

SOYSA U5-U10 Coaches Resource Guide For Skills Development

ODribbling

Passing

Shooting

General Approach to Coaching

1. FUN is the most important part of teaching soccer FUNdamentals. Players will respond and want to learn if practice sessions are fun.

2. POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT: Whenever possible, give individuals and/or groups positive reinforcement. Refrain from using negative comments. Use praise as an incentive.

3. BE CREATIVE AND USE INITIATIVE: Use drills that are challenging and demand players' attention.

4. MAKE A DIFFERENCE: Be motivational and inspirational. Enthusiasm and being energetic are contagious.

Did I mention FUN?

6. KEEP PLAYERS ACTIVE: If the drill is static for very long, players get restless. Keep players actively involved with a constant change in focus.

7. EACH PLAYER IS AN INDIVIDUAL: Be aware of player differences. Recognition of individual personalities will allow you to respond to all players, and they will respond to you positively.

8. STRIVE FOR QUALITY: In all demonstrations make the desired objectives clear. If a player

shows mastery of a skill, use him/her to demonstrate.

9. REINFORCE CORRECT TECHNIQUE: When you catch players doing drills correctly give them praise.

10. FUN is good!!!

11. ENCOURAGE PLAYER MOVEMENT: At all times make players aware of importance of readiness. Emphasize weight forward on toes and bouncing instead of flat footedness.

12. ROTATE POSITIONS: All players should be active as servers, assistants. In game situations change positions each quarter.

13. DEVELOP PLAYER RESPECT: Continually encourage players to support one another. Teach them to show good sportsmanship towards all players - including opponents - and respect others' attempts and efforts.

14. EQUALITY AMONGST PLAYERS: Give equal attention to all players in group or games. Do not leave the less competent players behind nor slow the advanced players.

15. FUN: Players learn best when they are having FUN!!

Coach's Role: Make It Fun

Practice unruly, kids misbehaving? How do you get them back in line? Who do you blame?

As coaches, the first place to look is ourselves. Practices break down for a number of reasons. One of the main reasons is that the practice that we are trying to run is, to the players, "boring". If a practice is "fun," it is unlikely that players will misbehave.

Most young children do not have the same practice/play better mentality of many adults. They practice hard when it is *fun*, and by so doing become better players. A small percentage will engage entirely with a boring drill simply for altruistic reasons – they are doing their best to be "nice" and respect the coach. However, this type of motivation does not produce the most effective training.

A fun practice usually means that the drills are challenging, understandable, meaningful to the age of the players, and have a competitive component. When a practice is breaking down, ask yourself some questions:

- Is this drill challenging at the *correct level*?
- Is this practice understandable?
- Is this practice active enough for all players?
- Does this practice have a fun/competitive component?

If you answer NO to any of these questions, you need to find a way to satisfy those aspects or switch drills. True, there are some times near Halloween and full moons where the troops are plain unruly and simply want to howl at the moon. But by fighting that instinct among our players, we know who will lose. So "simple it down" if necessary, keep the activity up, relax the rigidity, and use their excess energy to benefit the team.

The bottom line is that if you want things to cook, find the drills and mini games in this manual *that will work* for your team.

DRIBBLING

General Tips:

- Maintain close control with both feet.
- Be agile; stay on toes.
- Use all parts of feet: inside, outside, laces, sole.
- Move to get behind ball's path.
- Keep a soft contact.
- Concentrate on center of ball.
- Keep head up.
- Control ball first; don't just kick it away.
- Change direction and speed when turning.
- Be a friend with the ball.

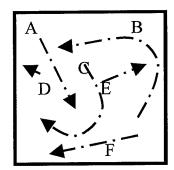
Dribbling - Skill drills

1. Dribbling in a grid (10x10 metres)

Formation

Players dribbling to coachs' commands

Move ball inside square.



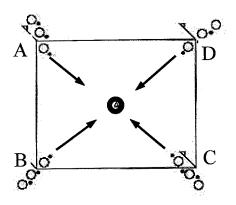
- Dribble with both feet in various directions, "stop" (using sole of foot)
- Dribble with both feet, "cone", players dribble around closest cone and back into center of grid.
- Dribble with both feet, "change direction" dragging the ball back with sole of foot and going in opposite direction.
- Dribble with "right foot only" and "turn" (with inside of foot only, outside of foot only)
- Dribble with "left foot only" and "turn" (with inside of foot only, outside of foot only) Dribble keeping the ball moving, "how many fingers am I holding up".
- Dribble, "stop & change" balls with another player as fast as you can. (Take a ball out of grid, take two balls out of grid)

<u>Find Spaces</u>. As kids move their ball inside square they try to find as much space as possible. When says stop the player with most space is winner.

