

Clontarf GAA Club

Introducing the Skills of Hurling

Produced by : Hurling Development Committee

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1 Introduction

Over the past number of years Clontarf GAA has strived to introduce hurling to greater numbers in its 4 year Boys Nursery programme. Since 2009 all boys are participating in equal numbers in both codes and in late 2011 Camogie was re introduced to Girls at Under 8/9.

1.1 Scope

Section 1 of this document outlines the list of hurling skills and the order in which they should be introduced. It describes the various stages of the Nursery programme and outlines the existing Nursery Structure for hurling.

Section 2 of this document outlines the equipment necessary for the coaching of hurling.

Section 3 of this document introduces the basics of hurling, the parts of the hurley, the grip and the fundamental skills in the order in which they should be taught. Commencing with the basics of the grip we then introduce 7 core skills. The aim is that every child will leave the Nursery with competence in these 7 skills.

Section 4 of this document describes the implementation of small sided games and specific drills designed to address the physical aspects (contact) of small sided games. Competitive drills will prepare kids to enter competition once they leave the Nursery.

Section 5 This section discusses the ‘Innovate Programme’ which aims to introduce a new style of coaching hurling that places a great emphasis on Fundamental Movement and ABC’s (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination). Lightweight plastic hurleys and no wearing of helmets are just two of the novel aspects to this programme.

1.2 Hurling Skills List

The following table lists the order in which the various hurling skills should be introduced. It also shows a comparison with the listing in the GAA's Fun Do Resource manual.

While certain skills can be introduced in training at an earlier stage, the listing below shows the groups which should focus most on the learning of a particular skill.

#	Group	Clontarf Hurling Skills Manual	Fun Do Hurling Resource
1	Under 6	The Basics, Grip, Positions	The Basics, Grip, Positions
2	Under 7	Ground Strike	Chest Catch
3	Under 8	Dribble	Dribble
4		Stopping a Ground Ball	Shoulder Clash
5		Ground Strike on the run	Stopping a Ground Ball
6		Frontal Ground Block	Ground Strike
7		Shoulder Clash	Frontal Ground Block
8		Chest Catch	Hook
9	Under 9	Frontal Air Block	Ground Strike on the run
10	Under 10	Overhead Bat	Roll Lift
11		Striking from the Hand	Overhead Catch
12		Overhead Catch	Jab Lift
13		Roll Lift	Striking from the Hand
14		Jab Lift	Frontal Air Block
15		Hand Pass	Hand Pass
16	Under 11	Blocking a ball Overhead	Blocking a ball Overhead
17	Under 12	Hook	Solo Run
18		Solo Run	Controlling a Moving Ball
19		Controlling a Moving Ball	Doubling Back
20		Doubling Back	Overhead Bat
21		Ground Flick	Ground Flick
22		Overhead Striking	Overhead Striking

1.3 Our Nursery Structure

Clontarf GAA Nursery is a 4 year programme, from Under 5 up until the players enter Go Games competition at Under 9.

Cubs Nursery (Boys and Girls ages 4-5):

In this introduction nursery group the children are involved in activities which are beneficial to hurling. The basic approach of the CUBS Nursery is to enhance, develop motor skills and the ABC's (agility, balance and co-ordination). This is achieved using the following stations:

- Obstacle course.
- Balance stones.
- Throwing bean bags at a target and throwing and catching loopies.
- Running (forward and lateral), hopping and bounding.

In the 2nd part of the season a specific hurling station is introduced, involving small sized hurleys, bean bags or lightweight sliotars. Relay races are practised as well as hopping or 'tapping' of the bean bag on the bat. The Kids also perform tapping of the bean bag from the bat into the hand.

Junior Nursery (Boys ages 5-6):

Intermediate Nursery (Boys ages 6-7):

This document mainly focuses on the introduction of hurling to both these age groups using plastic hurleys. Kids will be taught the basics of Grip, Striking, Ground Blocking and Dribbling. In addition fundamental movement exercises and fun games will expand on what was practised at the Cubs Nursery. Small-sided games will be introduced and helmets must be worn.

Senior Nursery (Boys ages 7-8):

In their final Nursery year the children will continue to complete the learning of the 7 basis skills for Under 8's. A greater emphasis will be placed on contact as these kids prepare to enter competition once the season is completed. Players will move from using the plastic hurleys to normal wooden ones

Camogie Nursery (Girls ages 5-8):

A revival in the coaching of Camogie in the Girls Nursery is now well under way and coaches can follow the exact same skills and drills as have been outlined for the Boys Nursery Hurling section.

1.4 Swap Over Model

Clontarf GAA uses a station based approach to coaching. The entire group (avg. 40-60) is divided into 4,5 or 6 groups, with an ideal coach:pupil ratio of less than 8:1. Groups rotate around the various stations during a 90min session, with coaches remaining at the stations. A ratio of 8:1 for mentor:child is expected.

In order to devote greater time to hurling the ‘Swap-over model’ was implemented in 2008 and the use of St. Pauls Astro pitches were secured. 50% of a group practise hurling for 45mins, then swap over with the other 50% who practise football. Since then some groups have managed to implement a more ideal situation where all kids do hurling for 45mins and then football. The main problem with the latter is the provision of helmets for 50+ kids.

During the weeks where the Nursery is staged on the grass, anything from a one or two hurling stations to the full swap-over model can be implemented. The use of tyres and rope bashers (sliotars fixed to a length of rope) is of great assistance during the wet winter months on the grass.

The benefits of playing on the Astro for these young players are:

- The sliotar travels better, making practising of striking, blocking and dribbling far easier and more enjoyable.
- Confined space for playing small sized games

The Nursery season follows the school calendar year from September to June. In May the mini leagues commence and run until mid June culminating in a finals day. During the mini league season the primary focus of the 90 min session is the playing of small sided games. Mini league teams (6 or 8) are formed with equal ability and named on a county basis according to tee-shirt colour.

2 Equipment

Based on the Nursery swap over model approx 50% (45mins) of the Sat morning Nursery time is dedicated to hurling. This means that equipment for up to 30 boys must be provided. The following is a list of Nursery equipment used for the 2008-2012 seasons.

1. 30 **Hurleys** (generally size 26) and **Helmets**. Junior and Intermediate groups use plastic hurleys while the Senior Nursery uses Wooden (size 26/28) hurleys in the latter part of the season from January to June.
2. 30 **First Touch sliotars**. 30 **Tennis balls** (Senior Nursery)
3. 60 **Training cones**. 30 of these are required for initial staging of the group where each player lines up at a cone and goes through the basics of grip, positions, imaginary striking, ground block etc.
4. 30 **Wristbands**. These are used to identify the dominant hand for each player. See [Establish the dominant hand](#)



5. **Rope bashers** - 4 ropes with 4 balls attached on each rope. A variety of basic drills can be performed at this introduction stage. The rope bashers are especially useful on the grass surface during the winter months allowing players to get many touches as they hone their striking skills. (TBA – photo of the extended line)



6. **Tyres** – Similar purpose to the rope bashers in that they facilitate lots of contact for striking. Players can travel in pairs, hitting both sides of the tyre, which will at a later stage transition to the ‘Shoulder clash’ using the rope bashers. 2 players can also stand either side of the tyre and practice stationary striking.

More lightweight tyres (motor bike etc) can be used to introduce relay races. The kids divide into 2 or 3 teams and the coach gives each player 20 seconds to move the tyre forward before the next player takes over.

3 Fundamental Hurling Skills

As the skills of hurling are introduced, coaches should keep in mind the following key principles:

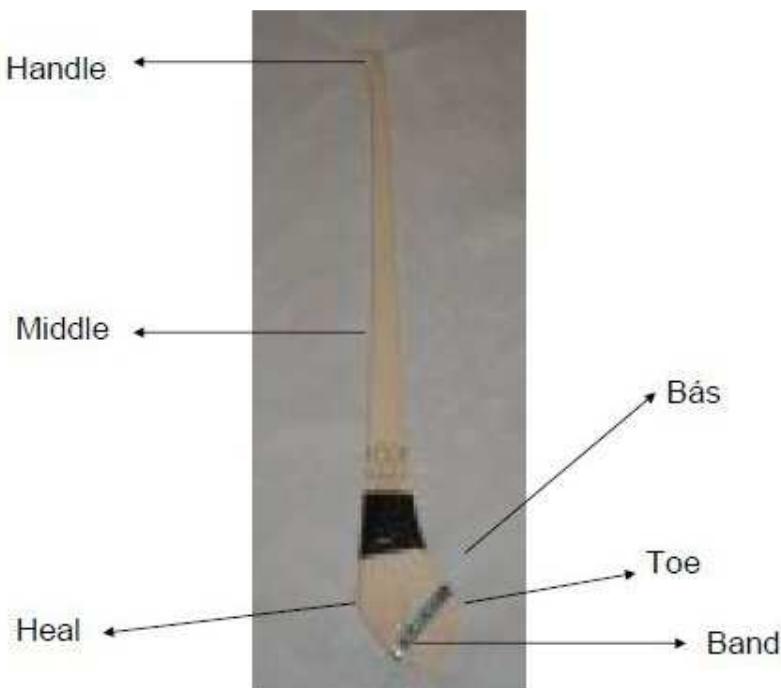
Grip - The correct grip is the foundation upon which all skills are developed. While an incorrect grip may not appear to hinder a hurler at the Nursery level, it will especially impact as the child strives to become an elite hurler. Coaches should be familiar with the drawbacks of an incorrect grip, the reasons why a child develops and persists with an incorrect grip and the various techniques used to correct the grip.

