

Defending set plays

If your team leaks goals from set plays, this session will help prevent conceding from corners, wide free kicks and central free kicks.



What you tell your players the session is about

1. Defending set plays.
2. Clearing the ball from danger.
3. Understanding tactics for corners, wide and central free kicks.

Session planner

Warm-up 5 mins	Session 30 mins	Game situation 20 mins	Warm-down 5 mins
-------------------	--------------------	---------------------------	---------------------

Activity	Kit	Outcome
Warm-up	Balls, cones/poles	Players work on jumping and heading the ball, from The Ultimate Football Warm-Ups Manual , exercise 52
Session	Balls, goals, bibs	The team work on defending corners from the right and left and the team work on defending wide and central free kicks
Game situation	Two goals, balls, bibs, cones	The team defend set pieces in a game situation
Warm-down	n/a	Gentle jogging and stretching exercises



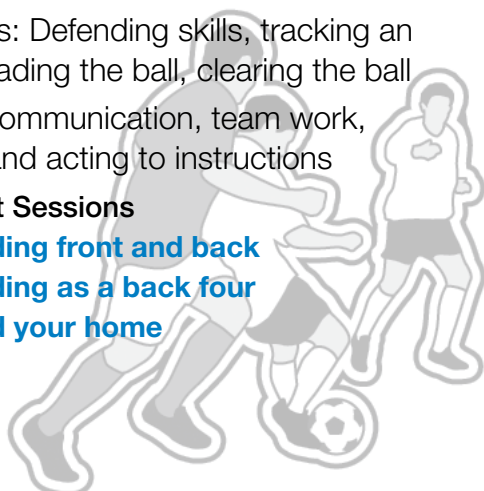
Where it fits

Individual skills: Defending skills, tracking an opponent, heading the ball, clearing the ball

Team skills: Communication, team work, listening too and acting to instructions

Related Smart Sessions

- 39 [Defending front and back](#)
- 63 [Defending as a back four](#)
- 83 [Defend your home](#)



[Click here to download the index](#)



What to think about

- 30% of goals are scored from set plays.
- Your team has to be prepared to defend against set plays and in pre-set positions.
- When clearing the ball, it is essential that the player kicks or heads the ball into wide areas to stop an opponent picking up a clearance in central areas where they can shoot at goal.





Set-up

Use half a match pitch for the entire practice. For mini soccer teams, this may be 40 yards long by 30 yards wide. For 11-a-side teams, it can be anything from 90 to 120 yards long by 60 to 80 yards wide.



Session – 30 mins

Split the group into two teams to work on defending/attacking a corner. The defending team earns a point for clearing the ball outside of the box. Two points for clearing the ball outside the box into wide areas and three points for clearing the ball to a team mate who can dribble the ball over the halfway line – but the counter break must be made as a team.

When defending a corner you should look to have the following in place (11v11 only):

- One player on each post.
- One player at the edge of the six-yard box in line with the corner kicker's delivery.
- Three to five marking players.
- Two players in a position to receive a clearance and counter attack.

Wide free kicks (middle picture) – place two players in the wall to stop a direct shot at the near post, four to six markers and one player between to prevent a run or shot from the attackers.

The defensive line must not be too deep as this invites pressure. One or two players should be in attacking positions for a counter attack.

Central free kicks (bottom picture) – use four players in the wall and a charging player to block the shot (particularly for indirect free kicks).

One defender stands to one side of the wall as cover, while the other defenders mark attackers and one is ready to counter attack.

Adjust your teams to how many players you have available and what your matches require. Rotate players regularly so each defends in all positions.



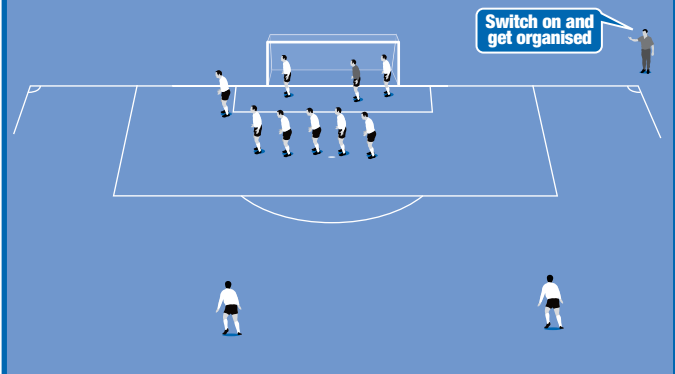
Game situation – 20 mins

Play a game of attackers v defenders. The attacking team attacks continuously while the defence can only clear the ball. However, you should award the attacking team five set plays at random. Now the defending team has chances to score goals by counter attacking.

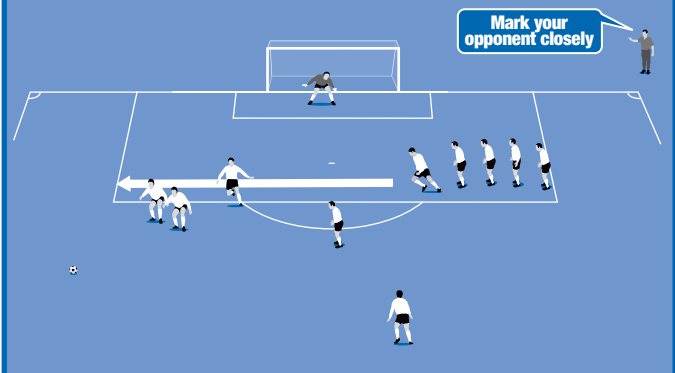
Swap roles after 10 minutes and the team which scores the most goals collectively wins.

Defending set plays

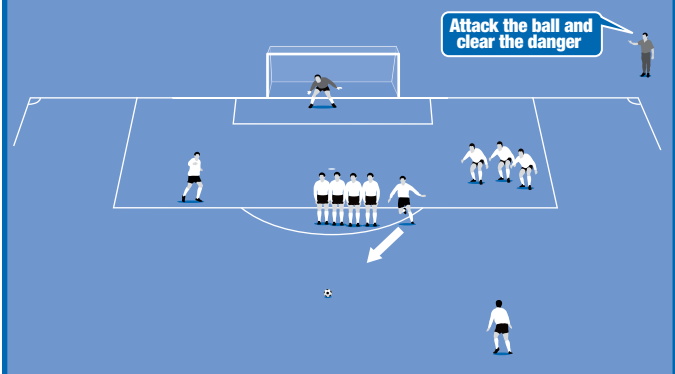
player movement →



Corner defence: make sure defensive players are in the correct positions.



Wide free kick defence: a two man wall is required to cover one side of the goal, under the instruction of the goalkeeper.



Central free kick defence: four in the wall and one charging player are needed when facing a central free kick