**Offside trap**

The offside trap can be an important defensive tool in some situations.

The trap is sprung by all defenders pushing up suddenly together, leaving one or more attackers in an offside position. When executed correctly, the trap can be very effective, especially in situations described below. **Executed badly, and it is a recipe for disaster. So the trap must be practiced.**

**Moving up together**

The trap just extends normal strategy - pushing up the defense - sometimes as far as the halfway line. All the defenders have to move up together. Players must know that they are operating a trap, and developing the cohesion that makes for an effective trap can take time. And **players have to communicate!**

**When and how to use the trap**

The trap works best against teams that use the long ball. It should be sprung when the ball is with the opposing defenders and they are about to make a long downfield pass. As the ball is being prepared, defenders step up together and leave opponents offsides.

**Role of the goalie**

The goalie plays a key role in the offside trap. Because all defenders have moved upfield, a **large gap is created** behind them. If opponents defeat the trap, they will be chasing down a long ball into this space.

Here the goalie **must** become a field player – another sweeper. He must cover the entire defensive third of the field, swell outside his box.

**Risks and choices**

The offside trap is risky when playing teams that use short passes and dribble, and when facing players faster than the defenders. The trap may still be worthwhile, but players need to be more careful when using it and especially ready to make long recovery runs.

Players also need to see whether the other team has learned how to defeat a trap. If they have not, you can use the trap all day. If they have – especially if you see midfielders making delayed runs that get them behind the trap – it’s probably a good idea to put the trap back in the box for another day.
**Figure 1 Successful offside trap**

Key points:
- All three defenders moved up together
- Attacking players did not react in time
- Defender did not release the ball quickly enough
Key points:

- D3 failed to move with the rest of the defenders
- A1 is now wide open behind the defense
- A2 has plenty of time to make a good pass forward
- D1 and D2 are too far forward to recover

Notes: