



# **AYSO REGION 55**

## **U08 COACH CLINIC HANDOUT**

We thank you for volunteering to coach. We hope you will have a great season and a wonderful experience teaching these little players to love the game of soccer.

### **A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE PLAYERS**

- Attention span is a bit longer than U06 players but not much
- Inclined toward small group activities
- Always in motion: scratching, blinking, jerking, rocking...
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Shout praise. Give "hints".
- They want everybody to like them.
- Developing physical confidence. (Most are able to ride a two-wheeler.)
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same gear as them.
- Lack of sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in apparent lack of coordination.
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. Make sure they get adequate water breaks.
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. Their assessment of themselves - if they tried hard then they performed well. Regardless of the actual performance. Thus, they need to be encouraged constantly, and asked, "Now, can you do this?" They will try hard.
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play, and remembering what goal they are going for but in the heat of battle, they will sometimes still forget. They still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time.
- 6, 7 and 8 year old players are a bit more compliant than their U06 counterparts. They will be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to have a good understanding about what it means to play a "game".
- They are starting to cooperate more with their teammates.
- Often they repeat the phrase, "I can't do that!" but will then quickly run to you to show you that they can, even when they only think they can.

### THINGS YOU CAN EXPECT NO MATTER HOW GOOD A COACH YOU ARE

- There will be at least 200-300 falls during the season, but, now they will usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys.
- They still want to wear a pinnie, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who is who's best friend as you try to make up teams.
- School conflicts will come up...please, let them go (they must face their teachers 5 days a week).
- They will wear their uniforms to bed. ☺

### SO, REMEMBER THIS

- Small sided soccer is the best option for these players. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but it is an easier game to understand.
- Because of rapid growth spurts during this age, players will go through time when they seem to have lost control of their body. What they could easily do 2 weeks ago now seems unattainable. Be patient.
- Passing is not an important part of their game, no matter how much anybody yells at them to do otherwise, it is much more fun to dribble and shoot. Let them.
- Training once or twice a week is plenty, and should not last longer than one hour.
- Each player needs to bring their own size 3 ball to practice. Learning how to control it should be the main objective. They need to touch it as many times as possible during fun activities that will engage them.
- Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.
- Incidental things are important. They are forming the habits that will impact their future participation. Ask them to take care of their equipment (water bottles included), cooperate, listen, behave, and try hard. Realize, however, that they often forget and will need to be reminded often.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and work from there.

## **WHAT TO DO FIRST?**

Read your Regional Handbook and this Coach Clinic Handout thoroughly.

## **WHAT TO DO SECOND? CALL YOUR PLAYERS**

Before your team meeting you need to call all your players and make some decisions. Have these items set before your team meeting if possible. You don't really want them to be open for debate at the meeting. Be flexible, but remember, you are the one who stepped up to coach. They had their chance, trust me. Make sure it works for you first.

Some parents of U08 players will stay for practices and some will not. Remind them of this when you are trying to get each parent to step-up and volunteer for something. If they are going to stay anyway, they may as well participate. Make it clear that everyone must do something. The old, "You're going to be at every practice and game anyway" works well. Parents need not know anything about soccer. Older siblings, particularly those who already play soccer, are also very valuable. They can help assist at practice or even be one of your referees.

### **PRACTICE DAY / TIME**

Practices can begin as of August 1<sup>st</sup>. That said, a lot of U08 teams do not begin practicing until mid August. Whatever works for you and your players is fine as long as you do not practice before August 1<sup>st</sup>.

As coach, you will determine the practice days and times that work best for you. Most coaches do ask their players parents if there are any days that they absolutely cannot practice in order to ensure that the players can attend. Do this when you initially call them so that you can have practice days set before your team meeting. It is best NOT to leave practice days up for debate.

U08 should practice late afternoon. You cannot practice too early since school is still in session, and our permit does not apply that early anyway, and you cannot practice too late since U08 players should be home for dinner by 6pm. Most U08 teams practice once a week or twice a week, for one hour, sometime between 4 and 6pm.

You can practice at any of the schools listed in your Regional Handbook (you read it, right?). If you have a player who absolutely cannot make your practice day/time they can just attend the games and not practice. Or, if they choose to, they can be removed from your team and placed on the waitlist for another team if a spot opens up. But, we don't guarantee that there will be a spot or that they will be able to make that coach's practice time either. We do not move players from one team to another once they are formed. And, if you have this packet, they are formed. Essentially, they need to decide if they want to play soccer or do their other activity for the 10-12 week season.

## TEAM PARENT

Find two when you make your initial calls. If you have a “career” team parent, most likely they will tell you on the phone. Be sure to look at the player registration forms when you make your calls to see who volunteered to team mom, ref, etc so you know who you are calling. If you do not have a “career” team parent you need to find some people willing to do the job. You really want to have at least two. It’s a big job. Once you find these people you will give them the second folder you were given. This will give them all the info they need to do the job. Don’t do their job. If they have questions there is a resource listed that they can contact.

## ASSISTANT COACH

Again, try to find this person when you are making your initial phone calls.

## REFEREES

You want to find three referees. Essentially a Referee and two Assistant Referees. Referees just take a short class, get a uniform and whistle and ref games. It’s easy. And, youth referees are perfect so hit up those big sisters and brothers to do this work.

*Remember, you can’t coach and referee at the same time so you can’t be your own team’s referee. And, there are at least 8 parents on your team. You are one and are coaching, two to team mom, three to ref, and two to do field set-up/takedown. Everyone does something. It’s an all volunteer league.*

## **TEAM MEETING**

If you don’t already have them assigned, you will need to finalize your AC, two Team Parents, three Referees and two Field Set-up/Takedown People. Remember, your team must set-up the goals and line the field if you have the first game of the day on that field and you must take down the goals if you have the last game. Field set-up needs to be done 15 minutes before game time.

You’ll need to cover the following during the team meeting:

- Pick a team name so the Team Parent can get your banner order going.
- Complete your Team Info Sheet and make sure your AC, Team Parents and Referees have turned in their volunteer paperwork. Field set-up people do not have to submit paperwork. If they have not already, they will need to give it to you. Volunteer paperwork must be done every year so even if they did it last year they need to do it again for this season. In order to get your uniforms you must turn in your Team Info Sheet and any outstanding volunteer paperwork. And, yes, we will know who has not turned in paperwork. If you are not sure about a volunteer, your Coordinator can tell you if their paperwork is in or not.

- Let the parents know what you expect the players to bring to practice. That you expect them to be on time. And, that if they do not stay they must pick their kids up on time.
- Explain the AYSO philosophy specifically 'Everyone Plays'. Remind them that the most important thing is that the players have fun. It is not about winning or losing.
- Explain your parent behavior expectations for practices and games. If you are clear about this now you will have no problems with unruly parents or bad behavior. Tell them that they may only cheer positively. That they are not to instruct or coach. That they are to say nothing negative to the referee before, during or after the game. This is where you really need to convey that you are in charge.
- Make sure you give the Team Parent their Regional Handbook folder.
- Be sure to hand out a Team Contact List with all the player and parent info.

# RUNNING PRACTICES

Here is a list of the things you should have with you at each practice/game:

- Size 3 soccer ball – provided in your coach bag
- Extra bottles of water - for you or for the kid who doesn't have one
- Small First-Aid kit – you can pick-up an inexpensive one at a drug store
- Ball air pump – provided in your coach bag
- Registration forms - you must have these with you at all practices/games
- Practice Discs – provided in your coach bag
- Scrimmage Vests (aka Pinnies) – provided in your coach bag
- Goalkeeper gloves – given to coach clinic attendees
- Flags – given to coach clinic attendees
- Stickers - we have given you some. If you want to give treats, such as candy, that is fine as long as your parents agree. Remember to let the kids equate soccer practice (exercise) with fun not candy.

Your players should have the following at every practice/game:

- Size 3 ball
- Shin guards covered by socks
- Cleats (baseball cleats ARE NOT allowed – no toe cleats)
- Water

## CONTROLLING SIX 6 & 7 YEAR OLDS FOR 1 HOUR

### *Player Circle*

When you want to talk to the players all together, instruct them to put their balls in the center of a circle and sit surrounding the balls. This gets the balls out of the hands of the players and reduces mayhem. If you don't separate balls from players, you will be amazed at the mischief they can invent. They are truly creative! The circle also ensures that no player sits behind another, another opportunity for fun. Sitting players do not have the same freedom to move into trouble that standing players do.

### *Water Break Time*

A key component to getting and keeping attention is to attend to players' needs for rest, water, and down time. Use breaks in the action to give your players rest, water, and down time. Use the time to organize your assistants for the next activity.

### *Players who don't want to Play*

That's ok, let them sit and watch. Always encourage their participation, but never force them to do it if they don't want to. Eventually they will see the other kids having fun and they will want to join in too. If they don't that's ok too.

### *Unruly Players*

Sooner or later, you are going to have one or more players get unruly. Dealing with them is multilayered and there is no single rule to follow. First, look at yourself. Are you at fault? Is practice boring? Have you dwelt too long on a single activity that is boring to a 7 year-old? Has the practice run so long that players are losing interest? Are your players tired or thirsty? Are too many players watching other players perform the activity? Next, remember that a guiding principle is that the children should have fun. Is it more fun to finish the dribbling activity or play tag? Balance the work component of practice with the fun component. The world won't end if two players get into a tickling match.

Now, if you do have a difficult child. One who disrupts practice repeatedly in a negative way. I recommend first that you have your AC continue the practice and you talk to the child away from the team. Explain how the behavior is not acceptable and that you will not allow it to continue. Tell them that if it continues you will be forced to speak with their parents. This usually does the trick. If not, speak with the parents and they should take care of it. But, give the child a chance to change their behavior on their own first. You'll be surprised how effective this can be with children. Remember the days of "Wait until your father gets home!" This is the equivalent.

If you have a child that this does not work with and you are at your wits end, contact – [coach@ayso55.org](mailto:coach@ayso55.org). Seriously. You should have fun too and dealing with difficult situations in not fun and not in your volunteer job description.

### *Unruly Parents*

OK. There it is. We have parents who get out of hand. Parents get out of control at practice, sometimes hounding their child to run faster, to do better, or to pay attention. Although it doesn't happen very often, parents also get out of control at games, "correcting" volunteer referees who may be running the first game they have ever seen.

If the parent is hounding their own child, first try reminding them that their child's behavior and skill is no different than the other children. Often parents are concerned that their child is not doing as well as the other children. Really, they just aren't seeing the other children. You can do this as a chat after practice or call them. Bottom line is that they need to understand that their yelling at their child is hurting their child's development as well as all the other children on the team and, as the Coach, you can't allow that. Make that clear.

