



SESSION 30 • STANDALONE PLAN

Finishing — Putting Them Away

Attacking and finishing • Reference format: U12 9v9 • 60 minutes • 14–16 players

AT A GLANCE

TIME	MINS	PHASE	PRACTICE
0:00 – 0:10	10	■ Warm-up	30.1 Side-Foot It
0:10 – 0:25	15	■ Technical practice	30.2 The Three Finishes
0:25 – 0:40	15	■ Skill game	30.3 Follow It In
0:40 – 0:55	15	■ Conditioned match	30.4 Two Touches in the Box
0:55 – 1:00	5	■ Reflection	Questions and homework

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

Session 29 the squad learned to create chances. Tonight they learn to take them, and the honest truth about finishing at this age is that it is mostly a technical problem dressed up as a psychological one. Watch any under-12 match and count the shots: perhaps a quarter are on target, and of the ones that miss, almost all were struck too hard with the laces from a position where a firm side-foot pass into the corner would have gone in. **The single most valuable sentence you can say to a twelve-year-old about finishing is this: pass it into the goal.** Not shoot — pass. The corner of the goal is a target about a metre wide and a goalkeeper cannot cover both of them, and a side-foot pass from twelve metres is a technique every player in your squad already has. They just do not believe it will be enough. There are two habits alongside it, and both are free. **Shoot earlier than feels comfortable** — the shot that beats a goalkeeper is nearly always the one taken before he has set himself. **And follow every shot in** — at this age goalkeepers parry more than they catch, and roughly one in five rebounds falls to somebody. A striker who follows every shot will score four or five goals a season from nothing but running.

BY THE END, PLAYERS CAN

- **Side-foot the ball into the corner** rather than blasting it.
- **Shoot early**, before the goalkeeper is set.
- **Finish first time** inside the box, because a second touch rarely exists.
- **Follow every shot in** — two players, every time.
- **Keep the head still** and look at the ball, not the goalkeeper.

KIT LIST

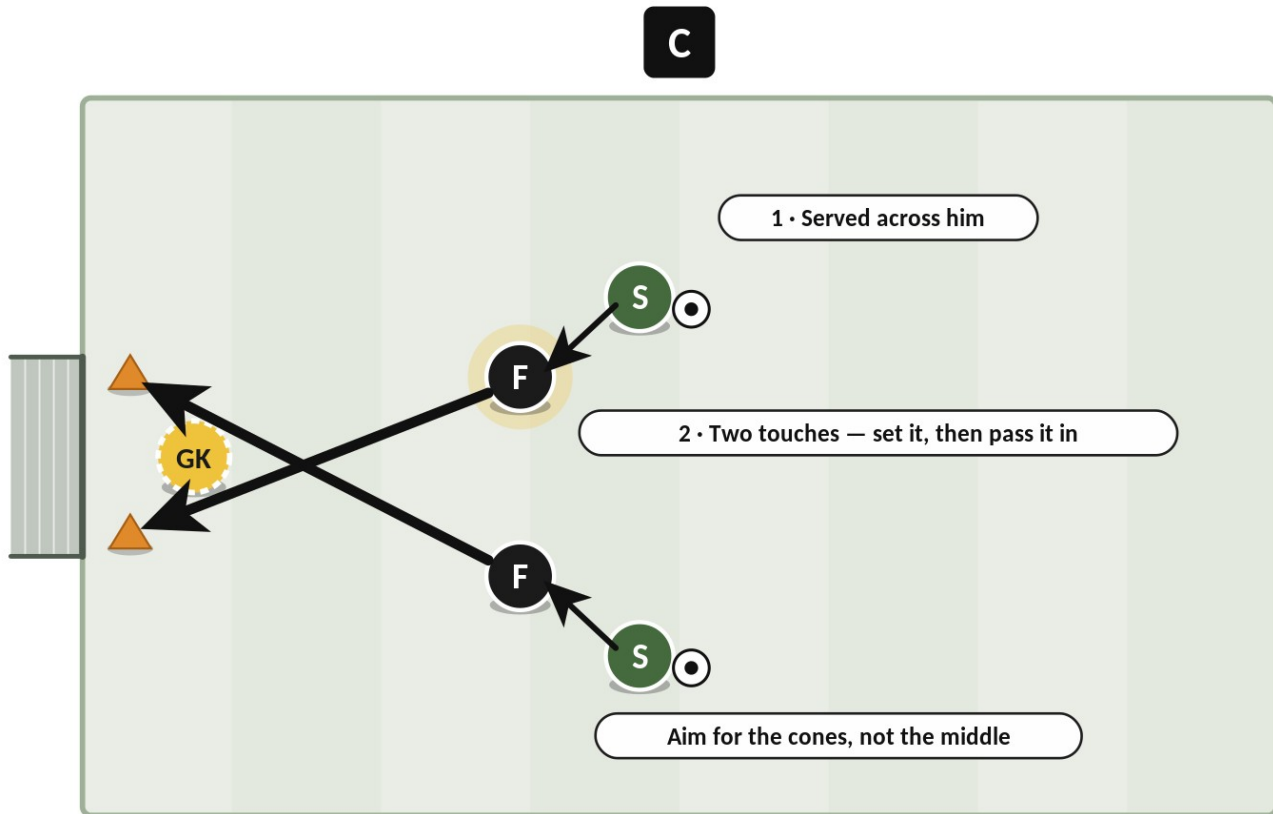
Ground needed: about 55 × 40 m. **The number of repetitions is the session.** A finishing practice with four balls and a queue of eight is a standing-around practice; with twenty-four balls and three stations it is two hundred shots in fifteen minutes. Borrow balls from another team if you have to. One other thing worth doing: rotate the goalkeepers every three minutes and tell them why — facing sixty shots in a row is exhausting and demoralising, and a tired keeper makes the finishers look better than they are.

