



SESSION 2 • STANDALONE PLAN

The First Touch That Travels

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	2.1 Landing Zone Grid
0:10 – 0:25	15	■ Technical practice	2.2 The Three-Door Room
0:25 – 0:40	15	■ Skill game	2.3 End Zone First Touch Game
0:40 – 0:55	15	■ Conditioned match	2.4 Two-Touch Middle Third
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

The first touch is the most frequently performed action in football and the least frequently coached. Here is the arithmetic that matters: a player who stops the ball dead needs a second touch to move it before they can pass, and that second touch costs about half a second. Half a second is exactly the time it takes an opponent of this age to close three metres. So the player who stops the ball is, by definition, always passing under more pressure than the player who moves it — and over a match that decides whether your team plays forward or backwards. There is a subtler benefit too: a touch that travels creates the passing angle that did not exist a moment earlier. In that sense the first touch is not preparation for the decision, it IS the decision. Session 1 bought the player a picture. Tonight they learn to do something with it.

BY THE END, PLAYERS CAN

- Take a first touch that travels at least a metre into a chosen space, rather than stopping the ball beneath them.
- Direct the touch away from pressure — into the space a defender has vacated, not the space they occupy.

- **Choose between three exits** having received under pressure from two opponents.
- **Use either foot**, selecting the foot according to where the ball needs to go rather than which one feels comfortable.
- **Recover from a poor touch** — protect, reset, choose again — instead of panicking into a rushed pass.

KIT LIST

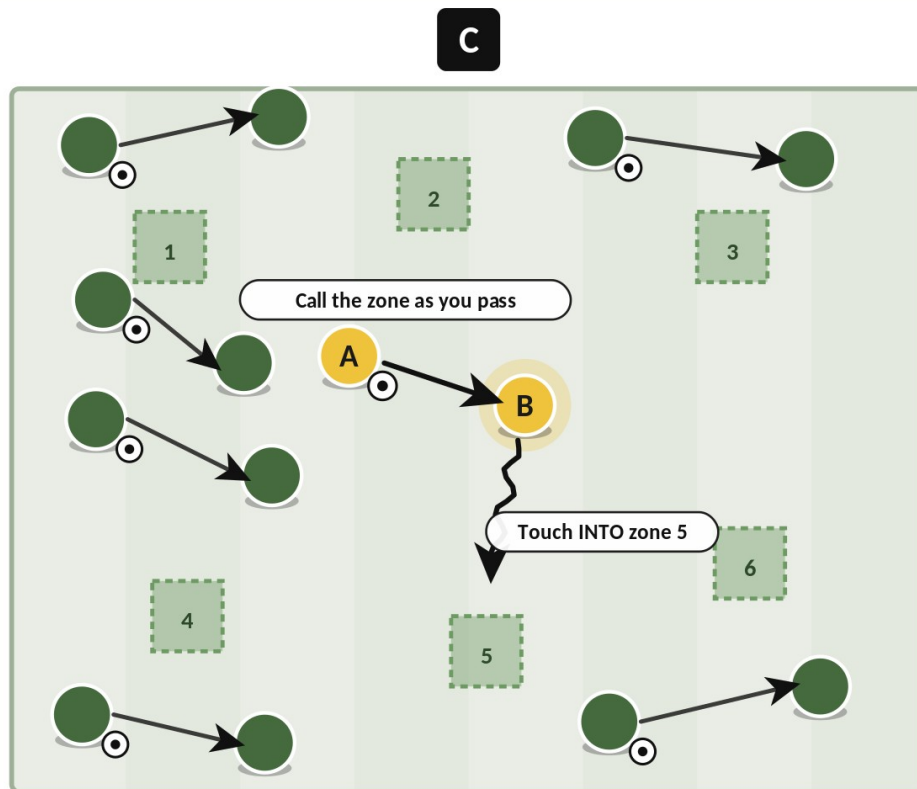
Ground needed: about 60 × 40 m, laid out identically to Session 1 so set-up is faster. The Session 1 layout converts in roughly four minutes — the Turn Zone markers widen from 12 m to 18 m, and the four-gate cones move into the Three-Door stations.

ITEM	QTY	USED IN
Footballs (size 4)	16	All practices
Flat markers	60	Grid, landing zones, end zones, middle third
Cones (tall)	12	Three doors per station (2.2)
Poles	4	Receiving-zone edges — 2 per station (2.2)
Bibs — red / blue / yellow	8 / 8 / 2	2.2, 2.3, 2.4
Full-size goals	2	Conditioned match (2.4)
Mini goals	2	Regression option in 2.3

2.1 LANDING ZONE GRID

Make the touch have a destination. Six numbered 2×2 m squares are marked on the grid and the receiver's first touch must finish inside one — the touch is no longer judged on whether it looked neat, but on whether the ball arrived where it was aimed.

