



STEP AHEAD SOCCER

U8 Curriculum

for more than 20 coaches



Who Are U8 Players?

You will be coaching players who are 6 and 7 years old. They will be turning 7 and 8 during the year.

There are a few things to understand about their development that will help you to understand and work with the kids more effectively.

At this age, it should not be all about soccer. You should also be focused on movement. These young bodies are just learning how to do many things. They need to be participating in activities which involve running, jumping, falling, and twisting. You can include activities with and without the ball that involve these types of movements. This helps them develop coordination and agility from an early stage.

Help them increase the use and development of all their body parts.

U8 Physical Characteristics

I am assuming if you have made it to coaching U8, you remember the recent past when your child and players were U6's. The U8 players have bodies that don't look much different than the U6 age group, just slightly taller. The pace of activities and coordination for U8's are beginning to develop rapidly. However, they are not mini adults. For instance, why does it seem like we are always fighting against U8 players kicking the ball only with their toes. Slow down and teach them to turn their foot sideways. You will notice, it is not because they can't hear you. It is developmentally challenging for a 6 or 7 year old to turn their foot sideways and kick a ball.

Physical differences between boys and girls are minimal. Boys are on average more aggressive than girls.

Similar to the U6 age group, U8 players are easily fatigued, but have rapid recovery. They will tire quickly of a game or running, but give them a breather and they are back at full speed. They have one pace – all out! Watch your own children, they go, and go, and go, and then they go to sleep. They wake up in the morning and the go, go, go starts as soon as their eyes open. Like Anna says in Frozen to her sister Elsa, "The sun is up and so am I."

Physically U8 players can now change direction. Whereas a U6 player can only dribble in a straight line (this is why they will kick a ball past a wide open goal), U8 players have the ability to change directions.

Getting lots of touches on the ball at this age is very important. Physical imprints are rapidly being made in the coordination of a U8 player.

Cognitive Development

They can focus well on one task at a time. Each task can have 2-3 rules, but no more or they will get confused. The more you break down a task into parts, the better they will understand.

Everything is very concrete. Don't use sarcasm. They don't get it and can lead to them perceiving things from you that you are not intending.

U8's are beginning to develop concepts of time and space. The coach can begin introducing how a second person relates to them on the soccer field.

Psycho-Social development

U8 players are beginning to develop a self-concept. This is an awareness of who they are in relation to other people. For instance, Santa is no longer a peer topic because they are afraid of looking silly. Fantasy is disappearing from their peer conversations.

U8 players have a need for approval from adults. When a coach has players practice a skill, players will all be trying to get the coach's attention. "Look at Me," "I can do it, see."

They will recognize themselves, the coach and their "friend." They still are not really aware of the entire team, but will often lock onto one or maybe two friends. This is a great age to do things in pairs. The team is still too complex of an idea. Don't let them always be with the same person. Help them learn to expand who can be in the sphere.

Ridicule from a coach in front of the group is destructive to their self-image.

The attention span is short, but certainly longer than it was at U6. Keep U8 players in constant motion. Don't spend very much time talking to them. 30-60 seconds is long enough to get them to the next activity and keep them moving.

They love to imitate "big" kids.

Demonstration of increased responsibility shown by the ability to:

- Bring a ball and water
- Tuck in jersey
- Pull socks up
- Carry their own stuff.

The coach should encourage players to work on responsibility in these areas.

On every U8 team, you will have a player or players who lack motivation. They would rather walk, or even lay down, than participate. Here are a couple of ideas to try. None of this is an exact science and there will be those players who don't respond to anything, except the passage of time as they get older. Developmentally some players may not be ready to be out there, but they have been placed on your team none the less. Don't stress out too much, they are on every team.

First, if practices move too slowly, if there are a lot of breaks or standing in line, players will get bored and underperform. Keep the practices moving, keep encouraging and challenging players.

Don't be afraid to enlist the parent. U6 parents are generally right on the side line. After practice or before the next practice, let the parent know if the player does not respond you will ask them to go sit by the parent. Don't approach the parent as an adversary, treat them as if you're on the same side and tell them why and how you think it might help. Explain that most players have no desire to be sent to their parent during practice. They have a correct sense that the parent will be displeased.

The other option you have, if nothing else is working, is to not give the child the attention. You have other players who are working for you, reward them, spend your time on them. Don't beg and plead the child to join in after you have tried the encouragement route. Don't waste 80% of your time on the child who does not care or want to be there. Invest 80% of your time on the other players who are engaged.

These practices are designed to be fun for the players, teach skills and coordination, get each player to touch the ball as much as possible, and be easy for the coach to use. Coaches should feel confident to change or adapt plans as necessary, but stick to the basic plan.

Practice Themes

Each practice will have a theme or focus listed at the top. Emphasize this theme with your players throughout the activities. Each practice will be formatted as follows:

- Warm-up activity: Fun and energetic start to practice. 7 minutes.
- Skill activity: Working on technical skills such as dribbling, receiving, or finishing. 7-10 minutes.
- Fun activity: These activities vary, but are fun with lots of movement. 7-10 minutes.
- 1v1 games: Games where two players compete against each other. 7-10 minutes.
- Lead into game activity: This activity will set up the game at the end of practice. 7-10 minutes.
- Soccer game: These will be 2v2 and 3v3 games to two goals. There will be specific variations to emphasize different parts of soccer. 12 minutes.
 - If the coach wants to play, always be on offense for both teams to keep play moving.
 - Teach rules during this time, but keep the play moving especially as the season progresses and they learn the rules. Your job is to keep the ball in play and let them get lots of touches on the ball. No standing around every time a ball goes out, get the next ball in.

