

Dribbling

Dribbling is the ability of a player to move with the ball past an opponent and is the true test of a player's technique.

PLAYERS WHO ARE ABLE TO DRIBBLE PAST AN OPPONENT ARE ABLE TO:

- Get into a goal-scoring position.
- Create a goal-scoring position for their teammates.
- Get out of tight areas on the ground.
- Maintain possession.
- Exploit space left by their opponents.

DRIBBLING CAN USE ONE OR A COMBINATION OF THE FOLLOWING PARTS OF THE FOOT:

- Inside.
- Outside.
- Instep.
- Sole of the foot.

Key points to remember:

- Approach the defender at a comfortable pace.
- Keep your centre of gravity low by leaning forward and bending your knees.
- Be patient and wait for the right moment. Wait until your opponent is off or flatfooted.
- Stay on your toes and be prepared to move laterally in either direction.
- Use a change of pace to move past your opponent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEINTING

Good defenders will be very patient and will delay your movement. If this occurs and your opponent has your moves covered, the most effective method of getting the defender off-balance is by feinting. When you execute different feints and tricks, you force your opponent to freeze up or lose balance. Be prepared to act quickly, because he or she may be off-balance for just a split second. The best dribblers use a variety of tricks, feints and foot surfaces to get past their opponents. Here's a list of the most widely used in the modern game. The key to effective dribbling is to keep your opponent guessing by using as different moves as possible.

- **The fake**
Quite simply, it involves pretending to shoot or pass. By exaggerating the fake pass or shot at goal, it unbalances the defender and gives you the opportunity to make your move.
- **Inside, outside**
Dribble the ball with the inside of the foot and, when the moment is right, use the outside to cut across your opponent.
- **Outside, inside**
As above, but this time you cut inside your opponent.
- **Step-over**
Moving forward, step over the ball with one side of the body and use the opposite leg to move the ball in the other direction.
- **Cut-back**
With the inside of the foot, cut the ball back behind your body. Using your right foot to cut the ball back, plant your left foot to the side of the ball and then bring your right foot up to cut the ball back.
- **Sole-of-the-foot turn**
Pull the ball back with the bottom of your shoe and burst away with a change of speed.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DRIBBLING AND RUNNING WITH THE BALL?

Dribbling involves getting past a direct opponent. On the other hand, running with the ball requires a combination of different techniques and occurs when the player has space and time to move freely with ball. For example:

- Defenders may run with the ball where their opponents have dropped off and there is space to exploit.
- Wide players, such as wings and backs receive the ball and run at pace to get as far as possible into their opponents half.
- Midfielders with space may run with the ball and scan to play the ball forward, maintain control, switch play or slow the pace of the game.
- Strikers who have received a through ball run at pace toward goal.

COMMON MISTAKES MADE

- The ball is pushed too far ahead of the player and the defender intercepts the ball.
- Head is down and the player is constantly looking at the ball.
- Not enough space.
- Lack of acceleration/speed.

There are three surfaces of the foot that can be used for running with the ball:

- Inside of the foot.
- Outside of the foot.
- Full instep.

Key points to remember when dribbling with the inside of the foot:

- It is the same inside part of the foot that is used for striking the ball.
- The ankle should remain relaxed and turned slightly outwards.
- Aim to tap or touch the ball with every second step.

Key points to remember when dribbling with the outside of the foot:

- The dribbling foot is turned inwards.
- Push the ball with the outside of the foot.
- When opponents are running alongside or parallel, the outside of the foot places the ball on their blind side.

Key points to remember when dribbling with the full instep:

- The dribbling foot is turned down towards the ground.
- Contact with the ball is made near the top.
- The player taps the ball forward.

Of the three techniques, dribbling with the full instep is probably the most difficult to master. It requires the player to tap the ball with the bootlace area.