

Coaching and developing field hockey skills

A video curriculum

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There are many technical skills of field hockey that need to be learned to become a good player. Learning how to use these skills in games is what makes one an excellent team player.

All possession skills must be learned with the underlying premise that all skills must be done “while looking up”. Players must learn this from the beginning as it will ensure they will have vision on the field at all times. Doing one's skills at speed “while looking up” is the Platinum Level of all skills as there are no unique “advanced” skills!

In a game, the skills of field hockey are used on the move within the context of the direction of the attacking goal. Drills that are directly related to the tactical skills used in the game are the ones that must be taught and used.

All skills should be learned and implemented as though the player is under a lot of pressure. Pressure means that the player must have the skills to be successful inside the attacking and defending circle and the 23 metre areas where it is crowded with other players. So, one should not teach players skills as though they have lots of space and time.

Developing a skill can only be done properly if the player begins slowly and then gradually increases the speed till they can do the skill at game speed. Every hand-eye coordination skill is learned this way. The analogy is that you don't begin to learn to drive a car on the highway because driving on the highway is done “at speed”. You develop your driving skills by starting out slowly in a place where there are no other cars and few obstacles.

Players should learn what the right way to do a skill is. But, it is just as important to understand what the wrong way to do a skill is. The job of the coach is to know what is incorrect, identify the errors and correct them immediately. The coach needs to be vigilant in a positive way about correcting errors in skill until the player has corrected the error permanently as well as understood how and why.

Finally, as is stated in the footer, *“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”* The juggler becomes good at juggling by juggling and by juggling every single day. We practice our control skills every day. Why every day? Because the player must adapt from being an athlete to becoming a field hockey player.

A champion age level swimmer once told me that the reason swimmers spend so much time in the pool is because the human body was not ideally made for being in the water. Swimmers must adapt their bodies to becoming ideal for being in the water, so they practice, practice, practice.

We aren't born as a field hockey player with Platinum Level skills. We practice and our bodies adapt into becoming a Platinum Level field hockey player.

Using the curriculum

The video curriculum is for both coaches and players. Each exercise is in a short approximately one-minute video clip with the teaching points explained. The clips are grouped by Type of Skill. There is a section for players and coaches that specifically addresses “how to correct doing a skill”.

The exercises are also grouped in the Learning Sequence which is listed after the list of Type of Skills. The Learning Sequence ensures that each player builds on what is learned and learns the skills in the correct sequence.

Watch the lessons a few times to learn the key learning points and then try them out. Then, go back and watch the lessons again to fully understand how to implement the key learning points.

To view each lesson, you need to enter a password. If you have forgotten, lost or don't know the password, please send an email to password_request@torontofield.com.

If you have problem viewing a lesson after you have entered the password correctly, then please email coaching@torontofield.com.

The curriculum sections

Level One – Fundamentals are the skills that players learn first. **Level Two – Fundamentals** builds on what is learned in Level One. **Level Three – Elimination Decision Making** shows how the fundamentals are used in the game situation. **Level Four – Group Play** shows how team play in attack and defense is implemented using the fundamentals. There are additional sections – **Drills, Practice Habits** and **Mini-games**.

New players, at any age, start at Level One and then learn the Level Two, Level Three and Level Four lessons once they have become familiar with the Level One Skills. But, players must always keep practicing their Level One Skills because the Platinum Level is “doing one's skills at speed while looking up” and the Platinum Level can only be achieved first at Level One.

Level One - Fundamentals

Level One – Fundamentals are the skills that players learn first. Level One is not just for “new” players. Players of all levels of experience and age who want to improve the way they play field hockey, including those who play at the highest levels, also start at Level One and will find that when they are diligent in understanding and in doing the lessons, they will improve.

Learning Sequence

Each skill is learned in a sequence that builds upon what has been taught and developed so that players will develop foundations skills first that are required in the other skills that are learned later. Follow the sequence as listed and players can achieve the Platinum Level of doing one's skills at speed “while looking up” in the game.

For coaches, each step in the sequence are the skills that are taught in a practice. This Level One sequence provides what is taught from practice to practice. Not all “skills” listed have to be taught in the same session but it is very important that the skills are “not taught out of sequence” or “not taught at all”.

