



SESSION 1 • STANDALONE PLAN

Scan, Open Out, Receive Across Your Body

Individual technique • Reference format: U12 9v9 • 60 minutes • 14–16 players

AT A GLANCE

TIME	MINS	PHASE	PRACTICE
0:00 – 0:10	10	■ Warm-up	1.1 Open Body Grid
0:10 – 0:25	15	■ Technical practice	1.2 The Y-Gate
0:25 – 0:40	15	■ Skill game	1.3 Four-Gate Scanning Game
0:40 – 0:55	15	■ Conditioned match	1.4 Turn Zone Match
0:55 – 1:00	5	■ Reflection	Player-led review

USING THIS SESSION

This is a standalone plan. It does not depend on any other session in the set and can be run whenever it is useful to you — as a one-off, out of order, or repeated. Nothing here assumes the players did something last week.

U12 nine-a-side is the reference format, not the audience. The session is written at 9v9 because something has to be, and the phone index adapts it to the other four Irish FA formats — pick your team at the top of it and this session will tell you whether to run it as printed, scale it, adapt it, or leave it for another age.

Scaling up, and down as far as 7v7, is a matter of numbers. Keep roughly the same space per player: to 7v7 that is about a fifth smaller with a player off each team, to 5v5 about a third. **For eleven-a-side** add ten to fifteen metres to the length of the bigger practices and put the extra players in as outside players or a second team, never in a queue.

Below U10 it is not just a matter of size, because the game itself is different. There is no offside, no throw-in — restarts are a dribble or a pass in — no referee, and no league result. At U8–U9 the technical practice usually wants shortening or dropping. At U6–U7 there are no goalkeepers at all and the four-phase hour is the wrong shape entirely. The Formats tab in the phone index has the rules for each stage.

WHY THIS SESSION MATTERS

Watch any U12 9v9 match and count how many possessions end within two seconds of a player receiving. The number is high, and the cause is almost never the pass — it is the body position of the player receiving it. A player who stands square-on, feet flat, eyes on the ball, has thrown away half the pitch before the ball arrives: they can't see the space behind them, can't see the defender closing, and their first touch has nowhere to go but backwards. A player who scans over their shoulder as the ball travels, turns their hips open and receives with the back foot has bought a metre of space and a second of time. In 9v9, that metre and that second are the difference between a backward pass and a line-breaking one. Almost everything else in this set is built on it.

BY THE END, PLAYERS CAN

- Scan over their shoulder at least once before the ball arrives — and tell you what they saw.
- Open their body so they can see the passer, the space behind them and their next option at the same time.
- Receive across the body with the back foot, so the first touch travels into the space they want to play into.

- **Choose between two forward options** under mild pressure, rather than defaulting to the nearest one or playing backwards.
- **Use the session vocabulary** — scan, open out, back foot, free side — and act on it when they hear it.

KIT LIST

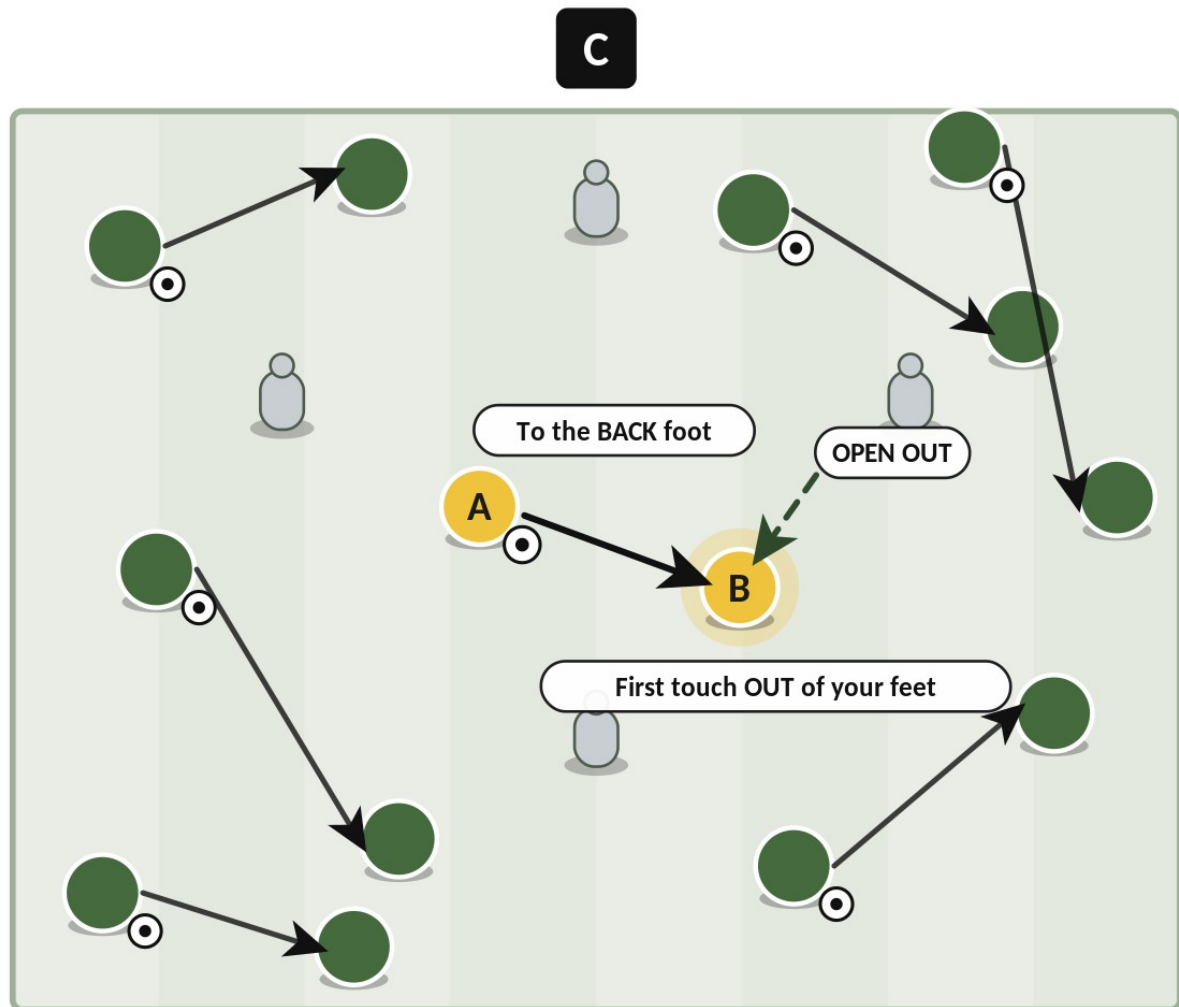
Ground needed: about 60 × 40 m. Lay out all four areas **BEFORE** the first player arrives — the biggest cause of dead time in grassroots football is a coach measuring cones while fourteen children stand still.

