



Training
Activities
for Players in
DIVISION D
(Under 8)

U8: Under 8

(as published by US Youth Soccer)

Some general characteristics of the U-8 player include:

- Attention span is a bit longer than the U-6 player, but still not at the “team at all costs” intensity, not extended.
- Inclined more towards group activities.
- Still very sensitive (dislike failure in front of peers); ridicule from the coach in front of the group is very destructive.
- Beginning to develop some physical coordination.
- Still into running, jumping, climbing, and rolling.
- More into imitation of the big guys (identifying with sports heroes in important)
- Still lack a sense of pace; will run very hard most of the time and chase the ball until they drop.

Implications for training the U-8 player include:

- Training sessions should not exceed 1 hour.
- Give brief directions; repeat when necessary.
- Many activities of short duration.
- A mixture of individual and partner activities. Add more target and maze-type games to the practice.
- Emphasize familiarity and confidence with the ball (every child must have access to a ball throughout every training session)

INTRODUCTION

Organization of player development by age and stage



Children do not learn in the same way as adults, especially when the learning process involves both intellectual *and* physical activity.

Age conditions the way a person perceives and interacts with the world and with others.

In any learning process, age is the key component in selecting appropriate content and methodology. Soccer is no different. For this reason we must not train 6 year old players the same way as 13 years old players. Training sessions must be adapted to the age of the players. Taking into consideration the characteristics of human and player development, we have structured the curriculum into four age groups. The first two age groups are:

1. INITIAL STAGE – 5 TO 8 YEARS OLD

At this age children do not have the same capacity as adults to analyze the environment. They explore and have an egocentric conception of the world. Children are still gathering the experience necessary to interact with their surroundings and with others. Also, empathy and the capacity to consider the thoughts and feelings of others is very low. In order to help children build their own experience, many exercises will be individual (e.g. each player will have a ball). The tactical component of the game will be reduced to small-sided games with basic explanations about space distribution. Training sessions will be treated more as physical education than specifically as soccer training.

2. BASIC STAGE – 9 TO 12 YEARS OLD

At this stage, the structure (but not the content) of the training sessions will be similar to that of older players. The main component of the training session will be technical. It is sensible at this age to develop technique and basic tactical understanding. Children's capacity to solve problems increases significantly. Therefore players will begin working on basic and dynamic tactical scenarios. At this stage, players are pre-pubescent and have important physical limitations in terms of strength and endurance.

3. INTERMEDIATE STAGE – 13 AND 14 YEARS OLD

Players at this age develop a good understanding of the game. However, these players are limited by their physical size and the significant changes, which arise with puberty. Safety should be the number one priority for the coach. The coach must be cautious to avoid overtraining should focus more on tactical and technical elements of the game and less on the physical aspects. Tactical training plays an important role at this age.

4. ADVANCED STAGE – 15 TO 18 YEARS OLD

Players at this age have completed most of their physical and mental development. All components of training can be combined and organized with the purpose of developing the highest potential of the player. The strength of the muscles helps to develop technique at high speed and this speed helps the player to react faster to tactical situations. This stage is crucial for combining all the components of soccer in order to increase the players' soccer knowledge.

These are some of the facts in terms of human development adapted to soccer. In this document these facts are used to develop the most appropriate training methodology for each age group.

PRINCIPLES OF AGE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Training characteristics based on human development

STAGES	AGE GROUPS	CHARACTERISTICS
INITIAL	U6	Very young players from 5 to 8 years of age love to play. Therefore, all practices should be based on fun games.
	U7	Players must spend the maximum time possible in contact with the ball and experiment by themselves. For the first time the player has to build a relationship with other players. Give different responsibilities to the players in order to develop a sense of team.
	U8	Basic motor skills like walking, running or jumping have to be combined with ball handling and ball control.
BASIC	U9	The pubescent players from age 9 to 12 years have a special ability to learn. Therefore, this is the right age to work on specific soccer techniques and skills. Developing good technique is essential at this age.
	U10	1v1 and 2v1 attacking and defending situations are important to develop individual skills as well as the passing techniques to develop the necessary team game.
	U11	Use small-sided games to develop basic attacking and defensive principles. Other important aspects of tactical training are possession, combination play, transition and finishing in the final third, as well as zonal defending. Players will rotate in two or three different positions to avoid early specialization.
	U12	Speed, coordination, balance and agility are the main physical aspects to improve at this stage.
INTERMEDIATE	U13	At this stage, training sessions are orientated more toward tactics and the player will practice in bigger spaces. Players must practice all different types of techniques at this stage.
	U14	Strength and endurance should be part of the fitness training. Coaching methods have to consider and preserve players' health since they will be experiencing many changes due to puberty at this stage. Warm-ups and cool downs are essential as is dynamic flexibility. Players must develop discipline at this stage by following the instructions of the coach both during and outside training sessions.

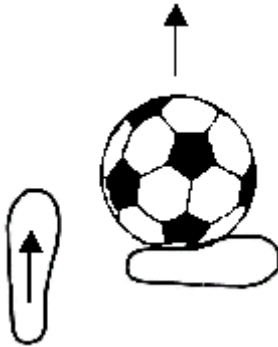
We at HGSC recommend the following for good soccer practices:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Do You Need a Goal or a Lined Field? Nope! If you have cones you can create your own area. However, a goal, even a small one, or a net backstop is handy if you are practicing shooting.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>A Ball for Every Player. This is a MUST. Ask each player to bring a ball to practice with their name on it. Make it a team rule! Also, buy a hand pump to keep the balls inflated!</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Small Soccer Cones. Disk cones are ideal for marking areas for small-sided games but any style will do. You need roughly 25 cones for your team. Disk cones look like an upside-down bowl and come in fluorescent yellow and orange. Consider buying a strap to keep your disk cones on. It's worth it!</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>A Way To Identify Groups or "Teams". You can use practice vests (also called "bibs" or "pinneys") which we loan to each team for the season. Another cheap way is to cut the sleeves & bottoms off old t-shirts & use the tops as practice vests; you can dye them in different colors to make enough for several teams. Another way is to buy a 3-pack of men's "Athletic T-shirts" (about \$6.00) in the X-Large size. Cut off the top about 3 inches below the bottom of the sleeve. If you need different colors, dye them.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Shin guards & Water. Every player should wear shin guards & bring a plastic water bottle with their name on it. Consider taking extra water because some players/parents always forget.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>A Whistle. A cheap one will do. This will be hugely helpful in getting attention.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>A Stopwatch/Timer. You can get by without this, but it makes it a lot easier to run timed games.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>An Equipment Bag. To keep your gear in. If you coach in the Fall, Dick's usually supplies each HTRSA rec team with one. <i>You should put some Band-Aids or a small medical kit (about \$5) in it. One of the instant ice packs is good to have as well.</i></p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>A Great Attitude! If the players see the coach having a good attitude, that will rub off. Remember to keep it FUN!</p>

Inside-of-Foot Passing & Receiving (U-8 & up)

Over 75% of all passes & receptions are made using the inside-of-the-foot. SoccerHelp believes passing, receiving and dribbling are the most fundamental and important skills to teach. To be a good player, a child must learn the correct technique for the inside-of-foot "push" pass, yet over 50% of youth players use incorrect technique. The result is passes that are inaccurate, don't have the right pace or don't stay on the ground. It's important to teach proper technique at an early age because if a child hasn't learned the proper technique by U-10, it's hard to correct the improper technique.

Teaching The Inside-of-Foot "Push" Pass:



- Have the player face the target & "square up" so he, ball & the target are in a straight line.
- Place the "plant" foot about 4" from the side of the ball, pointing toward the target. (The direction the plant foot points is important because that is the direction the hips will face; try it). The plant foot can be toward the middle or back of the ball, whichever the player prefers.
- Head over ball, looking down; both knees slightly bent.
- Teach the proper motion by first having the player place his striking foot flat against the back of the ball (about 5" above the ground) and pushing the ball toward the target and following through toward the target. (A push & follow-through; not a jab. Think of a tennis serve. However, jabbing a 1-touch pass is okay).
- Be sure he contacts the ball with his toes pulled up (i.e., with the foot parallel to the ground) & the ankle locked. Make contact with the arch, below the anklebone & follow through toward the target so the ball has top spin.
- Then, have him do the same, except start one step back from the ball, so the player, the ball & the target are in a straight line. This step provides power to the pass. If the pass goes into the air it means it was struck too low.

