



Quick Restarts

Tags: `set-piece` `standalone` `quick-restart` `dead-ball`

Kicker: Fast restarts are only ever trained for throw-ins. Every free-kick and corner in the programme assumes the defence is set and organised before the ball is played. This session trains the opposite — catching them before they are.

Session Overview

FIELD	VALUE
Session theme	Quick Restarts — Free-Kicks and Corners
Short summary	Four stages building the specific habit of playing a dead ball before the opposition is organised: a reaction-speed arrival, a quick free-kick routine, a quick corner routine, and a closing live game that rewards every fast restart taken. The emphasis throughout is recognition and decisiveness — most restarts should still be taken normally; this session trains spotting and taking the moments when speed beats setup.
Total duration	48 minutes across four practices
Goalkeeper requirements	Involved throughout, including as the "restarting" side's outlet during transition moments.
Area layout	A reaction-drill grid for Practice 1; a full attacking-third area for Practices 2–4.
Equipment	Cones for the reaction grid, a stopwatch or visible clock the group can see, a supply of balls.
Contingency — group struggling with the reaction habit	Slow the closing game's restart-window down (Practice 4's regression) rather than abandoning the session's core idea — the habit is worth persisting with even if match-speed execution takes longer to arrive.

PRACTICE 1 — BEAT THE WHISTLE (ARRIVAL)

Duration: 6 minutes · **Training load:** Low

Tactical purpose: A reaction-speed warm-up with no ball, training the specific mental habit this session is built around — noticing an opportunity and acting on it immediately, before it closes.

Organisation: The full group spread across a marked grid, no ball required.

Walkthrough: Players move freely around the grid; on a random signal from the coach (a whistle, a call, a clap), every player sprints to the nearest cone. The signal is deliberately unpredictable in timing, training reaction rather than anticipation.

Rules: No anticipating the signal — players caught starting early before the whistle are called out and reset.

Coaching points:

- *Physical:* an explosive first step the instant the signal comes, not a half-second of hesitation first.
- *Psychological:* staying alert and ready throughout, even during the unpredictable gaps between signals — this is the exact habit a quick restart demands.

No diagram, guided discovery questions, or progressions are attached to the arrival activity — it is deliberately kept simple so the session's teaching time is protected for the three main practices below.

PRACTICE 2 — GONE BEFORE THEY'RE SET (QUICK FREE-KICK ROUTINE)

Duration: 14 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate

Tactical purpose: Installs the specific recognition and technical routine for taking a free-kick before the defence has organised — the moment right after the foul is given, when defenders are still turning around or appealing rather than set in position.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** attacking-third working area, roughly 30 x 20 m
- **Players:** the fouled team (4–5 players) against a defending group that is deliberately slow to react, simulating the moments right after a whistle
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** organises what defensive structure exists, but is also working against the clock
- **Team sizes:** 4–5 attackers against 4–5 defenders
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** none beyond a marked foul spot
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram, defenders scattered and unorganised at the moment of the restart
- **Ball supply:** placed at the foul spot for each repetition
- **Restart:** the fouled player retrieves the ball and restarts as quickly as the rules allow
- **Coach position:** central, able to see both the restarting player's decision and the defence's recovery
- **Rotation method:** roles rotate every 4–5 repetitions
- **Direction of play:** always toward the same goal

Practice walkthrough: A foul is simulated at a marked spot with defenders deliberately out of position — mid-conversation, turned away, or still reacting to the decision. The fouled player has a genuine, brief window to play the restart quickly, either driving forward themselves or releasing a teammate into the space the disorganised defence has left. If that window closes, the routine reverts immediately to a normal, organised free-kick.

Rules: The restart must be taken the instant the ball is available if the window exists — no waiting for a "better" set-up once the defence starts organising; if the window has already closed, the player must recognise this and switch to the standard routine.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	A composed first touch and pass or strike, even though the restart is taken at speed and with limited preparation.
Tactical	Genuine recognition of whether the window is actually open — a quick restart into an organised defence wastes the advantage the foul created.
Physical	Explosive urgency in retrieving and playing the ball — seconds matter here more than in almost any other set-piece.
Psychological	Decisiveness — hesitation is the single biggest way this opportunity is lost.
Communication & leadership	A short, clear call from the restarting player to alert a teammate making the run, since there's no time for a lengthy instruction.

