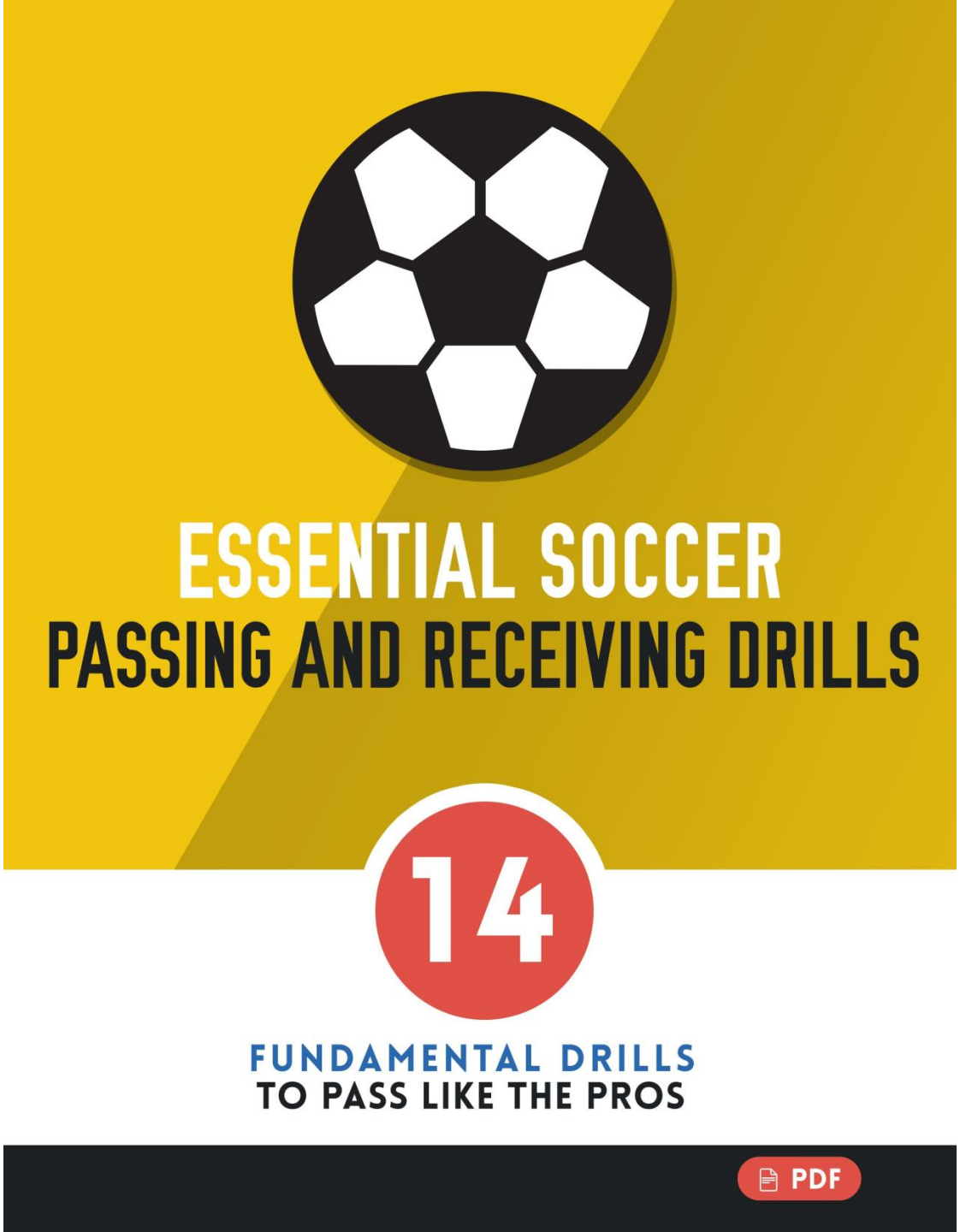
ESSENTIAL SOCCER
PASSING AND RECEIVING DRILLS
14
FUNDAMENTAL DRILLS
TO PASS LIKE THE PROS
PDF

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INTRODUCTION

Passing and receiving are foundational skills in the game of soccer and must be coached properly in order for teams to have fun and win games.

