



KILMEENA GAA CLUB  
BÓRD NA NÓG

# PLAYER PATHWAY



“MÓL AN ÓIGE AGUS TIOCFÁIDH SÍ”

(ENCOURAGE THEM AND THEY WILL COME)



# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE

This player pathway is to serve as a guide to mentors, parents and players as to what they should broadly be doing at a particular time in their playing careers in Kilmeena GAA Club. It is intended as an aid to assist all concerned with getting the maximum enjoyment and stimulation at the various stages in their football career. It is designed with player welfare at the heart of the plan. We hope that it will provide assistance to all in ensuring the development of players to reach their full potential from their first steps into the Academy up to the adult teams of the club and beyond.

## CLUB LAYOUT IN THIS DOCUMENT

We have broken the club into sections in this document. Each section is covered separately and contains guidelines as to what is recommended for players at each level.

As coaches, we should try to focus on the “5 Fs” - Fun, Firm Friendly, Flexible (positions) and Feedback.

We have included suggestions for training exercises and games from the GAA coaching manual “Fun DO - Football Resource” which is available to download at <https://learning.gaa.ie/sites/default/files/Football%20Coaching%20Classes.pdf>



## CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH GROUP

These are here to act as a guide to mentors in informing them as to the level their team should be at within a particular phase of their development. They are not written in stone and they are not 100% right for all players. Each player as an individual will develop at different rates both mentally and physically. Teams themselves will mature and develop at different rates and the mentors need to be aware of this. Just because last year's team

## “ ATTITUDE IS AS IMPORTANT AS ABILITY

could do certain things it does not follow that this year's team will be able to do them too. Rather than compare their team to what has gone before the mentors should be far more concerned with helping their own team reach its potential in an enjoyable and structured manner. We are concerned with the long term development of each and every player to reach their own maximum potential whatever that may be.

	TEAMS	SKILL EMPHASIS	PERSONALITY	DECISION MAKING PROCESS
1	Academy U6,7 & 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing both sides</li> <li>Develop fundamental motor skills on both sides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easily distracted</li> <li>Short attention span</li> <li>Not ready for formal sport</li> <li>Self centred expect others to adapt to them</li> <li>Attention is over exclusive</li> <li>Don't understand planned training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to be led or shown</li> <li>told constantly</li> <li>allowed make mistakes</li> <li>made use both sides</li> <li>Will play alongside others rather than with them.</li> </ul>
2	U9 to U11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing basic and sport specific skills on both sides</li> <li>Develop fundamental motor skills on both sides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can now cope with skill training</li> <li>Place huge emphasis on skill development</li> <li>Beginning to understand rules and competition. Introduce these slowly</li> <li>Will follow 'role models'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depend on coach to give feedback on performance</li> <li>During games coach as commentator; making decisions on what to do for players</li> <li>Time to mimic good practice</li> </ul>
3	U12 to U14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop sport specific skills on both sides</li> <li>Understanding of basic rules of sport</li> <li>Positional/Game awareness</li> <li>Team group skills</li> <li>Basic teamwork skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin to form small close friendship groups</li> <li>Start to compare to each other - competitive nature forming</li> <li>Group opinion important for evaluation &gt; coach</li> <li>Better able to work with others much easier to develop teamwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get players to get their 'head up'</li> <li>Teach them LOOK/SEE/DECIDE/ACT approach</li> <li>A good time to set a team standard</li> <li>Will still require 'spot and fix' instruction from the coach i.e. spot an error and tell them how to fix it.</li> <li>Definitely want to play by the rules</li> </ul>
4	U15 to U16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and improve athleticism</li> <li>Improve teamwork skills</li> <li>Develop specific position skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ready for concentrated and specific training programmes</li> <li>Ready for individual programmes to help work on weaknesses.</li> <li>Will respond well to 'praise and challenge' - mental fitness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't like decisions to be made for them - will use their own criteria</li> <li>Very strong on self evaluation: need to be taught how.</li> <li>Expect to be consulted on decisions</li> <li>Through 'praise and challenge' coaching players will make own decisions during games</li> </ul>



## ACADEMY (U6 & U8)

The skills outlined here have been identified as appropriate for under 6 and under 8 players.