Spot and Fix – The main purpose for assembling this coaching manual is to provide coaches with a breakdown of each of the basic hurling skills. A crucial and often neglected role of the coach is to ‘spot and fix’. When a kid fails to perform a skill, it’s not sufficient to tell the child “Hard luck, try again, you’re nearly there!”. Coaches must be able to spot errors and provide feedback. The 1st page of each of the skills has a dedicated section on ‘Errors and Corrections’

Fun and Competition - Coaches should constantly assess the drills they employ to observe if the kids are enjoying the drills. When kids become bored they lose focus and little is learned. Similarly kids want to be competitive, all they want to do is ‘play the match’. So elements of competition should be introduced to all drills e.g. See who can strike the tyre the most in 20 seconds etc

3.1 The Basics of Grip and Swing

3.1.1 Parts of the Hurley



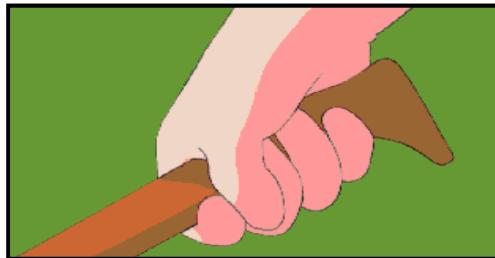
3.1.2 Establish the Dominant Hand

Wristbands (See Equipment Section) are used to identify the dominant hand for each player. The benefit is twofold. Firstly the child can be coached the correct grip, with the wristband hand always on top and the ball should never handled with the wristband hand. Secondly the wristband acts as a quick guide for the coach and his assistants to correct the grip.

The Lead Mentor and his assistants should constantly remind players ‘wristband hand on top’ and also make the distinction between ‘hurley’ hand and ‘catching’ hand. Kids in the Junior and even Intermediate Nursery can be unsure of which hand they write with so to apply the wristband have the child pick up a sliotar and throw it. Make sure they aren’t holding a hurley at the same time!

The importance of the wristband is it provides a constant reminder to child and coach. Often during drills the child will pick up a sliotar or bean bag with his dominant hand, thus changing over to an incorrect grip.

3.1.3 The Grip



- Get the kids to shake hands with the hurley (one handed) using their dominant ‘wristband’ hand.
- Make an X, write initials
- Mimic the coach.
- Touch the bean bag (on the ground) on both sides with the hurley (using the one handed grip).

3.1.4 The Ready Position



- This position is held when the ball is not being played.
- Get the child to shake hands with the hurley (one handed) using their dominant hand.
- Now get the child to bring the hurley across the body. The non dominant hand supporting just above the bás.
- Make sure that the toe of the hurl is pointing towards the player (the hurley being flat).
- This is the ‘ready position’ and should be in use at all times when players are not interacting with the sliotar or an opponent. Coaches should constantly highlight this position, be vocal!.

3.1.5 The Lock Position



- Central element of all striking skills – practise regularly.
- Adopt ready position.
- Slide non-dominant hand up the handle of hurley.
- Lock with dominant hand
- This is the lock position.

3.1.6 The Lift Position



- Used in any skill in which the ball is lifted, in many blocking skills and when batting the ball.
- Adopt the ready position.
- Open weaker hand, fingers spread apart. Use thumb of dominant hand to turn the hurley so that toe is facing away from body.
- Close thumb of weaker hand on hurley so that both thumbs are pointing towards the bas.

- This is the lifting position.

3.1.7 Progression from the Basics

The following diagram shows a sample setup to allow a single coach to direct a session for up to 20 kids as they are coached the basics of Grip and Swing.



The general progression for introducing children to the game would be to teach the correct grip first, then the ready position, how to carry a hurley and ball at the same time, the dribble, blocking a ball and the ground strike on both sides. Obviously all of these skills would not be taught at once. However it is important to point out that the game is a striking game and the sooner you can progress to that skill the better.

Once the grip and basis positions have been taught the kids are ready to work with the Sliotar. Progress through the following movements:

- Walking then running with ball and hurley in hand
- Running with ball balanced on open palm
- Handing over ball to partner with hurley still in hand
- Throwing ball with hurley in hand
- Throwing ball out in front and picking while ball is moving away

The kids are now ready for the Dribble and the Ground Strike.

3.2 Ground Strike



Begin in the Ready Position, feet shoulder width apart, ball between both feet.



Adopt the Lock Position, bending the elbows to raise the hurley. The wrists should be raised over the shoulder and the elbows out from the body.



Bend the knees slightly and swing the hurley down with a wristy action. Strike the ball 'flat on' with the bas of the hurley, keeping the eye on the ball.



Keep the head down and follow through to shoulder height with the swing.

- ❖ Introduce
- ❖ Demonstrate
- ❖ Execute
- ❖ Attend

Striking the ball on the ground is one of the most important techniques in hurling. Players should be introduced to the skill by attempting to strike a stationary ball on the ground from a stationary position. It is important that players are taught to strike from the dominant and non-dominant side from an early age.

Errors and Corrections

E1: Feet too close together, bad balance.

C1: Adopt ready position, feet shoulder width apart, ball between feet.

E1: Reaching for a ball too far away or not in the correct position, poor contact.

C1: Bas of hurley should be beside sliotar when player standing upright. Take a practice swing.

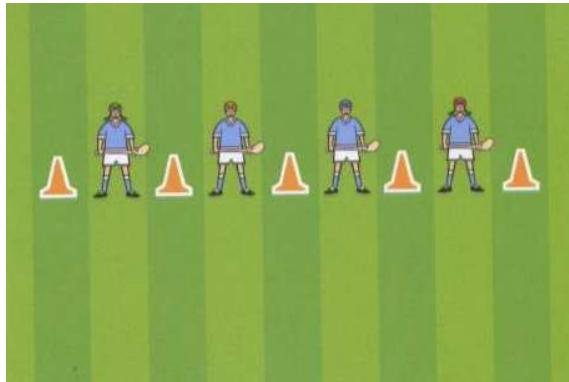
E1: Lifting head early to follow the ball.

C1: Keep the head down until follow through is complete.

Coaches Call out

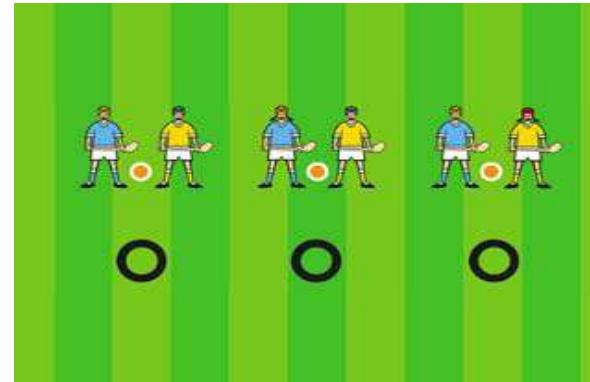
- ✓ Sliotar between feet.
- ✓ Head down.
- ✓ Eye on the ball

Ground Strike



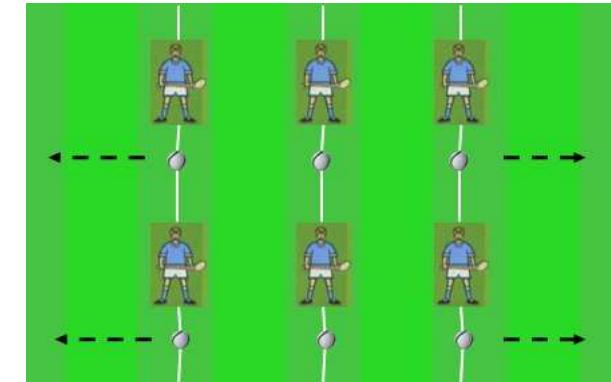
BASIC – Imaginary Strike

Keep players between cones so no contact occurs. On the whistle they strike an imaginary ball in front of them. Alternate left and right. Challenge players to strike 3 times in succession on the same side. Monitor correct technique.