If they are getting too worked up at the games, yelling at referees or just cheering too loudly, or negatively toward your opponent try the same approach as above. Have a chat with them explaining that they are making the team look bad and negatively affecting all the children on the team and you can't allow that. If they can't control themselves they'll need to stay home on game days.

Again, if you just can't convince a parent to change their behavior contact – [coach@ayso55.org](mailto:coach@ayso55.org) and we will assist you in the most discreet way possible.

EACH 1 HOUR LONG PRACTICE WILL HAVE THIS SAME STRUCTURE

<i>5-10 MIN PRIOR</i>	<i>YOU AND YOUR AC ARRIVE AND SET-UP</i>
5 MIN	FREE PLAY / LATE PLAYER ARRIVALS - Select a "Free Play" that follows in this handout.
5 MIN	STRETCHES
13 MIN	ACTIVITY 1 - Select an Activity that follows in this handout. It doesn't matter which one you choose.
2 MIN	WATER BREAK (yes, again)
13 MIN	ACTIVITY 2 - Select another Activity that follows in this handout. It still doesn't matter which one.
2 MIN	WATER BREAK (really)
15 MIN	4v4 SCRIMMAGE (4v3 if one is missing, 3v3 if two are missing, etc)
5 MIN	WRAP-UP
<i>5-10 MIN AFTER</i>	<i>YOU AND YOUR AC STAY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AND MAKE SURE ALL KIDS GET PICKED UP</i>

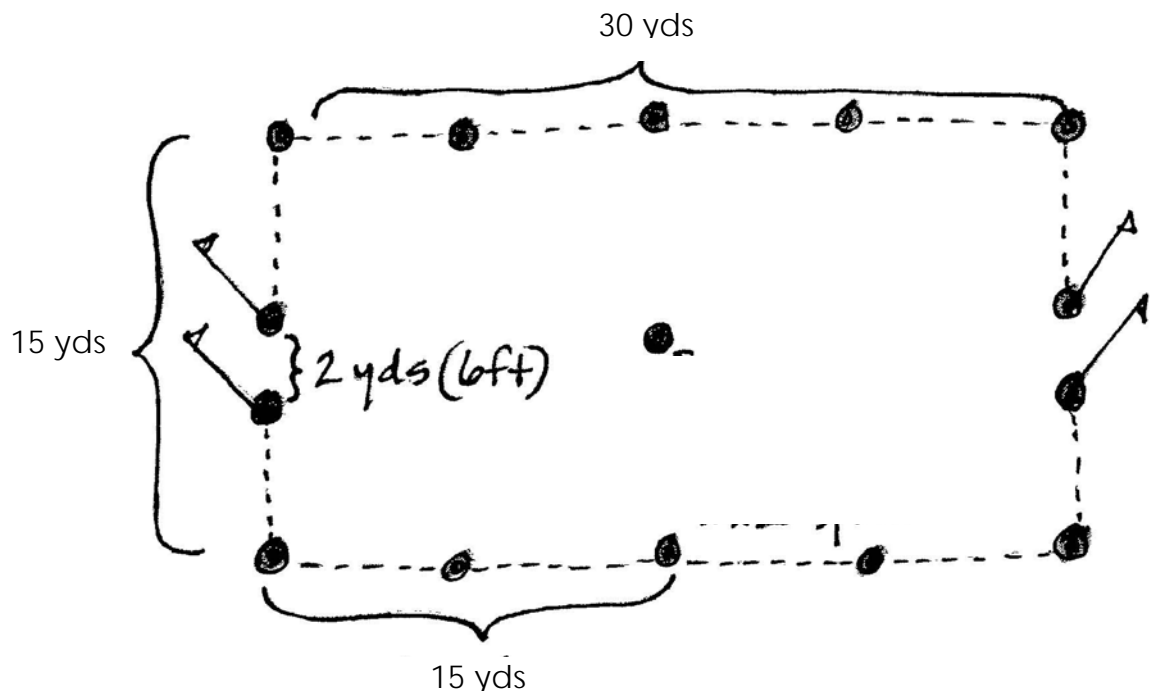


## SET-UP

Be sure to arrive 5-10 minutes prior to each practice to set-up and plan to stay 5-10 minutes after to answer parent questions or wait for all the kids to be picked up. NEVER LEAVE A KID AT THE FIELD EVEN IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAITING TO BE PICKED UP.

When you arrive at the field you should set-up in a way that allows you to do the activities and finish with your scrimmage without having to place more discs. You should only have to pick-up discs as you go. So, start with your 15 x 30 yard scrimmage grid. Don't use too many discs to set it up. And, place your flag for goals as shown below. You don't need very much space to run a U08 practice.

All of the activities in this handout can be done using either the 15 x 15 or 15 x 30 grid (as shown below).



## FREE PLAY

Free play describes the condition where individuals play without restrictions. Players are given general directions on time or space, on what they should attempt to accomplish and then left on their own. Free play allows players to develop natural abilities. You should not instruct during free play except for the initial direction. For U08, you will probably have to give the initial direction several times but you should not give any more direction than that. You will also have to make sure the parents understand that they are not to instruct. After a few practices players may understand that free play is the first thing they will do. Let players know as they arrive what free play is that day and have them start. No need to wait for the whole group to arrive.

Free Play 1 – Tell your players to take their ball and dribble around in a set space (use your 15 x 30 yd grid). Tell them that they need to make sure they stay inside the space marked by the discs and that they should not run into other players. Don't tell them anything else. Let them do whatever they do.

Free Play 2 – Tell your players to take their ball and juggle. For U08, you will need to show them what juggle is. Then just let them juggle however they want even if they use their hands a lot.

Free Play 3 – Tell your players to take their ball and go shoot on both goals (you use your flags for goals). Remember, no instruction on how they do it.

Free Play 4 – Make something up. ☺ Or, repeat a previous Free Play. Dribbling is always good.

## STRETCHES

For U08, you really just want to teach them that you stretch before you exercise. A quick touching of toes, jumping jacks, leg stretches, etc will suffice for this already limber age group.

## ACTIVITIES

No matter which activities you choose from this handout you will deliver them to the players using the same process – SAY IT, SHOW IT, HAVE THEM DO IT, ASSESS IT, INSTRUCT.

1. SAY IT. Tell the players what activity they are going to do. The name and a very, very simple verbal description. You are simply trying to elicit excitement for the activity. "Okay, now we are going to play keep away!"
2. SHOW IT. Then, using your AC and a couple of your players, demonstrate the activity (don't pick the same players for every demonstration). Have the demonstration players actually do it while the other players watch.

Remember to keep it short and simple. These players have a short attention span.

3. HAVE THEM DO IT. Now get all the players involved. Be patient, they will get it. It will take time though. Don't stop them to explain again if you can help it. Just help each kid one at a time if necessary until the activity is running well.
4. ASSESS IT. Assess the activity and how your players are able to do it. Can they? If not, simplify it. If it is too easy, make it harder. If the activity breaks out groups, are the groups balanced? If not, correct the groups so they are balanced.
5. INSTRUCT. During the activity you will instruct individual players on proper technique. Please do not embarrass players. When you give them "hints" do it quietly with just that player. Anything you shout should be positive – "good job", "great work", "excellent", etc. It will not hurt to say these things even if you don't think them! The better your players think they are, the better they will be, seriously. Remember that U08 players will naturally use BOTH feet. That is, until some adult asks them, why aren't you using your right foot? Each player will develop their own style. This is VERY, VERY important in soccer. There is a huge amount of creativity in this sport and it is what makes the difference between a good player and a great player later on. Don't quash it. AND, NEVER, NEVER CRITICIZE A SHOT. Once a player is criticized on how they shoot they become less likely to take shots. The more they hear it the less they shoot. Every shot is a good shot. The only bad shots are those not taken. Encourage shooting. And, praise attempts not just goals.

#### 4v4 SCRIMMAGE

Use your 15 x 30 grid, with flags in place for goals, to run a 4v4 scrimmage. Make sure your teams are balanced. Don't put your strongest players on one team and weakest on the other. We've given you pinnies so they, and you, can tell who is on what team. Be sure to trade the pinnies so that all the players get to wear them sometime since pinnies are pretty popular with U8 players.

Set each team up in a diamond shape (one player up, one back, one right and one left). Don't worry if they don't keep their shape. We are just trying to get the concept of shape into their little head early on. So, explain that it is a diamond and show them. They will get it. During a real game they will not maintain much shape. Don't be disappointed.

The best way to help them with shape and spacing is to tell them to pretend that the four of them (their team) are attached with rubber bands. If they get too close to each other then the bands will fall on the ground and they will trip over them. If they get too far away from each other then the bands will break. U8 players get this and it makes it easy for you to remind them about shape without saying "shape" which U8 players won't understand anyway. Instead, you tell them, "be careful your rubber bands are going to break".

Now, this is the hard part...let them play. Don't stop them every 5 minutes to correct them. Just let them play. As they play, you can pull players aside to give them "hints" on what to try. This is not the time to teach a player to pass or kick or throw-in though. You do that in your activity time. Watch them. The things you see in the scrimmage that need fixing are your activities for your next practice.

Remember not to give them too much to think about with your comments. They just can't absorb too many concepts at once. For U8, I recommend one thing, maybe two, if one of the things is a good throw-in. So, for example, keep reminding them not to let their rubber bands hit the ground or break. That's it. If a throw-in is taken you can tell them to remember the throw-in practice, remind them to keep their feet down, etc. That's it. Don't flood them with dribbling technique, passing technique, shooting technique in one 4v4 scrimmage. Once they get the rubber band thing you can move on to something else for your next scrimmage.

### WRAP UP

At the end of practice have the players get their water and come back to you in the circle. This is when you can remind them of things they learned. Praise them. Handout stickers. Let them ask questions. They will ask you silly things not related to soccer at all like "Do you like pizza?" Enjoy it. It will remind you to be more like a kid. ☺ Always remind the parents what time your game is that weekend and what time you want the players there.