### BODY CATCH

The Body Catch is a basic technique in Gaelic Football. This type of catch is used when the ball is dropping between waist and head height and the player has time to cushion it into their chest.

### LOW CATCH

The Low Catch is a basic technique in Gaelic Football used to receive a pass bouncing low along the ground.

### PUNT KICK

The Punt Kick is one of the most common foot passing techniques used in Gaelic Football. It may also be used to kick for a score when approaching the goal straight on.

### BOUNCE

The Bounce is a basic technique in Gaelic Football used to play the ball in order to keep possession without fouling. When in possession it is possible to take a maximum of four steps without playing the ball. After four steps the player has the choice of bouncing the ball, performing a toe tap, or playing the ball away. The ball may not be bounced more than once in succession. However, the ball may be bounced alternately with the toe tap to keep possession as part of a solo run.

### HAND PASS

The Hand Pass is a basic technique in Gaelic Football used to pass the ball over a short distance. The technique involves supporting the ball in one hand and striking it with the open free hand.

### SIDE STEP

The Side Step is a basic technique in Gaelic Football used to evade an opponent while in possession of the ball. The technique involves a shift in weight from one leg to the other, tricking the opponent into tackling to one side while the player moves off to the other.



**“REMEMBER, ENCOURAGE & REASSURE TO ELIMINATE FEAR OF FAILURE”**



FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS	SKILL EMPHASIS	GAMES TYPE	GAA COACHING MANUAL REFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Balance</b></li> <li>• <b>Co-Ordination</b></li> <li>• <b>Speed</b></li> <li>• <b>Running:</b> technique</li> <li>• <b>Jumping:</b> technique</li> <li>• <b>Throwing:</b> side throw</li> </ul>	<p><b>Bouncing</b></p> <p><b>4 steps:</b> bounce</p> <p><b>Catching:</b> chest catch</p> <p><b>Fist passing</b></p> <p><b>Throwing:</b> side throw</p> <p><b>Pick up:</b> big step/hands</p> <p><b>Dribbling:</b> both feet</p> <p><b>Kicking off the ground and the hand</b></p> <p><b>Punt kick</b></p> <p><b>Evasive:</b> side step, no ball</p> <p><b>Tackling:</b> shadowing</p> <p><i>Progress onto</i></p> <p><b>4 steps: bounce/solo</b></p> <p><b>Catching:</b> overhead</p> <p><b>Fist passing and chest catch on the move</b></p> <p><b>Pick up:</b> crouch lift</p> <p><b>Punt kick:</b> step and punt kick through, at a target</p> <p><b>Evasive:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. side step with ball</li> <li>2. shoulder roll</li> </ol> <p><b>Tackling:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. shadowing</li> <li>2. near hand tackle</li> </ol>	<p>Target games – coaches should start with games that have very little decision making and contact. Have target games where players simply aim at or through targets e.g. 2 markers</p> <p>Court games – aim in these games to pass a ball over an obstacle e.g. net or middle zone marked out. (No mans land/4 ball battle)</p> <p><i>Progress onto</i></p> <p>Field games – rounder type games, more tactical decisions needed e.g. where to kick, when and when not to run.</p> <p>If you intend to play invasion games try: Go Football</p> <p>Court games - aim in these games to pass a ball over an obstacle e.g. net or middle zone marked out. (No mans land / 4 ball battle)</p> <p>Field games – rounder type games, more tactical decisions needed e.g. where to kick, when and when not to run.</p> <p><i>Progress onto</i></p> <p>Invasion games – part or full invasion games ‘Go Games’</p>	<p><b>Bounce:</b> See pages 8-34</p> <p><b>Catching:</b> See pages 11-22</p> <p><b>Fist Passing:</b> See page 85</p> <p><b>Hand Passing:</b> See page 35</p> <p><b>Punt Kick:</b> See page 23</p> <p><b>Body Catch:</b> See page 11</p> <p><b>Low Catch:</b> See page 17</p> <p><b>Side Step:</b> See page 41</p>



## UNDER 10

The skills outlined here have been identified as appropriate for players under the age of 10.