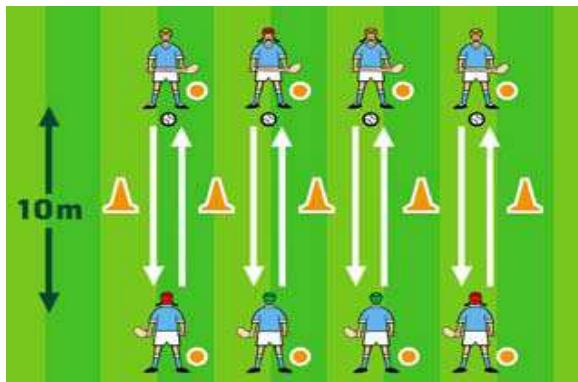
BASIC – Static Tyre Striking

Players work in pairs, each player in turn striking the tyre. After a set number of strikes, players change sides. Next allow non striking player to count # strikes. FUN – Who achieves the most strikes.



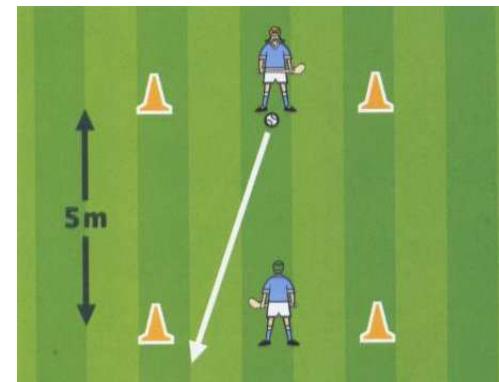
BASIC – Static Rope Bashers

Ability for a single instructor and several assistants to coach 24+ kids at a time. Practise striking on both sides, with good technique. Introduce a whistle with a target of 10 strikes etc.



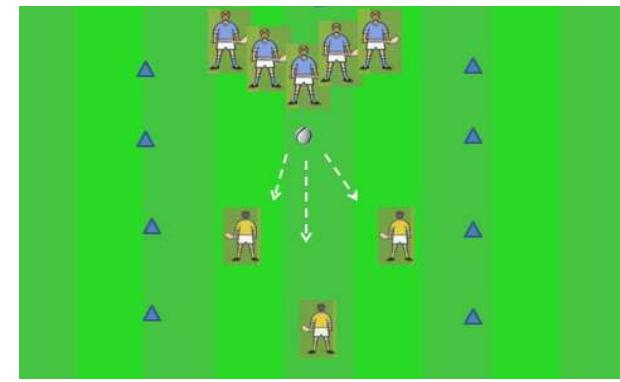
INTERMEDIATE – Accuracy Strike

Players work in pairs 10m apart, 1 ball per pair. Players must strike the ball between the cones. Alternate left/right sides. Count # scores. Later, reduce distance between cones.



FUN – Goal to Goal

Players work in pairs 10m apart, 1 ball per pair and using 2 cones as goals for each. Players in turn try to score goals. Award 1 point for a goal and 2 if scored with non-dominant hand.



FUN – Long Puck Challenge

Attacking team takes turns to see how far they can strike the sliotar. As alternatives, reduce the striking corridor and also introduce 1-3 defenders who can't move but can stop the ball passing them. Switch defenders and attackers.

3.3 The Dribble



Bend at the hips and knees, place the heel of the Hurley on the ground



Non-dominant hand down the hurley



Alternate Sides on each stroke



Progress to one hand

- ❖ Introduce
- ❖ Demonstrate
- ❖ Execute
- ❖ Attend

Dribbling is a hurling technique used to move the sliotar along the ground in order to avoid opponents or to place the ball in a better position for striking. It may be performed with one hand on the hurley but using two hands will provide more control.

Errors and Corrections

E1: Locking the hands, poor control.

C1: Keep the non-dominant hand down the handle of the hurley.

E2: The Bas of the hurley striking over the top of the ball.

C2: Place the heel of the hurley on the ground before performing the technique.

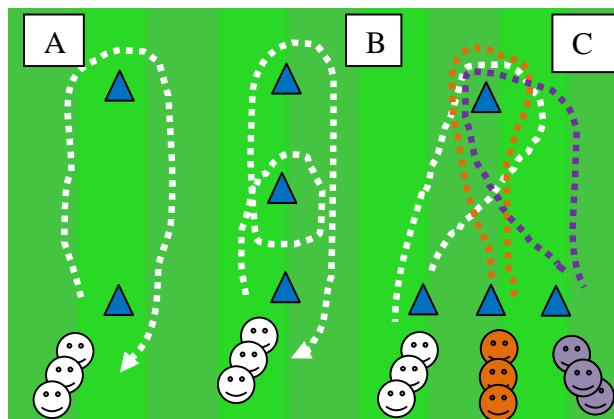
E3: Pushing the sliotar too far in front, possession loss.

C3: Keep the non-dominant hand well down the hurley.

Coaches Call

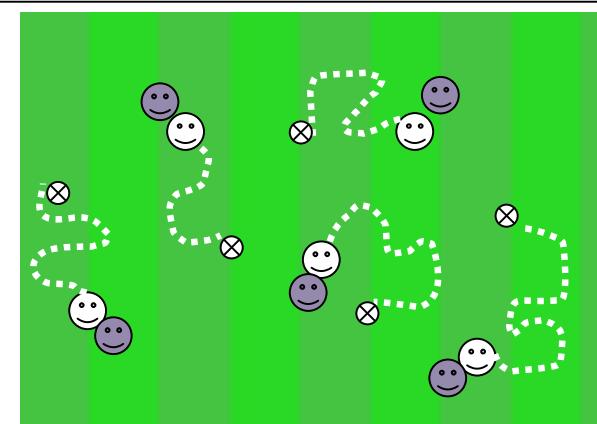
1. Wristband hand on top.
2. Two hands on the hurley.
3. Separate the hands.
4. Bend the knees.

The Dribble



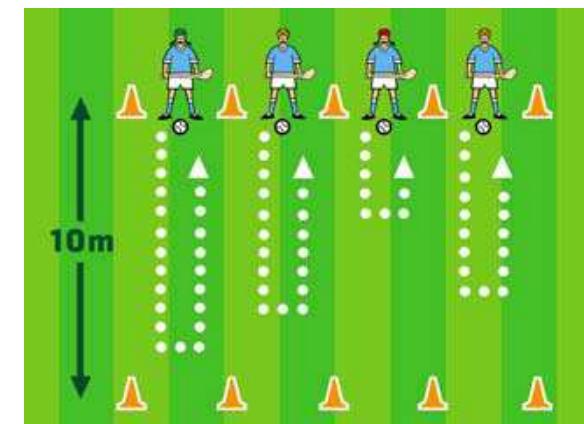
BASIC – 3 Foundation Drills

3 variations of a basic introduction to dribbling.
1 sliotar per group, 10m distance to end cone.
Use multiple lines for each drill (max 3 per line).
Each player in turn dribbles out and back.
[FUN] - Introduce a relay race for each drill.



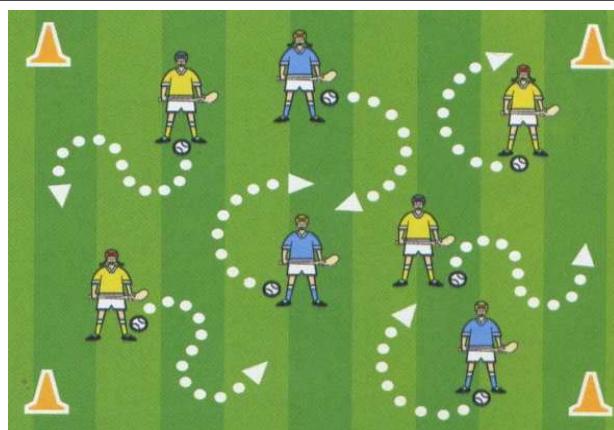
BASIC - Follow the Leader

Players work in pairs, one dribbles while the other follows, staying as close as possible.
Player dribbling keeps changing direction and maintains good control over the sliotar.
Alternate who dribbles/follows.



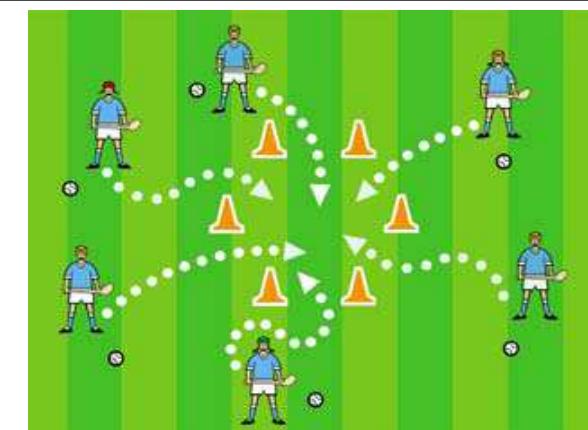
INTERMEDIATE - Signal and Turn

All players line up with a sliotar each.
Each player dribbles towards the far cone.
On coach's signals, players change direction.
Coach should vary the point at which the signal is given.