Tactical roles: **Restarting player** — reads the window and decides instantly. **Supporting runner** — stays alert for a sudden release into space. **Rest of the attacking unit** — ready to receive if the restarter chooses to keep it simple and short.

Decision-making triggers: a visibly disorganised or distracted defence is the trigger to go quickly; a defence already reset and facing the ball is the trigger to revert to the standard routine.

Communication language used: *Quick* (the restarting player's call confirming they're taking it fast), *Set* (the call to revert to a normal, organised restart).

Guided discovery questions:

1. What specifically told you the window was open — or that it had already closed?
2. What made the decision to go quickly harder than it looks?
3. What's lost if a team takes every free-kick quickly, regardless of whether the defence is actually disorganised?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the window's average length so the recognition-to-action time has to sharpen further.
2. Add a genuine choice between a quick pass to a nearby teammate and a longer ball into space behind a still-recovering defensive line.

Regressions:

1. Call out "window's open" for the first few repetitions while the recognition habit is being built.
2. Walk through the decision without opposition first, then add live defenders.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The restarting player hesitates even when the window is clearly open, and the chance closes	Habit of treating every free-kick as a set-piece to organise, not an opportunity to seize	The defence finishes organising before the ball is played, despite an obvious early window	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: replay the exact moment and name the window that was missed	Resume
The restart is rushed even though the defence is already set and organised	Overcorrecting toward speed regardless of the actual situation	A quick restart played straight into a well-organised defence, losing the ball cheaply	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reinforce the "Set" recognition trigger	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: freeze-and-correct for missed windows and for restarts taken into an already-organised defence.

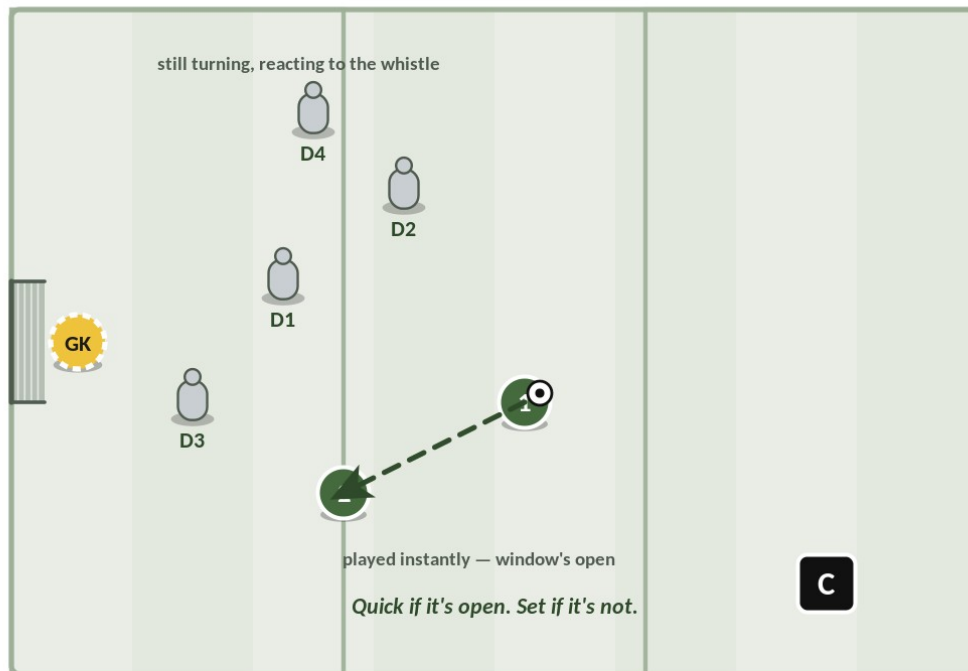
Success indicators:

- Genuinely open windows are taken quickly, almost without exception.
- Genuinely closed windows are recognised and the routine reverts to the standard free-kick without hesitation.
- The supporting runner's timing matches the restarting player's decision.

Coach's eye: the real skill this practice teaches is judgement, not speed — a team that rushes every restart is no better than one that never does; watch for genuine recognition, not blind urgency.

