



FOOTBALL COACHING MANUAL



Acknowledgements

This football coaching manual was adapted from the *Coach2Coach Programme* developed for the Right to Play organization by Mr Steve Watson, Footy4Kids, United Kingdom. It was originally produced for the Right to Play's Middle East programme. IPEC would like to express its gratitude to Mr Watson, Footy4Kids and Right to Play for allowing the *Coach2Coach Programme* to be used as a reference for this resource kit. For coaches who have access to the internet and would like to know more, the web site www.footy4kids.co.uk is highly recommended. It is bursting with ideas, drills, hints, advice, tools and games, and provides useful ideas for coaches working with young children and inexperienced players.

IPEC would also like to acknowledge and express its sincere appreciation to International Service's "Coaching for Hope" project and Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club in the United Kingdom for allowing the reproduction of sections of their football coaching manual *Goals without goalposts!*

How to use this manual

The purpose of this coaching manual is to serve as a support tool for coaches implementing a football-based project for children engaged in, removed from or at risk of child labour. It is aimed in particular at coaches who might not be able to call on local football clubs or local or national football federations for help, particularly in terms of their own training and development. The manual lays out some key points and activities and suggests some coaching drills that can be used during training sessions.

However, the manual only scratches the surface of the many different ways that exist of coaching children to play football. There are so many possible exercises, activities, and coaching hints and tips that it would be impossible to bring them all together in one place. The intention of this manual is to stimulate coaches' learning and hopefully be the start of something that will remain behind long after the project has finished.

Throughout this resource kit, it is constantly emphasized that the involvement of local, regional and national football organizations should be sought in project activities, particularly in terms of the training of football coaches and obtaining appropriate resource materials, including coaching manuals in national languages, as well as

the necessary equipment, such as footballs, training cones and training bibs. The involvement of these football organizations is addressed in more detail in the module *Mobilizing communities and partners*.

In contacting football organizations, particularly local clubs and national federations, coaches should seek support in training for themselves to improve their own skills and capacities and should also look for additional ideas for football coaching drills and games to use with children and young people. If resources and handbooks are available, coaches should make extensive use of these. In addition, if access to the internet is possible, an internet search with "football coaching drills" as the subject is highly recommended. There are literally hundreds of web sites that provide additional support for coaches from a wide range of sources, including football clubs and national federations. In addition, the Education and Technical Department of FIFA has developed a coaching manual for young children aged 6 to 12, the *FIFA Grassroots Manual*, which can be downloaded from the web site: www.fifa.com. This manual helps coaches, teachers and each adult involved in youth football to better teach the game to children, understanding and taking into account the specifics of training young children. Among other aspects, the manual stresses the importance of festivals, skill exercises and small-sided games.

It is up to you, the coach, to keep up the enthusiasm and joy of the game among the children and other members of the community involved in project activities. This will usually happen because of your own commitment to the project, the game and the children. Your job is critical to the success of the project and the health, well-being, fulfilment and happiness of the children. You will play a key role in helping the children overcome the trauma of the past or in preventing them from ending up in situations of exploitation or abuse. Many of the beneficiaries of the project will be (former) working children or vulnerable children with the potential to drop out of school and enter prematurely into work. Coaches are teachers, educators, surrogate parents, social workers, leaders, counsellors, nurses and friends all rolled into one. You have a lot of responsibility on your shoulders and, for the sake of the children, you must always be on top of your game.

Make the most of “downtime” during coaching sessions to get to know the children in your group better, for example during the cool-down stretch. This is a good time to talk to them and encourage them – find out what, if anything, is troubling them with regard to their football game or their lives in general. Use this as a moment of calm reflection and therapy by talking to them gently and in a non-judgemental fashion. This is part of the confidence and trust-building process that is critical in your relationship with the children and it might help in bringing problem areas to the fore so that, if necessary or warranted, you can later bring these to the attention of medical or health professionals, counsellors, parents, teachers, social welfare authorities, education authorities or community leaders.

With personal commitment, dedication and a willingness to help vulnerable children, there is no end to what creative and imaginative football coaches might achieve. With your help, football projects will make a significant difference to the lives of those children who need it most.

A brief history of football

Football as a sport was first recorded in Great Britain, although it is not known exactly where the sport was invented. There are records of earlier forms in China, at least two thousand years ago, and in ancient Greece and Rome. But it was in England that football began to take the shape recognized today. Originally frowned upon by the authorities and upper classes, who made constant efforts from the 14th century onwards to suppress it, football was seen as a game of the people: a vulgar and rowdy pastime. Known as “mob football”, matches were little more than violent street battles. The football “field” was the length of the town in which the game was being played and there could be as many as 500 players playing a “match” that continued all day long. The damage to property and players was significant.

The contemporary history of football began in Great Britain in 1863 when 12 clubs and schools attended a meeting where they decided to form an association called “The Football Association”. This association drafted the first common set of rules of football, which were accepted on 8th December that year. Among other things, the original set of rules included limiting the field size to 200 by 100 metres, allowing players to catch the ball with their hands and teams changing ends after each goal. Eight years later, the first football competition in the world started – the English Football Association (FA) Cup – and in 1872 the first international match was contested by England and Scotland.

The spread of football outside of Great Britain, mainly due to the British influence abroad, started slowly but soon gathered momentum and spread rapidly to all parts of the world. When the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) was founded in Paris in May 1904, it had seven founder members: France, Belgium,

Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. By 1930, the year of the first World Cup, there were 41 members. There were 51 members in 1938, and in 1950, after the interval caused by the Second World War, the number had reached 73. In 2009, there were 208 affiliated member associations from every corner of the globe, and the Football World Cup is the second largest global sporting event after the Olympics.

How the game of football is played

For the adult game, football is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than 11 players, one of whom is the goalkeeper. Official matches may not start if either team consists of fewer than seven players. The duration of the match at senior level lasts two equal periods of 45 minutes, unless otherwise mutually agreed between the referee and the two participating teams. Players are entitled to a half-time interval of no more than 15 minutes.

Each team consists of a goalkeeper, defenders, midfielders and forwards. The combination of defenders, midfielders and forwards is referred to as the “team’s system”, and there can be many variations. Systems are stated in a three consecutive number combinations, with the first number referring to the defenders, the second to the midfielders and the third to the forwards. For example, a “5-3-2 combination” would be a very defensive system, with 5 defenders, 3 midfielders and only 2 forwards, while a “4-3-4 combination” would be an attacking system with 4 defenders, 3 midfielders and 4 forwards.

The team scoring the greater number of goals during a match is the winner. If both teams score an equal number of goals, or if no goals are scored, the match is drawn.

The field of play

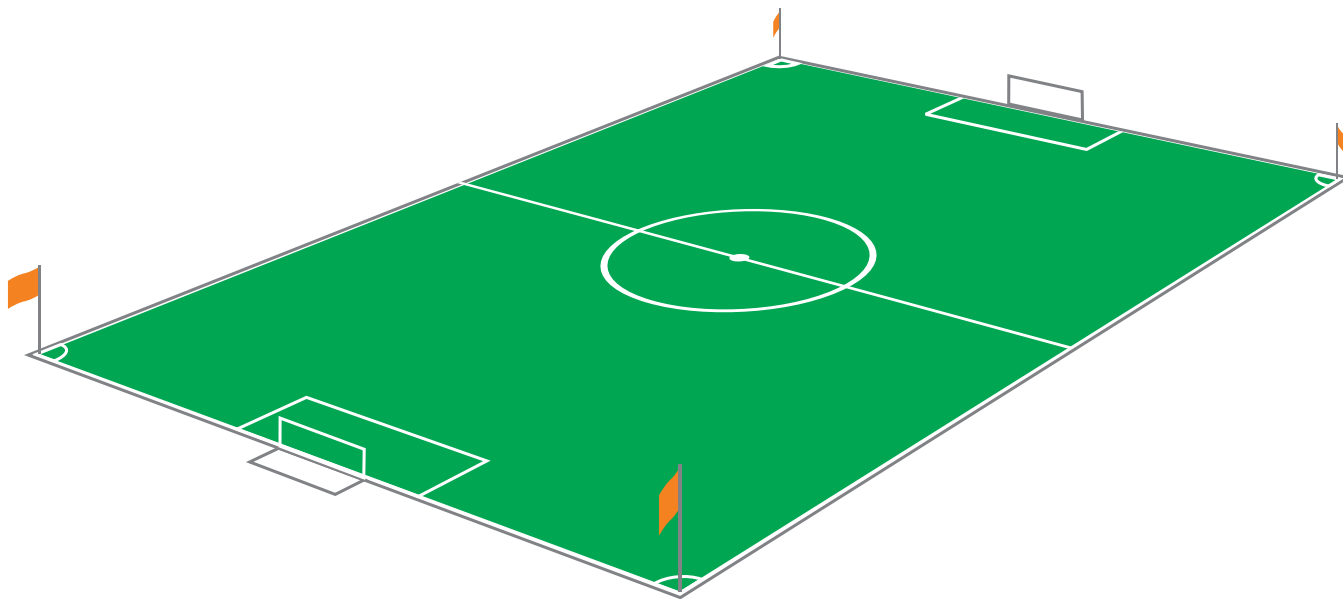
It is important that football pitch sizes are set in accordance with the age of the players – generally the younger the children, the smaller the pitch. The table below shows the optimum pitch size for each age group (as recommended by the English Football Association) and the maximum and minimum sizes in metres.

Football pitch minimum and maximum dimensions

AGE GROUPING	MEASUREMENT IN METRES			
	PITCH LENGTH		PITCH WIDTH	
	MAXIMUM	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MINIMUM
UNDER 7 TO 8-YEARS-OLD	45.75M	27.45M	27.45M	18.3M
UNDER 9 TO 10-YEARS-OLD	54.9M	45.75M	36.6M	27.45M
UNDER 11 TO 12-YEARS-OLD	73.85M	54.9M	50.77M	42M
UNDER 13 TO 14-YEARS-OLD	73.85M	64.62M	56M	42M
UNDER 15 TO 16-YEARS-OLD	82M	70M	56M	42M
UNDER 17 TO 18-YEARS-OLD AND ADULTS	120M	90M	90M	45M

Pitch layout

The pitch should be laid out as in the diagram below. The boxes that mark the goalkeeper's area for the full-size pitch are 15 metres wide by 9 metres deep. A 5-metre diameter centre circle can be added if you wish.



The basic rules of football

Note for coaches

For beginners and smaller children, there is no need to place too much emphasis on learning the rules. It is far more important to concentrate on teaching them the necessary skills required to play. At young ages, it is important that children have fun while playing and learning. The objective of "football for fun" runs through the IPEC football project approach. The rules set out below should guide implementing partners and volunteer coaches in terms of what they use for older children or more experienced younger players. As children progress in their playing skills and understanding of the game, it would be important to start introducing more formal rules.

Below are eight basic rules of football to help you, the coach, to understand the game better, particularly if you have not played or understood the game yourself before. Knowing the basic rules of football will help you coach children to play the game or will help you train other volunteer football coaches. These are not the full rules of the game, of course, and if you would like to know more about the comprehensive laws of football then you should either visit the FIFA web site, www.fifa.com, or contact regional or national federations or even local football clubs. The rules set out below are the basic rules that will be needed to start coaching children to play. It is advisable to study the more detailed rules over time, but they are not necessary in order to introduce children, particularly young or inexperienced children, to the concept of the game and have some basic rules for them to follow and to allow you (and them) to start working on skills and technique – which will be more fun for the children.

Remember: Play first ... rules later!

1. The start and restart of play: A coin is tossed and the team which wins the toss (i.e. heads or tails) decides which goal it will attack in the first half of the match. The other team takes the kick-off to start the match. The teams change ends for the second half of the game and the team that did not kick-off to start the first half will do so to start the second.

Note for coaches

Tossing a coin is the traditional way to start a football game. However, there are different ways in which to decide which team kicks off or starts on which side of the pitch. For example, the coach or referee can hold a small stone in the fist of one hand, put his/her hands behind his/her back and then ask the team captains to choose which hand they think it is in. The one who guesses correctly chooses first.

2. The ball in and out of play: The ball is out of play when it has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air, or play has been stopped by the referee. The ball is in play at all other times.

3. The method of scoring: A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goal posts and under the crossbar, provided that no infringement of the laws of the game has been committed previously by the team scoring the goal.

Note for coaches

It may well be that there will be no touchlines, goal lines, goal posts and crossbars in the game you are playing, especially if it is with young children kicking a ball around in a field. Do not worry about this. You, the coach or the referee, can set out the pitch using different means, such as small sticks, plastic balls, pieces of clothing or whatever (see the later section on *Goals without goalposts*). After that, it will be up to you to decide whether the ball has crossed the line by using your eyes and common sense! The height of the goal will also have to be a common sense judgement in these cases.

4. Offside: A player is in an offside position if he/she is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent, and involved in the play. A player cannot be offside from a throw in, corner kick, goal kick or in their own half.

Note for coaches

The offside rule can be very complicated and difficult for young and inexperienced players to understand and should not be introduced into their game until they have become more experienced and are more comfortable with the techniques and skills of playing the game and are then ready to understand its more complicated rules better. The offside rule should be introduced gradually to children, with clear explanations and pointing out when it occurs in a game, although perhaps not penalizing it. Rules can be introduced gradually over time, but remember to let them play first.

5. Direct free kick: A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offences, and is taken from where the offence occurred:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent;
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent;
- jumps at an opponent;
- charges at an opponent;
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent;
- pushes an opponent;
- tackles an opponent, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball;
- holds an opponent, for example by the shirt;
- spits at an opponent;
- handles the ball with his/her hands deliberately.

The player taking the direct free kick can score a goal directly from it, which is what differentiates it from an indirect free kick below which are for lesser fouls.

Note for coaches

The spirit of “fair play” must be a fundamental principle in all football coaching. Younger players, in particular, need to understand the spirit of fair play in all sports and to ensure that this permeates all aspects of their lives as a result. This is even more important for children withdrawn from situations of harmful exploitation and abuse and whose concept of society, fairness, social justice and right and wrong may be tainted and who may need to relearn the meaning of these concepts. Football is a powerful medium for this education process. Children should learn to play football fairly and then adapt these rules from their football to their everyday lives with others, in school, at home and with their friends and peers.

6. Indirect free kick: An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team from where the offence took place if:

- the goalkeeper takes more than six seconds to release the ball from his/her possession;
- the goalkeeper touches the ball again with his/her hands after it has been released from his/her possession and not touched another player;
- the goalkeeper touches the ball with his/her hands after it has been deliberately kicked to her or him by a team mate;
- the goalkeeper touches the ball with his/her hands after he/she has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team mate;
- if any player plays in a dangerous manner;
- if any player impedes the progress of an opponent;
- if any player prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his/her hands;
- if any player commits any other offence for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player.

Remember that the player taking an indirect free kick may not score a goal directly from it. The ball must be passed to at least one

other player in the team before a goal can be scored. Referees award indirect free kicks for lesser offences than direct free kicks.

Note for coaches

Some of the rules for direct and indirect free kicks can be confusing and complicated for younger and inexperienced players and should not necessarily be enforced or even discussed until the children have more experience in playing the game or are older.

7. The penalty: A penalty kick is awarded against a team which commits any of the same offences for which a direct free kick is awarded (see above) inside its own penalty area and while the ball is in play. The penalty kick is taken from the penalty spot, 11 metres from the centre of the goal line for senior pitches. No players apart from the player taking the penalty and the goalkeeper are allowed inside the penalty area until the ball is kicked.

