

# 60 TIPS FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL COACHES



COACHES  
CLUB

Providing you with 60 top tips  
for grassroots coaches from  
UEFA A licence coach Seb Tidey



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**1**

## Dodgeball Games

Use dodgeball and tag games to teach your players physical literacy, especially younger players. A lot of people ask – Should they be using ladders hurdles? At the younger ages, no they shouldn't. Get them playing tag games, get them playing dodgeball, get them doing games that have loads of different types of movement and you'll help give them physical literacy to make them better football players. You can use this in a warm-up or as part of your practice. Players will enjoy it as well and they will develop physically.

**2**

## Weaknesses

We always look at coaching players weaknesses, to make them all round players but we lose sight of what their strengths are and a lot of times we get players into our teams because of these strengths. So don't forget to improve these strengths as well and make them super strengths. Think of an Arjen Robben, who could cut inside and put it top corner with his left foot every time. Even the best defenders in the world could not stop him doing this because he made his strength his super strength. It's ok to coach everything around the player but don't lose sight of what their strengths are and keep improving that as well.

**3**

## Goalkeeper Inclusion

Incorporate goalkeepers in your training sessions, playing with the outfielders not just doing goalkeeper training. Goalkeepers take more than 90% of their touches with their feet and they need to technically be as good as outfield players. Include them in some of your outfield practises so they can work under pressure and improve their technical ability with both feet and their passing range.

**4**

## Free Kick Routines

Let your players come up with their own corner free kick routines. Especially with younger players as this will help them to be creative and it will help them come up with little patterns of play, it also helps to promote leadership in a fun way. Let them have a go at creating things, let them have a go at trying things and it will also stimulate loads of discussion between players. It will improve their communication and those leaders will come out. It will also improve that leadership element as well and it is done in a nice fun way. So, let them have a go at creating all those routines, let them try and implement them and try them in matches.

**5**

## Stand Back and Evaluate

Sometimes when your training sessions are going on, just stand back and watch. Don't say anything, stand back 10,15,20 yards from the practise and just watch. Especially if you've got an assistant that can lead parts of the session or if you are the assistant stand back and watch. Look at body language, are players engaged? What are they getting out of this practise? Does it look like the game at the weekend? Is the way the practise is laid out looking like how a game will be? Just take the time to step back out of the emotion and out of trying to do things and trying to talk to players. Step back, analyse and watch and see how that benefits your coaching.

**6**

## Interactions

The best coaches are amazing with people, most of the coaches at the top level are going to have the same amount of technical and tactical knowledge. There is going to be tiny percentage differences at that level and at youth level. The technical, tactical stuff is important, but it is not vital. The most important skill at every level and what dictates how good a coach is, is how good that coach is with people and how good they are with the people that they are coaching, whether they are 6 years old, 16 years old or 60 years old. So, learn and think about how you interact with people and develop your people skills, because ultimately that is what makes a great coach.

## 7

## Team Talks

Do team talks in front of their parents. Don't be scared of parents, try and get them involved and increase their understanding of what you're trying to do. If you do your team talks in front of their parents, they will get a better understanding of what you are trying to achieve on the day, in terms of tactics or challenges. Then hopefully they will buy into what you're doing but also, they won't start saying things on the sideline which counteract what you're trying to get to happen. So, make sure you try and do team talks around them, so they hear what is going on and hear what you are saying to a player. "I want you to try and take players on as much as you can today, whenever you get 1v1 take a player on" then hopefully it will encourage that player when they get into one 1v1 situation rather than saying "pass, pass" and confusing the player.

## 8

## Positive Words

Instead of restricting players saying, "You've got to play two touch" or "You must do this", use the words, "Can you try to?" because this way you are allowing them decision making. You're trying to shape their decision but you're not restricting them to make decisions that might not be the right decision.

Because if you say to someone you have got to play two touch what if it's not the right time to play two touch? But you are trying to get them to move the ball quickly, so start by saying "Can you try to move the ball quicker" or "When you're in midfield can you try to play two touch when it's the right time", so this is the first step, rather than going all way to the other end and saying "You are on two touch, can you try to do this when you get one on one? Can you try to take players on and be positive?". That little change in language can have a big effect on players "Can you try?".



# SEASON PLANS UNDER 7-10 2023-24 SEASON

## Session Topic

PASSING - PLAYING THROUGH THE THIRDS

### What are we doing and why?

This session is designed to give players the foundation skills they need to be able to play through the thirds. This is the ability to improve their awareness and control in tight areas. Once they have control they can then look at improving their body shape to be able to play forward quickly, finally then making the decision of the best way to play forward (whether that is to pass or dribble/drive into space)

### Learning Objective Priorities

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Priority 1 | The first priority is to make sure every player can have close control of the ball in tight areas and have the ability to take their first touch and then have their head up to make a decision.                 |
| Priority 2 | Once players can do the above they need to work on receiving the ball with an open body shape so that before they receive the ball they can see where the ball is coming from and where they want to play it.    |
| Priority 3 | For players who can perform the above two priorities you now want to challenge them to make the right decision when they have the ball. The main focus is do they pass or drive into the space if its available. |

### Equipment

Balls, Bibs, Cones, Mini Goals, Normal Goals



# PART 1 - WARM UP 0-20 MINUTES



## Set up

Set up a square between 20x20 and 30x30 dependant on how many players you have - they have should have passing lanes but also it should be crowded enough they need to control the ball closely. The idea is to get them lots of touches and allow different ways to manipulate the ball, but also get them thinking about playing forward by either passing or dribbling.