Keep It Moving

Practices are designed for 50-60 minutes, but can easily be lengthened to an hour by adding 1-2 minutes to each activity. 50-60 minutes is optimal for U8. Definitely do not practice more than one hour. One practice a week is enough.

- Teach yourself and players to keep practices moving briskly.
 - Transition from one activity to the next quickly.
 - Keep the ball in play and players moving.
- Take time for water breaks.

- Plan on two water breaks after the 2nd and 4th activities. If it is hot, you may have to take water breaks more frequently. Teach kids to jog to water, get a drink, and jog back. Don't let them sit and hang out with their parents until you call them back. Total time involved should be approximately 60 seconds.

Do

- Every player must have a ball! Size 3. Pumped up. Coach should bring a pump to practice. Don't use flat balls.
- Every player must have water.
- Dribbling Activities: Every time you do dribbling activities make players use different parts of their feet (inside, outside, toe, laces, heel, and sole). ALWAYS MAKE PLAYERS USE BOTH FEET!
- Goals: A Goal is anywhere you drop two cones. It does not have to be a real goal with posts and a net.

Don't

- Don't waste time on stretching. The purpose of stretching is to prevent muscle pulls; eight year olds don't sustain these types of injuries on the soccer field.
- Don't have players run laps! Players will be running in other activities that imitate the game of soccer better. A well run practice will include a lot of movement with the ball in confined areas.

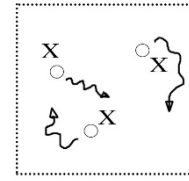
Enjoy! Don't be scared of getting in there and learning with the kids. The important thing is that the kids have fun, move a lot, and touch the ball. They don't know if you are new to this. They will love you for being there and having fun with them.

U8 Practices: Practice #1 Dribbling

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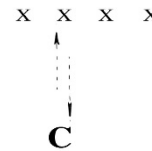
Shout Dribbling (7 Min)

- Every player has a ball. 15 x 15 yard grid.
- Players will dribble randomly in within the area. Always make players use both feet.
 - Players should change directions at least every three steps, don't allow them to dribble in circles around the edge of the area.
- Coach will shout out commands. Players must adjust without stopping. Use each command several times and mix up the order of commands. The first time you issue each command there may be confusion and you will have to demonstrate for the players.
 - "Stop" – player must quickly place a foot on the ball.
 - "Change" – players must find another player's ball to dribble.
 - Coach shouts out any surface of the foot, "inside, outside, toe, heel, sole (bottom), laces"
 - "Backwards" – players must move backward with the ball.
 - "Sideways" – players must move sideways with the ball.
 - Coach's imagination – Must deal with ball movement, change of direction, ball stopping, etc.



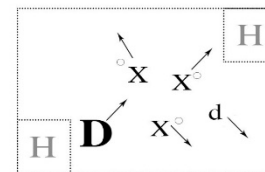
Soft Toss (7 Min)

- Every player has a ball. Players stand shoulder to shoulder. Coach slides down line from player to player.
- The player tosses the ball to the coach and the coach tosses it back (gently, two hands, underhand) to each player. Beforehand, coach tells players how to return the ball.
 - Hands – player has to catch ball.
 - Thighs – player uses thigh to hit ball up and catch it. If they can do this, move to hitting the ball with the right and left thigh (two juggles) before catching it.
 - Feet – player uses laces to kick ball up and catch it. If they can do this, move to kicking it back up to the coach. (Difficult).
 - Heads – player heads ball back to coach. Three guidelines for heading:
 - Use the forehead.
 - Keep eyes open. The ball will go the direction the eyes are pointed.
 - The head should hit the ball, NOT letting the ball hit the head.
- All players are a team. Coach sets a number (between 3-15 depending on difficulty) of successful attempts (i.e. Player hits ball up with thigh and catches it). Players count out loud together with coach for each success until they reach the set number. Then move on to the next skill.



Doctor, Doctor (10 Min)

- Every player has a ball except the "Doctor" (one player) and the "Disease" (one or two players.) 15 x 20 yard grid. (Make grid smaller to make this more difficult). Set up a 3x3 yard square "hospital" in two corners diagonal from each other.
- Players dribble in grid. If the "Disease" tags a player, that player picks up the ball and holds it and stand with spread legs.
- The "Doctor" can unfreeze sick players by tagging them.
- Hospitals are safe zones where players cannot be tagged, but can only remain for three seconds. (See two more instructions on top of the next page.)



d-doctor, D-disease

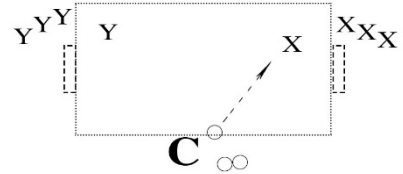
U8 Practices: Practice #1 Dribbling

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- Other players can unfreeze each other by passing their ball through the legs of the frozen player.
- Adjust number of “Diseases” to keep the game competitive and fun.

