

Greater Libertyville Soccer Association

**Recreational League
Coaching Handbook**

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To the Coaches,

First, we would like to start off by saying thank you to all of the wonderful volunteer coaches that have given their time to help make each player's soccer experience at GLSA a fruitful one. You are the driving force behind this program and hopefully your experience as a coach will be as fun and enjoyable as the kids. The ability to coach and teach kids in any sport is a very special gift. It takes time, patience, a love of the game, the ability to understand who you are coaching and how best to go about teaching them. This may be the first time for some of you to coach soccer while others may have been coaching for years. Either way, we must always remember that we are here for the benefit of the kids. Hopefully along the way we can all learn together and have some fun as well.

This manual is just one of the many tools that can provide you with the basic knowledge of coaching soccer. It is a general overview of the different age levels and what their needs are. Each age will require a unique method to coaching and have different goals and expectations. The idea is to provide each player with the basis they will need to advance to the next level. While no coaching method is ever exactly alike, the basic principles of the game remain the same. We must try and not step past what is needed at one age level, because we feel that the players need something more. We want to challenge the kids as long as we stay within the bounds of the age group. This will help each player to develop at the appropriate rate.

As with anything that we do, coaching is an ongoing learning process. We all will do our best and probably make some mistakes along the way. We must keep in mind that this is a game and it's supposed to be fun. If kids are enjoying their experience, then they will continue to play and get better over time. Hopefully with your efforts, and the support of the GLSA program, we can create a successful environment for the kids to learn.

Thanks for all your help. Good Luck!!!

GLSA Staff

I. Introduction

A. Principles of coaching

1. Know who you are coaching

- Each age level and requires specific emphasis on different aspects of the game
- What works for a 12 year old is not appropriate for 6 year old
- Every child is different and will develop at different rates

2. Have knowledge of the game

- Understand all of the rules and laws of the game
- Know the correct technique (dribbling, passing, shooting)
- Understand the different positions and roles of the players

3. Be Organized

- Practices should be understandable and age appropriate
- Each exercise should have objectives and pertain to the topic
- Have a plan and set goals for the practice, the week, the season etc.

4. Emphasize the correct things and Demonstrate

- Teach the basics of the age level
- Concentrate on good play not winning or losing
- Demonstrate the correct methods of doing something

B. Role of the Coach

1. As a Facilitator

- Provide the appropriate environment for learning
- Ensure that everyone is involved
- It should be fun and allow lots of success

2. As a Communicator

- Kids need positive feedback
- Be enthusiastic
- Negative feedback is ok as long as it is presented correctly and follows with a solution

3. As a Role Model

- Demonstrate respect for team members, opponents, referees, parents, spectators and opposing coaches
- Teach responsibility of the game itself
- Generally behave in a manner that you want your players emulate

4. As a Motivator

- Develop high levels of self confidence
- Be positive and show patience
- Be sensitive to each child

C. GLSA Code of Ethics for Coaches

- I will treat each player, opposing coach, official, parent and administrator with respect and dignity.
- I will acknowledge in my behavior and language that the GLSA exists for the children first and a love of soccer second.
- I will, in all circumstances, teach and model good sportsmanship... winning with grace and losing with dignity.
- I will base playing time decisions on individual player development and learning... not wining.
- I will do my best to learn the fundamental skills, teaching and evaluation techniques, and strategies of my sport.
- I will become thoroughly familiar with the rules of my sport and teach them to players and coaches.
- I will become familiar with the objectives of the GLSA and will strive to achieve these objectives and communicate them to my players and parents.
- I will uphold the authority of officials who are assigned to the contests in which I coach, and will assist them in any way to conduct fair and impartial competitive contests.
- I will learn the strengths and weaknesses of my players so that I might place them into situations where they have the maximum opportunity to achieve success.
- I will plan and conduct my practices and games so that all players have an opportunity to improve their skill level through active participation.
- I will communicate to my players and their parents the rights and responsibilities of individuals on our team.
- I will cooperate with the director and administrator of our organization in the enforcement of rules and regulations, and I will report any irregularities that violate sound competitive practices.
- I will protect the health and safety of my players by insisting that all of the activities under my control are conducted for the psychological and physiological welfare, rather than the vicarious interest of adults.

II. Coaching the Pre-School Age

Pre-School age kids are some of the most fun and yet can be the most frustrating group to coach. They are full of energy but lack concentration. They can be very active at times or can resist participation. In this section we will look at the basic characteristics of these players and then try to formulate a plan on how to teach them the basic elements of soccer within their physical and psychological limitations. As this is an introductory stage for players, we must keep all activities in the scope of fun, constant action, short time periods, and yet fundamentally sound.

A. Characteristics of the Player

- Short Attention Span
- Most are individually oriented (me, my, mine)
- Constantly in motion
- Psychologically easily bruised
- Limit or no concern for team activities
- Development for boys and girls very similar
- Primitive eye/foot coordination
- Love to run and jump

B. What to Emphasize (Goals and Expectations)

- **Balance and Coordination:** Develop the ability to balance on one foot or the other; develop the ability to switch from using one side of the body to the other.
- *Introducing players to the ball and the different surfaces of the body that can be used to move it.*
- **Dribbling:** Using the inside and outside of the foot to kick the ball forward while keeping the ball within reach
- **Stopping the Ball:** Using the inside or sole of the foot to stop the ball from rolling.
- **Turning:** Using the inside or outside of the foot to turn the ball in different directions or using the sole of the foot to roll the ball in a different direction
- **Passing:** Using the inside of the foot to kick the ball in the intended direction.
- **Shooting:** Using the instep or shoelace portion of the foot to kick the ball at or in the goal.
- **Competition:** Teaching the basic understanding of having opponents that are attempting to steal the ball.
- **Self Confidence:** Allowing players to be successful in every aspect of the game; encouraging them to be creative and try new things without the fear of failure.

C. Teaching the Basics

- **Time:** Because of their short attention span, all activities should last no more than 10-15 minutes per exercise otherwise players will become bored.
- **One Player One Ball:** Most if not all exercises should have each player working with their own ball; Partners are ok however you will find it is more effective to keep it one to one.
- **Keep it Simple:** There should not be a lot of complicated rules or boundaries; The idea is to give the kids a chance to try everything without restriction.
- **Demonstrate Don't Describe:** Players need to see what to do not hear it; Too much explaining will cause them to change focus to something else. Sometimes you may need to participate to help the exercise work.
- **Be Specific:** If you are working on dribbling, then only work on one surface of one foot at a time (inside of the right foot or outside of the left).
- **Exercises Should Be Fun:** All activities should be geared towards excitement and constant action; Games that incorporate the ball but are something that all kids understand are the most effective (Soccer Tag, Red Light Green Light etc.).
- **Be Creative:** There is no right or wrong way at this age as long as any activities you chose incorporate proper basic techniques, constant action and fun.

D. Teamwork and Positioning

- *Pre-School age kids have the most difficulty with this concept.*
- **Teamwork:** Any activity that requires more than one player to accomplish a task will be the most effective. For example, if a group of players, who all have their own ball, must try and catch one or more players without a ball. This will incorporate the “one player one ball” concept with working together to reach a common goal.
- **Partners:** Usually working in pairs allows players to develop the concept of teammates. Any activity where two players working with one ball must complete a task together will encourage teamwork.
- **Positioning:** Most of the time, if there is a group of players and only one ball, all positioning can be thrown out and the swarming of the ball takes place. All players should be allowed to play all positions, however, this is the last thing we really want to be concentrating on at this age.
- **Moving Together:** At this age, players should be taught the basic concept of moving up and down the field together irregardless of what position they started at. The idea is to not have players standing around on the field waiting for the ball to come near them. Its ok if they all become involved in attacking the goal or defending their own goal.

Sample Exercises for Pre-School Age Players

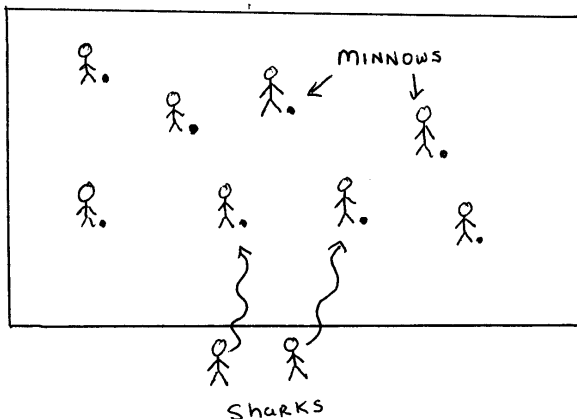
Dribbling:

“Sharks and Minnows”

All but one or two players will have their ball within a confined area. The one or two players without the ball (the sharks) must try and run in to the confined area, steal a ball from one of the players (minnows) and kick it outside of the confined area. Then the player who lost his/her ball must help the shark to steal balls from other minnows. The game ends when all players' have lost their soccer balls.

Emphasis: Dribbling the ball close to the body using both feet and turning the ball away from the opponent or boundary. Encourage all surfaces including inside, outside and sole of the foot as well as using both the right and the left foot.

Demonstration: Coach should demonstrate between games as to the different surfaces a player could use to dribble the ball or turn away from an opponent.



“Red Light Green Light”

Line up the players next to one another each with their own ball. Distance between starting and finishing lines should be 20 to 30 yards. Coach will then shout commands “Red Light”, which means that players must have the ball stopped and have their foot on top of the ball, or “Green Light” which requires the player to dribble the ball forward. Work one time with both feet then limit them to right foot and then left. You can also add other color light to add tasks to this exercise. Be Creative!!