In this practice the blues have a ball each and must try to get the ball from one green player to the other, then back again. The reds will be doing the same with the yellow players. Play for 90 seconds then swap the bibbed outside players.

On certain occasions the bibbed player will have a ball when someone wants to pass to them, the bibbed player needs to be encouraged to play quickly, the other players need to look up and be aware if the bibbed player is available before passing.

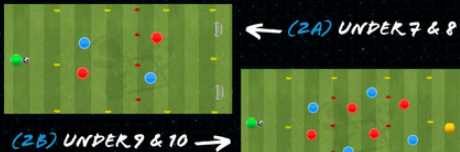
If you want to make the practice more competitive than play for a time period and get each player to count how many times they can get in and to then count up each teams combined score. You can also say that a player will lose their points if they play to a bibbed player when they have a ball already to increase their awareness.

## Coaching Points

1. Before you receive the ball can you get your body shape in a position that you can see where the ball is coming from and where you want it to go?  
This will allow players to play forward quicker whether it is passing or dribbling.
2. If there is nobody behind you can you receive on your back foot?  
This involves opening the body out so you can receive the ball on your back foot to play forwards and allows players to improve their awareness.
3. If you cant play a pass quickly is there space that you can drive into using dribbling or running with the ball skills?  
This is teaching that player that if you cant pass forward quickly, then try and drive into space if it is there.
4. Pass at the right time, make sure you are aware if the player you are passing to is ready to receive the ball, if not can you be relaxed and keep the ball without losing it.  
If the opportunity is not on to play you want them to be relaxed and composed on the ball and not panic.



# PART 2 - MAIN SESSION 20-40 MINUTES



## Set up

There are two different versions of this practice, one for under 7 & 8 players and one for under 9 & 10 players, but you can choose the one that suits your players more, younger players will benefit from working in smaller groups.

The purpose of both practices is to receive the ball from a target player and then play to the other end. In the older players scenario that is into another target player, who will then restart the practice giving the other way, giving it back to the team who gave them the ball. The younger players will finish into a goal instead, if the defending team win the ball they play back to the server and they are now the attacking team.

In both practices the pitch is split, for the younger players split into two, for older players split into thirds. The younger players should try to have a player in each half at all times, the older players should try to have a player in each third at all times.

Do not lock players into zones or say they have to stay in specific areas, allow players to rotate and move but encourage them to stay in all areas as a team as this will create depth which allows you to play forward quicker.

You can also make this competitive by awarding goals for the younger players if they score, or a point for older players playing server to server.

## Coaching Points

1. Can you use clever movement to create space away from the defender?  
Before working on the ball, help players to make movements into space so that when they receive the ball they will have more time to make their decision.
2. As a team can you be aware and try to have 2 player in each section of the pitch when you are attacking?  
Teach players to look around and have awareness of how they can help the team when they don't have the ball.
3. If there is no defender behind you when you receive can you turn your body out, if there is can you protect the ball?  
Other than your body out to play forward or protect the ball by passing, shielding, or dribbling away from a defender.
4. Is the best way to play forward dribbling or passing?  
Make a decision on if you can pass forward quickly, if not can you drive into the space?

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## PART 3 - GAME RELATED 40-60 MINUTES



### Set up

Set up a pitch appropriate to the number of players you have. I would always suggest playing with an overload/underload rather than a floating player if you have uneven numbers.

Split the pitch into thirds using cones or flat discs. The thirds are there as a reference point, or at times should players be locked into thirds, these are there to give them guidance about spreading out to effect the play.

Play a normal game in 6 minute blocks. As a coach you are allowed to stop the practice to step in to coach the following amount of times:

- First 6 minute block - Twice
- Second 6 minute block - Once
- Final 6 minute block - drive by's only.

This will allow players to take on the information and try to put it into a match situation. You can use drive by's or talk to individual players as many times as you like, but try to let the players create solutions and take their learning from the start of the session into the game.

### Coaching Points

1. As a team can you be aware and try to have a player in each third of the pitch when you are attacking?

2. Can you use clever movement to create space away from the defender?

3. Can you play into the next 3rd quickly?

4. Support play as the ball goes forward but think about if we lose it.

5. Make sure you support the players up the pitch when they have the ball, but can players also be clever and recognise that if you go to the attacking third you may be in trouble if you lose the ball.



## PASSING PLAYING THROUGH THE 3RD'S

### PART 1



### Set up

Set up a square either 20x30 or 30x30. In this practice the blues have a ball each and must try to get the ball from one green player to the other, then back again. The reds will be doing the same with the yellow players. Play for 90 seconds then swap the labelled outside players.

If you want to make the practice more competitive then play for a time period and get each player to count how many times they can go end to end, then count up each teams combined score.

### Coaching Points

1. Before you receive can you open up your body shape to see where ball is coming from and its going
2. If there is nobody behind you can you receive on your back foot?
3. If you cant play a pass quickly is there space that you can drive into using dribbling or running with the ball skills?
4. Decision on when to pass.

### Set up

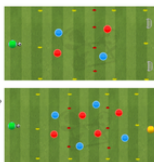
2 (a) - the blues receive the ball from the target player (green) and try to score in the mini goals. If the reds win the ball and can play back to the green player they now becomes the attacking team. The team who scores the most goals wins. Rotate target player after 3 minutes.

2 (b) - the blues and reds are trying to play from target player to target player and get a point everytime they do so. Target players give back to the team that gave it to them. Rotate target players every 3 minutes.