SP4.2 GONE BEFORE THEY'RE SET — Quick Free-Kick Routine

Attacking third • restart taken before the defence organises • 14 minutes



- Attacking side
- Defenders (still disorganised)
- Ball
- ➔ Quick release
- ▲ Foul spot

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PRACTICE 3 — FLAG TO FEET (QUICK CORNER ROUTINE)

Duration: 14 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate

Tactical purpose: Installs the equivalent quick-restart habit at a corner — taking it fast while the defence is still setting its zonal-plus-post structure, rather than waiting for every defender to reach their position.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** corner-area working space opening into the box
- **Players:** corner-taker plus 2–3 supporting attackers against a defending group deliberately slow to reach their corner positions
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** organises the defensive reaction against the clock, exactly as in a real disorganised moment
- **Team sizes:** 3–4 attackers against a recovering defensive structure
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** none beyond the established corner setup
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram, defenders still arriving at their zonal positions
- **Ball supply:** reset at the corner flag after each repetition
- **Restart:** fresh corner after every attempt
- **Coach position:** at the edge of the box, able to see both the corner-taker's decision and the defensive structure forming
- **Rotation method:** roles rotate every 4–5 repetitions
- **Direction of play:** always toward the same goal

Practice walkthrough: As soon as the ball is dead and available, defenders begin moving toward their established zonal-plus-post positions — but deliberately not all at once, leaving a genuine early window. The corner-taker reads this and, if the window is real, plays a fast, low ball to a supporting attacker arriving in the gap the not-yet-set defence has left, rather than waiting for a normal delivery. If the window has already closed by the time the ball is retrieved, the corner reverts to the club's standard routine.

Rules: The quick option must be a considered, genuine decision based on what the defence actually shows — not a habitual default taken on every corner regardless of the picture in front of the taker.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	A quick, accurate low ball into the gap, played cleanly under real time pressure.
Tactical	Reading the defensive structure's actual state — genuinely unset versus merely still arriving but covering the danger.
Physical	Fast retrieval and a quick take of the corner — no wasted seconds walking to the flag.
Psychological	Trust from the supporting attacker to make the run before being certain the ball is coming — hesitation from either side kills the opportunity.
Communication & leadership	A short, immediate call from the corner-taker alerting the supporting attacker that the quick option is on.

Tactical roles: **Corner-taker** — reads the defensive structure and decides instantly. **Supporting attacker** — stays alert and ready to exploit the gap the moment it's called. **Rest of the attacking group** — hold normal corner positions in case the routine reverts to standard.

Decision-making triggers: defenders still visibly moving into position, especially near-post or the space just in front of goal, is the trigger to go quick; a defence already set in its zonal-plus-post shape is the trigger to take the standard corner.

Communication language used: *Quick* (the corner-taker's call), *Set* (the call to revert to the standard corner routine), reusing the same shared language as Practice 2 so the habit generalises across both restart types.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What specifically made this corner's window open or closed?
2. How is reading a corner's window different from reading a free-kick's window?
3. What's the risk of taking a quick corner into a defence that only looks unset but actually has the danger covered?

Progressions:

1. Reduce how long defenders take to reach their positions, sharpening the recognition window further.
2. Add a second supporting-attacker option so the corner-taker has a genuine choice of which gap to exploit.

Regressions:

1. Call out "window's open" during the first few repetitions while the pattern is being learned.
2. Walk through the decision without defensive pressure before adding live opposition.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The corner-taker takes too long retrieving the ball and setting up, closing a window that was genuinely open	Treating the quick corner as a normal restart out of habit	The defence finishes organising while the corner-taker is still preparing	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: rehearse rapid retrieval and an immediate take	Resume
The supporting attacker doesn't move until the ball is already played, arriving too late	Waiting for certainty rather than reading the same picture the corner-taker sees	The pass is played into space the attacker hasn't reached yet	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: rehearse the shared recognition trigger between taker and runner	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: freeze-and-correct for slow retrieval and for a late-reacting supporting attacker.

