



ENGLAND
FOOTBALL



FutureFit

KNOW YOUR FORMAT

The How-to Guide

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Grassroots is thriving!



The Grassroots game is thriving. More players are playing, more coaches are coaching and we have a flourishing volunteer network.

We're all part of something bigger

Every time our England youth and senior teams take to the pitch, they carry the dreams of thousands of grassroots players and volunteers who make football possible in every corner of our country. As The FA's Head of Grassroots Coach Development, I'm proud to champion everything our England teams stand for.

Celebrating our thriving national game

English football is unique. Across our communities, football thrives because of the passion and commitment of volunteers who dedicate their time to ensure teams can play week after week. This resource is designed to celebrate that effort and make the task of managing a grassroots or schools team simpler, more enjoyable and more rewarding.

Inside this guide, you'll discover:

- Clear guidance on formats from 3v3 to 11v11 – including pitch and goal sizes, how the game is played and the benefits of each format.
- Best practice – from restarts to retreat lines, helping teachers, referees, coaches, players and parents create a positive matchday experience.
- Session planning and programme examples – a range of sample plans and practices for every format to inspire fun, player development and teamwork.

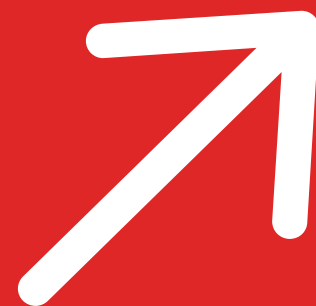
Together, we can ensure that every child and adult who steps onto the pitch feels part of something bigger – a game that unites communities and inspires generations.

John Folwell

Head of Grassroots Coach Development



The Player Pathway



The FA is making changes to maximise every child's experience of the game.

These changes will be introduced through our player pathway below, with changes to playing formats going live from the start of the 2026–2027 season.

Aligning the playing formats with primary and secondary education gives our young people consistency in their football experience. Here are the formats a player will experience at any given age group:

Primary School							Secondary School						
U5	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13	U14	U15	U16	U17	U18
Play Phase													
		3v3											
			5v5										
					7v7								
							9v9						
									11v11				
5v5 Futsal													

3v3

3v3 will be introduced from the 2026–27 season.

It is a headline change being brought in as part of Future Fit.

This playing format is for u7s.

5v5

From the 2026–27 season, u8s and u9's will play 5v5.

7v7

From the 2026–27 season, u10s and u11s will play 7v7.

9v9

From the 2026–27 season, u12s will continue to play 9v9 but so will u13s.

11v11

From the 2026–27 season, u14s and above will play 11v11.

Click or scan for more resources about 3v3:

The Youth Development Framework



With the aspiration to maximise a child's experience of football, the Youth Development Framework contains multiple layers that underpin and inform these changes. There are two themes that shape our approach to driving change: **Championing Children's Rights and Promoting the Spirit of the Game.**

Together, we recognise that all children have rights and it's our responsibility as adults to continually honour these for all children who play football. Equally important, is that we uphold the spirit of the game. Not all football looks the same, but there's a spirit that exists whatever the format of play. That spirit is built around the basics of the game: two teams respectfully competing, trying to stop their opponent from scoring whilst trying to score, themselves. The emotions we feel and the lessons we learn are a shared experience.

The player experience is created from four primary elements:

- 1. Playing opportunities:** Providing an appropriate volume and variety of playing opportunities for all children to support their development and enjoyment of the game.
- 2. Coaches and Teachers:** Supporting coaches to use teaching and learning strategies to develop the person and the player through the games that they play.
- 3. Environment:** Creating a safe, fun and inclusive environment for a child's development both on and off the pitch.
- 4. Parents and Carers:** Supporting parents, carers and families to play their part in making youth football the best possible environment and experience for all children.

The outer ring of the model below highlights the outcomes we believe we will achieve by delivering this framework.

- Instilling a joy of being physically active to support happy, healthy lives.
- Developing more skilful players who are capable of reaching their footballing potential.
- Supporting the all-round development of young people and setting them up to thrive inside and outside football.
- Inspiring a lifelong love of the game leading to lasting engagement in the sport.



What does this mean for my grassroots or school team?



	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
U7	3v3	3v3	3v3	3v3
U8	5v5	5v5	5v5	5v5
U9	5v5	5v5	5v5	5v5
U10	7v7	7v7	7v7	7v7
U11	7v7	7v7	7v7	7v7
U12	9v9	9v9	9v9	9v9
U13	9v9	9v9	9v9	9v9
U14	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11
U15	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11
U16	11v11	11v11	11v11	11v11

Here's an example that tracks a playing journey from the 2025–2026 season



Key Laws and Regulations



	U7 (Up to 3v3)	U8 & U9 (Up to 5v5)	U10 & U11 (Up to 7v7)	U12 & U13 (Up to 9v9)	U14+ (Up to 11v11)
Match Length	6–10 mins	40 mins	50 mins	60 mins	70–90 mins
Ball Size	Size 3	Size 3	Size 3	Size 4	Size 5
Goal Size	4ft x 2.5ft / 120 x 75cm	12ft x 6ft	12ft x 6ft	16ft x 7ft	21ft x 7ft / 24ft x 8ft
Goalkeeper	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Heading	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Throw-ins	✗ (Pass/Dribble)	✗ (Pass/Dribble)	✗ (Pass/Dribble)	✓	✓
Corners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Offside	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Power Play	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Retreat Line	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Back Pass Rule	N/A (No GK)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Substitutes	✗ (Everyone plays)	✓ (Rolling)	✓ (Rolling)	✓ (Rolling)	✓ (Rolling)
Officials	✗ (Facilitator)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes:

U7 Restarts: All restarts (goal line, corners, sidelines, free kicks) give players the option to dribble or pass-in.

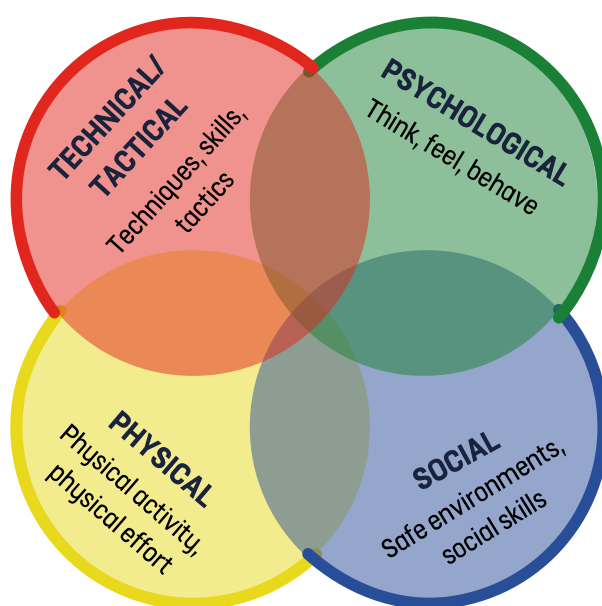
Playing Time: For u7, all children play (no subs). For u8 and above, equal playing time (at least 50%) is the best practice recommendation.

Evolving and developing players within your format

By using The FA Four Corner Model as a thinking tool, you can recognise the holistic needs of your players in their format of the game.

Player Considerations:

- Q 1. Where are they at currently?
- Q 2. What do they need help with at the moment?
- Q 3. How do I help them?
- Q 4. What do players need to play within their format of the game?



Top tips for coaches/teachers:

These will help you support your players by answering their needs as players as well as your needs as a coach.

Planning skills

- Plan sessions and matchdays in line with intended outcomes and your playing philosophy.
- Link training to matchday. Treat matchdays as learning opportunities for your players.
- Understand individual differences, age/stage priorities, and share training and matchday outcomes with players.
- Take a holistic approach (technical, physical, psychological, social) to help develop players.
- Include player voice and choice when setting challenges or targets for them.

Practice design

- Recognise different practice types, their returns and how they can help your players within the game format that they play.
- Adapt practices to meet player needs and goals.
- Apply invasion game principles in all sessions (direction, opposition, scoring).

Matchday and session management

- Make in-game decisions to help players develop and learn new skills and playing positions.
- Deliver coaching points aligned to intended outcomes. Be consistent with this to help players be clear about what you want them to learn and do.
- Manage mistakes constructively: observe, notice and support the players.
- Use matchdays and training as opportunities for learning and reflection.

Click or scan to watch
Coachcast knowing
your players:



Promote a thriving learning environment

- Embed safety, respect and enjoyment into the environment.
- Foster belonging and inclusion, and help manage individual differences.
- Encourage voice and choice. Be positive and enthusiastic, and seek players' ideas.

Maximise learning off the pitch

- Use tasks to help players reflect on training and matchday.

Use a player-development focus

Technical

- Link individual tactics to skill. For more information on this, please see QR below.
- Understand and coach core skills and core moves within the formats.

Click or scan to watch the ten core skills every player needs and how to coach them:



Physical

- Develop movement skills across all ages and positions.
- Understand player maturity and relative-age effects.

Psychological

- Create a positive, thriving learning environment.
- Help develop motivation: make players feel valued and capable.

Social

- Develop social skills for football and life.
- Encourage teamwork and communication.

Game Understanding

- Apply principles of play in all sessions (e.g. scoring goals, stopping goals).
- Use different formats to help players develop.

Self

- Promote self-awareness and reflection between players and yourself as the coach. Listen, get feedback and allow choice.



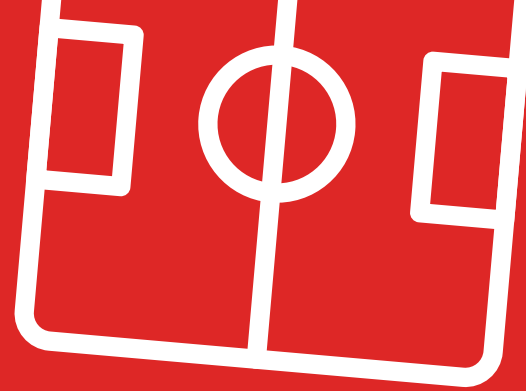
Click or scan for more info on The FA Four Corner Model:



Click or scan for more info on how coaches can support players as they grow and mature:



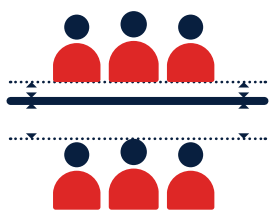
Best practice: sideline restarts



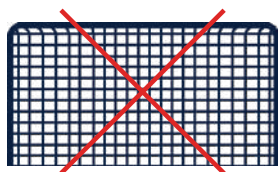
Using the sideline restart encourages young players and their teams to develop their style of play, to be comfortable in possession and to build attacks.

The sideline restart rule:

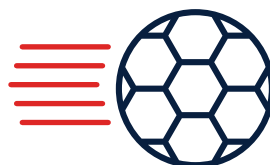
In the 3v3, 5v5 and 7v7 formats, when the whole of the ball crosses the touchline (on the ground or in the air) a pass-in or dribble-in is awarded instead of a throw-in.



All opponents must stand at least three metres for 3v3 and five yards away from the restart point for 5v5 and 7v7.



A goal cannot be scored directly from a pass-in.



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



A player taking a pass-in may touch the ball again before another player does.

Why Sideline Restarts matter:

Sideline restarts develop players holistically across The FA Four Corner Model:

TECHNICAL / TACTICAL

They improve short passing over varying distances, develop individual possession skills like dribbling and help develop passer and receiver relationships between units of players.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

They build confidence, concentration, communication, and scanning and risk assessment skills.

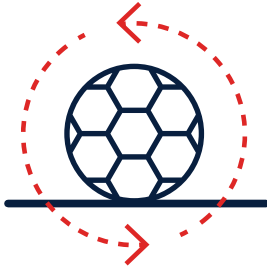
SOCIAL

They encourage cooperation, relationships, teamwork and the understanding of different roles.

PHYSICAL

They develop agility, balance, coordination (ABCs), game speed, and on/off-ball movement.

The key benefits: Sideline restarts promote decision-making and keep the game flowing.



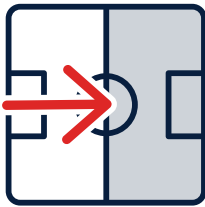
Make sure players understand that sideline restarts aren't just about getting the ball back in quickly. They can also help keep possession and build play.



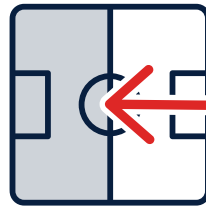
Recognise players for choosing the right option, even if the execution isn't perfect.



Avoid communicating instructions. Let players solve problems themselves. This builds confidence and creativity.



In the attacking half a dribble-in may create overloads or goalscoring opportunities



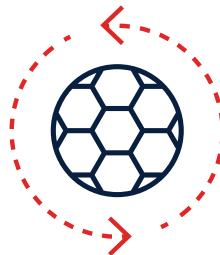
In the defending half either a safer pass to build possession or a dribble-in to exploit space?



Encourage players to choose between passing or dribbling based on the situation. Help players learn from their decisions by practicing this within training sessions: "Shall I pass or dribble? Which is the better option?"



Discuss opponents and their positioning. Teach players to assess and explore 'risk' for the best solution.



Pre-match briefing: Explain restart options and encourage players to try both passing and dribbling.



Ask players: "What helped us keep the ball from the sideline restart?"

Click or scan to explore these resources:



Six Core Capabilities



Two-Player Core Moves



Three-Player Core moves

Further Learning:



Video Guide - Pass-ins and Dribble-ins

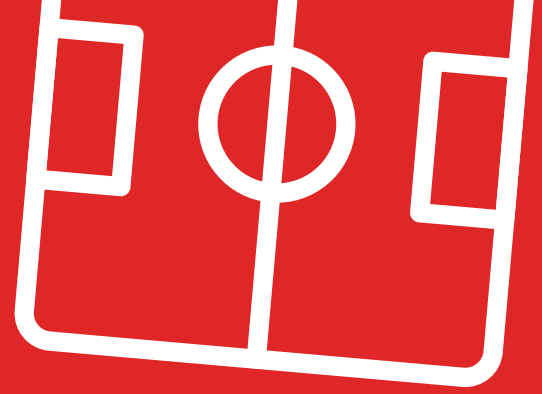


Heading & Restarts Guidance



If parents are present: Share key messages so they reinforce encouragement rather than give tactical advice.

Best practice: retreat line



Using the retreat line encourages young players and the team to develop their style of play, to be comfortable in possession and to support an attack from deep.

The retreat line rule:

The team without the ball at a goal line restart must retreat to their own half until the ball is in play. This is known as the retreat line.

Once the ball is in play, the team without the ball can try and win it back. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.

TECHNICAL/ TACTICAL

Gives players time to develop their first touch and play accurate short passes or travel with the ball under initial minimal pressure. It encourages defenders and goalkeepers to build play through the thirds rather than resorting to long clearances. Players learn positioning to help create more space and time for themselves as they look to build and maintain possession. Players develop the ability to scan, identify space and anticipate how to deal with the opposition press.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

It reduces fear of losing the ball near the goal, allowing players to take risks and learn. Players assess options – play short, dribble or switch play – based on time and space. Players develop resilience by making decisions and learning from mistakes.

SOCIAL

Helps players develop teamwork and communication. It encourages problem-solving when opponents press once the ball is in play and helps teammates combine.

PHYSICAL

Receiving and turning under pressure improves on/off the ball movement skills as players develop balance, coordination and agility.

The FA's insights show that using the retreat line increases passing sequences and technical involvement, creating a more development-focused environment rather than a 'kick and chase' game.

Top Tips for Coaches/Teachers

- **Brief players** on the purpose of the retreat line.
- **Show players where the retreat line is** and what it looks like in practice.
- **Walk through a goal kick scenario** so they see the movement of both attacking and defending players.
- **Reinforce patience and composure** when playing out from the back.
- **Encourage parents to support the process** rather than shouting instructions.
- **Praise attempts to play out** even if mistakes happen – focus on learning, not results.
- **Encourage defenders** to create width, midfielders to offer depth and forward players to give the pitch height and length.



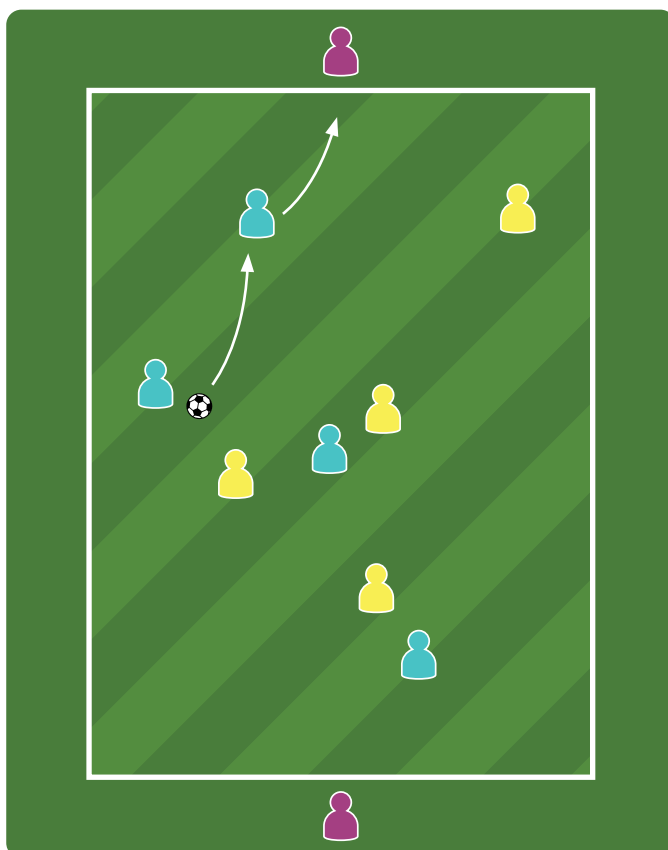
- **Use freeze moments** in training sessions to ask: "What options do you see?" This will help build awareness.
- **Try to incorporate Goalkeepers** within your coaching sessions and include them in your coaching practices to help their playing out from the back skills.
- **In coaching sessions begin, if needed, with unopposed practice.** For example, the goalkeeper plays to defenders, defenders pass to midfielders, and they try to progress up the pitch. Then gradually add pressure where one defender presses, then two defenders press before introducing full opposition.

Practical support

Using practices such as the 'Target' game (illustrated here) can help players develop outcomes such as:

- Receiving on the half turn
- Angled passing between players
- Movement off the ball to create space
- Communication with teammates
- Making effective decisions
- Working together as a team
- Problem solving of game-like situations

You can develop this by adding a retreat line into the practice, or by adding goals with goalkeepers within them to help create realism.



Planning practices

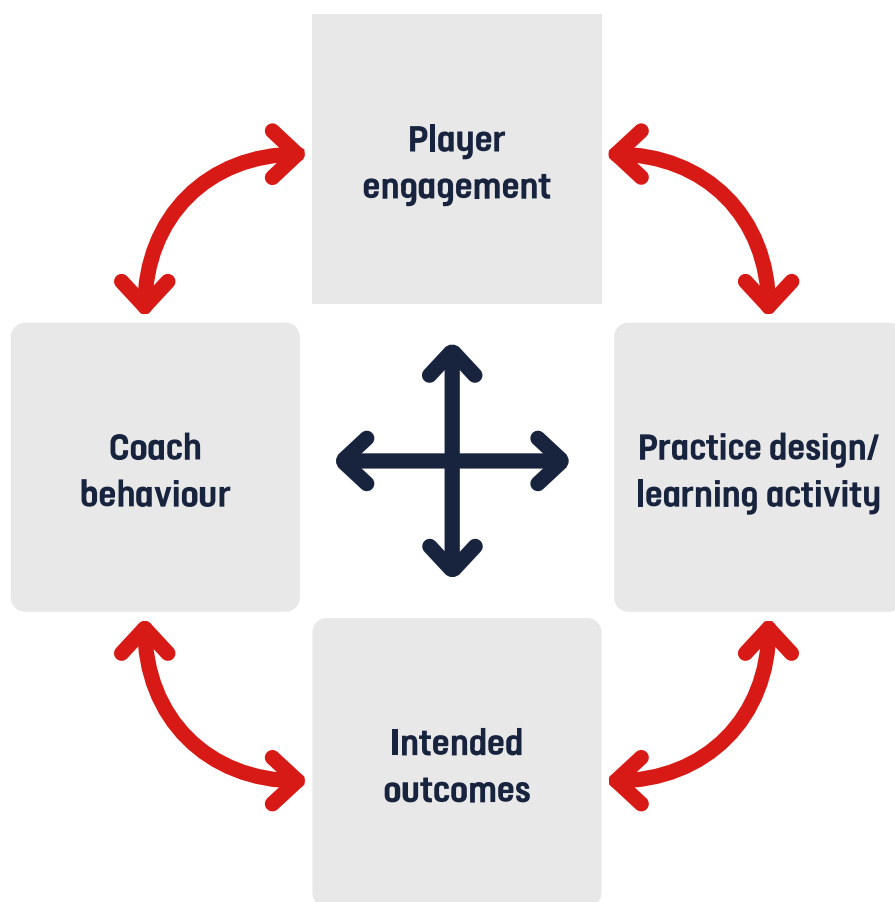
When planning practices, training sessions and coaching programmes, consider:

Intended outcomes: Who am I working with and what am I trying to help them get better at?

Player engagement: How do I want the players to feel? Be supported? Learn?

Practice design: What type of practices connect with the intended outcomes and player engagement?

Coach behaviour: How can you as the coach provide added value with your actions, interventions and behaviours?



Coach planning and reflective mode
Adapted from (Muir, B., Morgan, G., and Abraham, A.)

For more info on the coach planning and reflective model see here:



Practice spectrum

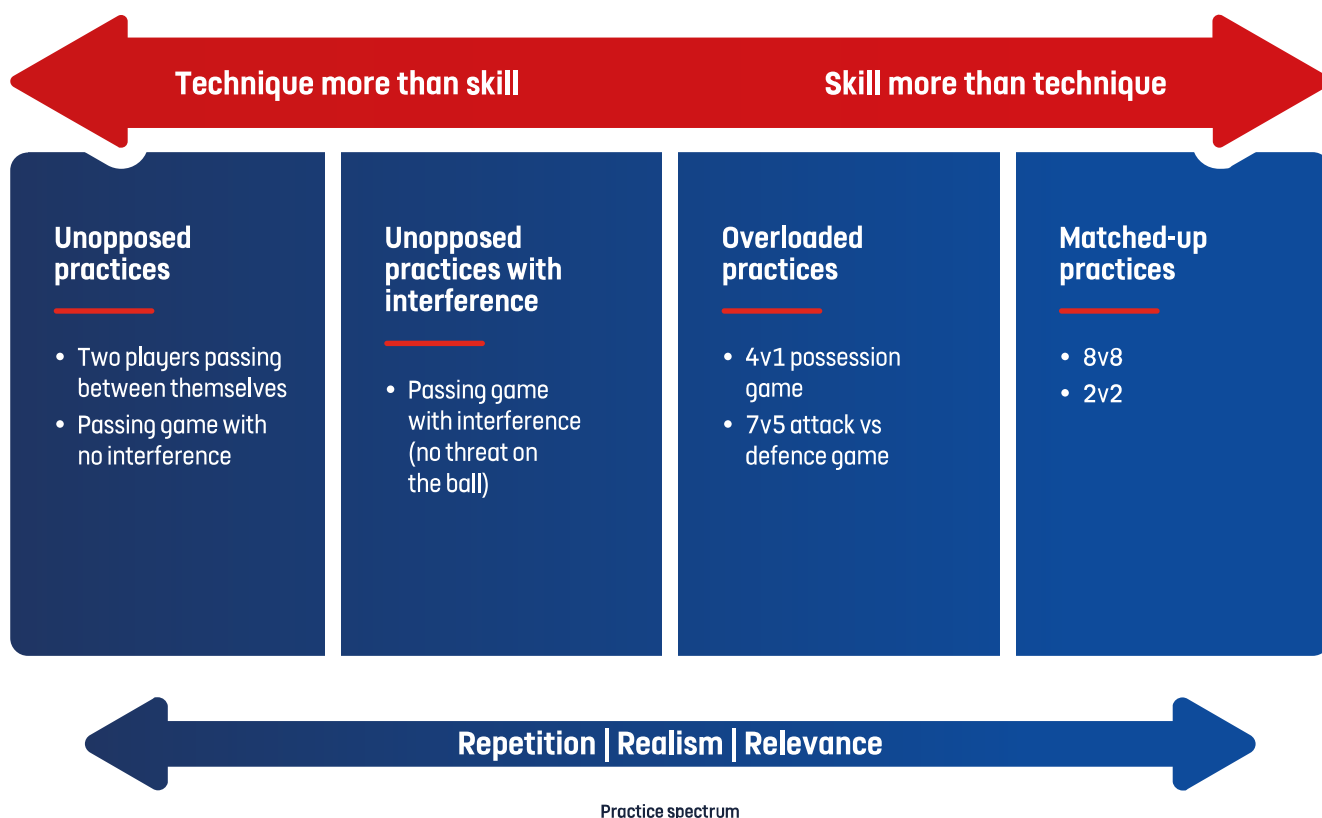
Practices sit on a spectrum. They all have particular benefits for players across various areas:

When planning a practice as a teacher or coach, you need to understand the benefits, the effects on players and the reason for these effects.