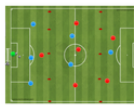
### Coaching Points

1. Can you use clever movement to create space away from the defender?
2. As a team can you be aware and try to have a player in each section of the pitch when you are attacking?
3. If there is no defender behind you when you receive can you turn your body off, if there is can you protect the ball?
4. Is the best way to play forward dribbling or passing?

### PART 2



### PART 3



### Set up

Set up a pitch appropriate to the number of players you have. I would always suggest playing with an overload/underload rather than a floating player if you have uneven numbers.

Split the pitch into thirds using cones or flat discs. The thirds are there as a reference point, or at times should players be locked into thirds, these are there to give them guidance about spreading out to effect the play.

Play a normal game in 3 x 6 minute blocks.

### Coaching Points

1. As a team can you be aware and try to have a player in each third of the pitch when you are attacking?
2. Can you use clever movement to create space away from the defender?
3. Can you play into the next 3rd quickly?
4. Support play as the ball goes forward but think about if we lose it.



## TIPS AND ADJUSTMENTS

### Player Numbers

Practice 1 you just adapt the players in the middle or outside dependent on how many turn up.

Practice 2(a) if you have too many then do multiple areas as long as there is 2v2 in the middle, or have a 3v3 in the middle.

Practice 2(b) if you have less adjust numbers in middle, if you have too many do multiple areas with less in the middle.

Part 3 - Adjust outfield numbers - have an overload rather than a floating player

### Not Enough Equipment

If you dont have goals you can just use cones to mark them out, especially instead of mini goals.

If you dont have enough footballs for almost a ball each for the warm up, split players into pairs and they must combine before playing out to the target player.

### Differentiation

If you have some players who are really struggling with controlling the ball and opening their body due to the pressure, play the games the same but give one team an overload to give them more time to make their decision.

For players excelling challenge them to try and pass quickly (in 2 touch if they can) or to drive into space with their first touch if they know they have to drive/dribble.

### 90 minute session

If you have a 90 minute session then use both the middle section parts of the practice so you can drip the messages in.

Part 1 - 20 minutes

Part 2 (a) - 20 minutes

Part 2 (b) - 20 minutes

Part 3 - 30 minutes

### Including Goalkeepers

At this age include goalkeepers outfield for the first 2 parts of the session then in goal during the game. You may use the goalkeepers as the target players in part 1 & 2 but give them a time limit in how quick they must play the ball.

### Coaching Styles

Use a lot of demonstrations to players on their body shape and opening your body then let them have a go. When players do this well, stop the practice and praise in front of the group. If someone is struggling do drive by's whilst the session is going to help them individually so they can see when they should turn out and how it feels. The same with players making decisions on when to pass/dribble.

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**9**

## Sub Inclusion

Instead of having subs that sit there watching the game, especially U7's, 8's and 9's. Try and set up something for them to do at the side. If you have got 4 subs, set up a 2V2 at the side. It is always good to ask your opposition if they want to get involved as well. Especially in U7's and 8's, instead of having players watching, because they won't pay attention or take much in, get them playing 1V1 or 2V2 games at the side. If that could be against the opposition, that is even better because it helps with the social side as well as getting them more touches on the ball and getting more involved in the match day.

**10**

## Ball Mastery

When doing ball mastery and dribbling practises, use a circle not square. When you have got everyone with the ball dribbling around and trying to take loads of touches, use a circle because it automatically directs players back in towards chaos. Whereas, in a square you can hide in corners on the outside but in a circle you can't, so use a circle for those practises and your ball mastery.

Players will get lots of touches that involve decision making because they are going in and out of traffic a lot more often.

**11**

## Real Life Scenario

Whenever you are designing a practise, the first question you should ask is - Does this look like a game? Dribbling in and around cones, doesn't look like the game. Having players standing on a cone to pass to cone, to cone, to cone, doesn't look like the game. Dribbling in and out of players, where it's a bit chaotic and messy, does look like the game. Passing where there's interference of players moving so that the attacker has to move to create angles, does look like the game. I always think about does this practise look like the game? If it doesn't, change it so it looks more like the game because that is what training is about, practising for the game at the weekend so that players can be more effective in it.





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## 1v1s

A great way to develop fitness in older players and adults, is to do loads of 1V1 practises. This will help with younger players who will develop technical ability but using this as a fitness element of teenagers and adults, especially in pre-season, really pushes players beyond their limits and it will really improve their fitness.

You also have the added element of its extra competitive, the more competitive you make it the harder players will work. So, try as many one 1V1 and 2V2 practises as you can, and it will really push and increase fitness levels.

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## Awareness

A tip to improve awareness, give players words that they will understand. I've heard this one before and someone used the word 'wing mirrors' you check your wing mirrors in your car, left and right. It's a great way to talk to players and a word to shout out, for players to think I've got to be aware. Instead of shouting "check your shoulders", shout "wing mirrors" and then they should immediately understand what that means. Especially if you explained it to them, it's a great word to trigger players looking around and becoming more aware

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## Context

Make sure everything you do is aligned to your context. If you're seeing one touch keepy-up rondos on YouTube with Real Madrid first team and you coach U7's, that does not relate to your context. Look at everything you see, all the coaching sessions you see, watch as many coaches as possible, coach. Learn so much about watching coaching but always think in your head how does this relate to my context in my team? As you can take all the great things and adapt it to your context, and it will make you an effective coach and really engage with players in your practises.

