

Sample chapters -- book available on Amazon

# FOOTBALL ENGLISH

Soccer  
Vocabulary  
for Learners  
of English

Tom Challenger

Sample chapters -- book available on Amazon

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is a collection of vocabulary exercises. The exercises are designed to practise the English for football you already know, or introduce you to new football terms in a memorable, realistic context. They are carefully designed so you can use the contexts (sentences, match reports, pictures etc.), logic and your knowledge of football to maximise your learning.

You can do the chapters in any order you wish. It is suggested that you start with the topics which are most relevant to your needs or interests.

The solutions (answers) to each exercise are at the end of the book. Try your best to do the whole exercise before you look at the answers! This will maximise the learning experience because the more you look at the contexts and use logic to find the answers, the deeper the learning will be. Think of each exercise like a puzzle.

Each chapter has a difficulty level: 1, 2 or 3. The easier exercises contain the most useful English for football vocabulary, the harder exercises contain football vocabulary which isn't so necessary for basic communication but is used a lot by advanced speakers and in newspaper articles etc. If you have an intermediate level of English reading skills (i.e. about B1) then you can do all of the levels. The more difficult levels will take you longer and you may need to use a dictionary to help you sometimes.

If you find the easier exercises very easy, then they are still worth doing because then you can concentrate on getting the phrases exactly correct, e.g. noticing that we say **attacking** midfielder and not \*attack midfielder; a **well**-deserved victory, not \*a good-deserved victory; he **got** the equaliser not \*he made the equaliser, etc.

In this book players are referred to by their surnames, e.g. "**Smith** scored", "**Williams** was a substitute". Teams are referred to using the common team name endings: United, Rovers, City, Wanderers, Albion and Athletic, e.g. "**Wanderers** are in good form at the moment", "**Albion** have signed two new players".

Please contact me at [footballenglish.org](http://footballenglish.org) if you have any comments or questions, where you can also find helpful English for football learning resources. And if you would like to recommend the book to other people then please leave a review on the website where you bought the book (e.g. [amazon.de](http://amazon.de), [amazon.es](http://amazon.es) etc.).

I hope you enjoy using this book to improve your Football English!

Tom Challenger, 2012.

## Difficulty Levels



Sample chapters -- book available on Amazon

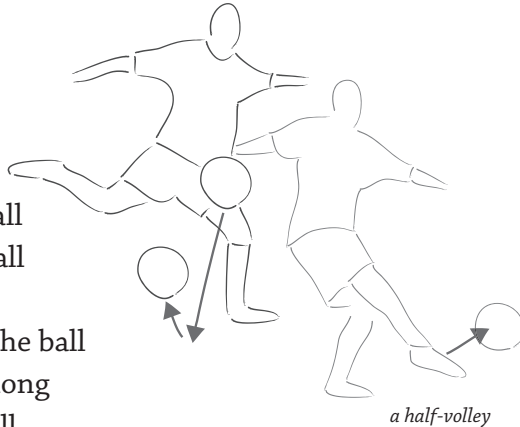
For Kati & Eni

# 1. KICKING & MOVING THE BALL

Difficulty level 1: "The Basics"

**Ex. 1** Match the words and phrases with their definitions:

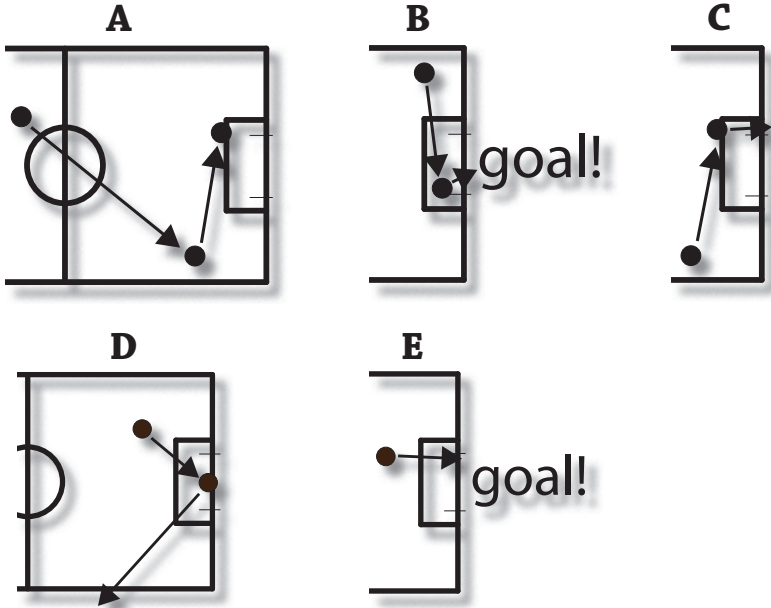
1. To shoot  $\beta$
2. To pass back
3. To cross
4. To pass
5. To touch the ball
6. To volley the ball
7. To hit the ball
8. To half-volley the ball
9. To hit the ball long
10. To chest the ball



