

# FOOTBALL FOR KIDS



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PUFFIN BOOKS

# FOREWORD

This book is a very useful tool for coaches (parents) working in grass-roots football. It respects the needs and requirements of young players finding their way into the game of football.

Under consideration of the psychological background of youngsters, comprehensive recommendations for efficient training are offered.

Also, adults with little or no experience in coaching will understand what training at this early stage of development is all about. Consequently both parties will be beneficiaries, the players and the adults involved.

## **Holger Osieck**

Head Coach, Qantas Socceroos

(Former Head of Technical Development, FIFA)

You have in your hands *Football for Kids*, FFA's latest coaching resource for coaches of the youngest players. Coaching 5–7 year old kids is challenging, but it can also be tremendous fun and extremely rewarding if it's done the proper way!

In the National Football Curriculum we call this phase the 'Discovery Phase'. The essence of this is to let kids discover how the great game of football works in a natural and enjoyable way.

This has been scientifically proven to be the best way to 'coach' kids of this age, so please do not make the mistake to handle them as 'little adults'.

All exercises in this book are constructed according to age-related principles and are therefore specifically fun and simple to 'coach'.

I congratulate my colleague Kelly Cross on this book and wish you many rewarding hours as you help the kids develop their natural potential.

## **Han Berger**

National Technical Director

## PREFACE

Football, more than any other sport, is a game for everybody. Male and female players, from the elite to the recreational level, are playing the world game in ever-increasing numbers in Australia. Football is also a game that allows for all ages to be involved.

Of all the age groups playing football, it is the young that are the most important. These players are the foundation of the whole of football; without young players, football has no future.

This book is aimed at the people responsible for nurturing these young players. By making their job easier, and by assisting them to design appropriate training sessions, the book will be a major contributor to Australia's football development.



The overarching focus of this publication is the provision of 'quality football experiences'. Kids must enjoy football, in a safe environment, and they need to feel valued as human beings. Moreover, the volunteer coaches who play such an important role in our game need to feel confident about the job they are doing.

I believe this book will help players and coaches achieve those goals, and will make sure they have fun doing it! Football Federation Australia is committed to servicing the game of football at all levels. In an era of amazing achievement at the top end of the game, with our Socceroos and Matildas performing so well, this book confirms our awareness of the equal importance of grassroots football.

On behalf of Football Federation Australia, I would like to thank you for your dedication to the development of Australia's young players.

**Ben Buckley**

Chief Executive Officer  
Football Federation Australia

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## INTRODUCTION

This book is for community football coaches who are involved with players aged seven and under.

The coaches of these teams are usually interested parents and volunteers. Their involvement will often stem from a desire to help their own child and the team their child plays in.

FFA has produced this book to help these vital members of the football family, the volunteer coaches, to perform their crucial role as well as possible.

With over 50,000 registered players aged seven and under, these coaches are nurturing the future of Australian football; it is the hope of FFA that, together, we will be helping whole generations of players to develop a lifelong passion for this great game.

*Football for Kids* is designed to accompany and complement the FFA Grassroots Football Certificate course. Its purpose is to make coaching kids' teams easy. A suggested coaching format is outlined, and it is intentionally simple, breaking a session down into three components:

### THE BEGINNING

### THE MIDDLE

### THE END

The relevant sections for each component have been given traffic-light colours for ease of reference: green for 'the beginning' (go!), amber for 'the middle' and red for 'the end' (stop!).

Within each of the three components, we have tried to simplify the coach's job of content selection by giving a range of games and practices.

The coach is encouraged to experiment and find the right blend of practices for your team, using the framework contained in the book.

By following the guidelines given, coaches will feel better about the job they are doing, and young players will enjoy themselves, while both are developing the necessary skills to improve.

This is in line with the FFA Coach Education slogan:

***better coaches, better football***

It is not an exaggeration to state that grassroots coaches have the biggest influence on the future of football in Australia. By conducting appropriate training sessions for the youngsters in your care, you really do touch the future. Your commitment to the task is appreciated by FFA and the States and Territories of Australia, and by using the guidelines in this book we feel sure your players will appreciate it too.

Enjoy the experience!



**Kelly Cross**

National Coach Education Manager  
Football Federation Australia

## WHAT IS COACHING KIDS ALL ABOUT?

Not so long ago children learned football by playing the game on the street or in the park, for hours, making their own rules. It was free play – with no adults to interfere – and they played because they enjoyed it.

For a host of reasons, street football has virtually disappeared. The challenge today for coaches of our youngest players is to recreate that environment of fun and freedom and deliver the learning foundation that street football used to provide.

We believe that this fun and free approach to coaching will give thousands of young players enjoyable football experiences, and hopefully foster a love and passion for the game that will last a lifetime.

There is every chance this approach will help us produce more creative players who can make a difference in a game that people love to watch.



## ENJOYMENT IS THE THING, NOT WINNING!

When children are training or playing games against other teams they need a fun environment where they can play without pressure. The game result, for younger players, should be irrelevant.

If the emphasis is on winning matches or the competition, the development process is doomed to failure and the fun of junior play is replaced by the pressures and frustrations of adult football.

A study of youth sport values showed that the most important values were:

- enjoyment
- personal achievement

The least important value was:

- winning

The junior coach must value, above all else, the individual development and welfare of every single player. Research has shown that the emphasis should be on the child experiencing fun and excitement. Children at this age are still sampling many sports and activities; football coaches can have an impact on which sport the child will choose.



## ORGANISING FUN PRACTICES

Perhaps the first and most important step is to take the word ‘coach’ out of your mind. Your role is summed up in the above title – see yourself as an *organiser of fun practices*.

It is a mistake, made far too often, for children’s coaches to imitate the coaches they see on television. In fairness, these are usually the only models there are to copy, but unfortunately, the job of a high-profile coach in a professional team bears no resemblance to the job of a kids’ coach. Your FFA Grassroots Football Certificate presenter is a much better model to imitate.

As soon as you think of yourself as an ‘organiser’, or a ‘facilitator of learning’, you start to see the role in its true light.

Your job is to plan and organise fun practices.

And... *let them play!*

This book will help you select practices that have a role in the long-term development of young players. The practice is the teacher, and the kids will learn from the experiences provided.

Remember that teaching young players and watching them develop can give the same, if not greater, satisfaction as winning trophies and medals with senior players.

***Mistakes are often made at the basic training and development stage. The coaches are responsible for this, because they think they are working with professional teams.***

JOHANN CRUYFF (HOLLAND), WORLD FOOTBALL LEGEND

# WHAT TOOLS DO I NEED?

There is a range of tools that all football coaches require. At this level, the two main tools needed are personal skills and organisation skills.

## PERSONAL SKILLS

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### Be enthusiastic

If you look like you are having a good time, it will generally follow that the kids will have a good time. Try to show the children that there is no place you would rather be than on the field with them.

### Be friendly

The kids need to feel that you are on their side, as a friend as well as a mentor. Make sure you greet every player on arrival and say goodbye to every player when they leave, thanking them for their efforts in the session.

### Show your sense of humour

Fun is the key word; young players are not preparing for the World Cup, so let them enjoy themselves. Letting the children see you laugh is a great way of showing them you are a warm, likeable person. Try 'beat the coach' activities: you try to tag them in a square; you go in the goal and they try to score past you; or suggest that 'If you score ten goals in three minutes, I'll have to sprint to the halfway line and back'.

### Respect every individual

Children need to feel valued, which helps them develop self-confidence during this key phase of their social growth.

### Give lots of praise

Praise is not only given for doing something well; it is also one of the greatest motivators for young players.

### Encourage after mistakes

Coaches of youngsters should never see the kids' errors or mistakes as negatives. Everything that happens is a learning experience. Young players can learn just as much from a miskick or loss of possession as from a successful shot at goal.

### Display excellent social skills

Your behaviour is usually imitated by children, so make sure you are a good role model. Be polite, respectful and calm under pressure. Communicate with each player individually, and talk regularly to their parents.

### Be patient

Training with younger age groups can be frustrating at times, so remember that patience is a virtue. Don't have unrealistic expectations – expect things to go wrong. Usually, it's not their intent to stop things working, it's just their age!



*Good planning and organisation skills prevent many frustrations occurring.*

## ORGANISATION SKILLS

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### Plan practice sessions in advance

Write a plan before each session. Players do not get the most out of training if the coach makes it up on the spot. Even the most experienced coach will plan and prepare meticulously for training sessions.



### Arrive early and set up your area

A player's time and effort are priceless resources. Don't waste them! You should never leave kids standing around or filling in time while you move cones to set up the next practice area.

### Give clear instructions

The experienced coach will wait until everyone is listening before giving instructions. Then, you should speak in a loud, clear voice accompanied by distinct hand/arm signals. You might say, for instance: 'Those of you in red bibs, stand up. When I give you the signal, move into that square there'.

### Demonstrate quickly and efficiently

Remember that a good demonstration saves a lot of talking. You don't need to be a great player to do this – showing the general idea, even in slow motion, is usually enough. For example, you might say: 'You run towards this cone, dribble your ball around it, then run back'. There is also nothing wrong with using one or more players from your group to show the others what they need to do. Try to limit the time spent explaining to about a minute. The objective is to get them active as soon as possible.

### Keep the session flowing

Young children have short attention spans. Keep them interested by regularly changing the activity, and build this factor into your session plan.

### Vary the type of activity

Changing the environment keeps children motivated. Mix and match the activities described in this book during your session.

### Give everyone a fair go!

When it's game time at the weekend, make sure everyone gets equal playing time – it's not about winning, it's about enjoyment.

Research<sup>1</sup> shows that children drop out of organised sport when:

- there is an over-emphasis on winning
- they don't get enough playing time
- they don't have enough fun
- the coach directs them too much



<sup>1</sup>Junior Sport Briefing Papers, Australian Sports Commission, 2005.

# MANAGING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

Organising groups of young players and getting them to follow instructions can be challenging. However, many potential problems can be avoided by using the personal and organisation skills outlined earlier.

Remember:

- If you're enthusiastic, the players probably will be.
- If the session is planned and set up in advance, there is less chance of the kids getting distracted.
- If you are patient and keep smiling when things aren't quite working for you, you'll never lose their respect.
- Try not to overreact when kids don't immediately do as you ask. They are not deliberately trying to spoil your session – they are just being kids!

## Praise is best

Keep praising kids for good performance and good effort. Give more attention to those who are quietly persevering, as opposed to attention-seeking.

## More activity, less misbehaviour

If the session is well-planned, well-organised and enjoyable, the kids will be too busy *participating* to misbehave. When problems arise, first ask yourself if this is your fault. The cause of the unrest may be you – have you been running this activity for too long? Is it too hard for the players? Have you been talking too much?

Here are some tips for dealing with misbehaviour:

- Stay calm and in control.
- Use comments like 'Melissa, that's not what we're meant to be doing, is it?'
- Avoid personal jibes such as 'You are a silly girl'. Don't abuse the child, but draw attention to the behaviour; 'That's a silly thing to do'.
- It is not a good idea to punish everyone for the misbehaviour of one child.
- Avoid using physical activity, like running around the field or push-ups, as a punishment. Exercise should be seen as fun, not a chore.
- Sometimes, simply standing nearer to the child and looking at them is enough.
- Find something to praise or encourage, or ask how things are going.
- Before acting on it, try to find out if there is another reason why the child is not following instructions. For instance, maybe they can't do the exercise, they are injured or upset about something, or they didn't understand the instructions.

If further action is required, try the following:

- In a calm manner, ask the child 'Do you think you should be doing that?', or 'What should you be doing instead?'
- Without losing your cool, ask the child to change what they have been doing and to follow the group instructions.

If you're still having problems, try a 'time out', which is a simple way of dealing with a child who has refused to behave appropriately. Keep the 'time out' brief, but long enough to have an effect, and make sure the 'time out' zone is not too far away so you can keep an eye on the child. When the child tells you that they are prepared to follow group instructions, they may return to the group.