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## Listening Back

Measure your comments that you make in a game, so you might leave your phone in your pocket on voice memo, or you might get someone to do it for you. Measure your comments and who they go to during a match day, sit there and think is it a positive or negative comment? Is it a command comment telling someone what to do? Is it criticism? Just come up with a little key for what each of these are and get someone to stand there with a tactics board with each player on it and write down all the comments you make. You will be really surprised that the player standing next to you gets the most comments, and you'll see – am I positive to some players and negative to other players? Am I asking questions to certain players? See how it changes in the second half. If you have not got someone that can sit there and do it for you, voice memo in your phone, in your pocket and listen to it back. It's not always nice listening to yourself back but you'll learn a lot about your behaviours as a coach.

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## Player Lead Team Talks

Try player lead team talks with younger players, let them have a go at trying to lead all their team talks, let them communicate with each other and you will see leadership skills come out. It will also show you how they analyse the game. Let them lead the team talks and let them come up with tactics as well. As players get older, take their opinions in during team talks as well, don't just be about telling them, ask them what they're seeing and what they think. This will help to develop their tactical knowledge and it will also help add analysis to the game. Let them have an involvement in that as well because they can sometimes see things on the pitch that you are not seeing and that can be vital in helping you go on to win games.

## 17 Offsides

Offsides, we are worried about teaching offsides as players get to 9 a side. I would get them playing FIFA if you can, sounds like most of them probably do anyway but use FIFA to teach them the offside rule and get them to learn about offsides through FIFA. This is a way you can make computer games useful because it can help you to teach the offside rule and probably some tactics as well.

## 18 Visuals

Always try to have a visual for players to look at when you are explaining a practice. If you have got a big whiteboard, you can use this with tags, X's and O's or with counters on it. Show that to explain the practice and if you haven't got that, put cones out on the floor. Use it to explain tactics where players are standing. You can use it at half time or at full time or if you have just got a pen and paper, draw on that. Try and give players a visual when you are explaining practices and the sessions to them.

## 19 One Topic

Make sure you are only focusing on one topic during the training sessions. Don't work on attacking and defending or passing and dribbling, focus it down to one topic. Make sure then you're focusing on, in possession and out of possession topics. You spent probably half of your time in your games defending but do we spend half of our training sessions working on defending? I doubt most do, so narrow it down to one topic, but make sure there is a balance of in possession and out of possession topics.

The background of the page is a photograph of a soccer field. In the foreground, the backs of several players in blue kits are visible. In the middle ground, a group of people, likely spectators or other players, are sitting on concrete steps. The background shows a green field and some trees under a clear sky.

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## Power Hours

Do power hours. A power hour is where you turn off your phone or any other distractions. You'll have YouTube on your computer and stuff to look for on the computer but turn all other notifications off. Narrow down your focus to one topic in detail and learn as much as you can about that topic, for example, it might be a tactical thing, how does a right back playing a 4-3-3? Just focus on that in detail for one hour. It might be looking at nutrition or how do I coach a player with ADHD in my team? Spend an hour cutting off all distractions and just learning as much as you can about that one subject in one hour. Make sure it's narrowed down; do this a couple of times a week and your coaching knowledge will go through the roof but ensure you get rid of all the potential distractions you might have at that time.

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## Breaking Lines

When you are trying to explain to players about breaking lines, playing from your defence through to the midfield and taking their strikers out of the game. We call that breaking lines, one of the easiest ways to explain it is saying "break the glass with the football, imagine the two strikers are holding a pane of glass between them". I don't want my player to run through a pane of glass to come and get the ball. I want the ball to travel through the glass, to the player because a lot of time the midfielders will drop in to get the ball and then when they turn those two attackers are still affecting you. Whereas if they're behind the two attackers and the ball breaks the pane of glass, it takes the attackers out the game and the same as when your midfielders play into your strikers. So, explain to players that breaking lines is like the defenders carrying a pane of glass between them and you want the ball to smash the glass, to get through to your next player.

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## Smaller Targets

Use smaller targets for players, when you're trying to get them to work on accuracy. If you're playing matches or playing a possession game with end zones or a target at the end - instead of having goals to shoot in maybe use smaller goals or put some cones out with a ball on top of each cone, that they've got to try and knock off. By having these targets, players can't just smash the ball so the players that rely on power will now have to look at placement. This will also help all your players improve the accuracy of their finishing. By having these smaller targets, you might have a big goal with smaller targets in the corners, such as cones or balls on cones in the corners and if you hit them or score in them, it's worth treble instead of one goal. This will promote players trying to be more accurate rather than just smashing the ball.

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## Wide vs Thin

When you're doing possession practise or game related practises that are directional, if you have a wide pitch, that will encourage players to turn out on their back foot more and to try and switch play. It will also encourage more spreading out wide and will also allow more opportunities to play penetrating passes, as it spreads to players. These are the outcomes you are going to get from having a wider pitch. If you make a thinner and longer pitch, you're going to encourage breaking lines more and players creating angles to play through. These are completely different outcomes, but you might have a 30 x 50 yard pitch or a 20 x 40 yard pitch but the way around that pitch, dictates what outcomes you're going to get out of it. Figure out what you need and then figure out what the shape of your pitch needs to be.

If you're trying to encourage passing, don't use every player has got to touch the ball before you score. If your striker gets the ball and your goalkeeper hasn't touched it and they turn around and pass to him or to her, you're probably not going to be happy about that during a match day. So why encourage it during training? I get the need to encourage passing, so just use however many passes you make is however many goals you get. If they make 10 passes and score it's worth 10, if they make 2 passes and score it's worth 2, so the emphasis is still on that they must score. If they score, the amount of passes they make goes onto their total score. By doing this, the more passes and more possession they like to keep, the more pressure builds because there is more reward there. A risk vs reward factor comes into it as well, which makes it quite fun. So, however many passes you make is however many goals you get and not everyone has to touch the ball before you score.

