

Indoor Technique Training: The Basics

by Klaus Pabst, German Staff Coach

Everyone agrees that perfect technique is essential for an attractive and successful game, and age-appropriate basic training is essential for learning technical skills. To learn basic techniques, players need to practice them again and again over a long period of time, ultimately using them in exercises with opposition pressure.

In winter, the gym can be an ideal place to practice technique. The limited space, even floor surface and opportunity to use the walls all speed up the game and make it more technically demanding. And you don't have to worry about inclement weather conditions (wind, cold, soft and mushy ground), which makes technique training even easier.

This article will summarize major concepts and attributes for each of the basic soccer techniques. This information can help coaches make corrections. We will also tell you the best way to use indoor training equipment for each exercise, and we also give some basic advice on organizing an efficient practice session. These sample exercises are intended primarily as suggestions: As a coach, you have to evaluate your players' abilities and decide which exercises are appropriate for them. Of course, by making small changes to the rules, adding extra rules or changing the setup, you can make any exercise harder or easier. We've also included some tips to help you organize these exercises and use them in your own training program.

Indoor training can be an excellent opportunity for players, especially the very young, to work on coordination and effectively improve their technical skills. Indoor training equipment can open up a whole new world of possibilities for the inventive youth coach!

Dribbling & Faking

- Take your eyes off the ball and look at the ground about three yards ahead of it.
- Keep the ball close! Touch it with the active foot often, preferably with every step you take.
- Keep your body between the ball and your opponent, so you can protect it. Always dribble with the foot farther away from your opponent.
- Use fakes intelligently.

Indoor Training

- Use lines on the gym floor as dribbling paths, with different colors for different dribbling styles (e.g. step-overs on the blue lines and shooting fakes on red).
- Use boxes, medicine balls, etc. as dribbling obstacles.
- Set up interesting dribbling par courses using various items.

Passing & Shooting

- Make sure your foot makes solid contact with the ball.

- Depending on the type of kick, either stretch your foot (point toes at the ground) or flex it (pull them up toward your shin).
- After your foot strikes the ball, follow through with the whole leg.
- On shots, take careful aim at an open corner of the goal.
- Always move to meet a pass.

Indoor Training

- Use walls and long benches as "passing stations."
- Use soft mats, boxes, and long benches as "goals" for shooting practice.
- Use soft mats to teach players spectacular shooting techniques (bicycle kick, hip-turn side volley, etc.).
- Use boxes as targets for shooting competitions.

Ball Control

- Move to meet the ball and let your foot "give" a little as it makes contact.
- For passes on the ground, raise your foot slightly so the ball can't roll over it.
- Always control the ball in a free space away from opponents.
- On passes in the air, don't let the ball bounce: It wastes time and increases your risk of losing the ball.

Indoor Training

- Use long benches as passing stations and "walls" for wall passes to help players learn to control balls on the ground.
- Incorporate the wall as a passing station and allow players to throw or kick high balls against the wall, to help them learn to control balls in the air as well.

Heading

- Pull your chin in to your chest and tense your neck muscles.
- Keep your eyes open as long as possible and watch the incoming ball (follow it with your eyes).
- Bend back from the waist; this provides the "wind-up" you need to hit the ball.
- Meet the ball at the top of your jump.
- Take a long running start.

Indoor Training

- Have players practice heading on the hard and soft mats (improves motivation).
- Use mats etc. as targets for heading competitions. To make this exercise even more effective, divide players into smaller groups.
- Set up a "basket shooting" (heading) competition on the basketball courts.
- Use the gym equipment to build a heading course with various stations.