

Key Coaching Points for Soccer Fundamentals

Dribbling

Preparation: stay on the balls of the feet; knees slightly bent; lean a little forward at the waist; arms out somewhat for balance; head

steady; eyes glance up to see the dribbling path

Contact: eyes glance down to ensure proper contact with the ball; touch the ball at the horizontal midline (line A) with the instep or the inside or outside of the instep (front of the foot near the toes); the ball can be touched at the vertical midline (line B) or slightly left or right of that line to change direction with the ball

Follow Through: the sole of the foot can be used to stop the ball or to change direction

Running with the Ball

Preparation: balance and good running motion

Contact: push the ball forward with the instep; each push of the ball should go several yards and then run to catch up with the ball; touch the ball forward in the natural running stride; when touching the ball with the instep look at the ball

Follow Through: look up and search for any passes or shots that might be on while the ball is rolling forward; when the ball is a few strides away the head is up and the eyes scan the field

Shielding

Preparation: take up a side position to keep the ball away from the opponent at the furthest point; stand on the leg closest to the opponent with the knee slightly bent for balance; the arm closest to the opponent should be to some extent up and locked for balance and to hold off the opponent (do not push); lean with the shoulder closest to the opponent; head steady; use the foot away from the opponent to turn away thus screening the ball

Contact: eyes on the ball; center of gravity lowered to help balance; the leg furthest from the opponent should be extended to hold the ball as far away from the opponent as possible; place the sole of the foot of that leg on top of the ball (alternately form a wedge by the inside of the foot and the ground)

Follow Through: firm base provided by supporting foot; if the opponent commits to one side then roll in the opposite direction

Passing

Push pass

Preparation: run up approach to the ball is a straight line; plant foot is beside the ball about 6" away and the toes are pointed in the direction of the pass; knee of the standing leg is bent; hips facing the direction of the pass; turn the kicking leg outwards from the hip; the toes of the kicking foot point out and the sole of that foot should be parallel to the ground; lean a bit forward at the waist; head down with the eyes on the ball; arms out for balance; a medium back swing of the kicking leg

Contact: lock the ankle of the kicking foot; toes of the kicking foot up slightly; hit across line A (equator) preferably where lines A & B cross; the kicking foot is turned out and pushes through

the middle of the ball; contact the ball near the arch of the foot; the downswing of the kicking leg comes from the hip; upon contact with the ball the knee and ankle of the kicking leg should be locked to provide a firm striking surface and more power; push through the ball towards the target.

Follow Through: keep the kicking foot in place; follow through with the foot towards the target; the knee of the kicking leg should come up on the follow through so that the thigh ends parallel to the ground; the upper torso becomes more upright on ball contact and the follow through; the head should remain down until the kicking foot lands once again

Instep Pass

Preparation: in the approach to the ball the last full stride of what will become the standing leg must be a long one; plant foot beside the ball about 6" away and with the toes pointing toward the target; bend the knee slightly; the angle of approach can be straight on or diagonal; the backswing of the kicking foot takes the heel towards the buttocks; toes of the kicking foot are pointed down; ankle is locked; eyes on the ball; lean forward slightly over the ball; arms out for balance

Contact: on the downswing the leg swings fully from the hip; keep the toes of the kicking foot pointed down; strike through the ball at the point of intersection of lines A & B; knee of the kicking leg is over the ball; keep the head down; watch the foot connect with the ball

Follow Through: the arm of the standing leg side comes across the torso; the arm of the kicking leg side stays back slightly; the kicking foot follows through in the same plane as the flight of the ball for a medium or high pass; for a low pass the follow through of the kicking leg is across the midline of the body so that with the leg on one side coming across and the arm on the opposite side coming across the body ends up in a corkscrew shape momentarily