1v1 to Small Goals (10 Min)

- 10 x 20 yard field with two small goals. Goals are 2 yards wide.
- All balls are set by the coach at the midline on the side of the field. Coach serves from midline. Ball is rolled or bounced toward one of the players to start 1v1. Players are working on receiving the ball. Don't roll it in the middle of them.
- Players line up in two teams, one on each end of the field.
- Play stops when a goal is scored or ball goes out of bounds.
- After playing 1v1, players should get back to line and have just a few seconds to catch their breath before going again. You can have more than one 1v1 game going at a time on the same field. Mix up who plays who.



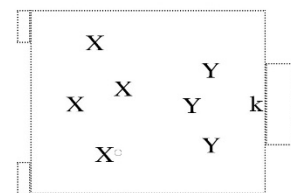
The Gauntlet (10 Min)

- Half of the players (attackers) start with a ball. The remainder of players (defenders) will start without a ball in consecutive 5x5 yard grids.
- One player at a time will begin to run the gauntlet. The player must try to dribble by each defender in order. If they are successful, they move to the next defender. If the defender steals the ball or it goes out of bounds, the defender becomes the attacker into the next grid. The attacker takes their place and defends the area they lost the ball in.
- Coach should keep the players going fairly quickly one after another, so players are not just standing and waiting. There can be more than one player in the gauntlet at a time.



Soccer Game (12 Min)

- 4v3 + goal keeper. 20 x 25 yard area. The four players score in the big goal. The three players score in either of two smaller goals (2 yards wide), on the opposite end from the big goal and are set up in the corners.
- Play two halves. When defending the big goal, one of the players is the goal keeper. Keep score. Have all extra balls set next to the field so nobody has to chase a ball.
- When the balls go over the end line with the big goal, practice CORNER KICKS AND GOAL KICKS.
 - A corner kick is taken by the attacking team when the ball crosses the end line, last touched by the defenders. A goal kick is taken from inside the small box by the defending team when the ball crosses the end line last touched by the attacking team.

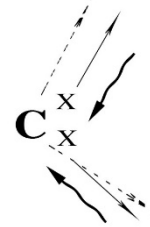


U8 Practice #2: Passing

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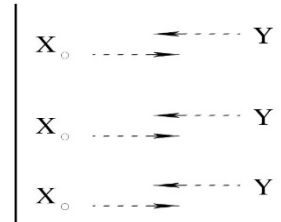
Boss of the balls (7 Min)

- Players get in groups of 2 with one ball.
- Coach throws balls out and gives directions how players are to bring the ball back and hand it to the coach. All activities will involve players cooperating to bring the ball back in partners. Example: if coach has players “bring the ball back with two knees,” that would involve one knee from each player. When they get back to the coach, they will pick the ball up and hand it to the coach.
- Vary how they bring the balls back.
 - Body parts, examples: two heads, an elbow and a shoulder, between their backs.
 - 7 passes to each other (or any other number)
 - 4 times holding ball in hands, dropping ball and kicking it up to partner.
 - Funny ways – anything silly that two players can do with a soccer ball.
 - Be creative as you want. It does not all have to look like soccer, you are also working on coordination.



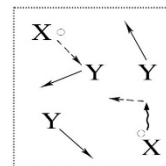
Partner Passing (7 Min)

- Players get in groups of 2 with one ball, a different partner than in the previous activity.
- Players stand facing each other 3 yards apart. All other partners should be in a row for ease of coaching.
- 2 touch passing. Players pass the ball to their partner who receives the ball with the inside of one foot (foot turned sideways) and plays it back with the inside of the other.
 - Teach players to turn their foot side ways to kick ball. If the foot can be turned perpendicular to the target it will travel straight forward.
 - The ball should hit the center to back of the foot (side of heel). Turning the foot sideways is a difficult coordination skill and will require you to reinforce and help the players long term.
- After learning, you can add competition. How many passes in a minute can they get? Race other partners.



Pac Man (7Min)

- Two players each have a ball. All other players are without a ball. 15 x 15 yard grid. (Make it smaller to increase difficulty.) All players must remain in the grid.
- Activity 1: Two players with a ball dribble around and try to hit other players in the legs.
- When a player gets hit, that player grabs a ball and becomes “it” as well. Game goes until every player has been hit with a ball.
- Optional Activity 2: Two players who are “it” have one ball between them. Everybody else pairs up and must hold hands. When either of the players holding hands get hit, they grab another ball and become “it” as well. Game goes until every pair has been hit with a ball.

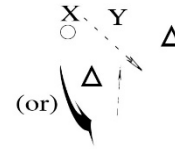


U8 Practice #2: Passing

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1v1 to two sided goal (10 Min)

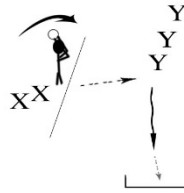
- 2 players per ball. Set up one "goal" for each set of partners.
- Set up "goals" by placing two cones 3 yards apart.
- 3 games x 45 seconds.
- Players can score from either side by passing through goal.
- Both players must be where the ball is, no standing in the goal.
- If one player scores, the other gets the ball.



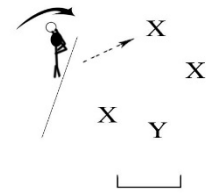
Throw-Ins (7 Min)

- Activity 1 – Player throws ball in to partner who receives ball, turns and dribbles toward goal and scores.
- Activity 2 – 3v1 to goal. 3 attackers and 1 defender.
- Play begins with throw-in. Other two attacking players spread out. Ball is thrown to the open player (where the defender is not).
- Player must stand behind line. Two feet must stay on the ground. Two hands come back over the head and throw together.