ITEM	QTY	USED IN
Footballs (size 4)	24	The more balls, the more repetitions — borrow some if you can
Flat markers	48	Stations, boxes and pitch edges
Bibs — red / blue / yellow	8 / 8 / 4	Servers, finishers and goalkeepers
Full-size goals	2	All practices
Cones	8	Target corners in the warm-up
Goalkeeper gloves	2 pairs	Rotate keepers every three minutes tonight

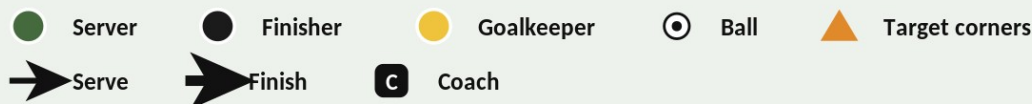
30.1 SIDE-FOOT IT

Pairs, a served ball, two touches, and a cone in each corner of the goal to aim at. Nobody is allowed to hit it hard. By minute eight most of the squad will have discovered that passing it in works better than smashing it.

30 x 18 m • pairs • two touches, and pass it into the corner • 10 minutes



PASS IT IN • DON'T BLAST IT • THE CORNERS ARE ALWAYS OPEN



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SET UP

- 30 × 18 m with a full goal and goalkeeper at one end.
- A cone just inside each post as a target.
- Pairs — a server and a finisher, working from both sides, two or three pairs at once.
- Balls at each serving point. As many as you can find.
- Coach beside the goal.

HOW IT RUNS

1. Minutes 0–3 — arrival. Greet each player by name, ball each, dribbling and striking gently. **Collect the Session 29 homework** — how many attackers got in the box on a professional cross?
2. Minute 3 — one demonstration, thirty seconds. Side-foot a ball into the corner from 12 m and say nothing except that's the shot.

3. **Minutes 4–7 — pairs, side-foot only.** Server rolls across the finisher; two touches — one to set it, one to pass it in. **No laces allowed.**
4. **Minute 7 — one question, twenty seconds.** *How many of those went in?* The number will be high and it makes the argument for you.
5. **Minutes 7–10 — scored.** 1 point for a goal, **2 for a goal that passes over a cone.** Alternate feet — three with the right, three with the left.

