

# Coaching Attacking Principles In A 4v4

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Below, we have created visual aids to help coaches, players and parents understand how these 4v4 sessions are designed. Hopefully, coaches can use these diagrams as a guide for setting up and running their own sessions.

To begin with, it can help to break the game down into simpler components in order to give players and coaches a better chance to understand the game as a whole. With that in mind, here are the 5 attacking principles that can be incorporated into 4v4's and any attacking practice...

## Attacking Principles

**Penetration** - When a team is in possession of the ball, can they play through the gaps between defenders or can they play the ball into space behind the opposition? This gives attackers the opportunity to exploit space through movement of the ball sideways or forwards and by forcing the opponents to move out of position. The key thing is to exploit space heading towards goal.

**Support** - By this we mean supporting the player in possession through the movement of players off the ball. Important coaching points to be associated with support are angles, timings and distances of the support provided.

**Width** - Providing options (laterally) across the pitch. This creates larger gaps between defenders which, in turn, creates opportunities to exploit the space and play forwards. The idea is to make the pitch big, look for the gaps and play through or around them.

**Mobility** - Is movement on and off the ball. This will provide support in the attack and can include rotation, exploiting space, and penetrating the defence at speed.

**Creativity/Improvisation** - If a team becomes predictable, it becomes easy to defend against. Coaches can encourage creativity from individuals so that they feel confident enough to attempt skills/tricks and so that players can combine, in unconventional ways, to create goal scoring opportunities.



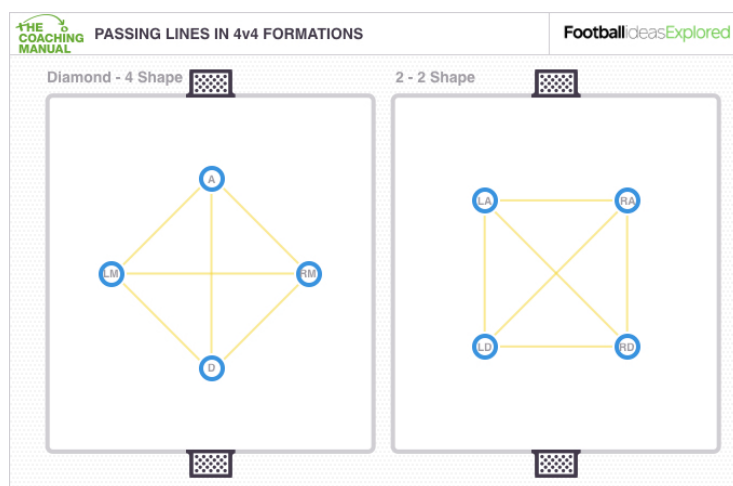
## Goalkeepers

As we discussed in defending 4v4, we do not use goalkeepers in 4v4 games. However, if a player wants to play as goalkeeper (or you are using a goalkeeper in a 4v4), they can still be incorporated into the games (without using hands) as they will practice skills important to larger formats of the game. By playing in 4v4's, "keepers will begin to understand movement of players in front of them and how to use width, mobility and penetration to launch attacks. Goalkeepers also get the lots of opportunities to develop their ability with the ball at feet.

## Team Shape

A team's shape can influence how a team attacks. Within a 4v4 coaches and players can adopt different formations including a diamond-4 or 2-2. When using a diamond there is naturally width, depth, angles, and passing lines. The player in possession will potentially have options ahead, alongside and behind the ball on most occasions.

With the 2-2 formation, if passing lines are vertical or horizontal, play can become predictable and easily defended. Therefore, if a team lines up in a 2-2 formation, one of the players can be encouraged to create angles and add width to play. Although the formation is a 2-2, the attacking and defending players don't have to be vertically aligned. One of the attackers can create space by moving into a wide area, which causes problems for the defender.



## Practice Design

### 4v4 Pitch divided into 4 zones

We are going to set up a 4v4 pitch with 4 zones to explain this football coaching exercise. Using the same set up as utilised in zonal defending in a 4v4 coaching drill, when your team has the ball, can players create a passing option in each zone?