Try and come up with a 3-word tagline for your team, for example – Fun, Safe, Respectful. This tagline should be about all the behaviours you expect to see from the team and from the players within your team, this can help create your own team's culture. Let the players come up with what the tagline should be and then they will start setting their own standards so a 3-word tagline. Fun, Safe, Respectful – make sure players are respectful to each other and to the coach, make sure everyone is having fun and make sure people are safe then when players break those rules it might have some of them dealing with their issues themselves because they're coming up with these lines and these words, you will also get more buying from players on that.

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## Goalkeeper Time Out

Give your goalkeeper time out on pitch. I've seen some academies do this where the goalkeeper spends a quarter of the time out on pitch because they have got an understanding of how vital it is for goalkeepers to have good technical ability with their feet and be composed and comfortable on the ball. When you can, give your goalkeeper the opportunity and the time to play on pitch in matches. They will get more touches and improve technically; this is obviously for younger age groups when you're trying to develop players. When you become adults and it's all about winning, then you obviously not going to do this but with the younger age groups let them have time on pitch and see how they get on.

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## Interventions

Time your interventions, especially if you think you talk too much. This is a great challenge to do with your assistant coach. Every time you're going to step in to intervene or do some coaching, get your assistant coach to time it and then when you come back, see how long it took you and how long you stopped the practise for and try and beat it. The smaller the time you intervene, the more time they get to play. This also makes you think about what you're going to say, before you step in because a lot of the time, you will step in and say something and then think of a better way to say it, say that as well and then you end up talking for 2-3 minutes. Time it, try and get in and out as quickly as possible and then set your assistant a chance to do the same. Then keep trying to beat your times but make sure it is effective still but time those interventions so that you can do them in and out quickly.

When you are doing ball mastery practises with the players and they've got a ball each and they are taking loads of touches, make sure you encourage them to drive at players and take players on. They're not going to try to tackle each other because they have all got a ball and they're practising their dribbling. There is no point doing a step over and beating a bit of thin air when you drive towards a player to practise step over, what you're judging as a player is – how far away do I need to be before I need to start the move? What is my awareness like? Where's the space for me to attack? So, if I go that way, I can go into that space but if there's no space there, I need to do the other step over and go the other way. It adds a lot more decisions into the technical skill that they're doing and when they're going to do a stepover or a drag back or any type of skill, they need something there to react to that will make them better at doing that skill. In your ball mastery practises make sure they're driving at players and going into traffic.

If you're trying to get players to move the ball quickly but still want to allow some dribbling as well, you need to encourage decision making about – when to pass and when to dribble. You can either play one touch or you must have at least four touches. This way players will get the opportunity to move the ball quickly but if they can't move the ball quickly, they will have to be composed on the ball. That is what happens in a game if you don't move quickly, you're going to be under pressure. They need to get comfortable under pressure and be composed on the ball, so players can play one touch or they must have at least four touches.



Don't always react to games with what you want to do in your next training session. Try and build a seasonal plan, so that you are working on everything the players of that age need to develop. If you always just react to what happened at the weekend, you are going to miss out on loads of things that players need to learn. Start building up through the season, so – 'we need to work on these ten different technical components and these ten different tactical outcomes as well' and make sure you build that into your planning. There will still be times in those sessions where you can react to 'we could have potentially done this better at the weekend' or 'we were good at this at the weekend' but if you just react to that, you are going to miss out loads of things that players need to learn, and they are going to miss at that stage of development. So, make sure you create a seasonal plan of things that you need to work on.

### 31 Filming

Try and film little clips of training on match days. You can do this on a phone, depending on safeguarding and what you're allowed to do at your club. Just film little clips of players or the team on your phone, it might only be filming for 30 seconds or 1 minute but then when you go back to that video, you can look at it in detail. Then the next time, if you film 1 minute of one player, playing centre mid-field, you can then go and look at – how were they in possession? What was the movement like? What were they like out of possession? What was their body shape like? Were they showing? What was their communication like? You can learn a lot about a player in a one-minute video clip, so try and do these and sit there and analyse it. It also gives you something to work on with the players, and to show the players visually that can help them improve as well.

# Coaches Club



COACHES CLUB



## What Is The Coaches Club?

The TSC Coaches Club mission is to give grassroots football coaches access to expert coaches, session plans, tips, advice and ongoing support throughout their coaching journey.

Available on Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and a TSC Coaches Club Newsletter.

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## What Do I Get?

- Session Plans for all age groups.
- Seasonal Plans
- Online Courses
- Occasional Webinars
- Open for discussions and debates



The TSC Coaches Club - Grassroots  
Football Coaching Sessions

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## Ability Levels

When you're doing dribbling practises or ball mastery practises, your players are going to be at different levels. Try and incorporate into your practise a busy area and then a bit more of a quieter area. It might be you've got a big 20 x 20 square with a small circle in the middle of it and then you can say to players who is going to be brave and drive through the middle of the circle. That will have heavy traffic and it will make it difficult but then the players who really need to be pushed might go through it and the players who are a little less confident who still need to take their touches and build up that confidence and technical ability, might stay out in the quieter areas. Then when you see them getting lots of success out there, try and use a bit of a nudge by saying "Go on, can you be brave and just try and go through that every so often" or "Look for the opportunity to go through there" but it allows you to balance up working with the players that really need challenging and the ones that need to build their confidence a little bit as well.

