



# First things first!

## Part 1: Playful coordination training with jump rope and ball by Christoph Anrich, athletic coach, German youth national team

Unfortunately, children's training still seems to be a sort of scaled-down adult training in many clubs. Players practice techniques and run through a few tactics; in the most extreme cases they may even do drills on isolated aspects of condition.

Though their coaches may mean well, there's one thing we can be sure of: This is not the way to train children! It's not designed to meet their needs, and later on it will keep them from tapping their full potential.

In this article, Christoph Anrich shows us how closely comprehensive motor training is linked to future performance. He also gives us exercises that use jump ropes and soccer balls to help kids develop agility and build coordination in a playful way.

### Training coordination

Sport-specific skills can only be built on the foundation of good coordination. Players who have well-developed coordination in addition to their technical and other athletic skills will be able, as they develop, to surpass other players whose sport-specific skills were initially comparable or even better. Coordination should therefore be considered a performance-limiting factor. Training should continuously alternate between the various aspects of coordination so that players will be able to deal ap-

propriately with any given situation in match play. Every move an athlete makes combines various movement sequences (motor integration). He must react to complex game situations and plays (reaction, anticipation and adaptability) within the constraints of space (orientation).

Our basic assumption is that if fundamental movement sequences are learned at the right time, they can be applied to the specific motor demands of any sport. The primary function of coordination training for children is to teach these sequences.

Individual motor techniques are not sport-specific. They form

a solid foundation for more complex motor techniques and sport-specific coordination training at a later age. The only way for youth players to perform at a high level is by continuing to develop the aspects of coordination they acquired as children.

Athletic performance is largely determined by how well players are able to utilize the different aspects of coordination, which depends in turn on the extent of their energy reserves and their cardiovascular capacity.

The chart on the next page provides an overview of the various aspects of coordination in soccer. Exercises and notes on training begin on page 37.



### Up next:

The second part of this series will appear in our November issue, which is scheduled to be published on Oct. 16.

Playful training activities are not only fun for kids, they're a great way to learn!

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**FIG. 1** COORDINATION IN SOCCER: AN OVERVIEW



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## SAMPLE EXERCISES

### How to use them

The exercises below can be combined into a complete coordination training session. They can also be individually integrated into a session on a soccer-specific topic, in which case we recommend them as warm-up and main session exercises. Players should work on coordination on a regular basis!

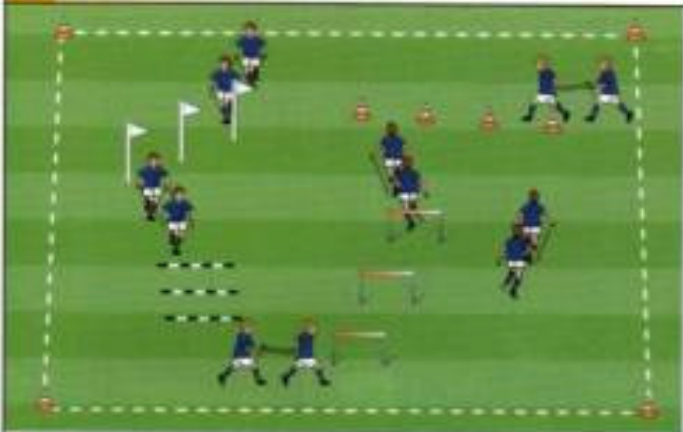
### Intensity level

Some of these activities require players to pay exceptionally close attention. In the second variation on this page, for example, players have to dribble the ball in response to their partners' signals. Don't overwork your players! Keep their ability level in mind. That way they're guaranteed to learn a lot and have plenty of fun, as the photos show.

### Setup and materials

Most clubs these days should have jump ropes in their equipment closets. Otherwise you may be able to borrow some from a nearby school. If neither of these is an option for you, the solution might be a trip to the hardware store, where you can buy rope in bulk. Just cut the lengths you need, and you're ready for practice!

#### 1 Coachman and horse



##### Setup

- Mark out a field.
- Put out cones, hurdles and/or poles as obstacles.
- Divide players into pairs and give each pair two ropes.

##### Sequence

- One partner runs after the other, connected by the ropes.
- The rear player (the coachman) uses the ropes to determine the pace



and direction of the front player (the horse), leading him through the obstacles. Commands are:

- no tension on the reins: go faster
- gentle tug: go slower
- harder tug: go backwards
- tug to the right or left: turn right or left

##### Focus on:

- Motor differentiation



▶ 1



▶ 2

##### Variations

- Partners hold two poles.
- The front player dribbles a ball (Photo 1).
- The front player has his eyes closed (Photo 2).

**Caution:** for experienced players only!



## SAMPLE EXERCISES

## 2 Rope parcours



▶ 1

**Setup**

- Lay 6–10 ropes on the ground, 18–36 inches apart.
- Have players line up at the first rope in groups of two or three.

**Sequence**

- Partners run over the ropes, trying to coordinate their pace and rhythm as precisely as possible.
- At the end they turn and run back around the outside to the start.

**Variations**

- Players do knee lifts (Photo 1), run backwards, do one- or two-legged jumps over the ropes (forward, sideways, backwards), take 4–8 quick steps between ropes, cross one foot in front of the other (Photo 2) or skip (Photo 3).

**Focus on:**

- Sense of rhythm



▶ 2



▶ 3

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### 3 Catch the rope!



▶ 1



▶ 2



▶ 3



▶ 4



▶ 5



▶ 6

#### Setup

- Six to eight players (plus the coach) stand in a circle and hold hands (Photo 1).
- Next, they let go and take two steps back (Photo 2).
- Each player holds a coiled rope.

#### Sequence

- At a signal from the coach (or a player), everyone throws their ropes straight up (Photos 3–5). **Coach's command:** "Throw your ropes as high as you can!"
- Each player tries to catch his neighbor's rope (Photo 6). **Note:** Decide in advance whether to have players move left or right.
- How many ropes can the players catch?

#### Variations

- Players try to catch their neighbors' neighbors' ropes.
- After throwing their ropes up in the air, players do a forward roll and then catch their neighbors' ropes.
- See photo sequence below: At the coach's signal, each player bounces a ball (Photo 1) and then tries to catch his neighbor's ball before it bounces a second time (Photos 2 and 3). **Tips for players:** "The higher your ball bounces, the more time your partner has to catch it." And: "Try to make your bounce as straight as possible."
- Same as above, except players bounce their balls while kneeling.

#### Competition

- Divide players into two teams of equal size. Teams get one point for each mistake (dropped rope or ball).
- After three rounds, which team has fewer points?
- Which team can do the exercise with no mistakes?

#### Focus on:

- Reaction, orientation and differentiation



▶ 1



▶ 2



▶ 3