<u>Between legs</u> Have half the players stand in the grid with their legs apart and for one minute have the other players dribble and meg (ball through the legs) the standing players. Then reverse roles

2. Dribbling in a traffic jam grid (10x10 metres)

Formation



Traffic jam dribbling

4 lines of players follow the commands of the coach. Each exercise is designed to have the player dribble into a congested area around the central cone.

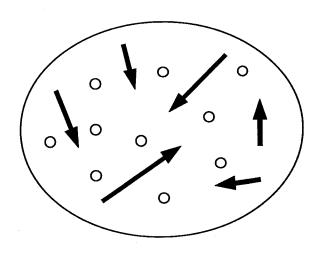
Commands

Dribble to cone and back (next player goes)
Dribble around cone left foot only
Dribble around cone right foot only
Dribble to cone and exchange ball with other player
Dribble to cone using the bottom of the feet only
(ball walking)
Dribble to cone and back faster

Line A dribble around the cone and end up at line B Line B dribble around the cone and end up at line A (same drill for lines C & D

3. Dribbling in a maze of cones

Formation



Coaches commands:

- * Dribble around the cones without touching them
- * Dribble with left foot only
- * Dribble with right foot only
- * Dribble and change directions when coach says "change"

Stand at a cone and:

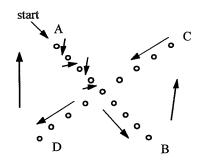
- * Dribble around the cone using the outside of your left foot only
- * Dribble around the cone using the outside of your right foot only
- * Walk ball around the cone

Follow the leader (shadow dribbling): In pairs, dribble around the cones, one player shadowing the lead player

Speed dribbling
Dribble at varying speeds
1=slow, up to 5 = fast

4. Dribbling obstacle course

Formation



Players line up at the starting cone.

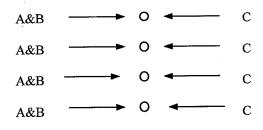
At 5 second intervals players start dribbling the zig-zag obstacle course. From A to B to C to D and then to the start again. Players need to dribble carefully where the two lines meet to avoid collisions

Variations:

Dribble course left foot only
Dribble course right foot only
Dribble course slowly then speed up every time
through
Add a goal to shoot on at the end of B and D
Weave the lines in different directions
Add a passing component between B and C or D
and A

5. Dribbling in a relays

Formation



Dribbling in a relay 20 metres apart with a cone in the middle of three player (A<B<C)

Start with the end that has two players

Relay commands:

Dribble around cone and onto player C
Dribble left foot only around cone, onto C
Dribble right foot only around cone, onto C
Dribble to cone, ball juggle 3 times, onto C
Dribble using the bottom of your feet, onto C
Dribble ball shuttles (ball quickly between feet)
Dribble to cone, 3 jumps over ball, onto C
Dribble to cone, head ball to self, onto C

Variations:

Do each relay continuously for a specific time Perform a dribbling move at the cone, then onto C Make the relay into a race

6. Multiple Squares

Formation

A	C
В	D

Multiple Square Drill (each square 5 metres)
Using 4 adjacent squares. All players start in one square with ball. Coach calls a square number and players move their ball to that square and keep dribbling inside new square until coach calls another letter

Have all players in square A dribbling very slowly because of the confined space, then call A& B now they can dribble in both squares and faster. With the addition of each square the players should dribble faster

Split players into all 4 squares. Call 2 square letters and those players have to switch squares.

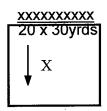
Variations:

Perform the above drills with left foot only and then right foot only

Dribbling - Games

1. British Bulldog (aka. sharks and fish)

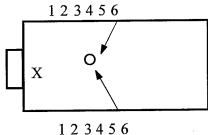
Players line up at the end of the grid.
Players (fish) are to dribble ball to the opposite side of the grid on your command. The coach is the first bulldog (shark) and tries safely to knock the players' balls outside the grid. If a player's ball is knocked out, the player becomes a dog. He/she takes a position in the middle and attempts safely to knock balls out of grid.



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2. Numbers Game

Split players into two teams, number them and put on opposite sides of grid. The coach (goalkeeper)X kicks a ball out and calls one or more numbers. When a player's given number is called they quickly go to the ball. The first person to the ball becomes the attacker and the other becomes the defender. The attacker dribbles bwards the goal and tries to score on the goalkeeper. The defender tries to stop the attacker from scoring and at the same time tries to score themselves.