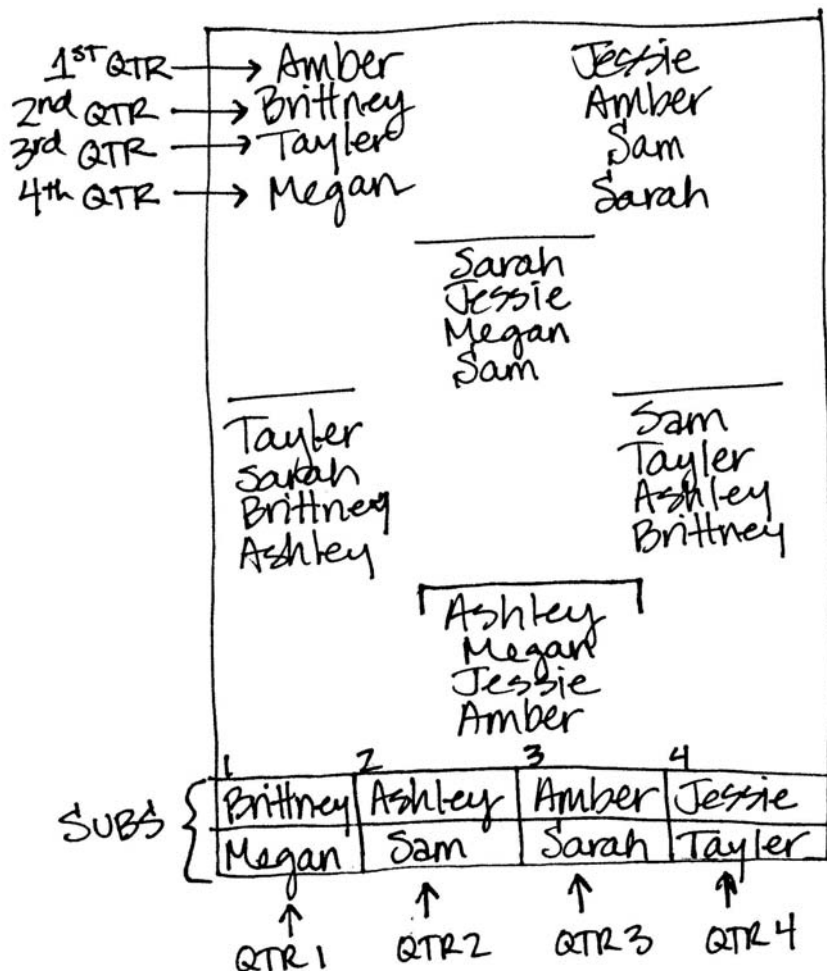
# GAME DAY

## THE FIELD, PLAYERS & GAME DURATION

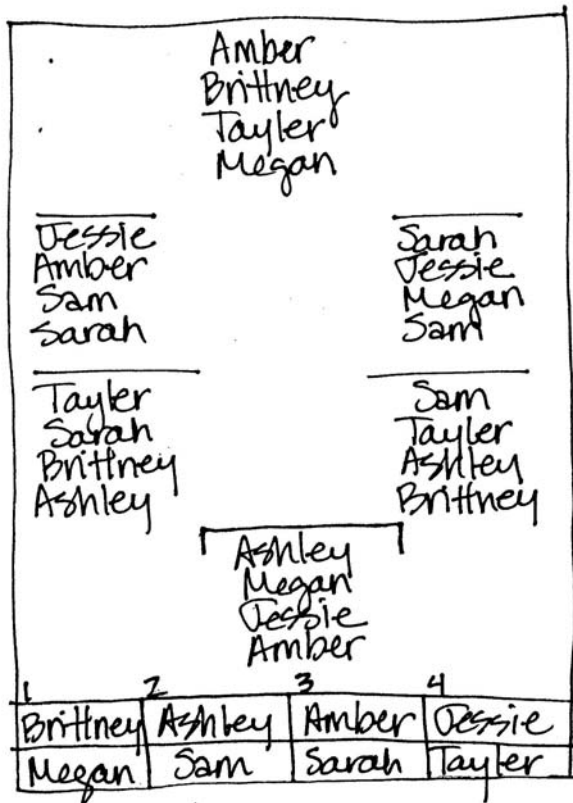
- Approximately 40 yards wide by 60 yards long
- Goals are 6 feet high by 12 feet wide
- Eight players on a team
- Games are played 6v6 including the goalkeeper
- Four 10 minute quarters
- Half-time break is five to ten minutes

The two things you need to do before each game are:

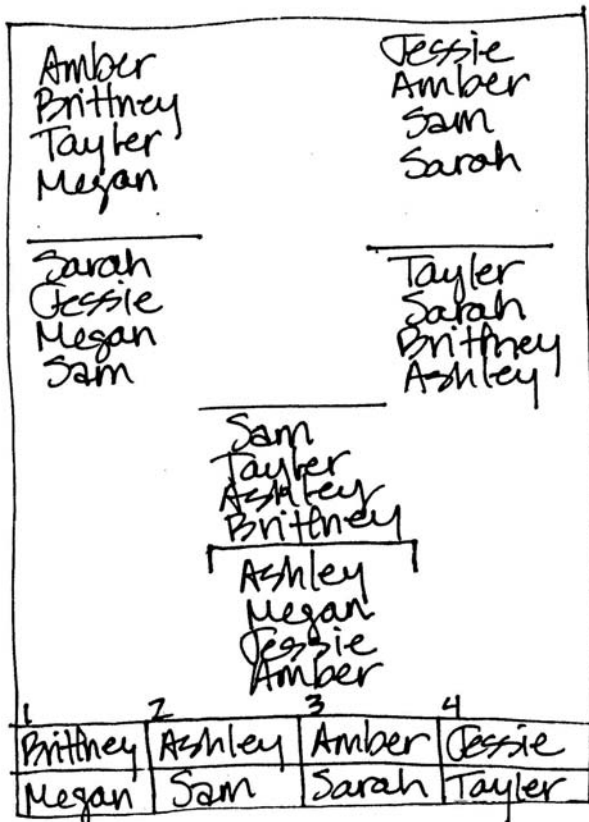
- A Game Line-up Card - see the example of how to fill this out in your Regional Handbook)
- Your player Line-up Plan. Below are some examples. If you do them this way you can easily see who is playing each position in each quarter and reference the bottom for who the subs are for each quarter. No matter what format you choose, make sure you have a plan. Don't count on remembering who sat out and who hasn't during a game. All players must get 3 quarters of play each game.



When you need more players back:



When you need more players up:



Have your team arrive about 20-30 minutes before the game is scheduled to begin. Your field set-up people should have already handled that part if necessary. If not, get the other parents to set the field up. Don't do it yourself. You need to prepare your team. Preparation simply consists of making sure your players know which goal they are shooting at in the first half, where they are playing the first quarter or if they are one of the subs. Make sure each player knows what they are doing the first quarter.

An elaborate warm-up is not necessary for U08. Have your AC handle the warm-up part while you handle the informational part. A quick jog around the field, then some stretches, then some passing or shooting on goal will suffice. At this point it is too late to teach technique.

During the game remember to be positive. The most important thing is for the players to have fun. Nothing you say or yell during the game will change the outcome. Likewise, keep the parents under control. You are responsible to make sure ALL the players have fun – on both sides of the field. Don't let your parents get too vocal when your team scores, especially if your team scores more than the other team. Don't let them make a scene. Also (and I can't believe that I have to write this but...) NO negative cheers, betting, t-shirts with writing about your team or the other team. Some parents like to collect money when goals are scored to put into a party fund. Please discourage this. It absolutely sends the wrong message to the kids. They play because it's fun and not because they get something. Don't put a monetary value on anything they do on the field.

Don't run up the score. No matter what. So, you need to have a plan going into your first game in case your team is strong. A run up score is anything over a 5 goal differential. So, if your team scores 3 goals in the first quarter you are going to need to quickly control them. Here are some options to even things out if needed:

- First off, make sure your team understands well before your first game that if your team scores 3 goals then you won't score anymore unless the other team does first. Yes, they will get it. Yes, they will make mistakes, forget the score, etc. But remember, you'll only be at 3 when that happens.
- If you are ahead by 3 at the first quarter break tell your team that they can now only score a goal if they kick it with their left foot. If they are a lefty, then their right foot. Make sure they understand this. You won't have anything else to cover at the break if you are ahead. At the same time, move your scoring players back and tell them they need to defend and are not to cross the halfline. Do this now, don't wait because they will forget and you'll need to remind them at halftime. But do not tell your entire team to stay behind the halfline. Make everything you do to control them subtle.
- If you are still ahead at halftime you will need to make sure your scoring players know that they should not score anymore goals. Pull them aside and explain that it is a secret...just for them. Their secret mission is to defend and not score any goals. Don't tell your entire

team not to score anymore. What will happen is that they will go out on the field and talk about it. They will remind each other that they are not allowed to score any more and that is just rude. Not good sportsmanship.

- Now, pick your player who is the least likely to score that day and tell all your players that everyone is to pass to that player. That it is their turn that day to score a goal. Best case scenario is that your game ends with a score of say 3-1 or 5-3 or 6-4 and your weakest player got a goal. That's a good day. 😊



## THE GAME BASICS

Be sure to cover the game basics during your activity time in practices. But, don't just do the basics, make sure you do the other activities that are on the pages that follow. They are fun and teach skills. And, it is about the fun.

**KICKOFFS** - Show the players what should happen during a game for kickoff. Have two players stand near where the halfline would be. One player will kick the ball as over the halfline to the other player. Then have that player kick it forward. Make sure your team knows that they should move forward on kickoff. You can have the first player just kick it as hard as they can toward the other team's goal but then you won't be teaching them the game of soccer. At least let them practice that first pass.

**THROW-INS** - Show the players what should happen during a game for a throw-in. If you have not done the throw-in activities in practice don't do this one yet. Do one of those for your first activity then translate that to a game situation. At U08 throw-ins should always be up the line toward the goal you are shooting on. Never toward the goal that you are defending. Practice using your 15 x 30 space.

**GOAL KICK** – Show the players what should happen during a game for a goal kick. You want your players to know to kick the ball to the side and not up the middle. If they kick it up the middle in a game the other teams forwards will get it and score quickly. Practice technique too. Have them try to lift the ball on their kicks.

**CORNER KICK** – Show the players what should happen during a game for a corner kick. You want your players to kick the ball from the corner toward the goal box in front of the goal.