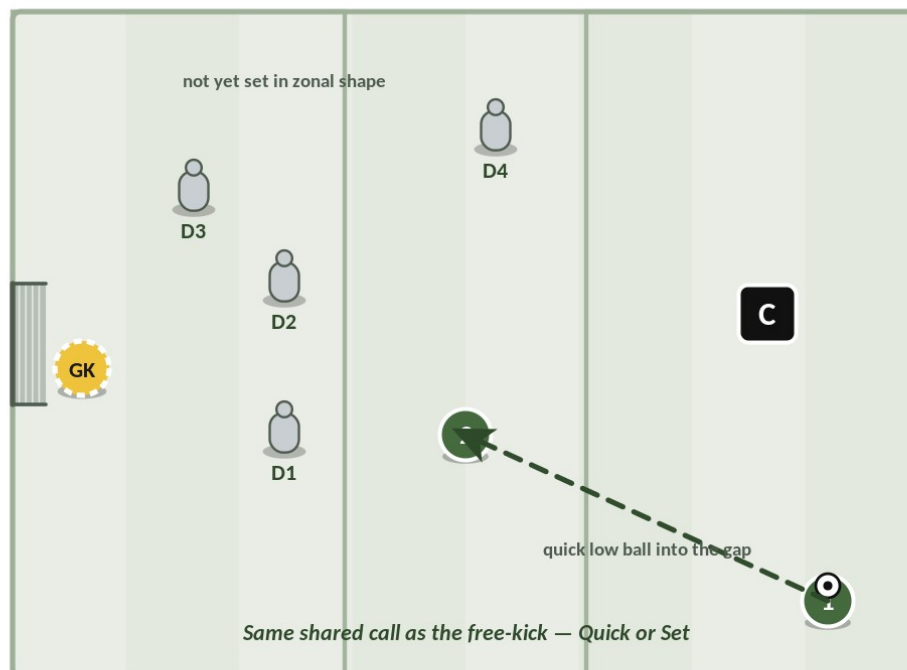
Success indicators:

- The corner-taker's retrieval and take are visibly fast whenever the window is open.
- The supporting attacker's run and the taker's decision are synchronised, not sequential.
- Genuinely closed windows are recognised and the routine reverts cleanly to the standard corner.

Coach's eye: the same judgement standard from Practice 2 applies here — a quick corner taken into real disorganisation is a genuine weapon; one taken out of habit is just a wasted corner.

SP4.3 FLAG TO FEET — Quick Corner Routine

Corner area • fast low ball before the zonal shape is set • 14 minutes



● Attacking side ● Defenders (still arriving) ● Ball ➡ Quick low ball

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PRACTICE 4 — RACE THE RECOVERY (CLOSING LIVE GAME)

Duration: 14 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate-high

Purpose: Closes the session with a live conditioned game that specifically rewards every fast restart taken, bringing the free-kick and corner habits from Practices 2 and 3 together under match conditions with a genuine scoring incentive attached.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 30 m working area including a full box
- **Players:** two teams of 6–7 with goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** each keeper defends their own goal and organises their own team's recovery after conceding a restart opportunity
- **Team sizes:** 6v6 or 7v7 with goalkeepers
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** none beyond standard small-sided game markers
- **Starting positions:** open play, restarting quickly after any free-kick or corner is won
- **Ball supply:** a supply near each likely restart zone to remove any delay in getting the ball back into play
- **Restart:** any free-kick or corner won may be taken quickly if the window is genuinely open; a goal scored from a restart taken within a short defined window (for example, the first 5 seconds after the ball is available) earns bonus recognition
- **Coach position:** mobile, observing both the attacking decision and the defensive recovery speed
- **Rotation method:** roles rotate naturally through open play
- **Direction of play:** both directions, standard small-sided game rules otherwise

Practice walkthrough: A small conditioned game runs normally, with every free-kick and corner won treated as a genuine quick-restart opportunity. The attacking side reads each situation and decides, exactly as in Practices 2 and 3, whether to go quickly or take a standard restart. Goals scored from a fast restart taken inside the defined early window are specifically recognised, reinforcing the value of the habit without punishing sound decisions to slow down when the defence is genuinely set.

Rules: Standard small-sided game rules, plus the defined quick-restart bonus window applied to every free-kick and corner won.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Both restart types hold their technical quality — composed touches and accurate passing — even when taken at speed.
Tactical	The attacking side's choice between quick and standard genuinely reflects the defensive picture, not the presence of a bonus incentive alone.
Physical	Recovery speed from the defending side improves visibly across the game as the habit of racing back into position sharpens.
Psychological	Composure and decisiveness under live, unpredictable conditions, not just in the rehearsed practices.
Communication & leadership	The shared <i>Quick / Set</i> language, now used by both restart types together under real game pressure.

