

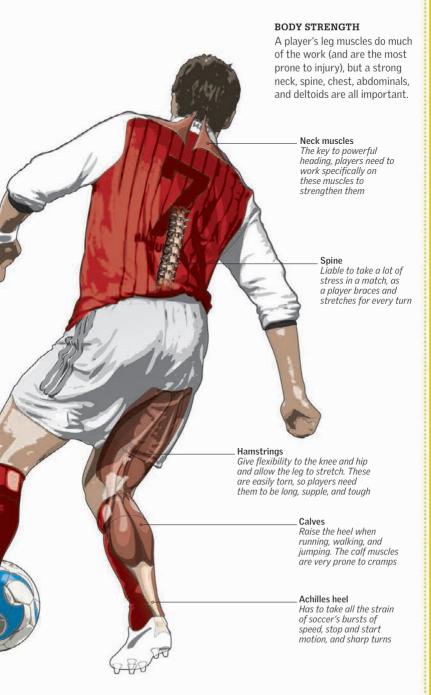
Individual Skills

Anatomy of a player

Like dancers and singers, soccer players' bodies are their instruments, their means of performance and expression. Although professionals are generally getting taller and increasingly fitter, the game still offers space for a variety of physiques and specialisms.



44 A PLAYER'S NECK MUSCLES ARE THE KEY TO POWERFUL HEADING. ""



Changing shape

Soccer players are changing shape. One study looked at the height, weight, and body mass index (BMI) of players in the top English division between 1974 and 2004. Over those 30 years, players on average have become taller and leaner.

Highs and lows

Soccer does not favor one body type or one kind of player. Since it demands a complex range and mixture of skills, it can accommodate all shapes and sizes. Many different physical makeups have played at the top level, from towering strikers to tiny midfield terriers.

MARADONA'S
LOW CENTER
OF GRAVITY
GAVE HIM
AMAZING
BALANCE.

THE LONG	AND THE SHORT
6ft 10in (2.08m)	5ft 3in (1.60m)
Kristof van Hout (Belgium)	Brian Flynn (Wales)
6ft 9in (2.05m)	5ft 2in (1.58m)
Yang Changpeng (China)	Élton Jose Xavier Gomes (Brazil)
6ft 8in (2.04m)	5ft 1in (1.55m)
Tor Hogne Aarøy (Norway)	Jafal Rashed (Qatar)
6ft 7in	5ft 5in
2.01m	1.65m

PETER CROUCH

Tall, gangly, but surprisingly mobile and a regular for England.

DIEGO MARADONA

His low center of gravity gave him amazing balance.

The perfect player?

Despite 150 years of top-flight soccer, the perfect player has yet to grace the field. Hypothetically, however, it would be rewarding to create the perfect identikit player by fusing together the best physical attributes of some of the game's greats.

PART	WHO AND WHY?	
BRAIN	Johan Cruyff—dubbed "Pythagoras in Boots"; no player ever saw the angles and spaces of a game more quickly.	
HANDS	Pat Jennings—huge, long-fingered, and reliable, the Northern Ireland keeper even scored a goal in 1967.	
UPPER BODY	Christian Vieri—the powerful chest of the Italian striker gives him the strength to out-jump and out-muscle defenders.	
THIGHS	Ronald Koeman—very muscular upper legs, so the Dutch player delivered shots and free-kicks with great force.	
RIGHT FOOT	David Beckham—a foot that can caress and coax the ball as well as slam it is the perfect tool.	
LEFT FOOT	Maradona—the Argentinian scored the "Goal of the Century" with his left foot, and produced many other magical moments.	



FATTY FOULKES

At his peak in the 1920s, Foulkes weighed 280lbs (127kg).



PELÉ

The perfect player, a balance of height, speed, and power.

Warming up

Every game of soccer should start with a warm-up. Soccer's twists and turns and its demand for fast accelerating movements will quickly pull or damage cold muscles, and stiff joints and tendons. Similarly, the body's metabolism works best if it is gradually coaxed into life, by systematically raising the heart rate and body temperature of the player. There are four stages to the typical warm-up routine used by professional teams—jogging and gentle stretches, static stretches, dynamic stretches, and footwork and agility. The session is always followed by a cool-down.

Stage 1: jogging and gentle stretches

To get the body ready for the demanding tasks ahead, start by raising your body temperature, pushing up your heart rate, and beginning the process of stretching tendons and mobilizing joints.

Teamwork

Working in pairs, jog around a 30ft (10m) circle, slowing at intervals to stretch

> Side step Take two steps to one side, then back again; begin to work the leg muscle, back, and torso

Stage 2: static stretches

The body is warm, but big muscle groups are not yet ready for a full workout. The quadriceps in the front of the thigh and the hamstrings in the back of the leg need stretching. Groins, calves, and ankles may be damaged if used when cold.



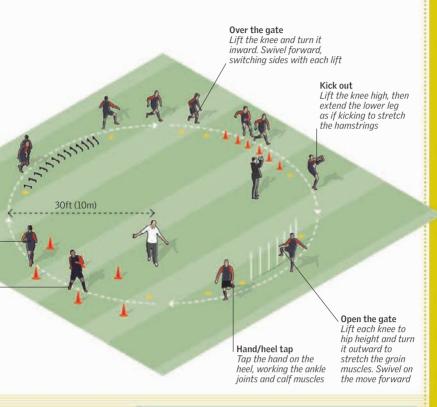
CALF STRETCH

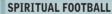
Stand with your back foot flat on the floor and transfer weight to the front foot. Hold for about 10 seconds.



OUAD STRETCH

Hold your heel against your buttock for at least 30 seconds. Use a wall to aid balance.





Yoga, the ancient Indian art of stretching, breathing, and meditation has been used by several famous players to help them recover from injury and to prolong their careers. Practitioners have included Manchester United winger Ryan Giggs and England goalkeeper David James.

Do not bend your knee beyond the ankle.

HAMSTRING STRETCH

Feel the muscles of your front lea tighten

Extend one leg in front with the foot flexed. Bend your other knee and lean forward slightly.

GROIN STRETCH

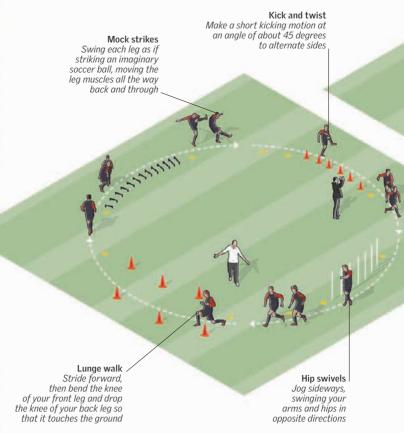
Good for inner thigh and groin muscles—hold the position for 10–20 seconds.

Stage 3: dynamic stretches

Pick up the pace now and combine aerobic work (which raises the activity rate of the heart and lungs) with full muscle stretches. Work in pairs, moving through a series of routines that push your heart rates upward. Use your partner for balance during the moves. The intention is also to raise the body's temperature by approximately 2°F (1°C).

RUNNING LATE

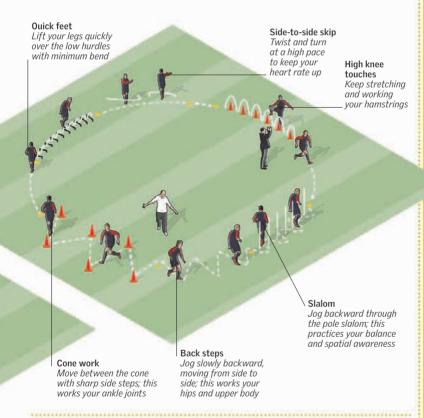
In 2006, Spartak Moscow was stuck in traffic on the way to a match against Internazionale. With time running short, the team had to warm up by jogging through the streets to the nearest subway station and received the team talk in a packed commuter car.



AFTER THE MUSCLES HAVE WARMED UP AND THE JOINTS HAVE RELAXED, YOU CAN MOVE ONTO FASTER, SHARPER MOVEMENTS MORE CLOSELY RELATED TO SOCCER. J

Stage 4: footwork and agility

Now that the muscles have warmed up and the joints have relaxed, you can move onto faster, sharper movements more closely related to actual game play. Work concentrates on the feet and ankles and higher-tempo movements.



The cool-down

After training, you need to lower your heart rate and body temperature steadily, and allow your body to disperse the buildup of lactic acid that forms in

well worked muscles. Repeat the gentle stretches at a steadily lower pace. Then repeat long static and dynamic stretching of all the key muscle groups.

COOL-DOWN ROUTINE			
STAGE ONE GENTLE MOVEMENTS	STAGE TWO STATIC STRETCHES	STAGE THREE DYNAMIC STRETCHES	
OVER THE GATE	QUADS	MOCK STRIKES	
OPEN THE GATE	HAMSTRINGS	KICK AND TWIST	
HAND TAP	CALVES	HIP SWIVELS	
KICK-OUT	GROIN	LUNGE WALK	
SIDE STEP			

Training

Top teams spend a great deal of time practicing with the ball. Some of this is devoted to rehearsing set pieces (see pp.160–63), but a major part of the average training session is given to honing basic ball skills, so that they become instinctive.

Ballwork



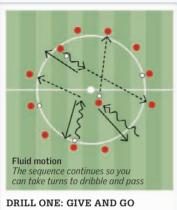
Post warm-up

Ballwork drills should be practiced after you have warmed up. There should be one ball for every two or three players and these should remain in play throughout the session

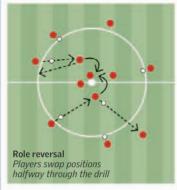


PLYOMETRICS

Plyometric training is designed to develop the explosive muscle power needed for sudden bursts of acceleration such as a forward chasing a ball. A good example is players iumping over a series of hurdles set narrowly apart.

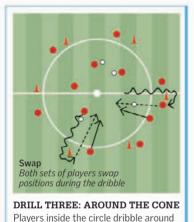


All players line up on the edge of a circle. Those with the ball dribble into the center, pass to players without the ball, and run back.



DRILL TWO: IN THE MIDDLE

Half the players stand on the outside of the circle, the other half toward its center. The two sets exchange passes with several balls.



a cone on the edge, and pass to players who have run to the first player's

original starting point.

DRILL FOUR: MORE CONE WORK Players in the center dribble around cones. When instructed, they pass

Which player? The coach dictates which free player is passed to

to a free player on the outside of the circle and swap positions.