The secret to effective passing and receiving at any level is in the details. Some of those details include: the firmness of each pass, the proper movement and body position when receiving the ball, and eye contact between the passer and receiver. Eye contact before passing the ball is a must.

In addition to teaching the importance of eye contact, as a good coach, you should teach your players to provide quick verbal cues to help with decision making when passing and receiving. Communication through eye contact and verbal cues combine for a powerful duo in allowing players to avoid mistakes and make great plays.

Movement at the right time is also essential when receiving the ball. If your players move too early, they will have to wait for the ball and will give the defender a chance to catch up, react, or intercept.

Another thing to keep in mind is that receiving the ball on the ground is very different than receiving it in the air. Players need to be able to do both in order to excel in the game. You should make sure your players get experience fielding balls and passes both from the ground and air.

In each scenario, make sure your players know that they need to keep their eye on the ball, decide on which body part or foot will control the ball, cushion the ball to slow it down and prepare for the next touch (dribble, pass, or shot).

In Essential Soccer Passing & Receiving Drills there are 14 activities that allow your players to practice many of the essential details of passing and receiving that were mentioned above. You can also create variations of each drill and add complexities to allow your players to progress and improve as they reach higher levels of play.

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DRILL #1 – PUT YOUR FOOT DOWN

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

Depending on the number of coaches you have, you might be able to run more than one line. All you need is a ball, and your players in single file lines facing you about 10 yards away.

Execution:

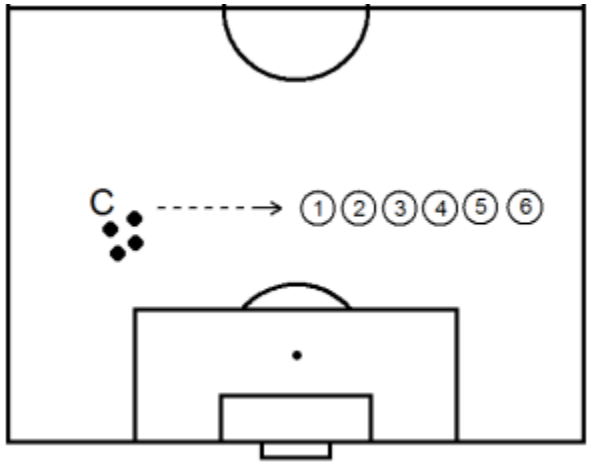
1. Roll the ball toward your players.
2. They need to stop it by putting their foot on top of the ball.
3. They then kick the ball back to you and go to the back of the line.
4. Repeat until each player has gone through the line at least 2-3 times.

Coaching Tips:

- It is important for younger players to understand what happens when the ball comes to them. Stopping the ball is the first step in gaining control of it. Explain to your players that when they get the ball, one of the first things they are going to do is stop the ball to maintain control.

- You can vary the difficulty of this drill by having the kids go to their right or left to stop the ball, and you can roll the ball harder.

- After repeating this drill time after time, you will notice a significant increase in the ability of your players to stop and control the ball before moving on.



This drill teaches players to stop the ball so they can control it and improve their game.

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DRILL #2 – HIT THE RUNNER

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

Two lines - one with passers and one with runners. You can have two separate groups for this if you have the numbers.

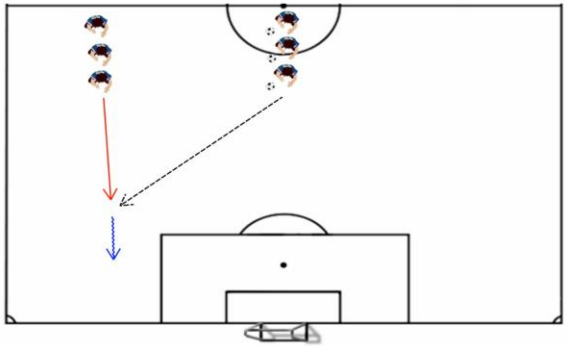
Execution:

1. Explain that each player needs to lead the runner with the pass in order for them to get it in stride.
2. Show them how much harder it is to receive the ball if it is behind you than in front of you.
3. As the runner takes off, the player will have to try and gauge the speed of the runner and send a pass to that player.
4. The runners should try and vary their speed - not always running as fast as they can, but sometimes just jogging and other times maybe just standing still in the line.

