

2012 WIAA Coaches School

From Good to Great

The how, why and what of getting your players to train on their own

Cary Davidson

Head Coach, Girls and Boys Soccer, Auburn Mountainview High School

AUBURN MOUNTAINVIEW SOCCER

The Self Workout

A practical guide to developing technical soccer skills on your own

Compiled by: Jacob Gordon, Assistant Coach, Auburn Mountainview High School

Few athletic endeavors require mastering as many skills as soccer.

You may only be called upon to head a ball with precision or whip in a perfect left-footed cross once in an 80 minute game, yet how many times in a typical training session do you head a ball or cross left footed?

To develop and master the skills necessary to become a great player (or even a good player) you need to practice on your own – a lot.

I had to spend countless hours, above and beyond the basic time, to try and perfect the fundamentals. –
Julius Erving (aka Dr. J), Basketball Hall of Fame Player

The vision of a champion is bent over, drenched in sweat, at the point of exhaustion, when nobody else is looking. – Anson Dorrance, Nat'l Soccer Hall of Fame Coach

I am building a fire, and every day I train, I add more fuel. At just the right moment, I light the match. –
Mia Hamm, Nat'l Soccer Hall of Fame Player

The Four Pillars of Soccer

Soccer can be broken down into four overarching components, or pillars:

1. *Technical* Individually Focused. The How. The details or fundamentals of how to execute skills.
2. *Tactical* Small groups or team focused. When and Where to use technique. Organization. Player Roles. Combinations. Thirds of the Field. Defensive Responsibilities. Offensive Responsibilities. etc.
3. *Physical* Physical health, fitness level, strength (esp. core), balance, agility, acceleration, speed, jumping
4. *Psychological* Mental preparation, positive outlook, self-talk, visualization, self-actualization, goal setting

***** How to Improve Your Game (In a Nutshell) *****

You can work on all of these pillars by yourself, the easiest & most important of which is TECHNIQUE. Listed from top to bottom, greatest to least impact to your game per unit time spent by yourself.



Technical – Wall exercises and juggling – what the rest of this packet will help you do.

Psychological – Goal-setting. Visualizing correct technique. Positive self-talk. Imagination. Creativity. Self-Accountability.

Physical – Stretching/Yoga, other sports, core exercise (sit-ups, push-ups, pull ups, etc.), weights, ladder, running

Tactical – Watching games not just for fun but to analyze tactics, especially those used by players in your position.
(What do they do? Why do you think they do it? What do they do during repeating patterns or scenarios?)
Reading books about the game. I would highly recommend Tactics and Teamwork if you can find a copy.
Playing lots of soccer. Watching videos describing tactics (2v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4, systems of play, formations, etc.)

The 10,000 Hour Rule

Malcolm Gladwell identified the 10,000 hour maxim in his book, Outliers: The Story of Success. The rule describes how to attain Big Time Success. Based on an analysis of people who reached the top of their fields, Gladwell claims that any of us can reach greatness by practicing tasks relevant to our chosen field for a total of 10,000 hours. He provides pretty compelling examples including the Beatles, Bill Gates, and Tiger Woods. These guys put in the hours, then rapidly pulled ahead of the competition. (quoted from lauragraceweldon.com) I.e. the more time you spend, the better you will become.

Only 2 Minutes in a Game

In a 90-minute match involving two teams playing 11 v 11, each player will average 2 minutes in contact with the ball. That means you have two minutes on the ball to influence the game. It's not very much time, so you have to be able to make the most of it. Those two minutes can be crisp and neat or fragmented and messy. It all depends on your preparation, meaning all the work you've done by yourself and with the team to master skills and quick decision-making.

Two Seconds to Make a Decision and Execute

During a varsity game, upon receiving the ball, on average a player has no more than 2 seconds before pressure is on him (which generally means being tackled). That is... ball is received, "one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two", pressure. Therefore, the ability to make quick decisions (thinking ahead) and to execute skills quickly and efficiently is of the utmost importance at higher levels of soccer, like varsity. There are only 3 possible choices on the ball: pass, dribble, or shoot.

Technique vs. Skill

Technique is the ability to execute an action. Can you hit a 50 yard pass to feet, shoot on target, dribble well, volley, etc.? **Skill** is the ability to perform that technique under pressure. **First, you must learn the technique. Once learned, you must push yourself to test technique against pressure.** At best, this pressure can come from playing against opponents who are more skilled than you, but if you are alone, you can add time constraints and set goals that continue to push yourself. **Remember to practice technique slowly at first and gradually increase the speed at which you do it.**

The Self Workout: Just You and the Ball

The best thing you can do to improve your soccer technique is to spend time with just you and the ball by:

Juggling: You can do this anywhere as long as you have a spherical object and some space.