Crossing

Instep

Preparation: during the dribble down field sight the target space across the field to pass the ball to; from the dribble the next to last touch of the ball should be to push it slightly and diagonally towards the inside of the field (prep touch); on the last stride the plant foot should go beside the ball about 6" away from the ball with the toes pointed across the field toward the opposite touchline; the knee of the standing leg should be to some extent bent for balance; the heel of the kicking foot should rise sharply towards the buttocks; the entire kicking leg should go back from the hip; the head should now be a bit forward and the eyes on the ball; arms out slightly from the sides for balance; on the downswing of the kicking foot the toes of that foot should be pointed down and the ankle locked

Contact: strike the center of the ball, where lines A & B meet, with the instep (for an out-swinger strike the ball to the outside of line B and for an in-swinger strike the ball to the inside of line B); connect with the ball a little below the horizontal midline (line A) of the ball to increase height (or on the midline for a flat flight); watch the foot connect with the ball

Follow Through: follow through with the kicking leg forward and slightly across the midline of the body; hips should now be square with the opposite touchline; come down on the kicking foot at the end of the follow through swing and then look up

Bending (swerve) Pass

Inside of Foot

Preparation: plant foot beside the ball about 6" to the side with the toes pointed toward the target; knee of the standing leg slightly bent; lean forward a bit at the waist; head down and eyes on the ball; the arm opposite to the kicking leg should be out from the torso and the arm on the kicking leg side should be nearer to the torso; the heel of the kicking foot goes up towards the buttock on the backswing; on the downswing the toes of the kicking foot should be up and the ankle locked

Contact: strike the ball to the outside of line B (above, at or below line A depends on the height of the pass desired)

Follow Through: the toes of the kicking foot stay up on the follow through; bring the kicking leg across the midline and slightly upward; the arm opposite the kicking leg comes across the chest; the head should stay down and steady

Outside of Foot

Preparation: plant foot beside the ball about 8" to the side with the toes pointed toward the target; knee of the standing leg slightly bent; lean forward a bit at the waist; head down and eyes on the ball; the arm opposite to the kicking leg should be out from the torso and the arm on the kicking leg side should be nearer to the torso; the heel of the kicking foot goes up towards the buttock on the backswing; on the downswing the toes of the kicking foot should be do with the little toe angled down toward the ground and the ankle locked

Contact: strike the ball to the inside of line B (a above, at or below line A depends on the height of the pass desired)

Follow Through: the toes of the kicking foot stay down on the follow through; bring the kicking leg across the midline and slightly upward; the arm opposite the kicking leg comes across the chest; the head should stay down and steady

Chip Pass

Preparation: plant foot beside the ball about 6" to the side with the toes pointed toward the target; knee of the standing leg should be flexed; the hips should face the target; the kicking leg bends sharply at the knee; heel of the kicking foot must rise sharply toward the buttock; head down and eyes on the ball

Contact: the lower leg of the kicking foot snaps downward; to get backspin hit the ball under line A; 'squeeze' the ball between the foot and ground; a good snapping action is needed from the leg below the knee and it must be brought down hard; the toes of the kicking foot should wedge at a 45° angle between the ground and the bottom of the ball; the instep should actually hit the portion of the ball resting on the ground

Follow Through: the sole of the kicking foot should stop completely flat under the ball and thus make a grazing divot in the turf; no further follow through, which causes a backspin on the ball; the head should stay down and steady; the kicking foot stays in place

Half Volley & Volley

The technique for passing with the inside of the foot and the instep on the half-volley and the full volley are essentially the same as when the ball is on the ground. The main difference is getting the kicking foot level with the ball to try and strike it through line A. This requires the passer to wait for the ball to have just bounced from the ground for the half-volley or to let the ball drop below knee height for the full volley. To strike the ball sooner the foot needs to be raised to the ball and sometimes this requires a jump. Other minor differences are the same for both parts of the foot, instep and inside, and are noted below.