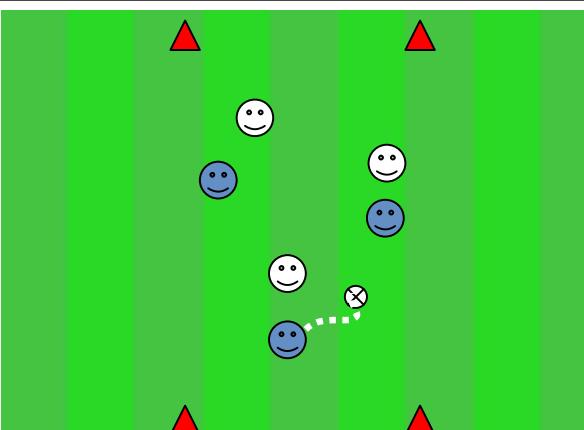
FUN DRILL – Guard the Sliotar

Each player with a ball dribbles around the grid.
The mentor tries to knock sliotars out of grid,
last left is winner. Add 1 or 2 players as tacklers
instead of the mentor.



FUN DRILL - Fill the Circle

2 teams, 2 circles.
Each team in turn dribble balls into the circle as fast as possible. Teams compete against each other in a relay race..



FUN MATCH – Dribble and score

2 small sided teams compete in a game. Players can only dribble the ball, scoring into the large goals. No striking is allowed. Mentor ensures the sliotar keeps moving.

3.4 Stopping a Ground Ball



Adopt the Ready Position



Move into the Blocking position on the strong side. Bend the knees and place the heel of the hurley on the ground.



To block a ball between the legs, move from the ready to the lifting position.



Keep legs together to block the ball if missed by the hurley. Bend the knees.

- ❖ Introduce
- ❖ Demonstrate
- ❖ Execute
- ❖ Attend

Stopping a Ground Ball is a hurling technique used to stop a ball which is moving along the ground. It is one of the basic ways to intercept and gain possession of the ball.

Errors and Corrections

E1: Locking the hands, poor control.

C1: Keep non-dominant hand down the hurley.

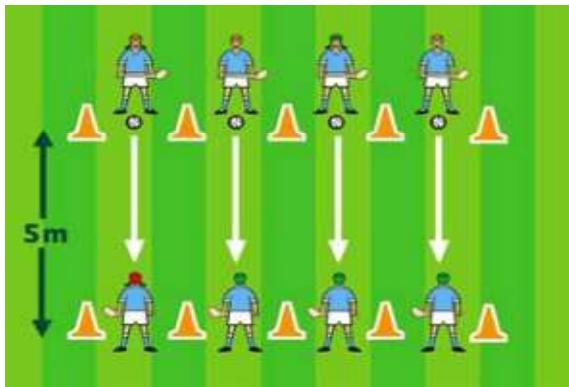
E2: Ball runs underneath the hurley.

C2: Place the heel of the hurley on the ground.

E3: Blocking a ball too far away.

C3: Move the body in line with the flight of the ball before attempting to block the ball.

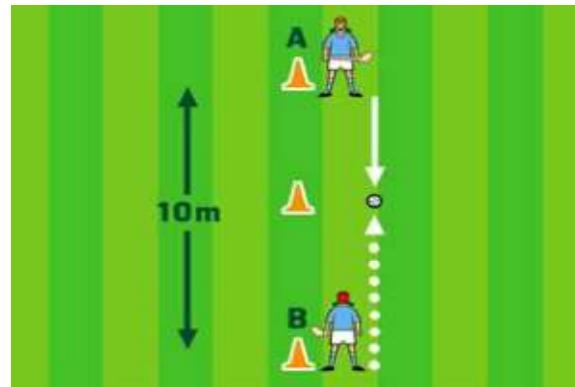
Stopping a Ground Ball



BASIC – Roll and Block

Divide the players into pairs, one ball per pair. One plays rolls the ball gently to the strong side or between the legs of his opponent who blocks the ball.

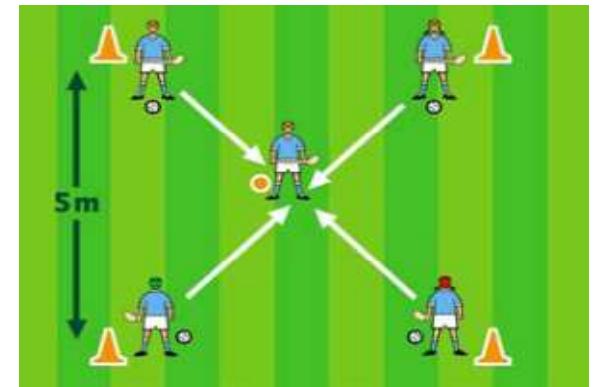
Continue to alternate rolls.



BASIC – Run to Block

Player A rolls the ball towards player B at pace. Player B runs out to block the ball at the center cone, then returns to original position with the ball and rolls it for Player A.

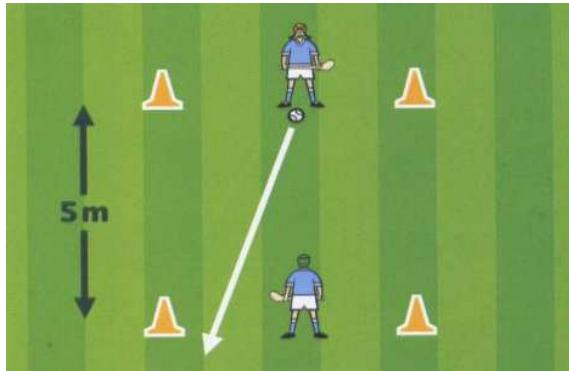
Progress to allowing players to strike the sliotar.



ADVANCED – Turn and Block

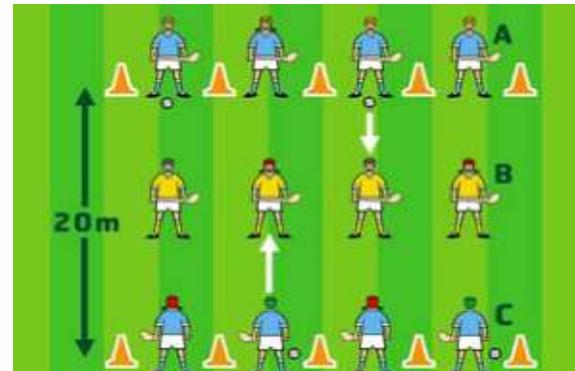
Players at the corners take turns to roll the ball towards the center player who blocks and sweeps the ball back.

FUN - Advance to Coach calling a number 1-4 so player in the middle has to adjust his position and block



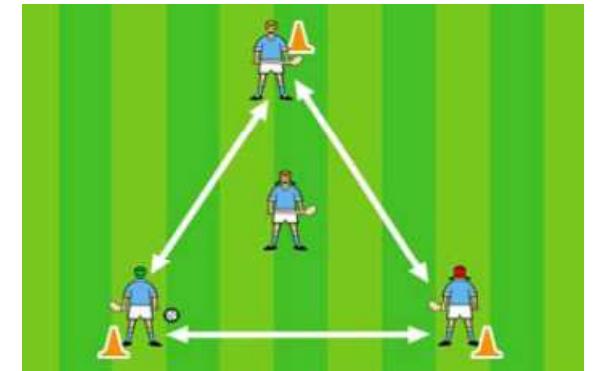
FUN – Goal to Goal

Players work in pairs 10m apart, 1 ball per pair and using 2 cones as goals for each. Players in turn try to score goals. Award points for a goals and blocks.



FUN – Pass the Guards

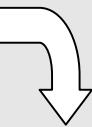
Divide players into 3 teams. Team B act as the guards 1st. Team A or C attempt to throw or roll the ball to the other side. Coach counts the scores each time the ball passes the guards.



FUN – Piggy in the Middle

Size of the triangle should suit the ability of the players. Players around the triangle attempt to throw the ball to one another while player in the middle tries to intercept. Any player who's throw is blocked becomes the 'piggy'.

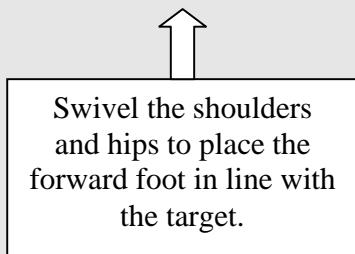
3.5 Ground Strike On The Run



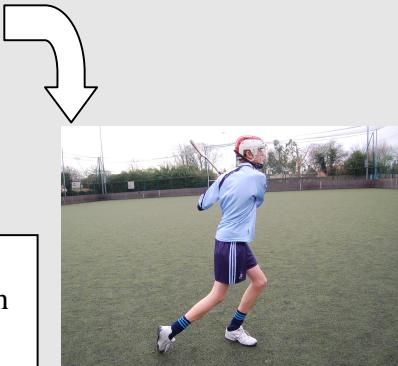
Move towards the ball in the ready position

- ❖ Introduce
- ❖ Demonstrate
- ❖ Execute
- ❖ Attend

Striking the ball on the ground while running is an essential technique in hurling, which is used to pass and move the ball. Players should be capable of striking using their dominant and non-dominant sides.