RULES & SCORING

- **Two touches maximum** — set it, then finish.
- **Side-foot only.** A shot with the laces scores nothing, however good it is.
- **1 point** for a goal, **2** for a goal inside a cone.
- Alternate feet in threes.
- Swap server and finisher every three repetitions.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Standing foot beside the ball and pointing at the target; ankle locked; follow through towards the corner; head down and still through the strike. That is the whole technique and it is the same as a 12 m pass.
Tactical	The corners are always open. A goalkeeper standing centrally can reach the middle of the goal and not both corners, so the only question is whether the finisher is accurate enough — and with a side-foot at 12 m, they are.
Physical	Light. This is a warm-up and a technical session, not a fitness one.
Psychological	Twelve-year-olds equate power with quality. The scoring and the goal count are what change their minds, not the instruction.
Social	Servers matter. A bad serve wastes a finisher's repetition — say so once and the quality will rise.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Blasting it	No point scored, calmly, every time.
Head coming up to look at the keeper	<i>Look at the ball. You already know where the corner is.</i>
Standing foot pointing the wrong way	The most common technical error. <i>Plant it towards the corner.</i>
Three or four touches	<i>Two. Set it and finish it.</i>
Weak side-feet that the keeper walks to	Accuracy and firmness together — <i>pass it hard.</i>
Only using the strong foot	Enforce the alternation. Weak-foot finishing is worth more than any other technical work at this age.

ASK THEM

- How many went in?
- Where's your standing foot pointing?
- Which is easier — hitting the corner or hitting it hard?
- Where should you be looking when you strike it?
- Can the goalkeeper cover both corners?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
One touch only.	Three touches.
Serves from behind so the finisher has to turn.	Static ball rather than a served one.
Weak foot only for two minutes.	Closer range (8 m).
Longer range (16 m).	No goalkeeper for the first two minutes.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Side-foot technique as the default.

A high proportion on target.

Heads down through the strike.

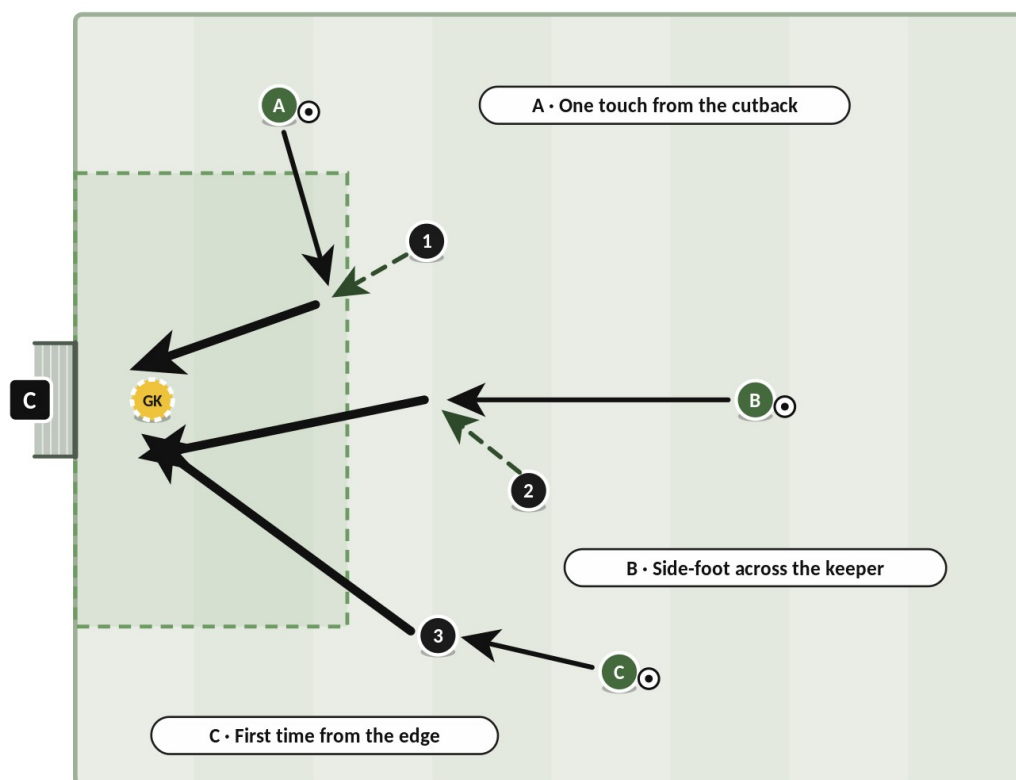
Both feet being used.

Somebody saying out loud that passing it in works better.