(I say “spherical object”, because Pelé used to juggle a grapefruit, while others have used tied-together trash bags.)

Dribbling: You just need a spherical object and a little more space.

Wall Exercises: This is the best thing you can do. Make sure to pay attention to technique when kicking and receiving.

Lea Hill Elementary

Undercover Area

Undercover: Shade, rainy days, grass

Auburn Mountainview High School

Tennis Courts

Late Nights: Bottom Court Lights 'til 10 pm (just push green button)

This is the Most Important Page!

When working by yourself, it is important to remember the following two quotes.

“Practice makes permanent” (i.e. making a habit)

It is important to use proper technique.

Whatever action you practice and repeat will start to become permanent; a habit.

If you practice something the wrong way, you'll start to remember the wrong way to do it.

Likewise, if you practice it the right way (correcting and refining as you go), you will start to execute it correctly more often.

So, focus on the details (or fundamentals) of the technique when you practice.

Remember to attempt, then correct, then repeat. It always gets easier, trust me.

“Repetition equals retention” (i.e. muscle memory)

Wall work and juggling give you the most repetition per unit time of various techniques. You will touch the ball hundreds of times in a 1 hour session. The more you practice a technique, the more it becomes second nature. After thinking about the technique and practicing the details, your body remembers how to do it. It's like when a good piano player plays the piano. Of course, when practicing the pianist must think about the details (where to place his fingers, move his hands, etc.). During the performance, however, the pianist no longer thinks about which finger goes where; His or her fingers just “know where to be” (this is known as “muscle memory”). **With repetition, you can master a skill, and then all you need to do in a game is decide when to do it (not how to do it).**

(The amount of skill you have) = (How much time you've spent on the fundamentals)

Juggling

(You can do this anywhere as long as you have a spherical object and a space to work in.)

Juggling is the art of keeping the ball in the air. It helps improve coordination, balance, and helps one become two-footed. While juggling is not used in a game, it helps a player become comfortable with a ball. It makes it easier to settle a ball when it comes in from any angle, direction or height; this is referred to as first touch.

Stalling the Ball: Holding the ball on your foot (Technique)

This will help you in all ball striking, improving control of your ankle.

- Foot in heel down, toe up position. Ankle locked. Knees bent. Ball in front of body.
- At first just place the ball between your toe and shin and try to balance the ball. Later, try rolling the ball onto your foot with the sole of your foot and then stalling it.
- When you roll the ball onto your foot, the foot should be parallel to the ground. As the ball rolls further onto your laces you need to pull your toes up.



Stalling the Ball on Ft.
Toe straight ahead
Heel down, toe up.
Knees bent.
Ball in front of body.

Getting the ball up into the air (before you start juggling) (Various Techniques)

- **Roll and scoop** (this one is most common and most important)
 - Ball in front of body, ankle in normal position, toe forward, knees bent. Roll back onto laces, lift up
- Motorcycle – Use the sole of one foot to roll the ball back onto the toe/laces of the plant foot, then hop
- Tony Hawk – Place ball between ankles/inside of both feet, hop up, pull knees toward chest, release ball
- Toe-Toe – Place the ball between the toes of both your feet. Quickly snap both feet in underneath the ball
- A rainbow? There are hundreds of ways to get the ball in the air, & plenty of YouTube videos to see them.

Foot Juggling (listed in order of increasing difficulty)

1. Keeping the ball in the air between the knees and thighs (no spin).
 - Use the laces/instep of your foot to knock the ball up. Knees bent. Toe slightly out away from body.
2. Keeping the ball in the air below the knees.
 - a. No spin: Use the juggling foot to bounce up and down just below the ball
 - b. Spinning: Slice underneath the ball to create backspin. Toe slightly raised above heel.
3. From the waist to the head (no spin)
4. Above the head (no spin)

Practice:

- Left foot only. Right foot only.
- Alternating feet.
- Two one foot, two the other. Etc.



Foot juggling technique without spin is most beneficial since it more closely resembles other soccer movements/kicks.

Advanced Foot Juggling

- Inside of the Feet
- Outside of the Feet

Thigh Juggling Technique

- Before making contact with the ball, the thigh should be tilted downward (knee slightly below waist)
- The thigh should be raised so that it becomes parallel to the ground, making a table for the ball to land on
- The ball should make contact with between the center of the thigh and knee. Try to keep ball at eye-level.
- Strike the ball just to the inside of the thigh to make it easier to go back and forth between right and left.