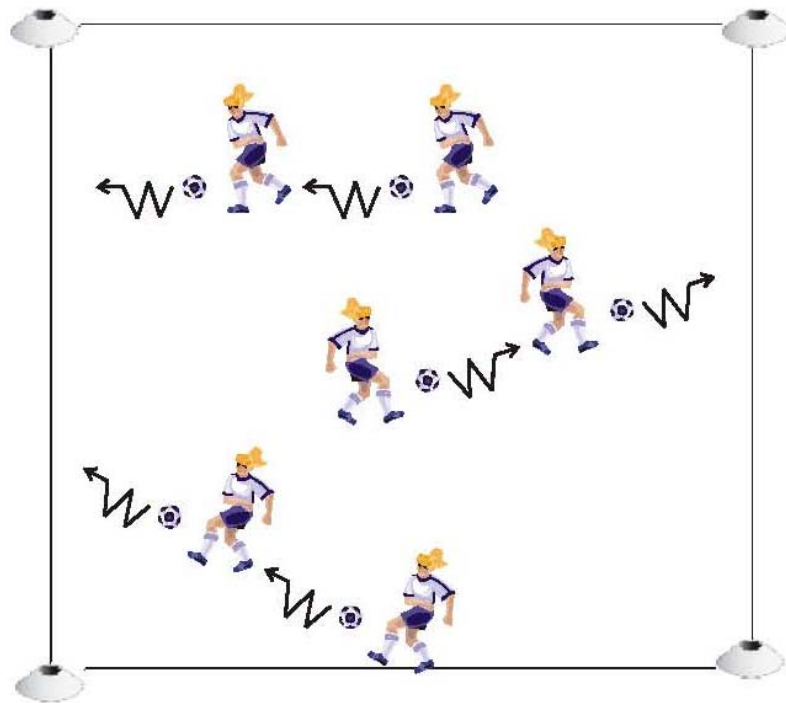
***Make sure you are having all your players take the kicks and throw-ins during a game and not just having your strongest players do them.***

# THE SHADOW

Skill: Dribbling

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 30 X 30 yard grid. Divide the team into pairs. All players are within the grid, with one ball per player.

**How The Game Is Played:** Players begin to move in any direction throughout the grid one partner leading and the other closely following. The trailing player tries to imitate the dribbling movements of the lead player. Coach will blow his or her whistle after about 20 to 30 seconds, the leader than becomes the follower.



**Variations:** This is a very good warm-up activity.

# MY BUDDY

Skill: Passing

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. Create 4 or 5 goals that are arbitrarily placed in the grid. Group players in pairs, 1 ball for every pair.

**How The Game Is Played:** Both players in the pair will move to a goal with one of the players dribbling to one of the goals in the grid. When the pair gets to a goal they then pass the ball through the goal 3 times to score a goal. Pairs move throughout the area until they have completed all the goals in the grid. If another pair is at a goal, players must go to a goal that is vacant.



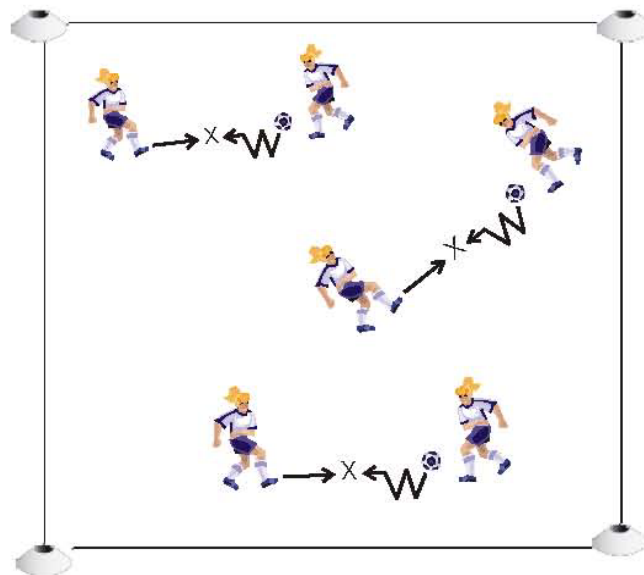
**Variations:** Left foot passing only, right foot passing only.

# TAKE-OVERS

Skill: Dribbling and Take-overs

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 30 X 30 yard grid. All players are within the grid, with one ball for each two players.

**How The Game Is Played:** All players begin to move in any direction throughout the grid. Half of the players will have a ball at their feet and all players will be moving at half-speed. When the coach shouts “takeover” the players with the ball will exchange possession of the ball with one of the players without a ball, using good takeover technique. Coach should shout “takeover” about every 10 or 15 seconds.



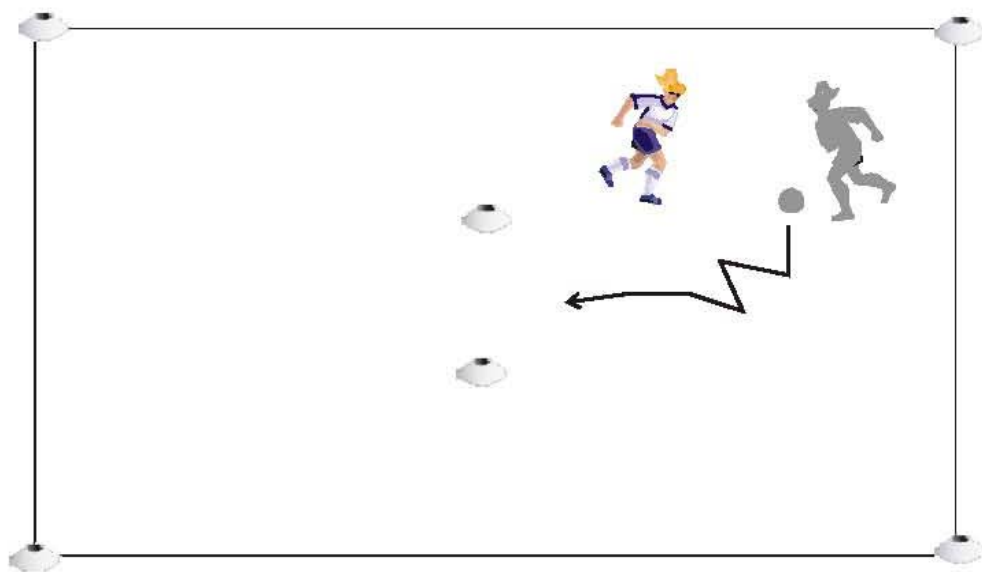
**Variations:** Add a pass just before the takeover.

## YOU AND ME (1v1)

Skill: Dribbling, Attacking and Defending

**Organization:** Create a 15 x 15 yd grid marked with cones and create a goal with cones on the center point of the grid. Group players into pairs, place one player from each pair standing any place on the end lines.

**How The Game Is Played:** Coach will direct which player has the ball first. The coach will yell, "go". Player with the ball is on the attack second player defends. Attacker tries to beat the defender by dribbling past the defender through the goal. If the defender gains possession she attempts to dribble through her goal. Play is stopped when a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play. A point is scored every time a ball is dribbled through the goal. First player with 3 points wins.

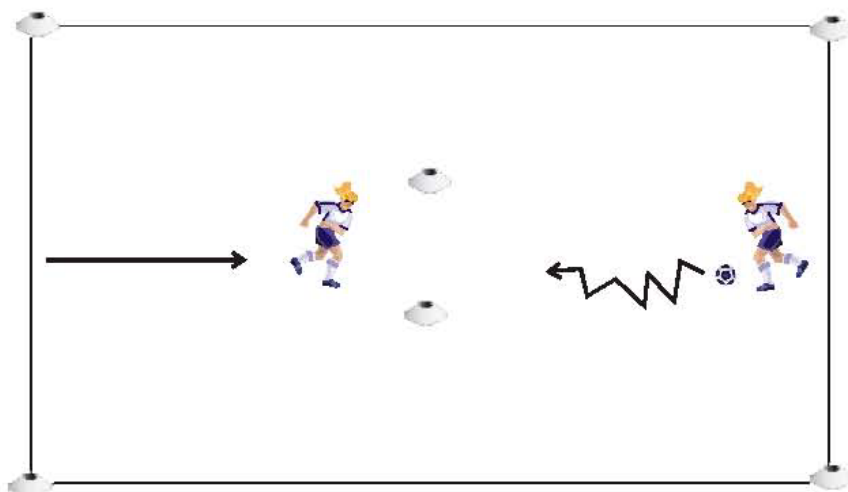


**Variations:** Coach can play the ball to the center of the grid. Players can pass the ball between the goal for a point.

## YOU AND ME (1v1) 2

Skill: Dribbling, Attacking and Defending

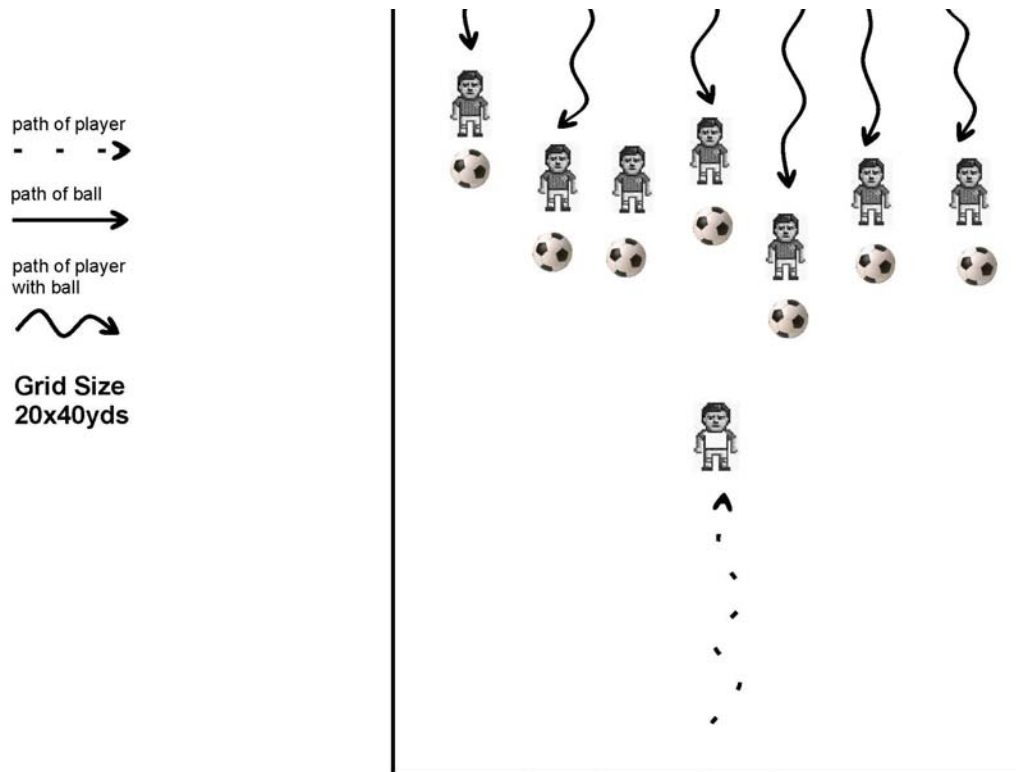
**How The Game Is Played:** The coach direct which player has the ball first. The coach yells, "go". Player with the ball is on the attack second player defends. Attacker tries to beat the defender by dribbling past the defender through the goal. If the defender gains possession, she attempts to dribble through the goal. Play is stopped when a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play. A point is scored every time a ball is dribbled through the goal. First player with 3 points wins.