Training without the ball



Sprint training

During matches, players sprint in quick bursts and spend the rest of the time jogging or walking. Sprint training is designed to reflect this. Players run flat-out for five to ten seconds, then walk back to the start and repeat the procedure. One of the advantages of this kind of training is that it accustoms the body to working anaerobically. This means that it is temporarily producing energy without oxygen, which is what happens when a player suddenly has to run flat-out at the end of 90 exhausting minutes. Anaerobic exercise is hard on the body so it should only be practiced occasionally, perhaps once every two weeks.

SPRINT TRAINING ACCUSTOMS THE BODY TO TEMPORARILY PRODUCE ENERGY WITHOUT OXYGEN. ")

FOODS TO EAT, DRINK, AND AVOID

If the wrong kind of fuel is put into a car it will underperform. The same is true of soccer players with regard to their diets. Players should eat and drink certain types of food to perform at their best on match days.

EAT

Players should consume plenty of carbohydrates (such as potatoes and pasta), as these provide the body with energy; easily digestible proteins such as fish and chicken; and vegetables rich in iron, such as broccoli.

- After training: The body stores energy in the form of a substance called glycogen. Players need to replenish their glycogen levels within two to five hours of exercising. The best way to do this is to eat plenty of carbohydrates.
- Three days before a match: Players should start "carbohydrate-loading." This means they should eat meals that comprise 75 percent complex carbohydrates.

 Match day: To help optimize energy available to the player during the game, he or she should eat a meal high in carbohydrates and low in protein and fat three to four hours before kick-off

DRINK

Soccer players should drink lots of water, particularly before and after training sessions. Players can lose four quarts (four liters) or more of water during a match and will need to rehydrate themselves as quickly as possible. In addition to water, isotonic drinks containing vital nutrients and sugars are particularly easy for the body to absorb. There are several commercial varieties, but a simple version can be made with fruit juice and water mixed in equal measures.

AVOID

Players should avoid all caffeine (tea and coffee), alcohol, and junk foods (such as potato chips and deep-fried foodstuffs). Consumption of dairy products, and fatty and high-sugar foods should also be limited.

Controlling the ball

Possession is the key to controlling a game and a team can only be said to be in possession when one of its players has the ball under his control. Achieving this is one of the fundamental skills of soccer. No matter how perfectly a pass is delivered, it will be wasted if you fail to control the ball effectively.

Flexibility and first touch

Controlling the ball is easiest when it is passed gently to the feet but you must be prepared to reach it at any height, from any angle, and at any speed. The quality of a player's first touch is crucial. The best players are able to put the ball exactly where they want it with the same touch they use to bring it under control, giving them time and space to consider their next move.

Using the body

If you receive the ball at a level too high to control with your feet, you have three main options: to use your thigh, chest, or head. An excellent way to practice these skills is via a game of "head tennis." Played over a volleyball net, you must keep the ball from touching the ground, and return it over the net by using your head, chest, thigh, and feet. The more frequently you play this enjoyable game, the better your skills will become.



CONTROL WITH THIGH

If you can "catch" the ball with the upper part of your thigh, you can bring it under control very effectively.

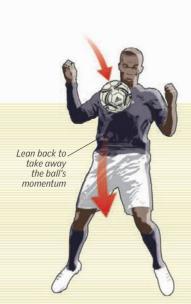


The French international demonstrates the athleticism involved in certain hall control maneuvers. Wiltord has effectively caught the ball at shoulder height with the toe of his cleat. Players must have both excellent coordination and suppleness to accomplish this.

SHANKIV'S SWEAT ROX

Liverpool's legendary manager Bill Shankly used an innovative but exhausting device to improve his players' hall control and stamina Known as the "sweat box." it consisted of an area bounded by four numbered boards, which players shot against, in between controlling the rebounds, corresponding to the number shouted out by the trainer

11 THE QUALITY OF A PLAYER'S FIRST TOUCH IS CRUCIAL THE BEST PLAYERS ARE ABLE TO **PUT THE** BALL EXACTLY WHERE THEY WANT IT. **7**



CONTROL WITH CHEST

Using the chest to control the ball is easier than it sounds. You must take care to keep the ball from hitting you too low and winding you.



CONTROL WITH HEAD

This technique is difficult because the skull is hard, making a degree of bounce inevitable, but sometimes you will have no alternative.

Using the feet

The easiest way to control the ball with your feet is to get into a position to receive the ball early. To practice this, kick a ball against a wall at varying heights, strengths, and angles, and control the rebound. As you improve, ask a friend to rebound the ball for you so you have to make quick adjustments. Basic foot-trapping techniques involve the inside and sole of the foot (see below). Gradually, you will be able to move on to the outside, top, and side volley trap (see opposite).

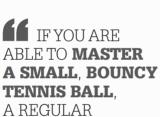
Pull your foot / back slightly to cushion impact

FOOT TENNIS

A good way to learn ball control is to use a tennis ball. Many great players honed their techniques in this way. If you can master a small, bouncy object such as a tennis ball, a regular soccer ball will seem as big as a pumpkin.

INSIDE OF FOOT

This is the easiest way to control the ball. Ideally, the ball will land about a stride ahead of you rather than directly at your feet.

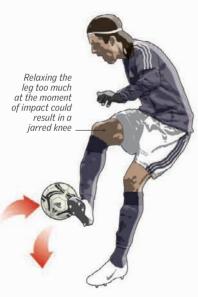


SOCCER BALL WILL SEEM AS BIG AS A PUMPKIN.

As the ball lands, bring your foot down on it gently but firmly

SOLE OF FOOT

A ball dropping near your feet is best controlled by pinning it to the ground with the underside of the foot.



PRACTICE CONTROLLING THE BALL WITH YOUR FEET BY KICKING A BALL AGAINST A WALL AT VARYING HEIGHTS, STRENGTHS, AND ANGLES.

OUTSIDE OF FOOT

If the close proximity of opponents precludes using the inside of the favored foot, use the outside of the other foot



TOP-OF-FOOT CUSHION

A way to control a dropping ball, this is a difficult tactic to perform correctly, since you have to use the narrowest part of your foot.

SIDE VOLLEY TRAP

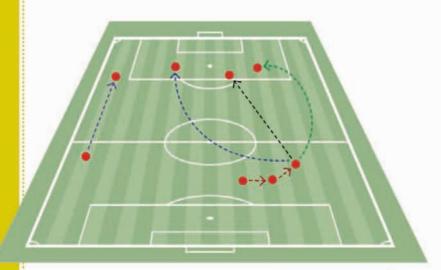
This is used when the ball arrives too high to trap but too low to chest down. The technique requires flexibility for good execution.

Passing

Passing is the lifeblood of any team and a vital skill for all players to learn, including goalkeepers. There are several good reasons why you might choose to pass—to clear the ball from a danger area, to help your team keep possession, or to try to set up a scoring opportunity, for example. There is only one good time for you to make the pass, however, whenever there is a teammate in a better position than you.

Types of pass

Players pass in order to develop attacks, or to work the ball away from opponents. These passes can be along the ground or in the air, over short distances or long range. Short passes are the easiest to execute; long-range airborne passes the most difficult. Each type of pass has its advantages and disadvantages.



PASSING OPTIONS

Short passes are sometimes made in tight situations when the player in possession is near the opponent's goal, or laterally between defenders prior to searching a forward pass. Inswinging, outswinging, and driven passes are made over long distances. They are usually executed from the player's own half of the field.

KEY - Inswinging pass - Outswinging pass - Driven pass - Short pass - Channel pass - Player

USING THE CHANNELS

Sometimes, when you have ball possession, there may be no obvious teammate to pass the ball to. In such cases, you should either run with the ball or pass it into a "safe" channel (usually directly ahead of you, see above) which gives a teammate a realistic chance of winning the race with the defender to receive it.

Short pass

This pass is the most accurate kind for two reasons: the ball is struck with the side of the foot; and any slight miscue can be masked by the small distance the ball has to travel.

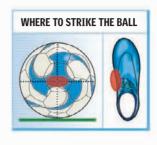


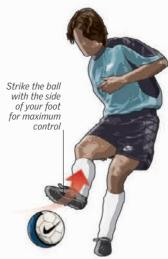
Place your

standing leg alongside the ball with your toes pointing in the direction of travel

Approach the ball at a 30-degree

Approach the ball at a 30-degree angle, giving yourself room to swing your passing leg.





2 Strike the ball with the side of your foot and keep the ball down. Keep your ankle firm.

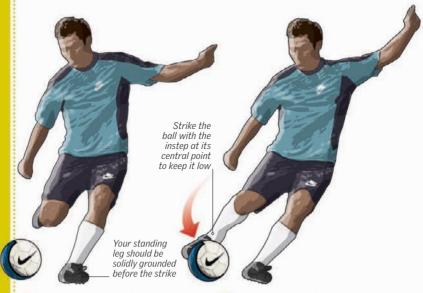


The length of follow-through reflects the weight you want to give the pass.

FASSES
CAN BE
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GROUND OR
IN THE AIR,
OVER SHORT
DISTANCES
OR LONG
RANGE.

Making a long pass

Long passes or crosses can be very effective, largely because defenders tend to guard their opponents less thoroughly the farther away they are from the action. Accuracy in executing this pass is crucial as any error will be magnified.

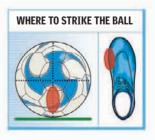


Fix your eyes on the ball and approach it at an angle of about 30 degrees.

To keep the pass low, make sure the knee of your striking leg is over the ball at impact.



Your follow-through should be more pronounced than for a short pass.



WHILE EXECUTING
THE LONG PASS
IS CRUCIAL
AS ANY ERROR
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The science of spin

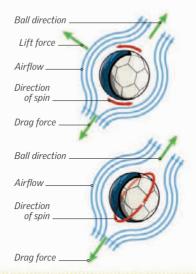
Spinning a ball is a skill every good player should know. Once struck, the ball naturally seeks the path of least resistance, swerving in the direction of the spin—to the right if the ball is spinning clockwise and left if it is spinning counterclockwise.

SIDEWAYS SPIN

If a ball is spinning through the air sideways, one side of it will move in the direction of its flight while the other will move counter to it. The forward-spinning side develops a greater force than the backward-spinning one. This is called the Magnus force.

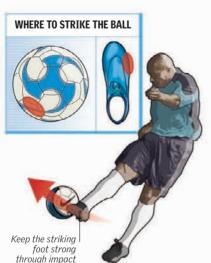
TOP- AND BACKSPIN

If a ball is rotating forward or backward, the same principle applies but it has different effects. A ball given topspin will move downward faster than it otherwise would, while the reverse is true of a ball given backspin.



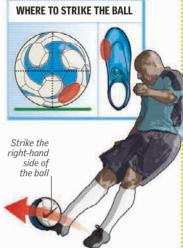
Adding curve to a long pass

Putting curve onto the ball can be useful during attacking moves because the path of a curving ball is much harder to anticipate, and therefore defend, than one that flies straight.



