




**THE
COACHING
MANUAL**



**SPRING COACH
CURRICULUM
PACK - U4**

SPRING 2024 INTRODUCTION

12 weeks is not much time at all, it will fly by. With only 12 hours of training, you have to be realistic about what you and your players will learn from the season. However, if we're going to keep youngsters on the soccer pathway, it's vital that little by little, they make the improvements which will ignite a genuine passion for the game.

The Coaching Manual is here to support you and ensure that your players and you come out of the season having improved.

This guide for coaches who are working with U4 has been built from a technical framework that has been developed with some of the greatest soccer minds in the world game at every level.

The guiding principles for this age group are simplicity and patience. You are not going to turn U4 players into superstars after one season, but you do have an opportunity to start to develop some of the most important building blocks that youngsters need in order to create a lifelong love of soccer and that's what this curriculum guide will help you do.

SPRING 2024 OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the Spring season for U4 fall into two brackets. What you, as the coach, will be confident in at the end of the season and what outcomes we are aiming for with players at this age.

Learning soccer is all about gradual improvements over a long period of time, it's why children have to start learning the game young. It's the world's most popular sport, but it's also one of the world's most technically challenging sports. By the end of Spring...

Coach Objectives

1. ...you will be confident in teaching basic ball mastery techniques: Toe Taps, Inside Outside and Drag Taps
2. ...you will feel comfortable about correcting technique with your players
3. ...you will be more confident about coaching soccer.

Player Objectives

1. ...your players will be able to perform the basic ball mastery moves: Toe Taps, Inside Outside and Drag Taps
2. ...your players will have become used to keeping the ball inside the lines
3. ...your players will be used to the structure of soccer and a coaching session

HOW TO COACH

6 important things to remember for every session you deliver:

The soccer ball is the world's most popular toy

It's great fun to play with and it's even more fun with friends. This means fun is implicit, you don't need to manufacture fun. As long as you start and end with a game, they will have a great time.

You don't need to over complicate things

Too many practices in a session means you spend a lot of time setting things up and kids spend more time learning the session than the actual skills. Keep it simple and they'll get more time on the ball.

Make sure they get lots of opportunity to play

It's their game. Whilst you're there to teach them they need space to work things out and express themselves. Stopping things too often can be counter productive, so try to be concise with feedback

You are working with young children

You have to be encouraging and patient. Some of them might not be able to do the skills, don't worry, it's just an age thing. Also, little humans are brilliant at listening, even when you don't think they are.

If you can, try to involve the parents

Involve all the stakeholders, they'll appreciate it. You can even send them the curriculum that you are working from, they will love that you are taking so much care of the development of their kids.

If they improve, they will want to keep coming back

There's a risk in modern coaching that we sit back and observe. If you can help a player get something right (and praise them for it), their learning will accelerate and they'll enjoy it more.

THE BALL MASTERY SKILLS

The 3 Ball Mastery Skills for this Spring are Toe Taps, Drag Taps and Inside Outside.

These skills are the perfect introduction for young players because it teaches them to use the inside, outside and sole of the foot. They also start building the neural connections between the brain and the feet, so they help with agility, coordination and balance which are all vital in soccer. Watch the videos and learn how they work.

TIP: Share these skills with your parents, so the players can learn at home!

Toe Taps - <https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Content/1725>

Alternate the feet to use the sole of the foot to tap the ball. Make sure the players don't move the ball too much. Tip: With young players this will have to be done at walking pace and they might need to put both feet on the floor between each rep and that's fine. Repeat this skill through Spring and aim for them picking up the speed by the end of the season

Inside Outside - <https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Content/2252>

Move the ball forward by alternating touching it with the inside of the foot and then the outside. This is Messi's most used skill. Tip: Go slow and to begin with focus on the players stronger foot, there's plenty of time to work on the other foot later. By the end of the season players should be able to do this skill quicker than at the start.

