

Possession

This page will serve as a landing page to build out content related to teaching both Core and EXTRA teams to play a possession style of soccer.

UPDATE: If you wish to view/print/export the entire series from a single page, [go here](#).

What is a “possession style”?

Possession-based soccer is characterized by:

- Methodically moving the ball up the field with many short, quick passes
- Comfortable playing the ball across and back, including to the keeper
- Passing around opponents instead of dribbling them
- Patience; not forcing the ball forwards

When should you begin teaching it?

There are many basic technical skills that should be in place before you move into these tactical concepts. Generally this can begin around 10u. Your players should be comfortable with (though not necessarily experts at):

- Able to dribble with their heads up to look for a passing opportunity
- Able to properly execute a pass to a teammate under pressure
- Understand basic spacing to get open and call for a pass
- Demonstrating all the above consistently during games

All requisite technical skills must be in place before you can move forward, else you will just frustrate yourself and team with trying to force a style the team is just not ready for.

How can I get my players to adopt this style?

Possession is a mindset that your players must adopt at their very core. This is not something you ever finish coaching, you can only expect small incremental improvements each week and you must focus on it constantly. EXTRA coaches should expect to make far more progress over a given season, but doesn't mean you shouldn't expose Core teams to this teaching either. Core coaches just need to have reasonable expectations. As we coaching staff at 1455 do a better job at getting more Core coaches coaching the same way, you can expect more players to be exposed to these concepts at earlier ages, and thus Core coaches have less "starting over" to do each season. And that makes it way more fun for everyone involved.

Possession Skills Path

This is a skill path progression for teaching a possession mindset and accompanying technical skills.

Article	Description
Explaining a Possession Mindset	This gets younger players thinking about a somewhat foreign concept to them: Keeping possession instead of just driving to goal. It will also help you frame your drills to them so that they understand the "why" behind it.
Shielding the Ball	Getting players comfortable turning away from pressure and how to use proper shielding techniques.
Receiving with the Proper Foot	How a player chooses to receive a ball will set them up for success or failure.

<u>Escaping Pressure</u>	Eventually players will encounter situations with no clear passing options. This is how to use the dribble to escape that pressure until options become available.
<u>Playing From the Spot</u>	How to get players comfortable holding their ground and not defaulting to driving forward towards pressure.
<u>Movement Off Ball</u>	How to teach your players to have empathy for the ball carrier and how to get them moving off ball.
<u>Importance of Width and Spacing</u>	How should players react to regaining possession, where do they position themselves.
<u>Passing Angles</u>	Lots of specific details about how best to support the ball carrier. And, conversely, how can the ball carrier best leverage their support.
<u>Scanning the Field</u>	How do players know when to play the ball forward, across, or back.
<u>Play the Way You Face</u>	Get players in the habit of not turning into pressure.

Note: A lot of this work is adapted from two sources 1) [Possession](#) by Dan Blank. 2) US Youth Soccer Association's Olympic Development Program [Coaching Manual](#) which is all about possession style soccer.

Both resources are geared towards the Advanced player stage (15u+), so I have pulled out applicable content and simplified it for use in Basic and Intermediate stage players. I still recommend reading them if you're interested in this topic.