



SESSION 9 • STANDALONE PLAN

The Wall Pass — Two Players, One Problem

Combination play • Reference format: U12 9v9 • 60 minutes • 14–16 players

AT A GLANCE

TIME	MINS	PHASE	PRACTICE
0:00 – 0:10	10	■ Warm-up	9.1 The Bounce Grid
0:10 – 0:25	15	■ Technical practice	9.2 The Wall Pass Gate
0:25 – 0:40	15	■ Skill game	9.3 One-Two Scores Triple
0:40 – 0:55	15	■ Conditioned match	9.4 Combination 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

The other sessions in this theme ask the same question — can you beat this player on your own? Tonight the question changes: can two of you solve it faster than one of you can? The wall pass is the answer, and it is the most efficient attacking action in football. A player passes, runs past their opponent, and receives it back on the other side. The defender is eliminated without being beaten, without a trick, and without the risk of losing the ball. It works because a defender's attention follows the ball, and for the half-second it takes them to look at the wall player, the runner is already gone. There are two reasons it fails at Under-12, and neither is technical. The first is that the passer stops to admire their pass instead of running. The second is that the wall player takes a touch, which gives the defender time to recover. So the entire session is built on two instructions: **pass and go**, and **set it back first time**. Everything else is detail.

BY THE END, PLAYERS CAN

- **Pass and run immediately** — the run starts as the ball leaves the foot, not after it arrives.
- **Set the ball back first time** as the wall player, with no controlling touch.

- **Return it into the runner's path**, ahead of them and away from the defender, never into their feet.
- **Recognise when the wall pass is on** — a defender committed and a teammate available at an angle.
- **Choose between the wall pass and the dribble**, rather than defaulting to either.

KIT LIST

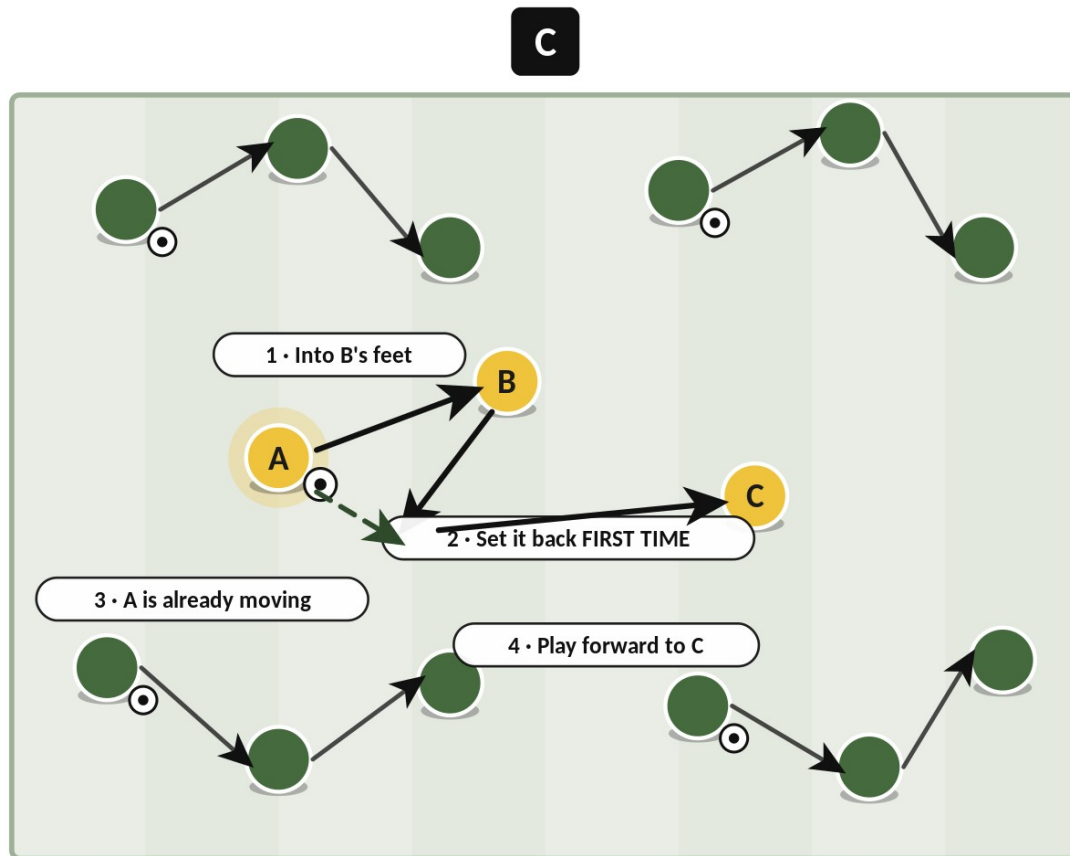
Ground needed: about 60 × 40 m. Pairings matter tonight: put your most hesitant players with your most GENEROUS passers — not your best players, your most generous ones. A wall player who wants the ball back is useless; a wall player who wants their partner to score is the whole practice.