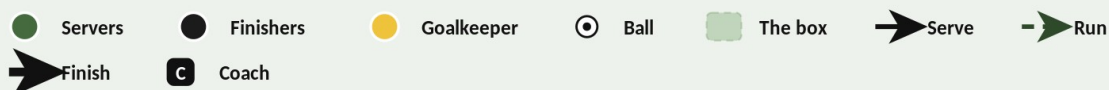
30.2 THE THREE FINISHES

Three stations round one goal, each rehearsing a finish that genuinely occurs in matches — the one-touch from a cutback, the side-foot across the keeper in a one-against-one, and the first-time strike from the edge. Rotate every three minutes and everybody gets all three.

42 x 34 m • three stations round one goal • the shots that actually happen in matches • 15 minutes



ONE TOUCH • ACROSS THE KEEPER • FIRST TIME — ROTATE EVERY THREE MINUTES



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SET UP

- 42 x 34 m with a full goal and goalkeeper, the box marked.
- **Three serving stations:** A beside the byline, B centrally 30 m out, C wide of the box at 20 m.
- **Three finishing queues**, one per station, three or four players in each.
- Balls at every station. Volume matters more than anything tonight.
- Coach roaming between stations; goalkeepers rotate every three minutes.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Set up the three stations in 90 seconds.** Name each finish as you set it: *one touch from the cutback, across the keeper, first time from the edge.*
2. **Minutes 0–4 — station A only**, all three groups, so everybody sees the picture once. Then split.
3. **Minutes 4–13 — three stations running, rotating every three minutes.** Keep the balls moving; there should be a shot every four or five seconds across the practice.

4. **Two coaching points per station, no more.** A: *one touch, across the keeper.* B: *don't wait for him — strike it early.* C: *head over the ball, keep it down.*
5. **Minute 13 — a competition.** Two minutes, one shot each in turn from a station of their choice, most goals wins.
6. **Rotate the goalkeepers at minutes 3, 6, 9 and 12.**

RULES & SCORING

- **Station A:** one touch only. **Station B:** the finisher may take two touches and must finish before the 6 m line. **Station C:** first time only.
- **Everybody works all three stations.**
- Shots must be on target to count; a goal is a goal.
- Retrieve your own ball and rejoin the back of the queue.
- Goalkeepers change every three minutes.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Three techniques: the side-foot redirect (A), the side-foot pass across the goalkeeper (B), and the low driven shot with the head over the ball (C). Only C uses the laces.
Tactical	These are the three shots that actually happen. A volley from 25 m is not one of them, which is why we do not practise it. And in a one-against-one, across the keeper is nearly always right — it uses the space he cannot reach and, if he saves it, the rebound comes back across the goal to a teammate rather than to him.
Physical	Short efforts with queueing. Genuinely restful compared with the rest of the block.
Psychological	Missing in front of a queue is embarrassing. Keep the tempo so high that nobody has time to dwell on a miss, and never comment on an individual failure in front of the group.
Social	Goalkeepers should be thanked out loud at every rotation. They make this session possible and get very little from it.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Waiting for the keeper to commit at station B	<i>Early. He's not set yet — that's the moment.</i>
Shots rising over the bar at station C	<i>Head over the ball, knee over the ball, keep it down.</i>
Two touches at station A	In a real box you get one. Enforce it.
Slow rotation and long queues	The enemy of the session. Add balls, shorten queues, split into four stations if you have the goals.
Goalkeepers wilting	Rotate on time regardless of what is happening.
The same player always finishing	Check the queues are even and that quieter players are getting their turns.

ASK THEM

- Which of the three is hardest? Why?
- In a one-against-one, where does the ball go?
- Why do we shoot early rather than waiting?
- What happens to the rebound if you shoot across him?
- Which foot did you use? Try the other one.

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
One touch at all three stations.	Two touches at all stations.
A recovering defender chasing at station B.	Closer serving points.
Weak foot only for one rotation.	Remove the goalkeeper at one station and use target cones instead.
A five-second clock from serve to shot.	Two stations rather than three if the group is small.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

A shot every four or five seconds across the practice.

Side-foot finishes at A and B.

Low, early strikes at C.