3. Frozen Tag (ages 5-7)

Players dribble in a 20 metre square grid with the coach or some other player as it (the tagger). When a player is tagged they must freeze with legs open & hold their ball. They are unfrozen by any other player passing their ball through the frozen players open legs.

4. Capture the flags

Players dribble in a 20 metre square grid with one end of a pinnie tucked into their shorts. The object is steal other players flags (pinnie) and tuck them into your shorts. When you lose your flag you are not out, you simply carry on and try to steal flags.

5. Mr. Wolf (5&6 yrs)

Coach starts as the big bad wolf. Each little pig has a brick house (the end line where they begin). The Pigs shout "What's the time Mr Wolf" and the wolf shouts back a time. Each player advances the ball the number the wolf shouts out. Pigs ask again and repeat. When the Wolf shouts "Dinnertime", the pigs have to dribble their soccer balls back to their house and the wolf chases and tries to kick their ball away. Let each player have a go as the wolf.

6. Go – Go Stop (5 & 6 yrs)

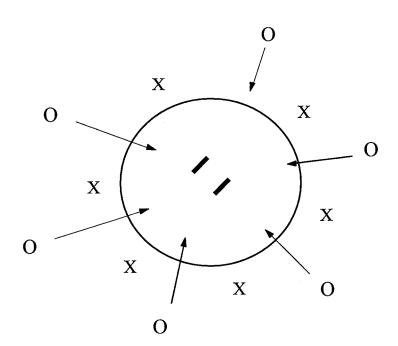
The players line up on the end line with the coach standing about 10' in front. Facing away from the players the coach starts walking calling out go-go-go (the players dribble in the same direction behind the coach). When the coach calls out stop, the players must sit on their ball as fast as they can. If the coach turns (after approx 3 seconds) and a player is not sitting on their ball they must return to the starting line. The object is to be able to go the length of the field without having to go back to the starting line.

7. Shark attack

Players are dribbling in a grid with the coach dribbling as an attacker (shark). Players must dribble away from the shark or else he/she will kick their ball out of the square. If your ball is kicked out, you must retrieve your ball and "ball juggle" for 30 seconds before you get back into the game.

8. Castle Guards

In the center circle is a goal formed by two cones (2 to3 yards wide). Half the players serve as castle guards stand around the center circle. The other half of the team are attackers & try to dribble their ball past the castle guards and through the goal. Each time they are successful they score one point. Play for 4 minutes, then reverse player roles.



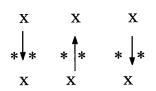
PASSING

General Tips:

- Use inside of feet as your primary passing method.
- Contact the ball at the equator (mid-line).
- Follow through in the direction of the pass.
- Change body position so it's comfortable.
- Stay relaxed. Don't be like a robot.
- Look at ball when passing.
- Pass to other players, not just kick and hope.
- · Move afterwards.
- Move away from players to receive ball.
- Turn body to face ball when receiving.
- Stay spread out.

Passing - Skill Drills

1. Passing in partners



Teaching pointers

Passing

- Pass with the side of the foot
- Contact the ball mid-seam
- Follow through in the direction of the pass

Throw-ins

- Throw from directly behind the head
- Throw equally with both hands

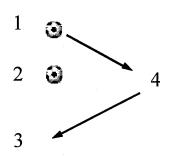
Keep both feet on the ground

Instep pass to partner through a pair of cones.

- Pass and trap with strong foot
- Pass with weaker passing foot
- Throw-ins 10' apart
- Trap turn and heal kick
- Control a bouncing pass and return pass
- Pass and trap with the outside of both feet
- Move back slightly and pass with laces for a longer pass
- Passing mini game

Start 1 foot apart and pass to partner, with each successful pass through the cones take one step back & try to go back as far as you can before you miss. When you miss you both start again passing 1 foot apart.

2. Pressure Passing

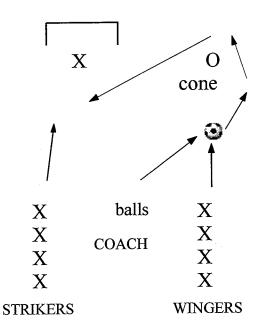


Have one player face 3 players (10' apart) who have 2 balls:

- * Player 1 passes to player 4, who passes to Player 3.
- * When 3 receives the pass, player 2 then passes to 4, who passes to 1, and so on.

