

Striking the Ball

World class players have the ability to shoot powerfully at goal, make the ball curve and swerve, play a well-weighted pass and use different parts of their foot to strike the ball.

Accurate striking with both feet is a necessity in the modern game. It allows teammates to be brought into play with both long and short passes. Spectacular goals are scored with the correct techniques from free kicks or shots from long range.

STRIKING THE BALL WITH THE INSTEP

- Place your non-kicking foot beside the ball.
- Bend the knee of your kicking foot.
- Adopt a slight body lean with arms extended for balance.
- On contact, face your toe downward with a quick “knee snap” (allowing the lower leg to straighten and produce the power).

FOR GREATER POWER WHEN SHOOTING

- Increase the back swing of the kicking leg.
- Keep the ankle rigid.
- Follow through with the entire body.

TO ACHIEVE SWERVE

- Strike the ball in the centre with the laces of your foot. The power of the kick and the lack of spin will cause the ball to dip and swerve.

STRIKING THE BALL WITH THE INSIDE OF THE FOOT

- Place your non-kicking foot beside the ball.
- Turn your kicking leg (from hip down) outward.
- Bend your knee.
- Keep your ankle rigid and strike the ball firmly.

STRIKING THE BALL WITH THE OUTSIDE OF THE FOOT

This type of kick is less frequently used, but when executed well can deceive many goalkeepers. It’s regarded as a speciality kick that is used to bend the ball around a defensive wall at set pieces.

- Place your non-kicking foot beside the ball.
- Swing your kicking foot back and then across your body.
- Strike the ball with the outside of your foot, bending your knee.

VOLLEYING

This is perhaps the most spectacular but the most difficult kick to master. A volley occurs when the ball is kicked while still in the air. Different parts of the foot can be used to perform this kick:

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

Key points to remember:

- Present the surface of the foot to the ball and keep it firm and rigid.
- Raise the knee of the kicking leg to get over or level with the height of the ball.
- Make a forward movement to the ball.
- Let the power arrive with a “stabbing” action from the knee, with a small backswing.

INSTEP VOLLEY

When properly executed, this is one of the most spectacular ways of striking the ball.

Key points to remember:

- Stand on the balls of your feet. (Standing flat-footed makes it hard for you to stay on balance during the volley).
- Lean over the non-striking leg to enable swing to develop.
- Extend your arms for balance.
- Wherever possible, try to get above the ball by using your non-striking foot to lift you above the height of the ball.
- Strike the ball powerfully with the instep.
- Allow your body to follow through with the action.

DID YOU KNOW?

Power on your shot is generated by knee snap, from the knee down. This means the speed with which you can straighten your leg determines how hard you can strike the ball.

HOW TO BEND THE BALL AROUND THE BEST PLACED DEFENSIVE WALLS

The Magnus Effect explained

The physics behind bending a football is attributed to a 19th century German physicist, Gustav Magnus. Kicking the ball with speed and spin causes a pressure difference between the left-hand side of the ball, where the surface is spinning in the direction of the airflow over the ball, and the right-hand side, where the surface spin is opposite the airflow. The result is a lift force that deflects the ball in the spin direction from bottom right to top left. Get it right and the ball could deflect by as much as four metres.

DO THE TOP PLAYERS KNOW THE PHYSICS?

Probably not, but they have mastered the skill with years of practice based on their intuition. So what can you practise? Here’s what a right-footed player would do for a free-kick.

- Notice that your supporting foot should not be directed at the target but must be pointing slightly to the side of it. Ideally, you should approach the ball at the same angle.
- Plant your supporting foot slightly behind the ball. Swing your kicking foot, not in the direction of the target, but slightly to the right of the target. Strike the outside of the ball, slightly below its middle.
- The further to the outside you slice the ball, the more spin it will have.
- It’s usually easier to bend the ball with the inside of the foot, especially when you are learning the skill.

TAKING PENALTIES

Striking the ball with the instep

Power and height are achieved when striking the ball with the instep. Even if the goalkeeper is able to anticipate the correct direction, the pace and height of the kick will his or her ability to save.

Striking the ball with the inside of the foot

While you may sacrifice power, you will certainly increase your level of accuracy and deception.