Note for coaches

You should decide whether or not you will even introduce penalty kicks in the early stages of coaching beginners and young children. When you do decide to introduce penalties, once the children understand the rules better, you should consider at what distance you will mark out the penalty spot. The distance for senior players is 11 metres from the goal line. Depending on the age group you are coaching and the size of the pitch you have marked out, you should adjust this distance accordingly. Not too close to make it too difficult for the goalkeeper to defend his/her goal and not too far to make it too difficult for the player to score.

8. The throw-in, goal kick and corner kick:

- A throw-in is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air, from the point where it crossed the touch line to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball.

- A goal kick is awarded when the whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the attacking team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, and a goal is not scored.
- A corner kick is awarded when the whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the defending team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, and a goal is not scored.

Fundamentals of physical education

Coaches are urged to make constructive use of the various modules in this football resource kit and to prepare their coaching sessions well.

Planning and preparation

Planning and preparing for football coaching sessions are very important and will help coaches to improve. It is generally recommended that coaches should set aside around 20 minutes to plan what they are going to do in their training sessions and then set aside 10 minutes to organize drills. You do not necessarily need to use pens and paper to plan what you are going to do. You can think about it in your head and organize it in your mind or, better still, you can make your plan by using training cones, sticks or plastic bottles to represent your training area and your players and then run through it by yourself before doing the activities with the children. When planning coaching sessions, you should think about a number of issues, including:

- the children's abilities;
- the equipment you need;
- the space you will need for the exercises;
- the time it will take;
- whether there will be times when some children will be waiting their turn and not doing anything and whether there might be some small physical activity they could do while waiting their turn to keep them occupied;
- what you want the players to learn from the session;
- what previous sessions they have done that can contribute to this coaching drill and what future sessions you will be running that will benefit from this drill.

Planning coaching sessions could also include different timescales, for example weekly training sessions, and monthly plans looking at how training sessions tie into one another and progress, and also at how individual players are progressing and what needs to be done to improve their skills and help them in their weak areas. Lastly, you might also consider a yearly plan which would allow you to design and deliver a complete football coaching programme for the group of children concerned. Planning can help you as a coach, the other volunteer coaches who might be working with you, the players and their parents, as everyone involved has a clear understanding of what is happening and what they are working towards. Include milestones in your planning and celebrate achieving these with your other coaches and players, for example everyone in the group being able to pass with both feet. These achievements are important for everyone involved and can serve to strengthen the bonds between coaches and players and build confidence.

When you are preparing for individual coaching sessions, make sure that you have the materials you need, such as footballs, training cones or other markers. Also make sure the training area is clear of anything that might impede training or hurt any of the children, such as rocks, stones or glass bottles and other rubbish. In addition, if possible try to provide the children with some light refreshments, particularly water which they will need if they are running around. If you, the parents and the community can help in providing these, it would be beneficial to the children's health and enjoyment of their training time with you.

Annex 1 includes some sample football coaching session plans to illustrate in more detail the sorts of things that coaches should keep in mind as part of their preparations. The plan includes deciding what the objective of the session should be for the age group and number of children involved. It then pieces together warm-up session exercises, followed by skill exercises, small group activities and full group activities or game. Under each heading are the title and description of the activity and the key points coaches should watch out for and observe in the practice. An approximate time indicator for each exercise is given and the necessary equipment listed. Each session also includes a cool-down stretching period and a few back-up activities for the coach to choose from if the planned activities do not work out. All the activities are chosen to build on each other and put individual skills into game situations. At the end, the planner includes a section for the coach him/herself to assess the coaching session both from the point of view of the players and of his/her own performance as a coach and to decide where improvements can be made.

Coaches might not have the time or capacity to complete such detailed written plans, at least not in the early stages of their coaching activities. However, these session plans can be helpful to coaches in the development of their own capacities and skills.

Note for coaches

What to do in emergencies!

It is vital that there is a plan of what to do in an emergency, for example in the case of a child being injured or hurt or falling sick. This is why two responsible individuals, the coach and a helper or two coaches, must be present at every coaching session. In this way, if a child needs special attention or first aid, there is always another responsible individual to take care of the other children. The *User's Guide* underlines the importance of first-aid training and the need for all coaches, referees and other individuals involved in the project to benefit from appropriate training and to be informed of steps to take in the case of emergencies or injuries. The health, well-being and safety of the children must always be the priority.

Key points for coaches

- All players should warm up before training so that their muscles are less susceptible to injury and their hearts begin to beat faster and pump blood into the muscles to “warm” them up, ready for more strenuous exercise. Muscles can be easily pulled or torn if they are not warmed up before training. It also gets children into the mood of play and into the right frame of mind for the training session.
- Once muscles are warmed up, coaches should spend about 5 to 10 minutes stretching. It is good for children from a very early age in physical education to learn how to stretch their main muscles, particularly the muscles in the legs, back, neck, shoulders and arms. This is a preventive measure against injury but also helps improve flexibility, which is important at all ages. Although stretching is not crucial for young



children, it gets them into good habits for their sport later in life. Pre- and post-training stretching exercises are included in the relevant sections below.

- Give players an opportunity to get their breath back in between exercises and bring their breathing down to normal. These moments can be an opportunity to talk to them about various issues: explaining the next drill, giving words of encouragement, helping to rectify any errors they may have made in the previous exercise or just generally chatting to them to continue to build trust and confidence. It can also be an opportunity for them to have a drink of water or stretch a little more.
- At the end of the coaching session, there should be a five to ten-minute period of “cool down” stretches. This is important **especially for older children in order to help the body to better absorb the lactic acid produced by exercising.** It is also an opportunity for you, the coach, to talk to them, to give some positive and constructive comments after the training session, to give them some pointers for the next session, to talk to them generally about school, families, hopes, dreams and life in general. **It should be an opportunity to continue to build the bond of trust and confidence that is so important in working with these children.**



Note for coaches

The 11+: FIFA's complete warm-up to prevent injuries

Warming up prior to playing and training is a matter of routine for football players. A smart warm-up not only improves performance, but also helps to prevent injuries. With this in mind, FIFA's Medical Assessment and Research Centre (F-MARC) has developed “The 11+”, an injury prevention programme which provides a complete, football-specific warm-up and can easily be integrated into regular training routines.

“The 11+” is divided into three parts: it starts off with running exercises (part I); moves on to six exercises with three levels of increasing difficulty to improve strength, balance, muscle control and core stability (part II); and concludes with further running exercises (part III). The different levels of difficulty increase the programme's effectiveness and allow coaches and players to individually adapt the programme to age, ability and experience. It takes around 20 minutes to complete the programme.

“The 11+” has been proven to cut injuries by up to 50 per cent if performed correctly and regularly. When it is adopted together with the values of fair play, it enables coaches and players to protect themselves, the team and opposing teams and thus increase everyone's enjoyment of the game. The programme can be accessed on the FIFA web site:

www.fifa.com/aboutfffa/developing/medical/the11/index.html

The exercises can be downloaded on a full colour poster or on individual exercise cards for printing and putting up for all players to consult. In addition, the exercises can be viewed in video format so that coaches and players alike can see exactly what to do and how to perform each exercise.

The 11+ programme is designed for young people from the age of 14 upwards to adults. As well as developing a similar health programme specifically for younger children, FIFA's medical department carries out an ongoing programme of research into health and medical related issues in football. New and updated resources and research results are regularly published on the FIFA web site.

Pre-session stretching

Allow the children around 5 minutes or so to run about before you start your coaching session. They can either run around with or without footballs. They could play a game of tag, or whatever. The idea is to begin to warm up muscles before stretching and perhaps also to allow you to finish off setting up your drills and completing other preparations. After 5 to 10 minutes, bring all the children around you so that each of them can see you properly as you show them the stretching exercises to start their training session. Explain to them why it is important to stretch and change your exercises every now and then so that they learn a large repertoire of stretching exercises. Eventually they should be able to do some of these exercises themselves without even being asked. The players should spend at least 5 to 10 minutes stretching.

You can either start at the top part of the body and work down, or start at the bottom and work up. In the section below are some stretching exercises, but there are hundreds of these used by different cultures and sports around the world (see also the FIFA 11+ programme referred to in box). Coaches can build their own repertoire of stretching exercises over time gleaned from various sources, for example a physical education teacher in a local school, coaches of other sports in the area, coaches from local football clubs, the national football federation office, the internet, and so on.

Proper stretching technique

Coaches should instruct the children in the group in proper stretching techniques so that they learn good habits over time. These include:

- Perform balanced stretching. This means you should always stretch the muscles on both sides of the body evenly. Do not stretch one side more than the other side.
- Avoid over-stretching. Never stretch to the point of pain or discomfort. You will feel slight tension or a pull on the muscle at the peak of the stretch and you should not go beyond that point.

- Go slowly! Always stretch slowly and evenly. Hold the stretch for the time indicated and release slowly as well.
- Never bounce or jerk while stretching. This can cause injury as a muscle is pushed beyond its ability. All stretches should be smooth, and slow.
- Do not forget to breathe. Flexibility exercises should be relaxing. Deep, easy and even breathing is the key to relaxation. Never hold your breath while you stretch.

Below are some suggested stretching exercises:

- Sit cross-legged on the ground or with the soles of your feet together. Your back should be straight to begin, hands resting on knees, eyes looking forward. Then gently round the back, letting the head fall towards the lap with the natural weight of body and gravity stretching the spine. Gently return to upright position by unfolding from the base of the spine to the top of the head, eyes looking forward again. Repeat this three to five times.
- Still sitting cross-legged, back straight, gently and very slowly twist your upper body above the waist from side to side, arms extended to the side, head following the direction of the back arm. The body should then come back to the centre position. Repeat this three to five times.
- Extend the arms overhead. Stretch one arm higher, then stretch the other arm higher. The front of the body remains facing forward, with shoulders over hip line. This can be done sitting or standing. Hold the stretch for about five seconds and then let go. Repeat this three to five times.
- This exercise should be done sitting, but with the legs straddled, that is opened wide in front of you, stretched out but not tightened. The back should be straight to begin. Turn the body to face one leg, reach down to hold onto the leg as far down it as possible with both hands and gently lean towards the leg, letting the weight of gravity help with the stretch. Turn and lean towards the other leg. Repeat this three to five times with each leg.

- Sit up facing forward, hold onto both legs and round the back and gently lean forward between the legs, while looking towards the floor. Next, place the palms of your hands on the floor in front of the body for support. Point and flex the feet and ankles in unison, then try to point one foot while flexing the other foot and repeat rhythmically. Continue this for about 20 seconds and rest before repeating once more.
- This exercise can be done sitting or kneeling. If you are sitting, the legs should be straddled, back stretched straight, legs stretched but not tightened and toes pointed. Press the palms of your hands together in salutation fashion, applying medium tension (you should feel some pressure in the shoulders). The lower arms should be parallel with the floor. Release the tension, press again and release the tension once more and now extend the hands and arms upwards and outwards to the side, stretching arms up, again. Bring the hands back to the salutation pose. This exercise should be repeated several times.
- This exercise should be done standing with legs slightly apart for balance. Stretch your arms out to the side, palms facing up, and hold taut and count 1, 2 and 3; then stretch the arms overhead and hold taut and count 4, 5 and 6. Repeat the exercise several times. Move straight into the next stretch. Do not hold the arms so taut this time but stretch them overhead, then let the body and arms bend from side to side. Repeat the exercise several times. Finish this stretching sequence by swinging both arms down to the front and both towards the right side; swing both arms across the front of the body and to the left side of the body several times. Lastly, rest your arms at each side while standing straight.
- **Neck stretch:** Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and hands on hips or at your sides. Tilt your head to one side, right or left it does not matter. Then, gently rotate the head in a circle, pushing it to the limit of the stretch of the neck muscles, but around five seconds in one direction and then five in another for about 30 seconds in all.

Then, standing upright and tall, use your right hand to push your chin towards the left shoulder until you feel a pull in the right hand side of the neck and hold for about ten seconds, then do the same with the other side.

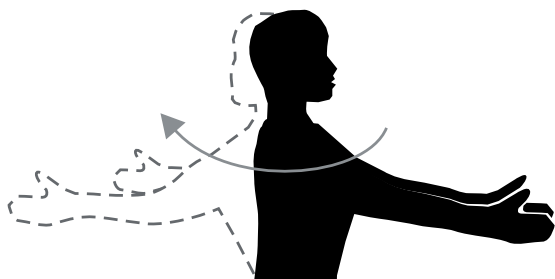
- **Shoulder stretch:** Standing with your feet shoulder width apart, stretch out your hands to the side so your arms are parallel with the ground. Stretch out your fingers and begin to turn your arms in small circles, five seconds one way and five the other. Then, turn your arms/hands in ever increasing circles so that eventually your arms are like big windmills turning round – first one way and then another. Then, slowly decrease the circles again until they are very small. For the next exercise, you should have your arms stretched out wide to the sides again and this time bend the arms in so that your fingers grip your shoulders. Repeat the circular motion exercise one way and then the other – roll your shoulders quite vigorously.



SHOULDER STRETCH

- **Back and side stretch:** Stand with your arms raised in front of you. Turn to the right side until your hands are pointing almost directly behind you and hold the stretch. Then slowly turn until you have turned to the left side and around pointing behind yourselves again. Repeat this exercise five times to each side.

BACK AND SIDE STRETCH



LOWER BACK STRETCH

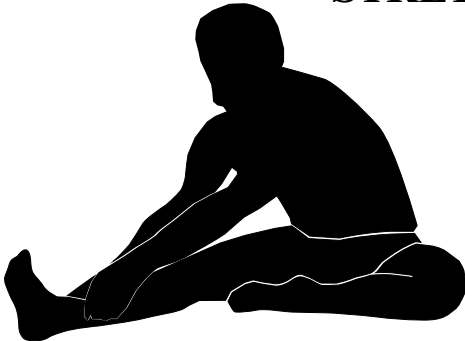


HIP STRETCH

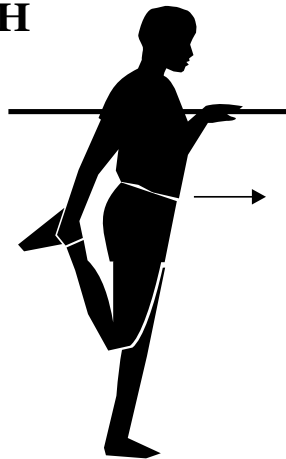


- **Lower back stretch:** Lie flat on your back on the ground with knees bent. Wrap your arms around your knees, joining the hands together, and pull your knees towards your chest. Lift the head and shoulders off the ground until the head is approximately six inches from the knees (almost touching). Then cross your ankles and gently rock yourself back and forth in this position for 30 seconds.
- **Hip stretch:** Lie on your back. Bend the left leg and bring it towards your chest. Grasp the left knee gently with the right hand and pull it slightly down and to the right until you feel a stretch and hold. Turn the head to the left. The right leg should stay flat on the floor. You should hold the stretch for 10 seconds and repeat with the other leg.
- **Hamstring stretch:** These are the muscles in the back of the thigh that can be easily pulled if not warmed and stretched properly. Sit on the floor with one leg straight in front of you and the other leg bent with the sole of the foot touching the inside thigh of the outstretched leg. Keep the back straight and lean forward from the hips. Slide your arms forward towards the outstretched foot. You should stop when you feel a pull in the hamstring on the outstretched leg and hold for 15 seconds and then repeat with the other leg extended.
- **Quadriceps stretch:** Lie on your right side with your right knee bent at a 90 degree angle. Bend your left leg and hold onto the ankle with your left hand. Gently pull your left heel in towards the left side of your buttocks. As soon as you feel a stretch in your left quadriceps (front part of your thigh), you should slowly lower your left knee towards the ground behind your right knee. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds and repeat with the other leg.
- **Calf muscle stretch:** The calf muscle is often neglected in stretching routines and yet it is vital to stretch it well as it is a large muscle and the Achilles tendon is situated at the base of the back calf muscle. This tendon is particularly susceptible to stresses and strains. Stand an arm's length away from a

HAMSTRING STRETCH



QUADRICEPS STRETCH



CALF MUSCLE STRETCH

wall (or you can do this in pairs with your partner to support you in the stretch) with your feet shoulder width apart. Lean against the wall or your partner and slide the left foot back approximately 18 inches, keeping the knee straight and both heels flat on the floor. Bend the right knee and slowly move the pelvis forward until you feel a stretch in the calf and Achilles tendon of the left leg. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds and repeat with the other leg.