Player 4 receives all of the passes for two minutes and then another player rotates into the pressure passing position.

3. Crossing pass from winger



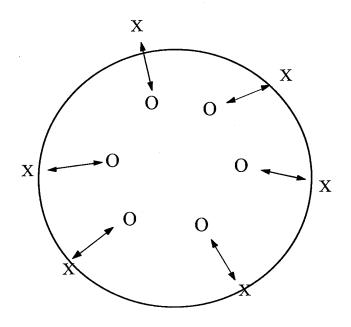
Form two lines (strikers and wingers).

The coach stands between the lines with all of the balls.

The coach passes the ball slightly in front of the winger to run onto and dribble around the cone. The winger then crosses the ball to the striker, who then shoots.

Once the shot is taken, the striker retrieves the ball and goes to the end of the wingers line, and the winger goes to the end of the strikers line.

4. Circle Passing



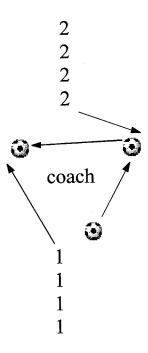
O players start with the ball, pass to X and get a return pass, & then proceed to the next X player.

Coach commands:

- Pass moving clock wise
- Pass moving anti clock wise
- Pass move random and pass to whatever receiver is open
- Pass to X, go around X, r eceive return pass

When completed, reverse roles, X move to the inside and O move to the outside as receivers

5. Give and Go (a.k.a. 1-2)



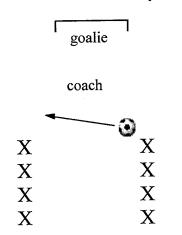
Coach stands in the middle of two lines.

Players must use the "give and go" pass around the coach:

- * Player 1 waits for player 2 to show either left or right.
- * Once player 2 moves to an area to receive an open pass, player 1 passes to player 2.
- * Player 1 then moves past the coach on the opposite side of the coach from player 2 and receives a return pass.

This is the most important play in soccer - practice it often!

6. Two on one passing



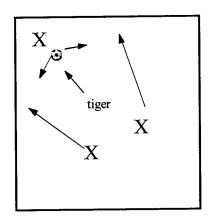
The first X players in each row attack the goal as a pair. They must make a minimum of 2 passes before they can shoot on goal.

The coach provides passive resistance by generally getting in the way, but at the same time encouraging players to move into a good position to receive a return pass.

Coaching point:

"When not in possession, get into position!"

7. Tiger ball (a.k.a. Pig in the middle)



3 vs 1 passing

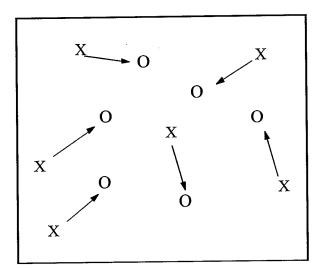
The object of this exercise is for the tiger (coach) to attack the ball and the 3 players to keep the ball away from the tiger.

The two X players who do not have the ball Need to move into wide positions to give X player with the ball two easy pass options.

Play for about 2 minutes and rotate in another player to be the tiger

Passing - Games

1. Top Gun



Half the team have a ball X and half are in the grid without a ball O. The players with the ball try and pass onto the shins of the players without the ball. The last player to be hit is the top gun. The ball must hit the player below the knee.

Once top gun is achieved, players reverse roles and the O have the ball and X evades the passes

2. European Hand Ball

An excellent game to encourage players to pass and move into position to receive a return pass.

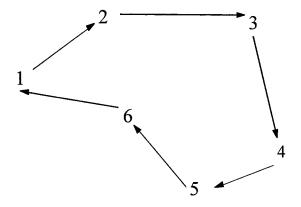
Divide your team into two teams.

Rules;

- pass by throwing the ball from hands to hands (as in basketball)
- When in possession player can only take 3 steps before passing
- On defence, players can only stand within 1 metre of the player with the ball and can intercept passes only (can't rip the ball from the attacking player)

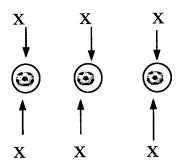
Goal is scored when a pass is completed to a player standing passed the goal line of the other team

3. Soccer golf



Set up a golf course using gates as the holes. Have players in groups of 3 or 4 pass their ball through the gates in the order you designate. Players count their number of passes. The lowest score wins. Teaching points: A variety of passing techniques, short, angled, long. Variation: have players design the course, or use obstacles such as trees, parents that players have to pass around.