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

Across the grassroots game, we encourage coaches to enable players to experience practices across the spectrum.

A greater understanding of practice design will help you to provide the best support to your players.



Click or scan for more info on the practice spectrum:



Structuring sessions



What session structures can coaches and teachers use?

Whole-part-whole

This starts with a game and then focuses on a specific technique or skill, before finishing with another game. It's a great way to get players to apply what they've learned before they have a chance to forget.

Up the steps

This is when you increase the difficulty throughout the session. Don't be afraid to start higher for some players to give them the challenge they need.

Carousel

This is where you set up different activities and move players between them. It takes a little effort to organise but allows each player to engage in all the activities.

Click or scan for further details on structuring your coaching:



Making coaching inclusive

The STEP model is a tool used by coaches to adapt activities to make them more inclusive and engaging for players of all abilities.

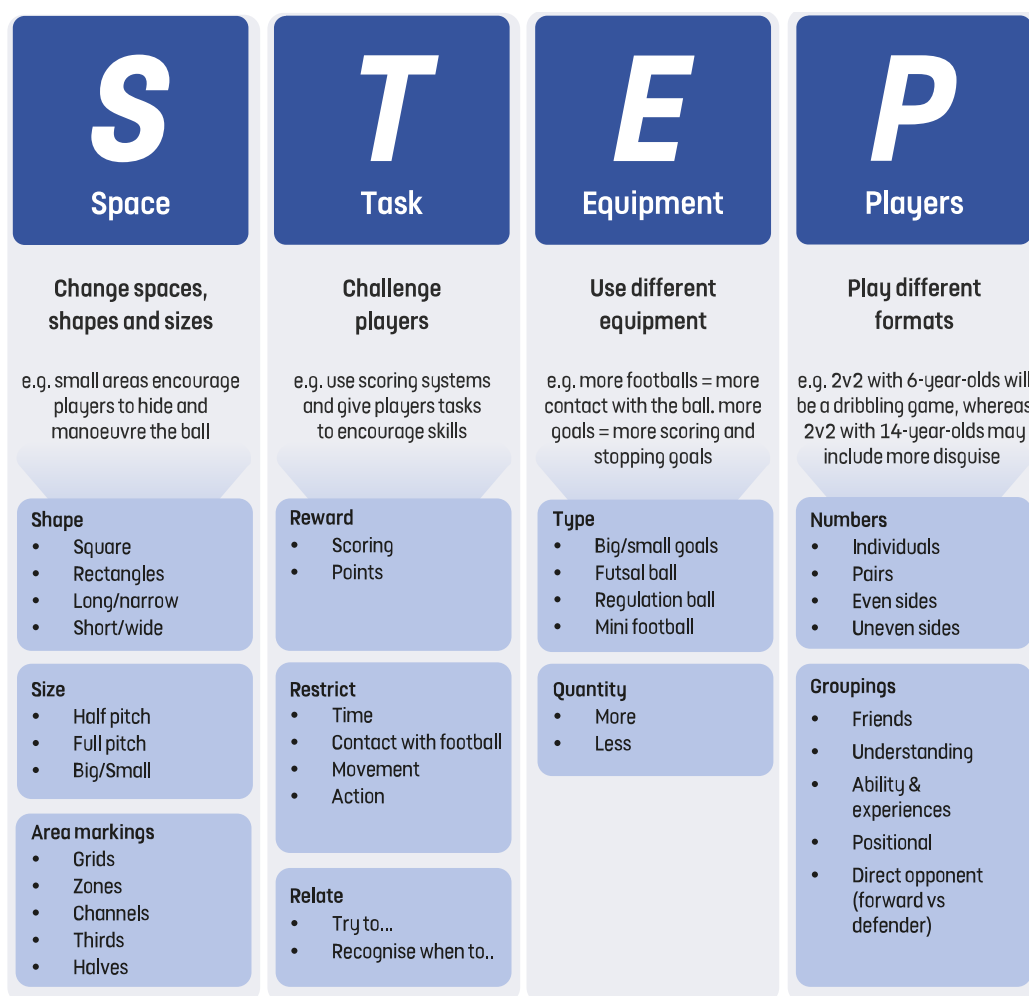
STEP stands for Space, Task, Equipment and Players. STEPS is also used as a variation on this model with the final S standing for Safety.

Coaches and teachers can modify each element to either increase or decrease the challenge of an activity.

By thinking about these components, coaches and teachers can tailor sessions and lessons to better suit the needs of individual players and help them develop and enjoy the game.

It's commonly used to:

1. Increase and decrease the level of challenge for a group or individuals. This enhances enjoyment, motivation and learning.
2. Ensure activities are inclusive and accessible.



STEP framework
Adapted from (Youth Sports Trust, 2002)

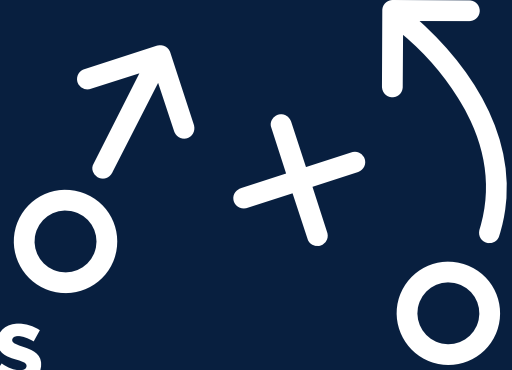
Step model



AIM model



3v3 Format: coaching sessions



Arrival activities/warm-up

1V1 DUELS

Organisation

- Mark out several 5 by 5 areas.
- Players are in pairs, one is the attacker (yellow), whilst the other player (blue) is the defender.
- They play in a 1v1 game. (The diagram shows one area.)

How to Play

- The yellow player aims to evade the blue player. The blue player must tag the yellow player to score a point.
- If the yellow player evades the blue player, yellow gets a point.
- Play for a set time of 5, 10, 15 seconds per game.
- Play best of 5 and then mix up the pairings so players play different people.
- Add a ball for both players and play the same game whilst dribbling.



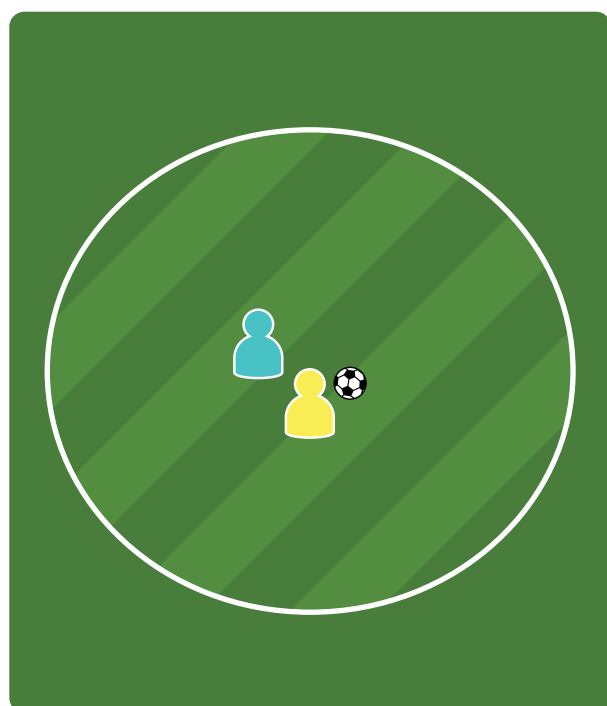
EVADE

Organisation

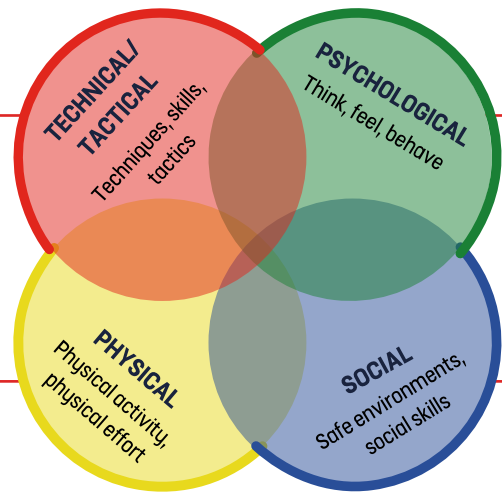
- Set up an area and adjust according to numbers, age, ability, etc.
- Divide the players into small groups and play lots of 1v1 games in circles. The attacker in yellow plays 1v1 against the defender and tries to keep their ball away from the blue defender.
- The person who is in possession of the ball after 20 seconds wins.
- Play best of 5 games.

Challenges

- Play 15, 20, 25-second games.
- Change roles – give everyone a chance of being an attacker.
- Adapt and play two defenders vs one attacker.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?



Games

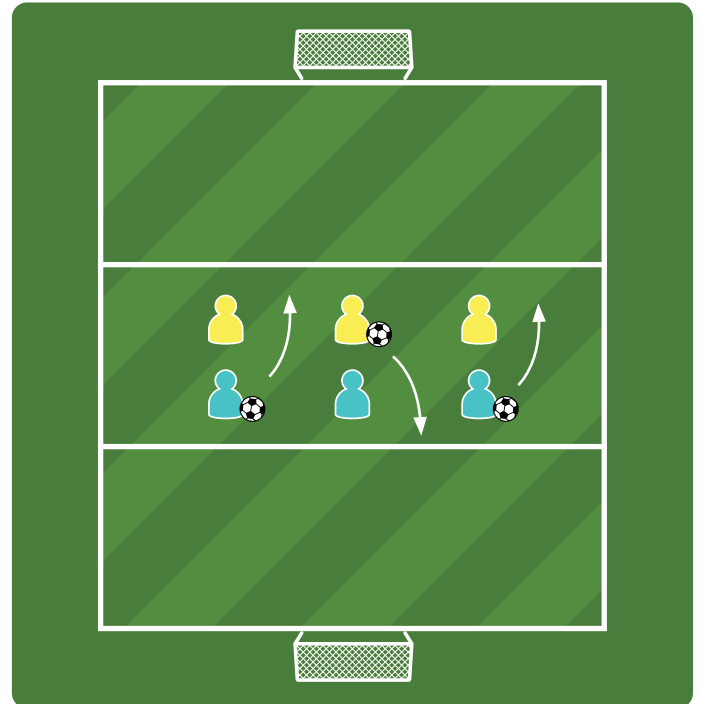
1V1S TO SCORE

Organisation

- The size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players. This will give you different returns.

How to Play

- Set up the area and divide into thirds.
- Players are set up 1v1 and the player in possession is to beat their opponent and break into the end zone. Once they are in the end zone they are able to shoot the ball. If the opponent wins the ball back they can then attack in the opposite goal.
- When a goal is scored the player needs to retreat back to their end zone line.



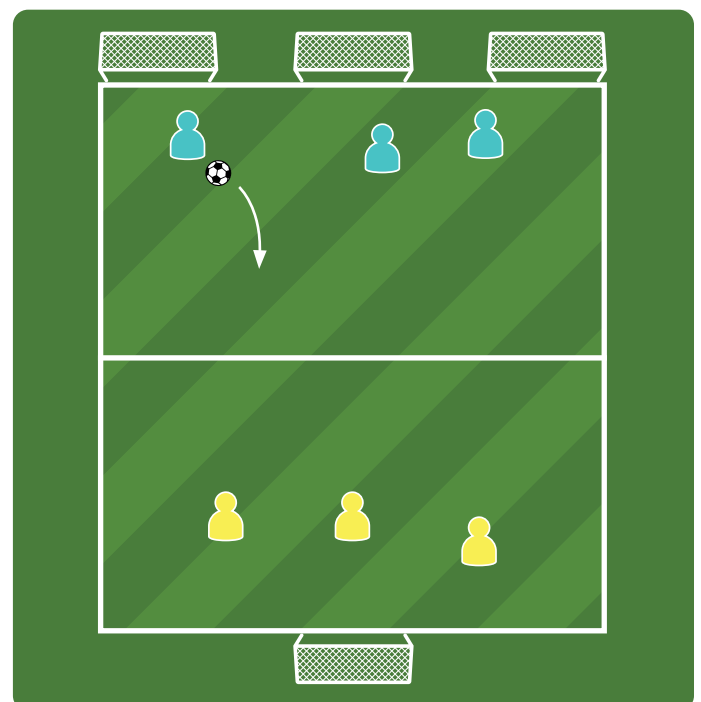
3 GOALS VS 1 GOAL

Organisation

- The size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players. This will give you different returns.

How to Play

- Set up the area and split the pitch in two.
- Players are set up 3v3 and the player in possession is to beat their opponent and break into the opposite half to score.
- Team 1 has to defend one goal.
- Team 2 has to defend three goals.
- Both teams have to defend each half for 4/5 minutes.



Games

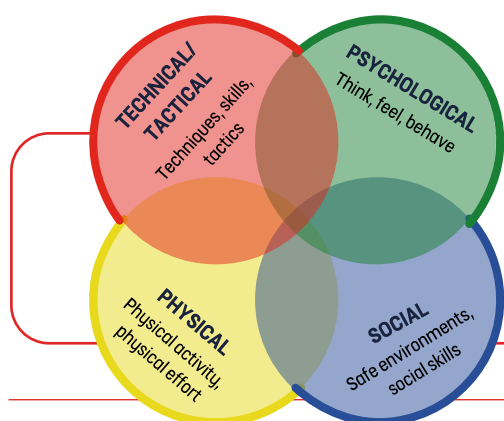
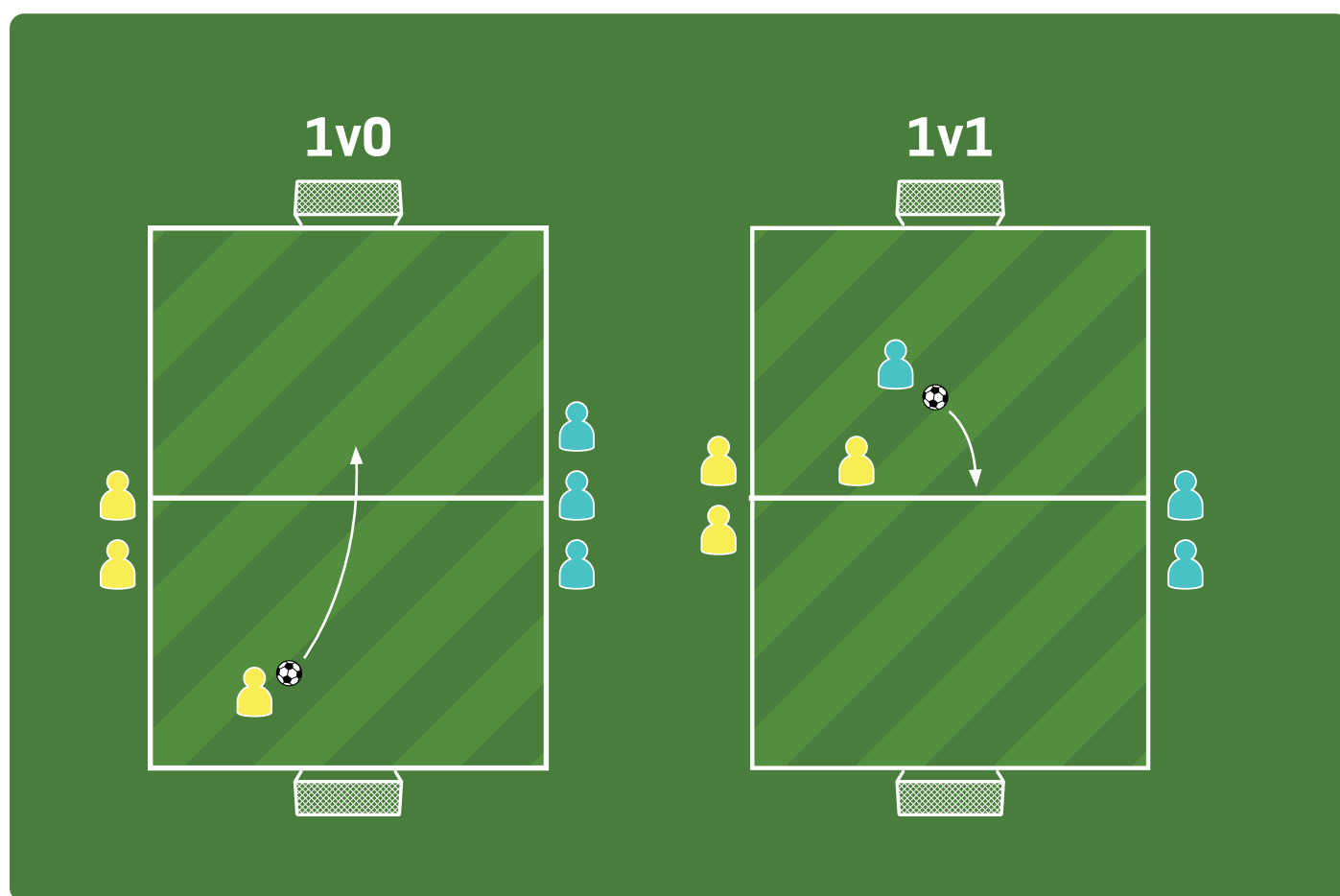
OVERLOADS AND UNDERLOADS

Organisation

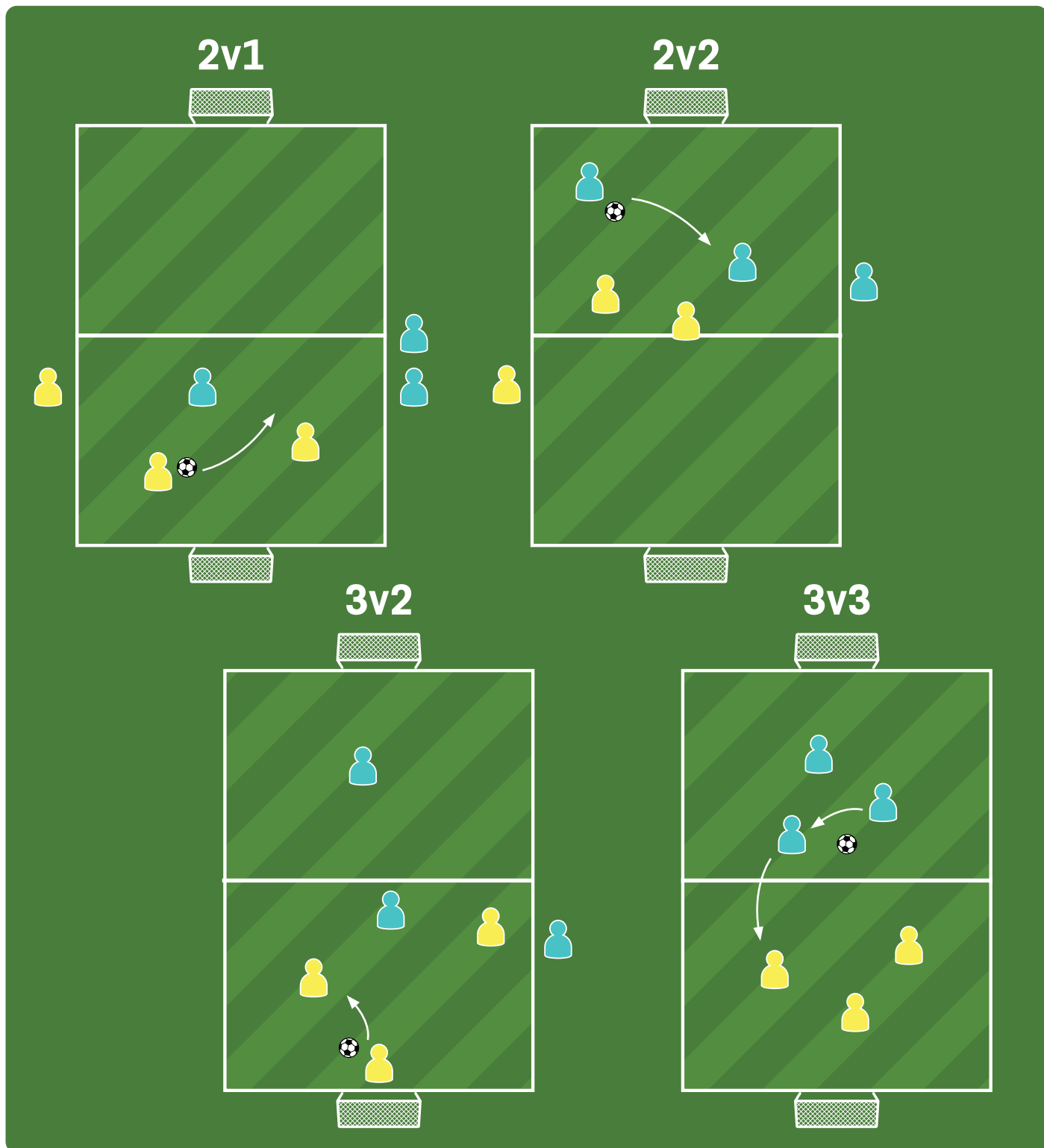
- The size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players. This will give you different returns.

How to Play

- The game starts with a player travelling with the ball into the opposite half and finishing.
- As soon as the shot is taken, the next ball is rolled in and an opponent is introduced to create a 1v1. The player who shot then needs to recover. Continue adding players until you reach 3v3.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?