Drag Taps - <https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Content/1313>

A brilliant activity for teaching coordination and helping children really concentrate on the technique. The player drags the ball towards themselves and then gently taps it forward with the same foot. Can be a head scratcher. Tip: focus on the technique whilst stood still and with their stronger foot to begin with, so they can build that muscle memory

MAIN COMPONENTS OF DEVELOPMENT



**Learn one new
thing**



Sweating



Smiling

4 CORNER MODEL



SOCIAL



**'BALL'
TECHNICAL**

**'BODY'
PHYSICAL**

**'GAME'
TACTICAL**

**'MIND'
PSYCHOLOGICAL**

WHERE CAN WE PRACTICE THESE TECHNIQUES?

HOME

Me and my Ball

Practice the techniques on my own, challenging myself to get better and better at specific techniques

“The longer a player actually plays with the ball, the better their ‘feel’ for it.”

- Don Howe

WITH FRIENDS

Me, my ball and friend(s)

Uninterrupted play with my friends, playing on different surfaces and areas to refine my technique or challenging each other

Soccer is the most beautiful game. We can play it in the street. We can play it everywhere.

- Johan Cruyff

TRAINING

Me, my ball and teammates

Put things into practice and work with the my teammates to focus on not only my technique but the principles of play

The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.

- Phil Jackson

PLAY



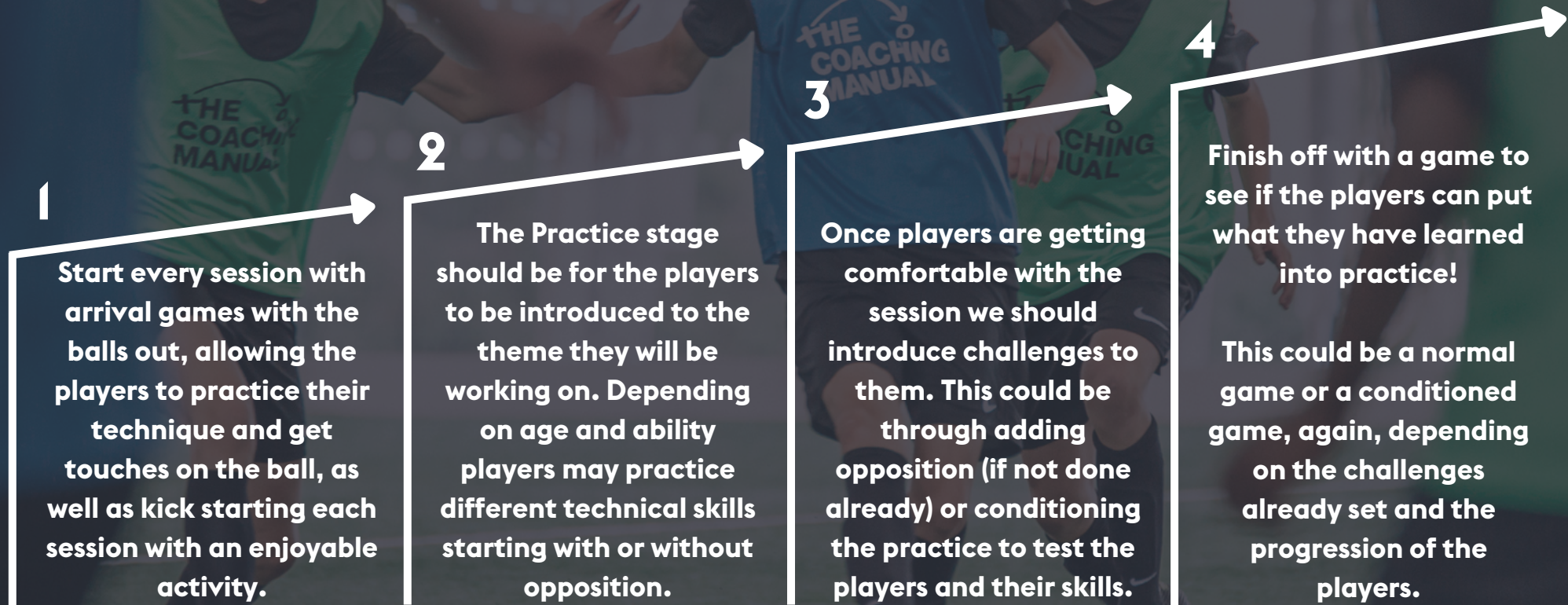
PRACTICE



PROGRESS



PLAY



1
Start every session with arrival games with the balls out, allowing the players to practice their technique and get touches on the ball, as well as kick starting each session with an enjoyable activity.

2
The Practice stage should be for the players to be introduced to the theme they will be working on. Depending on age and ability players may practice different technical skills starting with or without opposition.

3
Once players are getting comfortable with the session we should introduce challenges to them. This could be through adding opposition (if not done already) or conditioning the practice to test the players and their skills.

4
Finish off with a game to see if the players can put what they have learned into practice!

This could be a normal game or a conditioned game, again, depending on the challenges already set and the progression of the players.