Activity 1

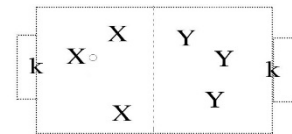


Activity 2



Play Soccer Game (12 Min)

- 3v3 plus goal keepers. 25 x 35 yard field with two small goals.
- Every ball that goes out of bounds is started by a throw-in from the side line. Today, this is even for balls that go off the end line.
- Coach should have every other team take the throw-in no matter who kicked the ball out. Make sure to rotate which player is throwing the ball in.

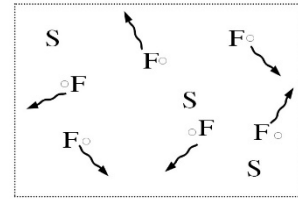


U8 Practice #3: Dribbling

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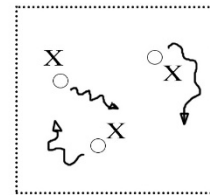
Sharks (7 Min)

- 2/3 of the players have a ball. Example for nine players, six have a ball. 10 x 15 grid.
- The players without a ball are the sharks. The players with the ball are fish.
- The fish dribble around inside the grid. The sharks attempt to steal balls from the fish.
 - If a fish has their ball stolen, they become a shark and must find a new ball (not the one that was just stolen) to steal. When a shark wins a ball they become a fish.
 - Teach players to win the ball in bounds, not to kick the ball away when defending.



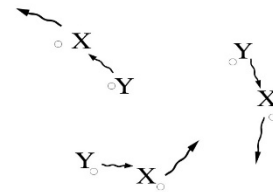
Ball Moves (7 Min)

- Everybody has a ball. 15 x 15 yard grid.
- 1st Activity: Teach two soccer moves. Players must learn with both feet.
- Inside Cuts: Also known as the chop. With the dribbling foot, cut the ball across in front of body.
 - Toe should be pointed down. The laces of the shoe should contact the ball. Keep ball close to the body, don't kick it. Cut the ball 180°.
- Outside Cuts: Also known as the outside chop. With the dribbling foot, cut the ball back away from body.
 - Rotate ankle 90°, point toe out (opposite of a pigeon toe). Take ball with the outside of the foot. Keep ball close to the body, don't kick it. Cut the ball 180°.
- 2nd Activity: Dribble around in grid and do inside and outside cuts on coach's command.



Follow the Leader (7 Min)

- Every player has a ball. Get players in groups of two.
- One player leads, the other follows. Both players must always have a ball. 45 seconds and then switch leaders. After each player has been the leader, switch partners and repeat.
- The leaders should dribble around doing goofy things like hopping, sitting, spinning, having fun and being creative with the ball.

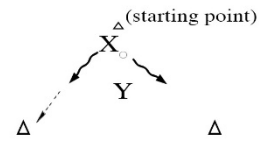


U8 Practice #3: Dribbling

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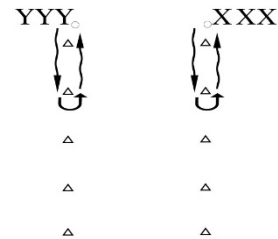
1v1 to Two Cones 12 Yards Apart (7 Min)

- 2 players per ball. Set up two cones 12 yards apart. Tall cones that could be knocked over are preferable, but not necessary. Set up a third cone 12 yards away from the first two in a triangle shape.
- Attacker will begin with the ball on the third cone. Defender starts 3 yards from the attacker.
- Attacker scores by hitting either cone with the ball. Teach the players to dribble, not straight at the defender, but to their sides. Teach players to use inside and outside cuts to change direction. Both cones are available so the attacker can learn to keep cutting the ball in a different direction until the attacker is able to get by the defender and hit a cone with the ball.
- If the defender wins the ball, they would try to score on either cone. Play continues until either player hits the cone with a ball.
- The next game begins in the same manner, with the attacker and defender switching roles.
- After each person has been the attacker, switch partners.



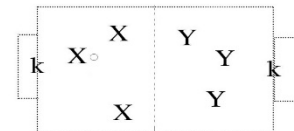
Relay Races (10 Min)

- Two teams, one ball per team
- Set up five cones in a straight line for each team, five yards between each cone.
- Do 3-5 races total.
- Each player has to go around the first cone and back. Then each player goes out to the second cone and back. Then to the third cone, then the fourth cone, until all players have finished.
- Teams can be changed inbetween races to even them out if necessary.
- Races 1 and 2: Players use inside cuts to turn. Right foot turns, then left foot turns.
- Races 3 and 4: Players use outside cuts to turn. Right foot turns, then left foot turns.



Soccer Game (12 Min)

- 3v3 plus goal keepers. 20 x 25 yard area. Set up small goals on each end using cones.
- Have all extra balls set next to the field so nobody has to chase a ball.
- Encourage players to use INSIDE AND OUTSIDE CUTS. If coach sees a good one, reward with a point just as if a goal was scored. Keep score.
- When ball goes out of bounds, coach restarts the next ball by kicking it to a player from the sideline. Mix up who gets the ball, and get the ball in quickly so players have to learn to react quickly. There are NO throw-ins, goal kicks, corner kicks, kick offs.

