



SESSION 4 • STANDALONE PLAN

Travelling With the Ball — Change of Direction and Speed

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	4.1 The Shrinking Grid
0:10 – 0:25	15	■ Technical practice	4.2 Break Out
0:25 – 0:40	15	■ Skill game	4.3 Drive the Line
0:40 – 0:55	15	■ Conditioned match	4.4 Carry Channels Match
0:55 – 1:00	5	■ Reflection	Review, with the players

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

There is a moment in every match when passing is the wrong answer. Nobody is available, the space in front is empty, and the correct decision is to run with the ball. Under-12 players are often actively coached out of this — 'pass it!' is the most common shout on any touchline in the country — and they arrive at 11v11 football able to move the ball but not to carry it. Carrying is a distinct skill with its own technique: the ball is pushed further ahead with the laces when the space is open, kept within a stride when it is tight, and the change of direction that escapes a defender is a different action again. Tonight completes the individual toolkit built across this theme. Session 1 gave them the picture, Session 2 the touch, Session 3 the pass. Session 4 gives them the option of keeping it and going — which is also the doorway into this theme, where they learn to beat an opponent one against one.

BY THE END, PLAYERS CAN

- Carry the ball at speed with the laces, pushing it into open space and running onto it.
- Change the size of the touch to match the space — long in the open, short and within a stride when tight.

- **Change direction to escape pressure**, using at least one move confidently with each foot.
- **Decide between passing and carrying** based on what is in front of them, not on habit or instruction.
- **Lift their head while travelling**, so the carry ends in a good decision rather than a dead end.

KIT LIST

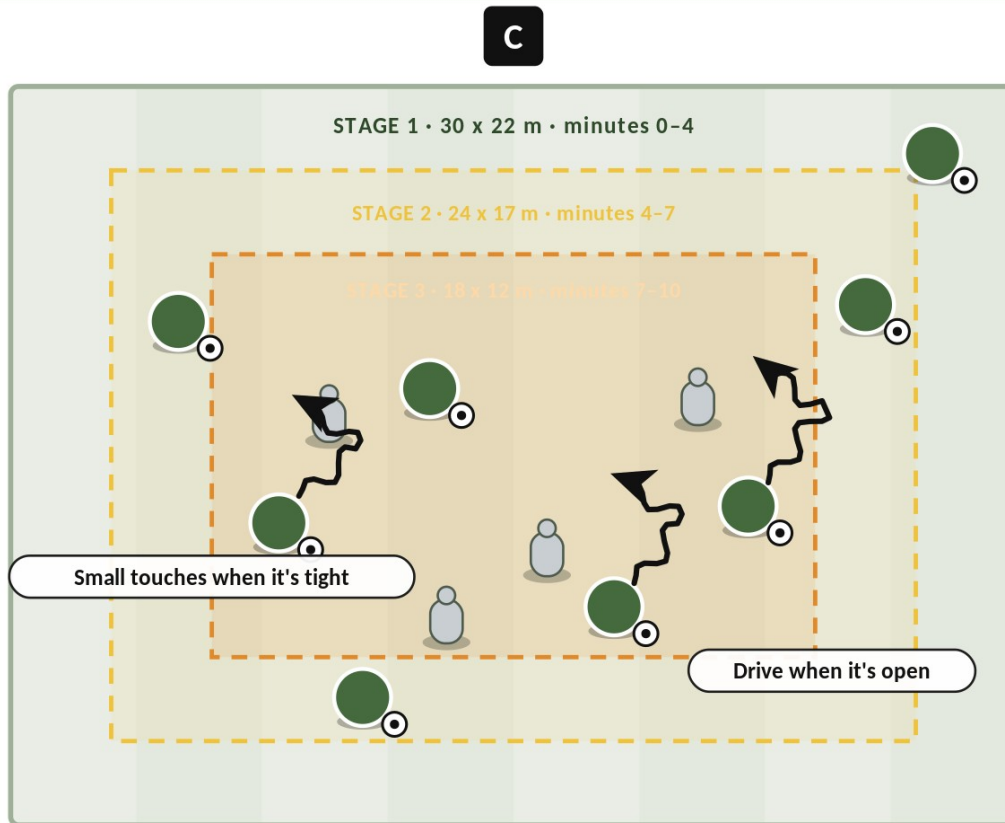
Ground needed: about 60 × 40 m. The Shrinking Grid needs all three rectangles marked in different colours BEFORE the session — you cannot re-mark a grid mid-warm-up without losing the whole point of it.

ITEM	QTY	USED IN
Footballs (size 4)	16	All practices
Flat markers	60	Nested grids, carry lines, channels
Cones (tall)	12	Speed gates (4.2, 3 stations × 4)
Mannequins	4	Warm-up obstacles (4.1)
Bibs — red / blue / yellow	8 / 8 / 2	4.2, 4.3, 4.4
Mini goals	2	Skill game (4.3) — one per end
Full-size goals	2	Conditioned match (4.4)

4.1 THE SHRINKING GRID

One activity, three levels of difficulty. The grid shrinks twice without anyone being told to change anything — so the touches get smaller and quicker because the space demands it, not because a coach said so.

starts 30 x 22 m and shrinks twice • one ball per player • 4 mannequins • 10 minutes



SAME GRID, LESS SPACE • THE TOUCHES HAVE TO GET SMALLER AND QUICKER



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SET UP

- Three nested rectangles marked with different-coloured flat markers: 30 × 22 m, then 24 × 17 m, then 18 × 12 m, all sharing roughly the same centre.
- One ball per player. Four mannequins spread inside the smallest rectangle so they are obstacles at every stage.
- Everyone works in the outer grid for four minutes, the middle grid for three, the inner grid for three.
- Balls at the edge so the first arrival starts immediately.
- Coach outside the grid, calling moves and stage changes.

