above for 15-to 18-year-olds. Some skills will be mastered in a short space of time, others will take longer. Remember that children develop at different rates. Make copies of this page and regularly reassess your players' progress as a way of providing praise.

FA RECOMMENDED PITCH SIZE U15-U18



US SOCCER PITCH SIZE U15-U18



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Clarke

As Head Coach of Soccer Coach Weekly, David Clarke provides thousands of subscribers worldwide with drills, insight, interviews and webinars covering all aspects of coaching. Soccer Coach Weekly is now in its ninth season with over 400 issues produced.

Dave has coached grassroots teams for 20 years, from U7s to U16s and has always had as his goal to help young players to be the best they can.

Dave's qualifications include: UEFA B license and FA youth module 1, 2 and 3, the Coerver Youth Module, and is a lecturer and presenter for the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and a course tutor.



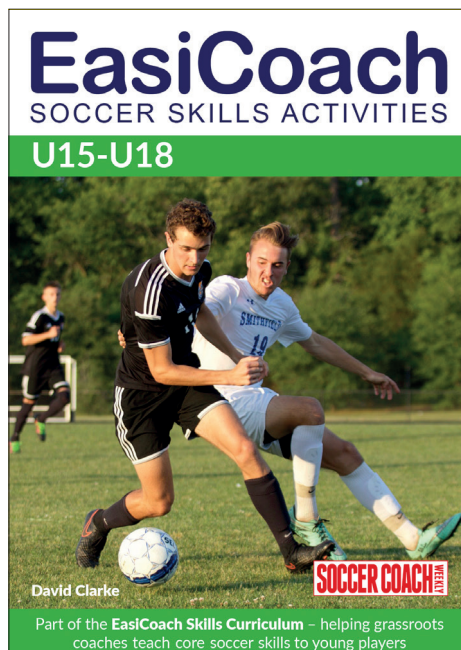
How EasiCoach Was Created...

EasiCoach Soccer Curriculum™ has been created by the people who publish Soccer Coach Weekly coaching magazine. We have been publishing sports coaching advice for grassroots coaches since 2003.

Covering the key core skills required for consistent player development across five age ranges from U7 to U16, EasiCoach follows the latest guidelines on player development and has been approved by senior national coaching development officers.

As a coaching tool aimed at helping beginner coaches, volunteer assistants and helpers, EasiCoach offers a guaranteed programme of skills development activities every season.

EasiCoach is owned by Green Star Media Ltd, which provides informed, easy-to-follow advice for 450,000 soccer, rugby and basketball coaches in more than 80 countries. For more information, please visit www.greenstarmedia.net



EasiCoach provides ready-made, age-appropriate, safe training activities, set out clearly on a single page, that even a child could understand.

For each activity there is also a relevant game, so the players learn a skill in an activity and then use that skill in a game.

Follow all the materials in this manual and your players will be learning the right skills for their age group.

They will be having more fun, and be on a gradual development pathway that will make them better, more skilful, players and continue playing soccer for longer.

SOCCER COACH WEEKLY