Receiving A Pass Using Inside-of-Foot:



- Receive the ball even with the toes of the plant foot (or a little in front).
- Stiffen or relax the receiving foot so the ball stops about one step away (so you can quickly take one step & strike it; it is this step that gives power to the pass).
- Be sure the receiving foot is 4" - 5" off the ground (if too low the ball will pop up) & contact the ball on the back part of foot (under the anklebone), not near the toes. Pull the toes up so the foot is parallel with the ground (not pointing downward). (If a player can't remember to raise his foot, have him practice by raising his foot higher than the ball & then bringing the foot down in front of the ball to stop it. This will help him to remember).
- If you want the ball to go to the left or right (instead of straight in front) you must angle your foot & contact the ball more in front or behind, depending on whether you want it to go left or right.

Ball Thieves

SETUP:

LARGE island area marked with cones.

Split the team into 2 groups and give one group pinis to wear.

Give one team balls to dribble. Not every player on the team should have a ball! For example: If 6 players in a group, 4 have **soccer balls**.

THE GAME:

The team with the balls tries to dribble inside the area without losing possession of their ball to the other team.

The objective is to see which team has the most soccer balls at the end of the game.

Players with soccer balls should shield and Pass.

Players from the same team should work together to steal balls or keep possession of them.

Run game for 2 minutes and see which team is the winner!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

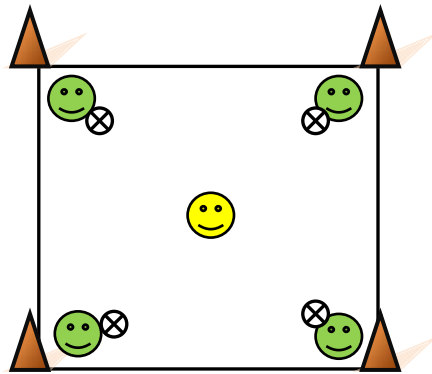
Working on keeping the ball from an opponent, passing the ball to a teammate, and tackling (taking away) the ball from a player!

Bull in the Ring!

SETUP:

Set up a square with 4 cones, 5 to 6 yards apart.

5 players – Put one player in the middle of four. The four players on the outside each have a soccer ball.



THE GAME:

Players on the outside with the ball alternate by serving by hand (or feet if capable) to the player in the middle. The middleman (the BULL!) receives the ball and controls it (feet, chest, thigh, etc.) and passes it back to the server and turns to the next.

Go for 60 to 90 seconds and switch.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Quick touches on the ball and trapping/collecting the ball and getting it back to a teammate.

Make sure the BULL gets his body behind the ball (move the feet, don't stick a leg out!). This is a great way to get them moving.

3 Points/Captain's Island Game

SETUP:

Setup an enclosed "island" area with cones. All players are on the "island" with a soccer ball.

THE GAME:

All players start with 3 points. On "AND...BEGIN!" all players begin dribbling on the island.

All players MUST STAY on the island and keep the ball close to them.

Coach (the "Captain") can bark out commands: "LEFT FOOT ONLY!", "OUTSIDE FOOT ONLY!", "LACES ONLY!", "DRIBBLE FAST!", etc.

On "SWITCH" the player must leave their ball and dribble another.

When Captain yells "STOP", player must use the BOTTOM of the foot to STOP THE BALL DEAD and spread their arms out: ...OR...

When Captain yells "CAPTAIN ON DECK!" players must use the sole of their foot to STOP THE BALL DEAD and make eye contact with the coach, salute and say "Aye-Aye, Captain!" and then...spread their arms out:

If a player does not stop the ball, they lose a point.

If a player does not stay on the island, they lose a point.

If a player can touch another player, they lose a point.

Don't be the first one to ZERO!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Keeping the ball close while dribbling and dribbling in traffic and dribbling to an open space.

Catch That Fish!

SETUP:

Play the length of short sided Field! Players in 2 teams (use practice vests). One is Attacking and one is Defending.

All players on one End Line. Coach has all the soccer balls.

Attacking Fish (Player A) is trying to score in far goal...and Defending Fish (Player B) is trying to prevent that.

THE GAME:

As coach's signal Attacker (Player A) begins dribbling down the field toward the goal. At coach's command of "Catch That Fish!" (in 2 seconds?, 5 seconds?) Defender (Player B) runs to catch them and prevent the goal being scored. Defender may kick the ball out of bounds or try to steal the ball and dribble it back.

WHAT THIS TEACHES/COACHING POINTS:

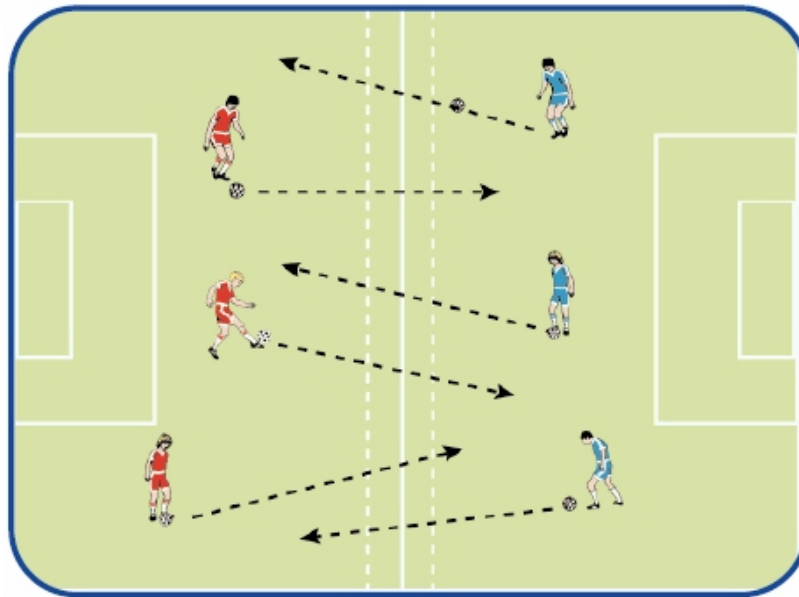
For the ATTACKER: Dribbling under pressure is TOUGH but part of the game! Dribble fast to the goal, keep the defender from stealing the ball and try to shoot from a distance.

For the DEFENSE: Don't run by the attacker and into the GOAL! Run to the BALL and try to steal it!

Clean Up Your Yard

SETUP: A small field area marked by cones. All soccer balls are spread out evenly throughout the areas. *If coaching U8 players, create a middle zone with cones.

2 teams, all players line up on their end line.



THE GAME: When coach says "AND...BEGIN!" teams come off their endline and DRIBBLE/PASS/KICK the balls that are in their "yard" over to the other team's "yard". Players CANNOT go into the other team's yard.

Key: Players should try to kick the ball to where the other team's players aren't!

Game goes for 2 to 3 minutes. The team with the least number of soccer balls in their "yard" wins!

Rule for U8 teams: Players cannot go into the middle zone!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Dribbling and kicking the ball to a spot. Retrieving the ball, working as a team!

Color Tag

SETUP:

Quite a big island area marked by cones. All players have a ball. Make sure players notice what color shirt they are wearing.

THE GAME:

Players dribble their ball in the big island area. Trying to stay away from each other as much as possible. Keep those heads Up!

Coach calls a color (i.e. "RED! All Red Shirts are IT!")

Whoever has that color shirt is a tagger. Players wearing that color shirt leave their ball and try to tag all the other players. All other players pick up their ball and try to avoid the taggers while staying on the island for 20-30 seconds. Frozen players must freeze when tagged.

Be sure to stress to the kids to KEEP THEIR HEADS UP!

