

The **England** DNA

Every coach, parent and volunteer involved with the development of young players wants to do the best that they can. As each new season approaches thoughts will turn to preparing the players for the season and you may even have young players joining your team and its preparations for the very first time.

The pre-season period is **NOT** the same as the preparation an adult player might be involved in so as you read the guidelines and advice that follows you should always remember:



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

The **England** DNA top tips for getting your players ready to play:

- You are coaching children. Allow it to be enjoyable, exciting and very active (this is perfect preparation for any stage of the season)
- Get the children running, chasing, dodging, jumping, twisting and turning (the activities that follow will help you with this)
- Play lots of small-sided games of different numbers and on pitches of different sizes
- Create something so special that the players cannot wait for the next session



The **England** DNA: Getting our young players ready to play

When thinking about how we might prepare our young players after returning from any prolonged break there are a number of things to think about:

- At times during the first one or two weeks involve all the players as one big group (or two smaller groups) working in larger areas. This lowers the intensity at the start and eases the players back into action. Getting them playing matches is a great thing to include early on.
- Then, each week, think about how you can make it slightly harder for the players by increasing the time spent on the task.(These are the building blocks). Smaller groups in smaller areas can begin to be introduced over the coming weeks.



The **England** DNA: Getting our young players ready to play (continued)

- If you train more than **once** a week try to vary the kind of the sessions i.e. (Try to change the theme so that the players are not always undertaking the same repetitive actions).
- Look to include activities that are fun to be involved in. Include throwing and catching (tag rugby or dodge ball is a great warm up). **Get them laughing and out of breath.**

The **England** DNA: Getting our young players ready to play

- Warm-ups for our young players have to be engaging, enjoyable and active.
- Ensure they are introduced to a wide range of movements
- **All** sessions should be **FUN** so include a ball where possible
- Play lots of matches of different numbers on different sizes of area (as a rule of thumb remember: early on include some large numbers, large area activities— later on, smaller numbers, smaller areas, even it is just for parts of the session)
- Respect each child as an individual and adapt the session or challenge for them. Over the 6 weeks (and throughout the season) try to pair or group players together for different outcomes so that their individual needs are met more often.



WEEK ONE

- Enjoyment
- Activity
- Football

PLAN

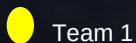
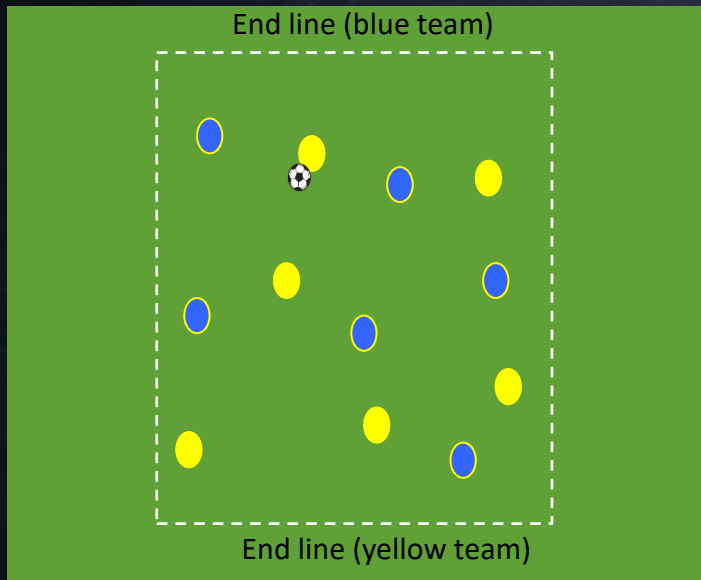
DO

REVIEW

Children need
the freedom and
time to play.
Play is not a
luxury.
Play is a
necessity.



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase



Team 1



Team 2



Ball

Crazy handball

Organisation: This game can accommodate lots of players and is a good physical warm up for young players as it involves the ball in hand and lots of dodging, running, stopping and starting. The game shown is 6v6 but this can be altered depending on numbers. Make the area appropriate so that it challenges the player's movement skills and keeps the game competitive.

How to play: The yellow team starts with possession of the ball in the hands. The activity is a game of **handball** but with a difference – the ball has to be thrown over the head backwards until you are close enough to run over the line (you can catch and run over the line from 2m out).

Players can run for 3 or 4 steps with the ball when attacking but then they must throw the ball backwards over their head. Hopefully, a teammate is there to catch it, repeat and move forwards towards the end line ready to score. If blues intercept they play to the same rules.



ENGLAND DNA

Foundation Phase

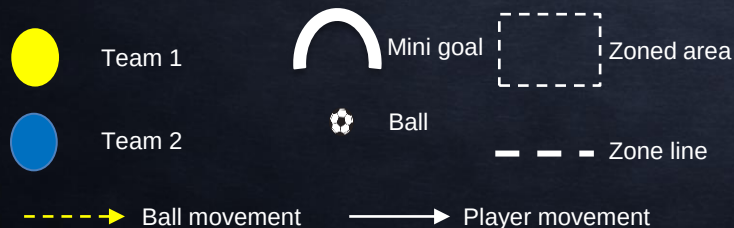
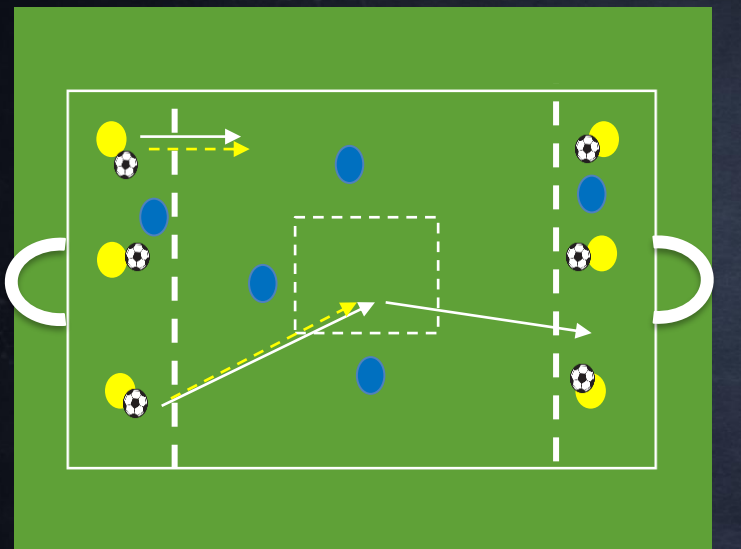
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Master the ball



Organisation: There are two 5m zones at either end as in the diagram. One blue defender is placed in either end zone. There are three blue defenders placed in the middle zone. The yellow players at each end have a ball.

