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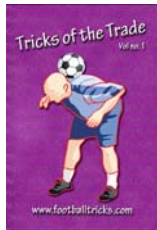
We also have made a selection of DVDs that can be bought online and if you would like more information or like to purchase them follow this link:-

<http://www.footballtricks.com/View.aspx?nID=166>



### **'1 to 1- Parent Player Coaching' DVD**

This DVD is approx 3 hours long and is for the parent who wants to spend some quality time with their children as well as help them improve. The DVD turns all the drills into fun games. A must for all parents who want to help their child be the best they can be.



### **Tricks of the Trade 1**

A 90 minute DVD which takes you step by step through how to do some of the most amazing juggling tricks with a ball. A terrific present for that player you know who loves soccer/football.

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## Foreword

Hello, my name is Sean D’Arcy and I am a professional coach. I have helped out hundreds of coaches just like you who have volunteered to be the coach of your son or daughter’s team. You agreed to do it but now you are not sure how you are going to make it through the season as you have no idea where to start.

This book is terrific for all players up to the age of about 12 years. It will allow you to nurture the talent and enthusiasm of your players to play this beautiful game.

The philosophy is for the players to learn through playing fun games. Each fun game will require a player to use correct techniques to get success so the games teach the players how to dribble the ball properly, how to pass, how to shoot and quite simply how to play.

Advice I give ‘coaches’ is for them to think of themselves as ‘organisers’ and not someone who has to teach or coach players how to play. Let the fun games do all the work and you and your players will enjoy yourselves much more.

To help you out throughout the book I will give you tips from my years of experience. At the start of each chapter I will give a brief outline of the reason behind the games in that chapter. For each game I will tell you what you should praise and what you should ask the players not to do.

Importantly I will give you advice on how to watch for the behavioural triggers that can disrupt the game and how to deal with them before they become a problem.



## Introduction

As the organiser of the sessions you have to make sure that anything that disrupts or stops the players playing needs to be avoided.

### **Golden Rules**

- Enjoy yourself and the players will too.
- Be organised and place down all the cones before the players arrive so the session can move smoothly from one game to the next.
- Keep breaks for drinks to a specified length of time i.e. 1 minute or 30 seconds. Don't allow yourself or the players to get distracted talking and end up having a couple of 5 to 10 minute breaks every session.

### **Discipline Problems**

In my experience players will generally be no problem at all if they are active, stimulated and enjoying themselves. If you are having discipline problems with your players then here is a check list to go through to see what may have caused it

1 – Were the players active. How long has it been since it was their turn. As a guide if a player has to wait more than 30 seconds then that is a long time.

2 – How long have they been playing that particular game. I try to make the games very fast so that a player always knows that even if they are not going to win this particular game that they will have another opportunity very soon. As a guide don't have games lasting much longer than 3 or 4 minutes.

3 – Are the players having any success. It is hard to keep playing games when you feel you can never do them properly.

4 – Are the players enjoying themselves. If the players don't like the game then do something else. The sport is meant to be enjoyed.

One of main ways that a session can be halted is by the players arguing over what has happened in the game they are playing. Simply try to remove anything that can be argued over. If they argue about whether the ball went out or not then remove the boundaries or remove a cone or two so the boundary is less definite which makes it harder to argue about. Just change the rules or the conditions so they cannot waste time arguing about it anymore

Sometimes players argue because they need a drink or a break and standing still talking takes less effort than running. With experience you will see the signs but sometimes arguments can be forgotten with a 30 second drink break.

One point to remember is never to get involved in the arguments or try to sort them out as this normally leads to the session being halted for longer.

Once I made a mistake when I was running a mini tournament. I had 4 games of 4 v 4 going on at once and I sent the players out to play against the same team they had just played against. All of them complained but I wasn't sure what the mistake was so I said that I was using the 'Le Gros' method and told them to carry on. Le Gros is my mother's maiden name and it meant absolutely nothing but it got them all playing again instead of standing around while I sorted out how the mistake had happened.

This is mentioned throughout this book but it cannot be mentioned enough just enjoy yourself and the players will as well.

I understand that you may not ever have done a training session before so here are the answers I give to my most common questions.

*How long should I train for?*

5-7 years old – 45-60 mins.

8-12 years old – 60-90 mins.

*What should I do in the training session and for how long?*

For a 60 min session

Warm Up – 5-10 mins.

Fun Games – 8-10 mins each.

SSG's (Small Sided Games) – 20-30 mins.

Cool Down – 5 mins (tell them how good they were and pick up all the cones).

All the times are approx but make sure the SSG's are never less than 33% of a training session as the players need practice playing. During a season I will often have a training session where the players just warm up then play SSG's for the entire session.

So lets get going and start enjoying ourselves.

## Chapter 1

### Warm Up Games

The emphasis on our warm up games is to make sure that the players know they are going to enjoy themselves and coming to training is something they don't want to miss.

If the start of your session is running around the pitch five times then what incentive does that give the players to be on time.

Each one of these games can be started before everyone is there and allows the players just to join in as they arrive. This is very important if you design your own games because waiting for enough players to arrive wastes the time of the players who got there at the right time.

Also each game keeps the players close to you so it is very easy to keep control of them and see if anyone looks like they may be a problem for your session.

## Cone Grab

This is the warm up game I use the most because I really enjoy it.



### Equipment

10 cones and the ability to say words that begin with the letter 'C'.

### Set Up

Make a semi circle using half as many cones as you have players. Split the squad up into pairs and have two players facing each other with a cone in between them

### Rules

The players have to do everything you say but when you shout 'cone' it is a race to see who has the quickest reactions and can grab the cone between them first.

So now you warm up the players getting them to jog on the spot, kick an imaginary ball, run on the spot with one leg straight, do 5 jumps etc but every now and then shout 'cone' and watch the players grab for the cone.

Fun Tip – Randomly shout out phrases to trick the players into thinking you are going to say 'cone'. My favourites are “Coke is nicer than Pepsi”, “Cauliflower, I love Cauliflower”, “Colin is my next door neighbour”, “Coconut cream biscuits are my favourite”. I think you get the picture.

Safety Tip – Make sure the cones are far enough apart so that the players don't hit each other with any of the actions you get them to do.

Discipline Tip – Probably at some stage two players (especially with boys) will end up rolling around on the floor trying to pull the cone off each other. Don't try to stop them just carry straight on with the game and they will get up themselves.

### Progressions

1 – It only counts if you say 'cone' when you have your hand in the air so they have to keep looking up while they do the actions. Lots of younger players look down when you ask them to run on the spot quickly and having to look up at you can get them out of this habit.

2 – If you have used blue cones to mark out this game you could say that the players having to grab the cone when you say a word beginning with 'B' that gets them thinking.

3 – Play the cone game with two different coloured cones between each pair. Now they have to decide which cone to grab depending on which colour you shout.

To keep this game fun it has to be played very quickly with each action only lasting 10-15 seconds maximum. You as the coach can dictate the pace of the game but for me the quicker the better.

How you arrange the cones is up to you but I have found that a horseshoe shape works best for me but if the group is really large then I will have them in a circle with me inside the circle. When I do this I am constantly moving about so that I don't have my back to anyone for more than a few seconds.

Another tip is to use cones of only one colour with younger players you can have two players fighting over the red cone because they don't want to play with a green cone. It won't happen with all groups but if all the cones are the same colour then there is nothing that can be argued over.

## Slap Happy

A terrific game that you can start with as few as four players.



### Equipment

All you need is 1 x ball and enthusiasm.

### Set Up

Get all the players to form a complete circle with their legs as wide as possible and their feet touching the player next to them.

### Rules

You can only use your hands and you have to try to 'score' by slapping the ball through other players' legs. You can 'save' the ball going through your legs with your hands too.

Be patient as a larger group can take a while to form a circle the first time.

Make up new rules as you see fit. Often I have to say that you cannot score against the player next to you to keep the ball moving around the circle.

Encourage the players who slap the ball quickly and keep the game moving.

Fun Tip – To get the game going ask all the players to do a huge stretch backwards before you start and as soon as they lean back roll the ball through someone's legs.

Safety Tip – Watch for players scooping the ball up with both hands if this happens a lot then ask the players to play with one hand behind their back.

Discipline Tip – Don't allow players to pick the ball up as if they hold on to it another player might try to knock it out of their hands and then problems start.

### Progressions

1 – Introduce a second or third ball into the circle which really ramps up the fun. I rarely have more than three balls in the circle as the younger players tend to get too excited and will scoop the ball up or come in and kick the ball at someone.

2 – Players are only allowed to use the hand they don't write with. I would use this to slow the game down if players are getting too excited.

3 – With a small group this can be brilliant. Have two balls in the circle and players have to play with their eyes closed.

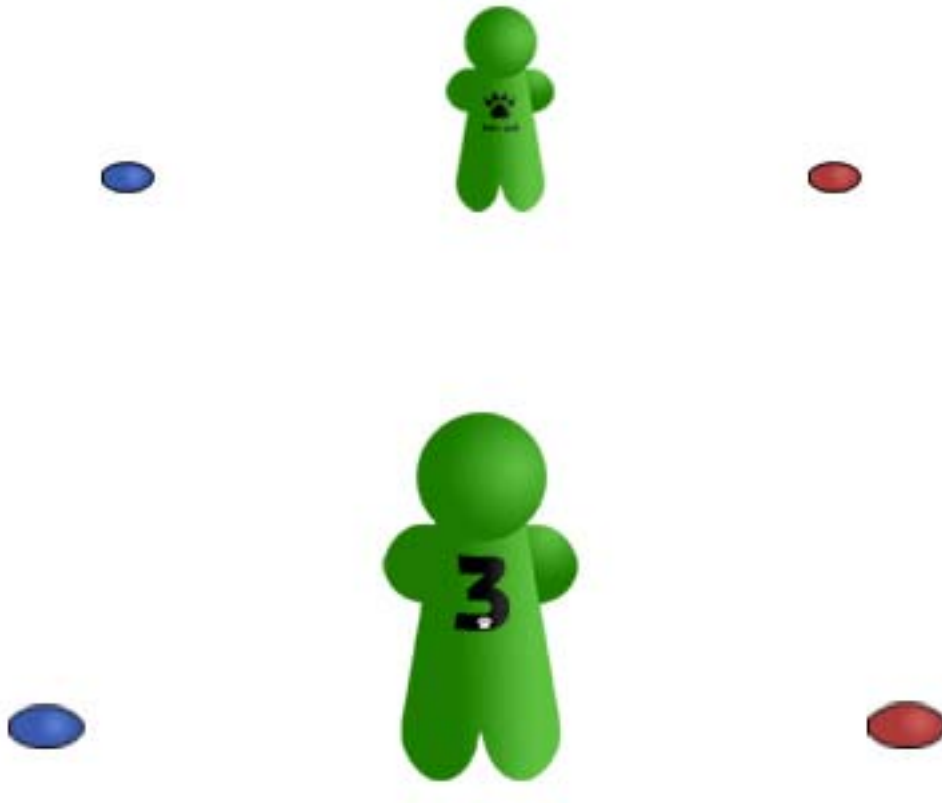
4 – If your group is big enough then maybe you could go into the middle and the players have to try and hit your feet. Word of advice don't jump out of the way of the ball as if you land on the ball you may end up flat on your back or crushing one of the players. Just move your feet from side to side to avoid getting hit.

The beauty of this game is how simple it is. It can be set up so quickly that it is good to think of it as an emergency game not just a warm up game. I have used it at such times when suddenly three players from one side in a 4 v 4 have decided they need to go to the toilet.

It works in two ways as the other players have fun instead of just waiting for the other players to come back and the players rush back from the toilet so they don't miss out.

## Silly Warm Up

Very energetic and it is up to you how silly.



### Equipment

4 x cones (normally 2 x cones of different colours)

### Set Up

Mark out a grid about 10m and 20m long and split the squad up into pairs. Ask one partner to stand on one side of the grid facing the other partner on the other side.

### Rules

The players have to meet in the middle of the grid and do whatever you tell them to do.

Now warm the players up by getting them to jog into the middle and give their partner a High 5 then jog back. Tell the players to jog on the spot between the cones until you tell them what to do next when they meet in the middle.

The trick to this is to get the players to do different things each time they meet in the middle such High 10's, High 10's with hands crossed, High 1's (1 finger touch) or bump hips that bit is up to your imagination. Email me on [info@footballtricks.com](mailto:info@footballtricks.com) if you need a few ideas to work with.

Praise the players who go all the way back to their line after they meet in the middle.

Fun Tip – The fun comes from making the players do more and more outrageous actions in the middle. I have had groups do 'backwards low 10's' which involves them lying on their stomachs and trying to slap the soles of their feet together.

Safety Tip – Very important that you have inspected the area for sharp objects if you want them to go on the ground when they meet in the middle.

Discipline Tip – If the players are getting a bit unruly slow the game right down by doing a complex action that you have to demonstrate a few times. This gives them time to calm down.

### Progressions

1 – Depending on how old the players are you could introduce a ball. One of the players in each pair dribbles a ball to the middle and then the pair do a high 5 for example then the other one takes the ball away.

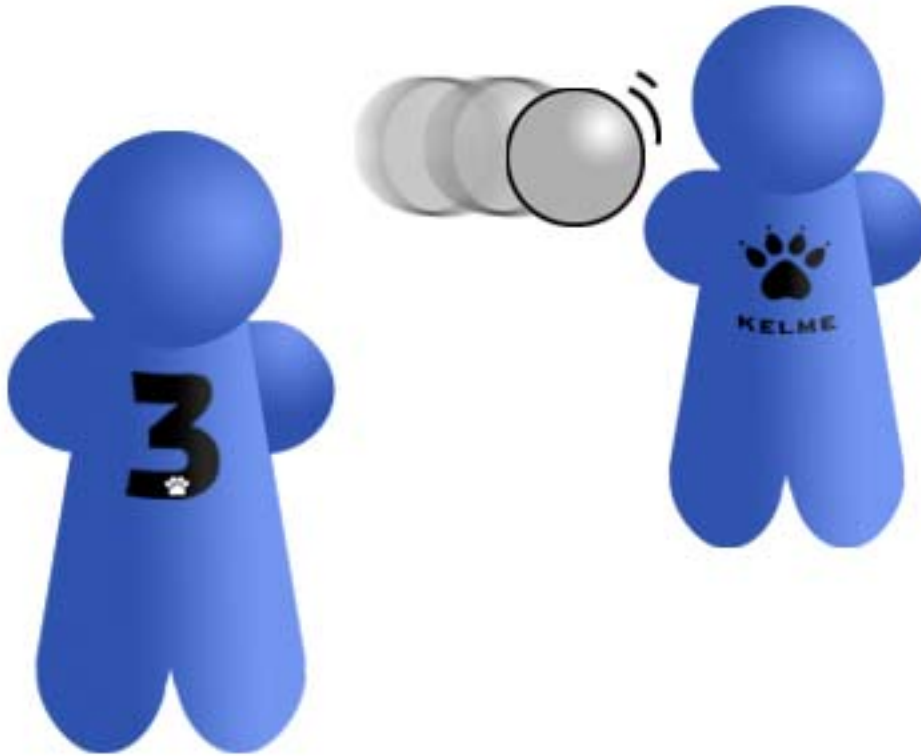
This can be difficult so I would start very simply with the players carrying the ball and passing it over in the middle till they understand the concept.

2 – Make it a memory game so a High 5 is one, high 10 is two, a high 1 is 3 etc and all you do is shout out a number not the action to do. This can be hilarious when one player thinks it is a High 10 and the other thinks it is bump hips.

This is a terrific game when the weather is cold as you can actually get the players to do lots of running even though they only ever run a short distance at a time. All the twisting and turning can really get the blood flowing.

## Juggling in Pairs

Terrific way to give the players lots of touches of the ball as they warm up.



### Equipment

1 x ball between every two players.

### Set Up

Split the squad up into pairs and give them one ball for each pair then tell them to find some space.

### Rules

The players need to stand close enough so that if they both lean forward they can just about touch fingers.

The players have to do whatever you ask them to do with the ball then throw it to their partner for their partner to have a go. Start off really easy and quick such one knee bounce then pass the ball to your partner.

The fun comes from getting the players to do strange things with the ball like throw the ball up let it bounce then head it back into the ground, throw the ball up let it bounce then slap it with the sole off your foot to make it bounce again, throw the ball up and stepover it when it bounces etc. This is only limited by your imagination.

Fun Tip – If the group are mature enough you can get them to pass the ball to each other in silly ways like pass it by bouncing the ball off your backside or bouncing off the back of your head.

Safety Tip – Make sure the players don't spread too far apart because then they can miss with a throw to their partner and hit someone else.

Discipline Tip - Be really strict especially at the start that the players catch the ball and throw it gently to their partner because if they kick it to each other then that can get out of hand quickly.

### Progressions

1 – Play Soccer Tennis. The players have to kick the ball to each other with only one bounce in between each kick. How many kicks can you do before it bounces twice.

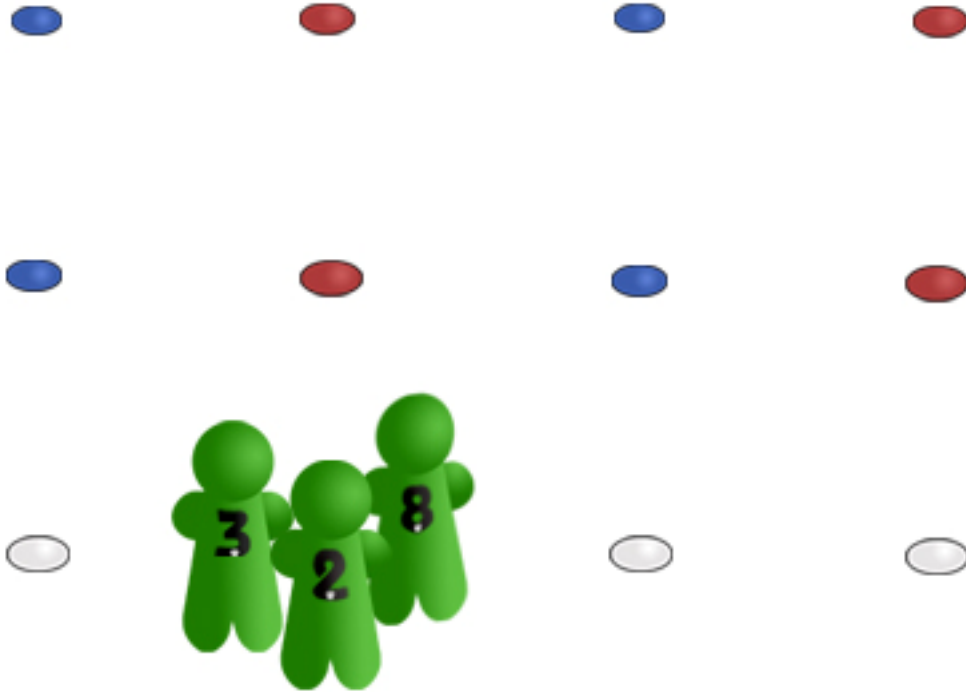
2 – Head Tennis. How many headers can you do from one player to the other till the ball hits the ground.

