



The Principles of Play for Soccer

Effective attacking and defending depends simultaneously on individual and team actions. These actions consist of corresponding attacking and defending actions known as the "Principles of Play."

Principals of Play	
Principles of Attack	Principles of Defense
Penetration	Pressure
Depth (Support)	Delay
Mobility	Depth (Cover)
Width	Balance
Improvisation	Compactness
Finishing	Control and Restraint
Communication	
Match Situation	

Fundamental Principles of Attack

When your team has the ball, everyone on the team becomes an attacker. Your goals as attackers are:

1. Keep possession of the ball
2. Move the ball forward into an attacking position
3. Create chances to score a goal

Fundamental Principles of Defense

The moment your team loses possession of the ball, everyone on the team becomes a defender. Your goals as defenders are:

1. Stop the other team from creating chances to score a goal
2. Limit the chances for the other team to get into attacking positions
3. Regain possession

Following two principals are common to **Attack and Defense**:

- **Communication** – Players must communicate to their teammates by both talking and gestures. This helps to organize your efforts and avoid confusion.
- **Match Situation** – How much time is left in the game? Are you winning or losing? These and other situations may change how urgently you must attack or defend



Principles of Attack

- **Penetration** – When you are dribbling forward, passing forward, or shooting, you are attempting penetration.
- **Depth (Support)** – Good width and depth provides the player on the ball with all around support so that there are options to play the ball forward, square or back. The more options a player has, the less likely they will lose the ball. Creating depth means spacing out up and down the field.
- **Mobility** – Mobility means movement. Movement is important in the game so that players can create space for themselves or for their teammates. Players without the ball need to keep moving to unbalance the opponent's defense, and by making "runs" into positions that will create scoring opportunities or create space for the teammates near the ball.
- **Width** – Creating width means spacing out side to side on the field. Good width provides opportunities to attack on either side of the field and up the middle of the field.
- **Improvisation** – When players use their own individual flair to create passing or shooting opportunities to themselves or for teammates. Clever dribbling or passing eliminates defenders and creates openings for attackers.
- **Finishing** – Simply put, finishing is successfully scoring a goal on scoring opportunities. This means shooting when you should shoot, making sure your shots are on goal and not wide nor over the goal, getting the ball past the goal keeper, etc.



Principles of Defense

- **Pressure** – The moment possession is lost the nearest player tries to regain possession or apply pressure on the ball. Players giving immediate chase can also help to delay the attack by stopping the other team from playing the ball forward quickly.
- **Delay** – While applying pressure, the defender must be careful to not over-commit. If they are beaten easily, the attacking team may get a scoring chance quickly. A pressuring defender should also be looking to slow down or "delay" the attacking player.
- **Depth (Cover)** – While the ball is being pressured all other players should be getting into defensive positions. The positions taken should support the pressuring defender in case they are beaten. This is called providing defensive cover.
- **Balance** – As your team concentrates their defense in the area of the ball, defenders not near the ball must position themselves to cover important spaces (normally central areas) in order to prevent attackers from making penetrating runs into these spaces.
- **Compactness** – As you organize your defense, limit the time and space for the opponent by concentrating your defense in the general area of the ball. Defenders should also attempt to stay "goal side" in order to limit the other team's ability to directly attack the goal.
- **Control and Restraint** – Players often make poorly timed or off-balanced attempts to win the ball. You must play "under control" when challenging for the ball. In addition, you should refrain from tackling unless you are confident you will win the ball.