Example: Defending player (D) has the ball in Zone 1 (see below image). The remaining players move to take up positions to receive in Zones 2, 3 and 4. As a coach, the technical detail of angles, distances, and timing of movements to create passing lines may also be coached. In this football coaching session, it is imperative that players on the attacking team continue to move and show for the ball, making it difficult to be marked and tracked by the opposition.

It also creates opportunities to penetrate and produces 1v1 situations. If each of the zones becomes occupied by an attacking and defending player then each player will find themselves in a 1v1 scenario (attacking or defending), which is great for young players.

## 4-Goal game

Instead of having two goals, set up a 4v4 game with 4 goals (one in each corner). The practice design and conditions encourage teams to score in one of two designated wide goals, which promotes width, support and penetration in wide areas as well as switching play. Coaching point - if the defence shifts towards one wide goal then players may look to switch the play to attack the opposite wide goal. Coaches can also set individual challenges within this soccer drill. For example, you could condition a midfielder player to switch the play as quickly and in as few touches as possible, when on to do so.

## Vertical Channels

The approved pitch set up of 4v4 games, in USA and UK, incorporates two goals not four, therefore coaches could approach delivering penetration, width, support and switching play by utilising a practice design with vertical channels; Channel 1, Channel 2, Channel 3 and Channel 4

Players could be set a condition that before they score a goal, the ball must enter both Channel 1 and 4, in any order the team wishes. This will encourage players to adopt width in attack, play a range of different passes and create opportunities to penetrate, combine and advance forwards towards goal.

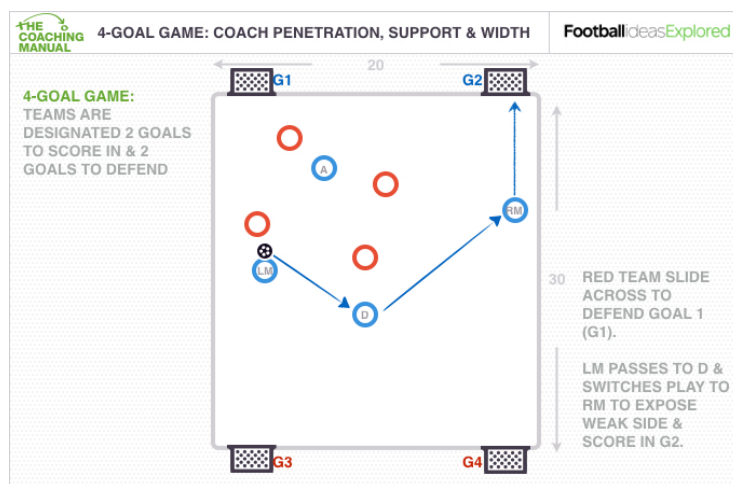
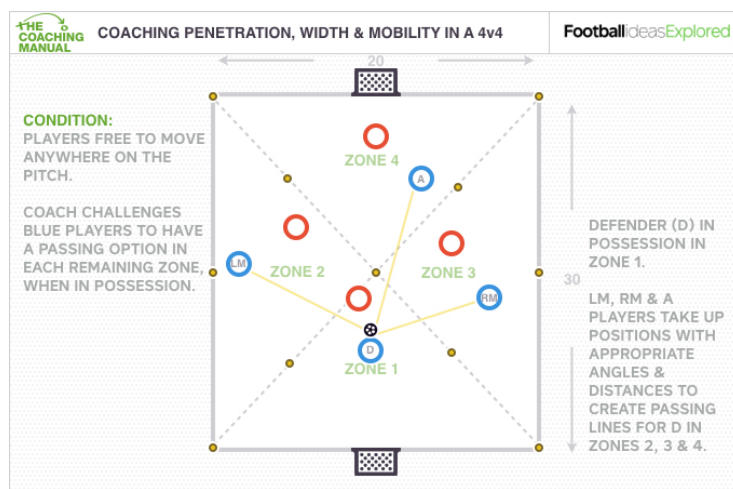
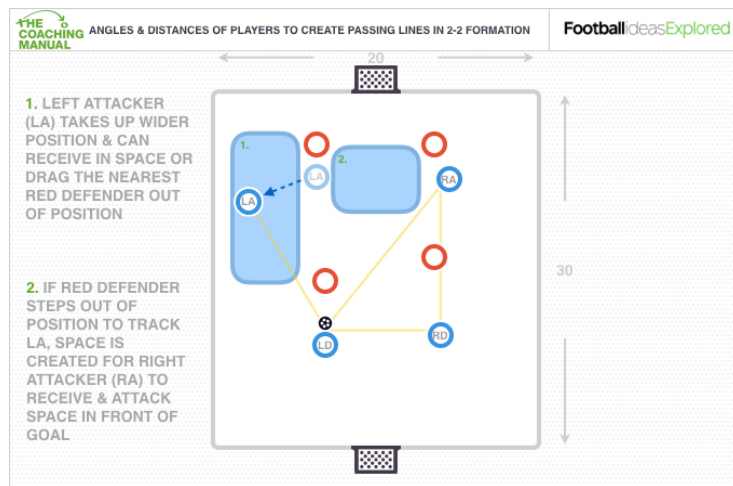
## Line Ball Game