**Each mini round should not last longer than 30 seconds.
Change starting positions to give players different experiences.**

Games

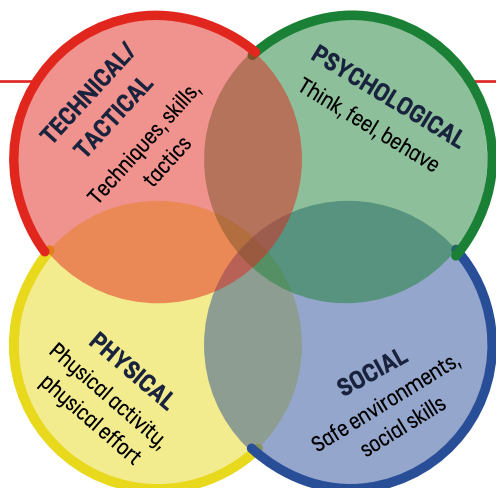
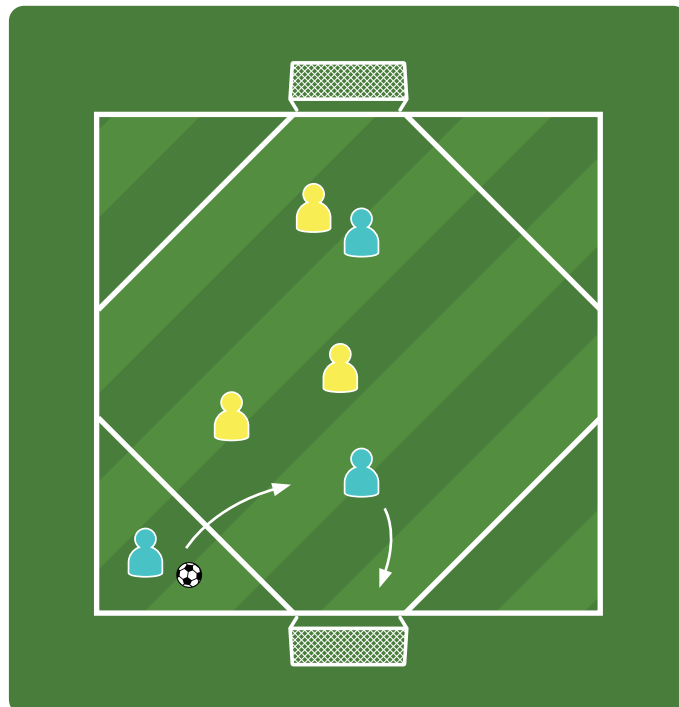
DIAMOND PITCH FOOTBALL

Organisation

- The size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players. This will give you different returns.

How to Play

- Using cones create a diamond inside your pitch.
- The aim of the game is to develop ways to attack into wide areas.
- If your team gets into the wide area = 1 point.
- If your team gets into the wider area and crosses the ball with contact or a shot = 2 points.
- If your team gets into the wider area and crosses the ball and scores a goal = 3 points.



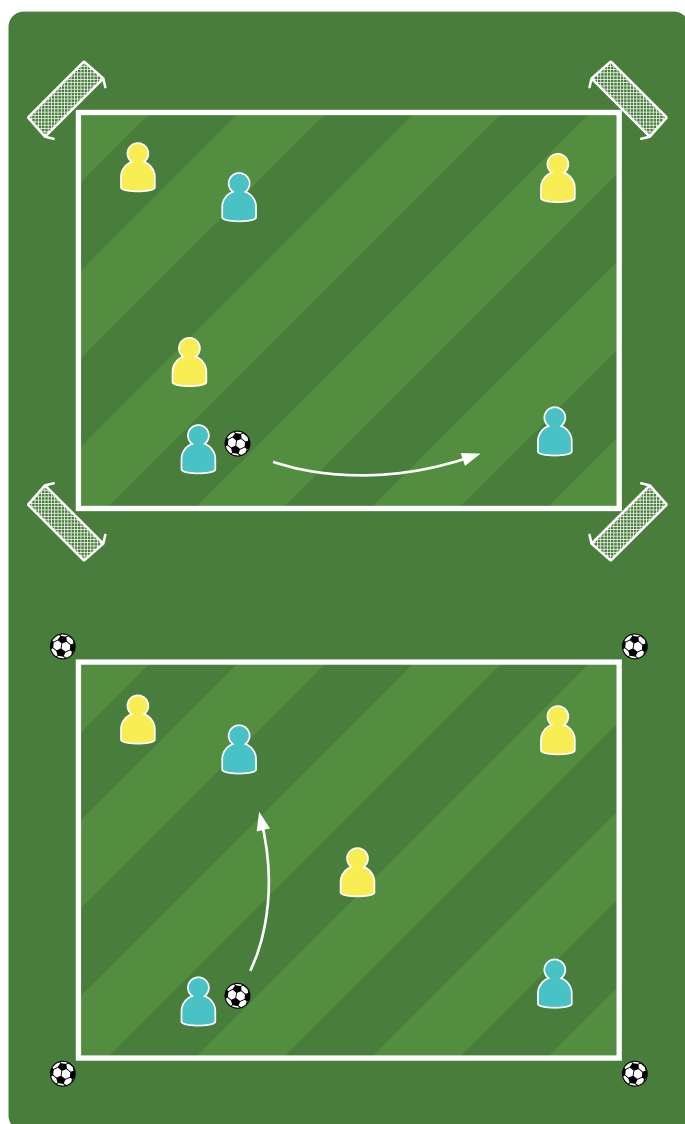
**What would be your
Four Corner Focus in
these sessions?**



FOUR GOAL FOOTBALL

Organisation

- The size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players. This will give you different returns.
- Set up four goals with one in each corner. If goals are not available you can use cones or players can knock balls off the cone.
- Make sure the goals are slightly off the pitch.



How to Play

- Multi directional activity.
- The aim of the game is for the players to recognise space and where to attack/defend. The team wins when it secures three goals.
- When a goal is scored, the team then has to defend that goal whilst trying to score in the vacant goals. If the team concedes in the goal they scored in then the goal goes to the opposition team.

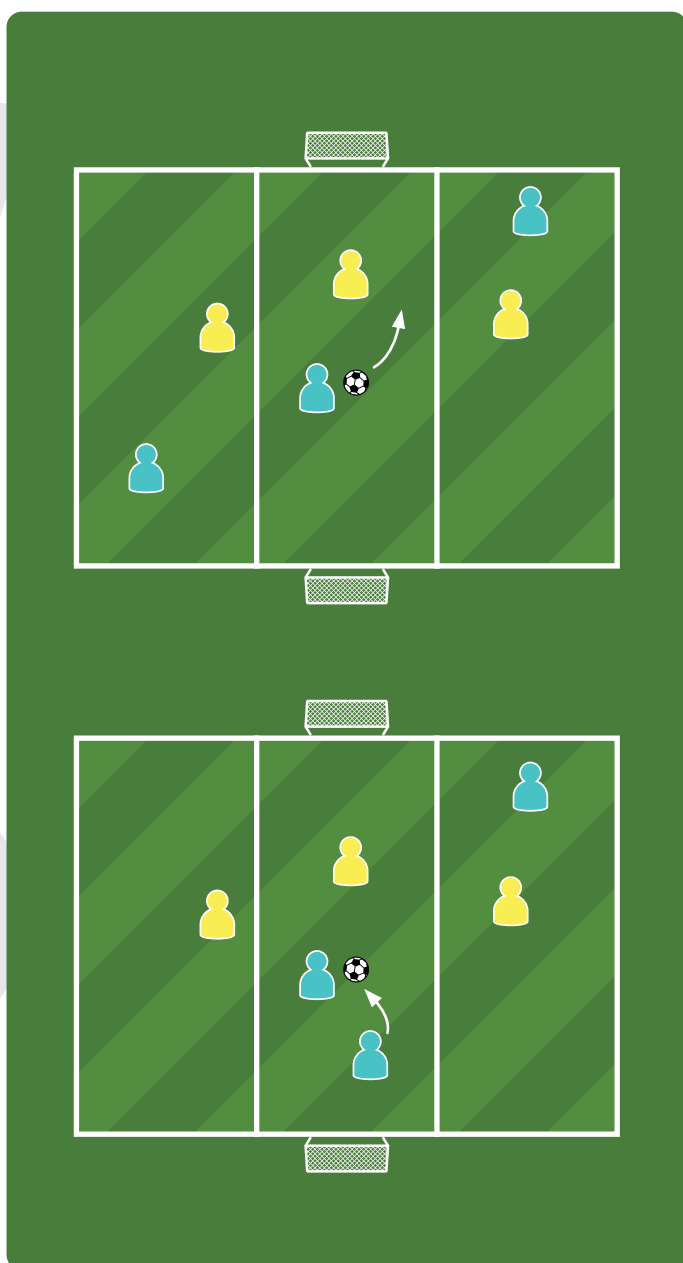


Games

3V3 CHANNELS

Organisation

- Size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players. The size of the area will give you different returns.
- Split the pitch into three vertically.



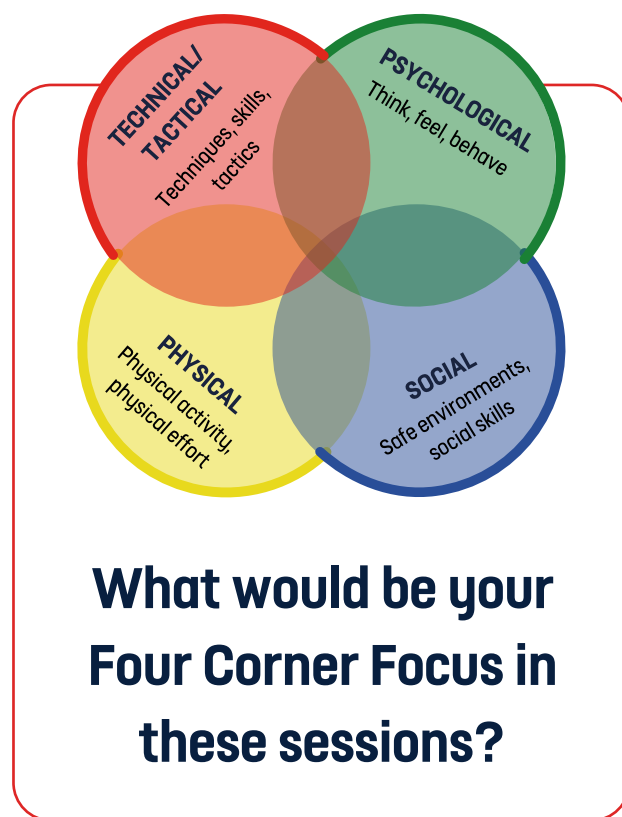
How to Play

Start with 1v1 in each channel. The aim of the game is to beat your player or try and pass the ball to your teammate in another channel.

Players are locked into their channels.

Progression

- If the player passes the ball into the next channel they can cross into that channel to create an overload.
- Player challenge: Can you play the ball into the opposite channel?
- Ensure the players get to play in different channels.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

Coach profile example

3V3 FORMAT



Craig
U7 Grassroots Coach
Staying on the Ball

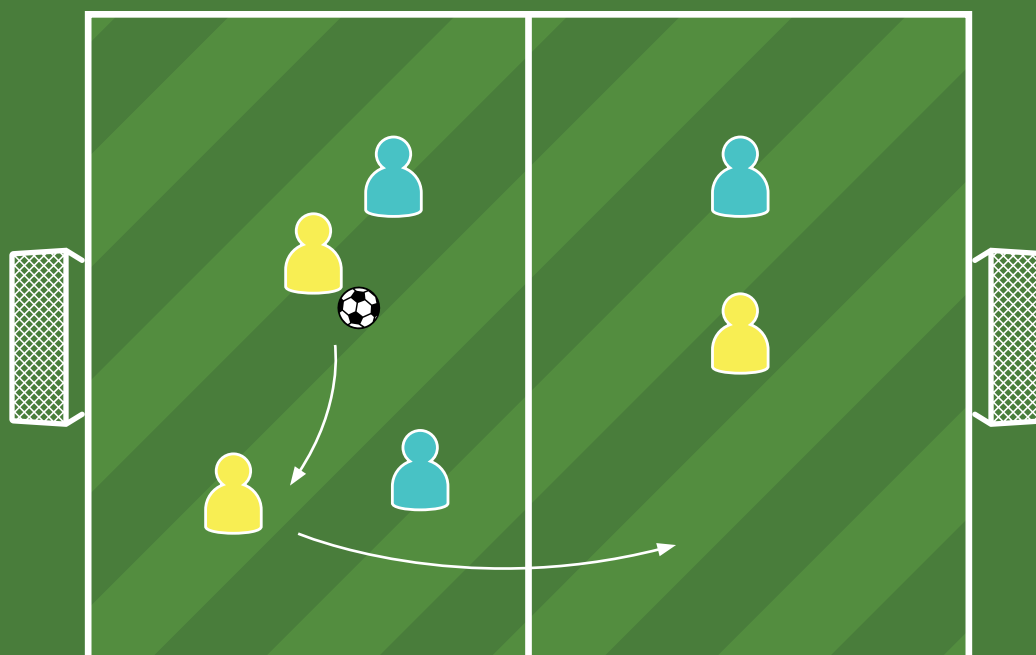
- This game is played on a max size pitch – 20x15.
- Play a normal game. If the ball goes out of play, players can dribble or pass to teammates to restart the game. Play is continuous.

Challenge 1

- Try to stay on the ball until you can shoot or pass forward.

Challenge 2

- Try to have as many touches as you can whilst keeping the ball for your team.
- You need to be in your opponent's half to score.

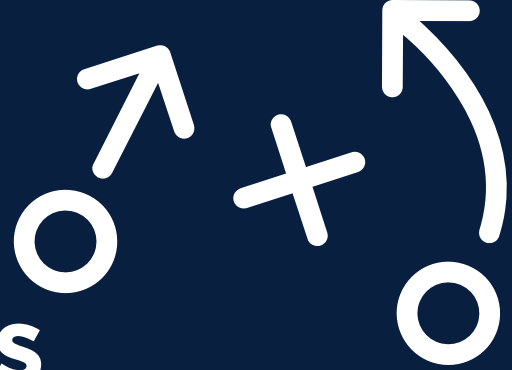


NOTE. You'll be able to use some practices across different formats. It's important to remember to align sessions to your players' needs, wants and capabilities.

For more info on 3v3 rules and for some practice ideas, please see:



5v5 Format: coaching sessions



Arrival activities/warm-up

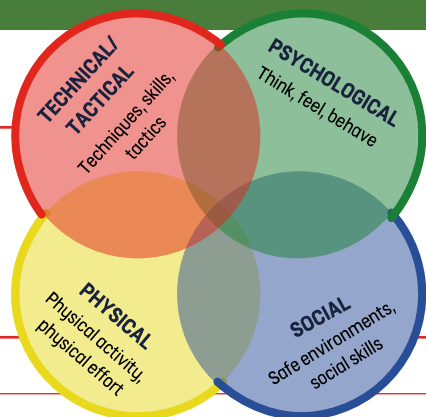
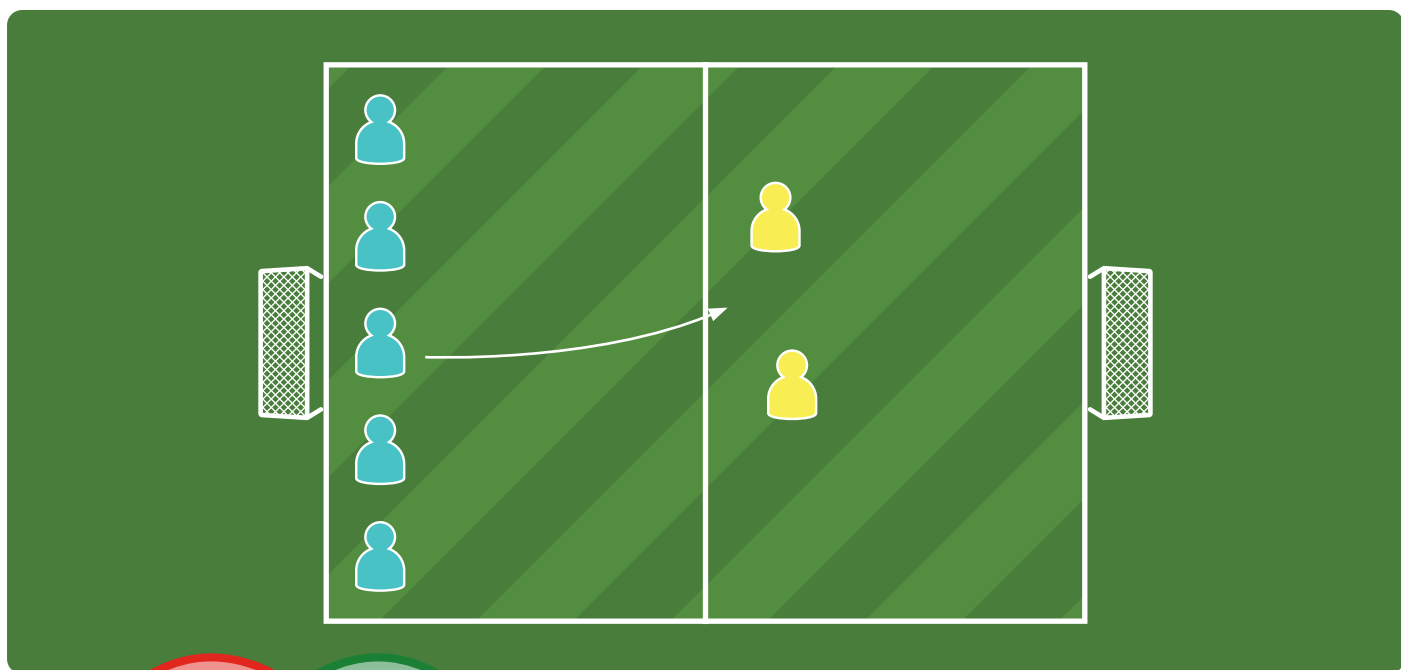
TAG AND CHASE

Organisation

- The game is set up as shown and the area is max 20x15yds but can be adjusted to suit the ability of the players.
- Each of the blue players has a bib in their hand and one in the side of their shorts.

How to Play

- On 'go' the blue players attempt to run, dodge and evade the yellow 'taggers' and throw the bib in their hand into the goal at the far end. If successful they pick the bib up again and run the opposite way and score.
- If a yellow player can grab a bib, they run and throw it in the goal for a point to them.
- This game helps dodging, changing direction and running at different speeds.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

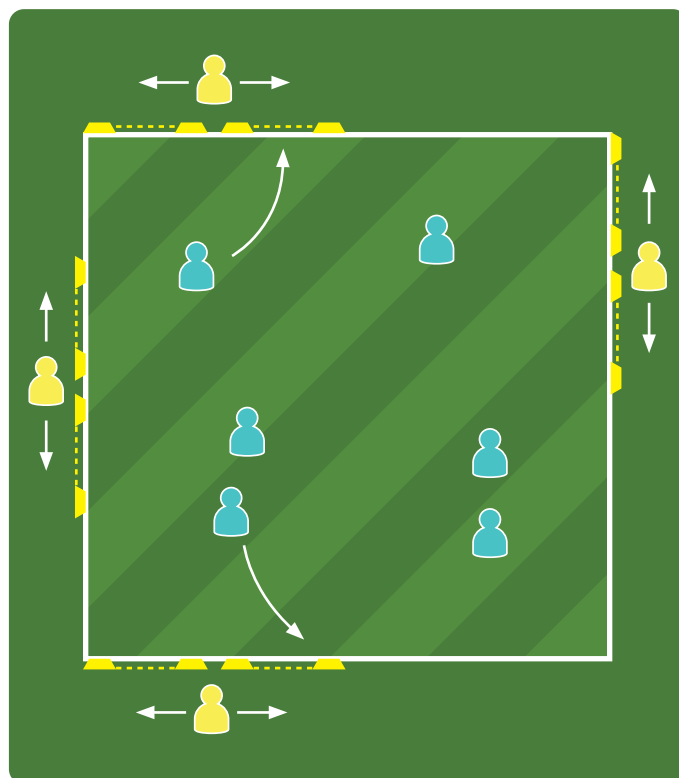
GREAT ESCAPE

Organisation

- Set up an area and adjust according to numbers, age, ability, etc.
- Each 'guard' (yellow) has two gates to guard.
- Blues have to escape through any gate past a guard.
- Once you have escaped, return to the area through any unguarded gate.

Challenges

- Add a football for the blues.
- How many times can you escape?
- Time based challenges – how many times can you escape in 20, 30, 45 seconds?
- Add guards in the middle area to increase the challenge.
- Add a ball for guards to dribble.



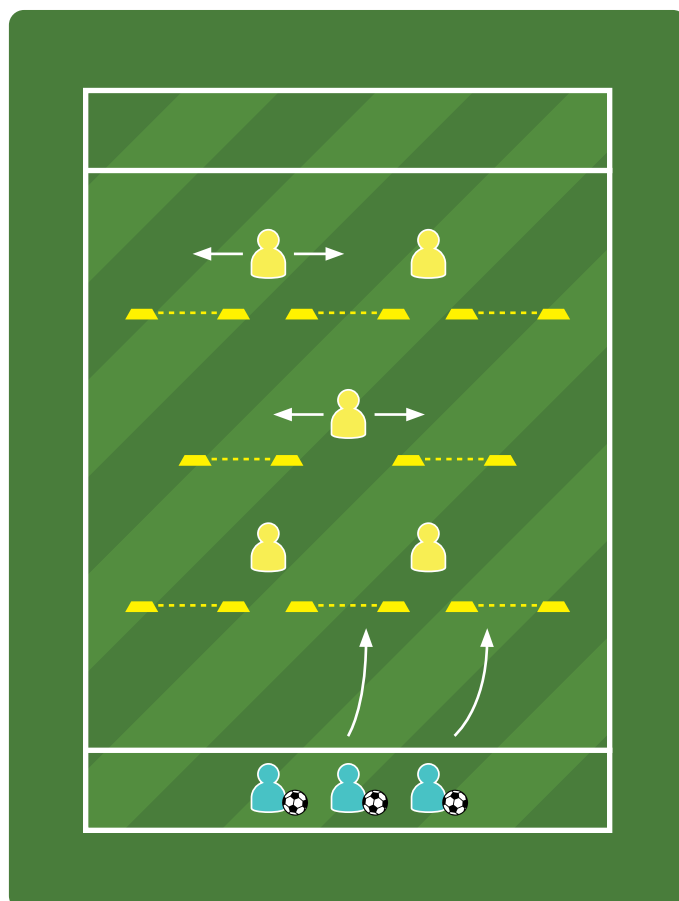
SECRET AGENT

Organisation

- Blue players start in waves of three.
- Blue players must dribble through the gates to reach the end zone.
- Yellows must try to tackle the blue players as they progress.
- If blues dribble through, they return to begin another wave of three.
- If blues are tackled, they can restart at the gate where they were tackled.

Challenges

- Add or reduce the gates.
- Give the yellow defenders a ball to dribble with.
- Work both directions.



