

# Surprise!

Playing a long diagonal pass can surprise opponents and exploit space. This option gives a mobile forward time to control and shield the ball, and allows other attackers to make forward runs. It also pulls defenders out of position as they look to cover. Get your players to use this pass wisely as a surprise attack.



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

1. Passing technique.
2. Playing diagonal passes.
3. Making forward runs to support a pass.

## Session planner

Warm up 10 mins	Session 10 mins	Developments 15 mins	Game 20 mins	Warm down 5 mins
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Activity	Kit	Outcome
Warm up	Balls and cones	Diagonal passing and support runs. From <i>The Ultimate Football Warm-Ups Manual</i> , exercise 72
The session	Balls and cones	Players demonstrate good passing and receiving skills from diagonal balls
Development	Balls, cones and one goal	Players now make runs to support a diagonal pass in order to create shooting opportunities
Game	Balls, cones and one goal	Players keep possession to draw opponents towards the ball before unleashing the surprise diagonal pass
Warm down	n/a	Gentle jogging and stretching exercises



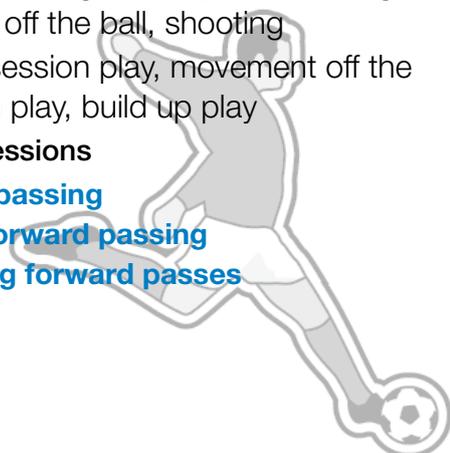
### Where it fits

Individual skills: Passing techniques, receiving skills, movement off the ball, shooting

Team skills: Possession play, movement off the ball, combination play, build up play

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### What to think about

A diagonal pass can exploit space on the other side of the pitch for a 1v1 or 2v1 situation.

Playing a diagonal pass can pull the opposition defence out of shape.

Midfielders should make forward runs off the ball in order to receive a pass from a striker.

A diagonal pass must be used sparingly to add the element of surprise.

By playing some short, quick passes, your players are able to pull opponents close to the ball. This creates a good opportunity to play a diagonal pass and use the space on the other side of the pitch.





## Set-up

For the opening practice, place four cones at the corners of a 15 yards by 30 yards rectangle. Then create a 60 yards by 40 yards playing area for the development and game stages.



## What you get your players to do

The players complete a passing drill in a figure of 8 circuit. They must alternate a square, grounded, pass with a lofted diagonal pass.

They then follow their passes as they work their way around the circuit.



## What to call out

- “Can you draw the opponent to the ball with short passes?”
- “Play a diagonal pass to exploit space”
- “Support the diagonal pass with runs off the ball”



## Development

Develop with a finishing drill. The ball is passed to a wide midfielder, who plays a diagonal pass to the centre forward. Immediately, the forward can either control the ball and shoot or pass to a central midfielder, making a forward run, to have a shot.

Rotate players so the wide midfielder moves to the centre, the central midfielder becomes the forward and the forward joins the end of the line. Alternate diagonal passes from the left and right.



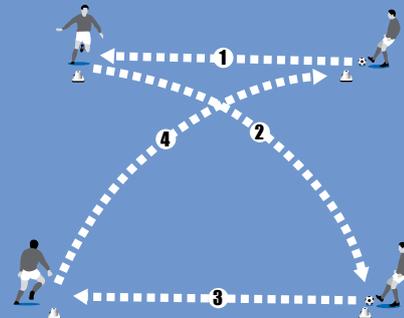
## Game situation

Play a small-sided game. The four (grey) midfielders try to complete a minimum of three passes in the defensive zone. After playing these and drawing three (white) midfielders to the ball, a grey midfielder plays a diagonal pass to one of two forwards. Another grey midfielder must immediately support the diagonal pass and combine with the two forwards against a lone defender to score.

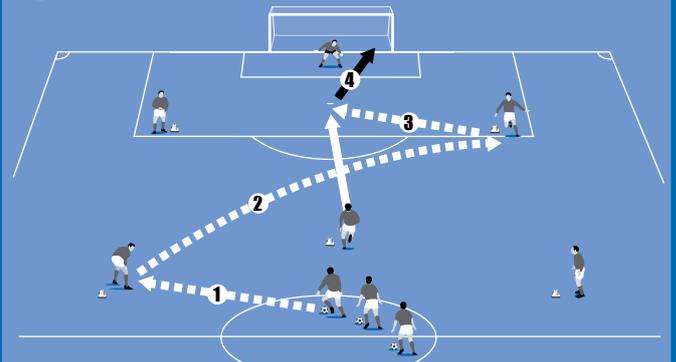
A progression to this practice is to allow a second defender to run back with the supporting midfielder. Rotate players from attack to defence.

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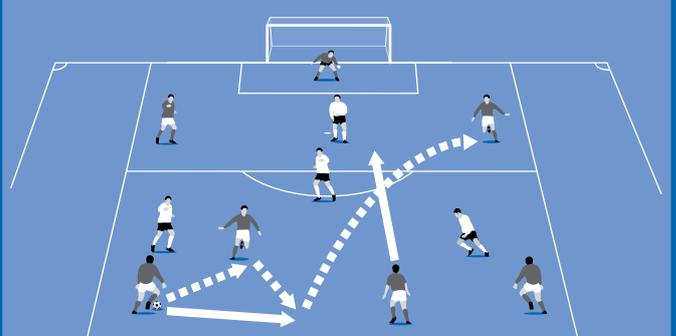
direction of run  $\Rightarrow$  pass  $\square\square\square\Rightarrow$   
shot  $\blackrightarrow$



Players give a square grounded pass and then a lofted diagonal pass. They follow their passes around a figure of 8 circuit.



A diagonal pass is played to the centre forward, who controls the ball and sets up a supporting midfielder to shoot.



Midfielders have a number of passes before playing a diagonal ball to a forward. One of the midfielders runs forward to support the attack.