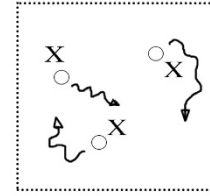


U8 Practice #4: Shooting/Goal Keeping

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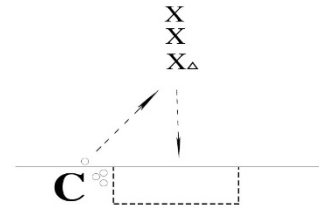
Problem Solving Dribbling (7 Min)

- Every player has a ball. 15 x 15 yard grid.
- Coach will call out commands for players to follow while dribbling. Coach will introduce the commands one at a time. Players will need to stop only during the teaching part. After the first introduction, when a command is called out players should learn to do it without stopping.
 - Use different surfaces of the foot and let them be creative.
 - Inside cuts, outside cuts, heels, laces, toes, sole (bottom) of foot.
 - Change directions. Again encourage them to be creative and experiment.
 - Call out numbers; 2,3,4... Players must quickly get in groups of that number.
- Coach should mix up all these commands to get the players to quickly solve problems in the flow of the dribbling.



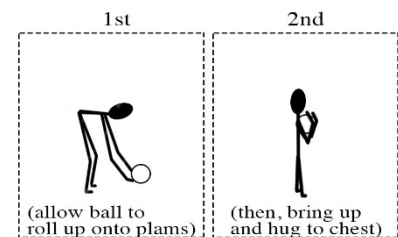
Shooting Frenzy (7 Min)

- Players stand by a cone 12 yards from goal post. Coach stands next to the post with all of the balls.
- Players are to shoot as many balls as possible in the 7 minutes available. There will be no goal keeper or defenders.
- Coach serves balls to on coming players in three different levels of difficulty.
 - On ground. (3 Min)
 - Bouncing balls. (2 Min)
 - In the air (soft). Move starting position into 4 yards in front of coach. (2 Min)
- The players come one after another as fast as the coach can send balls out. The line should move fast. There really will be no line, just a starting spot.
- Players grab ball out of goal after shooting and bring it to the coach's feet.



Goal Keeper Basket Catch (7 Min)

- Every player is a goal keeper in this activity. At this age, have all players practice being a goal keeper and using hands. In games, use several keepers. Don't use just one.
- Two players (partners) per one ball.
- Partners should face each other 3-5 yards apart.
- One player will roll the ball to their partner who will use a basket catch to receive it. That player will then roll the ball back to the other player who will use a basket catch.
 - Basket Catch: Arms should be together in front of body with palms facing up. Allow the ball to roll up onto the palms of both hands. Brings up to chest by bending elbows and clutching the ball to the keeper's chest.

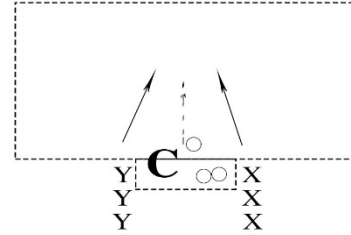


U8 Practice #4: Shooting/Goal Keeping

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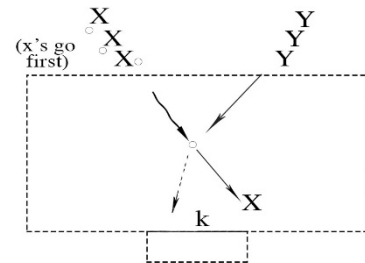
1v1 and 2v2 off Goal Post (7 Min)

- Players line up on both posts. Place all balls next to the coach on the end line to the side of the goal.
- Coach starts each game by calling out either the first one or two players in line and kicking the ball onto the field. All players try to score on the big goal.
- One player is the goal keeper. Every time a goal is scored a new player becomes the goal keeper.



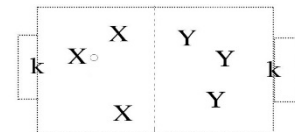
Goal Keeper Shot Stopping/Field Player Leave and Shoot (10 Min)

- Players form two lines just outside the penalty box (large box painted in front of goal). The line on the right, each player has a ball.
- One player is the goal keeper.
- The player in the line on the right dribbles the ball to 6-8 yards in front of the goal, steps on it to stop it and keep running out of the way.
- The player from the line on the left follows and shoots the ball that is left by the first player.
- To score, the ball must be on the ground.
- The player who left the ball becomes the next goal keeper immediately. Keep the lines moving so players have to react quickly. When players go back to the lines, they should switch the line they were in.
- Coach should stand behind goal keepers and help them focus on correct technique for a basket catch. If the ball is hit to the side, get the keepers moving their feet first. Only dive if they cannot get their standing up.



Play Soccer Game (10 Min)

- 3v3 plus goal keepers. 10 yards long x 30 yards wide. Big goals about 10 yards apart. Use real goal or cones to make 4-6 yard wide goals.
 - The goals are close together to cut down on the dribbling and running and encourage more shooting.
- Coach starts play by rolling the ball onto the field. Mix up which player the ball is rolled to and where on the field it is rolled.
- Emphasize SHOOTING fast and get next ball in immediately.

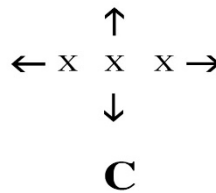


U8 Practice #5: Defending

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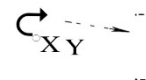
Defensive Shuffling (7 Min)

- No balls. Players spread out in front of coach, all facing straight forward.
- Coach will give four commands (mix up visual and auditory)
 - Right and Left: players must shuffle sideways without crossing their feet.
 - Backward: player jogs backward. The players head and eyes should always be facing forward on coach.
 - Sprint forward: Players run hard forward toward coach.
 - Variations
 - 1st, players must do opposite of what you tell or show them.
 - 2nd, players must do this with a ball at their feet. Every player has a ball.