ITEM	QTY	USED IN
Footballs (size 4)	16	All practices
Flat markers	48	Grid, stations, pitch edges
Cones (tall)	12	Target gates (9.2, 3 stations × 4)
Bibs — red / blue / yellow	8 / 8 / 3	9.1 onwards
Mini goals	4	Skill game (9.3) — two per end
Full-size goals	2	Conditioned match (9.4)

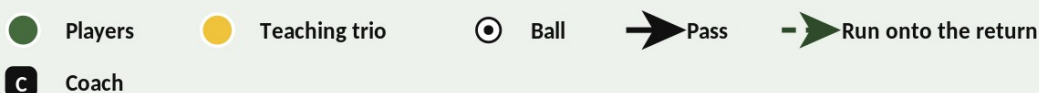
9.1 THE BOUNCE GRID

Build the two halves of the wall pass with nobody defending. Groups of three move continuously: A passes to B, B sets it back first time into A's path, A plays forward to C. The set is one touch from the very first repetition.

28 x 20 m • groups of three • one ball each • set it back first time • 10 minutes



THE SET IS ONE TOUCH • INTO THE PATH, NEVER INTO THE FEET



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SET UP

- 28 × 20 m grid marked with flat markers.
- **Groups of three**, one ball each. With 14–16 players that is four or five trios; a group of four simply adds a fourth station in the chain.
- No cones inside the grid. Trios move freely and must avoid each other, which is part of the warm-up.
- Balls at the grid edge so the first arrival starts immediately.
- Coach inside the grid from minute 5, coaching individual trios on the move.

HOW IT RUNS

- Minutes 0–3 — arrival.** Greet each player by name, ball each, free dribbling. **Collect the Session 8 homework — which way did your full-back show the winger?**

2. **Minute 3 — form trios.** *A passes to B, B passes to C, C starts again. Keep moving. Ninety seconds of plain passing to get moving.*
3. **Minute 5 — add the set.** *Now B doesn't turn. B sets it straight back to A, first time. One 20-second demonstration. Expect it to be scrappy for a minute.*
4. **Minute 7 — add the run.** *A, you're not standing still waiting for it. Pass and GO — move as the ball leaves your foot. This is the session's key instruction and it should be shouted, repeated and praised all evening.*
5. **Minutes 8-10 — the full sequence.** *A passes to B, runs past B, receives the set into their path, then plays forward to C. Trios count how many clean sequences they complete in ninety seconds.*

RULES & SCORING

- **The set-back is one touch.** A controlling touch means the sequence doesn't count.
- **The passer must be moving before the ball reaches the wall player.**
- The return must arrive **in front of** the runner, not at their feet.
- Loose ball: nearest player retrieves and the trio restarts on the move.
- Rotate roles every ninety seconds so everybody is the wall player.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Passer: firm, along the ground, into the wall player's feet. Wall player: get side-on before the ball arrives, use the inside foot furthest from where the ball came from , and cushion it into the space rather than blocking it back. Return: ahead of the runner, weighted so they don't break stride.
Tactical	The run is what makes the pass work. Passing and standing still is just a pass. Angles matter — the wall player should be at 45 degrees, not directly in front.
Physical	Continuous movement with short accelerations on every sequence. The pass-and-go builds exactly the repeated-sprint pattern the session needs.
Psychological	The set-back is a generous act — you are giving the ball straight back. Name it as a skill, because some players will find it counter-intuitive to give up possession that quickly.
Social	One call: "one-two!" from the passer as they play it. The word tells the wall player what's coming and it should be loud.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Wall player takes a touch before returning it	<i>Count your touches. One. If you need two, you've given the defender time — and there isn't even a defender yet.</i>
Passer stands and admires the pass	The single most common fault. <i>Pass and go. Your feet move when the ball moves. Say it every time until it stops.</i>
Return into the feet instead of into the path	<i>Where's he running? Put it there, not where he is now.</i>
Wall player square-on and unable to redirect	Straight back to this theme: <i>Open out before it comes to you.</i>
Trios standing still between sequences	<i>Nobody stops. Find space and go again.</i>

ASK THEM

- How many touches should the set-back take?
- When should you start running — before or after the pass arrives?
- Where should the return arrive — at your feet or in front of you?
- What angle should the wall player be standing at?