HOW IT RUNS

- Minutes 0-3 — arrival.** Greet each player by name and send them in with a ball. Free dribbling. **Collect the Session 3 homework numbers** — *how many of that player's passes went forward past an opponent?*
- Minute 3 — start calling moves.** One every 45 seconds: drag-back, outside cut, inside cut, sole roll, stop-and-go. Call it once, show it once, then leave them to it.

3. **Minute 4 — Stage 2.** *Everyone inside the yellow grid now.* Say nothing else. Let them discover that the same speed no longer works.
4. **Minute 7 — Stage 3.** *Everyone inside the orange grid.* Now it is genuinely crowded. Add one rule: **no contact and no stopping.**
5. **Minutes 8–10 — the release.** On the coach's shout of **"OUT!"** every player drives at speed out of the small grid into the big one, then back in on **"IN!"** Three or four repetitions. This is the session's core idea in miniature: small touches when it's tight, big touches when it's open.
6. **Throughout:** if a player collides or loses the ball out of the grid, they simply rejoin. No punishment, no restart drill.

RULES & SCORING

- No stopping. If you have the ball, you are moving.
- No contact — the challenge is the space, not the opponent.
- Every called move must be attempted with both feet before the next call.
- On **"OUT!"** the ball must be driven with the **laces**, not carried on the inside foot.
- Anyone whose ball leaves the grid retrieves it and rejoins immediately.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Tight space: touches within a stride, ball on the inside and sole of the foot, body low and over the ball. Open space: push the ball 3–5 m ahead with the laces and run onto it, head up between touches, arms used for balance.
Tactical	The size of the touch is decided by the space, not by preference. Scan for the gap before you move into it — the best dribblers in a crowded grid are the ones looking two players ahead.
Physical	This is the session's movement preparation: multi-directional acceleration, deceleration and change of direction with the ball. The OUT/IN releases are short maximal efforts and should come at the end, once players are warm.
Psychological	Losing the ball in a crowded grid is inevitable and must be treated as normal. Say so out loud before Stage 3 begins.
Social	In the smallest grid, players have to look after each other. Praise anyone who avoids a collision by giving way — that awareness is the same skill you want in a match.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Same touch size in every grid — the ball still being pushed 4 m in an 18 × 12 m box	Don't tell them. Ask after a collision: <i>How much space have you got now compared to five minutes ago? What should that change?</i>
Head down in the small grid — collisions, and dribbling into other players	Reduce the technical demand: <i>Bigger, simpler touches for now — just tell me how many players are in front of you.</i> The head lifts as a by-product.
Carrying on the inside foot during the OUT release — slow and short	One cue: <i>Laces, and push it into the space in front of you — don't hold it.</i>
Stronger foot only for every move	Make it the rule of the call rather than a correction: <i>Drag-back with the left only. Everybody.</i>
Players hiding at the edges to avoid traffic	Shrink the grid one stage early for them, or ask them to count how many times they cross the middle.

ASK THEM

- What had to change when the grid got smaller?

- How far in front of you should the ball be right now?
- What did you do differently when I shouted OUT?
- Which move worked best in a tight space? Which worked best in an open one?
- How do you avoid running into someone — what are you looking at?
- In a match, where on the pitch is it like the small grid? Where is it like the big one?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Two players share one ball in the smallest grid, passing and receiving in traffic.	Stay in the two larger grids and skip Stage 3.
Add two taggers without balls who try to touch other players' footballs.	Fewer called moves — two only, held for two minutes each.
Weak foot only in Stage 3.	Remove the mannequins in the smallest grid.
Shrink to a fourth stage — 12 × 10 m — for the final ninety seconds.	Allow stopping while the technique is new.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Visibly smaller touches in Stage 3 than Stage 1, without being told.

Heads lifting between touches in the crowded grid.

Laces used on the OUT releases and the ball genuinely driven, not carried.