- **Final back, hamstring, groin, quadriceps, shoulder and arm multi-stretch:** Stand with your feet as wide apart as comfortable – if they are too far apart, they will not be able to stretch. Put your hands on the sides of your legs and stretch down to the left until your touch your knee and hold. Do the same to the right side and hold. Alternate five times on each side. Then reach down with your hands, palms down, between your legs and try and touch the ground with your palms and hold for five seconds. Lastly, touch the ground in front of you stretching out with your fingers tips, then in between your legs and then as far back behind them as possible, reaching between your legs. Repeat this exercise five to ten times, standing up straight and stretching up to the sky in between each repetition.
- **Get up and shake it off!** Once the stretches are done, stand up, jump around and shake your legs, feet, arms and hands vigorously and get the muscles loose and ready for training.

Dynamic stretching

The above stretching exercises are called “static stretching exercises”; in other words, they are done in one place without moving around. Dynamic stretching involves moving the limb through its range of movement, starting slowly, and then speeding up throughout the movement. Dynamic stretching allows for more football specific movements to be made and also prepares the muscles for quick, explosive movements, which are repeated throughout the session. So, for example, the players could do some

gentle jogging around an area, interspersed with short sprints. Or they might walk around the area while every now and then making a high kicking action and reaching out to touch the foot in mid-air with the opposite hand, thereby stretching the legs, back, arms and shoulders.

The point about dynamic stretching is that it involves moving all parts of the body, stretching the muscles more vigorously and getting the muscles warm. Use your imagination when getting children to do dynamic stretching, including the sorts of movements that the children will use playing football. Continue dynamic stretching for around 5 to 10 minutes.

Coaching football: Some hints and tips

Below are some key points that football coaches need to keep in mind. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather just some of the major principles of coaching, especially for young children, inexperienced players and children who have either been withdrawn from or at risk of child labour.

Key principles:

- Use the K.I.S.S. principle (Keep It Short and Simple) when introducing new skills.
- Give short, effective demonstrations while briefly explaining the new skill or concept.
- Keep coaching sessions short, clear and well planned.
- Be positive – focus on what the player does correctly and “catch them being good” rather than on what he/she does wrong.
- Make training sessions meaningful, fun, challenging and exciting.
- Try not to use too many static line drills. Play fun, football-related games instead, especially with younger children and children new to the game.

- Try to avoid “elimination games”, games in which players who fail to do something properly or to be able to keep up with others are removed from the game. The players most in need of improvement and repetitions are usually the first to be eliminated and this can undermine their confidence and the trust that you need to build as the coach. Base your training sessions on the principle of inclusivity and do not discriminate – encourage those who need it most.
- Do not play games with large numbers in the teams for more than 10 minutes in an hour. In 8 v 8 or 10 v 10 style games, some players do not get enough touches of the ball. The weaker players tend to get the fewest touches and bad habits can be reinforced because players tend to do the same things wrong they have always done. Again, these situations can undermine confidence and trust.

What coaches should do

As a coach, a great deal of responsibility will fall on your shoulders in terms of looking after the children in your group. They are fragile, vulnerable and potentially anxious about the project. They may not have played any sport before in their lives, let alone football. They may not have ever seen a football nor had the opportunity to enjoy much recreation. It will be your responsibility to reassure them, comfort them, build their trust, confidence, self-esteem and earn their respect. It will be your responsibility to ensure that, first and foremost, they have fun and play and begin the long process of overcoming various traumatic and difficult situations and circumstances.

You will need to work closely with them, with parents, teachers, community leaders, football clubs and regional and national federations and gain the confidence and trust of all these stakeholders to ensure that you can piece together a positive and constructive enabling environment that will ensure the success of the project and the long-term health, well-being and happiness of the children. You may become much more than

a coach to some of these children – you may become a mentor, a friend and possibly even a father or mother figure in some instances. In this respect, there are some fundamental matters that you should always keep in mind during the project, a list of things you **should do** as a coach:

- Find out what the children expect to get out of playing football with you.
- Be firm, fair and organized.
- Give credit where it is due and give help where it is needed.
- Be consistent.
- Provide learning experiences: teach.
- Make practice and competition fun, which does not mean making it silly.
- Recognize the value of friendships between children.
- Show your approval whenever you can.
- Listen to the children and take action or change based on what you hear.
- Relax and enjoy yourself with the children.
- Emphasize learning skill, not competing.
- Reward children for effort.
- Help children over the realization that they might not have the ability of others.
- Build confidence by being positive.
- Reduce competitive expectations.
- Help those who do not want to compete.
- Remember that mistakes are part of learning.

Football positional play for young children

In terms of positional play on the pitch, there is no “right” or “wrong” approach to coaching young and inexperienced children to play football. Some coaches believe that you should not introduce children to positions on a football team until around the ages of 11 or 12. Others believe you should strike a balance of teaching children skills while also introducing the idea of defenders, midfield, attackers and sweepers. This coaching manual provides

you with the scope to choose what you think would be best for your group. There are individual skills activities and also small game-based activities in which children put their new skills into practice while also thinking about their position on the football pitch. As with all things in life, you should be guided by moderation and common sense. If you can see that the children are simply not ready to learn new skills and think about where they are supposed to be on the pitch, tell them not to worry and do not confuse them. You must be guided by your group and always focus on those who struggle, who might be weaker and who need your help most.

Coaching girls

This resource kit is very insistent on the need for projects and coaches to reach out to girls as well as boys. And up to the age of puberty, there is no real reason why girls and boys cannot train and play football together. There might be prevailing social, cultural and religious considerations to keep in mind and these are dealt with in the *User's Guide*. In terms of the difference between girls and boys in how they approach football, coaches of both sexes around the world have found that:

- Girls tend to be more analytical than boys. This means girls will not take generalities at face value. They will want to know why they should do something a particular way more than boys will.
- Team unity is more important to girls than boys.
- Girls may place more emphasis on “fair play” than boys who are more likely to find ways to bend the rules.
- Boys are more likely than girls to blame other people (the referee, the weather, the coach) if they lose. Girls have a tendency to blame themselves for a poor performance.
- For girls, winning is not as important as making sure every player gets an equal amount of playing time.

- Males appear to be more “self-oriented” and tend to have an attitude of winning at any cost in their approach to sport.

Boys and girls should always be offered the same opportunities and given the same consideration during your coaching sessions if you have both sexes in the group. For example, do not cancel a training session for girls because of bad weather if you wouldn't cancel it for a boy's session. And if you coach mixed groups, do not try to “protect” the girls. Treat them equally but understand the differences. It is not insulting to girls to consider if they need to be coached differently. It is rather an indication of your aim to coach them as effectively as you can.

Basic football skills

There are a number of basic skills that all children need to master in order to get the most enjoyment out of playing football.

Ball control



There are three important points for good ball control:

1. The first touch should protect the ball from challenging players and not give them a chance to regain possession.
2. The ball should be played into available space to allow for the next touch.
3. The ball should be played so that the team's movement or momentum is continued.

A poor first touch of the ball will risk taking the momentum out of play and increase the possibility of losing possession. Some players make the mistake of stopping the movement of the ball and not concentrating on getting it out of their feet. The first touch should ensure that

a time-wasting second touch is not needed to get the ball ready to pass or shoot.

The different body surfaces often used in controlling the ball are the foot (sole, inside, outside and instep), thigh, chest, stomach and head. Generally, the part of the body used should preferably be large, flat and able to take the weight of the incoming pass. The key coaching points for general ball control are:

- Keep the head steady and watch the ball carefully to judge its path or flight and speed.
- Move the feet quickly so the body is in front of the ball.
- Choose the right technique and body surface to control the ball (for example, the foot).
- Relax the body part concerned.
- Cushion the force of the ball by pulling back the body part being used to control the ball. Encourage children to pretend the body part is a pillow or something soft. The ball should not go very far after it contacts the body.
- Maintain eye contact with the ball until it is fully controlled.

Dribbling the ball



Another important aspect of ball control is the ability to run with the ball, what is called “dribbling”. The key coaching points are:

- Use short steps.
- Push the ball forward gently with the inside or the outside of the foot.
- Alternate feet.
- Keep the ball close and in front.
- Use peripheral vision (that is, looking out of the “corner” of the eye) to look at the ball while watching the direction being travelled. As skill increases, players should look less at the ball and more at what is happening in front and around them.

- Monitor speed based on ability to keep the ball close.

Passing the ball



Successful passing is the key to good teamwork. Teaching the technique of passing is actually quite straightforward, but it is not always easy

to spot and remedy the mistakes that children make. The key coaching points are:

- Use inside of the foot (the instep).
- The non-striking foot should be pointing in the direction of the intended target.
- The striking leg makes a swinging motion.
- The striking ankle must be locked.
- Players should stay relaxed and not be stiff like a robot.
- Players should look up to find their target but remember to look at the ball as they strike it as that is the only way to strike the ball correctly.
- Foot follows through in direction of target.
- Move afterwards – players should not stand there admiring their pass!

The “push” pass

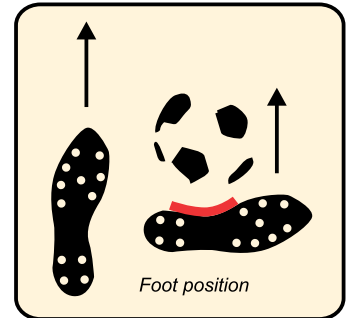


The push pass is used to pass the ball over short distances. The key coaching points are:

- Plant the non-kicking foot beside the ball.
- The kicking foot should be pointing sideways with the inside of the foot facing the ball.
- Push the ball towards the target.

The “inside of the foot” pass

This is the method used for passing the ball over longer distances, or in situations where the pass requires some extra power. The key coaching points are:

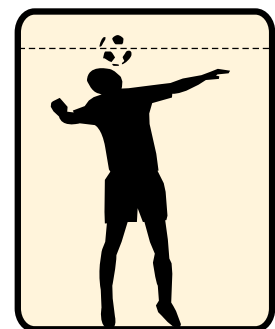


- Plant the non-kicking foot next to the ball.
- Make contact with the ball in the middle.
- Use the inside of the foot.
- Players should follow through so their kicking foot goes to their target.
- Players should use a firm kick so the ball gets to their target.

Common mistakes in passing the ball

These are some common mistakes in passing a football, and this is how to correct them:

- **If the ball is off target, but rolling well** – the player has not pointed his/her non-striking foot at the target.
- **If the ball spins off the foot** – the ankle was not locked when striking the ball.
- **If the ball goes in the air** – the player has struck the ball below the centre line of the ball and it will rise. Striking the ball above the centre line will ensure that it rolls on the ground.
- **If the pass lacks power or the player falls down after passing** – the player tried to swing his/her leg across the body instead of on a line with the hips and shoulders.



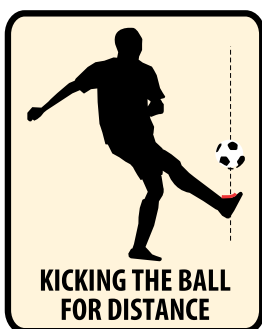
Shooting for goal

To score goals, players need to be able to use both power and placement. The key coaching points are:



- Keep the head down and eyes on the ball – look up to pick out the target, but then look back at the ball to shoot.
- Plant the non-striking foot alongside (not in front of) the ball.
- Strike the middle of the ball so it does not rise.
- Keep the knee of the kicking leg over the ball.
- Approach the ball slightly from the side.
- Follow through and do not jerk back when striking the ball as this will lose power in the strike.

Kicking the ball for distance



Especially in defence, the long kick is important for clearing the ball. The key coaching points are:

- Plant the non-kicking foot next to the ball.
- Make contact below the middle of the ball.
- Make contact with the ball using the instep of the foot.
- Follow through with the kick.
- Kick hard!

Heading the ball



Heading is an inevitable part of football, both in attack and defence, but can be dangerous for smaller children (see the note for coaches below). If teaching heading, as a general

rule, defensive headers should go high, wide and far, while offensive headers should be aimed towards the ground as ground balls are

harder for goalkeepers to handle. Defenders usually will aim to head the bottom half of the ball while attackers usually will aim to head the top half. Initially, of course, it is most important to teach the correct technique and the courage to use it, so it is not too important where the ball goes at first. The key coaching points are:

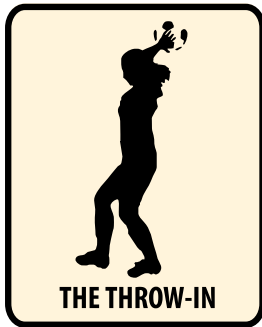
- Put feet in a balanced, athletic and ready position with knees bent and weight centred evenly.
- Keep the neck stiff and lean back.
- Keep the eyes OPEN and watch the ball until contact!
- Keep the mouth CLOSED to avoid injury!
- Move the head forward towards the ball and contact the ball with the forehead area between hairline and eyebrows.
- The arms should reach forward as the ball is coming and pull backwards as the head moves forward.
- Follow through to the target area.
- If players hit the ball on its bottom half, the ball will go up.
- If players hit the ball on its upper half, the ball will go down.

Note for coaches

There could be the risk of injury to the spine from the excess compacting effect of heading the ball. Heading skills can be left for intensive development until the early teens, i.e. above 12 years old, particularly as the skill of heading is something older players can cope with better than a non-discerning youngster. Heading the ball is an inevitable part of any football match, so for this reason it is important to show players how to head the ball correctly. Just do not do it too much!

The throw-in

When the ball goes out of play across the side touch lines of the pitch, it must be put back into play by a “throw-in”. The key coaching points of the throw-in are:



- The throw-in takes place where the ball goes out of play.
- Face the target with feet shoulder-width apart, or one in front of the other as long as they both remain on the ground, on or behind the touch line, when the ball is released.
- Grip the ball firmly with two hands.
- Lean back and bring the ball over the head.
- Transfer the body weight forward and quickly bring the arms forward and fully extend them at the point of release.
- Do not step over the touch line.
- The ball is released in front of the head.
- Add a short run up to the touch line before throwing in to generate momentum.
- Hand positioning for low balls – the hands should form a supple web that surrounds the back side (closest to the goal) of the ball. Fingers should be pointed down and palms facing forward. The little fingers of both hands are almost touching.
- Players should side-step quickly behind the line of the ball as it comes towards them and try to get two hands behind the ball.
- Create barriers between the ball and the goal with the body, legs and hands and have as much of the body behind the ball as possible.
- Concentrate until the ball is in the hands, relax at the point of contact and cushion the ball towards the body with the hands.
- Attack the ball whenever possible.

Goalkeeping



Children should not start specializing in any positions until they are a bit older. Therefore, teaching goalkeeping skills to smaller children is a great way to help them understand the game better. The key coaching points are:

- Start with the ready position – balance on the balls or front of the feet, bend comfortably at the knees while keeping as tall as possible, and have the hands relaxed through the fingertips.
- Hand positioning for high balls – the hands should form a supple web that surrounds the back side (closest to the goal) of the ball. Fingertips should be pointed up and palms facing forward. The thumbs of both hands are almost touching.

