How to Achieve Success in Soccer

Learn how agents and scouts evaluate your technique, game intelligence, physical fitness, and mindset
# Table of contents

**Introduction** ................................................................. 3

**Technique** .................................................................. 4

1. Ball control ................................................................. 4
2. Dribbling ................................................................. 4
3. Passing accuracy ......................................................... 5
4. Body control ............................................................. 5

**Game intelligence** .............................................................. 6

5. Spatial awareness ....................................................... 6
6. Tactical knowledge ..................................................... 7
7. Risk assessment .......................................................... 8

**Physical fitness** ................................................................. 10

8. Endurance ................................................................. 10
9. Balance and coordination ........................................... 11
10. Speed ................................................................. 11
11. Strength and power .................................................. 12

**Proper mindset** ................................................................. 13

12. Passion and love of the sport ...................................... 13
13. Composure and mental strength .................................... 13
14. Coachability .............................................................. 15
15. Self-motivation .......................................................... 15

**A note from Ertheo** ......................................................... 16
Introduction

If you dream about becoming a professional football player, you have your work cut out for you. Less than one percent of footballers who have played the game regularly from a very young age really achieves success in football and gets the opportunity to make a living by playing. Only a small fraction of that one percent gets the opportunity to play in the big leagues and earn the fortune and fame often associated with being a professional footballer.

To become a professional soccer player and achieve success in football, you’ll need to participate in elite soccer training to develop these 4 core areas:

1. **Technique** – ball control, dribbling skills, passing accuracy, body control

2. **Game intelligence** – spatial awareness, tactical knowledge, risk assessment

3. **Physical fitness** – endurance, balance and coordination, speed, strength and power

4. **Proper mindset** – compassion, composure and mental strength, coachability, self-motivation
Part 1: Technique

*Technique* is perhaps the most visibly obvious element to success in football. Even an amateur can recognize good technique. Do they have good ball control? Are they fast with the ball at their feet? Can they dribble through their opponents? Do they pass to feet?

Good technique has 4 key elements:

1. **Ball control**

   *Ball control* refers to a player’s ability to collect the ball and gain control of it using all parts of the body including feet, legs, chest, and head. A player with good ball control is able to receive passes both on the ground and out of the air with clean first touches keeping the ball close to their body. Ball control also refers to a player’s ability to maintain possession of the ball, successfully protecting it from opponents. The ability to turn quickly and sharply with the ball is also of upmost important to achieving success in football and falls under the *ball control* element.

2. **Dribbling skills**

   *Dribbling skills* refers to a player’s ability move up and down the pitch with full control of the ball. A player with good dribbling skills can move the ball in different directions at different speeds with both feet. They can successfully maneuver through opponents without losing possession of the ball. Superb drilling skills are essential to achieving success in football for players of all positions.
3. Passing accuracy

*Passing accuracy* refers to a player’s ability to use both feet to send the ball to the player’s desired destination. That could mean sending the ball straight to a teammate’s feet with power and precision, sending a through pass into space with proper weight, crossing the ball accurately in front of the net, or, for strikers shooting the ball accurately and powerful into the back of the net. Players cannot achieve success in football without being able to pass accurately with both feet.

4. Body control

*Body control* refers to a player’s ability to move their body fluidly to optimize balance and coordination. Since *body control* falls under the category of technique rather than physical fitness, *body control* refers mostly to correctness of form. Long strides, correct running form, and a low center of gravity are good indications of good body control.
Part 2: Game intelligence

*Game intelligence* is measured by a player’s ability to make smart decisions on the pitch and make them quickly. A smart footballer aims to keep the game as clean as possible, minimizing energy expenditure while maximizing results. Essentially, game intelligence implies playing smarter, not harder.

Game intelligence comprises 3 skills:

5. **Spatial awareness**

*Spatial awareness* refers to a player’s ability to see space clearly across the entire pitch and utilize it to their advantage. What does it mean to see space clearly?

First of all, players need to be aware of the immediate space around them. According to the position of the ball, their own teammates, and their opponents, where should they be? Should they be moving into a space to receive a pass? Should they be drawing defenders away from their teammate who has the ball to create open space for them?

Secondly, intelligent players are always aware of where their teammates are and where they should be according to the positioning of the other team. There are two reasons they need to know where their teammates are and should be: (1) to tell them where they should be if they’re not there, and (2) to anticipate their teammate’s position and make a quick, instinctive pass almost without looking. In fact, scouts often look for this *sixth sense* of a footballer.
Finally, intelligent players are extremely aware of the geometry of the game. They know how to position themselves and others to make wide angles and easy passing opportunities for themselves while on offense and narrow angles and difficult passing opportunities for their opponents while on defense.