OUTSWINGING PASS OR CROSS

To swing the ball left to right, strike the left side of the ball with the outside of your foot, if you are right-footed.



INSWINGING PASS OR CROSS

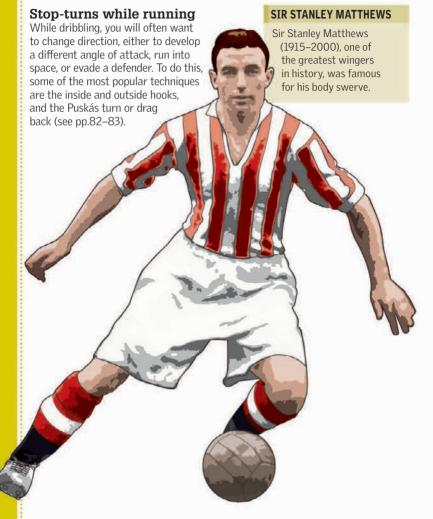
To get the ball to swing right to left, strike the ball on its right side with your instep, if you are right-footed.

Running with the ball

Running with the ball under control is known as dribbling. In its basic form, the skill involves you kicking the ball ahead of yourself, running to catch up with it, kicking it forward again and so on. In practice, however, you will rarely have clear spaces ahead of you for long as opposing defenders will arrive to try to check your runs. You, therefore, need to keep the ball close to your feet and develop a repertoire of skills to avoid would-be tacklers.

Beating opponents

As a dribbler, you may employ a variety of techniques to get past opponents without checking your runs. One of the most important is the shoulder drop, in which you lower the level of one shoulder to fool the defender into thinking you are heading in that direction. Another is having the ability to anticipate tackles (see pp.126-29) and the dexterity to jump over them.



How to dribble

The best dribblers give the impression that the ball is tied to their shoes. These players also have the ability to easily alternate between both feet (using the inside and outside of the feet). A dribble is executed as follows.



Don't kick the ball too hard with either foot

Using your left foot, gently kick the ball between 12 and 19in (30–50cm) ahead of you and to the right.



Keep your eyes on the ball while running forward, occasionally looking up to assess the situation ahead of you.

THE NUTMEG

The nutmeg is a maneuver in which an attacking player passes the ball through an opponent's legs, weighting it so he can continue his dribble on the other side. Defenders dislike being nutmegged, but if they keep their legs too close together to prevent it, they invite the attacker to kick the ball past them and get around them to the side.

MEEP THE
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TO YOUR FEET
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TACKLERS.



When you reach the ball, continue with the dribble, using your right foot. Repeat this sequence, using your left foot then right.

Inside hook

This hook technique is easier than the outside hook (see below). It is used to move inside (to the left for a right-footer) when an opponent is on your outside.



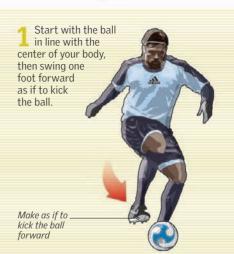
Outside hook

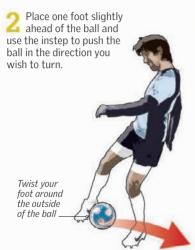
This skill is more demanding than the inside hook (see above), since you must use the outside of your right foot to move 180 degrees to the right (for a right-footer).



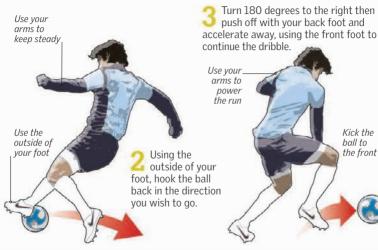
Puskás turn

Named after the great Hungarian striker Ferenc Puskás, this trick involves a quarter turn that allows you have to rapidly move at right angles to the direction in which you were originally dribbling.



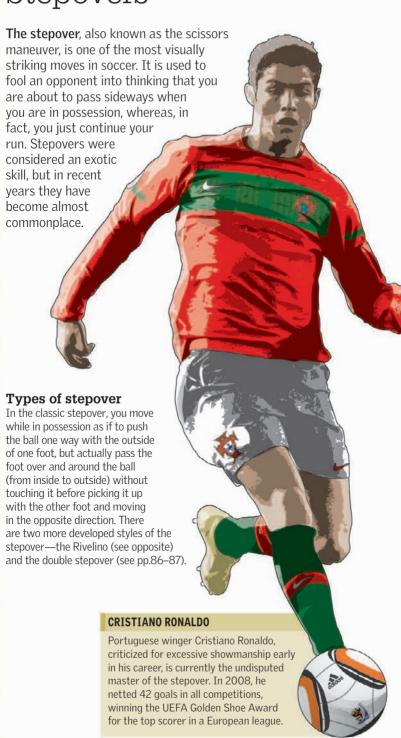






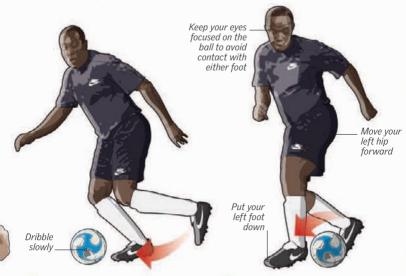


Stepovers



The Rivelino

In this variation of the stepover, named after the Brazilian winger, the legs move around the ball in the opposite direction, that is from outside to inside. The Rivelino requires precise balance.



Dribble the ball slowly toward the defender. Plant your front foot and bring the trailing leg toward the ball.

Instead of making contact with the ball, bring the trailing leg up and over the ball, placing it on the other side.



Swivel 180 degrees, place your weight on the right foot, then play the ball with your left.

ARE USED TO
FOOL AN
OPPONENT
INTO THINKING
THAT YOU
WILL PASS
SIDEWAYS
WHEN YOU
ACTUALLY
CONTINUE
YOUR RUN. JJ

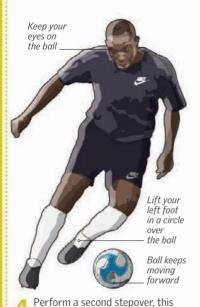
Double stepover

In the double stepover, you have to perform the trick twice in quick succession, once with each foot. Technically, this is a more difficult tactic to master

IN SOUTH AMERICA THE CONTINENT WHICH GAVE **BIRTH TO THE** STEPOVER. IT IS CALLED THE PEDALADA. AND WAS A **COMMON** SKILL USED BY **RRAZII.IAN I.EGEND** PELÉ.



Dribble the ball forward and prepare to set your standing leg.

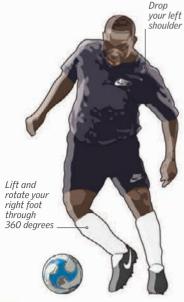


time with the left foot and in a

counterclockwise direction



You will again be back to the starting position, but farther forward than before



Then move your right foot around and over the ball in a clockwise direction.



This will bring you back to the starting point, but farther forward than before.

Spring off from the left side to travel quickly to the right



6 Knock the ball forward with your right foot and continue the dribble

MASTER OF THE STEPOVER

Cristiano Ronaldo performed 11 stepovers per game on average during the 2007–08 season.

SPACE CREATED

The typical amount of space created by an effective stepover move is 25in (63cm).

GREAT EVASION

Brazil winger Denílson made six stepovers before evading France midfielder Emmanuel Petit during the 1998 World Cup.

INVENTOR OF THE MOVE

Pelé, the inventor of the stepover, has won the World Cup three times.

STEP IT UP

In 2007 Roma's Mancini performed six stepovers in rapid succession to score a goal against Olympique Lyonnais.

Spins and turns

Some of the most spectacular moves in soccer involve players spinning or turning in unexpected ways. These require great technical accuracy and often only the world's best known and most skillful players use them successfully in a match situation.

Finding space

Complex turns are more challenging than the turns covered under the dribbling section (see pp.80–83) and need lots of practice. Making a successful turn is a great way to lose a marker or wrong-foot an opponent, both of which will buy you time to run into space or make a considered pass to a teammate. Two of the best maneuvers for achieving this are the Zidane spin and the Cruyff turn.

The Zidane spin

The Zidane spin is a form of pirouette in which you have to spin through 360 degrees while keeping the ball under close control. It is as difficult to describe as it is to do, but can be broken down into five stages. Zidane has performed this technique at the highest level on many occasions. If executed well, it can buy you good time in crowded midfield situations.



1 Dribble forward with the ball as normal, then stop and put your stronger foot on top of it.



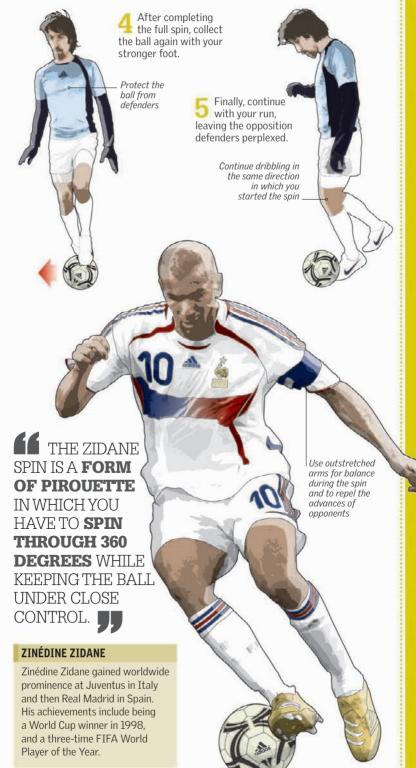
Roll the ball backward, spin 180 degrees around it, then collect it with your weaker foot.



Roll the ball back gently with your weaker foot and turn 180 degrees in the same direction.







The Cruyff turn

This maneuver, a complex drag back that always leaves defenders behind, is named after Netherlands forward Johan Cruyff. When executing this tactic, your goal is to feign execution of a long pass or cross but instead spin 180 degrees and continue the dribble.

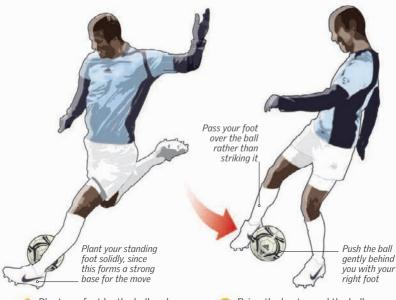


JOHAN CRUYFF

Cruyff was the most complete player in the Dutch and Ajax teams famous for "total soccer." Nominally a striker, he bamboozled markers by dropping into midfield. His vision and passing skills led to the accolade "Pythagoras in boots." This Dutch maestro perfected a move known as the "Cruyff turn," which he first performed in 1974.