Tackling



In football, the term “tackling” is used to describe any effort to take the football away or knock it away from an opposing player or dispossess them of the football.

There are two types of tackling – block and slide tackling. Slide tackling can be dangerous, and is banned in some children’s leagues. Therefore, we would advise you not to train the children in this form of tackling until they are more experienced and older, for example from early teenage years upwards. Block tackling is safer and will be taught in this manual. It is important to point out that the player is tackling the *ball itself* and not the opponent. The objective is to avoid injury to either the tackler or the person being tackled. The key coaching points of block tackling are:

- Place the non-kicking foot alongside the ball.
- The ankle joint of the tackling foot must be firm and locked.

- The knees should be bent to lower the centre of gravity of the player.
- The head and upper body should be over the ball.
- The hands should be closed (make a fist). This will tighten the upper body.
- Contact is made with the inside of the foot.
- Contact on the ball should be made through the middle of the ball.

Football coaching drills

A “drill” is a training exercise. Coaching drills are used to help players practice and improve specific aspects, techniques and skills of the game. Once the drill is set up and running, the coach should advise, correct and encourage the players. The drill is a means to an end and not an end in itself. When using drills, football coaches should:

- Plan and prepare well to ensure that the drills flow one from the other and that the children do not spend too much time standing around with nothing to do.
- Vary the drill to prevent monotony.
- Explain the purpose of the drill.
- Not continue the same drill for too long.
- Try to make drills fun.
- Follow difficult drills with easy ones and vice versa.
- Mix the drills with little exercises so that one drill can be set up while another has been completed, for example running once around the pitch or doing a series of exercises.
- Always have a whistle to get the attention of the children, to start and stop exercises and to help them get used to hearing a whistle and stopping. When they eventually play matches, they will need to listen for the referee’s whistle and it is good practice.

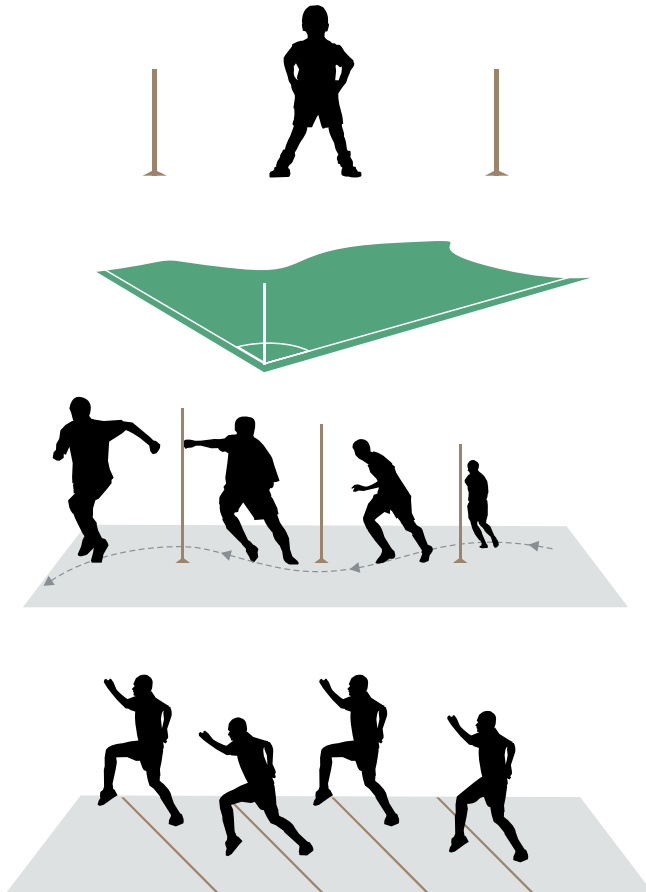
Keep in mind the ages and ability levels of the children you are working with and try and make sure that no one is left behind. Work harder with the children with less ability and keep sending them positive and encouraging statements, for example “You’re doing much better now”, “Good shot”, “Good tackle”, “Good save”, “Nice movement with the ball”, and so on. The children will become more and more involved in the drills and the game as you encourage them all. You might need to balance out the coaching drills between older and younger children and those with more experience in playing. This will depend on the mix of ages and abilities in your group, which is why it is so important to identify volunteers in the community – especially parents and older children – who can help with coaching and maybe become football coaches themselves.

What to do when training equipment is limited

You may not have access to such basic necessities as training cones, touchline markers and other equipment. In such cases, it is important to improvise and use what is available in the environment. The key objective is to ensure that children continue to benefit from the sport whatever the situation, and training cones and goalposts can always be made from what is available.

Sticks and pieces of wood

There may be a lot of unused wood lying around and it can be used to good effect in coaching sessions. However, bear in mind the safety of the players. For this reason, avoid using sticks with sharp ends or points. If necessary, you can always wrap bits of old fabric around sharp or pointed bits of wood to make them safer. Sticks can be used in a variety of ways. They can be stuck upright in the ground (see diagram) to act as goalposts and corner and touchline markers or used in training for speed and evasion drills, running in and out of the sticks without touching them to improve dribbling and agility.



Sticks can also be laid flat on the ground (see diagram) to mark out touch lines or for speed-agility-quickness exercises in which players move their feet quickly in between the sticks.

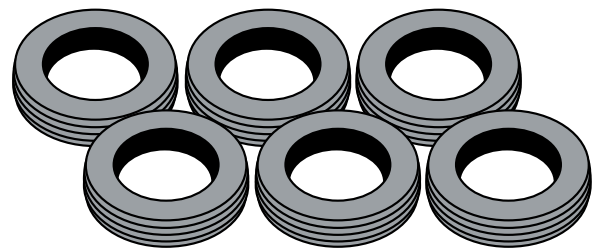
Plastic bottles

Plastic bottles can be used as a substitute for training cones if they are filled with either sand or fluid of some kind. Where water is hard to come by, it would probably be better to use sand or dirt. However, it is very important NOT to use glass bottles as these are too dangerous to be used anywhere near a football coaching session.

Tyres

Tyres and old inner tubes can also be used for speed-agility-quickness exercises as in the diagram below. With tyres laid out in this sequence, coaches can organize drills in which the children run the length of the area, making sure that they place their left and right feet in the tyres as appropriate, lifting them high each time to make sure they do not

trip up. You could also create races between teams using tyres to add an element of competition. Also, in skills and fun sessions, tyres can be used as targets for players either to kick balls through or to hit them in a particular sequence, for example passing practice to make sure they hit the target each time. Tyres are a very good resource for football coaching because they are not only multi-purpose but also reasonably safe, because they are made of rubber and children will not hurt themselves if they fall on them.



Note for coaches

Coaches should avoid using any materials or natural matter which could hurt or injure children should they fall on them or be hit by them. For example, try and avoid using stones as markers or goal posts as the potential for injury is high. Piles of soft earth may be used instead.

Plastic bags and old cloth

Different coloured plastic bags and pieces of cloth can be used as training bibs for children to distinguish them when making teams for drill sessions or even little football games. Rather than make something that fits over the body, it might be better to tuck coloured plastic or cloth into children's clothing, such as their shorts, skirts or trousers, in order to indicate which team the player is on.

One of the key points in improvising materials to coach and play football is the health and safety of the children themselves. Anything that coaches might decide to use should be chosen on the fundamental premise that it cannot hurt or injure the children within reason, keeping in mind that children can get hurt just falling over in a game of football!

Somewhere to train and play

It is important that the group has somewhere safe and appropriate to train and play football. This might be a field or a piece of communal land. Talk to parents, community leaders and local schools to ask for permission to use a piece of land that has been identified because it is relatively flat, safe and accessible. The children and community could help clear the land if necessary, for example by clearing away stones, rubbish or other obstacles. It does not have to be perfect as the most important thing is to have somewhere that is regularly available and where the children will always play. Over time, with the support of others, it might be possible to improve the piece of land, including levelling it and perhaps even getting enough support to put up goalposts.

Warm-up drills

Warm-up drills should precede a skills training session to help the children get in the right physical and mental frame of mind. Building on the static and dynamic stretching above, these short warm-up drills will help loosen and warm up the muscles further, get children thinking about the football and their positioning and be ready for the coaching session proper to start. Below is a series of suggested warm-up drills, but again there are hundreds of possibilities to use with children and you would need to adapt the games below for older children. Learn about other warm-up drills from other coaches, local football clubs, national federations, through the internet, and so on. The possibilities are endless, and you can

make up your own as well. The main point is to ensure that all the activities follow each other with a minimum amount of downtime in order to keep up the interest and involvement of the children and to ensure that their muscles do not cool down too much. The initial stretching and warm-up activities are designed to get the children slightly out of breath so that they are working their hearts and muscles properly. Each of the warm-up drills below should last no longer than 5 to 7 minutes.

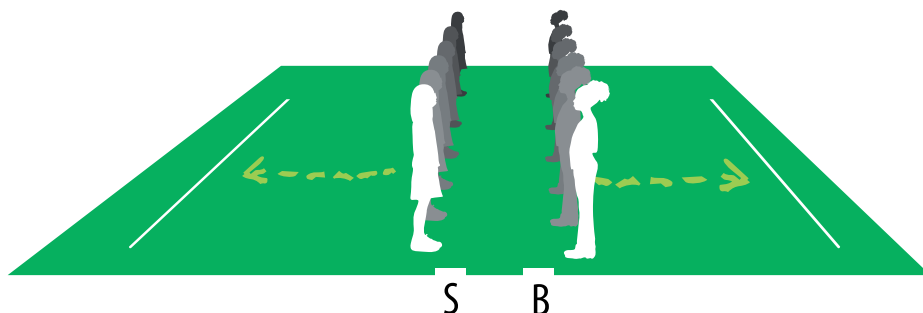
Note for coaches

One possibility in working with children who have limited knowledge of or exposure to sport in general or football in particular is to ask them what games they play with other children, for example in school or in groups of their peers. Quite often, these will be traditional games specific to the country, the area or the culture. Playing games that they know well and that are special to them will help in building the children's confidence and in reinforcing their relationship with you. Traditional games are often quite dynamic and include some form of moving about. Any game is acceptable as long as it involves all the children moving at some point or other so that it raises their heartbeats and gets them a little out of breath. Without even realizing it, they will be warming up for their football drills.

You should also look for ways to adapt traditional games to suit the game of football. This will help those children who have never played football before as it will involve similar skills and techniques that they use in their ordinary childhood games.

Spiders and bugs

Mark three lines 20 metres long and 15 metres apart as shown in the diagram below using cones, sticks, plastic bottles or other forms of markers:



Divide players into two equal teams. Each team should stand alongside the centre line about 2 metres apart and all facing forward. Name one team Spiders (the “S” in the diagram above) and one team Bugs (the “B”). When you call “Spiders!” or “Bugs!” that team has to sprint for the end line nearest them. The other team tries to tag²⁴ them. Anyone who is “tagged” joins the other team. Continue only until the players start to breathe heavily, in other words, do not exhaust them. Alternatively, keep going until only one player is left.

The zipper drill

Make a square about 20 metres by 20 metres using markers such as cones, plastic bottles, piles of earth, etc. Divide the children into two groups. Players start on marker A and run down to marker B. When they pass marker B, they run diagonally to the opposite corner and across the other group, they now start from marker A again. Different exercises can include: slow jogging, stopping and turning, skipping (forwards, sideways and backwards), faster jogging, striding out, sprinting, three steps to the right then three steps to the left, high knees, heel flicks and “jump and head”.

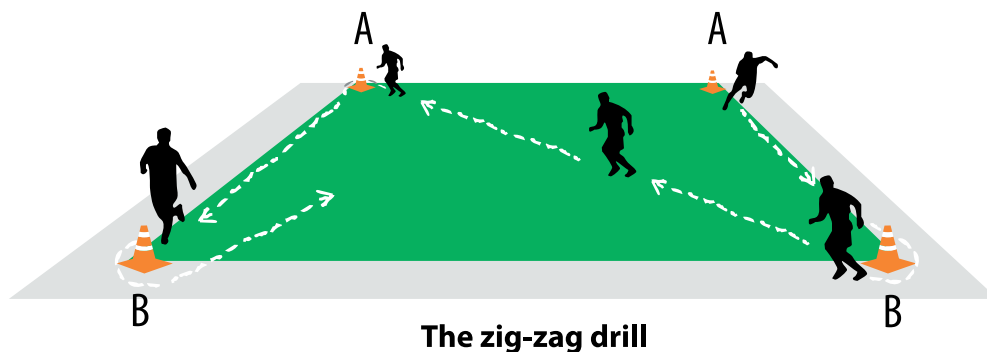
Progressions can include players giving each other a “high five” in the middle and sprinting to A, turning before the “zip”, or introduce a ball.

Musical footballs

Each player has his/her own football and dribbles around a large circle area which you should define depending on the space you have. The players should be moving around at a steady pace, avoiding each other and keeping their heads up and trying not to look at the ball too much.

After they have been dribbling for a while, call out “Change!”. Each player must stop his/her ball, leave it where it is and run around the circle looking for another ball. It is important they get to new balls right away and continue dribbling. After allowing them to get comfortable with the concept of the drill, remove one player’s ball. This player now must run around the drill without a ball. When the next “Change” comes about, that person must try and find a ball, leaving another player without a ball to dribble.

Any player who doesn’t end up with a ball after a “Change” is called has to run round the area just the same. Just be careful that the same player doesn’t lose out every time. Sometimes children make “deals” between themselves to swap each other’s football each time, so to avoid this, players are not allowed to swap balls with the same person two consecutive times, and make sure that they are using the entire area to run around. Keep a close eye on things to make sure that things stay under control.



The zig-zag drill

²⁴“Tag”: in this context, to tag means that one child runs after another and tries to “touch” them with their hands. Once touched, then that child is “tagged”. To make it more fun or more difficult, you can say that children must tag with their right or left hand, or both hands, or that the tag has to be below the waist, or any combination or other ideas.

Lastly, make sure that the players are practicing moves and turns within the area, not just dribbling straight forward all the time. They should be weaving in and out of each other at a realistic speed and trying not to bump into one another or hit one ball with another – it is important that they learn how to dribble with the ball close to their feet.

All skills warm-up

Set up teams of four to five players facing a line of markers evenly spaced about 10 metres apart. In the diagram below, “X” marks the children and “C” shows the markers. The markers will make the exercises more fun and more challenging technically as the children will be running in and out of them.

Start with simple shuttle races in which the players run to and from each of the markers in turn. In this race, they run to the first marker, back to the beginning, to the second cone, back to the beginning and so on until they have run to all the markers, they hand over to the next in line. The first team to finish wins the race.

Then, in order to introduce ball skills, tell the players that the handovers will now require the successful completion of a basic skill. For example, place a ball between each line of players and the first marker. After running to all of the markers, the runner must hand over to the next in line by passing the ball to her or him, receiving a return pass and then passing it back. This exercise has to be performed correctly before the next in line can start to run to the markers. After passing, try other skills such as heading or side foot volleys.