Head Juggling Technique

- Knees bent
- Head up
- Neck muscles tight
- Mouth closed
- Eyes open
- Little motion coming from your abs up toward the ball (neck should not move). Contact ball with forehead.



Try juggling a smaller ball, such as a tennis ball. It's more difficult, but it will only make juggling a soccer ball easier, improving eye-foot coordination.
A tennis ball or volleyball can be used to soften headers (especially if you do numerous reps).



Free Style (any combo of the above) (be creative) ("elevator": foot, thigh, shoulder, head, shoulder, thigh, foot)

- See "The Amazing Mr. Woo" on YouTube – he uses the sole of his feet, heels, shins & shoulders

Dribbling & Foot Skills

Dribbling and foot skills are the cornerstone of any soccer player's game. If you can't control the ball at your feet, you won't be an effective soccer player, period. The more familiar you can be with the ball, the better.

- Dribble while going for a run, or on your way to do wall work (not next to the road)
- Dribble between juggling efforts or between wall exercises.



Keep the ball close

Keep low.
Knees bent.
Body over ball.

The Two Keys to Dribbling

1. *Change of Speed*
2. *Change of Direction*

Therefore, **focus on:**

1. *Acceleration After the Move/Turn*
2. *Side-to-side Motion*

** Basically, dribble the ball as quickly & far away from the opponent as possible**

Sole of Foot
Drag or Pull-Back

Shielding: The ball is kept as far away

Ankle Weights
Wear them
while practicing
moves to increase
foot speed.

The Cruyff Move

Basic Foot skills/Moves

Work on these with **both feet**:

- Inside-Outside of one foot only.
- Shuffles: Inside of ft, back & forth
- Drags: Use the sole of the foot to drag the ball across the body.
- Pushes: Push the ball forwards with the sole of the foot.
- Pull-Backs: Pull the ball backwards with the sole of the foot. Left foot, right foot, alternate feet.
- Inside-Outside: Inside of right foot across body, outside of left foot away from body.
Inside of left foot across body, outside of right foot away from body. Repeat.
- Shuffle-Shuffle-Drag: Inside of one foot, then the other, then sole of the other foot across the ball.
- Mathews: Drag ball inside then outside in one fluid motion without the foot touching the ground.
- Flip-Flop: Drag ball outside then inside in one fluid motion without the foot touching the ground.
- Cruyff: Use the inside of the foot or the inside of the heel to knock the ball behind the plant foot.
- Maradona: Two pull-backs in a spin move. You probably have already seen it.
- Step-over: Inside of foot from outside to inside of body, around the ball. Your legs may cross.
After the move, quickly take the ball the other direction with the outside of the same foot.
- Scissor: Outside of foot from inside to outside of body, around the ball.
After the move, quickly take the ball the other direction with the outside of the opposite foot.

** There are many more. Use combinations, your creativity, go on YouTube, or watch soccer for ideas.

The Step-Over



The Scissor Move

Eyes/Head Up
when dribbling
to see what's next

Turns while Dribbling (not from a pass)

Work on these with **both feet**:

- Pull back: Pull the ball straight back, then turn.
- Cruyff: Use the inside of the foot or the inside of the heel to knock the ball behind the plant foot.
- Inside-Hook: Use the inside of one foot to hook the ball away and back to the way you came.
- Outside-Hook: Use the outside of one foot to hook the ball away and back to the way you came.
- Stop-Over: Dribbling at pace, put the sole of your forward foot on top of the ball to stop it and use your momentum to jump over to the other side of the ball. Then carry with the inside of the same foot, or the outside of the other foot.

** There are many more. Get ideas on YouTube or by watching soccer.

To keep it worthwhile and interesting:

- Visualize where you can use the move
- Imagine yourself beating opponents with it
- Practice moves you like. Make them your own.

Speed Dribbling (cover 15 to 100 yards quickly, keeping the ball close)

Use the laces of the foot & flick the ball forward on every step.

Speed Dribble
Body over ball.
Ankle in.
Laces used.
Flick the ball.
Touch in stride.

Why Juggling and Wall Exercises are so Beneficial: First Touch

To become a great soccer player, you must be able to control the ball in an instant, no matter how it comes to you. This ability is referred to as first touch. This will improve by practicing juggling and wall exercises.