26 x 20 m • pairs • six 2×2 m landing zones • first touch must land inside • 10 minutes



THE TOUCH HAS A DESTINATION • NOT A TECHNIQUE



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SET UP

- 26 x 20 m grid. Six 2×2 m landing zones marked with flat markers and numbered 1–6, spread asymmetrically so no two are the same distance apart.
- One ball per pair — 7 or 8 pairs. Odd number: one group of three passing in a rotating triangle.
- Balls at the edge of the grid so the first arrival starts immediately.
- Coach outside the grid for the first two minutes, then inside coaching individuals on the move.

HOW IT RUNS

- Minutes 0–3 — arrival.** Greet each player by name and send them in with a ball. Free dribbling and passing while the squad assembles. Collect the Session 1 homework numbers as they arrive — *how many shoulder-checks did that midfielder make?*
- Minute 3.** Pair up, one ball per pair. Ninety seconds of Session 1 revision: *keep moving, scan before it comes to you.*

3. **Minute 4 — introduce the zones.** Six numbered squares. When you receive, your **FIRST** touch has to finish inside one of them. Not your second touch. Your first. Free choice of zone.
4. **Minute 6 — one demonstration.** Show a touch that stops the ball dead (impossible to land in a zone) next to one that travels (lands easily). Ask the group which one worked and why. Fifteen seconds, then restart.
5. **Minute 7 — the passer calls the zone number as they pass.** The receiver now processes information while the ball travels — the exact cognitive load of a match.
6. **Minutes 8–10.** Pairs count consecutive successful landings, resetting to zero on a miss. Swap the calling role halfway.

RULES & SCORING

- **One touch to reach the zone.** If it takes two, it doesn't count — let the pair police it themselves.
- Maximum three touches per possession from minute 6.
- From minute 7, only the **called** zone scores.
- Loose ball: nearest player retrieves and the pair restarts on the move.
- One group freeze maximum, at the demonstration.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Choose the receiving surface before the ball arrives — inside foot to redirect across the body, outside foot to push into a wide space, sole to stop and reposition when the zone is behind. Cushion rather than block: the foot moves slightly with the ball on contact.
Tactical	Look at the zone before the ball arrives, not after. Choose a zone away from where a defender would be — build the habit before the defender exists.
Physical	Continuous multi-directional movement with deliberate deceleration and re-acceleration — the movement pattern of receiving under pressure, and proper preparation for hamstrings and adductors.
Psychological	Precision under safe pressure. Missing a zone costs nothing, which lets players try surfaces they'd never risk in a match.
Social	The called zone forces clear, early, loud communication. A late call is worse than no call — the receiver should say so.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Two touches to reach the zone — control first, aim second. Players will often claim this as a success	Be precise and let the pair police it: <i>First touch. If you needed a second one, it doesn't count.</i>
Ignoring the far zones — zones 1 and 4 get all the traffic	The called-zone progression fixes this. Alternatively, score the distant zones at 2 points.
Wrong surface for the job — repeated inside-foot touches even when the zone is directly behind them	Ask: <i>Which part of your foot would send it there?</i> Then let them experiment. Don't demonstrate first — the discovery is the learning.
Not looking until the ball arrives — the Session 1 habit is only a week old	Use the exact Session 1 language: <i>Scan — where's your zone before the ball comes?</i>

ASK THEM

- What's the difference between controlling the ball and aiming the ball?
- Which part of your foot did you use for the zone behind you? Why?
- When your partner called the number, when did you look for it?

- What happens if your first touch is too soft? Too hard?
- Which zone was hardest to reach, and what made it hard?
- If a defender was standing between you and the zone, would you still choose it?
- What could your partner do with the pass to make the landing easier?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Late call — the passer calls the number only as the ball leaves their foot.	Bigger zones (3 × 3 m) so success is frequent.
Two zones, choose one — the passer calls two numbers and the receiver must choose, then explain the choice.	Free choice throughout — drop the called-zone demand entirely.
Add a floating defender — the receiver must land in a zone away from them.	Static passer serving from a fixed distance, removing everything except the touch.
Weak foot only for all first touches.	Two touches allowed to reach the zone — aim for direction rather than economy.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

First touches visibly travelling 1–3 m rather than stopping.

Both feet in use — count how many left-foot first touches you actually see.

Players looking at their target zone **before** the ball arrives.