WEMBLEY

Organisation

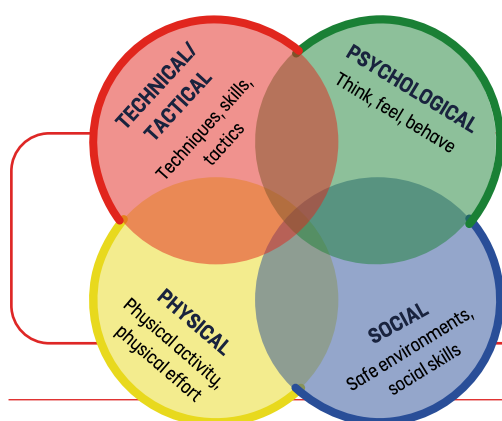
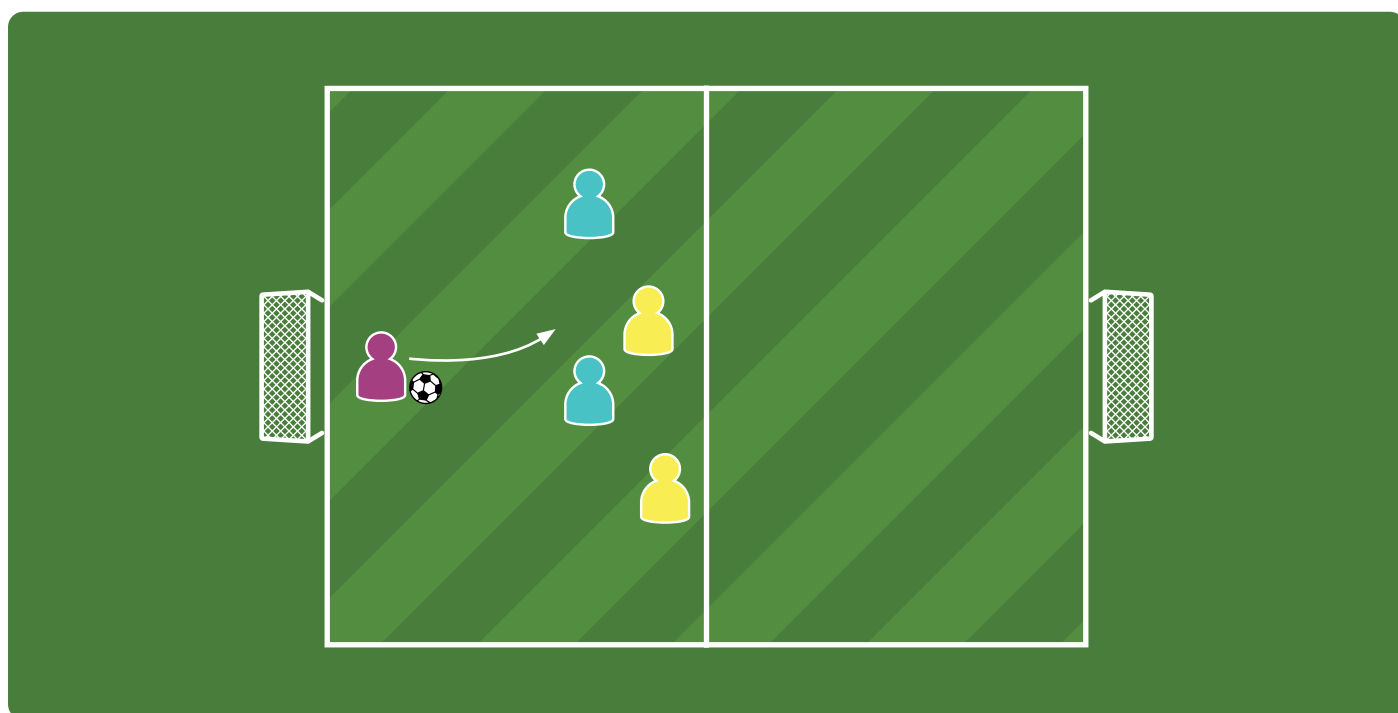
- Set up a pitch and play within one half of it.
- The area size can be adapted to suit your team's age and stage of development.

Tight area = greater technical returns.

Large area = more space and time to make decisions.

How to play

- One goalkeeper and other players play as individuals or in teams.
- The goalkeeper passes the ball out and compete to win the ball and score.
- The first player or team to score goes through to the next round.
- Play continues until the last player or team is eliminated.
- If the ball goes out of play, start again from the goalkeeper (singles game) or with a sideline restart (team game).
- Play in rounds until the last two players or two teams are in the final.

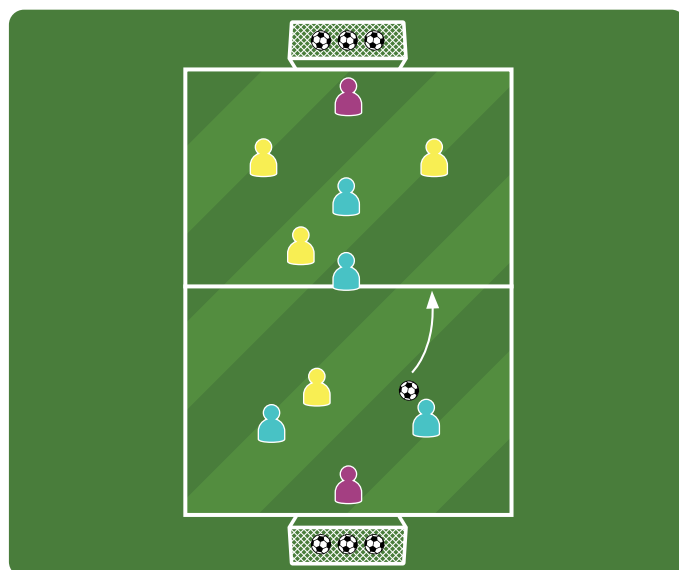


What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

Simple Games

EMPTY THE NET

- Play a normal game.
- Set up three balls in each net and one ball in play.
- When a goal is scored, the ball remains in that net and the goalscoring team starts with a ball from their net. Empty your net of all footballs and score them in your opponent's net to win.

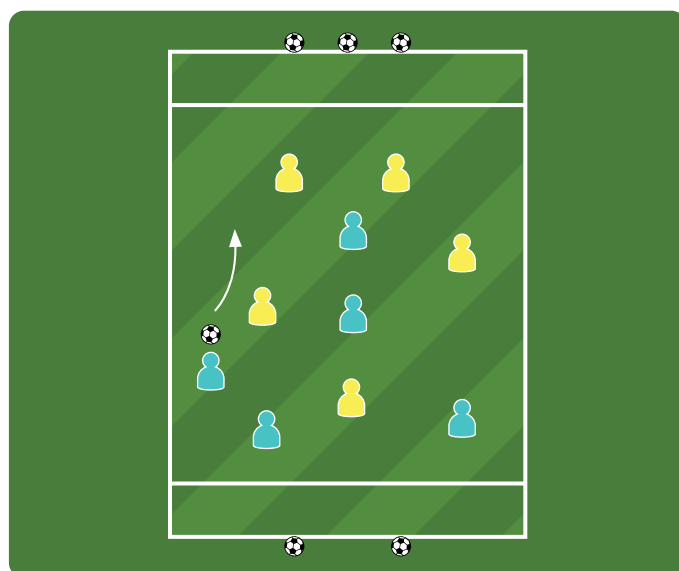


5 GOALS 5 WAYS

- Play a normal game.
- On the whiteboard, write down five different ways to score (e.g. left foot, right foot, header, volley, nutmeg).
- The first team to score using all five methods are the winners.

END ZONE GAME

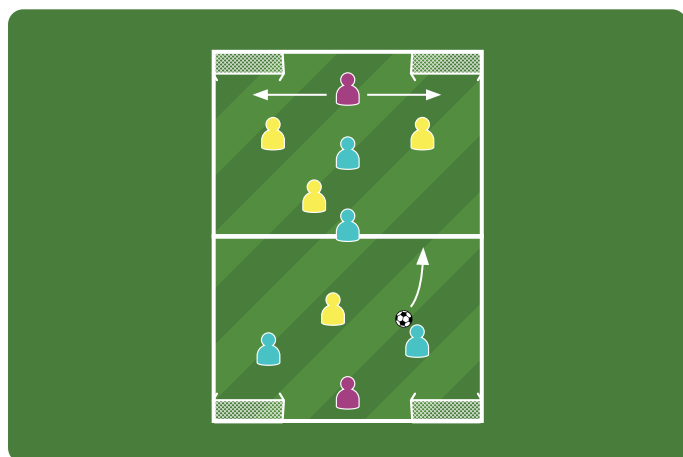
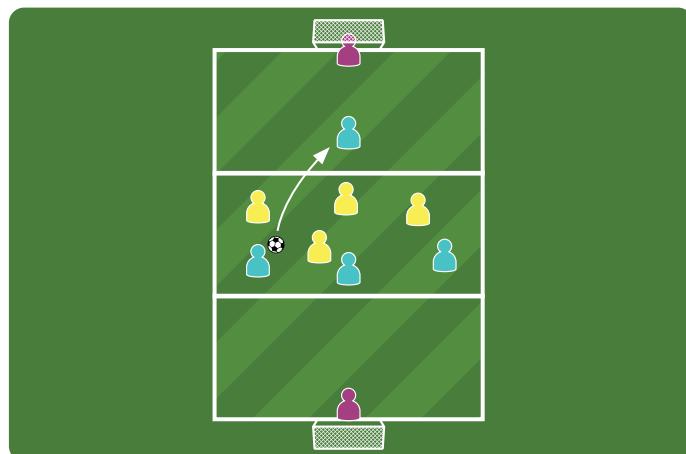
- Play a normal game.
- Run or dribble with the ball into the end zone and stop it to score.
- The team who scores maintains possession of the ball from the opposite end.



Games

THROUGH BALL GAME

- Set up the pitch in three sections.
- Play a normal game.
- Attacking areas are empty.
- Players must pass the ball into the end area for teammate to run onto and shoot.



DEVELOPING THE GOALKEEPER

Organisation

- Play a normal, directional game on a narrow pitch.
- The goalkeeper has to protect each goal and can work laterally across the pitch to save shots in both goals.

Challenges

- You must score with a one-touch finish in either of the two goals.
- You must take a touch before you shoot in either of the two goals (helps the goalkeeper to have time to get across the pitch).

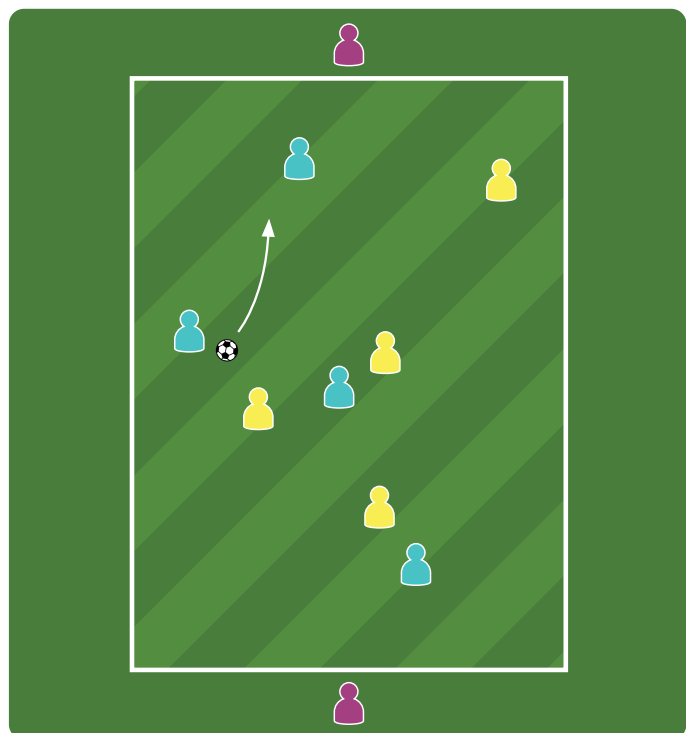
TARGET

Organisation

- Play a game with target players (pink) on the end line which could be your goalkeepers.
- Players combine to pass into their target in the end zone.
- The team who passes the ball to the target receives the ball back and tries to work the ball to the target at the opposite end.
- Points are scored from goals (1 point).
- The first team to reach a set number of points wins.
- You can play goalkeepers as targets to help develop their passing and receiving skills.

Challenges

- Play underloaded, even sided or overloaded.
- Add a screener in front of the target.
- Use a retreat line if wanting to develop this area of the game.
- Add in goals.



Coach profile example

5v5 FORMAT



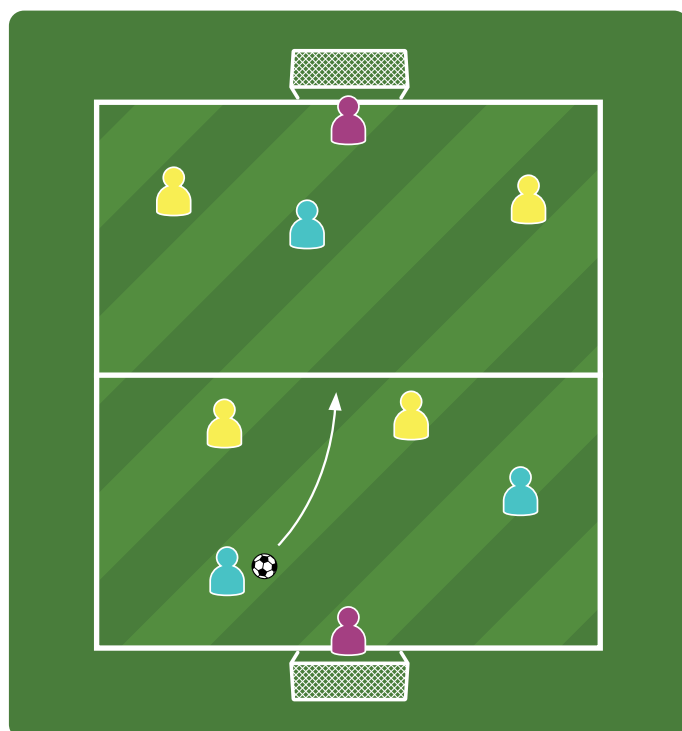
Simon
School Team
Staying on the Ball

9 at training – play 5v4

- Play a normal game.
- If the ball goes out of play, players can dribble or pass into teammates to restart the game.
- Play is continuous.

Challenges

- Try to score by yourself.
- Try to do something that surprises your opponent.
- Try to score by combining with your teammates.



Ryan – Comets Session – Parallel Practice: Progressing with the Ball

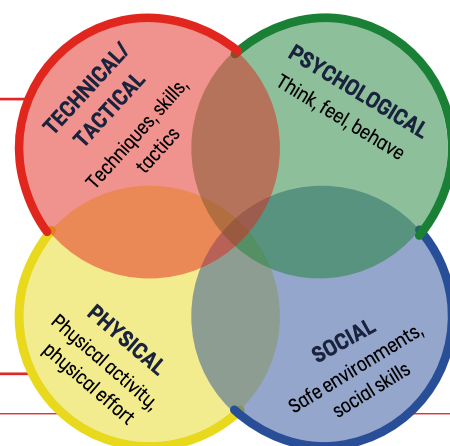


NOTE: You'll be able to use some practices across different formats. It's important to remember to align the sessions to your players' needs, wants and capabilities.

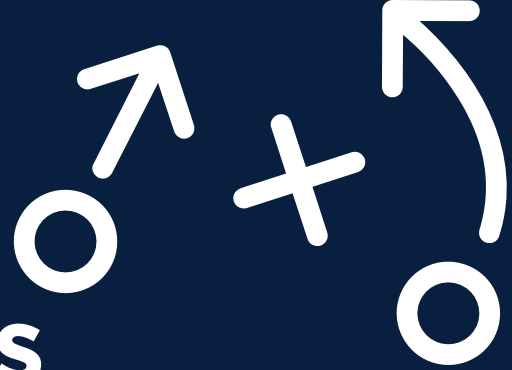
Click or scan for more 5v5 format coaching sessions:



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?



7v7 Format: coaching sessions



Arrival activities/warm-up

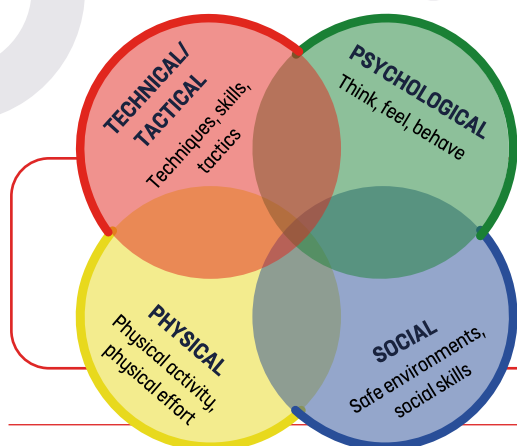
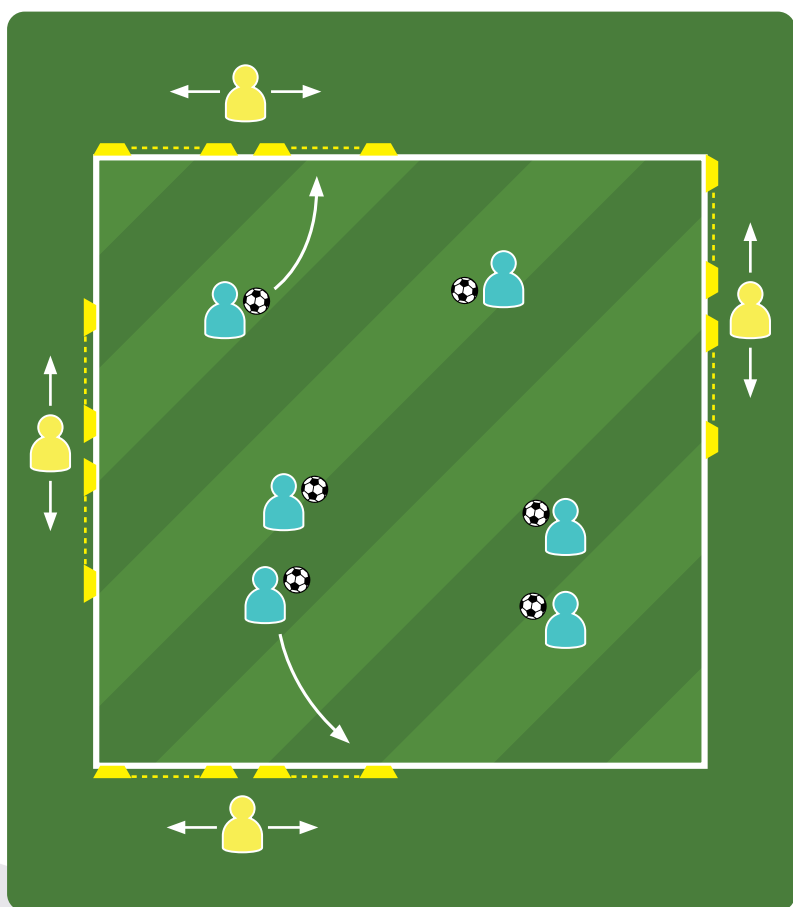
GREAT ESCAPE

Organisation

- Set up an area and adjust according to numbers, age and ability.
- Each 'guard' (yellow) has two gates to guard.
- Blues have to escape through any gate past a guard.
- Blues can escape with or without the ball. Once they have escaped, blues return to the area through any unguarded gate (either dribbling, turning, keep ups).

Challenges

- How many times can you escape?
- Time based challenges – how many times can you escape in 20, 30, 45 seconds?
- Add guards in the middle area to increase the challenge.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

DIAMOND DUEL

Organisation

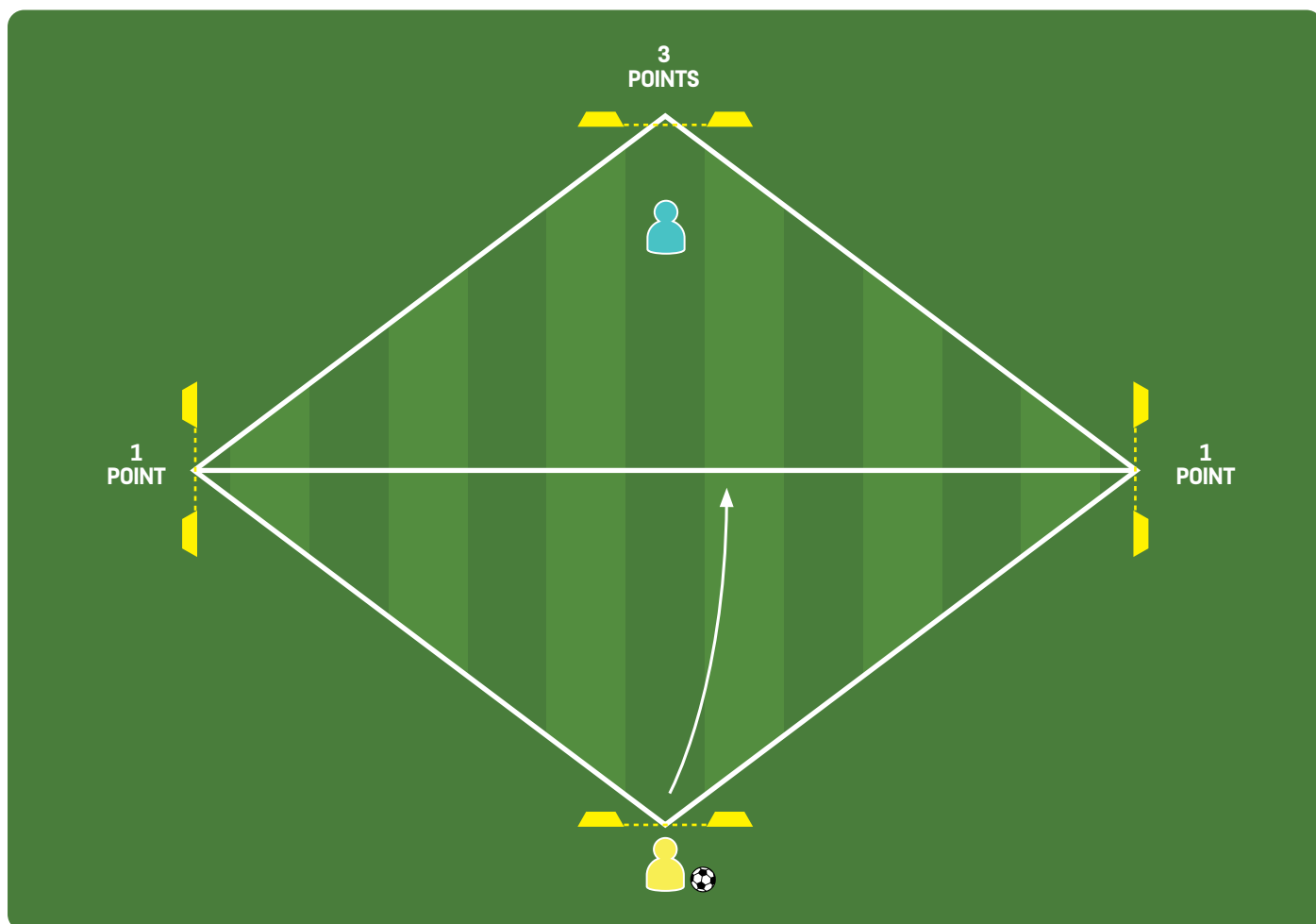
Using four gates, set up a 10x10 yd diamond-shape. You can adapt this space to suit your team's age and stage of development. Players split into pairs and line up at opposite points of the diamond, next to a cone. One player is the attacking team. The other is the defending team.

How to play

The aim of this game is for the attacking player (yellow) to win points by reaching the cones before the defender.

1v1 without footballs

The game starts with an attacker moving off their cone. One of the defenders then enters the diamond. They aim to tag the attacker and prevent them from reaching the cones. If the attacker reaches one of the side cones, it is worth one point. If they get to the back cone, it's worth three points. To stop the game, the defender needs to tag the attacker or force them to run outside the diamond. The attacker ends the game by reaching one of the cones. The players then join the queue at opposing ends of the diamond. The next pair take their turn. Play for three minutes, or ten rounds, then count each player's score.



1v1 with footballs

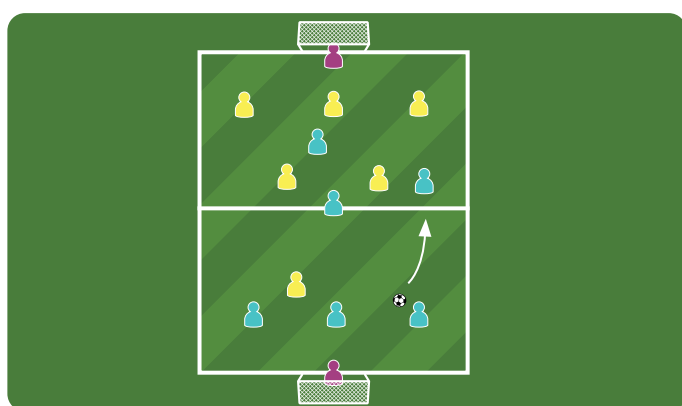
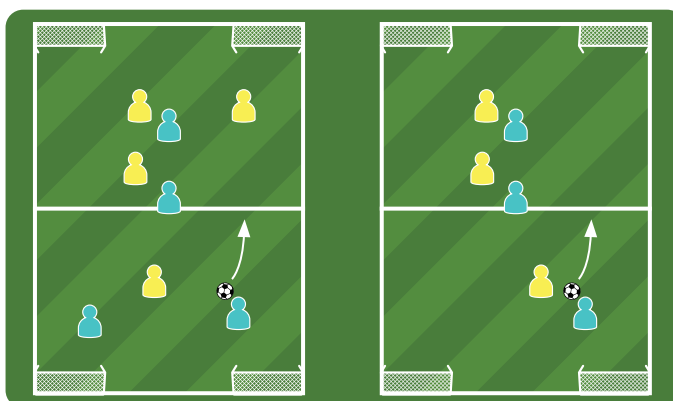
Once the players have mastered the game, it's time to introduce footballs. The game starts with the defender (blue) playing the ball into the attacker's feet. To score points, the attacker now needs to

dribble to the cones. The defender aims to win the ball off the attacker. If they do this, they can counter and score points by dribbling to the cones.