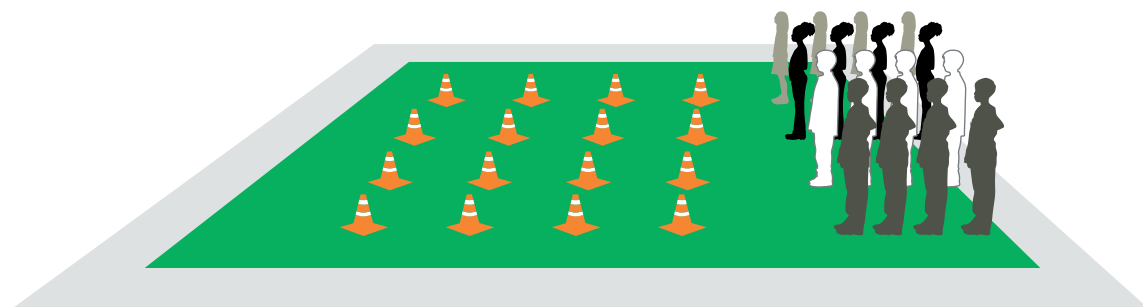
Another permutation of this drill is to have the children dribble a ball around the markers from 1 to 4 and then back again. After they come back and dribble around the markers, they then pass to the next line. You can add more markers if you want. There are many permutations and different exercises that you can come up with based on the idea of a shuttle race and you can introduce all kinds of ball skills.

Keep a close eye on competition, however. If one team seems weaker than the others and is always losing the shuttle races, then try and mix the teams up next time. It is important that their confidence is not undermined at all. Make sure that the exercises are not too difficult as the idea is for this warm-up exercise to be fun more than anything else.

Three ball keep-away

Start with two teams of equal numbers and three footballs. Mark out a square or a circle grid and place all three balls in the middle of the grid. Get the two teams to stand outside the grid. On your signal (use a whistle), the players run into the grid and try to possess as many balls as possible. Each team tries to keep the footballs they have while trying to take other footballs off the other team using block tackles or interception.

In this game, players must be good passers of the ball to keep possession. They must also make decisions on where to run in the grid when they do not have the ball, when to pass or dribble and whom to pass to. On your second signal, the play stops and the



All skills warm-up

team in possession of two or more balls wins that round. Repeat this exercise several times. Make sure the children understand that they need to run around the grid to make themselves available for passes or to tackle the other team. They need to begin to understand the principle of running into space and calling for the ball to support one another. Again, keep an eye out to make sure that not always the same team wins, and mix up the groups if necessary. Encourage those who are weaker at passing or tackling and make sure they are not left out.

Reaction warm-up

This is a good warm-up exercise that warms up the brain as well as the feet! It is a good activity to find out who can think quickly – and also who knows their left from their right! Make a circle with markers – one marker for each player. Players should face the centre of the circle. If there are a large number of players, make two or three smaller circles – it would be helpful to have some assistants in this case to be with each circle. Do not be afraid to ask parents or older siblings to help out. The size of the circle will depend on the age of the players but even a small circle is good enough if the drill is done at pace.

Players stand at each marker and the coach calls out a variety of instructions that players must follow. For example, the coach may call out “2 left” and all the players have to run to the marker 2 places to their left; or “3 right, 1 left” (3 markers to the right, then back 1 marker to the left); or “2 right, centre, 1 left” (2 markers to the right, run to the centre and back, then 1 marker to the left).

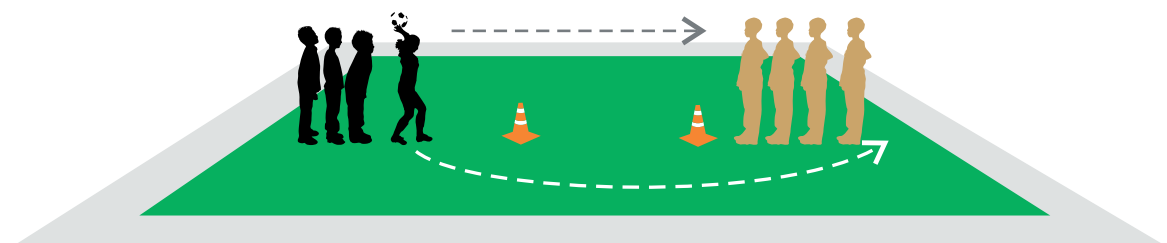
There are many variations to this drill. It can be done with or without a ball. You can specify the type of steps players have to use between each marker (for example, sidesteps, backwards, turn and run). You can have players sit down after each instruction to get practice getting to their feet quickly from sitting or lying positions. Again, it is limited only by your imagination and you can make as many different combinations as you like. Make it fun and vary the instructions: even though the children are working hard, it is important to keep them on their toes.

Quick reactions

Players line up behind each other in a straight line with markers 10 metres away on their left and right. The coach stands opposite them and calls instructions out to them, for example, “run left”, “jump right”, “skip left”, “hop right”, “sidestep left”. The players move to the line of markers indicated and back to the centre for the next instruction.

Passing warm-up

In the diagram below, the squares represent players, the triangles represent markers, such as plastic bottles or cones, the straight arrows represent movement of the ball and the curved line represents movement of the player. In the first exercise, the front player in the left line starts with the ball in his/her hands. The first player throws the ball to the player opposite and sprints to join the back of that queue. The player who receives that pass (catching it in his/her hands) does the same and it continues until the ball is dropped, someone makes a



Passing warm-up

mistake or after a set amount of time. The next exercise quickly moves on to the players using their feet and passing to each other in the same way, always sprinting to join the back of the opposite queue. Mix up the passing by telling players to go to one-touch or two-touch passing at random times in order to keep them on their toes! See how many passes the group can achieve before they make a mistake, and set them targets. Identify the children who still need help with their passing and help them afterwards.

Football skills drills

The drills presented from this point on concern specific football coaching drills to help the children improve their technique and skills. They include the following:

- Ball control drills
- Dribbling drills
- Passing drills
- Shooting drills
- Heading drills
- Goalkeeping drills

On average, the drills should last between 5 and 10 minutes depending on the activity. Every effort should be made to avoid players standing around with nothing to do in between exercises.

Note for coaches

In some of the drills below, you will need to split the larger group up into smaller groups or partners. When you do this, make sure that you balance out the weaker and the stronger players to ensure that there is always a good mix. For example, pair a strong player with a weaker player so that the stronger players can act as peer coaches for their peers, giving them encouragement and correcting any mistakes being made in the exercise. This will instil in the stronger players a willingness to help others and share their good abilities with those

less fortunate. In this way, the bonds within the group are strengthened and there is less focus on who is strong and who is weak. You also enhance the personal development of the stronger players by using them as assistant coaches to help others in the group.

Ball control drills

Monkey-in-the-middle

Ensure that the name of this drill will not cause any problems in the group. If you think it will, simply replace it with another animal or name. It does not matter, as long as it does not upset anyone and it will not result in bullying through name-calling. This exercise requires groups of three, with one ball to a group. Volunteer one player to be the “monkey-in-the-middle”. The two other players try to pass the ball with their feet past the “monkey” without letting her or him control it. Once the “monkey” traps the ball, the last player to touch the ball takes his/her place. The two outside players must control the ball, or they will have to switch with the “monkey”. The groups should work in small grids that you mark out and they should learn to move into space to make and receive passes. The “monkey” should try and intercept passes and move to tackle the person in control of the ball to force them to pass.

Rapid fire

Have the full group form a circle around a single player. If possible, every player except the middle player should have a ball. Have each team member take turns passing the ball to the player in the centre. This player tries to trap and control the ball, and then passes it back to the original player. Have each team member take a turn as the middle player. If the number of footballs is limited, the player in the middle starts with a ball and passes to a player standing in the circle. That player then passes it back to

the middle player who then passes the ball to a different player in the circle. If your group is too large for this exercise – which might mean that children have to wait too long to pass or be in the middle – then split the group up into smaller groups doing the same exercise.

Continue down the line

Divide team members into groups of four players with one ball for each group. Select one player to be the server. The three remaining players should line up, side by side, facing the server. The server will take turns “serving” the ball to each player who must **trap and control before returning it to the server**. Continue in this fashion, alternating the server. The server should alternate the type of serve, for example, instep passing, hard passing, lifting the ball, and so on. Receiving players should use feet, chest and heads to bring the ball under control.

Flight ball

Divide the group into pairs, giving each pair one ball and mark an area on the ground. One player will be the server, who is to serve **the ball in the air to any location in the other player’s half of the area**. This player must move to the ball, trap it, and return it to the server. Alternate roles after every 10 serves. If some players find it difficult to make the serve in the air using their feet (which can be the case if they are new to the game or very young), they can use their hands and throw the ball into the air for their partner to trap.

4 v 1 keep-away

Divide team members into groups of five. Mark out a square area about 10 metres by 10 metres for each group, with a player at each corner and one in the middle. Players must keep the ball away from the defender in the middle while keeping the football in the area. For more advanced players, use 3 v 1 or 3 v 2, with one open corner so that players must move into space to support.

Note for coaches

Reduce the size of the area as players get better. Keep score by counting passes. Do not be too strict on keeping ball in the square – let play continue unless the football is blatantly out of the square.

Protect the marker

Mark out an area of 20 metres by 30 metres. Divide the players into four equal teams depending on numbers in the group. Each player should have a ball. Each team **sets up three or four cones or plastic bottles filled with sand or dirt to protect on one side of the space**. Teams decide which of their players will defend and attack. The game begins with players defending their cones/bottles or trying to knock down the other teams’ cones/bottles, while controlling their own ball. When a team’s cones/bottles are knocked down, the team is out. The team with the last standing cone/bottle is the winner.

Note for coaches

Make sure the turnover time for this game is quick so that the first team knocked out is not waiting on the sidelines for a long time. However, it is a fun and noisy game so let the children play it in that spirit.

Dribbling drills

Note for coaches

If you do not have enough footballs, then you might have to do some of these drills with one group and then with another, depending on the number of balls you have. However, the need to obtain more footballs could be an incentive to try and find a sponsor to provide you with materials or to discuss this possibility with local football clubs or the local and national federations.

Keep away

Mark out a boundary proportionate to the overall group size. Each player should have a ball. On your signal, the players should dribble their football within the boundary, while at the same time trying to kick other players' footballs out of the area. Players whose ball is kicked out of area must retrieve the ball and dribble around the whole boundary area before returning to the game inside the boundary.

The stop and go

This is simply a change of pace. Each player should have a ball and should jog slowly around the designated area with the ball, and then on your command of "Go!" or a whistle blast, should put on a burst of speed until you say "Stop!" or blow the whistle again. The key is a change of pace with the ball. Players can also put the sole of their foot on top of the ball when stopping the ball and then push it forward with the instep when they break off on the dribble again. In order to add in some game simulation, place defenders in the grid who can try and dispossess players as they dribble. It will force the players to accelerate around the defender.

Beehive

Mark out an area of 20 metres by 20 metres and give each player a ball. Players dribble inside the area avoiding other players. Players should practice inside and outside foot dribbling, stopping, changing direction and pace, and maintaining control while in the beehive. The small square will mean there will be a lot of players in a confined space (hence, a "beehive" of activity) and they need to avoid each other and use peripheral vision. However, if you have a large group, you might need to set up two or more areas to accommodate all the children.

King/queen of the ring

Mark out an area of 20 metres by 20 metres – if you have a large group, you might need to set up two or more areas. Provide each player

except one in the area with a football. The player without the ball is "it", in other words the king (if a boy) or queen (if a girl). Players start to dribble inside the area while the king or queen tries to kick each ball out of the area. Players may re-enter the area after retrieving their balls. Set a time for each player to be the king or queen and get them to count how many balls they kick out of the area. See who ends up with the highest number at the end.

Shadow dribbling

Pair the players up, each with one ball between them. The first player (the leader) dribbles while the second player follows, also dribbling with an "imaginary" ball. The second player must copy what the leader does. This means that players have to try to keep their heads up and watch what the other is doing, especially the player who is copying the other. Encourage the leader to perform creative dribbling, including changes in direction, pace and technique. The objective is for the leader to make it difficult for the other player to copy her or him. Stress the need for football control and change leaders frequently.

One on one

Pair the players pair, each with one football between them. They should work in a square with markers at each corner. The player with the ball is "on the attack" and the other player is the defender. The attacking player tries to dribble to any of the markers and touch it with the ball. The defending player tries to prevent this. Players switch possession of the ball when the attacker accomplishes his/her goal or when the ball goes out of bounds.

Dribble across a square

This is a good drill for evaluating players' dribbling skills. It teaches general ball control, dribbling and the importance of looking up while dribbling. Players also develop their peripheral vision (the capacity to see what is going on out of the corner of their eyes), practice shielding the ball and improve their ability to speed up if they get in



Dribble across a square

the clear. Use four markers to make a square about 10 or 12 steps wide (smaller or larger depending on age and number of players). Every player should have a football. Spread players around the square, all facing inward (see the diagram below):

On your command of “Go!” or a whistle blast, each player dribbles across the square and back. When they reach the side of the square, the players must begin to perfect turning with the football and they should use one of two techniques. They must do a “pullback turn” in which they put the bottom of the foot on top of the ball to stop it and pull it back in the direction they came from and turn as they do so. Or, they must do a “hook turn” in which they pull up their toes and turn the foot so the outside of the foot can “hook” the ball, stop it and pull it back in the direction they came from and turn themselves as they do so.

Players should look up while they dribble so they do not run into each other. The first player to cross the square 12 times without the ball getting away from her or him or making a mistake is the winner. You can make a game of this by giving players points for each successful turn they do and then run the exercise several times to see who is the overall winner. Tell the players that the first one to complete the 12 runs should call out “Done!” or “Finished!” and then all players should stop and count up how many turns they made. You should then note all the scores at the end of the game. However, you should always be sensitive to the weaker players in the group and if

you think that counting up scores could reinforce these weaknesses, avoid doing it. Simply bring the exercise to an end without counting up scores.

Play two or three games like this. As a variation, for the second game, you could state that the first to 10 is the winner and for the third game, the first to 8 is the winner, and so on.

Note for coaches

Players need to learn that when they are in “traffic”, i.e., surrounded by other players, they should keep the ball close to the feet to protect it. They also need to learn how to look up while dribbling by keeping the ball close to the feet. Then, when they have got themselves into the open, away from the traffic of other players, they should kick the ball ahead and run on to it to go faster, but still keep it under control to turn.

Passing drills

Basic passing

Divide the group into partners, giving each pair a football. Have the players pass and trap the ball, while you evaluate their skill and help them with advice and guidance. With children – and particularly the children from IPEC projects – it is much better to show them how to pass and trap the ball properly, so that they can watch and copy what you do. The correct technique in

passing and trapping the ball is described in more detail in the earlier section on *Basic football skills*.

Later in this exercise, introduce one-touch control passing, which is passing the ball without first trapping it. This is much more difficult for children with little experience of football or who are very young. The ball can fly off in all directions if they are not careful. Therefore, make sure they can trap and pass the ball proficiently before progressing to one-touch passing. Move among the pairs of players, spending some time with each of them and encourage them all the time and give help where it is needed but without any form of judgement or criticism. Show them how to perform the techniques correctly so they can copy you.

Triangle pass

Make up groups of three with one ball between each group. Get the players in each group to stand in a triangle facing inwards, using markers to keep the shape of the triangle. Players should try to pass around the triangle shape between them. Get them to reverse the direction of the passes from time to time, so that they do not always get used to going only one way. They can use trap and passing technique and one-touch passing as they progress. After a certain level of proficiency is reached, add a defender in each triangle to try and intercept the passes. Players are allowed to move short distances off their triangle marker to either take or give passes and make the defender work harder.

Tell the players always to remain on the balls of their feet during passing drills. They should bounce slightly, turning their feet one way and another so that they are always in a state of readiness to receive and give a pass. After a short while of passing one way around the triangle and then the other, allow the passers to pass randomly. In addition, allow the defender to be switched around, for example, if he/she intercepts a ball he/she can replace the person whose pass was intercepted. Try and progress every exercise

into more of a game situation so that the children learn how to use these skills under pressure and in game simulation.

