



What is Higher Football?

Higher Football is a Christian based programme of eight sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, aimed primarily at children aged 8 to 11, though with a little tweaking the age range can be extended at both the lower and higher end. Each session has a football focus with the children being actively involved in playing; there are warm-up activities and specific exercises designed to increase the participants' understanding, skill and enjoyment of the game, but this is not a specialist sports course, rather it is taking children's love of sport and integrating these into a church's outreach programme. Please note that the format for Session 8 is a little different, taking the form of a mini tournament to which friends and family can be invited.

When can I run Higher Football?

Higher Football is ideally an outdoor programme so clearly will work better in the warmer months, though an indoor sports hall makes a year round option possible. It could run as a series of weekly programmes throughout a half term (either after school on a weekday or perhaps on a Saturday morning) or it could run as a holiday programme over eight days or over four days if two sessions are run each day. It may work well to run it around a major sports event such as the Football World Cup or European Championships or the Olympics/Paralympics.

Where can I run Higher Football?

It is designed to be run on a park, sports pitch, school playing field, in a sports hall or even at a MUGA (Multi Use Games Area). All you need is a good space but access to toilets is obviously important.

What do I need to run Higher Football?

Energy, enthusiasm and a passion for sports ministry with children and young people. A team of willing volunteers (at least one for every eight children), a suitable venue, a variety of sports equipment** and a group of children that want to take part. It is helpful for the team to have a similar coloured T-shirt for ID purposes.

Why run Higher Football?

This is the KEY question. If you know why you are running it and what you hope to achieve, then you will be able to judge if the programme is a success. We passionately believe that this programme is a great way of connecting the church with a group of children (and their families) who might not otherwise be a part of the faith community. Each session of Higher Football includes a Team Talk based around the life of David and the key theme is integrated into the activities.

For that reason it is vital BEFORE you start to run Higher Football to think through how you follow up this programme with the children and families. Will you run a similar programme again? Is there a holiday club? A special family service? A church BBQ or other event? It is important to build small steps to strengthen relationships with those involved which will lead to greater church engagement.

** Scripture Union has a stock of Higher Games bags for sale which contain all the key equipment you will need to run this programme. More information at www.scriptureunion.org.uk/sport

A typical programme outline for sessions 1–7 (assuming the session runs from 10–11:30am)

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:15am | Team arrives, check venue, set up activities |
| 9:30am | Team briefing; programme outline, key responsibilities, safety, questions |
| 9:40am | Team prayer |
| 9:50am | Registration opens; opening activity underway |
| 10:05am | Welcome and introductions; safety instructions; overview of programme and theme |
| 10:10am | Warm-up activities |
| 10:20am | Exercises |
| 10:50am | Drinks break/refreshments (suggest children bring their own bottles/snacks) |
| 11:00am | Team talk |
| 11:05am | Star skills (see Session 8)/Game(s) |
| 11:25am | Close – final briefing; notices |
| 11:30am | Children depart; team clear-up, debrief and prayer |

The programme in detail/How to use this guide

Each session (except the last one) runs along similar lines and so the best way to use this guide is to print off the relevant sessions including the appropriate Team Talk. The Star Skills session in Session 8 is something you can incorporate into any of the other sessions at any stage. Each session is clearly divided between **Warm Up** activities and drills, called **Exercises**, but feel free to add in your own warm-ups to get the children engaged and active. We strongly suggest that during or immediately after the **Drinks Break** you hold the **Team Talk**. Each session can then conclude with a game or series of mini games or by working on the Star Skills.

The Team Talks are sequential and so you should progress from Session 1 to Session 7 in order. Session 8's Team Talk is a little different – a talk which will also make sense to any friends and family who are watching the tournament.

Each Team Talk is based on the life of David and draws out a particular theme which relates to the world of sport:

Session themes

| Session | Theme | Bible base | Story |
|---------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Growing in obscurity | 1 Samuel 16,17 | Harp practise to shepherding skills |
| 2 | Overcoming giants and obstacles | 1 Samuel 17 | David and Goliath |
| 3 | Making others great | 2 Samuel 23 | Jonathan/David's mighty men |
| 4 | Self-control | 1 Samuel 19,24 | David resists killing Saul |
| 5 | Overcoming temptation | 2 Samuel 11,12 | David and Bathsheba |
| 6 | Hitting the target | Psalms 139 | God wants the best for us |
| 7 | Counting the cost | 2 Samuel 24:18–25 | David builds an altar |
| 8 | Powerball presentation | Gospel overview | |

Welcome and introduction

On the first day welcome the children to Higher Football. Introduce yourself and the other team members. Explain any safety notices such as boundaries and that children will need to be signed out at the end of the session. Show where the toilets are and any routine for the children going to them. Explain that the sessions are being run by CHURCH/ORGANISATION and that there will be warm-ups, exercises and games but also a refreshments break and a time to reflect on what they are learning through their play and a chance to connect that with a man called David. On subsequent sessions welcome any new children and recap the salient points of the above.

