

WE CAN IMPROVE ANY SOCCER KID IN 5 MINUTES



*All kids are different. All kids have talent. All kids make mistakes.
All kids can practice. All kids can improve. All kids need is a ball.*

LEARNING

We all have eyes, ears, mouths and minds. We just need to open them. We need to look, listen, ask questions and learn.

All kids are different. Once we learn about kids, we can discover what each kid needs to improve. All kids have talent. If we believe they have talent, we will search for it. All kids make mistakes. We will keep correcting their technique because we teach technique. But if we learn about kids we can discover the underlying cause of the mistakes.

What's significant is not how easy it is to improve Soccer kids but how hard it is to get adults to listen to any ideas that are different. They're happy with innovation as long as everything stays the same.

All kids can practice. There's a key to every kid and a drill for every skill. All kids need is a ball and close repetition drills so they can get 200 ball touches. There's nothing wrong with their Soccer skills. We just need to activate their natural skills so they can control the ball.



FOOTWORK

When a kid kicks a ball, we look at the kick and overlook the kid.

The vast majority of kids struggle to strike the ball because they don't know how to move their feet. Soccer kids are flat footed, stiff legged and one footed. It's difficult for kids to control a ball if they lead with their striking foot. This makes them stab **at** a ball awkwardly instead of striking **through** it smoothly. They've never been taught footwork.

When kids practice heading, coaches stare at their head so they can correct the technique and develop perfect contact. They never look at the players or notice that their feet are glued to the ground. We spend years teaching the same techniques and correcting the same mistakes because we don't know how to search for the underlying cause. It takes 5 minutes to show Soccer players how to move their feet so they can improve their striking technique. Any kid can learn how to kick a ball. Innovative kids develop different ways to connect with the ball.



VISION

Ordinary players look up to see the net bulge when they shoot.

Soccer kids struggle to strike the target because they don't know what to look at when they strike the ball. Some kids look at the ball, some look at the target, some don't look at the target till after they shoot and some never look at the target at all. Most kids take their eyes off the ball as they shoot. Most coaches have never looked at the eyes.

Plenty of kids can learn to shoot. Talented players learn how to score goals. The key to shooting is technique. The key to scoring is vision. Any coach can stand behind a net and watch the eyes of the strikers as they shoot at goal. Any coaching organisation can use communication resources to discover what every kid in Australia is looking at when they shoot. It takes 5 minutes to show kids what to look at when they kick the ball so they can improve their shooting and score more goals.

Freestyle kids keep their eyes firmly on the ball when they strike it



POWER

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

It's human nature that kids try too hard to kick the ball too hard. They try to maximise power before they develop timing. The first 5 minutes of anything we do is full of mistakes. That's how we learn. Kids who know this, have patience. Kids and coaches who don't know this, get frustrated and try harder. Force is the default option if kids lack skill.

Finishing is probably the most neglected skill in Australian Soccer. The quality of shooting should be a major priority for research and development. We can improve so much just by observing our strikers.



Freestyle kids learn how to finish because they know where to start. Power shooting begins in the 6 yard box with short, simple, smooth, slow, two touch control on the ground and builds up to powerful first time volleys from outside the penalty area. Wall practice is the most effective way to teach kids how to weight the pass. When kids stand a couple of metres away from the wall, they soon learn that the wall can kick the ball a lot harder than any kid can. It takes 5 minutes to show kids how to develop timing first so they can maximise their power.

PRECISION

Professional marksmen don't aim for the target. They aim for the bullseye which is the smallest part of the target.

When strikers shoot, they aim for the whole goal. They miss big because they aim big. If they aim small they will only miss small. Goals are too big. We can fit 34 Soccer balls between two posts and 10 balls from the ground to the crossbar. That's 340 places to score. Junior goals are 23 balls wide and 8 balls high. That's 184 different places. Little kids aim for the whole goal or kick to the goalkeeper.

Most Soccer teams only spend 15 minutes each week at shooting practice so they only have enough time to blast a few balls over the crossbar from outside the 18 yard box. Freestyle kids spend two hours shooting at goal from every angle and distance until the skill becomes second nature. All across Australia, there are thousands of talented Soccer kids waiting to be discovered. It only takes 5 minutes to show kids how to increase their accuracy by aiming at small target cones.

Any kid can learn to shoot. Freestyle kids want to score goals.



MOVEMENT

Some kids just go through the motions without actually moving.

Modern kids are losing basic motor skills because they spend so much time in front of a screen. At Soccer training, kids spend so little time on the ball that simple moves become unfamiliar and mechanical.