Swivel the shoulders and hips to place the forward foot in line with the target.



Eyes on ball. Swing down to connect with the ball in line with lead foot.

Head down, follow through in direction of target. Swivel shoulders and hips back to original position and continue the run

Errors and Corrections

E1: Stopping to strike the ball.

C1: Run through the strike, place the lead foot in line with the ball and trailing foot behind lead foot for balance.

E2: Not placing foot forward in line with the ball.

C2: Bas of hurley should be beside sliotar when player standing upright.

E3: Lifting head early to follow the ball.

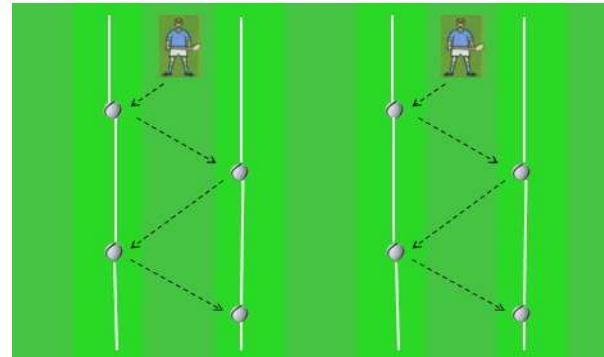
C3: Keep the head down and eye on the ball.

Ground Strike On The Run



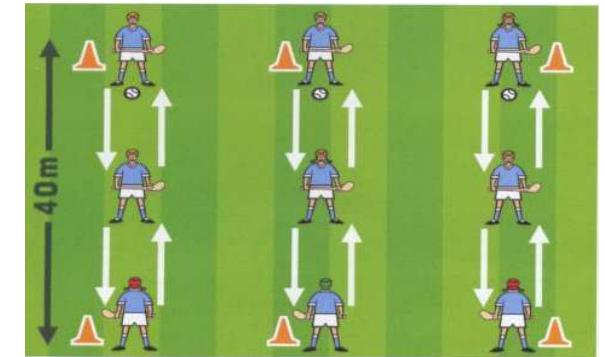
BASIC – Dynamic Tyre Striking

Tyres are placed 5m apart in zig-zag formation. Players jog through, striking with dominant and non-dominant side alternatively.
FUN – 2 teams, 8 tyres, relay race.



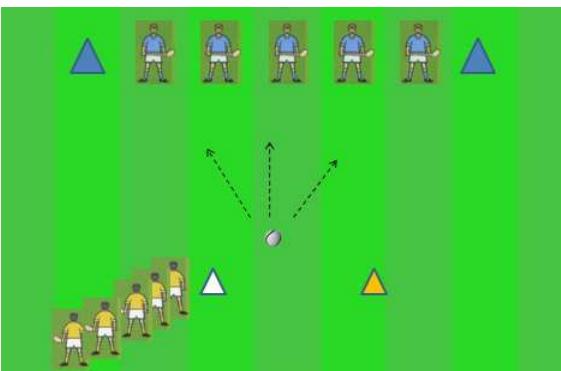
BASIC – Dynamic Rope Bashers

Two lines of ropes are placed 5m apart in zig-zag formation. Players jog through, striking with dominant and non-dominant side alternatively.
FUN – 2 teams, 4 rope bashers, relay race.



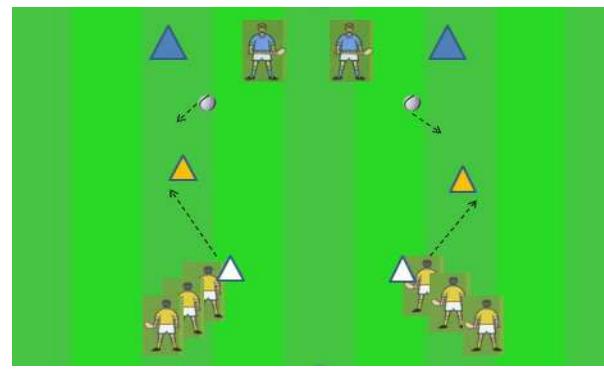
ADVANCED – Centre and Strike

Distance of 30-40m between cones. Teams of 3 with player in the middle striking on the run. Initially have the end players roll the ball for the middle player. End players practise stopping the ball. Progress to striking for end players.



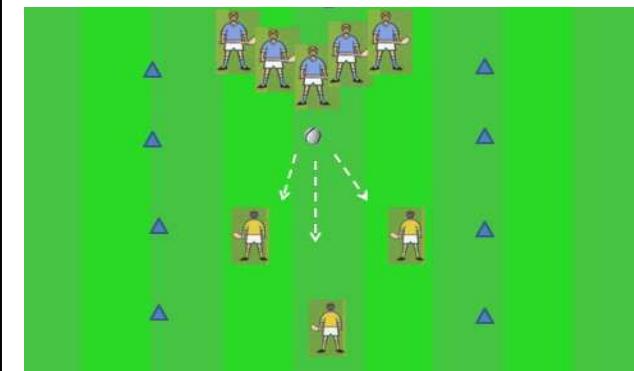
FUN – Break the Barrier

2 teams take turns to run onto the sliotar and try to break the barrier, scoring between the blue cones. Alternate starting position between Orange/White cones to ensure practise on both sides. Count #goals scored.



ADVANCED – Roll and Strike

2 Coaches roll sliotar as the players move in turn to strike on left or right while on the run. Ensure players do not spin around to strike on their stronger side. Coach varies pace of the rolled ball to suit player ability. Change over sides.



FUN – Dynamic Long Puck

Similar to the Static Long Puck drill except Coach rolls the ball for the attacking player to strike on the run and try get the sliotar pass the 3 defenders who can block the sliotar but cannot move.

3.6 Frontal Ground Block



Adopt the Ready Position



Release non-dominant hand from the hurley.



Step into the tackle with the dominant foot



Extend the dominant arm to right angle with hurley, blocking opponents hurley at point of strike

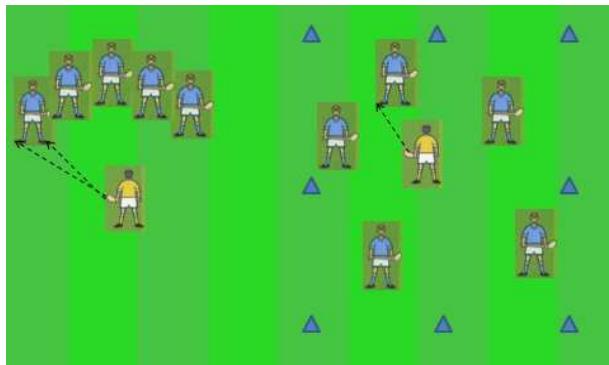
- ❖ Introduce
- ❖ Demonstrate
- ❖ Execute
- ❖ Attend

The Frontal Ground Block is a vital technique in hurling used to protect the player and block the ball. It is used when an opponent is attempting to strike the ball on the ground in the direction of the player making the tackle. It is very important that all young players are taught how to defend and protect themselves when in this situation.

Errors and Corrections

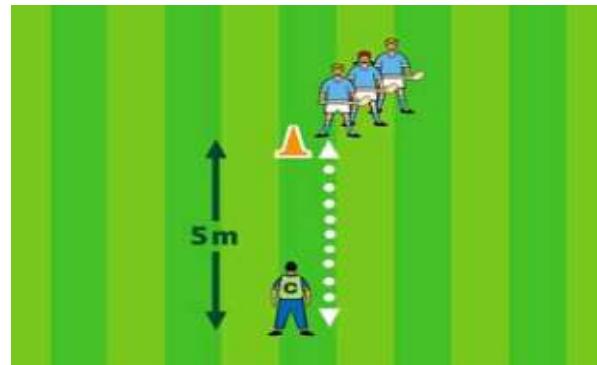
- Not stepping into the tackle
- Swivel on the non-dominant foot and step into tackle.
- Stepping into tackle with opposite hand and leg.
- Hold hurley in dominant hand and step in with the dominant foot.
- Not extending the dominant arm.
- Extend arm to prevent a hurley sliding up.

