

The specialist

All teams have at least one player who is used to take set pieces. The practices in this **Smart Session** are designed to help you identify the best free kick, corner and penalty takers.



What you tell your players the session is about

1. Selecting the team's corner, free kick and penalty takers.
2. Improving shooting and crossing techniques.
3. Scoring from set pieces (free kicks and corners).

Session planner

Warm-up 5 mins	Session 15 mins	Development 15 mins	Game situation 20 mins	Warm-down 5 mins
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Activity	Kit	Outcome
Warm-up	Cones, a ball	Players improve their first touch and passing skills using Gate Game from <i>The Ultimate Football Warm-Ups Manual</i> , exercise 41
Session	Cones, balls, one goal	The players have opportunities to work on their technique
Development	One goal, balls, bibs cones	The two teams compete to score from set pieces
Game situation	Two goals, balls, bibs, cones	The teams react to the random set pieces that occur in the game
Warm-down	n/a	Gentle jogging and stretching exercises



Where it fits

Individual skills: Shooting techniques (driven, placed, curled) crossing techniques (lofted, driven, curled) movement off the ball, scoring from crosses (headers, volleys) communication

Team skills: Communication, movements off the ball to create space for each other, attacking set pieces, defending set pieces.

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What to think about

- Every set piece (corner or free kick) inside the opponent's half of the field is an opportunity to score a goal.
- The delivery of the ball into the opponent's box must be with accuracy and quality in order to give your team the best chance of scoring.
- Taking the time to work with the players in your group and identifying the ones with the correct techniques and skill to be a set-piece specialist is vitally important.





Set-up

Use the final third of a pitch including the goal for the session and development.

Use a 40 yards long by 30 yards wide area for the game.



Session – 15 mins

The first session works as a circuit with the players moving from station 1 through to station 4 as they complete the different tasks.

Station 1 – player one takes a penalty.

Station 2 – player two takes an in-swinging or out-swinging corner for player one to try and score from.

Station 3 – player three takes a direct free kick at goal from outside the box

Station 4 – player four takes an in-swinging or out-swinging corner for player three to try and score from.

Set this session up with two or more players at each station so the session is continuous.



Development – 15 mins

Now select two teams of four players. Each team must nominate one specialist who goes outside the playing area to become the set-piece specialist.

The teams take turns to be the attackers and defenders in this game.

Each team has three attacking set pieces – a corner (1), a wide free kick (2) and a central free kick (3).

After both teams have completed their set pieces, the game is restarted with a new specialist.



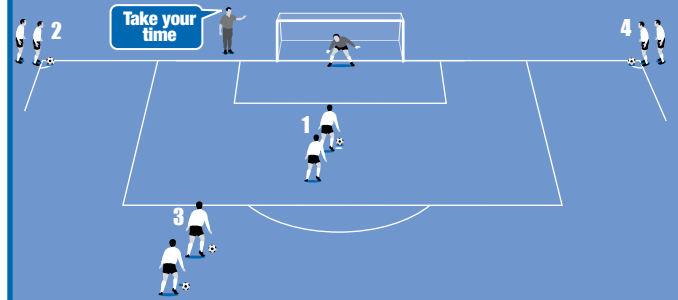
Game situation – 20 mins

Two teams play a small-sided game. However, all throw-ins are replaced with “kick-ins”, so when the ball leaves play, the restart is like having a set piece due to the small size of the pitch.

Including this rule in the game ensures each team has lots of practice at both attacking and defending set plays and the specialists are trying to perfect their technique from different angles and distances to goal.

The specialist

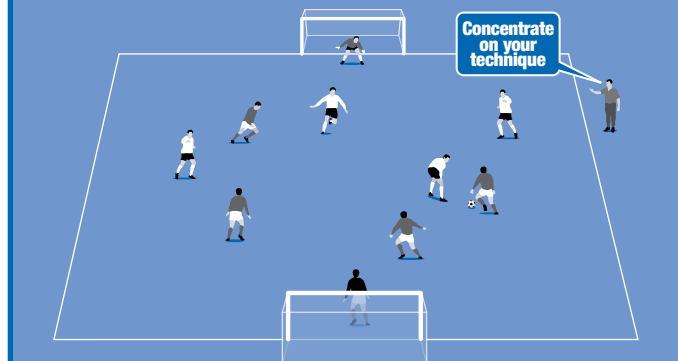
direction of run \Rightarrow what to call out



Players take turns to take three types of set pieces. These are penalties, corners and direct free kicks.



Teams nominate a player to practise set pieces and score goals. The set pieces are corners, wide free kicks and central free kicks.



In a small-sided game, “kick-ins” are awarded rather than throw-ins to continually create set pieces to test attackers and defenders.