60m

15 minutes

15 minutes

15 minutes

15 minutes

90m

25 minutes

20 minutes

20 minutes

25 minutes

Organisation

Management

Coaching

PLAY

PRACTICE

PROGRESS

PLAY

High

S
U
C
C
E
S
S

Achievement Line

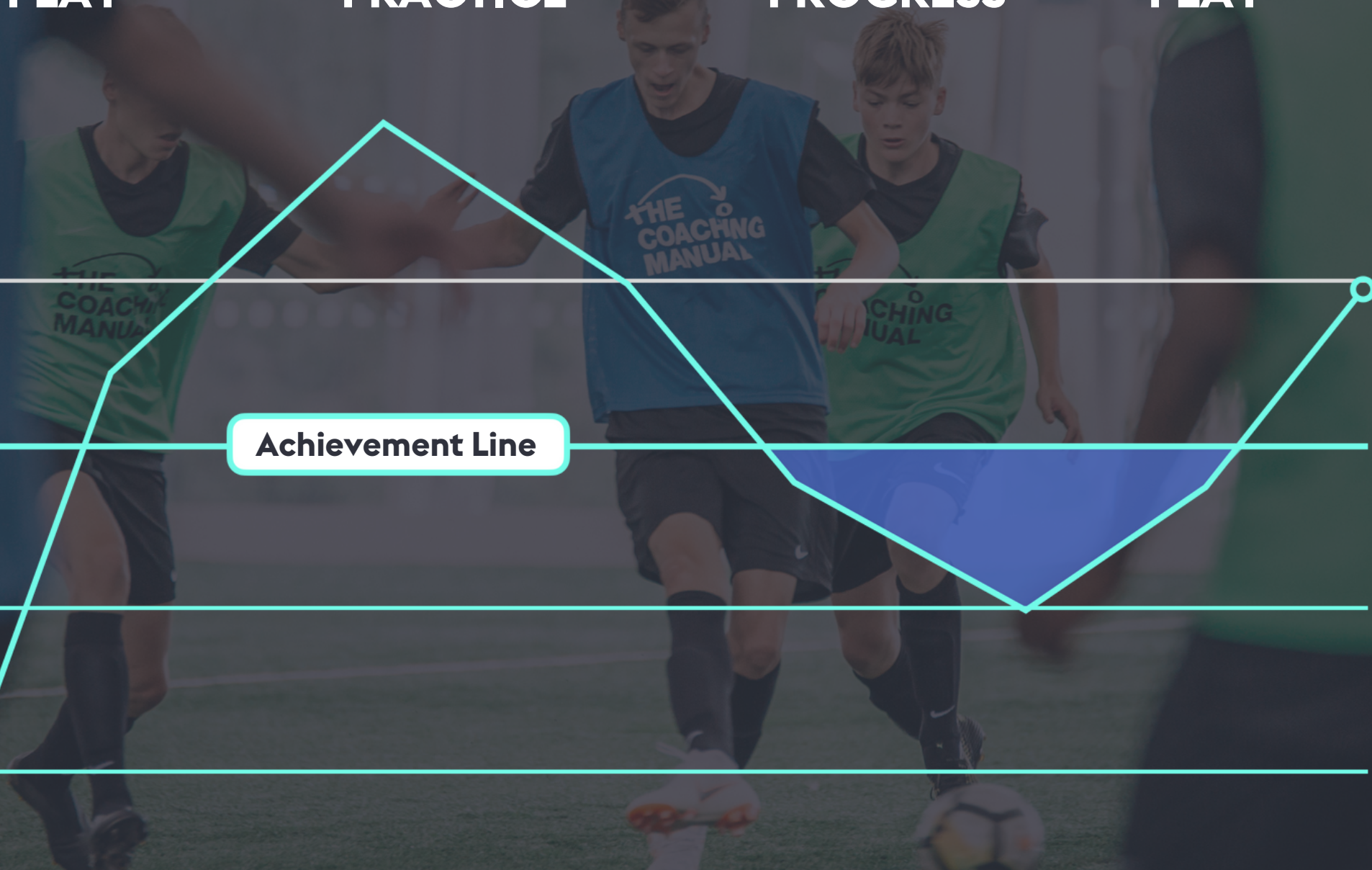
Low

INTRO

PRACTICE

CHALLENGE

ADAPT



THE SEASON PLAN

There's no need to spend any time planning this Spring, we've taken care of it for you and have crafted an age specific curriculum which will help you and your players meet your objectives. At the end of the season, you'll be more confident and your players will be better players.

The plan is built around a play-practice-play model, which gives the players lots of repetition.

The plan also repeats sessions to give your players a chance to show how much they've improved from the first time they did it.

WEEK 1 - MOVE TO IMPROVE

Week 1 is about starting to develop some of the fundamental movements needed for soccer, like quick changes of direction

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18581>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - Using 3v3 (4v4 or 5v5) arrival game means you can get games going as soon as even 2 players arrive and you can add players as they arrive for practice! Tip: Put 2 piles of different coloured pinnies by the side, so you can tell them to put one on as they arrive.
- **Part 2 - Group Ball Mastery** - Every player needs a ball, we're learning Toe-Taps!
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - This simple game teaches players the movements they will need to play soccer. It's a simple activity but mastering this can have lifelong benefits!
- **Part 4 - Game** - Use cones if you don't have 4 small goals. Encourage players to try to control the ball with the bottom of their foot (toe taps) and ask them to move when they don't have the ball like they did in the group practice!

WEEK 2 - BALL MASTERY