ITEM	QTY	USED IN
Footballs (size 4)	16	All practices
Flat markers	40	Grid and zone edges (1.1, 1.3, 1.4)
Cones (tall)	28	Target gates (1.2 ×12, 1.3 ×16)
Poles	6	Receiving-zone edges — 2 per station (1.2)
Mannequins	4	Warm-up obstacles (1.1)
Bibs — red / blue / yellow	8 / 8 / 2	1.2, 1.3, 1.4
Full-size goals	2	Conditioned match (1.4)
Mini goals	2	Regression option in 1.3

1.1 OPEN BODY GRID

Everyone moving with a ball from minute one, and the session's core habit installed with no pressure: scan, open your body, receive across yourself.

26 x 20 m • pairs • one ball per pair • 4 mannequins • 10 minutes



SCAN • OPEN YOUR BODY • RECEIVE ACROSS YOURSELF



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SET UP

- 26 × 20 m grid marked with flat markers. Four mannequins spread inside it as passive obstacles.
- One ball per pair — 7 or 8 pairs. Odd number: make one group of three passing in a rotating triangle.
- Balls laid out at the edge of the grid so the first player to arrive starts immediately.
- Coach starts outside the grid to see the whole picture, then moves inside from minute 4 to coach pairs on the move.

HOW IT RUNS

- Minutes 0–3 — arrival.** Greet every player by name as they walk on and send them straight in with a ball. Free dribbling and passing while the rest turn up. No organisation, no queue, no waiting for numbers.
- Minute 3.** Pair everyone up, one ball per pair. *Keep moving, keep passing. If you can walk to your pass, you're too close.*
- Minute 5 — add the scan.** *Before the ball arrives, look over your shoulder. I want to see heads turn.* Freeze once for fifteen seconds and ask two players what was behind them.
- Minute 7 — add the shape.** Passer plays to the **back foot**; receiver takes one step sideways so the ball comes **across** them rather than at them. Demonstrate once with a pair, then let them work.
- Minutes 8–10 — add the touch.** *First touch out of your feet.* Pairs count five in a row where the first touch takes them past a mannequin. They count out loud themselves.

RULES & SCORING

- Maximum three touches from minute 7 — below three the technique breaks down at this age.
- Loose ball: nearest player retrieves and the pair restarts **on the move**, never from standing.
- Two coach freezes maximum, under twenty seconds each. Everything else is said individually, on the move.
- Swap which partner leads the movement every two minutes.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Firm, along the ground, aimed at the receiver's back foot . Receive side-on, weight on the balls of the feet, using the foot furthest from the passer. First touch travels 1–2 m.
Tactical	Move to receive — never receive standing still. Adjust your angle so a mannequin isn't blocking the passer's line. Show where you can see the most pitch.
Physical	Continuous multi-directional work. Deliberate lateral and backward movement to open the hips. Build to near match tempo by minute 8.
Psychological	Curiosity, not correction. Ask them to notice the difference between square and open — let them feel it rather than be told it.
Social	Two calls tonight and only two: " Turn! " and " Man on! " A silent pair is getting half the information.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Receives with the near foot — ball stops dead and they finish square-on to the passer	Ask, don't tell: <i>Which foot did you use? Try the other one and tell me what changes.</i> They discover the far foot lets the ball run across them.
Scans at the wrong moment — head turns while the ball is still at the passer's feet, then stays fixed	Give them a rhythm: <i>Look as it leaves their foot, and again just before it reaches you.</i> Count it out loud with them a few times.
First touch under the body , followed by a little hop to fix it — half a second wasted every time	Give the touch a destination: <i>Touch it into the gap between you and that mannequin.</i> A target beats a technique instruction.
Pairs drifting too close together	<i>If you can hear each other whisper, you're too close.</i> Set a minimum distance with two markers if needed.