A GOOD first touch will:

- Provide time & space to assess what to do next & to execute that decision (e.g. pass, dribble, shoot)
- Ensure no time is wasted getting the ball out of the feet
- Enable you to operate comfortably under pressure

A BAD first touch may:

- Take momentum out of an attack
- Result in losing possession

skills school

FIRST TOUCH

with
Tom Goodman, M.Ed.
 National Director of
 Coaching Education



The key to keeping the ball for your team in a game is how you touch the ball when it first arrives at your feet. How you handle it at this instant is extremely important. In the soccer world, this is known as your "first touch."

When I was very young, I liked to kick my soccer ball against the back brick wall of a clubhouse at Nathan Bill Park in Springfield, Mass. If I kicked the ball hard off the wall, the ball would return to me fast. Likewise, if I kicked the ball softer off the wall, the ball would return to me slow.

I would do this for many hours during the week, kicking low, hard, driven balls or high, lofted balls off that wall. What I thought I was practicing was my kicking technique. After all, I tried kicking with my laces (instep), with the ankle area of my foot (inside), with the outside of my foot and, yes, even with my toe – which I found very useful in scoring quick goals as I got older. What I didn't realize was that every time I kicked the ball against the wall at different speeds and from different distances, I had to decide what kind of "first touch" I would put on the ball as it came back to me.



If the ball returned to me at a slow pace, I chose to kick it again or touch it so that it moved off on a slight angle about 1-2 steps away from me. Then I could easily approach it and kick it again.

If the ball returned to me at a faster pace, I had to pull my foot away from the ball (cushion the ball) just as it reached me.

Sometimes I stopped it dead and sometimes I touched it so that it landed 1-2 steps away from me. Sometimes I touched it so that it would go behind me as I turned in the opposite direction.

That wall and my imagination were responsible for some pretty good "first touch" as I got older.



Taking the Ball Out of the Air: Control

There are **two types of control**:

1. *Wedge Control* – Wedge the ball between the ground and a rigid body part at the moment it hits the ground.
2. *Cushion Control* – Absorb the momentum of the ball coming in. Pull back the controlling surface on impact.

When practicing the two types of control, toss the ball with your hands to head height only and practice the control technique. Once you get the technique down, toss the ball up higher, increasing the difficulty. Then use them during wall exercises.

Wedge Control

Wedge the ball against the ground & force the ball downwards or into a space you want to move into.

- *Sole of the Foot and Ground (Technique)*
 - When it bounces, wedge the ball between the sole of the foot and the ground
- *Inside of Foot and Ground (Technique)*
 - When it bounces, wedge the ball between the inside of the foot and the ground
 - Weight on plant foot, leaning direction you want to take the ball
 - Lean over the ball with the body & leg
 - Take the ball across the body
- *Outside of Foot and Ground (Technique)*
 - Take outside of foot, and draw leg across body in front of other leg
 - When it bounces, wedge the ball between the outside of the foot and the ground
 - Weight on plant foot, leaning direction you want to take the ball
 - Lean over the ball with the body and leg
 - Touch the ball outside of the body
- *Chest Down* (lean over the ball knocking it down towards the ground – for flat, chest-level balls



Sole Wedge Control



Inside Wedge

Cushion Control

Take the sting out of the ball by pulling back the controlling surface on impact, bringing it to the feet.

- *Instep Cushion Control (aka the Catch Trap) (Technique)*
 - Like the scooping motion of the roll and scoop (see juggling section)
 - Lift the foot one or two inches off the ground
 - Toe forward, sole of foot parallel to ground (or toe slightly raised)
 - Let ball hit the laces out of the air and draw the foot away as it makes contact
 - Legs shoulder-width apart or less
 - Knees bent
 - Weight on center
- *Thigh Cushion Control (Technique)*
 - Meet the ball at the center of quad
 - Place the thigh so that the knee is slightly below the waist
 - When the ball makes contact, drop the knee slightly, bringing the ball to the feet
- *Chest Cushion Control (Technique)* (You can also practice this after jumping into the air to receive it)
 - “Make the chest a table”. Lean back, shoulders forward. Chest around ball.
 - Arms up on sides (so you don’t commit a hand ball, and can battle opponent)
 - Draw chest away, bending at the torso, and pop the ball up on contact, Or...
 - ... Twist into ball so it directs to your right or left side for the volley/pass



Instep Cushion



Thigh Cushion

- *Head Cushion Control (Technique)*
- Neck muscles locked
- Eyes Open
- Mouth closed
- Knees bent
- Upon contact with the ball, draw the head away using the torso & knees, not the neck
- Meet the ball at the center of the forehead just below the hair line


Head Cushion
Usually, you will have to use one more body part to bring it down.