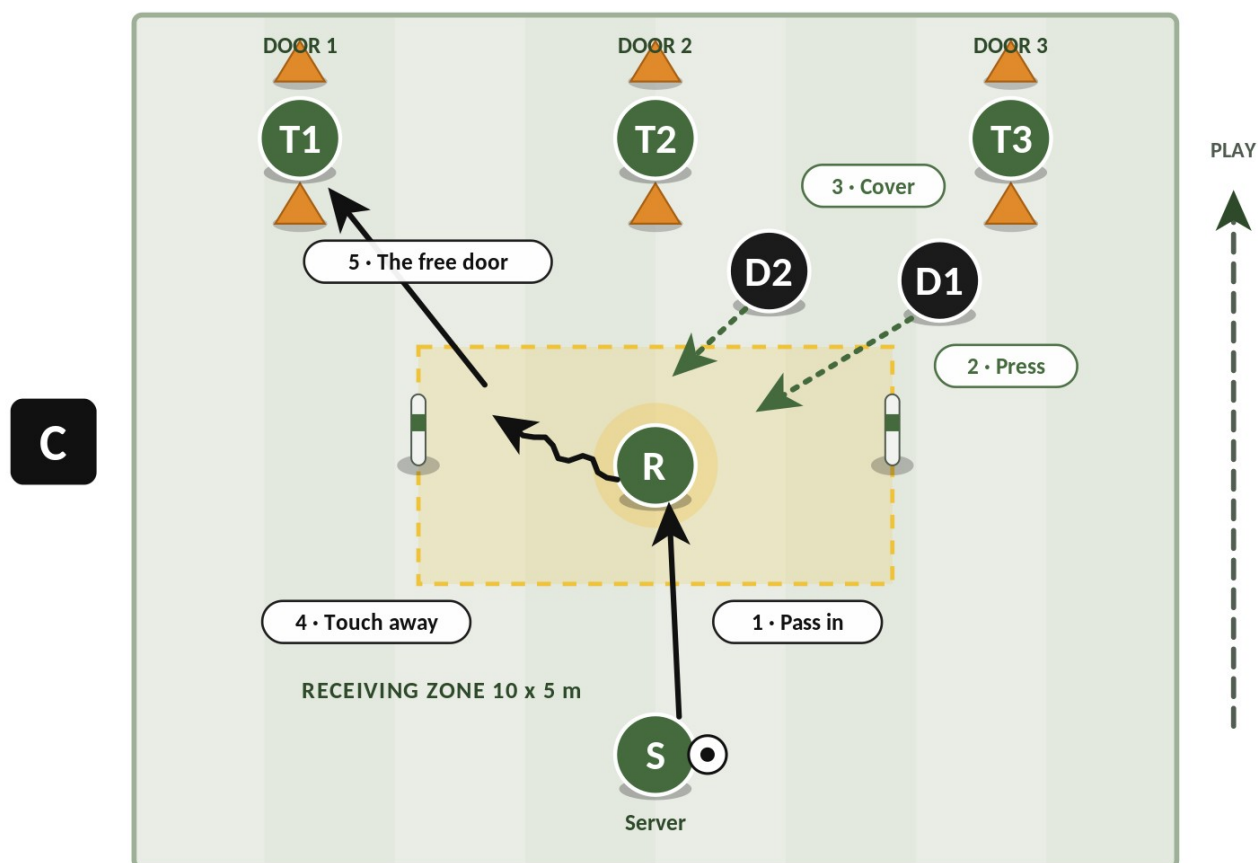
Called zones reached more than half the time by the end.

Early, audible calls from the passers.

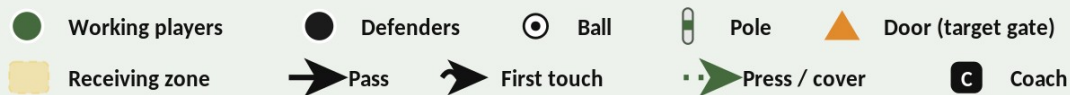
2.2 THE THREE-DOOR ROOM

The Y-Gate with the difficulty raised in exactly one dimension: three doors and two defenders. One door is always open, but finding it means reading two opponents rather than one — the specific perceptual demand of midfield play.

22 x 18 m per station • 7 players per station • 2 stations running • 15 minutes



ROTATION: R → the door they used • that target → S • S → D1 • D1 → D2 • D2 → R



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SET UP

- Two stations, each 22 × 18 m, along the far touchline with 5 m between them.
- Per station: a 10 × 5 m receiving zone with a pole at each side; **three** 3 m doors along the far end at 3.5 m, 11 m and 18.5 m; one ball plus two spares; two blue bibs.
- Seven players per station (14). With 15, one station runs eight with a second server alternating. With 16, both run eight.
- Defenders D1 and D2 start on the same side, between the doors and the receiving zone.

- Coach stands between the two stations, level with the receiving zones — the only vantage point from which hips and first touches are both visible.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Set the picture in 40 seconds** — they already know the shape from Session 1. Ask, don't tell: *Two defenders, three doors. How many doors can they cover? So where's the ball going?*
2. **Minutes 0–3 — passive.** Defenders jog to within 2 m and shadow only. Receivers build the pattern with guaranteed success.
3. **Minute 3 — one freeze, twenty seconds.** Show a receiver whose touch travelled beside one whose touch stopped, and let the group compare the options each has.
4. **Minutes 3–10 — live.** Defenders may tackle and now choose their own doors to cover, so the free door changes every repetition and can't be predicted.
5. **Minutes 10–15 — two-touch** inside the receiving zone: one to travel, one to pass. This is the session's key demand, and it's where the first touch either works or the practice exposes it.
6. **Rotation, every repetition:** R goes to the door they used → that target dribbles back to become the server → server becomes D1 → D1 becomes D2 → D2 becomes R. Every player covers every role in about three and a half minutes.

