

Football Tactics Worksheet

Choosing paragraph headings

The text on the next page has four sections **A–D**.

Choose the correct heading for each section from the list (1–6) below.

List of headings

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Teams who have influenced tactics |
| 2 | The tactics of today's teams |
| 3 | Attacking tactics of the nineteenth century |
| 4 | The development of association football |
| 5 | The influence of new rules and equipment |
| 6 | A victory for attacking football |

Section **A** _____

Section **B** _____

Section **C** _____

Section **D** _____

Reading for detail

Answer the questions below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** from the text for each answer.

- 1 How many defenders did England employ when they first played a match against another country?
- 2 What was the name of the formation that ended the domination of the 2-3-5?
- 3 Which factor has encouraged international footballers to try to score goals from long distances?
- 4 What kind of tactics do attack-minded teams sometimes adopt when they play against defensive teams?

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The History of Football Tactics

A Today, millions of people all over the world watch football matches every week. The people who gather in the stadiums, the bars and the living rooms often claim to be experts on the tactics of successful football teams – a small minority really are – but if these fans were to see the strategies and formations adopted by football teams down the years, they might well be totally baffled.

Until the late nineteenth century, there were various forms of football, many of which were associated with a particular public school, some featuring a lot of running whilst carrying the ball and others favouring kicking or controlling the ball with the feet. The idea of universally-agreed rules administered by a *football association* is a relatively new one. For much of the game's history, football has tended to be a violent sport involving large numbers of people, and one which more than one British monarch has attempted to ban. It was not until 1877 that the Football Association's rules were finally accepted all over England and the sport began to resemble the football that people know so well now.

B Although today's rules are still mostly similar to those of the late nineteenth century, the tactics employed are certainly not. While most modern teams prefer formations such as 4-4-2 (four defenders, four midfielders and two forwards) or even 4-5-1, when England played Scotland in the first ever international match, England's formation was 1-2-7 and Scotland's 2-2-6; although these tactics could not prevent the game finishing in a 0-0 draw. Generally, football matches of this era consisted of players attempting to use their individual skill to avoid heavy tackles in an attempt to reach their opponents' goal.

In the 1880s a new formation was developed that dominated the game for sixty years: the 2-3-5 or 'pyramid formation'. Although it allowed for some defensive play – the three midfielders were expected to defend as well as attack – it was still very cavalier by today's standards. This formation was adopted almost universally, at least in Britain, until the next seismic shift in soccer tactics, as football edged towards a more technical, defensive approach, when Arsenal developed the 'W-M,' essentially a 3-4-3.

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C The W-M formation was the brainchild of Herbert Chapman, Arsenal's manager, and was largely a response to a change in the offside law. Since then, there have been several other instances where changes in rules or other factors have led to new and influential tactical approaches. The most basic elements in a football match – the ball, the players' boots and the playing surface – have evolved considerably during the last hundred years, with each development influencing the way the game is played. From the 1950s, new, lighter designs of football boots put the emphasis on mobility and control rather than power and protection, and increasingly football clubs have invested money in preserving an even and smooth playing surface. This has resulted in far more fluid football, with players expected to be far more versatile and cover more ground during a match – think of the Brazilian teams of the '50s, '60s and '70s. More recently, the development of increasingly lightweight footballs in recent World Cups has encouraged more players to attempt to shoot from long range.

D Over the years, certain great players and teams have delivered performances on the pitch that seemed to define the start of a new era and mark a shift in the tactics employed by other national and club managers. The Hungarian team of the 1950s, for instance, announced a new era of fluent, attractive football based around creative and unpredictable movement off the ball, famously inflicting England's first ever defeat at Wembley with a 6-3 demolition that effectively killed off the rigidity of the W-M formation.

The pendulum appeared to swing the other way when Italian sides began using the *catenaccio*, or 'door-bolt' system in the 1960s, a system based on rigid defence and occasional swift counter-attacks or moments of individual brilliance. Ever since, there has been a tactical tussle between football based around fluid, attacking creativity exemplified by the 1970s Dutch 'Total Football' side and more disciplined play based around power and defence, such as that of Italy's 1982 World Cup winners. Brazil's World Cup triumph in 2002 seemed to be a victory for attacking flair, but when Greece won the 2004 European Championships playing a more defensive game, club managers around the continent seemed to follow suit. For their part, more attacking sides such as Barcelona and Arsenal have adapted to their opponents' defensive football by adopting possession-based (as opposed to counter-attacking) tactics – keeping the ball by playing short passes, probing the opposition's defence for an opening.

At the time of writing, the world awaits the first World Cup on African soil. Whether a team from that continent can win the trophy, and what effect this might have on future tactics, remains to be seen.

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Key

Section A 4

Section B 2

Section C 5

Section D 1

Reading for detail

Answer the questions below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** from the text for each answer.

- 1 How many defenders did England employ when they first played a match against another country?
1 defender
- 2 What was the name of the formation that ended the domination of the 2-3-5?
'W-M,' or 3-4-3
- 3 Which factor has encouraged international footballers to try to score goals from long distances?
increasingly lightweight footballs
- 4 What kind of tactics do attack-minded teams sometimes adopt when they play against defensive teams?
adopting possession-based tactics / playing short passes