Frontal Ground Block



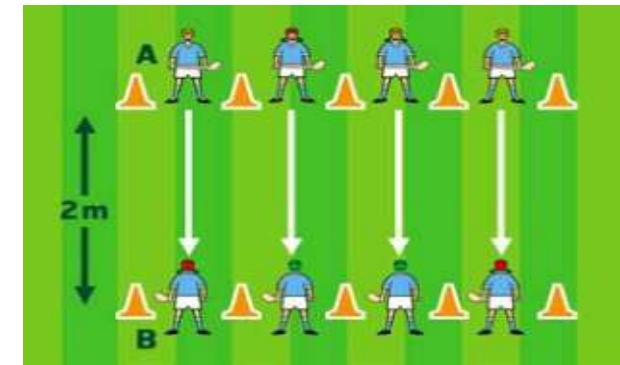
FUN – Sword Fighting

Begin with the Coach trying to prod players toes who avoid by move from the ready position into a 1 handed block of either toe. Progress to a game where players are ‘out’ if they move outside grid of cones or coach touches their toes.



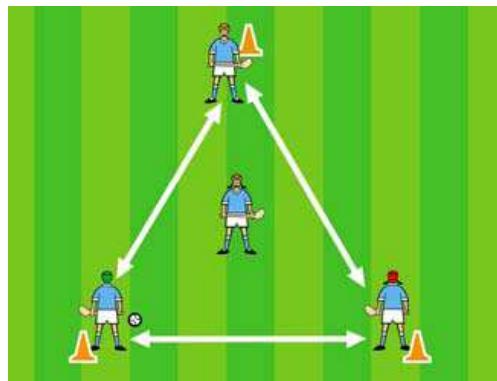
BASIC - Contact Block

No Players jog forward and attempt to block the coach’s swing ball;



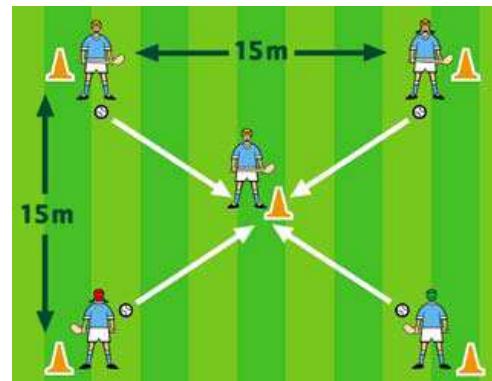
Partner Block

Player B attempts to block Player A when striking the ball



Piggy in the Middle

Player in the middle attempts to block the outer players playing the ball



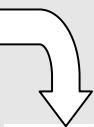
Defend the Cone

Centre player moves to block outer players in turn, returning around centre cone each time.

3.7 The Clash



Move towards the ball in the Ready position. Get in close to the opponent.



Move to the Lock position. Eyes on the ball, making shoulder and hip contact.



Keep one foot on the ground



- ❖ Introduce
- ❖ Demonstrate
- ❖ Execute
- ❖ Attend



Use a Two-handed wristy action to swing



In addition to mastering the non-contact skills, players must learn the contact skills necessary to participate in game situations. The Shoulder Clash is a basic contact skill required by hurling players. This is where players make shoulder to shoulder and hip to hip contact when contesting for possession.

Errors and Corrections

E1: Not getting in close enough.

C1: Make shoulder and hip contact with opponent.

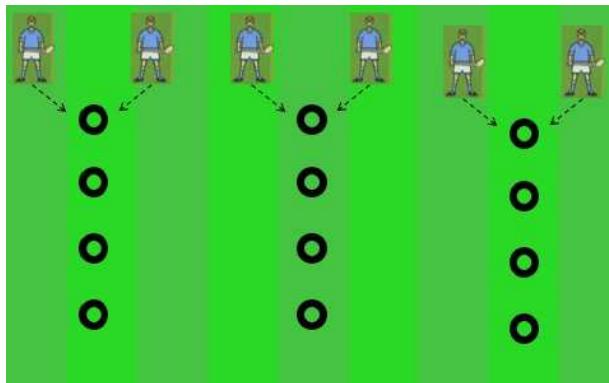
E2: Hands not locked, incomplete back swing.

C2: Adopt the lock position.

E3: Swinging too slowly

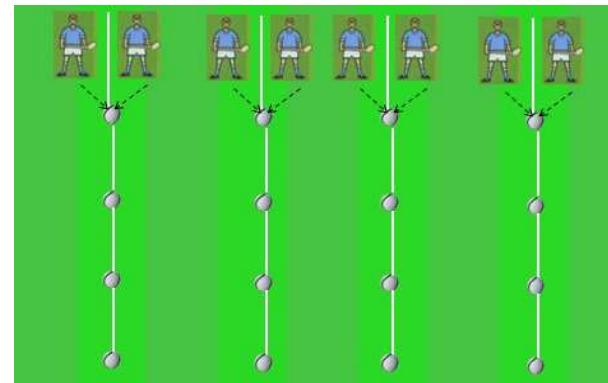
C3: Use a quick wristy action to swing for the ball.

The Clash



Tyre Clash

Basic introduction to the clash. Players jog together in pairs clashing on the tyres. Coach the players to get their timing correct so they clash together. Alternate sides



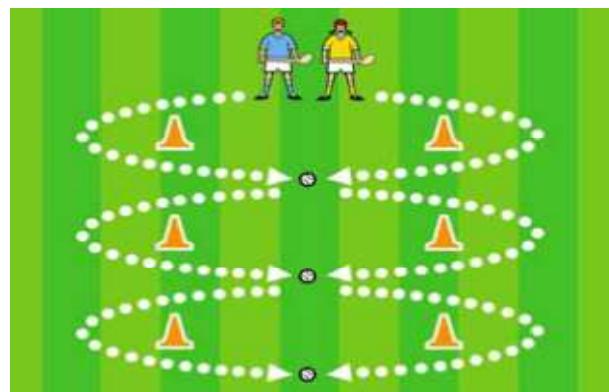
Rope Basher Clash

Players jog in pairs, clashing at the sliotars on the ropes. Ensure players are side to side on impact and clash together. Move from walking to jogging and alternate sides.



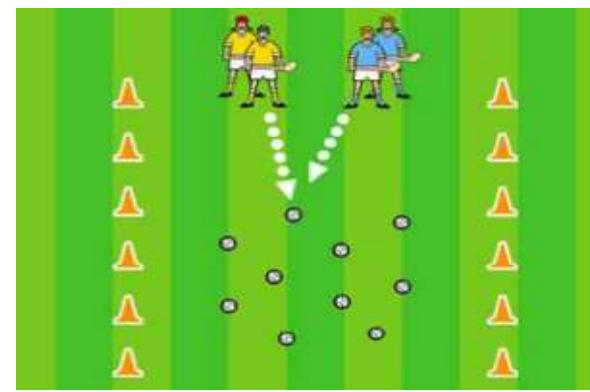
1, 2, 3 Clash

Players pair off and walk forward to clash on the coach's hurley. Alternate sides on repeat attempts. Progress to jogging into the clash. Introduce a football for the players to clash on



Zig-Zag Clash

Pairs run through the grid clashing on each ball. Player who strikes the most balls wins. Use tyres, then rope bashers, then sliotars. Alternate sides on repeat runs.



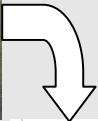
A Race Against Time

Pairs run through the grid clashing on each ball. Player who strikes the most balls wins

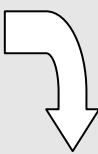
3.8 Chest Catch



Adopt the Ready Position



Release non-dominant hand and hold it in a cupped position.



Move to meet the ball. Between the chest and cupped hand. Move Hurley across the chest for protection

- ❖ Introduce
- ❖ Demonstrate
- ❖ Execute
- ❖ Attend



Cushion the ball on impact between chest and cupped hand

Catching is the most effective way of stopping, gaining possession and controlling a ball. The Chest Catch is a particular catching technique used when the ball is dropping from a height and the player has time to cushion it into his chest. It is predominantly used by the goalkeeper.

Errors and Corrections

E1: Not moving to the ball to receive it between the chest and cupped hand

C1: As ball approaches, move to receive it correctly.

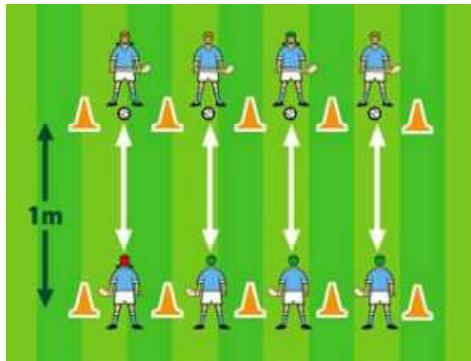
E2: Failing to relax the chest on impact, ball bounces.

C2: Inhale on impact, cushioning the ball between chest and hand.

E3: Holding the hurley too low during the catch.

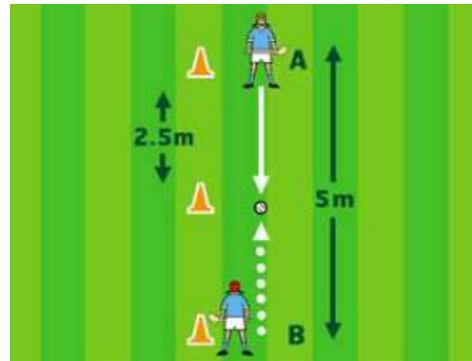
C3: Hold hurley in front of and across the body.