RULES & SCORING

- **1 point** for a clean pass received by a target inside their door. **2 points** if the first touch alone took the receiver clear of both defenders.
- **1 point to the defenders** for a win, an interception, or forcing a pass back to the server.
- **If both defenders come within 3 m of the ball, the attackers get an automatic point** — this makes them organise into press and cover within two repetitions.
- Ball out or won: instant restart from the server with a spare ball.
- Two group freezes maximum. Individual coaching goes to the **next** receiver before the serve, not the last one after the mistake.
- Only go live once two-thirds of receivers are finding the free door under passive pressure.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	First touch travels 1–2 m into the space between or beyond the defenders. Surface chosen for the job: inside foot to move across the body, outside foot into a wide channel, sole to drag back when both defenders overrun. Pass off the second touch with the standing foot pointing at the door.
Tactical	Scan twice — once as the server prepares, once as the ball travels. Read both defenders: the free door is the one neither can reach in time, which isn't always the one furthest away. If both press the ball, the free door is behind them. Recognise when the answer is to protect and reset.
Physical	Short adjustment steps before receiving, explosive first movement after the touch. Roughly three minutes of continuous involvement per rotation cycle, with natural recovery in the target and server roles.
Psychological	Two defenders raise anxiety noticeably at this age. Praise the touch that travelled even when the pass afterwards failed: <i>The touch was the hard bit and you got it right.</i>
Social	Extend the vocabulary to three calls: "Turn!", "Man on!" and "I'm free!" from the target in the open door. A silent target is an invisible target.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
First touch into the space in front, straight at a defender — good quality, wrong route. They're	<i>Where were both defenders when the ball came? Where were they NOT? Make them describe the empty space before the next</i>

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
looking at the destination, not the path	repetition.
Ball stopped dead under the body — then three touches: stop, fix, tackled	Go back to the warm-up language: <i>Give the touch a destination. Where's it going?</i> If they're overwhelmed, drop their defender to passive for two reps and rebuild confidence.
Only reading one defender — beats the presser cleanly, then passes straight to the cover	Ask the covering defender to be audible for a few reps — <i>D2, call out where you are as you move</i> — then remove the support.
Rushing the pass after a good touch — adrenaline after escaping the press	Slow the moment with your voice: <i>You're free — take a breath and pick it.</i>
Both defenders pressing the ball — every door open, practice becomes trivial	The automatic-point rule handles it. Say it once and let the scoring teach them.

ASK THEM

- Can two defenders cover three doors? What does that tell you?
- Before the ball arrived, where were both defenders?
- Which space was empty — and did your first touch go into it?
- What surface of your foot did you use? Would another have been better?
- Defenders — how did you decide who pressed and who covered?
- If both defenders come to you, what has that created behind them?
- When is the right answer to pass back to the server? Is that failing?
- How is this the same as what happens to our midfielders on Saturday?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Doors close — the coach declares one door shut as the ball travels, forcing a re-decision mid-touch.	One defender only — quietly revert to the Session 1 Y-Gate for a struggling player; the shape is identical so nobody notices.
Third defender starting behind the receiver, so the scan must cover 360 degrees. Widen the zone to 12 m.	Passive defenders throughout.
Moving targets — targets may move 4 m either side of their door.	Wider doors (5 m) and closer targets.
Counter-goal — defenders who win it score by dribbling through the server's line.	Announced press — defenders call which door they're covering as they set off.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

First touch travels at least a metre in the majority of repetitions.

The receiver beats the press **and** avoids the cover in most attempts.

The free door found rather than the favourite door used.

Both feet used for first touches — count left-foot touches specifically.

