



SAMPLE

FOOTBALL

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2

About the card sort

- The cards describe competencies, behaviours and qualities in the game of football.
- The sort can be completed by athletes on their own, or in a conversation with a coach, parent or mentor.
- The cards should be used to identify competencies to grow into super strengths or areas to work on.
- On the back of the cards are ideas for actions to support development planning.
- Use the cards at the beginning and end of the season, and following key milestones.

Select cards to sort appropriate for your roles in the team.

Categories of competencies for football include:

- team and character
- mental skills
- physical
- athlete life
- football skills
- football skills – goal keeper
- game strategy

Turn over to see the full list of competencies.

Mental Skills	Leadership and Character	Athlete Life	Physical	Football Skills	Football Skills Goal Keeper	Tactical
Situational Management and Focus	Growth Mindset	Wellbeing, Life Balance and Career Plan	Robustness/ Avoiding Injury	Passing	Saving Shots	Tactics
Motivation and Passion	Team Values and Culture	Support Networks	Aerobic Fitness	Receiving	Positional Play	Team Formations
Resilience	Leadership	Financial Skills, Facilities & Equipment	Speed Endurance	One-On-One with the Ball (Attackers, Mid-Fielders)	Communication and Organisation	Communication and Organisation
Self-Belief and Confidence	Team Person	Nutrition	Speed	Defending	Distribution Skills	
Performance Preparation	Programme Ownership	Identity, Purpose and Self-Awareness	Agility	Goal Scoring	Corners	
Performance Review	Drive & Ambition	Mental Health	Recovery	Positioning to Receive the Ball	Penalties	
	Competitiveness		Strength	Set Play Delivery		
	Work Ethic			Attacking Set Plays		
	Mastery			Defending Set Plays		
				Taking Penalties		

2

How to use the cards

ATHLETE

1

SORT FOR STRENGTHS

Sort the cards into roughly three even piles with the following black cards forming the top of each set:

- high/strength
- middle/average
- low/work-on; and
- not applicable.

Sort based on your highest level of competition.

2

EXPLAIN/RECORD

Explain reasons for placement, focusing on strengths and areas to work on. Take a photo or fill in the worksheets to record placement to refer back to on review.

3

PRIORITISE

Once completed, pick up the cards sorted as areas to work on. You may also wish to select some strengths to include in your development plan that could become super strengths. Flip over the header cards and sort again for priorities for the next season or training block using the black cards (high, medium, low). Aim to narrow down to not more than two development priorities per category.

Once you have identified your priorities, turn over the cards. The back of the cards have development planning ideas.

Please Turn Over

2

How to use the cards

COACH/ MENTOR

1

INTRODUCTION

Explain the purpose of the process.

Explain the process (see website for more detail) and discuss confidentiality.

Check for comfort and questions.

2

GUIDE

Guide the process.

Question, clarify and summarise to help the athlete identify the critical priorities.

Listen with an open mind, avoid making judgements.

3

PLAN

Record placement of cards with notes. Select priorities emerging from the second sort and identify development actions (see ideas on the back of cards) in collaboration with the athlete.

TIP: You can complete a separate card sort for comparative discussion.

STRENGTH



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A STRENGTH AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL
OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

HIGH PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

MIDDLE/AVERAGE



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS MIDDLE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL
OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

MEDIUM PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A MEDIUM PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

WORK-ON



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS AN AREA TO WORK-ON AT THE HIGHEST
LEVEL OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

LOW PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A LOW PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

NOT APPLICABLE



THESE ARE EITHER NOT APPLICABLE OR TO BE SORTED AT A LATER DATE



MENTAL SKILLS[©]

— SORT CARDS —



Situational Management and Focus

In adversity, under pressure or following unexpected events, I can maintain performance focus and composure. For example, I usually:

- Remain focussed and in emotional control, consistently performing to my potential (within a game or tournament).
- Use processes and tools to help me focus on the process, not the outcome e.g., self-talk, imagery, affirmations.
- Stay calm and unflappable.
- Lead by example with both words and actions, continuing to communicate positively and effectively with teammates and the referee.
- Maintain confidence in others and have a settling effect on the team.
- Make rational decisions.
- Show resilience.