*When removing a child from the group, do not physically grab or drag them to the 'time out' zone.*

Avoid long lectures, and use firm but calm words. Do not hold a grudge against them – they are just children.



## WHAT ARE THE SECRETS TO TRAINING KIDS SUCCESSFULLY?

### Plan the session

Be clear about how you will organise the session. Think about what areas to mark out and which activities will be used. Avoid over-planning – simple sessions are usually the most successful. Some activities will need to be repeated for a few sessions – continuity helps children understand the activities better, instead of constantly having to learn new ones.

### Set up early

Arrive before the players and have the session all set up. Remember to do a safety check as well.

### Get things happening quickly

Give clear and brief instructions. Use a demonstration whenever possible, making sure the players are looking and listening. Stand where there are no distractions behind you, and so that the sun is not in their eyes. Make sure you have been understood – ask if there are any questions after giving instructions.

### Be more of an 'organiser' than a 'coach'

Let them play! Don't stop them playing so you can talk to them. Remember, if you follow the guidelines from this book, the activity will be the coach.

## Enjoy yourself!

Have fun with football – it's a game, not a chore. Have fun with the kids by talking with them and getting to know them.

## Set some guidelines

Let the kids and their parents know what you expect from them in terms of such things as behaviour and punctuality. A parent's information night followed by a social dinner is a great way to deliver these important messages and then answer questions. The children and yourself can make a few rules and talk about what consequences might follow if they are broken, such as a 'time out'.

## Promote fair team-picking

It's better if you call out even and odd numbers to form the two teams rather than letting players pick teams. Being one of the last ones picked can damage a child's self-esteem.

## Put WHY before HOW

If players understand *why* they are doing something, or how it relates to the game, they will be more enthused about learning *how* to do it.

## Use the KISS principle

The 'Keep It Simple, Stupid' principle applies in many walks of life, and teaching football is no exception. Too many coaches mistakenly believe that the more complicated they make things, the more advanced their knowledge is perceived to be. But remember, a more complex practice, particularly with youngsters, is rarely a better one.

## *Simplicity is genius.*

RON GREENWOOD, FORMER NATIONAL COACH OF ENGLAND

# WHAT ABOUT DEFENDING?

At this stage of the players' development, the focus should be on the attacking aspects of the game. There are so many skills and techniques for a child to pick up that spending time on defending (which can easily be taught at a later stage) is a waste of valuable learning time.



# WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS OF A TRAINING SESSION FOR KIDS?

The simplest way of looking at a kids' training session is to consider that it has **a beginning, a middle and an end.**

This book aims to help you take this easy approach to session planning so you can provide enjoyable and meaningful practices for young players. The pages of this book have been colour-coded to assist you in finding appropriate activities for each stage of the session.

**The Beginning:** Relays, Tagging Games

**The Middle:** Fun Football Exercises

**The End:** Small-Sided Games

## SETTING UP YOUR AREA

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Organising the area for a training session can be daunting and time consuming for the novice coach. It doesn't have to be.

Many kids' teams only get a very small area to train on and that can be challenging. It shouldn't be.

Using the guidelines in this book, setting up at the start of a session will be quick and easy, and you should be able to progress through the training with little moving of cones. At worst, you can send the children to get a quick drink while you re-adjust. (It is a good idea to let them have brief drink breaks anyway, especially in hot weather.)

What you don't want to do is to keep the kids waiting in the middle of a training session while you think about where to put the cones for the next exercise.

The practices in this book are focused around the same basic set-up, which you can use every time you train. All you will need to do is make quick, minor adjustments, depending on which exercises you choose.

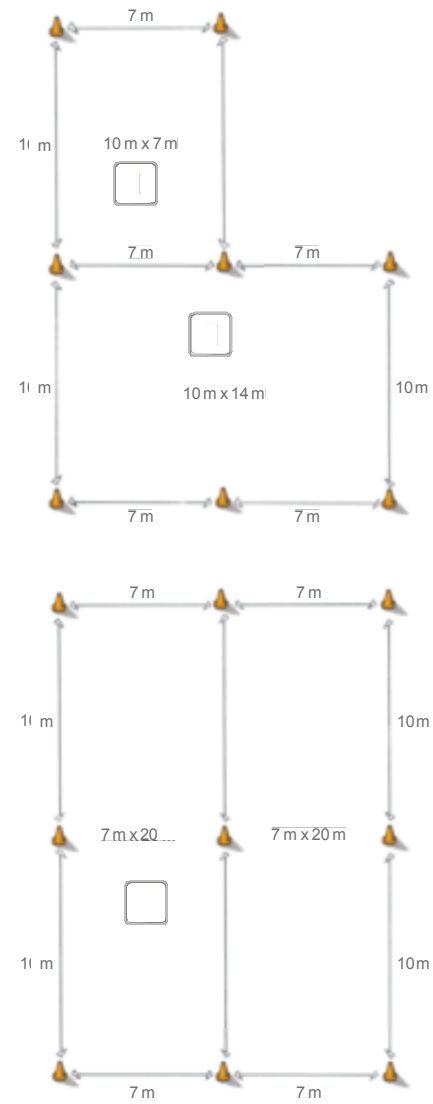
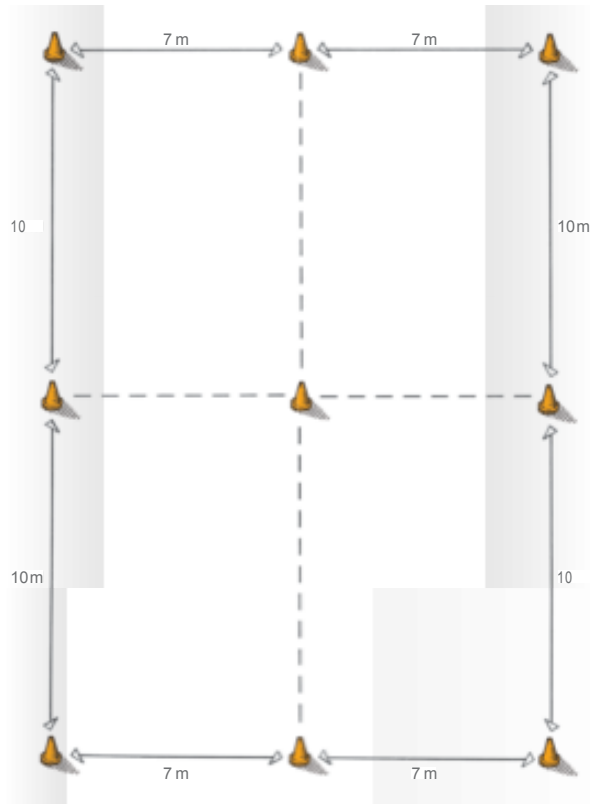
Arriving five minutes before the session begins should give you plenty of preparation time.

The maximum number of cones you will need is twenty. (This assumes your training group consists of the six players registered to play as a team in 4v4 Optus Small-Sided Football at the weekend.)

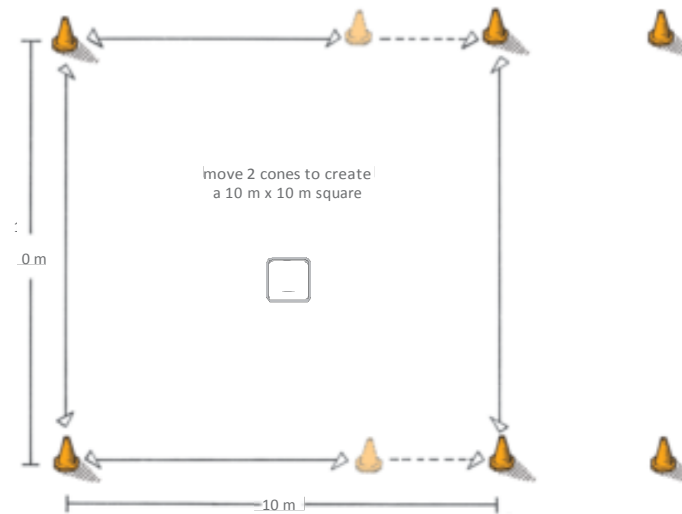
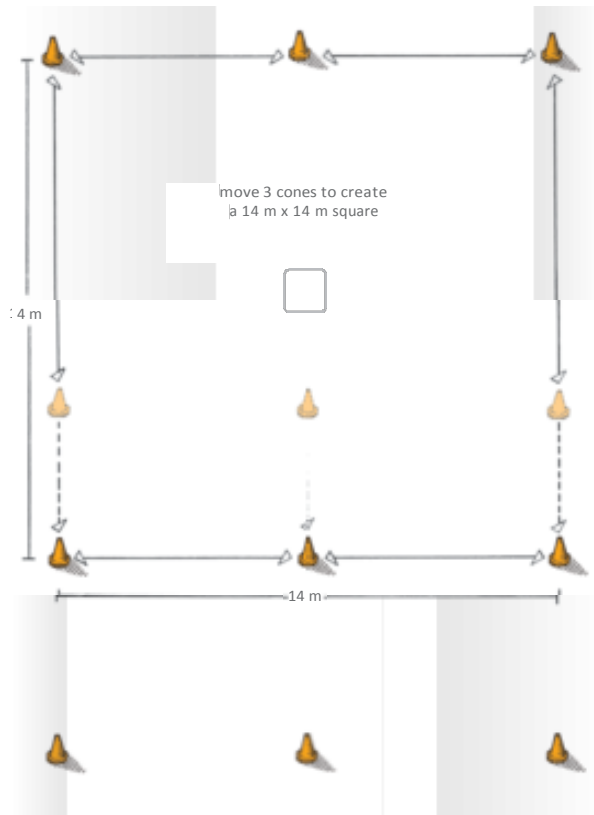
## THE BASIC SET-UP

Place nine cones in rows of three (see diagram below). This automatically creates four  $10\text{ m} \times 7\text{ m}$  areas (see diagram 1), two  $10\text{ m} \times 14\text{ m}$  areas (see diagram 2) and two  $20\text{ m} \times 7\text{ m}$  areas (see diagram 3), which are suitable for a wide range of exercises.

This basic set-up also creates lines and 'corridors' for relays that you can use in the first part of the session.

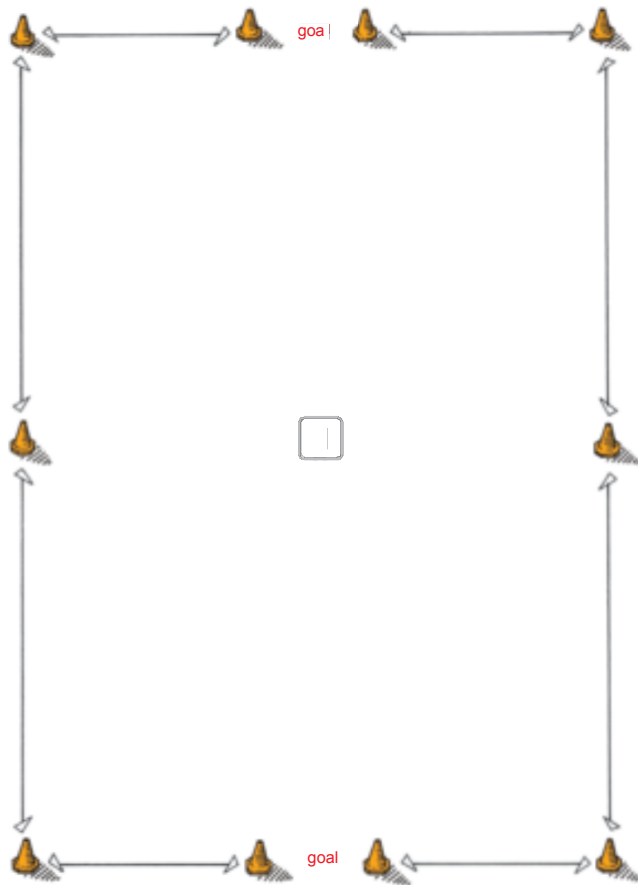


By moving a few cones you can quickly make areas of different dimensions if needed (see diagrams 4 and 5).