Control the ball:

- Down
- Close to the Body
- Into a New Direction

To prepare your next move.



Chest Cushion

Passing and Receiving

Fundamental Passing Technique (The Ball should “Zip and Roll”)

Everyone needs to improve!

- Kicking foot in “**heel down, toe up**” position (so that you use the largest surface area of your foot to meet the ball, improving contact accuracy, and so that the ball does not pop over your foot as you kick it).
- Plant foot to the side of the ball, with the toe pointing straight at the target (improving accuracy).
- Plant foot and kicking foot **make an L shape**; this shape should remain after striking the ball. (The kicking foot should make a flat surface, including in the follow through, so the pass is straight and accurate)
- **Open hips**, as opposed to a tight body shape (to allow for fluid movement and better accuracy).
- Keep your **body slightly over the ball** (so that it stays on the ground).
- Both **knees should be slightly bent** (for balance and accuracy).
- Draw the leg into a **backswing** (adjust the backswing to the length of the pass).
- Strike with the inside of the foot **through the center, or equator, of the ball** – about 2 inches off the ground (this will keep the ball on the ground and make sure full body motion transfers to the ball).
- **Follow through**: Kicking foot remains heel down, toe up & in L-shape all the way through the pass.

To trap the ball: use the same technique except instead of kicking the ball, **cushion it, drawing the foot away** as it meets the foot. (This will make sure the ball stays close to your body and does not bounce out of your space towards an opponent).

Wall Exercises (practice your left and right foot)

Pick a spot on the wall just above the ground to hit (so you can test your accuracy). Try at different distances.

- Two touch: Receive with the inside of the left foot, pass with inside of the left foot. Repeat with right foot.
- Two touch: Receive with the inside of one foot, touching it across your body, and pass with other foot.
- Two touch: Receive with the outside of your foot, pass with the inside of the same foot.
- One touch: Inside of one foot only. For short passes, less follow-through, bring leg back and punch ball.
- One touch: Alternate passing with the inside of either foot.

Advanced Passing Techniques:

Outside of the Foot (a more disguised pass)

- Plant foot at 30 degrees
- Weight forward on plant foot
- Kicking foot toe pointed down and slightly pulled toward the body.
- Strike across the ball

Practice: inside of foot trap across body, then outside of same foot pass

Bending the ball (banana kick)

Strike the ball left/right of vertical center.

- Outside of foot strikes across ball
 - Toe pointed down & inside
- Inside of foot around & through ball
 - Ankle curls foot around ball

Heel

- Straight back
- Or, axe chop (one foot over other)



Cesc Fàbregas of Barcelona using good passing technique.
(heel down toe up, L shape, body over the ball, follow through, knees bent)

Passing and Receiving (Continued)

Make it Rich: Add a “head check” (look over your shoulder) to see what’s behind you before you turn: a good habit.

Types of Turns (work on after receiving a pass that you’re working on against the wall)

Turn your shoulders & hips as you turn.
After the turn, explode off of the plant ft.

- Inside of the Foot 180: Ball is glued to inside of foot when you receive and turn with it
- Outside of the Foot: Turn body & plant foot 30 to 45 degrees away from ball, and use outside of foot flick around
- Cruyff Turn: Touch ball behind plant leg with the inside of the receiving foot
- Faint Turn: Act like coming towards ball, but let ball come across body and receive and turn with inside or outside
- Step-over then Turn: Step over the ball with inside of one foot to fake one way, then turn the other

** There are many more. Use your creativity, go on YouTube, or watch soccer to get ideas.

Lob Technique

Great for going over opponents in tight spaces, especially near/in the opponent's penalty box.

- First, do it with the ball still. Later, practice it when the ball is moving.
- Toe forward and slightly pointed down (toe should be a little lower than your heel)
- Move toes as close to the bottom of the ball as possible; pinch between the ball & ground.
- Plant foot off to the side of the ball, either even or behind the ball, pointed at the target.
- Both knees slightly bent ready to spring and lift. Big toe on center of ball.
- Lift the ball into the air. Keep the knee bent as you lift. Lift the leg &/or flick the ankle.
- The ball should have little to no rotation. A chip, which is different, will have rotation.



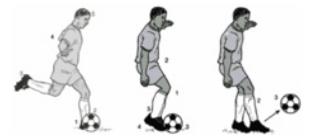
Lob over a Wall

YouTube “Thiago insane pass to Canales”

Chipping Technique

Great for playing behind the defense or to the corners without letting the ball roll to the keeper or out of bounds.