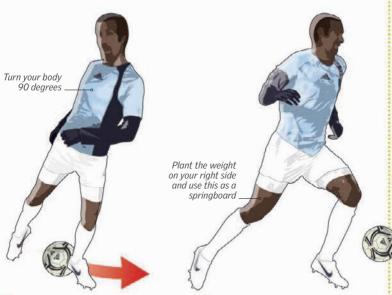
THE HALF-PREKT

Predrag Radosavljevi began his career with Red Star Belgrade and ended it in Major League Soccer in the US, where he shortened his name to Preki. In this maneuver, named after him, you can create space, while dribbling, between you and an approaching defender by rolling the ball across the front of your body with the sole of your dominant foot. When you lift your foot to begin the move, the defender might think you will pass. Another version of the trick starts with a half-Preki and ends with a stepover (see pp.84–87).



Plant one foot by the ball and make as if to shoot or hit a long pass with your other leg.

2 Bring the leg toward the ball, but instead of kicking it, pass your foot over the ball.



Using the inside of the same foot, drag the ball back behind you and turn your body.

Complete the turn through 180 degrees and run off with the ball.

If PLANT ONE FOOT BY THE BALL, AS IF TO HIT A LONG PASS WITH THE OTHER LEG. ""

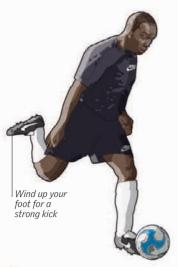
Fakes

Deception is a vital ingredient in top-class soccer. Many of the most effective moves rely on players fooling their opponents into thinking they are going to do one thing and actually doing another. When this works, it cons members of the other team into moving out of position and buys crucial time for the team in possession.

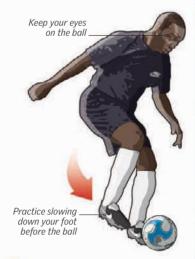


The fake kick

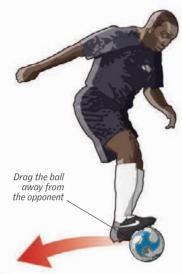
In this fake, you have to mime a shot or a pass, causing the defenders to flinch, but instead you simply pass your foot over or just to the side of the ball. This gives you time and space to turn or deliver a pass.



Give every indication of taking a long-range shot at goal or making a long pass. Draw back your leg in preparation for a strike.



2 Swing your foot down hard, but as it approaches the ball, slow it down rapidly and pass the foot over the ball.



While your opponent turns away in anticipation of a shot, place your foot lightly on top of the ball and drag it back quickly.

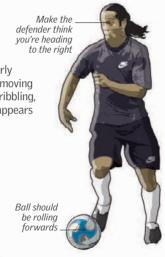
FOR A
FAKE KICK,
MIME A
SHOT OR
A PASS, BUT
ACTUALLY
PASS YOUR
FOOT OVER
OR JUST TO
THE SIDE OF
THE BALL.

The elastico or flip-flap

Brazil striker Ronaldinho is associated particularly with the "elastico" or "flip-flap." It involves you moving your foot very quickly from right to left while dribbling, keeping the ball in such close proximity that it appears connected to your foot by elastic.

WHY BRAZIL?

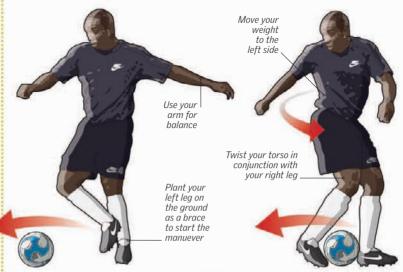
Brazilian players are famous for their eye-catching tricks on the field. Why they are so famous is down to their unique soccer philosophy. In addition to being tactically astute, Brazilian players like to produce the unexpected, doing simple things with flair, and playing for the sheer fun and joy of the game.



Prepare for the elastico by looking in the direction you want the approaching defender to think you are about to play the ball.

The Beardsley shuffle

The most famous shuffle in sport, a high-speed shimmy that mesmerized opponents, belonged to Muhammad Ali. The soccer equivalent, essentially an abbreviated stepover (see pp.84–87), was perfected by Peter Beardsley.

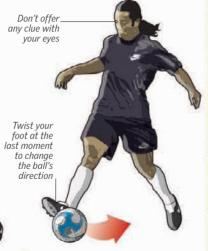


Jogging slowly with the ball under close control, bring your right leg toward the ball as if feigning to pass it or change direction.

2 Bring your right foot very close to the ball so the defender is convinced that you are about to change your direction.

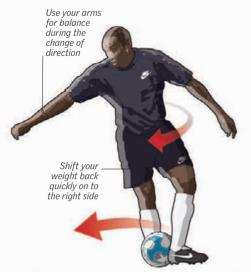


Push the ball with the outside of your right foot as though you are about to dribble to the right.

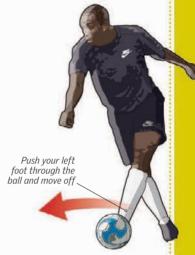


At the last moment, gather the ball in with the instep of the same foot and pull it back in the other direction, confusing the defender.

KEEP THE BALL IN SUCH CLOSE PROXIMITY THAT IT SEEMS CONNECTED TO YOUR FOOT BY ELASTIC.



In one rapid, fluid movement, shift your balance back to the right side, leaving the defender confused as to your chosen path.



Move away quickly with the ball in the direction you were traveling in in step 1. You will gain precious space as a result.

Shooting

Soccer would be nothing without goals. Besides heading the ball, benefiting from an own goal, or a lucky deflection, the only way to score is to shoot. This can be done from almost any position on the field, but the closer you are to the opponents' goal when you take a shot the higher the chances of success. There are many ways of scoring a goal; however, always strike the ball as hard as you can without sacrificing accuracy.

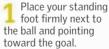
The basic shot

Certain principles apply whether a shot is longor short-range, placed, or blasted. You should aim the ball either side of the goalkeeper and keep it down, so it doesn't fly over the crossbar.



WHERE TO STRIKE THE BALL

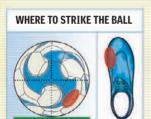




Make contact with the center of the ball or a spot slightly below it.

The curving shot

A difficult shot to execute well, it requires a highly precise strike, both in terms of the part of the foot used and the impact position on the ball. For the inswinging strike (see right), connect with the instep on the base of the ball; for the outswinger, use the same spot on the outside of your foot (see also p.79).





Use your standing foot as a solid base from which to swing your striking leg

Approach the ball and ensure that your standing leg is about 18in (45cm) to the side.

The chip, scoop, and lob

When a goalkeeper is off his line, there is a chance of beating him by lofting the ball over his head and weighting the shot so that the ball drops under the crossbar. The three methods by which you can achieve this—the chip, scoop, and lob—are all about touch, timing, and judgment.



THE CHIP AND SCOOP

You use the chip and the scoop when the ball is on the ground as the shot is taken. The chip requires back-lift and the scoop doesn't.

YOU HAVE TO STRIKE THE BALL AS HARD AS YOU CAN WITHOUT SACRIFICING ACCURACY. JJ



THE LOB

Use the lob when the ball arrives at you full toss or after bouncing. You need to strike the ball with enough height to clear the goalkeeper.



_ Focus on the part of the ball you want to strike

> Get your toes under the ball for more lofted shots

2 Sweep your leg on an in-to-out arc and connect with the bottom right portion of the ball.



Follow the path of the ball with your foot to stand a better chance of curving it.

Volleying

There are few sights in soccer as satisfying as seeing a cleanly hit volley fly into the net. This technique, defined as striking a ball that is in full flight, is also used to make rapid crosses, clearances, and passes. A high level of foot-eye coordination is essential for volleying. When it is executed well, the results can be spectacular.

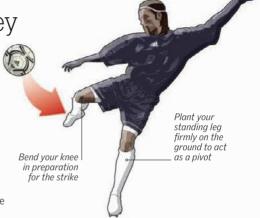
Volleying styles

The first type of volley is the full volley, where the ball is struck "on the fly." The second is the half-volley, where the ball is struck shortly after it has bounced. A third technique, the bicycle (or overhead) kick is normally performed by experienced, very athletic players.

The full volley

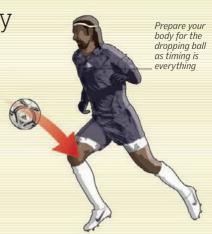
You use the full volley when the ball arrives at you without touching the ground. A well-executed full volley requires good timing, composure, and concentration.

Keep your eyes on the ball.
Position yourself in its line
of flight to stand the best chance
of making good contact.



The half-volley

You perform the half-volley when the ball bounces just before you strike it. It is, therefore, sometimes on the rise at the moment of impact. If you can hit the ball at the exact moment it touches the ground the shot gains more momentum as the ball has lost less energy through not bouncing.

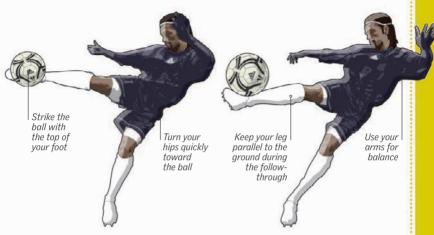


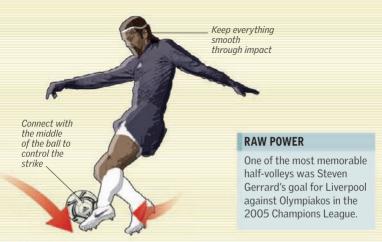
Watch the ball closely as it drops toward you. Position yourself and pull back your striking leg before connecting with the ball.

A BALL SUSPENDED AT CHEST HEIGHT FROM A CROSSBAR VIA A PIECE OF ROPE TO PRACTICE THE FULL VOLLEY.

2 Starting with your knee, bring your leg toward the ball and turn your hips. Strike the ball above center to keep it down.

Follow through with your kicking leg parallel to the ground and rotate your hips through the impact area.





Strike the ball with the top of your foot, either on the rise or as it drops toward the ground heading for a second bounce.

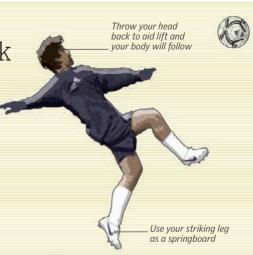
Bicycle kick

Also known as the overhead kick, the bicycle kick is one of soccer's most spectacular techniques. It was invented in the Peruvian port of Callao during a game between the locals and some European sailors in the early 1900s. Residents of the city are known as Chalacos and "Chalaca," the Latin American term for the trick, literally means "from Callao."