- What's the hardest part of being the wall player?
- What would a defender have to do to stop that?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
One touch for everybody, not just the wall player.	Two touches allowed for the wall player while the pattern is new.
Weak foot for the set-back only.	Static wall player who stands still while A passes, runs and receives.
Add a floating defender with no ball who tries to intercept any pass.	Walk it through at half pace for a full minute before adding speed.
Two balls per trio for the last minute — chaotic and excellent.	Bigger groups (four) so there is more time between involvements.

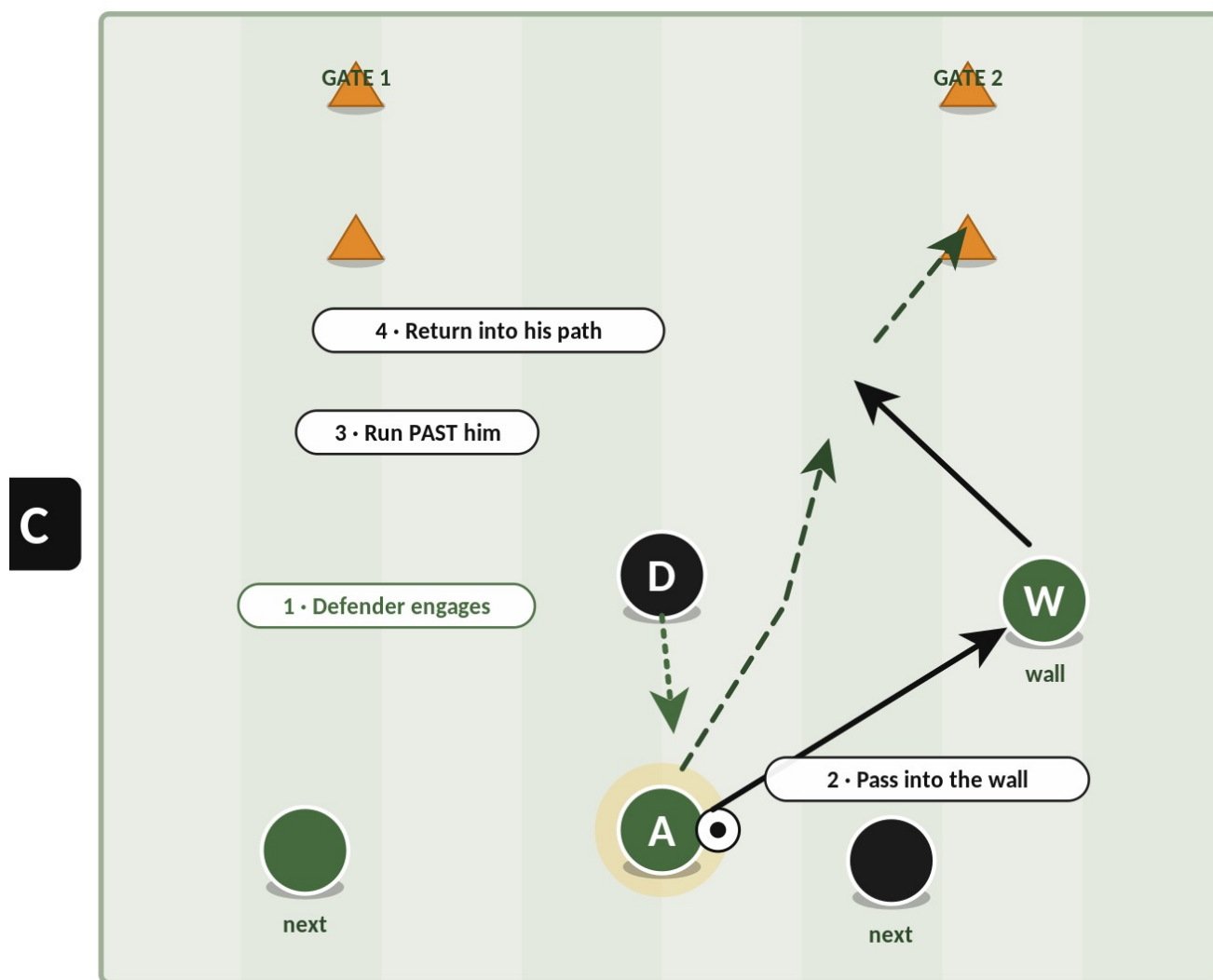
IT'S WORKING WHEN

- One-touch set-backs from most of the squad by minute 8.
- Passers moving as the ball leaves their foot, not after.
- Returns arriving in front of the runner.
- Wall players receiving side-on.
- The call "one-two" being used without prompting.