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## Narrow Topics

When planning your session, try to narrow down your topic. Passing is too broad a topic, a bit of passing or a bit of dribbling, is too broad a topic. Passing has probably got about 50 different topics at a minimum. You could break that down too, so it might be penetrative passing. For example, 'We are working on passing but we're looking at when we can penetrate today' then that will give you your coaching points to work off that day - looking for the opportunity to penetrate, then the weight of pass, type of pass, who you playing that pass to, what area of the pitch, they are all different coaching points you might have but you really need to narrow down your topics and not be too broad with it. Otherwise, you end up coaching a little bit of everything and you don't end up getting enough detail in there to improve players as much as you can.

Make sure your values are always aligned. You need to make sure that the values with the club, coach, parents, and players are always aligned. This is important because if you go to work at a club that is all about player development, equal playing time and players just playing for fun but you as a coach just want to develop players, do equal playing time, rotating of positions and don't care about results etc but you have got parents that just want to win and want their child to go and play at professional Academy, it is always going to end in tears or with issues. So, you need to have these conversations right at the start with parents, players, clubs, and coaches, to make sure everyone's values are aligned. If there are people there that values don't align with everyone else it is ok for them to go and find somewhere else, because ultimately that is probably what is going to happen. I have talked about the nice side of rotation of positions etc. If you've got a club, coach, parent, or a player who just want to play at the highest level, win trophies and develop, that's ok as long as everything is aligned with everyone.

Make sure you rotate positions with younger players. You must let them experience different positions and there are so many reasons for this. There is also a full blog on the coaches club about this. Let them experience playing in different positions, especially when they are young because you don't know where they're going to end up playing in the future and you don't know how the game is going to change. If you've got that player that naturally likes to defend and spends more time defending, let them spend 3 quarters of their time there but let them play in other positions as well. Teach them that by playing these other positions you are going to get better at the position you like to play.

Especially with younger players, try using a horseshoe. This means that you stand in one position as the coach and put out a cone for each player in a horseshoe shape around you. When players come in for team talks, tell them to stand at a cone each. You will get all the players attention; they will all be in your eye line, and no one will be standing in front or behind each other. It makes it a lot easier to coach and get your messages across with younger players, they can put their drink near their cones, so they know where they've got to go. Players who are a lot younger can take their cone home and design it, colour on it or put pictures on it so they know where they are. This will really help you be more effective when you are talking to players as a group.

For a lot of coaches, you will get to the point where the players you coach are a lot better at football than you are and that's different for every coach. The difficulty here comes when you're trying to do demonstrations and when you get to the point where you have to demonstrate something you can't demonstrate. When you get to that point, get the best players to demonstrate for you or any player that's good at that tactical or technical thing. Get the players to do the demos for you and then it saves you the embarrassment of having to do it and getting it wrong. Once you get to higher levels you don't need to demonstrate, the players will understand and get them to show it if it's needed. This can take some pressure off coaches who aren't confident in their own technical ability, by using the players to do it.

Try a whole part whole practise. We have got a full blog on this on the site and a few practises on the TSC Coaches Club for this. You start with the whole, so you might start with a game and you're trying to work on improving playing through midfield, so you set up a game where teams have got to play through midfield and then halfway through or 20 minutes into session, you narrow that down to just working on one component of getting through that midfield. It might be the rotation of players, receiving on the back foot or combinations. You will break your session down and isolate that small section to work on, once you've done that you can then go back to the whole part of the practise. See if that goes into the game and you can measure their learning.

As players get older, you won't rotate positions as much, but they might start looking at playing in an area of the pitch. There was a Dutch model used at a certain point, where players would train at right back, right of the midfield three and right of the forward three. You are starting to isolate their positioning a little bit but you're giving them aspects of working in defence, midfield, and playing forward. Modern players now need to be able to play in every third of the pitch, so this way it gives them exposure to doing all of that but also in a position that they are comfortable in as well. Try this model of maybe centre back, centre midfield, striker, left striker, left midfield, left back and the same on the right side and see how it helps your players develop.

A background image showing a football training session. In the foreground, several young boys in blue football kits are sitting on the grass, looking towards a coach who is partially visible on the left. In the background, other people are sitting on concrete steps, and a football pitch is visible. The overall scene is outdoors on a sunny day.

40

## Chaos

Embrace the chaos. Football is chaotic, a match day is chaotic, and so your training sessions need to have an element of chaos in them. The training sessions we see where the ball is played from this cone to that cone and move from here, to here and dribble through these cones, looks structured and organised. They might look good from the sides and all neat and tidy but they're not effective for the players because that is not how the game looks. Sometimes make your session very chaotic, there should always be some element of chaos in your game that's making players really think about what's going on and find solutions.

41

## Why?

This sounds simple this tip but not many people do it. Ask kids why they are playing football, ask them why they are playing and what they want to get out of it. The answers might surprise you but once you figure out why they're playing and what they're trying to get out of the game you can align your coaching to this and then you'll get more buying from players, you'll get more engagement and hopefully you'll get more success from it as well. Always ask players and get an understanding of why they play football and why they want to play in your team.