Emphasis: Listening to direction. Dribbling the ball with both feet and all surfaces. Keeping the ball close to the body in order to stop it quickly

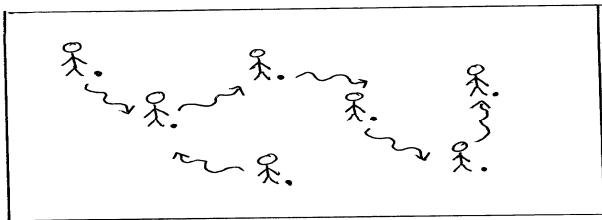
Demonstration: Demonstrate on keeping the ball close with small soft touches not long kicks. Show the right foot only and then the left foot only.

“Soccer Tag”

All players with their own ball will be inside a confined area approximately 20 x 20 yards. When the coach gives the command every player must try and tag other players without getting tagged themselves. Players must have the ball at their feet to tag someone. Game ends when all but one player has been tagged.

Emphasis: Dribbling the ball close to the body. Turning the ball away from opponents and boundaries. Using different surfaces of each foot.

Demonstration: Demonstrate on keeping the ball close to the body and then using different surfaces and different feet to quickly change directions.



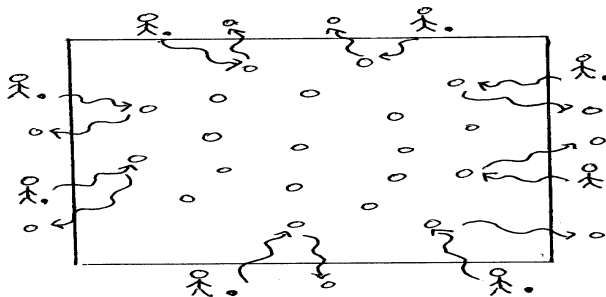
Passing:

“Grab The Cone”

Create a square using cones about 10x 10 yards with many cones scattered around throughout the inside of the square (approximately 2 cones per player). All players will have their own soccer ball. When the coach gives the command players must stand outside the square and attempt to hit the cone using their ball. If the miss, they must retrieve their ball and try again. If they hit a cone then they get to keep it. The player with the most cones wins. Game ends when all cones have been grabbed.

Emphasis: Using the inside of the foot to hit a stationary target. Placing the non-kicking foot next to the ball. Pointing the toe of the non-kicking foot at the target. Turning the kicking foot perpendicular to the non-kicking foot like a “T” shape. Following through at the target without crossing the legs one over the other.

Demonstration: Demonstrate proper technique of both kicking and non-kicking foot. Encourage the players to use both feet even if you restrict them to one or the other for different games.

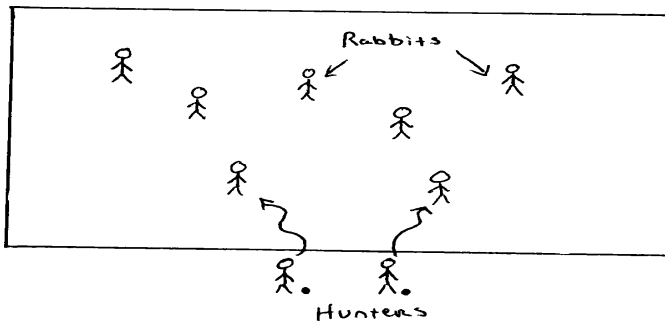


“Hunters and Rabbits”

Create a boundary of 20x 20 yards using cones. All but two players will be inside the boundary without a ball (the rabbits). The two players with the ball (the hunters) must try and dribble the ball in the area and pass the ball at a rabbit on the ground and tag them in the leg. If a rabbit gets hit, then they must get a ball and help the hunters. Game ends when all players have been tagged.

Emphasis: Passing the ball from a dribbling motion and hitting a moving target. Concentrate on the position of the non-kicking foot making sure it is next to the ball and the toe is pointed correctly. Use inside of both feet only. No Toes!

Demonstration: Demonstrate on how to point the non-kicking foot’s toe at the target while moving. Hit the center of the ball not underneath it.

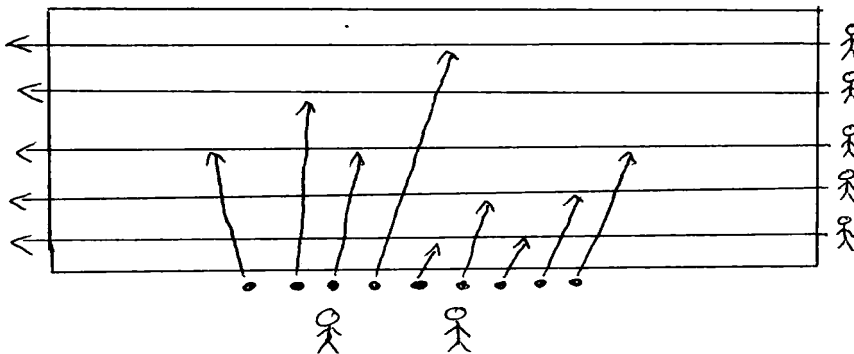


“Torpedo”

Create a grid 10 yards wide and 20 yards long using cones. Line up the soccer balls along the side of the grid and have all of the players line up at one end. Players must run from one end of the grid to the other without being hit by the ball (torpedo). The coach should start by being the first passer. If a player gets hit then they must help line up the balls and pass them at the players while they run from end to end.

Emphasis: Passing a stationary ball at a moving target. Passing the ball at the correct time to a moving player. Using the inside of the foot only.

Demonstration: Demonstrate correct non-kicking foot toe position. Hitting the center of the ball. Following through without crossing the legs.



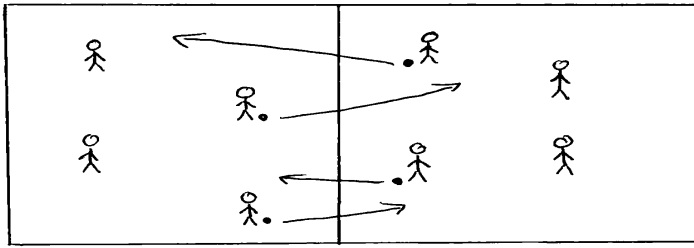
Stopping the ball:

“Save The Ball”

Set up a grid 10yards wide and 20 yards with a center line that creates 2 10x10 yard squares. Split the players into equal groups and each group has their own square. Use half as many balls as there are players. The object is for players from one square to try and kick the ball through the centerline and out of the back of the other teams square. The players without the ball must try and stop the ball from going through their square and out the back.

Emphasis: Getting the body behind the ball so it does not roll past. Using different surfaces of the body to stop and control the ball. After the ball has stopped the player will have a task to do with it.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to position your body behind a moving ball, how to use the different surfaces of the foot to stop the ball, how to stop a bouncing ball.



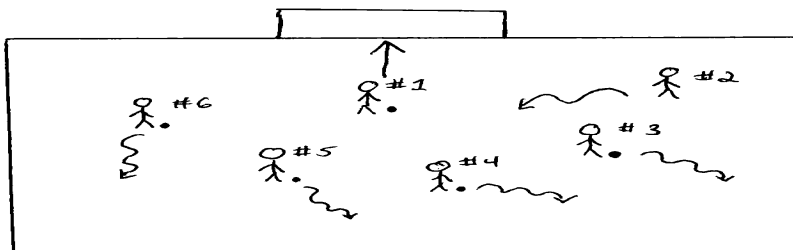
Shooting:

“Numbers Up”

Each player will have a ball inside the penalty box or a grid 20x20 yards with a goal at one end. They will each be given a number. Players must dribble the ball inside the area and when their number is called they will turn and shoot the ball at the goal.

Emphasis: Pointing the kicking foot's toe down and hitting the ball with the shoelace area of the foot. Non-kicking foot's toe must be pointed at the target. Locking the kicking leg's ankle in place to create a hard surface.

Demonstration: Demonstrate on hitting the ball with the correct surface of the foot. Work both right and left feet. Show non-kicking foot's toe position.



Teamwork:

“Chain Tag”

This can be used as an activity or a warm up and can be done with or without balls. All but 2 players will be spread out in a confined area. The two other players must hold hands and try and run together and tag the other players. If someone gets tagged then they must join hands with the chain and help tag the rest.

Emphasis: Working together with more than one player to reach a common goal.

Demonstration: Coach may have to be a part of the chain to make it work.

Notes:

III. Coaching the U8 Age Level (Ages 6,7,8)

The U8 age level is unique in that you may have players that have played soccer before and you may have some that are brand new to the game. It is important to evaluate this early on so that you can plan your practices accordingly. Feel free to use some of the exercises in the earlier section if you feel that your players are not ready for certain activities. At this stage, however, we must try and touch on some of the more specific fundamentals that kids will need later on. There will be more emphasis on play and 1 vs. 1 confrontations as well. Be patient and let the kids have some fun. Don't over coach. Let them have some freedom to be creative.