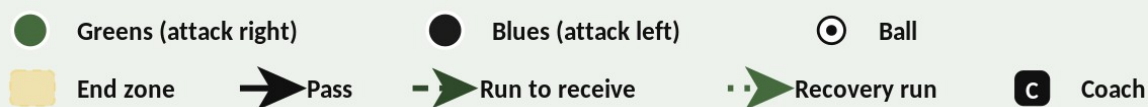
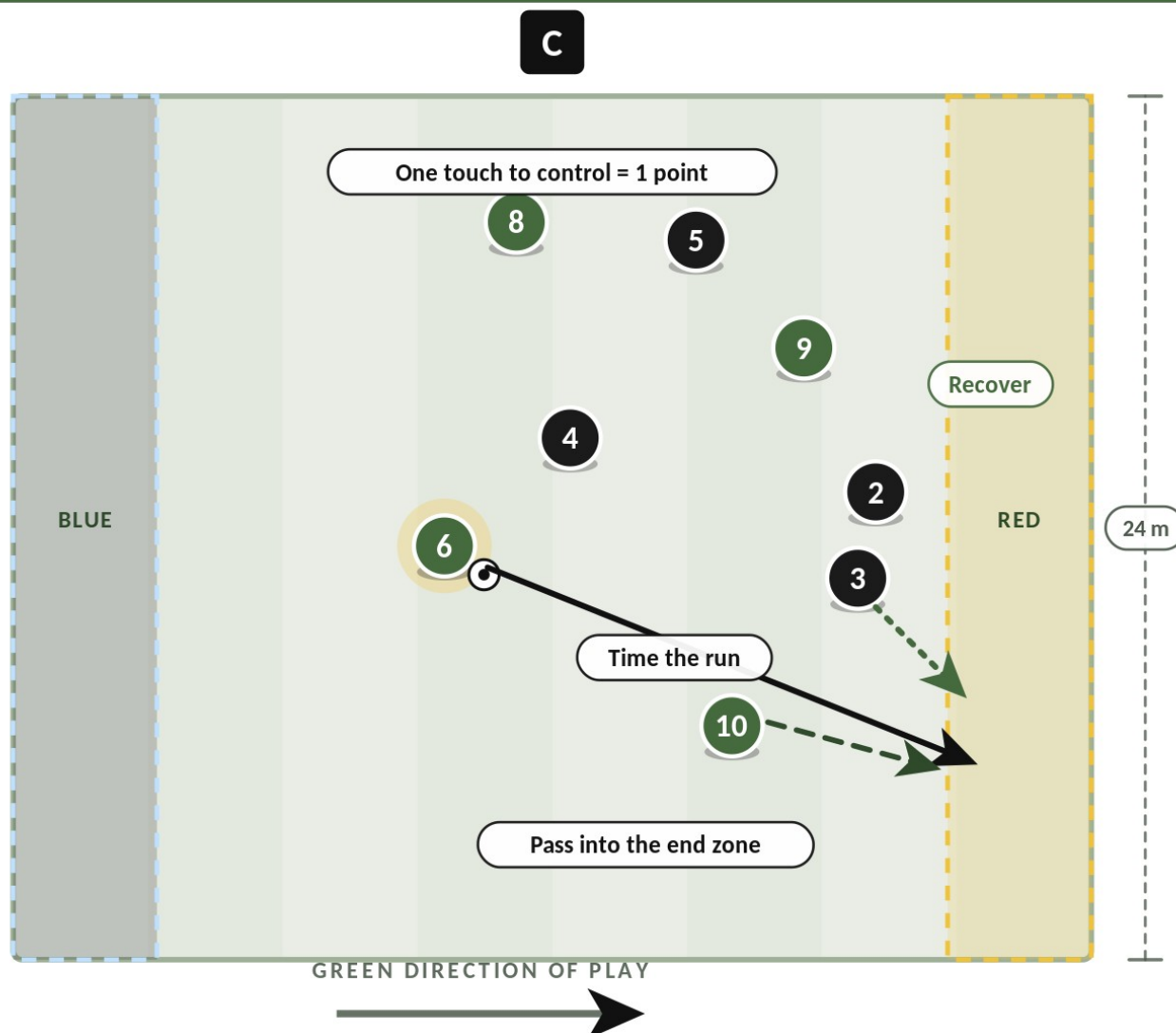
The two-touch phase survives. If the practice collapses when the touch limit arrives, the first touch isn't good enough yet — and that is valuable information, not a failure.

Defenders organising into press and cover without instruction by minute ten.

2.3 END ZONE FIRST TOUCH GAME (4 v 4)

Make the first touch worth points. The scoring act IS a controlled first touch — a pass into the 4 m end zone, controlled there with one touch. No goal, no keeper, no shot: nothing to distract from the theme.

30 x 24 m • 4 m end zones • control in the end zone to score • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- Two pitches, each 30 × 24 m, side by side with a 5 m corridor between them. A 4 m end zone marked across the full width at each end.
- Per pitch: 16 flat markers, 4 red bibs, 4 blue bibs, 2 balls.
- 4 v 4 per pitch (16). With 14, run 4v4 and 3v3. With 15, run 4v4 and 4v3 with the extra player on the weaker team.
- Coach in the 5 m corridor between the pitches, feeding and coaching both games without walking.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Bibs out while you explain.** Teams balanced for ability.
2. **Explain in 25 seconds:** *Score by passing into the yellow zone and a teammate controlling it there with ONE touch. Two touches, no point. Three minutes. Go.*
3. **Game 1 — no coaching.** Watch who moves into the zone early (and is therefore easy to defend) and who times it.
4. **Between games 1 and 2, one question:** *When's the best moment to run into the end zone — before the pass, or as the pass is played?* Let them answer, then play.
5. **From game 3, add the bonuses:** 2 points if the controlling touch is taken with the **weaker foot**, and 2 points if the touch leaves the player **facing forward**. Announce them once and let the scoring do the teaching.
6. **Four games of three minutes with 45 seconds between**, using the same ladder as Session 1 — winners of Pitch 1 stay, losers swap.

