

SIMPLE SOCCER STEPS



O.K.A.A.T. O.S.A.A.T. O.M.A.A.T.

TAKE 5

All kids have the talent to reach the top if they take the right steps.

Any Soccer kid can improve in 5 minutes because they can get 200 ball touches in 5 minutes by juggling, wall practice or close repetition training drills. It only takes 200 touches to achieve an intuitive level.

The average kid who stands dead still in a line, waiting to kick a dead ball, gets one touch of the ball every two and a half minutes. That's 100 ball touches in four hours. There are simple steps to improve that.

Imagine learning to walk by taking one perfect step every two and a half minutes. We learn to walk by walking. We can learn to control a ball by controlling a ball. It's repetition that creates natural talent. In the leading Football nations of the world, the street kids are getting thousands of ball touches every day. They're 1 million steps ahead of Australian kids and also have the freedom to think for themselves.



OKAAT, OSAAT, OMAAT

One kid at a time, one step at a time, one mistake at a time.

Some kids can't head the ball. Some kids can't juggle. Some kids can't shoot. There are simple ways to improve every one of them.

Initial steps need to be short, simple, soft, slow, smooth, steady and safe. Kids need to develop timing, rhythm, balance and coordination before they increase speed, distance, power and degree of difficulty.



Heading gives kids confidence in the air. Juggling gives kids confidence on the ball. Shooting gives kids the confidence to miss.

The most effective steps in Soccer are the 10 Freestyle elements. Any Soccer player can develop footwork and vision, power and precision, movement and decision, belief and repetition, challenge and intuition.

HEADING THE RIGHT WAY

The most important part of heading is developing the confidence.

Some kids are scared of heading a ball in case it hurts and they're right. Anyone who understands the Liverpool Kiss will know the difference between striking the ball and being struck by the ball.

When little kids first start to learn heading, the ball should never travel more than 3 metres. Kids can throw the ball into the air and then head it back into their hands but they need to keep moving. As they improve, they can get a team mate to throw the ball to them. Heading in Pairs teaches kids to dominate the ball in the air. With practice kids can increase the throwing range and the heading range.



Kids who develop heading confidence one step at a time will have no trouble attacking a goal kick or heading a low hard cross into the net.

MOTOR SKILLS

Soccer skills are basic motor skills just like walking and running.

We all develop our basic motor skills at three levels. At the cognitive (conscious) level, we have to stop and think before we make a move. At the associative (familiar) level we begin to get a feel for the ball. At the autonomous (intuitive) we can make moves without thinking.



Juggling takes kids through the three levels of motor skills. It takes a lot of time, effort and ball touches to develop juggling skills. When a kid can juggle 20 touches they reach the associative level where the skill can help in a game. When they can get 100 touches, kids have reached the intuitive level where they become a lot more confident. Every Freestyle Soccer kid aims to exceed 100 touches in a juggle.

HARD AND FAST RULES

Too much, too soon, too hard, too fast, too late, too bad.

The problem with hard and fast rules is that every kid is different and we will end up producing a lot of mean average kids. If we learn about players we can discover the unique talent that some kids have and identify the underlying cause of mistakes that other kids have.

You could expect Freestyle surfers, skateboarders, bike riders and Soccer kids to fall apart without hard and fast rules but they don't. They develop their initiative, intuition, intelligence and innovation. Freestyle Soccer kids practice ball skills every day because they base their personal training program on their specific needs and their short term goals. They train because they want to not because they have to.

We need to identify the gifted kids who can take the game further and the struggling kids who can benefit most from individual coaching.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

There's a key to every kid and a drill for every skill. There's a solution to every problem and an underlying cause of every mistake.

Most kids are into instant gratification. They expect too much too soon and try too hard to kick the ball too hard. When they shoot, they look up at the goal so they can see the net bulge. They are more focused on what they put into the shot than what they get out of it. Freestyle kids pick the target first and then keep their eyes on the ball.

Little kids step back so they can stab at the ball. They often feel the pressure to strike the ball as hard as they can because Dad stands on the sideline shouting 'Big Kick'. Freestyle kids don't feel the need to impress anyone. They know what they need to achieve and they work to their own agenda and stick to their own timetable so that they keep practising the same skill until they nail it and aim for the next level.



COUNT ON IT

The key to juggling is to start with the basics not with fancy tricks.

Juggling gives kids the freedom to think for themselves, make their own decisions, make their own mistakes, learn from them, measure their performance, measure their improvement and develop their confidence without direction, correction or protection from adults.

Juggling develops respect, responsibility and resilience that kids need. There are plenty of talented kids who only train when coaches tell them to train. Juggling enables players to train whenever they want.

A lot of kids pass the ball and stand still. Juggling in pairs teaches kids to give and go, pass and move. There's no time out with ballwork in pairs. Each player either controls the ball or supports the ball player. Juggling enables kids to communicate and rely on each other.



BULLSEYE

There's a key to every kid and a drill for every skill.

We should never encourage little kids to boot the ball up the field. They should always be able to keep control inside their comfort zone.

If a 5 year old can hit a target cone 10 metres away, and increases 2 metres every year, we will have a 15 year old with 30 metre accuracy. The most important subject kids can learn about is themselves. They need to know what their range is so they never overextend their limits. Every kid, no matter how small, has a range of accuracy.



Performance measurement is critical to Australian Soccer. Kids need to know where they're up to and what level they need to aim for next. They need to know what their limits are so that they can extend them. Freestyle kids go as far as they can and from there they can see a lot further. There are no limits if kids keep improving one step at a time.

FAR OUT

Most kids don't know their own strength. Freestyle kids do.

Kids will never develop power shooting by blasting the ball from outside the penalty area. The secret to power lies in the 6 yard box. Kids need to develop timing, balance and eye/foot coordination before they increase the distance, speed and power of their shots.

Strength plus speed and timing equals power. Strength minus speed and timing equals force. Kids can't force power. They'll find it when they stop looking for it. A little kid who runs onto the high ball will have more power than a big kid who stands still and waits for the ball.

Any club can develop their own Shooting Gallery where kids can start with short simple shots inside the 6 yard box and increase one step at a time till they can run rapid fire drills and volley from 30 metres out.



READY, SET, GO

The average Soccer kid only gets 10 ball touches before each game.

It takes at least 200 ball touches for kids to develop basic motor skills from the cognitive level through the associative level to the intuitive level where control becomes second nature. It will take a long time for coaches to realise the importance of ball control before games.



Anyone can discover that the average Soccer player gets 10 touches of the ball before kickoff and spends the next 20 minutes making unforced errors. The average Soccer team stand around in a circle sharing one ball before the game starts so it's understandable when they stand around in the game waiting for someone to pass the ball before they make a run. The most effective way for kids to get 200 ball touches before a game is close repetition drills in pairs so that both kids develop control on the ball and support off the ball.

CHALLENGE

If they can't believe it, they won't even think about it.

The biggest challenge in Freestyle Soccer is to give Australian players and coaches the confidence to believe in themselves. Kids are easy to improve because they're willing to look and listen. Any kid can improve just by integrating their natural skills with Soccer skills. Any kid has the talent to think for themselves and create their own moves.

Any coach has the ability to improve any Soccer kid in 5 minutes. Any coach can see whether a kid stabs **at** a ball awkwardly or kicks **through** it smoothly. Any coach can see what kids look at when they kick a ball. Any coach can hear what kids call in a game. Any coach can discover how many ball touches kids need before they get a feel for the ball. Any coach can measure the fitness and skill levels of any player. Any coach can discover what each player needs to improve.