Preparation: backswing is shorter; no essential alteration in the posture of the body and arms

Contact: strike through the proper line of the ball

Follow Through: shorter follow through

Receiving

Ground (Inside of Foot)

Preparation: feet about shoulder width apart; toes of the standing foot pointing forward; bend both knees a bit; arms out slightly for balance; turn the toes of the receiving foot out so that the arch of the foot is facing the oncoming ball; extend the receiving foot slightly forward; watch the ball onto the receiving foot

Contact: with the flat inside area of the foot (centered at the arch of the foot); as the ball makes contact with the foot gently pull the leg backward to absorb the pace of the ball; keep the sole of the foot parallel with the ground

Follow Through: bring the receiving foot back just beyond the standing leg; eyes on the ball

Instep

Preparation: feet somewhat less than shoulder width apart; knees gently bent for balance; arms out a little for balance; toes of the standing foot pointing forward; toes of the receiving foot pointing down; ankle locked; extend the receiving foot slightly forward; watch the ball onto the receiving foot

Contact: with the instep (shoe laces) meet the ball; gently pull the leg backward at the knee joint to absorb the pace of the ball; keep the toes down and ankle locked

Follow Through: bring the receiving foot back just beyond the standing leg; eyes on the ball

Out of the Air

Cushion (Instep)

Preparation: get in line with the path of the ball; the body should rest on the non-receiving leg which is bent at the knee; the receiving leg should be relaxed and bent at the knee; raise the receiving foot as high up in the air from the hip as possible; watch the ball all the way onto the foot

Contact: the ball should come into contact with the full instep; lock the foot in place to provide a steady receiving surface; receiving leg is lowered smoothly and fairly quick (first at almost the same pace as the ball – slow the speed as the leg comes closer to the ground); arms out slightly for balance

Follow Through: the ball and the foot should remain in contact for as long as possible to reduce the pace of the ball as the leg is gradually slowing its speed toward the ground; the ball should land on the ground gently without bouncing

Thigh

Preparation: move into the line of flight of the ball; body weight is on the standing leg with the knee bent; the receiving leg is raised from the hip with the knee bent so that the thigh is at an angle of 50° to 60° to that of the shin; eyes on the ball

Contact: essentially the same as receiving with the instep; ball contact should be near the center of the thigh; lower the thigh at roughly the same speed as the ball; the thigh muscles will absorb the impact of the ball

Follow Through: lower the knee of the receiving leg as though stepping down from a ladder; the ball should drop in front of the player's foot; balance normally

Chest

Preparation: get in line with the path of the ball; prepare for contact by pushing the chest towards the ball; tuck the chin in towards the chest to protect the throat and to watch the ball onto the chest; bring the arms upward slightly to make the chest a bit concave and to help relax the upper body

Contact: on impact relax the chest muscles to absorb the ball; exhale upon contact to better absorb the energy of the ball; watch the ball all the way onto the chest; lean slightly backwards from the waist and the knees in the action of bending as ball contact is made; the ball then drops neatly under control

Follow Through: regain a natural posture to now dribble, pass or shoot the ball

Throw-ins

Standing

Preparation: feet flat and square on the ground (about shoulder width apart) or feet staggered with one foot forward and flat on the ground and the other behind with the heel raised; knees bent for good balance; sight where to throw the ball; turn the hips in that direction; the palms of the hands while holding the ball should face the direction the thrower wishes the ball to take; the grip of the ball is similar to the W grip of goalkeepers

Contact: hands should be at the back of the ball (the diamond grip works well for small hands); ball behind the head with the elbows bent; lean the upper torso backward at the waist and knees bent forward for counterbalance; throw with both hands coming forward simultaneously; the legs straighten now; the upper torso snaps forward; head steady for balance; weight is evenly distributed to both feet; if one foot is in front of the other the weight should be transferred from the rear to the front foot during the course of the throwing action; the ball should not leave the hands until the ball is over or just beyond the head