Click on each lesson title to watch an approximately one-minute video.

“We all love to win, but how many people love to train?”, Mark Spitz (won Seven Gold Medals at the 1972 Olympics)
“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” Will Durant

Session 1

- A 1 [Head Up - while doing control skills](#)
 - A 1.1 [Head Up - Getting it Right](#)
 - A 2 [Left Hand Control Position](#)
 - A 2.1 [Left Hand Control Position - Getting it right](#)
 - A 3 [Right Hand Control Position](#)
 - B 1 [Double Dribble](#)
 - B 2 [One Hand Reach](#)
 - B 3 [Double to One Hand Reach](#)
 - C 1 [Straight Line](#)
 - C 2 [Stop & Start](#)
-
- J 1 [Right hand turning the stick when doing the Single Dribble](#)
 - J 2 [Right hand too low when controlling the ball - Stationary](#)
 - J 3 [Guiding the ball instead of tapping it when dribbling](#)
 - J 4 [Reaching to get the ball with two hands on the stick](#)
 - J 5 [One Hand Reach with Push Position Grip](#)
 - J 6 [Straight Line Running - Ball on the Right Hand Side](#)
 - J 7 [Left Hand Grip wrong when running with the ball](#)
 - J 8 [Tapping the ball instead of guiding when Running with the ball](#)
 - J 9 [Right hand too low when running with the ball](#)

Session 2

- A 4 [Push Grip](#)
- A 6 [Changing the grip from Push & Hit to Left Hand Control](#)
- E. 1 [Forehand Upright Trap - The Basics](#)
- E. 6 [Reverse Stick Upright Trap - The Basics](#)
- F 1 [Push - The Basics](#)
- F 1.1 [Push - Straight Ahead](#)
- F 9 [Flip Pass](#)
- J 14 Push - slap or drag
- M 1 Hold the stick in the Left Hand Control Position and Not with the Push Grip

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Session 3

- C 4 [Stop & Draw \(Stop, Tap to side, Tap Ahead to One Hand Reach\)](#)
- C 4.1 [Stop & Draw \(Stop, Tap to side, Tap Ahead to One Hand Reach\)](#)
- C 9 [Shuffle - Retreat](#)
- C 9.1 [Shuffle - Retreat Practice](#)

Session 4

- C 10 [Pivot - Right to Left](#)
- C 10.1 [Pivot - Left to Right](#)
- C 10.2 [Pivot Dance](#)
- F 2 [Push - Left to Right](#)
- F 3 [Push - Right to Left](#)

Session 5

- N 18 [Feeling the ball on your stick](#)
- A 5 [Hit Grip](#)
- C 7 [Weave](#)
- E 15 Indoor Forehand Trap
- F 11 [Hit - Straight Ahead](#)
- K 1 Watching Off The Ball
- K 2 Calling for the Pass
- K 3 The Square Pass
- K 4 [The Backward of Square Pass - Left to Right](#)
- K 4 [The Backward of Square Pass - Right to Left](#)
- J 13 Hit - hands apart

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Session 6

- B 18 [One Hand Snap](#)
- C 22 [One Hand Reach - Running Forward](#)
- C 23 [One Hand Reach - Running in Retreat](#)
- C 24 [Two players - Weave with ball & tackler retreat with one hand reach](#)
- F 12 [Hit - Left to Right](#)
- F 13 [Hit - Right to Left](#)
- G 0 [An Introduction to Tackling](#)
- G 1 [Tackle in Retreat - Forehand side](#)
- K 7 The Inverted Triangle
- K 8 Forward or Left to Right Pass to Reverse Stick Side
- J 10 Tackling with two hands on the stick
- J 11 Tackling - Do not lunge forward
- J 12 Tackling - Do not swing the stick

Session 7

- G 2 [Tackle in Retreat - Reverse stick side](#)
- H 9 [Weave Elimination - Right Side](#)