ASK THEM

- What did you see when you looked over your shoulder?
- Which foot did you receive with, and where did the ball end up?
- What's the difference between stopping the ball and moving it?

- When you're side-on, how much more of the pitch can you see?
- Where should your partner put the pass to make it easy for you to turn?
- If a defender was standing behind you, which way would you want your first touch to go?

ADJUST IT

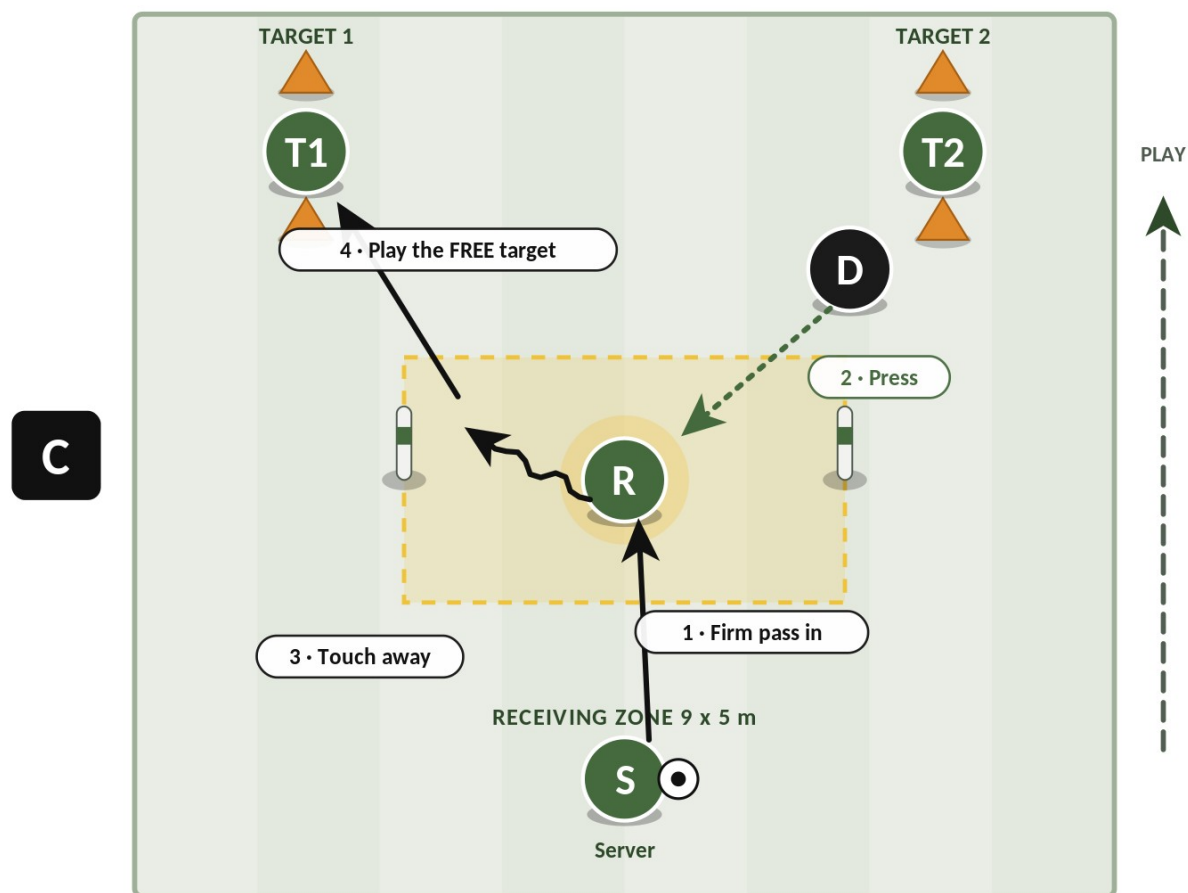
HARDER	EASIER
Add a floating defender with no ball who tries to intercept any pass in the grid.	Receiver stays in a 3 m box and only practises the body-shape turn; the passer does the moving.
Two-touch maximum — raises the demand on the direction of the first touch.	Remove the touch limit so players can settle the ball, then focus purely on turning open.
Passer shouts a mannequin colour as they pass; the receiver's first touch must go towards it.	Run two waves of four pairs so there's no traffic to manage while the technique is new.

IT'S WORKING WHEN Visible head turns from two-thirds of the squad before the ball arrives. First touches that travel — the ball leaving the receiver's feet by a metre or more. Passes arriving at the back foot, not the chest or the front foot. Pairs holding 6–8 m apart without being reminded, and calling each other's names.

1.2 THE Y-GATE — RECEIVE TO CHOOSE

The moment the session stops being about technique and starts being about perception. Ball in from behind, defender from one side, two exits — the free target is always opposite the press, but you can only know that if you scanned.

20 x 18 m per station • 5 players per station • 3 stations running • 15 minutes



● Working players ● Defender ● Ball ▤ Pole ▲ Target gate
 ■ Receiving zone ➡ Pass ➡ First touch ➡ Press C Coach

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SET UP

- Three identical stations, each 20 × 18 m, laid out along the far touchline with 5 m between them.
- Per station: a 9 × 5 m receiving zone marked with flat markers and a pole at each side; two 3 m target gates at the far end; one ball plus **two spares** behind the server; one blue bib.
- Five players per station (15 players). With 14, run one station with four — remove the second target and use a single wider gate. With 16, add a second server to one station.