VERSION#2: Have players line-up across the side-line and have them dribble across the field. When most players get to the middle of the area, call out your color.

VERSION#3: Do this without soccer balls. A great warm-up!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Develops coordination, activates the players mind and vision.

Cone Goal Pass

SETUP:

Group the players in pairs and each pair has one soccer ball.

Two cones about **1 to 3 yards apart** between **each pair** of players. The younger the age, the more space you should have between the cones!

THE GAME:

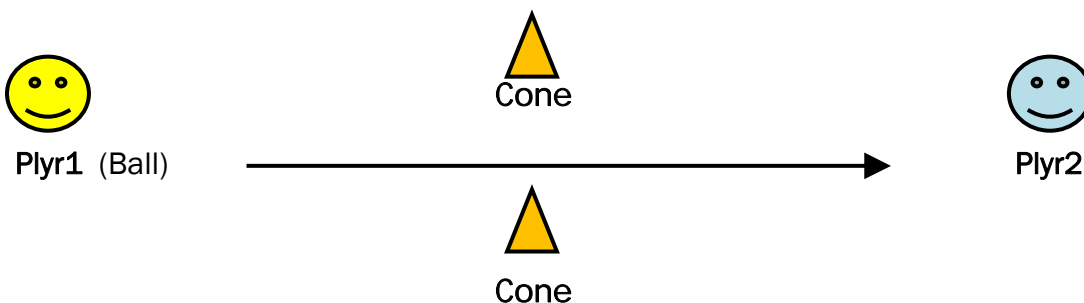
Go over the correct Inside of the Foot PASSING technique.

Players strike and pass their ball back and forth to each other between their cone goal ...**OR**...

NOTE! – You *MAY* want to play by having Player 1 on their knees rolling the ball to Player 2 to traps it and then passes back. This will give the player a more concentrated time with the ball and means less soccer balls flying everywhere! Switch after 90 seconds.

Feel free to practice both inside of the foot and instep (“LACES”) kicks.

Variation#1: After (if!) players get the hang of it, add some competition by seeing who can ‘score’ the most “goals” in 1 minute!



WHAT THIS TEACHES:

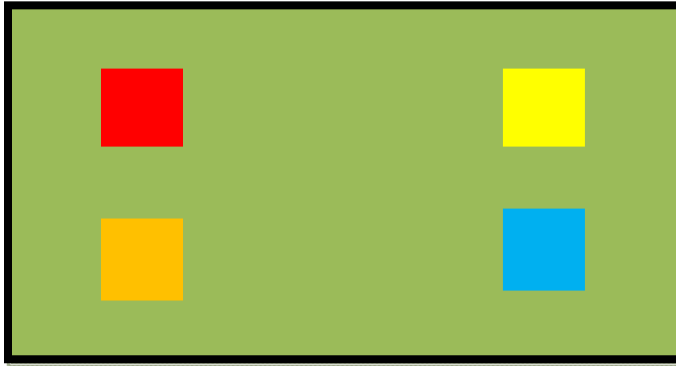
This teaches the Inside of the Foot pass and Instep Kick which is critical for players to learn and aiming through a target (goal).

****Warning!** BE PATIENT WITH THE PLAYERS AS THIS WILL LOOK VERY UGLY with soccer balls going everywhere! But it is necessary to spend time on this for their development! Gently correct any improper technique.

Crazy Drivers

SETUP: All players have a ball.

Have different items and / or different colored cones, objects (Ball Bag, Goals, Parents! etc.) around the area/field. (The best: *If you have different color cones, make 6x6 yard square/triangle areas of like color cones).



THE GAME:

Tell the players they are taking their soccer ball for a "drive" and you the coach are going to tell them how to drive! *Have players say "beep-beep" if they get too close to another player (Car).* Work for 3 minutes then rest.

Players start dribbling. Coach commands driving speed: "FAST!", "SLOW", "CRUISE", "STOP!" as well as "INSIDE FOOT", "OUTSIDE FOOT", "LACES!".

If coach yells "SWITCH!" players must leave their ball and go to another. If coach yells "U TURN!" players must do a U Turn. (Really, you can pick ANY sort of skill here!)

When Coach yells "Dribble to the Red cone/square," all players dribble to the Red cone/square.

When Coach yells "Dribble to Coach Jim", all players dribble to the coach, etc. Coach can also split it up for example "girls dribble to red cone, boys dribble to the yellow cone!"

VARIATION#1: Divide players into 2 teams...then you can call out: "Team1, dribble to red cone/square... Team2, dribble to yellow cone/square" etc.

VARIATION#2: Call out shapes for example: "dribble outside the small squares"... "inside the small red square"...and "Team1 dribble outside the small squares, Team2 dribble inside the red square..."

WHAT THIS TEACHES: How to dribble in traffic and dribbling to a specific point!

Defrost Tag

(from the USYouth Soccer Coaching Manual)

SETUP:

Two equal teams and a 20x20 or 30x30 playing area.

One team is inside the area without soccer balls.

The other team is on the outside of the area with 1 ball per player.

THE GAME:

On "GO" the team of players with the ball dribble into the area and try to hit the OTHER TEAM'S players BELOW THE KNEES!

Players can jump and run to avoid being hit with a ball and they CANNOT leave the area!

Once a player is hit they are frozen and must stand with their legs apart and hands on their head. They can only be un-frozen by another player on their team crawling through their legs.

The objective is to see how long it takes to freeze the entire team!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Passing/aiming at a target, dribbling towards a target and problem solving!

NOTE! – Coach should emphasize **PASSING**, not shooting!

Dribble Across the Field Race

SETUP:

Use your assistant coach or recruit a parent!

Use a small side field (30x20 yard area).

The players are divided into 2 teams. One team is spread out on one end-line and the other group is spread out on the opposite end-line. Every player has a ball. One coach stands with one group and the other coach (or parent) stands with the other group.

THE GAME:

When the coach says "GO!" players must dribble their ball across the field (Keep those heads up as players will be dribbling toward each other!), keeping the ball close and dribble to the coach/parent on that side and slap them on the hand.

The first team that completes this wins!

Coach may move across the end-line so the players cannot just look at the ball they are dribbling but must look up to find where the coach is!

Variation#1: Have the players dribble using ONLY the SOLE* (turned like an "L") of their foot to move the ball, or others techniques (Outside foot, Laces, Inside-Outside combo, etc.)

Variation#2: If you have pop-up goals, have them shoot the ball into the net and then run to the coach!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Players work on their dribbling skills BUT also get used to dribbling in traffic and keeping their heads up.

*Why use the SOLE of their foot (turned like an "L") to move the ball? Because it simulates them turning their foot to make that all-important inside of the foot pass!

Dribble & Cut Through the Minefield

SETUP:

Spread out cones randomly around an area. Every player has a ball.

THE GAME:

Have players dribble their ball through and at the cones. At every cone they should do either an inside or outside cut to change direction and get around the cone. The idea is to get them to CHANGE DIRECTION at the cone! DO NOT TOUCH THE CONE!

Players can walk through the course. NOT A Race!

VARIATION #1 - spread out cones randomly and have players dribble to any cone and do a change of direction move not just a touch around it!

Change of direction moves being:

- Outside cut,
- Inside cut,
- Hook/U Turn,
- Stop Turn,
- Reverse Step-Over/Scissors, etc.

...then go to another cone and repeat!

When Coach says "Switch!" players leave their ball and go to another.

Coach can call out moves to do! Make it FUN!