Simple Games

NO GOALKEEPERS AT TRAINING – PLAY ONE-TOUCH FINISH

- Play a normal game on two pitches.
- You must score with a one-touch finish in either of the two goals.

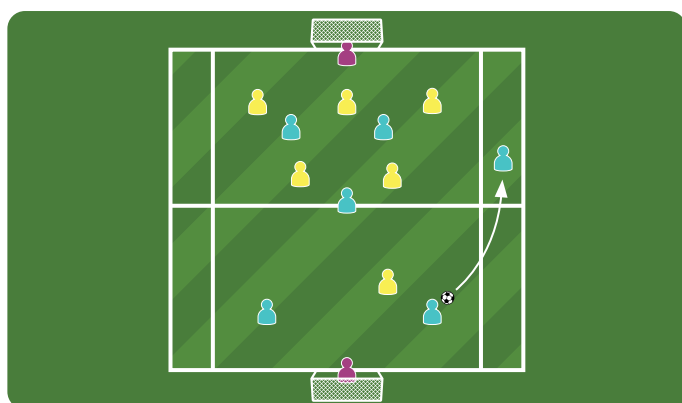
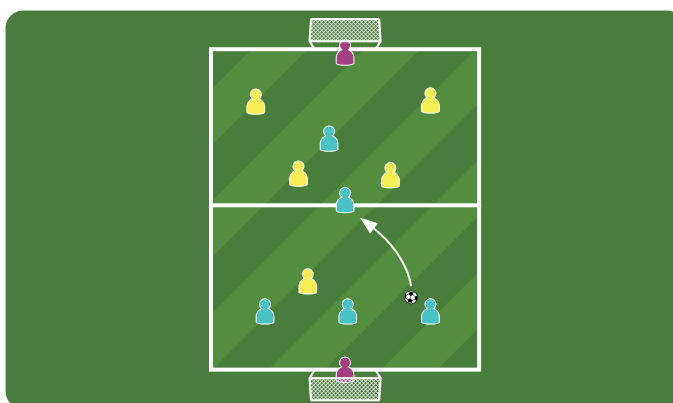


21 UP

- Play a normal game.
- The number of consecutive passes = the number of goals. E.g. blues make 4 passes before a goal = 5 goals (4 passes + 1 goal).
- The first team to 21 goals exactly (or more) wins.

POSSESSION WITH PURPOSE

- Play a normal game.
- Every pass you make before you score equals the amount of goals e.g. 3 passes = 3 goals.



WIDE PLAY GAME

- Play a normal game.
- Wide areas are safe. 3-second time/two-touch limit.

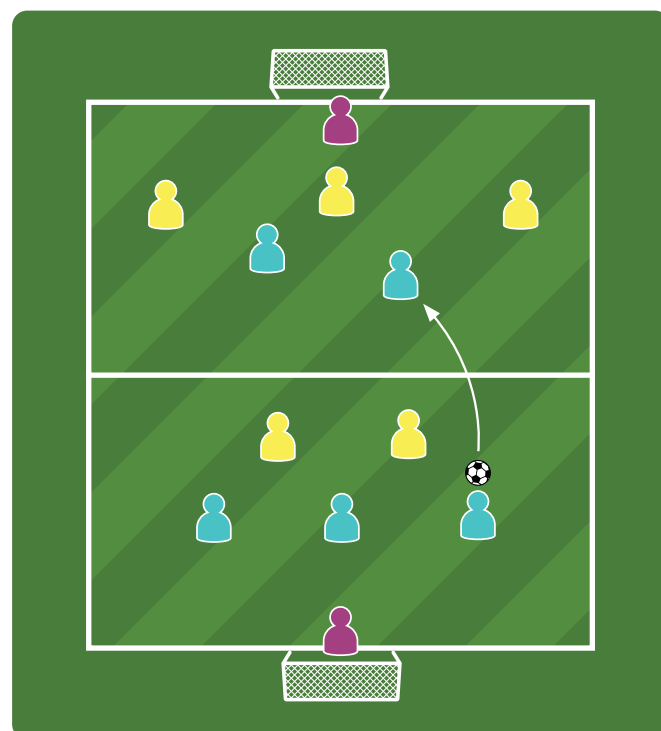
Games

NO WAY BACK

- Play 3v2 in each half.
- Encourage forwards to play against three defenders and only play back in their own half if they need to in order to keep possession.
- Players are not allowed out of the half they are set up in.
- This will help forwards practice playing outnumbered and develop 'escape' strategies.

Challenges

- Play offsides if appropriate.
- Set up area size according to age and ability.
- Smaller area = greater technical returns.



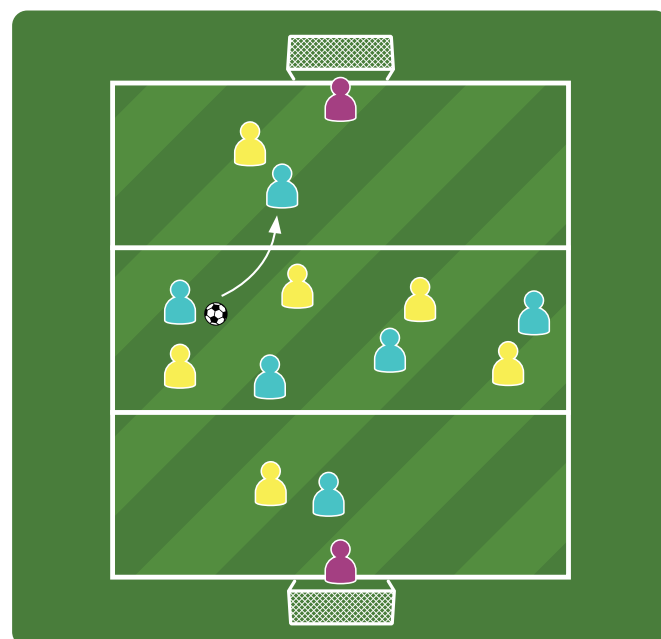
CREATE TO SCORE

Organisation

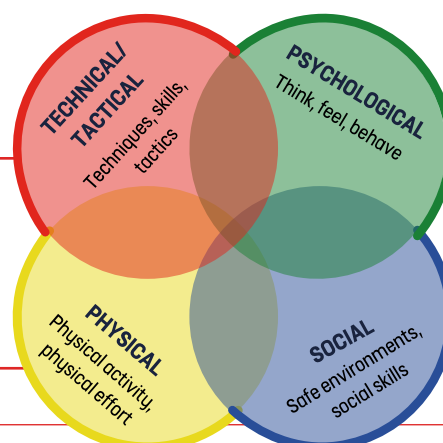
- Divide the area into three zones, with a defender and a striker in each end zone and the remaining players in the central area.
- The ball starts in the central area. Players combine to pass into their striker in the end zone who plays 1v1 to score. The player who passes the ball into the striker can enter the end zone (now 2v1) to also score.
- Points are scored from goals (1 point). The first team to reach a set number of points wins.
- The goalkeeper can play into the middle area with feet or hands.

Challenges

- An additional defender in the target area creates a 2v1 situation.
- Attacking players from the central area can join in to create a 2v2 or a 2v3 scenario.
- Vary the size of the middle area.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?



Games

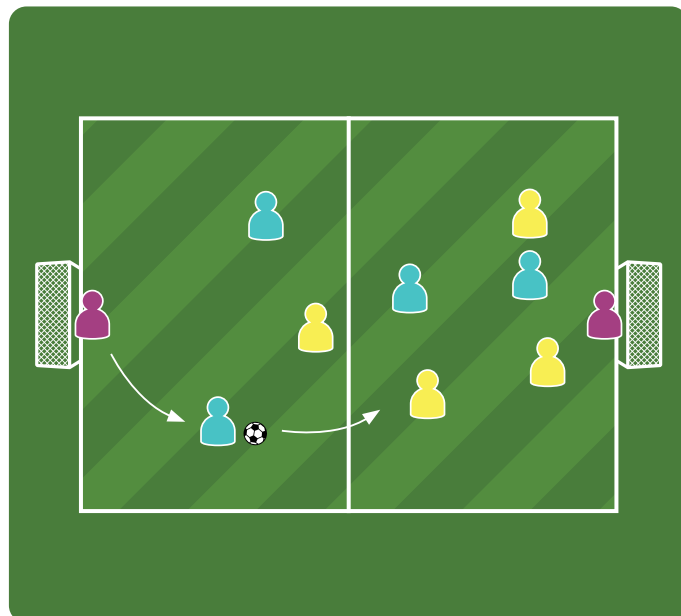
COUNTER-ATTACK

Organisation

- Set up a pitch.

How to Play

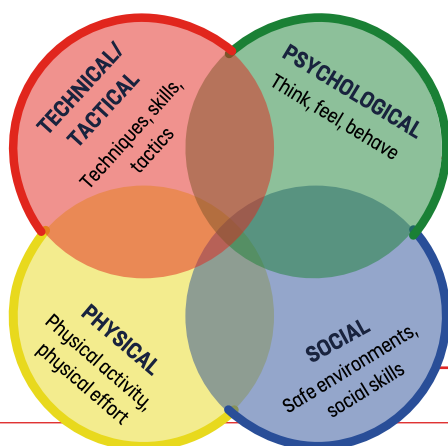
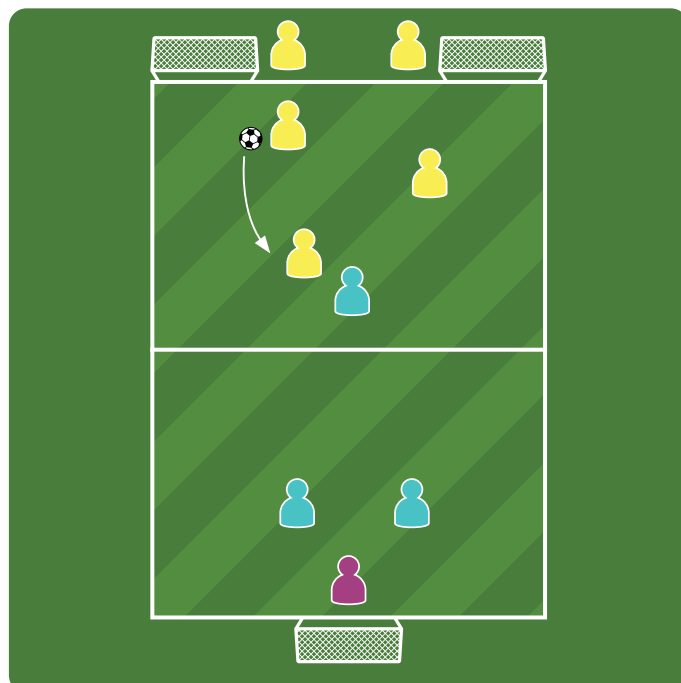
- The goalkeeper plays into the blue team to attack the opposite end.
- The blue team combines to score at the opposite end – five passes are required before breaking out to score.
- The yellow team defend to win the ball – if they win the ball they attack quickly to score.



OVERLOADS ON REPEAT

Game

- Set up three goals: two at one end and one at the other.
- Three yellows attack.
- The yellows play 3v1 in the top half of the pitch and play 3v3 in the bottom half of the pitch.
- The aim is to get past the defenders and score past the goalkeeper.
- If the blue defender wins the ball, they can break out to score in either of the two goals at the far end.
- Practice restarts at the top of the practice.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

Coach profile example

7v7 FORMAT



Mia

U10 Grassroots Coach

Finishing – 9 players at training

Practice 1 – Game

- Blues – play and try to score from inside the scoring zones (double score but any goal counts).
- Yellows – score past the goalkeeper (treble score).
- Swap – over.

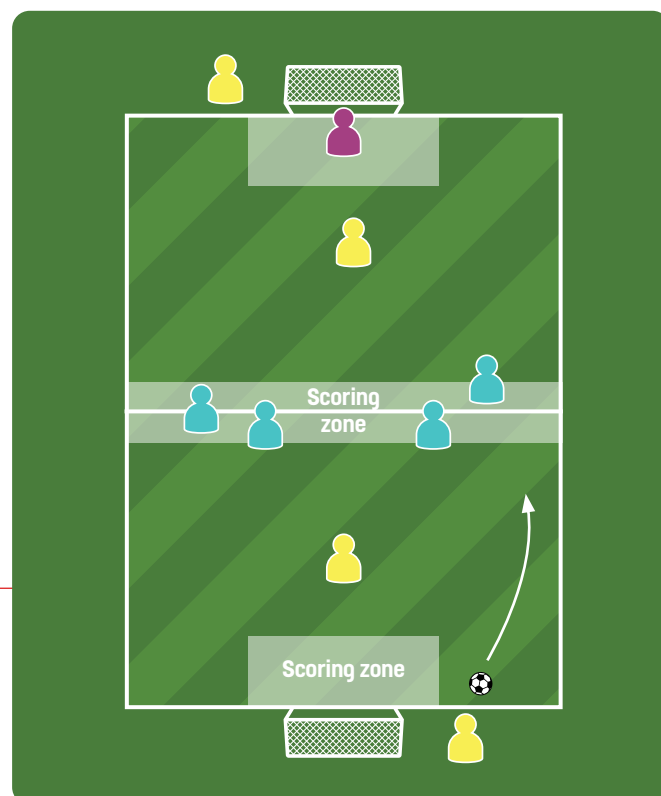


Practice 2 – Part 2v1

- 2v1 at each end with a middle scoring zone.
- One yellow defender with or without a goalkeeper.
- To start – either the goalkeeper or the defender sends the ball to the attackers.
- Blues attack 2v1.
- If the defender (or the goalkeeper) wins the ball back – the other defender joins in to make 2v2 and then tries to score in the middle zone.
- Players should get the chance to attack and defend.

Practice 3 – Game

- Back to game 1 – remove the middle zone.
- Change the scoring system.
- Change the rules.

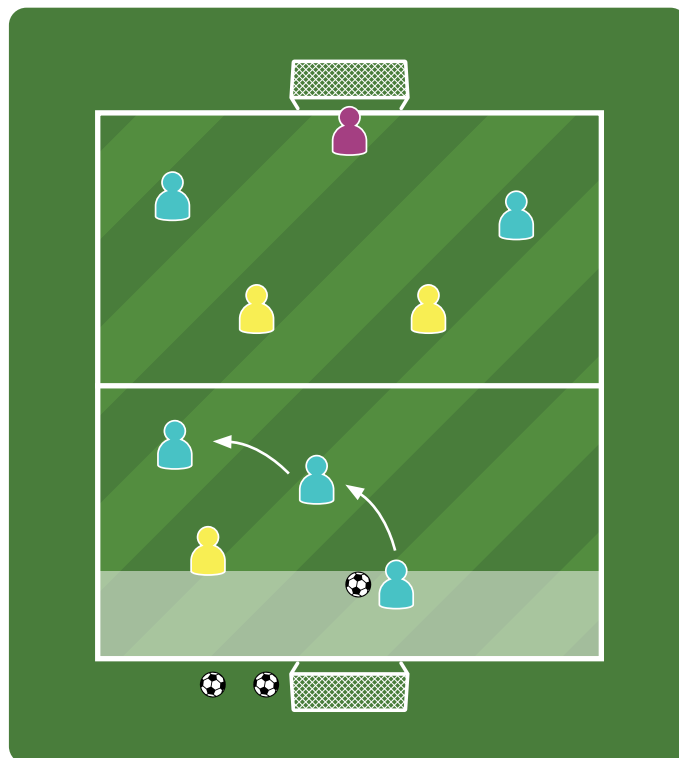


7v7 FORMAT



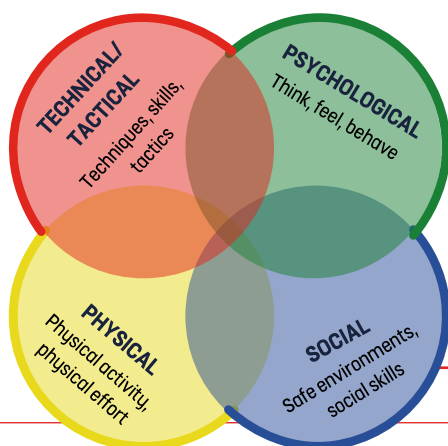
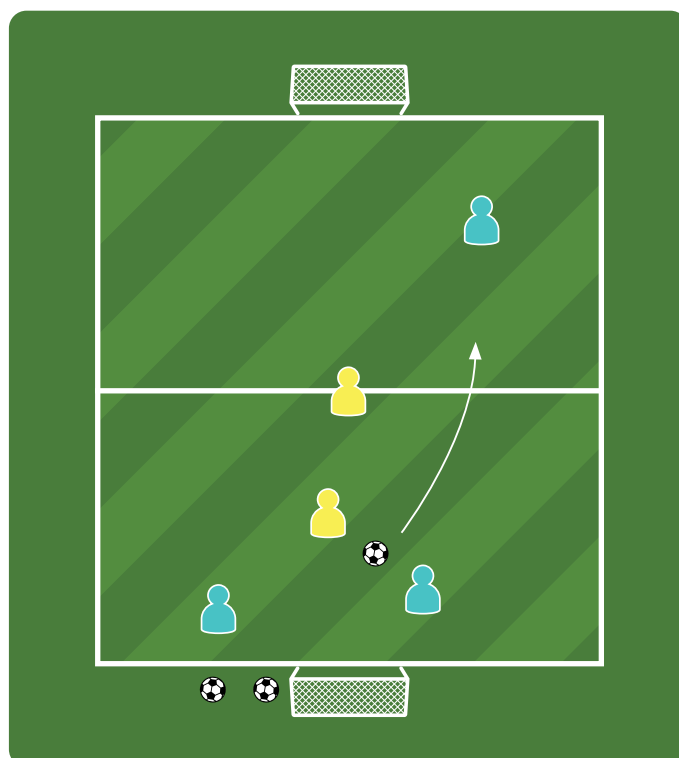
Harpal U10 Grassroots Coach Receiving 5v3 Game

- Blues start attacking inside the end zone (safe area).
- Yellows defend – one player in the blue half and the rest in their own half (goalkeeper + 2v1 formation).
- Blues try to score but keep a 'guard' in the end zone.
- Yellows must keep a player in the blues half.
- Yellows try to score in the end zone.
- Blues make 4 – 5 attacks and then change roles.
- Free the game up.



3v2 Game

- A yellow defender screens on the middle line and the other defender is live.
- The blues try to get the ball to the target player in the other half.
- Once the ball is transferred into the other half, a blue player joins in and the screening player becomes live.
- The other defender now screens the halfway line.
- Start again.
- Add a scoring system/goals.

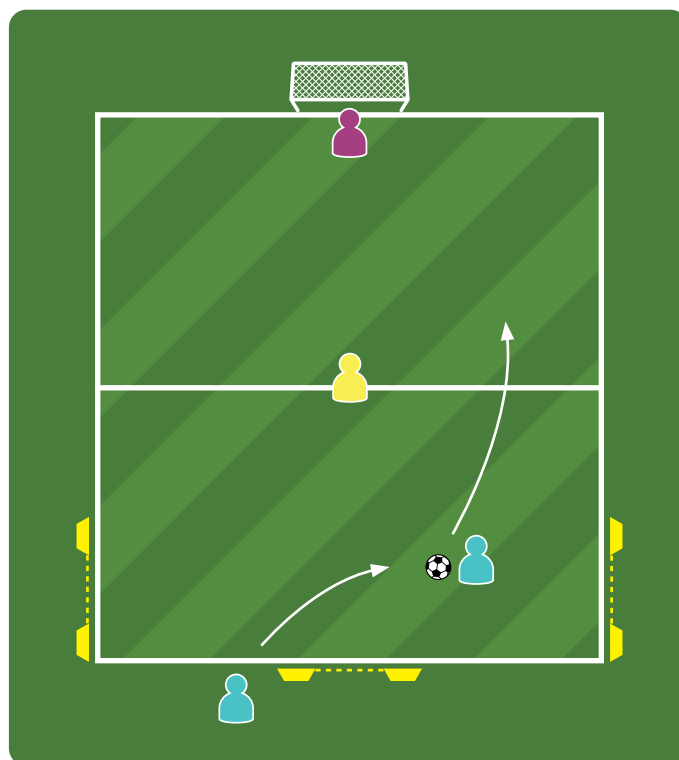


What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

2v1 + Goalkeeper:

- Blues start with a pass from the end line and try to score past the goalkeeper.
- A yellow defender starts in their own half and can defend once the ball is in play.
- All players can go into the other half as the attack progresses into it.
- If the blues score, the attack is restarted.
- If the yellow defender wins the ball and passes through the cones or over the end line, they become an attacker.
- The goalkeeper can also be used as a sweeper keeper to help the yellow defender.
- If the goalkeeper saves a shot, they can help the yellow defender to get through the cones.
- Carefully select the players for each game according to their capabilities.
- The pitch size can be altered to suit players' physical capabilities.

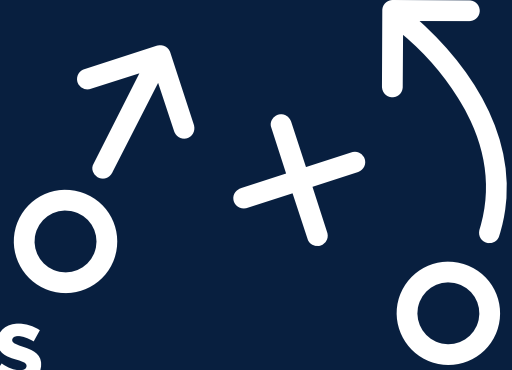
NOTE: You'll be able to use some practices across different formats. It's important to remember to align the sessions to your players' needs, wants and capabilities.