- Coach stands between two stations, level with the receiving zones. From there you can see body shape and head movement — the only two things you're actually coaching — across two stations at once. Move to the third every 90 seconds.

HOW IT RUNS

- 1. Set the picture.** Walk the whole squad through one station at half pace. Ask, don't tell: *If the defender comes from that side, which target is free?*
- 2. Minutes 0–3 — passive.** The defender jogs to within 2 m and applies shadow pressure only, no tackling. Receivers succeed and the pattern builds.
- 3. Minute 3 — one freeze, fifteen seconds.** Pick a receiver who did it well and one who received square-on. Let the group compare the two pictures. Restart.
- 4. Minutes 3–10 — live.** The defender may now tackle, and chooses their own approach side. The receiver can no longer predict it and must genuinely scan.
- 5. Minutes 10–15 — two-touch.** One touch to control, one to pass, inside the receiving zone. This forces the first touch to be purposeful rather than corrective.
- 6. Rotation, every repetition:** R follows the pass and replaces the target they used → that target dribbles back to become the server → server becomes the defender → defender becomes R. Say it out loud twice in the first minute, then stop — they'll own it.

RULES & SCORING

- **1 point** for a clean pass received by a target inside their gate. **2 points** if the receiver's first touch beat the press before the pass.
- **1 point to the defender** for a win, an interception, or forcing a backward pass to the server. Highest defensive score gets first pick of bib colour in the next practice.
- Ball out or won by the defender: **instant restart** from the server with a spare ball. Never wait for a ball to be fetched.
- Two group freezes maximum. Individual coaching is delivered by standing beside the receiver **before** the next serve, not after the mistake.
- Only go live once two-thirds of receivers are turning open under passive pressure.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Receive with the foot furthest from the defender . First touch travels away from pressure into the space the defender has left. Front shoulder pointing at the target you intend to use.
Tactical	Scan before the ball arrives — twice if there's time. Read the approach angle: the free target is always opposite the press . If both are covered, protect the ball and reset to the server — that's a decision, not a failure.
Physical	Short, sharp adjustment steps before receiving. Teach a small check away and back to create the yard. Each player works continuously for about three minutes per rotation cycle.
Psychological	Praise the process — the scan, the open shape — even when the outcome fails. A receiver who scans, turns and miscontrols has done more right than one who plays safe without looking.
Social	Targets must talk: "Turn!" (you have space) or "Man on!" (you don't). A silent target is letting their teammate down — tell the receivers to demand information.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Receives square-on with the near foot — ends up facing the server with the defender behind, only option backwards	Rewind the moment: <i>Where were your toes pointing when the ball arrived? Where do you want them to point? Try again and tell me what you can see.</i>

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Scans too late — looks up only after the first touch, then panics	Make it a condition the group can police: the server doesn't pass until they see the receiver's head turn.
Always picks the same target — T1 gets eight balls, T2 gets two	Ask the targets, not the receiver: <i>How many balls have you had? Why do you think that is?</i> The receiver overhears and adjusts.
Rushes the pass — hits it early and hard before properly beating the press	<i>You've already beaten him with your first touch. Now take a breath and pick the pass.</i> Drop that defender to passive for a rep if needed.
Defender dives in — U12 defenders equate defending with tackling	Score it: award the attackers a point every time the defender is beaten by the first touch. They learn to stay on their feet within two reps.

ASK THEM

- Before the ball came to you, where was the defender?
- How did you know which target was free?
- Which foot should you receive with if the defender is on your right?
- What did your first touch do — did it help you, or did you have to fix it?
- What could the targets say to make your job easier?
- If both targets are covered, what's the best decision? Is that a bad thing?
- Defenders — what made it hard for you? What did the good receivers do?
- How is this the same as something that happens in your matches?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Two defenders — a second starts behind the receiver, so the scan must register two pieces of information. Widen the receiving zone to 12 m.	Passive defender throughout — the picture stays, the anxiety doesn't.
Live targets — targets may move laterally along a 6 m zone, so the receiver must find a moving option.	Wider gates (5 m) and targets 4 m closer — a decent pass is guaranteed to succeed.
Counter-goal — if the defender wins it, they score by dribbling back through the server's line. Raises the cost of losing the ball.	Announced press — the defender calls which side they're coming from as they set off, supporting the scan before you remove the support.
One-touch pass — one touch to control, then pass first time.	Larger receiving zone (12 × 7 m) — buys the receiver time to complete the turn.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

At least one visible head turn before the ball arrives in seven out of ten repetitions.

Receivers side-on rather than square in the majority of reps.

The **free** target selected, not the favourite target.