Some extra tips if you give a young player a ball then that will be the focus of their attention not you. If you want to talk to the players get them to sit down or put one foot on the ball. You have to do something to keep that ball still and you have to be very quick with what you have to say.

You have to get this going very quickly as the biggest chance of someone being stupid with the ball and hurting someone is between when they first get the ball and when you start.

## Grand Prix

The perfect relay race as no one is left out and it is a team effort.



### Equipment

12 x cones and 4 x balls.

### Set Up

Make a line of 3 cones spaced about 5m apart using a white cone as the starting cone. Now do 3 more lines parallel to this line with about 5m again between each one. Split the squad up into 4 equal teams and get each team to stand on a white starting cone with one ball for each team.

### Rules

Each team has to run altogether up to the first cone when you say go and do whatever you ask them to do with the ball then pass the ball on to the next member in their team to do the same thing. When all the team has done it they then have to do it all again at the next cone. The first team back to the start is the winner.

The fun comes from what actions you get them to do at each cone such as they must bounce the ball off their chest and catch it then throw the ball to the next team member. Younger players just love to have a race.

Fun Tip – Once the Grand Prix is going make up ridiculous rules or get in the way of teams so that everyone gets a chance to win.

Safety Tip – Don't have the players kicking the ball to each other around the cone till they have had 3 or 4 races because they may kick it too hard at each other at the start.

Discipline Tip – Watch out for players being too enthusiastic in their passes.

### Progressions

1 – You could begin to organise the players to act as a team. What often happens in this game is that the players wait until everyone has done the action before anyone moves. You could ask them to show you ways they can work together more efficiently such as move to the next cone as soon as you have done the action and throw the ball from one cone to the next cone so they can save time.

2 – They have to do the whole Grand Prix without ever touching the ball with their hands and the actions can be more soccer specific.

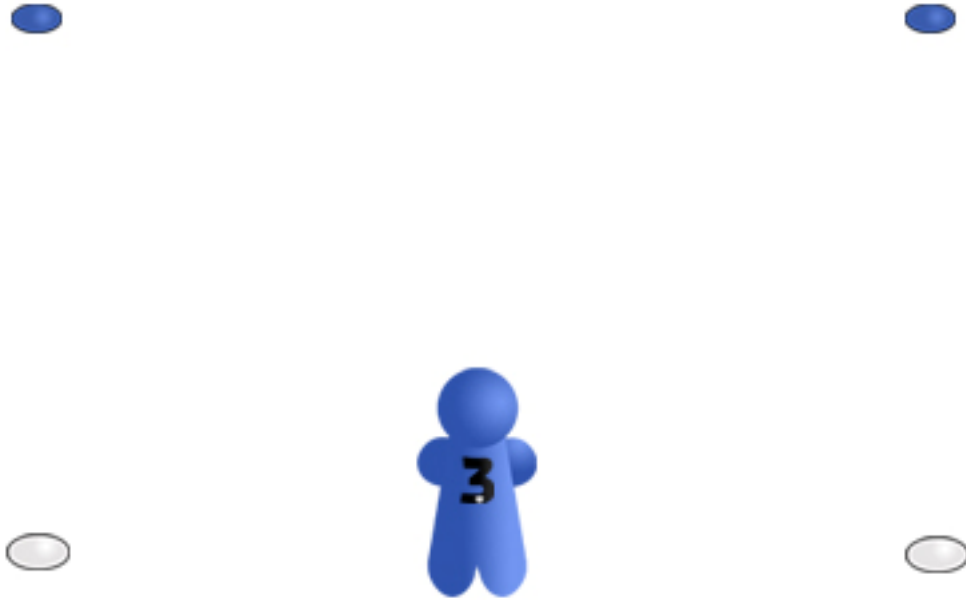
At the start I would keep this really simple and have the players simply bounce the ball catch it and pass the ball to the next member of the team.

Whatever actions you do make sure they can do it quickly and move on remember the point of the game is to have fun so keep it moving.

I usually don't worry about teams cheating in fact at times I actively encourage it. It adds to the fun if you don't make a big deal of who wins each race.

## Go Game

This has to be the simplest game in the whole world.



### Equipment

4 x cones, a team and a sense of humour.

### Set Up

Mark out a straight line using the white cones and get your squad to line up on it facing you. Mark out another line of blue cones parallel to the white line with a gap of about 6-8m.

### Rules

The players do whatever you ask them to do and when you clap your hands it is a race to the blue line.

You warm them up by getting the players to jog on the spot, pass an imaginary ball, jump for a header etc.

Fun Tip – The fun comes from shouting ‘Go’ and taking a few quick steps back. See who runs because remember the race doesn’t start till you clap your hands.

Safety Tip – Make sure the players are spread out enough as when they start to sprint elbows and arms fly everywhere.

Discipline – Be very strict if players start pushing and shoving each other when they sprint. This can lead to a big pile up as players fall in front of each other. Insist the players are spaced out far enough not to be able to bump each other.

### Progressions

1 – You could change the signal to you lifting your arm so that players have to keep their eyes on you all the time.

2 – You make the players touch the blue line and sprint back. To make it more fun I would say the players have to touch the line with their knee or forehead and of course this helps get the players warmer too.

3 – Place red cones down on the opposite side from the blue cones but the same distance away from the white cones. Now if you shout ‘red’ or ‘blue’ or hold up a red or blue cone the players have to sprint to that colour. This will make the players stay focused as well as add to the fun.

You can do this game differently and make it more like the ‘Cone Game’. The players run when you say ‘Go’ not when you clap your hands but instead you shout out phrases like ‘Girls are better than boys’ or ‘Going to rain tomorrow’.

Another tip is when you are doing the last race make it to win you have to be the first person to touch the coach. As soon as the players start running you turn and run over to where you have set up the next game in the training session. It is the quickest way to get everyone in the right place to continue.

## Red-Blue

Can be done with all age groups but you can really progress this with older groups.



### Equipment

4 x cones (2 blue & 2 red) and a ball for each pair.

### Set Up

Mark out a grid about 10m and 20m long and split the squad up into pairs. Give each pair a ball and ask them to stand in the grid.

### Rules

The players have to throw the ball to each other but when I shout 'Ball' the player who has hold of ball or has the ball coming towards them has to sprint to the blue line and the person without the ball goes to the red line.

I sometimes add as it can be confusing for the players. "If you have the ball you have to go to blue so B for ball goes to B for blue."

Now you could get the players to do some of the things you got them to do in the 'Juggling' game or in the 'Grand Prix' but this time they have to stay focused as they are going to need to make a decision about which way to sprint at any time.

Start off very simply just having the players throw the ball to each other until you are confident they understand the concept.

Fun Tip – Try to trick them by shouting ‘red’ or ‘blue’ or like in the other games shout phrases that begin with B like ‘Beautiful day to play soccer’, ‘Balloons cost a fortune’ or ‘Beckham can really hit a free kick’.

Safety Tip – Make sure the players are spread out so they don’t run into each other.

Discipline Tip – Don’t let anyone hold on to the ball waiting for you the shout when it gets thrown to them as this can lead to players fighting over the ball.

### Progressions

Like I said at the start you can really progress this with the older groups.

1 – Play Soccer Tennis or Head Tennis like the way we progressed the Juggling Game.

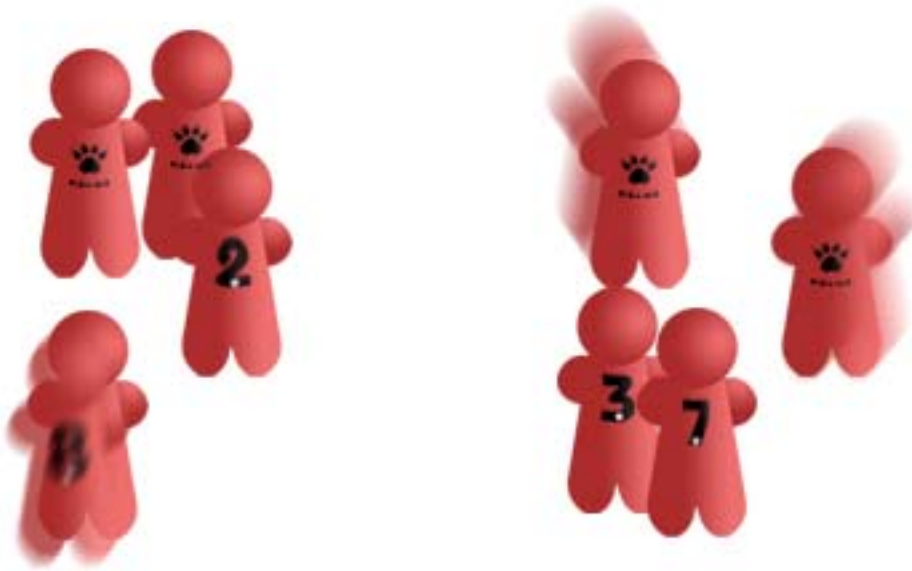
2 – Have the players simply pass the ball first time along the ground to each other. This incorporates decision making into a simple technique exercise. The players need to dribble the ball to the blue line.

Like I said before as the players have a ball you need to start very quickly.

Don’t criticise any players if they find it hard to go the right way as players can be so used in following instructions that it can be quite daunting to have to decide for your self which way to go.

## 2's, 3's, 4's

You can keep this game going right the way through the whole training session.



### Equipment

Just the players and you.

### Set Up

None really just ask the players to spread out

### Rules

Ask the players to do any movement you want but when you shout out a number they have to quickly get into groups that size. i.e you shout out '4' all the players must get into groups of 4.

You warm the players up by getting them to jog around you, pass an imaginary ball, skip, jump basically anything you want.

Fun Tip – The fun comes by shouting numbers that leave players left over or by shouting 'ones' and seeing who spins around trying to get into a group of one. Often I will join a group to make a nuisance of myself.

Safety Tip - Don't let the players grab each other to try to pull them into their group. Be very strict with this as it can cause injuries and explanations to parents why the over priced replica top they bought their child has a big rip in it.

Discipline Tip – Don't make any fuss about the players who didn't get into a group just carry on with the warm up. Otherwise you will have players throwing themselves into groups to be there before someone else.

### Progressions

1 – Spread out 5 x white cones and 5 x blue cones randomly around you. Now shout a colour before the number such as 'blue threes' this means they have form groups of 3 around a blue cone.

2 – Shout out how you want the groups to look such 'sitting threes' which means you want a group of 3 sitting on the ground. Be careful that you say that right as well.

You can have lots of fun saying stuff like 'holding hands fours' or 'touching toes twos'.

3 - If you are doing this game inside a grid that you are going to use next in your training session. You could add a rule that the players must run around a cone then come back into the grid before forming the groups. Good for seeing which players can think of two things at once.

## Chapter 2

### Running Games

The emphasis on our running games is to develop good habits in the players. The two most important habits that these games teach are for the players to run with the ball without needing to look at it constantly and to run with the ball using the insides of both feet.

Players need to be able to run with the ball and look up away from it so they can assess the situation and see how it has changed since they received the ball. A player who needs to look at the ball constantly can easily be surprised by defenders 'suddenly' appearing and tackling them.

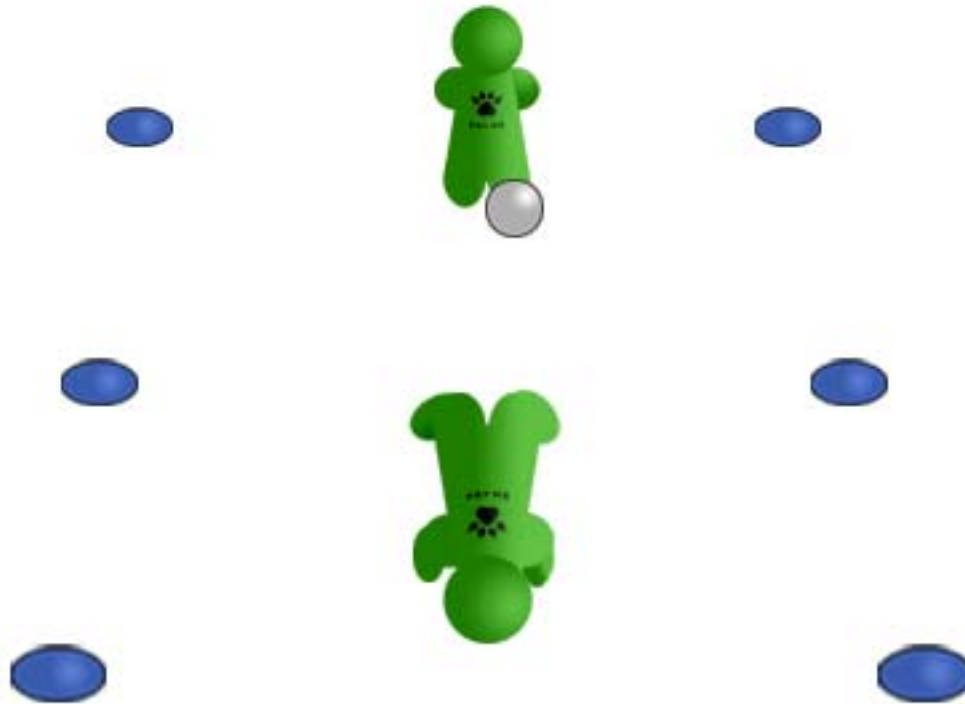
If a player runs with the ball using the insides of both feet then they can change direction very quickly with little effort.

Let me explain if a player runs with the ball using the outside of their right foot and the defender approaches them from their left then the player can easily move the ball away to the right in one quick motion. But if the defender comes from the right then the player has to first get their foot around the ball before they can go to the left away from the defender. Obviously this takes longer and could be the difference between keeping the ball and losing it.

If you design any running games for yourself then remember it has to develop these two habits.

## BBD Crab Style

A long time favourite and the most requested game by players I have coached.



### Equipment

One ball for every player and 6 x cones

### Set Up

Mark out a grid approx 20m x 30m and have the entire squad stand at one end of the grid with a ball each.

### Rules

The players have to run with the ball past you the catcher and get to the other side of the grid without their ball being touched by your feet. If their ball is touched they become a catcher as well and so on until there is only one player left. The catchers have to go crab style to slow them down. Crab style is on your hands and feet with your back closest to the ground.

Fun Tip – Ask the players if they think they are going to win and then say to whoever shouted the loudest that you are going to catch them first.

Safety Tip – Don't allow anyone to lift the ball over the catchers as this can mean someone getting hit in the face or worse for boys if it doesn't go high enough. Also don't allow them to kick the ball past players as this can lead to accidents as well and defeats the purpose of the game.

Discipline Tip – Don't allow players who have reached the end of the grid to go back across until everyone has made it across.

Encourage players to go backwards and switch sides if their way forward is blocked. It is terrific when this happens as the player has been able to look up which is a habit we want and then make a decision on what they can see.

Encourage the players to be patient and to keep the ball moving. Tell them within reason there is no time limit to get to the other side but don't allow players just to stand at the start line and not move.

Be flexible with the grid make it wider when there are lots of catchers so the players still have a challenge but have a chance of success.

### Progressions

1 – The catchers instead of being crab style have to be in 2's and must link arms. They cannot catch anyone if they have unlinked their arms. This helps with team work between the players.

2 – Use 4 cones mark off 'NO GO' areas so the players have more obstacles than just the defenders to cope with.

3 – The ball must be kicked out of the grid not just touched. You must be confident that your team are mature enough to cope with the more physical tackling.

## Bib Grab

Fast, furious and fun. Great game.



### Equipment

4 x cones, one ball per person and one bib per person.

### Set Up

All the players must go inside the grid with a ball each. Every player must tuck a bib into the back of their shorts leaving as much hanging out of their shorts as possible.

### Rules

When you say 'GO' without leaving the grid or losing control of your ball the players need to collect as many bibs as possible in one minute. The player with the most bibs at the end is the winner.'

Often I do this game without the balls at least twice at the start so the players understand the concept. Watch for players simply trying to keep their own bib in their shorts and not trying to collect other players. Really emphasise how well the player who has got the most at the end of the first game did and that usually encourages everyone to go for it.

Make sure everyone tucks their shirts in first too so that when they grab the bib they don't grab a handful of an expensive replica shirt too that gets ripped.

Fun Tip – Wear a bib yourself and run around inside the grid.

Safety Tip – Don't allow anyone to snatch the bibs out of other players' hands. This can lead to collisions.

Discipline Tip – The only problems I have ever had with this game are when players try to physically hold on to their own bib and not allow someone to pull it out their shorts. You have to stop this immediately and again stress that keeping your own bib means nothing.

Loudly encourage any player who actually keeps the ball moving and chases players down. Watch out for players just standing still and collecting bibs as players run past them. Remember the point of the game is for them to get practice at running with the ball.