- A. To make contact with the ball, e.g. kick it or head it.
- B. To kick the ball in order to score.
- C. To kick the ball while it is in the air.
- D. To kick the ball into the centre so someone on your team can try to score a goal.
- E. To kick the ball to a player on your team.
- F. To kick the ball immediately after it has bounced.
- G. To control the ball with your upper-body.
- H. To pass the ball a great distance in a forward or diagonal direction.
- I. To kick the ball, usually to kick it hard.
- J. To kick the ball to your goalkeeper.

Difficulty level 1: "The Basics"

**Ex. 2** Match the sentences below to the pictures, and fill in the gaps (the answers to *Ex.1* will help you):



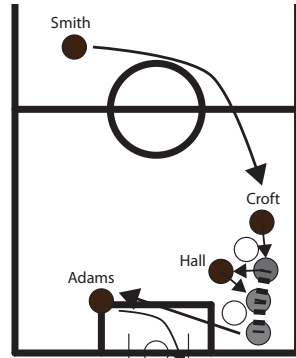
1. Smith passed it back to his goalkeeper who hit the ball out for a throw-in. *picture D*
2. Adams c\_\_\_\_\_ the ball from the left, finding Robins who headed in from close range.
3. He had time to take a t\_\_\_\_\_ before hitting it firmly into the bottom left corner.
4. He met Smith's cross with a half-v\_\_\_\_\_ which went just wide.
5. Robins got on the end of Smith's l\_\_\_\_\_ -ball and crossed for Adams.



Difficulty level 2: "Good to Know"

**Ex. 3** This is part of a half-time television analysis. Find the words & phrases that are described below (the picture is a diagram of the action being described):

“...Smith's high, diagonal ball **upfield** found Croft sprinting down the left, who cleverly flicked the ball past his marker on to Robins and played a quick one-two with Hall. A perfect first-touch and an explosive burst of pace took Robins clear of the helpless Richards who could do nothing to stop a low, hard cross reaching Adams on the edge of the area. Adams surprised the keeper with a well-placed, first-time chip into the top-left corner...”



1. [An adjective] in a forward direction... : upfield
2. [A verb] to touch the ball very lightly in order to pass it to another player (using the power already on the ball)... : \_\_\_\_\_
3. [Two-word noun] a move where player A passes to player B, who quickly passes the ball back to player A again... : \_\_\_\_\_
4. [Two-word noun] the first 'kick' to bring the ball under control... : \_\_\_\_\_
5. [Adjective+noun] kicking the ball into the centre, near the goal, along the ground... : \_\_\_\_\_
6. [Adjective] without taking a first touch... : \_\_\_\_\_
7. [Noun] a shot which is kicked delicately over the goalkeeper... : \_\_\_\_\_

Difficulty level 3: "Advanced"

**Ex. 4** These are sentences from match reports. Match the words & phrases **in bold** with their definitions below:

(Example 6=A)

...his third goal followed shortly afterwards as he sprinted on to Allen's <sup>[1]</sup>**lofted pass** out of defence, turned and <sup>[2]</sup>**fire**d a right-footed drive into the bottom corner...

...Some slick play from Athletic culminated in Hill <sup>[3]</sup>**slipping the ball through** to Perry, who blasted it high over the United goal from the edge of the area...

...Henderson put Mason through on goal with a delightful <sup>[4]</sup>**slide-rule pass** but his left-footed shot was easily saved by Armstrong...

...Lamberton earned the visitors all three points with a very late goal, guiding in Daniels' <sup>[5]</sup>**teasing** cross with only two minutes left on the clock...

...Lamberton had been on the field only three minutes when he played <sup>[6]</sup>**a perfectly weighted pass** to Bowen, who finished confidently...

...This was impressive play from Wanderers who were <sup>[7]</sup>**knocking the ball around** nicely and causing Rovers problems...

...Hall tried to <sup>[8]</sup>**curl** the free kick into the top-left corner, but there wasn't enough bend on it to beat the keeper...

