

Chest control

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Bringing the ball under control.
- 2 Creating space.
- 3 A good first touch.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 "Cushion" the ball – take the pace off it by withdrawing the chest on impact.
- 2 Control the ball in the direction you want to move off in.
- 3 End with a pass.



what to shout

- "Try to be relaxed"
- "Stay focused on the ball, not the defender"



what to look for

- Moving into the ball's line of flight.
- Keeping the head steady.
- Controlling the ball away from an opponent – the ball can be deflected to the side into available space by turning the upper body on contact.
- Passing the ball on the second touch.



what to think about

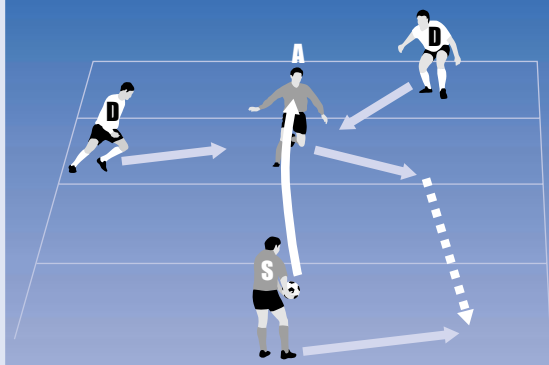
Coaches often say to players "keep your eyes on the ball" but players should glance away from the ball while it's in flight to assess passing possibilities.

What you get your players to do:

Stage 1: In an area 10 metres x 10 metres two players stand opposite each other. The first player acts as a server and throws the ball underhand to the other player, who controls it on the chest and passes it back.

Stage 2: The serving player applies pressure by running to one side of the receiving player, who controls the ball to the other side.

Chest control



direction of run → pass → return pass ■■■→
A = attacker D = defender S = server

Development

Play one attacker versus two defenders in an area split into four equal zones. The server throws the ball to the attacker who is challenged by both defenders.

The attacker controls the ball, creating space with their first touch, and while in the same zone plays the ball back to the server. The server can repeat the practice.

How would I put this into a game situation?

Play 4 attackers versus 2 defenders, with two target players outside the area. A target player throws the ball to one of the attackers who ideally controls it on the chest before passing to a teammate. The ball has to be played to a teammate before the attacking team can pass the ball back to either target player. Award points for every successful chest control and pass, and for every time a defender intercepts or wins the ball.



How to use smart sessions

Print off the session and take it to training. It should take you less than five minutes to read the instructions, set up the session, and then you are ready to communicate what happens to your players.

Number of players

You only need six players to complete a session, though it can easily be expanded to meet your needs. With lots more players you could have a number of grids working at the same time.

Timings

The timings are for a twenty minute session, but it can be expanded or reduced to meet your needs. It's your call.

As a rule of thumb 10 minutes would be enough time for a well executed first drill, development and feedback. Any shorter and you have not explored the full skill range or asked enough questions of the players. Longer is fine as long as you feel the session is developing. The game related element adds another 10 minutes.

Equipment

The equipment used is simple. A set of cones (or trainers or tops) as markers and a couple of balls.

You can add in other equipment where you feel you need them – we just assume that you don't have them because sometimes the shed is locked or another coach is using them.

Training area

The size of the training area is left for you to decide. Smaller players need a smaller area, but the session will never need more than a 20m x 20m grid for initial drills. The smaller the area the more intense the training.

The standard and age groups

Smart sessions are based on the core skills of soccer. They will challenge any standard because a player can always perform the core better.

The "development" ideas can be used to differentiate between the different standards of your players; the "think about" section can challenge the more advanced; the "game related situations" can change the contact situations the teams face.

Players should wear shin pads in all coaching sessions. They should be suitable to the player's physique and worn correctly with socks pulled up.

Elements of the session

What to tell your players the session is about:

This is your introduction and outlines the objectives of the session. Just read this out. The players then have an objective. Return to this at the end of the session to see if you have achieved your objectives.

What you tell your players to do:

This is how you want your players to achieve the objectives. You can tell the players straight away how to achieve the objectives, or you can tease it out of them as the session goes on.

What you get your players to do:

This shows you how the session is going to work. Depending on what is going to be achieved, it sets out what actions the players are going to take. There are no exact measurements, or complicated patterns – the approach is "simple, stupid, successful". Slow motion the first few patterns – get the drill right and the skill right first before speeding up. Use the "What to shout" prompts to keep the players focused. Use the "What to look for" to keep your eye on why the players might be failing.

Development

No session is worth doing unless there is some form of progression. Normally there will be an increase in pressure, say by adding more defenders, or by restricting the time available. Other areas for you to think about are: Where do I stand as coach? Do I throw the ball into the grid?

How would I put this into a game situation?

All the elements of the session are geared to the game, but this section puts the session one step away from a full game, with attack, defence and a goal line.

What to shout

Have the words handy, because apart from the usual words of encouragement, it is good to shout the key factors to players. Of course you can hold some of these "shouts" back and ask the players to identify how they can improve.

What to look for

You need to keep your eyes open for "best practice". This section helps you identify quickly where players might go wrong so you can quickly put them right.

Think about

Here you have the chance to challenge the players and situation, either by using feedback or just asking yourself the questions. It is a little more advanced and might not be appropriate for your players.

Where does it fit:

To help you file and order our coaching we have given you the core areas of individual and team skills that the session covers.