9.2 THE WALL PASS GATE

The wall pass against a real defender. The attacker must recognise the moment the defender commits, play into the wall, run past on the correct side, and receive the return in the space behind — then get through a gate.

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



ROTATION: A → wall • wall → defender • defender → back of the attacking line



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SET UP

- Three stations, each 22 × 18 m, with 4 m between them.
- Per station: **two 3 m gates** on the far line; one ball plus a spare; one blue bib.
- Five players per station (15): attacker, defender, wall player, and two waiting. Waits under 20 seconds.

- The wall player stands to one side at roughly 45 degrees, about 7 m from the attacker's starting position, and does not move until the ball is played.
- Coach walking between stations, watching the **timing of the run** more than the quality of the pass.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Set the picture in 40 seconds.** *Play it into the wall, run past the defender, get it back, go through a gate. Wall player: one touch.*
2. **Minutes 0–3 — passive defender.** The defender jogs in and applies shadow pressure without tackling. Every attacker completes the sequence and feels how it works.
3. **Minute 3 — one freeze, twenty seconds.** Show an attacker who passed and ran beside one who passed and waited. Ask the defender which one was harder.
4. **Minutes 3–10 — live.** The defender may tackle and may intercept the return. The attacker must now genuinely time the pass to the moment the defender commits.
5. **Minutes 10–15 — add the choice.** The attacker may now **dribble past instead** if the wall pass isn't on. This turns the practice from a pattern into a decision, which is the point of this theme.
6. **Rotation:** attacker → wall player → defender → back of the attacking line.

RULES & SCORING

- The wall player is limited to one touch. Two touches and the sequence doesn't count.
- **1 point** for completing the wall pass and reaching a gate. **2 points** if the return was received without breaking stride. **1 point to the defender** for an interception or a tackle.
- The attacker must **run past the defender**, not around the outside of the whole practice.
- From minute 10, dribbling past counts for **1 point** — the wall pass is worth more, but the choice is theirs.
- Ball out: instant restart with the spare ball.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Pass firmly into the wall player's feet — a soft pass invites the interception. Wall player: one touch, into the space behind the defender. Runner: accelerate on the pass and take the return in stride with the far foot.
Tactical	Play the pass at the moment the defender commits , not before. Too early and they simply drop off; too late and they're on top of you. Run past on the side the defender has vacated. If the defender stands off, the wall pass isn't on — carry the ball instead.
Physical	Short maximal accelerations, roughly one every 25 seconds per player. The run is the physically demanding part and it is also the part players skip when tired — watch for it in the last three minutes.
Psychological	The wall player has to trust that giving the ball away instantly is the right thing to do. Praise the set-back as loudly as the goal — this is what makes generous players.
Social	The attacker calls " one-two! "; the wall player answers with " go! " as they set it. Two words, both essential, both free.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Passing too early — the defender hasn't committed and simply drops off to intercept the return	<i>When did you play it? Was he coming or was he waiting? Try holding it one more step.</i>
Passing and waiting	<i>Your feet move when the ball moves. If it persists, make them shout "go!" as they pass — the voice starts the legs.</i>

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Wall player turning and trying to attack themselves	<i>Your job is the return. Give it and get out of the way. Some players find this genuinely hard; praise them the first time they do it.</i>
Return played into the feet	<i>He's running. Put it where he's going to be.</i>
Running past on the wrong side — into the defender rather than away from them	<i>Which side has he left open? Go there.</i>
Forcing the wall pass when the defender is standing off	The minute-10 dribble option handles it: <i>He wasn't coming. What else was on?</i>

ASK THEM

- When exactly should you play the pass?
- How many touches does the wall player take?
- Which side do you run past on, and how do you know?
- Where should the return arrive?
- Defenders — which was harder to stop, the wall pass or the dribble?
- What does the defender do that tells you the one-two is on?
- What should the wall player say?
- When is the wall pass the WRONG choice?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
One touch for the attacker too — pass first time, receive first time, go.	Passive defender throughout.
Second defender covering the space behind, so the return must be weighted perfectly.	Two touches for the wall player.
Wall player may not move at all , so the angle must be created by the attacker.	Wider gates (5 m) and a shorter distance to the target.
Finish at the end — replace a gate with a mini goal and require a shot.	Wall player may move to find the angle, taking the burden off the attacker.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

One-touch set-backs under pressure.

Runs starting as the ball leaves the foot.