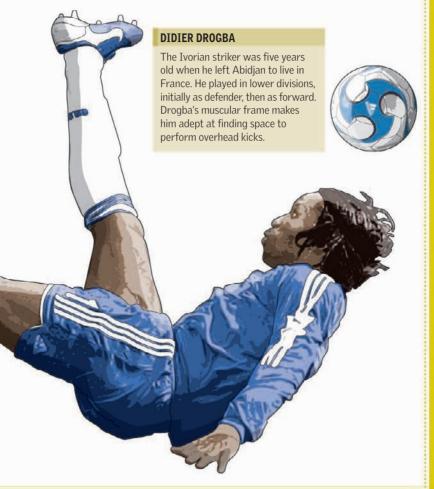
FOR AN OVERHEAD KICK, 'TEE' YOURSELF UP WITH YOUR BACK TO THE GOAL, FLICKING THE BALL UP TO STRIKE. THROW YOUR HEAD BACK TO AID THE LIFT. JJ

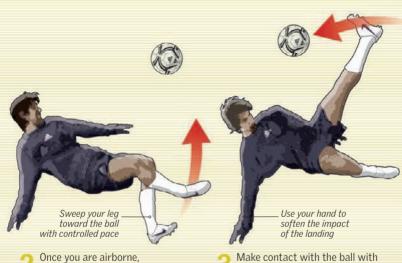
Making an overhead kick

You can use the bicycle kick when an apparently misplaced cross arrives behind you. Alternatively, you can "tee" yourself up for an overhead kick with your back to the goal by flicking the ball up to strike.



Launch yourself into the air by raising your non-kicking leg and pushing off the ground with the other foot.





your back parallel to the ground.

You should practice this in training before attempting it in a match.

swing your kicking leg

beyond the other leg and

toward the ball.

Heading

Heading the ball is counterintuitive for any young players learning the game, because they think it will hurt. However, it is an essential skill to master because, on an average, the ball is in the air for 30 percent of the match time.

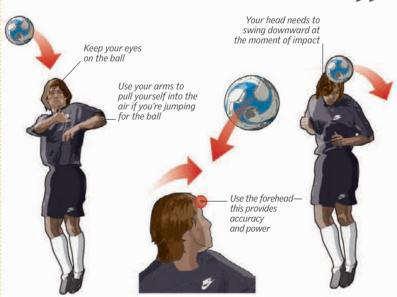
Types of header

There are many different types of header—basic, flick, tactical, defensive, and diving. You need to practice all of them so you know which one to use in a match situation

Basic header

The basic header is used for passing and attempts on goal. It is made with the forehead as this provides the most power and accuracy, and doesn't hurt, unlike heading with the top of your head. To get power on a header, bend your knees and arch your back as you jump for the ball, turning yourself into the shape of a bow. Tilt your head back initially, then bring it forward rapidly using your neck muscles.

LEARNING
HOW TO HEAD
THE BALL IS
ESSENTIAL, SINCE
THE BALL IS IN THE
AIR FOR ABOUT 30
PERCENT OF THE
MATCH TIME.



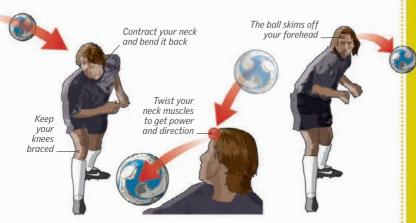
Get into position early and watch the ball come onto your head, keeping your eyes open throughout.

Without taking your eyes off the ball, tense your neck muscles to provide maximum power.

To head the ball downward at the moment of impact, you need to rise above the ball when you jump.

Flick header

The flick header is used to head the ball sideways or backward. It is useful when a defender facing upfield wants to head the ball back to his goalkeeper; when a midfielder wants to flick the ball back to a defender; or when a forward wants to get the ball into the penalty area from a near post cross or corner without revealing his intentions.



Arch your body forward when you make contact with the ball

Use your forehead if your neck is supple, otherwise, use the side of your head.

The ball bounces off your head and continues on its new path.

TACTICAL HEADERS

The flick header, a staple tactic in professional games, is used on crosses, free kicks, and corners to change the direction of the ball and confuse the opposition defenders.

K	EY
AttackerDefenderGoalkeeper	Ball motion Player movement



NEAR POST HEADER

Time your run so that you are in front of your marker when the ball arrives, then flick it behind you into the area for a teammate.



FAR POST HEADER

You may need to step backward to lose your marker. You should direct your header back across goal toward the far post.

THE FLICK HEADER IS USED ON CROSSES, FREE KICKS, AND CORNERS TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF THE BALL.



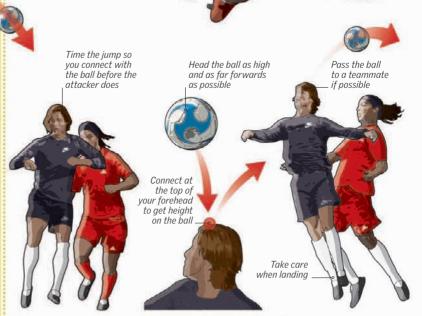
Defensive header

The most important thing when making a defensive header is to get good height and distance on the ball. It is usually safer to direct it away

from the center of the field

WAYNE ROONEY

England's Wayne Rooney is one of the most skillful and powerful soccer players. He has extremely powerful neck muscles and knows how to put them to good use.



You should get in position early, since you will probably be competing with an attacker to get to the ball

Make contact with the bottom half of the ball using the very top part of your forehead. Make sure you keep your neck braced

If you approach the ball from a sideways position, you stand less chance of clashing with the attacker.

Diving header

Use your whole body as a battering ram to strike the ball. This skill is usually used only to attempt to score, since you face the risk of getting a kick in the face from a defender. It is an option when the ball arrives in front of you at a height between your neck and your knee.



Keeping your eyes on the ball, launch yourself into the air with the foot nearest to the goal. The longest-range goal scored with the head was by Peter Aldis of Aston Villa. In September 1952, he headed the ball into the Sunderland net from an astonishing distance of 32m (35yd).



When you make contact with the ball, you should be parallel to the ground. Head the ball with the top of your forehead.



After heading the ball toward goal, put your arms in front to protect yourself as you fall to the ground.

A DIVING HEADER IS USUALLY ONLY USED WHEN TRYING TO SCORE, AS YOU COULD GET KICKED IN THE FACE BY A DEFENDER.

Throw-ins and corners

Statistically, corners and throw-ins are the most commonly awarded set pieces (see pp.160–63). A team is likely to make several of each during the course of a game. These can often lead to scoring opportunities—about a third of all goals are scored from set pieces—so coaches ensure players practice them extensively on the training ground.

Throw-ins

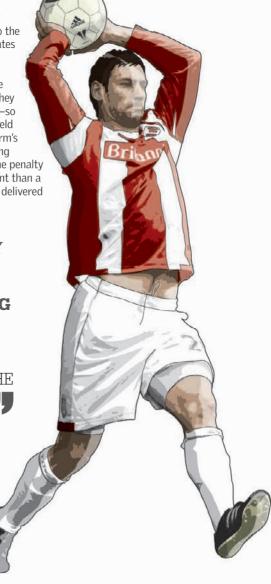
Throw-ins are used to restart play from the sideline. They can be taken either short or long. You need to be alert to the movements of your teammates and have a good aim when vou throw. Throwing onto the field can be risky—if the opponents win possession they may quickly counterattack—so most throws are aimed upfield along the sideline, out of harm's way The exception is the long throw aimed directly into the penalty area. This can be more potent than a corner as the thrown ball is delivered more accurately.

A MAJORITY
OF THROWS
ARE AIMED
UPFIELD ALONG
THE SIDELINE,
OUT OF HARM'S
WAY THE ONLY

EXCEPTION IS THE LONG THROW.

RORY DELAP

Known as the "Delapidator," the Republic of Ireland player terrorizes defenses with his long throws. Delap throws the ball, on average, 125ft (38m)



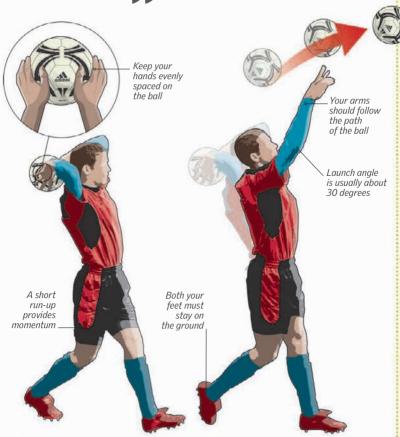
Taking a throw-in

Throw-ins awarded in a team's own half are usually taken as a means of getting the ball back in play. But those taken near the opposition's penalty area can be as effective as a free-kick. There are three basic rules for taking throw-ins: you are permitted a run-up; you have to throw the ball from behind your head with both hands; and you must keep both your feet on the ground at the moment of release.

ABOUT A THIRD OF ALL GOALS ARE SCORED FROM SET PIECES SUCH AS THROW-INS AND CORNERS.

RULES ON SCORING

Goals cannot be scored directly from a throw-in. The rules concerning corners are ambiguous, however. FIFA regulations state that "a corner-kick falls under the same guidelines as a direct free-kick," implying that such goals are legitimate.



Hold the ball fully behind your head with both your hands. You are permitted to make a short run-up.

Bring your arms over your head and whip your body forward as you release the ball. This generates the power for the throw.

Corner-kicks

As with free-kicks (see pp.110–13), there are several options open to a player taking a corner. Aside from the inswinging and outswinging corners, there are five key variations.

Coalkeeper Attackers Ball motion

Five corner styles

A corner represents a good opportunity to score a goal, so teams always work on these set piece routines. The following corner techniques are all practiced during training sessions: penalty spot, near post, far post, long, and short.



PENALTY SPOT CORNER

A corner aimed at the penalty spot may lure the keeper from his goal. The ball must travel fast to reach a teammate before it is intercepted.



NEAR POST CORNER

The corner is aimed at the near goalpost so that it can be flicked on by a teammate to alter the ball's path and confuse the defenders.



FAR POST CORNER

Usually delivered as an outswinger, the ball will be curving toward the teammate attacking it, helping him to get power into his header.



LONG CORNER

Used when the corner-taker notices a teammate hovering unmarked outside the six-yard box. A quick pass can set up a strike on goal.



SHORT CORNER

A short-range pass to a teammate creates a different crossing or shooting angle. Defenders have no time to readjust themselves.

Taking a corner

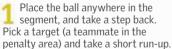
The rules of taking a corner are simple: you are allowed to place the ball anywhere within the segment (the quarter circle between the goal line and the sideline) and you are not permitted to remove the corner flag. For more detailed techniques on taking a corner, see "Passing" (pp.76–79) and "Free-kicks" (pp.110–13).