It is a good idea to leave the four corner cones. These are the key cones to keep in place for the game at the end of the session.

It is no problem to change the size of an area during a practice if you feel it is too small or too big. All you may have to do is say, 'OK, Koalas, just stop there for one second; you're doing so well, I think we need a bit more room! I'm just going to move this cone over here, and this one over here. OK, off you go again'.



By removing the middle of these nine cones, your field for the game at the end of the session is already marked (see diagram 6).

You may find that a slightly different-sized basic set-up is better for your players, but the same simple concept should apply.





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## WARMING UP

Young players in the 5–7 age group are always active, remarkably resilient and rarely suffer soft tissue injuries. They do not need the professional warm-up that senior athletes might perform.

The biggest mistake seen at grassroots level is well-meaning coaches sending young kids to run laps and taking them through static stretching routines. Not only are these unnecessary, they have two major flaws:

- The kids are not having fun!
- The kids are not playing football!

Youngsters do not enjoy running around the field, and they find stretching boring. They have come to *play*!

There is no evidence that static stretching before exercise prevents injury with players of any age group. In fact, some studies suggest the opposite!

Remember, they are kids, not mini-adults. Make it fun from the very start!

Use the activities in the green pages right from the beginning of your training session. Not only will the kids enjoy it more, but you will also be contributing to the long-term improvement of football in Australia.

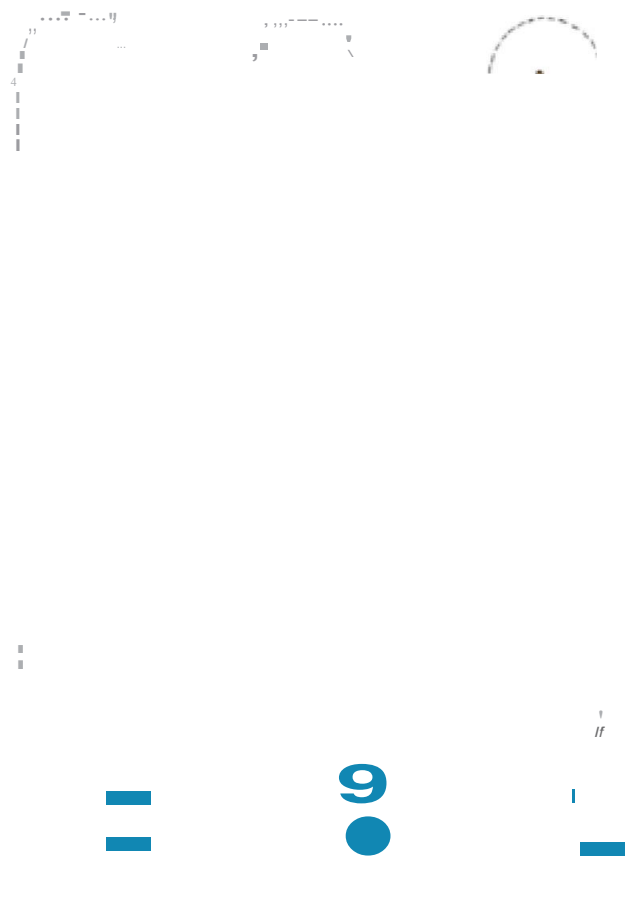
Don't waste precious football training time.

## RELAYS

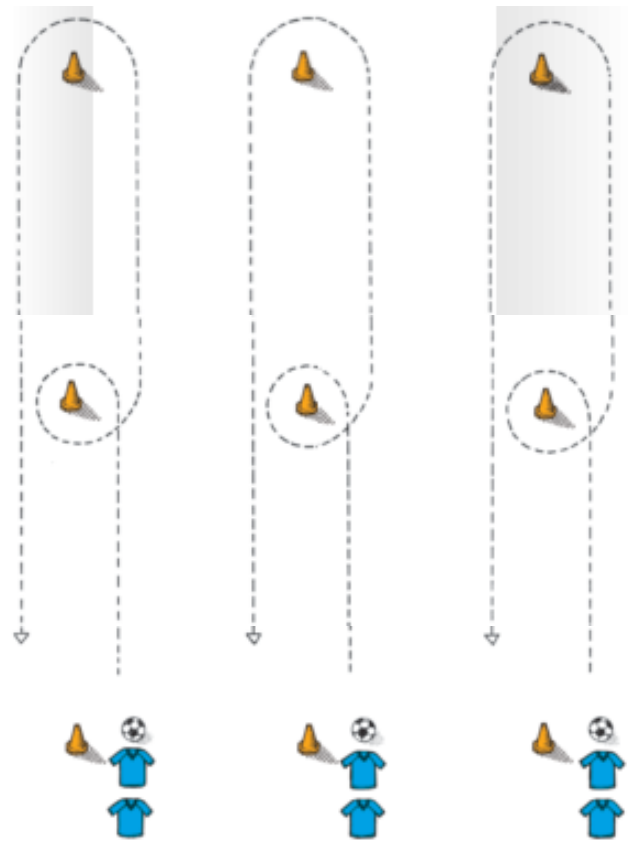
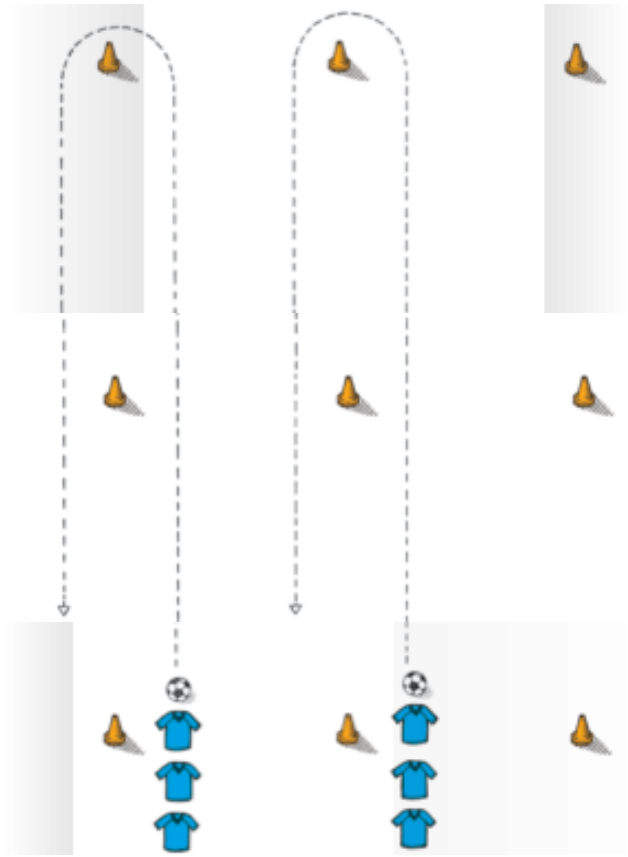
### GUIDELINES FOR RELAYS

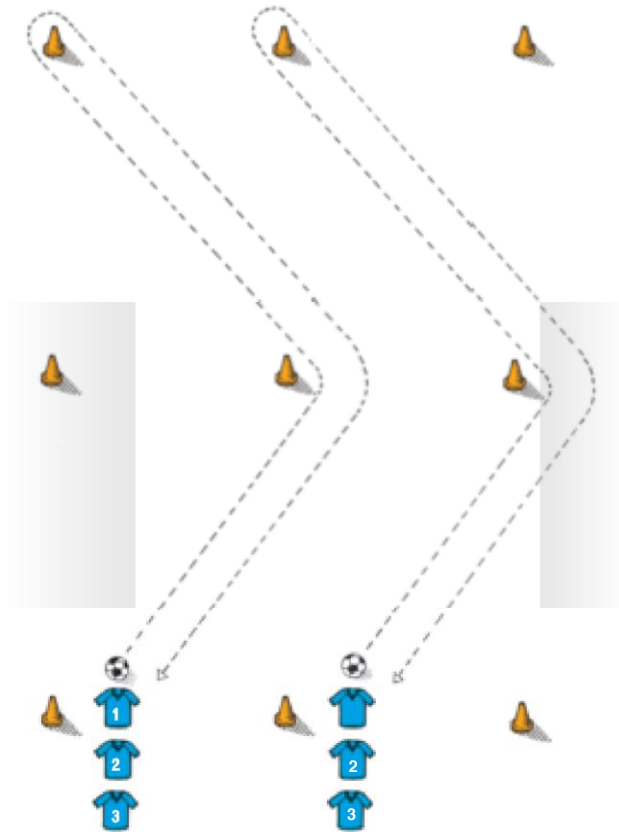
- Avoid long queues.
- Keep players as active as possible (don't keep them waiting in line for too long).
- Give the group a quick break for a drink when necessary.
- All relays in this book can be performed with and without the ball (the preference is to always use the ball, but it is fine to take the ball out of the relays early in the session).
- The more skill your players acquire, the more the ball should be used and the greater the challenges can be.
- If there are more than six players, make another lane of cones and keep it to two players in a line (this avoids long queues).





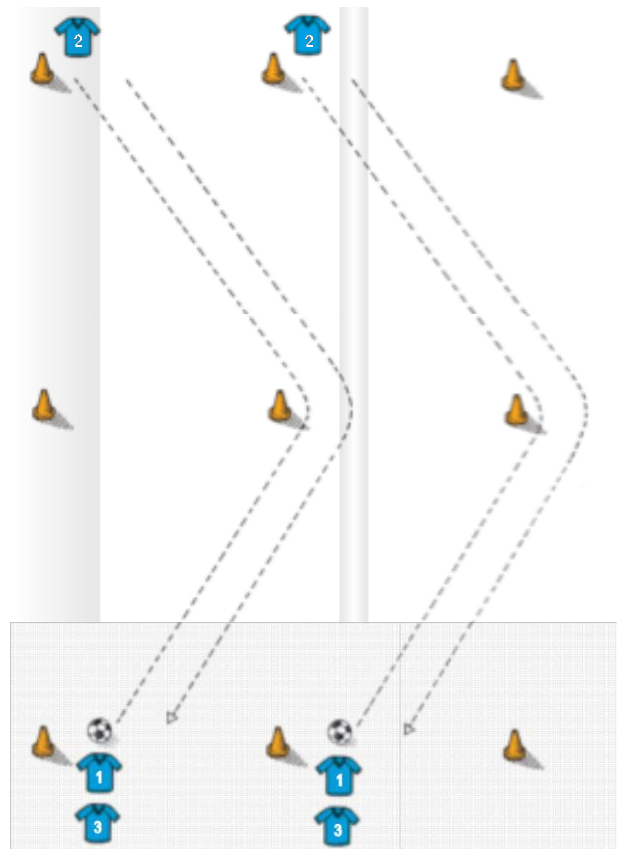
If necessary, provide a longer rest between turns by creating two teams of three (see diagram below).





For the relay shown below, number 1 goes to far line, touches 2's outstretched hand to allow 2 to start running. Number 2 goes back to the start line and touches 3's hand; 3 goes to the far end.

Repeat until everyone is back where they started (equals two turns each).