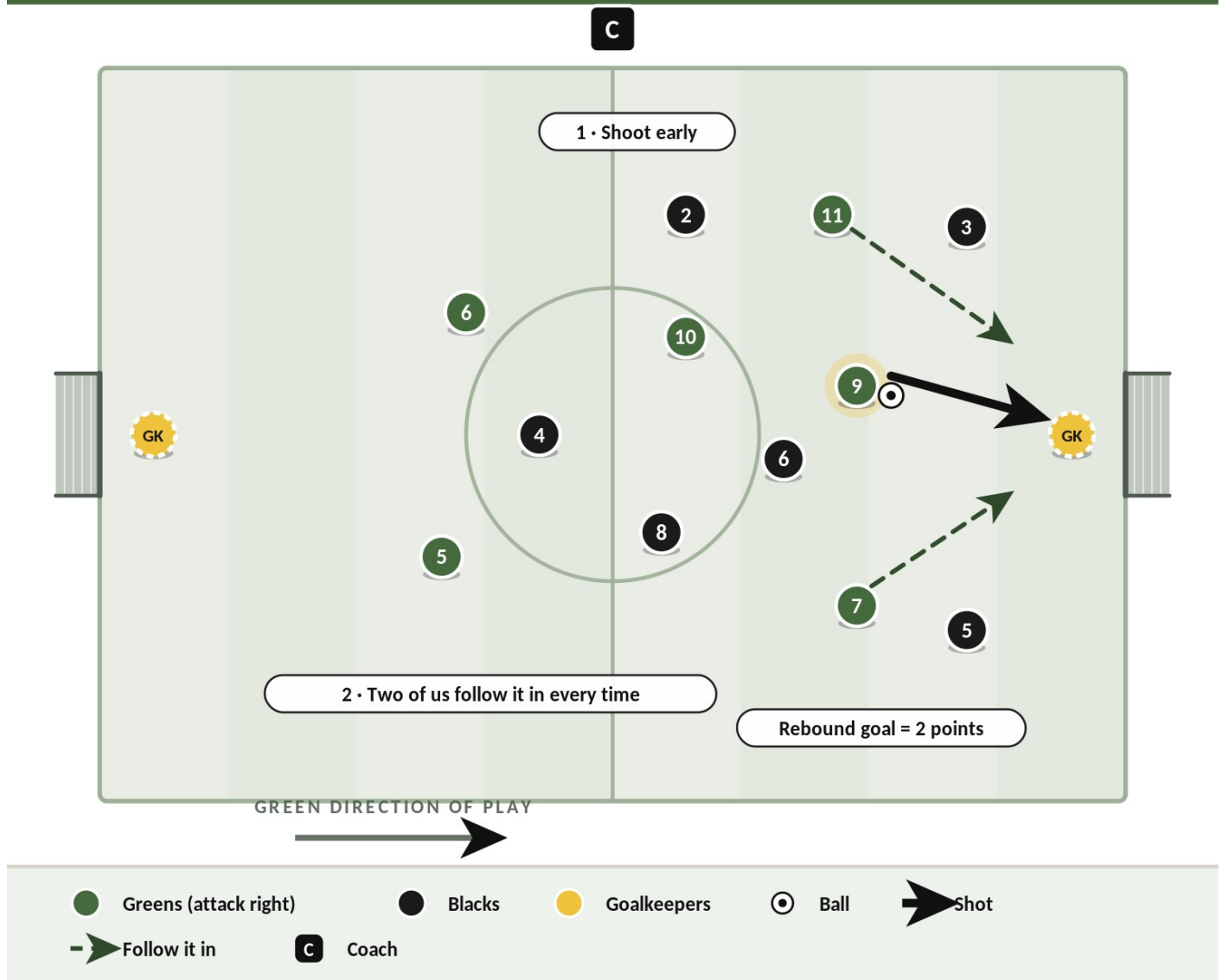
Everybody working all three stations.

Goalkeepers rotated on schedule and still enjoying it.

30.3 FOLLOW IT IN (6 v 6 + GKs)

A game with one rule that produces goals from nothing: every shot must be followed in by two players, and a goal from a rebound counts double. It is the cheapest source of goals in youth football and almost nobody coaches it.

42 x 30 m • every shot must be followed in • rebound goals count double • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- One pitch, **42 × 30 m**, both full goals with a goalkeeper in each.
- 6 v 6 outfield plus two goalkeepers (14). With 15–16, roll substitutes every two minutes.
- No zones. Fast restarts — spare balls behind both goals.
- Encourage shooting: the practice needs volume.
- Coach on the halfway line.

