

2 - First Touch and Control

Every time they our players make a poor first touch in a game we are likely to give the ball away to the other team so it is important to keep on improving. The key to a good first touch is being relaxed and focused. If a young player thinks they will be told off for getting it wrong they will probably fail.

Provide practice regularly, little and often, and include work using both feet. All the unopposed short passing drills can be used with the emphasis on the touch rather than the pass. Additional drills are also listed below.

Explain and demonstrate the difference between cushion and wedge control and how to move the ball away from pressure into space on the first touch.

To coach control of long and high passes begin with easy serves and gradually increase the level of difficulty.

Coaching Points - Observe the following details:

- ✓ Is the player alert and playing on their toes, do they look ready to react to the movement of the ball?
- ✓ Does the player move into the line of the ball early? Any delay in reacting will make control more difficult
- ✓ They should get themselves right across the line of the ball and not end up chasing after it
- ✓ Concentration is vital, do they keep their head steady and watch the movement of the ball carefully?
- ✓ If the pass is under-hit do they move quickly down the line of the ball to meet it?
- ✓ To cushion the ball the foot needs to be off ground and withdrawn at the moment of contact "*soft ankle*"
- ✓ Check that they use the inside area, or top of outside of the foot to make a controlling touch on ground pass
- ✓ Contact should be with the horizontal mid-line of the ball or above to prevent it skipping up on 1st touch
- ✓ To wedge the ball sweep across the top of it with the inside or outside of the foot
- ✓ With a high ball the player should make an early decision on what surface they will use to control it
- ✓ Make sure they keep their eyes open and observe the flight of the ball
- ✓ Chest, thigh, instep & outside of foot - "*relax*" and withdraw surface on contact to cushion the ball
- ✓ The ball should not be allowed to bounce, move along line of ball to meet it as early as possible
- ✓ If under pressure does the player redirect ball into space on first touch and pass it on early?

Useful Drills

1	Criss-Cross	10	Up, Back and Through	22	Triangles
2	Diamond Drill	12	Big Touch	23	The Square
3	Zig-Zag	13	Back Foot	27	Five v Three
4	Empty Corner	14	Man On	30	Mixed Passing
5	Figure of Eight	15	Let it Run	31	Quarters
6	Square Dance	16	Next	55	Go Then Show
7	Pass 'n' Move	17	Long Ball	76	Head Tennis
9	Two Steps Forward...	18	Hi Ball	77	Chips