Returns arriving in the path, taken in stride.

The pass timed to the defender's commitment rather than played on schedule.

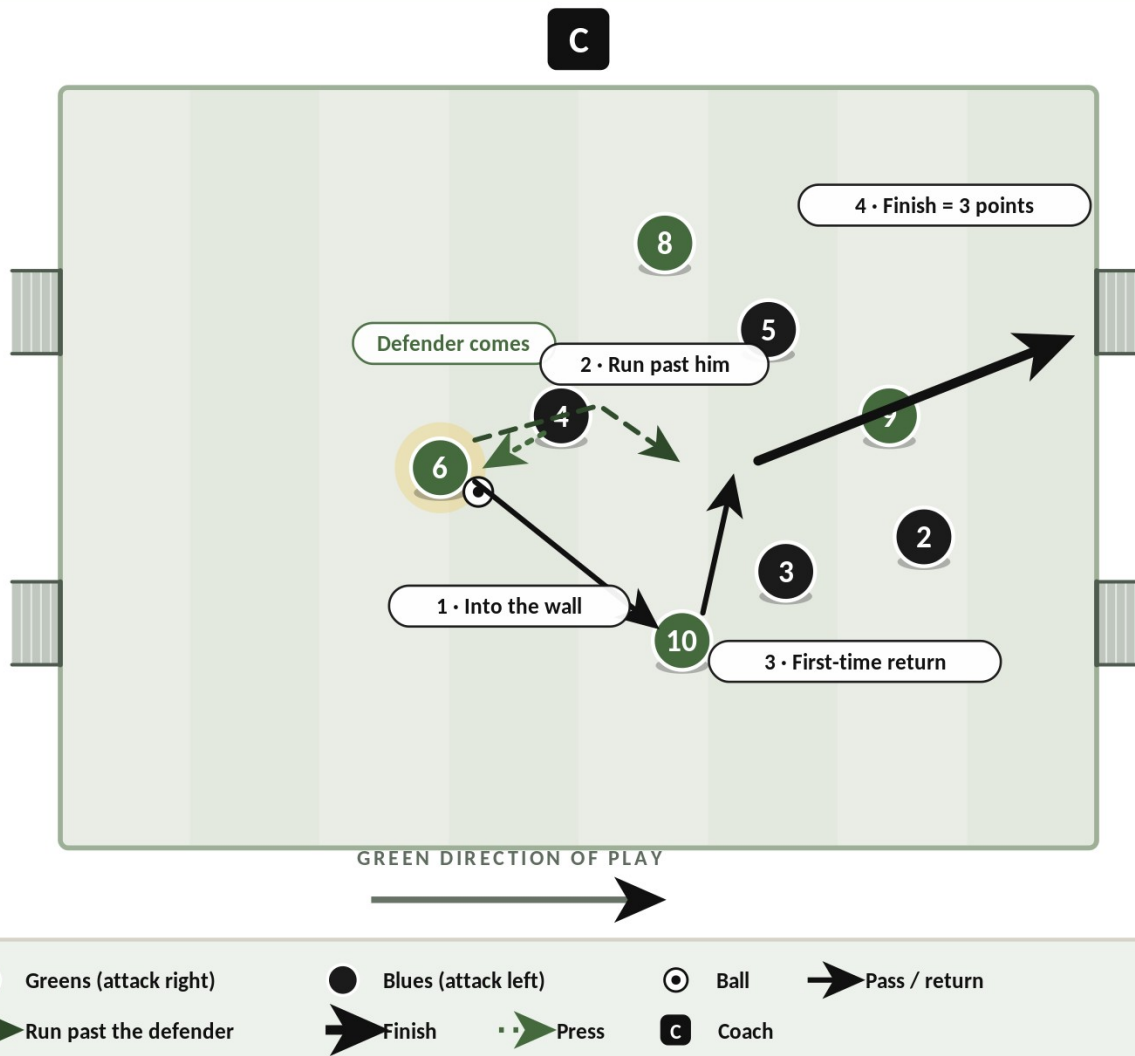
From minute 10, players **choosing** between the wall pass and the dribble rather than defaulting.

Defenders finding it genuinely difficult — if they're winning everything, the timing isn't there yet.

9.3 ONE-TWO SCORES TRIPLE (4 v 4)

Put a price on the combination. A normal goal scores one; a goal that follows a completed one-two scores three. The players will find the wall pass themselves because the scoreboard makes it worth finding.