Follow Through: follow through smoothly with the hands towards your target (finish with the fingertips pointing towards the target); keep the feet touching the ground; keep both feet pointed toward the target; do not step forward until the ball has left the hands

Moving

Preparation: start one or two yards back from the touchline; move forward with quick, short steps; sight where to throw the ball; turn the hips in that direction; the back is fully arched after the run up

Contact: all points are the same as with the standing throw plus at the end of the run up to the touchline the feet can plant together firmly on the ground with a small forward hop or one foot in front of the other while dragging the toe of the trail leg; toes of the lead leg or both feet pointing towards the target; throw with both hands coming forward simultaneously

Follow Through: follow through smoothly with the hands towards the target; keep some part of the feet touching the ground; do not step forward until the ball has left the hands

Shooting

Inside of Foot

Preparation: non-kicking (plant) foot is alongside the ball about 6" away; toes of the plant foot pointed toward the target; knee of the plant foot leg is slightly bent; shoulder on the kicking leg side is in-line with the ball; the backswing of the kicking foot is approximately 45°; the ankle of the kicking foot is now with the toes pointing away from the kicker; the head is steady and looking down at the ball; the hips must now be facing the target; on the downswing of the kicking foot the sole of the foot is parallel to the ground

Contact: strike the center of the ball at the horizontal line A (equator) with the inside (arch) of the foot; the toes of the kicking foot turned slightly upward

Follow Through: the knee of the kicking leg should come upwards on the follow through; the inside of the kicking foot should be flat to the target on the follow through; the kicking foot should go towards the target on the follow through; keep the head down until after the kicking foot has landed on the ground

Instep Drive

Preparation: non-kicking (plant) foot is alongside the ball about 6" away; toes of the plant foot pointed toward the target; knee of the plant foot leg slightly bent; heel of the kicking foot should come up towards the buttocks on the back swing; lock the ankle of the kicking foot during the backswing and keep it locked on ball contact and during the follow through; knee of the kicking leg over the ball; chest forward and over the ball, bending at the waist slightly; arms out for balance; head steady and down with eyes on the ball; on the downswing of the kicking foot point the toes down, lock the ankle and curl the toes back (curling the toes back makes a firmer striking surface of the instep...make a fist with the toes and foot)

Contact: watch the foot strike the ball in the center strike through the ball

Follow Through: keep the toes of the kicking foot pointed down on the follow through; the head must remain looking down at the spot where the ball was and steady in line with the midline of the body; the kicking foot comes across the standing leg; the arm opposite of the kicking leg comes across the torso to maintain balance; the arm on the kicking leg side remains slightly out from the torso for balance; the shooter should end up in a corkscrew posture and then land forward on the kicking foot

Chip

Shooting with a chip is the same as passing with a chip. A very sharp rise of the ball will be needed to beat the goalkeeper.

Half volley (Inside of Foot)

Preparation: get the kicking foot level with the ball by raising the kicking foot; toes of the standing leg are pointed toward the target and the knee is flexed; the arm opposite to the kicking leg should be forward; the arm on the same side as the kicking leg should be to the side; head steady and eyes on the ball

Contact: swing the kicking leg forward from the hip; raise the upper leg enough to get the kicking foot level with the ball; make contact with the arch of the foot; keep the ankle firm and the toes pointed out; concentrate on keeping the eye on the ball and holding the head steady; pivot on the standing leg while striking the ball

Follow Through: the arm on the same side as the kicking leg should go back to counterbalance the forward swing of the kicking leg; follow through with the kicking foot towards the target

Forward Instep Drive

Preparation: the non kicking foot is placed alongside the ball as it bounces; keep the head and knee over it; swing the kicking foot back; snap the leg forward just as the ball comes off the ground (try to hit the ball when it is no more than 2" off the ground)

Contact: strike the ball through the point where lines A and B cross; punch through the point of contact; toes down and curled back

Follow Through: the follow through is most important for power; to help keep the ball below crossbar height raise the knee of the kicking leg on the follow through and the foot goes generally forward