**Variations:** Coach can play the ball to the center of the grid. Players can pass the ball between the goal for a point.

# BULLDOG

Skill: Dribbling and Tackling



## Description

All players line up at one end of a grid with a ball each  
One player begins in the middle of the grid  
On the coach's signal all players must try to get to other end of the grid without getting tackled  
Players who lose their ball join the defender for the next run  
If a player runs out of the side of the grid they are also out and must become a defender  
The winner is the last player to lose their ball and they become the first defender in the next round

## Skills they will be learning

- ♦ Running with the ball
- ♦ Playing with head up - can they see the spaces?
- ♦ Dribbling, taking on defender 1 v 1
- ♦ Winning the ball, tackling
- ♦ Playing by the rules - do they admit to being out?
- ♦ Cooperation - can they work together?

## Adjusting The Game

- Adjust the length and / or width of the grid
- Have players use only their weaker foot to dribble the ball



# LINE TAG

Skill: Dribbling

path of player



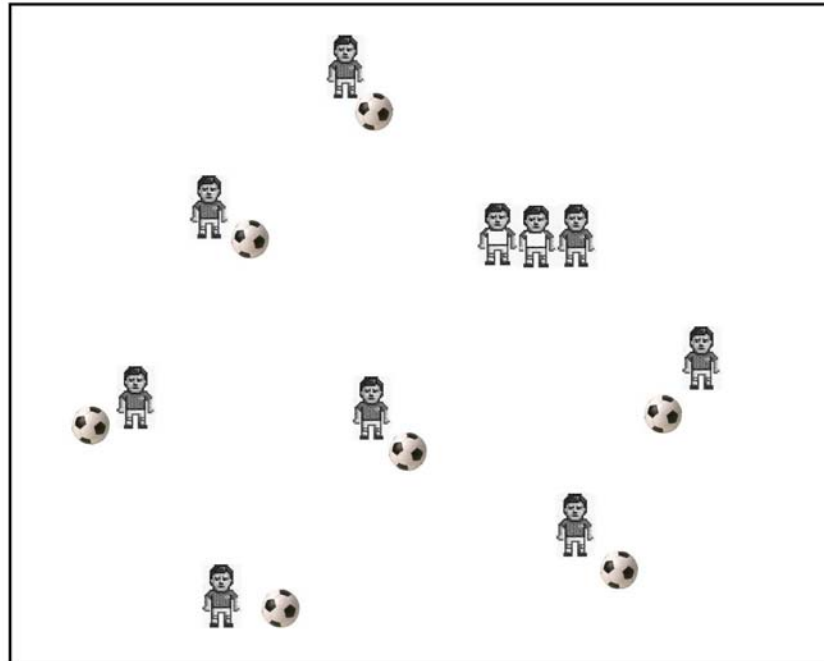
path of ball



path of player  
with ball



**Grid Size:**  
**Adjust for**  
**size of group**



As well as being great fun, regular use of tag-type games will help young players improve their movement skills. At this age children still need to develop all the generic movements such as, running, stopping, turning, jumping and landing. Be creative in inventing new types of game with or without the use of footballs. More ideas for tag games are in the section on warm-ups - see page 149.

## Description

Two players begin either holding hands or linking arms  
All other players have a ball each and dribble freely around the grid  
The two taggers are trying to kick one of the balls out of the area  
When a player loses their ball they must join the line  
The winner is the last player to have a ball  
It is difficult for long lines to stay together so when it gets to four or five allow them to split to form 2 lines  
With the youngest players the coach can start as part of the line

## Skills they will be learning

- ♦ Dribbling
- ♦ Turning
- ♦ Observing space
- ♦ Working together to isolate an opponent
- ♦ Communication

## Adjusting The Game

- Reduce size of the grid
- Only one ball players have to pass the ball around and keep possession, bad pass - join the line



# SEQUENCE

Skill: Passing

path of player



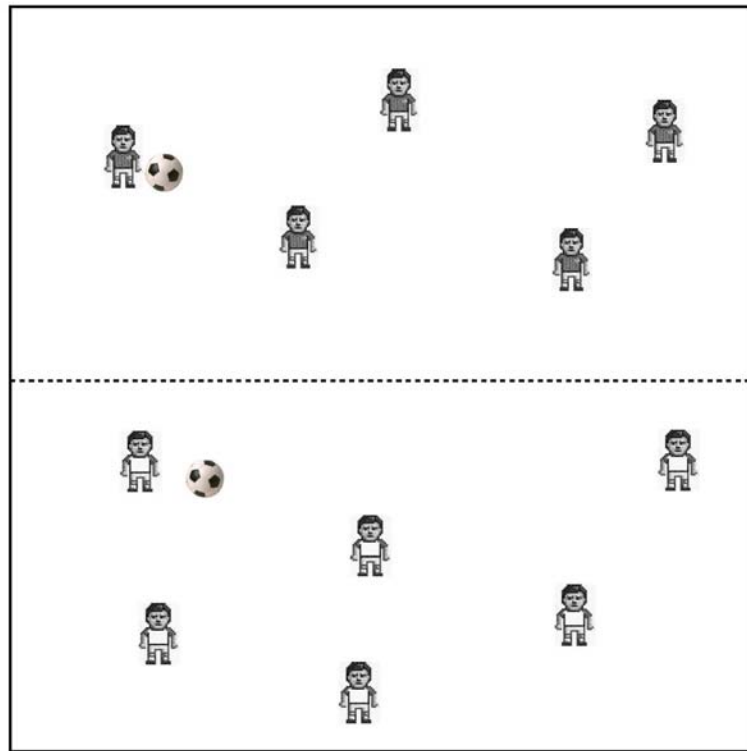
path of ball



path of player  
with ball



**Grid Size:**  
**Adjust for**  
**size of group**



## Description

Split the group into two squads with one ball per group  
Each player has a number and the ball is passed in sequence, begin by passing the ball with hands  
All players should be constantly jogging around filling space, make a run after passing the ball  
Players should show quickly for the pass when the player before them gets the ball  
As they get success have both squads play through the same area  
Ball should now be played with the feet

## Skills they will be learning

- ♦ Passing
- ♦ Movement off the ball
- ♦ Communication
- ♦ Vision and awareness

## Adjusting The Game

- Stipulate how the ball should be passed; back-heel etc.
- Add additional ball/s to each squad

## KEEP YOUR YARD CLEAN

Skill: Passing / Shooting or Throw-in

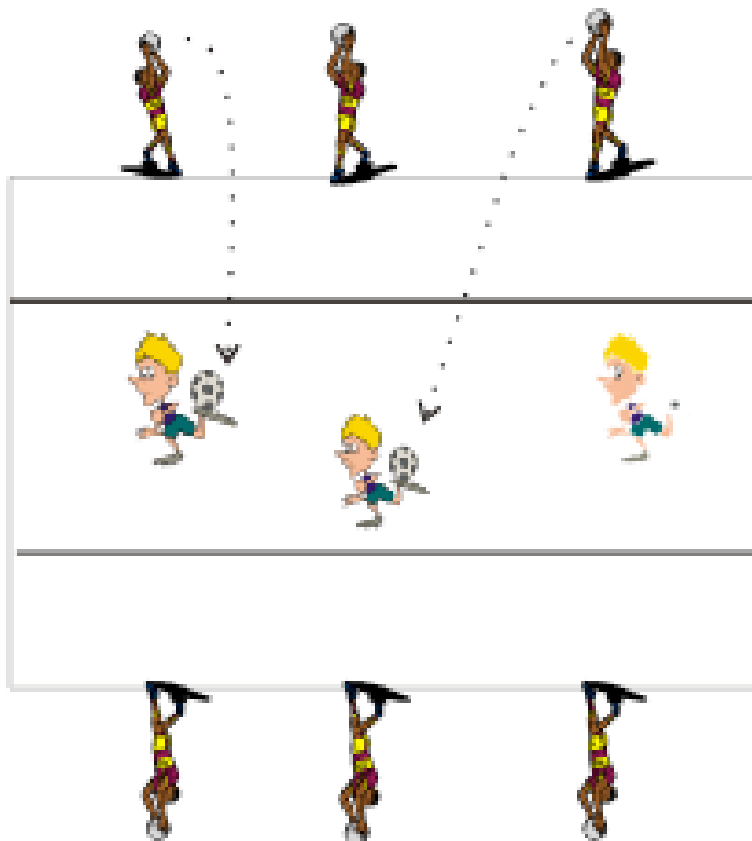
***How The Game Is Played:*** Create a 'neutral area' between the two teams where no player is allowed into. This area can be as small as one yard and as big as 10 yards wide. The width is determined by how far the players can kick the ball. Each player starts with a ball at their feet. On coach command, each team tries to keep their yard free of balls by kicking their ball over to the other teams side. They also kick back any balls sent over by the other team trying to get their yard free of all balls. After a short time – when the balls become too scattered, or, the players are losing focus – call the game and count which side has the fewest balls. They are the winning team.

***Variation:*** Have players do throw-ins to the other side to clear their yard.

# SHOOT FOR THE SHOES

Skill: Throw-in

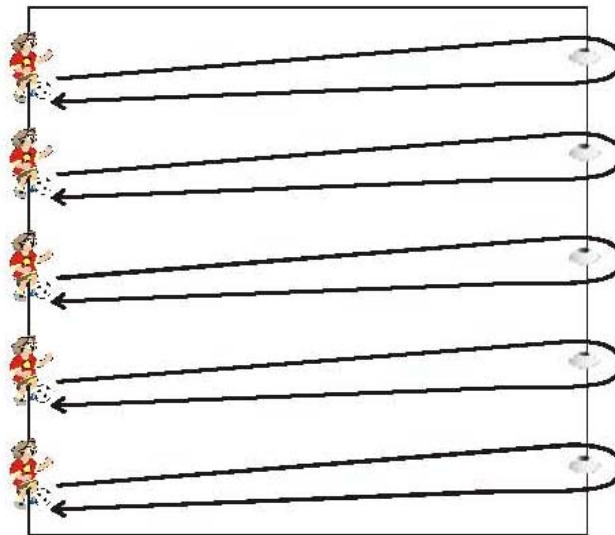
**How The Game Is Played:** The coach yells, "go". Throwers attempt to hit targets in the feet (for sure below the waist). All throw-ins must be legal. Targets can move anyplace in the central grid. Players on the opposite end collect balls not hitting a target. A target player who is hit with a legally thrown ball returns the ball to one of the throwers and play continues. One (1) point for each hit below the waist, deduct a point for illegal throw, first team to ten (10) wins. Play three rounds.