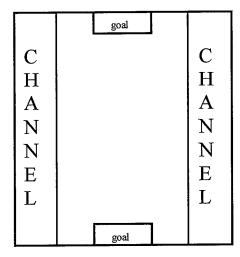
4. Soccer Bowling



Have players paired off approximately 10 metres apart with a ball balancing on a woz marker in the middle. Players pass their ball towards the ball in the middle in the hope of bowling off the marker. Score one point for every time the ball is knocked off the marker.

Players can compete in the pairs or make it a cooperative game and have the combined pairs total compete with other pairs.

5. Channel ball



This passing game places two players (wingers) in the sideline channels. These players cannot be checked while in the channel and can dribble anywhere in the channel. Their job is to dribble up the field and cross the ball back to one of their players (channel wingers are playing for both teams, so when they receive a pass they return a pass to the same team.

A good game to encourage players to pass the ball out to the flanks instead of directly up the field

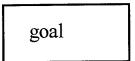
SHOOTING

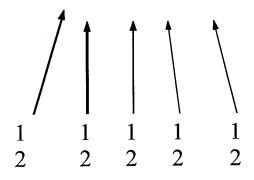
General Tips:

- Keep toe pointing down.
- Lock ankle.
- · Strike with shoelaces.
- Strike through center of ball.
- · Keep your eye on the ball as you strike it.
- Swing leg and follow through.
- Keep body relaxed, but keep foot locked.
- Accuracy before power.
- · Keep knee and head over ball.
- Place standing foot alongside ball, not in front or behind.
- · Aim for bottom corners of goal.
- Follow after shooting for rebounds.

Shooting – Skill Drills

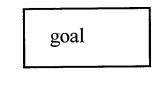
1. Run and gun

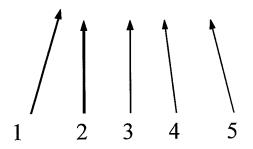




Players form five lines of two players each approximately 25 metres from the goal. All #1 players dribble in and shoot on goal when the coach says go. As #1 players retrieve their ball, #2 players take their turn. This is a practice breaka-way so players should shoot about 10' from the goal. The coach should play goal to control the drill.

2. Shooting by the numbers



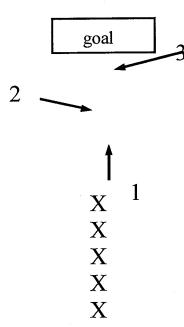


Five to eight players line up 25 metres from goal. When the coach calls your number you dribble in and shoot on goal. Two or three numbers at a time can be called to create a mini competition to see who scores first.

This is a practice break-a-way, so players should shoot about 10' from the goal. The coach should play goal to control the drill.

*An excellent drill to keep players attention because players must be ready to respond to their number being called at all times.

3. Triple-shot shooting



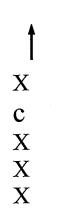
Players line up 20 metres out from the goal.

- Player touches the ball forward and takes a "laces" shot aiming at lower left or right side
- 2. Player proceeds with a side foot shot coming from the left at about 10 metres
- Player proceeds further with another side foot shot coming in from the right side at about 6 metres.

Taking 3 shots in a row is an excellent practice from different distances and helps keep players focussed

4. Blind Shot

goal

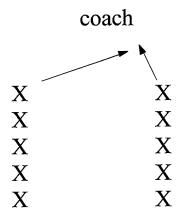


Players line up approximately 20 metres from goal. First player gives their ball to the coach and faces the goal. The coach © stands behind the player and feeds the ball forward for the player to run onto and shoot at goal. The coach passes on the right side, left side, between the players legs or over players head and the player is blind to what delivery they are going to get until it happens.

A good drill to practice reaction time

5. Two-on-one shot

goal



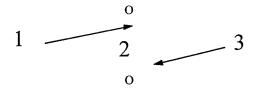
Have two lines of players approximately 20 metres from the goal.

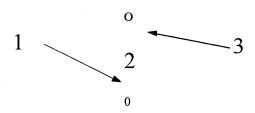
The first player in each row must make 2 passes to each other before they shoot on goal.

The coach is a passive defender, generally getting in the way but not tackling.

Coach encourages players to pass and then move into an open position to receive the ball for a shot.

6. Shooting and goalie drill





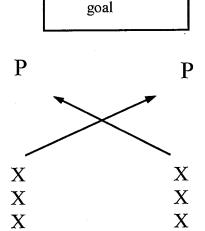
Players are grouped into three's. #1 shoots on #2 #2 then turns and faces a shot from #3 and then back to face #1 etc.