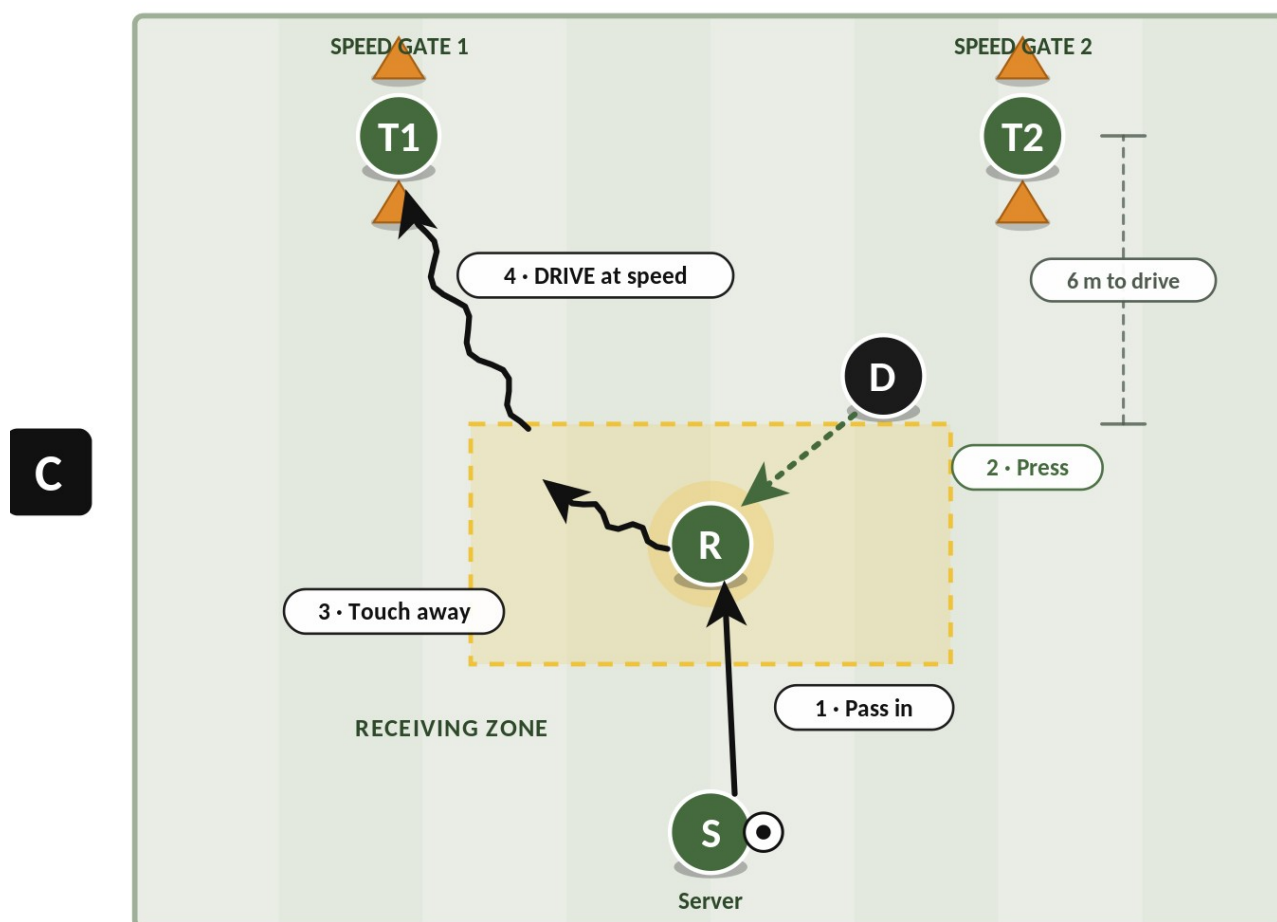
Both feet used on called moves.

Fewer collisions in the last two minutes than the first two in the small grid.

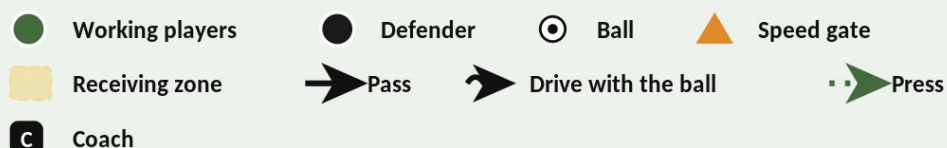
4.2 BREAK OUT — Receive, Escape, Drive

Join the whole block together in one action. Receive on the half-turn (Session 1), take a first touch away from pressure (Session 2), then — instead of passing (Session 3) — carry the ball at speed through a gate. This is the practice where the whole theme becomes one skill.

24 x 18 m per station • 6 players per station • 2–3 stations • 15 minutes



ROTATION: R → the gate they used • that target → S • S → D • D → R



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SET UP

- Two or three stations, each 24 × 18 m, along the far touchline with 5 m between them.
- Per station: a 10 × 5 m receiving zone; **two 3 m speed gates** at the far end, 13 m apart; one ball plus two spares; one blue bib.

- Six players per station (12–15 players over two or three stations). The two target players stand beyond their gates and act only as ball collectors and callers.
- The defender starts **beside** the receiving zone, not behind it — the receiver must escape sideways before driving forward.
- Coach between stations, level with the receiving zone.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Set the picture in 40 seconds.** They know this shape from Sessions 1 and 2. *Same room. But this time you don't pass out of it — you carry it out.*
2. **Minutes 0–3 — passive.** The defender applies shadow pressure only. Every receiver gets a clean escape and a clean drive. Let them feel what fast looks like.
3. **Minute 3 — one freeze, twenty seconds.** Show the difference between a first touch that goes 1 m and one that goes 3 m into the space. Ask which one makes the drive easier.
4. **Minutes 3–10 — live.** The defender may tackle and may recover after being beaten, so the carry has to be genuinely quick, not just tidy.
5. **Minutes 10–15 — timed.** Time each break-out from the moment the ball leaves the server to the moment it crosses a gate. Under four seconds is the target. Players call their own times.
6. **Rotation, every repetition:** R goes to the gate they used → that target dribbles back to become the server → server becomes the defender → defender becomes R.