A. Characteristics of the Player

- Attention span is relatively short
- Players understand small group activities
- Constantly in motion
- Psychologically easily bruised (need to feel liked)
- Developing Physical Confidence
- Development for boys and girls very similar
- Developing eye/foot coordination
- Love to run and jump

B. What to Emphasize (Goals and Expectations)

- **Balance and Coordination:** Depending on the player we should start to develop running strides, reflexes and agility.
- *More specific actions with using different surfaces of the body to achieve certain tasks with the ball.*
- **Juggling:** Using feet and thighs to keep the ball off the ground.
- **Dribbling:** Using different surfaces of the foot to move the ball in a controlled manner. Introducing fakes and cuts of the ball.
- **Stopping the Ball:** Trapping the ball with the different surfaces of the feet as well as using the thigh. Trapping the ball in a direction.
- **Turning:** Using the inside or outside of the foot to turn the ball in different directions or using the sole of the foot to roll the ball in a different direction. Shielding should be introduced.
- **Passing:** Passing with the correct technique to a teammate in a certain direction.
- **Shooting:** Using the instep or shoelace portion of the foot to kick the ball at or in the goal. Refining technique.
- **Competition:** Introducing more 1 vs. 1 situations and small group situations.
- **Self Confidence:** Allow players to be successful in every aspect of the game; encouraging them to be creative and try new things without the fear of failure. Introducing the concept of "proper technique will create success".

C. Teaching the Basics

- **Time:** Activities should last no more than 15 minutes. Players at this age tend to run themselves to exhaustion and need breaks often.
- **One Player One Ball:** All exercises involving dribbling should be one player one ball. Passing can involve a partner as long as every player is getting lots of repetitions.
- **Have Rules:** Players need to learn how to follow rules at this age. Don't overcomplicate them and try to keep them to a minimum. We don't want to confuse the players.
- **Demonstrate Don't Describe:** Players need to see what to do not hear it; Too much explaining will cause them to change focus to something else. Sometimes you may need to participate to help the exercise work.
- **Be Specific:** If you are working on dribbling, then only work on one surface of one foot at a time (inside of the right foot or outside of the left).
- **Exercises Should Be Fun but Effective:** All activities should be geared towards excitement and constant action but need to relate to a specific task that soccer requires.
- **Don't Over Coach:** Too much coaching will not allow kids to figure some things out on their own. It's also not much fun for the players. Try and keep everything to only one or two concepts at a time.

D. Teamwork and Positioning

- *Every player will learn these concepts at different rates. Patience!*
- **Teamwork:** Kids at this age understand small group activities. Exercises that use a combination of players to use soccer skills to complete a task must be used. Make sure that each activity allows the group of players to be successful.
- **Groups:** Many kids when asked to get into a group will go with their friends. While this is ok, it is better to group them by skill and athletic ability. This way you can require different results from different groups depending on ability. This helps to create success.
- **Positioning:** Introducing positions will be a relatively new concept for them. It is better to teach them spaces then positions initially like right or left, back or front. If you have specific positions, make sure all players are rotated into each position. Using exercises like forwards against defenders may help to define the role of each of them.
- **Game Planning:** During your season, every game should have a different plan with different positions for each player. If you are using a goalie try and rotate as many players there as possible. Some players will be better at one position than another. Try and encourage players to try new positions. This will build confidence and help players understand the game. Remember, we are not here to win, we are here to develop the player and the person.

Sample Exercises for U8 Age Players

Dribbling:

“Gates”

Utilizing an open area, place 2 cones 1 yard apart (the gate) for each player you have. Try and keep all of the gates close together so that the players don't have too far to dribble from gate to gate. With each player starting in their own gate, the coach will say "go", and the players must dribble from gate to gate, going through as many as they can, while using different surfaces of the feet to dribble and turn. Make a contest to see how many gates they can go through in a period of time.

Emphasis: Dribbling and turning using different surfaces of both feet. Cutting the ball using the inside, outside and the sole of the foot.

Demonstration: Demonstrate different ways of dribbling and turning. Limit players to different surfaces like only the right foot, or only turning with the inside of the foot.

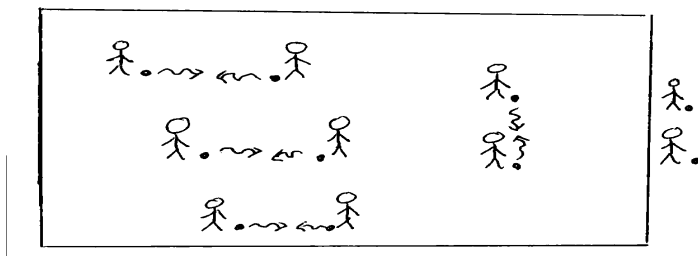


“Knockout”

Create a grid 20x20 yards using cone. Every player must have their own ball and be inside the grid. Players must dribble the ball and try to knock out opponents ball using their feet without their own ball being knocked out. Game ends when all balls have been knocked out.

Emphasis: Protecting the ball by keeping your body between the ball and the opponent (shielding). Turning or cutting the ball in different directions using different surfaces of both feet.

Demonstration: Demonstrate to the players how to shield the ball by keeping your body between the opponent and the ball.

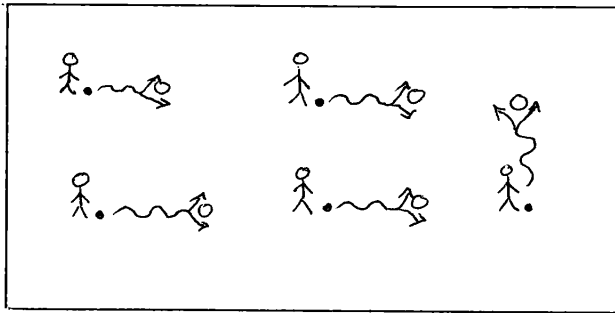


“Fake the Cone”

Lay out enough cones in a confined area so that there is one for each player. Players will dribble at different cones using different fakes. Two basic ones are: The “Waddle” (player fakes by stepping in one direction with one foot then pushes the ball with the outside of the other foot in the opposite direction); and the “Scissors” (player steps over the ball with one foot in one direction and then pushes the ball with the outside of the other foot in the opposite direction)

Emphasis: Teach one fake at a time. Make sure players understand that the cones are pretend defenders. Work on both feet.

Demonstration: Demonstrate each fake and the appropriate distance from the cone to make the fake.



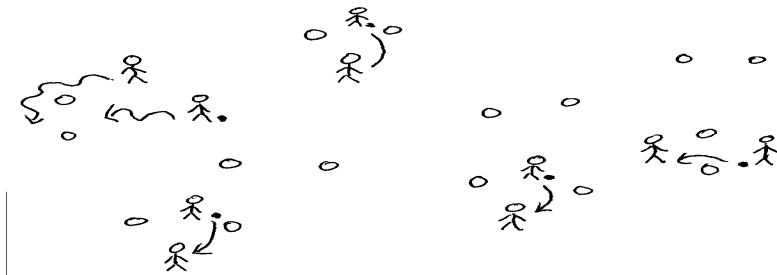
Passing:

“Gates”

Using a similar set up to the gates dribbling exercise, you will need to have players choose a partner and get a ball. When the coach starts the exercise, one player must dribble the ball to one gate, while their partner will run to the other side of the gate. Then the player with the ball will pass the ball between the gate to his/her partner. They will then proceed to the next gate and repeat the same step while alternating who has the ball.

Emphasis: Working with pairs and passing to a teammate. Using the correct part of the foot and working with both feet.

Demonstration: Demonstrate proper technique of both kicking and non-kicking foot. Encourage the players to use both feet even if you restrict them to one foot or the other.

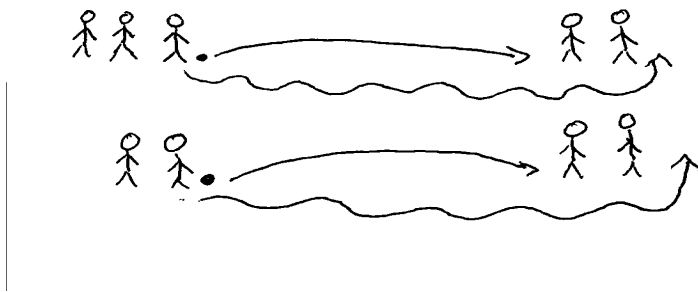


“Shuttle Passing”

In groups of three or four, have two players on one line with a ball and the others approximately 15 yards apart on a different line. The player with the ball will pass it to the player in the opposite line and then run to the back of that line. The player receiving the ball will then pass it back to the starting line and make the same run. Make sure you work with both feet.

Emphasis: Pointing non-kicking foot at the target. Turning the kicking foot out at a 90-degree angle to make sure they are hitting the ball with the inside of the foot. Following through, with the kicking foot at the target and not crossing the legs.

Demonstration: Demonstrate on how to point the non-kicking foot’s toe at the target. Hit the center of the ball not underneath it. How to move after a pass.



Receiving the ball (trapping):

“Partners”

Have the players choose partners with one ball between them. They should stand 5 yards apart, passing the ball to one another. Concentrate on the player who is receiving the ball. First, work on stopping the ball with the sole of the foot by stepping on the ball. Next, work on stopping the ball with the inside of the foot. Last, make the player who will receive the ball run backwards 5 steps and then come forward to the ball. The ball can also be tossed with the hands to create a bouncing ball.

Emphasis: Soft touches of the ball to keep it near the body. Retracting the foot as the ball approaches to create a cushioning effect.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the proper technique using both feet.