Developing Situational Management and Focus

Experiment with ways to stay calm, manage focus and eliminate distractions

Feeling stressed or anxious affects your focus. Ask other athletes what they do to manage their mood and focus and stay calm in high-pressure situations.

Experiment with different strategies for managing focus, mood and eliminating distraction, e.g., breathing control, routines, music, mental imagery or visualisation, cue or focus words, perceptual positioning (NLP) and/or thought dumping/thought stopping.

Prepare well and plan your focus

Focus is having less in your mind. Use a journal to identify and plan your focus for key moments that may arise. Quiz the consistent performers in your team/sport on their strategies. Evaluate your focus at training as well.

Scenario planning

Brainstorm some 'what if' and/or 'key moment' scenarios with a mentor or coach and plan what reaction(s) you will have to each scenario so that you can respond more quickly and positively.

Focus on what you can control

Draw a circle. Inside the circle write down everything about your performance that is within your control. Next, write down everything that is outside of your control outside of the circle. Observe and review how much time you spend thinking about and worrying about things outside of your control.

Reflect on the consequences

Discuss with someone (a mentor or coach) what the outcomes and impacts of losing your composure are. Discuss high profile examples.

Become actively aware

Do you keep a journal/daily training diary in which you rate yourself every time you train or play? Simple daily evaluations are critical to improving your focus because you are building a habit of being consciously aware. Some possible questions to ask yourself in your journal are: was I focused on the right things? How well did I evaluate what was happening and make good decisions?



Motivation and Passion

- Intrinsically motivated to play football for the love of the game.
- Enjoys the game, has fun.
- Motivated by internal rather than external rewards.
- Often stays at the end of the training to do something extra.
- Loves to learn more, talk more, and watch more football.

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Developing Motivation and Passion

Celebrate success

Think about how you can acknowledge and celebrate little milestones or day-to-day success.

Understand your why

Being clear on what drives you and why it is important affects your motivation, self-confidence and enjoyment. Ask yourself the 5 whys, i.e., why do I play my sport x5? Each time you answer the question, drill down to a deeper level of understanding.

OK to make mistakes

When it gets hard, find ways to focus on what you are doing right. Learning from mistakes is important, but don't linger on them. Remember, mistakes are part

of learning: 'the biggest mistake you can make, is to not make any'. Talk with your training partners and coach(es) about how you can have fun celebrating successes. Recognise the effort and courage that is required to master a new thing.

Focus on process goals

Are you measuring your success with process goals or outcome goals? Set process goals or checklists to tick off as part of your training week.

Bring back the fun

Brainstorm and implement some ideas to add fun and competitions into training sessions.

Have down time

Plan your down time and use it wisely to recharge your batteries.

Thrive/survive score

Rate yourself regularly on the thrive/survive scale (where -10 is barely surviving and +10 is thriving). Discuss the reasons behind your score with your coach or mentor.

Ownership builds motivation

Reflect on any areas you could take more control or ownership over your programme, discuss it with your coach.



LEADERSHIP AND CHARACTER

— SORT CARDS —



Growth Mindset

- Committed to own improvement and accountable for it.
- Open to advice/feedback, views it positively without defence or excuses, able to evaluate it.
- Learns from successes and failures.
- Uses questioning to engage in self-analysis, increase self-knowledge and assist decision-making.
- Flexible; can adapt to demands in different situations.
- Practices attentive and active listening; has patience to hear people out.
- Can accept and align to coaches' decisions or directives regardless of personal opinion.
- Keen to learn new competencies; willing to try new things.
- A creative problem solver.

Developing Growth Mindset

Learn from 'learning-agile' people

Do you know people who are fast learners? Make a list of those people and talk to them about their attitude to learning.

Self-reflection

When you are learning a new skill, try to figure out for yourself what is going right or wrong. Try different techniques or strategies to see what happens.