- Like a lob, but instead of lifting the ball, sweep underneath it.
- The motion should stop as you meet the ball (little follow through). This will produce back spin.
- When meeting the ball, the plant foot knee should bend (therefore, your body should dip a little)
- These can be low & short (just a few yards) or long & far (up and over defenders)
 - For short chips: make a short quick jab down into the ball
 - For long chips: lean back on the follow through to get height/distance



Long Ball Technique

Great for clearing the ball to a teammate, switching the field, crossing, and playing behind the defense.

- Ankle locked straight down (toes pointed down away from body)
- Plant foot knee bent. Kicking leg as straight as possible
- Swing into the ball from the hips/torso.
- Lean back and away from the ball to get the ball in the air more.
- Adjust how far you lean back. Far back: height. Over ball: direct.
- Meet the ball low and on center with the laces/instep.
- Wrap your foot around the ball so that it makes contact w/ instep.
- Strike mid-swing. Follow through the ball with your kicking leg.



Driven Ball Technique

Great for getting the ball to a teammate quicker than an inside of the foot pass. This technique is similar to shooting. They are called “driven” for a reason. They should be low, firm, and quick passes.

If you knock it in the air, make sure it stays less than a foot off of the ground.

- Ankle locked straight down (toes pointed down away from body).
- Knees bent. Body (chest and kicking leg knee) over the ball.
- Strike through the center of the ball. Push through the ball.
- Keep your head steady. Make sure to hit ball dead center (no lift or rotation)
- Meet the ball with the laces/instep. This is the hardest part of your foot. Practice on hitting this “sweet spot”.
- Make sure the ball stays on the ground, or flies low & bounces just before it reaches your teammate (the wall).



Playing the Ball Out of the Air: Volleys and Headers

Volleys

Direct Volleys: Hit the ball directly out of the air, or after a bounce. Strike the ball on its way down.

To keep inside/instep volley low:

- **Keep your chest over the ball**
- **Knee over the ball** if use instep
- **Strike mid-swing**



Messi doing a side volley.

Ankle locked. Eye on ball.
Plant foot on target. Knees bent.

Practice Tip:

Drop kick it or throw a ball up & let it bounce before you volley towards a target.

When volleying, focus on the following **overarching techniques:**

- Ankle locked (Inside of foot: heel down, toe up; Instep (laces): toe straight down)
- Position body in flight of ball. Point plant foot at the target. Keep both knees bent.
- Keep your head still and your eyes focused on the ball; watch the ball hit the foot.
- Strike through the center of the ball (when using instep, can strike above center)
- The power comes from the twist from the torso. It should be driven, not cleared.

The two most common volleys (practice both feet):

- Inside of the Foot – Same as basic passing technique except strike ball out of the air.
- Instep – aka laces. Same as driven ball, except ball hit in air. Knee & chest over ball.
 - Lead with the knee and bring the kicking leg through the ball.

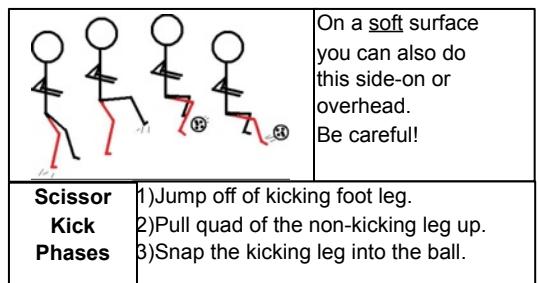
Advanced Volleys

- Half-Volley – Strike the ball with the instep the millisecond after it hits the ground.
- Side Volley – See Messi on the left. Knees bent, kicking foot pointed, kicking leg out to the side, using the torso to turn into ball, hands out for balance
- Scissor Kick – Karate kick in the air.

Cushion Control, Then Volley (or Pass on the Ground)

Control the ball off of the wall in the air, then volley/pass.