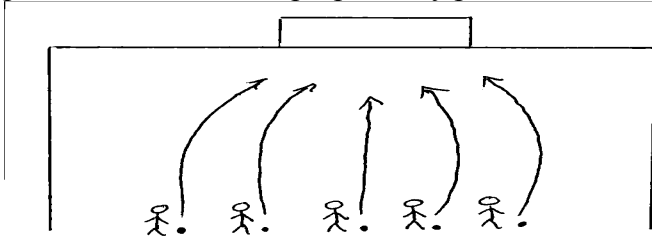
Shooting:

“Rapid Fire”

Have the players line up next to one another approximately 15 yards from the goal. Starting with the ball underneath them, one at a time the players will shoot the ball at the goal. After everyone has gone then they can get their balls and start again. After a few tries, have them move a few steps back and shoot the ball. Finish by rolling the ball out in front of them so they have to shoot it before it stops. Make a contest of how many goals they can score.

Emphasis: Hitting the ball with the shoelace area of their foot. Locking the ankle of the kicking foot in place. Bending the knee of the non-shooting leg. Placing the head down and over the ball while shooting it. Work with both feet.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to point the toe down to hit the ball with the correct part of the foot. Show proper body position and non-kicking leg position.



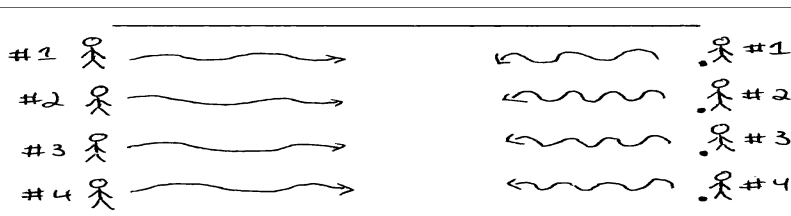
1 vs. 1:

“Line Soccer”

Create 2 lines of players standing opposite of one another 20 yards apart. One side will have soccer balls. Each line of players will be given a number that corresponds with a player on the opposite team. When you call their number out, the player with the ball must try and dribble past the player without the ball and across the opposite line. After that number is finished, the player who just defended will get the ball and they both go back to their lines. Repeat the steps to work the opposite player.

Emphasis: Dribbling with speed. Using one of the moves you worked on in the dribbling exercise. Using both feet and both parts of the feet to dribble.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the moves you showed before in “Faking the Cone”. Show players how to dribble with speed, make a move, and then accelerate past the opponent.

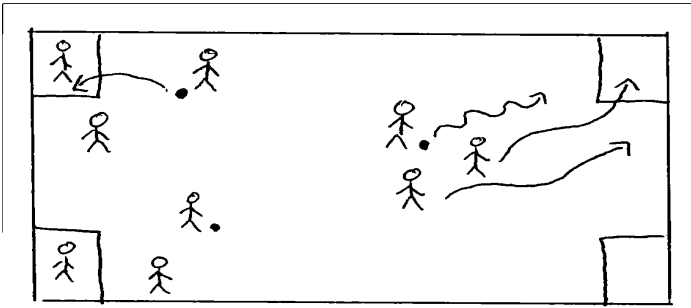


Teamwork:

“4 Corners”

Set up four 10x10 yard squares in the four corners of one half of the soccer field using cones. Have the players get into groups of three or four with one ball. The object is for the group of players to get the ball into all four corners of the field. Each player must touch the ball before it can be dribbled or passed into one of the corners. Have a contest to see who can finish the quickest.

Emphasis: Working together to move the ball from corner to corner.



Notes:

IV. Coaching the U10 Age Level (Ages 9,10)

Typically, most of the kids playing at this age have had some soccer experience. The coach must evaluate what the players have learned so far, and start at the appropriate stage. You may need to go back one step to make sure players have the proper base needed to accomplish the steps in this section. At the U10 age level, players will need to start learning more about how to play the game under pressure from an opponent, as well as understand positions and the role each one must take. These roles are usually very general so as not to overwhelm the players as they are rotated into different positions.

A. Characteristics of the Player

- Ability to stay focused longer
- Players start to understand decision making
- Have the ability to pace themselves and think ahead
- Psychologically more confident in who they are
- Technical and Physical abilities are more defined and diverse
- Boys and girls start to develop differently
- Increased self responsibility
- Will initiate play more without being told or encouraged

B. What to Emphasize (Goals and Expectations)

- **Physical:** Most, if not all exercises should involve a ball. Any running should only be done with a ball.
- *Repetition is vital at this age. All actions need to have a purpose behind them, and not just doing something for the sake of doing it.*
- **Juggling:** Using combinations of feet, thighs and head to juggle multiple times.
- **Dribbling:** Using different surfaces of the foot to change directions and speeds. Understanding where and when to dribble. Shielding.
- **Receiving the Ball:** Using feet, thighs and chest to control the ball quickly and then passing, dribbling or shooting afterwards.
- **Passing:** Passing with the inside or shoelace parts of the foot to move the ball at different speeds over various distances.
- **Shooting:** Using the shoelace portion of the foot to shoot stationary, moving or bouncing balls. Shooting to one part of the goal.
- **Defending:** Introducing the concepts of individual defending 1 vs. 1 as well as staying with a player who does not have the ball (marking).
- **Competition:** Every exercise should start with no pressure and then have opponents added to create pressure.
- **Tactics:** Introduce a purpose for every thing they do. After players learn “how” to do something, they need to start to learn “why” they are doing it. Limit any tactics to small situations not large-scale games.

C. Teaching Beyond the Basics

- **Time:** Depending on the activity, time limits should be from 15-25 minutes. The key is to make sure they understand and can accomplish what you are looking for them to do.
- **Player/Ball Ratio:** Dribbling exercises should be one player one ball, however to add pressure you can go to 2 to 1 or even 3 to 1. We want all exercises to be constant activity, not players standing in line.
- **Rules should imitate the game:** All rules for any exercise should involve regular soccer regulations to ensure that players are learning properly.
- **Demonstrate and Explain:** After demonstrating a task, explain to the players the purpose and how it relates to small situations in the game.
- **Give room for Creativity:** All exercises should allow players some freedom to explore different ways of doing the same thing. Try to keep objectives specific but allow the methods for achieving them somewhat open.
- **Add Direction:** Exercises at this age should have a direction in which the players are going. This incorporates the way in which soccer is actually played i.e. forwards, backwards, or side to side.
- **Limitations:** You can start to add limitations, such as, touch restrictions or numbers of consecutive passes. Use the restrictions to bring out the objectives in any exercise.

D. Teamwork and Positioning

- *Players at this age should have some basic knowledge of this already.*
- **Teamwork:** All teamwork exercise should have a specific objective such as scoring a goal, or reaching a specific area of the field.
- **Groups:** In technical exercises players should be grouped by skill level. This will allow you to challenge different groups at the same time. Group activities should start to involve players playing in positions i.e. defenders working against forwards.
- **Positioning:** At this stage, you will need to teach players the different positions on the field. Although we still want to encourage players to try all positions, many will be better and more comfortable in certain ones. Encourage players to learn the roles of all of them. You will also need to start teaching some goalkeeping.
- **Game Planning:** During your season, every game should have a different plan with different positions for each player. However, now you must have more specific objectives for the game. For example, in one game you may want to make sure that the defenders are pushing up when the ball is in the front, then in another game you may want to concentrate on passing the ball to the outside of the field when it starts in the middle.
- **Set Plays:** You must also introduce the player to the concepts of Kick offs, Goal kicks, Corner kick, and Free kicks.

Sample Exercises for U10 Age Players

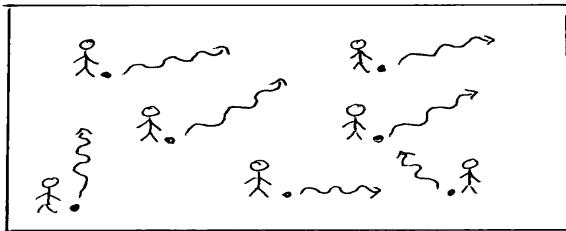
Dribbling:

“Restricted Space Dribbling”

Create a grid 20 x 30 yards using cones. Players should have their own ball. Starts by having the players dribble the balls inside the grid while trying to avoid running into other players. Work on using both feet and the different surfaces of each foot. Introduce the different turns and moves as well. Finally, add 2 or 3 players without balls, whose purpose is to try and knock out other players balls (adding pressure).

Emphasis: Dribbling in and out of crowds of people. Using different surfaces to turn.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to keep the ball close to the body and quickly turn and find some empty space to dribble into.

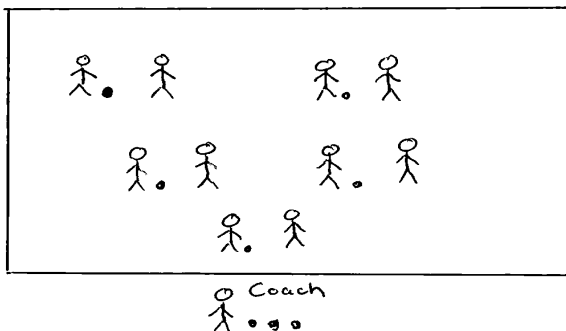


“Get a ball”

Create a grid that is 30x40 yards. Split the players into two groups. One group has balls the other does not. The object is for the team without the balls to steal all of the balls from the opposing team. Once a player has stolen the ball then he/she passes it to the coach and tries to steal another one. Play ends when all the balls have been stolen and passed to the coach.

Emphasis: Protecting the ball by keeping your body between the ball and the opponent (shielding). Dribbling the ball into empty space and away from the opponent.

Demonstration: Demonstrate to the players how to shield the ball by keeping your body between the opponent and the ball.