Another practice design to coach principles of attack is the Line Ball game. By removing all goals, the scoring in the game would then come from stopping the ball on the oppositions end-line. This promotes dribbling skills as well as timing, movement and clever combinations. Creativity and improvisation will also be developed as individuals come up with solutions to receive or transport the ball to the opponent's end-line, under pressure and under control

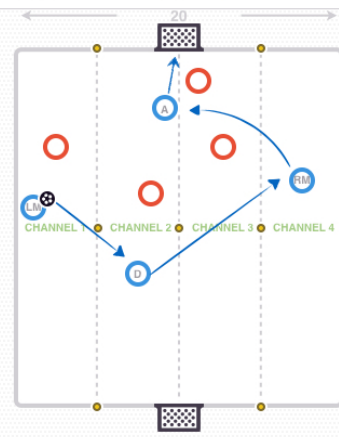
## Key Coaching Points

- Ensure that the set-up of the session allows players to attack as individuals and as a team. The practice design should facilitate 1v1 situations and attacking combination play, where possible.
- Give the players reference points on the pitch to develop the skills to exploit and create space in attack
- Encourage improvisation and creativity. This is key with younger players, and coaches should let them try new things. If it doesn't work, keep encouraging players as they need to feel comfortable and confident enough to attempt new things and develop their ball mastery and fundamental skills
- Within any attacking play, make sure there are goal scoring opportunities. There is no better feeling in football than scoring a goal, especially at a young age. Give all of the players opportunities to score goals and develop that love for the game

Hopefully your players will enjoy playing in these conditioned 4v4 game formats and coaches will have reference points and appropriate practice designs to facilitate and develop attacking play for their young soccer players.



**CONDITION:**  
BALL MUST ENTER CHANNEL 1 & CHANNEL 4 BEFORE TEAM IN POSSESSION CAN ATTEMPT TO SCORE

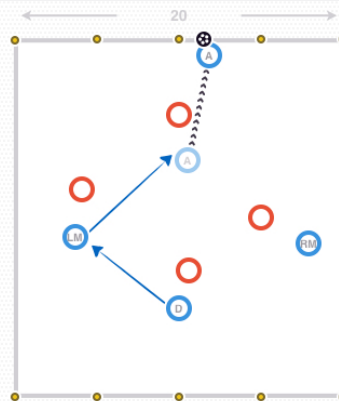


RED TEAM SLIDE ACROSS TO PRESS & COMPACT SPACE BEHIND LM IN CHANNEL 1.

LM PASSES TO D & SWITCHES PLAY TO RM IN CHANNEL 4.

BLUE TEAM CAN NOW ATTACK THE GOAL.

**LINE BALL GAME:**  
TEAM IN POSSESSION MUST STOP THE BALL, UNDER CONTROL, ON OPPONENTS END-LINE TO SCORE



BLUE TEAM IN POSSESSION, WITH WIDTH & MOBILITY, CREATE 1 VS. 1 (ATTACKER VS. RED DEFENDER).

'A' DRIBBLES AT DEFENDER & STOPS BALL ON END-LINE FOR 1 GOAL