Session 8

- B 4 [Snap/Putt Tap - R to L](#)
- B 5 [L to R Snap/Putt Tap](#)
- C 12 Left Side Running
- C 13 [Left Side Running - show the pass](#)
- C 14 [Left Side Running - fake the pass & tap across to a one hand reach](#)
- C 17 [Right Side Running](#)
- C 19 [Right Side Running - fake the pass & tap across to a one hand reach](#)
- F 4 [Push - Left to Right on the run](#)
- F 5 [Push - Right to Left on the run](#)

Session 9

- B 8 [Inside Out - between feet](#)
- B 9 [Inside Out - Left Side](#)
- B 10 [Inside Out - To the Right](#)
- F 14.1 [Hit - Left to Right on the run - Set & Hit](#)

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List of Skills

A. Foundation

- A 1 [Head Up - while doing control skills](#)
- A 1.1 [Head Up - Getting it Right](#)
- A 2 [Left Hand Control Position](#)
- A 2.1 [Left Hand Control Position - Getting it right](#)
- A 3 [Right Hand Control Position](#)
- A 4 [Push Grip](#)
- A 5 [Hit Grip](#)
- A 6 [Changing the grip from Push & Hit to Left Hand Control](#)

B. Stationary Control Skills

- B 1 [Double Dribble](#)
- B 2 [One Hand Reach](#)
- B 3 [Double to One Hand Reach](#)
- B 4 [Snap/Putt Tap - R to L](#)
- B 5 [L to R Snap/Putt Tap](#)
- B 8 [Inside Out - between feet](#)
- B 9 [Inside Out - Left Side](#)
- B 10 [Inside Out - To the Right](#)
- B 18 [One Hand Snap](#)

C. Running Control Skills

- C 1 [Straight Line](#)
- C 2 [Stop & Start](#)
- C 4 [Stop & Draw \(Stop, Tap to side, Tap Ahead to One Hand Reach\)](#)
- C 4.1 [Stop & Draw \(Stop, Tap to side, Tap Ahead to One Hand Reach\)](#)
- C 7 [Weave](#)
- C 9 [Shuffle - Retreat](#)
- C 9.1 [Shuffle - Retreat Practice](#)
- C 10 [Pivot - Right to Left](#)
- C 10.1 [Pivot - Left to Right](#)
- C 10.2 [Pivot Dance](#)
- C 12 Left Side Running
- C 13 [Left Side Running - show the pass](#)

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- C 14 [Left Side Running - fake the pass & tap across to a one hand reach](#)
- C 17 [Right Side Running](#)
- C 18 Right Side Running - show the pass
- C 19 [Right Side Running - fake the pass & tap across to a one hand reach](#)
- C 22 [One Hand Reach - Running Forward](#)
- C 23 [One Hand Reach - Running in Retreat](#)
- C 24 [Two players - Weave with ball & tackler retreat with one hand reach](#)

E. Receive Control Skills

- E 1 [Forehand Upright Trap - The Basics](#)
- E 6 [Reverse Stick Upright Trap - The Basics](#)
- E 10 [Reverse Stick - Behind the Back \(Spin\)](#)
- E 15 Indoor Forehand Trap
- E 16 Indoor Reverse Side Trap - Two Hands
- E 17 Indoor Reverse Side Trap - One Hand

F. Pass Control Skills

- F 1 [Push - The Basics](#)
- F 1.1 [Push - Straight Ahead](#)
- F 2 [Push - Left to Right](#)
- F 3 [Push - Right to Left](#)
- F 4 [Push - Left to Right on the run](#)
- F 5 [Push - Right to Left on the run](#)
- F 9 [Flip Pass](#)
- F 10 [Shuffle to Pass \(push and hit\)](#)
- F 11 [Hit - Straight Ahead](#)
- F 12 [Hit - Left to Right](#)
- F 13 [Hit - Right to Left](#)
- F 14.1 [Hit - Left to Right on the run - Set & Hit](#)
- F 14.2 Hit - Left to Right on the run - Set, Retreat & Hit
- F 15 Hit - Right to Left on the run
- F 20 [Forehand Sweep](#)
- F 21 [Reverse Sweep](#)

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G. Defending

- G 0 [An Introduction to Tackling](#)
- G 1 [Tackle in Retreat - Forehand side](#)
- G 2 [Tackle in Retreat - Reverse stick side](#)