How to play: In the end zones yellow players try to keep possession of the ball from the blue player until they see an opportunity to travel across to the other side of the grid. There are two ways to do this:

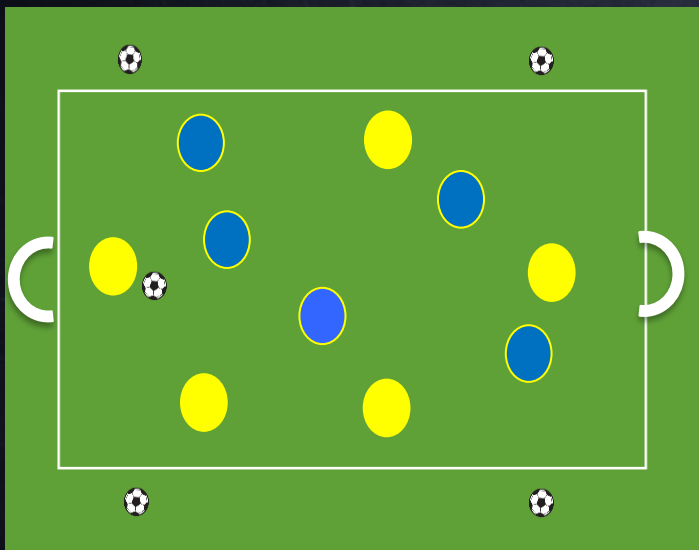
- 1 If the yellow player travels to the other side of the grid without losing the ball to a blue defender they gain a point for their team.
- 2 If the yellow attacker travels through the central zone and out to the other side they gain 5 team points because it is harder.

If the blue player steals possession of the ball s/he can dribble into an end zone and score in a goal. The yellow player can try to get the ball back before this happens. If the blue defender scores they gain a point for their team and the yellow player retrieves their ball to start again.

Swap players around to give a chance to play with a ball and without.



DNA Focus: Excite with the ball and seek creative solutions



Attacker/team 1



Ball



Defender/team 2



Mini goal

Organisation: 5v5 on mini pitches but large enough to be able to spend time on the ball.

How to play: Play 5v5 trying to score. If the ball goes out players can dribble or pass in to restart the game. Play is continuous so have ball placed around the outside.

Encourage players to experiment and try different ways to be creative.

Challenges 1 - Try to stay on the ball until you can pass forward

Challenges 2 - Try to have as many touches as you can whilst keeping the ball for you team.

This game can be played with and without GK's.



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

Technical

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After a movement warm up and some individual fun with the ball get the players into matches. The last activity was a larger numbered game so you might just continue with this in the first week back.

Remember: At this stage in week one include some larger number games, larger areas (but not bigger than they would normally play on) at some point to ease players back into the routine.

Play is the beginning of knowledge!

WEEK TWO

- More enjoyment
- More activity
- More football

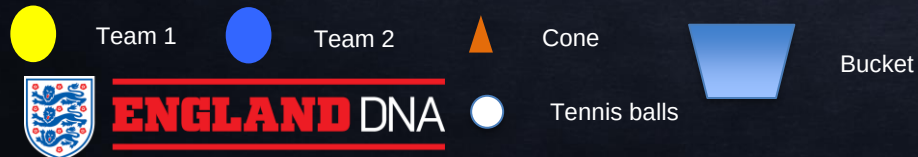
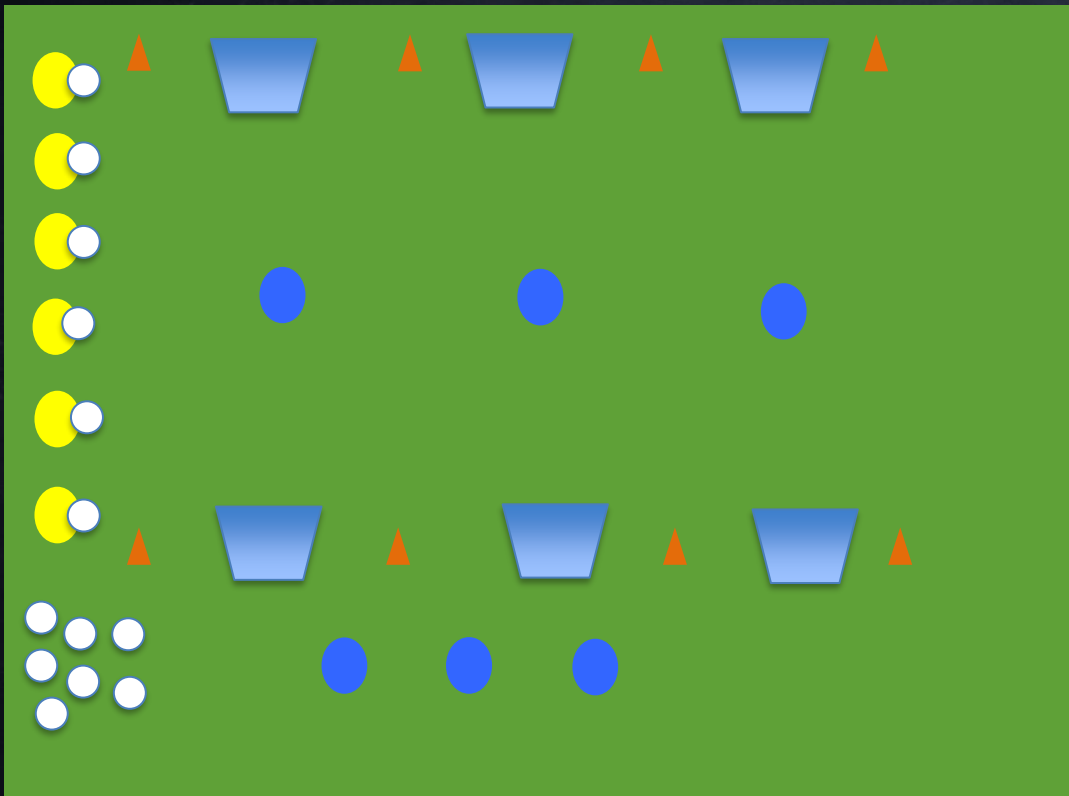
Play is our
brains
favourite
way of
learning



