

## Selecting a starting lineup

**In picking a starting lineup, as a general rule, you should try to find a way to get your top 10 players on the field (I am taking the keeper out of this discussion) and then pick your formation from there. Too many coaches want to pick their formation (say a 4-4-2) and then try to figure out who can play where. Instead, they should pick their players and then figure out what formation is best for those players. If, in picking your best 10 players, you find that you have 2 forwards, 3 backs and 5 defenders, rather than trying to force one of the midfielders to play one of the back positions.**

If, in looking at your top 10 players, you have one strong target player and a bunch of midfielders, then it might make sense to play a 4-5-1 as opposed to a 4-3-3.

If, you have decided that the best formation for your team to start with is a 4-3-3, this still could be varied based on the type of players the three midfielders. If you have a dominant center midfielder and two other fast midfielders, you would probably play with the two fast midfielders out as wide as possible in order to get them as much space to work with as possible. If you have three players who are more geared toward playing in small spaces and outside backs who like to attack, you would probably play with the three midfielders in a triangle in the middle of the field which plays toward their strengths and gives the outside to the backs to go forward.

The other thing to realize when talking about formations is that it's not uncommon for a team to be playing two different formations at the same time. For example, they might be playing a 5-3-2 on defense and a 3-4-3 when attacking by having the two outside backs on defense step up to outside midfielders in the attack and one of the midfielders step up into a center forwards position when attacking.

Another consideration when talking about formations is the formation and style of the opponent. If the opposing team has three fast forwards, you probably will not want to play with only three backs since it would result in you having no coverage in back. If the other team plays with 1 forward and 5 midfielders, you might not want to play a 5-3-2.

**In picking your starting lineup, the first thing you want to try to do is get your top players on the field, then you want to put them in positions that will allow them to excel and finally, you will want to take your opponents into consideration.**

Coaches like to talk about the best formation but without taking all of these factors into consideration, it becomes too theoretical. There are some exceptions to this. If you, as a coach, have the ability to "recruit" the types of players you want to play a particular system, then you can use the system that you choose. However, most coaches don't have this opportunity so instead, they should look at putting their best players in the best positions and then letting them play.