

**A Guide to Skills Development.**



## ***Introduction:***

Greetings coaches! This is your roadmap for nurturing netball skills at every stage. As architects of player growth, your role is pivotal in shaping the future of the game.

This guide explores skills from under 11s to under 17s, laying the foundation for excellence. Coaching is an art of continuous improvement, turning challenges into opportunities. Beyond technical facets, coaching includes leadership, communication, and strategic acumen.

Our aim is to empower you to create an environment where players thrive and excel. Remember, in every player, there's untapped potential waiting to be unearthed. Let's break down barriers and unlock the full potential of your players. This guide is your companion in moulding resilient, strategic, and empowered athletes.

## Under 11s:

### 1. Fundamental Ball Handling:

- **Catching:**

- Stress the importance of soft hands and proper hand positioning when receiving passes.
- Incorporate drills that focus on tracking the ball's trajectory and timing the catch.

- **Passing:**

- Break down the mechanics of chest passes, emphasizing a strong base and follow-through.
- Introduce basic bounce passes and encourage players to practice accuracy at short distances.

- **Footwork:**

- Teach the basic pivot, ensuring players understand how to pivot on one foot while keeping the other grounded.
- Include fun agility drills to develop nimble footwork.

### 2. Court Awareness:

- **Positioning:**

- Emphasize court thirds and zones, teaching players where to position themselves during different phases of the game.
- Utilize small-sided games to reinforce spatial awareness.

- **Rules Understanding:**

- Focus on foundational rules like three-second possession and no stepping violations.
- Encourage a basic understanding of the concept of offside.

### 3. Teamwork and Communication:

- **Basic Communication:**

- Introduce simple verbal cues such as calling for the ball and signalling intent.
- Foster a supportive and positive communication environment.

- **Positional Play:**

- Explain basic positional responsibilities, such as the roles of shooters, mid-court players, and defenders.
- Encourage teamwork through paired drills and cooperative exercises.

TIP: I found introducing set plays was the perfect way to teach player positioning, roles and responsibilities!

Players at this level should not have "set positions". Players will have preferred and show qualities of a position they are good at, although it is important that all players are rotated through ALL positions.

#### Note:

It is important for the players to have mastered the basic footwork and passing skills.

A suggestion would be a mix up trainings with different drills that focus on the same skills, to keep it interesting but also repetitive.

## Under 13s (Progressing from Under 11s):

### 1. Advanced Ball Skills:

#### • Passing Techniques:

- Refine passing techniques under pressure, incorporating dynamic drills that simulate game scenarios.
- Introduce more advanced passes like shoulder passes and lob passes.

#### • Shooting Introduction:

- Break down shooting into components – foot positioning, hand release, and follow-through.
- Break down the importance of following to the rebound, how to gain the advantage once the shot is released.
- Include shooting drills that simulate game situations and encourage decision-making.

Getting players to “instinctively” get arms over the ball (3 feet) is a skill all players need. Using drills for this will help both attack and defence.

### Footwork:

- Expand on pivoting techniques, including the use of both front and back pivots.
- Introduce dodging movements to evade defenders.

### 2. Defensive Skills:

#### • Marking and Intercepting:

- Develop one-on-one defensive skills, emphasizing body positioning and anticipation.
- Introduce basic intercepting drills to improve reaction time.

#### • Defensive Stance:

- Emphasize maintaining a low and balanced defensive stance, incorporating agility drills.
- Encourage players to read the opposition's plays and react accordingly.

At this age level, I tend to find players struggle with body on. It's a fundamental defensive skill that will need constant attention at trainings and games.

### 3. Increasing Fitness Levels:

#### • Endurance Training:

- Incorporate interval training to build cardiovascular endurance.
- Focus on fitness that mimics the stop-and-start nature of netball.

#### • Off-the-Ball Movement:

- Develop off-the-ball movements to create space and facilitate passing options.
- Introduce structured plays that emphasize coordinated movement.

This will include drills that focus on a dodge or front cut, the focus on this off-ball movement will be to understand the importance of creating space and not going for every ball... there is a time and place to lead for the ball

**Note:**  
It is important when moving to under 13s that players still get the opportunity to play other positions. Coaches need to be open to having more rotations of the team as a whole.