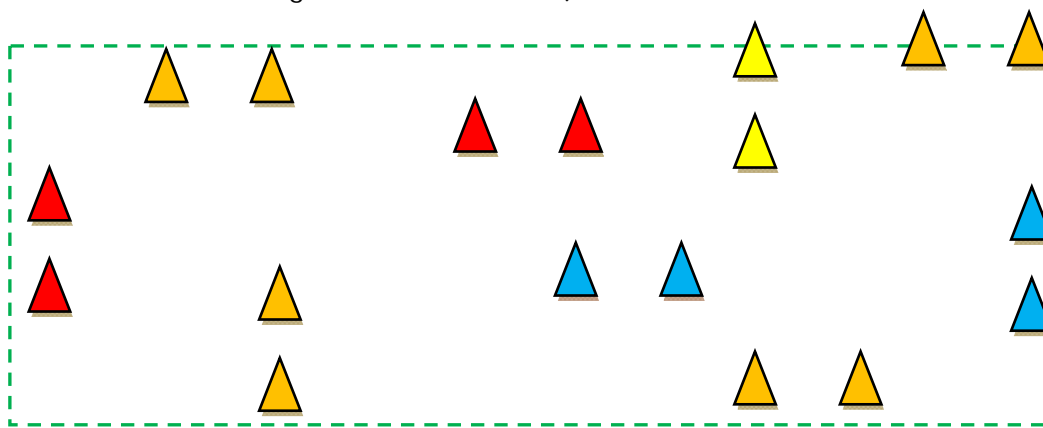
WHAT THIS TEACHES:

This is for the player to work on their skill with the ball while moving in traffic like game day.

Dribbling Thru the Gates

SETUP: Pairs of cones no more than 3 yards apart scattered randomly throughout an area ...probably a 20x40 yard area. The island area does NOT need to be marked off.

Every player has a soccer ball at their feet (although for U6 you can play a round WITHOUT soccer balls to give them confidence).



THE GAME:

When coach says, "AND...BEGIN!" players dribble the ball thru as many cone "gates" as they can. Players should NOT go through the same gate without going through another. Game goes for 60 to 90 seconds and the players keep score!

**For Under 6 age players: Parents should help the players count how many times they pass through the gates as the ability to dribble through gates and count is difficult at this age. Each player gets a chance to repeat the exercise to try and beat their own score. It is appropriate for younger players to compete against themselves, not other players.

VARIATION: (1) For a round the Coach orders players to use only the OUTSIDE/INSIDE of their feet. (2) For older kids have players in pairs and compete against each other for how many times they dribble through the gates!

WHAT THIS TEACHES: Players will have to keep their head up in traffic! They are learning to dribble to a specific target at a pace that suits them.

Why use the BOTTOM of their foot (turned like an "L") to move the ball? Because it simulates them turning their foot to make that all-important inside of the foot pass...an important skill to learn.

Egg Hunt

SETUP:

- One or two pop-up or cone goal or goals.
- The players line up across one end of the field their backs facing the field.
- All balls (many more than players) are spread out around the field.
- The pop-up or cone goal or goals are the "basket".

THE GAME:

The object is to have all players help and get all the 'eggs' into the 'basket' as quickly as possible.

They are not allowed to take the ball away from another player.

Time them with the stopwatch.

Encourage shooting from a distance instead of dribbling into the goal!

See if they can better their total time when you play it again!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

This teaches the tracking of the ball, dribbling quickly to a target, and shooting/kicking the ball to a target.

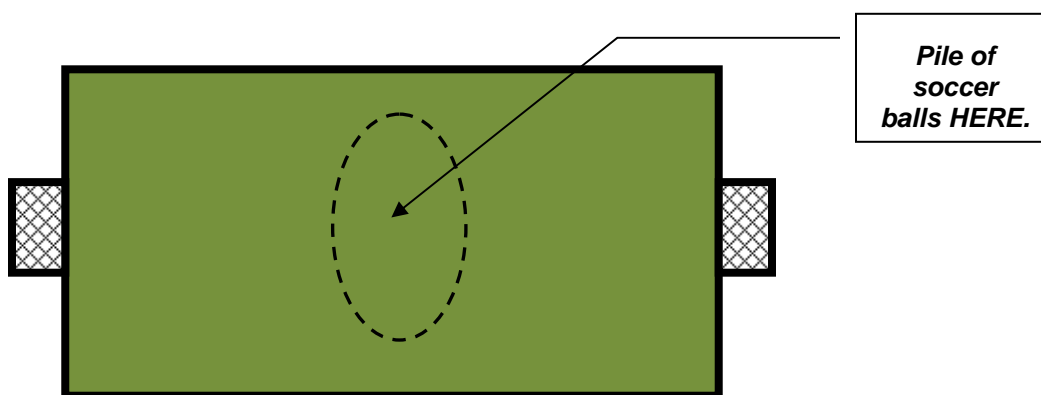
This game self-adjusts for skill as a skilled kid may do 3 balls in the net while a slower kid may do 1.

Feed Your Hungry Monster

SETUP:

A rectangular area with 2 goals/pop-up goals on different sides of the area.

All soccer balls (many more than players!) are inside the area in a pile (dotted area below). Players are grouped in teams behind their goal.



THE GAME:

On "GO" players must retrieve the "meatballs" (soccer balls) **one at a time** from the center pile, dribble it back to their goal 'monster' and feed to their monster (kick it in the net!).

Do this until ALL BALLS in the center are gone.

The Team that has fed the most meatballs to their monster (the most soccer balls in their goal) wins!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Hey! Kids love to score goals! Shooting, dribbling under timed pressure.

This game self-adjusts for skill as a skilled kid may do 3 balls in the net while a slower kid may do 1.

See how they run around the ball to get the ball?! Correct them to use a "HOOK/PULL-BACK TURN" instead.

Fetch the Frogs!

SETUP:

One coach with many soccer balls at his feet. Players are nearby.

THE GAME:

The coach stands in the middle of the training site and collects all of the balls. The coach then explains that players are "Frog Catchers" and must bring the "Frogs" (soccer balls) back to the pond where the coach is.

Frogs are clever and can jump high (coach bounces ball) and move really fast (coach rolls the ball)! Keep your eye on your frog!

The coach puts various conditions on how they retrieve the ball (an example for U6: with one hand; one hand with the ball touching the forehead; both hands and the ball touching their belly button; both hands and the ball touching the top of their head, etc.).

Once the children show comfort with the exercise, they are asked to retrieve the ball with their feet.

The coach kicks and/or throws the balls in different directions 10 to 15 yards away. Each kick/throw is accompanied with a player's name. That player should chase down that frog and quickly retrieve it back to coach.

When they deliver that ball back to you, toss it again! Go for 60-120 seconds.

Stress that Dribbling is NOT KICK & CHASE! It is controlled movement of the ball! Touch the ball with every step!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

It develops dribbling skills and tracking the ball taking it from point A to point B.

The Game also self-adjusts to a player's skill as a skilled kid may return 5 during the exercise and a novice may return 2.

Glob!

SETUP:

Use cones to outline the sidelines and the finish line. A 20x20 or 30x20 yard space should be adequate.

THE GAME:

Begin without a ball.

The Coach stands in the middle of the area and talks and acts like a Glob. The coach challenges the players to TRY to run (without the ball) across the space to the other side without being caught (tagged) by the nasty Glob.

Ham it up a bit to have more fun! Then, have the players try to get across Glob Country by dribbling their ball while the coach tries to touch their ball out of bounds.

Their re-entry back into the game can be done in many ways, (i.e. 5 jumping jacks, three foot taps on the ball, throw the ball in the air clap twice and catch it, etc). *This is not an elimination game.*

This game is as good a time as ever to introduce the concept of 'keeping the ball close' and that dribbling is NOT kick and chase. The ball should be treated as a "puppy on a leash". If the puppy gets too far away you're going to lose him. In soccer if the ball gets too far away the other team is going to steal it.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

This game develops dribbling skills, quick thinking, and running to open space to avoid an opponent...AND keeping the ball close.

Hands Up!

