

ball control

games and drills designed to improve ball control

Thanks to [soccerperformance.org](http://www.soccerperformance.org) for this article at footy4kids.
(original link: http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/ball_control.htm)

There are two key elements of good ball control:

- a) The receiver's first touch should protect the ball from challenging players and not give them a chance to regain possession,
- b) the receiving player should play the ball into available space to allow for the next touch and to gain or keep momentum.

A poor first-touch will risk taking the momentum out of play and increase the possibility of losing possession. Some players make the mistake of killing the ball dead and not concentrating on getting it out of their feet. The first touch should ensure that a time wasting second touch is not needed to get the ball out ready for the next action.

The general technique for controlling the ball requires several simple skills which can be acquired through correct training practices.

1. The first element of ball control is to place the controlling surface into the ball's line of flight. The body weight should be well distributed so it is possible to move forwards, backwards or sideways. Keep the head steady and watch the ball carefully to judge it's flight and speed. It is difficult to keep one's eyes permanently on the ball and better players are able to take a quick glance to know what is happening around them before contact is made.

2. The second step is making an early judgement in choosing the right *technique* and *body surface* to control. Wedge control involves a more rigid surface where the player attempts to force the ball downwards or into space so he can move onto it. A cushioned control involves taking the sting out of the ball. This involves pulling the surface back just when the ball makes contact (the body becomes elastic) so that it simply drops at the players feet. This particular technique is very useful when closely marked, for example a forward receiving the ball on the chest with his back to goal.

The different body surfaces often used in controlling the ball are: The foot (sole, inside, outside, instep), thigh, chest & stomach and head. Generally, the part of the body used should preferably be large, flat and able to take the weight of the incoming pass.

Control also requires good mental abilities such as confidence and total concentration. A composed player is one who is calm, relaxed and unhurried in his movements. Confidence does play a big part in this as players who know what they can do and are confident in their ability are more likely to show great technique and succeed. Those who do not have confidence, will be indecisive and their technique hurried.

When training, players can exaggerate the movements to get the feel of the right technique. Younger players can learn from the coach who should demonstrate the technique, break it down and practice the individual elements and eventually, practice the whole technique. Only once the basic techniques have been mastered should a coach move onto more advanced situations. These should concentrate on improving control in pressure situations (defenders coming from the side, front, back), control while moving at pace, control which involves an immediate layoff and controlling the ball for a team mate. The ball should be received from all angles, speeds and heights and all surfaces constantly used.

Some common problems when controlling the ball are described below along with a training method than can be used to improve technique:

Problem 1 - *Ball path has been misread and the player has missed the pass.*

Corrective procedure - Repeated practice using passes from different distances and vary intensity. The coach must encourage player to keep their eyes on the ball at all times and get their body in line.

Problem 2 - *Player is indecisive when choosing controlling body surface.*

Corrective procedure - Player shouts the type of body surface they will use and the server provides the pass and vice versa until the player gets the right feeling for the choice of technique.

Problem 3 - *The player does not get the ball out of their feet and needs a second touch.*

Corrective procedure - Encourage the player to relax and exaggerate the movement. Repeated practice using passes from different distances and vary intensity.

Problem 4 - *The ball bounces off the player and control is lost.*

Corrective procedure - Again, encourage the player to exaggerate the movement, especially the relaxation phase, firstly without the ball and afterwards using gentle service (eventually building up service difficulty). Try using smaller or lighter balls.

Take a look at some [games that will improve ball control techniques](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk) at www.footy4kids.co.uk