Click or scan for
more 7v7 format
coaching sessions:



9v9 Format: coaching sessions



Games

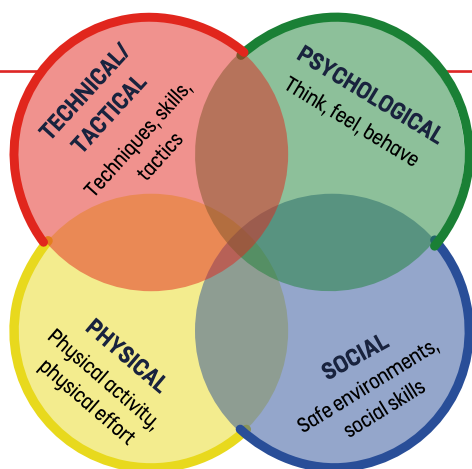
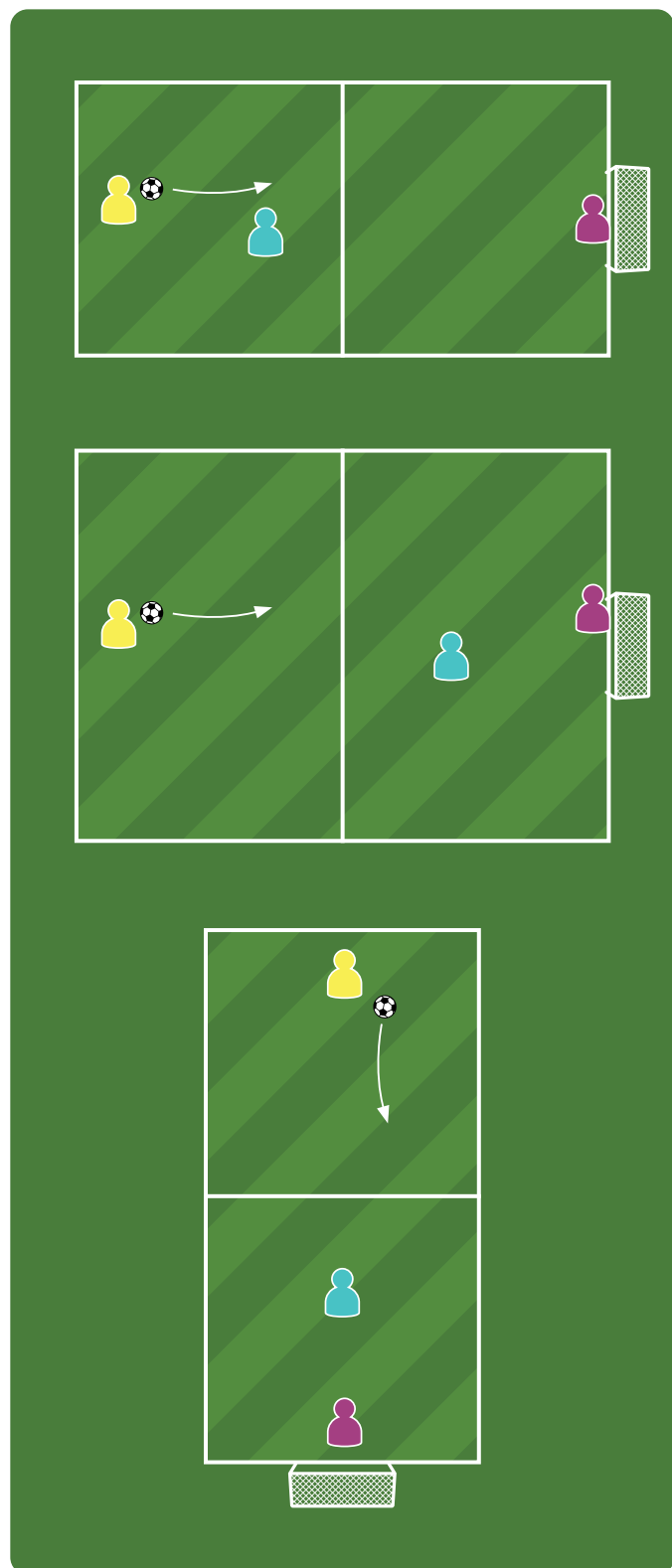
1v1 Games

Organisation

- Set up three pitches: one long, one wide and one narrow.
- The size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players.

How to Play

- The yellow attacking player dribbles out to attack the goal.
- The blue defending player defends within their zone which is marked by lines.
- The aim for the yellow attacker is to create a shot on goal, but the aim for the blue player is to win the ball from the attacker and dribble over the end line.
- Once either happens, the attacking player moves to the next pitch.
- Change roles and pitches every three minutes.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

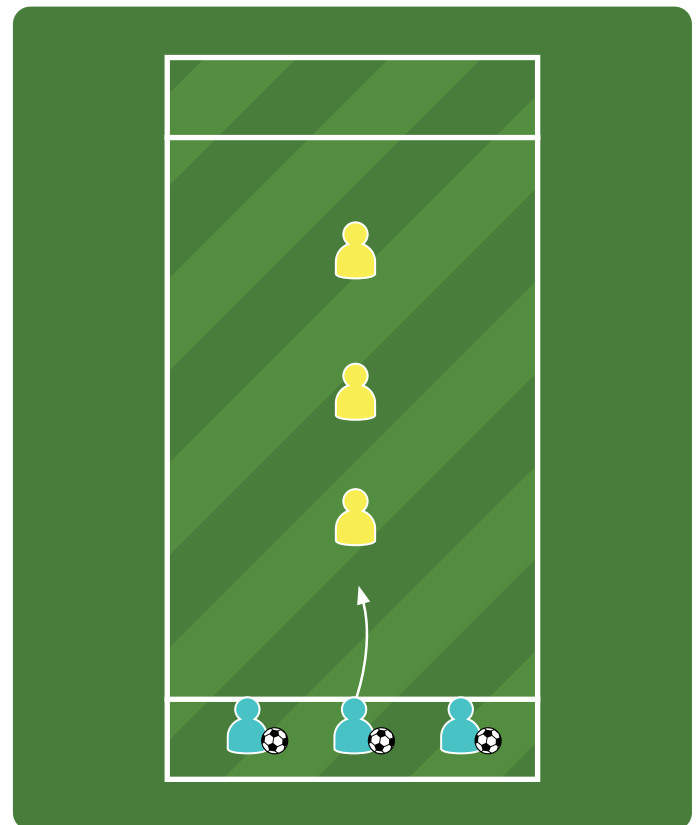
GAUNTLET

Organisation

- Blue players start in waves of three.
- Blue players must dribble through the 'gauntlet' to reach the end zone.
- The yellow defenders must try to tackle the blue players as they progress up the pitch.
- If the blues dribble through the area successfully, they return to start to work in another wave of three.
- If a blue player is tackled, they can restart from where they were tackled.

Challenges

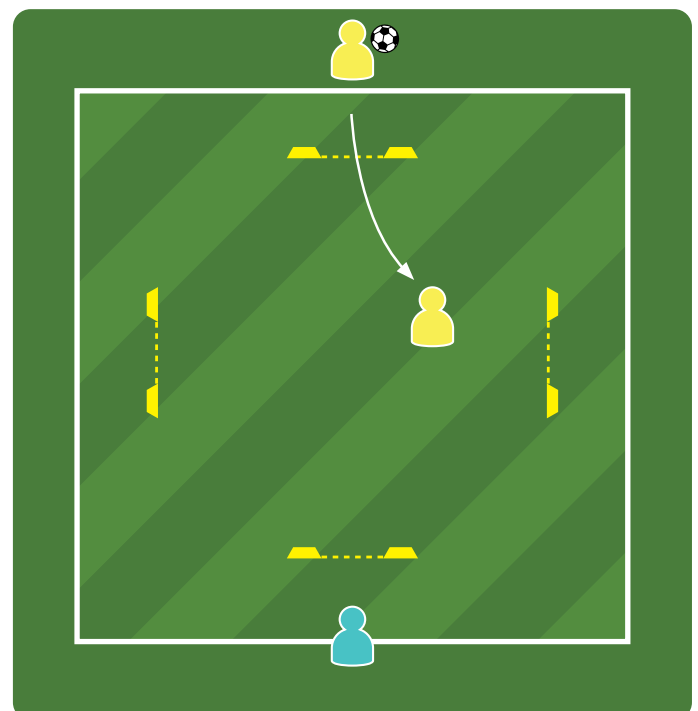
- Play without a ball to develop movement skills.
- Increase or reduce the number of yellow defenders.
- Give the yellow defenders a ball to dribble with.
- Let blue players go in pairs to beat the gauntlet.



1v1 DECEPTION

Organisation

- Set up multiple areas and adjust according to numbers, age and ability.
- Set up as shown with a yellow server, yellow attacker and blue defender.
- The server passes the ball to the attacker and the defender enters the area.
- The objective for the attacker is to dribble the ball through as many gates as possible.
- Attackers will earn a point for every gate they successfully run the ball through.
- The defender's objective is to win possession and dribble the ball out of the area in order to end the action.
- Once the action has ended, rotate the players and start again.



Challenges

- The defender can start inside the area.
- Make the gates wider.
- Make the area smaller.

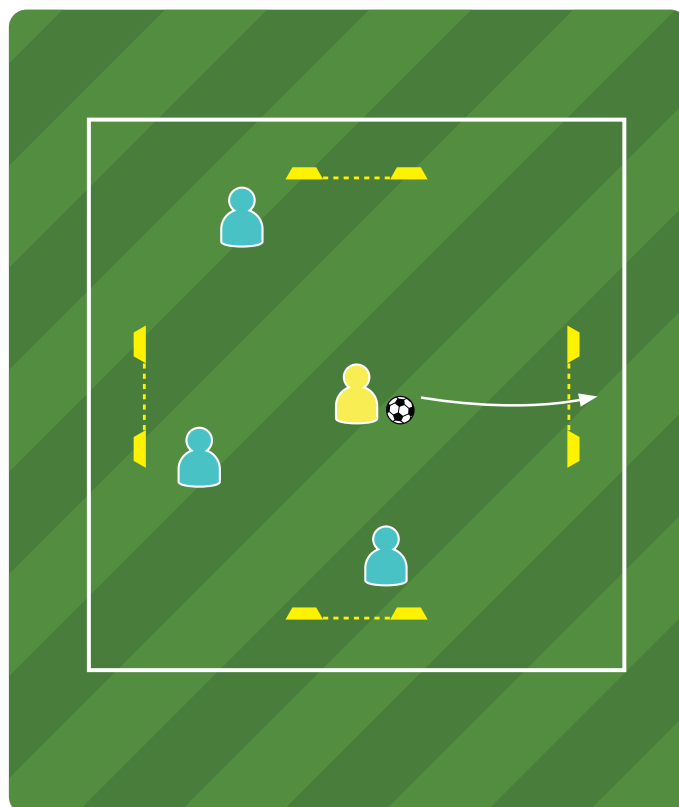
ESCAPE

Organisation

- Set up multiple areas and adjust according to numbers, age and ability.
- There should be four gates and three blue defenders who guard the gates but do not tackle.
- Divide the players into small groups.
- The attacker plays 3v1 and tries to escape out of the free gate.
- Defenders shuffle sideways to block the escape and work as a team of three.
- This will help develop ball manipulation for the attacker and lateral movements and teamwork for the defenders.

Challenges

- Change roles – give everyone a chance of being an attacker.
- Make sure the defenders stay moving around to protect the gates but do not try to tackle.
- Play 2 defenders v 1 attacker and tackling is allowed.



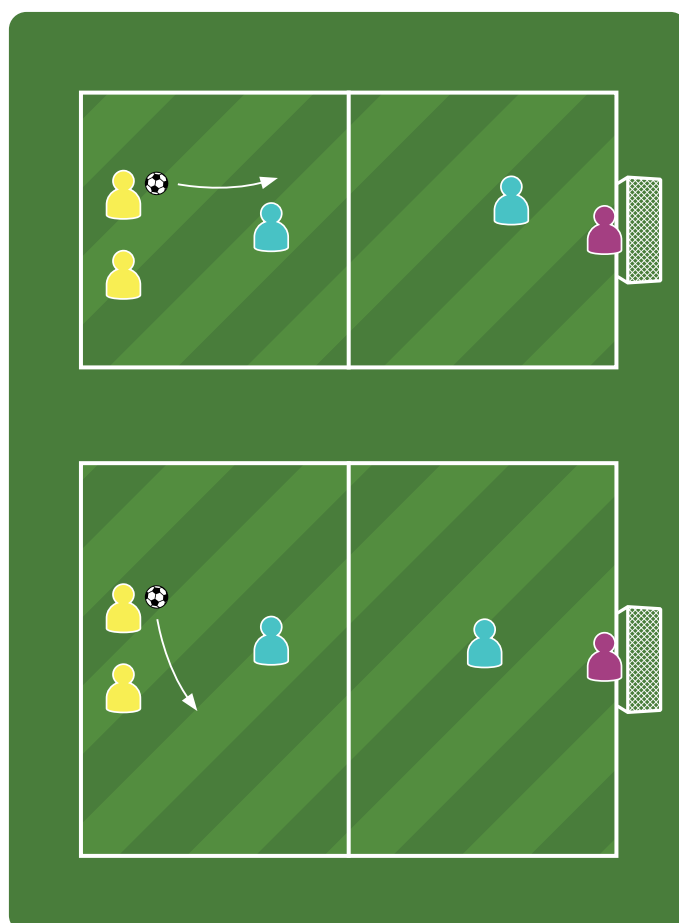
NARROW OR WIDE

Organisation

- Set up two pitches – one narrow and one wide.
- The size of the area should be set appropriately for the age and ability of the players, e.g. 15 by 30 and 20 by 40.

How to Play

- The yellow attacking players work in twos to attack the goal.
- The blue defending players defend within their zone which is marked by lines.
- The aim for the yellow team is to create a shot on goal while the aim for the blue player is to win the ball from the attackers and dribble over the end line.
- Once either happens, the two attacking players move to the next pitch and play wide or narrow.
- Change roles every five minutes.



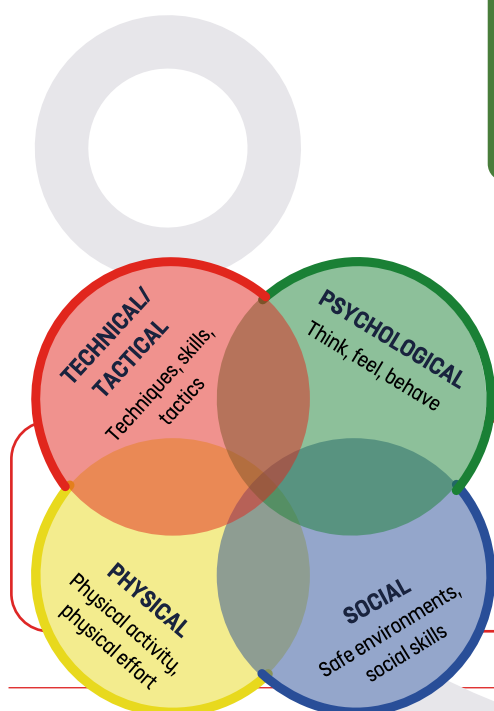
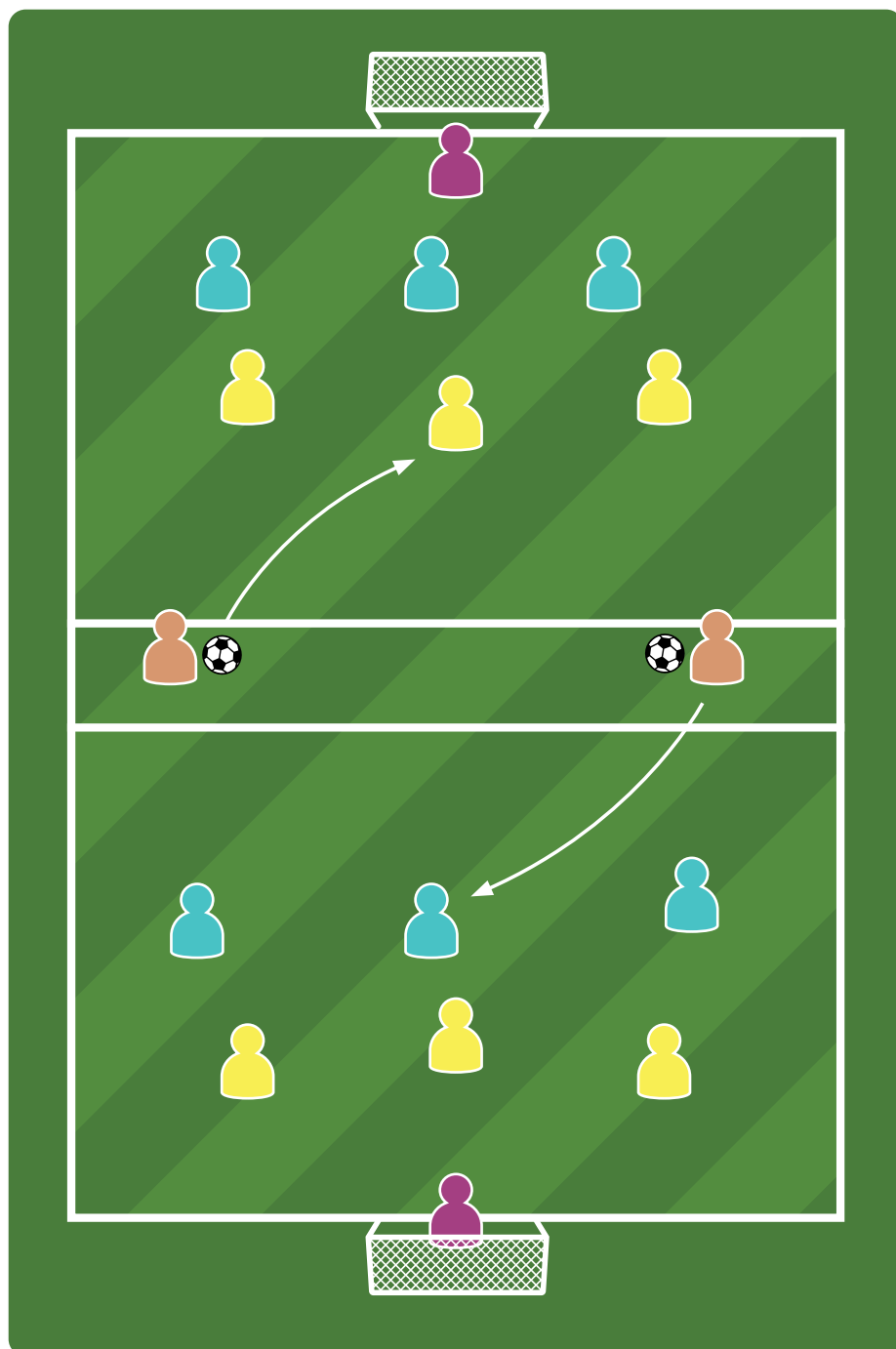
MATCHED UP

Organisation

- Set up the practice as shown: 3v3 plus two servers and two goalkeepers, and the pitch split into two halves.
- The pink server starts with the ball and serves into the attacking team who try to score past the goalkeeper.
- If a defender wins the ball, they can score by playing it back to the pink server.

Challenges

- Play underloaded or overloaded based on the capabilities of the group.
- Play with one ball.
- When the defending team passes the ball to the pink server, the ball is fed into the opposite half to become a directional game.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

Coach profile example

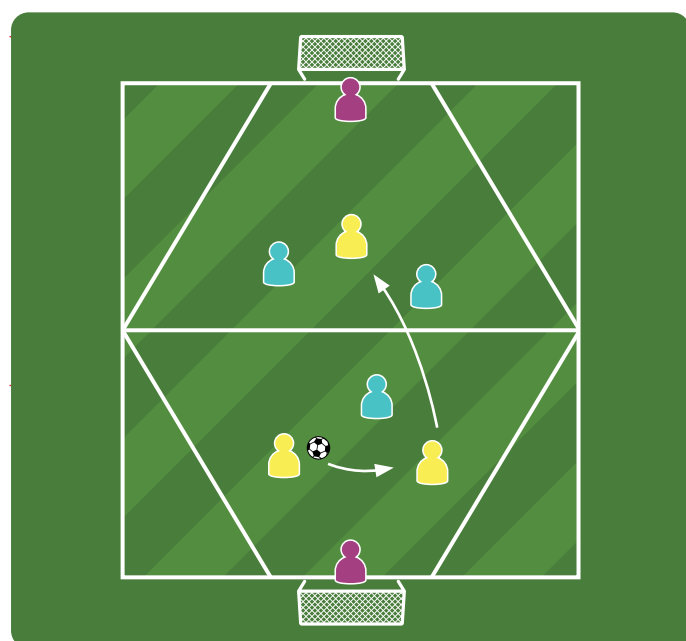
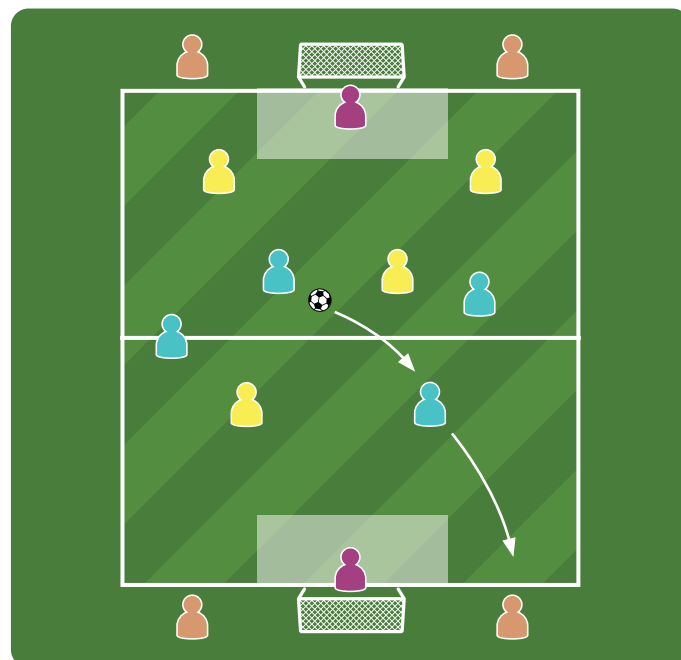
9v9 FORMAT



Megan
**U13 PE Teacher/
 Grassroots Coach**
Finishing

Using support players

- 4v4 plus a goalkeeper.
- 3 teams – one off as support.
- Use the support players to help you score.
- Support players can move.

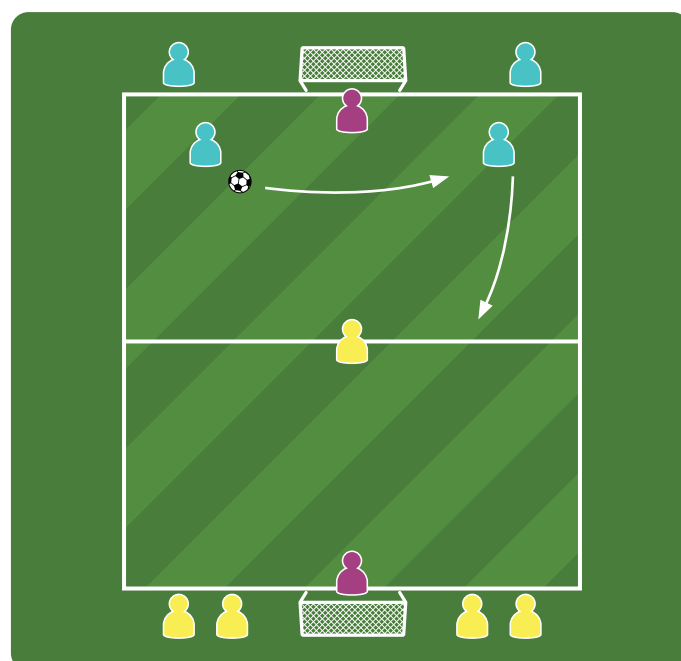


2-way Wave

- 2v1 going one way.
- Once the attackers shoot – another 2v1 starts.
- Add recovery runners.
- This can be a 2v2 or 3v2 if there are large numbers.

Changing the 'Pitch'

- 2v1 in each half.