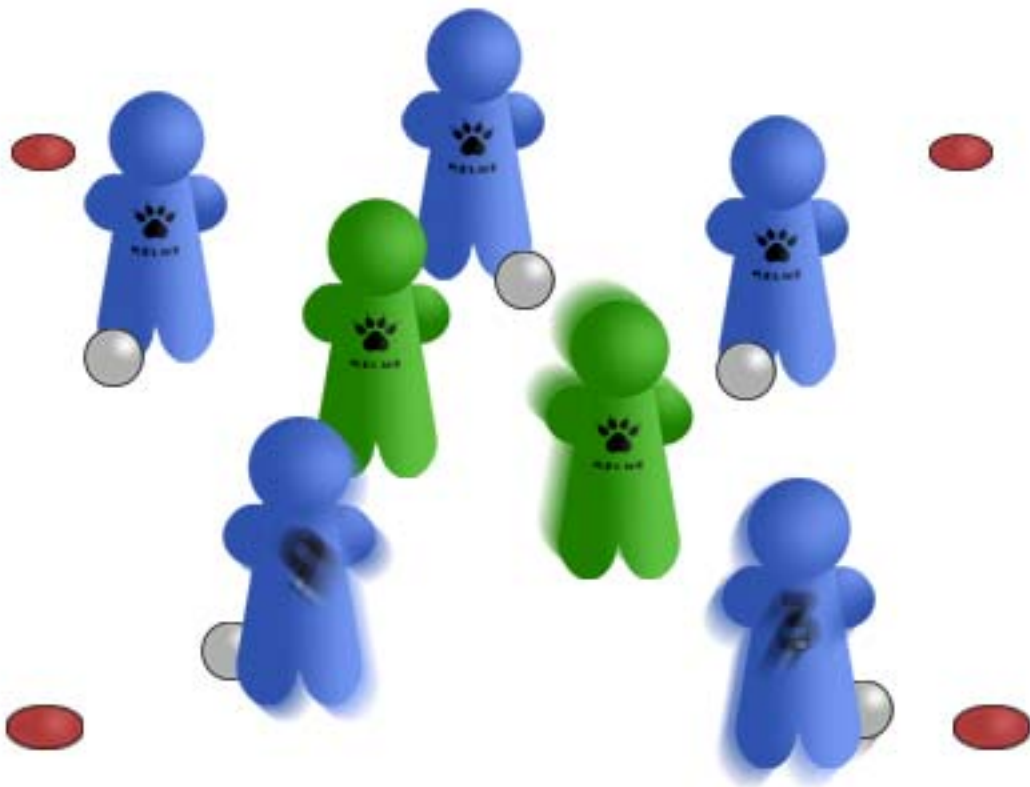
### Progressions

1 – Every time someone collects a bib they have to run to you and give a High 5. If you keep moving around while the game is on again this encourages running with the ball with your head up.

2 – Put in 3 x different colour bibs and say you cannot collect a bib the same colour as the one in your shorts at the start. This means the players have to make a decision about who they chase.

## Freeze Tag

A fabulous game that builds team work as well as technique.



### Equipment

4 x cones and a ball for each player.

### Set up

Mark out a grid approx 30m x 20m. Select 2 players to be the catchers and ask everyone else to grab a ball and find a space inside the grid.

### Rules

The catchers have to 2 minutes to freeze all the players by touching their ball with their feet. No one is allowed to leave the grid. When a player is frozen they must stand with their legs open and hold the ball above their head. A player can be unfrozen if another player dribbles the ball through the frozen players legs.

Don't be too strict with players leaving the grid as long as they try to stay inside. If they deliberately leave the grid then they are frozen.

Fun Tip – Keep telling the players incorrectly that a catcher is coming behind them or play yourself and keep going up to a frozen player with the ball then unfreezing someone else.

Safety Tip – Watch out for players being very physical when challenging for the ball some players get a bit too enthusiastic when they are faced with so many players to tackle.

Discipline Tip - Watch for players unfreezing themselves when no one is near them. This can quickly ruin the game as the catchers won't chase players to freeze them if they just unfreeze themselves when they feel like.

Loudly praise players when they unfreeze their team mates as this will encourage other players to do it.

Encourage the catchers to act more as a team and even suggest that one catcher defends the frozen players while the other tries to catch more players.

### Progressions

1 – Have four catchers but have them in pairs linking arms so they really need to work as a team as they will be much slower than before.

2 – Players can only be unfrozen if the ball goes through their legs twice both forwards and backwards.

What I like most about this game is how to do well at it a player must not only look up from the ball but they must look for two different things. Just like in a game they need to know where the catchers (or defenders) are and they need to know where their own team mates are. I would recommend you use this game often.

## The Blob

Terrific game for the younger age groups who just love the idea of a Blob catching all the players.



### Equipment

4 x Cones plus a ball for every player.

### Set up

Mark out a grid approx 30m x 20m. Ask everyone else to grab a ball and find a space inside the grid.

### Rules

You are the Blob and must catch all the players by touching their ball. If you catch a player they must link arms with you. Every player caught increases the size of the Blob until there is only one player left and a huge Blob chasing them. The Blob can only walk and it doesn't count if a player is caught when the Blob is unlinked.

Again only be strict with players leaving the grid if they are doing it regularly and deliberately and don't worry about someone who is trying to follow the rules.

Fun Tip – With younger players you can get them to chant 'Blob, Blob, Blob, Blob....' with every step they take.

Safety Tip – Try to make sure you stay in the middle of the Blob so you can make sure the Blob only walks and the players on the outsides don't get swung around.

Discipline Tip – You need to be very strict that a player isn't caught unless all the players in the Blob are linked otherwise players just let go and chase after the players. Also makes sure the Blob only walks because if you don't you will get a head clash.

Loudly praise players who realise that the Blob is slow and so make quick decisions to stop themselves getting caught. Encourage players to fake going one way and then turn back and go the other because the Blob cannot turn quickly.

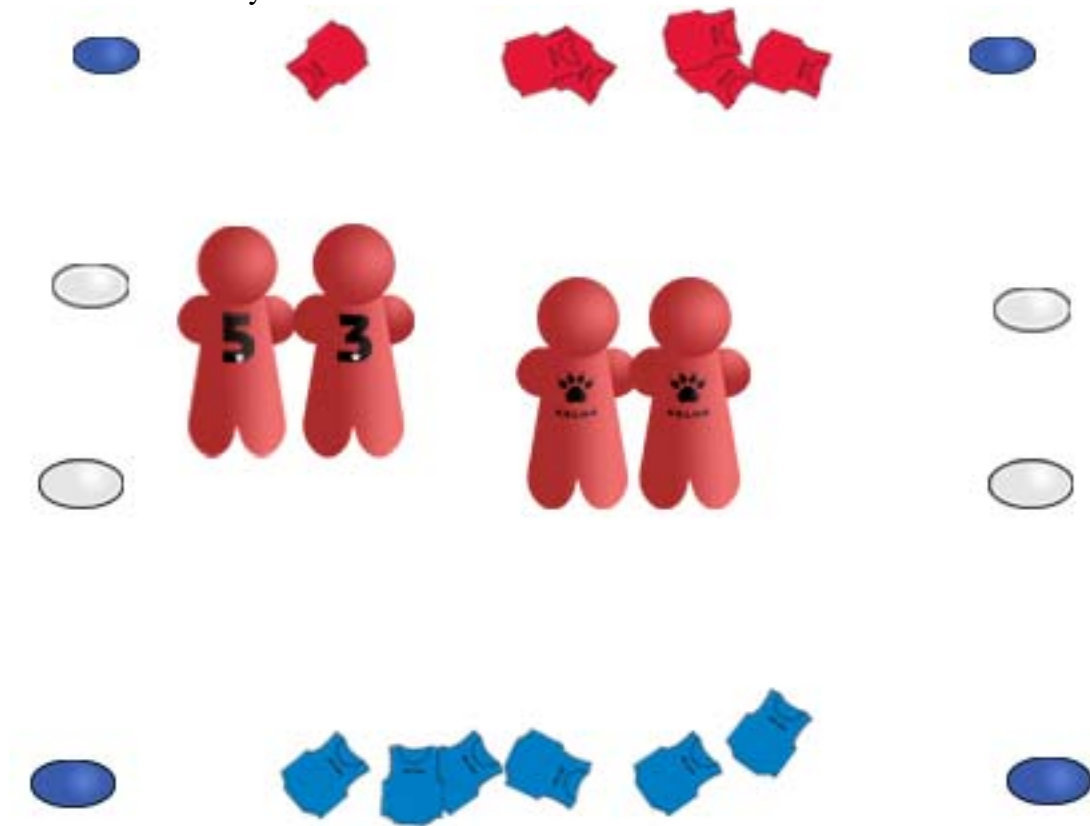
### Progressions

1 – The Blob can never grow to more than four players so when it gets to five it splits into a 3 Blob and a 2 Blob. With older players you can say the Blob never goes above 3 so there is lots of faster 2-player blobs in the game.

2 – Split the grid up into two halves and only allow the players to use one half until the Blob has 5 players. When 5 players are caught they can use the whole grid.

## Treasure Trove

Heaps of fun and the players love knowing whether they are winning or losing by the amount of bibs they have collected.



### Equipment

8 x cones, a ball for two thirds of the players and as many bibs as you can get.

### Set up

Mark out a grid approx 30m x 20m and in the middle mark out a 5m wide 'Catching Zone.' Split the squad up into 3 x teams. At each end of the grid place equal numbers of bibs.

### Rules

The teams at the ends of the grid have to try to collect as many bibs from the opposite end as possible without getting their ball touched by the team in the 'Catching Zone'. If their ball is touched they have to go back to the closest end of the grid and try again. The winner is the team with the most bibs at their end after 2 minutes.

The catchers have to be in pairs and link arms and cannot leave the 'Catching zone'. It doesn't count if they touch your ball when they are not linked.

Everyone is playing at the same time so the players are crossing the grid in different directions at the same time. This forces them to look up and see what is in front of them while controlling the ball.

Fun Tip – Keep giving the game away to the catchers when a player is trying to sneak up behind them.

Safety Tip – Again insist the ball stays on the ground and that players cannot smash the ball through the ‘Catching Zone’.

Discipline Tip – Be very strict with players taking more than one bib at a time and don’t allow the catchers out of the ‘Catching Zone’.

Really encourage players to be patient and seize opportunities to get across without getting caught such as catchers looking the other way or being distracted.

### Progressions

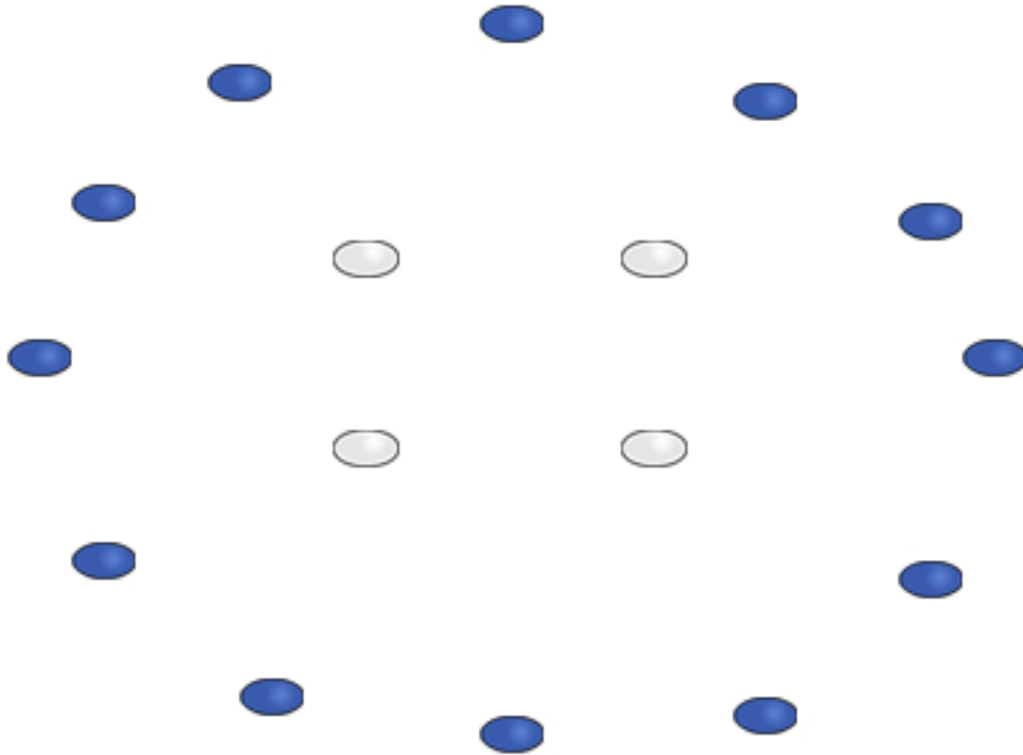
1 – Make the grid much longer so after the players have got through the ‘Catching Zone’ they get practice at running with the ball at pace.

2 – The catchers don’t have to link arms. As they are much faster it is an idea to make the ‘Catching Zone’ wider so they have a chance of getting across.

The best game there is for giving the players practicing at accelerating with the ball. They have to do this to seize a chance to get across ‘Catching Zone’.

## Musical Cones

Magnificent fun



### Equipment

19 x cones (4 x white, 15 x blue) and a ball for every player.

### Set Up

Using the white cones make a grid 10m x 10m and around the grid mark out a circle using the blue cones. The whole squad inside the white grid with a ball each.

### Rules

The players have to do whatever you ask them to do with the ball but when you shout 'Cone' they have to sprint to a cone and place their ball on top of it without using their hands.

While they are inside the white grid you can get them to move the ball anyway you want. You can get them to turn when you shout 'Turn' or stop when you shout 'Stop' anything you want such as 'Go fast' or 'Go slow'. If you need ideas just email me [info@footballtricks.com](mailto:info@footballtricks.com)

Normally on the first go I get the players to leave their ball in the grid and sprint out and stand on a cone so they understand the concept first.

Fun Tip – Make sure there is one less cone outside the grid than there are players so someone always missing out. Don't eliminate that player just carry the game on back inside the grid.

Safety Tip – Make sure the cones are spread out so you can avoid a mad dash to the one spot.

Discipline Tip – Be strict with who got to the cone first and don't allow clashes at the cones to happen.

Encourage the players you see changing direction so they can go to where the spare cones are instead of racing with the pack.

Don't allow players to stay near the edges when you are asking them to move around inside the white grid. Encourage them to mingle around with the others.

### Progressions

1 – You can flip the whole game and have the players outside the white grid and the blue cones inside it.

2 – You can make it so the players have to run around any cone on the outside and it is the last person back into the grid to carry on.

## Partner Dribbling

Not so much a game but a fun way to practice the technique.



### Equipment

A ball for every player.

### Set Up

Give each player and ball and split them up into pairs. Get the pairs to number themselves number 1 or number 2. It isn't necessary to mark out an area.

### Rules

Number 1's have to jog with the ball and number 2's have to follow them and do exactly what they do. The 1's have to try to get the 2's to make a mistake. When you shout out 'Change' the number 1's follow the 2's.

Again I would normally do this with the players holding the ball in their hands till they got the concept of the game.

Encourage the players not to run faster but to throw the follower off by changing direction quickly and often. Get louder and louder if they do a trick or a fake to throw the defender off.

Introduce lots of other commands such as when I say 'Switch' number 1 and 2 must switch balls and carry on. When I say 'Overlap' the player behind must sprint ahead of the player in front so they can follow them. Again let your imagination go wild and keep it fun.

Fun Tip – Instead of Number 1's and 2's maybe get the players to call themselves 'Messi' and 'Kaka' or 'Ronaldinho' and 'Ronaldo'.

Safety Tip – Make sure the area is big if you decide to mark out an area as having players running in all directions looking over their shoulders in a small area is a recipe for disaster.

Discipline Tip – Not often you will get players just running away from the group and not changing direction so they end up quite a way from the group. When this has happened to me I have simply ignored them and they always come back. It gets very tiring very quickly when you are being chased. The more fuss you make the more likely they are to do it again.

### Progressions

1 – With older players you could include 'Win it' where the player behind must leave their ball and has 5 seconds to get possession of their partner's ball.

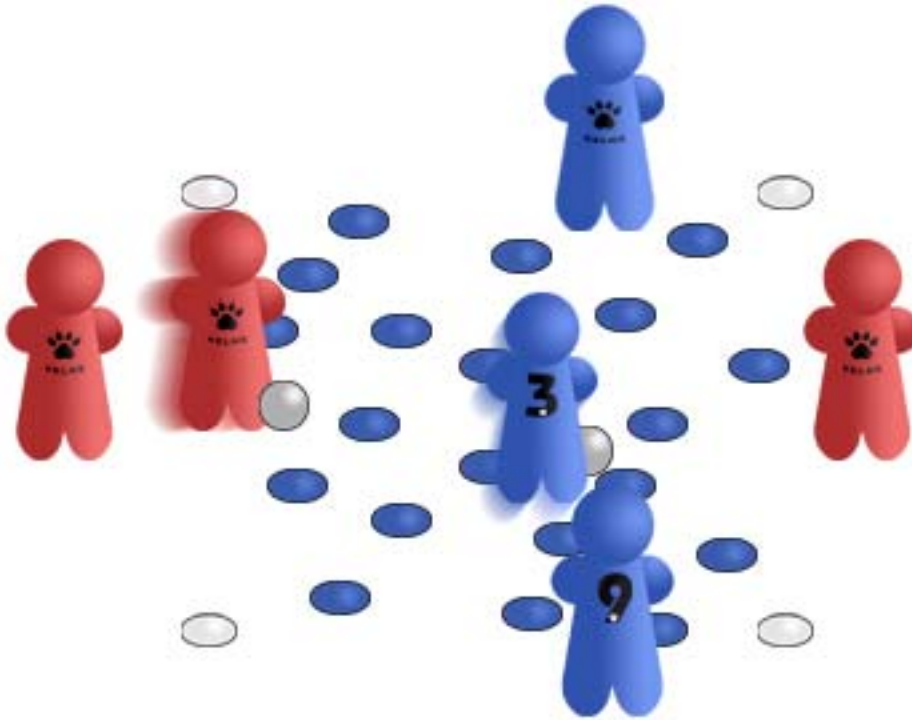
2 - Increase the size of the groups to 3's but this is only really for the older players. The younger ones will find 2's hard enough.

3 – Get player 1 to tuck their ball under their arm and run backwards holding up fingers against their chest. Player 2 must follow and say how many fingers are up. Player 1's change the number of fingers every 5 seconds or so.

Although this isn't a game it can be lots of fun to play but is very tiring. Don't play it for too long without a break as the players are constantly running.