ENGLAND DNA

Foundation Phase

DNA Focus: Physical literacy 9-12 years



Practice Name: The "Gauntlet"

Organisation: The game is set up as shown but this can be adapted depending upon numbers. The game shows 6 Yellow v 3 Blue but because the yellow team get two goes this means that the second group of 3 resting blues can come on. Or, have more buckets so that every blue can defend two buckets.

How to play: The yellow team have a huge supply of tennis balls (or bean bags) and they pick them up one at a time. They run to put the ball into any of the buckets but obviously there is a blue guard for every two buckets. The blue guards are locked into the area marked by the cones. The buckets at the far end are worth more points but obviously involve more risk. Place the ball in the bucket to score then go and get another. If you are tagged just go back to the start and have another go. Play for a short time then change the players over and total up the scores.

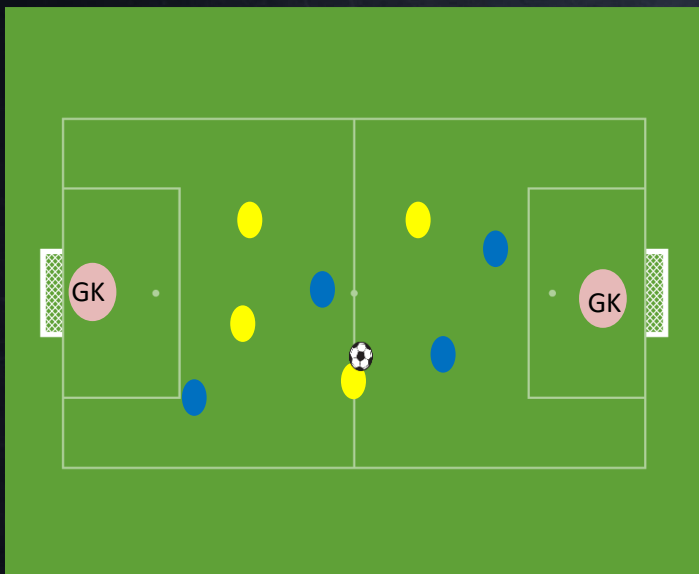
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Excite with the ball and seek creative solutions



 Attacker/team 1  Ball

 Defender/team 2

 Goalkeeper 2



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Foundation Phase

Organisation: Pitch size related to your teams format in your age group 4v4/5v5 / 6V6 etc. If the ball goes out, players can dribble or pass in to teammates to restart.

How to play: Give related challenges in relation to the topics,

Challenge 1 - Try to score without using a team mate

Challenge 2 – Try to stay on the ball until you can pass forward

Challenge 3 – Try to have as many touches as you can whilst keeping the ball for your team

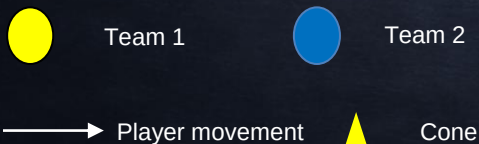
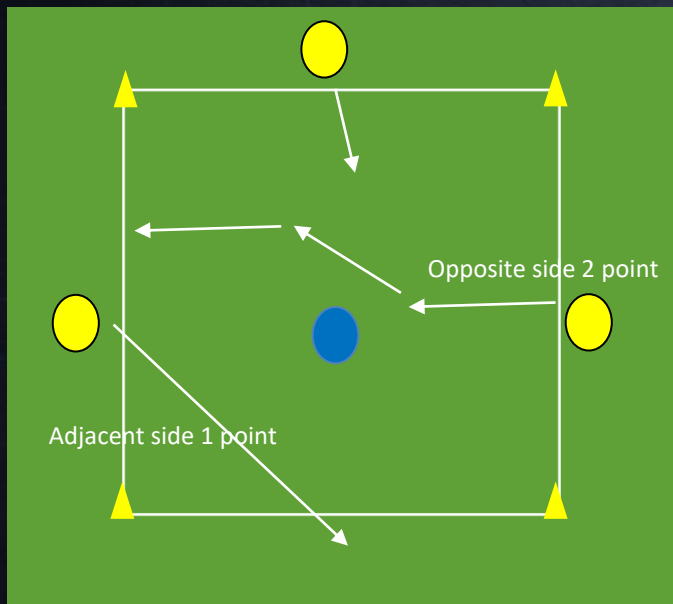
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Developing and refining agility, speed and awareness of space.



Organisation: Suitable squares are marked out with cones. 3 players start on the outside of the square with bibs placed in the SIDE of their shorts like a tail.

How to play:

The middle player tries to steal the bib as players travel across the square to get to different sides. Team points are given for successful runs across (higher the risk-higher the points). If the middle player steals a bib players change places and roles.

