



# STAGE 1

## ASB First Kicks

(4-6 years)

### INTRODUCTION TO COACHING



## INTRODUCTION

### How to be an Effective Game Leader

First Kicks players are likely to be participating in organised football for the very first time, and they need to enjoy the experience if they are to fall in love with the game. For the First Kicks game leader, this means having a good understanding of the needs of young children who are just entering the game.

### Four Corner Overview - Where is the focus

#### Technical / Tactical

Activities provide learning opportunities – allow the children to play  
 Technique development takes place through fun activities that offer lots of dribbling and shooting  
 Football coordination is developed with lots of touches of the ball in different activities

#### Physical

High energy games with lots of activity  
 Activities need to improve players coordination in general  
 The ball should be used to add fun  
 Activities include lots of different types of movements  
 Sessions need to be safe and risk free

#### Social / Emotional

Activities focus on individual development while in a group environment  
 Activities give the player as much time using the ball as possible  
 Activities need to be used as playful and fun experiences

#### Mental

Activities should involve opportunities to make worry free mistakes  
 Activities should progress or change quickly  
 Activities need to challenge players to become aware of the other players around them  
 Attach stories to activities to take advantage of imagination and curiosity

The game leader must be aware of these characteristics and run sessions accordingly. This means using a range of games and activities that are based on improving the players' coordination while introducing football skills. The games and activities used in the Junior Framework cover four specific components that make up a First Kicks practice session.





## The Four Key Components

The percentage of time spent on each component reflects the age-related requirements of the First Kicks player.

### Focus for Training - where we spend most of our training time

#### GENERAL MOVEMENT

Activities involve:

- Agility (running, speeding up/slowing down, changing direction, stopping)
- Balance (hopping, jumping, landing)
- Coordination (combining different movements, moving with the ball, falling and standing safely)

A focus on these A,B,C's provides a foundation for players to learn more complex movement sequences later on

#### FOOTBALL COORDINATION

Lots and lots of touches of the ball

When dribbling with the ball, allow players to explore and use their imagination

Challenge players to use different parts of the foot

#### SMALL SIDED GAMES

SSG's motivate players more than any other activity

SSG's should involve small numbers playing in small areas

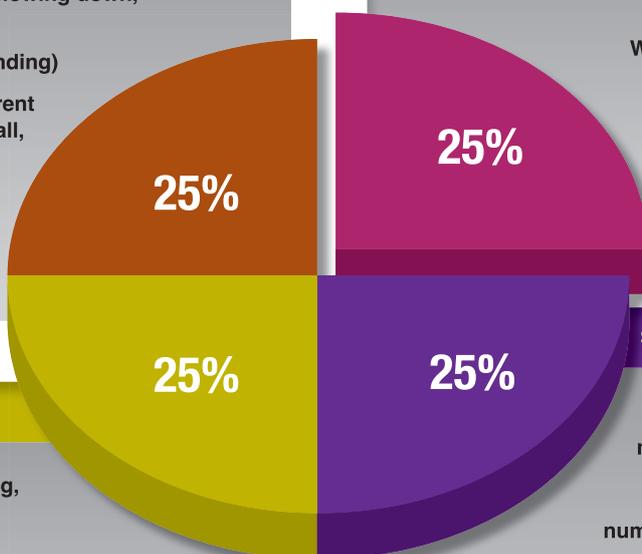
SSG's provide the players with the chance to best use their individual skills, developed in a group setting

#### FOOTBALL TECHNIQUE

Core techniques involve dribbling, turning and shooting

These techniques are fundamental features of the game that players enjoy greatly

Small competitions and games should be used to motivate players to use these technique



## INTRODUCTION *cont..*

### How to be an Effective Game Leader

The First Kicks player needs to be the focus of any game or activity, rather than the coach. If you are new to football or new to 'coaching', don't worry that you may not know a lot. The key is to let the players play and learn throughout the activity – and interfere with these activities as little as possible. This means that you will facilitate rather than 'coach'.