HOW IT RUNS

1. Teams, bibs and keepers in 60 seconds.
2. Explain in one sentence: Every time somebody shoots, two of you follow it in — and a goal from a rebound is worth two.

3. **Minutes 0–5 — count the follow-ins aloud.** *Two in! Nobody in!* Call it every single shot until it becomes automatic.
4. **Minute 5 — one question:** *how many of their shots did the keeper hold?* The answer will be about half, and it makes the case for the rule better than you can.
5. **Minutes 6–12 — competition.** Announce the rebound goals separately so the squad can see how many there have been.
6. **Minutes 12–15 — add the early-shot rule:** any shot taken from inside the box within two seconds of receiving the ball counts double as well. Now both habits are live at once.

RULES & SCORING

- **Every shot must be followed in by at least two players.** A goal from an unfollowed shot still counts, but no bonus applies.
- **A goal from a rebound = 2 points.**
- From minute 12: **a shot taken within two seconds of receiving inside the box, that scores, = 2 points.**
- Keepers restart within six seconds — quick restarts keep the volume high.
- No offside.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Finishing off balance, from awkward angles, at speed — because that is what a rebound gives you.
Tactical	At this age keepers parry far more than they catch. Roughly one shot in five produces a loose ball, and the player who is already moving gets there first. The follow-in also changes the goalkeeper's decision — a keeper who knows two attackers are arriving is more likely to try to catch, and more likely to spill it.
Physical	Repeated short sprints into the box. Substitute forwards regularly.
Psychological	Following in is unglamorous work with a low success rate, which is exactly why it needs a reward attached. Announce every rebound goal by name.
Social	<i>Follow it!</i> becomes a squad call very quickly. Encourage it from the players who are not shooting.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Nobody following the shot	Call it out loud every time until it stops.
Both followers going to the same spot	<i>One near post, one back post.</i>
Players stopping to admire the shot	The exact habit this session exists to break.
Shot volume dropping	<i>Shoot. You can't score if you don't.</i> Some squads become reluctant when finishing is the focus.
Goalkeepers holding everything	Then say so — it is a compliment to them and a genuine result.
Rebounds falling to defenders	Note who wins them. That player belongs in the box.

ASK THEM

- How many of their shots did the keeper hold?
- Where should the two followers go?
- Why do we follow a shot that looks like a goal anyway?
- What does it do to the keeper when he sees you coming?

- Who's winning the loose balls?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Three players must follow in.	One player follows in.
Only rebound goals count for three minutes.	Smaller pitch (36 × 28 m) so the box is closer.
Bigger pitch (48 × 32 m) so following in costs more.	Remove the two-second rule.
Shots must be first time inside the box.	Award the bonus for any shot on target, not just goals.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Two players following in without being told by minute 8.

Rebound goals actually being scored.

Followers splitting near post and back post.

Shot volume staying high.

Follow it! being called by the players.

50 x 34 m • two touches maximum inside the box • 15 minutes



- 50 × 34 m with full-size goals and clearly marked boxes.
- 7 v 7 including goalkeepers (14). With 15-16, play 8v8 or roll substitutes every two minutes.
- 2-3-1 shape assigned.
- **The condition applies inside the box only** — unlimited touches everywhere else.
- Coach on the halfway line.

1. Shape and teams in 60 seconds.
2. **Explain in one sentence:** *Two touches maximum inside the box. Three touches and it's a free-kick out to them.*

3. **Minutes 0–6 — enforce it exactly.** The first four or five free-kicks will feel harsh and then the behaviour changes.
4. **Minute 6 — drinks and one question:** *how many chances did we take earlier than we normally would?* Then point out how many of them went in.
5. **Minutes 7–13 — add the follow-in from 30.3:** rebound goals still count double, so both habits are live.
6. **Final two minutes — all conditions removed.** Watch whether the finishing stays quick.