Points:

- Running to an adjacent side without losing the bib 1 point
- Running to the opposite side without losing the bib 2 points

The middle 'tagger' can change with a player on the outside when s/he has stolen the bib

Add a ball

- For all players
- For just players on the outside (tagger is 'live')

After a different movement warm up and some other individual fun with the ball get the players into matches again.

Remember: This is only week two so still larger number games, larger areas (but not bigger than they would normally play on)

Help them find out what the game is all about and the part they might play in it. For some players the number of games they have played might be small. They need practice as this is what our training prepares them for.

“Children learn as they play.

More importantly, in play the coach can help children learn how to learn.

WEEK THREE.

Can we include even:

- More enjoyment
- More activity
- More football

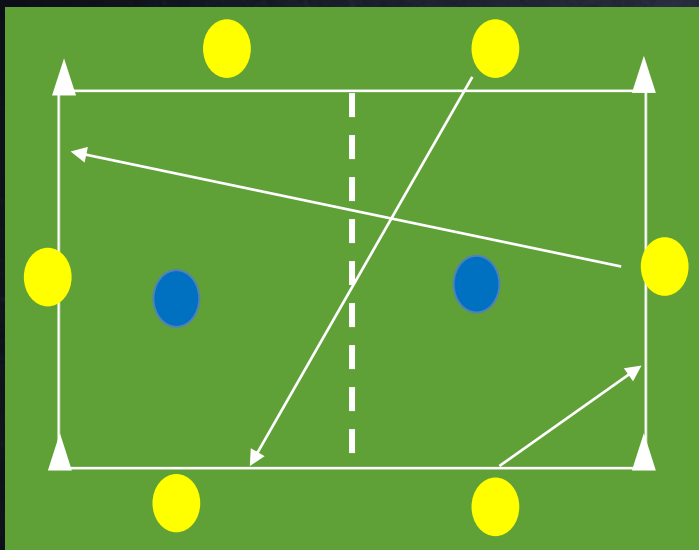
Almost all
creativity
involves
purposeful
play.



ENGLAND DNA

Foundation Phase

DNA Focus: Instinctive decision making



Organisation: Set up as shown. 6 players (yellow) are placed around the outside of the area. (More players can be used if required)
How to play: Yellow players place a bib in the SIDE of their shorts and attempt to travel the longest distance across the area without a Blue defender stealing their bib. If this happens the players change roles.

Risk v Reward. Help players understand this. The opposite side is a long way away and you must avoid being tagged by two Blue "taggers". When is a good time to run?

CHALLENGE: Try to make the longest run you can by staying in the area for as long as possible.

Progression: Add a ball for the players on the outside (taggers are "live") Taggers MUST take the ball off one of the players as they travel across. If the ball is kicked out they stay as a tagger. If a tagger cleanly gets possession of a ball AND can dribble out of the area with the ball under control then s/he can change places with the player on the outside.



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

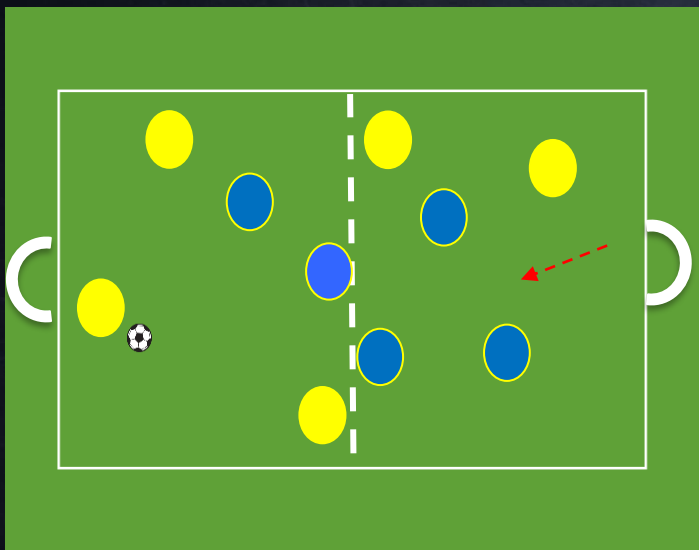
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Intelligent defending



Organisation: Mini pitch with goals ensuring the pitch is big enough for players to have time to spend on the ball.

How to play: Normal game (with or without GK's) and players can dribble or pass in when the ball goes out of play.

We want to encourage intelligent defending and winning the ball back cleanly so:

1 point for scoring normally

3 points if you win possession back in the oppositions half and your team goes on to score.

However:

If you are beaten easily when you are pressing in the opponents half and they get round you, you are 'Locked in' to that half and cannot recover to help your team defend until your team regains possession. Once this happens you can go anywhere again.

Challenges 1 - Try to cleanly win the ball back close to the opponent's goal (kicking the ball out is a last resort)

Challenges 2 - Try to choose the best time to win the ball back for your team

Note: For older age groups consider placing an off side line into the session



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

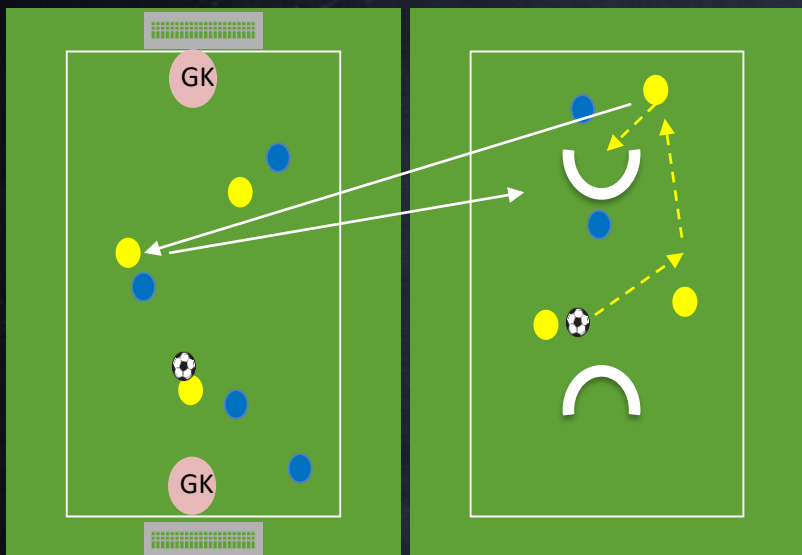
Technical

Physical

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Social

DNA Focus: Intelligent defending



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

Organisation: 2 Mini pitches are set up side by side. On one pitch the goals are in the normal position and on the other pitch the goals face back to back with a central playing area between them.

