

The circuit training method to improve fitness and technique is a unique way for the coach to achieve a number of objectives simultaneously. It also gives the coach a chance to enliven the training routine. A circuit consists of a number of stations at which different exercises are to be performed. It can be set up on the pitch or indoors, using a variety of equipment—cones, flag posts, benches, for example. An imaginative coach will be able to design a circuit on which fitness and technique training can be combined (economical training). The number of stations in a circuit is determined on the basis of the players' previous training and ability levels. It is important for the players to perform to the best of their abilities at each station, so jog between stations to lower the breathing and pulse rates, yet stay on the move. A thorough warm-up should always precede the exercises. Explain to the players before beginning how to execute the exercises at each station. Occasionally the coach will put a time limit for the entire circuit to be completed and other times not.

The circuit can be set up to run clockwise or counterclockwise. The players can go through the circuit in pairs or singles. When the focus is on fitness then pairs may work best so the partners can push one another.

The circuit system is intended for use over a period of one month, with gradual increases in the number of repetitions and the length of time spent at each station. However, the coach may also wish to use the circuit for a change of pace during the season or when weather conditions impede other activities. During the off-season, circuit exercises may be performed daily, especially when the team is unable to train together or to begin training at the same time. The circuit allows players who arrive late to begin working out without requiring the immediate attention of the coach.

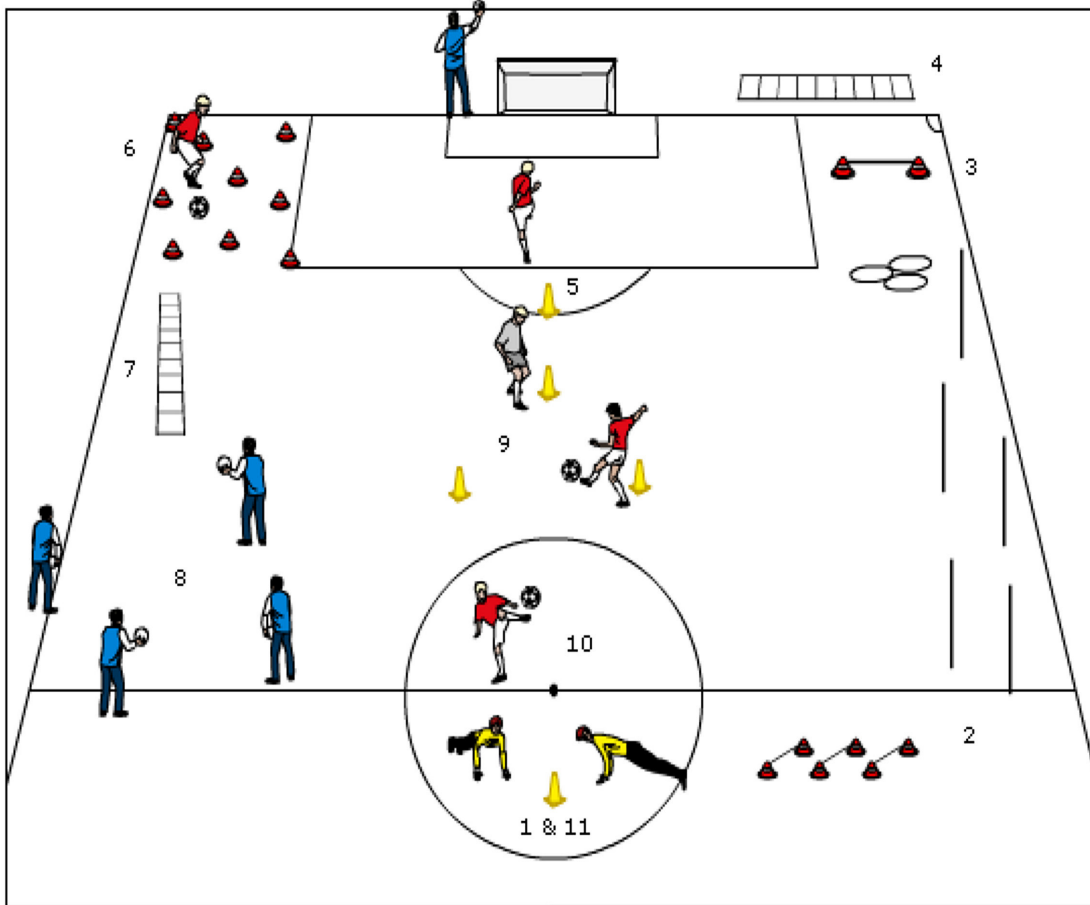
The coach may make changes in the circuit exercises and adapt the equipment to meet the team's needs. Stations should be set up so that difficult and less difficult exercises are alternated.¹