RULES & SCORING

- **1 point** for a pass into the end zone controlled by a teammate with **one touch**. **2 points** for a weak-foot control, or a control that leaves the player facing forward. **No points** if a second touch is needed to bring it under control.
- Ball out: coach rolls a new ball in immediately to the team that didn't concede possession. No throw-ins, no corners.
- From game 3, maximum **three touches** per player anywhere on the pitch.
- No stoppages during games. Coaching happens in the 45-second gaps, as a question.
- **Add the bonus scoring only once teams are regularly reaching the end zone.** Rewarding difficulty before basic success flattens confidence.
- If nobody has scored after two games, widen the end zone — don't lecture.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	The controlling touch is taken while moving , not from a standstill. Cushion, don't block. Use the foot furthest from the nearest defender. Passers: weight the ball into the space in front of the runner — a pass to the feet in the end zone is almost impossible to control in one.
Tactical	Time the run: arrive as the ball arrives, not before. Stay out of the end zone until the pass is played — a player standing in the zone is easy to mark. Passers look for the runner before the run is made. Defensively, hold a line in front of the end zone rather than dropping into it.
Physical	Repeated accelerations into space. Three minutes on, 45 seconds off, four times. Cut the last game short if quality declines.
Psychological	The one-touch rule means many attempts fail early. Say it clearly and often: <i>Missing this is normal. Keep going for it.</i>
Social	One call from the runner — " Now! " — timed to the moment they want the ball. Runners who go silently are relying on luck.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Standing in the end zone waiting — camped, marked, and never passed to	Between games: <i>How many points did our zone-camper score? Why not?</i> If it persists, rule that no attacker may be in the end zone before the pass is played.
Passing to the feet in the zone — receivers repeatedly needing two touches	<i>Where does the ball need to be for your teammate to control it in one — at their feet, or in front of them?</i>
Controlling with the wrong foot — body twisting to get the strong foot to the ball, losing control	The weak-foot bonus does most of this. Reinforce individually: <i>Which foot was closer to the ball?</i>
Everyone attacking, nobody balancing — both	Ask the losing team: <i>What happens to us when we all go forward?</i>

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
teams scoring instantly on the counter	Early seeding for this theme.
The game becoming a long-ball contest — few passes, ball in the air	Add a condition: along the ground only, or three passes before the end-zone pass counts.

ASK THEM

- When is the best moment to run into the end zone?
- Where does the pass need to arrive for you to control it in one touch?
- Which foot should you use if the defender is on your left?
- What did the teams that scored most have in common?
- What was the hardest part — getting free, or the touch itself?
- Defenders — was it better to mark the runner or press the passer?
- What happened when we all attacked at once?
- If we made the end zone half the size, what would you change?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Control and hold — one touch to control, then keep the ball in the zone for two seconds under pressure.	Wider end zones (6 m).
Narrower end zones (2.5 m) — raises the accuracy demand on both pass and touch.	Two touches to control — keep the theme, remove the precision requirement.
No attacker in the end zone before the pass is played — forces perfect timing.	Mini goals instead of end zones , with a bonus point for a good first touch in the build-up.
Three-pass build-up before the end-zone pass counts.	3 v 3 on 26 × 20 m — more space, more time, more touches each.