- A. A pass which is not too hard, but not too soft.
- B. A long, high pass.
- C. Keeping the ball for a long period by passing the ball skilfully to each other.
- D. Passing the ball very skilfully, but quite slowly, along the ground through a small space between the defenders.
- E. A very skilful pass along the ground which goes through a small space between defenders.
- F. Describes a dangerous, quite slow ball in the air towards the opponent's goal which is difficult for the defenders or goalkeeper to reach.
- G. To kick the ball so it doesn't go in a straight line, but curves in the air.
- H. To shoot or pass very powerfully.

Difficulty level 3: "Advanced"

**Ex. 5** Use the explanations of the words & phrases to fill the gaps in the sentences from match reports (use each word/phrase only once):

**A reverse pass:** The player doesn't pass the ball in the direction that he is running in, but passes it suddenly about 90° to the left or to the right.

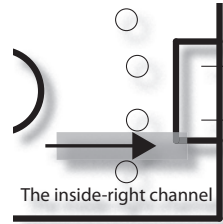


**To dink [the ball]:** The ball is kicked very lightly and delicately.

**A punt:** A forceful, inaccurate, long kick.

**[To pass down] the inside-right channel:** The pass is quite deep in the opponent's half and between where the left centre-back and left-back (on the other team) normally are.

**A knock-on:** A player touches the ball lightly to change its direction by a small amount. He hopes the ball will go to another player on his team.



**To ping [the ball]:** To pass the ball forcefully and accurately, often over a large distance.

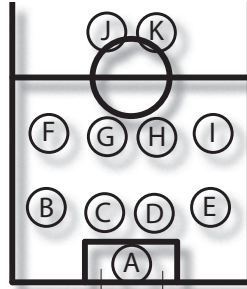
1. Rovers are pinging it around midfield nicely now and Wanderers just can't get hold of the ball.
2. Evans \_\_\_\_\_ the ball over the keeper but there wasn't quite enough power to take it across the line before Shepard intercepted.
3. McDowell changed the direction of play by finding Jarvis, who had made a diagonal run, with a clever \_\_\_\_\_.
4. City are having no luck with their tactic of trying speculative \_\_\_\_\_ up to the front two.
5. United scored from their first corner of the game when Small's \_\_\_\_\_ at the near post was bundled in by Jennings.
6. Carver found some space in the box when getting on the end of a perfectly weighted pass down \_\_\_\_\_ but could only shoot wide.

## 2. POSITIONS

Difficulty level 1: "The Basics"

**Ex 1.** Match the names of positions to the correct place on the diagram:

1. forward J&K
2. right-back
3. centre-midfield
4. goalkeeper
5. left-midfield
6. centre-back
7. left-back
8. right-midfield



Difficulty level 1: "The Basics"

**Ex. 2** Match these position names to their descriptions:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. goalie C                                | A. A striker (who plays the furthest forward).   |
| 2. sweeper / libero                        | B. A left or right-back who should also attack.  |
| 3. full-back                               | C. The goalkeeper.   |
| 4. centre-half                             | D. Another word for centre-back.   |
| 5. holding midfielder /<br>midfield anchor | E. A midfielder who plays wide on the<br>right/left and should provide lots of<br>crosses for the striker/s. |
| 6. second striker /<br>"the number 10"     | F. A midfielder with a defensive role.   |
| 7. winger                                  | G. A midfielder with an offensive role.  |
| 8. centre-forward                          | H. A defender who plays behind the<br>other defenders.   |
| 9. a target man                            | I. A forward who plays just behind the<br>other striker, but in front of the midfield.                       |
| 10. attacking midfielder                   | J. A striker (normally tall) whose role is<br>to receive long balls from the defence.                        |
| 11. wing-back                              | K. Another word for a right/left-back.   |

### 3. DESCRIBING A GAME

Difficulty level 1: "The Basics"

**Ex. 1** These are some things fans say just after watching their team play. Match each sentence with the descriptions:

1. "That was a great **comeback!**" E
  2. "I think the **scoreline** was unfair." [It was 0-2 to the other team]
  3. "The **pace** of the game was too **high** for us."
  4. "We **dominated** the first half."
  5. "That was a very disappointing **result.**"
  6. "We **deserved** to win!"
- A. The fan's team played better than the other team, but the fan's team did not win or draw.
  - B. The fan expected his team to win, but they didn't.
  - C. The fan's team were better than the other team for the first 45 minutes: they didn't let the other team have the ball much, and they had the best chances to score.
  - D. The fan's team played better than the other team, but the fan's team did not win.
  - E. The score at half-time was 0-3, but the fan's team won 4-3 in the end.
  - F. The other team passed the ball very quickly, and moved around the pitch very quickly.