Week 2 is about embedding some of the learning from last week. It's like a reverse onion, we're building these players one small layer at a time

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18582>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - Using the same arrival activity throughout the season, will help players get into the right frame of mind when they come to practice!
- **Part 2 - Technical Practice** - Let's see if we can improve Toe Taps from week 1, hopefully they've been practicing at home!
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - Traffic lights teaches awareness, agility and balance and change of pace!
- **Part 4 - Game** - Can the players stop and move to create chances to score?

WEEK 3 - DRIBBLING

Time to create little Messis

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18583>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - 3v3, by now the players might even start playing without being asked!
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - The players might be picking up the pace with Toe Taps now!
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - Skills corridor is used worldwide to build control when dribbling. Stay in the lines!
- **Part 4 - Game** - Encourage dribbling in this game. When they get the ball, can they move with it?

WEEK 4 - 1v1 ATTACKING

Week 4 will start to get players tuned in to beating their opponent 1v1

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18584>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - As soon as they arrive, they join a game. Simple.
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - Your players will be showing Toe Taps improvement by now and you can correct them when they get it wrong. Tip: slow it down if they're struggling!
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - Simple 1v1 with loads of reps. Don't worry about success, we're planting seeds here!
- **Part 4 - Game** - 6 goals = lots of opportunity to score. Can they beat a player and score a goal?

