Top 25 Tips For Developing Soccer Skills

Soccer is the best sport on the planet. You can play it on your own, with a few friends or as part of a team. The fundamental skills needed can be developed through repetition, observation and visualization. With regular training and practice of a specific movement or technique, the player builds confidence and the skills become natural.

Over time, players can master a range of soccer skills such as ball control, dribbling, passing, crossing, shooting, heading, volleying, taking throw-ins, penalties, corner kicks and free kicks, tackling, marking, juggling, receiving, shielding, clearing, and goalkeeping.

The following 25 tips for developing soccer skills can help any soccer player become a better player:

1. **Every day practice the fundamentals of soccer. Work on technique on your own. Work on all of the skills mentioned above. Do at least 30 minutes of skill practice per day.** Doing little practice often is better than doing a lot of practice all at once. The key to being good at soccer is to work hard on all of the soccer fundamentals. Train your feet. Train your mind. This constant practice and improvement in your ball skills will allow you to progress faster than others.

2. **Get to know how the ball feels with your feet.** Roll it from side-to-side with the sole of each foot and the inside/outside of each foot. What you want to do is to begin to become very familiar with the ball. Notice what it feels like to move it in different ways with your bare feet and with your soccer boots.

3. **Practice with different sized soccer balls.** Kicking a mini-ball or a tennis ball will help you to have a much finer level of skill. When you come to play with a match ball it will feel much easier to control because of the skill that you now have with much smaller balls.

4. **Kick the ball with your weaker foot many times.** Pass the ball against a wall from different distances and with different balls over and over with your weaker foot. In the future, you will be happy that you did this practice over and over. Players who can use both feet effectively are rare and in high demand.

5. **Perfect your first touch.** This is where we immediately soften, cushion or deaden the ball. What we are aiming to do is to put the ball exactly where we want it with the same touch we use to bring it under control. This gives us the time and space to consider what to do next: pass, dribble or shoot. This takes lots of practice. Over time we will know what to do with the ball before it arrives. Controlling the ball is a fundamental soccer skill for all players. **You can’t skip this skill.**

6. **Develop your ability to pass the ball to the nearest team-mate quickly.** Passing is where we are swinging our foot effortlessly through the ball so that it goes in the direction that we intend. During a game, we aim to pass the ball to a teammate who is in a better position than we are. **Passing is a fundamental soccer skill for all players.** Pass the ball against a wall from different distances and with different balls over and over with both feet. Practice with a friend over short and long distances.

7. **Work on running with the ball and dribbling.** This is the ability to keep the ball under close control and to change direction. **Dribbling is a fundamental soccer skill** for all players and is...
exciting to do and see others do. The basic idea is to move the ball ahead of us in small movements and to fool the defender into thinking we are going one direction, when we really go in a different direction. Defenders will often panic when we run right at them.

8. **Work on two or three tricks** so that you do them without thinking in a game. There are many tricks and techniques that we can use when running at defenders, such as the step-over, nutmeg, and shoulder drop. The shoulder drop means that we dip the shoulder to one side and go in the opposite direction. There are many Brazilian tricks that you can learn. You can see how to do some of them on YouTube videos.

9. Know how to **shoot with both feet**. You need to take opportunities when they appear and being able to shoot with your weaker foot will mean that you convert more of these opportunities. Shooting is a fundamental soccer skill for all players. Every player needs to score a goal if they get the chance. Practice against a wall from different distances. Shooting is a balance between power and precision. Beginner soccer players tend to look at the goalkeeper when shooting on goal, which means that they tend to kick the ball straight at the keeper. If you want to get good at scoring goals, the key is to look for the space and keep the shot on target. Look around before collecting a pass, look where the goalkeeper is, look where the goal is and then aim your shot into the space that you see. Simple.

10. **Understand the importance of keeping possession** of the ball. Don’t give it away needlessly. **Your team can’t score goals and win games if you don’t have the ball.** This means that you need to know how to shield the ball. **Shielding the ball is a fundamental soccer skill** for all soccer players. Shielding is where you keep the ball or hold the ball up so you can pass the ball to a teammate or take a shot at goal. The way to do it is to position your body between the opposing player and the ball, or to turn away from pressure and keep the ball away from the other player, or cut back with either foot to protect the ball. **Watch how the professional players do it** when you watch a televised game. Practice with a friend by playing one-on-one.

11. Start simple when learning to head the ball. Just practice bouncing the ball gently on to your forehead with your hands, and then throw the ball against the wall and head it back on to the wall from different distances. Next have a friend throw the ball to you and head it back to them. Keep your eyes focused on the ball. **Heading is a fundamental soccer skill** for all players. Heading is good for passing, clearing the ball from danger, controlling scoring, and defending.

12. Understand the importance of gaining possession of the ball. **Your team can’t score goals and win games if you don’t have the ball.** This means that you need to know how to track, close down your opponent and tackle to get the ball for your team. **Tackling and jockeying are fundamental soccer skills** for all players. Jockeying means to position yourself in front of the opposing players and wait until they expose or release the ball far enough for you to intercept it. Position yourself so that the opposing players have to keep the ball on their weaker foot (usually the left side) which will make it easier for the tackle. When tackling, **don’t dive in** with a tackle unless you are absolutely sure that you will get it. Practice with a friend by playing one-on-one.

13. Develop your peripheral vision. This is a part of vision allows you to focus on your entire field of vision instead of focusing on just one spot. It enables you to notice small movements at the edge of your sight and so be more aware of your surroundings and ready to react to things other than those directly in front of you. Peripheral vision can be practiced. The soccer players that
regularly see objects in their peripheral vision have improved abilities – they are able to keep control of the ball while looking up for a teammate to pass the ball to. The key to this skill is to not look directly at the ball with your eyes, but instead focus on a defined point in mid-air.

14. **Practice soccer skills in your mind.** Imagine yourself taking free kicks, scoring goals and beating a defender with a dribbling trick. When we rehearse these skills in our mind, our body learns them. All great athletes and sports people do this skill automatically. Soccer Psychology works. Do this often: 1. Imagine yourself doing the ball skill; 2. Let your body kick the ball as well as it can; 3. See what is happening when you do the ball skill – don’t judge yourself good or bad, just notice what is happening; 4. Repeat the three steps.

15. Increase your speed as far as possible. **Speed is important** in soccer. Generally, your sprinting speed (10-40 yards) is more important than speed over a longer distances. Practice sprinting over these short distances and make sure you rest between each sprint.

16. Build your strength on the ball as far as possible. This is the ability to shield and control the ball when under pressure. It has to do with skill, positioning and physical strength. Although strength on the ball means more than physical strength, doing weights for 1-2 days per week to develop muscle will help.

17. **Eat the right food.** Nutrition is vital for your body. After an intense training session or soccer match, eat both carbohydrates and protein within 45 minutes to ensure proper muscle development. Have healthy food ready and nearby, such as a shake with water, protein powder and fruit. Before a game, make sure you eat two to three hours beforehand.

18. **Track the progress of your soccer skills development.** Look at each of your skills objectively. What are you good at and not so good at? It is vital to know your strengths and weaknesses and to realize that your weaknesses can be turned into strengths with lots of practice. (Use iSoccer.org to help!)

19. Set targets for your performance during training and games. Before a soccer practice, write down some goals you would like to achieve. After the soccer practice, write down your progress on your scorecard. During a game, if you are a striker, aim to have 10 shots on goal and on target, and set up 5 chances for your team-mates. If you are a defender, aim to make 20 tackles.

20. When buying a pair of soccer boots (cleats), make sure that they are comfortable, fit well, especially in the width, and are flexible in all directions, including the sole (the bottom of the boot). There are four different types of football boots: molded studs, screw-in studs, blades and astroturf trainers. You may want more than one pair of soccer cleats for different environments and to take care of them so that they last longer.

21. Do other physical activities for cross training purposes. Cross training means combining different exercises to work various parts of the body. Playing soccer will mean that you only develop certain muscle groups and you want to develop them all. So do other sports and activities, such as take up track to develop speed and take a dance class to develop balance and fancy footwork.

22. Find a good soccer coach to learn from (and join a soccer team that matches your ability). What you are looking for is a coach who knows what he or she is talking about, values individual skill development and can show you how to do the skills.
23. **Watch soccer skills DVD’s.** (Or find them on YouTube!) Slow the moves down to really see what the player is doing. Copy what you see. Watching and copying other players’ skills can help you improve your technique.

24. **Watch live soccer matches on television.** Many soccer players find that their skills improve as they watch the professionals play at the highest level. TV viewers who know what it feels like to play the sport will train the awareness and the muscle memory in their minds and bodies. This is because they are unconsciously absorbing the skills through visualization and imagination. Although watching the World Cup is fun, the European Champions league tournament has the highest standard of soccer and is most worth watching.

25. **Know the rules of soccer.** There are about 17 laws of the game. It is important to know them. Especially the offside rule. You don’t want to make any embarrassing mistakes during a game do you? You can take the online Grade 8 referee course at:

   http://www.ussoccer.com/referees/resource-center/referee-resources/grade-8-referee-course.aspx

Source: http://soccerskillsforbeginners.com