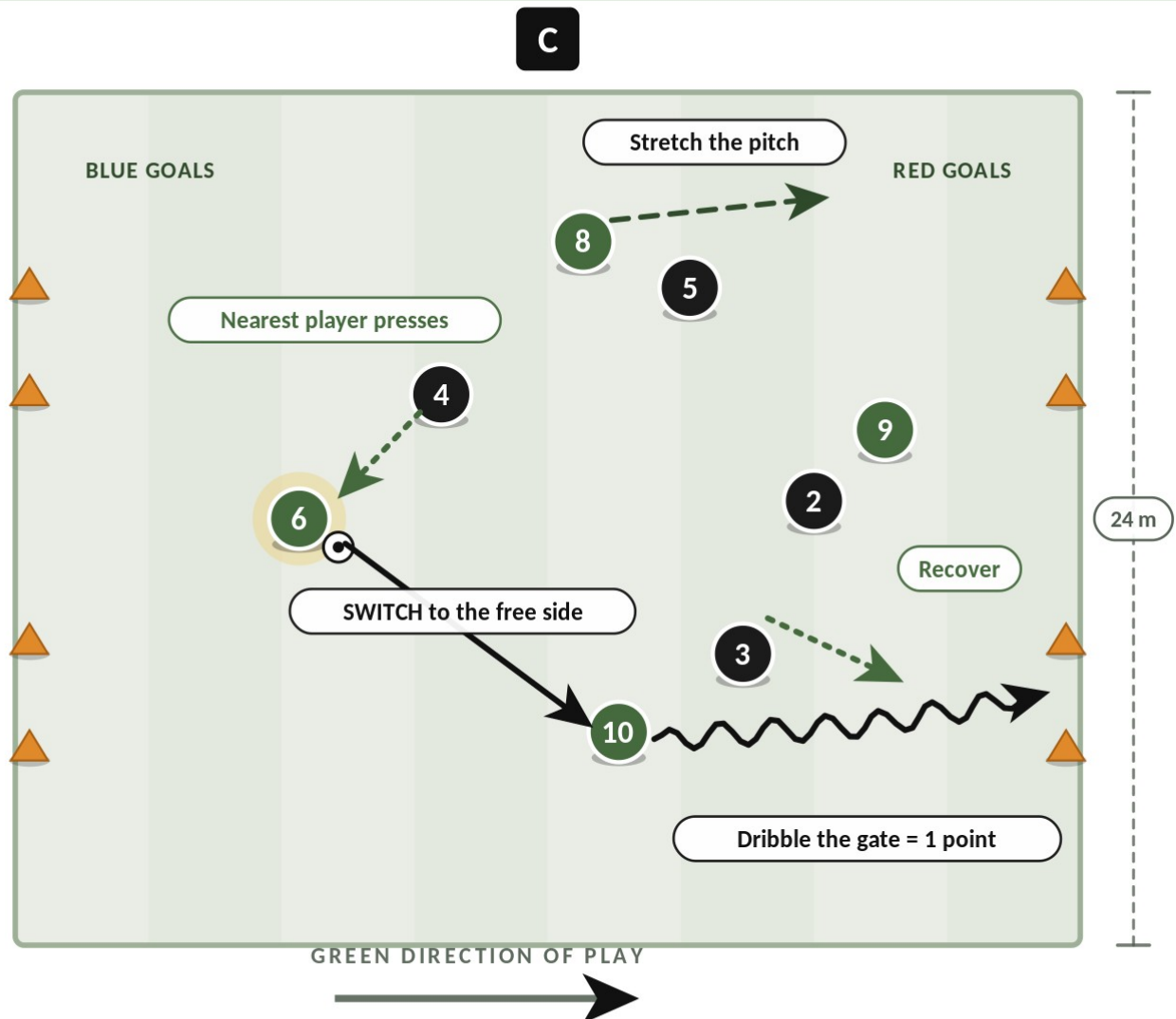
Backward passes to the server falling noticeably between minute 5 and minute 12.

Defenders approaching side-on and delaying rather than diving in by the end of the practice.

1.3 FOUR-GATE SCANNING GAME (4 v 4)

Two gates per team means nobody can defend both equally — so there is always a free side, and finding it means lifting your head. This is where 'the free target' becomes 'the free side', which becomes switching play in this theme.

30 x 24 m • two 3 m gates per team • two pitches side by side • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- Two pitches, each 30 × 24 m, side by side with a 5 m corridor between them.
- Per pitch: two 3 m cone gates on each end line, centred 7 m and 17 m from one corner; 4 red bibs, 4 blue bibs; corners marked with flat markers.
- 4 v 4 on each pitch (16 players). With 14, play 4v4 and 3v3. With 15, play 4v4 and 4v3 with the extra player on the weaker team.

- **Coach stands in the 5 m corridor between the two pitches.** From there you can see both games, feed both games and coach into both without walking. It's the most efficient coaching position of the session.

HOW IT RUNS

- 1. Set the teams before you explain anything** — mixed ability, roughly balanced. Hand out bibs while you talk.
- 2. Explain in under 30 seconds:** *Two gates each end. Score by dribbling through one, or passing to a teammate through one. Three minutes. Go.* Don't explain more — they'll work it out.
- 3. Game 1 — no coaching at all.** Watch. Note two or three players who never lift their head, and one who does it well.
- 4. Between games 1 and 2, ask one question:** *Is it possible to defend both gates properly at the same time?* Let them answer, then start game 2.
- 5. From game 3, add the bonus:** a goal at the gate **furthest from where the possession started** is worth 2 points. This directly pays for scanning and switching.
- 6. Four games of three minutes with 45 seconds between.** Winners of Pitch 1 stay, losers swap with Pitch 2 — a ladder that keeps games competitive with nobody sitting out.

RULES & SCORING

- **1 point** for dribbling under control through a gate, or a pass through a gate received by a teammate. **2 points** from game 3 for using the far gate.
- **Ball out of play: the coach rolls a new ball in immediately** to the team that didn't put it out. No throw-ins, corners or goal kicks — ball rolling time is the priority.
- From game 3, maximum **four touches inside your own half** — speeds up the scan and the release without penalising dribbling in the attacking half.
- **No stoppages during games.** All coaching happens in the 45-second gaps, and it takes the form of a question.
- Introduce the far-gate bonus only once they've discovered for themselves that both gates can't be defended.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Receive on the half-turn so both gates stay visible. First touch out of the feet towards space. Ball out of the feet when running into space, close to the feet under pressure. Pass firmly — a soft pass through a gate gets intercepted.
Tactical	Scan before receiving to locate the free gate. Attack the gate they've under-loaded. Support at an angle, never directly behind or in front. Out of possession: nearest player presses, second player drops to cover the far gate. Width creates the gap between the two gates — a narrow team makes both easy to defend.
Physical	Three minutes on, 45 seconds off, four times — a well-matched work-to-rest ratio for U12. If technique declines in the last game, cut it to two and a half minutes.
Psychological	Bravery in possession. Say it explicitly: <i>If you lose it trying to find the far gate, that's fine. If you never look for it, that's the mistake.</i>
Social	One loud word: "Switch!" The players furthest from the ball should be the loudest, because they can see the most.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Everybody chasing the ball — eight players in a 10 m circle, both far gates unattended	Don't freeze it. Ask between games: <i>When we all went to the ball, what happened to the other gate?</i> Then set a target: <i>This game, one player must always be further from the ball than everyone else.</i>
Attacking the nearest gate every time — almost	The 2-point bonus does most of this. Reinforce with a question to

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
all attempts at one end	the scorer: <i>Which gate had two defenders on it? Which had none?</i>
Receiving with the back to play — first touches going backwards, possession travelling sideways	Individual and quiet: <i>Next time, before it comes to you, take one step to the side. Just one. Then tell me what you could see.</i>
Over-dribbling into crowds — good problem to have at U12	Don't discourage it, re-aim it: <i>Great skill — now do that where there's nobody, not where there's three.</i>
Silence	Give them exactly one word — "Switch!" — make it a team target, and count the calls out loud yourself in the first game.

ASK THEM

- Can one team defend both gates properly at the same time? Why not?
- When the ball is on the left, where is the space?
- What do you have to do BEFORE you get the ball to know where the free gate is?
- Who on your team can see the most of the pitch right now? What should that player be doing?
- What made the two-point goals happen — luck, or a choice?
- Defenders — what was the hardest thing about defending two gates?
- What happens to the space when your whole team runs to the ball?
- If you could add one rule to make this game better, what would it be?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Three gates per team on a 34 m-wide pitch — the scan has to be genuinely wide.	Wider gates (5 m) so success is frequent and confidence stays high.
All four gates live — either team may score in any gate, forcing constant re-orientation.	Mini goals instead of the two far gates — a bigger, more obvious target.
Two-touch in your own half — sharpens the scan-before-receiving demand considerably.	3 v 3 on 26 × 20 m — fewer bodies, more space, more touches each.
Add a floating neutral who always plays for the team in possession, creating a permanent overload.	Passing goals only — remove the dribble-through option so the game is decided by passing decisions.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Visible head turns before receiving from most of the squad by game 3.

At least two goals per game scored at the **far** gate once the bonus is in.

Players supporting at angles rather than in straight lines behind the ball.

"Switch!" audible from at least four different players.