## Heavy Traffic

A brilliant game to play when the weather is warm as there are frequent short breaks for the players.



### Equipment

6 balls max and 24 cones (20 x blue, 4 x white)

### Set up

Mark out a grid 5m x 5m using the white cones. Inside the grid randomly set out the blue cones so no player can get across the grid in a straight line. Split the squad up into groups of 3 with 1 ball. Using all 4 sides of the grid place 2 players from each team on one side of the grid and the other player from that team on the opposite side.

### Rules

All the teams have to do is dribble the ball across the grid to their team mate on the other side without touching a cone. The second team mate takes the ball off them and dribbles it back across the grid to the third team mate who keeps the process going. All the teams go at the same time. Who is going to be the first team back to where they started

Normally I would get just one group to demonstrate first what has to be done before I ask the other groups to join it. So that everyone understands what is happening.

Watch for players gradually starting inside the grid as it progresses. Don't be too strict unless they get so close they are interfering with other players.

Keep rearranging the cones in the middle so that the players have to take different ways through each time.

Fun Tip – Jump into the grid yourself and get in the way of the players so they have to go around you as well as the cones.

Safety Tip – Watch for players not looking up and causing collisions. Just explain to them the point of the game is to not touch the cones and avoid the other players.

Discipline Tip – Watch for players going around the sides and avoiding the cones altogether. If you let one do it before you know it everyone else is doing it.

### Progressions

1 – If the players are mature enough let them bump each other as long as they have control off their own ball as they go across.

2 – Keep all the blue cones in a tight area but make the grid much bigger and the players have to sprint with ball after they have gone through the cones to get to their team. You work out the distance depending on the age of the players.

3 – The team mate on the other side of the grid holds up one hand as they go across and player with the ball has to say which hand it is.

This game is magnificent at working on the player's close control in a tight space while still looking up away from the ball to access the situation.

## Chapter Three

### Shooting/Long Passing Games

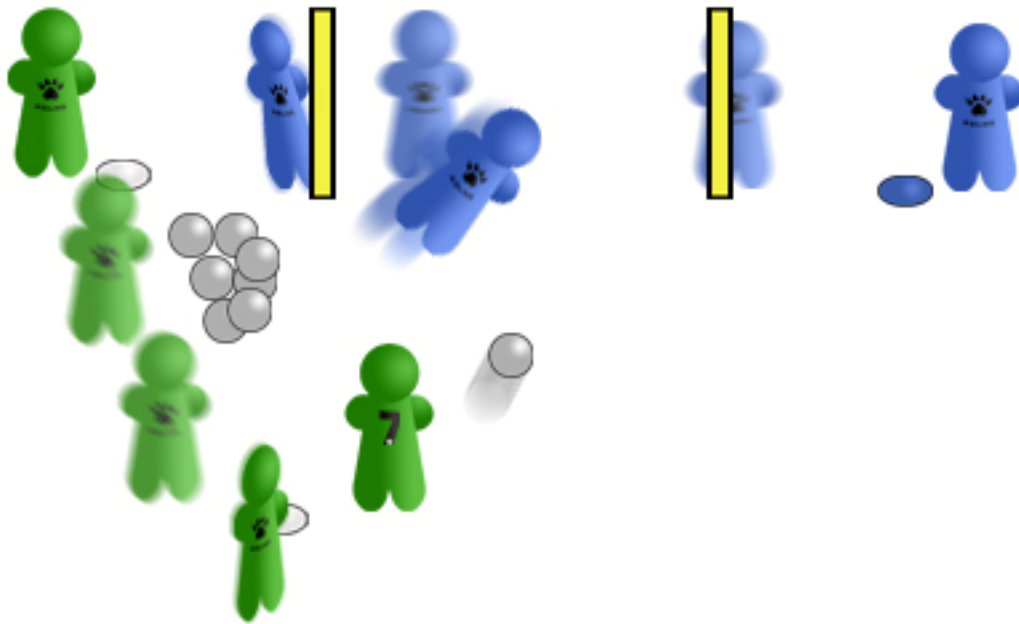
The problem I see regularly with teams practicing shooting or long passing is that it is so slow. One of the drills that I hate is when all the players are lined up outside the penalty box with a ball. They pass the ball to the coach one at a time who passes it to the side and the player runs in and has a shot.

The player then collects the ball and joins the back of the line. With a squad of 14 players you would be lucky to get more than 3 shots each in 10 minutes. The rest of the time is spent collecting the ball or waiting in line which doesn't make you a better player.

So when you design your own games try to make sure the players get lots of practice and spend very little time not involved in the game. Also when they shoot or pass they have a target to aim for and a decision to make. Read the rest of the chapter and it will become clear.

## Around the Goal

This is my personal favourite and I don't think there is a single person on the planet that has played this game more than me.



### Equipment

3 x cones (2 x white, 1 x blue), a goal and as many balls as you can get.

### Set Up

As you face the goal place down the 1<sup>st</sup> white cone 5m to the left of the goal and now walk out on to the pitch 12m and place down the 2<sup>nd</sup> white cone. On the other side of the goal place down a blue cone 5m from the other post. Split the squad into two equal teams and have one team line up behind the 1<sup>st</sup> white cone they are the Smashers and the other, the Goalkeepers, line up behind the blue cone. Put all the balls together between the 1<sup>st</sup> white cone and the nearest post.

### Rules

When I say 'Go' one Smasher at a time must run around the 2<sup>nd</sup> white cone and shoot first time with the ball I pass out as they are running. The Goalkeepers when I say 'Go' you must run around behind the goal and try to save the shot. A different Smasher and different Goalkeeper every time I say 'Go'.

Play this game at a very high tempo and in 2 minutes one team can have as many as 5 or 6 shots at goal each. As soon as the first Smasher has kicked the ball send out the next one and so on.

Obviously you are going to quickly run out of balls if no one collects their ball after a shot. Just stand there and say the clock is still counting down the 2 minutes when all

the balls have run out. They quickly realise if they don't collect the balls the other team will get more shots and probably win.

Fun Tip – Really try to ramp up the atmosphere by acting like a TV Sports Commentator as each shot is taken.

Safety Tip – If you can see that it is a player with a hard shot against a little player in goal then push your pass out just that bit further so that the little player is less likely to get hurt.

Discipline Tip – Be very strict with allowing the Smashers only 1 touch or you will end up with a smasher kicking the ball forward then shooting from very close in and someone will get hurt.

### Progressions

1 – I could go on all day with progressions for this game but I will just give you some quick ideas.

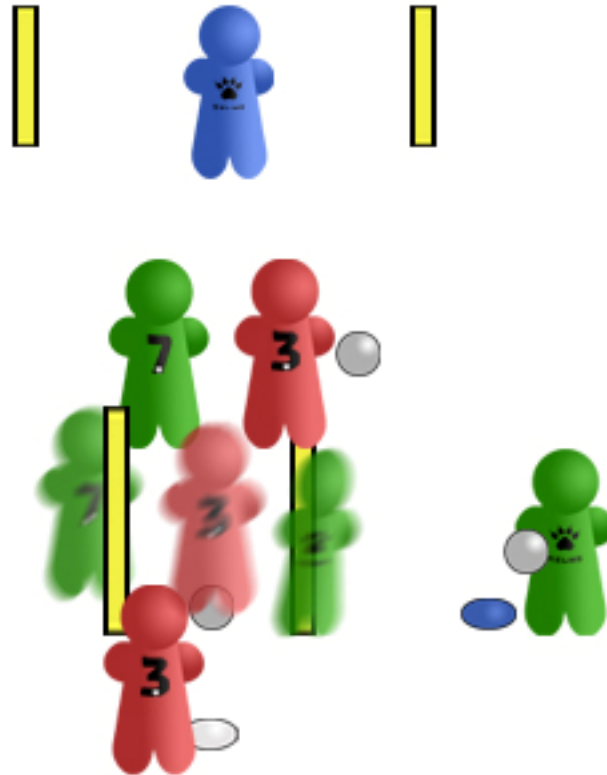
- Swap to the other side and have left foot shots
- Throw the ball up in the air and have volleys at goal.
- Throw it high and have headers at goal.
- Bounce the ball to the players so they have to control the shot more.
- Have a permanent goalkeeper and the defender runs around the goal to block the shot. This way you can allow the smasher two touches.

Only your imagination will hold you back.

I play it that each team has 2 goes as a Smasher and 2 as a Goalkeeper. It will take about 12-15 mins and everyone will have plenty of shots and heaps of fun. When you play it you will be delighted with see some of the saves the players make. I have seen some of the best full length saves in my life playing this game.

## Touch & Smash

The most realistic shooting practice you will ever do.



### Equipment

A goal, 2 x cones, 2 x Poles and enough balls for at least half the players

### Set Up

Put the two poles in the ground approx 25m away from the goal about 3m apart. Put a blue cone in line with the poles about 4m away from the nearest pole. Put a white cone down 4m away from the poles so that it lines up with the middle of the poles and the middle of the goal. Split the squad up into two equal teams. Have one team, the Smashers, line up behind the white cone facing the goal and the other team, the Defenders, line up behind the blue cone but each one of them needs a ball in their hands.

### Rules

The defenders have to jog past the poles and place the ball down in between them then sprint around the second pole and stop the Smasher from scoring. Smashers can go as the ball touches the ground and try to bring the ball close enough to the goal to score. All the defender has to do is touch the ball and the turn is over. You can go in goal yourself or ask for a volunteer.

Keep the tempo high again and as soon as the shot has been taken or the defender touched the ball let the next pair go.

Make sure that the distance between the poles and the goal is far enough to encourage players to run the ball forward and discourage a first time shot.

Fun Tip – Go in goal yourself and dive about the place like a lunatic.

Safety Tip – Watch for the Smashers creeping closer and closer to where the ball is placed. Some players get so excited they simply run in the way of the defender trying to put the ball down and get knocked over.

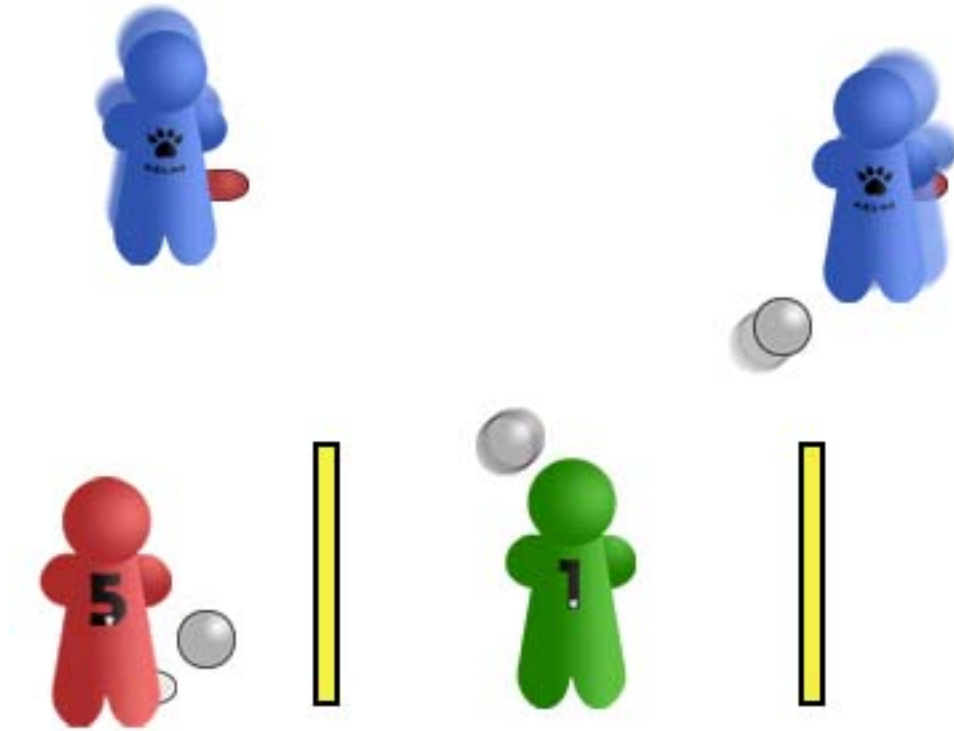
Discipline Tip – Make sure the ball is placed down not bounced down. Also make sure the ball is placed in the middle not near the pole the defenders have to run around. These two things have been the cause of every argument I have had with this game.

This is so realistic because in matches involving U-12's or younger a huge number of goals are scored with one attacker running at the goalkeeper with a defender chasing them. It gives the players invaluable practice shooting under pressure.

Remember the goal scorers in your team can learn lots by being the goalkeeper for this game. If they have to think like a goalkeeper they will learn how to beat a goalkeeper.

## Spare Man Shooting

Let the game teach them how to use the extra player.



### Equipment

3 x cones, a goal and enough balls for half the players.

### Set Up

Place down 2 red cones about 10m apart about 25m from the goal. Put down 1 white cone next to one of the posts. Split the squad into 2 equal teams. Line one team up behind the white cone with a ball each they are the defenders. Split the other team up equally and line them up behind each red cone facing the goal and they are the attackers.

### Rules

Defenders start each game by passing the ball out to either attacker. As soon as the attacker touches the ball you can run out and stop them scoring. The Attacker's team has two minutes to score as many goals as possible. To stop a goal all a defender has to do is touch the ball. You can go in goal or ask for a volunteer.

Again play at a high tempo and encourage the players to play quickly and shoot at the first opportunity. If the defenders are slow passing out the balls and slowing the tempo then you stand on the other side of the goal and pass the ball out for them.

Fun Tip – Allow the players to play the 'Joker' which means you have to run on and play for the team that shouted it. Only allow them one 'Joker' a game.

Safety Tip – Watch for players getting really close then shooting hard. I normally just jump in and say ‘Goal’ if I think the goalkeeper will get hurt before the shot is taken.

Discipline Tip – You have to be very strict that the ball is played along the ground to the attackers because otherwise the defenders will give bad passes on purpose.

### Progressions

1 – Introduce the offside rule (if they are old enough to play offside) and you be the Referee’s Assistant.

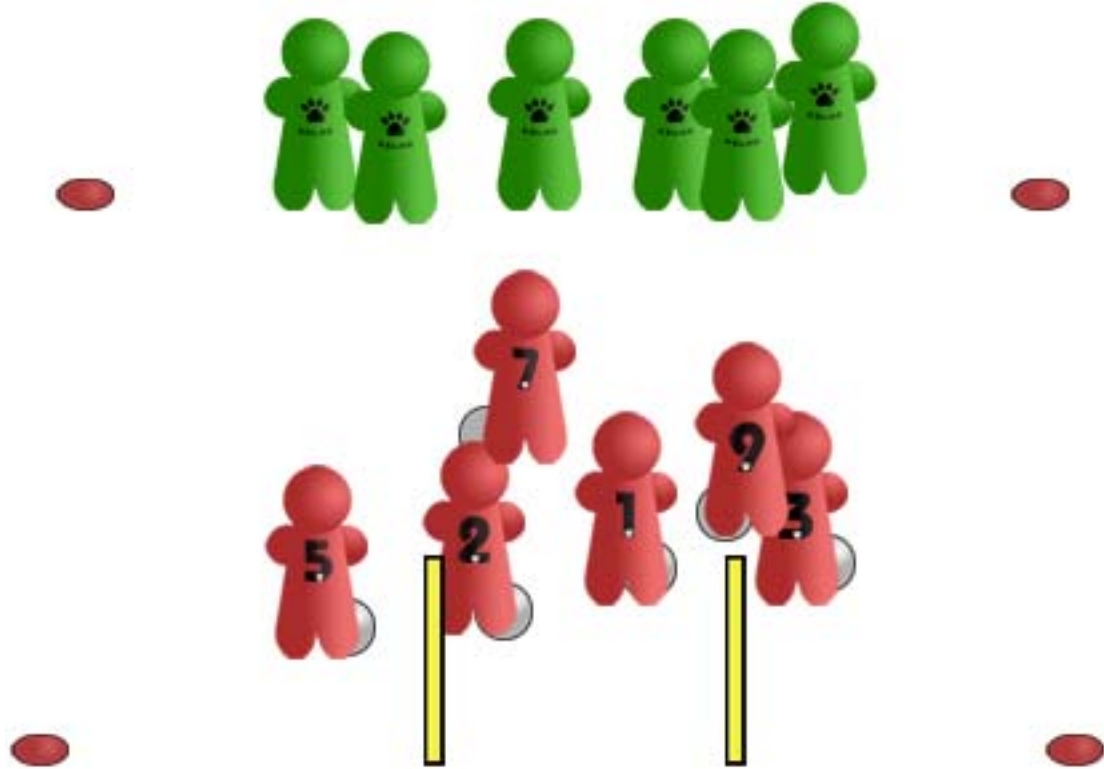
2 – The pass to the attackers is thrown out by the goalkeeper so it is a more difficult ball to control.

3 – After 10 seconds another defender is allowed on so as to encourage the attackers to score quickly.

A brilliant game but one that can get out of hand with some groups because the attacker who gets the ball first always shoots whether the defender is there to block the shot or not. If this happens then say that both attackers must touch the ball for a goal to count and they will start to play it the right way.

## Box Game

Essentially an excellent shooting game but works on lots of other techniques as well.



### Equipment

6 x cones, a goal and balls for half the players.

### Set Up

Either use the penalty area on a pitch or mark out an area approx 40m x 30m and put one goal on one of the long sides. Split the squad up into two equal teams with one team outside the area (Attackers) and one team (Defenders) with a ball each inside the area.

### Rules

The Attackers have 2 minutes to enter the area and try to win possession and score with as many of the balls as possible. The Defenders must try to stop them. No one is allowed to leave the area. If the ball goes out of the area except when a goal is scored then it is returned to the nearest defender.

Keep score by timing how long it took the attacking team to score all the goals or count how many balls were left after 2 minutes.

Everyone stays involved so if a Defender has their ball taken off them and scored then encourage them to help other Defenders by asking them to pass to the ball to them. In a perfect scenario the 'Box Game' goes from 6 x 1 v 1 battles at the start to a 6 v 6 possession game at the end.

When Attackers try to shoot too hard and miss the target point out to them how hard they worked to win the ball and now the Defenders get the ball back. Next time they will shoot on target I can guarantee it.