### REACH CATCH

The Reach Catch in Football is a technique used to catch the ball when it approaches at or above head height. It forms the basic element of the overhead catch.

### BLOCK DOWN

The Block Down is a tackling skill used to prevent an opponent shooting for a score or passing to another player. In scoring situations the Block Down is an effective and dramatic defensive skill.

### HOOK KICK

The Hook Kick is a kicking technique used in Gaelic Football. It is predominantly used to shoot for points but is also used to pass to a team mate at an angle to the player in possession.

### SOLO

The Solo or 'toe tap' in Gaelic Football is a technique used to play the ball in order to keep possession without fouling. It is used to carry possession to a better position or to evade an opponent. A solo run may incorporate a sequence of alternating bounces and toe taps, or just be a series of toe taps.

### CROUCH LIFT

The Crouch Lift is a basic skill in Gaelic Football used to lift the ball from the ground into the hands.

### CHECKING

Checking (shadowing) in Gaelic Football is a tackling skill used to force an opponent away from goal, into a poor position or onto their weaker side. Performed intelligently it is a very effective form of tackle. It is also known as jockeying.

### FIST PASS

The Fist Pass is a variation of the handpass technique in Gaelic Football used to pass the ball over a short distance. The technique involves supporting the ball in one hand and striking it with the closed fist of the free hand. A fisted pass will travel a greater distance than an open-handed handpass. Remember a fisted pass may be used to score a point but an open handed pass may not.

### SIDE TO SIDE CHARGE

In addition to mastering the non-contact skills, players must learn the contact skills necessary to participate in game situations. The Side to Side Charge is the basic contact skill required by football players. It may be used when the opponent is in possession of the ball, when they are playing the ball or when both players are moving in the direction of the ball to play it.

"FIRST WE WILL BE BEST,  
THEN WE WILL BE FIRST"



# UNDER 10

## LEARNING TO USE THE BALL WELL

“ THE MORE I PRACTICE THE BETTER I GET

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS	SKILL EMPHASIS	GAMES TYPE	GAA COACHING MANUAL REFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agility</li> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Co-Ordination</li> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Running: technique</li> <li>• Jumping: technique</li> <li>• Throwing: side throw</li> <li>• Flexibility / stretching</li> </ul>	<p><b>4 steps: bounce / solo</b></p> <p><b>Catching: overhead</b></p> <p><b>Fist passing and chest catch on the move</b></p> <p><b>Pick up: crouch lift</b></p> <p><b>Punt kick:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact</li> <li>• Direction</li> <li>• Power</li> <li>• Kick to a player</li> </ul> <p><b>Evasive:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side step with ball</li> <li>• Shoulder roll</li> </ul> <p><b>Tackling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shadowing</li> <li>• Near hand tackle</li> </ul> <p><b>Blocking Part 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step in with near leg</li> <li>• Hands together downward pressure</li> </ul> <p><b>Overhead catch: introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement jump and catch</li> </ul> <p><b>Kicking: shooting for goals and points</b></p> <p><b>Scoring: with the feet and the fist</b></p> <p><b>Blocking Part 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make contact with the ball</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court games</li> <li>• Field games</li> <li>• Full invasion games</li> <li>• Conditioned games</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Catching Overhead:</b> See pages 11-22</p> <p><b>Fist Passing:</b> See page 85</p> <p><b>Crouch Lift:</b> See page 73</p> <p><b>Punt Kick:</b> See pages 23 and 99</p> <p><b>Side Step:</b> See pages 41 and 91</p> <p><b>Near Hand Tackling:</b> See pages 117</p> <p><b>Blocking:</b> See page 55</p> <p><b>Soloing:</b> See page 67</p>



## UNDER 12-14

The skills outlined here have been identified as appropriate for players from the ages of 12-14.

### PUNT KICK

The Punt Kick is a foot passing technique used in Gaelic Football. It may also be used to kick for a score when approaching the goal straight on.

The objective of the technique is to disguise the intended direction of movement in order to move into a more advantageous position.