Coaching Tips:

- This is a similar drill to long pass control and learning to pass receive on the run, but this one focuses on how to pass properly to players that are running.

- Although the focus of this drill is passing, it is beneficial to make sure the runners are also working on their pass control skills by stopping the ball and gaining control.



As the marbles game helped players learn stationary accuracy, this drill will help them learn to pass accurately to a player that is moving.

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DRILL #3 – MARBLES (GAME)

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

Put together four or five players in a group and give them each a ball.

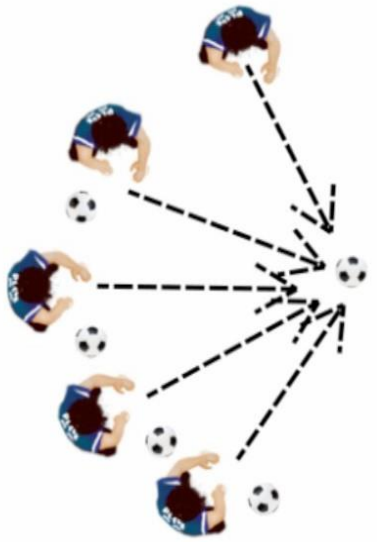
Execution:

1. The first player will ‘pass’ the ball, about 10 yards in front of them.
2. Then, the next player tries to ‘pass’ the ball to hit the first players ball
3. Then the next player and the next player, with each player trying to aim for and hit person’s ball previous to them.
4. If the player hits the previous players ball they get a point. The first one to any number of points wins.

Coaching Tips:

- You can alter this drill and make it more difficult by increasing the distance they ‘pass’ the ball.

- Passing accuracy is important to maintain control of the ball. This drill is a basic one that helps improve player’s passing accuracy.



With players using their proper passing skills, they will develop proper distance and accuracy each time they try to get the ball to hit the persons before them.

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DRILL #4 – PASSING CIRCLE (1ST LEVEL)

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

Create two or three circles of players with one ball for each circle. As players get better, you can add two, or even three balls.

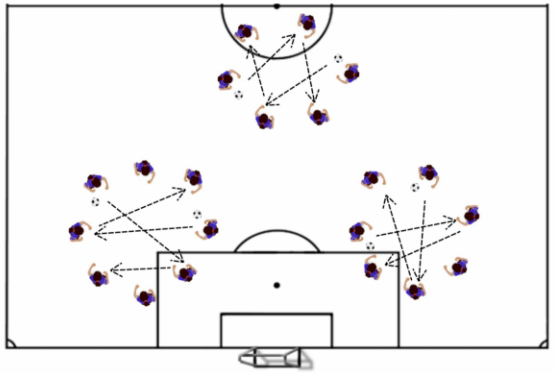
Execution:

1. With players around in a circle, one player starts off by passing it to a teammate within the circle.
2. The player receiving the pass must stop the ball, and then pass it to another player.
3. As players get better at this drill, the passes will become quicker, and the players will need to be more aware of what is going on in order to receive the pass.

Coaching Tips:

- As mentioned earlier, you can increase the level of difficulty by adding a second ball, and if the players are up for it a third ball. Proper passing and pass reception is important.

- This drill will help players learn to be aware of a pass coming to them at any time.



Players learn to be more prepared and timely in their approach to passing and receiving.

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DRILL #5 – GIVE AND GO PASSING

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

Have players split into pairs for this drill. Give each pair a ball.