42

## Challenge

Try to give every player their own little challenge every match day. Think about giving them a challenge that's going to help them improve and improving the position they're playing, or a technical component need to improve on that game. Just try and just give them one simple challenge every game, it might be that you write each person's down on a bit of paper or on a tactics board but then it gives them a target of something to improve on individually throughout that game. If you do this every game through the season, set loads a little challenges that are going to help them improve as football players. So, one challenge, per game, per player.

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## Ball Rolling Time

Do you know what your ball rolling time is? This is the amount of time the ball is moving and playing in a session. You need to measure this and then you need to try and improve it. My experience at grassroots level is, only 30-40% of the session the ball is rolling, that's around 20 minutes out of a 60-minute session that the ball is rolling. You need to improve this, so get someone to time you with a stopwatch, when you say "play", start a stopwatch and as soon as you say, "stop the play", whether it's for a coaching point or to change the topics to get a drink they stop the stopwatch. Measure what your ball rolling time is over an hour, you can get a parent or an assistant coach to do it and then try and improve this. It is massively important, and it can be a real learning curve for coaches, so give it go.



Try to create a team challenge each week, which you can relate to what you do in training. Then players can take what they've learned in training, into the match day where it is important. Try and give a team challenge related to what you have done in training. For example, if you worked on trying to counterattack in training, winning the ball in your defensive third and trying to counterattack, your challenge might be – how many times can we win the ball in our defensive third and get into their final third within 8 seconds? Set a little team challenge like that and if you can get someone to measure it, even better. Because you can say “How many times do you think we are going to do this half?” They might say “Three”. Get someone to measure it, see how they've done at half time. If they have not reached that goal, then you can give them some coaching tips and help but if they have reached that goal then say, “What do you think we can get next half?” You can extend them and press that challenge on even more, so a different challenge for the teams, based on what you've done in training.

## 45 Transitions

Make sure there is transition in every part of every session you do. Transition is one of the most important elements in the game and we don't introduce it enough in our training sessions. For example, if we are doing an attack vs defence practise, sometimes when defence win the ball, the practise just stops but what you want is when your defence win the ball, you want them to break out and attack by either driving with the ball or passing the ball or it might be as you relax on the ball and keeping the ball. Make sure these elements are in your practise so when the defence win it, give them something to attack or if the attack loses the ball give them something to move back and defend. It is important that you always implement transition throughout your practises.

# COACHES CLUB

# PATREON

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**SEB TIDEY**

A background image showing a soccer field with several players in blue kits and spectators sitting on bleachers. The scene is outdoors with trees and a building in the distance.

**46**

## Equal Play Time

With younger players make sure you're using equal playing time. Anyone under 11, equal playing time should be done all the time, we've got a further video on this on the Coaches Club. You do not know which speed players are going to develop and some of your strongest players at 7's and 8's are physically more developed and they will not always be the strongest players at 9/10/11/12's. You have got to give players the opportunity to develop, you have got to give them the opportunity of playing games. You must do equal playing time at younger age groups, to help all your players develop equally.

**47**

## Resilience

To help players improve their resilience and how they react to things on the pitch, ask them how the best professionals react when things go wrong. They will probably be able to bring up some professional players that probably don't act in the right way when things go wrong but ask them for the examples of players that really do. What about when they've lost a big game, or they've lost a final or they've lost the game in a controversial manner. How do the best players react to that because then they can see what their heroes are doing and what the top players at the top level do. This will hopefully help psychologically improve them and make them a bit more resilient to when things go wrong.

A background image showing a soccer field. In the foreground, a coach in a dark jacket is talking to a group of young players in blue jerseys. In the background, other people are sitting on a bench. The scene is outdoors during the day.

**48**

## Technical Practice

At the younger age groups, focus on technical practises. 6/7/8/9's lots of technical work lots of 1v1 work. You need to give them a technical foundation and then as they get older, especially when they start moving into teenage groups, you start to work on tactics a lot more. It will be easier to work on tactics with players that have got a solid technical foundation, so focus on this when they're younger and then psychologically that is what they are better built to learn and then as they get older, start working on tactics then.

**49**

**2v2, 3v3  
& 4v4**

Try and use 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4 versions of your small sided games as much as you can, at every age group, even adults. If you're working on a passing practise with as many passes you make, is as many goals as you get, don't just go straight into a 6v6 or a 7v7 and do this. Start at 2v2, then try 3v3, then try 4v4 and look at all the different outcomes you get. Players will get more touches; they will be more involved, and they will get more decisions to make. Yes, you then you want to open it up for older players especially to 6v6 and 7v7, so it can be a bit more tactical and then you've got a wider area to work over. But work in 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4 versions of your small sided games as well as the 6v6 and 7v7.



50

## Defending

Work on defending as much as you can, we don't work on defending enough. In your training sessions work on 1V1 defending, 2V2 defending and 3V3 4v4 defending. This is vital for all your age groups but think about how much time you spend defending during your matches. We don't spend enough time training it, so start to work on all those different elements of defending throughout your sessions. Even if you're doing matches, don't just talk about the attacking, talk about the defending side of it as well. Start to give tips to players on how to defend better.

51

## Playstation Coach

Don't be a PlayStation coach, a PlayStation coach is someone who stands there and says "Pass, Shoot, Dribble, Cross", this will not help players because players need to be able to make decisions themselves. Even if they get them wrong, which they will do all the time but you taking the decision making away, will make them less effective as they get older. It is like sitting in an exam with a child and giving them the answers to the exam. When they have to use it in real life situations, they are going to struggle. Don't play station coach, let them make their own decisions and when they get older the game is so quick that they will have made their decision before your shout even comes out, they won't hear you half the time either.