RULES & SCORING

- **The ball must be carried through the gate, not passed through it.**
- **1 point** for a clean break-out. **2 points** if it takes under four seconds. **1 point to the defender** for a win, or for forcing the ball back to the server.
- The defender may recover and tackle from behind once beaten — this is what makes the speed matter.
- Ball out or won: instant restart from the server with a spare ball.
- Only go live once two-thirds of receivers are escaping cleanly under passive pressure.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	First touch into the space, not just away from the defender — 2–3 m is better than 1 m here. Then the second touch is with the laces and the ball is pushed ahead. Head up on the third touch to find the gate. Body between the defender and the ball while turning.
Tactical	Escape towards the space the defender has left, then drive at the gate that is furthest from them. Recognise the moment the defender commits — that is when the ball goes past them, not before.
Physical	Short maximal accelerations with the ball, roughly one every 25 seconds per player. This is the highest-intensity practice in this theme; make sure the passive phase has warmed them properly.
Psychological	This is a licence to run with the ball, and some players will need permission. Say it explicitly: <i>Tonight I don't want you to pass. I want you to go.</i>
Social	The target players call the free gate. Same vocabulary as Session 1 — the language should be automatic by now if you have run the other sessions in this theme.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
First touch too short — escapes the press but leaves no room to accelerate	The timed phase exposes this by itself. Reinforce: <i>Your touch was safe but it was slow. How much space did it buy you?</i>

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Carrying on the inside foot — tidy, controlled and far too slow	<i>Which part of your foot lets you run fastest? Try it and check your time.</i>
Head down through the drive — carries straight into the covering defender	<i>Look up on your second touch. The gate isn't moving; the defender is.</i>
Beating the defender then slowing down	<i>Point at the scoring: You were clear. Four seconds. Why did you stop running?</i>
Defender committing early and being beaten every time	<i>Coach the defender: Don't dive in. Show him one way and be there when he goes. and this session is the first lesson in it.</i>

ASK THEM

- How big does your first touch need to be if you're going to run after it?
- Which part of your foot do you use when you're running with the ball? Why?
- When did you know the defender had committed?
- What were you looking at while you were driving?
- Was it faster to go to the near gate or the far one? Why?
- Defenders — what made it hard to stop them?
- When in a match would you carry the ball instead of passing it?
- What did your time tell you?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Second defender starting on the far side, so the drive must be steered as well as fast.	Passive defender throughout.
Under three seconds for the bonus point.	Wider gates (5 m) and a shorter drive (4 m).
Finish at the end — replace one gate with a mini goal and require a shot after the drive.	Remove the timing so there is no pressure on speed while the technique is new.
Recovery race — the defender starts level with the receiver and races them to the gate.	Allow a pass through the gate as an alternative route to a point.