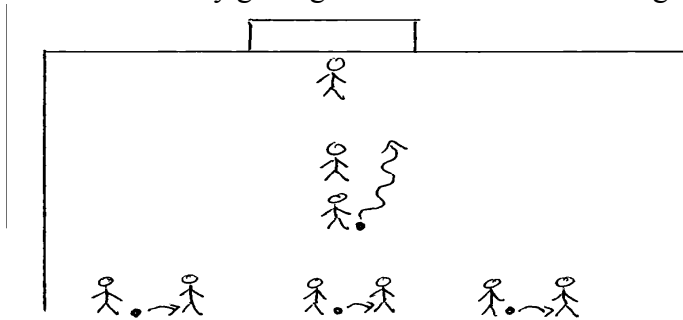


“1 vs. 1 to Goal”

Have the players choose partners and get a soccer ball. Each pair of players will be given a number. The players should start 25 yards from the goal and pass the ball back and forth between themselves. When the coach calls their number the player who has the ball at the time tries to dribble and score a goal while the other player tries to steal the ball and score also. After either player scores, they both go back to the starting position and resume passing.

Emphasis: Faking the player and then dribbling with speed at the goal. Finishing with a shot. Individual defending.

Demonstration: Demonstrate different fakes and how to accelerate to goal. Demonstrate how to defend by getting between the ball and the goal.



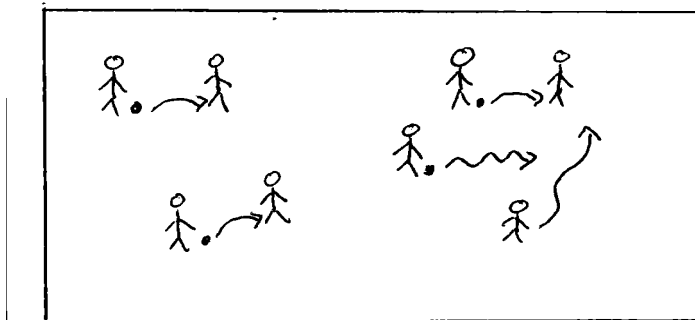
Passing:

“Restricted Space Passing”

Using a similar set up to the restricted space dribbling exercise, have the player choose a partner and get one soccer ball. This time the players will dribble, pass, and move throughout the grid without hitting someone else with the ball. Make sure to work both feet. You can start with short passes then require them to make longer passes.

Emphasis: Passing and moving in and out of other players. Receiving the ball and then looking up for a teammate. Using only the inside of the foot to pass.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to pass and then move to get open for a return pass.

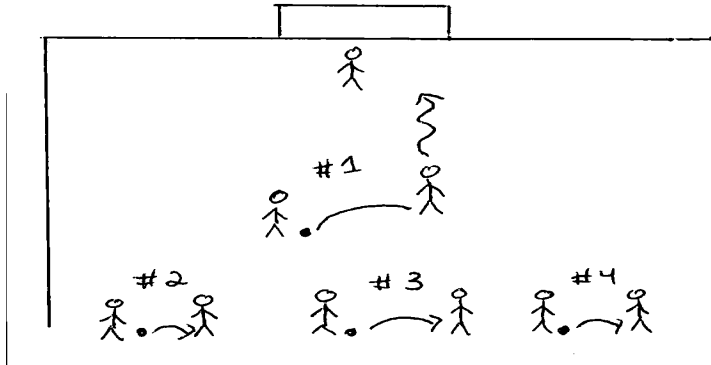


“2 Player Passing to Goal”

Use the exact same set up as the 1 vs. 1 to goal. This time when the partner’s number is called, they must pass the ball back and forth trying to get closer to the goal. When they do, one of the players will take a shot. The players should alternate who shoots each time.

Emphasis: Passing in a direction and with a purpose. Leading the player with a pass so they can move in one direction.

Demonstration: Demonstrate on how to lead a player with a pass.



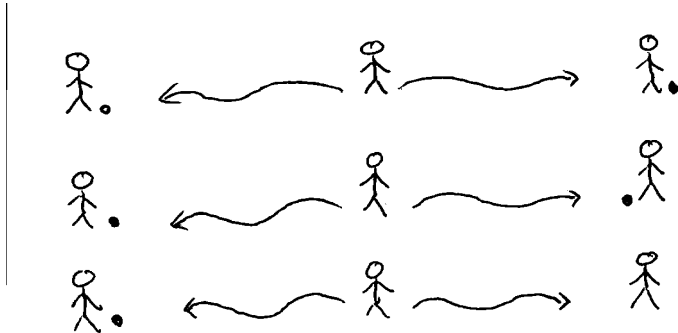
Receiving the ball (trapping):

“2 to 1 Receiving”

Players should be in groups of three with two balls. The two players with the balls should stand 20 yards apart and the player without the ball should be between them. Start with the ball on the ground. The player without the ball will run back and forth between the players with the ball and receive a pass, then pass it back to them. Rotate the players into the middle after a period of time. Then have the players on the end pick up the ball and toss it to create a bouncing ball. Finish using the thighs and chest to trap the ball.

Emphasis: Using different part of the body to control the ball. Adjusting to balls depending on their speed or if they are in the air.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the proper technique using both feet, the thighs and the chest.



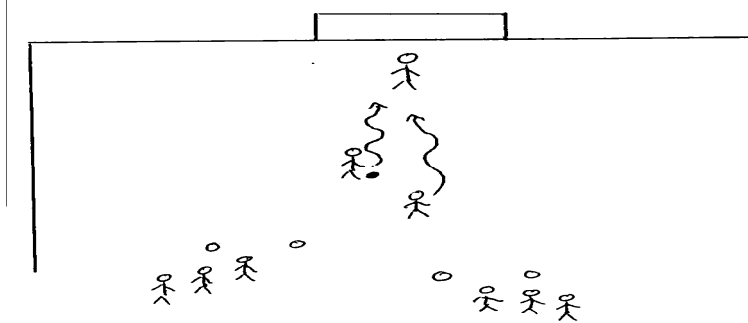
Shooting:

“Break Away”

Have separate lines of players facing the goal. One line should start 5 yards further back than the other. Pass a ball out in front of the closer line so the player can dribble in and take a shot on goal. The player from the further line will try and catch the shooting player. After they are finished they should switch lines. Use a goalkeeper for this exercise.

Emphasis: Shooting a ball off of the dribble. Shooting under pressure from an opponent. Shooting the ball into the corners of the goal.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to shoot the ball properly from the dribble. Concentrate on hitting it with the lace and getting the non-kicking foot next to the ball.



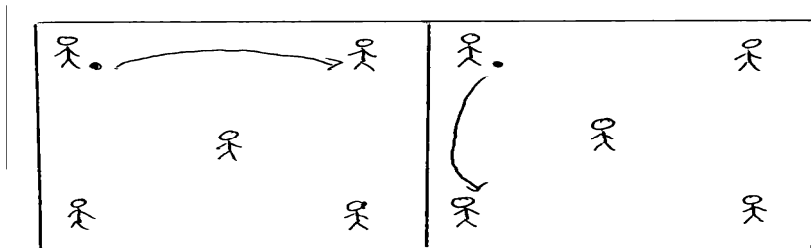
Possession:

“Keep-A-Way”

Divide the players into groups of five with 1 ball. Create a separate grid for each group 10x15 yards using cones. Choose 1 player from each group to be a defender. Inside the grid, the four players will try and pass the ball to each other and keep it away from the defender. Rotate the defenders periodically.

Emphasis: Receiving the ball, picking up the head, finding the open player and then passing it to them.

Demonstration: Demonstrate on how to receive the ball with the correct foot in order to pass it to the open player.



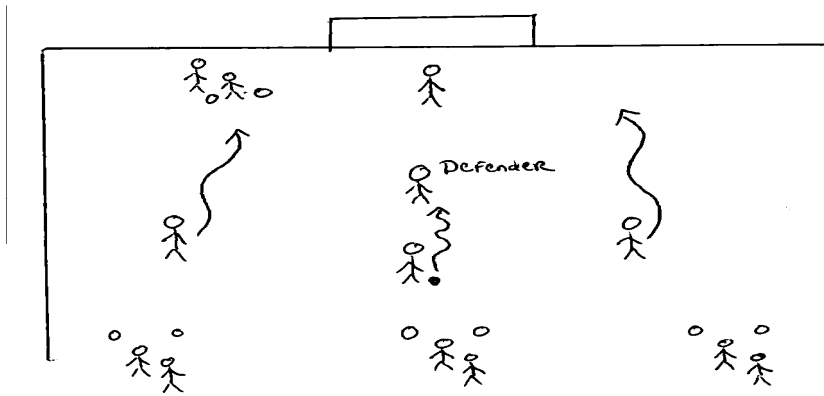
Teamwork:

“3 vs. 1 To Goal”

Have three lines of players 30 yards from the goal. One line in the center, one on the left and one on the right. There will also be a defending line of players next to the goal. The coach passes a ball to one of the three lines and then one player from each line will come out and play. The three “attacking” line players must try and go around the defending player and score a goal. Rotate the players between the lines.

Emphasis: Working together to avoid a defender, dribble, pass and shoot to score a goal.

Demonstration: Demonstrate on when to dribble, pass, or shoot.



Notes:

V. Coaching the U12 Age Level (Ages 11,12)

At the U12 age level there can be a dramatic difference between levels within the same team. The challenge is to work with these different levels and still reach the same goals and expectations of the age groups. All of the exercises in the earlier stages can be adapted to fit your needs of this age. You can adjust every activity by adding or reducing restrictions, increasing or decreasing space and time, and changing the number of players used. This section will assume that players have gone through the previous stages properly.