Example

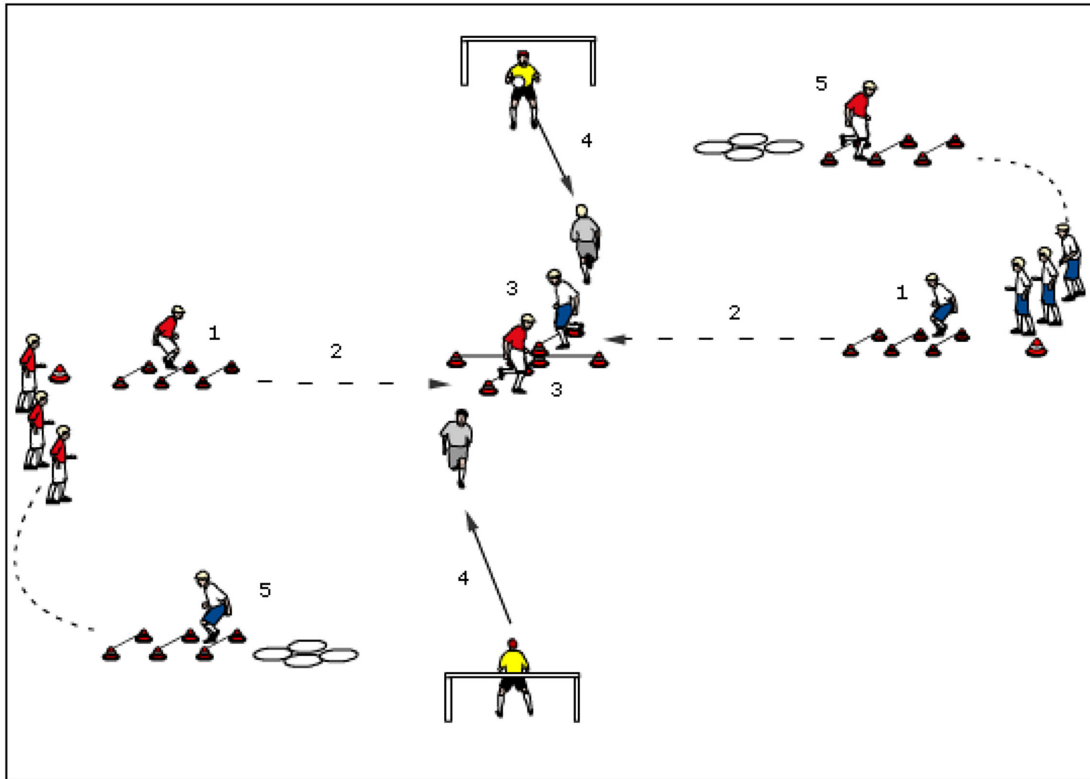
In the example below eleven stations are set up for the circuit. Eleven players could begin the with one player at each station to begin. Or all players could begin at station one and follow one another through the circuit. The stations in this example are:

1. 20 pushups
2. agility run over low hurdles, through sticks/cones and ending with agility rings – the distance is 20-25 yards – execute various moves sticks/cones (shuttle L-R, R-L, spins, twirls, backwards, forwards)
3. hurdle over the bar or a team bench (the height of the object to be hurdled will depend upon the age group & fitness level of the players)
4. speed ladder (execute a movement that impacts foot speed)
5. strike at goal on the first touch on the volley (head or foot) – the run begins at the top of the penalty arc – a server next to one post should serve the ball underhand
6. dribble through the maze of cones in the corner of the field – move on after dribbling around every cone
7. plyometric bounding through a second speed ladder
8. receiving gauntlet over a distance of 20 yards with 4 servers who toss the ball underhand as the player comes through – servers are positioned staggered so that