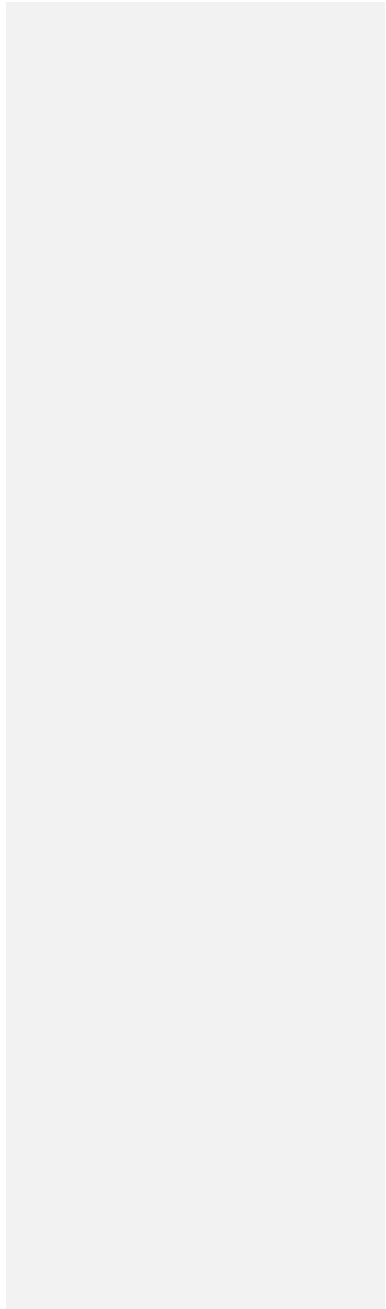
For the relay shown below, players dribble their ball round the far cone and go through the gate on the way back.

Twelve cones are required. If you don't have enough cones, use bibs or jackets instead.



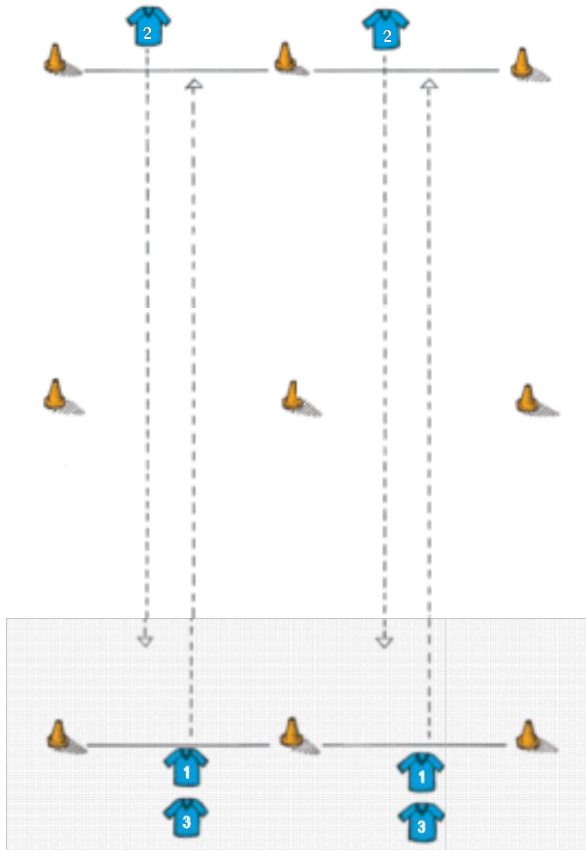
For the relay shown below, players dribble their ball through the gate, around the far cone and on the way back through the gate again.

Twelve cones are required. If you don't have enough cones, use bibs or jackets instead.



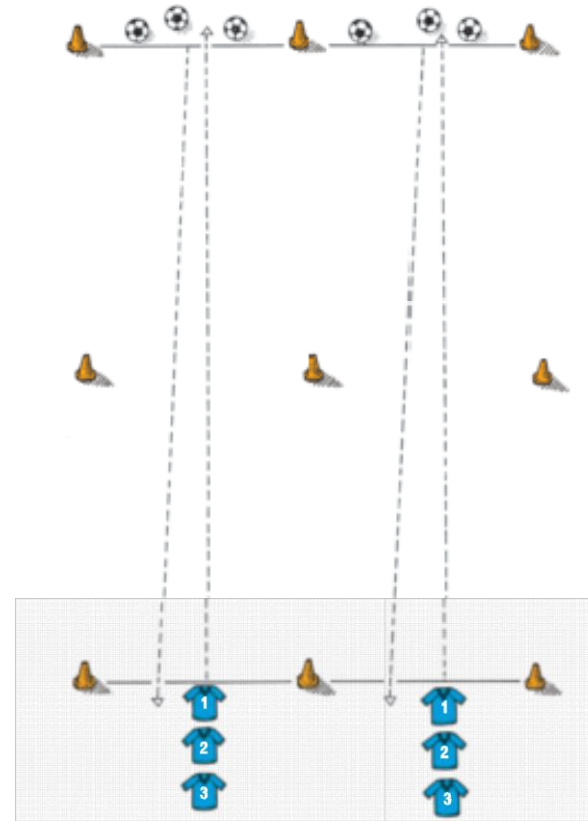
For the relay shown below, number 1 goes to the far line, touches 2's outstretched hand to allow 2 to start running. Number 2 goes back to the start line and touches 3's hand; 3 goes to the far end.

Repeat until everyone is back where they started (equals two turns each).



For the relay shown below, each player's ball is put behind the far line.

Number 1 runs beyond the far line, gets the ball (using their feet only) and dribbles the ball back. Number 2 can start running as 1 crosses the start line. Number 2 runs beyond the far line, gets the ball, and so on. Repeat until everyone has had a turn. The winning group is the first one back in line with their ball under their foot.





## TAGGING GAMES

Games that involve chasing and dodging are great exercises for players young and old, because they:

- are fun
- are motivating
- are competitive
- get players warm
- involve changes of speed
- involve changes of direction
- develop the key skill of 'faking' (i.e. making someone think you're going to move in one direction, then accelerating in the opposite direction), which complements the development of 1v1 skills
- help develop vision and decision making



## STICK-IN-THE-MUD

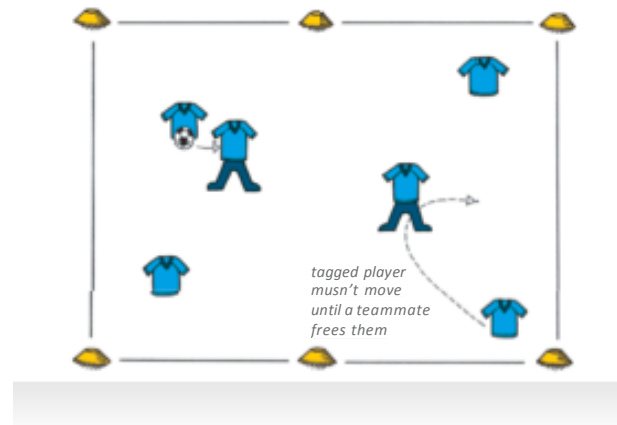
Mark out a 10 m × 14 m area (move 3 cones as outlined on page 20). Five players try to avoid one player who carries a ball in their hands.

The ball-carrier attempts to tag the runners by touching them with the ball (make sure the ball is not thrown and that players aim for the trunk). If a player is tagged, they 'stick in the mud' with their legs wide apart until a teammate frees them by crawling through their legs.

Each ball-carrier has 30 seconds to tag as many players as possible. After 30 seconds, change the ball-carrier.

### Progression:

- ball-carrier dribbles the ball around the field and tags the players with their hand, while keeping the ball close to them (if this progression proves difficult for them, make the field smaller)



## ME AND MY SHADOW

Players get into pairs and one is designated as 'leader' and the other as 'follower'.

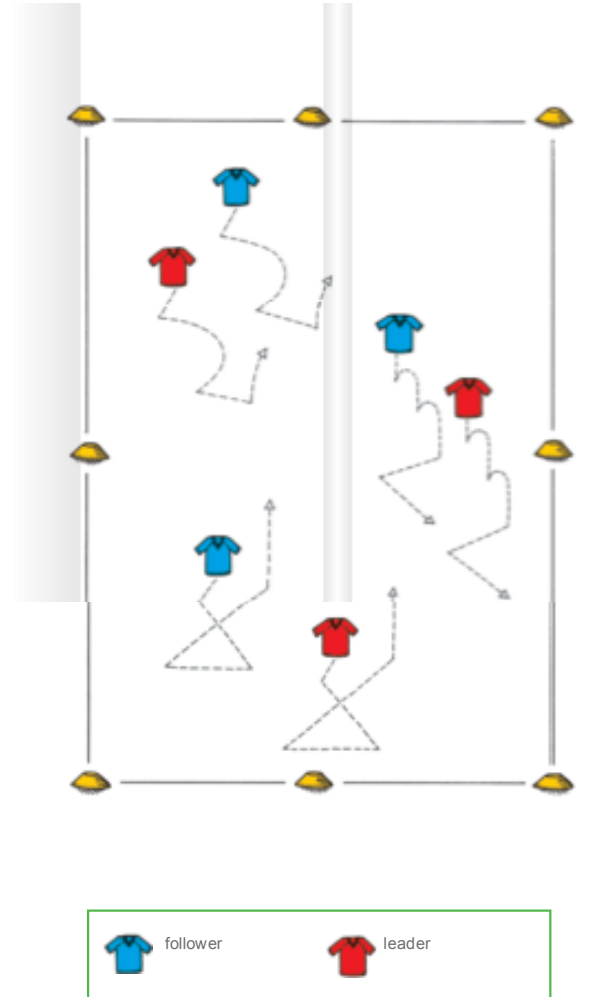
The 'leader' moves around the field, changing speed and direction frequently, and perhaps adding a variation here and there, such as a jump or a ground touch.

The 'follower' then copies everything the 'leader' does.

Change partners regularly.

### Progression:

- 'follower' has a ball (this is a difficult progression so instruct 'leader' to jog at medium speed around the area, with occasional random changes of direction)



## DOUBLE TROUBLE

Two players without a ball link hands and move around the area trying to kick other players' balls out.

The other players dribble their balls around the area, trying to avoid having their ball kicked out.

There are two options for this game:

- Change the chasing pair when everyone is out (when a player's ball is kicked out, they fetch it then remain outside until that game is over).
- Change the chasing pair after a set time period by setting the challenge: 'How many balls can you kick out in 30 seconds?' (When a player's ball is kicked out, they fetch it and come back into the area as soon as possible, continuing to dribble and to avoid losing their ball.)



## DRIBBLERS AND COLLECTORS

Two players without a ball link hands and move around the area trying to kick other players' balls out. They are the 'collectors'.

When a player's ball is kicked out, they immediately join the 'collectors', so that there are now three players with hands linked chasing the others (then four and five) until everyone is out. Then two new 'collectors' start chasing.

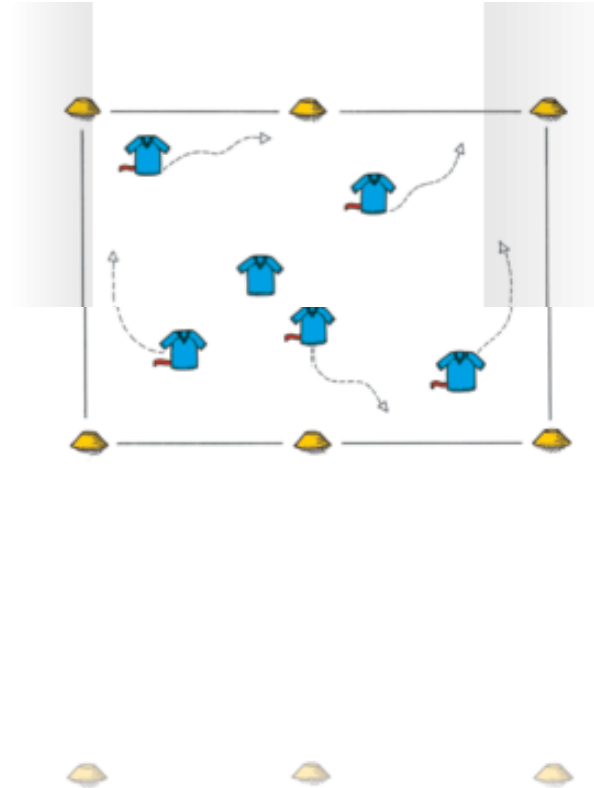


## CATCH THE TAILS

One or more players are 'hunters'. They chase the other players and try to remove their 'tails'. If a player's 'tail' is taken, they become a 'hunter'. (Bibs tucked into shorts can function as 'tails'.)