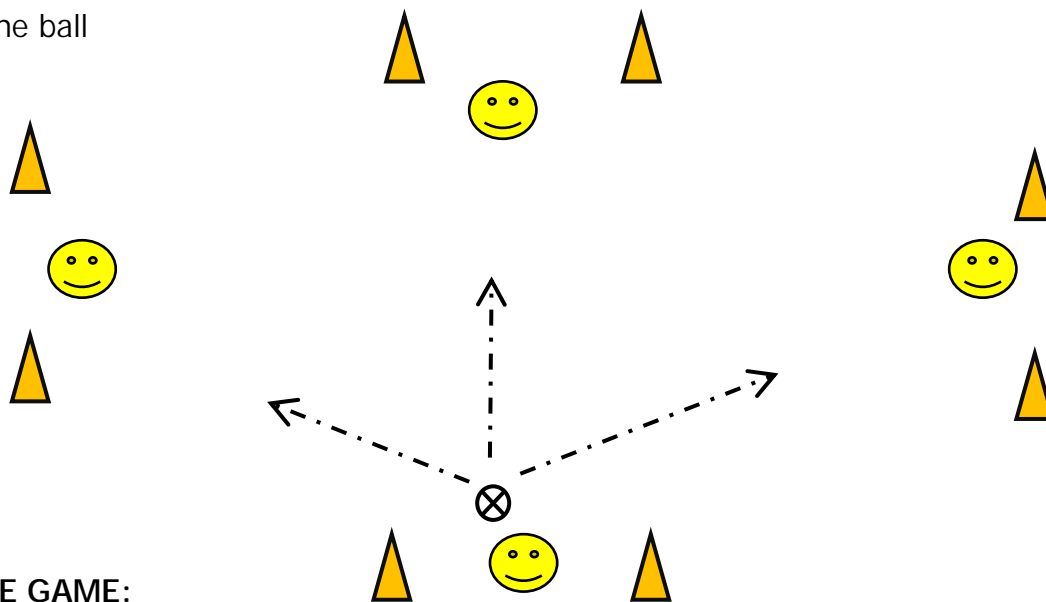
(Goalkeeper Game!)

SETUP:

*Four cone goals, spaced about 20 yards apart.

*Put a GOALKEEPER in each goal.

*One ball



THE GAME:

The Goalkeeper with the ball tries to score a goal by **THROWING** the ball into one of the other 3 goals.

Variation: Instead of throwing players try and score a goal from a full or half volley

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Get Players used to playing Goalkeeper and using their hands! Emphasize the need for a transition from defending the goal and attacking quickly!

Hit the Coach!**

SETUP:

All players are on one side of an enclosed 'island' area marked by cones. Coach CANNOT leave the island area!

Each player has a ball. Coach stands in the area 5 steps away.

The stopwatch is set at two minutes!

THE GAME:

- On "Go", the Coach runs slowly away while players dribble to chase him & try to hit him with the ball (below the knees!) by shooting/passing at him.
- They (the group) gets 1 point each time they hit him
- If you have more than 10 kids recruit parents to help & split into 2 games, so it is less crowded
- Stay in a small area & have fun with this game and play for about 2 minutes. How many times can they hit the coach?!

GO CRAZY! Before starting, tell the players that if they as a group hit you 3 or 5 times (total) you will make the sound of their favorite animal, like a dog or a cow, etc. but if they don't...THEY must imitate an animal! When you are hit X amount of times, stop & let them choose a sound. Then start all over!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Dribbling in traffic and shooting/passing at a moving target! Just like during the game! Plus, it shows that the coach can have fun too! 😊

Hot Potato!

SETUP:

Every player has a soccer ball and starts with the ball in front of their feet.

The coach is in the middle with a stopwatch.

THE GAME:

Explain to the players that the ball is a HOT POTATO and the only way to cool it down is by touching/tapping it on top with their foot! Coach demonstrates the skill.

Coach blows the whistle and the players touch the top of the ball with the bottom of their foot/toes alternating their feet if possible.

Start stationary and then see if they can tap alternating feet while going around the ball.

How many touches can each player get in 30 seconds?!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

We are helping develop the player's fine motor skills!

This teaches and reinforces control of the ball. Keep knees bent & tap ball with the front of the foot (this gives better control than the back of the foot).

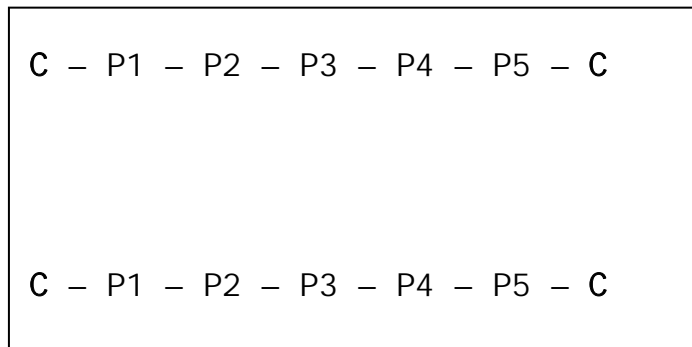
Numbers vs. Numbers

SETUP:

Split the team in half and set up a rectangular area marked with 4 cones. Two opposite ends of this area should be able to fit one half of the team with arms spread apart on the line.

Half of the team stands across the "line" between the cones and the other half stands on the "line" opposite them as shown below: (if possible, have one team wear the same color practice 'vests').

C = Cone P = Player



Every player on each line receives a number i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc and they are to remember that number!

THE GAME:

Coach will kick a soccer ball into the area and call a number or numbers OR player names. (for example: "2s and 5s and Adam!"). Players called with those numbers/names are to enter the field and try to control the ball and get it past the other team's line for a goal.

The other players whose numbers were NOT called must STAY ON THE LINE and try to prevent the ball from passing them. NO HANDS! If ball goes out of the sideline, play is done.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Attacking, defending a goal, controlling the ball...putting it all together.

‘Outta Here!’

(from the USYouth Soccer Coaching Manual)

SETUP:

Create a shortside field approximately 15X20, or 20x30 yards with two small goals on each endline. Split the group into two even teams and line them up on the same sideline with the coach in the middle with a pile of soccer balls. It would help if one group wore alternate jerseys.

THE GAME:

The coach will play a ball into the area and call out a player(s) names. Those players must then sprint onto the field and play. The game should continue until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds.

If a goal is scored the scoring team/player stays on while the defending team comes off.

If ball goes out of bounds coach shouts “Get Outta-Here!” and all players must leave the field and sprint back to their team’s line!

Variation#1: *If doing 1v1, have more than one 1v1 going at the same time (yes, the same field!)*

Variation#2: *Call out more players to create a 2v1, 3v2 or 3v3.*

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

- Encourages players to take on their opponent.
- Encourages players to shoot when they have a chance of a goal.
- That yes...there is a SIDELINE/Out of BOUNDS!
- There is NO HIDING HERE! Every player gets to battle for the ball when they are called out to the field!

Pac Man

(from the USYouth Soccer Coaching Manual)

SETUP:

Two players each with a soccer ball and all other players without a soccer ball on a 20x20 yard "Island Area" marked by cones.

THE GAME:

The two players with the ball are the "Pac Men". The Pac Men dribble their soccer balls and attempt to hit the other players **BELOW THE KNEE** with a pass. Players try to avoid being hit by running, jumping, and dodging.

Once a player is hit they retrieve a ball and join the Pac Men. The game continues until all players have been hit.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

This activity encourages dribbling and passing to a moving target, decision making, changing direction, endurance, and allows all ability levels to play equally.

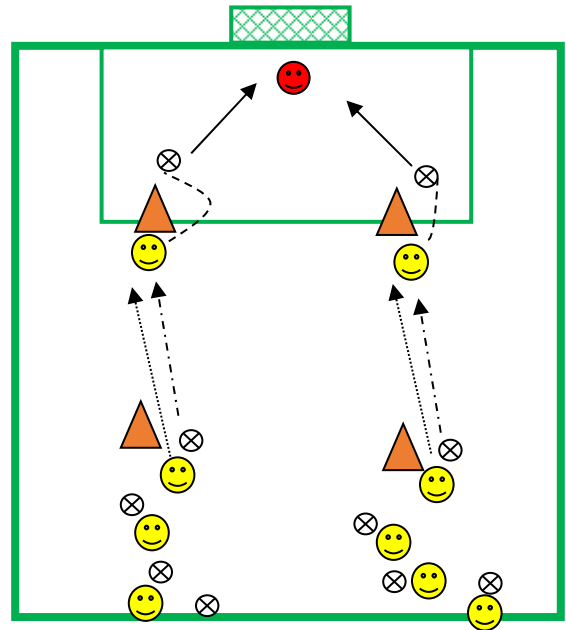
If players are hit early, they will have more opportunity to dribble. If they manage to avoid getting hit until near the end, their challenge increases greatly.