30 x 22 m • two mini goals per end • a goal after a completed one-two = 3 • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- Two pitches, each 30 × 22 m, side by side with a 5 m corridor between them.
- Per pitch: **two mini goals at each end**, 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.
- **The players call their own one-twos.** Trust them; the rule is there to shape behaviour, not to be refereed.
- Coach in the corridor between the pitches with a spare ball.

HOW IT RUNS

- 1. Bibs out while you explain.** Balanced teams.
- 2. Explain in 20 seconds:** Goal is 1. Goal after a proper one-two — pass, run, get it back first time — is 3. Three minutes. Go.
- 3. Game 1 — no coaching.** Count how many one-twos are attempted. It may be none, and that's information.

4. **Between games 1 and 2, one question:** *What has to happen before a one-two is possible?* You want two answers: *a defender has to come, and someone has to be available at an angle.*
5. **From game 3, add the support rule:** every time a teammate has the ball and a defender approaches, **the nearest player must offer an angle** rather than standing still. Name it once and then praise it.
6. **Four games of three minutes with 45 seconds between,** ladder as usual.

RULES & SCORING

- **Goal = 1 point. Goal after a completed one-two = 3 points.**
- A one-two counts only if the return is **first time** and the passer has run past an opponent.
- Ball out: the coach rolls a new one in immediately.
- No stoppages during games. Coaching happens in the 45-second gaps, as a question.
- **Give any close call to the attacking team.** The rule exists to encourage a behaviour, not to police it.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Firm pass in, one-touch set, return into the path. All three under real pressure and with tired legs.
Tactical	The support angle is the whole game. A teammate standing directly beside or behind the ball carrier offers nothing; a teammate at 45 degrees offers a one-two. Off the ball, the second player's job is to be available before they are needed.
Physical	Three minutes on, 45 off, four times, with a sprint on every combination. Shorten the last game if quality drops.
Psychological	Some players will keep dribbling because that's what this theme has rewarded. Don't correct it — point out the scoreboard and let them work it out.
Social	This is the most sociable practice in the curriculum so far. The word "one-two" should be constant, and the players who provide the wall should be named as often as the scorers.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Nobody attempting one-tuos — the game reverts to this theme dribbling	Ask, don't instruct: <i>Which points haven't we scored? What would we need to do?</i> Then let game 2 run.
Support players standing square beside the ball carrier	<i>Where are you standing? Could he play a one-two off you from there? Where would be better?</i>
Wall player controlling it and killing the move	<i>One touch or it doesn't count.</i> Players will police this themselves once they understand the points.
Passing and stopping	The refrain for this theme: <i>pass and go.</i>
Forced one-tuos in bad areas because they're worth three	<i>Was that on? What was the defender doing?</i> And remind them a one-two that loses the ball in your own third is expensive.

ASK THEM

- What has to happen before a one-two is possible?
- Where should the supporting player stand?
- How do you know the defender has committed?
- Whose job is it to be available — the player with the ball, or the one without?
- Which was easier, beating him yourself or going round him with a teammate?
- What did the teams scoring threes have in common?

- Who set up the most goals tonight without scoring one?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Only goals after a one-two count at all.	An attempted one-two counts for 2 points, completed or not.
Two-touch maximum for everybody, forcing quicker combinations.	Allow two touches for the wall player.
The one-two must beat a defender — a return that goes backwards doesn't count.	3 v 3 on 26 × 20 m — more space, clearer angles.
Double one-two — two completed combinations in one attack scores five.	Add a neutral player who always plays for the team in possession and acts as a permanent wall.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

At least two completed one-twos per team per game by game 3.

Support players offering angles rather than standing square.

One-touch returns under pressure.

Runners moving as the ball leaves the foot.