### Progression:

- the 'hunter' dribbles their ball while trying to remove the 'tails'
- players with 'tails' dribble their balls while trying to avoid the 'hunter'

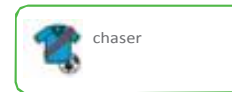
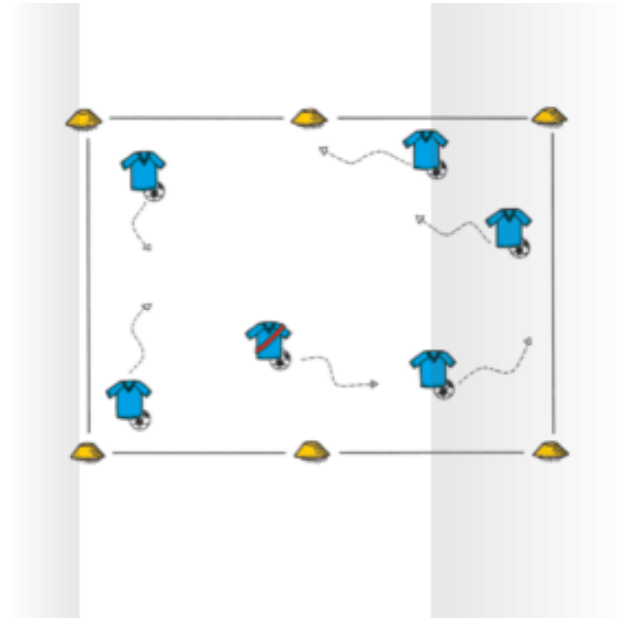


## DRIBBLE TAG

In an area about 10 m × 14 m (half of your basic set-up), players dribble their balls around.

A 'chaser' is nominated and they try to tag the other players while keeping control of their own ball. The other players avoid him or her while keeping control of their balls.

If tagged, the player must call out their own name loudly so everyone knows who the new 'chaser' is.





# THE MIDDLE

## FUN FOOTBALL EXERCISES

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## FUN FOOTBALL EXERCISES

The middle part of a training session for kids should be made up of fun exercises that are related to the game of football.

Remember that football is a very complex game and it must be simplified for younger players.

Your role is to introduce young players to football in its fundamental form and not to fast-track them into understanding adult, 11v11 concepts.

By using the content of this book, you will best serve the needs of the players in your care and provide the correct foundation for their future development.

*Children are not small adults. At the earliest stage, a child's interest in the game called football must be gradually developed. Then, the essential rules concerning the playing fields, the ball, the duration of the game, the number of players, must be adapted according to the individual age group.*

STATEMENT FROM FIFA, THE WORLD GOVERNING BODY FOR FOOTBALL

*Nature decrees that children should be children before they become adults. If we try to alter this natural order, we will reach adulthood prematurely but with neither substance nor strength.*

JEAN J. ROUSSEAU

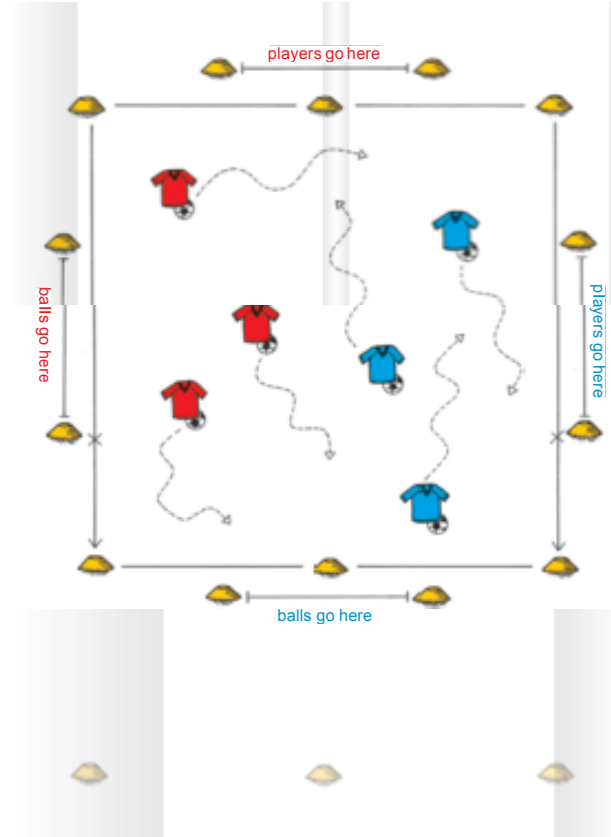


## EMPTY IT! FILL IT!

Mark out a 14 m × 14 m square.

Players in two teams dribble balls around the square. Outside the square, each team has two lines marked: one for their balls and one for themselves. On the call 'empty it!' the teams compete to be the first to empty the square.

On the call 'fill it!' the teams compete to be the first to get all their balls and themselves back in the square.



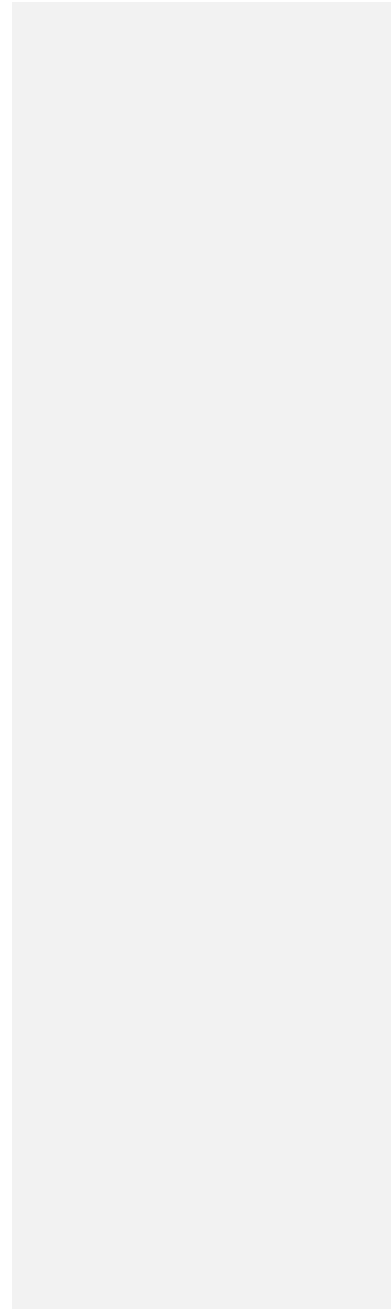
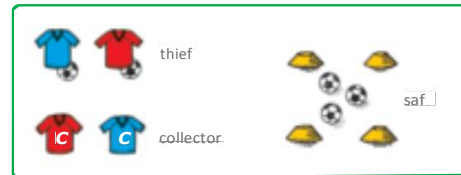
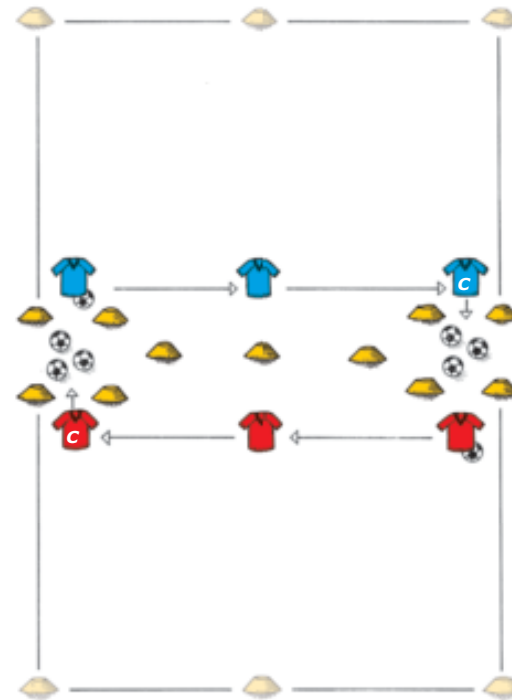
## ROBIN HOOD

Two teams of three split up as shown in the diagram opposite. Each team starts with an equal number of balls in their 'safe'. When the game begins, each team can start stealing balls from their opponent's 'safe' – there is one 'thief' who takes a ball and passes it across the first 'moat' to their teammate; they then pass it across the second 'moat', to their team's 'collector', who puts it in the team's 'safe'.

Meanwhile, their opponents are doing the same with their balls! After a set time period (e.g. two minutes), see which team has the most balls in their 'safe'. The team that passes and controls the balls best will have the most balls in their 'safe' and will therefore be the winners.




*You can't use your hands - feet only!*

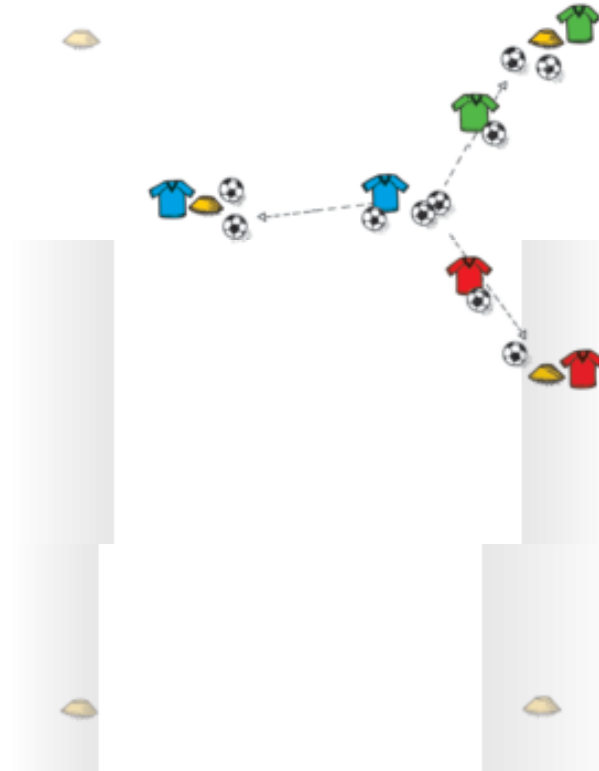


## FEATHER THE NEST

Mark out a triangle with sides 10–12 m long. Three teams of two players are positioned at each corner with a cluster of balls in the middle of the triangle. The object of the game is to gather as many balls as possible for the corner or 'nest' within a set time period.

One player from each team runs to the middle of the triangle to get a ball and dribbles it to their corner, or nest, and leaves it there. Their teammate then does the same. When all the balls in the middle of the triangle are gone, players can take them from someone else's nest.

 **Players are NOT allowed to stop others from taking balls from their nest - no blocking, defending, tackling, etc. No hands! Feet only.**



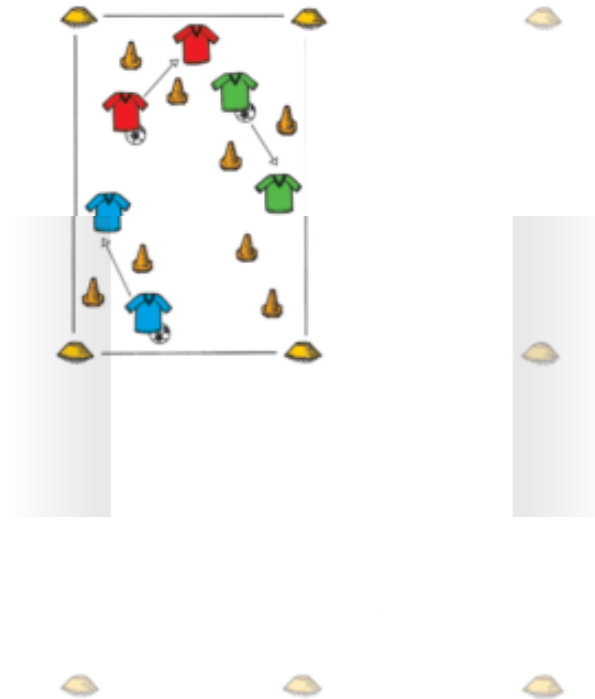
## PAIRS THROUGH THE GATES

Mark out an area about 7 m × 10 m and set up four small gates – two cones about two metres apart.