- Thigh Cushion, then Volley or Pass
- Chest Cushion/Wedge, then Volley or Pass
- Head Cushion, then Volley or Pass



Heading (** Remember: You can use a tennis ball or volleyball to reduce impact when working on heading technique)

Basic Heading Technique

- Sideways stance (for balance & so you don't get pushed off the ball)
- Eyes Open (so you can see the ball) – this is harder than it sounds
- Mouth closed (so you don't bite your tongue)
- Neck muscles locked (you do NOT nod your head "yes" into the ball)
- Bend back at torso/core as the ball comes in (prepare the catapult)
- Snap from the core (not the neck) toward the ball (release catapult)
- Push through w/ chest (break through the newspaper you're holding)
- Meet the ball square on the forehead for passing & offensive headers
- Meet the ball at the hair line (where your hair starts on your forehead) for defensive headers
- Timing: Meet the ball at the earliest point you can control it
- Use the arms for balance and momentum



Special Heading Skill: Flick-On Headers
Meet ball at the hairline & flick back w/ the torso/neck

To Do a Jumping Header,

- Jump off the front leg (if you jump off of the back, the opponent can bump you off easily)
- Jump early (a split second before an opponent can help you win balls in the air)
- Practice timing; You want to be at the peak of your jump as you snap into the ball

The Three Types of Headers (each can be done with the feet on the ground or in the air)

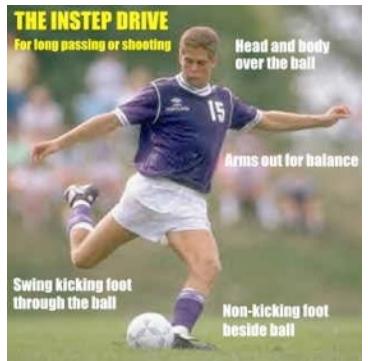
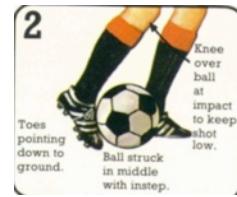
1. **Passing Headers** – Arches and softly drops to the feet of a teammate. Work on the soft touch/weight.
2. **Attacking Headers** – Head & chest must snap over the ball as it is struck down towards feet of GK.
3. **Defensive Headers** – Ball struck at hairline. Chest out & up; Make the ball go high, wide & far.

Shooting, Throw-ins, & Fitness

Shooting

The Instep Drive (Shooting Technique)

- Similar to the driven ball (page 9)
- Pick your spot. Point plant foot at that spot. Then just focus on the ball.
- Toe pointed down. Ankle locked. Strike with the instep (the “sweet spot”)
- Head steady. Knees bent. Shooting leg knee and chest over the ball.
- Get into a natural rhythm – a good prep touch, short quick steps, plant well.
- Twist into the ball so your momentum forces you to land on your shooting foot.
- Follow the shot! Get in the habit. Many goals are scored on the second effort.



Free Kicks (power & dip)

- **Power:** strike the bladder of the ball (the spot where you put in the needle to pump it up); hardest part of ball
- **Dip:** Hit high on the ball (just above center) & low on your instep. Dig into the spot to create a lip for the ball.

Shooting vs. Finishing

Shooting is a technique using the instep. Finishing is a mentality; It is the hunger to score goals and the ability to put the ball in the back of the net any which way (instep, inside, chip, head, toe, volley, or just being scrappy).

A Goal and the 18-Yard Box

It is good to practice shooting in the 18-yard box. The mind subconsciously takes in the lines, demarcations, & their relationship to where the goal is (angles and distances). You can practice shooting at “hot spots” so you’re more familiar in a match. Six Yard Box: All you need is a flat surface. 18-yard box: placement, then power.

Throw-ins

Use a basketball to practice throw-ins against the wall. It’s heavier & will only make you throw the ball in further. Also, you can use a medicine ball for resistance when practicing the overhead movement (don’t throw the ball).

Throw-in Technique

- Feet on the ground (can lift at the heel or drag the toes for power)
- Fingers open and hands behind the ball (not on the sides)
- Elbows/arms to the sides (slightly tucked in)
- Arch the back and launch forward at the torso. Continue w/ arms.
- Release right after the ball is overhead



Fitness

The word “fitness” is commonly associated with endurance running and sprinting. However, that sort of physical fitness does not accurately describe the type of physical fitness you need to execute soccer exercises. Traits like posture, balance, agility, and flexibility are much more important in executing soccer technique. Therefore, it is important to focus on your core, meaning not just the abs but the connection of the torso to the leg and arm muscles. Arm-core strength, for instance, can be useful for balance and holding your space against opponents.

It is easy to become fit enough to run sprints and play a full game in just a few weeks at your age, so technically you could just work on them before tryouts. Strengthening the core however, and improving the traits mentioned above, should be done while you work on technique because they will drastically improve the ease with which you can execute techniques. Examples: You could get more power in your shot if you had a stronger core; You could hit volleys more easily with greater balance; You could dribble more easily with increased agility; And by focusing on good posture during play, you will make it harder to knock you off the ball and help your body move more efficiently.