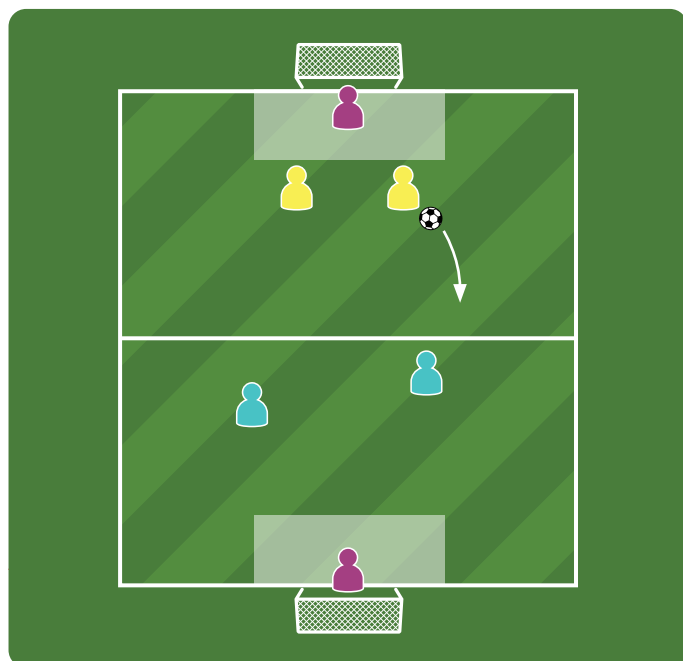
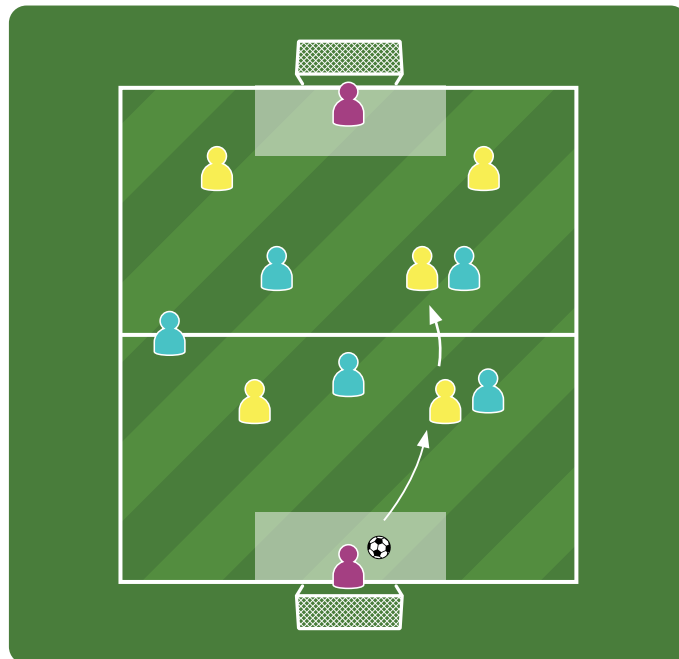
9v9 FORMAT



Chris
U12 Primary Stars Coach
Pressing

Practice 1 – 6v6 Game

- 6 blues vs 6 yellows.
- The yellows to play through/into players as a condition.
- The blues are a pressing team and have opportunities to press as a result of the yellow condition.

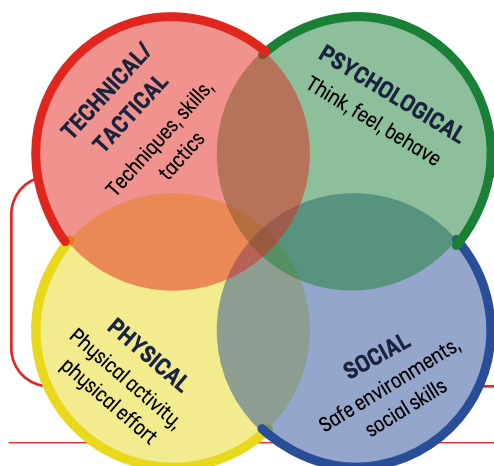


Practice 2 – Part Game

- Play 2v2.
- The blues press high and try to regain the ball in the attacking half.
- When they regain in the attacking half, they should try to score.
- The idea is to try and win the ball back as close to their goal as possible.

Practice 3 – Whole Game

- Back to Practice 1.
- See how individual/unit/team presses.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

Coach profile example

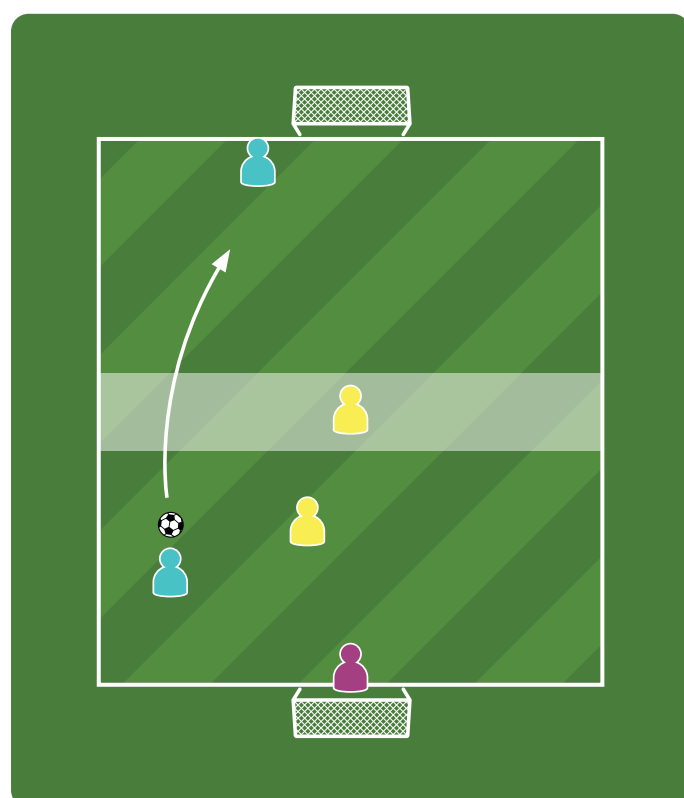
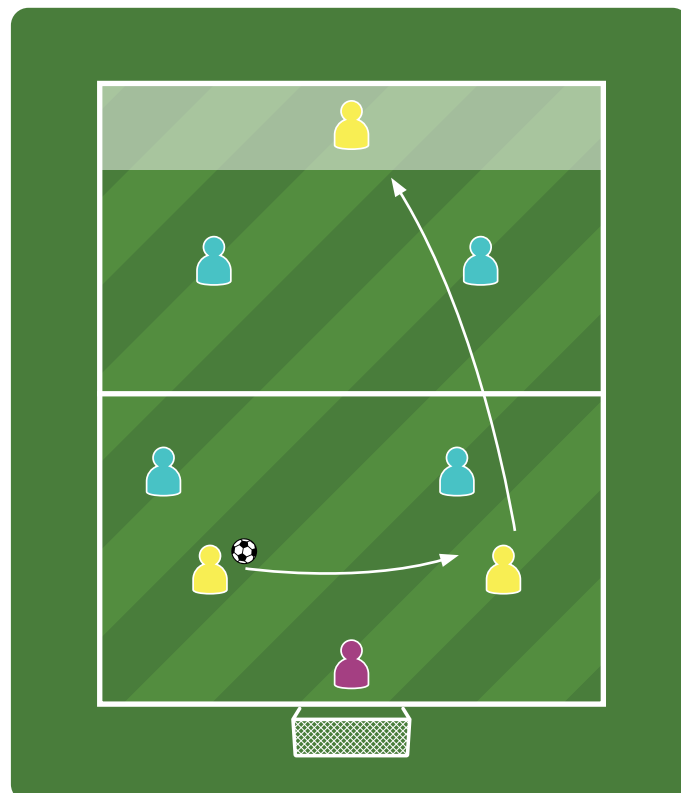
9v9 FORMAT



Lawrence
U12 Community Coach
Intercepting

4v4

- 3v2 in one half, 1v2 in the other.
- Yellows attempt to play the ball to the target player.
- The blues have to screen the player in the defending half.
- If the blues are able to intercept, they can break free and try to score.
- The ball always starts with the goalkeeper.
- The goalkeeper is free to 'roam' as an outfield player.

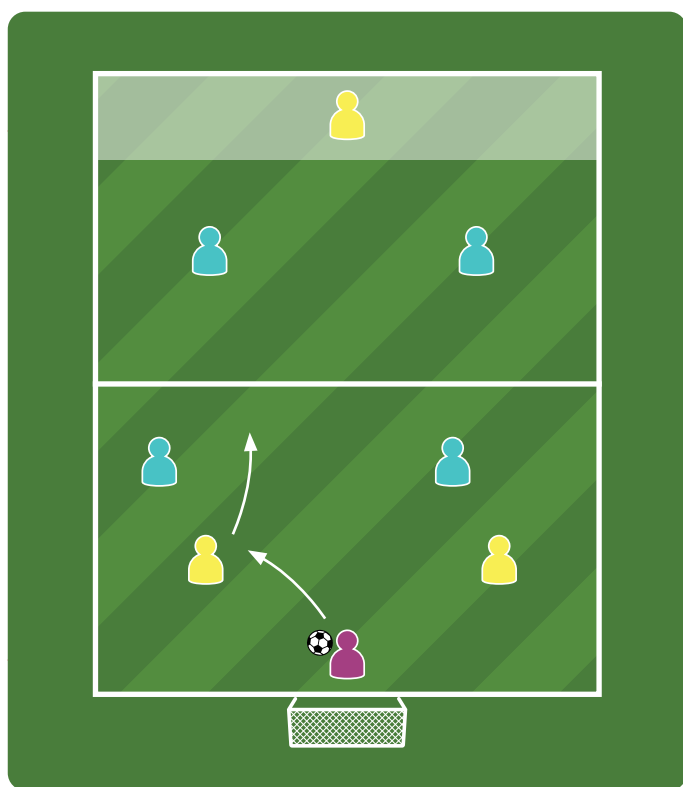
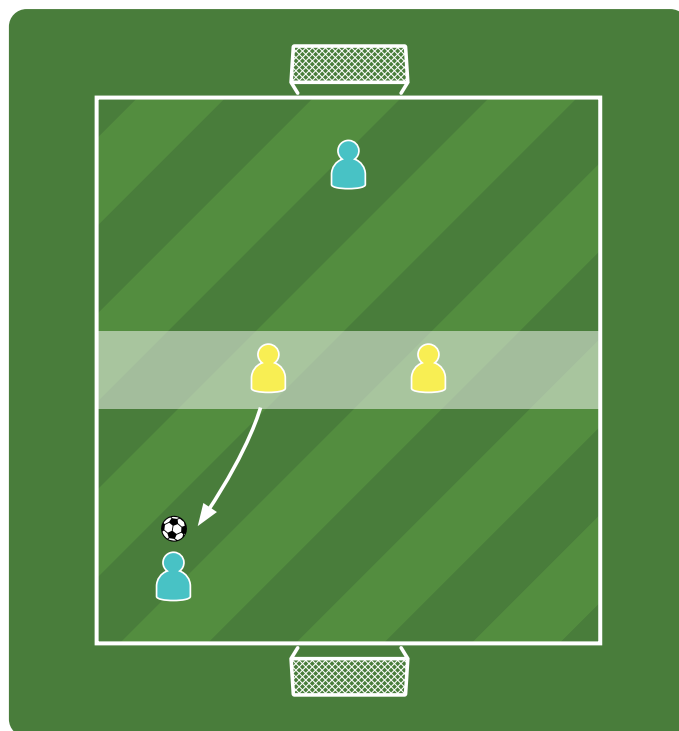


2v2

- Blues work with the goalkeeper to get the ball to the target player on the end line.
- The yellow team has a defender screening the middle area.
- The other defender is live.
- If the blues are successful in passing the ball to the target player, then they can join up to attack the goalkeeper with the yellows in defence.

NO Goalkeeper?

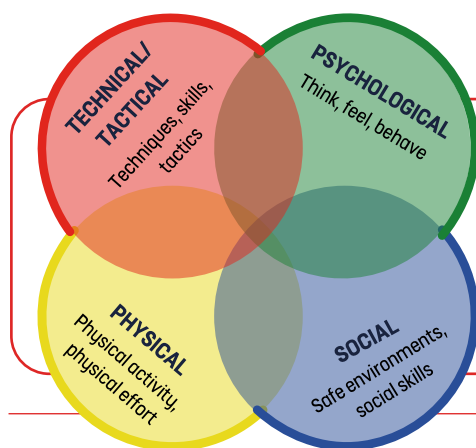
- The yellow player sends the ball to the blue player who tries to pass to the other blue player, who can roam in the other half.
- If yellows win the ball back they attack the furthest goal from where they won the ball.
- If the second blue player succeeds in receiving the ball, they can attack the empty goal.



4v4

- Yellows attack the end zone.
- If they score they can attack the goal.
- Interceptions by the blue team which result in a goal past the goalkeeper count as double.

NOTE: You'll be able to use some practices across different formats. It's important to remember to align the sessions to your players' needs, wants and capabilities.

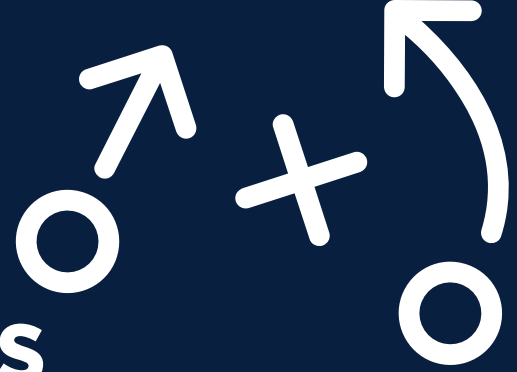


What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

Click or scan for more 9v9 format coaching sessions:



11v11 Format: coaching sessions



11v11 FORMAT



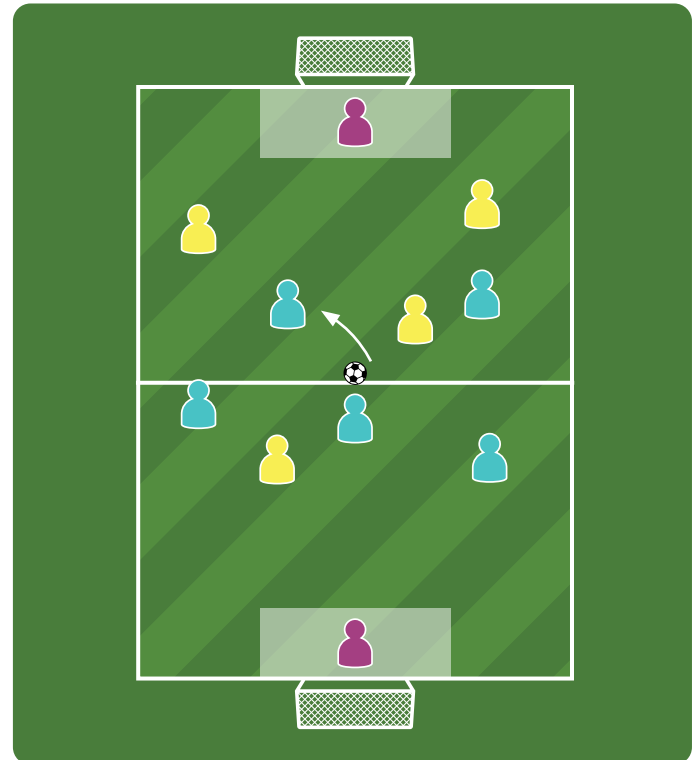
Hamzeh
U14 Girls Team Coach
Finishing

Practice 1 – Game

Each team must have at least one defender in their own half (any player) or a goal is given to the opposition.

Double points for:

- One-touch finishes.
- Volleys and half-volleys.
- Goalkeeper scoring.

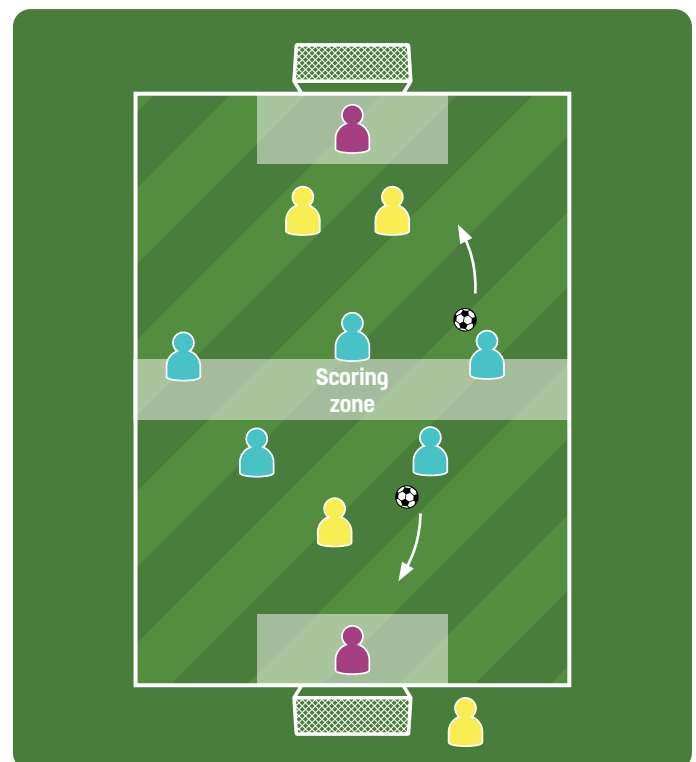


Practice 2 – Part Game Wave Practice

- Blues attack 3v2 at one end.
- The goalkeeper starts by playing the ball to the attackers.
- The yellows try to win the ball and play into the middle zone.
- Blues attack 2v1 at the other end.
- Once yellows win the ball, they must try to get into the middle zone. If they do, swap roles and teams.

Practice 3 – Whole Game

- Back to Game 1.
- Play offsides.
- Add double score rules.



Coach profile example

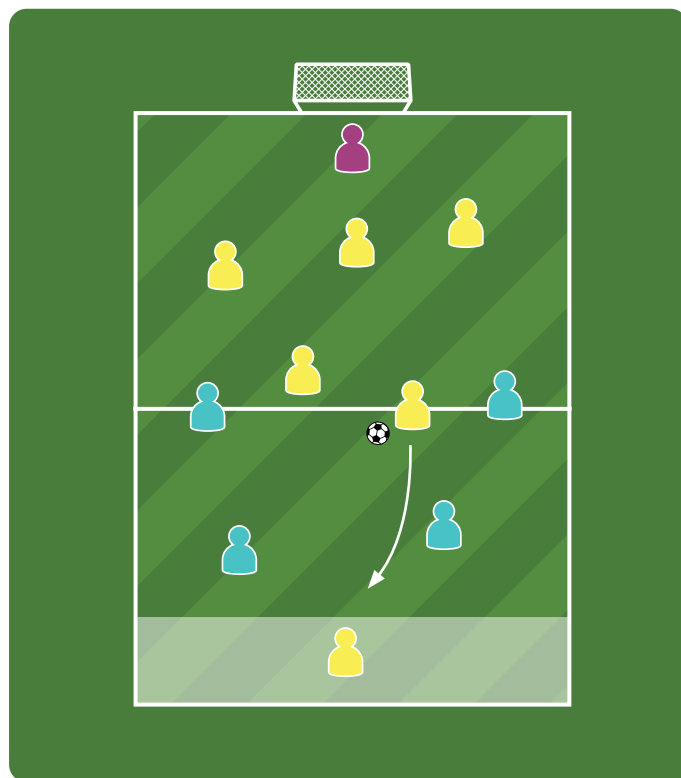
11v11 FORMAT



Rebecca
U14 Community Coach
Receiving

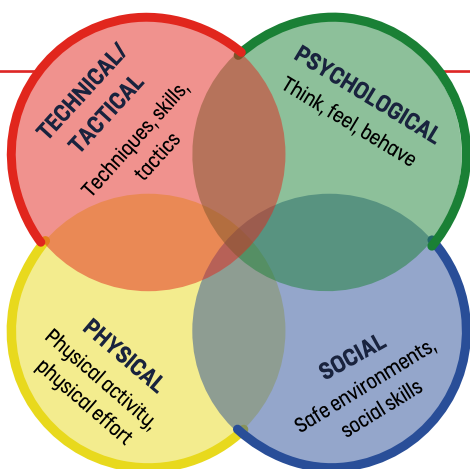
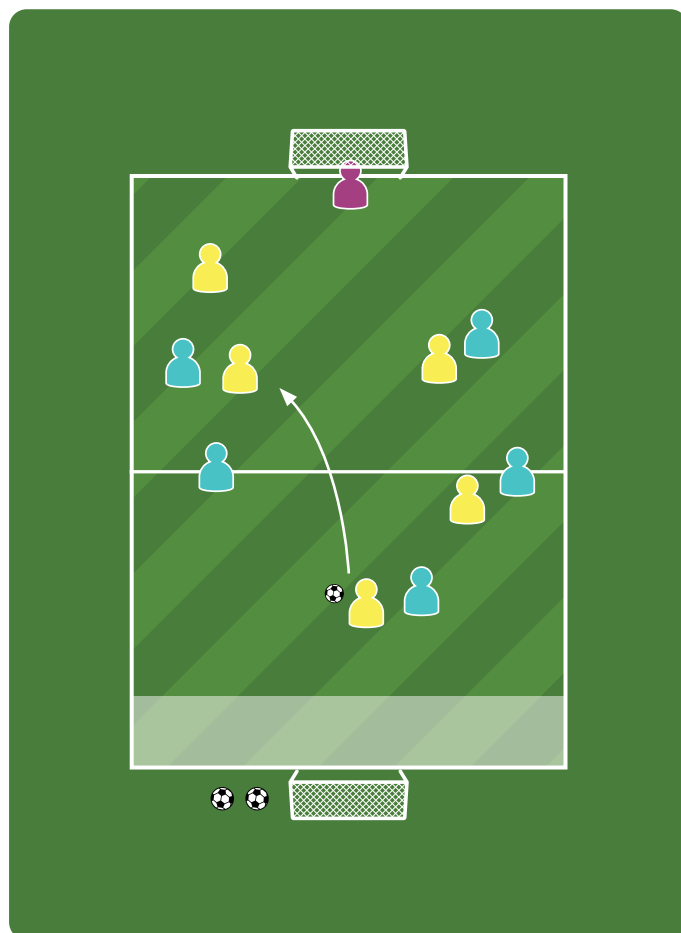
6v4 + Goalkeeper

- Yellow plays to the target player in the end zone (safe zone). The target player then sends the ball back to the goalkeeper to start another attack.
- Blues try to break up the possession. If the blues win the ball they can score in any direction, either by running into the end zone or by scoring a goal past the goalkeeper.
- Yellows to play under head height.
- Change roles.



5v5 + Goalkeeper

- Yellows attack the goal.
- Blues attack the end zone.
- The end zone can be a safe area for yellows when they're in possession.



What would be your Four Corner Focus in these sessions?

Coach profile example

11v11 FORMAT



Rachel
U15 Coach
Through the Thirds

- Yellows work the ball from end to end.
- Blues to challenge and break out at any end.
- The blues are set up as illustrated. Develop the practice by allowing them to win the ball back in any way they can.
- Develop so that yellows are allowed to score after achieving end-to-end possession.
- Add goalkeepers (if available) as the practice progresses.



11v11 FORMAT



Luke
U18 Grassroots Coach
Lead In Practice – Midfield Combinations

What?

Playing through central midfield

Who?

Midfield 3 unit

Why?

Dictate play centrally, break lines

Key Principles

Space Creation, Penetration, Movement

Core Moves

Wall Pass, Up-back-through

Key objectives

Must

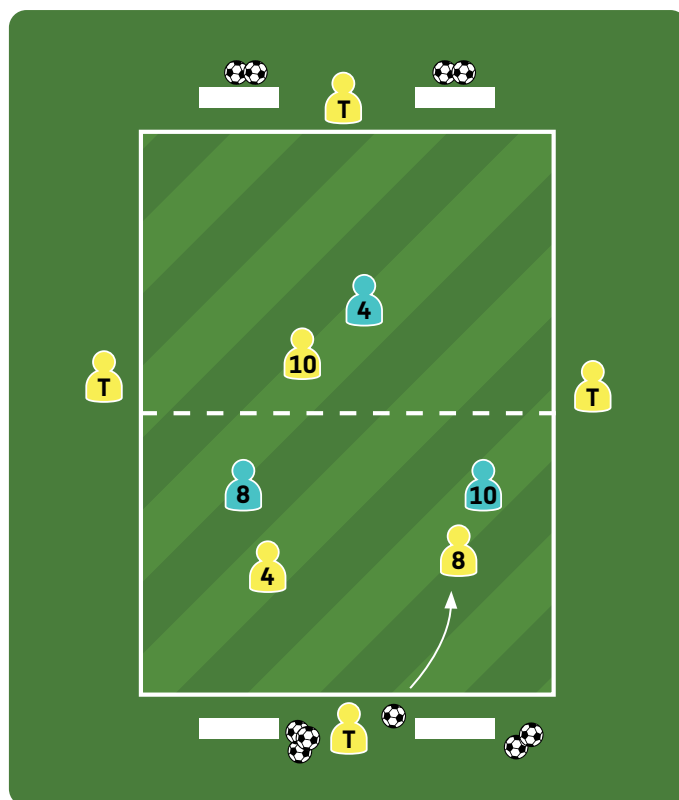
- To score, you must play into T on the top line. The ball always starts at the bottom of the practice. Blues try to intercept and break up play and score by playing to any T.