Chest Catch



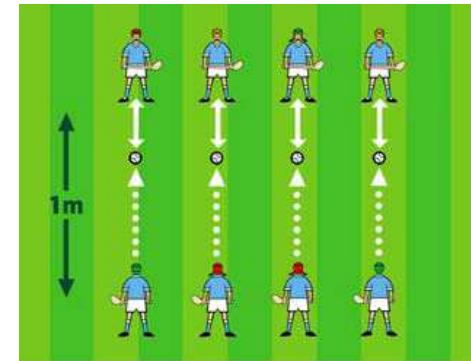
Partner Catch

Divide the players into pairs, one ball per pair. Each player throws a bean bag underarm for their partner to catch. Move from a bean bag to a tennis ball. Progress to throwing the ball against a wall.



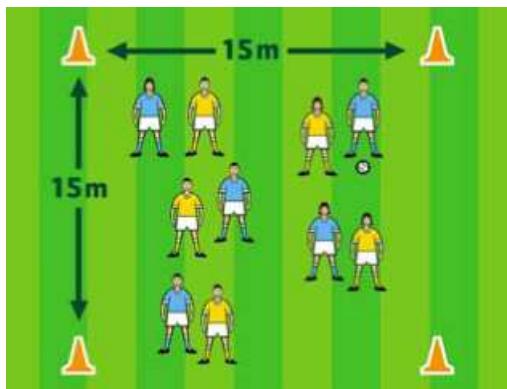
Move to Catch

Player A throws the bean bag underarm for Player B, who must run out and chest catch the bean bag at the centre cone. Progress to a tennis ball.



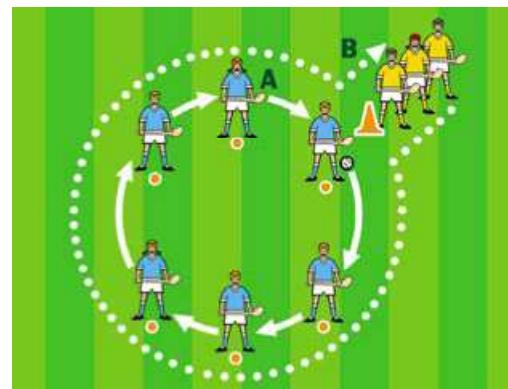
Move and Catch

Players move to receive the ball from their partner while moving across the field



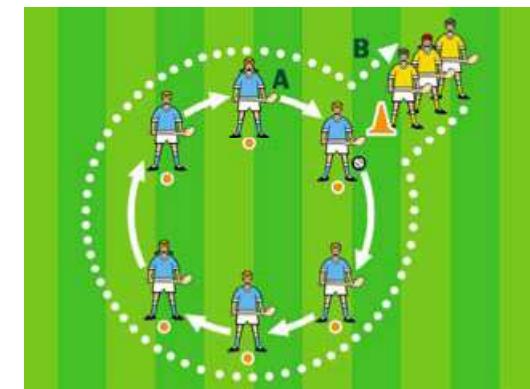
Keep Ball

No hurley; Players maintain possession by throwing the ball for a team mate to chest catch.



Beat the Circle

Team A throws the ball around the circle while Team B runs around the circle in relay



Beat the Circle

Team A throws the ball around the circle while Team B runs around the circle in relay

4 Introducing Competition

4.1 Small Side Matches

Once the very basic skills of Grip, Blocking, Striking and Dribbling have been introduced players can begin to participate in small sided games. Playing games is the most interesting aspect of a training session for kids and despite their young age and they should be allowed to participate under the guidance of at least 2 coaches for each match.

One of the best ways to get a coaching message across to the kids is to stop a game and deliver a brief 1 minute message to them, especially safety related.

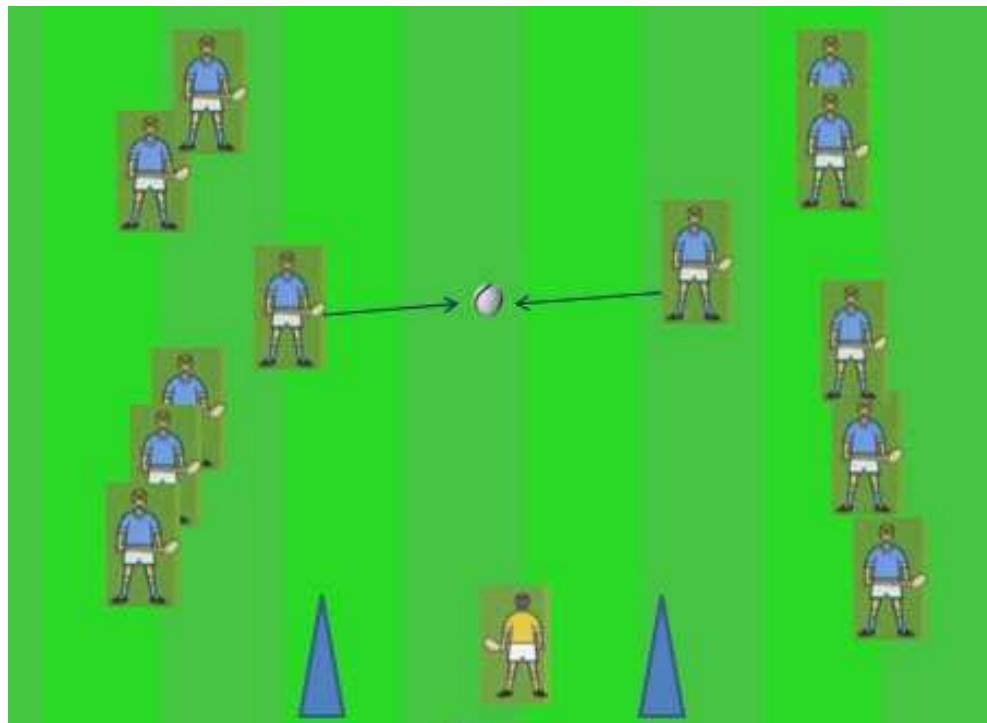
Top Tips for the introduction of small sided games:

1. Beginners games should be from 3 v 3 to a max of 5 v 5 in an area 20-30M X 10M and of duration max 10mins. Senior Nursery can progress up to 7 v 7 in preparation for similar competition rules at Under 8.
2. 1 coach should control the game while assistant coaches ‘spot and fix’ any basic errors.
3. Coach should constantly remind kids to keep 2 hands on the stick at all times.
4. Coach should constantly remind kids to be in the ready position when they are not playing the ball. During the games the coach should call ‘FREEZE’ a number of times and check the ready position of all players and observe the correct grip.
5. Coach should constantly monitor wristband hands for the correct grip and remind kids “Wristband hand on top”.
6. Players should be discouraged from excessive dribbling, encourage them strike the ball. The dribble is only used to move the ball into space from where they can then strike.
7. Players must remain on their two feet. They will have a tendency to dive on the ball - a habit from football games.
8. Goalkeepers should not pick up the ball. As the goalkeeper position rotates, the coach should remind him of the correct position for blocking a ground ball. Ensure the goalkeeper always block an incoming ball and does not swing first.
9. When the goalkeeper is pucking out the ball (on the ground) keep all other players well back to ensure the ball travels a decent distance.
10. Coaches should keep the ball moving at all times to lessen the risk of injuries.
11. Players should be coached in safety aspects of the game e.g. Frontal Ground block and body position in relation to being behind an opponent swinging the hurley.
12. Once the kids are familiar with small sided games additional scoring methods should be introduced to increase their interest and to focus on rewarding kids of different abilities as follows: Goal – 2pts, Save – 1pt, Good Strike – 1pt, Block – 1pt

4.2 Fun Game – Bingo!

Here's a fun game that introduces competitiveness and is sure to keep the focus of all the kids. A great game to play when they are all giddy!. The coach calls the numbers and bingo...

- Line up two teams either side of the playing area and assign a number to each player on a team.
- One team is instructed to defend while the other must score.
- The coach call a number '4' and both number 4's attack the sliotar, one trying to score while the other tries to clear it up field.
- The coach encourages both players to compete and asks remaining players to cheer for their team colour.
- Next two numbers are called '3' and '7', so 4 players see action.
- Reverse the attacking/defending teams.



5 The Fun Hurling Programme

5.1 Introduction

In January 2010 Laois coach Pat Critchley presented a hurling workshop at Clontarf GAA club. The aim of this workshop was to present mentors with new concepts for the early stage development of hurling skills. The workshop was primarily aimed at children in the 5-8 age group, however at least 50% of the workshop covered drills applicable to juvenile and Adults. The drills presented developed ABC's (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination) in a fun and safe environment. Using lightweight plastic hurleys and bean bags, children are free from the wearing of helmets, something most young players initially find uncomfortable.