# THE BIG RACE

Skill: Dribbling

***How The Game Is Played:*** The coach will say, "Start your engines" after which he will yell go. The players must dribble their ball around their cone and back to the starting line. The first player back is the race winner.



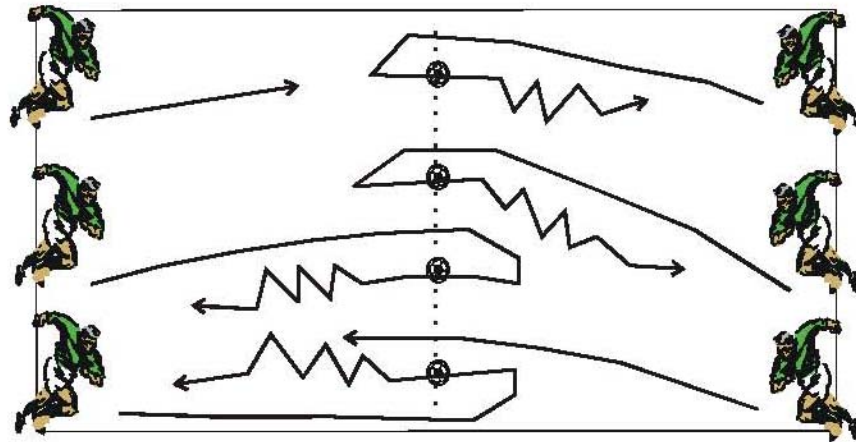
***Variations:*** Have a staggered start. Race in teams of two or three, players. Have the player's race individually against the clock (time trials).

# MUSICAL BALLS

Skill: Dribbling

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 25 X 40 yard grid, divided by a midline. Divide the team into two equal groups and place one group on each endline, facing the center of the grid. Place balls along the midline (two fewer than the number of players).

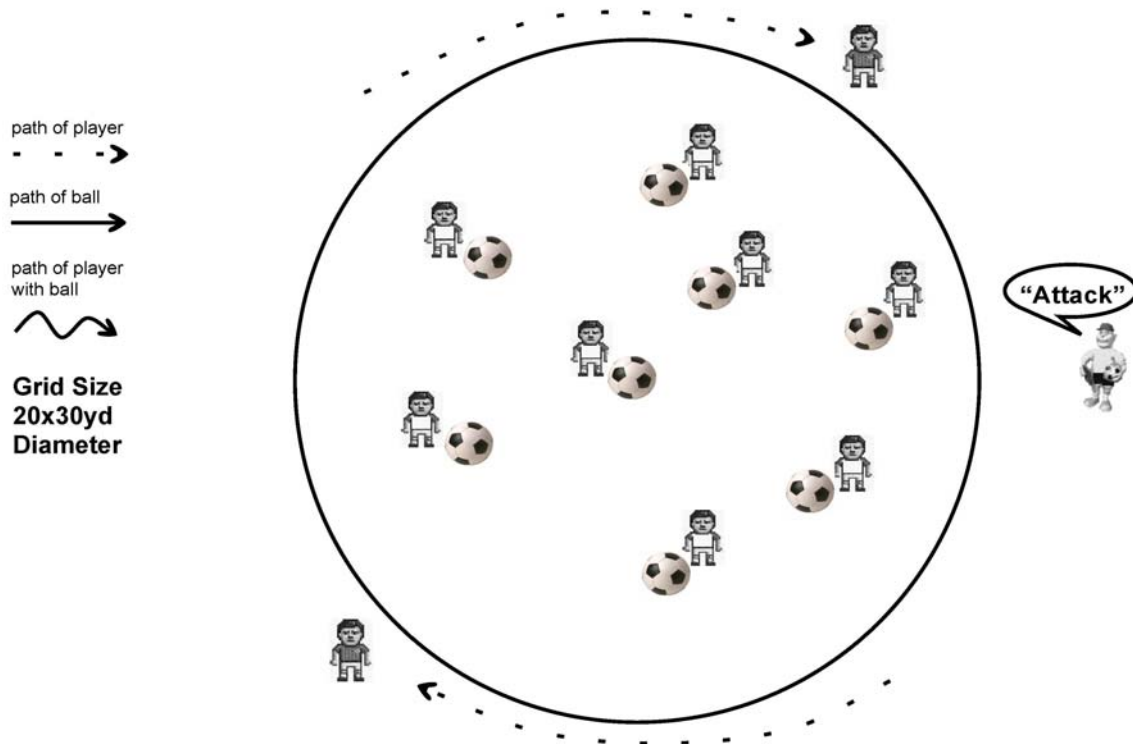
**How The Game Is Played:** The coach will yell, "go". Players from both sides rush to the midline and compete for possession of a ball and attempt to return to their endline by dribbling. The players who did not get a ball will try to steal a ball from someone from the other team and return it to their endline. Game is over when all the balls have been dribbled and are stopped on an end line. Play the game 5 times.



**Variations:** Keep reducing the number of balls and player (those who didn't get a ball) so that the last round is 1 v 1 with one ball on the midline.

# SHARKS

Skill: Dribbling and Turning



## Description

Mark a circle appropriate to the size of the group, every player has a ball each  
Nominate a couple of players - Sharks - to stay outside the circle without a ball  
All players dribble around inside the circle and the two Sharks jog around the perimeter  
On the coach's signal the Sharks have 10 seconds to kick as many balls out the circle as possible  
Any players who get tackled leave the circle and the Sharks go back to jogging  
Players who are out help the coach count down 10 seconds for the next attack  
Make it competitive - award points to the last 2 players to survive, they become sharks next

## Skills they will be learning

- ♦ Dribbling, keeping close control of the ball
- ♦ Turning with the ball
- ♦ Looking up to observe space
- ♦ Protecting the ball from pressure
- ♦ Work ethic of defenders

## Adjusting The Game

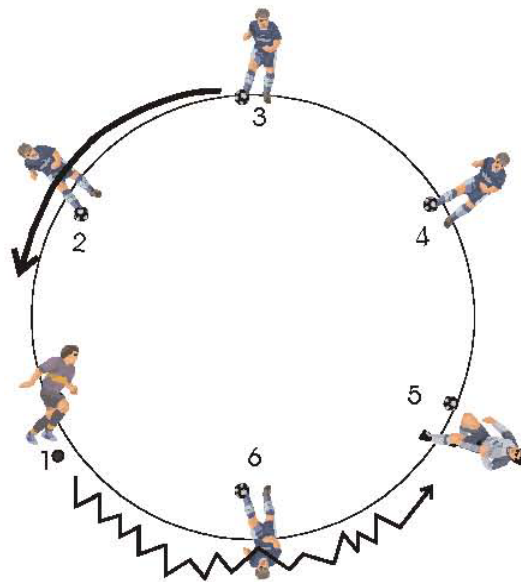
- Reduce the size of the area to increase pressure on players on the ball
- Use more than two attackers
- Once players are out they all join the next attack

# THE RACE

Skill: Dribbling and Passing

**Organization:** Using cones layout a circle 20 to 30 yards in diameter. Number all players 1 – 10 (depending on the number of players at practice). Position all players on the perimeter of the circle.

**How The Game Is Played:** The coach will call a number and that numbered player will immediately start dribbling counter clockwise around the grid. The player that is one number removed from the number that was called will leave his or her ball in place and will immediately pursue the number that was called trying to tag the called player before he or she reaches his/her starting position. So if the number 1 is called, #1 dribbles and 3 chases.



**Variations:** Change the size of the circle as needed. Change the chaser to be two numbers removed from the number that was called if needed to gain required results. Have both players dribble.



# VOLCANO

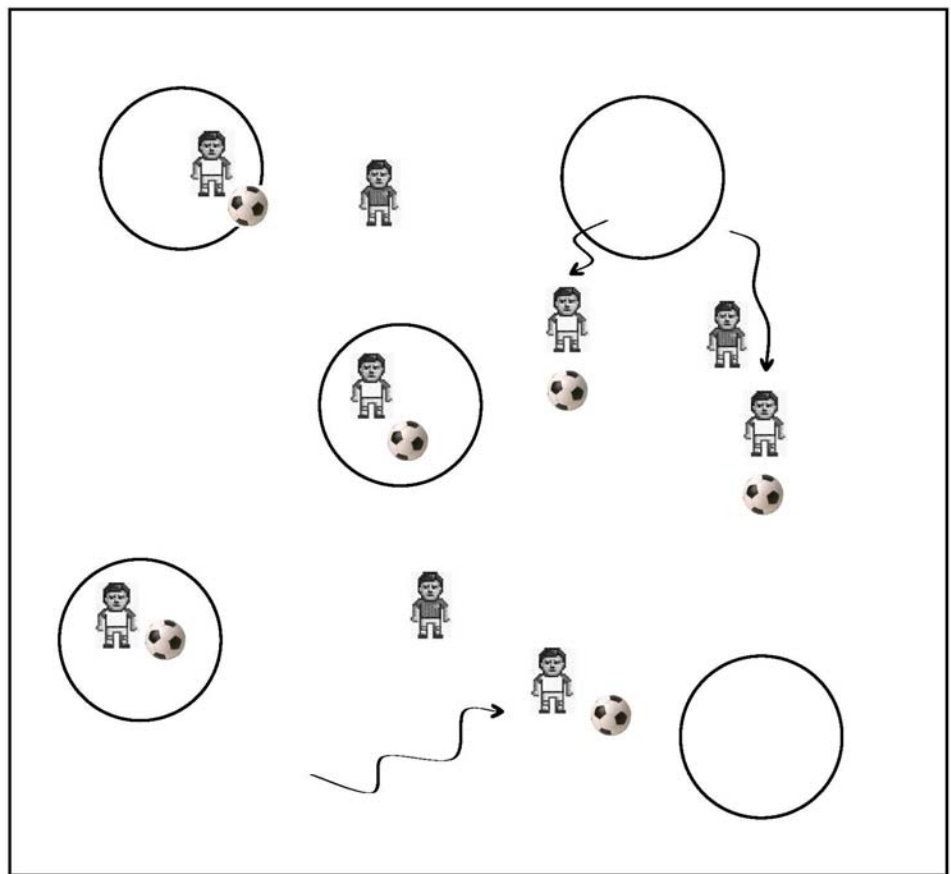
Skill: Dribbling

path of player  
- - - ➔

path of ball  
➔

path of player  
with ball  
~ ~ ~

Grid Size  
30yds  
Square



## Description

**The Story** - Players are safe on the "islands", as they move between them they may have their ball stolen by the sharks. They get a point for every island they get to. If they stay on an island for more than five seconds at a time it will blow up and they will lose all their points.