BALL POSITIONING

- 1 Take a corner from the left-hand side if you are right-footed.
- 2 Take a corner from the right-hand side if you are left-footed.



THE OLIMPICO

A goal scored directly from a corner with a curving shot is known as an "Olimpico" in South America. It is named in honor of Cesáreo Onzari of Uruguay, who scored against Argentina in this manner in 1924 when his team were the reigning Olympic champions.



Connect with the bottom of the ball on the right- or left-hand side, depending on the intended curve, if any, and follow through.

Free-kicks

All free-kicks are awarded against the team that has committed some infringement. There are various options open to you when you take the free-kick. You can strike the ball directly at the goal with force, or you can chip, curve, or pass to a teammate. Anything, in fact, that catches the opposing team unawares.

Types of free-kick

There are two types of free-kick—direct and indirect. Many direct free-kicks that are taken from the edge of the opposition penalty area represent good goalscoring opportunities, while most indirect free-kicks (except those taken from inside the penalty area) are little more than a means of restarting play.

DIRECT FREE-KICK

A direct free-kick is awarded against a team for committing a penalty foul, such as kicking a player instead of the ball, pushing, tripping, and similar infringements. If the referee deems the foul to be too malicious or dangerous, he will issue a yellow or red card. Direct free-kicks can be struck directly into the goal without the need for another teammate to touch the ball. The most punitive direct free-kick a team can face is a kick from the penalty spot (see pp.114–17).

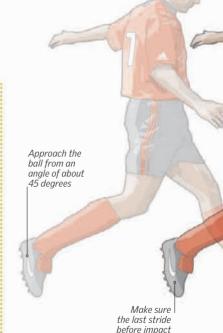
INDIRECT FREE-KICK

An indirect free-kick is awarded against a team for committing a foul other than a penalty foul (for example, dangerous play) or for infringing certain technical requirements of the laws (for example, offside). An indirect free-kick requires the ball to be touched by more than one player on the same team before it can enter the goal.

HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE

If in doubt about whether a free-kick is direct or indirect, watch the referee. He indicates a direct kick with an outstretched arm (horizontal) and an indirect with a vertical arm position.

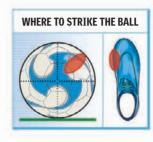




is a long one

The curving free-kick

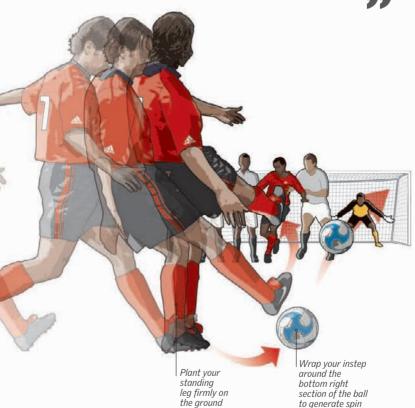
If the free-kick is awarded close to the goal, the defending team will build a defensive wall (see p.162). When taking the free-kick, if you give the ball enough curve, it will bend around the wall and also make it difficult for the keeper to judge its flight. The principles of getting the ball to curve are the same whether the kick is taken from a dead ball situation or on the move (see p.97).



THE QUICK FREE-KICK

Usually, when you stand over a free-kick, you must wait for the referee's whistle before starting play. But you are permitted to ask the referee if you can take a "quick" kick without the whistle signal, to try to gain an advantage.

MANY DIRECT FREE-KICKS THAT ARE TAKEN FROM THE EDGE OF THE OPPOSITION PENALTY AREA REPRESENT GOOD GOALSCORING OPPORTUNITIES.



Free-kick options

Sometimes the success of a free-kick is down to the skill and ingenuity of one player; on other occasions it is a team effort. Free-kicks are good opportunities to score the goals that win matches, so coaches work on them extensively with players during training.

KEY O Goalkeeper Attacker Defender Ball motion Player motion



CURVING SHOT

The art of bending a shot around the defensive wall and away from the dive of the keeper. Curved shots are created by striking the ball on its side and generating spin (see p.79).



DIPPING SHOT

A challenging skill that requires you to strike the ball over the wall rather than around it; if struck correctly, the dipping ball drops at the end of its flight.



THROUGH THE WALL

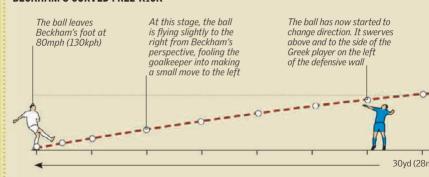
You have to strike the ball low so it goes under the players in the wall as they jump; or strike directly at a teammate in the wall who jumps out of the way to create a space.

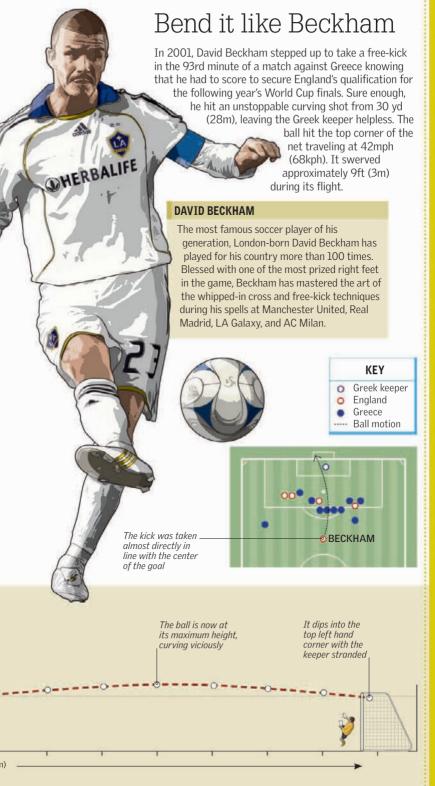


CHIP INTO SPACE

You should dink the ball into an area 8–10yd (7–9m) from the goal, where the goalkeeper cannot easily claim it; the intention is that one of your teammates is then able to shoot or head at goal.

BECKHAM'S CURVED FREE-KICK





Penalties

Penalties are awarded for fouls committed in the penalty area, such as tripping and pushing. They are taken from the penalty spot, which is located directly between the goalposts, 12yd (11m) from the goal line. Scoring from penalties requires composure and skillful ball placement, saving penalties requires agility and anticipation. Goalkeepers are rarely expected to save penalties.

Penalty shootouts

Draws are acceptable in some matches (almost all league games), but not in matches where a winner has to be found in order for a tournament to progress or reach a conclusion (cup ties, cup finals, and play-offs). Penalty shootouts are a way of forcing a result when the scores are level at the end of such a game, usually after a period of extra-time.

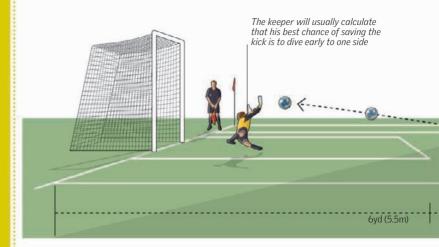
WOBBLY KNEES

In the 1984 European Cup final penalty shootout, Liverpool goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar wobbled his legs in mock terror, causing two AS Roma players to miss. Liverpool won the trophy.

Penalty rules

The penalty is not just a battle of wits between the taker and the keeper, there are various rules and restrictions to be adhered to for other players, too.



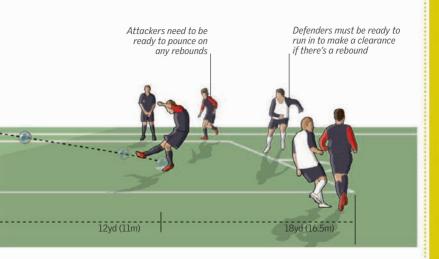


FINDING A WINNER

Shootouts were introduced by UEFA in 1970 and FIFA in 1976. Each team takes five penalties against the other, with the kicks alternating. The team that's ahead at the end wins the match. If the scores are still level, the match goes into "sudden death." The first team to fall behind when an equal number of penalties has been taken by each side loses. Penalty shootouts are often considered an unsatisfactory way of deciding matches, but no better alternative has yet been found.

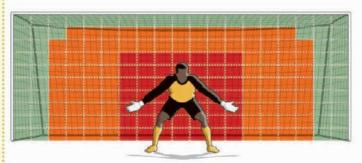
PENALTY DO'S AND DON'TS	
DO	DON'T
Keep your weight over the ball	Take too long a run-up
Make a plan and stick to it	Let the keeper psyche you out
Fool the keeper with your eyes	Hit the ball at chest height
Strike the ball firmly	or too close to the keeper

A SOCCER MATCH GOES INTO 'SUDDEN DEATH' IF THE SCORES ARE STILL LEVEL AFTER A PENALTY SHOOTOUT.



Where to shoot

Success or failure with the penalty-kick is partly determined by the strength of the shot, but if a penalty is poorly placed the goalkeeper may reach it. So where should you aim for to guarantee the greatest chance of success?





- Goalkeeper will save unless he overcommits
- Goalkeeper may save if shot is struck weakly
- Goalkeeper is highly unlikely to save

ALLESSANDRO DEL PIERO

The Juventus and Italy striker has a good penalty-taking record. He often uses delicate chips to outwit

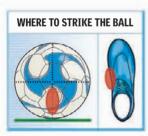
the keeper. He was brought on near the end of the 2006 World Cup final against France to take a penalty, and he scored.

A PENALTY
THAT IS STRUCK
FIRMLY INTO
THE BOTTOM
OR TOP CORNER
WILL REGISTER A
GOAL, BUT THERE
IS VERY LITTLE
MARGIN FOR

ERROR.

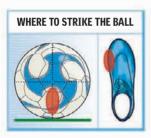
Types of penalty

You have three options when taking a spot kick: attempt to pass the ball into the net, try a cheeky chip, or strike the ball firmly. A penalty struck firmly into the bottom or top corner will register a goal but there is little margin for error; you cannot kick the ball wide



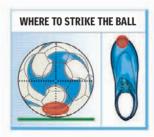
PENALTY PASS

When you place a penalty, you effectively pass the ball into the net. This provides accuracy and is a good option if the keeper has dived early.



POWER SHOT

You sacrifice accuracy for speed with this option and stand a good chance of success if you don't blast the ball wide or high.



PENALTY CHIP

This is the most audacious kind of penalty, but extremely risky. You have to rely on the goalkeeper diving before you make the strike.

PIRES' POOR PENALTY

In October 2005, Arsenal was awarded a penalty in a match against Manchester City. Instead of shooting, Robert Pires opted for the unorthodox but perfectly legal option of knocking the ball for Thierry Henry to strike. However, Pires' touch was so feeble that the ball failed to move and a defender cleared it

THE PENALTY CHIP IS
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DIVING BEFORE YOU MAKE
THE STRIKE.