Pass, Turn, and SHOOT Lines!

SETUP:

Two lines each with 2 cones facing the goal. Cone A in each line is just above penalty box area with second Cone B about 12-15 yards behind.

Cone A has one player (Player 1) without ball and Cone B has many players with soccer balls. Goalkeeper is in the goal.



THE GAME:

Player 1 has his back to goal and receives a pass from Player 2 at Cone B.

Player 1 traps the ball and turns/pullbacks the ball past/around his cone.

Player 1 after turning SHOOTs on goal then gets in line at Cone B. Shoot it off quick! No more than 3 touches!

Meanwhile Player 2 runs to Cone A and takes the place where Player 1 was. And so it goes. Have this running at two lines and alternate sides.

Variation: After passing Player 2 becomes a DEFENDER and runs to prevent the shot being taken! This is great because it forces the shooter to shoot under pressure!

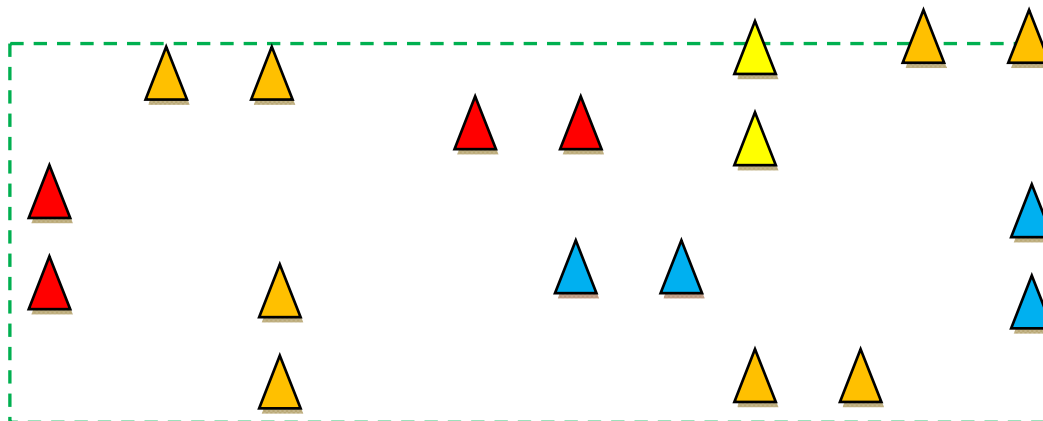
WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Passing. Turning the ball under control and shooting! Players should look up before getting off a shot. It's a good workout for the goalkeeper as well.

Passing Thru the Gates

SETUP: Pairs of cones 'gates' no more than 3 yards apart scattered randomly throughout an island area probably a 20x20 yard area. ('Gates' could be 3x3 yard squares too). The island area does NOT need to be marked off.

Players in pairs and each pair has a soccer ball.



THE GAME: When coach says, "AND...BEGIN!" all player pairs attempt to play as many passes to each other as possible through the cone 'gates'. Players cannot play a ball through the same gate on consecutive passes. Hence they must DRIBBLE to another gate!

Game goes for 60 to 90 seconds and the players keep score.

Each player group gets a chance to repeat the game to try and beat their own score. It is appropriate for younger players to compete against themselves, not other players.

VARIATION: For a round the Coach orders players to move the ball only with the OUTSIDE/INSIDE of their feet ...BOTTOM of their feet (turned like an "L") ...or orders players to SWITCH balls during the game! Play again and see if players can better their score.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

This activity encourages problem-solving, speed of passing, changing direction, and receiving and passing to feet. Players will have to keep their head up in traffic and the pairs must work together! They should talk and communicate! They are learning to dribble to a specific target and pass to a target at a pace that suits them.

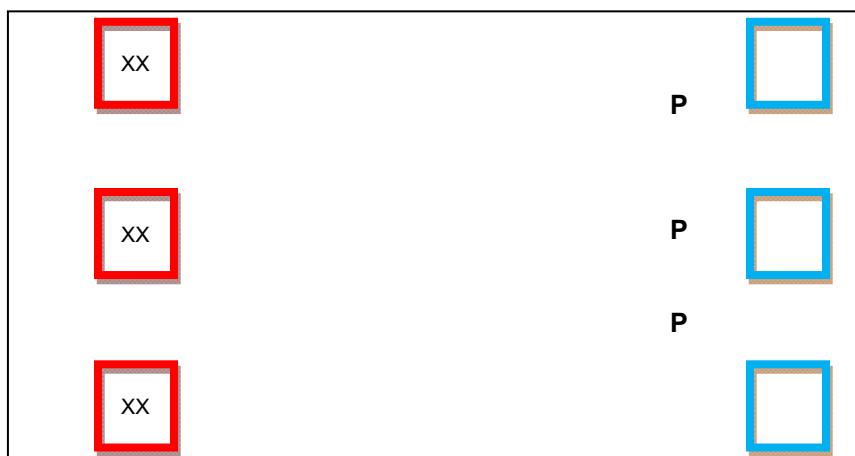
Why use the BOTTOM of their foot (turned like an "L") to move the ball? Because it simulates them turning their foot to make that all-important inside of the foot pass...an important skill to learn.

Reach the Square Game

SETUP:

Set up (ideally) six 6x6 yard squares as shown below. Three squares marked by RED cones (7+ yards between the squares) and 20 yards from that have three squares marked by another color let's say BLUE cones.

Three players without a soccer ball (the Ps) stand just outside the blue squares. All other players (the Xs) are in one of the red squares each with a soccer ball.



THE GAME:

On coach's command every player must change to a square at the other end. The team/players in the middle (the Ps) try to regain the ball in the process and dribble to one of the original squares.

Whoever is able to switch to a square with a ball gets a point. After 60-90 seconds stop the game and any player who has NOT reached a square gets ZERO points.

Play again before switching players. See how many points each player gets. Rotate until all players have started without the ball.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

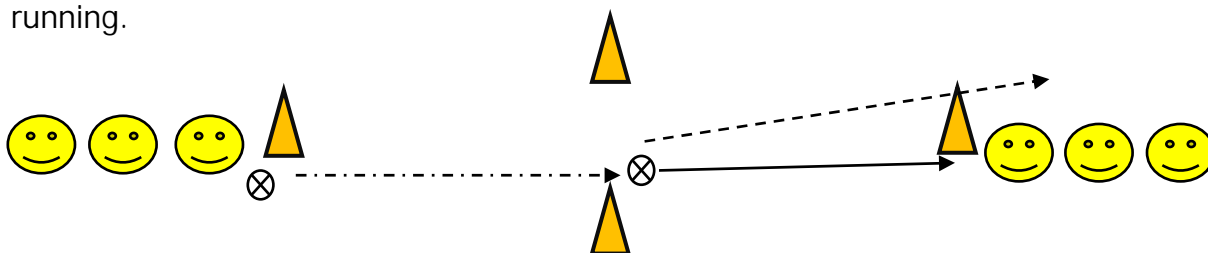
Dribbling in traffic and dribbling to a target under pressure and give them experience in taking away the ball from another player!

Receiving Line (Dribble and Pass)

SETUP:

Two cones, spaced apart, half of the group on one side (side A) in a line and the other half behind the other cone (side B) facing them in a line.

One ball. No more than 8 players per game! If more, have 2 games running.



Path of DRIBBLE = ----->

Path of RUN = ----->

Path of PASS = —————>

BALL = ⊗

THE GAME:

Player1 (Side A) with the ball dribbles the ball (touch it with every step!) through the cone(s) at the middle. Once at the middle they pass the ball the Player2 at the other line on Side B. Then player on Side B dribbles the ball through the cone(s) at the middle and does the same. Players go back to the end of line they passed to.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Gets players used to dribbling the ball with purpose/to a specific target

Passing while moving!