The space between shooter and goalie can range from 5 to 10 metres

After 2 minutes players should rotate positions so that every player has a turn at goal.

7. Criss-Cross

X



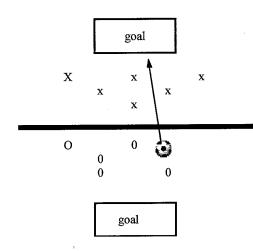
X

Two lines of shooters line up approximately 20 metres from goal. Alternately players pass the ball diagonally to the passer (P) and run onto a return pass for a shot at the 10 to 15 metre Spot.

Excellent drill for striking the ball coming across the goal and staying over the ball so it doesn't go up and over the goal.

Shooting - Games

1. King Louie

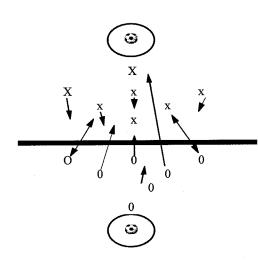


Divide the players into two even teams. Each team has a goalkeeper. The object is to shoot and score from your side.

Split the field in half with a set of woz markers. Coach serves a ball into one team and they must pass and spring a player open for a shot on the opponents goal from their own half of the field. Neither team can enter the others' half but players can block shots.

One variation is to allow one player to enter the other team's half to defend or attack.

2. Hulk Ball



Divide the players into two even teams.

Every player starts with a ball and must stay on their side of center. At the end of each half there is a woz cone with a ball balancing on top of it.

The objective is to knock the opposing team's ball off the cone.

Like dodge ball, if a player is hit below the knee, they are out of the game and must practice juggling on the side.

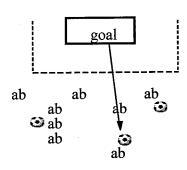
Each team can have one goalie in front of the crease.

First team to knock the opposing team's ball off of the cone is the winner.

3. The numbers game

Refer to the numbers game mentioned in the dribbling game section. This is also a great game to practice shooting.

4. World Cup



Divide your players into balanced pairs (weak player with a strong player, A + B).

The players stay outside the crease area (12 metres out from goal).

Balls are played out from the goalie and the pairs must win the ball from the other pairs, pass and produce a shot on goal.

When one pair scores, they go to the recording clipboard, mark down their goal, then continue playing.

The two pairs that have the most goals after playing for 10 minutes play in the world cup final (first pair to score in the final wins).

More! Games for Mini Soccer Practice (ages U6 – U9)

Marbles

- Split your team into two groups and line them up behind two opposing lines.
- · Each player should have a ball.
- Place an unusual colour (or size) ball in the middle this is the "marble" (a small #2 size ball works well).
- Have them try to move the marble across the other team's line by striking it with a ball.
- After the game starts, don't require them to use their own ball they are free to use any other ball they can find.

At first the players may get really excited and kick the marble. If this happens, call time-out and put it back.

Variation: eliminate the teams and play it in a circle. The game is over when the ball exits the circle.

Egg Hunt

- Have more balls than players.
- · Get the players to line-up across one end of the field.
- Take their balls and spread them out around the field these are the eggs.
- · At the other end of the field is a goal called the "basket."
- Blow the whistle and turn them loose!

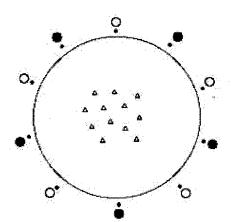
The object of the game is to get all the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. Time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task.

The kids really like this game. The more balls (eggs) the better. You should see them score, and turn right around and go back for more balls!

Downhill Skiing

- · Set up multiple gates in a grid.
- Each gate should be about 2-3 feet wide.
- Players are skiing (dribbling their ball) inside the grid but not going through the gates.
- When the coach shouts "Let's go Skiing!" the players try to "ski" with their ball through as many different gates as possible in the time the coach allows.

The Holy Grail



- Divide the players into two teams.
- Both teams spread around the circle with a ball (teams are intermixed).
 - When the coach signals, players strike the balls at the cones (the small kind that fall over when hit with a ball).
- The team that wins is team that knocks down last cone the "Holy Grail."

This exercise works on striking. Coaches, keep a good eye out for form - is ankle locked? Is plant foot pointed at target? Is center of gravity lowered? Is foot touching the ball center?