- the player now receives balls served on the diagonal – serve to receive with the foot, thigh, chest and play a pass back to the server after receiving – the last serve is a header back to the server
9. diagonal passes – a server is at the top cone of a triangle and makes push passes to the other cones – the player makes a return pass and then sprints to receive and return the next pass at the opposite cone (works on lateral movement & one touch diagonal passing)
 10. juggle with all body parts for one minute
 11. 20 pushups

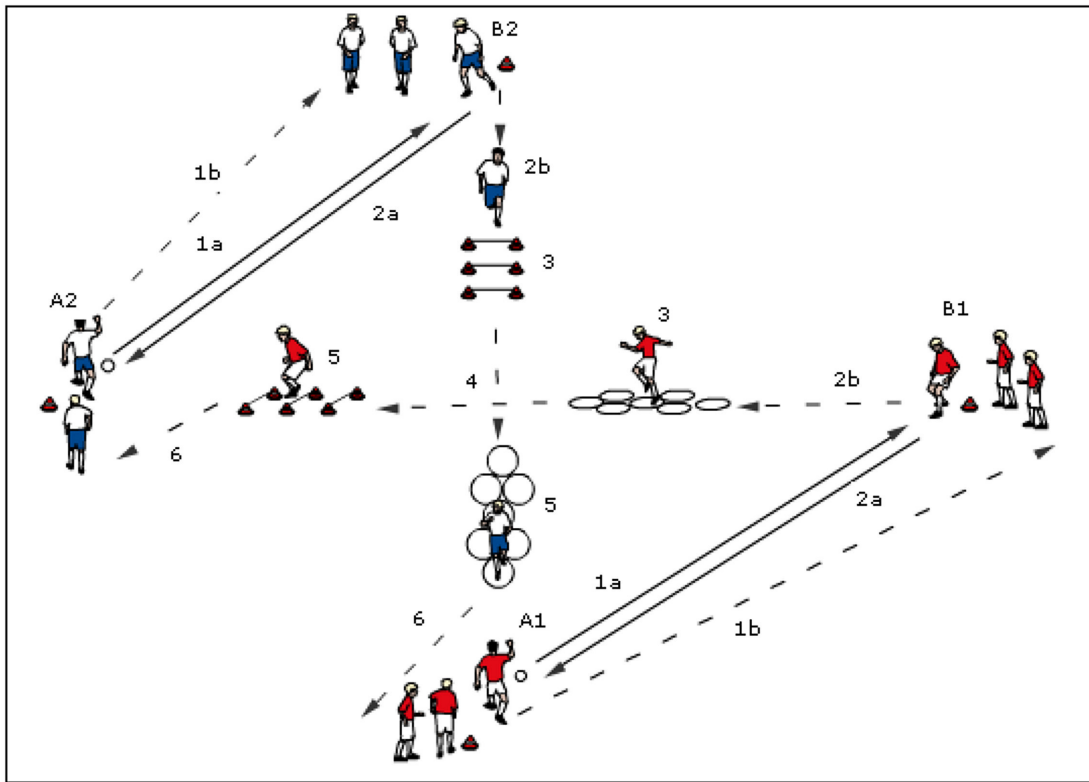


The following diagrams are additional examples of possible circuits.



The team is divided into two groups of blue and red with both groups performing the circuit simultaneously.

1. From the starting cone perform double leg hops over the low hurdles
2. sprint to the low hurdles in the center of the training area
3. perform single leg hops in a counterclockwise direction
4. move towards the goal and receive a bowled distribution from the goalkeeper, receive it with the foot and then play a pass back to the goalkeeper
5. hop single leg (alternating) through the rings on the ground and then single leg hop through the low hurdles, then jog back to the starting cone



The team is divided into four groups, two in red and two in white. The four groups gather at a starting cone near the perimeter of the training grid. A1 plays a pass (1a) to B2 who makes a one touch return pass (2a) to A1 who stops the ball and then sprints (1b) to the end of the line to his right. B1 sprints (2b) to the rings (3) and skips through. B1 then sprints through the intersection (4) with B2 while avoiding collision. Once at the low hurdles (5) B1 double leg hops over them and then sprints (6) to the new starting cone area. A2 and B2 have been doing the same on the opposite side of the grid. Station 3 can be the rings on both sides or rings for one group and low hurdles for the other group as depicted here.

¹ Walter Chyzowych, The Official Soccer Book of the United States Soccer Federation (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1978), pp. 187-189.