The size of the area is flexible depending on the numbers in your group. Mark out a few safe areas. Bib up the teams, one of which will need a ball each. The other team (the sharks) should have fewer players. Once a ball is won by one of the sharks they should give it back quickly and go and challenge somebody else. Play for an agreed time and then see who has got the most points. Nominate new sharks.

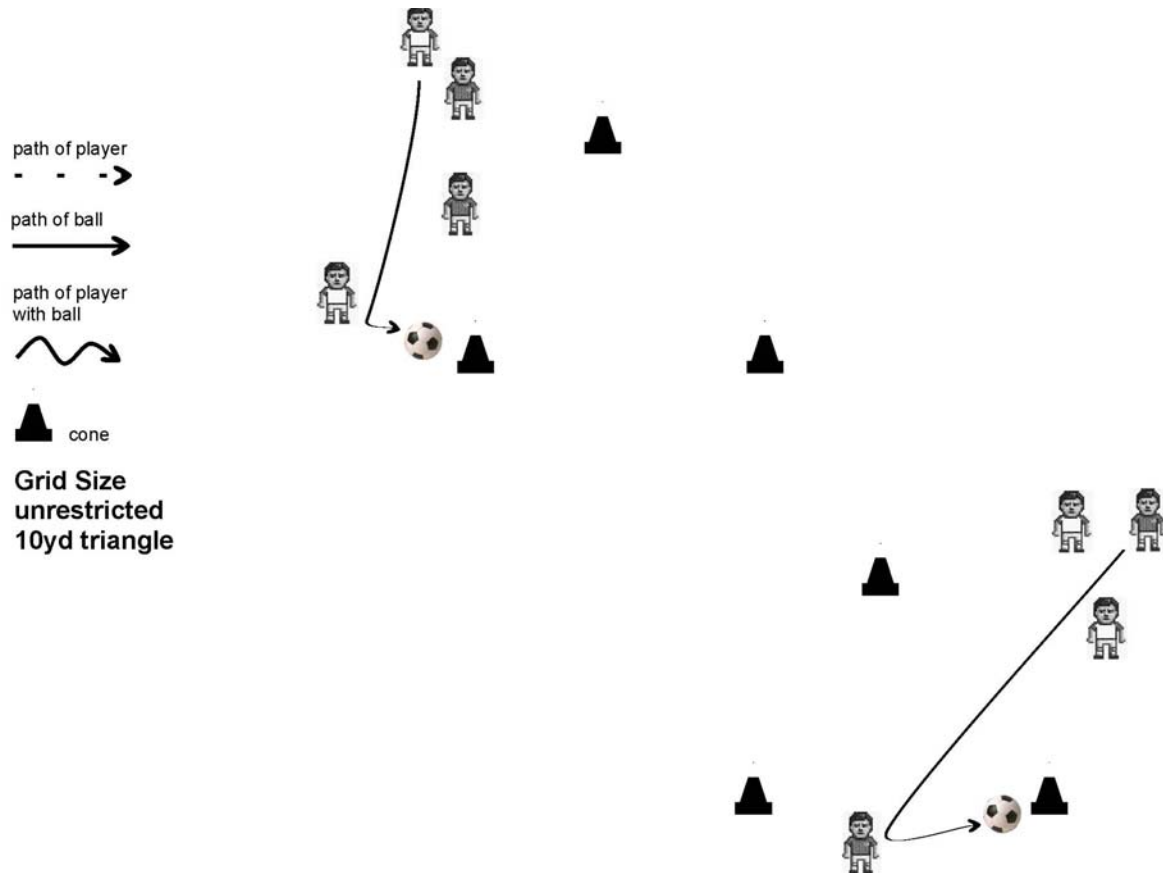
## Skills they will be learning

- ♦ Dribbling at opponents
- ♦ Keeping close control of ball
- ♦ Observing available space
- ♦ Turning away from pressure
- ♦ Running at speed with the ball
- ♦ Determination to defend and win the ball



# BERMUDA TRIANGLE

Skill: Dribbling, Passing and Defending



## Description

Arrange players into pairs and bib them up  
 Players play 2 v 2 with no restriction on limits of space  
 Both teams are trying to score points by knocking over a cone with the ball, any player can attack any cone  
 If using bigger cones it will be enough to hit the cone, it won't fall down easily  
 Play to an agreed number of points or for a certain time  
 Set up a number of games to include whole squad  
 At end of agreed time the winners move up a grid etc.

## Skills they will be learning

- ♦ Dribbling at opponents,
- ♦ Moving off the ball into space
- ♦ Looking up to see support
- ♦ Passing
- ♦ Taking chances to shoot
- ♦ Defending / tackling

## Adjusting The Game

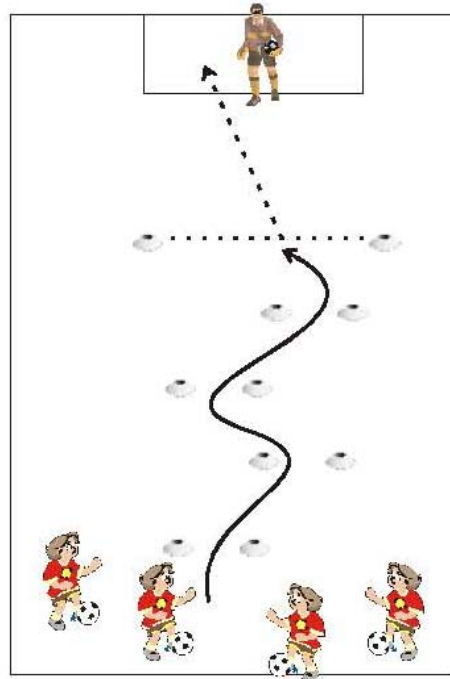
- i Make triangle smaller, pairs score by passing through the triangle
- ii Point only counts if ball is passed through triangle to team-mate

## SLALOM SHOOTING

Skill: Dribbling and Shooting

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 30 X 20 yard grid with some type of goal. Shooters are at the opposite from the goal. Each shooter has a ball and a Keeper is placed in the goal. Lay 5 pairs of cones between the endline in a slalom style with the last pair of cones about 8 yards from the goal.

**How The Game Is Played:** Each shooter in turn dribbles through the slalom course and must shoot when he arrives at the last set of cones. As soon as the shot is taken, the next shooter starts. The shooter and the keeper exchange places. Every shooter becomes the keeper. First player to score 5 goals wins.



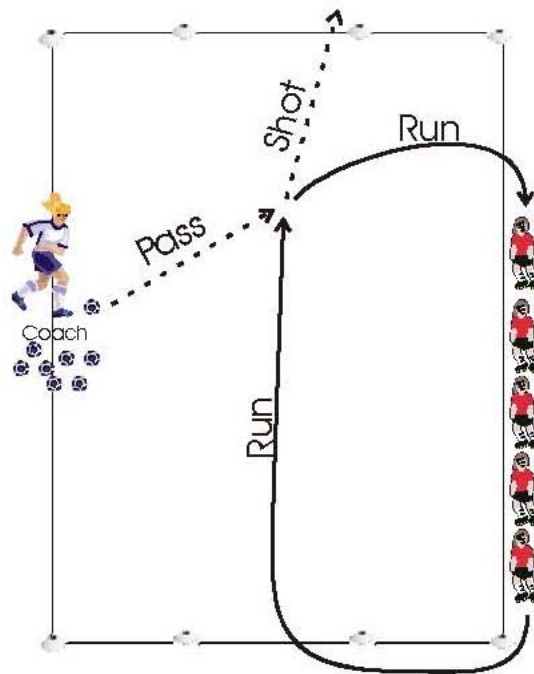
**Variations:** Shoot with the right or the left foot only.

# SHOOTING GALLERY

Skill: xxxx

**Organization:** Create a 15 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. Mark two goals with cones on each goal line. The coach will be located on the opposite touch line from the players with a good supply of soccer balls.

**How The Game Is Played:** The coach will call the name of the first player in line, when the name is called the player will run between the near 2 cones, receive a pass from the coach so the player can shoot on goal and return to end of the line.



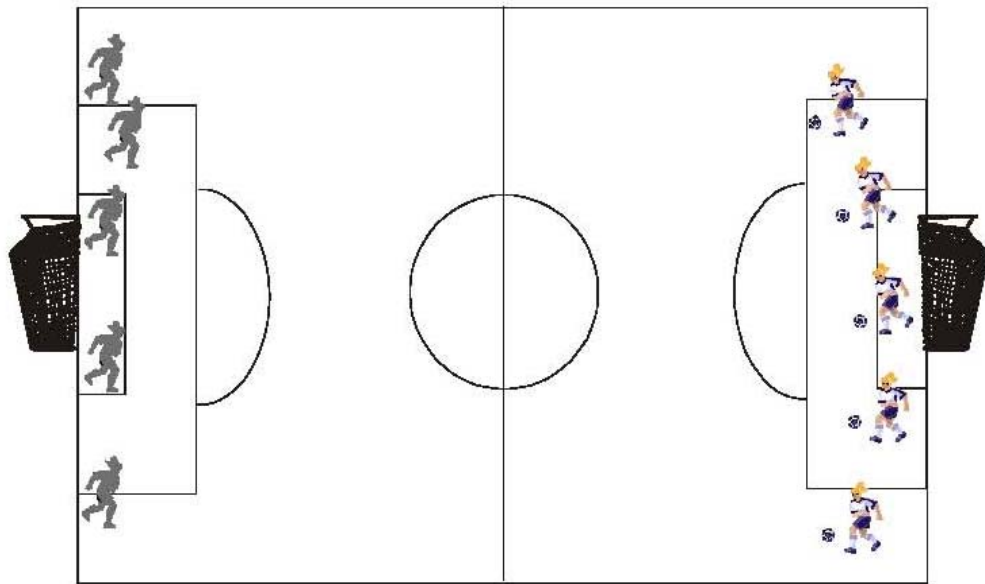
**Variations:** Coach and players will switch sides. Players should try to one touch the shot on goal. Have players use their left and right foot.