Spiderman

- Set up a large grid of 30x30 yards.
- This is a game of soccer tag where everyone but the coach ("it") is dribbling in the square.
- When the coach ("it") tags a player, they hold hands with the coach and carry on tagging players.
- As more players get tagged, they hold hands with the ever-enlarging spider web.
- Last player to be tagged is the winner.

Pirates

- · A combination of frozen tag and British Bull dog.
- Players must dribble from one end zone to the opposite end zone.
- However, one to three pirates are in the middle and can freeze you along the way by simply tagging you.
- Once frozen, you can be freed if your team players dribble their ball through your legs.
- Create a series of safe (no tag) islands in the middle of the playing area with small circles of cones. Players can find temporary safety inside these cone circles (safe Islands).

Star Wars

- · Running the gauntlet.
- · Players form a straight line, each with a soccer ball at their feet.
- The coach or designated player must run from one end of the line to the other about 10 feet away from the line.
- The players in the line attempt to hit the running player below the knee by passing their ball at him/her.
- Players love it when the coach runs the gauntlet!

Kicking the Ball

* * Reprinted from the U6-U11 House League Manual * *

Kicking the ball is fundamental to soccer, and yet many youth players never learn the correct technique for kicking. (Alternatively referred to as "striking" the ball.)

There are essentially two types of kicks:

- 1. square-foot passing kick (also very effective for shooting)
- 2. instep or "laces" kick (used for powerful shots, airborne crosses, and long clearances)

More advanced players will learn curling "banana" kicks (striking the ball with a glancing blow from the outside of their foot) and volleys (striking the ball when it's in the air), but these are not target skills for U6-U11. The most important consideration at U6-U11 is that players at least master the square-foot kick; if they also learn the instep kick, then that is good too. If time, desire, and competency in these core kicking techniques permit, coaches can by all means teach more advanced kicking techniques!

1. Square-Foot Kick

The square-footed kick is the basis of all soccer. In addition to passing, square-foot strikes are excellent for shooting on goal – they tend to be far more accurate that the great whalloping kicks kids often attempt, and even the most famous professional players frequently shoot on goal square-footed.

Correct technique for the basic square-foot pass:

- 1. Foot strikes the ball with the foot turned "square" and held rigid so that the leg is like a "hockey stick" hip of striking leg needs to rotate into an "open" position, knee slightly bent.
- 2. Foot of supporting leg is planted beside the ball, toes pointing to where you want the ball to go.
- 3. Head above foot of supporting leg (not leaning backwards off-balance).
- 4. Foot strikes ball at middle/top-half of ball, middle of side of foot.
- 5. Ball should have top spin and stay on the ground.
- 6. NO TOE PUNTS!!!

(a). Square-Foot Drill for Beginners U6-U9

It's very important to introduce correct technique for striking the ball at an early age. If you are working with players in U6-U9, it would be great to repeat this drill every practice/game day for just 3-5 minutes, to refresh their technique. (The great thing about this drill is that it also helps with early goalkeeper training at same time!).

- 1) Put players into pairs with one ball.
- 2) Player A kneels and holds the ball with palms behind it, fingers on sides, while Player B (facing them) gently hits the side of the ball with their foot, practicing planting their supporting leg and swinging their kicking leg while the coach "inspects" and corrects technique where necessary. (Player B should have at least 10 gentle swings at the ball, with a chance for the coach to see.) Switch Player A and Player B and repeat.
- 3) Progress to movement next. Player A now places the ball on the ground and retreats 3-5 yards, kneels and waits with hands ready to receive the ball on the ground (emphasize that you want the ball to roll on the ground after it's struck).
- 4) Player B strikes the ball square-footed into the hands of Player A, who stops/places the ball and again retreats 3-5 yards. The hands are the "goal." Continue across the field, then switch Players A and B.

(b). Square-Foot Drill for Intermediate Players U6-U11 "Squirrels & Nuts" Game (Variation)

- 1) Mark a square 20 x 20 metres with plastic woz markers.
- 2) Mark four corner "nests" 3 x 3 metres.
- 3) Mark a centre circle 4 metres in diameter.
- 4) With all balls in centre circle and teams in all four nests, teams identify one player who will stay in nest as a 'target' person to receive passes (important soccer concept).
- 5) On coach signal, all players other than target persons run to centre circle, then pass as many balls as they can to their target person in the nest, who must control/receive the ball.

Coaching Points:

- Emphasize eye contact and accurate passing. Accuracy comes with correct technique!
- Observe passing technique to make sure ball is being struck square (accuracy). If you see a lot of side spinning, curling, and generally errant passes, you know that you need to coach basic passing technique again.