Fun Tip – Ask the Defenders who is going to be the last one with a ball. Whoever shouts the loudest tell the Attackers they all must target that Defender first before they can tackle anyone else.

Safety Tip – Watch out for Defenders just standing in the corner of the grid protecting their ball it always ends up with someone getting kicked. Make a rule that the ball cannot stop moving if it happens a lot.

Discipline Tip – Be very strict stopping Defenders who have lost their ball just standing around in front of the goal blocking shots.

### Progressions

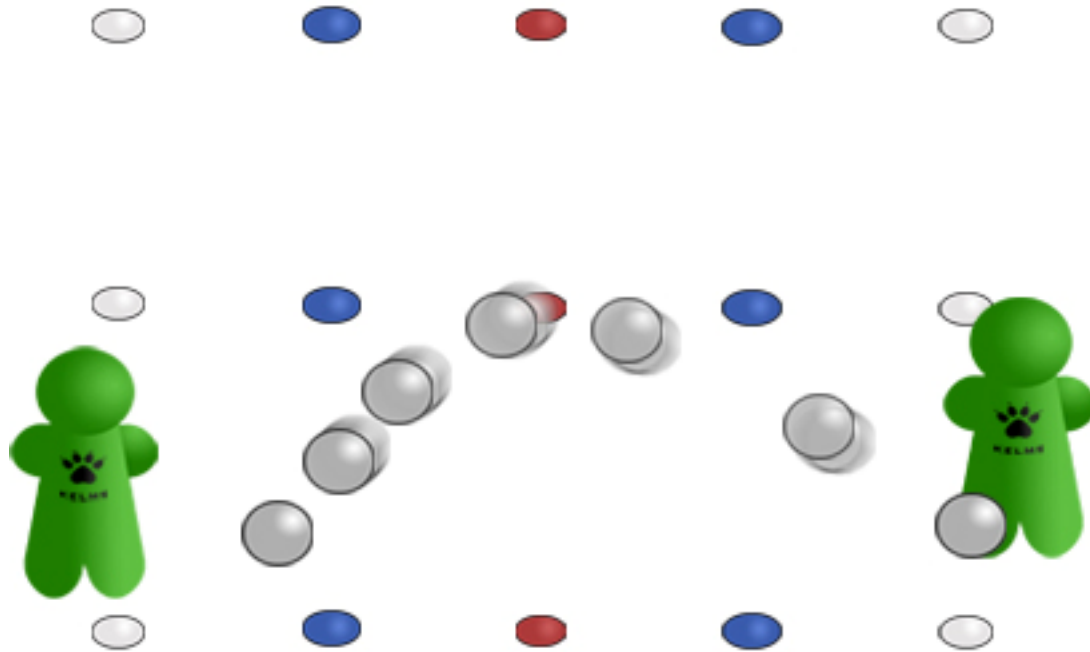
1 – Goals only count if the Attacker passes to another Attacker for a one touch finish. This encourages team play.

2 – Mark out an area around the goal or on a real pitch use the 6 yard box and say all goals have to be scored from outside of that area.

This is a terrific game that covers lots of techniques but remember it is a shooting game so make sure the players take lots of shots.

## Longest Drive

Simple but addictive.



### Equipment

15 x cones (3 x red, 6 x blue, 6 x white) and a ball for at least half the players.

### Set Up

Mark out 5 parallel lines 10m apart. Colour the lines in this order white, blue, red, blue then white again. Each line is 20m long. Basically you have set up a driving range 20m wide and 40m long. Divide the squad into pairs and ask the pair to stand at opposite ends of the driving range. Give all the players at one end a ball.

### Rules

The players have to see how far they can kick a ball accurately. To score points you have to kick the ball so its first bounce is past the red cones and still inside the range. 10 points for landing between the blue and the red cones, twenty for landing between the blue and white cones and 50 points if you can get the ball over the furthest white cones.

This is a terrific game if the players are tired or the weather is very warm as it is still fun although it is quite slow. You dictate the tempo and make sure all the balls have been kicked from one end before anyone collects their ball. You can make them kick one at a time or altogether it is up to you.

Fun Tip – Allow the players to double up. They can place the ball on top of a cone to kick it but only once and they get their score doubled wherever they land or lose every point they have already if they miss the grid.

Safety Tip – Be very strict with no one collecting a ball until all the balls are kicked otherwise you will have players in all directions and someone will get hurt.

Discipline Tip – If you are going to have all the players kick at once be very strict with it and any player who doesn't kick loses their go. When I first played this game regularly someone would get a ball in the back from a player kicking the ball after all the others.

### Progressions

1 – Again you are limited by your imagination you could have

- Longest Throw.
- Longest Volley.
- Longest Header.
- Longest Goalkeeper kick etc

2 – You can make it about accuracy too by saying the ball has to land between the red and blue cones. Or you could say you get triple points if your partner can catch the ball without moving off the white line.

## Space Invaders

Lots of fun for the players but maybe not for you.



### Equipment

4 x Cones, a ball for every player and lots of courage for you.

### Set Up

Mark out a grid 10m x 15m. Every player has a ball and they must line up at one end of the grid and you stand with your back to them 15m away.

### Rules

This is simple. You have to walk sideways along the end of the grid flapping your arms like a 'Space Invader' from the 70's arcade game. The players have one shot to hit you with the ball. They get 50 points for hitting an arm or leg, 100 points for your back and 500 for a head shot.

It is up to you if the players all kick at once or one at a time. It depends on how quickly you want the game to progress.

Fun Tip – I like to turn the tables on the players and after they have had 4 or 5 attempts I say now it is my go.

Safety Tip – Have somebody you trust make sure that everyone has had their turn before you turn around or ask twice before you turn around as the last thing you want is to be hit in the face by someone taking a late shot.

Discipline Tip – The players can get a bit out of control when they are allowed to smash the ball at someone so you need to have someone you trust to control them and stop players bringing the ball closer when your back is turned.

Progressions

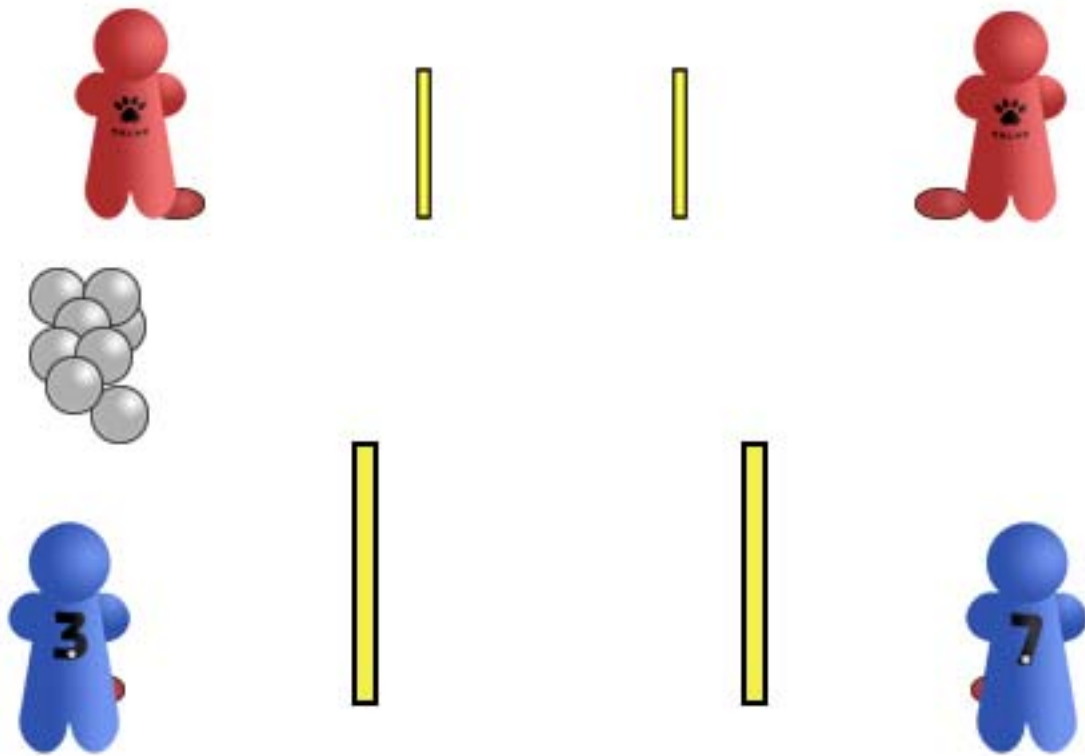
1 – Stand still.

2 – The players have to do a volley, a throw-in, a header etc

Extra Tip – I tend to do this more when the weather is cold so I will be wearing tracksuit bottoms, 2 or 3 training tops plus a rain jacket and maybe a woolly beanie as well. This way I am quite protected against getting hit. The fact is I rarely get hit at all the players get so excited that they try to hit the ball too hard and miss. If the players hit you a lot than think smart and get one of the other parents to volunteer.

## Change Soccer

Makes the players think quick and play quick.



### Equipment

4 x cones, 4 x poles and as many balls as possible.

### Set Up

Mark out a grid 30m x 20m and put a 5m goal at each end. Split the squad up into 2 equal teams. Send each team to a different end of the grid and ask the teams to split up again and have equal numbers on each corner of their end of the grid. Put all the balls on the side of the pitch.

### Rules

When I throw the ball on to the pitch 2 players from each team, one from each corner, must run on and try to score in the goal at the other end. Basically it is a 2 v 2 but when I shout 'Change' the players must leave the ball if they have not scored and a new ball is thrown on and 4 new players must come on to play. Each game is very quick and only lasts 10-15 seconds.

Fun Tip – Throw the ball in by bouncing it off your backside or the top of your head.

Safety Tip – Never throw the ball in the middle so it is an equal distance for both teams as this invites collisions. Always throw it to one side or the other and just keep varying which side you favour.

Discipline Tip – Be very strict with players kicking the ball after you have shouted ‘Change’ as this can lead to injuries with players running on looking at the other ball you threw on getting hit.

### Progressions

1 – Make the players think. When you shout ‘Change’ it is just like a normal game of 2 v 2 but when you shout ‘Change 2’ two players from each corner must run on to make it a 4 v 4.

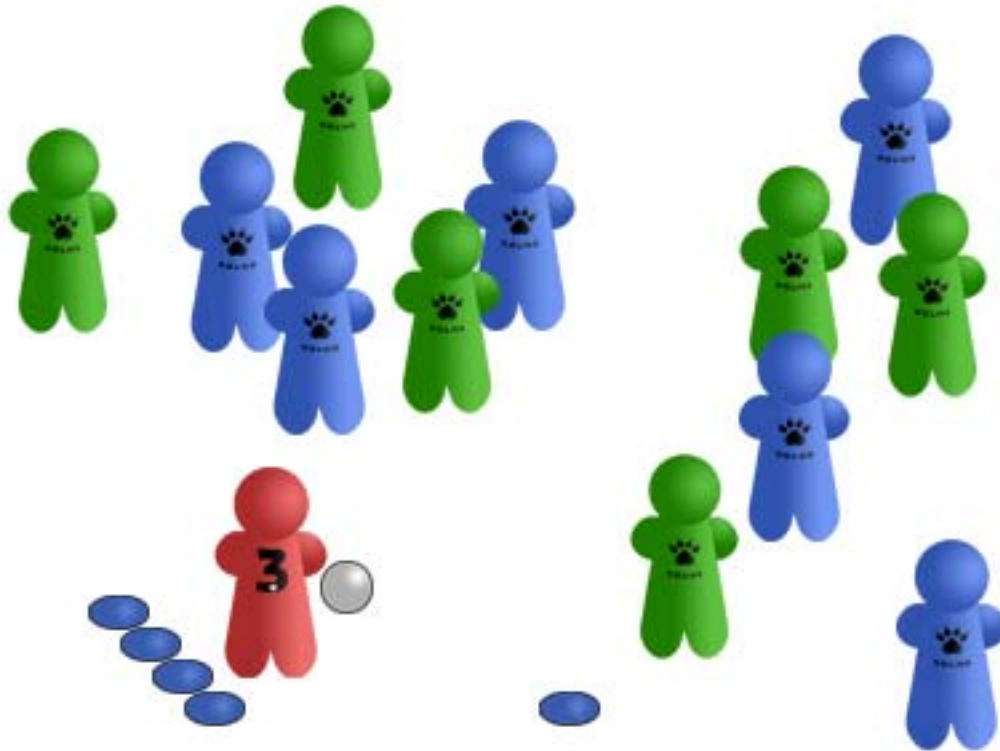
2 – When you shout ‘Change’ the players have to think does it apply to them i.e. ‘Change if you have blue eyes’, ‘Change if you think Coke is nicer than Pepsi’ or ‘Change if the number of your home is even’. This way you might get only one player to run on or it might be 5 v 3.

3 – When you shout ‘Change’ only the players change but the ball they were playing with is the one the next 2 v 2 plays with as well.

You can really have lots of fun with the players with this one. Encourage the players to shoot as soon as they get the opportunity.

## Twisted Soccer Cricket

Fun game that keeps everybody involved.



### Equipment

1 x ball, 5 x cones and enough bibs to make 3 x teams.

### Set Up

Place down 4 cones in a line to make the wicket and place the 5<sup>th</sup> cone about 6-8m to the right. Divide the squad up into 3 teams i.e a green, blue and red team. One team becomes the batters and two teams go into the field. You are the bowler.

### Rules

You roll the ball at the wicket and the batter has to kick the ball before it hits. Each batter gets only one kick and to score points they have to run around the 5<sup>th</sup> cone and back around the wickets until they are out. When the batter kicks the ball the first team to touch the ball in the field must all get in a line and tunnel the ball through their legs. When the player at the end of the tunnel holds the ball up the batter is out.

Fun Tip – Introduce targets and say if you can hit the crossbar you get 100 points.

Safety Tip – You always be the bowler so you can make sure everyone is far enough back not to get hurt if they get hit by the ball.

Discipline Tip – Watch for players at the end of the tunnel just booting the ball back at you. If you don't clamp down on it early then the game will be really slowed down when they kick the ball way over your head or a long way to the side.

### Progressions

- 1 – Instead of just the batter having to do the run to the 5<sup>th</sup> cone and back the entire team must run to get any points.
- 2 – Change it to the batter isn't out until the ball gets back into your hands.
- 3 – When fielding the first team to touch the ball must go at the front of the tunnel and the other team must go at the back but the ball must be tunnelled through both teams.
- 4 – Instead of tunnel ball the team who touches the ball first must do one pass to each other.

This is a terrific game for lots of reasons such as team work, organisation, communication between the players and it is fun to play. Keep it at a high tempo. Depending what country you live in you could make this Soccer Baseball or Soccer Rounders.

## Chapter Four

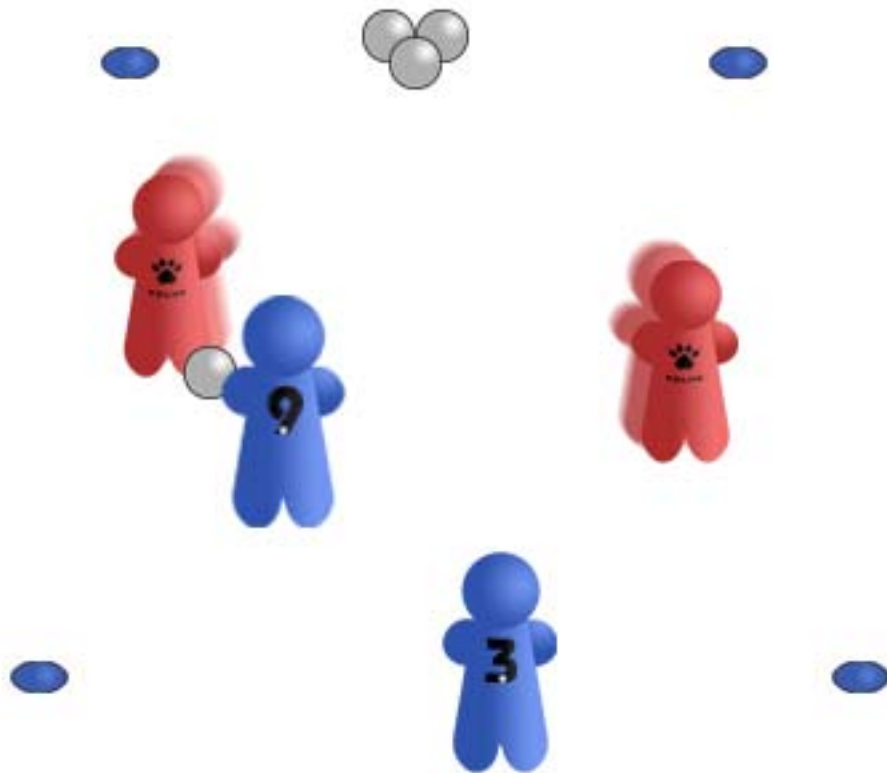
### Passing Games

The emphasis on these games is for the players to have lots of practice passing the ball over short distances and having to make a decision when to pass and where to move to.

Obviously as one player passes another must receive the ball. Encourage the players to always use the insides of their feet to control the ball. It is a very good habit to get into as it allows the player to push the ball in any direction with their first touch. This could be away from a tackle or to have a shot at goal.

## Moving House

Simple, quick and lots of fun.



### Equipment

For each set of 4 players you need 4 x balls and 4 x cones.

### Set Up

Mark out a grid 10m x 20m. At one end of the grid place the 4 balls and at the other end put one player who is the receiver. Inside the grid divide the other 3 players into 2 attackers and 1 defender.

### Rules

The 2 attackers have to get all 4 balls one at a time to the receiver without the defender touching the ball or the ball leaving the ground. If the defender touches the ball they have to bring the ball back and start again until all 4 balls are with the receiver. The defender counts how many times they made the attackers go back and start again.

For younger players only allow the defender to walk so that the attackers get some success at getting the ball to the receiver or make the defender go 'crab style'.

Fun Tip – Introduce a time limit.

Safety Tip – There isn't really a way for the players to hurt themselves with this game in my experience.