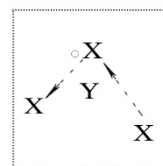
1v1 Turning Contest (7 Min)

- Two players, one ball. One 3 yard goal set up seven yards behind the defender.
- The player with the ball will start with their back to the defender.
- The defender should be up against the attacker with at very least touching their back with a hand, preferably closer.
- The attacker holds the ball while the defender pushes a bit, but does not steal the ball.
- When the coach shouts "Go," the attacking player tries to turn and score in the 3 yard goal seven yards behind the defender.



3v1 Keep Away (7 Min)

- Four players, one ball. Have extra balls close by. 10 x 10 yard grid.
- 3 attackers play keep away from the one defender. Play for 1 minute and then switch defenders.
- 1st pass is always free (cannot be intercepted by the defender).
- The defender should pressure the ball immediately if close to it. If the defender is not close, they should wait until the ball is passed before applying pressure.
- If the defender wins the ball, they try to dribble it as long as possible while the three attackers try to get the ball back.



1v1 to 1x1x1 yard triangle (7 Min)

- Two players, one ball and three cones marking a 1x1x1 yard triangle.
- Play 4 games x 45 seconds each.
- Each player is trying to score by passing the ball through the triangle.
- If the defender wins the ball, that player is now the attacker.

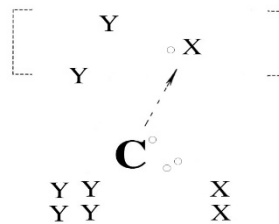


U8 Practice #5: Defending

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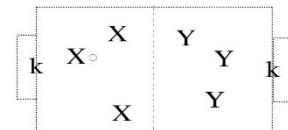
1v2 to Small Goals (10 Min)

- 3 players are on the field at a time with two small goals.
- Other players wait next to coach. After each ball, three new players go on field.
- One player defends one goal and the other two defend the other goal.
- Coach serves the ball to the team of "one"
- Defenders, one should immediately go pressure the ball. The second defender should support by holding a few yards behind the first defender in case the first defender is beaten.
- When the two players win the ball, they must make at least one pass before scoring. Player who loses the ball should immediately pressure and try to win the ball back.



Play Soccer Game (12 Min)

- 3v3 plus goal keepers. 20 x 25 yard field. Set up small goals on each end using cones.
- Have extra balls set next to the field so nobody has to chase a ball.
- There must be ONE PASS each time a team wins the ball before shooting.
- Emphasize DEFENDING. The closest defender to the ball immediately pressures the attacker. Not all defenders pressure the ball at the same time.

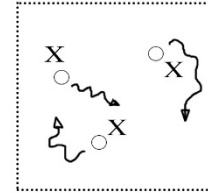


U8 Practice #6: Turning with Ball

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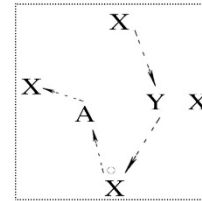
Ball Moves (7 Min)

- Everybody has a ball. 15 x 15 yard grid.
- 1st Activity: Teach one soccer move and review two moves. Players must learn with both feet.
- Teach Cruyff: Dribbling forward, reach forward, turning the dribbling foot in and knock the ball back between the legs with inside of that foot. Land on that foot and complete the 180° turn, pushing the ball back away with the outside of the opposite foot.
- Review Inside Cuts: Also known as the chop. With the dribbling foot, cut the ball across in front of body.
 - Toe should be pointed down. The laces of the shoe should contact the ball. Keep ball close to the body, don't kick it. Cut the ball 180°.
- Review Outside Cuts: Also known as the outside chop. With the dribbling foot, cut the ball back away from body.
 - Rotate ankle 90°, point toe out (opposite of a pigeon toe). Take ball with the outside of the foot. Keep ball close to the body, don't kick it. Cut the ball 180°.
- 2nd Activity: Dribble around in grid and do inside cuts, outside cuts and Cruyffs on coach's command.



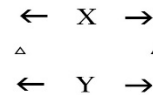
Turning to the 4's (10 Min)

- Six players, two balls. 15 x 15 yard grid.
- Four players are one on each edge of the ball. Two of them start with a ball.
- Two players are inside the grid without a ball. 1 minute and then switch to two new players in the middle. Rotate through so each player gets two times to be in the middle.
- The two players in the middle each check to a separate ball, receive it, turn and find another player on the edge of the grid to pass the ball to. The players in the middle then check to the other ball.



Mirror game (7 Min)

- Groups of two with no ball.
- For each set of two players, set up two cones seven yards apart.
- Pretend the space in between the two cones is a mirror. One player will stand on each side of the mirror. One player is designated as the attacker (leader). The other is the defender (follower).
- The object is for the attacker to touch either cone before the defender can touch it. This is a point. If the defender touches it at the same time, no point is awarded.
- Play goes for 30 seconds. Switch who the attacker is and play again for 30 seconds. The winner is the player who scores the most points in 30 seconds as the attacker.
- Variation 1: Add a ball for both the attacker and defender.
- Variation 2: Add a ball for just the attacker (this is the most difficult game to score).
- To score with a ball, the ball must be under control. It must be right next to the attacker's foot.