Welcome feedback

Feedback is a gift, ask for feedback and welcome it. Make a point of thanking someone who has given you feedback. You get to decide what you will take on board and what you will discard at the end of the day.

Self-reviews

In this card sort process you have been open about your strengths and areas to work on. Make a daily commitment to the action plan you develop from this process.

We get worse before we get better

When you are working on new skills, understand that you may get worse before you get better. Set aside time to practice your weaknesses (e.g., add in 10 mins before or after team training).

Questioning

Does your coach provide opportunities for questioning and self-review? If not, could you discuss with him/her opportunities to do this?

Are you brave enough to ask what might seem like a silly question? As long as your timing and intention is good, you should be treated with respect.



Team Values and Culture

- Aware of self and impact on others.
- Acts in line with team values (during both good times and bad times) and encourages others to do the same.
- Is widely trusted. Is seen as a direct, truthful and humble individual.
- Respects the leadership/shows leadership.
- Is selfless and willing to support the development of others in the team.
- Doesn't misrepresent him/herself for personal gain.
- Can quickly sense what will help or hinder the team to accomplish a goal.
- Can see the bigger picture.
- Builds confidence in others.

Developing Team Values and Culture

Understanding our culture

- Has your team discussed how they are seen from the outside, and how they want to be seen?
- Has your team discussed what moments or events have created those perceptions and how you might go about changing them?
- Is everyone absolutely clear on what behaviours are expected within the 'desired' culture and which are not?
- Have you discussed scenarios and what you would be expected to do?
- Have you discussed consequences of falling short of expectations with the team?

If needed, talk to your coach or captain and encourage them to create this clarity.

Supporting the leaders

If you are a senior player in the team, encourage your captain to organise a regular informal catch up to talk with the other senior players and coach(es). Discuss what you have observed and how you can work together to build the culture you desire. If you are a junior player and you see something that's not quite right, approach a senior player you trust to ask if you can help.

Reflecting on the past

Reflect on the times when you have known a behaviour was outside of what is expected.

Reflect on what action you took and what your motivations were. Reflect on any barriers to taking action and how you would approach the situation in hindsight?

Knowing why it's important

Have you drawn a clear line of sight between the impacts/consequences of not respecting team agreements and the team's ability to be successful?

Using humble enquiry

If you see or hear something that doesn't sit right, try asking a humble question to check others' perceptions.



ATHLETE LIFE[©]

SORT CARDS



Mental Health

- Copes with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to social groups, work groups and community.
- Can think, feel and act in a way that allows enjoyment of life and an ability to deal with the challenges it presents.
- Will speak easily and openly around feelings when needed.
- Can acknowledge when things become more difficult, identify there is a problem and get help or guidance from a trusted person/advisor.
- Doesn't suffer from feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, loss of interest in daily activities, loss of joy and pleasure, loss of appetite, significant weight changes or sleep changes, anger, irritability or anxiety, loss of energy, self-loathing, escapist or reckless behaviour, concentration problems, and/or unexplained aches and pains.

Taking Care of your Mental Health

Recognising when you need help

Do you have in place (and trust) the mechanisms that trigger you to seek assistance for ongoing periods of mental health challenges?

Support structures

Do you have well developed mental wellbeing support structures (friends, family, mentors)? Think about whether you need to add other people to your support network, identify options and approach them for support.

Use of support structures

Do you **regularly** use your support structures to assist you to work through pressures and challenges that impact on the way you think or feel? Think back through when you have used your support structures in the past and whether you are seeking help early enough and whether the support you are receiving is helping you.

Use of professional support people

Do you utilise a range of professional support people to assist with mental wellness planning and coping strategies? Consider:

- Using apps or similar to monitor your mental wellness and state regularly and consistently.
- Seeking recommendations on professional support people from within your network.

Make sure you have contact details of support people in case you need them at all times.