Spatial awareness is a complicated skill which encompasses many other skills absolutely essential to achieving success in football. In fact, spatial awareness is also closely related to the next game intelligence skill, tactical knowledge.

6. Tactical knowledge

*Tactical knowledge* refers to a player’s knowledge of the nature and structure of the game. This knowledge allows the best players to intelligently anticipate, plan, and strategize during a match. While spatial awareness helps intelligent players see their immediate opportunities, tactical knowledge contributes to a player’s ability to anticipate the future opportunities that will arise from each move.

For this reason, tactically intelligent players are great at maintaining possession and not only *waiting* for the right moment to attack, but also *creating* the right moment to attack. By anticipating the moves of their own players and their opponents, intelligent players can move the ball across the field, creating gaps in the opposing team’s defense until they have just enough space to attack.

Tactical intelligence is also critical to performing well on defense and perhaps even more important. On defense, players should constantly be
assessing the field to accurately anticipate their opponents’ next moves. If they anticipate correctly, they can close down their opponents’ angles, prevent easy passes between them, and force them to make a mistake.

Tactical intelligence is especially important for center backs and central midfielders because these players are in the best position not only to see the entire pitch but also to communicate with and command their teammates. Nevertheless, extraordinary tactical knowledge is vital for anyone who really wants to achieve great success in football.

7. Risk assessment

Risk refers to the fact that certain aggressive decisions could lead to loss of possession (or failure to regain possession in the case of diving or tackling on defense). When a team loses possession, each and every team member must expend extra energy until they regain control. Such aggressive decisions could lead to over expenditure of energy and inability to perform well for the full 90 minutes of the match. On the other hand, a complete lack of aggressive decisions in an effort to conserve energy and maintain possession could prevent the team from scoring goals and ultimately lead to a loss.

“If you’re attacking, you don’t get as tired as when you’re chasing.”

Kyle Rote, Jr.

Intelligent players, therefore, are constantly assessing the risk and reward of their decisions on the pitch. Should we make the long cross into the box and hope that someone touches it into the net but risk losing possession?
Or should we maintain possession and pass around the top of the box until one of our players has an open shot on goal?

Risk assessment, tactical knowledge, and spatial awareness are all complex skills that lead to smart, fast decisions, and, ultimately, game intelligence.

"I am not a perfectionist, but I like to feel that things are done well. More important than that, I feel an endless need to learn, to improve, to evolve, not only to please the coach and the fans but also to feel satisfied with myself. It is my conviction that here are no limits to learning, and that it can never stop, no matter what our age."

*Cristiano Ronaldo*
Part 3: Physical fitness

*Physical fitness* is another essential element to achieving success in football; a football match lasts for 90 – 95 minutes with very few subs. According to Livestrong, midfielders run an average of over 11 kilometers per match. Wingers perform the most “high-intensity” runs averaging nearly 150 sprints of at least 75% of their full speed per match. Apart from goalkeepers, center-backs run the least but still average 9.5 kilometers per match.

In addition to endurance and speed, footballers need balance and physical strength to defend the ball at their feet, to shoot, to pass the ball long distances, to win balls out of the air, etc.

In conclusion, physical fitness in football comprises 4 essential elements:

**8. Endurance**

According to dictionary.com, *endurance* is the ability or strength to continue to last especially despite fatigue, stress, or other adverse conditions. That is, endurance not only refers to a player’s physical fitness and ability to make it through the entire 90 minutes. It also refers to a player’s mental strength and ability to continue despite the overwhelming fatigue he or she might feel.

Elite footballers must not just endure physically but also mentally. As the body fatigues, control, focus, and decision making becomes more and more difficult. The ability to perform both physically and mentally for more than 90 minutes is crucial to achieving success in football.
“The vision of a champion is bent over, drenched in sweat, at the point of exhaustion, when nobody else is looking.”

*Mia Hamm*

9. Balance and coordination

Great *balance and coordination* are necessary skills for footballers. Footballers are often moving fast in small spaces either weaving through defenders or, on defense, keeping up with the moves of offenders. Moving quickly in small spaces with one foot on the ball requires a superb amount of balance and coordination. Balance and coordination (mixed with speed) is what makes a player agile and agility is a necessary skill for the best footballers.

10. Speed

*Speed* is necessary for footballers in terms of both quickness and quick feet and speed across greater distances. Speed in terms of quickness and quick feet goes hand in hand with balance and coordination. This type of quick speed in small spaces contributes to a player’s agility and ability to weave through defenders. The quickness is also essential for defensive players to keep up with their mark and to keep offensive players from dodging them or sprinting passed them with the ball.