First touch sets up your second touch!

Receiving Line (Throw In)

SETUP:

Two cones, spaced apart, half of the group on one side (side A) in a line and the other half behind the other cone (side B) facing them in a line.

One ball. No more than 8 players per game. If more, have 2 games running.



THE GAME:

First player (Side A) with the ball uses a Throw-in technique to throw ball to first player on Side B. After throwing the ball the Side A player runs toward the receiving player to simulate pressure BUT DOES NOT TAKE THE BALL AWAY! After pressure they go back to the end of Side B's line.

Receiving Player on Side B brings down the ball and then dribbles to the Side A line and leaves the ball at his feet to repeat.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

First touch and importance of trapping the ball

Get in line with the ball

Select what part of body you will use to trap the ball

Relax body part at impact

First touch sets up your second touch!

Ball should come down no farther than a "legs length" away.

Red Light! Green Light!

SETUP:

Every player has a soccer ball!

Use big AREA or CIRCLE as the driving area! – Place blue/yellow/red vests and tell them that they are LAKES or LAVA and we cannot drive into the THEM!

THE GAME:

EXPLAIN: The players are taking their soccer ball out for a “drive”. To do this we dribble the soccer ball. Dribbling the soccer ball is a touch of the ball with every step with the foot. Inside Foot... Outside foot...Bottom...etc. Demonstrate this to the players.

GREEN is a quick dribble,

YELLOW is dribble slowly,

RED is STOP with bottom of foot.

PURPLE is REVERSE DIRECTION (Pull Back/U Turn)

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

We are helping develop the player’s fine motor skills!

This teaches and reinforces control of the ball. Reinforce the dribbling is NOT kick and chase...it is controlled movement of the ball.

This also gets them listening to commands.

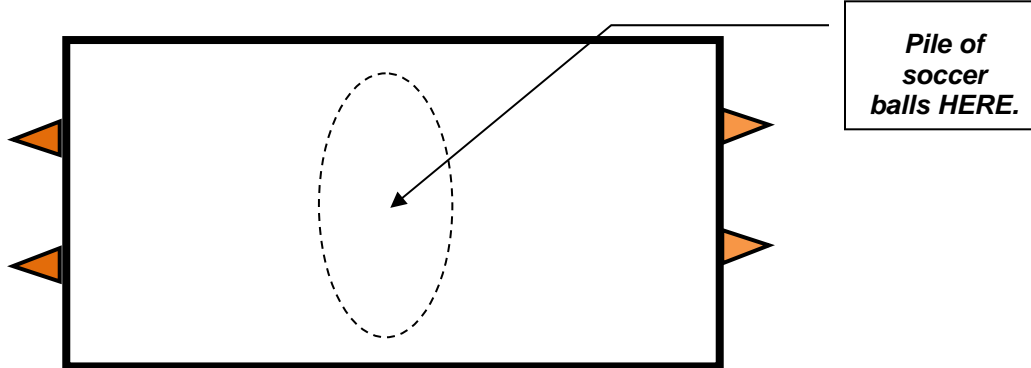
Rock Collectors

SETUP:

A rectangular area (20x30 yard area) with 2 Cone Goals on opposite sides of the area.

All soccer balls, many more than players, are scattered about in the mid-field area (dotted area below).

Players are grouped in teams behind their 'goal'.



THE GAME: Tell the players they are rock collectors. All the soccer balls are rocks!

On "GO" teams must COLLECT balls (one at a time) from the center pile, **dribble it back THRU their CONE GOALS and leave it there and go back and get more.** Do this until ALL BALLS in the center are gone. The team with the most rocks (soccer balls) collected wins!

Players should keep the ball close! Dribbling is NOT KICK AND CHASE!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Dribbling to a target under timed pressure.

This game self-adjusts for skill as a skilled kid may collect 3 balls for his team while a slower kid may do 1.

Shark Attack!

SETUP:

- Use pylons to create a 15 to 20 yard square.
- One player, the SHARK, starts outside the square without a ball.
- All other players, the TUNA FISHES, start inside the square (the TANK) each with a ball.

THE GAME:

- At the start, players in the Tank begin dribbling. Coach can use commands like "Outside Foot Only"... "Inside Foot Only"... "Do a U Turn"...etc.
- When the coach yells, "Shark's getting hungry!" the shark starts running around the outside of the square and the fish start dribbling around inside the square.
- Coach yells, "SHARK ATTACK!" the shark enters the square and has 30 - 45 seconds to kick balls outside the square "tank". When a ball leaves the square for any reason, the corresponding fish must leave the square and sit down.
- Choose a new shark and play another round until every player has been the shark once.

Play once and then explain and illustrate what "SHIELDING THE BALL" is. Explain that the player should put himself between the opposing player and the ball.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

For the TUNAS: Dribbling quickly in traffic and avoiding an opponent. They should also be using their outside, inside, & hoop cuts to keep the ball. Teaches & encourages them to SHIELD the ball from the shark.

For the SHARK: how to strip the ball from another player.

Soccer Island Tag

SETUP:

- Set up an "island" area with cones. It should be a big area like a 30x20 yard area.
- All players inside the area with soccer balls, 2 players (the taggers) start outside the area without balls.
- NOTE! The players with the balls should be considered a TEAM as should the 2 taggers!

THE GAME:

On "GO" players with the ball dribble around the area. The 2 taggers enter the area and try to tag all the players within 2 minutes.

Once a player is tagged frozen, they can only be un-frozen by another player dribbling by them and touching them.

While dribbling players must keep the ball close to them and stay in the area!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Dribbling to avoid an opponent and dribbling towards a target and teamwork!

Soccer Marbles

SETUP:

Group all players into groups of pairs with each player having a ball (2 balls per pair).

THE GAME:

Taking turns each player tries to hit the ball of the other player they are grouped with. NO DRIBBLING! One kick/pass of the ball is allowed per player turn.

Have the players keep score and have them play for 2 to 3 minutes.

See who gets the most amount of hits.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Passing and kicking accuracy, kicking to a point under no pressure (i.e. goal & free kicks).

(A Good Cool-down game after practice or game)

Taps

SETUP:

Every player has a soccer ball and starts with the ball between their feet with their knees bent.

THE GAME:

To start with, on coach's command each player bends down & touches the ball **between their hands** as many times as they can in 10 seconds. Do the same activity for **elbows**!

Use hands and elbows as the confidence builder. It's the FOOT touches that require balance and is harder!

Then, the next time, each player taps the ball **between their feet**. This is tricky as it requires balance and more coordination!

How many touches can each player get? Repeat 2 times

.

VARIATION#1:

Do 'Tap on Tops' where the players touch the top of the ball with the bottom of their foot/toes. Start stationary and then see if they can tap alternating feet while going around the ball.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

We are helping develop the player's fine motor skills! This teaches and reinforces control of the ball. Keep knees bent & tap ball with the front of the foot (this gives better control than the back of the foot).

Tigers & Antelopes **a.k.a: “Sharks & Minnows”**

SETUP:

A Big enclosed area about half a field size marked with cones.

Players (antelopes) each with a ball line up on one side of the field. If a large number of players, start by doing it in 2 shifts.

Coach(s) (the ‘tigers’) start in the middle of the area.

THE GAME:

Players dribble their ball across the field and thru the Tiger(s) to the other side.

For first crossing, coach should not try to get the ball but go in front of player and force them to turn with the ball. Get more aggressive as rounds continue.

If a tiger kicks an antelope’s ball OUT OF THE SIDES OF THE FIELD, that antelope becomes a tiger.

Play until there is 1 or zero antelopes left!

(SEE ALSO: the “GLOB” game...it’s similar but COACH is the only one taking away the ball and player continues dribbling!)

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

ANTELOPES: Dribbling into free space, shielding the ball and change of speed & direction with the ball.

TIGERS: Tackling & stripping the ball from an opponent.

*BEWARE! * For U6 you could get some kids crying saying “he took my ball!” We must explain to the player that this IS part of soccer and that if someone takes away your soccer ball go get it back! It’s all part of the game!*

The Turn Around Game

SETUP: This works best with 2 coaches!