Wellbeing, Life balance and Career Plan

- Actively considers the balance between personal/professional life and football.
- Has review processes and practices in place that allow for small or bold adjustments to safeguard alignment with purpose, goals and aspirations.
- Has friends and interests outside of football that allow some variety, challenge and stimulation.
- Has a career plan and is actively taking steps towards life after football (e.g., study, work, building relationships).
- Thriving (as opposed to surviving).
- Healthy most of the time (no ongoing sickness).

Taking Care of Wellbeing, Life balance and Career Plan

What is your thrive/survive score?

Rate yourself regularly on the thrive/survive scale (where -10 is barely surviving and +10 is thriving). Discuss the reasons behind your score with your coach or mentor.

Keep getting sick?

Your gut is the centre of your immune system. Research whether there are actions you can take to reduce stress and improve your immunity.

Examine how you spend your time

Is your life one-dimensional? Do you spend all of your time on your sport and only hang out with people related to your sport? Having another way to engage the brain, e.g., study, a job or interest, can help you

stay fresh, continue to enjoy your sport, work towards a career after you retire and provide perspective.

Plan your down time

Look at your week and plan when you have spare time that you could use. Think about how best you can use this time to refresh mentally and physically.

Planning in and using breaks effectively

Look at whether you can plan a complete break in your annual programme. Use this time wisely to refresh; e.g., try something new, do something outside your comfort zone, meet new people. TIP: keep your fitness up during your break through cross training.

Not sure what career you would like to follow?

Write down your strengths/talents and what you are passionate about. Write down the times in your life you have been in flow (when everything has clicked and you've been in your element). Identify industries or the type of work you are interested in. List jobs in which your skills, passions and interests would be matched. Research; have conversations with people you know in careers you are interested in. Consider study to work towards a career pathway.



PHYSICAL SKILLS[©]

— SORT CARDS —



Avoiding Injury / Robustness

- All basic movement patterns are pain free, free of dysfunction and able to be loaded safely to maximise athletic potential in all planes of movement and landing positions.
- Has not had a major injury (or a series of minor injuries) in the past year and does not have a longer-term history of being injury prone.
- Manages workload for repetitive actions progressively, proactively and sensibly.
- Has identified areas of potential weakness (e.g., through a muscle balance assessment) and incorporated strengthening into training.
- Is proactive in dealing with any niggles or injuries, seeing a physio quickly and communicating well with the coach.
- Follows the physiotherapist's advice when recovering from an injury and is diligent with the rehabilitation programme set.

Tips for Avoiding Injury / Robustness

Muscle balance assessment

A muscle balance assessment may help you to identify where your weaknesses are and how you can develop whole-of-body functional strength. It may also help you to identify the source of your injuries.

Preventative maintenance

Work with your physiotherapist to identify what you can be doing as part of your everyday routine to help you avoid injury; i.e., stretching and strengthening, technique work, cross-training, off-road running vs on-road running, etc. Once you have identified these things, work on how you can build them seamlessly into your weekly routine, e.g., 10 mins before a gym session or training.

Full recovery post-injury

If you are feeling pressured from your coach or teammates to go back to competing too early, discuss it with your doctor or physiotherapist. Coming back too early can lead to re-injury.

Dealing with niggles proactively

Are you dealing with niggles or injuries proactively? It is important to see a physio or doctor quickly and communicate well with your coach to avoid little things turning into bigger problems.

Substituting training content

Discuss with your trainer and physio if there is anything you can change in your training plan to reduce the stress on your body without compromising your physical targets.

Being diligent

Have you set aside time in your day to complete any prevention or recovery exercises? Keep track of your adherence and progress with a chart or diary. If you are struggling with motivation, think about the links between your goals and your ability to be 100% fit, create little reminders, rewards or milestones.



Aerobic Fitness

- High work-rate during a match.
- Aerobic fitness does not affect the execution of football actions, or concentration during matches or throughout a tournament.
- Can perform in a state of fatigue.