Try

- To play forward to the furthest line when possible.

Challenge

- Target players can't score, how many different combinations can you score from?



11v11 FORMAT



Rafi
U21 Team Coach
Playing out from the back

Squad practice

Objective

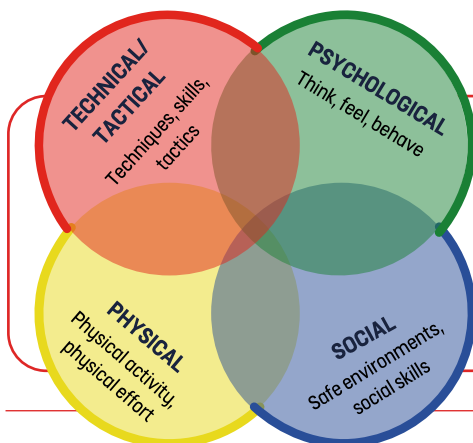
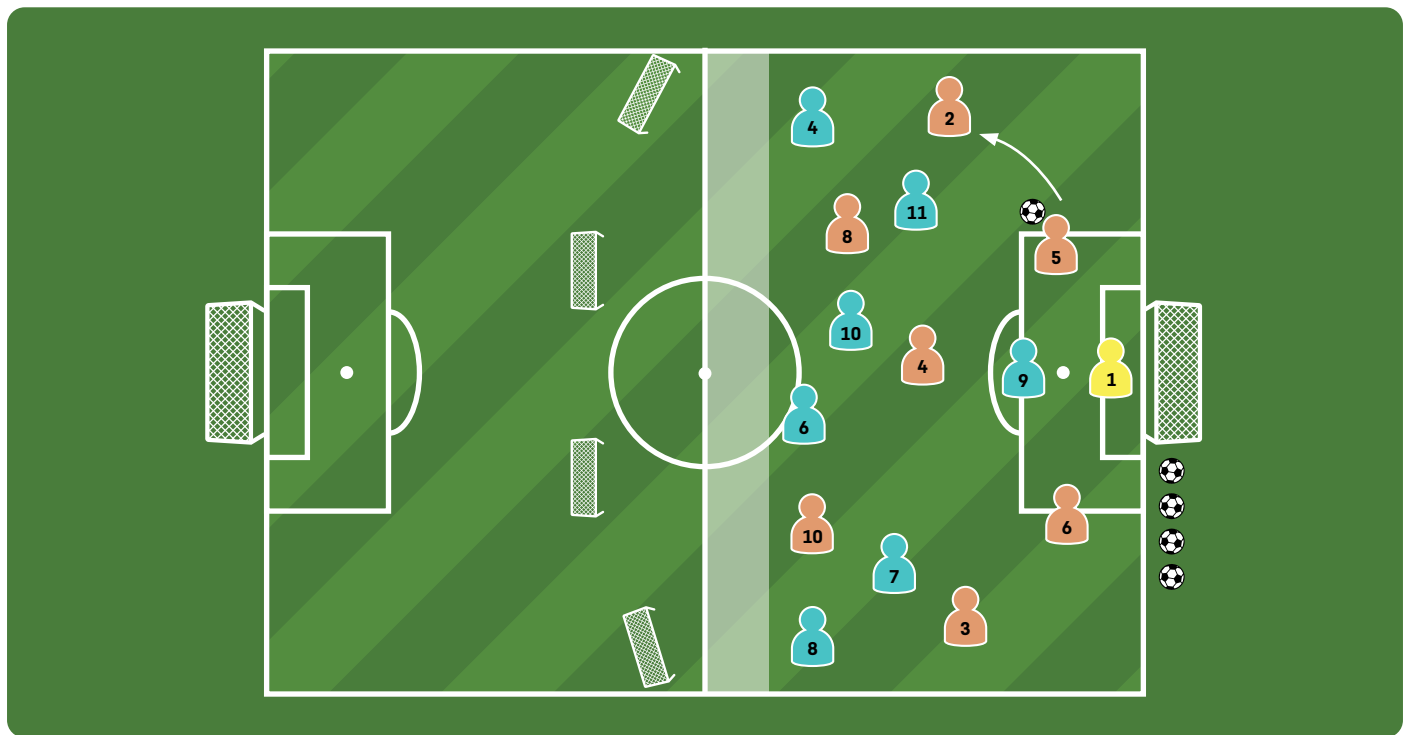
- Players to get into the shaded zone quickly, with good possession and in 'shape'.

Orange

- Break into the zone and score into the goals.
- Pass into goals from deep x2.
- Must try to score in the middle goals (x2).

Blue

- Attack the goal.
- Blues – try to stop the 4 getting on the ball.
- They must try to intercept and block.



**What would be your
 Four Corner Focus in
 these sessions?**

**Click or scan
 for more 11v11
 format
 coaching
 sessions:**



Six-week session Programmes



England Football Learning <https://learn.englishfootball.com/> provides downloadable 6-week coaching programmes intended as templates for coaches and teachers.

Please see below its 6-week coaching programmes for 7–11 year olds and 12–16 year olds.

7–11-year-old Session Programmes

Moving with the ball and turning to attack:



Pressing and covering to stop goals:



Marking and intercepting to defend:



Passing and receiving to score:



Receiving and finishing to score:



12–16-year-old Session Programmes

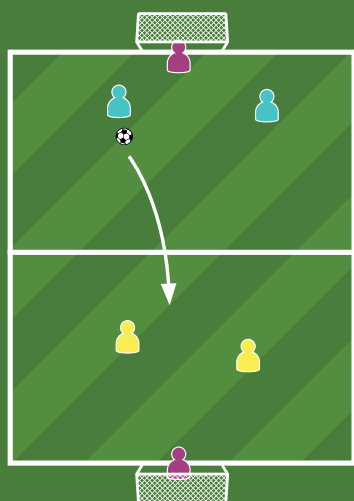


Remember to plan what you want your players to learn:

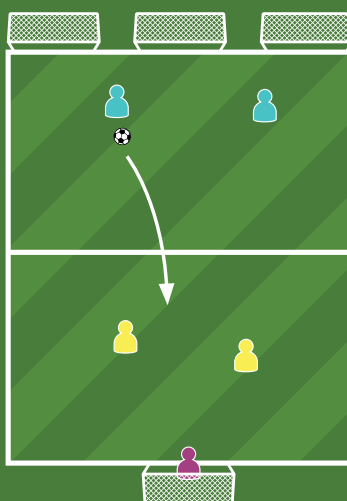
Top Tip: As coaches, consider how you can use the example practice templates on the next page to help you create your own coaching sessions and programmes.

Practice templates

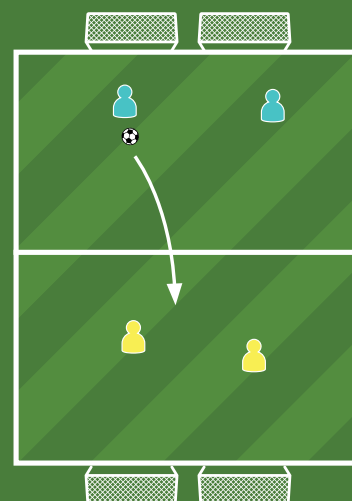
Small number practices for all coaches to use across all formats.



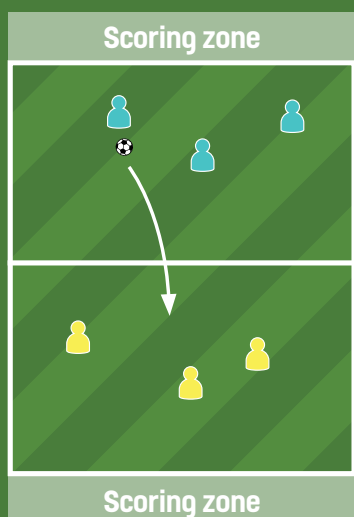
Normal game



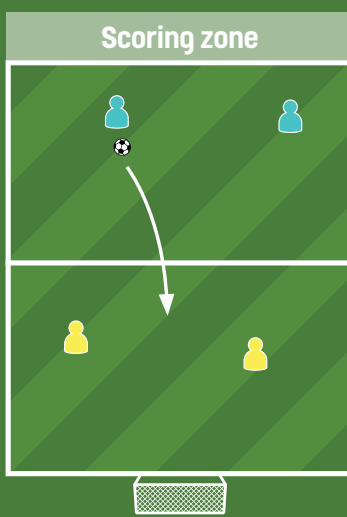
Dribble and score



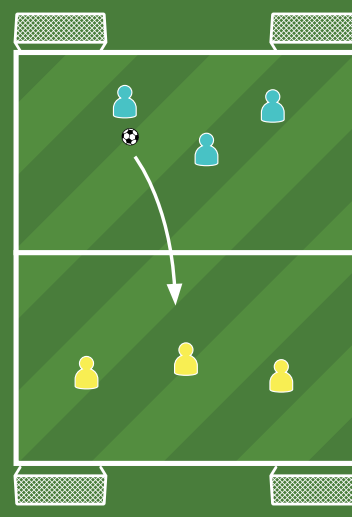
Attacking centrally



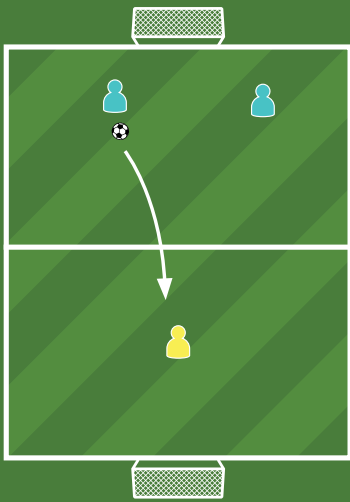
End zone games



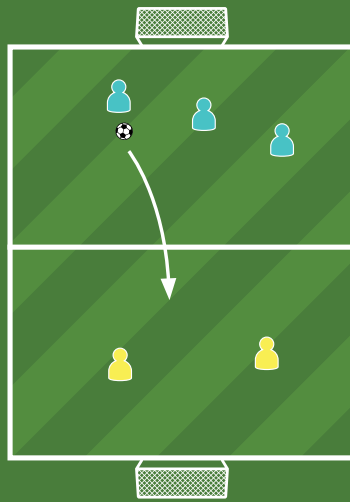
Attacking centrally or wide



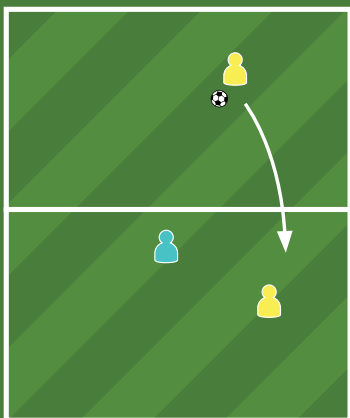
4-Goal game



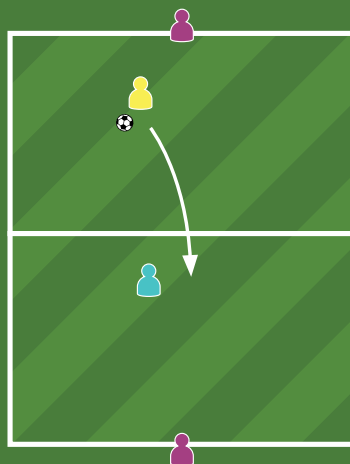
Underloaded 1v2



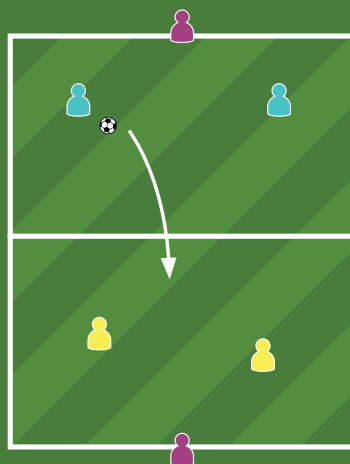
Overloaded 3v2



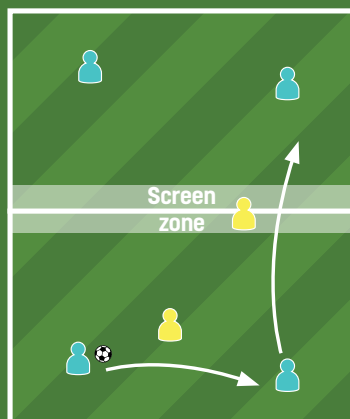
2v1 Keep ball



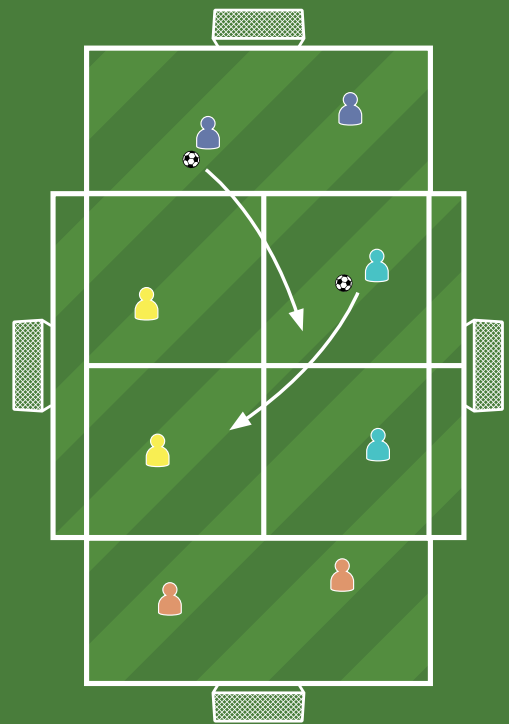
1v1 + Targets



2v2 + Targets



1 press 1 screen



Decision makers – game within a game

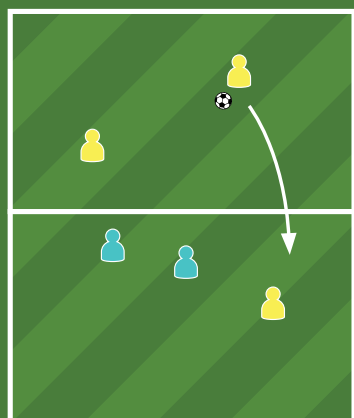


Click or scan for further coaching sessions and videos:

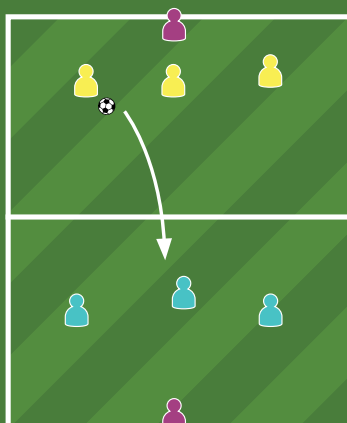


Practice templates

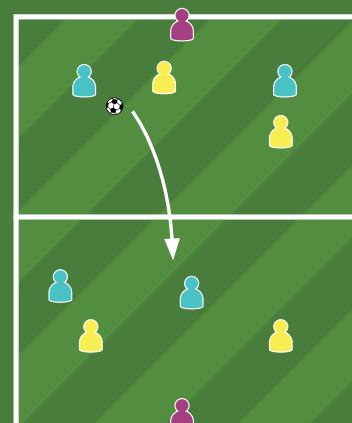
Small number practices for all coaches to use across all formats.



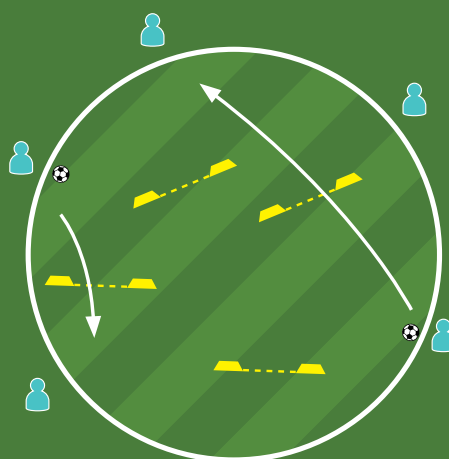
3v2 Keep ball



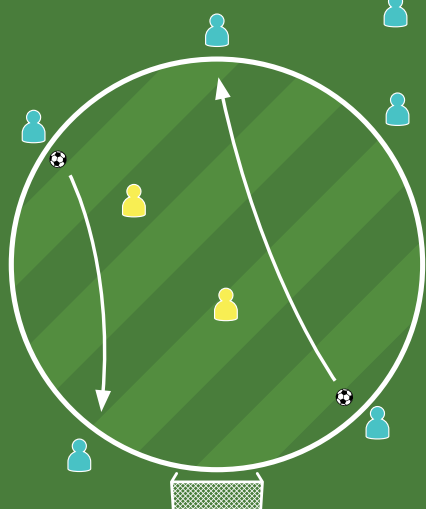
3v3 + Targets



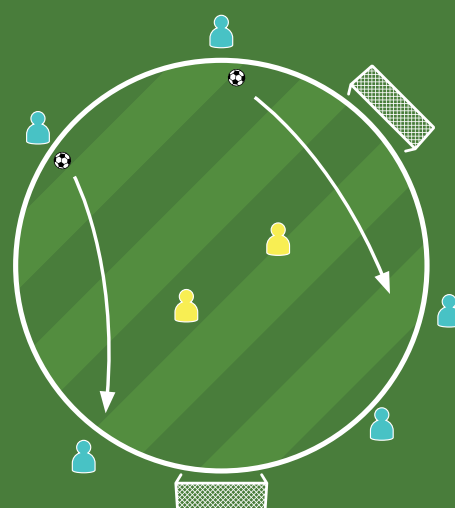
4v4 + Targets

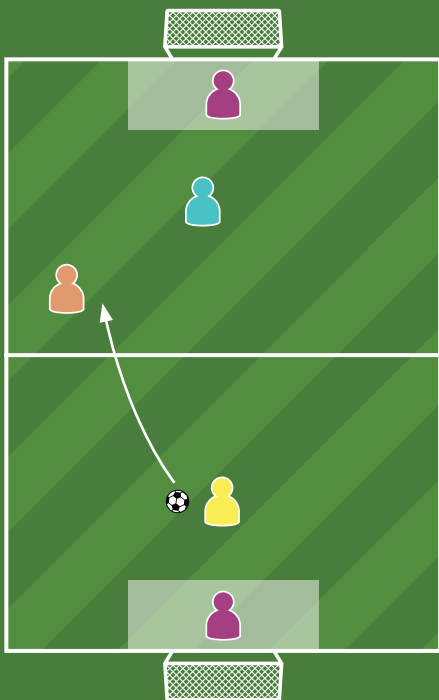


Dribble + pass games

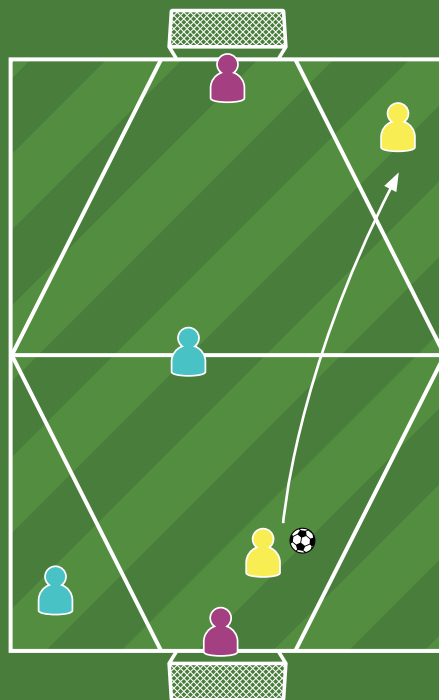


Dribble + pass games
Yellows try to tackle and score in goals

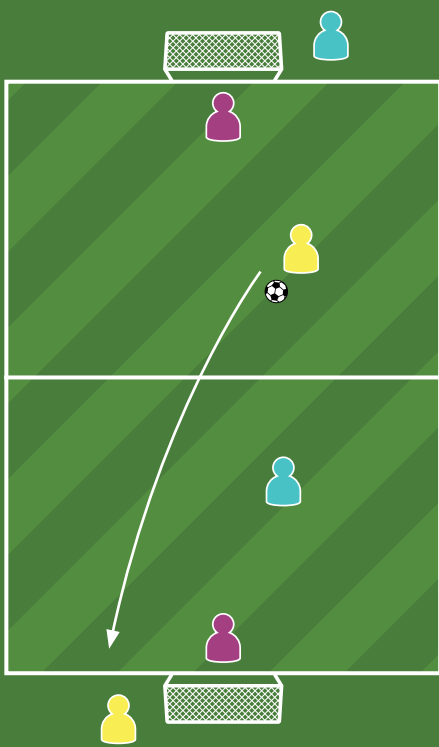




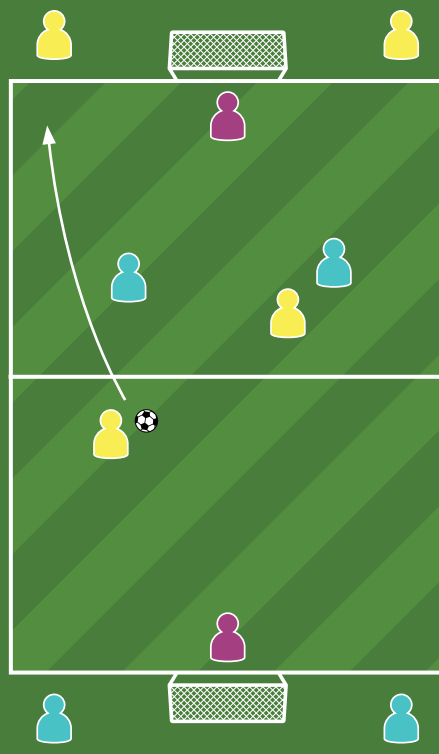
Using support players (pink plays for both teams but cannot score)



Forward pass and runs



1v1 (score off end zone player)



2v2 (score off end zone player)

The Grassroots Code

Playing football brings huge mental, physical and emotional wellbeing benefits.

From players to parents, coaches, teachers and club officials, we have a collective responsibility to create a positive football experience for all.

The Behaviour Hub supports everyone to uphold and improve the Standards of Behaviour we expect to see across grassroots football. It includes the following elements:

- The Grassroots Code
- Behaviour Improvement Programme.
- Behaviour Improvement Resources.
- Reporting Discrimination.
- Sanctions and Discipline.

Click or scan to discover more:



The Grassroots Code

Together, these Standards of Behaviour promote a positive, inclusive and respectful football experience for everyone. One in which your club can take pride. One which makes even the strongest football club stronger. One which better represents our communities.

Click or scan to get the full grassroots code:



Safeguarding



Supporting links

FutureFit Hub:



County FAs:



Courses:



England Football Find Football:



Ongoing Learning:



England Football:



England Football Learning:




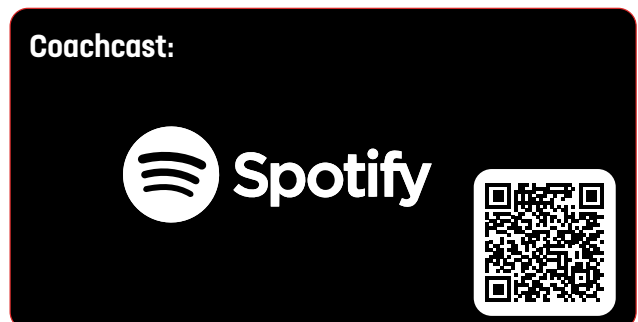
England Football Play Football:



England Football Learning YouTube:



Coachcast:





**ENGLAND
FOOTBALL**

FutureFit