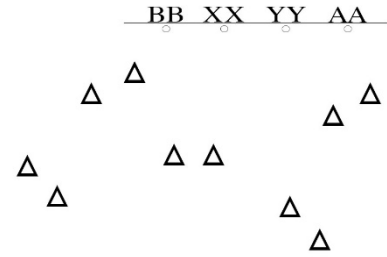


U8 Practice #6: Turning with Ball

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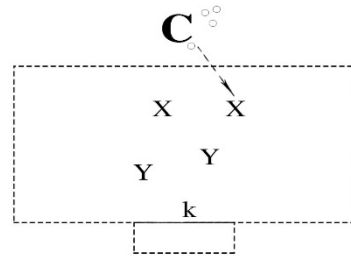
Multiple Goals (10 Min)

- Everybody has a ball.
- Set up six goals (2 cones that are two yards wide). Scatter the goals around randomly in a 25-25 yard area.
- Players start on line facing the area with the six goals.
 - Activity 1 – On the coach's signal, players race through the goals. Coach can vary the number and order the goals need to be dribbled through or let the players choose their order.
 - Activity 2 – 2 players, 1 ball. All players go at the same time. Partners must pass the ball through each goal to score before moving on to the next gate.



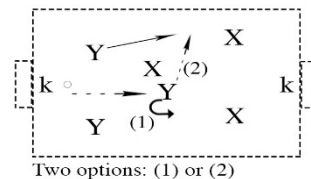
2v2 to Big Goal (10 Min)

- Four players start inside the penalty box (big box painted around goal). Use a goalkeeper.
- Coach plays balls in from outside of the penalty box. Coach will play 8-10 balls in a row. As soon as one is shot or goes outside the box, coach will play another ball in.
 - Coach should vary who gets the ball. It does not have to be fair who gets the next ball.
- Players start inside with backs to the goal.
- Play 2v2. One ball after another. Keep score.
- The players who are not playing, should chase balls so they are immediately ready for the next game.
- Switch group of players on the field. Rotate goalkeepers each game.
- The second time players come on the field, switch who their partners are.



Play Soccer Game (12 Min)

- 3v3 plus goal keepers. 20 x 25 yard field. Play to big goals (use cones if necessary). One player on each team is the goalkeeper.
- Teams should be set up with two defenders and one forward in a triangle shape. Make sure they are set up correctly before each new ball is played.
- Have extra balls set next to each goalkeeper so nobody has to chase a ball.
- Each new ball is started from by a pass from the goalkeeper on the ground to their forward.
 - The forward should be up in the center of the field facing their own goalkeeper.
 - First pass is always free (defenders cannot steal the ball before the forward touches the ball).
- Every time a goal is scored rotate positions so everybody gets to be the goalkeeper and the forward.
- Work with forwards on choosing one of two options each time:
 - Turning with the ball toward goal they are trying to score in.
 - Passing the ball immediately back or sideways to one of their teammates.

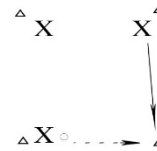


U8 Practice #7: Receiving

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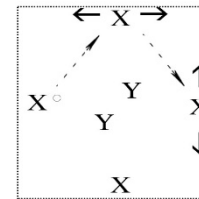
Moving to Receive (7 Min)

- Three players, one ball. 10 x 10 yard grid.
- The three players each start in a corner, one has a ball.
- Passes may only be made to the two corners to the right and left of a player, not the diagonal corner.
- The two players without the ball must run move so they occupy the corner to the right and left of the passer.
 - Coach should work on speed of decision making.
- Players should always receive the ball with their hips facing the field, not facing the corner or edge.



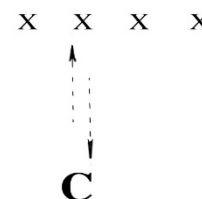
4v2 Keep Away from the Crabs (7 Min)

- Six players, one ball. 10 x 10 yard grid.
 - Adjust grid size so it is challenging, but 75% of passes can be completed.
- Four attacking players are on the edges (not the corners.)
- Two defenders are in the middle and must defend like crabs (hands and feet on the ground and stomach facing up.)
 - If a defender kicks a ball out, the four attackers each have one pushup before continuing.
- Play for 45 seconds, then switch defenders.
- The players without the ball should move up and down their edge to get open.



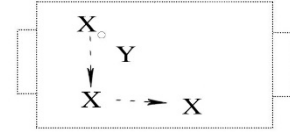
Soft Toss (7 Min)

- Every player has a ball. Players stand shoulder to shoulder. Coach slides down line from player to player.
- The player tosses the ball to the coach and the coach tosses it back (gently, two hands, underhand) to each player.
- Beforehand coach tells players how to return the ball.
 - Hands – player has to catch ball.
 - Thighs – player uses thigh to hit ball up and catch it. If they can do this, move to hitting the ball with the right and left thigh (two juggles) before catching it.
 - Feet – player uses laces to kick ball up and catch it. If they can do this, move to kicking it back up to the coach. (Difficult).
 - Heads – player heads ball back to coach. Three guidelines for heading
 - Use the forehead.
 - Keep eyes open. The ball will go the direction the eyes are pointed.
 - The head should hit the ball, NOT letting the ball hit the head.
- All players are a team. Coach sets a number (between 3-15 depending on difficulty) of successful attempts (i.e. Player hits ball up with thigh and catches it). Players count out loud together with coach for each success until they reach the set number. Then move on to the next skill.