Developing Aerobic Fitness

Types of aerobic workouts

When working on your aerobic base, there are different types of work-outs you can include in your training programme:

- **Fartlek workout** – A fartlek workout can range anywhere from 30 seconds to 5 minutes of harder running with a long recovery between each repeat. Aim for moderate effort.
- **A steady state run.** Like the fartlek, the steady state run is designed to be a moderate effort – not hard. Start with 20 to 30 minutes and slowly build up to an hour as you get stronger.
- **A long run.**

Each workout helps stimulate a different system. Fartlek runs help improve turnover, efficiency and neuromuscular function. Steady state running improves your aerobic threshold. Long runs help build mitochondria, capillaries and myoglobin content. The easy miles in-between help develop your aerobic endurance.

Adding mileage

To add mileage, increase the long run by about 2km every 1–2 weeks. Add 1–2 more runs per week and 2–5km to steady state runs every 1–3 weeks. Aim for a gradual, progressive increase in mileage that will help build endurance, injury resistance and economy.



FOOTBALL SKILLS

— SORT CARDS —

SELECT CARDS TO SORT FOR PLAYER POSITION AND ROLES



Players



Goal Keeper



Passing



- Can play a short or long pass accurately and while moving.
- Has good vision and awareness, gets head up early.
- Has good timing, e.g., doesn't rush the pass, can move into space, inviting the pressure and drawing defenders to give the pass at the right time.
- Can play passes with disguise and deception.
- Knows when to travel with the ball in order to create 2v1's or open up new passing options.
- Gives penetrating passes.
- Passes proactively to allow teammates to receive optimally to set up next action.
- Can pass with appropriate weight consistently.
- Can deliver diagonal balls and aerial passes with good distance, consistency and accuracy.
- Can cross the ball using a variety of techniques to create goal scoring opportunities.

Developing Passing

Mastery

Skill development is about repetitive practice, whilst managing your training loads without getting injured. How can you build more repetition into your practice (e.g., less down-time at training)?

Passing Techniques

Understand what good technique looks like for different types of passes. Gather knowledge through:

- Talking to experts (coaches, other athletes).
- Watching videos of the best in the world.
- Videoing yourself or getting someone to watch you and give feedback.

Training buddy

Find a training buddy who also needs to work on passing or receiving.

Small games and challenges

Set up small games, competitions or challenges to create pressure. Measure your progress and challenge yourself to gain more accuracy, power and deception with your passing.



Receiving



- Has good vision and awareness when receiving with back to the goal.
- Can receive passes with the feet or body and get the ball under control quickly with the first touch to set up the next action.
- Can receive the ball efficiently on the move to maintain the pace of the attack.
- Thinks ahead, receives the ball with a good body position to execute the next action efficiently.
- Can receive the ball with control under pressure whilst protecting it from the opposition.
- Confidently communicates ideal timing and placement to receive the ball.

Developing Receiving

Mastery

Skill development is about repetitive practice, whilst managing your training loads without getting injured. How can you build more repetition into your practice (e.g., less down-time at training)?

Receiving Techniques

Understand what good receiving technique looks like. Gather knowledge through:

- Talking to experts (coaches, other athletes).
- Watching videos of the best in the world.
- Video yourself or get someone to watch you and give feedback.

Training buddies

Find a training buddy who needs to work on passing or receiving.

Small games and challenges

Set up small games, competitions or challenges to create pressure. Measure your progress and challenge yourself to increase control during the receive.



Saving Shots

Goal Keeper



- Can secure shots around the body.
- Can deal effectively with balls above the head.
- Makes good decisions and can effectively secure the ball or parry when diving.
- Can make effective close range block shots with body or legs.
- Deals effectively with shots from inside or outside the penalty box.
- Deals effectively with crosses and makes good decisions on when to punch or catch.
- Is brave when going to ground to dive at feet or make saves from low shots.
- Able to organise and defend set plays, makes good decisions and attacks the ball bravely.
- Able to change from wide focus (organisation of the defence) to narrow focus (on the shot) at the right time.
- Able to recover from the first shot to save the second or third shot.
- Highly refined reactive speed and intuitive movement patterns (sound techniques, quick and agile).