Goalkeeping

Goalkeeping is so different from other soccer roles that it almost seems to belong to another sport. All players need agility, bravery, a strong physical presence, and good distribution and decisionmaking abilities, but goalkeepers have to have these characteristics in abundance. The three fundamentals that an aspiring goalkeeper needs to master are: stance (being "athletically primed"); body positioning (being aware of angles of attack and your position in relation to the goal); and shot-stopping.

Stance

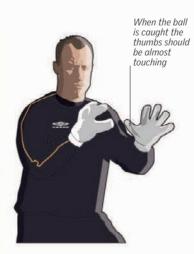
You have to be continually alert to the possibility of a shot, leaning slightly forward so that your weight is on your toes rather than your heels. This places you in the optimum position to dive quickly or run toward an attacker if the situation demands it.

Body positioning

You should always know where you and the ball are relative to the goal. To avoid turning around to check, construct a mental image of the goal area. Imagine a capital "T" with the shaft running through the penalty spot and the cross stroke stretching between the posts.

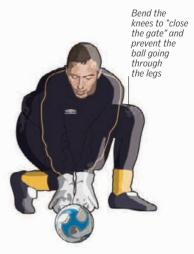
Shot-stopping

The key task for any goalkeeper is knowing how to catch or stop the ball. There are two differing techniques for this depending on whether the ball is traveling along the ground or in the air—the "W" and the "M." Whenever possible, you should attempt to use both your hands when gathering the ball or making a save. Two hands together are stronger and cover more area than one.



THE "W"

The basic hand position when dealing with a shot close to the body and above the waist forms the letter "W" with the thumbs touching and the fingers pointing upward—a good position to catch the ball.

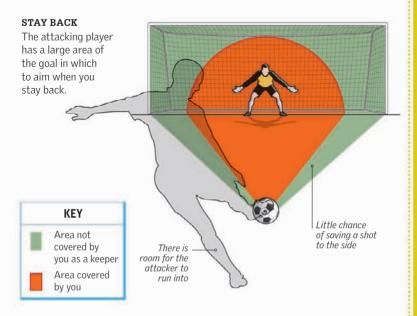


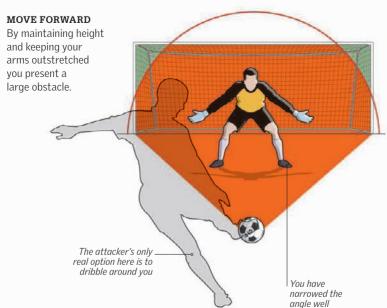
THE "M"

When dealing with a ball that reaches you below waist height and close to the body, you should form a downward pointing "M" with your hands, with the four fingers in the middle squeezed together and the thumbs pointing out.

Narrowing the angle

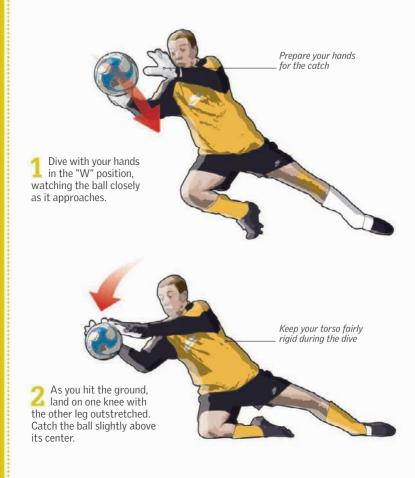
As a goalkeeper, the nearer you are to an attacker running toward you with the ball, the less chance he has of seeing the goal clearly. This method is known as "narrowing the angle." When an attacker is running toward the goal with the ball or charging onto a through pass, you need to decide instantly whether to stay back or run forward. You don't want to be caught in no man's land, where you have run away from the goal but are still not close enough to the ball to prevent or block a shot.

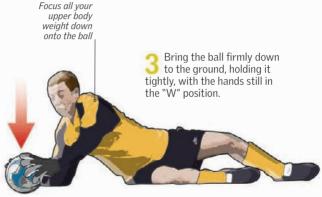




Grounding

When you catch a ball but have no chance of staying on your feet, you need to ground the ball as soon as possible to bring it under control and keep from spilling it into the path of incoming attackers.

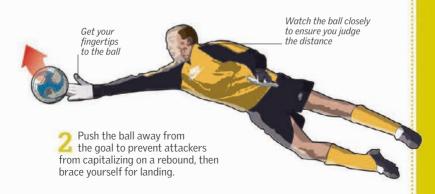




Diving save

The diving save is the most spectacular in a goalkeeper's repertoire. The keys to achieving this successfully are quick reactions, good footwork, and getting into position early.





A THE KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DIVING SAVE ARE QUICK REACTIONS, GOOD FOOTWORK, AND GETTING INTO POSITION EARLY.

A WORD IN YOUR EAR

In the Belgian league in January 2004, Racing Genk's Jan Moons became the first goalkeeper to receive instructions from the bench via an earpiece. His side beat FC Bruges 1–0.

Goalkeeper's roles

Being a good goalkeeper isn't all about eye-catching saves and a strong physical presence. As a keeper, you have a duty to start attacks by distributing the ball well and being the unofficial captain of the team's defense.

DISTRIBUTION DISTANCES

You need to tailor your distribution method to the player you are trying to reach. Often your target will be on the other side of the halfway line, which will usually necessitate a long punt or a half-volley (see opposite).



KEY

- -- Punt
- Half-volley
 Long throw
- -- Roll out
- O Goalkeeper

 N Danger area

LEV YASHIN

The only keeper to be voted European Player of the Year, Yashin played for Dynamo Moscow. He represented the USSR at three World Cups and was known as "The Black Spider" because he played as though he had eight arms.



Distribution

If you catch or pick up the ball while keeping, you have exactly six seconds to put the ball down again and restart play, otherwise you can be penalized. Your goal should be to launch a speedy counterattack, so look up quickly to find a free teammate. There are four methods you can use to start a new attack, each with its own merits.



THE PUNT

Drop the ball from your hands and volley it. It is possible to cover long distances with this technique.



THE HALF-VOLLEY

This is similar to the punt, but here you let the ball hit the ground a fraction of a second before making contact.



THE OVERARM THROW

Grip the ball tightly, then move your throwing arm around in an arc over your shoulder to launch the ball upfield.

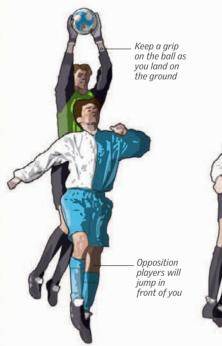


THE ROLL OUT

Rolling the ball out is a good option over short to medium distances and is extremely accurate.

Catch or punch?

While goalkeeping, you have to decide whether to deal with high balls played into the penalty area by catching them, punching them, or staying on your goal line. You should only do the latter if you believe you stand a poor chance of getting to the ball first.



CATCHING THE BALL

Your best option is to catch the ball, since this will end the attack. However, you have to reach the ball unimpeded.



PUNCHING THE BALL

The next best option is to punch the ball. Try to use both your arms although you may be able to get only one to the ball.

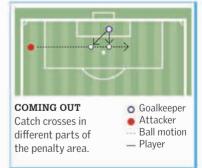
Dealing with crosses

The task of catching a cross or corner is ostensibly a simple one—follow the flight of the ball clearly and time the jump. Complications arise, however, with

the number of players in the penalty area. You must shout loudly to indicate your intentions to the defenders. Also, you must be strong enough to compete with the opposition's attackers.

DEFENDING A CROSS

The secret of defending a cross is all about organization. Defenders need to pick up the players they are supposed to be marking and you need to be authoritative as a keeper.

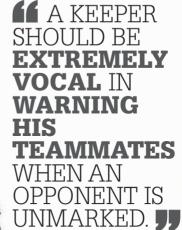


Marshaling the defense

Being a goalkeeper, you are the only player able to see the whole game in front of you. You are best placed to organize defenses for the general benefit of the team.

Under orders

A quiet keeper is not doing his job properly. You should be extremely vocal in warning your teammates when an opponent is unmarked, and in announcing your intention to clear or catch a ball. You should bark orders at your defense when setting up defensive walls, as you alone know where they should stand to give you the best chance of saving a shot.



PETER SCHMEICHEL

The Denmark and Manchester United keeper was a huge physical presence on the field He is 6ft 4in (193m) and wears size XXXI shoes

GOALKEEPING MOMENTS

THE SCORPION KICK

Former Colombian keeper René Higuita performed the "Scorpion kick," bouncing forward onto his hands, arching his back, and kicking the ball away with his heels.

TRAUTMANN'S NECK

Germany's Bert Trautmann came to England as a prisoner of war. He signed for Manchester City in 1949. He played most of the 1956 FA Cup Final with a broken neck.

A GUST OF WIND

Tottenham Hotspur's Pat Jennings scored a famous goalkeeping goal in the 1967 Charity Shield. His clearance was caught by wind and sailed past Manchester United's Alex Stepney.

Tackling

Tackling is hugely important—it's the principal means of wresting possession from the opposition. It is a skill that every member of a team, including forwards, needs to be prepared to use, coining the phrase "defending from the front."

Types of tackle

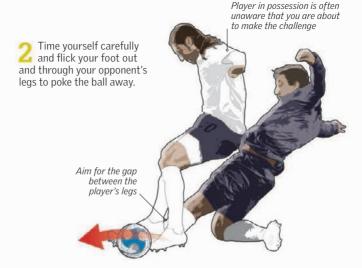
There are several kinds of tackle, each requiring different techniques, but two principles apply to them all. The first is timing: as a good tackler, you should know exactly when to attempt to win the ball. You are likely to miss the ball altogether if you lunge in prematurely. The second is safety, not only in terms of avoiding injury but also in making sure that a clumsy tackle doesn't lead to a free-kick.

Poke tackle

Stay on your feet and poke or prod the ball away from your opponent into the path of a teammate. It is best used when the ball has bounced up between knee and waist height.

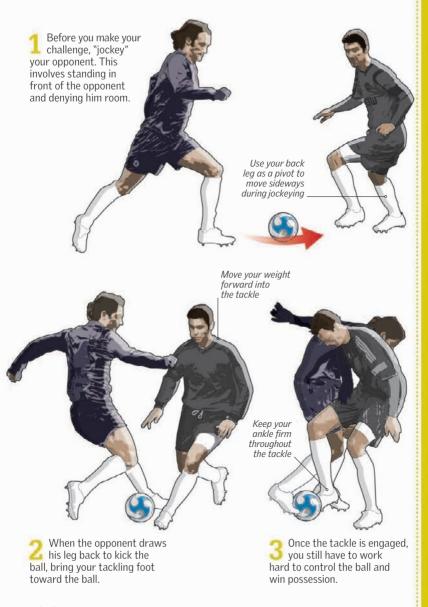
Get yourself as close as possible to your opponent before making the tackle and wait for the ball to come into view.