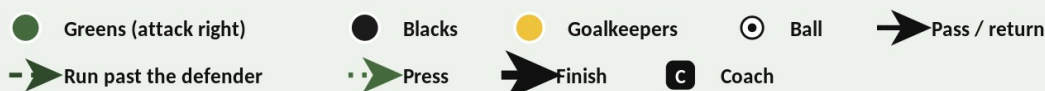
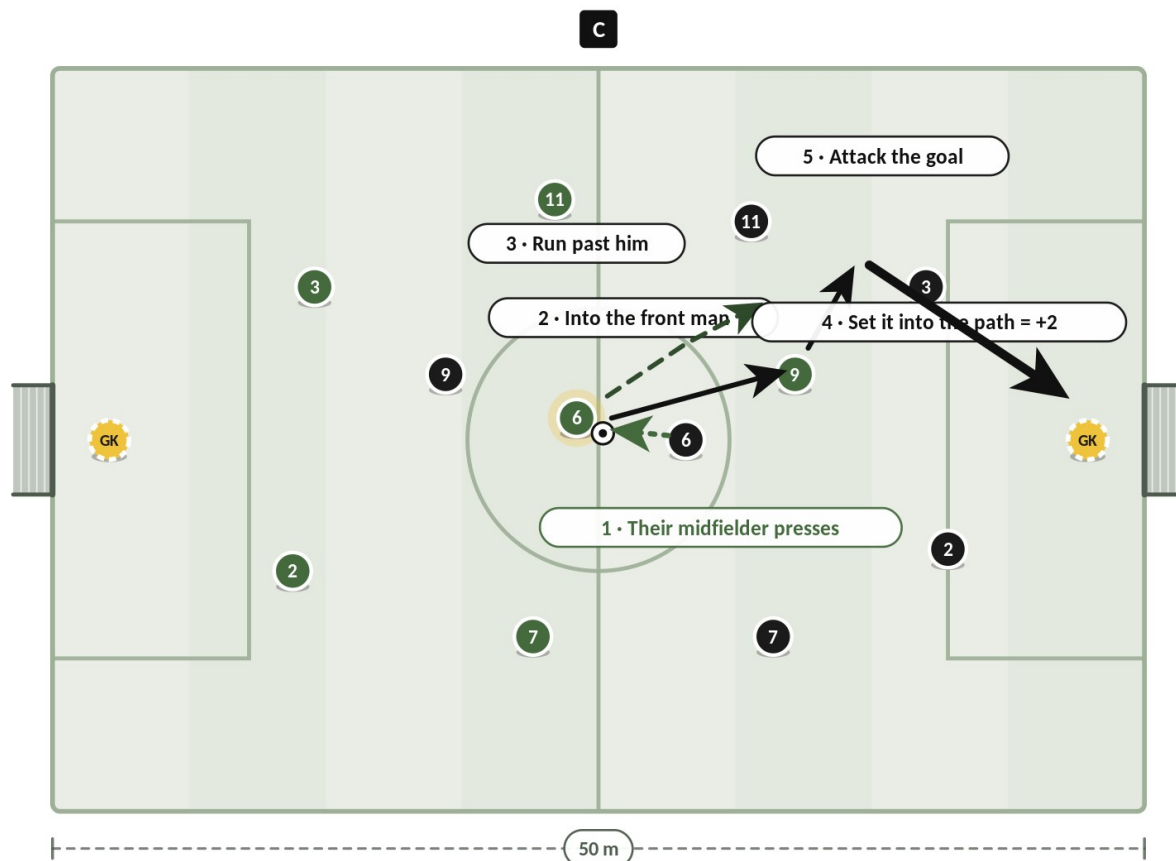
The word "one-two" audible from several players.

Players who provide the wall being praised by teammates, not just by you.

9.4 COMBINATION MATCH (7 v 7)

The wall pass in a full match picture, where it belongs — used to escape a press in midfield and to break a line in the final third, rather than performed for its own sake.

50 x 34 m • a one-two that beats an opponent = +2 • goal from a combination = +2 • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- 50 × 34 m with full-size goals. No extra markings tonight — the condition is behavioural, not spatial.
- 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. Rotate keepers at the halfway point.
- Coach on the halfway line, outside the pitch.

HOW IT RUNS

- 1. Keep the bibs and teams.** Keepers and shape in 30 seconds.
- 2. Explain the condition once:** Normal game. Any one-two that beats an opponent is two points. A goal that comes from a combination is two more.
- 3. Minutes 0–5 — no interruption.** Watch where the combinations happen and whether anyone offers an angle when a teammate is pressed.

4. **Minute 5 — drinks break, one question:** *When one of us is being closed down, what's the nearest player's job? You want give him an angle.* Restart.
5. **Minutes 6–13.** Announce combinations loudly and name **both** players every time — the wall player first.
6. **Final two minutes — free play.** Watch whether the support angles survive without the reward.