Playing area is the length of a small-sided field or bigger.

First, demonstrate how to "Turn the ball". Dribble and have your assistant say "Coach Jim, turn around!" When he does, step past the ball, cut the ball back with the inside of your primary foot as you shift my body, then push the ball the other way and start dribbling back from where you came. It is an inside of the foot turn! You could also demonstrate the "Hook" or "Pullback" turn.

Place all kids with their own ball, at the far end with you and place your Assistant Coach at the opposite end.

THE GAME:

On "DRIBBLE!" all players dribble the ball towards your Assistant Coach (everyone at the same time).

When a kid approaches him, he specifically calls that kid's name, steps in front of them, makes a big sweeping arm motion, and says: "Stacy, Turn Around". **It's important to note that each kid ONLY turns when the coach calls that player's name!** The player makes that turn and is now dribbling to you, the Head Coach.

When he approaches **you**, tell **her** to turn around. Now she is heading back towards your assistant. Do this for all players as they come near you and your assistant. Go for 2-3 minutes!

Players should be reminded that dribbling is NOT kick & chase...keep the ball close!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

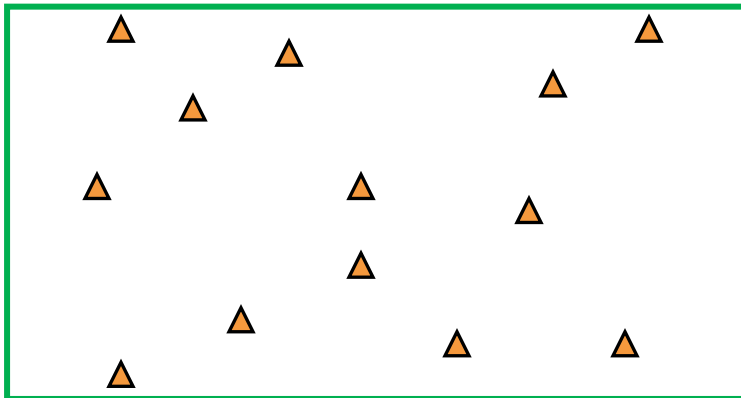
It forces players to keep their heads up, and it creates pressure and traffic! Naturally, some players are faster than others, so while all players start all going the same direction, you end up with kids going back and forth into each other and two way traffic! But the most important thing it teaches is the actual physical skill of turning.

This corrects the problem of scoring in the wrong goal during your games! 😊

Zap the Space Invaders

SETUP:

Set down a dozen or so cones over a wide area (20x30 yards) and every player has a soccer ball.



THE GAME:

Explain to the players that “space invaders” have come and are trying to take over the soccer field!

Ask them to “ZAP” as many invaders as possible by dribbling to a cone and kicking the ball at the space invader. If they touch the Space Invader with their ball that counts as a point!

Ask them to reset any cone they knock over and keep track of how many space aliens they shoot! (Parents can help in this regard!)

**For Under 6 age players: Parents should help the players count how many times they pass through the gates as the ability to dribble through gates and count is difficult at this age. Each player gets a chance to repeat the exercise to try and beat their own score. It is appropriate for younger players to compete against themselves, not other players.

The Game goes for 60 - 90 seconds and Players/Coaches keep score.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Players will have to keep their head up in traffic! They are learning to dribble to a specific target and pass/shoot to that target.

Zen Master Warm-Up(U10)

SETUP: Spread out many cones (make sure you have at least one per player) throughout the small field, the small field perimeter works well.

Each Player stands near a cone, one cone per player! – cone serves as point of reference...this is good for keeping younger kids spread out from one another and focused! (i.e. "Jay – stay at your cone please!")

Coach is where all players can see him...probably in the center of the area.

THE GAME/ACTIVITY:

Coach is the Zen Master! Coach demonstrates a skill and on command players perform skill repeatedly (20-30 sec.) You can introduce a new skill by asking the players: "I can do THIS...can YOU?"

- ***Activities Without Ball (developing motor skills!):***
1 foot balance... Up on toes...Back on heels...1 foot hop... 2 foot hop...bear crawl...crab crawl...jumping jacks...run forwards around cone...run backwards around cone...hop over cone...rub tummy while patting your head...touch your toes...etc.
- ***Introduce ball (developing motor skills with the ball!):***
Move ball with hands around legs together....move ball with hands in figure 8's between & around legs...Dribble around the cone(inside foot/outside foot)...Throw ball up, let it bounce, & catch the ball...Throw-Clap-Catch...Ball Taps with foot...Ball Tap on Forehead...Balance the ball on top of your head...Bring Thigh up to meet ball...Thigh & Catch...Ask Player to pick, ...really anything you want to work on!

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

This works to improve the player's motor skills and specific soccer ball control skills. Remember! US Soccer Federation states that for kids 4 to 8 years old "...*training sessions should be treated more as physical education than specifically soccer training*".

We coaches (& parents frankly) need to understand & acknowledge how limited the kids at this age are in what they're capable of doing on the field mentally & physically. Helping develop these motor skills is the critical first step.

Zombie Soccer!

SETUP:

A big island area marked by cones (say 20x20 yards). Put all players with their ball in the area. The Coach (the Zombie/monster) stands just outside the area.

THE GAME:

On "GO" players dribble their ball to stay away from the zombie (the coach) BUT MUST STAY ON THE ISLAND!!

The zombie (you, the COACH!) moves slowly around the area (perhaps dragging a leg, growling etc..)

If a player gets tagged by the zombie or goes off the island, they are either:

VARIATION#1: FROZEN until another player DRIBBLES the ball near them and touches them to un-freeze them.

...OR...

VARIATION#2: They must dribble to a "Hospital area" and do an activity to get back into the game (i.e. 5 jumping jacks, 5 toe taps on the ball or throw ball up and catch 3 times, etc)

Game goes for 2 minutes. Dribblers should be reminded to keep the ball close and keep their heads up!

This game is as good a time as ever to introduce the concept of 'keeping the ball close' and that dribbling is NOT kick and chase. The ball should be treated as a "puppy on a leash". If the puppy gets too far away you're going to lose him. In soccer if the ball gets too far away the other team is going to steal it.

WHAT THIS TEACHES:

Dribbling in traffic and dribbling to a specific target (i.e. away from the zombie, toward the frozen teammate).

Turning Moves from NY Red Bull Academy!



For video clips of these go to: <https://www.youtube.com/user/NYRBTrainingPrograms/featured> and look under "Ball Mastery" section!

Try these for your players at your training sessions! These are (for the most part) listed from easy to difficult!

The OUTSIDE CUT

Contact is made with the OUTSIDE of the foot while the non-kicking foot comes past the ball and plants allowing the player to pivot. Next touch is made with the nearest surface of the nearest foot while shielding the ball

The INSIDE CUT

Contact is made with the INSIDE of the foot taking the ball ACROSS the body into space. At the point of contact the knees bend to create a platform from which to accelerate!

The STOP TURN

Stop the ball with the SOLE/BOTTOM of the foot. Step PAST THE BALL and plant with the foot that stopped the ball. The knees bend to create a platform from which to accelerate. The next touch is made with the nearest surface of the nearest foot taking the ball in the opposite direction.

The U TURN

The non-kicking foot plants as the kicking foot reaches for the ball. Drag the ball BACK in the opposite direction shielding the ball as you turn. The next touch is made with the nearest surface of the nearest foot.

The CRYUFF TURN

Fake to strike the ball by planting the non-kicking foot in front of the ball. Use the inside of the opposite foot to move the ball BEHIND the non-kicking foot shielding the ball as you turn.

The STEP OVER

Pretend to play the ball with the INSIDE of the foot but move the foot around the front of the ball instead. Plant that foot and pivot back in the opposite direction. Take the ball away using the same foot.

The SLAP CUT

The ball is moved across the front of the body with the sole/bottom of the foot. The player IMMEDIATELY cuts the ball back with the OUTSIDE of the SAME FOOT creating space to pass or shoot.