RULES & SCORING

- **Two touches maximum inside the penalty area.** A third touch is an indirect free-kick to the other team.
- From minute 7: **rebound goals count double.**
- Keepers restart within six seconds. No offside.
- The condition applies to both teams and to defenders as well as attackers — which produces its own useful problems.
- All conditions removed for the last two minutes.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	First touch inside the box has to go somewhere useful, because there is no second chance to fix it. This is the highest-pressure first touch in football.
Tactical	Hesitation is the most expensive habit in the box. A chance exists for perhaps half a second, and a player taking three touches has already given it away. The condition also affects defenders , who now have to clear it in two — which teaches the same urgency from the other side.
Physical	Standard match load. Rotate as usual.
Psychological	Some players will avoid the box entirely rather than risk the free-kick. Watch for it and reassure them — the point is to be quicker, not to be perfect.
Social	Expect complaints about the free-kicks. Be consistent, explain once, and let the goals do the persuading.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
A third touch	Free-kick, every time, without discussion.
Players avoiding the box	<i>Get in there. Two touches is plenty.</i>
First touches going backwards under the pressure	The technical work to note for next time you run this.
Defenders panicking with two touches	Legitimate and useful — it produces turnovers in dangerous areas, which is the game.
Chances being taken earlier	Name it the first time it produces a goal.
The final two minutes	Does the finishing stay quick with nothing enforcing it?

ASK THEM

- How many chances did we take earlier than usual?
- How many of those went in?
- What does a third touch cost you?
- Where should your first touch go inside the box?
- Defenders — what did two touches do to you?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
One touch inside the box.	Three touches inside the box.
Two touches inside the whole final third.	Condition applies to attackers only.
Larger pitch (58 × 38 m).	Warnings rather than free-kicks for the first five breaches.
Goals must be side-footed to count double.	6 v 6 on 44 × 30 m with rolling substitutes.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Chances being taken within two touches.

Few free-kicks by minute 10.

Nobody avoiding the box.

Rebound goals appearing.

Quick finishing surviving the final two minutes.

Finish, match day & homework

REFLECTION — 5 MINUTES, SITTING DOWN

- *What do we do instead of shooting?* — pass it into the goal.
- *Where's the target?* The corners. Both of them.
- *When do we shoot?* Early — before he's set.
- *What happens after every shot?* Two of us follow it in.
- *How many touches in the box?* Two.
- **Name every player who scored tonight** — and then name the two who followed in most, because those goals belong to them as well.
- Finish with next time: *next time we make it unfair — two against one, three against two, and how to use it when we've got more players than they have.*

MATCH-DAY LINK

MATCH OBJECTIVES	WATCH FOR	ASK AFTERWARDS
- Side-foot the finish whenever we are inside the box. - Two players follow every shot in. - Take the chance within two touches.	- How many of our shots are on target. Count them — it is the single most useful attacking statistic at this age. - How many shots get followed in. - Whether the goalkeeper holds or parries — and what happens next.	- <i>How many of our shots were on target?</i> - <i>Did anyone follow them in?</i> - <i>Was there a chance we took too long over?</i>

HOMEWORK — "PASS IT IN" · 15 MINUTES, THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU NEXT TRAIN

- **Corner targets.** Put two markers a metre inside each post of any goal, or two bags against a wall. From 12 m, side-foot fifty balls at them, alternating feet. Count how many hit the target — write the number down each time and watch it climb.
- **Two-touch finishing.** Roll the ball out to yourself sideways, take one touch to set it, and finish with the second. Thirty each foot. In a match you almost never get a still ball.
- **Watch a game with a job.** Fifteen minutes of any professional match, watching **only the goals**. Count how many were blasted and how many were passed into the corner. Then count how many came from a rebound. Bring both numbers — they are both more surprising than players expect.
- *Optional extra:* watch a striker for ten minutes and count how many shots they follow in. The good ones do it every time, including when the ball is going wide.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Same theme — attacking and finishing. These cover the same ground from other angles and can be run in any order, before or after this one: **29** Penetration; **31** Attacking Overloads; **32** Creating and Taking Chances.

A natural follow-on. Session 31 — Attacking Overloads. Two against one, three against two, and the four-second window in which an extra player actually matters. Most under-12 teams create overloads by accident and then waste them by taking too long, passing sideways, or letting the spare player stand still. Next time is about recognising the moment you have more players than they do — and about the single hardest thing in youth football, which is a player deliberately drawing a defender towards them so that a teammate is free.

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.