J. Skill Correction

- J 1 [Right hand turning the stick when doing the Single Dribble](#)
- J 2 [Right hand too low when controlling the ball - Stationary](#)
- J 3 [Guiding the ball instead of tapping it when dribbling](#)
- J 4 [Reaching to get the ball with two hands on the stick](#)
- J 5 [One Hand Reach with Push Position Grip](#)
- J 6 [Straight Line Running - Ball on the Right Hand Side](#)
- J 7 [Left Hand Grip wrong when running with the ball](#)
- J 8 [Tapping the ball instead of guiding when Running with the ball](#)
- J 9 [Right hand too low when running with the ball](#)
- J 10 Tackling with two hands on the stick
- J 11 Tackling - Do not lunge forward
- J 12 Tackling - Do not swing the stick
- J 13 Hit - hands apart
- J 14 Push - slap or drag

K. Group Play Attack

- K 4 [The Backward of Square Pass - Left to Right](#)
- K 4 [The Backward of Square Pass - Right to Left](#)
- K 5 [Running off the ball to Receive the Backward of Square Pass](#)

N. Drills

- N 18 [Feeling the ball on your stick](#)

Level One Practice Scripts

Please go to Page 12.

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Level Two - Fundamentals

Level Two – Fundamentals builds on what is learned in Level One. Coaches and players must understand that the skills developed in Level One are needed to learn and properly do Level Two skills, so it is very important to not “rush” through the Level One skills and begin doing Level Two skills.

Developing skill is not race and it is not a race against other players. Each player will develop their skills at a different pace, so it is not a “failure” if a player still works at Level One plus the Platinum Level is “doing one’s skills at speed while looking up” and the Platinum Level can only be achieved first at Level One.

B. Stationary Control Skills

- B 6 [R to L Pull Drag](#)

C. Running Control Skills

- C 3 [Stop/Start - the ball only stops and starts](#)
- C 5 [Stop & Draw with Double Dribble](#)
- C 8 [Weave with Double Dribble](#)

D. Maintain Control Skills

- D 1 [Pivot Left Left - angle back](#)
- D 2 [Pivot Right Right - angle back](#)
- D 5 [Pivot Right to Left and Go Forward](#)
- D 6 [Pivot Left to Right and Go Forward](#)
- D 7 [Tactical Stop and Start](#)

E. Receive Control Skills

- E 7 [Reverse Stick - Trap & Tap Right or Left](#)

F. Pass Control Skills

- F 6 [Push - Fake to pass straight and pass Left](#)
- F 7 [Push - Fake to pass straight and pass Right](#)

K. Group Play Attack

- K 6 [Use the Weave after Receiving a Pass](#)

N. Drills

- N 4 [Diamond Cones - Right Side Elimination](#)
- N 5 [Diamond Cones - Right Side Elimination inverted V](#)
- N 6 [Diamond Cones - Right Side Elimination V in front](#)

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- N 7 [Diamond Cones - Left Side Loop](#)
- N 8 [Diamond Cones - Left Side Loop Fake](#)
- N 9 [Diamond Cones - Left side loop fake inverted V](#)
- N 10 [Diamond Cones - Left Side - V In Front of the defender](#)

More Level Two lessons are to be added.

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Level Three – Elimination Decision Making

Level Three – Elimination Decision Making shows how players make decisions in the game situation using the skills learned in Level One and Level Two. To learn the Elimination Decision Making in Level Three, players must have good control skills otherwise players will be “making moves” or “just dribbling” versus being able to make game situation decisions.

- H 1 [Left Side - Loop](#)
- H 2 [Left Side - Loop Fake](#)
- H 3 [Left Side - Loop Cut in Front](#)
- H 4 [Left Side - V Cut In Front](#)
- H 5 [Left Side - Inverted V](#)
- H 6 Left Side Loop Fake - Early
- H 7 [Right Side - To Attacker's Forehand Side](#)
- H 8 [Right Side - V in Front to Attacker's Reverse Side](#)
- H 9 [Weave Elimination - Right Side](#)

More Level Three lessons are to be added.

Level Four – Group Play

Level Four – Group Play shows how team play in attack and defense is implemented using the fundamentals.

