

Acquiring and performing movement skills

In football, one of the most essential skills for every top player to have is passing. Every top player must be able to perform a short and long pass efficiently and to a very high standard. Passing the ball well allows a team to build up an attack.

A good pass must be weighted so that it isn't too hard for the player receiving the pass to control the ball. A good pass must also be accurate, so that the ball isn't intercepted by an opposition player.

A continuum is a scale that we put skills on in order to define where between two extremes it is.

Muscular involvement (gross-fine) continuum

Gross _____ Fine

Passing

I would put passing here on the continuum because it is a skill that requires a lot of muscular movements, but also it requires the player to be precise in where he hits the ball.

Environmental influence (open-closed) continuum

Open _____ Closed

Passing

I would put passing here on the continuum because it is affected by the environment a lot. Depending on where the opposition players are, the passer will have to adapt his body's position in order to make the pass reach one of his team mates. Passing will be paced externally because if an opposition player tries to tackle the passer, he will have to pass the ball earlier than he wanted to.

Continuity (discrete-serial-continuous) continuum

Discrete _____ Serial _____ Continuous

Passing

I would put passing here on the continuum because it has a clear beginning and end. Once the player has passed the ball, if he wishes to repeat it he has to start the whole movement over again from the start.

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Pacing (self paced-externally paced) continuum

Self paced _____ Externally paced

Passing

I would put passing here on the continuum because the player has not got much control over the time it takes for him to play a pass if he has an opposition player pressurising him. If he was about to be tackled then he would have to play the pass to the first player on his team who became available.

Difficulty (simple-complex) continuum

Simple _____ complex

Passing

I would put passing here on the continuum because although it is not as complex as some skills like a bicycle kick, it is still not an easy skill to get exactly right. Sometimes there is little time available for decision making and this makes it harder for the person playing the pass.

Organisational (low-high) continuum

Low _____ high

Passing

I would put passing here on the continuum because it doesn't have a lot of sub routines and the ones it has are not easily practiced on their own. The skill really needs to be practiced as a whole skill in order for the player to improve at it.

There are two main types of pass that every top footballer is required to be able to perform to a high standard: the short pass and the long pass. The perfect model for a short pass would be for the ball to reach the receiver as fast as possible without being so fast that he couldn't control it and as accurately as possible so that it is played where the receiver wants it, e.g. just in front of them to run on to or to their preferred foot.

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If the receiver was moving then the pass would be played accurately enough for the receiver not to have to break his stride. This is to add fluency to the attack, as if each receiver had to break their stride then it would slow down the attack and increase the chances of the opposition intercepting the ball. Most short passes are played along the floor because if the ball was played in the air it would take longer to control.

The perfect model for a long pass is for the ball to be passed over a long distance on the floor or in the air, and to reach the receiver where he wants it. The ball should also be played at speed but not so fast that the player couldn't control it.

Practices that could improve passing over a short distance are used by most teams in training.

The most common one used consists of two queues of players facing opposite each other about five or ten yards apart. The ball is either passed first time or controlled and then passed (depending on the coach's preference), and once the pass has reached the receiver, the person who played the pass jogs or sprints to the back of the opposite queue of players. This is continued for about ten minutes, and it can also be used before a game so that players can get their "passing range" and for them to get their touch right.

To practice a moving short pass, a distance of about one hundred yards should be measured out using cones. The players must get into pairs with a ball between each pair and must pass the ball between each other whilst moving forwards. They should continue doing this until they reach the end cone.

A simple but effective way to practice a long pass is to get the players into pairs with a ball between each pair. The players should then spread out from their partner about thirty yards away, and pass the ball along the floor or in the air to each other. This should be done for about five to ten minutes, and will also help improve the player's control and touch.