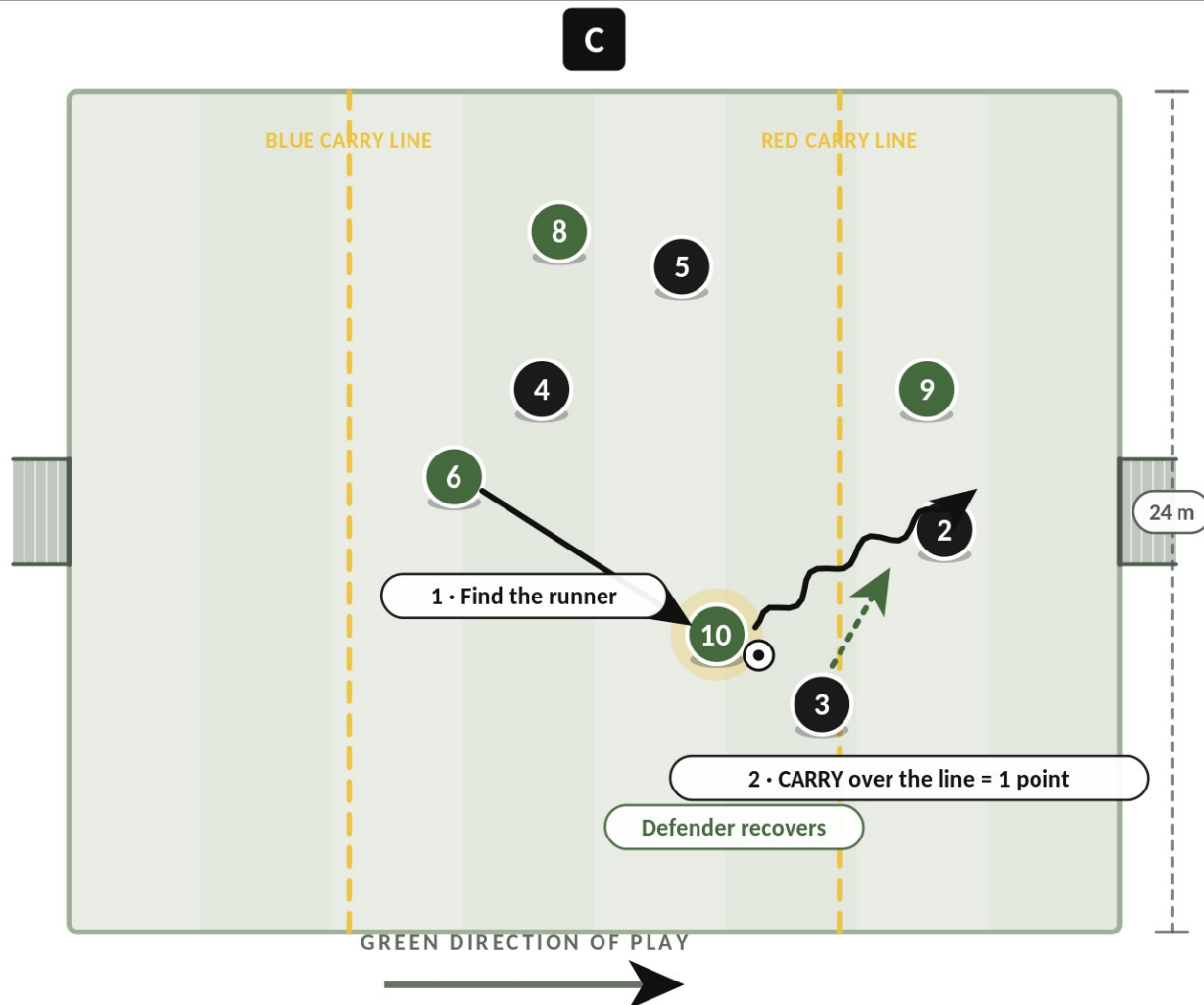
IT'S WORKING WHEN

First touches travelling 2–3 m rather than 1 m.
 Laces visibly used on the drive.
 Heads lifting during the carry, not just at the end.
 Break-out times falling between the start and end of the timed phase.
 Defenders staying on their feet and delaying rather than diving in.
 Players choosing the far gate when the defender is near the close one.

4.3 DRIVE THE LINE (4 v 4)

Pay players for carrying the ball into the danger area. A dashed line 8 m from each goal is worth a point to any player who dribbles across it under control — so running with the ball becomes the profitable option rather than the risky one.

30 x 24 m • one mini goal per end • carry line 8 m from each goal • 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: **one mini goal at each end**, plus a dashed **carry line** marked with flat markers 8 m from each goal, running the full width.
- 4 v 4 per pitch (16). With 14, run 4v4 and 3v3. With 15, run 4v4 and 4v3.
- Coach in the corridor between the pitches with a spare ball.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Bibs out while you explain.** Teams balanced for ability.

2. **Explain in 25 seconds:** *Mini goal is 2 points. Dribble the ball over their yellow line under control and that's 1 point. Three minutes. Go.*
3. **Game 1 — no coaching.** Watch who takes players on and who looks for the pass every time.
4. **Between games 1 and 2, one question:** *Is it easier to pass over that line or to carry it over? When is each one right?*
5. **From game 3, add the link:** a goal scored **within five seconds of a carry over the line** is worth 4 points. This stops the carry becoming an end in itself.
6. **Four games of three minutes with 45 seconds between,** ladder as usual.

RULES & SCORING

- **Mini goal = 2 points. Carry over the line under control = 1 point. Goal within five seconds of a carry = 4 points.**
- The ball must be **at the player's feet** as they cross the line — a heavy touch that crosses ahead of them doesn't score.
- The same player may not score two carry points in a row.
- Ball out: the coach rolls a new one in immediately. No throw-ins or corners.
- No stoppages during games; all coaching in the 45-second gaps, as a question.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Ball out of the feet when running into space, within a stride when a defender is close. Change of pace immediately after the change of direction — the move only works if the acceleration follows it. Use the body to shield while turning.
Tactical	Carry when the space in front is empty; pass when it isn't. Attack the defender's front foot. Teammates must give width so the carrier has somewhere to go — a carry into a crowd is a turnover.
Physical	Repeated accelerations and changes of direction at high intensity. Three on, 45 seconds off, four times. Shorten the last game if quality drops.
Psychological	Bravery. Say it plainly and repeat it: <i>If you lose it trying to take someone on, that's absolutely fine. Try the next one.</i> Nothing kills a young dribbler faster than a sideline groan.
Social	Teammates should encourage the carry — a shout of "go on!" rather than "pass!" Name this explicitly; it changes the culture of the group in one session.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Nobody dribbling — the game becomes a passing exercise despite the scoring	Ask the question rather than the instruction: <i>Which points have we not scored yet? Why not?</i> Then raise the carry point to 2 for one game.
Dribbling into crowds and losing it repeatedly	Don't discourage; re-aim: <i>Great courage. Now do it where there's one defender, not three.</i>
Heavy touch over the line and a point claimed	Be precise: <i>Was it at your feet? Then it doesn't count.</i> Let the opposition police it — they will.*
Carry over the line then nothing — the ball dies in the corner	The 4-point link fixes this. Reinforce: <i>You got over the line. What's the next decision?</i>
The same player taking every carry	Ask a quieter player: <i>How many times have you crossed the line? What would you need to try it?</i>

ASK THEM

- When is carrying better than passing?
- What do you look at on the defender before you go?