THE FIRST KICKS GAME LEADER...	THE PLAYERS BENEFIT BECAUSE...
Views each player as an individual	The individual learning styles of each player are recognised
Makes sure that each player is able to explore football, use their imagination and have fun	Players are more likely to have fun and feel successful
Provides a risk free environment where every player is fully involved in every activity	Players have the chance to make mistakes, learn from them and keep going
Learns about the players, takes a personal interest and gets to know each one of them	Players are able to touch the ball as many times as possible during a session

At practice sessions, always ensure players are constantly involved. This meets their needs and provides the game leader with the opportunity to understand what players enjoy the most, and what brings them the greatest feeling of success.

Monitor players throughout the session to help you understand when and how to best progress the session in order to best meet their wants and needs.

# COMMUNICATION



## Keep it short and sweet

First Kicks players have lots of energy but short attention spans. They want to spend as much time as possible playing games or activities. Make sure any information you give is delivered in bite-sized chunks that are easy for the players to understand – then let them find out more during the game.

## Come down to their level

Be enthusiastic, fun and energetic during sessions. Capture the players imagination through communication and stories applicable for their age, with no need to use football specific language or terms.

## Be patient with the players

Ensure that you give them every opportunity to have fun, be creative and learn from making mistakes.



## What do the practice sessions include?

A game leader will have achieved a great deal if he or she has built each child's confidence, self-esteem and motivation, and has helped them develop a love for the game. With this in mind, a First Kicks session should always be structured with the following in mind:

- 1 Include general coordination activities – running, jumping, tumbling and turning
- 2 Include games with lots of movement
- 3 Include small sided fun games 1v1, 1v2, 2v2, and 3v3
- 4 Include lots of familiarity with the ball – running & turning using all parts of the foot to move & control the ball.
- 5 Involve only a minimal amount of passing

All the First Kicks activities in the Junior Framework have been developed to ensure that sessions are well suited to the players. This means that inexperienced game leaders don't need to worry that they may not know enough to help the players learn. Game leaders should, however, remain close to the session. Watch how players react to the tasks. If they find tasks too hard or too easy be prepared to change something:

- 1 Change the size of target/goals
- 2 Change the part of the foot used to control the ball
- 3 Increase or decrease the number of touches
- 4 Change the area size to make it smaller or bigger
- 5 Change the rules

## Hints and Tips for the Game Leader

Adopt a hands-off approach to facilitating sessions, and ultimately allow the task itself to become the teacher. Let the players explore their own relationship with the ball, discovering and creating numerous ways of moving and stopping the ball with all parts of their foot.

Here are some hints and tips that will help you give your players the most enjoyable learning experience possible:

### During any game or activity you can effectively 'coach' by simply prompting players to...

**Alter speed/direction:** Speed may increase or decrease the number of touches used

**Use different parts of the foot or body:**  
Inside of foot, heel of foot, sole of foot etc

Use the left foot instead of the right foot and vice versa

Create interaction by using partners and groups for dribbling within the group

### You can also help the players improve their technique by...

**Maintaining good Tempo:**  
Keep the children moving and happy

Keeping tasks to a short duration and changing them frequently e.g select a new part of the foot to use

Progressing the activity by following the players lead i.e. using creative examples of work taken from players and adding to it

**Alter speed/direction:** Speed may increase or decrease the number of touches used



## The Key to Coaching the First Kicks Player - Let the game be the teacher!

Every activity over the following pages has been based on this principle. Now it's over to you to bring them alive by using your own personality as a coach!

### Remember:

- 1 Learners learn and coaches only help the process. Guide players through games and activities and help them to find effective solutions to technical problems posed by the game
- 2 Use sessions to allow players to explore football skills and learn from being active with the ball
- 3 Accentuate the positive! e.g. "Who can be the first person to collect their ball and get ready to start this game!" "Well done, Francis! You're so good at dribbling with your right foot – can you show me how good you are with your left too?"

### Equipment requirements for the First Kicks Game Leader

The following sessions aim to significantly support the First Kicks game leader in getting the best out of the 4-6 year old child. To bring alive these sessions, a ball per player, cones and bibs will be required as a minimum. Optimally, pop up goals and poles can be used, otherwise tall cones can be used to demonstrate goals and poles for sessions.





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