A. Characteristics of the Player

- Ability to understand complex situations
- Players understand some consequences to their actions
- Have the ability to problem solve on their own
- Psychologically very self critical
- Technical and Physical abilities well developed
- Puberty stage, girls developing maturity faster than boys
- Start to understand where they fit amongst the group athletically
- Openly competitive.

B. What to Emphasize (Goals and Expectations)

- **Physical:** Requires a warm-up before play. Physical exercises can be with or without the ball to increase stamina, strength and agility.
- *Adding pressure to all exercises is important to increase confidence in their game like abilities.*
- **Juggling:** We need to challenge players to be juggling constantly to increase touch. They should be juggling in the 20 to 50 range at this point.
- **Dribbling:** Changing speeds and directions. Ability to clearly beat a player one on one.
- **Receiving the Ball:** Using all surfaces to receive a ball under pressure.
- **Passing:** Precise passing to stationary and moving targets. Passing the ball in the air. Crossing the ball in front of goal. Combination passing.
- **Shooting:** Shooting balls from different angles. Shooting balls out of the air.
- **Heading:** Coaches need to begin the process of teaching the players the proper technique of heading.
- **Defending:** Defending 1v1. Tackling the ball. Defending with 2 players.
- **Competition:** We must create more game like conditions in each exercise. There must be an opponent to play against.
- **Tactics:** Players need to start to learn the concepts of playing 2 vs. 1 all the way up to 4 vs. 4.
- **Goalkeeping:** Separate goalkeeper training must be introduced. Actual technical practice, not just blocking shots.

C. Introducing Tactics

- **Time:** At this age, time relates more to how quickly a player can react to a situation and accomplish a task. Exercise lengths can vary depending on how physically and mentally intense they are.
- **Work Ratio:** Whether players are working individually or in small groups, the work to rest ratio should give players time to rest and recuperate.
- **Rules should imitate the game:** All rules for any exercise should involve regular soccer regulations to ensure that players are learning properly. Including the introduction of the “offsides” concept.
- **Demonstrate, Explain, Relate:** After demonstrating a task, explain to the players the purpose and how it relates to actual game situations as well as the consequences of doing it wrong.
- **Demand better performance:** In each activity the coach should require that the players follow proper technique and decision making. They need to start to be held more accountable for their actions.
- **Small side Games:** Every practice should include small side games that include some type of goals (this could be a line as well). Keep the numbers to a limit of 4 vs. 4.
- **Limitations:** Create the environment that forces limitations without having to add them. If you want less touches on the ball then decrease the space or add more players.

D. Teamwork and Positioning

- *We need to start refining the idea of positions and how players must work together within these positions to accomplish tasks.*
- **Teamwork:** Teamwork exercises must utilize players in specific positions such as; defenders working together to get the ball out of the defensive end.
- **Groups:** Try to group players more by where they play on the field. This will give them a chance to get used to playing with one another.
- **Positioning:** Most players will understand the different positions. Now we need to teach them specific ways in which to play each one. We also need to start teaching how the actions of one position effect the actions of another.
- **Game Planning:** While we still want to see players rotated in different positions, players should be given the opportunity to play where they feel more comfortable. Usually players will be more confident in playing a position that they feel suits them the best. Try to plan your games accordingly.
- **Formations:** At this age, you can start to introduce different systems of play. For example; you may play with 4 defenders (using a sweeper) 4 midfielders and 2 forwards, or 4 defenders 3 midfielders and 3 forwards.

Sample Exercises for U12 Age Players

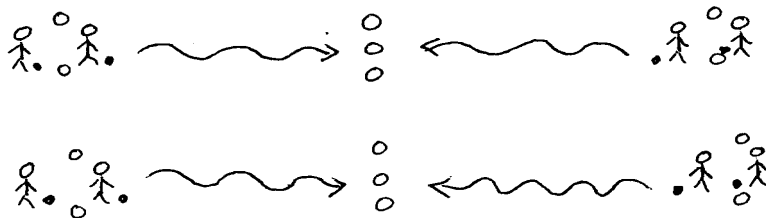
Dribbling:

“Attack the Cone”

Have players get into groups of four with two balls. Place two single cones 30 yards apart with three cones next to one another (pretend defender) between the single cones. Set this up for each group. Two players with one ball should be on one single cone and the other two players on the other single cone. At the same time, one player from each line will dribble the ball at the center three cones, cut the ball back, and then dribble back to the line they came from. Then the next player will repeat the same step. You can also use this with fakes where the dribbling player fakes the three cones then dribbles past them and goes to the opposite line.

Emphasis: Using different surfaces of the foot to cut the ball back. Working on different fakes. Timing and distance of using cuts and fakes.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the various ways to cut the ball. Show the different fakes that can be used.

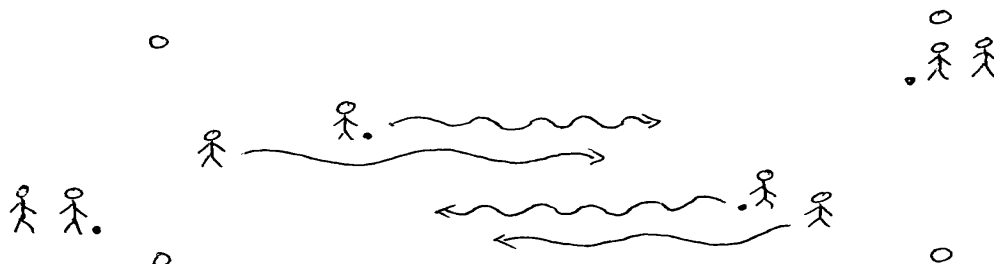


“Speed Dribbling”

Set up two lines of cones 40 yards apart. Players will get a partner and a ball. With all players starting on one line, the partner with the ball will take off dribbling to the opposite line. The other partner must count to five then try to catch the dribbling player.

Emphasis: Dribbling long distance using the shoelace portion of the foot to advance the ball.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to point the toe down and push the ball using the shoelace area of the foot to dribble while in a natural running stride.



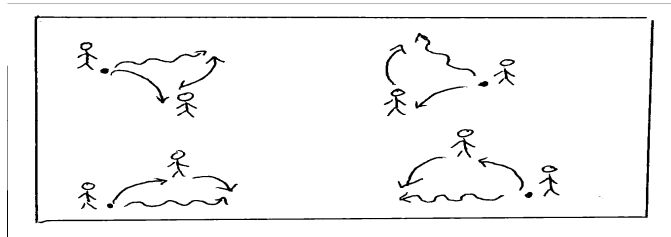
Passing:

“Combination Passing”

Have the players choose a partner and get a soccer ball. In a restricted space, the player without the ball should check (run towards) the player with the ball and ask for the ball. The player with the ball will pass it to the player without the ball, make a run past them, and receive a return pass (give and go or wall pass). Each partner should do five of these with the ball and five without the ball. Then you can change it to a different type of combination.

Emphasis: Combination passing between 2 players. Checking to the ball.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the various ways to combine passes between partners. Show how to check to the ball.



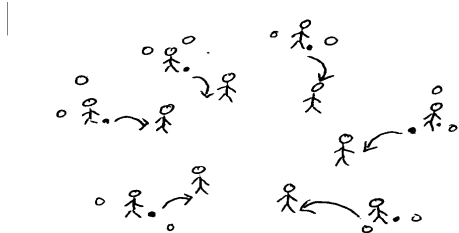
Receiving the ball (trapping):

“Windows”

Create a circle of cones approximately 30 yards in diameter. Half of the players should stand between 2 of the cones that make up the circle (window) with a ball, while the other half are inside the circle without a ball. Make sure the players on the outside are spread out evenly around the circle. The players on the inside must check (run towards) a player with the ball, receive a pass with a certain part of their body, and then pass it back. Next they must go to a different person and repeat the same step. After a period of time change the players in the middle.

Emphasis: Receiving the ball with different parts of the body. Checking to a ball. Asking for the ball when ready.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to receive the ball with different parts of the body. Show how to check to a ball and ask for it.



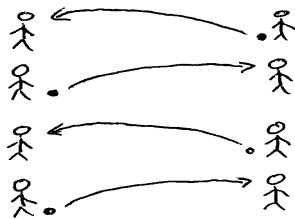
Heading:

“Stationary Heading”

Players should choose a partner and get a ball. Have the partner’s stand 5 yards apart and toss easy balls to one another and head the ball back to each other. Keep the repetition to no more than five at a time.

Emphasis: Heading with the proper part of the head (pointed part of the forehead. Using legs and back, not the neck, to push the head forward and advance the ball.

Demonstration: Demonstrate proper technique.



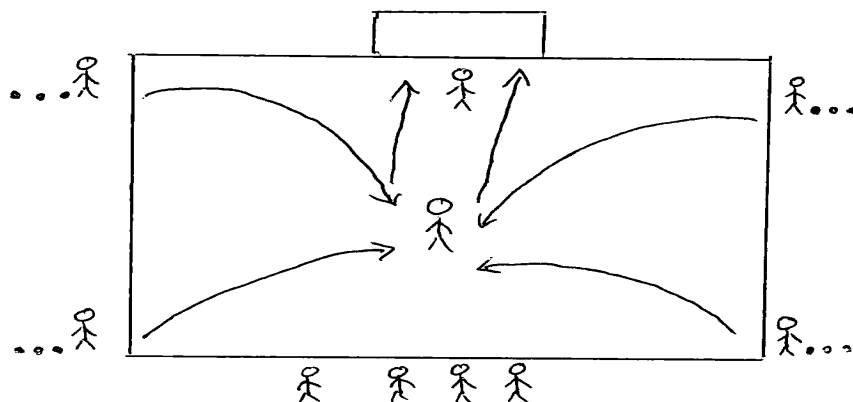
Shooting:

“Directional Shooting”

Have one player stand on each corner of the penalty box with multiple soccer balls. Line up the rest of the players at the top of the penalty box. One at a time the players will enter the box, receive a pass from each of the four corner players and take a shot on goal. Balls may also be tossed in the air to create a bouncing ball. Rotate the corner players. Use a goalkeeper.