- What happens after you change direction — do you speed up or slow down?
- What can your teammates do to give you room to run?
- Defenders — how do you stop someone running at you?
- Which is worth more, the carry or the goal? Why did I score it that way?
- Where on the pitch is carrying too risky?
- Who took someone on tonight who normally wouldn't?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Two carry lines — an outer one worth 1 and an inner one worth 2.	Move the carry line to 12 m from goal so there is more space to cross it.
A carry must beat a defender to count, not just cross the line into space.	Any carry over the line counts , controlled or not.
Weak-foot carries worth double.	3 v 3 on 26 × 20 m — more space, more one-against-one chances.
Remove the mini goals for one game so carrying is the only way to score.	Add a neutral player who always plays for the team in possession, easing the pressure on the carrier.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Every player attempting at least one carry across the line during the fifteen minutes.

Change of pace visible after the change of direction.

Teammates giving width rather than crowding the ball carrier.

At least one 4-point sequence — a carry leading directly to a goal.

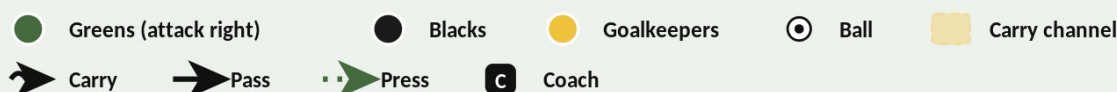
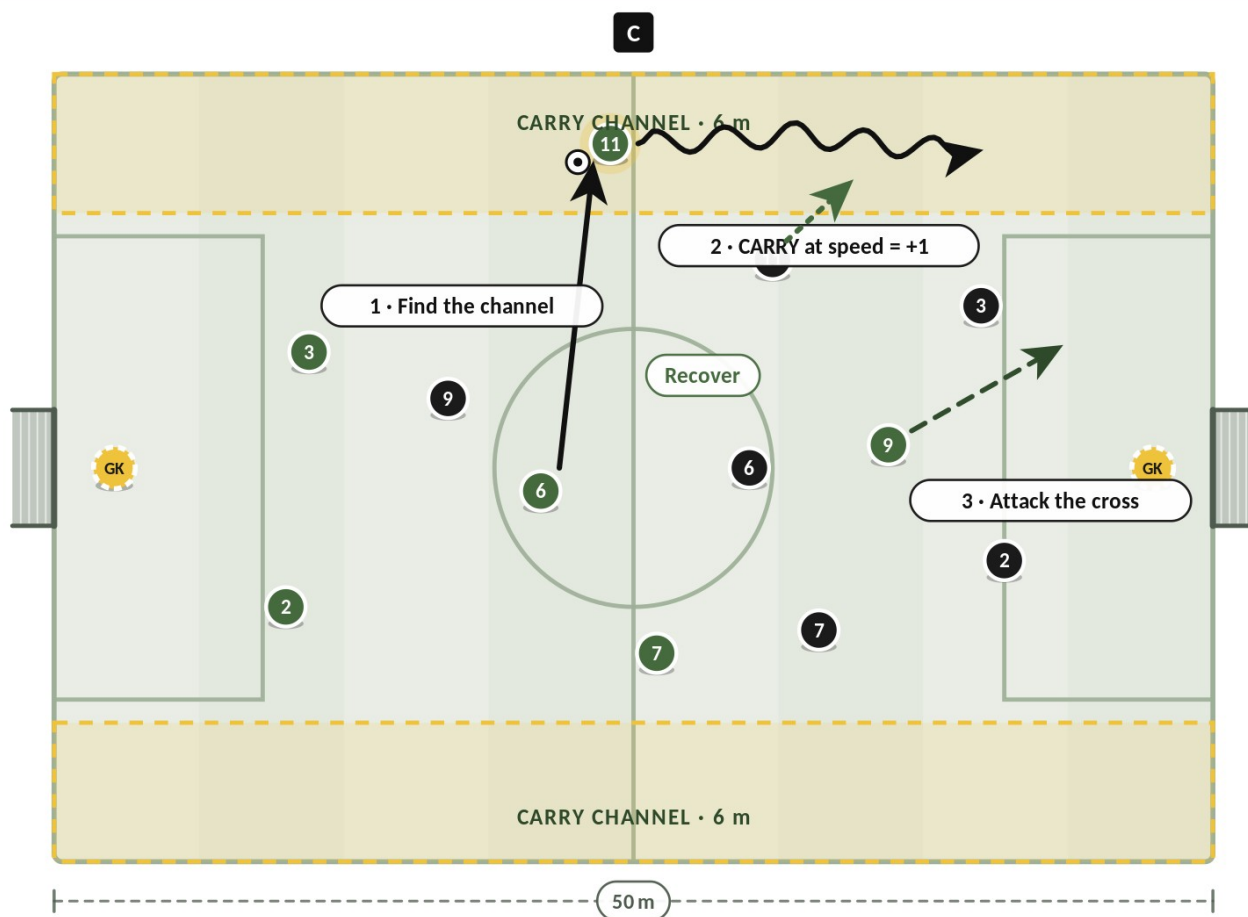
Encouragement rather than groans when a dribble is lost.