RULES & SCORING

- **Goal = 3 points. A one-two that beats an opponent = +2. A goal originating from a combination = +2 more.**
- The return must be **first time** and the passer must have run past an opponent.
- No touch restrictions otherwise. 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	Firm in, one touch back, into the path. Under fatigue the set-back is the first thing to deteriorate — watch for the extra touch creeping in.
Tactical	The one-two is the answer to a press. When an opponent commits, the ball goes into a teammate and the presser is eliminated. In the final third, the same action breaks the last line. Central midfielders should be looking for it constantly; defenders should use it to escape the first presser rather than hitting it long.
Physical	Fifteen minutes of continuous match play with repeated short sprints. Expect fatigue and manage it by keeping the ball rolling.
Psychological	Name the wall player first every time. Football naturally praises the scorer; a coach who praises the setter changes what a squad values.
Social	This is the session where a team starts to look like a team. Listen for players demanding the ball at angles and calling for the return.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Combinations only in the middle third , never in dangerous areas	<i>Where would a one-two hurt them most? What would it take to try it there?</i>
Nobody offering an angle when a teammate is pressed	One intervention: <i>He's being closed down. Where do you need to be so he's got an option?</i>
The wall player taking a touch under pressure	<i>One touch. The extra one is what lets him recover.</i>
Defenders hitting it long to escape a press rather than combining	<i>What's the safer option — that, or a one-two with your centre-back? This is early groundwork for this theme.</i>
One-twos attempted with nobody committing	<i>Was he coming? If he's standing off, what's on instead?</i>

ASK THEM

- When one of us is being closed down, what's the nearest player's job?
- Where on the pitch does a one-two hurt them most?
- What does a defender do that tells you it's on?
- How many touches does the return take?
- Who was the best wall player tonight? What made them good at it?
- When the conditions stopped, did we still offer angles?
- Is it better to beat him yourself or to go round him with a teammate? When is each one right?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Only combinations in the attacking half score.	An attempted one-two counts for 1 point.
Two-touch maximum across the whole pitch.	Allow two touches for the return.
Double bonus for a one-two that beats two opponents.	Bigger pitch (55 × 38 m) so angles are easier to find.
The goalkeeper must be involved in one combination per team.	6 v 6 on 44 × 30 m with rolling subs.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

At least four completed one-twos across the two teams.

Support angles offered when a teammate is pressed, without being told.

One-touch returns holding up under fatigue.

Combinations appearing in the attacking half, not just in midfield.

Wall players being named and praised.

The behaviour surviving the last two minutes with no bonus.

Finish, match day & homework

REFLECTION — 5 MINUTES, SITTING DOWN

- Circle up and **sit down**.
- *What are the two rules of a one-two?* (Pass and go. Set it back first time.)
- *When is it on? What does the defender have to do?*
- *Who was the best wall player tonight?* — let the players name each other, and make sure the setter gets as much credit as the scorer.
- *Which is better, beating him yourself or going round him with a teammate?* There is no right answer; listen to the reasoning.
- *What's the hardest part — the pass, the run, or the touch back?*
- Finish by naming **two players who gave the ball away generously** and made someone else look good.

MATCH-DAY LINK

MATCH OBJECTIVES	WATCH FOR	ASK AFTERWARDS
- Every player attempts at least one one-two. - When a teammate is pressed, the nearest player offers an angle rather than standing still. - At least one attack breaks a line through a combination rather than a dribble or a long pass.	- Whether the passer runs. Pick two players and watch only what their feet do after they pass. - Support angles. When a player is closed down, count how many teammates are available at 45 degrees. - The set-back. One touch or two? The extra touch is what kills the move.	- <i>Tell me about a one-two you were part of. Which bit was yours?</i> - <i>Was there a moment you passed and stood still? What could have happened?</i> - <i>Who made you look good on Saturday?</i>

HOMEWORK — "PASS AND GO" · 15 MINUTES, THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU NEXT TRAIN

- **Wall one-twos.** Against a wall from 5 m: pass, **take two steps sideways**, and control the rebound in your new position. Forty repetitions each foot. The steps are the homework; the pass is easy.
- **One-touch returns.** With anyone who will help — a parent, a sibling, a friend. They pass, you return it **first time** into a space they're moving into. Fifty repetitions each foot. If nobody is available, use a wall and aim your one-touch return at a target.
- **Watch a game with a job.** Fifteen minutes of any professional match watching for **one-twos only**. Count how many you see, and note what the defender was doing just before each one. Bring both.
- *Optional extra:* watch what the passer does immediately after passing, every single time, for five minutes. It will change how you play.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Same theme — combination play. These cover the same ground from other angles and can be run in any order, before or after this one: **10** Overlaps and Underlaps; **11** The Third-Man Run; **12** Combination Play Under Pressure.

A natural follow-on. Session 10 — Overlaps and Underlaps. The second combination. Where the wall pass goes THROUGH an opponent, the overlap goes AROUND them — a teammate running beyond the ball carrier to create a two-against-one. Session 10 covers the timing of the run, the disguise that makes it work, and the decision the ball carrier has to make when the runner arrives. Bring your notes on who set up goals tonight without scoring them; those players are the ones who will make this theme work.

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.