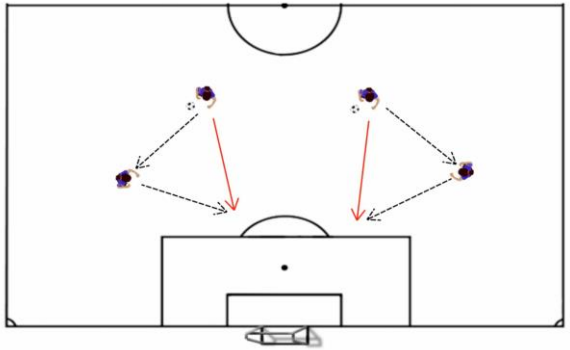
Execution:

1. One player starts with the ball and makes a good pass to their partner.
2. Once they make the pass they start running toward the goal waiting to receive the return pass.
3. The partner must control the ball and make the return pass quickly.
4. To make the drill slightly more challenging, you can put a defender on the starting player.
5. You can also vary the passing length and you can allow the player to try and make a return pass without stopping the ball for control. They can try to make the pass immediately after getting it from the starting player.

Coaching Tips:

- The give and go is one of the basic, but most often used and effective types of passes in soccer. This is when one player passes it to another, only to receive a return pass from that player right away.

- This is a basic passing play, but also teaches players how to receive a pass, gain control and then make another pass right away.



Players will learn and understand the value of gaining control of the ball and then making a quick pass.

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DRILL #6 – 3v2 KEEP AWAY

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

Create three or four different 20x20 yard areas with cones. Separate into groups of five at each station. Three players will be on offense and two on defense.

Execution:

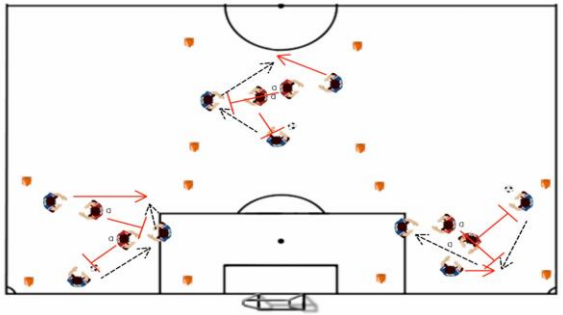
1. Inside the 20x20 area, the three offensive players have to try and keep the ball away from the two defenders.
2. If a player makes a bad pass, or loses the ball to one of the defenders, they must then take a position on the defense.
3. The game continues with a new player on the offensive side.

Coaching Tips:

- Keeping control of the ball and making good passes is so important you can never practice this skill enough. This game helps players with these skills in a scenario where they are under pressure from defenders.

- This will require good ball control and good passing skills on the part of the offense in order to keep the ball away from two defenders.

- This is also an excellent drill for defensive players to hone their defensive tactics, and to put a great deal of pressure on the offensive players.



This is more like a mini game for players to get involved in preparing more for game situations.

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DRILL #7 – TWO ON TWOS

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

Put four player of relatively similar skill together and have them split into two teams of two. Create a small field (10 yards by 40 yards long) with smaller cone goals.

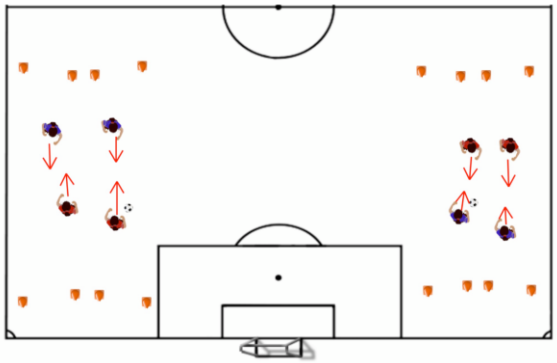
Execution:

1. Put two players together and pit them against two other teammates.
2. Allow the players to play freely and you can give them a set time or have them go until one team reaches a certain number of points.
3. To make it more competitive you can do a king of the court tournament or require the losing teams to run or do pushups.

Coaching Tips:

- As a coach, you can watch the each game, and point out coaching areas for each player. Instruct them on shielding the defender from the ball, making passes on the run and aiming the ball when they shoot.

- This is a great way to build healthy competition and also have players continue to develop their game skills.