Each player only has possession of the ball for 5% of a game. Skilful players use Soccer skills to dominate 5% of the game with the ball. Talented players use their natural skills to dominate the other 95% of the game without the ball. They constantly look, listen and think so they know where to move and what to call and they understand why.

Coaches separate Soccer skills from natural skills and isolate the control surface. Kids kick a ball while standing still or run around the oval without a ball. We need to integrate Soccer skills with natural skills. We need to coordinate ball control and human movement. Kids need 5 minutes to improve balance, coordination, rhythm and timing.

Smart players never stand and wait. They always move to the ball.



DECISION

Kids don't go to school to do what they're told. They go to school to learn how to think for themselves so they no longer have to go.

All kids have a mind and body of their own and they need to exercise them to achieve their full potential. Kids need the freedom to make their own decisions, make mistakes, learn from them and kick on.

Given the population of Australia, we already have thousands of elite kids waiting to be discovered and at least a couple with the potential of Messi and Ronaldo but we can't see them. We need experts to visit ovals and learn what players and coaches are actually doing. We look for the docile players who train when we tell them. We need to discover the self motivated kids who train when we don't tell them. Junior Soccer is a kids' game played by adults who like to make all the decisions and call the shots. If we look at the way Soccer was coached by an older generation 20 years ago, we get an insight into what the next generation are going to think about us in 20 years time.



BELIEF

*If the kids believe in the coach, and the coach believes in the kids,
the kids will believe in themselves.*

Most Soccer kids make mistakes because they worry about making mistakes in case their mates laugh at them or the coach shouts at them. Fear of failure is the greatest obstacle in sport. Soccer is a correctional system where we honestly believe we're helping kids by pointing out all their mistakes. Kids know when they make mistakes.

Our actions are driven by our beliefs. If we believe that Soccer kids have talent, we will learn about them and search for their talent. If we believe that Soccer kids lack the talent to reach the top, we will teach them all to look, think, stretch, move, kick and play the same way. We can improve any Soccer kid in 5 minutes if we believe we can.

Belief in natural talent is the key to the future of Soccer in Australia. It takes 5 minutes to develop confident kids by telling them to make as many mistakes as they like. They immediately stop worrying and start to relax. When they stop worrying, they stop making mistakes.



REPETITION

Kids need 200 touches of the ball before they're ready to play

Soccer kids don't get enough touches of the ball to develop intuitive skill. When 10 kids stand in line waiting to kick a ball to the coach, they spend 10% of their time controlling a ball and 90% standing around. They get one kick every two minutes. When teams stand in a circle sharing one ball before kickoff, each player gets 10 ball touches and spends the first 20 minutes of the game making unforced errors.

Kids need at least 200 ball touches before they reach the autonomous level where ball control becomes second nature. Control is a matter of balance between too much and too little. Initial kicks will be too hard or too soft, too fast or too slow, too early or too late, too high or too low, too left or too right. Every kid can tell when control kicks in.

It only takes 5 minutes for kids to get 200 touches of a Soccer ball just by juggling on their own, passing in pairs or kicking up against a wall.



CHALLENGE

It should only take 5 minutes to prove that we can't improve any kid

Australian Soccer kids need to be challenged so they can reach the next level. Our Soccer experts visit European clubs to learn about Australian kids. The answers are standing right in front of us. We need to learn about Australian Soccer kids so we can identify their strengths, weaknesses, skills, talents, fears and needs. We need to develop an Australian game to suit the needs of Australian players.

Sport should be a challenge. Kids need to practice what they can't do, not what they can do. Coaches need to coach the struggling players who need all the help they can get, not just pick the elite players who already know how to play. Coaching organisations need to find better ways, smarter ways, faster ways and innovative ways to improve kids.

It takes 5 minutes for kids to measure and record 10 juggling figures so they can identify their own personal best, know exactly where they're up to and challenge themselves to reach the next level of skill.



INTUITION

We need to show kids how to think, not tell them what to think.

Each generation is smarter and more talented than the previous generation. We already know what the older generation knows about the game. We need to learn what the Next Generation knows and thinks. We need to give kids a chance to show how talented they are.

Players need thousands of repetitive ball touches so they can reach the intuitive level of skill where they can automatically make the right decisions and create their own moves. They will never achieve their full potential by standing in line waiting to be told what to do.

Kicking is a simple motor skill like walking and running. We develop motor skills at three levels. At the cognitive level, we stop to think before we do anything. At the associative level, we become more confident. At the intuitive level, we can do it without thinking. The secret to intuitive play is to practice until it becomes automatic. It only takes 5 minutes for kids to discover how talented they really are. Perfect technique doesn't make perfect. Practice makes perfect.