- K 4 [The Backward of Square Pass - Left to Right](#)
- K 4 [The Backward of Square Pass - Right to Left](#)
- K 5 [Running off the ball to Receive the Backward of Square Pass](#)
- K 6 [Use the Weave after Receiving a Pass](#)

More Level Four lessons are to be added.

Drills

The Diamond Cone Drills teach players the fundamentals to do the Elimination Skills.

- N 4 [Diamond Cones - Right Side Elimination](#)
- N 5 [Diamond Cones - Right Side Elimination inverted V](#)
- N 6 [Diamond Cones - Right Side Elimination V in front](#)
- N 7 [Diamond Cones - Left Side Loop](#)
- N 8 [Diamond Cones - Left Side Loop Fake](#)
- N 9 [Diamond Cones - Left side loop fake inverted V](#)
- N 10 [Diamond Cones - Left Side - V In Front of the defender](#)

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More Drills are to be added.

Practice Habits

To be done.

Mini-games

To be done.

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Level One Practice Scripts

Match the Practice Scripts to the Learning Sequence video lessons.

❖ #1

- Basic premise, do your control skills while looking up
- Teach how to hold stick properly in “control” position with left hand and then how to hold with two hands with right hand above half way
 - Single dribble
- Double dribble
 - 30 second Double dribble test
- Left hand reach and left hand control only, i.e., must take right hand off stick when not controlling in slightly greater than shoulder width area
- Straight running with the ball
 - Done While Looking Up
- Stop start running
 - Hard Stop, Look, Start
- Scrimmage
 - Carry across the line

❖ #2

- Warm up of double dribbles and one hand reach
- Straight running with the ball in relay groups
 - Do stop / start
 - Fully remind players to LOOK UP after the Stop
- TEACH Flip Pass & Upright Trap
- Straight running with the ball in relay groups with “flip” pass back to next player
 - Do relay
(Inform players that they must pass the ball hard)
- TEACH tactic of Shuffling Back to make space away from a defender
- TEACH Pivot Right Right to maintain possession
- Play scrimmage with big emphasis that players MUST use Shuffle Back versus turn their back
 - Pass across the line
 - Players MUST ONLY USE a push pass, no slap pass allowed
 - REMIND players to hold stick in “Control” position at all times, NO 2 hands on the stick unless doing a two handed skill!

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❖ #3

- WARM UP after doing their double dribbles & one hand reach
 - Left hand control running (forward and back)
 - Straight Line
 - Stop & Start
- Stop/Start running with the ball in relay group with PUSH pass back to next player
 - Reverse stick trap TAUGHT
*Explain: Reverse stick trapping is the key for going forward in attack
(Show Behind the Back Reverse Stick Trap as final learning point)*
- Teach STOP & DRAW
 - In relay groups
 - Stop / draw (left and right)
 - STOP, TAP SQUARE, TAP AHEAD, REACH WITH ONE HAND to control the ball after the TAP AHEAD
- Teach PIVOTS
- Scrimmage
 - Carry between two sets of cones on a line
*Explain: 2 sets of cones setup to teach how to transfer to the other side where there always be less players
Use your Pivots and Hold stick in Control Position*

❖ #4

- WARM UP after doing their double dribbles & one hand reach
 - Left hand control running (forward and back)
 - Straight Line
 - Stop & Start
 - Stop & Draw
 - Shuffle
 - Pivots
- Stop/Start running with the ball in relay group with FLIP PASS pass back to next player
 - Reverse stick trap TAUGHT
*Explain: Reverse stick trapping is the key for going forward in attack
(Show Behind the Back Reverse Stick Trap as final learning point)*
- Teach WEAVE (and Push Pass R to L and L to R)
 - Use Rectangle Drill
 - Use Cones
 - Then without cones to show how player LOOKS from L to R and R to L
- Reminder on PIVOTS
- Scrimmage
 - Pass Over the Line – Receive On The Reverse Stick side only
*Explain: Reverse stick receiving is attacking skill
Use your Pivots and Hold stick in Control Position*

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❖ #5

(teach Hitting & Backward of Square Passing)