We have named the collection of skills and drills presented by Pat Critchley as '**The FUN Hurling Programme**'. Videos of the workshop are available on the club website, with the entire session split into 6 separate videos as detailed below.

FUN Hurling Programme Part 1 - : <http://www.vimeo.com/18910052>

- Introducing Plastic Hurleys
- The Hurling Haka
- The Grip

FUN Hurling Programme Part 2: <http://www.vimeo.com/18910100>

- The Electricity game
- Statues and Snap Statues

FUN Hurling Programme Part 3: <http://www.vimeo.com/18926688>

- Tag Game, Snap Tag, Blast Off
- Grand Prix, Partner Flicks, High Catches

FUN Hurling Programme Part 4: <http://www.vimeo.com/19033929>

- Swallows Nest Game
- Star ball, balance and movement.
- TAPS (basic, reverse, ground, air), Dummies

FUN Hurling Programme Part 5: <http://www.vimeo.com/19034167>

- Snug Grip, Mind Ball, Ground Ball
- The Circle Game, Jab and Roll Lift.

FUN Hurling Programme Part 6: <http://www.vimeo.com/19034290>

- Partner Drills for Warm-up
- Hand pass Drills
- Dragons Den and the Olympics.

The following are some tips for those coaching this programme:

- Avoid situations where a child has to perform while others watch as this can introduce tension into the child as they may be shy or very anxious about making a mistake with everybody watching.
- Try to get all the kids doing the routines simultaneously.
- The coach should make a few deliberate mistakes and be a bit of a “clown” so that the kids don’t feel that they have to perform; rather it’s all about having fun.
- Try to cultivate a sense of drama with all the routines where the kids are encouraged to use their imagination.

The following sections summarise the collection of drills that were presented and what are now referred to as '**The FUN Hurling Programme**'

5.2 The Setup

5.2.1 Establishing the Solo Grip

Establish the child’s dominant hand by asking them to write their initials on something and then ask them to pick up a ball and throw it over the crossbar. (Ensure that the child does not have a hurl or anything else in their hand while doing this). Then place a “**Clontarf GAA**” wristband on the dominant hand of each child.

Every child is given a “First Touch” 26” plastic hurl. They place the hurley on the ground and raise their dominant hand, holding it in a “thumbs up” position. Then ask them to put glue on their thumb as they are going to stick their thumb to the hurl. Then they pick up the hurl and (with the toe of the hurl pointing away from their bellybutton) they “glue” their thumb to the hurl at the point where the bottom of the grip meets the hurl. A lot of mentors are required to assist the kids with the technical aspects. Ask the kids to give the hurl a good shake to make sure the thumb is well stuck on. Continuously remind them about the glue as they go through their routines

5.2.2 Warm-up - The Hurling Haka

Then they pick up the bean ball. Ask them to raise the hurl high in the air and shout HURL! (Coach demonstrates all the actions and sounds). Then do the same with the other hand shouting BALL! Keep alternating while you dance, shouting HURL-BALL-HURL-BALL.....This is the Hurley Haka. It emphasizes that one hand is for the hurl and the other is for the ball. There is a DVD to accompany this drill.

5.3 Individual Drills

5.3.1 Statues and Electricity game

Each child balances a beanbag on their hurley, ensuring that the toe points away from their belly button. The coach marks out a confined spaces with cones and asks the players to walk around randomly. After a short time the coach shouts “**Statues!**”, upon which all players must freeze immediately.

The kids then progress to jogging around randomly in close proximity to each other with the bean bag balanced on the hurl. Remind them to avoid bumping into each other as they don't want to get a "**No shocks!**". Progress to the coach announcing "**Full steam ahead**". Let them run flat out again without bumping into each other. This improves their ABC skills ;lateral movement, sidestepping etc. (Lots of kids will drop the beanbag during the electricity games but tell them to just pick it up and keep going).

5.3.2 Snap-Statues

- Kids repeatedly place the bean bag onto their hurley and immediately flick it back into their hand, freezing as they do so.
- Coach the players to catch the bean bag in different positions and postures – high, low etc
- Combine Electricity Game with Snap Statues where they run around with the bean bag on the hurley continually snapping (and or dummy-snapping) the bean bag as they go and then grab the bean bag and freeze when the coach shouts stop or blows the whistle.

5.3.3 Statue of Liberty

Toss the ball high in the air with the hurley catching it at full stretch and freezing at the same time. (This is the High Catch)

Combine Electricity Game with Statue of Liberty where they run around with the bean bag on the hurley and then grab the bean bag and freeze in the Statue of Liberty position once the coach shouts stop or blows the whistle.

5.3.4 TAPS (Basic, Reverse, Ground, Air)

Taps refers to the act of tapping the sliotar off the hurley and back into the hand. It should be performed with a tennis ball for the youngest players. There are three variations of the TAPS drill.

Basic Taps is just bouncing the ball or sliotar on the hurley.

Ground Taps are performed by bouncing the sliotar off the ground and then directing it back into the hand off the hurley.

Air Taps are performed by throwing the sliotar in the air and then directing it back into the hand off the hurley.

Reverse Taps comprising of bouncing the ball on the sliotar using alternate sides of the hurley.

5.3.5 Swallows Nest Game

Place a hula hoop on the ground. This is the swallows nest. A cone is placed 5-6 metres away. This is a tree. The swallow (the player) will fly (run) from the nest with

the beanbag on the hurl around the tree and back to the nest where he flicks the ball into the nest.

Explain that the swallow is the best flier in the sky because he can swoop and swerve. So the players repeat the previous routine but this time they swerve their hurl from side to side as they run. Anticipate lots of mistakes here but emphasize that they just pick up the bean ball and keep going. Progress to swerving the hurl and the body from side to side as they run.

Using two players to introduce the concept of teamwork. One swallow minds the nest while the other flies around the tree, returns and flicks the bean bag to the other who puts it in the nest. Then reverse roles.

5.4 Partner Drills

5.4.1 Flick the Ball

In pairs, standing a couple of metres apart one kid simply flicks the bean bag over to his partner who tries to catch it and his partner returns it in the same way.

- A more difficult variation would be to use two bean-balls and the kids flick and catch simultaneously. Then try high flicks and catches simultaneously.
- Combine the Blastoff game as they countdown ten simultaneous flicks and catches with the last one being a very high flick and catch. (Very difficult)
- Flick and jump. (Done individually). Player flicks the ball high and into space runs after it and jumps to catch. (You need more space for this)

5.4.2 Tag

In partners one kid with bean bag on the hurl runs around randomly trying to shake off his partner who is trying to tag him with his bean bag. If the tag is successful reverse the roles.

5.4.3 Snap-Tag

A more advanced version is both kids have a bean bag on the hurl and when the player in pursuit gets close enough to tag their partner they flick the bean ball into their hand and immediately Snap-tag their partner.

5.4.4 Blast-off

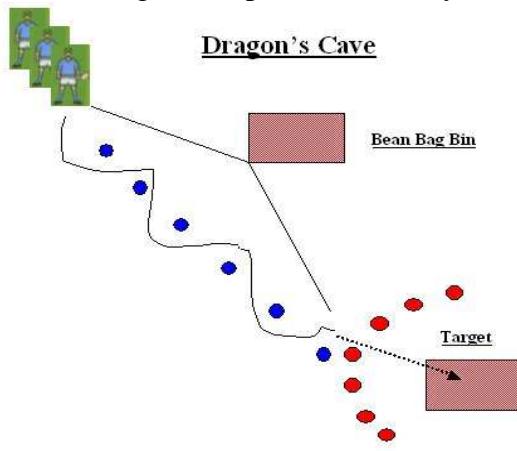
The kids do 10 crocodile snaps as the coach calls Ten- Nine-Eight-Seven-Six-Five Four-Three Two-One-BLAST-OFF!!! (Coach's voice gets louder and louder as he approaches Blast-off, building the drama) At Blast-off the kid flicks or throws the bean ball high in the air and tries to catch it in the Statue of Liberty position.

5.4.5 Pancakes

Player places bean bag on the hurl then flicks it up into the air and catches it on the base of the hurl before it hits the ground as you would a pancake. (Difficult).

5.4.6 Fun Game – Dragon’s Cave

This is a fun game to practice hand-eye co-ordination.



Setup:

- Players run zig zag around the cones and throw the bean bag at the target (Dragon’s Cave)
- While moving in/out of the cones, players should be encouraged to ‘look up’ a few times to check for the dragon!.
- Bean bags should be taken with the catching hand not the hurley (wristband) hand.
- Change from throwing the bean bag to flicking it off the hurley and into the bin.
- Players collect a bean bag from the bin on the way back to the start