Developing Shot Saving

Mastery

Skill development is about repetitive practice, whilst managing your training loads without getting injured. How can you build in more repetition to your practice (i.e., saving more shots per training)?

Specific practice

Ask your coach to tailor training for the specific types of saves or save patterns that you need to work on.

Developing Technique

Understand ideal technique for different scenarios:

- Watch video clips of the best in the world and analyse why they are good.
- Video yourself (at training and in games) and ask your coach(es) to analyse you and give feedback.

Small games and challenges

Set up small games, competitions or challenges to create pressure and variety, e.g., making multiple saves.

Scouting

Analyse video or live games and start a scouting homework book and keep notes on the teams/attackers you will be facing that you can refer back to.



Positional Play

Goal Keeper



- High level of own spatial awareness (i.e., positioning relative to the goal, backline and players).
- Effective in one-on-one situations, denying space by adopting a good position and delaying or blocking shots.



Developing Positional Play

Use of video

Analyse video of yourself and the best players in the world to:

- Review positioning in relation to the goal, backline and other players.
- Review positioning and effectiveness in one-on-one situations.

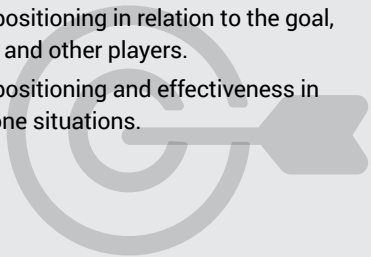
Agility

Good positional play requires good footwork and agility.

See agility card.

Anticipation

Strong positional play requires you to anticipate which space the attacker(s) are planning to use and if you can, get to that space first. Analyse times you got this right and times that you got it wrong.



Raise My Game®



TACTICAL

Sort Cards



SORT CARDS



Communication and Organisation

- Constant, clear, direct and decisive communication throughout the game.
- Is confident to organise others, calls name of person and then action.
- Recognises and instigates change through effective communication.
- Open communication lines with coaches and other support staff.
- Works to clarify role when not sure.
- Takes responsibility for raising questions at the appropriate time, with the appropriate people off the field.

Developing Communication Skills

On field presence

Get feedback on whether your communication is clear, concise and confident from your teammates and coach. Discuss role expectations with your coach.

Practice communication through a leadership role

Volunteer for a leadership task that allows you to practice your communication skills.

Observe role-models

Ask your teammates to identify players that have excellent communication. Observe them playing or training and note why their communication is a strength.

Developing confidence

Practice confident communication at lower levels of competition.

Listening

Communication is listening as well as talking. Practice your ability to listen and react quickly to instructions you are given on the field. Ask for feedback from your teammates.

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Tactics

- Understands tactical plans proposed by the coach and can implement them on the pitch.
- Understands role within a plan and how it relates to other players.
- Understands how to adjust the style of play depending on the score line and/or time left on the clock.
- Understands how to use width and height of the pitch to stretch out opposition defence.
- Understands how to play a zonal defence and a man-to-man marking defence.
- Understands tactical approach when overloaded, or can create an attacking overload.
- Understands tactics and roles on set-plays such as free kicks and corners.

Developing Tactical Understanding

Talk with your coaches

Ask your coaches or senior members of your team what they see when watching games. Talk through different tactical strategies, to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Use of video analysis

Use video to:

- Scout opposition strengths, weaknesses and set plays (including options used under pressure).
- Recognise patterns of play or movement.
- Ascertain tactical strategies and when they are used.

Aim to identify a few areas of focus.

Be humble and open

Being humble makes you more open to learning and therefore improving. Identify times when your attitude to feedback has been clouded by emotions, such as fear of looking bad. Reflect on how you contribute to a safe space for making mistakes and learning within your team.

Learning styles

Do you know your preferred learning style? For example, do you prefer to learn/take in information that is visual (pictures), spoken, read or do you prefer to learn by doing (kinesthetic)? Encourage your coach to present information in different ways to help everyone understand and learn.