This drill can be a fun competitive game in which players improve their passing and shooting skills.

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DRILL #8 – PASSING CIRCLE (2ND LEVEL)

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

Get the players into groups four to six players. Add three balls to the circle.

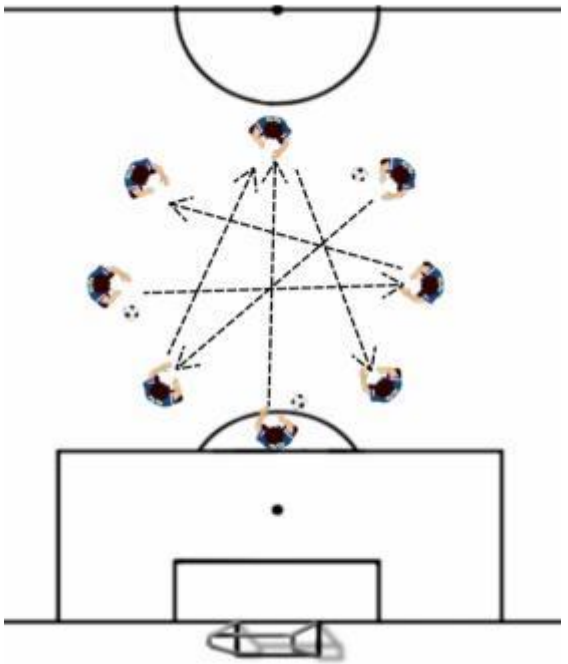
Execution:

1. Now, instead of only having one ball in the circle for players to track, you have three. This places an emphasis on keeping your head up (while you are passing and receiving), accurate passes and good control with the ball.
2. If you want, you can jack this up a bit and tell the players they have to keep the control of the ball for no longer than the time it takes to stop it, control it and then pass it away again. This places a little 'game-like' stress on them and forces them to focus on their skills.

Coaching Tips:

- Add a few more balls and the players will have to know exactly where the ball is going to, and coming from.

- Its important that while you increase the difficulty by adding balls and adding pressure that they still maintain proper control and practice in the right way. If they get too out of control then this can actually hinder their learning rather than helping.



Players learn to pass and receive better and create better awareness.

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DRILL #9 – THREE TYPE PASSING

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

Set up two groups, each with two lines. A passing line and a receiving line and a defender in between each. The passing player will start with a ball.

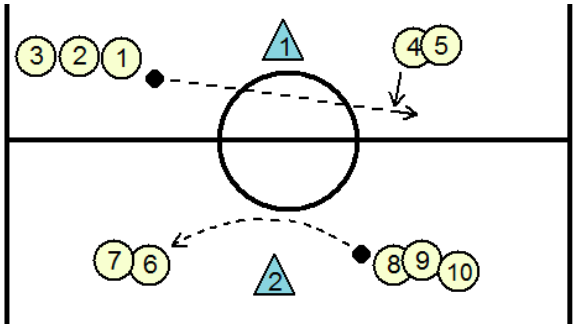
Execution:

1. The first player in the passing line will execute three different types of passes: a lob pass, a curved pass, and a long, lead pass.
2. On the first pass, the player must lob it over a defenders head and pass it to the first player in the receiving line.
3. On the second pass, the passer must curve the ball into the receiving player from both the right and left sides.
4. On the third pass, the player must judge distance and strength to lead the pass receiver on a long pass. The pass should be at least 25 or more yards.

Coaching Tips:

- A wider array of passing options are open to the player and each of these passing techniques are valuable in a game situation, as often time a straight passing lane is blocked.

- Passing on a flat straight trajectory is only one way to pass the ball and this drill helps players learn to pass in multiple ways.



This drill forces players to make different passing options while a defender is in the way of a direct passing lane.