Emphasis: Shooting balls coming at different angles. Striking the ball with the shoelace part of the foot. Trapping a ball, then shooting.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the proper technique of shooting at these different angles. Concentrate on squaring the shoulders to the target when hitting the ball.



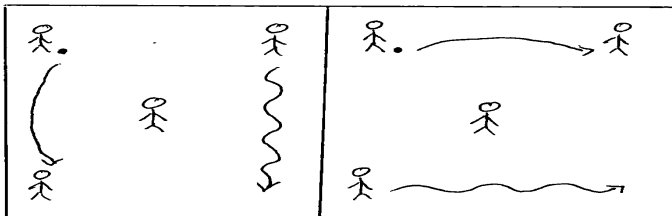
Possession:

“3 vs. 2 Keep-A-Way”

Create a grid 15x20 yards using cones. Have the players get into groups of five with one ball. Inside the grid, the three players must try to pass the ball between them and keep the ball away from the two defenders. Rotate the defenders after a period of time.

Emphasis: Controlling the ball under pressure. Receiving the ball across the body to face the whole field. Moving to the empty space in the grid to get open for a pass.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how receive the ball properly under pressure. Show the movement to the open space to get open for a pass.



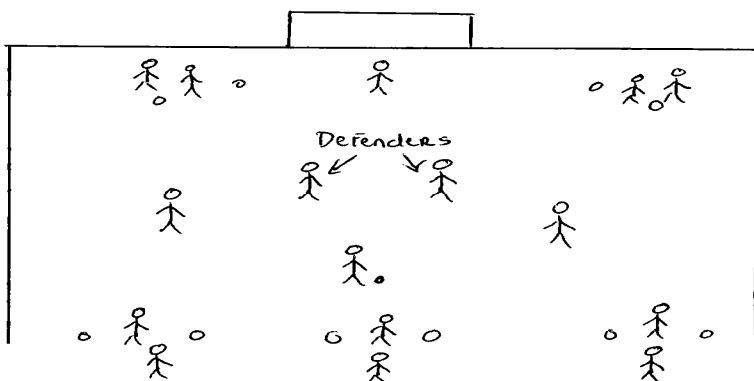
Teamwork:

“3 vs. 2 to Goal”

Have three lines of players 30 yards from the goal. One line in the center, one on the left and one on the right. There will also be two defending lines of players next to the goal. The coach passes a ball to one of the three lines and then one player from each line will come out and play. The three “attacking” line players must try and go around the two defending players and score a goal. Rotate the players between the lines.

Emphasis: Attacking quickly and looking for the open player for a shot. Defending with two players by cutting off a pass and pressuring the ball.

Demonstration: Demonstrate both the offensive and defensive ways to complete these tasks (tactics).



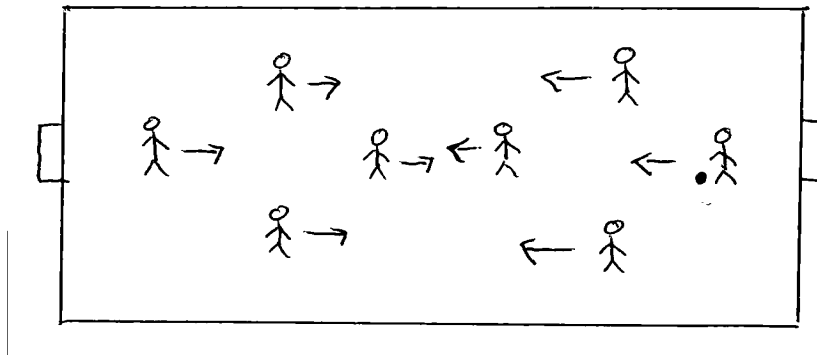
Small Sided Games:

“2 vs. 2 up to 4 vs. 4”

In an appropriate size mini field create two small goals on both ends. Start with 2 vs. 2 to the small goals and finish 4 vs. 4. If you have an odd number you can either play with a substitution, or have one player play as “all time offense”, so they play for both teams. 2 vs. 2 should play on a field 20x30 yards. 4 vs. 4 should play on a field 30x40 yards.

Emphasis: Attacking and defending with various numbers of players.

Demonstration: Let the players play freely and then stop the exercise to show different ways of doing something, or to make corrections.



Notes:

VI. Coaching the U14 Age Level (Ages 13,14)

A majority of the players playing at this stage have a reasonable background in soccer. Although some players may be well developed and others may not, there should be a solid base of knowledge to work with. As with any stage in this manual, you may go back to an earlier stage and use the principles and exercises there, if you feel that your players are not where they should be technically or tactically. Larger team play must be focused on at this age as well.

A. Characteristics of the Player

- Has a general knowledge of most soccer concepts
- Players understand roles and positions
- Have their own ideas of how to solve problems
- Psychologically can reason with success and failure
- Technical and Physical abilities in final stages
- Boys start to catch up with the maturity of girls
- Players have set into one position or another
- Highly competitive and always trying to prove themselves

B. What to Emphasize (Goals and Expectations)

- **Physical:** Exercises that work on speed, strength, agility and endurance should be separate from soccer training activities.
- *All exercises should start to relate to how the individuals and the team play on the field.*
- **Juggling:** We need to challenge players to be juggling constantly to increase touch. They should be juggling in the 60 to 100 range at this point.
- **Dribbling:** Dribbling in and out of space and away from pressure of the opponents.
- **Receiving the Ball:** Having a purpose with every touch. Controlling the ball under pressure and in tight situations.
- **Passing:** Passing the ball with the shoelace part of the foot for long distances. Chipping the ball. Timing the pass with the speed of the teammate.
- **Shooting:** Shooting to specific areas of the goal. Striking the ball under heavy pressure. Learning to volley the ball out of the air.
- **Heading:** Heading on goal. Defensive heading to clear a ball from danger.
- **Defending:** Team defending with three or more players. Learning the role of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd defenders.
- **Competition:** All exercises should finish with match like conditions and include goals.
- **Tactics:** Learning the concepts of 6 vs. 6 to 11 vs. 11. Team tactics.
- **Goalkeeping:** Separate goalkeeper training is imperative. Actual technical practice, not just blocking shots.

C. Continuing Tactics

- **Time:** Technical exercises should be short and intense. Tactical exercises involving team play must take as much time as needed to understand the concepts.
- **Work Ratio:** Work rate should be one to one. If the player is working for one minute, then they are only allowed a one minute break.
- **Rules should imitate the game:** All exercises should directly follow normal soccer rules. Including calling fouls. This will create a more game like atmosphere.
- **Demonstrate, Explain, Relate:** After demonstrating a task, explain to the players the purpose and how it relates to actual game situations as well as the consequences of doing it wrong.
- **Require specific performance:** In each activity the coach should require that the players follow proper technique and decision making with regards to the position they play. Teach everything towards the way they will play on the field.
- **Larger Games:** Practices should finish with a minimum of 6 vs. 6 playing to goals. At this stage, the game becomes the best teacher.
- **Limitations:** The limits of this age should be more specific. For example, you may want to require that players can only score one touch or off of a cross from an outside midfield player.

D. Teamwork and Positioning

- *Everything, even technique should relate to the positions that players will be playing. You may have players that play multiple position, so you must teach them properly to fill both roles.*
- **Teamwork:** Teamwork exercises need to relate to game play. You can have the forward line playing against the defending line.
- **Groups:** Try to group players by who will challenge each other the most. Placing a weak player against a strong player will not create an appropriate competitive environment.
- **Positioning:** Whether players play in one position or multiple ones, each position requires specific training. You must coach everything to keep that in mind. Coaching generally will not allow the players to develop the necessary skills to play a certain position.
- **Game Planning:** At this age you need to be thinking in terms of good play. Evaluate your group and plan the game to make sure all players are put into successful situations. Having the weaker players sit on the bench until the game is out of reach does nothing for them or the overall team.
- **Formations:** Players must have specific knowledge of the different formations. Try to teach all of them at some point. This will help them later on when they reach the older age and have coaches who play different systems.

Sample Exercises for U14 Age Players

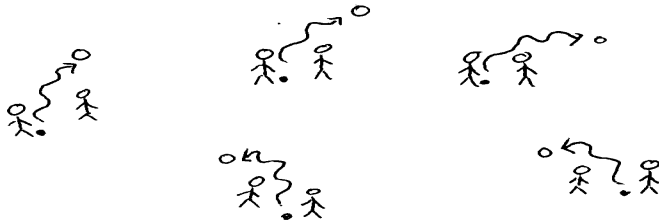
Dribbling:

“Touch the Cone”

Have players get a partner and one ball. Place one single cone for each pair of players around the field. The players will play 1 vs. 1 and try to touch the cone with the ball while keeping possession of it. Play games up to five and then rotate the players so they play against different partners.

Emphasis: Dribbling under pressure. Shielding while advancing the ball in a specific direction.