Difficulty level 2: "Good to Know"

**Ex. 2** These things are said by a television commentator at the end of a game. Match the phrases **in bold** to their *opposites*.

1. "Johnson missed two great chances in the **opening** ten minutes." B
  2. "United conceded **late on**, Philips heading in from close range on 88 minutes."
  3. "United looked very **nervy** in the second half, but managed to hold on for the win."
  4. "This was a **well deserved** victory, United outplayed Wanderers for most of the match."
  5. "Despite an **unconvincing** performance, United managed to get the win."
- A. lucky
  - B. final
  - C. composed
  - D. impressive
  - E. early on

Difficulty level 2: "Good to Know"

**Ex. 3** These are things that managers said after matches. Match the words & phrases **in bold** with their explanations:

(Example: 1=B)

"At half-time I said to the lads that we could <sup>[1]</sup>**turn it around**, we were unlucky to be one-nil down. And they gave me a great performance in the second half. We deserved that win."

"I thought we <sup>[2]</sup>**outplayed** them in the first half. But we didn't get the goal, and that cost us, because they had a great second half, and made us pay."

"It was disappointing not to get the win, but you have to **give** the other team <sup>[3]</sup>**credit** for a fine <sup>[4]</sup>**display**."

"It wasn't easy, but we <sup>[5]</sup>**finally** managed to get the goal at the end that I think we deserved."

"It was a <sup>[6]</sup>**frustrating** afternoon for us. We clearly deserved to win, but the referee clearly didn't want us to!"

"I was pleased because, although we lost, we **showed** a lot of <sup>[7]</sup>**spirit** in the second half. There was great effort, and we created a few good chances. We were unlucky not to score."

"It was an <sup>[8]</sup>**even match**, I think. Both teams could have won it, so I think a draw is a fair result."

- A. It was difficult and it took a long time.
- B. To come back.
- C. Makes you feel a bit angry.
- D. How well or badly a team plays.
- E. To play enthusiastically and work hard for your team.
- F. To play much better than the other team.
- G. To praise (say something positive about someone).
- H. A match where neither team was dominant.

Difficulty level 3: "Advanced"

**Ex. 4** Match these sentence halves. The sentences are all from match reports:

1. United managed to **salvage**... E
  2. United **struggled**...
  3. It was a **tight**...
  4. It got very...
  5. Apart from an early **spell**...
  6. After going two-nil down early on United were always **chasing the**...
  7. United's **defensive**...
  8. United **battled**...
  9. The United fans booed the players off after an **abject**...
- 
- A. ...game, with chances few and far between.
  - B. ...of pressure United failed to threaten their opponent's goal.
  - C. ...**frailties** cost them again, with basic errors leading to the two goals.
  - D. ...**hard** in the second half but couldn't create any clear chances.
  - E. ...**a point** with a late equaliser.
  - F. ...**display**.
  - G. ...**scrappy** in the second half, with both teams giving the ball away far too easily.
  - H. ...in the first half and were lucky not to go in one-nil down at the break.
  - I. ...**game**.

[The phrases **in bold** are defined in the next exercise on the next page]

Difficulty level 3: "Advanced"

**Ex. 5** These are the sentences from *Ex. 4*. Match the phrases **in bold** to their definitions:

1. United managed to **salvage a point** with a late equaliser. *A*
  2. United **struggled** in the first half and were lucky not to go in one-nil down at the break.
  3. It was a **tight** game, with chances few and far between.
  4. It got very **scrappy** in the second half, with both teams giving the ball away far too easily.
  5. Apart from an early **spell** of pressure, United failed to threaten their opponent's goal.
  6. After going two-nil down early on United were always **chasing the game**.
  7. United's **defensive frailties** cost them again, with basic errors leading to the two goals.
  8. United **battled hard** in the second half but couldn't create any clear chances.
  9. The United fans booed the players off after an **abject display**.
- 
- A. To 'rescue' a draw late in the match, when the team has not really deserved it.
  - B. A period of a match.
  - C. A phrase meaning that a team is losing, that they are trying hard to score, and that they are taking risks.
  - D. To play with a lot of physical effort.
  - E. Describes a match or a period of a match that is not very beautiful to watch; both teams' passing is not good and they find it difficult to keep the ball and to create flowing combinations.
  - F. To play badly and therefore risk conceding goals.
  - G. Weaknesses in the defence of a team.
  - H. Describes a match or a period of a match where both teams are defending and keeping the ball well, so it is difficult for both teams to score.
  - I. A really awful performance by a team.