How to play: The teams on both pitches are trying to score. If a player scores on one pitch s/he runs over to the other pitch and high 5's a teammate who moves to the pitch his teammate has just come from and continues to play. If the ball goes out players can dribble in or pass to a teammate.

When a player leaves your pitch after a goal there is a brief overload to the other team. How do you defend now?

Note: For older age groups, there could be an offside line used.

Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

Well done for using a different movement warm up and some other fun with the ball activities. Now get the players into matches again.

Remember: At week three you can look at slightly smaller sided games. 3v3 and 4v4 would be perfect at this stage (particularly if for the previous two weeks you have played 5v5 or 6v6).

Give small amounts of clear and simple help and advice followed by lots of practice and encouragement.

**“Necessity may be the mother of invention,
but play is certainly the father.**

WEEK FOUR.

The enjoyment

The activity

and

The football

CONTINUE

This is the real secret of life - to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now. And instead of calling it work, realize it is play.



ENGLAND DNA

Foundation Phase

DNA Focus: Physical literacy 9-12 years



Ball



Dribbling player



Basketball player



ENGLAND DNA

Practice Name: Basketball "Tag"

Organisation: Players are in pairs, one dribbling their football (yellow) whilst his opponent is allowed to bounce it like a basketball (blue). They play 1v1 but there are three pairs in each area. (The diagram shows one area.) This is so that players have to dribble around other players making the chase and the tag more difficult.

How to play: The player bouncing the ball must try to tag the player dribbling the ball (but only his opponent). If successful, they change over and repeat. You must be in contact with your bouncing ball when you tag (no leaving it and running after your opponent)

Play for a set time and add up the number of tags for each group of three players so that although you only have one opponent, you are contributing to a team total.

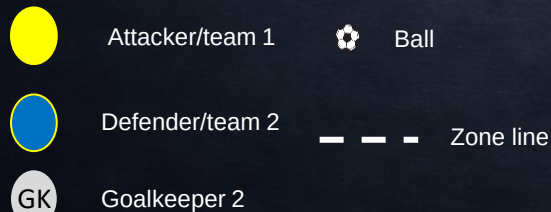
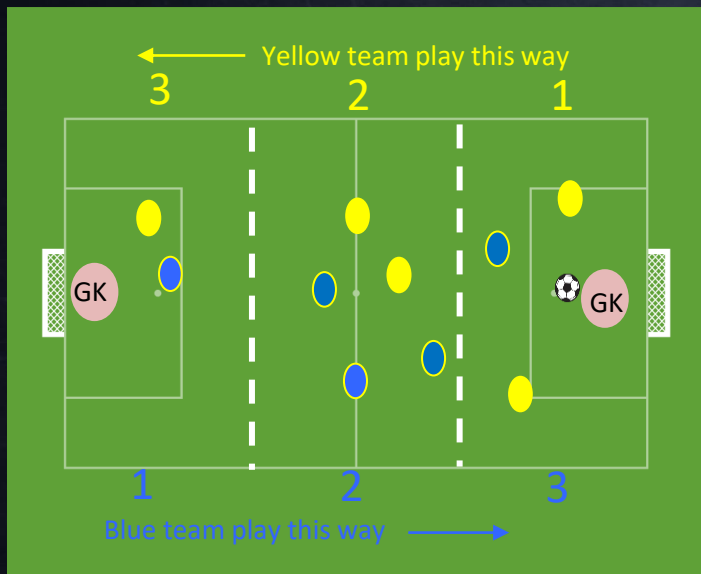
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Master the ball 1



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

Organisation: Play on a pitch that relates to the format your age group plays eg. 4v4/5v5 / 6V6 etc.

How to play: If the team in possession can play out from their GK (zone 1) and through the other zones by dribbling or passing to teammates and score, that goal counts as 3 points. 2 points if the attack starts from zone 2 and 1 point from zone 3.

Challenge 1 - Try to score without using a team mate

Challenge 2 – Try to stay on the ball until you can pass forward

Challenge 3 – Try to have as many touches as you can whilst keeping the ball for your team.

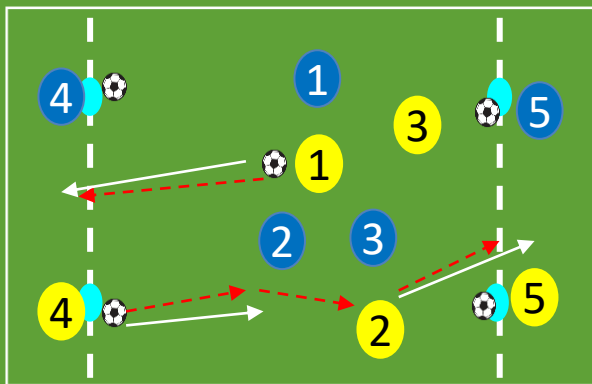
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Decide 'in the moment' when, why and how to stay on the ball to retain possession

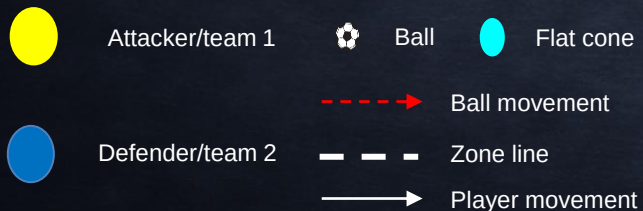


Organisation: 45 yds x 25 yds area with an 8 yrd end zone either end of the grid. 2 cones are placed evenly apart on the end line as the diagram shows. 2 teams 5v5 are shown however this can be changed to suit the group size. 2 players from each team stand by a flat cone manipulating the ball while they wait. (players 4&5)

How to play: 3 players from each team play 3v3 in the central zone, when a team mate dribbles with control into the end zone that triggers his team mate (Yellow 4) to travel into the area with his/her ball to continue the practice to the other end.