Discipline Tip – As you will need to set up 3 or 4 of these depending on the size of your squad make sure you stand where you are close to each game to discourage any messing around.

You can easily add a player to pass the balls in at the start to the attackers if you have extra players.

### Progressions

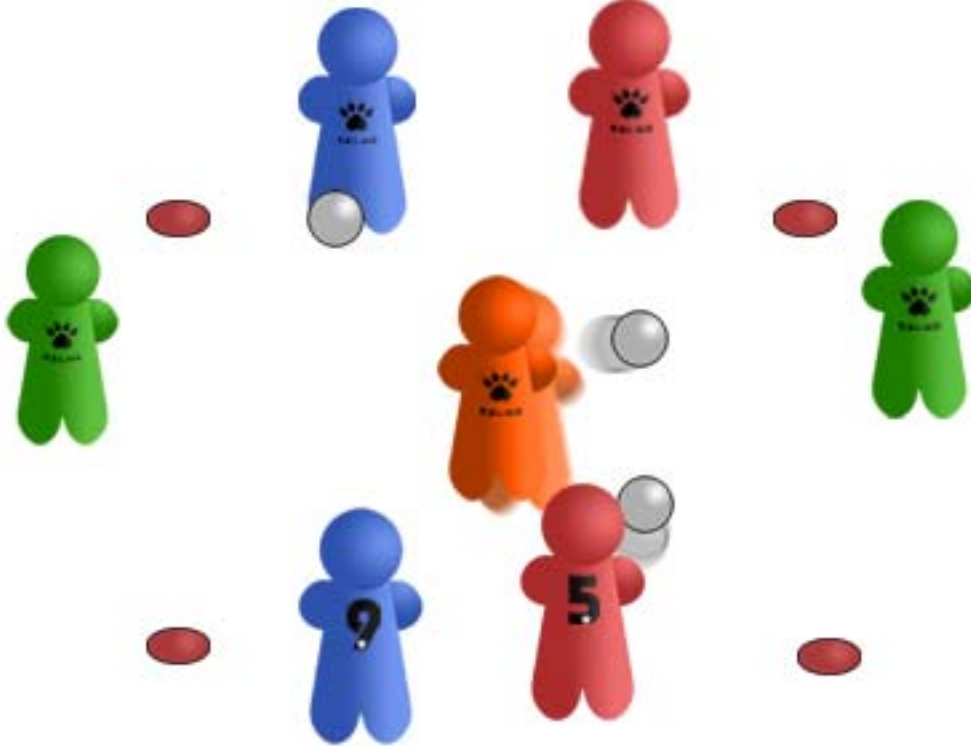
1 – If the defender touches the ball you start again with a different ball. This will teach the players to be safer with their passing.

2 – Bonus points are given if the ball gets to the receiver in less than 5 seconds.

With younger players I would play with a very wide grid to encourage them to space out away from the player on the ball.

## Blocker

Brilliant way to make players think and look up before passing.



### Equipment

For every 7 players you need 3 balls and 4 x cones

### Set Up

Mark out a grid approx 8 x 8m. Split the 7 players up into 3 x pairs and 1 blocker. The blocker stands inside the grid and isn't allowed to leave the grid. The pairs are on opposite sides of the outside of the grid.

### Rules

The pairs have to pass the ball across the grid to each other without the blocker touching the ball. The pairs are free to move around the grid but only score a point if the ball goes across the grid. They have 1 minute to get as many completed passes in as possible.

Encourage players to be patient and move if there is no opportunity to pass around the blocker.

Fun Tip – Be the blocker yourself and run around like a lunatic.

Safety Tip – The ball must stay on the ground and the blocker must stay on their feet to stop the blocker getting hurt.

Discipline Tip – Be very strict with two things. Firstly the blocker ignoring everyone else and focusing on only trying to stop one pair and secondly the blocker kicking the ball away because both of these stop players getting practice passing.

### Progressions

1 – Bonus points for successful 1<sup>st</sup> time passes.

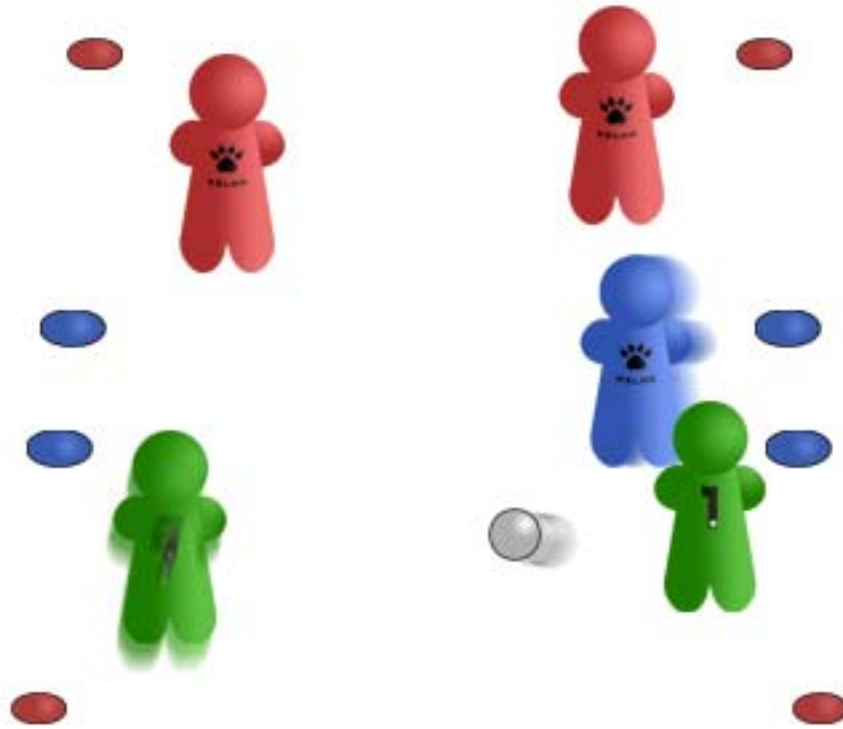
2 – A pair loses 5 points if they hit the blocker when the blocker wasn't even trying to stop their ball.

3 – Introduce a 2<sup>nd</sup> blocker.

Remember don't worry too much about the blocker getting blocks in as the point of the game is for lots of practice passing. Regularly change the blocker and feel free to change the game around to suit the number of players you have but remember if you have 6 or 7 pairs passing across the grid at the one time the balls tend to hit each other.

## Interceptor

A team passing game



### Equipment

For every 5 players you need 8 x cones and 1 x ball.

### Set Up

Mark out a grid 5 x 10m and halfway along the long side mark out 2 x 5m 'Interceptor Box' across the grid. Split the 5 players up into 2 pairs and an Interceptor. Put one pair inside the grid on either side of the 'Interceptor Box' and the Interceptor inside the box.

### Rules

The 2 pairs must work together to see how many times they can pass the ball along the ground across the 'Interceptor Box' without the ball being touched by the Interceptor. They have 1 minute to see how many they can get.

Encourage the players to keep the ball moving and stay on their toes to be able to play quickly. Praise loudly any players that switch sides or run with the ball from one side to the other to confuse the defender.

Fun Tip – Allow the Interceptor to dive and use their hands like a goalkeeper.

Safety Tip – Insist the ball is kept on the ground otherwise the interceptor can get hurt.

Discipline Tip – Watch for players holding on to the ball and not passing as this can get other players frustrated.

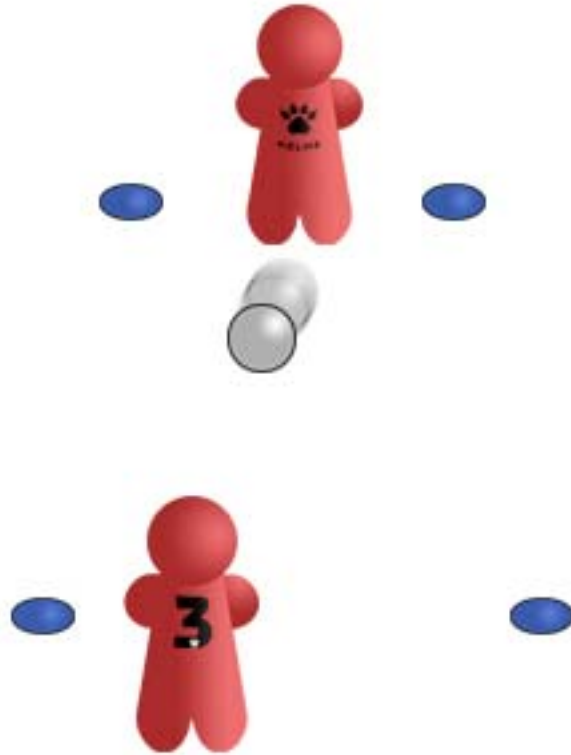
### Progressions

- 1 – Bonus points for 1<sup>st</sup> time passes back across the ‘Interceptor Box’.
- 2 – Expand the game to include more players i.e play with 3 or 4 players on each side of the grid and play with 2 interceptors. Bonus points for playing the pass between the 2 interceptors.
- 3 – Introduce a time limit that the ball can be on one side of the ‘Interceptor Box’ maybe 10 seconds.

This game is all about passing the ball to find the spare player and passing across the ‘Interceptor Box’ so encourage the players to pass the ball constantly.

## Channel Game

Brilliant game for working on first time passing and accuracy.



### Equipment

For every 2 players you need 1 x ball and 4 cones.

### Set Up

Mark out a grid 2m x 5m and put one player at either end of the grid.

### Rules

Each player has only 1 touch and they have to try to pass the ball through the other end of the grid to get a point. You also get a point if your opponent hits the ball out of the channel. First player to 10 points wins.

A few conditions you cannot score with the first pass that begins each point, you have to use the inside of your foot to pass and the ball can never leave the ground.

Keep a good supply of balls close by so that the games can keep going and lots of time is not lost collecting balls that have gone out of the channel.

If you have a less mature team then remove getting a point for scoring through the other end of the grid and begin with both players on 10 points and you lose points every time you kick the ball out of the channel.

Fun Tip – Encourage the players to play to their opponent's weaker foot.

Safety Tip – Watch for players just smashing the ball at each other and not using the inside of the foot to pass.

Discipline Tip – Make sure you space the grids out so that one ball from one game doesn't easily interfere with another as this can get players frustrated.

### Progressions

1 – Enlarge the grid and make it a 2 v 2 Channel Game.

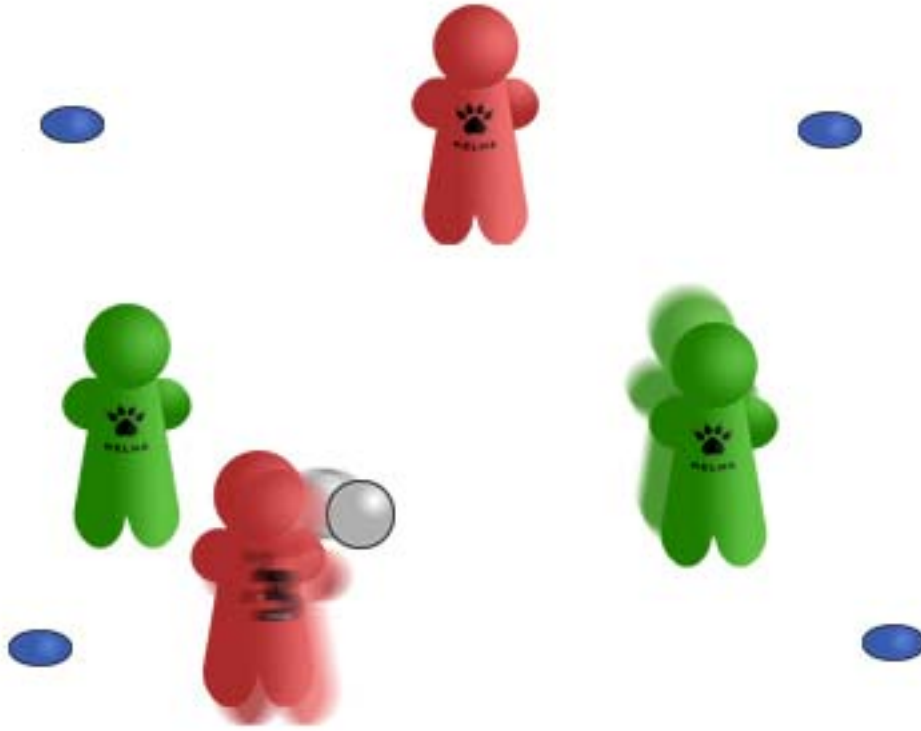
2 – Make the grids 1 – 2m longer so the players have to be more accurate.

3 – Introduce a time limit i.e. 2 mins and after that time the winner moves on to the next grid and so the players keep changing who they play.

Played properly this is a brilliant game for working on 1<sup>st</sup> touch passes but you have to understand that not all players are mature enough for this. With this game in particular if you are finding the players are spending most of their time not playing and chasing the balls as they go out of the grid then just move on to something else. Come back to it when the players are mature enough.

## Line Break

Fabulous game that teaching players how to play in a 2 v 1 situation.



### Equipment

For every 4 players 1 x ball and 4 x cones

### Set Up

Mark out a grid 10m x 15m. Put 1 x defender on each of the 10m sides and place the 2 x attackers in the middle of the grid with a ball.

### Rules

The 2 x attackers have to try to dribble the ball over the 10m lines without the defenders touching the ball as many times as possible within 2 mins. The defenders have to stay on their line until the 2 attackers head towards them. If the defender touches the ball the attack is stopped and the attackers must head back towards opposite line. After 2 mins the defenders have their turn as the attackers.

No better game to teach the players where to stand when supporting a player with the ball. Encourage loudly any player who uses the full width of the grid so that the defender cannot mark both players at once.

Fun Tip – When the players have got the concept of the game don't play for a fixed time limit but play until the defenders have touched the ball three times.

Safety Tip – If the defender begins to tackle hard for the ball remind they only have to touch the ball to stop the attack.

Discipline Tip – The only time I have had problems with this game was when the defender kept booting the ball away and the players lost time collecting the ball so just a reminder to the defender that they only have to touch the ball.

### Progressions

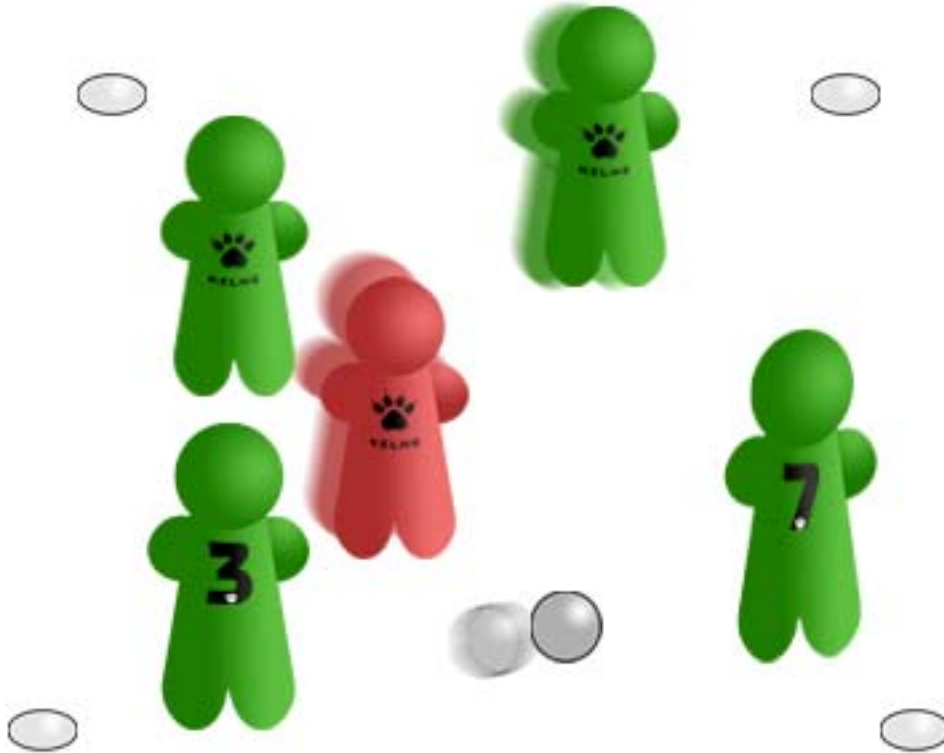
1 – One of the 2 attackers gets double points if they score.

2 – 5 times over the line without a defender touching the ball gets 5 bonus points.

This is just a fabulous game as it works on the players passing but also covers running with the ball with your head up, decision making, supporting play and defence positioning. All this is done just by the players playing the game and the repetition of the game will teach the players this without anyone needing to tell them what to do.

## Can you keep the ball

Brilliant way to encourage simple passes away from defenders



### Equipment

For every 5 players you need 4 x cones & 1 x ball

### Set Up

Mark out a grid 15m x 15m and have all 5 players inside it. Make one of the players a defender.

### Rules

To score a point the 4 players have to do 5 passes inside the grid without the defender touching the ball. The 4 players have 1 minute to get as many points as they can.

I, normally, start this game with the players having the ball in their hands so they get to understand the concept first and have to throw the ball to each other. The only condition they can not throw the ball over head height.

You may have to limit the defender to give the players more chance of success. You could say the defender can only walk or the defender is not allowed to tackle but can only intercept a pass.

To generate excitement you need to encourage any player who passes the ball away from the defender to another player and be really vocal when a team gets a point for 5 passes.

Fun Tip – Place a cone down in the middle of the grid which divides the grid into 4 quarters. Tell the players they cannot stay in the same quarter for more than 4 seconds. This keeps them moving.

Safety Tip – Just the usual if you ask players to tackle each other watch for over enthusiastic tackles.

Discipline Tip – Watch for defenders kicking the ball out of the grid constantly as it irritates the players and stops them getting the passing practice.

### Progressions

1 – The teams get a bonus point for every pass they can make after they reach 5 passes.