Tactical roles: the full set of roles from Practices 2 and 3, now applied inside a live, unpredictable game with a genuine incentive attached.

Decision-making triggers: the same triggers from Practices 2 and 3, now tested under live conditions and the added pull of the bonus window.

Communication language used: *Quick, Set* — the shared language from both earlier practices, now used interchangeably across free-kicks and corners.

Guided discovery questions:

1. Did the bonus window change how the attacking side made its decisions — for better or worse?
2. What did the defending side do differently by the end of the game compared with the start?
3. Is there a restart moment tonight where the quick option was tempting but the right call was actually to slow down?

Progressions:

1. Shorten the bonus window further to sharpen the recognition-to-action speed required.
2. Add a defensive bonus for a team that fully reorganises within the same short window, rewarding recovery speed as well as attacking speed.

Regressions:

1. Lengthen the bonus window if the group is forcing poor decisions purely to chase the incentive.
2. Remove the bonus window temporarily and rely on coach feedback alone if it's distorting decision-making.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Players chase the bonus window by rushing restarts into an already-organised defence	The incentive outweighing the genuine tactical judgement built in Practices 2 and 3	Quick restarts taken repeatedly into a clearly set defence, losing possession cheaply	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that window really open?"	Resume
The defending side stops trying to recover quickly, assuming every restart will be slow	Complacency built from a few slow restarts in a row	A defence that is visibly unhurried getting back into position after conceding a foul or a ball behind	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	A direct reminder that any restart could be quick, so recovery speed must be constant	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: reflective questioning for incentive-chasing decisions; a direct reminder for a complacent defensive recovery, both allowing play to continue first.

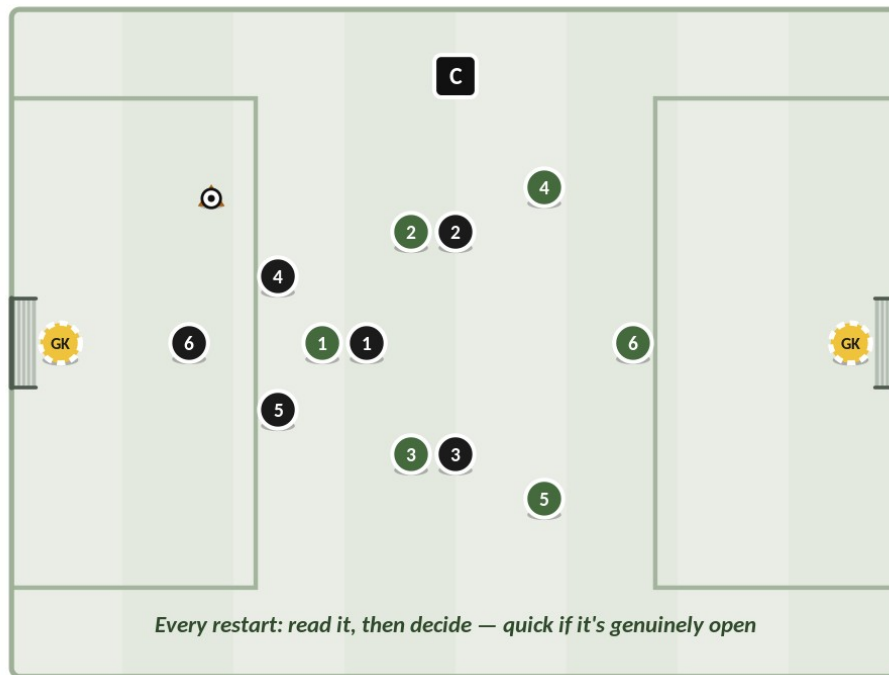
Success indicators:

- The attacking side's decisions stay grounded in genuine picture-reading, not just the bonus incentive.
- Defensive recovery speed improves visibly over the course of the game.
- The shared *Quick / Set* language is used correctly and instinctively by the end of the session.

Coach's eye: this closing game is the real test of whether tonight's judgement — not just tonight's speed — has actually transferred; a team that takes every restart quickly has learned the wrong lesson just as surely as one that never does.

SP4.4 RACE THE RECOVERY — Closing Live Game

40 x 30 m • 6v6 or 7v7 with keepers • bonus recognition for fast restarts • 14 minutes



● Team A ● Team B ● Ball ▲ Quick-restart bonus window

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