Volley (standing)

Forward Instep Drive

Preparation: first get the chosen kicking foot behind the line of the ball; get the kicking foot level with the ball by letting the ball drop below knee height; get the hip and knee above and over the ball as it comes through the air (an alternate method is to raise the knee so that the thigh is parallel with the ground, thus getting the kicking foot level with line A); the kicking leg is lifted back and up so that it can swing down and through to give the required power for distance

Contact: hit the ball low (at and slightly below line A) if height is required or higher (at and slightly above line A) to keep the ball lower; toes of the kicking foot pointed down; ankle locked; eyes on the ball (watch the foot connect with the ball); arms out as needed for good balance; the kicking leg swing can come from the knee joint or the hip joint dependent upon the distance the shot must travel

Follow Through: keep the head steady; follow through with the kicking foot towards the target; look up only after the kicking foot is back on the ground

Inside of the Foot

All of the key points are the same as with the inside of the foot half-volley with the exception that the ball is struck before it touches the ground.

Heading

To Score

Preparation: move to get the body in line with the flight of the ball and preferably with the hips squared to the ball; the feet should be about shoulder width apart (alternately they can be in a staggered stance) and the toes pointed toward the target area; knees slightly bent; lean backwards at the waist while simultaneously bringing the arms up and forward for balance; eyes on the ball; neck muscles locked to keep the head steady

Contact: once the ball is within a yard distance from the head snap the upper body forward from the waist with the arms simultaneously snapping backward; keep the arms slightly bent at the elbows and a little out from the sides of the body for balance and protection; at the moment of contact the knees should straighten (if the feet are staggered then the rear foot should come forward now) to add body weight to the force impelled to the ball; strike the ball on the forehead – close to the hair line; it is important to strike through the ball and not merely let the ball rebound off the head

Follow Through: lean the upper body forward on the follow through; throw the eyes (follow through) towards the target spot as this will increase contact time between the ball and the forehead thereby increasing accuracy; the power for heading the ball comes from the legs, lower back and abdominal muscles; strike the top half of the ball to guide it toward the goal line or the middle of the ball for a flat flight

To Pass (standing or jumping)

All points are the same as with the To Score section above with the exception that the ball is contacted at line B. To pass the ball sideways rotate the upper torso in the required direction immediately before contact so that the surface of the forehead and the torso finish at a right angle to the direction the player wishes to redirect the ball. Simultaneously with the upper torso rotation the trunk sways slightly back in order to help in the striking action of the head.

To Clear

All points are the same as with the To Score section above with the exception that the ball is contacted in lower half. Additionally the forehead should be tilted upwards. All clearances should be high, wide and long.

Standing

Preparation: feet pointed in the direction of the target space; knees slightly bent for balance; lean upper body back at the waist before ball contact; neck muscles locked to keep the head steady; eyes on the ball

Contact: snap forward from the waist to impact the ball; strike the ball with the forehead; arms slightly to the side for balance and protection

Follow Through: follow through with the upper body towards the target space

Jumping

Preparation: single or double leg take off; heels come up towards the buttocks; lean upper body back at the waist before ball contact; neck muscles locked to keep the head steady; eyes on the ball; time the jump according to the flight of the ball

Contact: snap forward from the waist to impact the ball; snap the feet forward during the striking motion; strike the ball with the forehead; arms slightly to the side for balance and protection

Follow Through: follow through with the upper body toward the target space

Flick

A flick header is a simple redirection of the ball without any additional impetus being added to the ball. The flick can be done while stationary, on the move or while in the air. As the ball touches the forehead turn the head with the neck muscles in the direction for the ball to be redirected. While the ball can be flicked backwards with a backwards motion of the head it is preferable to turn the head over the shoulder and to twist at the waist to flick the ball backwards as in this way the eyes can move with the ball on the follow through to improve the accuracy of the flick