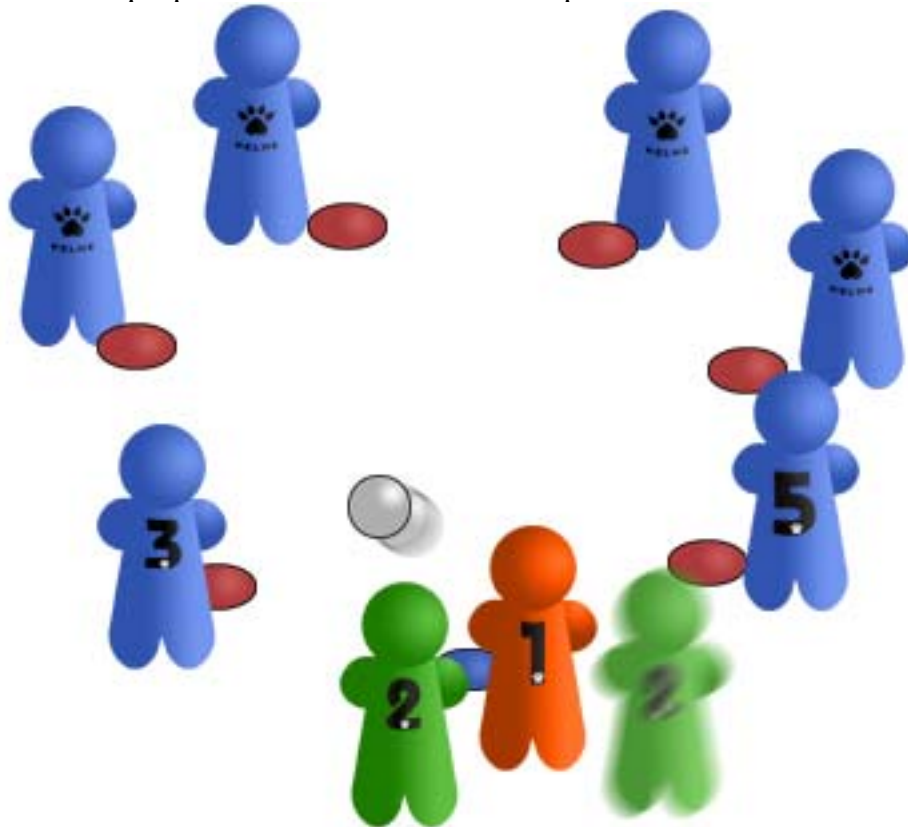
2 – The team gets 10 points if all 4 players are involved in the 5 passes.

3 – Give each player a number and the ball must be passed in sequence from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4. If they can do it they get 10 points.

One extra tip with this game you want the players to control the ball out of reach of the defender so loudly praise players who move the ball away from a defender with their first touch.

## Circle Race

Simple technique practice with a little bit of fun pressure.



### Equipment

7 x cones and 1 x ball

### Set Up

We will do this example with 12 players. Mark out a circle about 8m wide using the 7 cones. Split the squad up into 2 teams and ask all 6 players in one team to stand around the circle each one on a different cone. They are the 'Passers'. You stand on the last cone with the ball. The other 6 players are the 'Runners.'

### Rules

One player from 'Runners' has to stand next to you. The game is simple as soon as you say 'Go' you have to pass the ball to the 1<sup>st</sup> Passer on their cone and the ball must go around the circle with every player passing the ball till it gets back to you. If the 'Runner' can run around the outside of the circle and back to you before the ball gets back to you then the 'Runners' get a point if the ball makes it first then the 'Passers' get a point. Let every 'Runner' have a turn running around outside then let the teams swap places.

It is best to start this one with the 'Passers' throwing the ball to each other or bouncing it so that everyone understands the concept.

Once everyone understands then you can make them pass the ball with their feet, thighs, chests, head only your imagination can stop you.

If the 'Runners' are always winning then either make the circle bigger or make them hop, run backwards, run sideways anything you want to even the race up.

Fun Tip – Hold on the back of the shirt of the 'Runner' standing next to you when you say 'Go'.

Safety Tip – Always have the 'Runner' running around the circle in the opposite direction to the ball so there are no collisions near the finish.

Discipline Tip – A regular problem with this game is 'Passers' moving inwards away from their cone and making the circle smaller. Insist everyone stays back near their cone. Another much more dangerous problem is 'Passers' tripping 'Runners' as they go past be really strict if you think you see someone trying to do this.

### Progressions

1 – The 'Passers' must take two touches before they can pass the ball on.

2 – The 'Passer' cannot give the ball to the person next to them.

## Chapter Five

### Small Sided Games

This is a crucial chapter and it is extremely important to realise that players learn when they are playing and they should play as much as possible. When I train at least half of my session is playing small sided games and sometimes it is the entire session.

It is better to play a 4 v 4 game than 7 v 7 game simply because the players will get to do more tackles, passes and shots the fewer players are involved in the game so they get better quicker.

It is OK to have two teams playing against each other with uneven numbers so never ask players to stand out of the game simply because of odd numbers. Stack the team short a player by putting a couple of your best players in that team or put the up and coming players in the teams with the most players.

**13 players** – 4 v 3 & 3 v 3      **11 players** – 3 v 3 & 3 v 2      **10 players** – 3 v 3 & 2 v 2

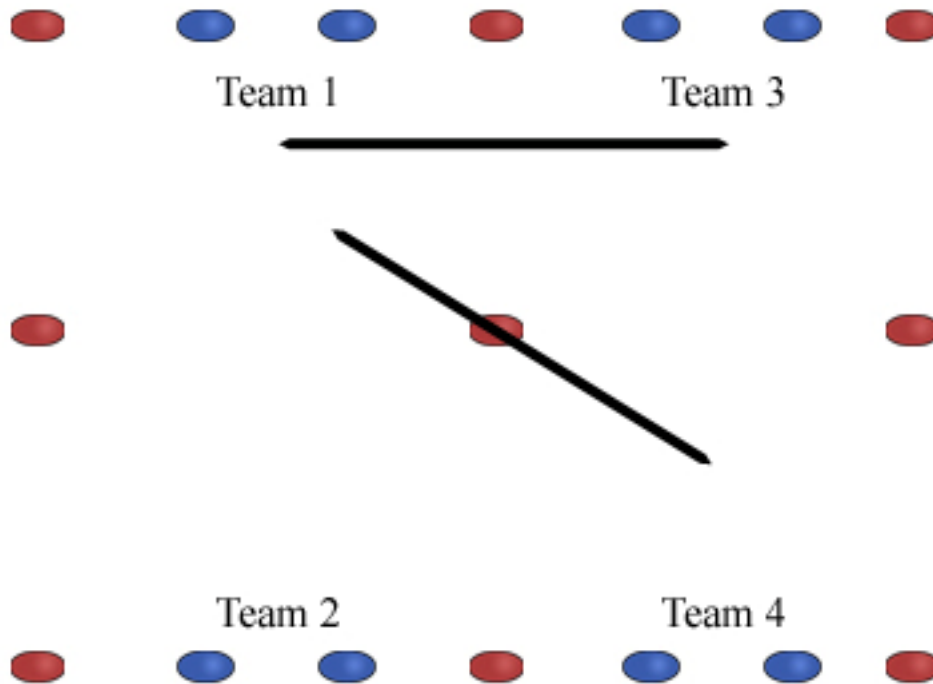
The size of the pitch is up to you but as a guide 30m x 20m is fine for a 4 v 4 game. If the players struggle to pass the ball to each other because everyone seems very close then make it bigger.

Don't worry too much about the size of the pitch or the number of players. Just remember that the reason you are playing the games is so the players get better so anything that stops the game or a player playing just change it.

- If the players argue constantly about whether the ball goes out or not then remove the sidelines and play with no boundaries now they can practice playing not practice arguing.
- If the players don't score enough then make the goals bigger to keep the enthusiasm high. If they score too easily make the goals a bit smaller but remember players like to score so not too small.
- Play with no goalkeepers so everyone is involved in the action even future goalkeepers need to be able to use their feet.
- Have a supply of balls behind the goals so no time is wasted collecting the ball after each goal.
- Be imaginative change the rules so the players play the way you want i.e. the ball cannot go in the air, no one can pass more than 5m, a goal only counts if it is a 1<sup>st</sup> time shot etc.

Enjoy yourself and the players will to.

## Set Up



Set up the pitches as in the diagram. After the first game ask the players to go back to their own goal. Now ask Teams 1 and 3 to move pitches so that Team 1 will now play Team 4 and Team 3 will play Team 2. When those games are finished ask all the players to go back to their goal in the last game they played. Now ask Teams 3 and 4 to move pitches so that each team has played each other once.

Using this set up you can play 3 x 3min games inside 10 minutes. If you change the rules slightly, like will be explained throughout this chapter, you can get all the teams to play each other again and you have another 10 mins played. Make the games quick so no matter what the score a new challenge comes within a few minutes.

Use the phrase 'move pitches' as if you say the words 'swap' or 'change' the player who took 5 minutes to put their bib on while take 0.5 seconds to take it off

## Passing SSG's

All the following SSG's force the players to pass to get success. There is a bit of counting how many passes have been done in these games. Don't allow the players to worry more about the numbers than the playing. Boys especially can forget about the playing totally and just fixate on how many passes the opposition claim to have made.

### 5 Passes a goal

Play a normal 4 v 4 game with goals scored counting but add that if a team plays 5 consecutive passes without the other team touching the ball then that counts as a goal as well.

Tip – Watch out for 2 players trying to play 5 passes between themselves. If this happens too much then say the pass doesn't count if you pass back to the player who gave you the ball.

If your players are struggling to get to 5 then make it 4 passes likewise if it is too easy you can make it 7 or 8 passes.

#### Progressions

- 1 – For the 5 passes to count they must all be played in the other team's half of the pitch.
- 2 – Passes played backwards don't count.
- 3 – A pass through the gap between 2 players from the other team counts as 2 passes.
- 4 – After 5 passes a team can score in either goal.

## Passing Points

A goal is worth as many passes it took in the move to create the goal without the other team touching the ball. If they touch it the count has to restart.

Tip – Watch out for teams trying to accumulate points and not taking goal scoring opportunities. If this happens too much then cap the number of points a goal can be worth to 5 points to encourage the players to try and score.

#### Progressions

- 1 – A pass through the gap between 2 players from the other team counts double.
- 2 – A pass in the air or a backwards pass doesn't count at all.
- 3 – A headed pass counts double.

## Total Football

For a goal to count every player on the team must have touched the ball before it is scored. If the other team touches the ball the count has to restart.

This is a terrific game as sometimes with younger players games can be dominated by 1 or 2 stronger players and the others never touch the ball. Don't allow the stronger players to run up to the other players with the ball and ask them to tap the ball back to them and then say that everyone has touched the ball.

Encourage loudly the teams to attack with all 4 players and everyone is involved in the build up. Discourage teams who pass the ball amongst themselves at the back to get all the touches then attack with 2 players or even worse with 1 player.

### Progressions

- 1 – All the touches have to be in the other team's half to count.
- 2 – A goal counts double if one of the passes in the build up was in the gap between 2 players from the other team.
- 3 – Instead of the whole team must touch the ball make it that only 1 designated player has to touch the ball for a goal to count. Make it the best player on the team and see how they cope with the extra pressure.

## Splitters

A normal game of 4 v 4 but a goal counts double if the ball is passed through the gap between 2 players from the other team in the move leading up to the goal.

Encourage any player who makes a run so that the ball can be passed through the other team's defence. The biggest problem with this game is that the other players in the team who have got the ball don't position themselves so that the ball can be passed through any gaps in the defence.

### Progressions

- 1 – A pass through the gap between 2 players from the other team doesn't count unless it is on the ground.
- 2 – Only goals scored after the ball is passed through the gap between 2 players from the other team count.
- 3 – For a goal to count the goal must be scored with only one touch after a pass between 2 players from the other team. This encourages the defence to stay tight together and encourages the attacking team to look for gaps close to the goal.

## 2 – Touch

A normal game of 4 v 4 but every player is allowed a maximum of 2 touches before another player must touch the ball. If they take more than 2 touches it is a free kick to the opposition.

Brilliant game that works on both receiving the ball and passing the ball as the players must control the ball with 1 touch to set up the pass with the next.

If the players are struggling to play 2 – Touch that just make it a maximum of 3 touches before another player must touch the ball. Often with young players they just don't realise that they have used up all 2 touches controlling the ball.

The game is to encourage passing so if you have to keep stopping the game to give a free kick because a player had 3 touches you need to change the rules.

If the players really struggle with 2 – Touch then this is an indication that they should be spending more time playing the running games in Chapter 2 as this will improve their ability to control a ball.

### Progressions

1 – The players get an extra touch if they control the ball with their non-preferred foot.

2 – They get a goal for passing through the gap between 2 players on the other team.

When you play 2 – Touch don't allow players to shield the ball if they have used up their two touches. Insist they leave the ball alone and allow the next player to have the ball.

Encourage the players when they are intelligent and don't waste a touch stopping the ball for no reason. Praise loudly any player who receives the ball facing forward so they can play forward without wasting touches turning around.

This game can easily become very stop-start if free kicks are happening constantly simply because the players need more than even 3 touches to play then it is best to change the game entirely. The reason we play it is to encourage passing so if this isn't happening we need to change.

## Focus SSG's

All the following SSG's require the players to think to gain success. It is just as important that the players learn to concentrate and work as a team as it is for them to learn good technique.

We cannot expect the players to focus on the weekend if during the week the training allows them to day dream when they play.

## Gone in 60 seconds

Simple and just brilliant.

Play a normal game of 4 v 4 but a goal doesn't count for 60 seconds. If in that time the opposition score then the goal is wiped totally and now this opposition goal has 60 seconds till it counts.

If the same team scores again inside the 60 seconds then the 1<sup>st</sup> goal counts immediately but the 2<sup>nd</sup> goal now has 60 seconds till it counts.

This can be a fantastic way to get players to run after the ball after a goal has been scored and restart play quickly. Start the countdown from the second the goal is scored and the players will get the game going as quickly as possible.

Make the goals very big so there is lots of opportunity to score and start the countdown.

### Progressions

1 – If your team has scored they cannot score again in the 60 seconds or they wipe their own goal off. Encourage the team to try to win the ball back and keep possession till the 60 seconds is up instead of defending for the whole time.

2 – If the goal is scored with the non-preferred foot or is a headed goal then it counts straight away.

## Game of two halves

When you are in your own half of the pitch your team is limited to a maximum of 2 touches before another player must touch the ball. In the opposition half you can have as many as you like.

Encourage players who pass the ball around and out of their own half and discourage players from kicking the ball out of their half as soon as possible just so that they can play normally.

A player is allowed to run the ball over the halfway line as long as they didn't take more than 2 touches in their own half.

### Progressions

1 – The players get an extra touch if they control the ball with their non-preferred foot in their own half.

2 – Switch it around and play 2 –Touch in the opposition half and free play in your own half.

This game is a beautifully simple game but the players must be aware of where they are on the pitch to play it properly so they really need to concentrate.

## Win by One

Play a normal 4 v 4 game for approx 3 mins but a team can never lead by more than 1 goal. If a team goes 2 in front by any way other than an own goal then they immediately lose the game. If a team scores a deliberate own goal they lose the game immediately.

It is so simple but a team now has different goals to achieve success depending on the score. If they are leading by one goal they must try to win the ball and keep possession of the ball. If they are drawing or losing they must try to score.

Encourage teams winning to try to keep possession of the ball as far away as possible from their own goal. Strongly discourage teams to try to play defensively for the rest of the game when they score although the game teaches them that this usually doesn't work.

Make sure the goals are bigger than normal so it is easier to score.

### Progressions

1 – Start the game with one team already leading by 1 goal

2 – The player who scored the goal must run around the pitch twice before they can play again.

## All Up

A goal doesn't count unless every player on your team is in the opposition half when it is scored. This encourages the team to attack as a team and not watch the play from the other end of the pitch.

Normally I would make the pitch slightly longer for this game so that the last player has to deliberately move into the opposition's half and isn't just there anyway when the goal is scored. The reason for the game is to get the players to focus so we don't want to reward a player when they have not done the right thing.

Again make sure the goals are big enough so that it is easy to score so those players at the back have to think quickly or the goal won't count.

Loudly encourage players who delay scoring until everyone is in the half. Also encourage players that tell the attacker it is OK to score because everyone is in the right place.

### Progressions

1 – Still have the rule the same that the scoring team must be in the opposition half for the goal to count but now have it so that a goal counts double if all the opposition aren't in their own half too.

2 – The goal counts double if the last player over the halfway line is the one who scores the goal.

The simplest game to explain but you will be amazed how many players switch off as soon as they have passed the ball. Magnificent way to keep everyone focused on the game.

## Switcheroo

This game is for the more mature players.

Play a normal 4 v 4 game but when a goal is scored the teams switch ends and play in the opposite direction. So when a goal is scored the team that scored the goal starts the game with a goal kick and attacks the other goal as quickly as possible.

This can be really testing for younger players as the whole concept of the goal that you have to score in changing so frequently can confuse them but when they get the concept it is terrifically beneficial.

The reason for the game is to get players to understand that depending on who has just scored they are either in an attacking position or a defensive position and how does that affect them.

Watch for players running to the opposite end after a goal is scored. Although I would rather they stayed where they were and played a different role this shows they are focused and realise they have to move if they want to stay a defender or attacker.

Until the players understand the concept let the Switcheroo be slow but when they understand make sure the Switcheroo is as quick as possible.

### Progressions

1 – At one end of the pitch have 1 big goal at the other end have 2 little goals so when the Switcheroo happens the players have a different set of problems.

2 – Similarly you could have one end of the pitch has a big goal and needs a goal keeper and the other end has a little goal with no goal keeper.

With all these Focus SSG's remember that the point of the game is keep the players focused so if the game is plodding along with little changes you need to stimulate the game.

With the majority of these games if no goals are scored then the player's focus isn't tested so you need to make sure goals happen. The easiest way to do this is to simply enlarge the goals but you could also artificially stimulate the games.

In 'Win by One' or 'Gone in 60 seconds' you could say I have just awarded the red team a goal and watch who understands what that means.

In 'All Up' you could say I am going to give the red team a goal in 5 seconds and countdown 5 – 4 – 3 - 2 – 1 and see who reacts.

In a 'Game of two halves' you could have a supply of balls next to you and whenever the ball goes out of the grid you could throw the ball on to someone and see if they understand how many touches they have.

