



FUTSAL FOR BEGINNERS

Simple tactical tips for a successful futsal career

Abstract

This document is for beginner players of the world's most beautiful sport who might not yet know the basics of positioning. How can we attack effectively, defend strongly as a team, or why are we the only ones not scoring from corners? This document answers all these questions. In other words, it explains what to do in: Possession, Opponent Possession, Counterattacks (both offensive and defensive), and Set Plays.

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Basic Skills of the Player

Many of us began on a green (or artificial) grass field outdoors, with cleats, under the blazing sun, pouring rain, or strong winds, often with a parent as a coach. This forms the foundation for all great Dutch footballers, from Ronald Koeman to Virgil van Dijk, Frenkie de Jong to Willem van Hanegem. It is also an excellent foundation for futsal. However, the basics of outdoor football differ slightly from futsal. Let's go back to the essentials (receiving, passing, shooting) and familiarize ourselves with futsal jargon and field positions, as these have different names and numbers compared to outdoor football.

Personal Skills

Brazilian Receiving: To instantly control the ball in futsal, you should receive it with the sole of your foot. This is called Brazilian receiving. The advantage is that the ball stays close to you, allowing for quick, controlled passing and making it harder for opponents to steal. Receiving with the inside of the foot often leads to losing possession as the ball moves further away from the body.

Passing to Teammates: This is similar to outdoor football, using the inside, outside, or instep of the foot, depending on the distance and speed required.

Play to Feet, Not Space: In futsal, it's better to pass directly to teammates' feet rather than into space. The ball rolls quickly on the small field, making it easier to maintain possession this way. Playing a through ball often results in loss of possession as the ball moves too fast.

The Roll: Due to the quick speed of the ball, we roll the ball back to an approaching teammate instead of passing. Receive it Brazilian-style, wait for your teammate to get close, and roll the ball with the sole for a perfect setup for a shot.

Shooting: Futsal balls, also called "ploffbal" are smaller, heavier, and less bouncy than regular footballs, making them easier to control but harder to shoot hard. With less time to shoot, use an old-fashioned toe-poke for quick and disguised shots.

Defensive Anchor: Always ensure that not all four field players are ahead of the ball during an attack. One player must stay behind as an anchor to maintain possession and prevent counterattacks.

Futsal Terminology/Jargon on the Field

Positions in a 3-1 System (Most Common Formation)

- Position 1: As in outdoor football, this is the goalkeeper.
- Position 2: The right-wing player.
- Position 3: The central player.
- Position 4: The left-wing player.
- Position 5: The striker, also known as the pivot in futsal.

Key Terms

Anchor: The player who stays back during an attack. "KEES ANCHOR!" means Kees must stay behind the ball and not push forward.

Block: A teammate creates space for the ball carrier by legally blocking an opponent. When someone shouts "BLOCK," a block must be set.

Turn: Synonymous with "time," but as an imperative for the player to turn around.

Press: Apply pressure with the intent of winning the ball. When "press" is shouted, everyone starts pressing. See defending

Play and Move: A command to pass the ball and then move to a new position. See attacking

Heat (Make it Hot): Apply pressure without necessarily trying to win the ball to avoid being bypassed.

Let Go: You can stop marking or following your opponent.

Close the Middle: Wing players move inward to block direct passes to the pivot. A direct ball through the middle is the most dangerous, as it allows offensive runs by the opponent.

Back/Danger: A player is directly behind the receiving player, requiring them to brace.

Step Up: A command for a player to advance toward a more forward opponent.

Switch: Exchange marking responsibilities with a teammate to maintain defensive organization.

Time: The receiving player has no immediate opponent nearby and can turn freely.

Hold: The receiving player must hold the ball, wait for teammates to join, and prepare to pass or roll.

Drop Back/Own Half/Let Them Come: Indicate that the team should retreat defensively (see defending). See defending

Trap/Keep Them Here: Indicate to press and lock opponents in their half. See defending

Attacking (Own Team in Possession)

The goal of attacking is to score goals, which requires creating chances. This begins with choosing a formation. Like outdoor football, futsal has various formations, with the 3-1 formation being the most common (used by 95% of teams).

In the video below, you can see several attacking plays. All the attacks have the following in common: **Everyone passes and moves**, there is always an **anchor** (one player moves forward while another stays back), and the first player to arrive in the **Hot Zone** moves toward **the second post**. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPaLU3NN4e0&t=369s>).

Hot Zone: This is the name Arne Slot uses for the area on the field from which it is easiest to score. The court can be divided into three areas: left, center, and right. The Hotzone is a particular area within the center of the field. In futsal, the Hot Zone is the central area between the goal line and the dashed line, i.e., the 10 meters closest to the goal. Attackers should aim to enter the Hot Zone through runs and rotations. If you don't receive the ball, exit the zone to create space for a teammate to arrive in the hot zone.

Pass and Move: Rotate using the principle of passing and then moving to a new position. Preferably, move forward through the center or diagonally toward the wings. This disrupts the opponent's defense and creates attacking opportunities. Always keep one player behind the ball as an **anchor**.