Pass and follow

In this drill, one player stands in the centre of a circle with the other plays around her or him. One of the players in the circle passes the ball to the player in the centre, follows the pass and takes the place of player in the middle. Meanwhile, the player in the centre traps the ball and passes to another player on the outside of the circle, following the pass and taking the place of the player passed to. The player with the ball traps the ball, passes it to the centre player and follows the pass. In other words, the person in the middle is constantly changing and will receive a pass from someone and make another one almost immediately and follow it out of the centre and back into the circle.

Continue around the circle like this for a few minutes as it is likely to be a bit difficult for the children at first as this drill is challenging. However, once they get used to it, the passes should flow well and the children will learn to think and react quickly. One of its objectives is to make the player receiving a pass to have already looked up and worked out to whom he/she will pass to afterwards.

As the players improve, put another ball into play and/or impose restrictions, for example one-touch play or alternate side-of-the-foot passes.

Pressure passing

Set up a circle of markers about 10 metres in diameter. One player will stand in the middle while the rest of the group will space themselves out equally around the edge of the circle. The player in the middle receives the ball from a player on the edge, controls it, turns and passes to another player. As soon as he/she passes the ball out, a second ball is played in from the edge of the circle. As soon as this ball is passed out to a player on the edge of the circle, the first ball is played in again

and so on. The middle player has to move about quickly in a constant state of readiness to provide passes to the rest of the circle. Swap the middle player after one minute.

Stress the importance of good, crisp and accurate passing. The middle player must keep his/her head up and look at the target and think ahead about who he/she will be passing to. You can vary this game by only allowing two-touches (trap and pass), then one-touch passing. This will make the player in the middle concentrate even more on technique and skill in passing. Played properly, this is an intensive and fun workout for the children.

Keep away ring

Get the players to pair up and stand across from each other around a circle of markers. One player will then stand inside the circle and try to intercept passes made between the pairs of players. Completed passes made between the players count as goals and each pair should keep count of the goals they score so that at the end of the exercise, the pair with the most goals wins. As the player in the middle intercepts passes, he/she kicks the ball out of the circle. After one minute, change the player in the middle of the circle.

Marker game

Get the players to stand in a circle, facing a partner on the opposite side. Set up six to eight markers in the middle of the circle as targets. Players should then try to knock over the markers in the middle with accurate passes. Make sure you have one or two players to help with setting up markers as they are knocked over, and change over the helpers from time to time. Pairs should keep score of the number of markers they knock over, and the pair with the highest number at the end of the game is the winner. It is probably best to use plastic bottles filled with sand or dirt as markers, but do not make them too heavy as otherwise the children will have difficulty in knocking them over.

Four corner pass

Set up a 10 metre by 10 metre square with markers at each of the corners. Four players, one each side of the square, have one ball to pass between them. They attempt to pass the ball to each other across the square but may only run between the cones on their side of the area. A fifth player inside the square tries to steal the ball by intercepting it during passes. In other words, players on the edge of the square should move up and down the line between the markers to put themselves into space to receive a pass and avoid the defender. Players may not come into the square – they must remain on the edge of the square in between their two markers. Change the defender in the middle every minute.

Circle passing

Many of the basic circle drills can be used to practice passing. Try using a circle with two players in the middle attempting to intercept passes made by the players on the outside. The player whose pass is intercepted goes into the middle to help the two defenders already there. The winner is the last player left on the outside of the circle. Another variation is that when a player's pass is intercepted and he/she comes into the middle of the circle, the defender who intercepted the pass goes on to the outside of the circle, so there will always only be two defenders.

Think up some of your own variations by studying these drills and understanding their basic principles.

Triangles

This is a good drill for reinforcing basic passing skills with the added bonus of introducing vision and awareness. Divide the team into groups of three players and get them to stand in a triangle. Number the players 1 to 3. Player 1 passes to player 2 and then immediately runs between player 2 and 3 in order to take up a position to make a triangle again. Player 2 then passes to player 3 and runs through the gap between player 3 and player 1 to make

up another triangle. And so on. Basically, the players will move around the field making up little triangles with the idea of running into space to create the idea of movement and making the ball do the work.

If it is done correctly, this can be a fast drill that reinforces the pass and move combination which is fundamental to football. It makes players look carefully to find their next target and requires good passing technique. Just be careful the players do not all disappear out of sight as they keep moving and making new triangles! Move around the groups yourself and help them to develop the correct techniques and to understand the need to sprint fast into the next position. They need to stay alert and on the balls of their feet ready to give and receive passes and move quickly into space.

Relays (similar to the “Passing warm-up” drill)

This drill focuses on the fun activity of relay races between teams. You can use a passing and moving relay race with a set up like the one in the diagram:

The basic practice drill is as follows: player A will pass to player D and then run to the back of the line (i.e. behind player C); player D will pass to B and run to the back of the line, and so on. Practice this with the groups for a few minutes and watch for and praise the correct technique. Then add the requirement that players must shout out the name of the person they are passing to. Adding this rule makes the players talk to each other and it makes them look up to see who they are passing to. In addition, if this drill is carried

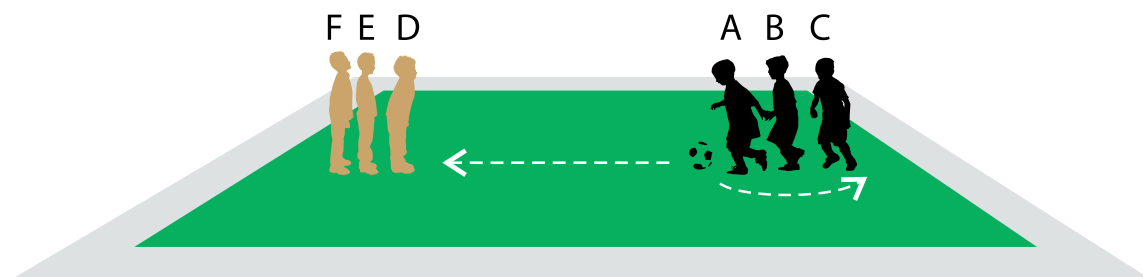
out at the start of the football season or a new project where all the children might not know each other, it helps introduce the new players to each other. This drill can also be made competitive with the first team doing 20 consecutive passes as the winner. However, make sure that the teams are well mixed and that one is not much stronger than the other. Avoid creating winners if it might upset the bonds within the group.

There are many possible variations to this drill. For example, get the players to give one-touch passes instead of two-touches. Once you know the children and their abilities better, you can create drills that you know they can do and they will enjoy.

Shooting drills

Marbles

Organize the players into pairs, each player with a ball, standing next to each other. Standing with his/her back to the field of play, the first player throws the ball over his/her head. The second player then kicks their ball from the starting point and tries to hit the ball that was thrown. Play alternates by kicks until one ball is hit. The players then change over and start again. As the coach, you should emphasize instep kicks for distance and the side of the foot for accuracy. Make it a condition that in every other game only the left foot is allowed to be used. This will help players to learn how to use both feet in playing football which is useful for dribbling and shooting.



Relays

Shoot between markers

Set up a row of markers 3 to 5 metres apart. Organize the players into pairs and put one player on each side of the line facing the markers and each other, i.e. the markers are separating them. Players should start the drill by standing close to the row of markers at first, striking the ball between them. The partner receives the ball and then passes it back through the markers. Gradually move the players further apart as their technique and accuracy improve. Get the pairs to sometimes use one-touch passes as they grow more confident. As the players improve, reduce the width between the markers to give them a harder target.

Go for goal

Players form two lines on either side of the coach who is standing 20 metres from a goal. The coach serves the ball, i.e. rolls it, towards the goal line while one player races to control the ball and shoot. Organize an order for players to take turns. As shooting skills improve, add a goalkeeper into the goal to make it more realistic. As coach, you should encourage correct shooting technique and a good first touch on the ball.

As a further variation and to make the drill more competitive, nominate the players on the right of you to be attackers and those on the left defenders. As you roll out the ball, the attacking player can move straight away, whereas the defender will move one or two seconds later. This means that the attacker has to win and strike the ball knowing there is someone coming to tackle her or him and there is also a goalkeeper to beat. It makes the drill more intense and more like a real game situation. You can add in variations, such as one touch and shoot, or two touches and shoot, and so on.

Quick shot

Organize the players into groups of three and give each group one ball and two markers. Each group should set the markers up as a goal and have one player be the goalkeeper.

The remaining two players should be on opposite sides of the goal, facing each other. They will take turns shooting at goal. When the goalkeeper makes a save, he/she should turn and roll the ball to the other player. Switch goalkeepers often among the three players, say every minute or so. Do not let the players stand too close to the goal for shooting as this makes it hard on the goalkeeper. Get the players to work on their accuracy and different heights of shooting.

Marker kick down

This drill is played just like a regular small-sided game and you should organize two equally balanced teams. Set up two goals as you would a normal game but line up five markers along each goal line instead of having a goalkeeper. The first team to knock down all five markers on the opposite goal line wins. However, it is important that the teams understand that although there are no goalkeepers, there are of course defenders and they should defend their goals to prevent attackers knocking down the markers. Use plastic bottles filled with sand or dirt as markers as these are easier targets to knock over for the children.

Shoot against the goalkeeper

Organize the team into pairs of players. Give each pair one ball and four markers and they should set these up as two separate goals opposite each other about 10 metres apart. Each player stands in front of a goal and takes turns shooting at the other goal and then being the goalkeeper as his/her partner shoots at his/her goal. To begin with, the players should kick a stationary ball. However, build the game up by encouraging them to stand behind their goal line and dribble up to it before shooting or have the goalkeepers roll the ball to the shooter for a one-touch shot.

Pass and shoot

Set up two markers as a goal at one end of a square and divide the group in half, always being equitable in the distribution of players so that one side will not always win or lose.

Pick one player to start the drill as goalkeeper, but switch goalkeepers often during this drill. Line one group up behind the goal in single file, with one ball for each player. Then line the other group up, also in single file, about 5 metres or so in front of the goal, in the centre. The first player in the line behind the goal should pass the ball to the first player in the centre line. This person then traps the ball and takes a shot at goal.

After shooting, the players should cross over and go to the end of the passing line and vice versa, so that the drill is continuous and players take a turn at passing and shooting. After players get more proficient in trapping the ball and shooting, tell them that they have to take their shots with only one touch. This is more difficult and you need to make sure that players are proficient enough to do this. For large groups, two games can be set up at opposite ends of the field.

3 v 3 one goal

This drill is based on a normal three-a-side game in an area approximately 30 metres by 20 metres, except that it is played around one goal rather than two. Set up the goal with two markers placed in the middle of the area that has been marked out. There should be one goalkeeper to defend the goals from both teams. Team A can score only from the left side of the field, and team B only from the right side. Players must combine by passing between each other to create goal-scoring opportunities. Emphasize shooting at goal at the earliest opportunity. The game is restarted with a throw-in any time the ball goes out of bounds. When the goalkeeper makes a save from one team, he/she throws the ball into the opposing half of the field. Change the goalkeeper often, at least every 2 minutes. Get the teams to count the number of goals they have scored, with the team that scores the most the winner.

Marker ball

This drill exercise can be played 4 v 4 v 4, i.e. 12 players in all, with one ball. Put a large marker in the middle of the field. The three

teams play against each other. In order to score, a team simply has to hit the marker. Each team adds up the number of times it hits the marker. The teams not in possession of the ball must try to dispossess the team with the ball and shoot at the marker. The teams play in the whole marked-out field. As a variation and to begin to make the drill a bit more challenging as the players get more proficient, add a 5-metre exclusion zone around the marker, in other words no players can go inside this zone and must therefore shoot at the marker from outside this zone. Later on, you can also introduce a goalkeeper to this area who can stop the shots at the marker. Change the goalkeeper often and at least every minute or so.

Heading drills

Note for coaches

Keep in mind the earlier caveat in this manual regarding the age of children and exercises for heading footballs. You should not do these exercises too often, if at all, with young children. Children above 12 years old could start heading exercises and technique. Below this age, it can be harmful to their spines and necks and should be avoided.

In addition, do not use too many heading drills one after the other as this will begin to hurt the players' heads and you could risk upsetting them, or even injuring them. You could even put them off heading the ball at all or even playing football. Intersperse heading drills with other exercises. You do not have to do a heading drill each time you train. Plan your drills wisely and according to the physical limitations of the players, especially very young players.

Self-heading

In this drill, players "head" the ball out of their own hands and catch it. The objective of this drill is to teach proper heading technique and get players to understand how to head the ball properly and effectively. The ball should start being held against each player's forehead. The player then pulls the head and

upper body *back* while holding ball still and then *strikes* the ball. Make sure that players concentrate on keeping their eyes open and mouths closed and that they hit the ball with the appropriate part of the forehead. They should make contact with the ball with the forehead area between hairline and eyebrows. Walk among the group and observe each individual technique and correct any errors as this can cause damage otherwise.

Self-heading in pairs

Organize the players in pairs, each with one ball between them. The players should stand about 5 metres apart. Using the technique described in the drill above, one player heads the ball to their partner. The partner catches the ball and heads it back using the same technique. Once the players have become more proficient in technique, they can stand a little further apart to improve accuracy and distance.

Partner heading

This drill can follow on quite easily from the two preceding drills, but again avoid doing too many heading drills at one time so that none of the children get hurt. Intersperse heading drills with other technique drills and do not overdo it. Organize the players in pairs, each with one ball between them. The players should stand only a few metres apart in the early part of this exercise. One player tosses the ball gently to the other player who heads it back, making sure to strike the ball properly with the head and concentrating also on accuracy in heading it back to his/her partner. One player should continue for 10 consecutive headers and then change to the other partner.

The heading game

Organize the players in pairs in a 10 by 5 metre area marked out with markers. Players take it in turns to head the ball over their partners' goal line by pulling the ball back and using their own momentum to head the ball. The players attempting to stop the ball can use their hands or dive if necessary. They then throw the ball back and each player takes ten consecutive

headers. Get the players to keep score and then see who the winner is at the end of the drill.

Three-person heading

Have one player stand in the middle of two others, who each have a ball. The outside players take turns tossing the ball gently for the middle player to head it back to them. The middle player must head one ball, spin around and head the other ball, then back again. Continue for a given number of headers, say 10 to 20, and then switch the player in the middle.

Target heading

Organize the players into groups of three with two tossing the ball and one heading it as above. This time, however, the first player gently tosses the ball for the second player to head in the direction of the third player who will be standing to the side of her or him at a 90° angle. This player catches the ball and tosses it gently for the middle player to head it back to the first again. Continue for a given number of headers, say 10 to 20, and then switch the player heading the ball. Once all players have been in the middle, start again but this time the player should stand on the opposite side of the middle player. Encourage accuracy of the headers and make sure that the players understand how to twist their heads as they connect with the ball to head it off to the left or right. Ensure that players are using good technique and will not injure themselves in any way.

Keep-it-up

This is a challenging exercise and you will only be able to do this with players who are more proficient at heading the ball. Organize the players into pairs and one player will toss the ball gently to the other player who heads it back. This time, the first player will also try to head the ball back and both players will try to keep the ball from hitting the ground only by using their heads. Encourage players to keep count of how many times they head the ball and get them to try to beat their best effort. As a variation, join two pairs together and have

them try to make the balls collide in mid-air. This game is all about timing and accuracy.

Circle keep-it-up

This drill is similar to the one above except that there are more players, requiring more concentration, more skill and good communication. Organize the players in a circle of four or five. The drill begins by one player tossing the ball gently to another player in the circle. The group must then try to keep the ball up for as long as possible using only their heads. Teams should count the number of consecutive headers they make before the ball hits the ground. The team with the highest number of headers is the winner.