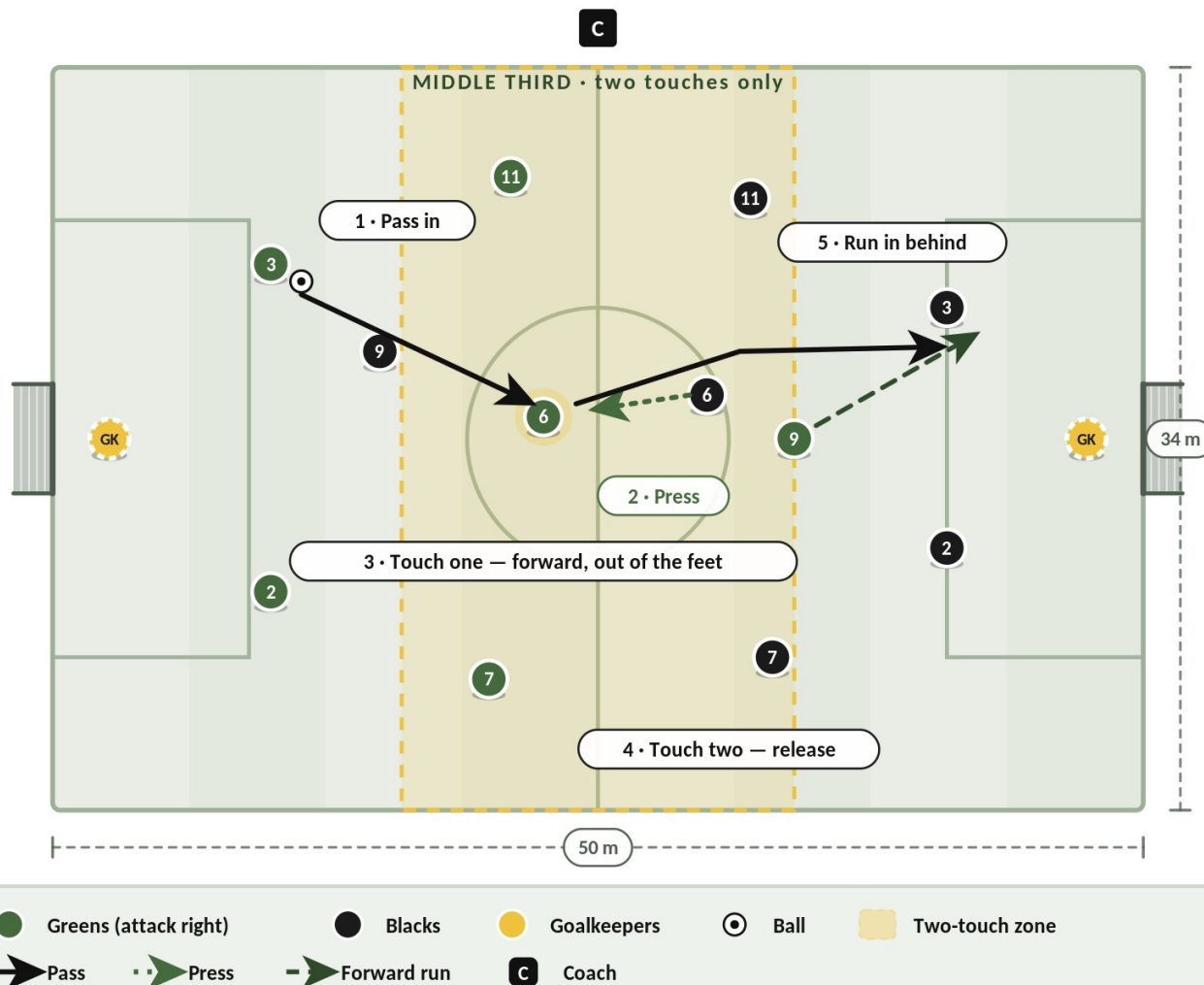
IT'S WORKING WHEN

At least two one-touch end-zone controls per team per game by game 3.
Runs timed to the pass — visible as fewer players standing in the zone.
Passes played into space in front of the runner rather than to feet.
Weak-foot controls being **attempted deliberately**, not just occurring by accident.
The call of "now" between passer and runner.
Defensive lines forming in front of the end zone rather than inside it.

2.4 TWO-TOUCH MIDDLE THIRD (7 v 7)

Prove that a good first touch buys time and a poor one costs it. Two touches inside the middle third: one to control, one to release. There is nowhere to hide — a touch that stops the ball dead leaves one touch and no space.

50 x 34 m • full-size goals • two touches only inside the shaded middle third • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- 50 × 34 m with full-size goals. An **18 m middle third** marked across the full width with flat markers.
- Four spare balls in the back of each goal.
- 7 v 7 including goalkeepers (14). With 15–16, play 8v8 or roll subs every 90 seconds.
- 2-3-1 outfield shape in front of each keeper. Keepers swap at the halfway point.
- Coach on the halfway line, outside the pitch, level with the middle third.

HOW IT RUNS

- 1. Keep the bibs and teams from the skill game.** Assign keepers and shape in 30 seconds.
- 2. Explain the condition once:** Normal game. But inside the shaded third you get two touches — one to control, one to play. Outside it, do what you like.
- 3. Minutes 0–4 — no interruption.** Expect it to be messy for the first ninety seconds; that's the condition doing its work.

4. **Minute 4 — drinks break, one question:** *What has to be true about your first touch for two touches to be enough?* Let a player answer in their own words, then restart.
5. **Minutes 5-15 — add the bonus:** +1 point for any two-touch sequence in the middle third that ends with a **forward pass beating an opponent**. Announce bonuses as they happen.
6. **If both teams are meeting the rule comfortably, drop to ONE touch in the middle third for the final three minutes** and watch what it does to movement off the ball.

RULES & SCORING

- **Goal = 3 points. Bonus = 1 point** for a two-touch sequence in the middle third ending in a forward pass that beats an opponent.
- **Two touches inside the middle third, unlimited elsewhere.** Goalkeepers are exempt.
- A third touch in the middle third gives possession to the opposition from where it happened — restarted immediately, no ceremony.
- Keepers restart within five seconds. Throw-ins may be taken as pass-ins.
- Two individual interventions maximum, plus the scheduled break question. No group freezes.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	First touch travels out of the feet and, where possible, forwards. Receive with the foot furthest from pressure. Pass off the second touch with the standing foot pointing where the ball is going.
Tactical	Support angles matter more than usual: with two touches available, the receiver needs an option immediately , so teammates must be moving before the ball is played, not after. Players outside the middle third offer themselves as the release.
Physical	Fifteen minutes of continuous match play at the end of a full session. Expect fatigue and keep the ball rolling — dead time is more tiring than play.
Psychological	Frustration management. Frame it honestly at the start: <i>This is meant to be hard. When it's hard, your touch is the reason. Fix the touch and the game gets easy.</i>
Social	Talking becomes essential rather than optional. Players outside the middle third can see more than those inside it and must say so. Reward loud, useful information.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Avoiding the middle third entirely — long balls from defence to attack, the shaded area empty	For two minutes, rule that the ball must be touched in the middle third before a goal counts. Then remove it and see whether the behaviour holds.
First touch backwards — possession retained but never progressed	The bonus point is the corrective. Reinforce with a question: <i>Your touch was safe. Was it useful?</i>
Support players static — the receiver uses their second touch on a hopeful pass because no option existed	One individual intervention, to a player NEAR the ball: <i>He's got one touch left. Where do you need to be?</i>
Panic on the second touch — wild clearances	Trace it to the cause, not the symptom: <i>That pass was rushed. Why? What happened before it?</i>
Goalkeepers playing long every time	Not tonight. Note it and remember it — this is exactly the problem this theme exists to solve.