# MAD HOUSE

Skill: Dribbling, Passing, Attacking, Defending

**Organization:** Using a full size U-8 soccer field, divide the team into two equal groups one of which will wear the pennies. Place one group on one goal line with a soccer ball at their feet and the other group on the other goal line. The coach will decide which group will have the ball first. .

**How The Game Is Played:** Coach will direct which group has the ball first. The coach will yell, "go". Group with the ball is on the attack the other group defends. Points are scored by shooting the ball into the goal at the opposite end of the field. If the defending group gets possession of a ball they go on the attack and try to score in the other teams goal. Group that scores the most wins. Play the game 4 times.



**Variations:** Allow each player to have a ball.

*This section covers the various techniques you can teach to your players. The better grasp you have of the techniques, the better you will be able to teach them to your players. Note: all techniques should be practiced with both feet to ensure players do not develop a "strong foot" and a "weak foot."*

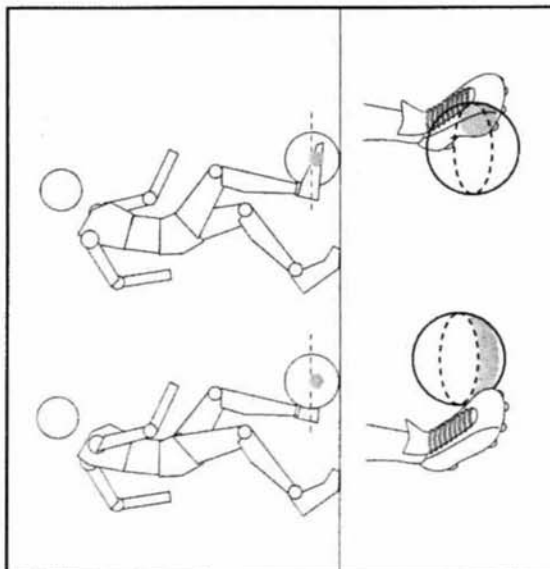
## **Dribbling**

Dribbling is the art of using the feet to advance the ball, on the ground, under control, while moving. The two primary reasons to use dribbling skill are:

- to move the ball into a better position on the field.
- to retain possession of the ball.

**Dribbling** is one of the ways to achieve **penetration**, the **Attacking Principle of Play** for this age group.

The most important element of dribbling is developing a "feel" or "touch" for the ball with the feet... BOTH OF THEM. The key is then to **keep the**



**ball close** by touching it softly.

## **DRIBBLING BASICS**

- Use all major surfaces of the foot.
- Knees should be slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close.
  - Encourage players to touch the ball softly.
  - Close control of the ball should be emphasized.
  - Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
  - Ball should never be more than a step or two away.

## **COMMON ERRORS AND CORRECTIONS**

- E** Ball is played too far ahead.
- C** Have players move slower and remind them to the touch ball softer.
- E** Player does not look up from ball.
- C** Remind players to look up, then run activity requiring players to look up while dribbling.
- E** Player re-positions entire body behind ball before touching.
- C** Encourage player to use motion of foot to direct ball, instead of re-positioning their body.

## **DRIBBLING BUILD UP**

**Stop the Ball** Players at this age should be able to stop the ball by putting their foot on top of it.

- Balance on plant foot (foot on the ground), while keeping play foot (foot on the ball) firmly on top of the ball.
- Step past the ball with plant foot before stepping on it, keeping in mind the speed at which the ball is rolling.

**Turn the Ball** Learning to change direction while dribbling is critical in soccer and should be introduced at this age level.

- Use motion of foot to direct the ball.
- Accelerate after changing direction.

## ■ **Throw-In**

A throw-in is used to restart the game after the entire ball has crossed the touch line, whether on the ground or in the air.

### **THROW-IN – BASICS**

*To execute a proper throw-in, the player must:*

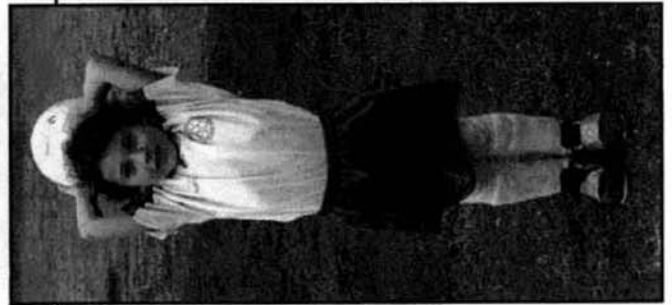
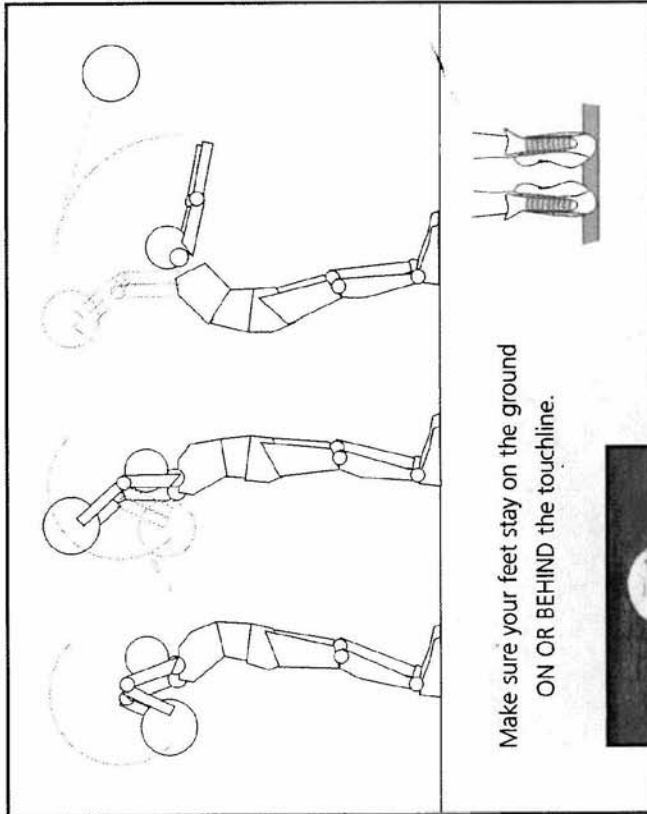
- Face the field of play.
- Have part of each foot on the ground, either on or behind the touchline when the ball is released.
- Use both hands and deliver the ball from behind and over the head in one continuous motion.
- Hold the ball evenly in both hands (hands should be slightly apart).
- Feet must be kept on the ground until ball is released.

### **THROW-IN – COACHING POINTS**

- The thrower may not play the ball a second time until it is touched by another player.
- Your team should try to maintain possession when executing a throw-in.
- Get the parents involved! Have each one of your players execute a throw-in by making a throw-in to a parent.
- Have each player continue to make throw-ins while you circulate and correct.

### **THROW-IN – COMMON ERRORS AND CORRECTIONS**

- E** Foot/feet come off ground during throw.
- C** Have players keep their feet together with knees bent and hold their feet down until they develop the feeling of throwing without lifting their feet.
- E** Ball slips out of grasp.
- C** If players hands are too small, instruct them to spread hands out until they have a solid grasp.





## **Instep Kick**

The instep kick is used to kick the ball and, as players get older, for long passes and shots on goal.

### **INSTEP KICK – BASICS**

#### **Prepare Plant Leg (supporting, non-kicking foot)**

- Place support foot next to the ball pointed in general direction of target (distance from ball will depend on height of the player).
- Bend knee slightly.
- All weight should be on plant foot.
- Use arms out to sides for balance.

#### **Prepare Striking (kicking) Leg**

- Bend knee (cock lower leg).
- Withdraw leg straight back at hip.
- Lock ankle back and down with toes pointed down.

#### **Striking Movement**

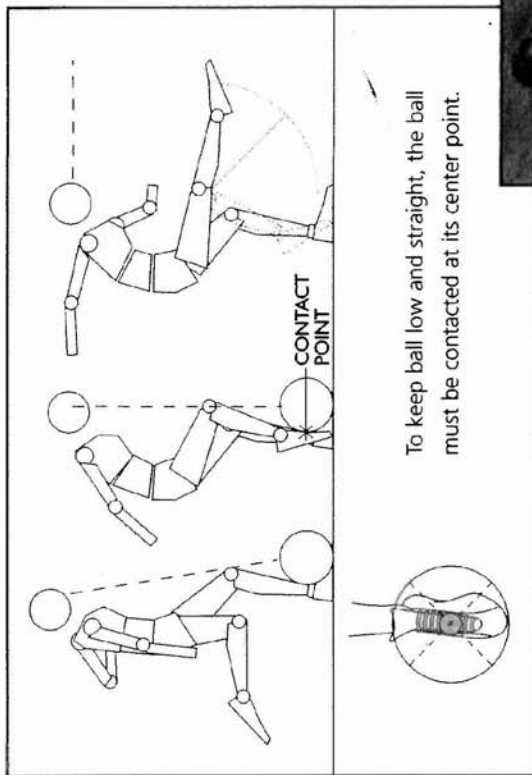
- Body should be over the ball, moving forward.
- Keep eyes on ball.
- Set plant knee over ball (eye-knee-ball in line).
- Move thigh of striking leg forward (whip action).
- Strike the center of the ball on the instep ("laces" of the shoes).
- Follow through—move leg straight through toward target:
  - Pull leg straight through while maintaining balance.
  - Lower body as leg rises.
  - Follow through and lift knee.
  - Step out of the kick.

### **INSTEP KICK – COACHING POINTS**

Before having players strike the ball:

- Have them practice planting their foot in the proper place.
- Have them practice swinging their leg and foot straight back and forth, ensuring proper body and leg movement.

Next, have a parent sit down with legs out in front and secure ball with feet. Have each player stand with plant foot in proper position and strike lightly until they begin to hit the ball solidly (properly).



To keep ball low and straight, the ball must be contacted at its center point.



### **INSTEP KICK –**

#### **COMMON ERRORS AND CORRECTIONS**

- E** Plant foot is too far in front, behind or away from ball and/or not pointed in general direction of target.
  - C** Review proper technique with player(s).
- E** Knee(s) are locked, not bent.
  - C** Review proper technique with player(s).
- E** Ankle is not locked and toes are not pointed.
  - C** Lock ankle, point toes.
- E** Ball is stabbed or jabbed.
  - C** Encourage player to follow through.
- E** Leg is swung across the body instead of toward the target.
  - C** Encourage player to withdraw leg straight back and follow through straight toward target.