Running to the Second Post: The easiest way to score is by creating a 100% chance, often done by positioning at the second post. When a teammate has the ball on the wing, another player should run to the Hot Zone near the second post. Shots from the wing should be aimed across the goal for easy tap-ins by the second post player. Scoring at the second post is highly effective! If a defender follows you to the second post, it creates space for the player with the ball to make an individual move, take a shot, or pass to another teammate and continue their run.

Defending (Opponent in Possession)

Defensive Formations: When attacking, you try to pull the opponent out of the previously mentioned Hot Zone so that you can occupy it at the right moment through movement to score. Defending is the exact opposite: you aim to close off the Hot Zone and the central areas, which is the most important goal. The opponent should be given as few chances as possible. You can choose to trap, defend high, or defend compactly. Positionally, there is no difference. The key distinction is that in high defending and trapping, the central defender is positioned in front of the opponent's deepest player instead of behind them. **THIS IS CRUCIAL**. You can defend in a diamond (1-2-1) formation or a square (2-2) formation. If the opponent plays in a 2-2, a square formation is easiest to use. If the opponent plays in a 3-1, a diamond formation is more effective. Below are two short videos explaining how to defend in a 2-2 (square) or a 1-2-1 (diamond) formation:

Square defending: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19oyUPUanLA>

Diamond defending: <https://youtu.be/qPzDeMU3m3k>.

Compact Defending (Dropping Back): In compact defending, the objective is to get all players onto your half of the field as quickly as possible. You might even allow the opponent to move slightly further up the field. As a team, you shrink the playing area, making it harder for the opponent to attack. If your team has a fast player, you can counterattack effectively because there's plenty of space on the opponent's half. When defending compactly, it is essential to maintain pressure on the ball carrier.

However, do not drop back too far. Always ensure you defend at least 10 meters away from your goal (to keep opponents out of the Hot Zone). Finally, focus on cutting off passes through the middle.

USE THIS STRATEGY WHEN:

- The opponent struggles to bypass defenders or primarily relies on passing and moving.
- The opponent is very fast (deny them space to run).

AVOID THIS STRATEGY WHEN:

- The opponent can easily bypass defenders. Once someone is bypassed, they are practically in the Hot Zone. In such cases, use trapping instead.

High Defending (Applying Pressure): In high defending, immediate pressure is applied in the opponent's half to prevent them from building up play. Each player must closely mark their opponent. **For the central defender, it is crucial to position in front of their opponent's pivot to block passes to them.** If the pivot does receive the ball, the opponent can exploit quick movement to launch attacks, which becomes very hard to defend. You will not be able to cover the spaces in time. High defending is energy-intensive and requires a good level of fitness. The goalkeeper plays a vital role in high defending by guiding defenders who may lose sight of their markers.

USE THIS STRATEGY WHEN:

- The opponent is significantly less fit than your team (usually if they have only one substitute).
- The opponent lacks strong positional play or struggles with passing and moving.

AVOID THIS STRATEGY WHEN:

- The opponent can easily bypass defenders or excels at passing and moving.

Trapping (Forcing Long Balls): Trapping involves defending high up the field in a way that forces the opponent to play long balls or throw the ball directly forward from the goal. The goal is to position your team such that their only option is to play long. **The central defender positions themselves in front of the opponent's pivot to intercept passes (THIS IS CRUCIAL).** The goalkeeper positions higher up the field to intercept deep balls over the central defender. The goalkeeper must guide the central defender by indicating the location of the opponent's pivot.

USE THIS STRATEGY WHEN:

- The opponent is skilled at passing, moving, or bypassing defenders. This prevents them from gaining possession.

AVOID THIS STRATEGY WHEN:

- The opponent has a very strong pivot who can consistently get in front of defenders.

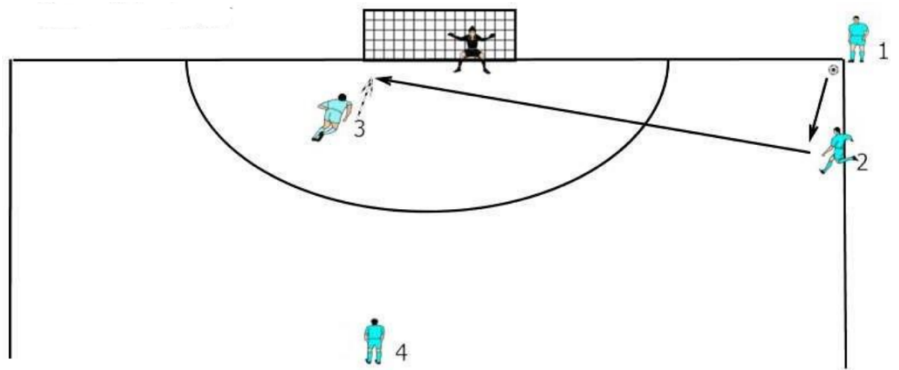
Set pieces

In an exam, there's always an easy question you don't have to study much for—free points. You just need to memorize a simple list. In futsal, set plays are free opportunities to score, provided they are executed correctly. A good execution is relatively straightforward.