If a Blue defender steals possession of the balls/he works with their team mate to get the ball into the end zone to trigger one of their players (blue 4 or 5) to enter the playing area with their ball. (Try to encourage players to stay on the ball and drive with possession when they see space to travel in to)

Progressing the session may see a 1v1 game being played in the end zone until a team mate frees you to enter the playing area.



Challenges:

Try to score by combining with a team mate

Try to score without using a team mate

Try to select 'in the moment' when to share the ball or keep it yourself



We hope you are beginning to get your own warm up ideas by now but if not its great that you are using the different movement games and activities that involve lots of ball contacts.

Now its time to play but we are reducing the numbers again.

We are now at week four so once again, look at slightly smaller sided games. 3v3 would be great to follow on from your previous activities so play more of this. You can play with or without GK's.

Again, give small amounts of clear and simple help and advice followed by lots of practice and encouragement.

Life is more fun if you play games.

WEEK FIVE.

The players are
now ready for
more games

Do not keep
children to
their studies by
compulsion
but by play



ENGLAND DNA

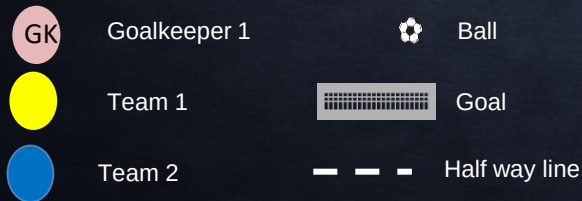
Foundation Phase

A diagram of a soccer pitch with a green field and a white dashed center line. On the left side (Blue half), there is a yellow circle (Yellow player) and a blue circle (Blue player). On the right side (Yellow half), there is a blue circle (Blue player) and a yellow circle (Yellow player). Two pink circles labeled 'GK' represent the goalkeepers. A yellow arrow points from the top right towards the top left, with the text 'Yellows attack this way' above it. A blue arrow points from the bottom right towards the bottom left, with the text 'Blues attack this way' below it. Soccer ball icons are placed at the top left, top right, bottom left, and bottom right corners of the pitch.

Challenges:

- Try to score by yourself
- Try to do something that surprises your opponent
- Try to score by combining with your teammates.

Have spare balls around if possible to keep play at a high tempo



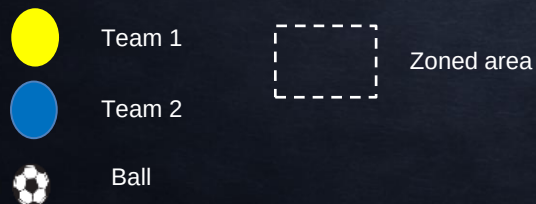
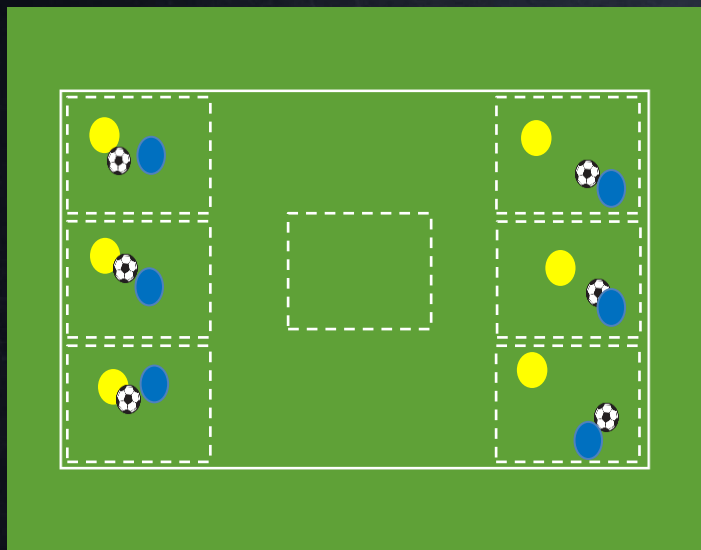
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Master the ball



Organisation: Set out squares, appropriate for the age and ability of your players, as shown in the diagram. In one half, yellow has the ball and in the opposite half the blue team starts with it.

How to play: Play 1v1 in your square. The yellow player in one half is trying to keep possession of the ball against the blue player and the opposite is happening in the other half. Points are scored by any player without a ball taking it cleanly off his opponent and dribbling it into the centre square. If successful, add the point to your team total, go back in the square and play again.

Stay on the ball for as long as you can to win the game or any 'nutmeg / panna wins the game.

Rotate players to play with other team mates.



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

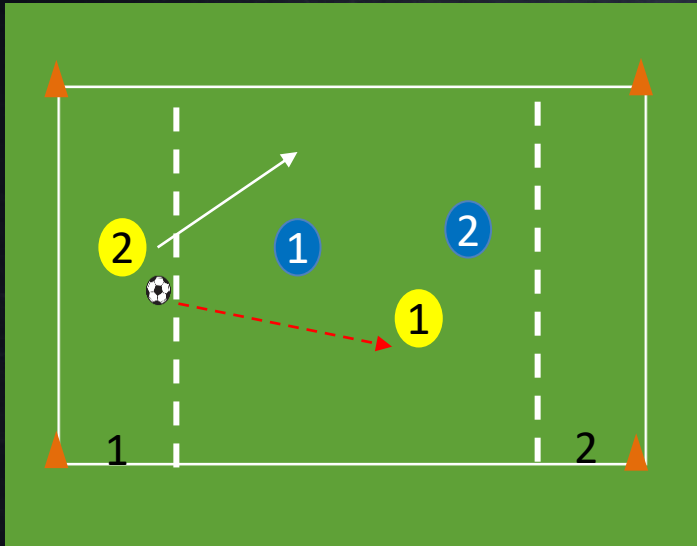
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Stay on the ball master the ball



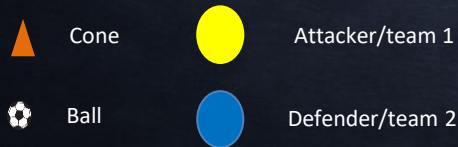
Organisation: A rectangle area with a 1 v 2 in the middle of the area and a yellow team mate (2) starts possession from the end zone 1. This player can support in many different ways.