ASK THEM

- What has to be true about your first touch for two touches to be enough?

- When your touch went backwards, what happened next?
- What do your teammates need to do while the ball is travelling to you?
- Which was harder — the middle third or the rest of the pitch? Why?
- What did you do differently after the drinks break?
- When you had one touch left, how did you decide where the ball was going?
- If we made it one touch in the middle third, what would have to change?
- How is this rule like having a defender next to you?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
One touch in the middle third for the final three minutes.	Three touches in the middle third instead of two.
Widen the middle third to 24 m , making the condition harder to avoid.	Narrow the middle third to 12 m.
Double bonus for a two-touch sequence that breaks the opposition's last line.	Condition applies to one team only — useful if one side is much stronger, and it balances the game without anyone losing face.
Two touches everywhere except the attacking third.	Remove the turnover penalty — a third touch just gets a reminder.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

First touches in the middle third travelling out of the feet rather than stopping.
 Fewer turnovers caused by the touch limit in the second half of the game than the first.
 At least three bonus points across the two teams.
 Support players moving **before** the ball arrives.
 Audible information from players outside the middle third.
 Left-foot first touches visible in the middle third — count them.

Finish, match day & homework

REFLECTION — 5 MINUTES, SITTING DOWN

- Circle up and **sit down**.
- *What were we working on tonight? Say it without using the word 'touch'.*
- *What does 'out of your feet' mean? Show me.*
- *Who used their weak foot tonight when they didn't have to?*
- *What was hardest — the three-door room, the end zone, or the two-touch rule? Why?*
- **Collect the Session 1 homework numbers out loud** — it tells the squad that homework gets checked, which is the only reason anyone does it.
- Finish with two named pieces of specific praise: one technical, one for courage.

MATCH-DAY LINK

MATCH OBJECTIVES	WATCH FOR	ASK AFTERWARDS
- Every first touch has a destination. Nobody stops the ball dead in the middle of the pitch. - At least five first touches taken with the weaker foot across the team, in situations where it was the correct foot. - The team plays out of the middle third in two touches wherever possible — not as a rule, as a habit.	- The touch immediately after receiving. Does it travel, and in which direction? Pick two players and watch only them for ten minutes. - What happens after a poor touch. Does the player recover and protect, or panic and give the ball away? - Whether support arrives in time. When a midfielder receives, is there an option available on their second touch?	- <i>Tell me about a first touch on Saturday that made your next decision easy.</i> - <i>Was there a moment your touch let you down? What happened next?</i> - <i>Did you use your weak foot at all? When?</i>

HOMEWORK — "DESTINATION TOUCHES" · 15 MINUTES, THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU NEXT TRAIN

- **Target touches.** Put a jumper 3 m to your left and another 3 m to your right. Pass against a wall and take a first touch that finishes next to one of them, alternating left and right. Forty with the right foot, forty with the left. **If the ball stops under you, it doesn't count.**
- **Two-touch wall.** Against a wall, pass and return using exactly two touches every time — one to control, one to play. Fifty repetitions. Then fifty more with the weak foot only, and expect it to be ugly.
- **Watch a game with a job.** Fifteen minutes of any professional match, watching **one central midfielder's first touch only**. Count how many go forwards, how many sideways, how many backwards. Bring the three numbers next time.
- *Optional extra:* 30 juggles with the weak foot only, cumulative across the week.

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: **1** Scan, Open Out, Receive Across Your Body; **3** Passing With Purpose; **4** Travelling With the Ball.

A natural follow-on. Session 3 — Passing With Purpose: Weight, Surface and Both Feet. With the scan (Session 1) and the touch (Session 2) established, players now learn to deliver the ball: choosing the surface, weighting the pass to the situation rather than the distance, and using the weaker foot as a genuine option rather than an emergency. The Three-Door Room evolves into a rotating passing practice with two balls running at once, and the conditioned match introduces a 'pass to the back foot' bonus. Players whose first touch is still stopping dead are your named priorities — bring them into the demonstration group early.

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.