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DRILL #10 – AROUND THE FIELD

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

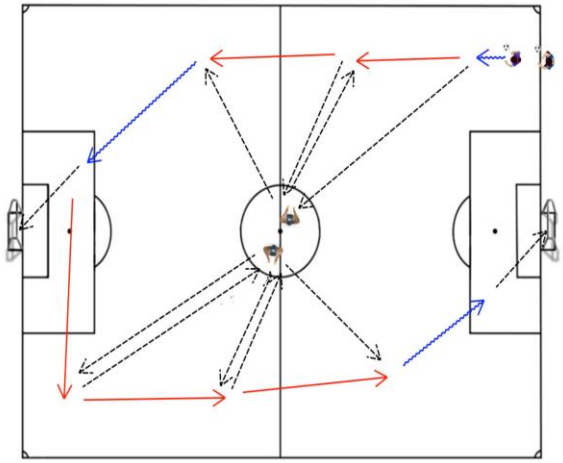
Place two coaches, or a coach and a player, in the center circle. Make sure they have several balls. There will be two lines at diagonally opposite ends of the field. The drills starts with the players at the front of each line.

Execution:

1. Each player at the front of the line will start by passing the ball from the corner to the first coach.
2. The coach passes the ball towards the midfield line.
3. The player then runs at three quarter speed to receive the first pass.
4. Once they receive it they immediately pass it back.
5. The coach then passes the ball towards slightly towards the goal.
6. The player then sprints hard to that area.
7. They must gain control of the ball and approach the net for a shot.
8. Then they go to the back of the line at the other corner and repeat on the opposite side to arrive back in their starting line.
9. The drill is complete when every player circles the entire field.

Coaching Tips:

- This is a great drill to work on basic skills and game situations, but also to build excellent fitness and conditioning.



Players will learn to pass and receive while running and sprinting at game speed.

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DRILL #11 – SPEED RUSH AND CROSS

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

Set up this play on one half of the field to start. Two lines of attackers about 10 yards outside of the 18 and two defenders can be used to start.

Execution:

1. The first player in the attacking line closest to the sideline will start with the ball.
2. That player will attack down the sideline.
3. The other attacker will sprint towards the goal.
4. The first attacker will attempt a cross pass and the other attacker with try to receive the pass and score.
5. The defenders mark each attacker and try to stop the cross pass and the score.
6. You can add several different components and changes to the drill to create varying scenarios:

    -Add a defender to Line 1 to try and make the tackle and prevent the crossing pass.

    -Add a middle defender to defend against the crossing pass.

    -Add both defenders at the same time.

    -Add a third, far-side attacker, so the passer has more options.

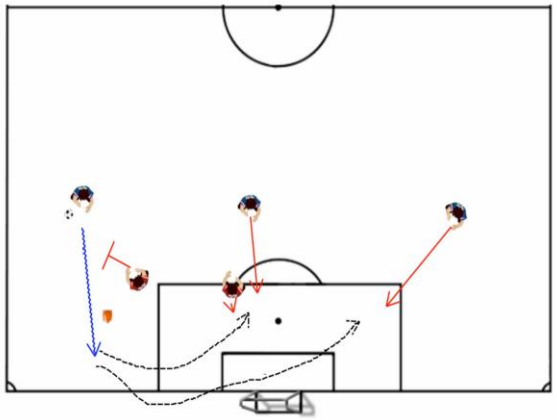
    -Have the player in Line 2 come from a variety of areas on the field.

    -Try the rush from the other side, to improve the left leg passing of your players.

Coaching Tips:

- This starts off as a simple speed rush with a crossing pass. But, as simple as it sounds, it needs practice to execute well. This helps with improvement in technique and execution of a crossing pass.

- This drill focuses on the sideline scamper coupled with a looping cross pass which make for great offensive plays if executed correctly.



The overall objective is for the attackers to execute the crossing pass for a goal in the different situations.

