

# The Messi challenge

Lionel Messi's attacking ability from both wide and central areas is unrivalled. Get your players to copy him in the Messi challenge – a session that will give them the confidence to attack from any position.



### What you tell your players the session is about

1. Learning to play like Lionel Messi.
2. Dribbling in wide and central areas.
3. Going past your opponent to shoot at goal.

## Session planner

Warm up 10 mins	Session 10 mins	Developments 20 mins	Game 15 mins	Warm down 5 mins
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Activity	Kit	Outcome
Warm up	Balls	Players reacting to change speed and direction when dribbling. From <i>The Ultimate Football Warm-Ups Manual</i> , exercise 35
The session	Balls, cones and two goals	Circuit drill where players learn to attack in wide and central areas
Development	Balls, cones and two goals	Small-sided game – rotate attacks in central and wide areas
Game	Balls, cones and two goals	Small-sided game – players are attempting to dribble when they receive the ball
Warm down	n/a	Gentle jogging and stretching exercises



### Where it fits

Individual skills: Dribbling, skill development, shooting, passing, receiving

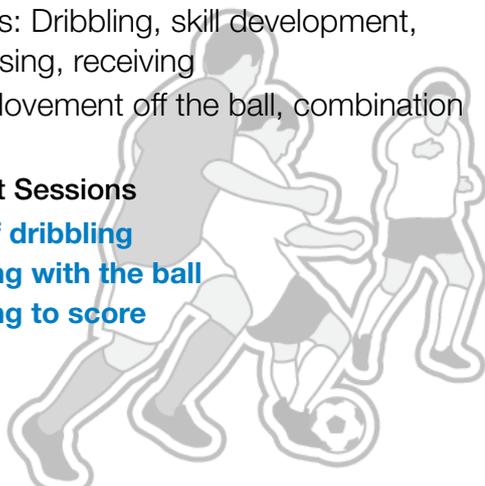
Team skills: Movement off the ball, combination play in attack

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### What to think about

Why not try your wide attackers on the opposite wing? Left footers play on the right and right footers on the left. This enables players to cut inside and shoot at goal, just like Messi for Barcelona.

It is important your players are positive when they receive the ball and look to attack their opponents.

The players must recognise when to dribble (1v1 situations) or when to pass (when faced with two defenders or when a team mate is free to shoot).

It is important the players continue to create space to shoot or cross rather than completing skills without an end product.





## Set-up

Create a 50 yards by 30 yards playing area, with a halfway line and goal at either end.



## What you get your players to do

Four players work at the same time. The (white) "Messi" players first attack from wide areas and look to beat a defender inside or outside to shoot. The attackers then react and run to collect a second ball and attack the opposite goal from a central area. Therefore, the defenders play one attack against each white attacker.

If a player is tackled, the attack finishes.

Swap roles when everyone has had a turn at attacking and defending.



## What to call out

- "Attack the defender"
- "Can you go past him?"
- "Can you get half a yard to shoot?"



## Development

Now develop these techniques into a small-sided game. The grey team has two defenders and two attackers. They attack the central areas, where a forward can pull into the free, central zone to receive and then dribble to create a 2v2 situation.

The white team has two defenders and three attackers. They attack in wide areas and can use the free wide zones to receive a pass and then dribble to make a 2v2 with the centre forward.

Play first to three goals or for 10 minutes before swapping team roles.



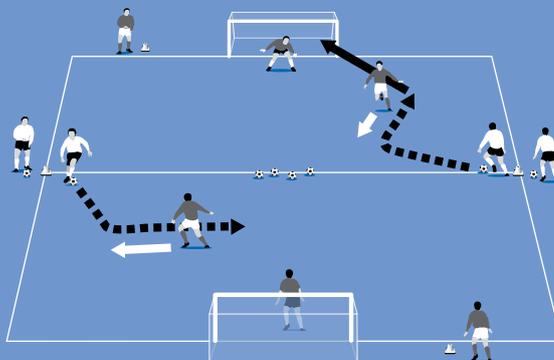
## Game situation

Play a normal game and encourage the players to dribble at defenders at every opportunity. You can award free-kicks against players not dribbling in space or 1v1 situations.

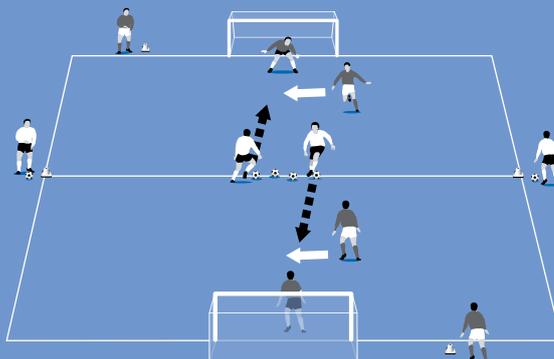
You can also penalise players if they dribble at the wrong time (when outnumbered or in defensive areas).

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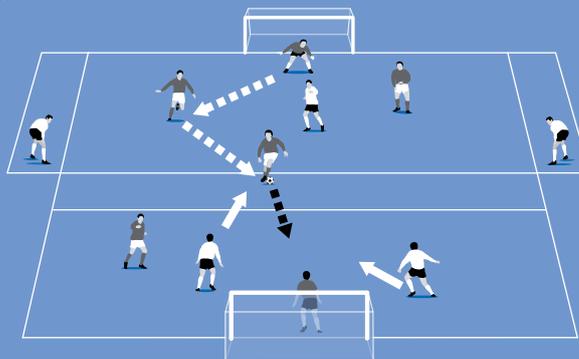
direction of run pass dribble shot



Players start on the wing and dribble forward to attack the defender on the inside or outside.



The players then turn to collect a second ball on the halfway line and run at the other defender from the middle of the pitch.



One team's players work on being like Messi in central areas. The other team's players work on being like Messi in wide areas.