The players run around the area in pairs with a ball between them and pass it through the gates to each other until they have performed a successful pass through each gate.

The winning pair is the first to pass through every gate and wait outside the area.

Before moving to the next activity, have a competition to see which pair (one at a time) can pass through the most gates in 20 seconds.

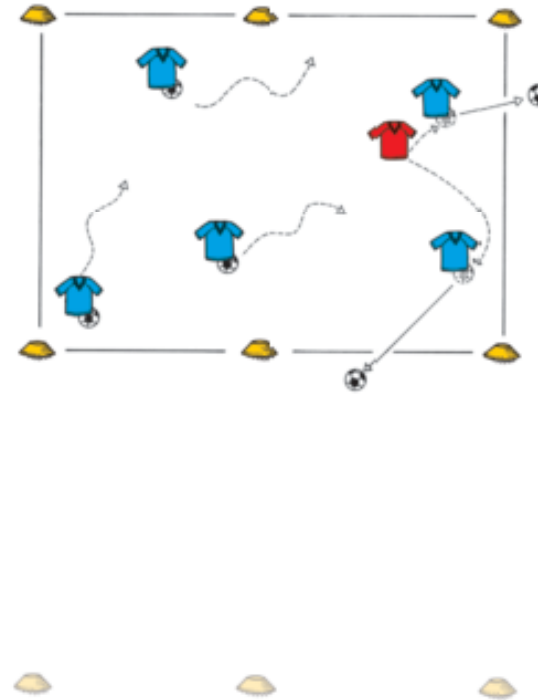


## ROUND'EM UP

Five players dribble their balls inside a 10 m × 14 m area. On your call 'round 'em up!' the sixth player tries to 'round up' all five balls, by kicking them out of the square.

Allow 30 seconds for players to 'round up' as many balls as possible.

Take turns so each player has a go at rounding up the balls.



## 1v1 MINI-GAMES

Make three small areas about 10 m × 7 m.

Players play 1v1 on each mini-field and score by dribbling the ball over the opponents' line.

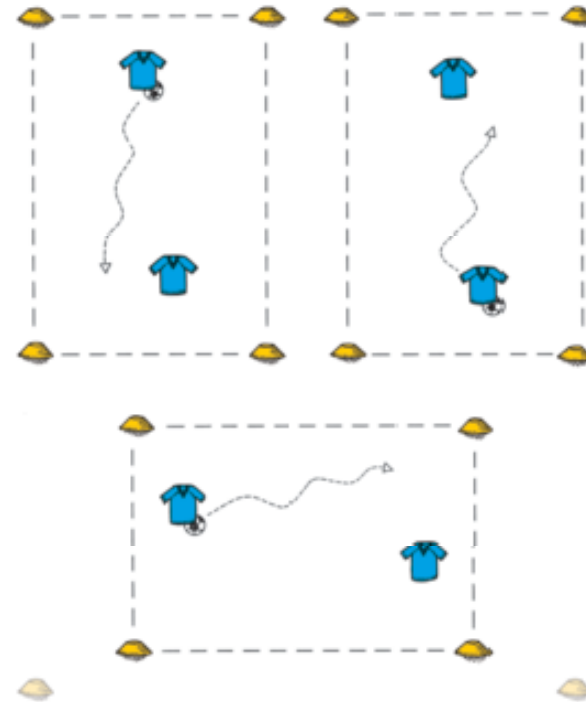
Think of safety when setting up; avoid scenarios where players could dribble into each other by allowing buffer zones.

Keep rotating so opponents are changed regularly. Rotation also allows a period of rest, so control how long rotation takes depending on how fatigued the players seem. You could also give some brief hints to the whole group in order to give them a rest.

If enough cones are available, progress to a small goal on each end-line for players to score in.



*You will also need a good supply of spare balls, as they tend to go everywhere when shooting is introduced.*



## COLOUR CODE

This activity should be arranged in half of the basic set-up area and requires cones of at least two different colours (the more colours the better!). The cones are arranged randomly.

Players dribble their balls round the outside perimeter of the area.

Call out a colour and the kids must dribble into the square, around the cone of that colour, and back outside the square. The winner is the first one back outside with their foot on their ball.

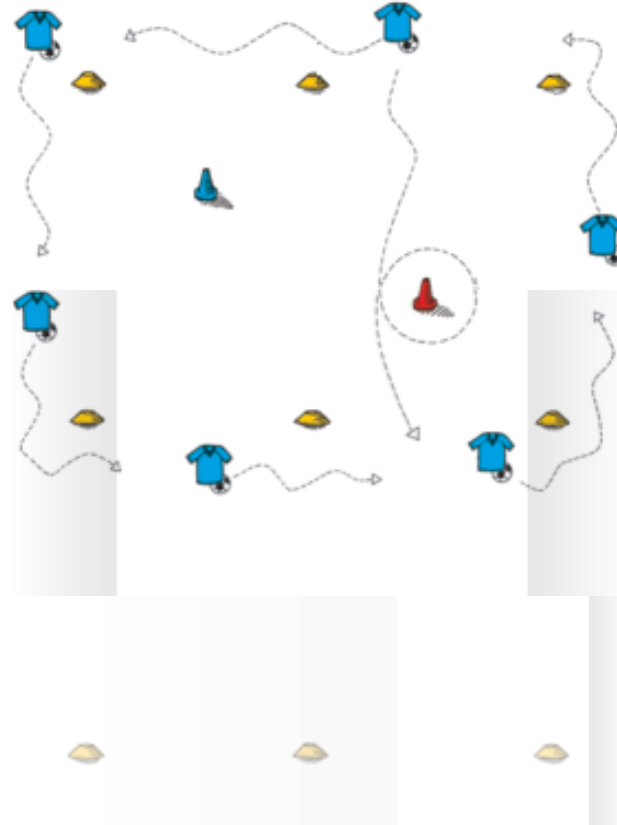
Remind players to keep their heads up and watch out for possible collisions.

Variations with two cones of each colour:

- round the *nearest* cone of the colour called out
- round *both* cones of that colour
- call two colours, players dribble round one of each



*There are more possible variations, limited only by the number and colour of your cones, and your imagination!*



## PASS AND MOVE

This activity requires two players with a ball and four players without.

The players with the balls start by dribbling. When they see another player ready to receive the ball, they pass to them, then move to another part of the area. When a player receives the ball, they dribble until they can see another player who is ready to receive the ball. They then pass the ball to that player and move. Players are constantly moving, either looking to receive one of the two balls, or looking to pass to one of the players without a ball.

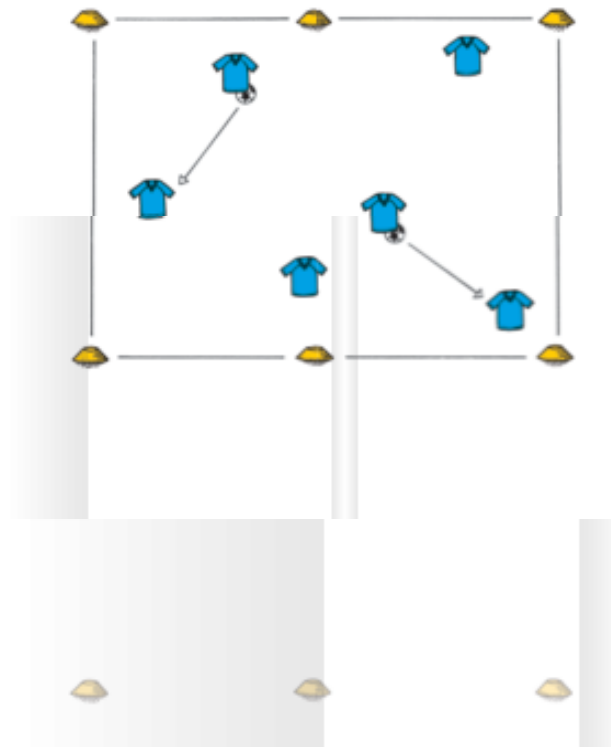
### Progression:

- three players with a ball and three without

This activity helps develop vision and communication and introduces the concept of passing the ball to a teammate, which is often difficult to grasp for a naturally self-centred under-seven!



*Passing will begin to be more evident from under-eights upwards.*



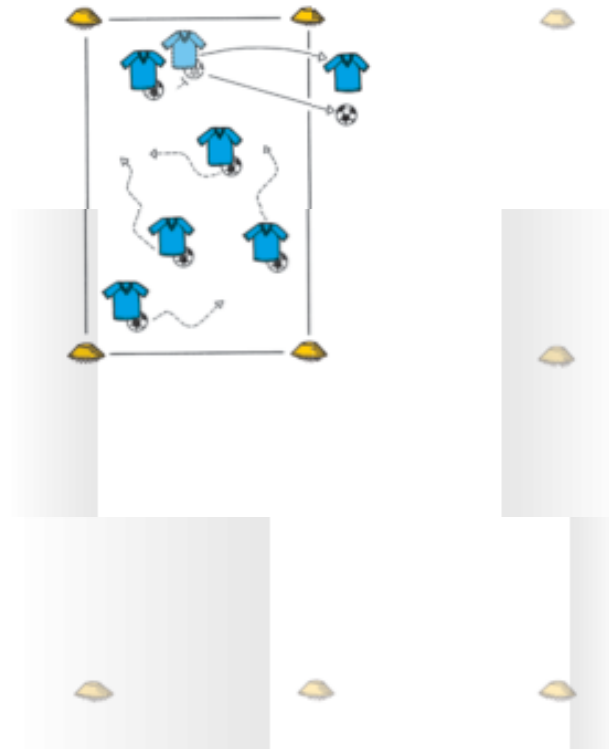


## BEEHIVE

Six players with a ball each dribble around an area about 7 m × 10 m (one quarter of your basic set-up).

They attempt to kick the other players' balls out of the area while keeping their own ball under control. The players must be careful – while they are kicking someone's ball out, someone else might kick theirs out!

If their ball is kicked out, the player must leave the area immediately without kicking any other balls out. The player can fetch their own ball and wait until there is a winner and the game starts again.



## SIMON SAYS

Players dribble freely around the area with a ball each. Give the kids various tasks and challenges, which they must do **ONLY** if you say 'Simon says' at the start of the sentence. Therefore, sometimes you use 'Simon says' and sometimes you don't – see who's listening!

The players must avoid touching anyone else's ball, and must not let anyone else touch their own ball.

Possible tasks:

- STOP! (Means stop dead with your foot on your ball.)
- TURN! (Quickly go the other way with your ball.)
- OUT! (Run outside the square and put your foot on your ball.)
- CHANGE! (Leave your ball and find another one to dribble; who is the last one dribbling a new ball?)
- LEFT! (Dribble around the area touching the ball only with your left foot.)
- RIGHT! (Dribble around the area touching the ball only with your right foot.)
- Use your imagination!

Take points off the last player to do what 'Simon says' and give points to the player who does it first.

Take points off anyone who does something when you don't say 'Simon says' or give points to those who don't.



*Use instructions like 'Simon says sit **next** to your ball' or 'Simon says get a **drink** from your bag', to give the players a rest when **needed**.*





# THE END

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## SMALL-SIDED GAMES

Always finish your training with a game.

The children must experience the feeling of playing a game every time they come to the field. They need to develop a sense of what the game is about.

They will gradually learn concepts like 'my team against their team', 'I score in that goal and try to stop them scoring in our goal'.

This is part of the long-term development process that culminates with the full 11v11 game.

Some game guidelines:

- no goalkeeper
- even teams
- if uneven numbers, give one team an extra player, and regularly change which team gets the extra one (**do not** put one player on the sideline to make teams even)
- change team members regularly to keep it interesting
- LET THEM PLAY!
- praise and encourage but don't stop them to 'coach'
- give some brief explanation of the rules they will encounter at the weekend in Optus Small-Sided Football

Allow plenty of time for the game – try not to get too engrossed in training the players. The game is the most effective coach there will ever be.