- Warm up of running with the ball after doing their double dribbles & one hand reach
 - Left hand control running (forward and back)
 - Straight Line
 - Stop & Start
 - Stop & Draw
 - Shuffle
 - Pivots
 - Weave
- Teach the forehand upright hit in pairs
- Reminder of the Weave Run in relay group with a HIT back to next player
- Passing in pairs with push passes with hit on goal
 - Teach Backward of Square Pass tactic to maintain possession and running off the ball to stay backward of square
Analogy is No Forward Pass in Rugby
- Scrimmage
 - Pass over the line
 - 1 pt for receiving on the forehand
 - 3 pts for receiving on the reverse stick side
Teach players to make the backward of square pass

❖ #6 - Learn tackling basics and focus on weave

- Warm up of running with the ball after doing their double dribbles & one hand reach
 - Left hand control running (forward and back)
 - Straight Line
 - Stop & Start
 - Stop & Draw
 - Shuffle
 - Pivots
 - Weave (focus with extra repetitions)
- Hitting in pairs for 5 minutes
- Introduce tackling
 - Show one hand wrist flick skill
 - Teach forward and retreat running controlling the ball to learn control for tackling
 - Tackling in retreat running with a partner
- Scrimmage – carry across the line
 - Set the ball with the one hand reach when crossing the line
 - Players must try use their weave skill
 - Players must not step forward to tackle, try to tackle in retreat
 - Players should use the backward of square pass

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- ❖ #7 - Start learning tactical basics (Call for Pass and Watch Off the Ball)
 - Warm up of control skills and running with the ball
 - Left hand control running (forward and back)
 - Straight Line
 - Stop & Start
 - Stop & Draw
 - Shuffle
 - Pivots
 - Weave (focus with extra repetitions)
 - Tackling in Retreat With Partner who does the Weave
 - Stationary Push Passing but with change in direction to make players move their feet to make a change of direction pass
 - Three players in a 90 degree triangle with all passes through the middle player which makes the player turn from L to R and R to L
Players must call for pass
 - Teach Left side and Right Side Running
 - Passing pairs with shot on goal
 - Left and Right Side Running is used
 - No Forward Pass
 - Teach “Call for your pass”
 - Teach “Watching Off the Ball”
 - Scrimmage
 - Pass over the line
 - Receive on the reverse stick side only
Remind players to make the backward of square pass to maintain possession

- ❖ #8 – Show how to Eliminate to Right Side in Weave (with Acting Defender); Inverted Triangle
 - Warm up of control skills and running with the ball
 - Left hand control running (forward and back)
 - Straight Line
 - Stop & Start
 - Stop & Draw
 - Shuffle
 - Pivots
 - Left Side Running with fake the pass
 - Right Side Running with fake the pass
 - Weave (focus with extra repetitions)
 - Tackling in Retreat With Partner who does the Weave
 - Weave Elimination to Right Side; Acting Defender role
 - Inverted Triangle Passing to show players to keep possession
 - From own goal line to half way to show how to bring the ball out of their zone
 - From half to circle and shot on goal for attacking play – show how forward players get to goal line when in the 25 yard area
Players must call for pass

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- Scrimmage
 - Pass across the line – receive on reverse stick side
 - All forward passes to be received on reverse stick side
 - On a Free Hit, a Forward Pass cannot be made (this forces the backward and change of direction pass)
 - NO step forward tackling

- ❖ #9 – Teach Reverse Sweep Pass
 - Warm up of control skills and running with the ball
 - Left hand control running (forward and back)
 - Straight Line
 - Stop & Start
 - Stop & Draw
 - Shuffle
 - Pivots
 - Left Side Running with fake the pass
 - Right Side Running with fake the pass
 - Weave (focus with extra repetitions)
 - Tackling in Retreat With Partner who does the Weave
 - Weave Elimination to Right Side; Acting Defender role
 - Teach Reverse Sweep Pass
 - Stationary
 - Pass in pairs running with hit on goal
 - Scrimmage (teach how to get ball out from in front of goal when defenders break up the play)
 - Shoot on goal and carry over the line
 - After a team scores – switch direction

“Practicing your skills better be fun because practice makes better”

Peter D’Cruz, coaching@torontofield.com, 2017

<https://vimeo.com/peterdcruz>

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