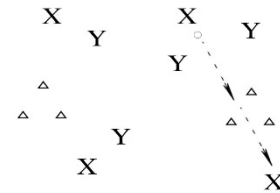
3v1 Keep Away or the One Scores (7 Min)

- Four players, one ball. 10 x 15 grid. Two small goals, one on each end, 2 yards wide.
- Three players play keep away. They score a point by completing three passes in a row (change number of passes if it is too easy.)
- The one player may score in either of the small goals after stealing the ball.



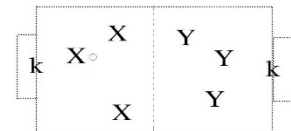
4v4 to Triangle Goals (10 Min)

- 4v4. There are no boundaries.
- Set up two triangle goals about 15 yards apart. The triangles should have 5 yard sides.
- To score, the team with the ball must pass the ball through either triangle to a teammate on the other side of the triangle. A completed pass through the triangle is a point.
- If the defense wins the ball, they score in the same way.
- No player is allowed inside either triangle.
- Variation: To make it more difficult, each team defends one triangle and attacks the other triangle.



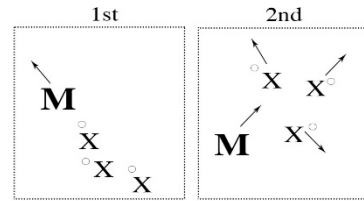
Play Soccer Game (12 Min)

- 3v3 plus goal keepers. 20 x 25 yard field. Set up small goals on each end using cones.
- Have extra balls set next to the field so nobody has to chase a ball.
- There must be ONE PASS each time a team wins the ball before shooting.



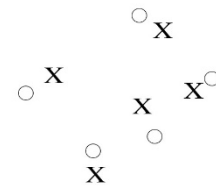
Dribbling: The Monster (7 Min)

- Every player has a ball. 10 x 10 yard grid.
- 1st Activity: Follow the monster.
 - Coach dribbles around doing goofy things like hopping, sitting, spinning, having fun. (If the coach cannot do these things, have the players lead each other). Players follow.
- 2nd Activity: Away from the monster!
 - Players dribble around in the box trying to keep their ball and keep it in bounds.
 - Coach and one player act like a monster and kicks the balls of the player outside the grid. Player chases the ball and gets back in as fast as possible. Switch monsters every 30 seconds.



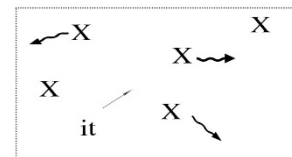
Juggling Ladder (7 Min)

- Every player has a ball.
- Player will juggle once and catch it. Player will then juggle twice and catch it. Player will juggle three times and catch it. And so on. Player cannot progress up the ladder until they complete each step.
 - Thighs, every other thigh. (Don't use the knee.)
 - Laces, every other foot. (Foot should be pointed straight up so ball goes off the laces.)
 - Inside of foot, every other foot. (Bend leg inward so the ball hits the inside of the foot. The inside ankle should be pointed toward the sky.)
 - Headers.



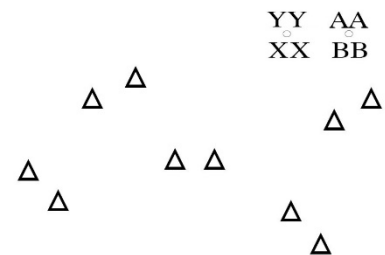
Tag (10 Min)

- Regular tag for 2-3 minutes. Keep the grid small enough that there is lots of action and it's hard to get away.
- Freeze tag
 - 3 games x 2 minutes with different players being "it."
 - All players who are not "it" have a ball. To unfreeze teammate, pass a ball through their legs.



2v2 on Multiple Goals (10 Min)

- Groups of four with one ball. Divide into 2v2 teams.
- Set up six goals (2 cones that are two yards wide). Scatter the goals around randomly in a 25-25 yard area.
- Players start on line facing the area with the six goals.
- On the coach's signal, players play 2v2.
- 4 games x 60 seconds. Stay in the same group of four and switch teammates.



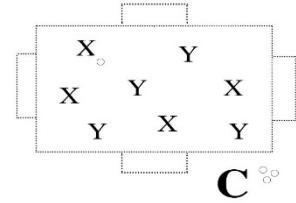
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- Attacker may score by passing ball through any goal to teammate. Teams cannot score in the same goal twice in a row. Play continues when goals are scored with the attackers keeping the ball until defender wins it.

4 Goal Game (10 Min)

- Divide players into two teams. 10 x 30 yard grid with small goals on each side. Use cones to set up 2 yard wide goals. Coach should have all balls together on the side of the field.
- Coach starts play by rolling the ball onto the field. Mix up which player the ball is rolled to.
- Play goes until one of the players scores or the ball goes out of bounds. Coach immediately starts next ball.
- Players can score in any of the four goals. Keep score.



Play Soccer Game (12 Min)

- 3v3 plus goal keepers. 20 x 25 yard field. Set up small goals on each end using cones.
- Have extra balls set next to the field so nobody has to chase a ball.
- There must be ONE PASS each time a team wins the ball before shooting.