Volley football

Organize two teams of two or three and get them to stand at either end of a 10 metre by 5 metre court with a centre line, similar to a volleyball court. Place benches, sticks, cones or other markers along the centre of the court to represent a net. The game begins with a throw-in from the side by one player to a team mate who heads the ball over the “net” to the opposing team. The opposing team must head the ball back over the “net” before it bounces twice on their side of the court. Points are scored as in volleyball, i.e. teams can only score when they are serving and they get to serve by winning on the other team’s serve.

You can vary this drill by also allowing the team to use their feet to keep the ball up, but only allowing them to get the ball over the net with their heads. You could also think about organizing a volley football competition within the group for a bit of fun. Perhaps adults from the community could play as well and the teams could be mixed up. Just make sure that the game remains fun and that the competition does not become too strong. It is primarily designed to improve football technique and skills.

The heading game, 2x2

Organize the players into pairs to play a game of 2 v 2 in a 10 by 10 metre square. One pair

starts with the football and tries to advance down the square heading the ball to each other without letting it touch the ground. Once they get near the other team’s goal line, one of them can attempt to head it over their line to score. The other team stays on their goal line and attempts to save the ball. Once the ball hits the ground or is saved, the two attackers become defenders and retreat to their goal line and the other pair begin to try to keep the ball in the air and advance up the field to score. See how many goals can be scored over a set period of time, say 3 to 5 minutes, or a set number of attacks, say five each. The team with the most goals wins. As a variation, you can increase the number of players in the teams and increase the size of the grid, although try not to let the goal line become too wide as scoring can be too easy.

Goalkeeping drills

It is important that children understand the roles of the different players on a football pitch and that, through the drills that have already been presented here, they begin to identify with the positions that suit them best, such as defending, attacking, passing the ball into the centre for other attackers to score, and so on. Once the children begin to identify these different positions and their roles and functions, coaches can start piecing together the makings of a football team and to move more into the rules of the game, roles of the different positions, game strategies, and so on. However, for young children and inexperienced players, it is important that coaches do not try and influence personal preferences for where they play. Let them experience all aspects of football and have fun playing in all positions. It is not until they are older, more experienced and possibly playing competitions that they might need to start thinking about where their best position might be. Even in senior teams, players tend to interchange positions depending on what is happening in a game. Football should be fun for children, so do not tie them down

with positions and rules – let them express themselves and try everything.

However, of all the players on a football pitch, only one has a very particular function, namely the goalkeeper, who occupies a position that represents the last line of defence between the opposing team and the goal. The primary role of the goalkeeper is to defend the team's goal and prevent the opposition from scoring a goal. Goalkeepers are the only players permitted to touch the ball with their hands or arms in open play within their own penalty area. However, goalkeepers are not allowed to handle the ball with their hands when receiving a deliberate pass from a teammate. As a result, all goalkeepers must also be able to control the ball with their feet, emphasizing the importance at young ages for children to be able to acquire ball control skills whatever position they may play in.

Outside of their penalty area, goalkeepers have the same restrictions as other players and may not handle the ball. They are also “protected” from active interference by opponents within their own goal area, an action punishable by the referee. Since goalkeepers can see every player on the field most of the time, they often organize the team's defence as well.

Below are some coaching drills for goalkeepers. Let all the children in the group experience this position and see how various individuals get on. You might already spot a future talented goalkeeper among them.

Soft catch

Organize the players into pairs with one football between them. Get the players to throw and catch the ball. At first, the ball should be gently tossed to one another directly over a short distance, say a few metres. However, as the players get more proficient, move them further apart and encourage them to throw the ball to the left, right or above their partners to make them stretch out and move in order to catch the ball. They can also throw the ball high or low to make their partners move about. In addition, for a bit of fun, tell them to try to make no sound as the ball hits

their hands – this is an almost impossible task but they will have fun trying!

Keepers' nest, 3 v 1

Organize the players into teams of four – three attackers and one defender. Place three markers in a triangular shape 10 metres apart. One player is inside the triangle as the goalkeeper. The other three try to keep possession of the ball and score goals by moving the goalkeeper out of position, through passing, and playing the ball through two markers on the opposite side of the triangle. If the goalkeeper intercepts the ball, the player who played the ball last becomes the new goalkeeper.

American football

Organize the entire group into equal teams and mark out a field large enough to take the full group. In this drill, players use their hands to pass. Emphasize that they should concentrate on proper hand position under pressure. If a player has the ball in his/her hands, then he/she cannot move his/her feet. Players cannot grab the ball if it is in another player's hands. Instead of making goals for the teams to score in, create an end zone a few metres wide at either end of the field.

A team can score a “touch-down”, as in American football, if they pass the ball to a team mate standing in the end zone. However, players cannot stand in the end zone for more than three seconds at a time. Players not in possession of the ball can try to intercept passes. Another variation can be that the ball should not be allowed to touch the ground. If it does, it passes over to the opposing team. This will encourage the players to throw the ball accurately and catch the ball cleanly. Count the touch-downs, and the team with the most at the end of the game wins.

Crocodiles in the river

Mark out a 20- by 30-metre area. Organize the players into three teams of about four players with three balls. One team, the “crocodiles”, will defend and the other two will attack.

Each team gets 5 minutes in the middle of the area as goalkeepers – in effect, they are the crocodiles in the river trying to intercept the balls! You should count the number of interceptions by the crocodiles and keep note of these. The other two teams have to play the footballs across the “river” back and forth and avoid letting the crocodiles intercept them.

Encourage members of the attacking teams to call for the ball, then pass it to a team mate on the same side. The crocodiles should use good goalkeeping techniques, including anticipation, setting into position for a shot and receiving balls. If a crocodile intercepts a football, he/she should roll it back to the coach. Variations of the game can include stopping the game once all three balls have been intercepted or circulating the footballs back to the attacking teams and letting the game go on for a set period of time, say 3 to 5 minutes, before putting another team in as crocodiles. The team with the biggest number of interceptions as crocodiles are the winners.

Triangular goals

Set up triangular goals – three markers 2 metres apart in a triangular shape – in the middle of the penalty area on a football pitch. Organize teams of four players and play 4 v 4 within the penalty box. You can also mark out the penalty box and goals. One team has four attackers with one football and the other has three goalkeepers, one for each side of the triangle, and one defender who covers all sides of the triangle. The attacking team tries to score by kicking the ball over the triangle goal lines. If the football is kicked out of the penalty area or if the goalkeepers/defender make a save, switch the teams around. Let each team keep their own scores.

Variations of the game can be introduced as the players become more proficient. For example, you can increase the area of play and

introduce teams of 6 v 6 or 8 v 8 (but always triangular goals and three goalkeepers). Open the triangular goal lines to up to 6 metres wide. Make the exercise even more challenging by telling the players that they have to make at least **three passes before they can shoot** at goal, or that they have to head a goal or chip over goals to a team mate to score.

Simple fun games for children

Note for coaches

In these simple games, the instructions involve splitting the larger group up into teams of certain sizes, such as two teams of seven, or two teams of ten, and so on. These are optimum team sizes only. If you do not have enough children for two teams of five, seven or ten, it does not matter. You should simply adjust the numbers and the size of the areas accordingly. You might only have a handful of children in your group. All that matters is that the children play, so do not worry about the numbers. The principles of these games remain the same and you should simply adapt them.

9 x 9 mobile wingers

This game involves two teams of seven playing in an area approximately 60 metres by 40 metres, which should be marked out with markers and with goals at either end (see diagram below). An additional two players per team act as “wingers”,²⁵ playing in a channel about 2 or 3 metres wide just outside the main marked-out pitch. These wingers cannot enter the main playing area, nor can they tackle one another. Their team mates can, however, pass to and receive the ball from them. They act as an additional strike force for teams attacking the goal.

²⁵ “Wingers” are part of the attacking forward structure on a football pitch. In the old days of football when positions were more established than they are today, the wingers played wide on the left and right side of the pitch, were usually quite fast and were responsible for crossing the football into the opposing penalty box to set up their strikers to score either through headers or shots at goal. Nowadays, a variety of players can find themselves playing down a wing to cross a ball to the centre.

Encourage the players to use the full width of the pitch in order to “stretch” the opposing defence. Emphasize the need for wingers to cross the ball well into the centre of the pitch and for attackers to make good runs into the penalty area to offer targets to the crosses by the wingers. Change the wingers every now and then so that all the players have the opportunity to learn how to play in that position and cross a ball. Encourage the teams to make good use of the wingers in preparing an attack by a lot of inter-passing between the players and learning to move forward with the ball through passing, running into space and dribbling forward. Help children understand the importance of playing across a pitch and not all “swarming” after the ball. This game helps children understand the meaning of the term “let the ball do the work”. This concept is always a challenge for young children and they will probably still all swarm around the ball. But do not worry about this – it is natural in children’s play all over the world. As they get older and more experienced, this will change. Play a game of about 10 minutes a half and make sure that all the players take turns at being the winger.

Your number’s up

This game involves splitting the children into two teams of ten. Set up a square with markers and make sure it is large enough to take the full 20 players so that they have some space. Mark out two goals opposite each other in the area. Split each team into sub-groups of five so that each sub-group is positioned on each corner of the square behind the corner marker. However, make

sure that the two teams are on the same side of the square where their goalposts are. Number the children from one to ten in each team – so there will be two number 1s, two number 2s, and so on up to 10.

In this exercise, you put a football in the middle of the square, stand to one side and call out a number from one to ten. The two players whose number is called must sprint into the square as quickly as possible and try and take possession of the ball. They then play against each other trying to score a goal. Once the goal is scored, or after a set time, say 1 minute, the two players return to their corners and the coach puts the ball in the middle and immediately calls out another number.

Once the teams become proficient at the game, you can vary it by calling more than one number at a time and increasing the number of players. The players from each team then join up and try and score in the opposite goal. Another option is to number the four sub-groups 1 to 5 only. Then, when you call out a number, four players, two from each team, will run into the square. The two from each team should join up together to try and score in the opposite goal. Change the numbers all the time so that the children need to think and react fast. Later, you could call out two numbers so that it becomes 4 v 4, and so on.

In addition, when you have more players running into the square, you can let play continue for, say, 3 minutes and then count up the number of goals scored by each team. The team with the most goals at the end is the winner. This subsequent exercise focuses on team work, and it is vital that the players get used to working as a team both in

LEFT WINGERS’ ZONE – ONLY WINGERS ALLOWED IN THIS AREA AND WINGERS NOT ALLOWED TO LEAVE THIS AREA

1 WINGER PER TEAM AND THEY CANNOT TACKLE EACH OTHER, ONLY RECEIVE AND GIVE PASSES/CROSSES

MAIN PLAYING AREA
TWO TEAMS OF 7 PLAYERS

RIGHT WINGERS’ ZONE – SAME RULES AS FOR LEFT WINGER

attack and defence. The first team to reach the ball in the middle becomes the initial attacking side and the other team will need to defend, tackle and dispossess the other team to try and attack the other goal. Encourage the children to talk to each other as they play and to get players not in possession of the ball to move into space and provide a target for their team mates to pass to. Activity off the ball is critical and you must emphasize this with the children. This helps to avoid the “swarming” activity of young and inexperienced players and helps them to move the ball around more by passing.

Run for your life

This game involves organizing the group into four teams of seven players. Mark out a football pitch of 60 metres by 40 metres. Bring two of the four teams onto the pitch to play a match of 7 v 7 in which the first team to score are the winners. As soon as a goal is scored, the winning team must retrieve the ball from the opposite goal which then becomes their goal to defend and, switching sides as quickly as possible, play a new game towards the opposite goal. Meanwhile, the team that lost the match must leave the pitch immediately and join the “queue” to play again. The next team in line must immediately come onto the pitch and ensure they are defending the correct goal. The games are continuous and competitive and the coach must referee the games and make sure that the correct teams leave the field, that a new one comes on immediately to defend their goal and that the teams know which goals they are attacking and defending.

This is a very fast and fun game for children. However, it is vital that there is speed of thought and movement. There is no time at all between games and the games must be continuous to keep up the pressure on the players so that they learn how to attack and defend under pressure. Communication between players is vital and before a team comes onto the pitch, they should already have thought about positions and how they will attack or defend. Obviously, as each team comes onto the pitch, they are automatically going to be the defending

team. Therefore, stress the importance of **organization in defence and the need to turn defence into attack**. Once the defending team has dispossessed the attacking team of the ball, they need to organize their attack to try and score.

In the zone

This game involves organizing the group into two teams of seven playing in an area approximately 60 metres by 40 metres set out with markers. Two players from each team must play in each of three zones that will be marked out on the pitch, i.e. two defenders, two midfielders and two attackers (and one goalkeeper, of course). **Players *must* stay in their zone**, so mark the zones clearly for both teams. Play the game for around 5 to 10 minutes. If you have a lot of players, then play for 5 minutes and change the teams over regularly so that children do not have to stand around idle. However, if you have help, organize several marked-out pitches around the field and play all the children at the same time. You can then swap over teams after 5 or 10 minutes so that the teams get to play each other. Move the children between the four sets of positions: goalkeeper, defence, midfield and attack.

This is a game where the players need to communicate with each other all the time and also learn how to move into space to receive a pass as they progress up the field in attack. Communication is also important for the defending team so that they learn how to mark attackers and try and intercept or prevent passes and when they dispossess players of the ball, to turn defence into attack as quickly as possible. This game helps children to understand the importance of creating space and the need to position themselves to take and give passes while always trying to move forwards. The game begins to help the transition to a proper football game.

As a progression in this game, the midfielders (second zone) can be allowed to move into their team’s attacking zone (the third zone) to create a numerical advantage. However, only do this once the players have become

ATTACK ZONE – 2 PLAYERS
FROM TEAM 1

DEFENCE ZONE – 2
PLAYERS FROM TEAM 2 + 1
GOALKEEPER

MIDFIELD ZONE – 2
PLAYERS FROM TEAM 1

MIDFIELD ZONE – 2
PLAYERS FROM TEAM 2

DEFENCE ZONE – 2
PLAYERS FROM TEAM 1 + 1
GOALKEEPER

ATTACK ZONE – 2 PLAYERS
FROM TEAM 2

more proficient in the game and to help them progress to a proper game. The idea of the zones is to teach the players how defenders, midfielders and attackers place themselves on the pitch and to get a better idea of how each group of players should play. Mix the players up after a set time so that each group gets to play as defenders, midfielders and attackers. This helps the children establish which positions they prefer and helps you, the coach, as you begin to build teams with the children in the group. However, it is important that children do not become blinkered by their zones and that you help them understand that this is only for this exercise. When children move on to full football games, it is important that they have no limitations and fear of moving forward and beyond the boundaries of so-called zones. For example, if a defender breaks out into attack, then a midfield player might drop back to cover his/her position until the attack is over. Children should get used to playing in all positions.

Another key aspect of this exercise is for the children to learn how to “mark” players, what is called “man-to-man marking”. In other words, that the defending players stand close to the attackers who do not have the ball but who are trying to move into position to receive a pass. By marking players, defenders can dispossess teams by tackling or intercepting passes. Attacking players need to learn how to find space on the pitch and move into space to receive a pass while trying to avoid markers. They need to be mobile around the pitch and to be constantly moving around to try and shake off markers and make space for themselves.

Changeover

This game involves two teams of seven players playing in a marked-out area approximately

60 metres by 40 metres. An additional seven players per team stand on the line just outside the pitch and can receive and pass the ball to those actually playing. However, these players cannot come onto the pitch and cannot tackle or dispossess each other. On a given command from the coach who shouts “Change!” or gives a whistle blast, the players on the outside swap with those on the pitch and the game continues.