Warm-up activities

The aim of the warm-up is just that – to get the children warmed up, active and engaging with the programme. Each session lists one suggested activity that is football related but you may also want to include a series of general warm-up activities (not included in the programme) such as stretching, star jumps, jogging on the spot etc.

Exercises

These are a range of drills/skill-based exercises which will work with a small and large number of children. Depending on the age, ability and number of children you will need to decide which ones are most suitable and whether to run one large version or several smaller ones.

Drinks break/refreshments

We suggest that children are encouraged to bring their own drinks and snacks but do have a supply of water available in case any of them have come without. If the children need a toilet break, then this the time to take it. Have a rubbish bag available too.

Team Talk

While the children are seated – either over their snack break or once it is over, gather them together for the Team Talk. Use the relevant day's talk and it may be good to have a Bible in your hand to reinforce this is a Bible story but do not read the story directly from the Bible. The aim is to keep the talk short and light and to draw parallels with the children's experience so that they can reflect and respond to it meaningfully. Use the outlines given simply as a guide; be creative and innovative and personalise the material with examples from your or well-known lives.

Star Skills/Football game(s)

You can work through the Star Skills (see Session 8) or simply run a football game or a series of mini games. If you have larger numbers do try to split by age or ability so that everyone can feel included.

Close

Draw the children together to say a big 'well done' for their participation. Remind them to collect any drinks bottles, clothing and mention the timings or any special notices for the next session. Ensure children are collected by parents/carers unless they have specific permission to leave unaccompanied.

Final session

The final session is quite different. After doing a warm-up you can ask the children to demonstrate (or be assessed for) their Star Skills and then you are putting the children into teams and arranging a tournament. The prize-giving time at the end gives you a window to do the Powerball presentation and you will certainly want to have thought through the next step for the children/families. A family service? A church BBQ? A holiday club? A weekly games club?



Session 4

Aim: To introduce the flick move to beat a defender. To learn and practise the technique of the driven and lofted passes.

Warm up (10 mins)

Set up:

- Centre circle with an 8x8 yard box in the middle
- Players divided into two groups
- two balls per group

How to play:

The exercise starts with both groups standing in a tight circle/group passing the ball from hand to hand in numerical order (1 to 2, 2 to 3 ... 6 to 1). Do this for a minute so that each person knows who they first get the ball from, and then who they must give it to.

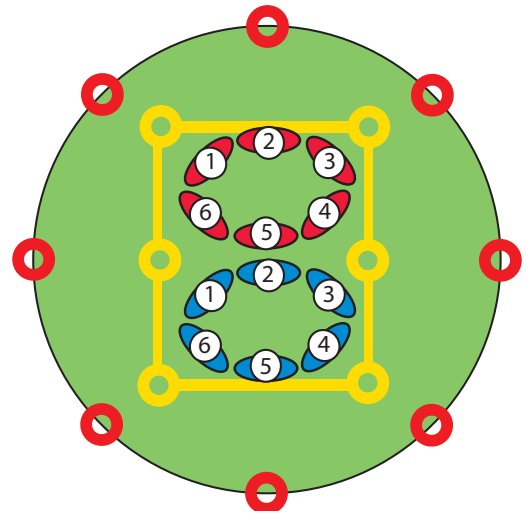
Once this has been established, start to introduce the various progressions.

Progression:

- Without going outside the yellow box, the groups continue to pass the ball in numerical order from hand to hand only this time they are freely moving in and around the yellow area, (ie both groups are now intermingling). Go for 1 or 2 minutes.
- Introduce two balls for each group.
- Doing the same as above, instead of going hand to hand, the ball is now at the feet and the players must exchange the ball using their feet. Please note – players are not passing to one another, but when the exchange takes place the player with the ball stops it in front of the next player who takes it off them. Go for 1 or 2 minutes. Start this progression with one ball and introduce the second as and when it is right to do so.
- After the exchange the player who gives the ball away must now run out of the box and turn over a red cone before returning. Do this in stages of getting the players to do a variety of things
 - Run to the red cones at 50% and jog back to the middle.
 - Do different locomotor movements to the cone and back – skipping, sidestep, knees etc.
 - Run to the red cones at 75% and jog back to the middle.
 - Sprint to the red cones and jog back.
 - Sprint to the red cones and back to the yellow area... etc.

