

Tell me when it kicks in!



The aim of Freestyle is to connect a kid and a ball.

MOTOR SKILLS

When we know what we're doing, we can do it without thinking.

Kicking is a simple motor skill like walking and running. We develop motor skills at three levels. At the cognitive (conscious) level, we stop to think before we do anything. At the associative (familiar) level, we become more confident. At the autonomous (instinctive) level, we discover that we can do the right thing without thinking. The secret to intuitive play is to practice till it becomes familiar and second nature.

The Neymar Effect demonstrates the importance of intuitive skill. Japanese scientists placed electrodes on Neymar and monitored his performance in international competition. Neymar uses 10% of the brain activity of ordinary players. In other words, he can simply do it without thinking about it, worrying about it or hoping that it works.



TAKE FIVE

Most kids have no idea how good they are and we can't tell them

The First Five minutes of anything we do is full of mistakes. That's human nature. That's how we learn and that's how we develop and improve our basic skills so we can achieve our full potential.

Kids who don't know about the First Five give up in the first five minutes because they don't know how good they really are. Coaches who don't know about the First Five criticise kids for making mistakes. Confidence is the real goal of every kid and teenager.

Team coaches don't have the chance to monitor or support these kids because they follow the bouncing ball in a game. Australian Soccer has yet to invent the Personal Soccer Skills Trainer, the Skills Specialist or the Individual Coach who can learn about players and identify their strengths and weaknesses. There are so many simple ways to improve kids if we can just find the time to learn about them.



200 TOUCHES

How many ball touches do kids need before they're ready to play?

All kids are different. We can teach them all to be the same or we can learn about their individual skills, talents, strengths, weaknesses, fears and needs. As soon as we give kids close repetition drills they begin to relax and improve their skills. It takes 5 minutes to get 200 touches.

The average kid needs at least 200 touches of the ball before control becomes intuitive and they develop a natural feel for the ball. Initial touches will be too hard or too soft, too high or too low, too early or too late, too fast or too slow, too left or too right. At some stage, their instinct kicks in and kids start to develop consistent control. Kids can run these drills and work together in pairs so that they learn to help each other and take more responsibility for their own development. Any coach can measure the effect of 200 ball touches on control.



JUGGLING

Kids don't need juggling skills to play Soccer but they need Soccer skills to be able to juggle. Juggling develops those Soccer skills.

A lot of kids give up juggling in the first five minutes because they don't believe they can do it. A lot of them expect too much too soon. There are so many simple ways for kids to learn how to juggle. They just need to start with a basic foundation and build on it. At first, kids can use their hands. They can throw the ball onto their foot and kick it back into their hands. They can practice left foot and then right foot. The key is to get kids to move their feet not just stand still like robots.

Freestyle kids practice juggling on their own, in pairs with their mates and in a juggling circle where they learn how to call and move to support. Kids don't need an elite coach or a lot of money to learn how to juggle. They keep a record of their juggling figures so they know exactly where they're up to and what level they have to aim for next. If kids juggle for ten minutes each day, they can tell when it kicks in.



SHOOTING

Kids can't shoot because coaches don't know how to score goals.

So many talented strikers fail to shoot because they panic in front of an open goal. They lack familiarity with the skill. In a game that's determined by the number of goals scored, most strikers only spend 15 minutes each week shooting at goal from outside the 18 yard box.

Team shooting practice often involves the whole team standing in line and playing a ball to the coach. We need to establish goal scoring academies in every major region of Australian Soccer where strikers can practice for two hours using 100 balls so that they get 100 shots before they need to collect all the balls and start the next set.

Freestyle Soccer kids learn how to score because they know how to miss. They learn how to finish because they know where to start.

These kids understand the ten key elements of goal scoring: footwork and vision, power and precision, movement and decision, belief and repetition, challenge and intuition. Freestyle kids run their own drills.



MATCH WARMUP

The average Australian Soccer kid gets ten touches of the ball in the 30 minutes before each match and makes unforced errors for the first 20 minutes of the game. Any coach can research and discover this.

Too many squads stand around in a circle sharing one ball or stand in line waiting to kick a dead ball to the coach. These players aren't warming up. They're learning how to stand around and wait. Using close repetition drills, team players can easily get 200 ball touches so that their control becomes second nature and the mistakes disappear.

Ballwork in pairs is the most effective way for kids to warm up before a game so they get a feel for the ball, the surface and the conditions. Close drills enable kids to focus on the ball and ignore distractions. These kids practice control on the ball and movement off the ball.



CLOSE REPETITION DRILLS

Practice, practice, practice and plenty of balls.

Imagine learning to walk by taking one perfect step every two minutes. That's how a lot of kids learn to kick a ball. They kick a ball to the coach and then go to the back of the line to for two minutes.

We learn to walk by walking. We all have different walking styles because we're all different and we all develop our own intuitive style of walking. We walk at approximately 100 paces each minute which is the same number of touches that a ball juggler gets in one minute.

There are so many intuitive, innovative, talented Soccer kids in Australia just waiting to be discovered and there are so many simple ways we connect their natural skills with their Soccer skills. These kids have all the instinctive energy to strive, thrive and come alive.