To improve your fitness, focus less on running and more on:

- Calisthenics: Sit-Ups, Push-Ups, Pull-Ups, Lunges, Dips, Calf-Raises, etc.
- Plyometrics: Single leg hops, leg bounding, power skipping, side jumps over ball, medicine ball exercise, etc.

Maintain healthy habits. Make sure to get enough sleep, eat nutritious foods, & keep a positive outlook.

Make sure to do a proper warm up with dynamic stretching before working out. Cool down at the end.

Make sure you **adequately hydrate yourself.** Drink plenty of water, especially on hot days.

Setting Goals & Watching Soccer

Goal Setting

Goals are the fuel in the furnace of achievement.

– Brian Tracy

When you set a goal, make sure to:

1. Define it as clearly as possible. How will you measure success? When will you start?
2. Think of three or more genuine reasons why you want to achieve the goal.
3. List three or more actions you can take to help achieve your goal.
4. List possible distractions and how you will overcome them.
5. Identify a person that can support you & hold you responsible for your goal.
6. List methods by which you can update your progress. List intermediate goals.
7. Write out your responses on a piece of paper, and review them each day.

Tactics: Watching Soccer

Make your training **economical**. Work on as many techniques as possible; don't waste time. Ex: In order: Inside pass, Cruyff turn, speed dribble, hook turn, long ball, pop ball up, instep volley, thigh cushion to feet, then repeat.

Watch games not just for fun, but to analyze technique and tactics exhibited by players in your position.

When you watch a game, focus on one player who plays your position and ask yourself:

- **What specific skills does the player use most often? Perhaps you should work on them.**
- What forms of communication does the player use? What does he/she say/do to communicate?
- What type of touches does the player make? How and where does he/she pass, dribble, or shoot?
- During every reception, notice what direction the player decides to take the ball? Find out why?
- What skills does the nearest opponent possess? How does the player counteract them?
- In what areas does the player most often: run into; pass into; dribble in; shoot in; defend in?
- What other players does that person work/combine with defensively and offensively? How?
- Remember, there are 22 players on a soccer field and only 1 can have the ball. So make sure you know what the other 21 are doing. I. e. **watch what your player does when he/she does NOT have the ball.** How does he stay involved? Where does he position himself? On defense does the player get behind the ball, provide pressure or cover, or man mark? On offense does he create space for himself/teammates by checking away? This may just mean staying wide, up top, or dropping to give space for his teammates to work in. Notice how often a player checks over his shoulder and keeps his "head on a swivel" to know what's around him. This helps him make decisions once he gets the ball.

When watching the team as a whole:

Websites: <http://www.videojug.com/film/shielding-the-ball>
<http://www.bettersoccercoaching.com/> (good for players as well)
<http://www.premierleague.com/en-gb/photos-and-videos/videos/> (search "Nike")

- How does the team work together on defense? Do they man-mark or zone? How?
- How does the team work together on offense? Do they build up or counterattack? How?
- When does the team decide to possess the ball vs. going forward towards goal?
- **When in possession, predict where the next pass will be played.** Try to find out the reason for that decision. Did he/she play: simple; the way he/she faced; to a man down field; to open space?
- **Replay goals:** Ask yourself why the team scored? What could the defense have done better?

As Charles Hughes eloquently put it in the first paragraph of his famous book Tactics and Teamwork:

The importance of systems of play is exaggerated. It should be understood at the outset that there is no system which will overcome inaccurate passing or inaccurate shooting: there is no system which caters for players who will not support each other and there is no system which caters for players who will not or who cannot run. Hughes, Charles. "Tactics and Teamwork". E.B. Publishing Limited. © Football Association, 1973. West Yorkshire, England

No matter what skills, accolades, shoes, or good looks you have, they will never be more important than your attitude, level of effort, and willingness to work for your team.

Sample Soccer Goals (Step 1)
 • Do a self workout 15 minutes every day from July to tryouts.
 • Do a self workout for a total of 3 hours every week July thru Aug.
Reasons Why (Step 2)
 • To make varsity next year.
 • To be an impact player.
 • To have more fun playing.
 • To be more confident in my play
Intermediate Goals (Step 6)
 • Pass from 10 yards away with my left foot, on target 49/50 passes, by the end of summer.
 • Juggle 25 times using the feet/thighs/ head only by July.
 • Learn step-over move technique by the end of the session.

Session Notes: