



elev8

Raise the game.

THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

**‘The principles of play are the foundations on which successful attacking and defending team play is built’-
The FA.**

The ‘principles of play’ get thrown around on most coaching courses. If you are a UEFA B coach or higher, you will definitely have applied them to your coaching. As a coach it is important that you not only understand the principles of play but can also ensure your players understand the advantages of employing these principles.

One thing that has always frustrated me about the principles of play is that there is no clear order for a coach to learn these in and apply to these practices. As a Coach you must study the game and how the principles apply to it. Watch the game at elite levels and focus on certain principles to build your knowledge. For example, you match watch a premier league game and focus on how teams out of possession, delay the opponents. Where do they do this? How? Who’s involved? What are the triggers? How does that relate to your team? If you are watching Premier League 11v11 but you coach a grass roots under 7 team, the principles may be the same but it will look different. So, with an U7 team you might focus on 1v1 defending, the first part of the process.

Underpinning all successful strategic and tactical play is the timely and correct implementation of the principles of play.

ATTACKING PRINCIPLES



WIDTH & DISPERSAL

The ability of team members to spread out from side to side and end to end to create as much time and space as possible when in possession. The team should use the time and space to pass to others, run with the ball or take on shots.

SUPPORT

The ability of a team to provide passing options for the player in possession of the ball. This is key to ball retention.

Efficient support play relies on passing outlets being at the appropriate angle and distance, plus being available at the appropriate time.

MOVEMENT

The intelligent and calculated movements of players to create opportunities to receive the ball or for others to receive the ball. Clever player movement has the ability to attract opponent's attention and potentially dislocate the positions of opposing defenders.

PENETRATION

The intelligent use of possession, support and movement to enter scoring area with accuracy, timing and deception. Teams will employ different playing styles, tactics and skills to achieve this.

INVENTION & CREATIVITY

The individual and combines activity of players to perform unexpected skills that eliminate opponents at the appropriate moments in the game.

Attacking Principles Example

Coaching Combination Play with U14 Forwards

- 1) Look at the **width and dispersal** of the attacking players. Are they organised to create space and opportunities? Does their organisation create opportunity for combinations?
 - RECOGNISE & EXPLOIT SPACE IN FRONT & TO THE SIDE OF DEFENDERS.
 - SPREAD OUT TO STRETCH THE OPPONENTS & CREATE SPACE
- 2) Are the players **SUPPORT** positions productive for combination play? Are the distances and angles correct for combinations to happen?
 - COMBINE & SUPPORT PLAY FROM FRONT AND BEHIND IN ATTACKING AREAS.
 - PLAY IN BETWEEN OPPONENTS
- 3) Is the **MOVEMENT** of the players what you want to see?
 - Changing the tempo of movement for combinations? Exploiting space.
- 4) How will your players combine to **PENETRATE** the defence?
 - Quick Play to open up forward passing opportunities
 - Receiving, passing, turning, dribbling and shooting skills.
- 5) Are your players being inventive and creative to combine?
 - Wall Passes, Third Man Runs, Up back through etc

DEFENDING PRINCIPLES



DELAY

(Out of possession) The movement of players and defensive structures to reduce time, space and opportunities for opponents to penetrate defensive lines.

DEPTH

The arrangement and movement of players to reduce opportunities for the opposition to pass to, or run into.

COMPACTNESS

The grouping of players around the ball and specifically the placement of players between the ball and the goal to reduce options to penetrate the defensive team structure.

BALANCE

The capability of a team to cover significant spaces that could be used by opponents in build-up play – when not engaged in pressing, challenging, marking, covering and tracking duties.

CONTROL & RESTRAINT

The adoption of composure, awareness and sound judgement, allied to understanding priority, responsibility and risk.

Defending Principles Example

Coaching Defensive Play with an U11 Team

- 1) Delay
 - Encourage defenders to slow attackers down
 - Work on 1v1 defending
 - Force attackers into the smallest spaces and wait for opportunities to win the ball.
- 2) Depth
 - Look at the positioning of the other players based on the position of the first defender. Are they blocking forward passing opportunities? Are they marking opponents appropriately with the correct distances?
- 3) Compactness
 - Are the players positioning themselves correctly and denying the opposition space by being compact? What are the players jobs?
- 4) Balance
 - Is the team balanced to deal with a switch of play? Is their positioning correct are their distances beneficial? Body position to see play?
- 5) Control
 - Being focused, cool, calm and collected to make correct decisions to defend effectively.