One of my biggest things for grassroots coaches, think about the environment you're cultivating and the people you are producing through your team. It's not about trying to produce professional football players all the time, it's about trying to produce good people and the way to kind of frame this in your mind is pretty much everyone in your team is going to have to get a job. So, are you creating kids that are going to be adults that you would want to work for you, work alongside you or you want to be your boss. It is a great way to frame things when you're creating an environment, thinking if I'm letting that player shout or moan at a referee, what is that player going to be like when they go into employment when they're older? Are they going to be successful or not? Ultimately as a coach in grassroots football, you are trying to create people, not necessarily football players.

Try something called the weak foot game. I know the term might be non-dominant foot game, but I've used the term weak foot game for years. The way this game works and you can do it in any possession practise or any match practise, the smaller the practise the more touches players will get. I would always recommend doing this in 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4 because it is about repetition of touches. The way it works is, you're only allowed one touch with your stronger foot and foot you like to use. That might be your first touch or your last touch, it doesn't matter. I'm predominantly right footed so if the ball comes to me, I can control it with my right but then every touch needs to be with my left or my control it with my left, take another touch then last touch can be with my right but players right now one touch with that dominant foot.

**54****Challenge  
Level**

Don't make training sessions too easy and don't make them too difficult, make sure players are challenged. If you get the challenge level right, players will be engaged all the time and they always be switched on and concentrating. The key rule to it is, if they get success twice out of every ten attempts it's probably a bit too hard, if they're getting success eight times out of every ten attempts, it's probably too easy but if they are getting success five times out of every ten attempts, you've got the level of your session right. As soon as they start getting more success, that's your time to make it a bit more difficult. Use the rule, two, five and eight to decide when to change your sessions and when to add progressions in.

**55****What's  
Important?**

Make sure everyone's values are aligned, that includes the club, the coach, the parents, and the players. Find out what the club want to achieve out of their teams and their set up, find out what the players want to get out of playing football. What the players want is probably the most important one but then you need to make sure that aligns with the with the team, the squad, and the club. What you then as a coach have to figure out is, do your values and the way you want to coach align with what the players want because they're more important. Then ultimately the parents need to understand what the values are of the club, the players, and the coach and they need to align with that as well. If you can get all of this aligned it will create a great environment for players to play football in, if there is one or two parts of this that aren't aligned, it will cause problems. It is important to figure out what all these values are from everyone at the club and make sure that all aligned so you can have a great season.

On a game day, relate how you want a player to play or a position that you want the player to play to how professional players do it. They look up to professional players normally and it can be easier to explain what you want out of players by relating it to a player they know. If you say I want someone to play as my N'golo Cante today, I want you to break things up and if you get the ball, you can break forward from midfield, but your main thing is to break things up. They will understand that because a lot of them will have watched it at the weekend. Then if you talk about a Harry Kane, where does Harry Kane play? He plays as striker and sometimes drops in to link up play but is there to try and score goals in the box. How does a Riyad Marez play? He will cut in from the side and try and finish but he will start out there and dribble at players. Relate it to pro players they know and then they'll start to try and act like them, and it makes some of your tactical talks a little bit easier.

Make sure your demos are always visual for players. What happens is, we will step in and will say "We need to switch play, so you need to play into that centre mid fielder who needs to receive on their back foot to play out there" or "When there's movement there and there's a bit of gap I want you to dart through that gap to receive the through ball" just talking through it, most players won't understand exactly what you need so as you are talking through it get the ball to move in the practise just whilst everyone is standing there to show visually what you want as well. Only giving the explanation is not good enough, most of the players will need to visually see it happen. Do both at the same time, talk as the ball moves and it will make you more effective for more players in your team when you intervene.





58

**Intention  
Not Outcome**

Praise the intention not the outcome. I've done loads of videos on this and talked about it a lot, always praise players for what they're trying to do and not what the outcome is of what they've tried to do. If you're trying to get someone to be better at using their left foot and they've tried to play a pass with their left and its gone wrong, praise the fact they've tried it. Then they will try it again and the more they try it they will get better at it. The time that they tried to play with their left foot and gave the ball away and then they got criticised for it, they will stop trying to do it. If you praise the intention of what they're doing and not the outcome it will help them become better players in the long run. They will be confident enough to keep trying things that they sometimes find difficult.

59

**Defence  
Reward**

When you do want to work on defending, you don't have to tell the players. A lot of the time you will tell players "We are going to work on defending" and you'll get a groan. Say you're working on attacking but just coach the defending part. Say "We're doing 1v1 attacking in the penalty area, we're going to score as many goals as we can, you're going to be 1v1 in the penalty area" Straight away players would say "Brilliant, great" and they are going to put full effort in but just don't coach any of the attacking elements only coach the defending elements or reward the defending elements. If you score a goal, you get one goal but if you manage to defend and win the ball and then break out, you'll get three goals. By putting more of a reward on the defensive side players or want to do that a lot more.



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## Motivation

In every practise you're doing, think about what the motivation for the defenders is. If you do an attack vs defence practise and you've got six attackers playing against five defenders, what is the motivation for that defence? Because even if it's getting the ball and drive out, that's still not overly motivating for them. Why don't you try, if you're doing attack vs defence but the defence gets out twice and gets to break out through two gates twice, you get to swap teams and you can become the attack. Instead of playing for a time limit, watch how much harder players work to defend and the team that are attacking when they lose the ball. Watch how much harder they will transition to win the ball back. You've got to motivate players to want to defend or want to work in transition if you want to get the most

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