Defenders staying on their feet and delaying.

4.4 CARRY CHANNELS MATCH (7 v 7)

Put the carry where it belongs in a match — in the wide areas, where the space is. A 6 m channel down each touchline pays a bonus for anyone who carries the ball through it at speed, which also drags the team's shape wider and sets up the width work in this theme.

50 x 34 m • 6 m channel down each touchline • carry through a channel = +1 • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- 50 × 34 m with full-size goals. A **6 m channel** marked down each touchline with flat markers, running the full length.
- 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.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Keep the bibs and teams from the skill game.** Keepers and shape in 30 seconds.
2. **Explain the condition once:** Normal game. If you carry the ball through one of the wide channels and beat a defender doing it, that's a bonus point.

3. **Minutes 0–5 — no interruption.** Watch whether anybody occupies the channels at all.
4. **Minute 5 — drinks break, one question:** *You can't carry through the channel if nobody's in it. Whose job is that?*
Restart.
5. **Minutes 6–15.** Announce bonuses as they happen. Two individual interventions maximum. No group freezes.
6. **Final three minutes — the block finale:** remove the channel markers and play a straight 7v7. Watch whether the behaviour survives without the paint. That is your this theme exam.

RULES & SCORING

- **Goal = 3 points. Bonus = 1 point** for carrying the ball through a wide channel and beating a defender in the process.
- A carry that goes through the channel unopposed does not score — this stops the bonus becoming a free jog down an empty touchline.
- No touch restrictions. This is a match.
- Keepers restart within five seconds. Throw-ins may be taken as pass-ins.
- Two individual interventions maximum, plus the scheduled break question.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Ball pushed ahead with the laces when the channel is open; within a stride when the full-back engages. Head up before the final touch so the carry ends in a cross, a pass or a shot rather than a dead end.
Tactical	Somebody must be in the channel before the pass can find them — width is a job, not an accident. The player carrying should attack the defender's front foot. Teammates in the middle must run into the box as the carry develops.
Physical	Fifteen minutes of continuous match play with repeated wide sprints. Expect fatigue and manage it by keeping the ball rolling.
Psychological	The last practice in this theme should feel like a reward. Coach lightly, praise loudly, and let them play.
Social	Encourage the shout of "go on!" from teammates. If the squad has adopted it by tonight, this theme has done its job culturally as well as technically.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Nobody in the channels — the game is played entirely through the middle	One intervention to a wide player: <i>Stand on that line and stay there. See what happens.</i>
Carrying into the channel then stopping — the ball dies by the corner flag	<i>You've beaten him. Now what? Look up before your last touch.</i>
Everybody following the carrier into the wide area	Ask the striker: <i>If he's going down the line, where should you be?</i>
Passing instead of carrying even with 20 m of empty channel ahead	<i>How much space was in front of you? What would have happened if you'd just run?</i>
The channels turning into a jogging lane for easy bonus points	The 'must beat a defender' rule handles it. Say it once more and move on.

ASK THEM

- Whose job is it to be in the wide channel?
- How do you know whether to carry or to pass?
- What should happen in the middle while someone is carrying down the wing?
- What's the last thing you do before your final touch in the channel?

- Defenders — is it harder to defend against someone running at you or someone passing?
- When we took the markers away, did anything change?
- Across this theme, what's the biggest difference in how you play?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
The carry must end in a cross for the bonus to count.	Widen the channels to 9 m.
Double bonus for a carry that beats two defenders.	Any carry through the channel counts, opposed or not.
Narrow the channels to 4 m.	No pressing in the channels for the first four minutes.
Both full-backs must be in the channels whenever their team has the ball.	6 v 6 on 40 × 30 m with rolling subs.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

- At least four bonus points across the two teams.
- Wide players occupying the channels **before** the ball comes to them.
- Carries ending in a decision — a cross, a pass or a shot — rather than a dead end.
- Players attacking defenders rather than waiting for support.
- The behaviour continuing in the final three minutes after the markers are removed.
- Encouragement audible from teammates when a dribble is attempted.

Finish, match day & homework

REFLECTION — 5 MINUTES, SITTING DOWN

- This is the **end of this theme** — spend the five minutes reviewing the whole theme, not one session.
- *What can you do now that you couldn't do four sessions ago?*
- *What does 'scan' mean? What does 'out of your feet' mean? What does 'open out' mean?* Check the vocabulary has landed.
- *Who beat someone tonight with a change of direction?*
- *When we took the markers away at the end, did you keep doing it?*
- **Name every player once.** Give each of them one specific thing they have improved since you ran Session 1. This takes ninety seconds and it matters more than anything else you will say all month.