## Under 15s (Progressing from Under 13s):

### 1. Shooting Proficiency:

- **Accuracy and Consistency:**

- Implement shooting drills that focus on accuracy from various distances and angles.
- Emphasize consistency in shooting technique under pressure.

Game Scenarios will be best to practice under pressure.

- **Decision-Making:**

- Introduce decision-making scenarios during shooting drills, encouraging players to choose between shooting and passing.
- Develop a deeper understanding of court positioning for optimal shot opportunities.

Teach goalers the "inner circle" for optimal goaling. Teach defenders to keep players out of the inner circle.

### 2. Tactical Understanding:

- **Game Strategies:**

- Analyse the game to study opponent strategies and discuss counterstrategies. (**coaches need to understand the tactics of the opponent and how to effectively match up players**)
- Introduce set plays and tactical variations to enhance strategic understanding.

- **Adaptability:**

- Engage players in drills that simulate different game scenarios, promoting adaptability to changing conditions.
- Encourage players to read the game and make strategic decisions on the fly.

### 3. Enhanced Defensive Skills:

- **Zoning:**

- Teach zone defence concepts, focusing on player positioning and teamwork within designated zones.
- Encourage communication and collaboration among defenders.

- **Double-Teaming:**

- Introduce the concept of double-teaming, emphasizing timing and coordination.
- Practice scenarios where players work together to apply pressure on opponents. (e.g. double teaming a tall holding goaler)

Zone Defence isn't for everyone, but it is a good technique the players must learn. This technique aids players understand "switching" and boost team defensive communication.

**Note:**  
For under 15s Set Plays are part of the fundamentals of the players. Coaches need to recognise how to deconstruct the set play into player movement mechanics. This will ensure smooth transitions of play.

## Under 17s (Progressing from Under 15s):

### 1. Advanced Game Understanding:

- **Game Analysis:**

- Conduct in-depth game analysis sessions, breaking downplays and discussing strategic decisions.
- Involve players in pre-match strategy discussions to enhance their understanding.

Trainings need to be structured from the analysis of previous games, even from a win there is something to work on. Trainings must have a specific purpose / outcome.

- **Decision-Making under Pressure:**

- Create high-pressure training scenarios that mirror late-game situations.
- Encourage players to make quick and effective decisions in critical moments.

### 2. Positional Specialization:

- **Role Specialization:**

- Identify players' strengths and preferences to allow for positional specialization.
- Provide specialized training sessions for each position to refine skills further.

- **Understanding Roles:**

- Deepen players' understanding of the unique roles and responsibilities associated with each position on the court.
- Facilitate position-specific drills to enhance expertise in designated roles.

### 3. High-Level Fitness:

- **Specialized Fitness Training:**

- Tailor fitness drills to specific positions, focusing on the demands of each role.
- Implement sport-specific conditioning to prepare players for the intensity of competitive play.

Players should be giving 100% at trainings and games, meaning they will be tired, encourage working on aerobic fitness and breathing recovery drills.

- **Recovery Strategies:**

- Educate players on effective recovery strategies, including nutrition, hydration, and post-game routines.
- Emphasize the importance of maintaining peak physical condition throughout the season.

### 4. Leadership and Communication:

- **Captaincy and Leadership:**

- Identify potential leaders and provide leadership development opportunities.
- Encourage captains to take an active role in decision-making and team motivation.

- **Motivation and Support:**

- Develop players' ability to motivate and support teammates during challenging situations.
- Foster a team culture that values positive communication and mutual encouragement.

It is difficult to get the team up and about when it comes to voices on court. This needs to be practiced at training and games. A team that is up and about can be intimidating to the opponent, I would encourage and share this with the team.

**Note:**  
In under 17s there needs to be a huge emphasis on WHY, coaches need to break down weaknesses and work on the improvements. Coaches need to be open to players – constructive criticism.

**Another Note:**  
After 17s players become senior players, it is critical to treat the players with maturity and conditioning for the next competition e.g. Footy Netball