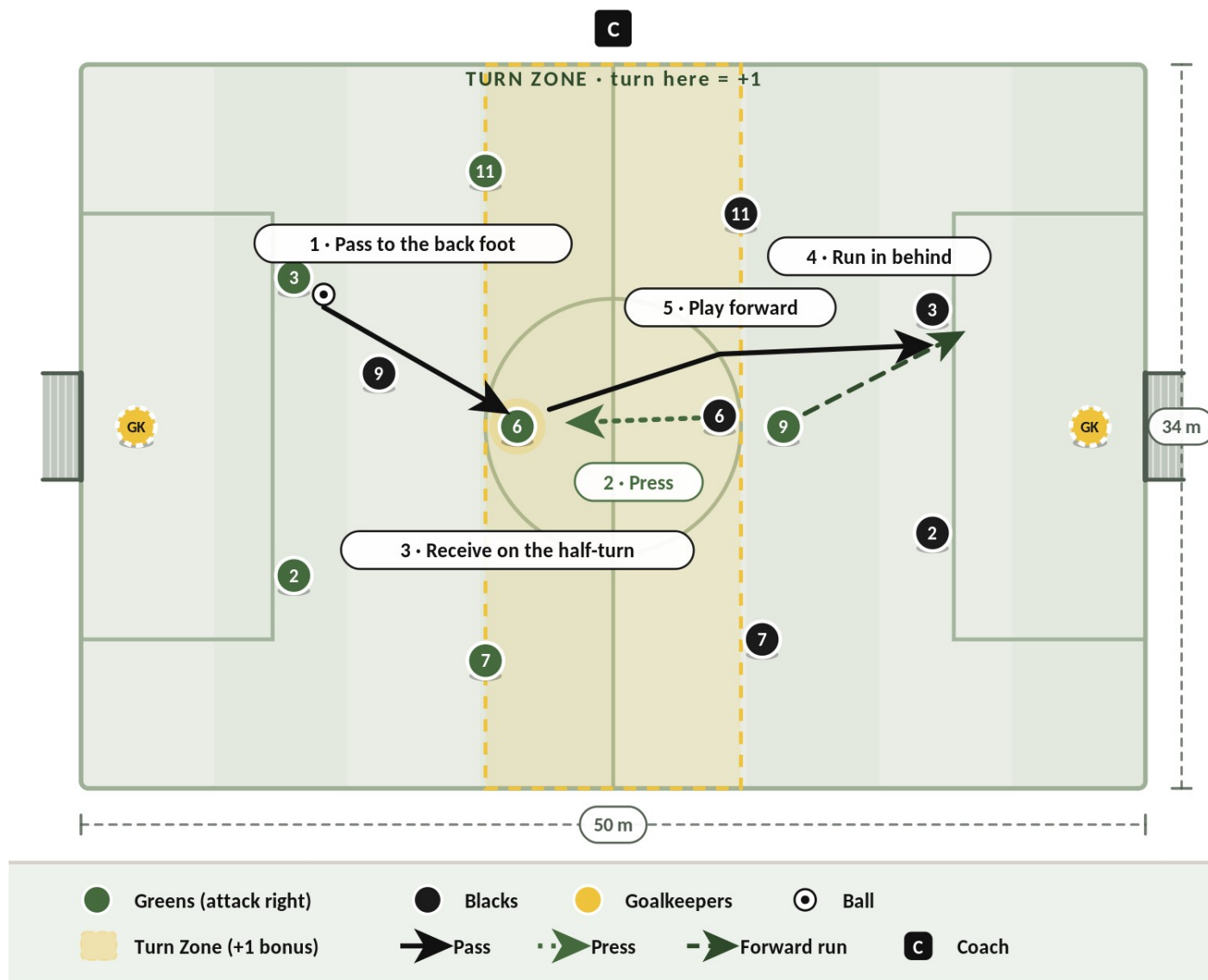
At least one player per team consistently covering the far gate instead of chasing the ball.

Pass completion noticeably higher in games 3 and 4 than in game 1.

1.4 TURN ZONE MATCH (7 v 7)

The theme in a real match picture — goalkeepers, goals, a scoreboard. One simple condition gives the habit a visible home on the pitch: turn **HERE**, and something good happens.

50 x 34 m • full-size goals • central 12 m Turn Zone • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- 50 × 34 m with full-size goals. A **12 m Turn Zone** marked across the full width, centred on the halfway line, using flat markers.
- Four spare balls in the back of each goal so the goalkeeper always restarts within five seconds.
- 7 v 7 including goalkeepers (14 players). With 15–16, play 8v8 or use rolling subs every 90 seconds — never leave a player standing longer than that.
- A 2-3-1 outfield shape in front of each keeper — the Saturday 9v9 shape minus one defender and one midfielder. Assign positions, then tell them they're free to move.
- **Coach on the halfway line, outside the pitch, level with the Turn Zone.** That's where the theme lives. Resist patrolling the touchline.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Keep the bibs and teams from the skill game** to save time. Assign keepers and shapes in 30 seconds, no more.
2. **Explain the condition once:** *Normal game, normal goals. But if you receive in the yellow zone, turn, and play forward — your team gets a bonus point on top of any goals. Don't explain it twice.*
3. **Minutes 0–5 — no interruption whatsoever.** Let them play. Note where the theme appears and where it should have.
4. **Minute 5 — 45-second drinks break, one question:** *How many times did someone turn in the yellow zone? What made it possible?* Restart.
5. **Minutes 6–15.** Maximum two brief individual interventions — a quiet word as play moves away from that player. No group freezes. **Announce bonus points out loud as they happen:** *That's a turn — bonus point, reds.*
6. **Rotate goalkeepers at the halfway point.** At U12 every player should keep goal occasionally.

RULES & SCORING

- **Goal = 3 points. Bonus = 1 point** each time a player receives in the Turn Zone, turns, and plays forward (a pass or carry that beats an opponent). Bonuses count towards the final score.
- **No touch restrictions.** This is a match.
- Normal restarts, but keepers always restart within five seconds. Throw-ins may be taken as pass-ins to keep the ball rolling.
- Two individual interventions maximum, plus the scheduled break question.
- **If both teams are earning the bonus freely, remove the Turn Zone markers for the last three minutes** and see whether the behaviour survives without the visual cue. That's the real test.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Receive on the half-turn with the back foot. First touch out of the feet and forwards. Pass to the back foot of the player you're finding. Keepers: distribute to a player who can turn , not to the nearest one.
Tactical	The player receiving in the Turn Zone should already know whether they can turn, because they scanned. Teammates behind the ball offer a supporting angle so 'can't turn' has an answer; players ahead offer depth so 'can turn' has one too. Full-backs give width so the pitch stays big.
Physical	Fifteen minutes of continuous match play at the end of a full session. Expect a drop in quality and accept it. Keep the ball rolling — a game with constant stoppages is more tiring, not less.
Psychological	Freedom. This is where players should feel trusted. Praise the attempt to turn and play forward far more loudly than the goal — they'll play for whatever you shout about.
Social	"Turn" and "man on" are now the team's two most important words. Encourage the goalkeepers to be the loudest voices on the pitch — they can see everything.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Nobody wants to receive in the Turn Zone — the ball goes from defence straight over the midfield	Reward the courage, not the outcome: award the bonus for the attempt to turn for the first few minutes. Confidence comes before competence.
Turning into pressure — possession lost centrally, often leading to a chance against	Ask, don't tell: <i>Could you turn there? How would you have known?</i> Reinforce that NOT turning is an intelligent choice — the bonus is for turning when you can, not turning always.
Support players standing still — the turn is good but there's no forward option	One individual intervention: <i>When he turns, where do you need to be? Show me next time.</i>