MATCH-DAY LINK

MATCH OBJECTIVES	WATCH FOR	ASK AFTERWARDS
- Every player attempts at least one dribble to beat an opponent. - Wide players stay wide and receive on the touchline rather than drifting inside. - The team carries the ball out of the defensive third at least twice rather than clearing it.	- Touch size relative to space. Pick two players and watch whether the ball is pushed further when the space opens up. - What happens after a beaten defender. Does the carrier accelerate away, or slow back down? - Reaction to a lost dribble. From the player, from teammates, and from the sideline. This tells you whether the culture is right.	- <i>Tell me about a time you ran with the ball on Saturday. What did you see that made you go?</i> - <i>Was there a moment you could have run but passed instead? What stopped you?</i> - <i>Did anyone lose the ball trying something? What happened next?</i>

HOMEWORK — "SPEED AND ESCAPE" · 15 MINUTES, THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU NEXT TRAIN

- **The 20-metre drive.** Mark 20 m. Push the ball with the laces and run after it, aiming for **four touches or fewer**. Ten repetitions each foot. Count your touches every time.
- **One move, both feet.** Pick one change of direction — drag-back, outside cut, or Cruyff turn. Fifty repetitions with the right foot, fifty with the left. **Accelerate for three steps after every single one.**
- **Watch a game with a job.** Fifteen minutes of any professional match watching **one wide player only**. Count how many times they run with the ball and how many times they pass first time. Bring both numbers.
- *Optional extra:* this theme challenge — 100 juggles in one go before Session 5.

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; **2** The First Touch That Travels; **3** Passing With Purpose.

A natural follow-on. Session 5 — The 1v1 Attacker. With the individual toolkit built, the squad now learns to beat an opponent deliberately rather than accidentally. Session 5 covers the approach, the feint and the acceleration away; Session 6 adds finishing after the beat; Sessions 7 and 8 flip the picture and teach defending the 1v1. Bring the notes from tonight's review page — the data you now have should shape who works with whom.

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.

Review — where the squad stands on individual technique

Complete this within a day of Session 4, while it is fresh. Twenty minutes here will make the whole of this theme sharper.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BE SEEING

AREA	WHAT YOU SHOULD NOW BE SEEING
Scanning	Most of the squad turning their head at least once before receiving, in practices AND in the conditioned match. If it only happens in the drills, it hasn't landed yet.
Body shape	Players receiving side-on rather than square by default. The word 'open' should now produce an action without further explanation.
First touch	The ball moving 1–2 m on the first touch rather than stopping dead. Fewer wasted second touches to get the ball out from under the body.
Passing	Visibly different technique at different ranges. Weak-foot passes being attempted in games, not just in drills.
Carrying	Touch size adapting to space. At least half the squad willing to run at an opponent.
Vocabulary	Scan, open out, back foot, out of your feet, free side, round or through, go on. These should be in the players' mouths, not just yours.
Culture	Mistakes made while trying something are met with encouragement rather than groans — from teammates and from the sideline.

SQUAD AUDIT — FILL THIS IN

QUESTION	PLAYERS
Which three players scan most consistently, in matches as well as training?	
Which three players still receive square-on under pressure?	
Whose first touch still stops dead when a defender arrives?	
Who has genuinely started using their weaker foot?	
Who is willing to run at an opponent? Who avoids it?	
Who talks on the pitch? Who has gone quiet?	
Who has improved most since you ran Session 1 — and have you told them?	
Who is enjoying it least, and do you know why?	

IF THE SQUAD HAS THIS COMFORTABLY

- **Compress this theme by one session** and bring forward the combination-play work from this theme — a squad that already receives and carries well will get more from third-man runs than from another week of 1v1.
- **Add the harder progressions as the default**, not the option: two-touch conditions in every practice, and the two-ball version of any rotation.
- **Raise the tempo rather than the complexity**. Smaller areas and shorter games will stretch a strong group without confusing them.
- **Give the most advanced players a coaching role** — running a station or leading the warm-up demonstration deepens their own understanding faster than another repetition.
- **Start weak-foot conditions** in the conditioned match, not just in technical practices.

IF THE SQUAD IS STRUGGLING

- **Repeat Session 1's Y-Gate inside this theme.** It is the single most valuable practice in this theme and there is no shame in running it again — the players will recognise it and succeed at it, which is the point.
- **Drop every touch restriction in the technical sessions.** Touch limits assume a technical base; if that base is missing, the limits only produce anxiety and turnovers.
- **Make the areas bigger.** Almost every technical problem at U12 improves with 20% more space, and almost none improve with more instruction.
- **Cut the number of coaching points per practice to one.** If the squad is struggling, they are being asked to think about too many things at once.
- **Keep the games and shorten the drills.** Ball rolling time fixes more than analysis does.
- **Check the physical picture** — a squad that looks technically poor at minute 45 is often just tired. Shorten the conditioned match to ten minutes and see whether quality returns.

CARRY THIS FORWARD

The three habits worth carrying into anything you run next: scanning before receiving, a first touch that travels, and the willingness to try something and lose the ball.

Name two players whose confidence needs protecting in the 1v1 sessions — being beaten repeatedly in front of teammates is the most exposing thing in youth football, and you should plan their pairings before Session 5, not during it.

Keep the vocabulary. Every phrase introduced here is used again throughout the set. Do not invent new words for old ideas.