WEEK 5 - MOVE TO IMPROVE

Repetition is key for young players. Week 5 takes us back to the week 1 theme

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18585>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - They won't be hanging around waiting to start now, they'll be straight into the thick of the action
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - Drag Taps is challenging, it's a step up from Toe Taps, but they will have the foundation in place to do this skill now
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - A soccer tag game, which will get the fun and energy levels sky high
- **Part 4 - Game** - Can we use the movements we used in the tag game to beat a player? Just don't forget to take the ball with you!

WEEK 6 - BALL MASTERY

Focused ball mastery this week, but we're learning a new skill

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18586>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - 3v3, 4v4 or 5v5. Lay the bibs out and start the session strong!
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - Have you been practicing Drag Taps at home?
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - You can use any players you want for the lines, but this gets them thinking hard. Keep in the lines!
- **Part 4 - Game** - Let's see them put some of their new skills into practice!

WEEK 7 - DRIBBLING

Yes, there's a pattern developing here. We're repeating the themes through the plan because learners love repetition

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18587>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - Should need no introduction now. Arrive, play!
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - We should be seeing some real gains on this skill now!
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - Start this without a ball to get them used to it, then add the balls and watch chaos unfold!
- **Part 4 - Game** - Focus on dribbling in the game, their marking might have improved too!

WEEK 8 - IV1 ATTACKING

Week 8 aims to take our IV1 attacking up a level!

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18588>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - Off to a flying start!
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - Players should all have a decent grasp of drag taps by now.
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - If the defender doesn't come to you, try to score as quickly as you can. Goalkeepers are optional!
- **Part 4 - Game** - Dribbling line ball is a great game. Players have to dribble to the line and stop the ball to score

WEEK 9 - MOVE TO IMPROVE

In the words of Coldplay, let's go back to the start! Our final block in this plan gives us the chance to see how much the players' movement has improved!

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18589>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - Grab a pinny and let's go!
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - Our last block has us working on one of the most important dribbling skills! Inside/Outside!
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - Let's develop some speed, agility and quickness with our players
- **Part 4 - Game** - Lot's of goal scoring opportunities in this game. What happens if you introduce a second ball?

WEEK 10 - BALL MASTERY

Let's really build the Inside/Outside skill this week, if they get it wrong, go in and help them get it right!

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18590>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - Players will be champing at the bit every time they come to practice!
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - Can we increase the speed of Inside/Outside?
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - Focus on Inside/Outside but with some target cones to increase control!
- **Part 4 - Game** - Time to put those skills to the test!

WEEK 11 - DRIBBLING

How much have our dribbling skills improve these last few weeks?

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18657>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - You probably don't even need to ask anymore!
- **Part 2 - Group Technical Practice** - Our Inside/Outside skills should be getting better. Make sure everyone is doing it right!
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - You can probably do this exercise with balls from the beginning now.
- **Part 4 - Game** - We're combining some skills in this game, so it's going to be chaotic!

WEEK 12 - IV1 ATTACKING

Wow, where did the time go? Here we are in our last week, so let's check in to see what we've learned.

<https://app.thecoachingmanual.com/Session/18658>

- **Part 1 - Arrival Game** - There are no latecomers anymore are there?
- **Part 2 - Technical Practice** - Let's check in on Inside/Outside but let's also through some Toe Taps and Drag Taps into the mix, just to remind ourselves what we've learned.
- **Part 3 - Group Practice** - This looks familiar. We're still not expecting loads of success cos this is hard. The players will have a much better understanding of IV1 now!
- **Part 4 - Game** - It's celebration time, who can show us the skills they've learned, the moves they've learned and are they even thinking more about what to do!

Well Done, you made it!

Now it's time to reflect and give yourself (and your players) a huge pat on the back!