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
The game becoming about the bonus — turning in the zone with no intention of progressing	Tighten the definition out loud: the forward pass or carry must actually beat an opponent. And remind them a goal is worth three.

ASK THEM

- What did you have to do before the ball came to you in the yellow zone?
- When you turned, what was in front of you?
- When you couldn't turn, what was the right decision instead?
- What could your teammates behind you have said to help?
- Where do the forwards need to be when a midfielder turns?
- Which was harder — turning, or knowing whether you could turn?
- How is the yellow zone the same as the middle of the pitch on Saturday?
- If we took the yellow markers away right now, would you still do it?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Remove the markers for the final three minutes — if the behaviour holds, the learning has transferred.	Widen the Turn Zone to 18 m — more time and space for the turn to succeed.
Double bonus for a forward pass that beats two opponents.	No pressing inside the Turn Zone for the first four minutes — guarantees success and builds the pattern.
Two-touch behind the halfway line — speeds the build-up and forces earlier scanning from defenders.	6 v 6 on 40 × 30 m with rolling subs, creating more space per player.
Man-marking in the Turn Zone — each team's central midfielder gets a specific opponent.	Bonus for the attempt , successful or not, until confidence is established.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

At least four bonus points awarded across the two teams.

Visible pre-scan from central midfielders before receiving.

Fewer balls played from defence straight over the midfield in the second half of the game than the first.

Keepers distributing to a player who can turn, not the nearest player.

At least one goal that originates from a turn in the Turn Zone.

"Turn" and "man on" being used without prompting.

Finish, match day & homework

REFLECTION — 5 MINUTES, SITTING DOWN

- Circle up and **sit down** — you sitting down changes the dynamic more than anything you can say.
- *What did we work on tonight? Say it in your own words.*
- *What does 'open out' actually mean? Show me with your body.*
- *When are you going to use this on Saturday?*
- *Who did something tonight they've never done before?*
- *What's one thing you're going to practise before next time?*
- Finish with **two named pieces of specific praise** — one for a technical moment, one for an act of courage or generosity. Then give out the homework and let them go.

MATCH-DAY LINK

MATCH OBJECTIVES	WATCH FOR	ASK AFTERWARDS
- Every player scans over their shoulder at least once before receiving. Not every time — once is a start. - Central midfielders receive side-on and attempt to turn whenever there's space. - The team plays at least five forward passes out of midfield across the match.	- Body shape at the moment of receiving. Pick two players and watch only them for ten minutes. Hips open or square? - The first touch after receiving. Does it travel into space, or stop dead and need a second touch to fix? - What happens after a player turns. Is there a forward option, or does the turn lead nowhere because nobody moved?	- <i>When you got the ball on Saturday, how much could you see before it arrived?</i> - <i>Tell me about one time you turned and went forward. What made it possible?</i> - <i>Was there a moment you wanted to turn but couldn't? What stopped you?</i>

HOMEWORK — "THE SHOULDER CHECK" · 15 MINUTES, THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU NEXT TRAIN

- **Wall passing with a scan.** Stand 4 m from a wall. Pass with the inside of the foot and **look over your shoulder every single time** before the ball comes back. Fifty with the right foot, fifty with the left. Count out loud how many times you looked.
- **Turn and go.** Two markers 8 m apart. Pass off the wall, receive with the far foot, turn and dribble to the far marker. Twenty each way. The touch must take you **past** the marker, not to it.
- **Watch a game with a job.** Fifteen minutes of any professional match — men's or women's — watching **one central midfielder only**. Count how many times they look over their shoulder before the ball comes to them. Bring the number to training.
- *Optional extra:* 100 juggles cumulative across the week, any combination.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Same theme — individual technique. These cover the same ground from other angles and can be run in any order, before or after this one: **2** The First Touch That Travels; **3** Passing With Purpose; **4** Travelling With the Ball.

A natural follow-on. Session 2 — The First Touch That Travels. Session 1 bought the player a picture; Session 2 teaches them to do something with it. The focus moves to the quality and direction of the first touch: out of the feet, into space, away from pressure, and with both feet. The Y-Gate evolves into a three-door room with two defenders, and the conditioned match imposes a two-touch limit in the middle third. Players who struggled with the far-foot receive tonight are your named priorities.

Or simply run this one again. Nothing in the set has to be done once. A session repeated three weeks later with a harder progression is usually worth more than a new session the players are meeting cold.