Block tackle

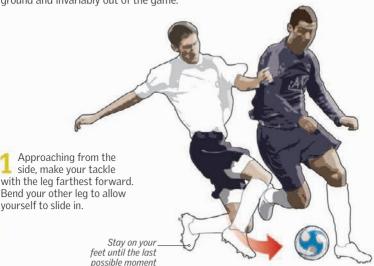
The block tackle is made when a defending player meets an attacker head on. Both players use the inside of their tackling foot, forceably making contact with the ball. Both players stay on their feet. The block tackle is used more often than any other kind of tackle.



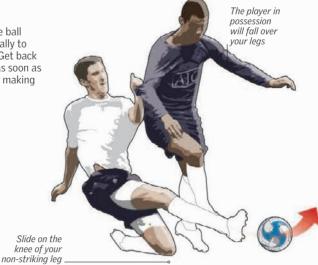
LUNGING IN PREMATURELY IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN YOU MISSING THE BALL ALTOGETHER.

Slide tackle

Both dramatic and emphatic, you should use this technique only when there are no alternatives. This is because you will always end up on the ground and invariably out of the game.



Knock the ball away, ideally to a teammate. Get back on your feet as soon as possible after making the tackle.



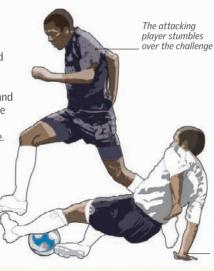
MOORE STOPS BRAZIL

One of the most famous and elegant tackles in history was made during the "Clash of the Champions"—England's encounter with Brazil in the group stages of the 1970 World Cup in Mexico. As Brazil's Jairzinho dribbled menacingly

into the box, Bobby Moore slid in with an immaculate tackle. Technically, he used his "wrong" foot (the one farther upfield) but he rose majestically and carried the ball out of defense as if the challenge had been merely routine.

The "hook" tackle

This is a variation of the slide tackle in which you "hook" your foot around the ball. You begin behind the player in possession at an angle of about 45 degrees Challenge him, and hook your foot around the ball and steal possession. Then pass to a teammate



Use your arm to support your body on the ground



Similar in many ways to the sliding tackle, the recovery tackle is not intended to gain possession or set up a pass to a teammate. It's usually made when an attacker has the hall near the sideline and needs to be stopped from advancing, Your best option is to kick the ball into touch.





OUT OF PLAY

The recovery tackle is used to dispossess an opponent and put the ball out of play.



EXECUTE THE RECOVERY TACKLE WHEN THE ATTACKER NEEDS TO BE STOPPED FROM

ADVANCING.

Freestyle skills

Freestyle soccer is essentially juggling with a ball in as creative a fashion as possible. As in the real game, any part of the body can be used except the hands and the arms. Although most of the skills associated with freestyle soccer are not directly relevant to match play, they are worth mastering as they develop ball control and encourage creativity and improvisation.

The moves

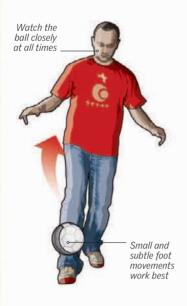
There are many different moves that an aspiring freestyler can learn and, as with other freestyle sports (such as skateboarding), new tricks are constantly being invented. Tricks usually fall into three main categories: juggling (keeping the ball airborne). flick-ups. and catches.

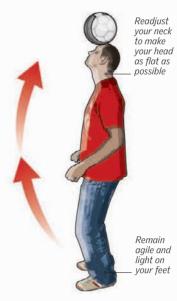
Keepy-uppie

In the simplest form, you have to keep the ball from touching the ground for as long as possible, usually with the feet and head. A fundamental skill, keepy-uppie is also known as juggling.

Head stall

In this trick, you have to balance the ball on your forehead. Keep your eyes on the ball while performing and make small neck and body adjustments to keep it in place.





TRICKS USUALLY FALL INTO THREE MAIN CATEGORIES: JUGGLING, FLICK-UPS, AND CATCHES. JJ

The rainbow

In this trick, you have to flick the ball behind you and then back-heel it over your head before bringing it under control at the front of your body. The flight of the ball forms an arc over your head, hence the trick's name.



Place your weaker foot in front of the ball, touching the heel. Roll the ball a short distance up the back of your ankle with your other foot.



When the ball is just above your heel, hop forward, leading with your stronger foot, and flick up the ball over your head with the weaker one.



Concentration and skill is required to anticipate the path of the ball over your head and onto your feet. Then start juggling.

SOCCER AND CAPOETRA

Young, urban South Americans have developed a soccer version of Capoeira, the Afro-Brazilian dancebased martial art.

TO PERFORM
THE RAINBOW,
FLICK THE BALL
BEHIND YOU, THEN
BACK-HEEL IT OVER
YOUR HEAD BEFORE
BRINGING IT UNDER
CONTROL IN FRONT
OF YOUR BODY.

Around the world

In this trick, you have to kick the ball up in the air during a keepy-uppie session and circle your kicking foot around it before it begins to drop. This must be done smoothly enough to get your foot back in position to continue the juggling at the end of the maneuver. The kicking foot can go around the ball either on the outside (away from the center of your body) or on the inside.



Start by juggling as normal, keeping the ball under close control, then begin the trick by kicking the ball higher than usual.

As the ball rises, circle your foot over the ball, then control it and continue juggling as it drops.

MAJOR FREESTYLE TOURNAMENTS

The rules may not have been standardized, and the sport may lack an official governing body, but there have been several self-proclaimed freestyle world championships over the years.

MASTERS OF THE GAME I

An organization called "Masters of the Game" held a tournament at the Amsterdam Arena, Netherlands, in 2003. It was won by South Korea's Mr. Woo.

MASTERS OF THE GAME II

The second Masters of the Game world championship was held in 2006 and was won by the UK's John Farnworth.

KOMBALL KONTEST

The Komball Kontest held in France in 2008 introduced a new format for freestyle competitions. Sixteen participants performed individually in front of three judges, with the best eight progressing to a knockout phase. Ireland's Nam "the Man" Ngueyen was crowned European soccer freestyle champion.

RED BULL STREET STYLE

In 2008, the Red Bull Street Style world finals were held in São Paulo, Brazil. A panel judged the participants on ball control, technique, style, and their ability to synchronize their movements with background music.

Unofficial world championships

Although the sport is not vet organized by a universally recognized international body several self-proclaimed freestyle world championships have taken place. They have spawned numerous freestyle stars, such as Mr. Woo. John Farnworth, Nam the Man, and Arnaud Garnier.

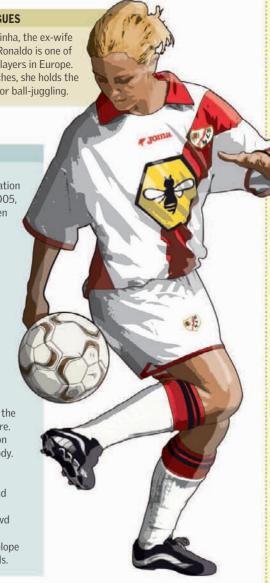
FREESTYLE PERFORMERS ARE MARKED ON THE **VARIETY** AND DIFFICULTY OF TRICKS PERFORMED.

MILENE DOMINGUES Known as Ronaldinha, the ex-wife of Brazilian star Ronaldo is one of the best female players in Europe With 55.198 touches, she holds the women's record for ball-juggling.

THE JUDGES' BRIEF

According to the World Freestyle Football Association (WFFA), established in 2005. performers should be given scores out of 10 in the following categories:

- Control: demonstrating and maintaining ball control using various parts of the body.
- Transitions: moving fluidly from one trick to the next
- Use of both feet.
- Use of the entire body, except hands.
- Combinations: including consistently completing the same move twice or more.
- Sticks: stalling the ball on different parts of the body.
- Variety of tricks.
- Level of difficulty.
- Creativity: originality and imagination shown in performance, using crowd reaction as a guide.
- Blotto: pushing the envelope of the sport to new levels.



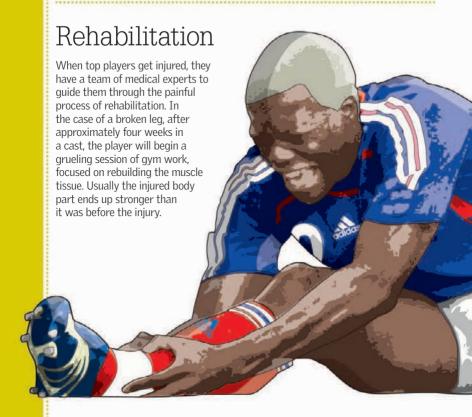
Injuries

Soccer does not have the frequency of contact injuries sustained in rugby and football. However, players' twists and turns put huge stresses on their joints, and tackles and collisions at high speed can be serious. At the top level, injuries are inevitable but can still affect a side's season or even shape a soccer player's entire career.

Injury facts

The most common months for injuries are during pre-season training and the season's early months, when muscles are comparatively untrained. The most common moments in games to get injured are the two 15-minute periods at the end of both halves. Eighty percent of injuries are severe enough to rule players out of at least one match—the average number of matches missed is as high as four.

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COMMON SOCCER INJURIES	
AREA OF BODY	INJURY/DESCRIPTION
HEAD	CUTS—general abrasions suffered in the course of play CONCUSSION—result of an impact to the head
BACK	MUSCLE STRAIN—caused by excessive spinal stretching SLIPPED DISK—the pain of a vertebrae pushing on a nerve
ARMS	FRACTURE—usually as a result of an awkward fall DISLOCATION—whereby a bone is dislodged from its socket
LEGS (UPPER)	GROIN STRAIN—overstretching of the groin muscles DEAD LEG—loss of feeling of movement from hard blow HAMSTRING STRAIN OR TEAR—usually incurred while running at high speed
KNEES	CRUCIATE LIGAMENT DAMAGE—overbending or rotation of the knee TORN CARTILAGE—damage to the knee's shock absorbers
LEGS (LOWER)	CALF STRAIN—overstretching of the lower leg SHIN SPLINTS—hard impact to the shin
ANKLES AND FEET	TWISTED OR BROKEN ANKLE—caused by rapid turning or a bad tackle ACHILLES STRAIN—strained tendon in the heel METATARSAL FRACTURE—fractured foot bones