Corners and Kick-ins in the Opponent's Half

The basics of corner kicks start with a solid setup. The setup is as follows:

- **Number 1 (Taker):** Takes the corner and decides the variation.
- **Number 2 (Shooter):** Positioned to shoot immediately.
- **Number 3 (Second Post Runner):** Runs to the second post to tap in a missed shot or cross.
- **Number 4 (Anchor):** Defends against counterattacks or positions for a long-range shot variant.

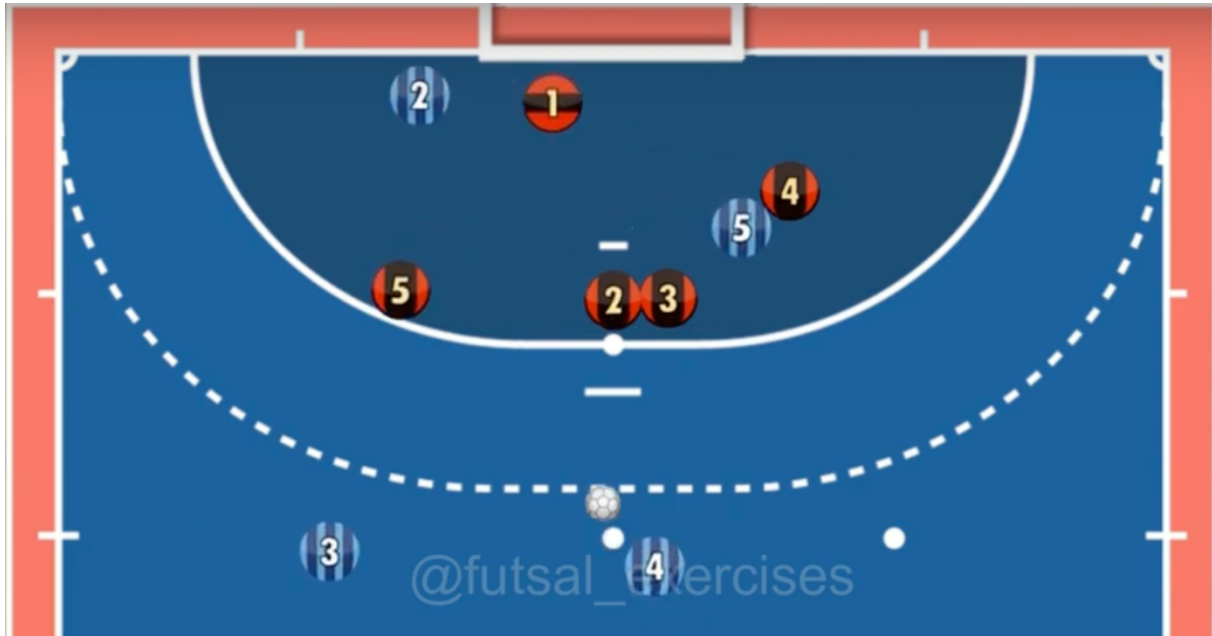


All possible variations begin from this setup. Below are some variations that always create opportunities:

- **Standard Corner (Call = Standard or Corner 1):** The standard corner is very simple. The taker rolls the ball to the shooter (Number 2), who shoots toward the far corner or crosses toward the second post for Number 3 to tap in, as shown in the diagram.
- **Double Roll Corner (Call = Sushi):** The taker rolls the ball to the shooter, then runs around them. The shooter rolls the ball back to the taker, who shoots on goal or crosses to Number 3.
- **Direct Corner (Call = Arsenal):** A hard-driven ball across the goal, tapped in by Number 3 at the second post. This corner is effective when the opponent anticipates a standard/double roll corner and positions too far forward.
- **Volley/Dropkick Corner (Call = Popeye):** When the opponent is very compact, player Number 4 (Anchor) has ample space to shoot. The taker plays the ball directly to the Anchor for a volley or shot. Watch an example here: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Pd4_q5ShkUs
- **Possession Corner (Call = Possession):** The shooter moves back to receive a pass instead of a roll. Number 3 moves to the flank, and the taker runs to the second post. A standard attack is initiated from a 3-1 formation.

Free kicks

Free kicks in futsal are free opportunities to score, but positioning is key. While you can come up with as many variations as you like, the simplest and most effective options are either shooting directly or passing wide and then shooting.



For free kicks: **Always position two players at the goalposts** (Attackers 2 and 5). Standing at the posts forces Defenders 5 and 4 to move back. If they don't follow, you will remain unmarked directly in front of the goal, as shown. In this case, Attacker 2 can receive the ball and score.

There should always be two players at the ball, preferably one left-footed and one right-footed. If defenders follow Attackers 2 and 5, this opens up space for a direct shot. If the taker (Attacker 4) has a clear shot around the wall, they should shoot directly. Otherwise, they can pass wide to Attacker 3, who then shoots on goal. The players at the posts position themselves to capitalize on any rebounds.