## 4. ATTACKING

*Difficulty level 1: "The Basics"*

**Ex. 1** Match each sentence with its explanation:

1. United were very successful **breaking down the left**. *H*
  2. United scored **on the counter-attack**.
  3. United were very **offensive**.
  4. United were effective **on the break**.
  5. United's **build-up play** was very **patient**.
  6. United's wingers **made** dangerous **runs** down both sides.
  7. United were very dangerous **up front**.
  8. United's wingers **set up** all the goals.
- 
- A. United had attacking tactics.
  - B. United's midfielders on the left and the right passed the ball so other players could score the goals.
  - C. United got a goal when they quickly moved the ball from their defence to their attack.
  - D. United played very well in all attacking areas of the pitch.
  - E. United's attacking play was good when they moved the ball quickly from their defence to their attack.
  - F. United's midfielders on the left and the right ran down the sides of the pitch (with, and without, the ball).
  - G. When united were trying to score a goal they passed the ball and waited for good opportunities, rather than playing the ball quickly towards the goal.
  - H. United were good when attacking on the left side of the pitch.

Difficulty level 2: "Good to Know"

**Ex. 2** This is part of an article about a team's attacking play. Match the phrases **in bold** with the definitions below:

(Example: 1=A)

"...City's play <sup>[1]</sup>**in the final third** has been breathtaking at times, and they <sup>[2]</sup>**look threatening** every time they <sup>[3]</sup>**press forward**. <sup>[4]</sup>**Going forward** they have got two attacking full-backs who can <sup>[5]</sup>**overlap** with their pacey wingers, midfielders who can <sup>[6]</sup>**arrive late in the box** to contribute to the scoring, and a powerful centre-forward who's able to <sup>[7]</sup>**run the channels**, <sup>[8]</sup>**lead the line** and <sup>[9]</sup>**poach goals**. The manager is clearly fundamentally <sup>[10]</sup>**attack minded** and puts out sides designed to penetrate and <sup>[11]</sup>**break down defences...**"

These match with 1-6:

- A. In the part of the pitch nearest to the opponent's goal.
- B. Attacking.
- C. (Starting in a position quite far back) to run into the area around the goal to try and score, but waiting until the last moment so it is difficult for the defenders to mark you.
- D. To run in front of the player on your own team who plays in the position in front of you (usually on the sides of the pitch).
- E. To attack strongly.
- F. To play in a way which means the team has a good chance of scoring.

These match with 7-11:

- G. To play as an attacker who plays the furthest up the pitch. This player receives long balls and holds the ball in order to give other players time to join the attack.
- H. To have the ability to score goals with a simple kick or header because the player's positional play is so good (he is able to be in the right place at the right time).
- I. To patiently get through the defence of the other team with intelligent passing and movement.
- J. To make attacking runs (without the ball) in the spaces between the defenders (the player hopes that he will get a pass or create space for other players on his team).
- K. Describing a person who thinks offensive play, rather than defensive play, is most important.

*Difficulty level 3: "Advanced"*

**Ex. 3** These sentences are from television commentaries. Match the synonyms below to the words and phrases **in bold**:

1. "Patterson is **bombing** down the wing." F
2. "Russel **popped up** at the back post to head it in."
3. "That was a dangerous ball **over the top** from James."
4. "Wanderers haven't managed to exploit the **gaps** in Albion's defence."
5. "That was an excellent **drive** down the left from Murphy."
6. "Albion are really **having a go at them** now."
7. "Bell **picked up** the ball on the halfway line."
8. "Wanderers have managed to survive the **onslaught** so far."
9. "Both the wingers' **final ball** has been poor tonight."

- A. over the defence
- B. (to) attack strongly
- C. (to) appear
- D. attacking run (with the ball)
- E. passes to the strikers (so they can score)
- F. (to) sprint
- G. hole
- H. (to) get
- I. constant attacking

*Difficulty level 3: "Advanced"*

**Ex. 4** These are sentences from match reports. Can you guess what the words and phrases **in bold** mean?

...after going behind early to a penalty, City were always **chasing the game**...

...United were **chasing the game** and left holes at the back...