How to play: Yellow 1 tries to create space to receive the ball from yellow 2, once the pass is played into yellow 1, Yellow 2 can join the action. Blue defender 1 always starts in front / blue 2 behind yellow 1.

The objective of the game is for yellow attacker 1 or 2 to have controlled possession in end zone 2, if this happens a goal is awarded to them. The game restarts with the Blue team attacking and the yellow team defending their end zone 1.

If possession is won by the defending team they try to attack the oppositions end zone immediately.

If the ball is passed out of the area the practice restarts with a dribble or pass in to a team mate.



— — — Zone line - - - - -> Ball movement ———> Player movement



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

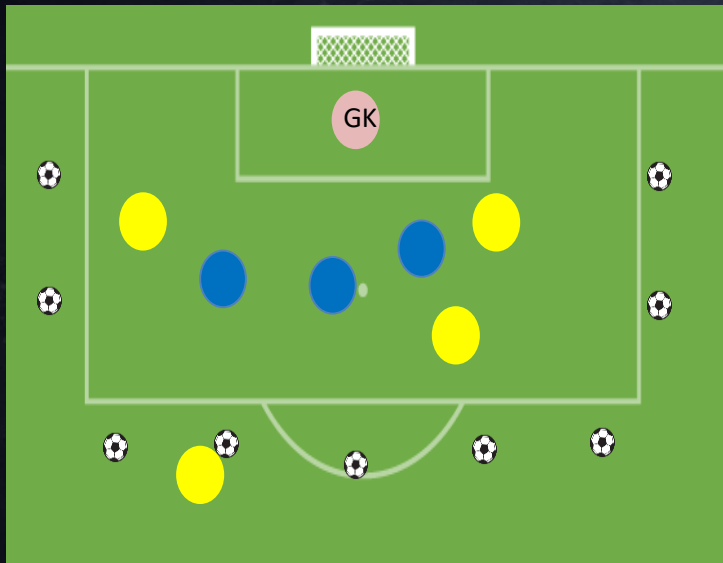
Technical

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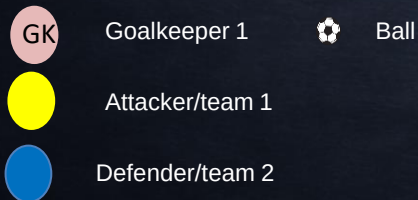
DNA Focus: Excite with the ball and seek creative solutions



Organisation: The game is set up around the penalty area of the pitch. Balls are placed around the area so that the game can restart quickly.

How to play: 5 yellow attackers play against GK and 3 Blue defenders. Yellows start the first attack and try to score a goal. If the yellow team score a yellow player runs to collect another ball to restart the game from around the area. If the attack finishes with a miss or the GK saves the shot the Blue team start the next attack with another ball. If the blue team steal possession of the ball and keep it they can score in the goal. If this happens the Blue team start the next attack and the game continues.

Which ever team scores always starts the next attack!!!



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

The weeks are flying by and we hope that you and your young players are having a great time getting ready to play for the new season.

Week 5 gives you some more warm up and small number ideas but at this point there needs to be a real focus on helping the players understand what happens during a match.

This week can be dedicated to playing lots of different formats and is a great way to revisit and consolidate your key messages to the players. Play 6v6, 3v3, 1v1 and 4v4. Mix it up and help the players cope with the demands of each game.

Whoever wants to understand much, must play much

WEEK SIX.

**The players
need even more
games**

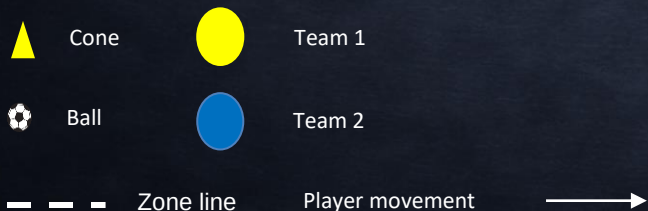
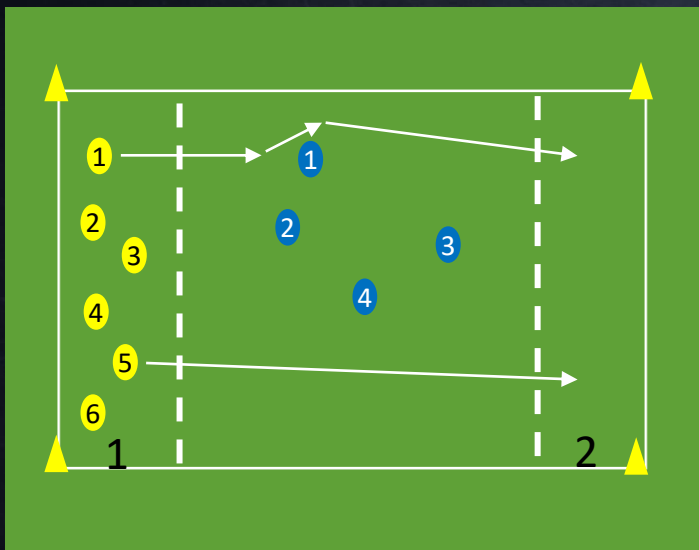
**Deep
meaning
lies often in
childish
play**



ENGLAND DNA

Foundation Phase

DNA Focus: Instinctive decision making



ENGLAND DNA
Foundation Phase

Organisation: Each yellow player has a bib tucked into the side of their shorts as a tail. There are four blue players in the middle and the game is set up as shown. A smaller area creates more dodging and turning whilst a larger area promotes more sprinting and fast running.