If in doubt, give them longer for the game time, not less.

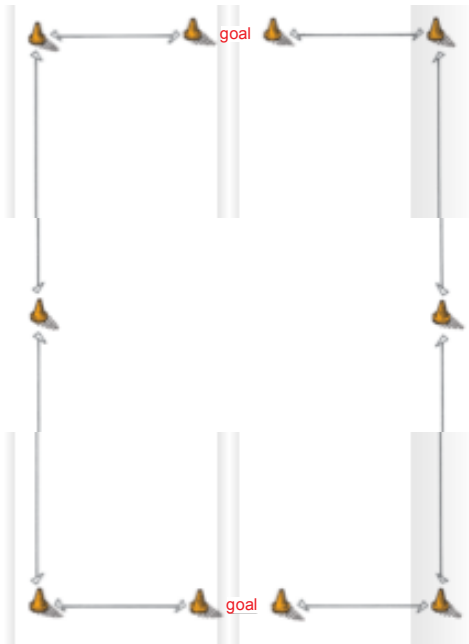
# GAME SET-UPS AND VARIATIONS

## 3v3 TRAINING GAME

**Length:** 20–25 m

**Width:** 14–18 m

**Goal:** 2–3 m



## LINE FOOTBALL

**Length:** 20–25 m

**Width:** 15–18 m

**Goal:** none

- Usual rules, but method of scoring is to dribble the ball across the opponents' end line.
- This game encourages dribbling and 1v1 skills.



4-

**OAL FOOTBALL**

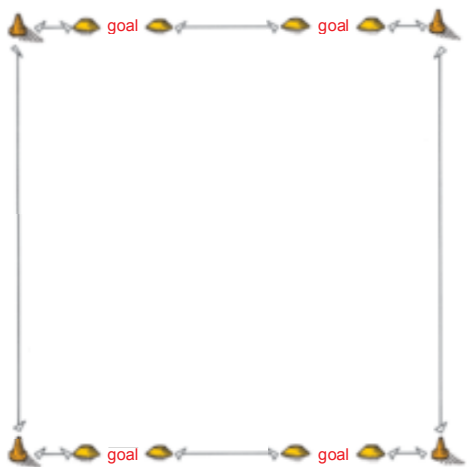
G

**Length:** 20 m

**Width:** 20 m

**Goal:** 2 goals (4 m wide) on each end-line

- There are no goalkeepers.
- This game encourages shooting and scoring.



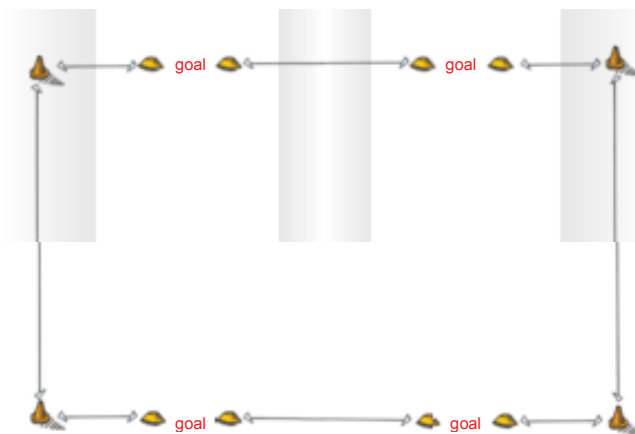
**SHORT AND WIDE**

**Length:** 15 m

**Width:** 25 m

**Goal:** 2 goals (2 m wide) on each end-line

- This game develops awareness of space.



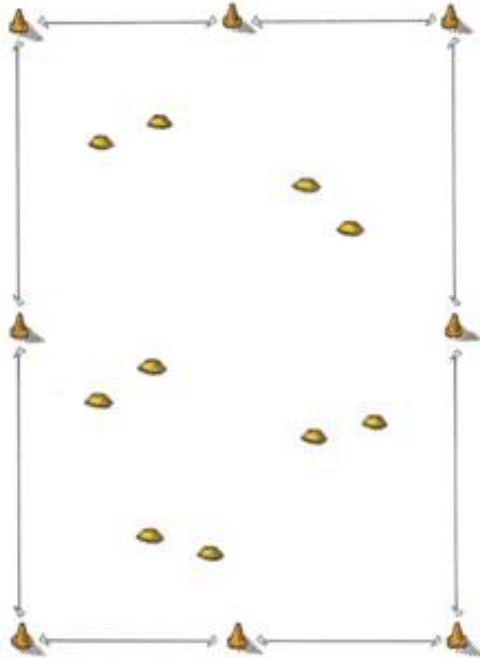
## PASSTO SCORE

**Length:** 15–20 m

**Width:** 15 m

**Goal:** none (make 4 or 5 gates of 1–2 m width inside the area)

- To score a goal, pass the ball through any of the gates to a teammate.
- This game encourages passing.



## MAKING COMPETITION INTERESTING

Here are different ways of keeping the score:

- number of goals scored (traditional A versus B scenario)
- number of goals scored in a set time period (allows a number of games to be played within the same set-up, giving both teams several opportunities to be the winner. The coach can maintain interest: 'That's three points to the red team, now we'll play for three minutes and this game is worth five points', etc.)
- scoreboard (Use physical items such as cones or bibs, which are collected or moved to a certain place every time a goal is scored, so players can 'see' what the score is. If you have the larger traffic cones, they can be knocked down or stood up to record a goal. 'The reds have five cones standing there, the blues have five there; when you score, go and knock one of your team's cones down; let's see which team knocks all their cones down first'.)

## WRAPPING IT UP

At the end of the session, praise the whole group, giving the players feedback and encouragement.

You can also give a quick evaluation of the session by saying, 'Remember how we tried to control the ball when it came to us...'

### HOMEWORK

Youngsters should be encouraged to play with their ball at home.

You can give them little tasks, like 'drop it, kick it up, catch it'.

Show them how to do this at the end of training and get them to have a few attempts. Mention that they can show you how many they can do next time you train together.

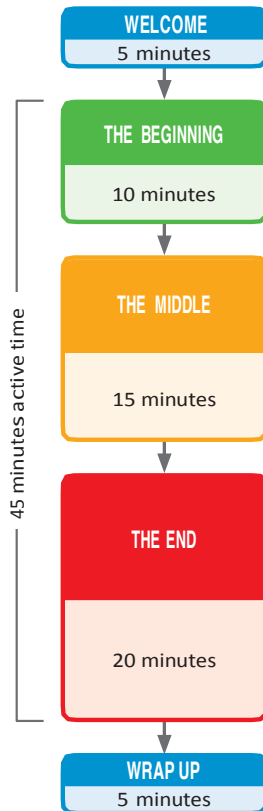
Get parents involved, as they can remind the kids to practise.

Other suggestions:

- kick ball repeatedly against a wall (great practice!)
- kick ball at a target – how many successes in ten attempts? (later, increase the distance)
- buy 'ball-on-a-string' training aid to practise kicking and ball feeling without having to continually fetch the ball



## SUGGESTED SESSION TIMELINE



If you feel your players are up to it, training can be increased to 60 minutes active time, but make sure it's because THEY want to train longer, not YOU!

## OPTUS SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL

Your team will be involved in small-sided football at the weekend. But what is it all about?

Why small-sided games?

*Expecting a child to comprehend and respond to the complex situations in the full 11v11 game format will only beget frustration and feelings of failure. Learning to understand the complex game of football can be best achieved through the practice of a logical progression of simplified games, with a gradual increase in the number of players on the teams.*

HORSTWEIN (WORLD-RENOWNED MENTOR OF FOOTBALL COACHES),  
'DEVELOPING YOUTH FOOTBALL PLAYERS'

*The children are more important than the activities in which they are engaged. The game is not the thing, the child is.*

UK DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, 'PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR AGES 5-16'

*'Moving step by step, you may travel great distances'*

ANONYMOUS

Optus Small-Sided Football is based on the following criteria:

- more fun and individual enjoyment due to smaller fields and simplified rules
- more playing time, which maximises individual participation and involvement

- far more repeated touches of the ball by all players on the field
- more shots at goal
- more involvement leads to greater improvement in fitness
- 11-a-side football is in essence an adult game devised by and for adults to play

While the recommendation for implementing Optus Small-Sided Football in the context of the Talent Development and Identification Program has as an underlying motivation – the development of players with better technical skills – there are certainly many other associated benefits that will be realised as a direct result of their inception, as follows.

First and foremost, Optus Small-Sided Football is aimed at young people of all abilities, not simply the more talented players in each age group.

With the emphasis on participation and enjoyment, and an associated removal of the current emphasis on the importance of winning, children are much more likely to enjoy their football playing experience, will be keen to play more often and are less likely to drop out of the game.

Parents who are new to the game are likely to be more comfortable playing the role of ‘game leader’ or ‘supervisor’ of teams playing Optus Small-Sided Football. Given that children playing at this age do not need to be ‘coached’, and by extension, these adults don’t need to have a great understanding of the game to be able to carry out this role effectively, finding parents to volunteer for these roles should become significantly easier.

Optus Small-Sided Football also makes more efficient use of facilities, given there can be multiple games on one standard-size field. Importantly, a significant amount of research has been conducted in countries where small-sided football is prevalent (including Australia), which overwhelmingly highlights benefits such as more touches and greater participation, as well as more enjoyment for the children.

Optus Small-Sided Football is a modified form of 11-a-side football, designed to meet the needs of players under the age of thirteen, who have very different developmental characteristics and needs from adult players. The philosophy of Optus Small-Sided Football is a focus on enjoyment and freedom of expression with limited emphasis on coaching per se, particularly in the formative years of a player’s development.

Almost without exception, young players in the major footballing nations of the world are introduced to the game through small-sided football. Brazil, France, England, Scotland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Germany, Japan, USA and Korea all introduce their young players to the game using this approach. Considerable research has been conducted into the benefits of small-sided football in many of these countries. Overwhelmingly, the findings have shown that small-sided football is enjoyed more by children and is a more effective method of improving their technical ability as footballers (compared to 11-a-side football).

While there are exceptions, in most parts of Australia Rooball has been the widely accepted format of the game for new players up to the age of eight or nine. The rules and regulations of Rooball vary in terms of field size and goal size, as does the age at which players progress to 11-a-side football. At the age of nine or ten, the general trend is for these players to then move to 11-a-side football on a full-size field, where they compete against other clubs in the local area.

There has also been an inconsistent approach in terms of the philosophy of football at this age, with the emphasis or otherwise on competition, winning, points tables, finals and the like, with variations depending upon the particular state or territory and/or association. Whether players compete and/or play against other clubs or within their own club is generally decided on a local basis.

For more information on small-sided games, go to:  
<http://www.smallsidedfootball.com.au/pdfs/handbook.pdf>

## LAWS OF OPTUS SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL 2010 (UNDER 6S & 7S)

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### The field of play

30 m × 20 m

### Goal size

Minimum 1.50 m wide × 0.90 m high

Maximum 2.00 m wide × 1.00 m high

### Penalty area

No penalty area

### The ball

Size 3

### The number of players

4v4 – no goalkeeper

There is a maximum of two substitutes who may rotate during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

### Goalkeeper

The game leader, coaches and managers should continually discourage children from stationing themselves in front of the goal.

### Duration of the game

2 × 15 minutes (half-time break 5 minutes)

This may be flexible depending on implementation format.

### Method of scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line. When goalposts are not available and cones are used for goals, a goal is scored when the ball passes between the cones without touching them, below shoulder height of the player.

### Start of play and re-start after a goal

Pass forward to a teammate from the middle of the halfway line. All players must be in their own half of the field of play. Opponents must be at least 5 m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

### Ball in and out of play

The ball is out of play when it has wholly crossed the goal line or the touchline on the ground or in the air, or when play has been stopped by the game leader.

