



FC BIRRARUNG

Skill Acquisition Phase

A guide to coaching U10 to U13 players

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What is the Skill Acquisition Phase?

In the Skill Acquisition Phase the coach focuses on providing **a foundation of game-related technical skills.**

These technical skills are the **4 Core Skills** introduced in the Discovery Phase

- **First touch** - controlling the ball with the feet and body
- **Striking the ball** - short/long passing, shooting and crossing
- **Running with the ball** - at speed or dribbling
- **1 v 1** - feints and accelerations with attacking and defending

The training sessions are divided into 3 segments :

- Skill introduction
- Skill training
- Skill game

In this phase players are ready for a more structured approach to training. In every session the coach focuses on one of the core skills from start to end. You will perform other skills in your session but only one core skill is highlighted. We also introduce the coaching tool C.H.A.N.G.E.I.T.

C.H.A.N.G.E.I.T. acronym

C - COACHING STYLE: Provide positive feedback and always encourage your players. Use player role models.

H - HOW YOU SCORE/WIN: Increase opportunities to score by adding more goals or incentives.

A - AREA: Increase or decrease the game challenges by changing the size/shape of the playing area, i.e. long and narrow, short and wide, smaller/larger.

N - NUMBERS: Use different team numbers of players to overload the advantage of one team or vary the number of turns at goal, etc.

G - GAME RULES: Change the rules slightly, i.e. no tackling, minimum number of passes, etc.

E - EQUIPMENT: Vary the equipment used, i.e. a bigger goal, smaller goals, more goals.

I - INCLUSION: Engage the players in modifying the practices; provide options they could choose from to encourage ownership, work with their skill level as a starting point.

T - TIME: Reduce or extend the time to perform actions, i.e. how many passes in 20 seconds.

Skill Introduction

This is the warm-up and the introduction of the selected core skill for your session. In this stage players perform fun games which include elements of :

- Perception- players communicating ie: calling names, being aware of space
- Decision- deciding what to do ie: pass or dribble
- Execution - performing the chosen football action ie: dribbling or passing

Helpful hints:

- Keep it 'flowing', no 'stop-start-coaching'
- Explain while demonstrating the game to avoid delays.
- Examples for skill introduction sessions are in [The NaTioNal FooTball curriculum](#) on pages 134-193.
- click on the sessions on the session guide tables on pages 135 and 136, it will take you to the session you have selected.
- Feel free to repeat the fun introduction a few times.

Skill Training

Moving straight from Skill introduction, Skill training focuses on conscious teaching and learning of the selected core skill - training sessions are based on skill development . In a nutshell you are breaking down the core skill on a technical level with:

- Lots of repetition in **game realistic scenarios**
- Interventions: stopping the session to perform 'question-answer patterns' to help the player understand how to solve problems during a game situation using the core skill.
- Role modelling: highlighting player(s) for performing the core skill well in training
- P: perception - D: decision E: execution

Helpful hints:

- This segment has 'start stop-coaching'
- Explain while demonstrating your session to avoid delays.
- Examples for skill training sessions are in [The NaTioNal FooTball curriculum](#) on pages 134 - 193
- click on the sessions on the session guide tables on pages 135 and 136, it will take you to the session you have selected.
- This is a themed based session.
- Sessions may get chaotic at times, don't be afraid of restarting the skill training exercise.

Skill Game

Following on from Skill training, Skill games are small sided games with elements of the real game. These games are designed so the selected core skill is used regularly. Repetition is the key to better understand the objective of the session. The players play and the coach observes if learning has taken place. It's very easy to focus on the 'win' but as coaches we need to be focussing on the execution of the core skill.

Helpful hints:

- Examples for skill games are in [The NaTioNal FooTball curriculum](#) on pages 134 - 193.
- Click on the sessions on the session guide tables on pages 135 and 136, it will take you to the session you have selected.
- Your sessions should have a theme from skill introduction to skill game
- Remember to let your players play!
- If the area needs adjusting or you need more goals or a new scoring method, don't forget to C.H.A.N.G.E.I.T (please refer to the Change it acronym), But if the session is chaotic, embrace it and reflect in the moment on how you could fix it.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Question 1: How do I work with different skill levels in my team?

Answer: Design a session around the lower skilled players and introduce challenges, that way players will have the option to challenge themselves.

Question 2: How many sessions can I focus on the same core skill?

Answer: Players learn through repetition, so you can repeat the same core skill session as many times as you need to. How about repeating the same core skill twice a week, once in attacking, once in defending, and if you feel the team need more sessions, repeat the session the following week using a different game.

Question 3: What is the best way to practice throw ins?

Answer: Practice throw ins during a skill training session (when it occurs) , where you can focus on one player at a time and make sure each player gets a turn.

Question 4: Should we be practicing headers?

Answer: Headers are very tricky when it comes to players U8-U12. Some players may be uncomfortable with heading the ball due to the size of the ball or the impact of the ball however in a game situation headers may occur. A suggestion would be limit the time spent on practicing headers during training and find out who is comfortable with performing headers. Currently there aren't any laws banning headers in Australia however you still check the guidelines.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Question 5: Can I use my skill game as a skill training session?

Answer: Yes absolutely, you can choose from either game based or technical based.

Question 6: How do I fix my sessions if nothing is going to plan?

Answer: Football is known to be chaotic, don't be afraid of Chaos. This is a great tool to reflect during and after your session. Ask yourself why the session is chaotic:

- What is the objective of the training session eg: what core skill am I highlighting
- Did I explain and demonstrate the exercise?
- Did I miss key points in my explanation?

Question: What do I do if I take longer than 2 mins to explain the exercise and the players lose concentration?

Answer: Consider dividing the exercise in two segments, part A and part B, practice part A 3-4 times then introduce part B. This will give your players a better understanding of your objective. Remember you are doing a good job so have fun with it.