The second kind of speed is speed across greater distances. Such speed assists footballers in beating their opponents to the ball and also beating them in long runs down the sidelines both on offense and defense. Speed is a baseline skill for footballers and is of upmost importance. A player might be super agile with the ball at their feet, but if they’re slow and can’t beat
their opponents to the ball, they’ll never get the opportunity to show off their agility.

**11. Strength and power**

*Strength and power* contribute to a player’s speed and agility as well as their ability to shoot, make long passes, defend and shield the ball, steal the ball from their opponents, and win balls out of the air.

Leg strength is undoubtedly important for passing the ball long distances and shooting and is undeniably advantageous in almost all aspects of the game. That being said, upper body strength and particularly core strength is also favorable while defending and shielding the ball and stealing the ball from opponents. In football, arm strength is often used to create space between the attacking player and their opponents while leg strength is used to maintain a low center of gravity. Therefore, while leg workouts are essential and should be prioritized, upper body workouts should not be overlooked.

Speed and agility are the physical attributes that are typically assigned to a so-called skilled player, but even an agile player can be easily pushed off the ball and lose possession without strength and power in both the upper and lower body.

Technique and game intelligence are vital to achieving success in football. However, without the strength and power to win the ball, protect the ball, send long and powerful passes, and sprint past opponents, even the most intelligent players are quite useless on the pitch.
Part 4: Proper mindset

Proper mindset is the final key to achieving success in football. To really achieve success, footballers have to put all their heart and soul into their sport. That being said, such passion can result in devastation after defeat or burnout. To achieve success in football, football players need to find a balance and learn to be passionate, while maintaining composure, and demonstrating resilience.

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do."

Pele

Proper mindset comprises 4 core traits:

12. Passion and love for the sport

The most important trait that a footballer must have to achieve success in football is a burning passion and love for the sport. In order to achieve success, footballers put in incomprehensible hours of practice, and once they achieve success, they continue to do so. These hours not only include time on the pitch but also time spent watching football matches, analyzing them, reflecting upon a player’s own performance on the pitch, etc. To achieve success in football, one must eat, sleep, and breathe football.

13. Composure and mental strength
Passion and love for the sport is often accompanied by extreme competitiveness. Those who LOVE their sport LOVE to win. This competitiveness is certainly crucial to achieving success in football, but it should also be accompanied by composure and mental strength.

Composure and mental strength can help a player to:

(1) **Perform well under pressure** – When time is running out, players often begin to play frantically. Composure helps a player to make rational decisions even in the last minutes of the match. Composure is also important in crucial game situations such as penalty kicks or even breakaways.

(2) **Accept defeat** – Mental strength is important for a player to be able to accept defeat and continue to train and play with a clear mind, empty of regret.

(3) **Deal with unnecessary aggression from the other team** – During matches, players can certainly get unnecessarily aggressive with players from the other team, pushing, elbowing, and stepping on feet when the referee isn’t looking. It’s easy to retaliate in rage. However, rage invokes a physical state which leads to poor decision making on the pitch and, ultimately, losses.

(4) **Accept rejection and persevere** – Footballers on the path to becoming professional football players will certainly have to deal with rejection along the way. The path for most is long and arduous. Many players get rejected from teams that they think will be their road to success. It’s important to accept this rejection and keep moving forward.
"The secret is to believe in your dreams; in your potential that you can be like your star, keep searching, keep believing and don’t lose faith in yourself."

Neymar

14. Coachability

Another important trait of a football player with the proper mindset is their coachability. No matter how talented a player might be, they have to be willing to learn from their coaches. This means not only listening to his or her instructions, but also seeking out, accepting, and integrating feedback without defensive backlash. Players should also demonstrate an ability to self-correct and try new actions to get improved results.

15. Self-motivation

The final trait a football player must possess to truly achieve success in football is self-motivation. As mentioned early, becoming one of the best in the world requires an incredible amount of practice. To practice for the necessary amount of hours at the necessary intensity, serious footballers must put in extra hours and make all kinds of sacrifices including waking up early to train, adhering to a strict diet and exercise routine, and missing out on all kinds of experiences with their peers.
A note from Ertheo

Becoming a successful soccer player is a challenge for even the most talented players. These 15 skills are essential to your development as a soccer player, but you’ll need more than skill to go pro. Specifically, you need knowledge about exactly how you can become a professional player.

The absolute best way to achieve success in soccer and even become a professional soccer player is to attend a high-performance soccer academy as a high school student. At high-performance academies, students explore their options to play professionally without neglecting their education.

During the winter months, the academies offer trials for interested students. Winter trials give coaches the chance to evaluate students’ performance and give students the chance to experience life as a full-time academy student.

If you have any questions about attending a winter trial at one of these academies, contact Ertheo at info@ertheo.com.

Becoming a successful soccer player is a challenge, but remember...

“The more difficult the victory, the greater the happiness in winning.”

Pelé