Day 1. Who we are and how we play

Tuesday 15 December 2026. Live online session, about two hours, with Arabic interpretation

What are the principles of our game, in each moment?

After today you can describe how your teams play in each of the four moments of the game, and write it down as principles. That page is the core of your Academy Blueprint, and everything on Day 2 and Day 3 is checked against it.

Stories

Two clubs, two methodologies

Principle. Principles come before tactics

Lesson. The club decides the principles. The coach decides how his team brings them to life. Without written principles every new coach starts the academy again.

Discussion. If a new coach joined your academy tomorrow, which page would tell him how your teams play?

Michel Sablon took the league tables down

Principle. The club measures what its model values

Lesson. A model only becomes real when the club changes what it measures. Keep the league tables and coaches will keep picking for results.

Discussion. What does your club measure at under-10 today, and what would you take off the wall?

England DNA wrote down how to coach

Principle. The model says how we coach as well as how we play

Lesson. Principles for each moment of the game, plus rules for the training session. A rule like 70 per cent ball-rolling time is what turns a philosophy into Tuesday's practice.

Discussion. If you wrote your club's model on one page, which coaching rule would sit next to the principles?

Athletic Club and the Williams brothers

Principle. Identity decides where you look for players

Lesson. A strong identity tells you where to look. When you cannot buy talent, your scouting network and your community become your transfer market.

Discussion. If your club could only use players from your own region, what would you have to build tomorrow?

Matthijs de Ligt and Plan Cruyff

Principle. The model shapes each player's plan

Your call. You coach him at under-15. He is big and strong for his age, but slow to decide. What do you change for next season?

Lesson. The model decides what a player still lacks. Ajax trained De Ligt on his weakness, in the position and the age group that exposed it.

Discussion. Which of your best players is picked for his strength when he should be trained on his weakness?

Guardiola and Barca B

Principle. One model from the second team to the first

Lesson. When the B team plays the first team's model, a coach and his players can step up together without learning the game again.

Discussion. Could your under-19 team play a first-team match tomorrow without changing how it plays?

Homework

The core page of your Academy Blueprint

Work on it alone, or together with colleagues from your club. Fill in the templates on this site, or print the PDFs.

- [ ] Write your club's identity in one sentence.
- [ ] For each of the four moments, write one principle.
- [ ] Break every principle into two sub-principles.
- [ ] Choose the moment that matters most to your club and add one sub-sub-principle to it.
- [ ] Under the four moments, note the shape you usually start from. One line is enough.
- [ ] Watch 10 minutes of your own last match. Note three moments where your team showed a principle, or did not. One line each.
- [ ] Watch the Tifo clip on how football works, in the clips above.
- [ ] Send a photo of your core page to the course group before Day 2.

Templates

- Game Model Blueprint. academy.klemengradisar.com/templates/game-model/

Clips

- Xavi on his playing style at Al Sadd, Coaches' Voice. youtu.be/3yR5B8viTWQ?t=16
- How football actually works, Tifo Football. youtu.be/1W4bRAKfMeM?t=11
- How Belgium became the best in the world, Football Made Simple. youtu.be/E7HaytbtXo8?t=116
- It's about identity, Athletic Club's player policy, BBC Sport. youtu.be/8iTU3yAoS5U?t=87

Reflection

Which principle would you keep at every age, from under-9 to the first team?