2. Instep Kick for Shots/Crosses

Teaching the correct technique for an instep kick can be very difficult – be prepared to exercise a lot of patience with your players, and be methodical in breaking-down the essential mechanics and movements for them.

Correct technique for the instep kick:

- 1. Foot strikes the ball with the "laces" of the boot NOT THE TOES! Instruct players to curl their toes DOWNWARDS into the sole of their kicking foot, and ensure that the point of contact is the long arch of bone between the base of the big toe and the ankle, just slightly to one side of the laces. (Rub their shoe laces and the bone ridge to be graphic.)
- 2. Foot of supporting leg is planted beside the ball, toes pointing to where you want the ball to go.
- 3. Head above foot of supporting leg (not leaning backwards off-balance).
- 4. Player approaches the ball from a slight angle (20-45 degrees), not from straight behind.
- 5. Foot strikes middle of ball for low drives and shots, under ball for lofted crosses and clearances, slightly under and wrapped "around" ball for curling crosses and shots.
- 6. Practiced technique can produce these effects: "knuckling" ball without spin for straighton power shots, back-spinning ball for lofted chips and crosses, side-spinning ball for curling crosses and shots.

(a). Instep Kick Drill for Beginners U8-U11 (U6-U7 optional)

The instep kick should be introduced to players only after it's clear that they have basic competency in the square-foot passing technique, otherwise it can be like teaching players to run before they can walk.

- 1) Put players into pairs with one ball.
- 2) Player A kneels and holds the ball with palms behind it, fingers on sides, while Player B (facing them) gently kicks the ball with their foot. The kicker practices stepping into the ball in "slow-motion", planting their supporting leg and swinging their kicking leg while the coach "inspects" and corrects technique where necessary. (Player B should have at least 10 gentle swings at the ball, with a chance for the coach to see.) Switch Player A and Player B and repeat.
- 3) Progress to movement by putting a parent/assistant coach into a small goal 3-5 metres away. Provide every player with a ball and line them up facing the "goalkeeper". Let players take turns taking practice

shots. (Ideally, you can have 2-3 parents in 2-3 different "goals", so that each player is shooting more frequently.)

4) If you are practicing in a gym, you can permit players to kick against the wall, as long as they have safe distance between them for errant rebounds. Beginners can use their hands to collect the rebounds – the emphasis initially is on producing lots of practice shots – but more advanced players (U10-U11) can be challenged to "collect" or receive the rebound with their feet, their chest or their thighs.

(b). Instep Kick Drill for Intermediate Players U9-U11 "Blast the Coach" Game

This drill is a variation on a drop-kick or punt. The difference is that the players are learning to lock the ankle of their kicking foot with the toes pointing downwards. Success in the drill demands it!

- 1) Coach(es) or parent(s) squat on their haunches in front of a tall wall or fence as a shooting target. (Wall/fence is to catch errant shots.)
- 2) Players run/step up to a line 3-5 metres away with a ball in their hands, and must drop-kick the ball at the coach. (The first few shots will usually go skywards! Players must collect their own balls.)
- 3) Encourage the players to hit the coach/parent with friendly taunts and jibes! Accuracy will rapidly improve!

(c). Instep Kick Volley Drill for Advanced Players U10-U11 Toss & Shoot

This drill coaches a "half-volley" shot – one where the ball is struck by the instep while the ball is in the air, but after the ball has already bounced once (or twice if necessary) on the ground.

- 1) Warm-up with partners 3-5 metres apart, spread out in two lines facing each other, with one ball between them, drop-kicking the ball at each other GENTLY. Players target their partner's chest striking the ball out of the air, ankle and toes locked downwards. Partners use hands to catch the ball.
- 2) After each partner has had 5-10 kicks, line up all the players with a ball in their hands in front of the goal, about 5 metres out. A coach or parent is in goal to collect and return balls with a toss to one side of the goal.
- 3) One-by-one, players step forward, then toss the ball straight-up in the air in front of themselves, wait for the ball to bounce once, then strike the ball with an instep "laces" kick. Players collect their balls if they miss the goal.
- 4) WARNING: Make sure players wait for previous shooter to get out of the way!

Coaching Points:

- Emphasize eye-on-the-ball, and waiting for the ball to fall again AFTER the bounce calm and easy.
- Emphasize that "power" is not required instruct them that proper technique (ie. striking the ball
 on the "sweet spot") will result in a shot that is both accurate and ABUNDANTLY powerful.