Coaching points:

- To make this work, the players must communicate loudly and clearly and be aware of when it will be their turn to receive the ball and give it on.
- That the players are gradually building the intensity of the exercise as it moves through the progressions.



Exercise 1

Aim: Develop the technique of the flick move

Practise 1:

Give each player a ball in a small area and practise the movement by 'imitating' the coach.

Practise 2:

Set up:

- 10m x 20m grid
- Groups of four
- One ball
- One bib

How to play:

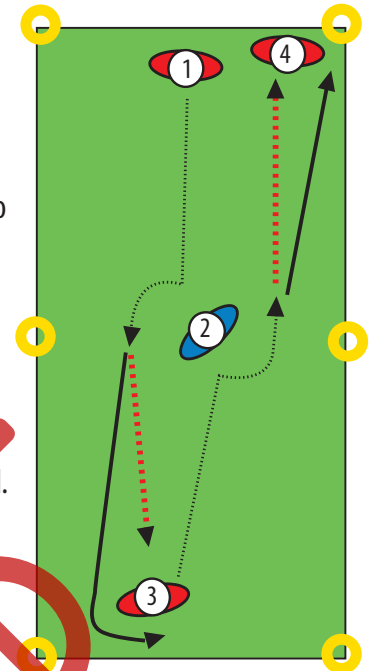
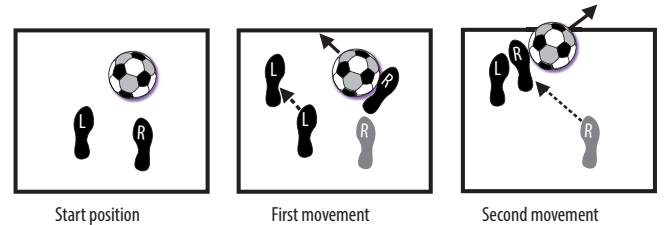
1 dribbles towards 2 who acts as a 'passive defender'. 1 performs the move around 2 and gives the ball to 3. 3 then does the same going back the other way and finishes with a pass to 4.

Progressions

- 2 plays passively to start
- 2 plays 50%, 75%, 100%
- Insert a goal at each end so after rounding the defender the attacker can finish with a strike on goal.

Coaching points:

- Flick move:
 1. Move the ball with the inside of the right foot to the left. Lean low to the left and drop the shoulder... and feint to go left.
 2. Move the right foot quickly behind the ball so as to be able to play the ball back to the right using the outside of the right foot.
 3. Play the ball forward and past the opponent with the outside of the right foot, attacking the space behind the defender.
 4. Accelerate away – eliminate defender.
- Players to go through the technique slowly at first to get the correct movement and feel for the move. 'Go slow – get low.'





Exercise 2

Aim: Develop the technique of the driven and lofted passes.

Practise 1:

Set up:

- 30m x 10m grid
- Two players
- one ball

How to play:

Red 1 starts with the ball and plays a driven pass towards their partner blue 1 who controls it. Blue 1 takes a touch out of the feet and plays another driven pass back to red 1. Then progress to four players with the 1s giving and receiving a short pass to the 2s before making the driven pass back to the other 1. After a while, swap the 1s and 2s.

Progression:

- Move to the lofted pass.

Coaching points:

- Driven pass:
 1. Approach the ball at a 30° angle.
 2. Keep the head down and still – eyes on the ball.
 3. Place the non-kicking foot 9–12 inches to the side of the ball, the toe pointing in the direction of the pass.
 4. Strike through the middle of the ball with the shoelaces. (For a right-footed pass, the big toe should be pointing to a '5 o'clock' position; for a left footed pass the big toe is pointing to a '7 o'clock' position.)
- Lofted pass:
 1. Approach the ball at a 30° angle.
 2. Keep the head down and still – eyes on the ball.
 3. Place the non-kicking foot 9–12 inches to the side of and a little behind the ball, the toe pointing in the direction of the pass.
 4. Strike through the bottom half of the ball with the toe end of the foot, keeping the ankle locked to the side (right-footed kicker, toe pointing towards '3 o'clock'; left-footed kicker, toe pointing towards '9 o'clock').

Easier: For younger players, have the distance between end-lines shorter – eg 10 x 20 area.

Harder: Challenge the children to hit with accuracy so that their partner doesn't have to move to get the ball. For the lofted pass, ask them to aim for their partner's chest.