### HIGH CATCH

The High Catch is one of the most spectacular techniques in Gaelic Football and is used to field the ball from the air. It is used in particular to win possession from a kick out or long pass.

**“YOU CAN’T MAKE A GREAT PLAY UNLESS YOU DO IT FIRST IN PRACTICE.”**

### THE ROLL

The Roll is an evasion technique used in Gaelic Football when the player in possession goes into contact with an opponent. To perform the technique the player in possession uses the contact to roll away from the opponent and change direction.



### NEAR HAND TACKLE

The Near Hand Tackle is a tackling technique in Gaelic Football used to knock the ball from an opponent’s possession with the open hand.

### FEINT AND SIDE STEP

The Feint and Side Step is a technique used to evade an opponent while in possession of the ball or to lose an opponent in order to find space.





# UNDER 12-14

## LEARNING TO PLAY TOGETHER

“ NOBODY WHO EVER GAVE HIS BEST REGRETTED IT ”

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS	SKILL EMPHASIS	GAMES TYPE	GAA COACHING MANUAL REFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of flexibility/stretching</li> <li>• Speed mechanics: correct arm and leg action</li> <li>• Warm up games incorporating the A,B,C's of athleticism (i.e. agility, balance and co-ordination)</li> <li>• Multi directional runs: game based runs.</li> <li>• Ladders and hurdles are useful aids here.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hook kick</b></li> <li>• <b>Side step and feint:</b> without the ball initially then introduce the ball</li> <li>• <b>Free kicks and penalties</b></li> <li>• <b>1 ball between every 2 to 3 players</b></li> <li>• <b>Small sided games:</b> 2v2</li> <li>• <b>Uneven teams in small sided games:</b> 3v5, etc.</li> <li>• <b>Drills with small numbers that are game related</b></li> <li>• <b>Conditioned games</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Court games</b></li> <li>• <b>Field games</b></li> <li>• <b>Full invasion games</b></li> <li>• <b>Conditioned games</b></li> <li>• Animal walks</li> <li>• Donkey push</li> <li>• 1 arm tug of war</li> <li>• Rugby push and pull</li> <li>• Wrist boxing</li> <li>• Stubborn donkey</li> <li>• Stamp</li> <li>• Parcel</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hook Kick:</b> See pages 61</p> <p><b>Side step and feint:</b> See page 123</p> 

# UNDER 15-18

## LEARNING TO PERFORM

“ GOOD TECHNIQUE LEADS TO CONFIDENCE AND CONFIDENCE LEADS TO SUCCESS

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS	SKILL EMPHASIS	GAME SKILLS	CONDITIONING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Speed mechanics:</b> correct arm and leg action</li> <li>• <b>Warm up games</b> incorporating the A,B,C's of athleticism (i.e. agility, balance and co-ordination)</li> <li>• <b>Multi directional runs:</b> game based runs.</li> <li>• Ladders and hurdles are useful aids here</li> <li>• <b>Running Guidelines</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0-8 seconds</li> <li>• 10-30 seconds</li> <li>• 30-90 seconds</li> <li>• 90 seconds +</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Match pace games</b></li> <li>• <b>Conditioned games</b></li> <li>• <b>Support play</b></li> <li>• <b>Overlap</b></li> <li>• <b>Keeping possession</b></li> <li>• <b>Breaking ball</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Developing a style of play</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• defensive play</li> <li>• forward play</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>'Games for better team play'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team 2000</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Speed of thought and speed of play</b></li> <li>• <b>Simple tactics</b></li> <li>• <b>Understanding space</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Under 15</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue core stability</li> <li>• Intro body weight circuit training</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Under 16</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue core stability</li> <li>• Body weight circuit training</li> <li>• Introduce progression into the circuits: add in light resistance e.g. Brush handle, water bottle, light medicine ball.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Under 18</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As before</li> <li>• Introduce functional exercises</li> <li>• Introduce light resistance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



“ IF YOU TRAIN HARD, YOU'LL NOT ONLY BE HARD, YOU'LL BE HARD TO BEAT