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DRILL #12 – HEAD PASS TRIANGLE

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

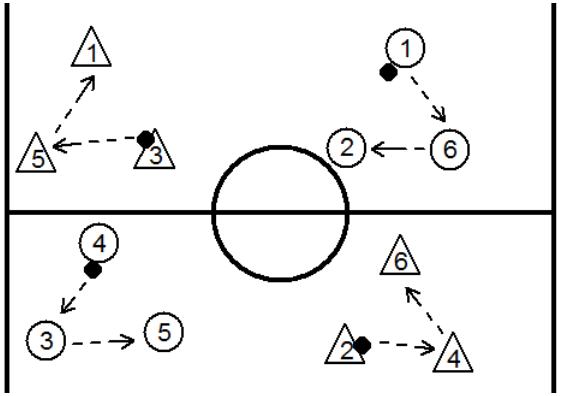
Put three players together in a triangle shape. You might want to set up cones so the players stay at a specific spot. Each group of three players gets a ball.

Execution:

1. With each player at his or her cone, or simply in the shape of a triangle, the first player tosses the ball up to player two, who has to head it to player three.
2. Then player three has to head the ball over to player one.
3. Player one will head the ball, and then player two catches it.
4. Player two then tosses the ball up to player three and the cycle continues.
5. As the players get more comfortable with the drill, you can get them to go two times around, or even three, eventually building up to the point where they can go around and around.

Coaching Tips:

- Improving your players ability to make passes with the head is an excellent skill for them to take their game to the next level.
- Coaches should watch the proper technique of the head pass, and that players are passing under control.
- Since head passes can be extremely valuable in soccer, this drill is great for giving players an additional skill to use.



This drill requires that players use their head to pass and control the ball.

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DRILL #13 – HEADING LADDER

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

Each player should have a ball of his or her own to do this drill. Or you can split the players into pairs with one ball per pair.

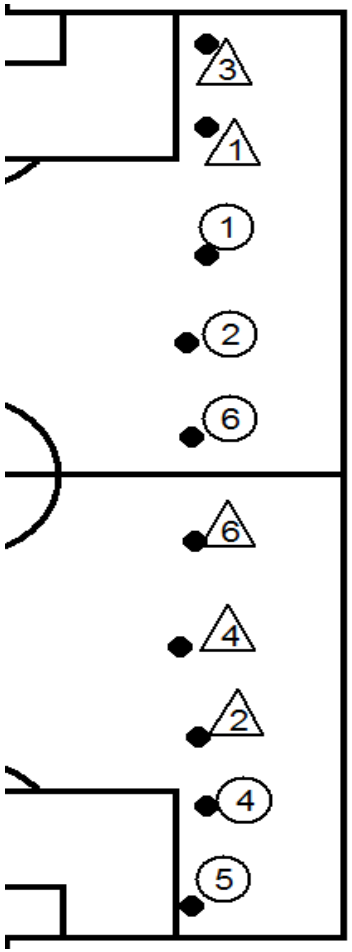
Execution:

1. To start, the player will toss the ball above them and head it and then catch it.
2. Then they will toss the ball up and head it twice in a row, then catch it.
3. Three times, then catch it.
4. This goes on until the player loses control, then they start back at one head again.
5. You can do this with two players and they have to head the ball back and forth until they lose control.
6. They have to try and direct the ball to their partner so they can keep the game going.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill allows players to practice controlling their head passes and work on knowing where the ball is going which are crucial to playing at an elite level.

- Players will build their heading skills and they will also gain further control over where they head the ball.



This drill allows players to strengthen their ability to control the ball with their heads.

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DRILL #14 – PASSING CIRCLE (3RD LEVEL)

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

With this drill you might want to add a few more players to each circle so there are more passing options. 8 to 10 players is the number you want to shoot for.

Execution:

1. Now, instead of only having three balls in the circle for players to track, you have five. This places an emphasis on keeping your head up (while you are passing and receiving), accurate passes and good control with the ball.
2. If you want, you can require that players only do one touch passes. This requires them to think ahead and make a quick decision.
3. Take it even one step further for advanced players and you can restrict them to making the passes with their non-dominant foot.

Coaching Tips:

- Alternating feet will help players develop skills to pass with both feet. Encourage them to alternate their feet or restrict them to passing with certain feet.

- Add a few more balls and the players will have to know exactly where the ball is going to, and coming from. Now it is going to get really crazy!

Better passing, receiving and more awareness of the players is what players will learn in this drill.

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