...Rovers were **chasing the game** and switched to a more attacking 4-4-2...

...he **cut in** from the left and fired a shot low past the keeper...

...the keeper dived high to his right to save Peter's powerful shot after the No 6 **cut in** from the right...

...Davis **cut in** from the left to send in a cross from which Stevens looped a header inches over...

...Etherington's goal was **under siege** for the whole of the second half, but somehow Albion failed to score...

...after the break Wanderers came out and put Rovers' goal **under siege**, getting their reward on 70 minutes with a fine goal...

...Neil Simmon's side were **under siege** for much of the first half and were lucky not to go behind...

...United were left free to pass the ball around the edge of the penalty area but failed to **find an opening**...

...City finally managed to **find an opening** when Brown exploited a rare gap in their opponent's defence to play Richards in on goal...

...although the central-defensive partnership was impressive throughout, Bailey managed to **find an opening** with 10 minutes left to play...

## ANSWER KEY

### 1 KICKING & MOVING THE BALL

#### Ex.1

1. B 5. A 9. H
2. J 6. C 10. G
3. D 7. I
4. E 8. F

#### Ex.2

1. back / D
2. crossed / B
3. touch / E
4. half-volley / C
5. long-ball / A

#### Ex.3

1. upfield
2. to flick (the ball on to another player)
3. a one-two
4. first-touch
5. a low cross
6. first-time
7. a chip (can also be used as a verb: 'to chip')

#### Ex.4

1. B 5. F
2. H 6. A
3. D 7. C
4. E 8. G

#### Ex.5

1. pinging
2. dinked
3. reverse pass
4. punts
5. knock-on
6. the inside-right channel

## 2

### POSITIONS

#### Ex.1

1. J/K
2. E
3. G/H
4. A
5. F
6. C/D
7. B
8. I

#### Ex.2

1. C 5. F 9. J
2. H 6. I 10. G
3. K 7. E 11. B
4. D 8. A

### 3 DESCRIBING A GAME

#### Ex.1

1. E 3. F 5. B
2. A 4. C 6. D

#### Ex.2

1. B - final (ten minutes)
2. E - early on
3. C - composed
4. A - lucky
5. D - impressive

#### Ex.3

1. B
2. F
3. G (to **give** credit to someone)
4. D
5. A
6. C
7. E (to **show** spirit)
8. H

#### Ex.4

1. E 4. G 7. C
2. H 5. B 8. D
3. A 6. I 9. F

Ex.5

- 1. A    4. E    7. G
- 2. F    5. B    8. D
- 3. H    6. C    9. I

4

ATTACKING

Ex.1

- 1. H    4. E    7. D
- 2. C    5. G    8. B
- 3. A    6. F

Ex.2

- 1. A    5. D    9. H
- 2. F    6. C    10. K
- 3. E    7. J    11. I
- 4. B    8. G

Ex.3

- 1. F    4. G    7. H
- 2. C    5. D    8. I
- 3. A    6. B    9. E

Ex.4

1. **To chase the game:** a team is chasing the game when they are behind (the other team has more goals) and they are attacking and taking risks in order to score.
2. **To cut in** (from the left/right): a player sharply changes the direction of his run. At first he is running down one of the wings, then

he turns sharply towards the centre of the pitch.

3. **To (be)/(to put a team) under siege:** a team is under siege when the other team is attacking constantly for a long period. The team under siege find it difficult to get possession of the ball, and to build their own attacks.
4. **To find an opening:** to find a space in a defence. The ball can then be passed through this space to set up a shot on goal.

5

DEFENDING

Ex.1

- 1. C    4. B    7. F
- 2. E    5. D
- 3. A    6. G

Ex.2

1. unmarked
2. dragged out of position
3. make a challenge
4. close a player down
5. playing an offside-trap
6. playing a flat back-four
7. a sliding tackle
8. to cover

Ex.3

- 1. A    4. B    7. C
- 2. F    5. G
- 3. D    6. E

Ex.4

1. defending too high up
2. splits the defence
3. central-defensive partnership
4. tight (to the player)
5. defensive frailties
6. at the back
7. to shield the ball
8. (to be) goalside

Ex.5

1. B/ii (to make a goal-line clearance)
2. C/iii (to win the ball cleanly)
3. D/iv (a zonal marking system)
4. A/i (a solid defence)

Ex.6

1. D/i (pressing game)
2. E/v (two-footed lunge)
3. B/iv (all over the place)
4. C/iii (to pick someone up)
5. A/ii (defensive record)