In 'Switcheroo' you could say whenever I yell out 'Switcheroo' you have change direction immediately.

## Overload SSG's

Professional players spend hours and hours practicing to try to get a situation during a game when there are more attackers than defenders near the ball. It is a good to get the players used to how to play when this happens.

The reason for these games is to create situations where the players are outnumbered so encourage players to stay involved in the play and create that imbalance.

## Palota

Play a normal 4 v 4 game but when a goal is scored the scorer must run around the pitch once before they can play again.

Really good game with the very young age groups as it stops one player dominating the game as after 3 or 4 times around the pitch they normally try to pass the ball for someone else to score.

You have to make sure the goals are big so there is lots of goals which then creates the imbalance in numbers.

I have seen this played where the player has been asked to stay out of the game for a minute after they have scored. I don't like that as I hate to see a player not participating. If they have to run around the pitch it is up to them how long they stay out of the game for. If they go slow you are happy as the imbalance lasts longer.

## Progressions

1 – You could have the goal scorer stand next to you and they can go back on when they have described their goal to you. You can have some fun with this one by asking them lots of questions about the goal to delay them getting back on.

2 – If they score with their non-preferred foot or a header than they only have to put one foot off the pitch before they can come back on.

3 – You could set up a grid off the pitch and say when you can do 5,10 or 15 juggles without dropping the ball inside the grid you can go back on.

## 5 v 3

A great game because there is a permanent imbalance but we need to make the game an even contest. The team with 5 players are limited to 2 – Touch and the team with 3 players can have as many touches as they want.

This game encourages the players to play the way you would want them to in a real game. When there is an imbalance in players it is best for the team with the larger numbers to keep the ball moving and pass frequently so this game is very beneficial for the players.

Particularly with this game encourage all the players to stay involved when attacking very often one player sometimes two will be a bit lazy when the 5 players have the

ball and just stay at the back. You have to be vigilant because if the 5 players don't attack then there is little point playing the game.

### Progressions

1 – One player on the team of 5 can have as many touches as they want. Make this one of the players that isn't normally as involved as much as the other players.

2 – If a player on the team of 5 controls the ball with their non-preferred foot they get an extra touch.

## Big Goal, Little Goal

This game has the added benefit that the teams play each other for 3 mins twice. They just have switch ends after the first 3 mins.

Play a normal 4 v 4 game but make one goal very big at one end and that team will need a goalkeeper and make the goal at the other end normal size so there is no need to have a goalkeeper. So the teams are 3 players plus a goalkeeper against 4 players.

I always allow the players to take turns in goal so that all the players are involved in the action as much as possible.

Encourage the team with 4 players to keep passing till they can pass to a player who is in space and can shoot at goal with no one to beat but the goalkeeper.

### Progressions

1 – A goal doesn't count for the 4 players unless they have all touched the ball in the move that created it without the defence touching the ball.

2 – A blocked shot by the 3 players counts as a goal for them. This encourages the 4 players to find space to shoot.

## 1 Up

One player must always remain in the opposition's half throughout the game otherwise it is an automatic goal to the other team.

Encourage the attacking team to attack as 4 players and leave the other player in their half. Also encourage the team who wins the ball to try to play the ball forward quickly to their team mate up the pitch.

This is a brilliant game but some players struggle to leave the player in their own half. You might change the rules so that a goal doesn't count unless all the attackers are in the opposition half like in the game 'All Up'.

Encourage the player still in the attacking half to move into positions where the ball can be played to them first time if their team win the ball so they are still involved in the game not just watching it.

Praise loudly any player who notices that they are the last player and stops themselves from running back into their own half. This is the beginnings of understanding that it is a team game.

### Progressions

1 – If the 3 players win the ball and can play it 1<sup>st</sup> time to their attacker in the other half they get a bonus goal.

2 – The player who stays up in the opposition half must be different every time. Use this if one player is being lazy and just not getting back ever.

## Floater

This can be a difficult concept for the younger players to understand. You play a normal 4 v 4 game but include an extra player who plays for whatever team has possession of the ball. Basically no matter which team has the ball it is a 5 v 4 game.

Tip – Make the floater wear a different colour bib to the other players or do something to make it obviously they don't play for either team.

Like I said this can be a difficult concept for some players. The way I explain the floater is like this “The floater is playing for the team that has the ball. They can score, shoot, pass and do anything they want but they cannot tackle for the ball.”

When you first use this often the players rarely pass to the floater. If this happens to you then change the rules and say a goal doesn't count unless the floater touches the ball in the move leading up to it.

You have to watch the floater as well as sometimes they can get carried away if they lose the ball and try to tackle to get it back. Just a gentle reminder to them is best that they have switched sides when the ball was lost.

Extra Tip – As there are more players on the pitch sometimes you might need to make the area a bit bigger.

### Progressions

1 – The floater has to score the goals

2 – A blocked shot counts as a goal for the defending team.

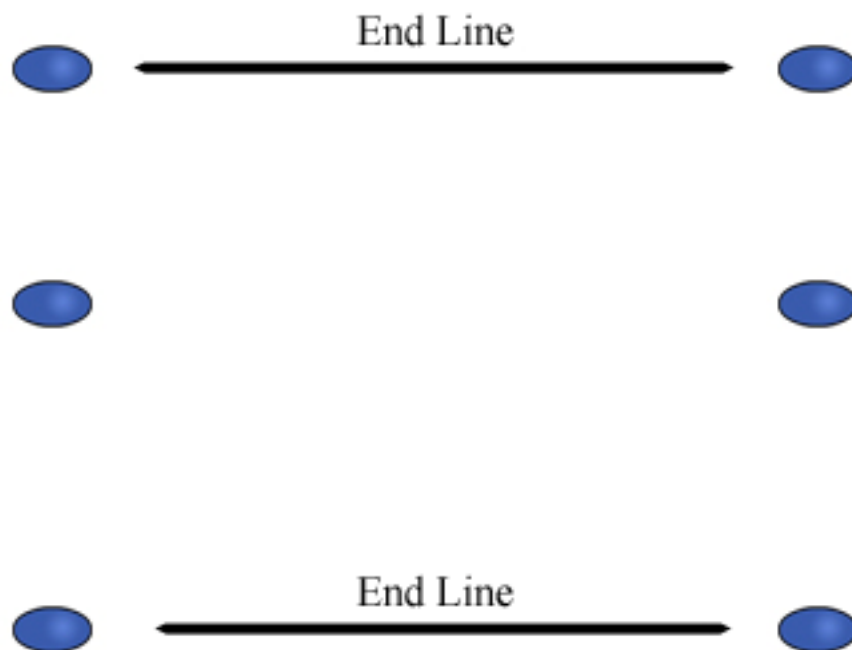
## Modified SSG's

All these SSG's require you to set up the pitch to play on differently so I have put them in a separate category. Although these SSG's require more effort on your part they are worth using simply because the players get enthusiastic when they see something different at training each week.

I have included some tips for how you can easily convert these games without any fuss so the players can keep playing. This is the point of the SSG's so anything that stops them playing has to be changed.

### Line Game

Terrific game and how you encourage the players to play can vary what techniques they work on.



A normal 4 v 4 game but to score a goal a player simply needs to run the ball over the end line of the other team.

Tip – Try to call it the end line as often with younger players if you call it a goal they will simply shoot the ball past the other team to score which isn't the purpose of the game.

Like I said at the start you can encourage the players to play this game in two ways.

Firstly it is a brilliant game for getting the players to space out. With the end line being so wide a player can be on their own on one side of the grid and a pass to them

can result in a goal without even a chance of a tackle. The game encourages players to space out as they will more than likely score easily if they do.

Secondly you can use this game to encourage players to notice situations when if they can go past only one defender they will score. If all the defenders spread out along the width of the grid to stop players passing the ball out to a player in space then encourage the players to take on the defender as if they get past they will score. So it can also be used as a game to get practice taking players on.

Tip – I have seen this played were players have to stop the ball on the end line for a goal to count. This leads to arguments about whether it was on the end line or not between the players. Remember anything that stops them playing we want to avoid.

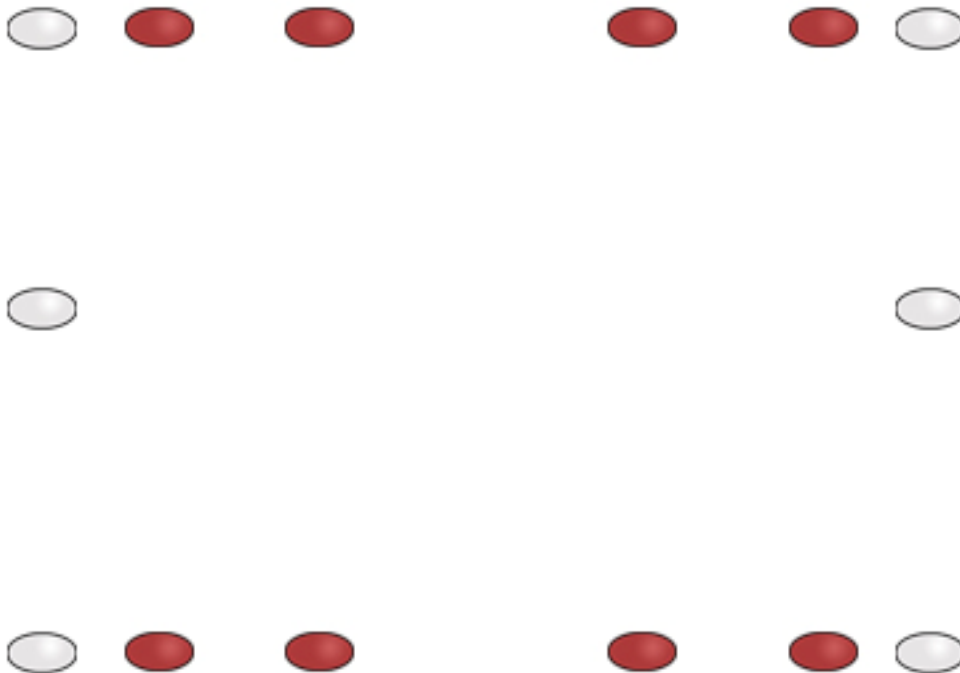
### Progressions

1 – A goal only counts if the player runs over the end line without being tackled or a player must take someone on before they go over the end line.

2 – A player must pass the ball over the end line to someone in his team to score a goal.

## 4 Goal Game

Fantastic game that really encourages the players to scan everything in front of them and decide which is the best direction to play in.



A normal 4 v 4 game but each team has two goals to defend and score in to.

This game really encourages the players to space out and to make decisions. Encourage loudly when an attacker changes direction and runs at the goal that has no players in front of it. Sometimes younger players can struggle with the concept and will try to score in a goal with 4 defenders in front of it instead of switching to the other goal which is undefended.

Tip – Discourage defenders who assign themselves a goal to defend and will let the attackers just score in the other one instead of defending both goals. Change the rules and say a goal counts double if the defenders defend the wrong goal.

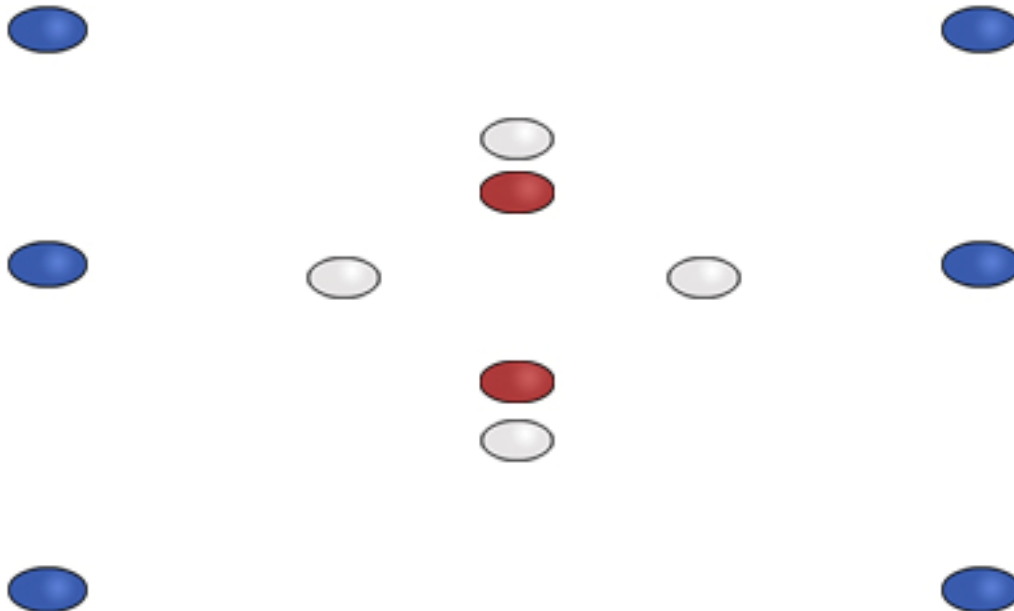
Extra Tip - Don't allow teams to assign one defender to each goal and attack with only two players. If this happens then say all attackers have to be in the opposition half for a goal to count.

The loudest encouragement should be reserved for players who fake to attack one goal and then switch the play when all the defenders have moved away from the goal. When this starts to happen you are really starting to develop good thinking players.

Set Up Tip – If in your session you want to play the 'Line Game' then the '4 Goal Game' simply put 2 cones on top of each other in every corner. So when you need to make the goals up for the '4 Goal Game' all you have to do is get the cone from under the corner cone to make the goal. Obviously it works the other way around as well.

## Double Sided Goal

Magnificent game that makes players look up when they play.



It is a normal 4 v 4 game but each team scores into the same goal and can score through the goal in either direction. The reason for playing this game is to get players to look at everything in front of them and decide which direction to play gives their team the best chance of scoring.

As you can see I have marked off an area around the goal. No player is allowed inside this area and this is to stop players being defenders and just trying to block shots.

Encourage loudly players who space out and go on the opposite side of the goal to the ball. Younger players especially tend to all follow the ball wherever it goes. Strongly encourage players who pass the ball to the opposite side of the goal instead of trying to shoot at the goal through a crowd of players.

Fun Tip – You could go in goal yourself and fling yourself all over the place.

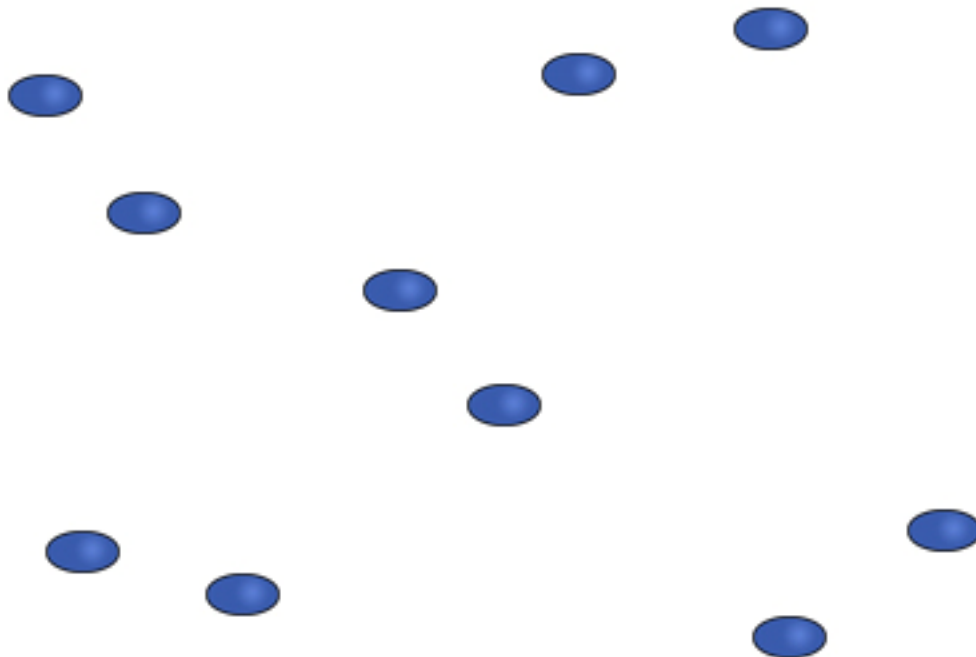
Insist that players stay out of the area around the goal as they can get hurt if they run through or across the area at the same time that someone shoots.

### Progressions

1 – A goal counts double if it is scored 1<sup>st</sup> time after a pass from the opposite side of the goal.

2 - A headed goal after the ball is played over the goal from the opposite side is worth double.

### Multiple Goals



Play a normal 4 v 4 game but each team can score in any of the goals on the pitch. To score a goal you have to run with the ball through the goal.

Tip – Without fail one player will always try to score multiple goals in the same goal by moving the ball backward and forward over the goal line. Just change the rules to you cannot score in the same goal twice for 30 seconds or until another goal is scored.

We will use this game mostly to have players look up and see where they are most likely to score so encourage loudly any player who changes direction to run through a goal unopposed.

If players are trying to change direction but struggling to control the ball while doing it then maybe do more of the games in the ‘Running with the ball’ chapter.

Watch for players just trying to barge through tackles to score in the goal in front of them. Keep mentioning there are 5 goals and only 4 players so 1 goal must always be free to score in.

### Progressions

1 – To score a goal the ball must be passed through the cones to another team mate on the opposite side.

2 – You get 5 goals for running through 2 goals one after the other.

### Cone Knockdown



Brilliant game that works on passing accuracy as well as playing with your head up.

Place 5 balls on top of the cones at either end of a pitch. To score a goal the ball must be knocked off the cone using the ball you are playing with. The first team to knock all 5 of the opposition cones off wins or the most cones knocked off in 3 mins.

Encourage players who move to the other side of the cones when they see a team mate attempt to knock a ball off as they have anticipated where the ball might end up and so are thinking ahead.

Praise players who pass the ball to team mates closer to the cones instead of trying to knock a cone off themselves.

Tip – Watch for players who simply stand in front of the cones defending them. If this happens a lot say that no one is allowed to go with 3m of a cone.

### Progressions

1 – A ball can only be knocked off by a 1<sup>st</sup> time pass to knock it off.

2 – A ball can only be knocked off from the opposite side of the line of cones.