How to play: The yellows try to get from one side to the other without having the bib taken from them by the blue players.

If a blue player steals a bib he must try to get into either end zone before the yellow player tags him. If successful, a point for his team.

Progress the session by allowing ANY yellow player to tag a blue defender who has stolen a bib and is trying to get into the end zone.

Progress the session by giving each yellow player 2 bibs, one in each side of their shorts.

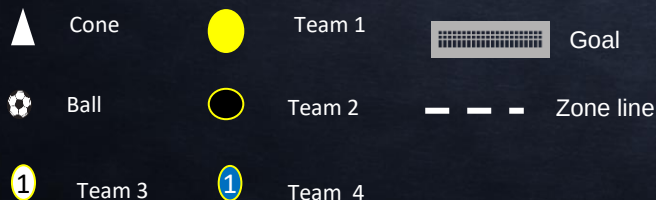
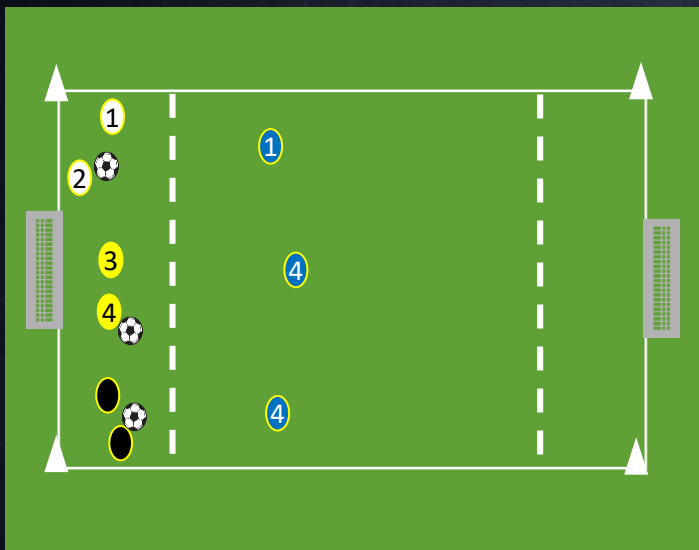
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Instinctive attacking decision making



Organisation: This game is a series of 2v1 battles. There are three pairs (white, yellow and black) playing against one blue in the same area.

How to play: The pairs try to get from one end zone to the other without having the ball taken from them by the one defender (blue). If successful either of the pair can score in the goal when they get into the end zone. (not from outside).

If the blue defender steals the ball he can try to score himself in the goal furthest away. The two players who lost possession will obviously recover quickly and try to win the ball back to attack again.

A progression could be to play a number of 3v2 games instead of 2v1 with the same rules.

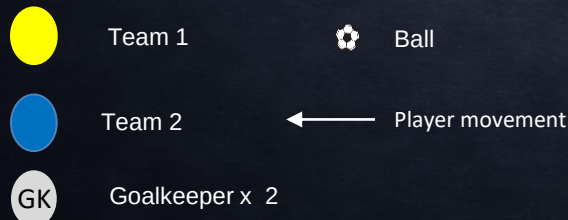
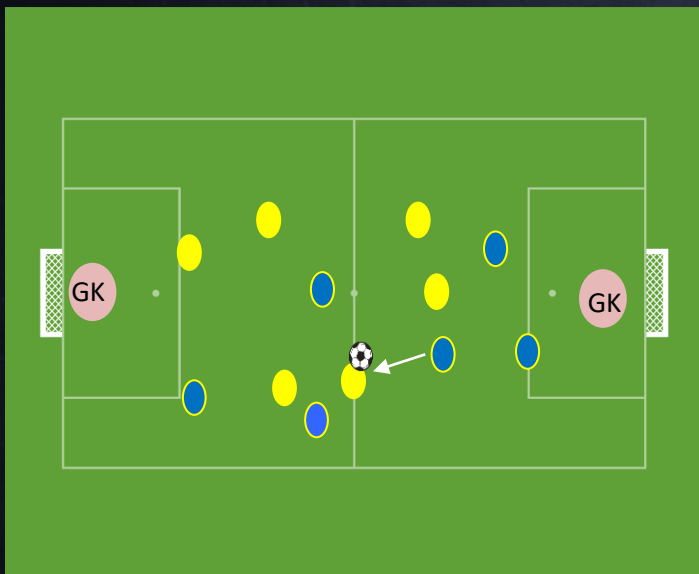
Technical

Physical

Psych

Social

DNA Focus: Instinctive defensive decision making



Organisation: Pitch size related to the format for your age group 5v5 /6V6/7v7 etc. If the ball goes out dribble or pass into teammates to restart the game.

How to play: End to end game

Challenge 1 - When possession is lost, if you are the nearest player, try to put him under immediate pressure.

Challenge 2 – When possession is lost, if you are the nearest player, try to stop the player passing or travelling forward.

Challenge 3 – When possession is lost, try to get yourself between the ball and the goal you are defending.

The “getting ready to play” phase is into week 6 already and we hope that you and your young players are still having a great time as the new season approaches.

This last week continues to offer more suggested movement and small number activities for you to try but once again to help these young players prepare fully we have to continue the very important themes of play, enjoyment and football. Playing games in training is vital so once again, get them into more small-sided games.

If you have followed the advice and guidance that has been suggested we believe that you and your players will have had a great time and the players love of football will have been enhanced even more. Well done.

Play provides a continuation desire. We desire to keep doing it, and the pleasure of the experience drives that desire. We find ways to keep it going.