This game enables the game to be played at a fast pace in a continuous fashion and gives all the players a chance to play. This helps with enthusiasm and enjoyment and also gives players and the coach a chance to learn more about the positions they might prefer. The coach should begin to move players around into different positions and play different combinations of players. This can be a useful exercise in developing teams. The coach can also split the players on the sidelines so that there are three for each team on one side and four on the other. Change the players frequently so that the players on the side do not get bored. The team with the greatest number of goals scored wins.

Mini-football

Once you have been coaching the players in the project for a while and their skill levels have begun to improve somewhat, particularly once you start using the small game activities listed above, you will eventually reach a point in the group’s development when you can begin to get them to play football matches between themselves. In this way, they will be able to put into practice the skills and techniques they have learned from you in game situations. With

young and inexperienced players, in reality it will be some time before they really put into practice in a game what they learn from their coaching. They will probably still all swarm after the ball in a big bunch, with all of them trying to kick the ball at the same time and in any direction. It will seem to you as if all your coaching has gone out of the window! But do not be discouraged. Small children are like this in everything they do in life. They copy one another and want to be involved with the other children. They move around in groups and the same will happen with football, no matter how much you try to teach them otherwise. Some children will be able to kick the ball hard, or run very fast, or catch the ball well, but the bulk will all swarm around the ball!

But, bit by bit, your coaching will pay dividends, and as they grow older and more experienced their style of play will change and they will begin to understand the need to move into space, pass ahead for someone to run on to the ball and move the ball from one side of the pitch to the other to create opportunities to attack the goal. All of this will happen, and it is only through coaching, playing and developing that eventually this realization will come. "Mini-football", therefore, is an exercise in introducing football matches to young children. It is a game of football devised for children under the age of 12 years old. It was created to improve children's skill and understanding of the game of football and can be a great way

to end a practice session by allowing players to practice the skills they have just been learning or developing in a simulated game environment.

A smaller field with fewer players greatly improves the game of football for younger children, as they get to touch the ball more often, do not get tired from running around a big field and therefore can more easily develop their skills. All the rules are generally the same as traditional 11-a-side football except for a few simple variations. The advantage of mini-football is that the coach can modify any rule to cope with the conditions and skill levels of the children participating. This is very important when working with target groups from IPEC projects who are particularly vulnerable children and who will probably require greater efforts from coaching and support staff.

Field dimensions

A regular football field is generally cut in half into two equally sized mini-football fields (see the table of football pitch dimensions at the beginning of this manual). This makes a smaller more practical field for children. The opposing goals are then placed on the sidelines of the pitch (new goal line). There are no direct measurements for the goals for children but they are usually much smaller than the regular goals and should not be more than 4 metres wide by 2 metres high. The size of the goal should be set to the age and skill level of the children participating. Depending on the equipment available, the goal lines might be marked out and you will need to use your discretion for the height of the crossbar and decide if a shot is too high.

Penalty area

One rule change for mini-football is that there is no penalty area and no penalty kicks.

Throw-ins

For younger children, about 5 to 9 years old, who have not learned to throw the ball in, the ball can be placed on the ground and kicked like a free kick from where the throw-in would normally take place. Older children who can



do a proper throw-in can continue with the regular rules.

Offside

Generally, offside is not applied in games involving younger children until a strong understanding of the rule is taught. Usually, children around the age of 10 can begin to comprehend the rule and it can slowly begin to be introduced.

Players

The number of players is variable, but generally there are seven players in a mini-football team: three forwards, three defenders and a goalkeeper. A variation could be that the goalkeeper is a “running goalie” and can come out of the goal to take part in defence or attack. However, make sure that he/she does not forget to guard the goal as well!

Key coaching points

Normally, mini-football games are around 10 minutes each half, around 20 minutes in all. This means that if there are more teams waiting on the side to play, they could be getting on with some training drills while they are waiting to play. The coach has to organize games and competitions keeping in mind that younger children have a shorter attention span than older children and can quickly grow bored not playing. So organize training drills on the side or make up several mini-football fields so that nearly all the children can play at the same time. Ask for help from other coaches, parents or even adults on the touchline. It is important that there is an adult or responsible young person in charge of each game and who keeps an eye on things. Encourage fair-play throughout the matches and among the players. It is important that they learn the spirit of fair-play from a very early age.

Organize a small competition with the teams playing against each other. In football projects, the aim is to encourage parents, teachers, older children and others in the community to come and help with organizing football activities and competitions,

refereeing, coaching the different teams, making sure the children are looked after, giving out refreshments, noting the results and planning the games, and so on. Reaching the stage of organizing mini-football competitions will be one of the key objectives of the IPEC football project, and it is vital to involve the local communities as fully as possible in these activities. In addition, coaches and implementing agencies should consider approaching the local business community to mobilize support and encourage businesses to sponsor prizes for the children or supply some refreshments, such as water. Efforts should also be made to contact the local media and try and get some coverage of the matches and let others know in the communities what is happening and why.

All of these support activities are presented in more detail in the *User's Guide*.

Good luck in your football coaching sessions and competitions. Please keep us informed of your progress, challenges, successes and concerns, and send us photos and reports of your activities. The football project approach will be adapted and improved through use around the world, so let us know your experiences so that we can share them more widely and adapt the resource kit accordingly.



Annex 1: Sample practice session plans

Ball control and dribbling

Objective: Players will be able to demonstrate the fundamentals of ball control and dribbling.

Age group: 10-12 years

No. of participants: 20

Warm-up: Three ball keep-away	Time	Equipment
Two teams, three footballs. On coach's signal (e.g. whistle blast), players try to possess as many balls as possible. On second signal, play stops. Team in possession of two or more balls wins that round. Repeat several times. Follow with stretching.	5 mins 5 mins	3 balls
<p>Individual/pair skill activity: Ball control</p> <p>In pairs, player A rolls or tosses the ball to player B. Player B brings ball under control.</p>	<p>Coaching points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep the head steady and watch the ball carefully to judge its flight and speed. 2. Move feet quickly so the body is in front of the ball. 3. Choose the right <i>body surface</i> to control the ball. 4. Cushion the force of the ball by pulling back the body part being used to control the ball. 	5 mins 1 ball per pair
<p>Individual/pair skill activity: Dribbling</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dribble ball between feet while in stationary position. 2. Dribble around a marker course. 3. On signal, dribble ball as fast as possible from one sideline to the other and stop on sideline. 4. On signal, count number of dribbles between feet in stationary position. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use short steps. 2. Push the ball forward gently with the inside or the outside of the foot. Alternate feet. 3. Keep the ball close and in front. 	10 mins 1 ball per player (or one per small group), markers
<p>Small group activity: "Monkey-in-the-middle"</p> <p>In groups of three, one player is the monkey-in-the-middle. The two other players pass the ball past the "monkey" without letting her or him control it. Once the "monkey" traps the ball, one of the other players takes his/her place. The two outside players must control the ball, or they will have to switch with the "monkey". Passes must be quick and short. Switch at least every 30 seconds.</p>	5 mins	1 ball per group

Large group activity/modified game: “Keep away” Within a set boundary each player has a ball. On signal, dribble ball within boundary and try to kick other players’ balls out of the area. Players whose ball is kicked out of area must retrieve ball and dribble around area before returning to game. “Mini Football” game	10 mins	1 ball per player
	10 mins	1 ball, Goals
Cool down: Stretching	5 mins	
Back-up activities: King of the ring, Protect the marker		Balls, markers

Notes/Self-evaluation: (For example: What worked well? What needs improvement? What do I need to work on in the future?)

Passing and shooting

Objective: Players will be able to demonstrate the fundamentals of passing and shooting.

Age group: 10-12 years

No. of participants: 20

Warm-up: Spiders and bugs

Time

Equipment

Divide players into two equal teams. Each team stands alongside the centre line about 2 metres apart and all facing forward, with two lines about 20 metres away on each side. Name one team “Spiders” and one team “Bugs”. When you call “Spiders” or “Bugs” that team has to sprint for the line nearest them. The other team tries to tag them. Anyone who is tagged joins the other team.

5 mins

none

5 mins

Stretching

Individual/pair skill activity:
Passing

1. Standing 3–4 metres from partner, pass ball back and forth using the inside of the foot.
2. As in 1, but count number of passes between partners in 1 minute.
3. Partners pass ball back and forth while jogging across field.

Coaching points:

1. With non-striking foot, step even with ball.
2. Strike ball at mid-point with inside of foot for low controlled pass
3. Face target before passing, look at ball during the pass
4. Follow through to target

5 mins

1 ball per pair

<p>Individual/pair skill activity: Shooting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up a line of markers each placed 3 to 5 metres apart. 2. Pair up players and put one player on each side of the line facing the markers and each other. 3. Players should start close to the row of markers at first, striking the ball between the markers. 4. The partner receives the ball and passes it back through the markers. 5. Move players further apart as their technique and accuracy improve. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep the head down and eyes on the ball – look up to pick out the target, but then look back at the ball to shoot. 2. Plant non-striking foot alongside (not above) the ball. 3. Strike the middle of the ball so it doesn't rise. 4. Follow through, do not jerk back when striking the ball (loses power). 	5 mins	1 ball and 2 markers per pair
<p>Small group activity: Four corner pass</p> <p>10 by 10 metre square with markers at each of the corners. Four players pass the ball, one on each side of the square. A fifth player defends inside the area. Players attempt to pass the ball across the area. Players may only run on their sides of the area between the markers. Change the middle defender frequently.</p>		15 mins	1 ball and 4 markers per group
<p>Large group activity/modified game: 3 on 3 one goal</p> <p>A normal 3-a-side game in an area approximately 30 by 20 metres, except that it is played around one goal rather than two (which is placed in the middle of the area). Emphasize shooting at goal at the earliest opportunity. Players combine to create goal-scoring opportunities. Team A can score only from the left side of the field, and team B only from the right side. Restart game with a throw-in any time the ball goes out of bounds. When the goalkeeper makes a save from one team, he/she throws the ball into the opposing half of the field.</p>		15 mins	1 ball and 2 markers per group
<p>Cool down: Stretching</p>		5 mins	
<p>Back-up activities: Triangles, Quick shot</p>			Balls, markers

Notes/Self-evaluation: (For example: What worked well? What needs improvement? What do I need to work on in the future?)

The header and throw-in

Objective: Players will be able to demonstrate the fundamentals of the header and throw-in.

Age group: 10-12 years

No. of participants: 20

Warm-up: Reaction warm-up		Time	Equipment
<p>Make a circle with markers – one for each player. If there are a large number of players, make two (or three) circles. Players stand at each marker and the coach calls out a variety of instructions that players must follow. For example, “2 left” (players all have to run to the marker 2 places to their left) or “3 right, 1 left” (3 markers to the right then back one marker to the left) or “2 right, centre, 1 left” (2 markers to the right, run to the centre and back, then 1 marker to the left).</p> <p>Stretching</p>		<p>5 mins</p> <p>5 mins</p>	<p>One marker for each player</p>
<p>Individual/pair skill activity: The header</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Players “head” the ball out of their hands and catch it. The ball should start being held against each player’s forehead. The player then pulls head/upper body back while holding ball still and then strikes the ball. Concentrate on eyes open, mouth closed, hit with proper part of forehead. 2. Players form pairs, each with a ball, and stand about 5 metres apart. One player heads the ball to his/her partner using the technique described above. Partner catches and heads back. 	<p>Coaching points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stand in balanced, athletic, ready position. 2. Lean back from waist as ball approaches. 3. Move head forward towards ball and contact ball with hairline of forehead. 4. Keep mouth closed and eyes open. 5. Follow through towards target. 	<p>5 mins</p>	<p>1 ball per player/pair</p>
<p>Individual skill/pair activity: The throw-in</p> <p>As in the drill above for the header, players form pairs and take turns throwing the ball to each other, gradually increasing the distance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Face target, feet shoulder width apart. 2. Draw ball back behind head with both hands and lean back. 3. Transfer weight forward and throw. 	<p>5 mins</p>	<p>1 ball per pair</p>
<p>Small group activity: “Volley football”</p> <p>Two teams stand at either end of 10 metres by 5 metres area with a centre line (similar to volleyball court). Place markers along the centre of the court to represent a “net”. Game begins with throw-in to team mate who heads ball over “net”. The opponent must head the ball back before it bounces twice. Points scored as in volleyball. Divide teams and play a “tournament”.</p>		<p>15 mins</p>	<p>1 ball per game, markers for boundary lines and “net”</p>
<p>Large group activity/modified game:</p> <p>Two 5-a-side games in each 18 yard box. Goals can only be scored by heading the ball.</p>		<p>15 mins</p>	<p>1 ball per game, 2 markers for each goal</p>

Cool down: Stretching	5 mins	
Back-up activities: The heading game, Partner heading, American football (passing by throw-in)		Balls, markers

Notes/Self-evaluation: (For example: What worked well? What needs improvement? What do I need to work on in the future?)

Goalkeeping

Objective: Players will be able to demonstrate the fundamentals of goalkeeping.

Age group: 10-12

No. of participants: 20

Warm-up: American football	Time	Equipment
<p>Divide the group into teams and players use their hands to pass. Concentrate on proper hand position under pressure. If a player has the ball in his/her hands they cannot move their feet. Players cannot grab the ball if it is in a player's hands. Instead of making goals for the teams to score in, create an end zone at either end of small field. A team can score a "touch down" if they pass the ball to a team mate standing in the end zone (players cannot stand in the end zone for more than 3 seconds).</p> <p>Stretching</p>	<p>5 mins</p> <p>5 mins</p>	<p>Markers for "end zones" and one ball</p>
<p>Individual skill activity: In pairs, sitting with feet together, players toss the ball to one another. Two hands, then right hand, then left hand (each for 1 minute). <i>Variations:</i> throw at stomach level, chest level, face level and above head.</p>	<p>Coaching points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concentrate until the ball is in the hands. 2. Relax at the point of contact. 3. Cushion the ball towards the body with hands. 	<p>5 mins</p> <p>1 ball per pair</p>
<p>Individual skill activity: Divide into groups of three. Each group has a small square 2 metres by 2 metres. Two players ("throwers" each with a ball) stand at two adjacent markers. The third player must sidestep between the other two markers and receive a throw from the throwers then return the ball and sidestep back to the other cone for the next throw. Each player takes a turn being the goalkeeper.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Side-step quickly behind the line of the ball and try to get two hands behind the ball. 2. Create two barriers between the ball and the goal with the body. 3. One minute of ground balls, one minute of bounced balls and one minute of chest balls. 	<p>10 mins</p> <p>1 ball, 4 markers per group</p>

<p>Small group activity: Keepers nest 3 v 1</p> <p>Three markers in a triangle 10 metres apart. One player is inside the triangle as the goalkeeper. The other three try to possess the ball and score goals by moving the goalkeeper out of position and playing through the triangle. If the goalkeeper intercepts the ball, the player who played the ball last becomes the new goalkeeper.</p>	10 mins	2 balls, 4 markers per group
<p>Large group activity/modified game: Crocodiles in the river</p> <p>20 by 30 metres area. 3 teams of about 4 players. Each team gets 5 minutes in the middle as goalkeepers (the “crocodiles”). Count the number of interceptions. The other two teams have to play the balls across the “river” back and forth. If ball is intercepted, the crocodile gives it to the coach.</p>	15 mins	3 balls, markers to mark the area
<p>Cool down: Stretching</p>	5 mins	
<p>Back-up activities: Keep away, Triangular goals</p>		Balls, markers

Notes/Self-evaluation: (For example: What worked well? What needs improvement? What do I need to work on in the future?)



Annex 2: Reference sources

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