### Ball crossing the touchline

There is no throw-in. A player from the opposing team to the player who touched the ball last before crossing the touchline will place the ball on the touchline and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must be at least 5 m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

### Ball crossing the goal line after touching the defending team last

There is no corner kick. Regardless of which team touched the ball last, a player from the team whose goal line the ball has crossed will place the ball anywhere along the goal line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must retreat to the halfway line and can move once the ball is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

### **Ball crossing the goal line after touching the attacking team last**

Regardless of which team touched the ball last, a player from the team whose goal line the ball has crossed will place the ball anywhere along the goal line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must retreat to the halfway line and can move once the ball is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

### **Offside**

No offside

### **Fouls and misconduct**

Indirect free kicks are awarded for all acts of handball or fouls and misconduct with opponents at least 5 m away from the ball. (An indirect free kick is where a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal.)

Most acts of handball or fouls and misconduct at this level are caused by a lack of coordination, with no intent. In this case, try to give the advantage to the attacking team and continue play. If you decide a deliberate or serious act of handball, foul or misconduct has occurred, explain to the child that they have done the wrong thing and that they should not do this again.

## **GAME LEADER RESOURCE 2010**

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The main role of the game leader is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match re-starts. Most importantly, they must make every effort to create an environment which ensures that all players have fun and have maximum involvement. This person can be a club official, parent, older child/player or beginning referee.

## **THE BASIC LAWS AND PLAYING CONDITIONS**

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### **The number of players**

4 players per side

### **Field size**

30 m × 20 m

### **Goalkeepers**

No goalkeepers

### **Start of play and re-start after a goal**

Pass forward to a teammate from the middle of the halfway line. All players must be in their own half of the field of play. Opponents must be at least 5 m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

### **Ball crossing the touchline**

There is no throw-in. A player from the opposing team to the player who touched the ball last before crossing the touchline will place the ball on the touchline and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must be

at least 5 m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

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### Offside

No offside

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Indirect free kicks are awarded for all acts of handball or fouls and misconduct with opponents at least 5 m away from the ball. (An indirect free kick is where a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal.)

The game leader should:

- encourage all children to have fun
- encourage different children to take re-starts
- ensure the correct number of players are on the field
- discourage players from over-guarding the goal
- use a 'Ready, Set, Go' prompt to encourage quick decisions when restarting play
- encourage children to dribble or pass ball into play from all re-starts rather than a big kick

- ensure team officials and parents create a safe, enjoyable and positive playing environment for the children and do not emphasise winning or losing
- encourage children to be involved in all aspects of the game: attacking and defending
- understand that most acts of handball or fouls and misconduct at this level are caused by a lack of coordination, with no intent. If you decide a deliberate or serious act of handball or foul and misconduct has occurred, explain to the child that they have done the wrong thing and that they should not do this again
- let the game flow and give instruction to all players on the run where you can
- praise and encourage both teams
- be enthusiastic, consistent and approachable



*The children are learning the game - be flexible and patient.*



## OPTUS SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL FORMATS

PLAYING FORMAT	UNDER 6S & 7S	UNDER 8S & 9S	UNDER 10S & 11S
NUMBERS	4v4	7v7	9v9
FIELD SIZE	30 m x 20 m	¼ full-size pitch Min. – 40 m x 30 m Max. – 50 m x 40 m	½ full-size pitch Min. – 60 m x 40 m Max. – 70 m x 50 m
FIELD MARKINGS	markers or line markings	markers or line markings	markers or line markings
PENALTY AREA	nil	5 m depth x 12 m width	5 m depth x 12 m width
GOAL SIZE	min. 1.5 m x 0.90 m max. 2.0 m x 1.00 m	min. 2.5 m x 2.0 m max. 3.0 m x 2.0 m	min. 4.5 m x 2.0 m max. 5.0 m x 2.0 m
GOAL TYPE	goals, poles or markers	goals, poles or markers	goals, poles or markers
BALL SIZE	size 3	size 3	size 4
GOALKEEPER	no	yes	yes
PLAYING TIME	2 x 15 minute-halves	2 x 20 minute-halves	2 x 25 minute-halves
HALF-TIME BREAK	5 minutes	5 minutes	7.5 minutes
REFEREE	Game Leader	Instructing Referee	Instructing Referee
POINTS TABLE & FINALS	no	no	no

## FFA NATIONAL FOOTBALL CURRICULUM

In 2009, FFA launched the National Football Curriculum to guide the development of football in Australia.

### Purpose

The Curriculum provides for a soundly based, consistent, coordinated national Talent Development and Identification Program for football in Australia that aims to achieve a major improvement in the quality and performance of Australia's top players, coaches and teams.

### Objectives

- To produce the best players (gauged in terms of international competitiveness), primarily for:
  - the Qantas Socceroos
  - the Hyundai A-League
  - the Westfield Matildas
  - the Westfield W-League
- To produce a team that is consistently ranked in the top 20 in the men's FIFA ranking system by 2015 (and strive for a position in the top 10 by 2020) and a top 10 team in women's football by 2012.
- To create a Talent Development and Identification Program that achieves success for generations to come.
- To create a coach development system in Australia that produces quality coaches who are able to bring the content of the Curriculum to life to realise the targets.

- To create a youth development system in Australia that is fully operational nationwide by 2015 and renowned as one of the world's best.
- To organise the 2018 or 2022 men's FIFA World Cup and compete at the highest level, striving to win the tournament.
- To be a medal winner at the 2019 women's FIFA World Cup and the 2020 Olympic Games.
- To achieve what the FFA has determined:
  - a set of principles that will guide action
  - a national football philosophy and a detailed Curriculum with specific content

### Curriculum development

The key gaps in Australia's current development of players and coaches have been identified. The Curriculum has been developed to work towards closing the gaps. The development has involved learning from what is done elsewhere, and the consequent results. The Curriculum is factually and analytically based (not a compilation of opinions!). The FFA has consulted widely to ensure all relevant ideas and thinking are considered.

The resulting Curriculum is an Australian solution.

A fundamental transformation of Australian football is needed to achieve the objectives!

### Current status

A structured pathway is in place for the identification and development of Australia's elite players in the fourteen to nineteen years age group (men's and women's)<sup>2</sup>.

A uniform nationwide structure is to be put in place for the eight to fourteen years age group.

The structure and technical content of this Talented Player Development Program is provided by the National Curriculum. Implementation must be nationwide.



<sup>2</sup> Refer to Achievements and Proposed Initiatives no. 5: Talented Player Pathway.

## AGE-GROUP GUIDELINES

MAIN FOCUS	AGE GROUP & COMPETITION FORMAT	TEAM GUIDELINES	TIC EMPHASIS
Learning to master the ball	U/6–U/7 4v4	No formation / tactics consist of only very general instructions	Getting a 'TIC' for football
Learning to act with the ball purposefully	U/8–U/9 7v7	1–3–3 formation/basic tactical instructions/everyone plays <i>all</i> positions	<b>TIC</b>
Learning to play together purposefully	U/10–U/11 9v9	1–3–2–3 formation/limited tactical instructions/talent for specific positions more clear (but still flexible)	<b>TIC</b>
Learning the positions and basic tasks in 11 v 11	U/12–U/13 11v11	1–4–3–3 formation: Extending tactical instruction, explaining the positions and basic tasks	<b>TIC</b>
Learning how the basic tasks link together	U/14–U/15 11v11	1–4–3–3 formation: Choice/specialising for a positions + corresponding tactical instruction	<b>TIC</b>
Learning how to play as a team	U/16–U/17 11v11	1–4–3–3 formation: Extending development on one position related to the team's output	<b>TIC</b> Football conditioning
Performing/winning as a team	U/18–U/19 11v11	1–4–3–3 formation: Perfection per position and as a team: result-oriented teamwork	<b>TIC</b> Football conditioning

**T** : Technique   **I** : Insight   **C** : Communication

## THE CURRICULUM (UNDER-6S AND 7S)

### General description

- Very short concentration span
- Quickly distracted (they notice a 'little of a lot')
- They all want to have the ball (even take the ball from a teammate)
- No ability yet for team play
- Not able to pass/make combinations (do not try to change this!)
- Able to understand *very simple rules*
- Able to understand very basic coaching like 'stay inside the field', 'do not use your hands', 'go with the ball to the goal', etc.
- Learning through trial and error
- The biggest challenge is discovering how to control that rolling and bouncing 'round thing' with their feet.

### Relevant training content

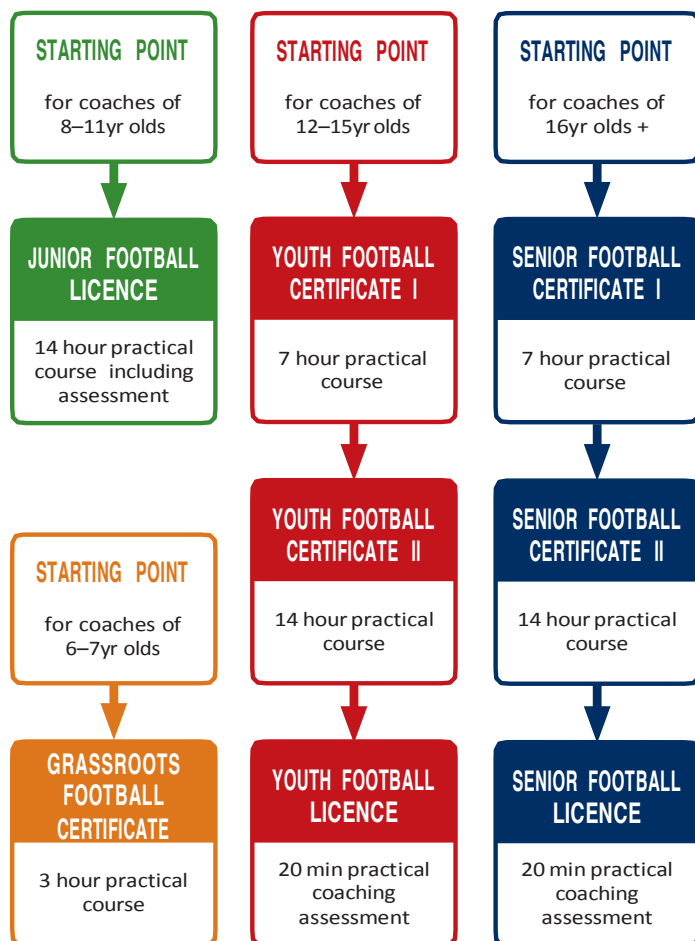
- All sorts of FUN games involving ball mastering / running with the ball (if possible, each child with a ball)
- All sorts of small sided games, 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4
- The various games should last no longer than 10 minutes and appeal to the children's fantasy
- No 'queue' exercises
- *No stretching*
- Number of sessions per week: 2 (+ 1 game)
- Maximum duration per training sessions = 45 minutes–1 hour

### Remarks

- Links to:
- S2S (online coaching tool)
  - Optus Small-Sided Football training DVD
  - Skills test



## FFA'S COMMUNITY COACHING PATHWAY



## FFA STATUTES

Over recent years, FFA has undertaken extensive research and consultation to develop national regulations to ensure all participants across the country enjoy football on equal and fair terms. The introduction of a uniform framework will also ensure that respect and protection is provided for coaches, players and referees while assisting volunteers to administer the game and removing some of the burden currently placed upon them. The regulations will enable FFA to be in compliance with the various statutes and regulations of FIFA, the world governing body for football.

Football in this country will now be in line with the rest of the football world and FIFA.

Coaches, together with all other members of official football in Australia, are bound by the FFA Statutes, which specify the rules and regulations for the administration of the playing, participating, coaching and officiating of football within FFA's jurisdiction.

These Statutes include the National Registration Regulations, National Code of Conduct, National Spectator Code of Conduct, National Disciplinary Regulations and National Grievance Resolution Regulations. They can be found at [www.footballaustralia.com.au](http://www.footballaustralia.com.au) under the 'Inside FFA' section and 'Statutes'.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Norm Boardman

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- 'Coaching Under-8s', Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB)
- Alfred Galustian and Charlie Cooke, 'Make Your Move', Coachwise Business Solutions

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