Demonstration: Allow the players to try it first. Then stop the exercise and demonstrate ways to shield and protect the ball while scoring. Using the sole of the foot to roll the ball into a scoring position.

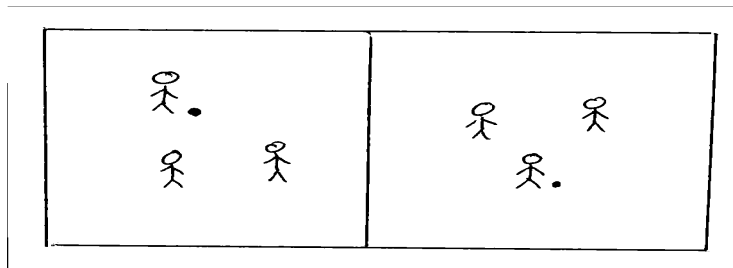


“1 vs. 2”

Have the players get into a group of three with one ball. Create grids 15x15 yards, one grid for each group of three. The object is for any of the three players to try and get the ball and keep it. Have the players play for 30 seconds and then at the end the player with the ball gets a point. First player to five points wins.

Emphasis: Holding the ball under pressure from more than one opponent. Tackling the ball away from a player and maintaining possession.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how dribble out of pressure. Shielding using the arms and shoulders. Tackling the ball.



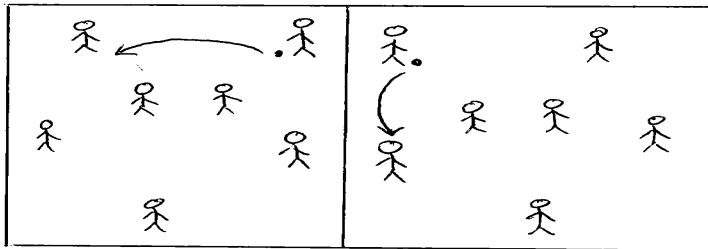
Passing:

“5 vs. 2”

Create grids 10x15 yards. Players should get into groups of seven with one ball. The five players on the outside must pass the ball and keep it away from the two defenders. If the defender steals it, or the ball goes out of bounds, then the outside player who made the mistake must switch with one of the defenders.

Emphasis: Quick one and two touch passing. Splitting the defenders with the pass. Moving to the correct angle to receive a pass.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the split pass. Show the correct movements to get to the right angle to receive the ball. Receiving the ball across the body.



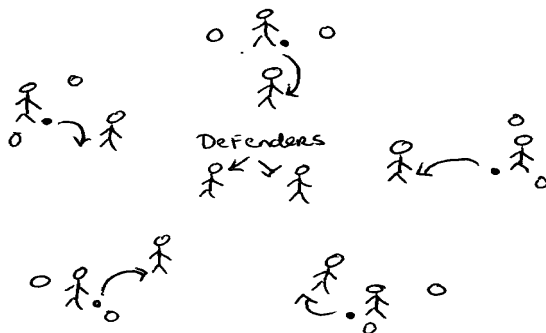
Receiving the ball (trapping):

“Windows with Pressure”

Use a similar set up to the “windows” exercise in the U12 age group section. This time choose two or three players to be defenders in the middle of the circle. They must try to steal the ball from a player who is trying to trap it and pass it back to the outside players.

Emphasis: Receiving the ball with different parts of the body under pressure. Shielding the ball from a defender while receiving it. Checking to a ball fast to create separation from a defender.

Demonstration: Demonstrate how to shield the ball from the defender while receiving it. Show how to check fast to create separation from the defender.



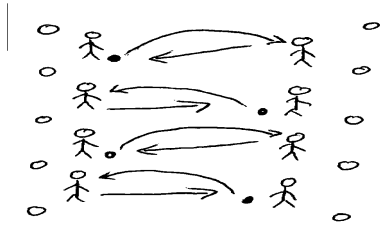
Heading:

“Header Wars”

Create two small goals 5 yards in width 10 yards across from each other. One player will stand between each goal. The first player will toss the ball to the second player who will try to head the ball past the first player into the goal. Then the play is reversed. The players in the mini goal can use their hands like a goalie to save the ball from going in. Rotate the partners so they play against a new opponent each game.

Emphasis: Heading the ball down and past a goalie. Using the legs and back to snap the head forward to advance the ball with speed.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the proper technique of heading the ball down and using the back and legs for strength.



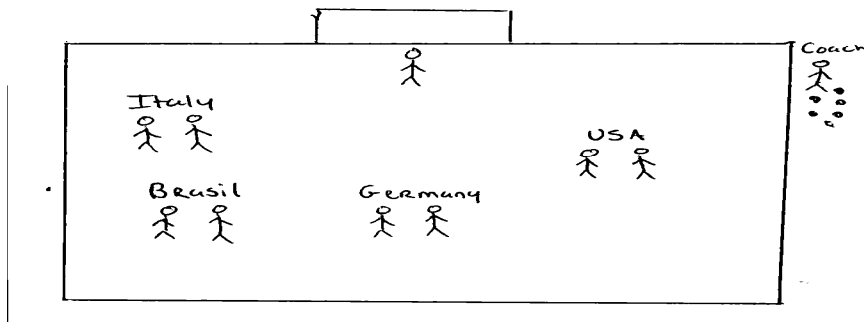
Shooting:

“World Cup”

Have the players get into teams of two or three and pick a country name such as USA. One separate player must be a goalie. With all teams standing inside the penalty box, the coach will pass a ball into the box. Each team must try to win the ball and score a goal. When a team scores a goal then they advance to the next round. The last team remaining gets eliminated from the game. Then the next round would begin and you keep going until one team wins the game.

Emphasis: Shooting balls in a crowd of people and under pressure. Choosing when to shoot and when to pass.

Demonstration: Demonstrate the difference of when to shoot and when to pass.



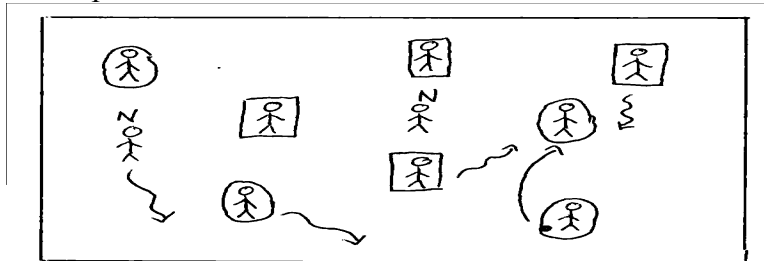
Possession:

“4 vs. 4 + 2”

Create a grid 30x40 yards using cones. Choose two teams of four players, each wearing different colors. Then add two players who are wearing a separate color from the two teams (these players are neutral and play only with the team that has the ball. The team of four, plus the two neutral players, try to pass and keep the ball away from the other team. If the defending team wins the ball, then they do the same thing, including using the neutral players.

Emphasis: Passing and moving to keep the ball. Playing the ball to the open player and away from defenders.

Demonstration: Allow the players to try it on their own first. Then demonstrate as to which pass is the best to make.



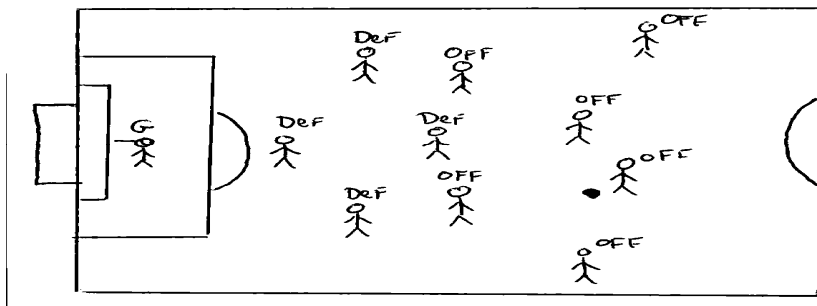
Teamwork:

“Offense vs. Defense”

In one half of the soccer field set your goalie and defenders up in their normal positions. Then set your forwards and midfielders into their positions facing the defenders. The offensive team is trying to score a goal. The defending team is trying to steal the ball and cross the half line with it.

Emphasis: Different ways of attacking and defending. Defenders getting the ball out of the back and then pushing up.

Demonstration: Demonstrate both the offensive and defensive ways to complete these tasks (tactics).



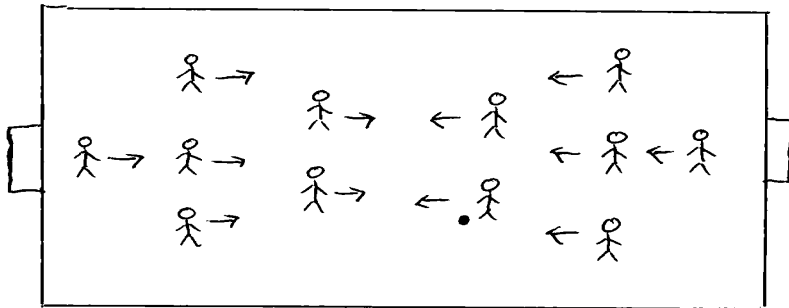
Large Games:

“6 vs. 6 to 8 vs. 8”

Try to utilize the lines of a soccer field or mark appropriate sizes using cones. Also, use large goals with goalies whenever you can. Keep players in positions that they might play during games and use regular soccer rules including offsides.

Emphasis: Team tactics on how to attack and defend with 6 or 8 players.

Demonstration: Let the players play freely and then stop the exercise to show different ways of attacking and defending, or to make corrections.



Notes: