

U4 Rec Soccer Training Activities

Welcome U4 Rec coaches!

With this being our youngest age group, coaches should focus on 2 main objectives:

1. **Have fun!** – Children at this age have short attention spans. Add as much fun to drills as possible to keep them engaged and happy.
2. **Ball touches** – Try to maximize the number of touches a player has on a ball. This will increase the player's foot/eye coordination and set them up for success in the future.

****THE END GOAL OF A U4 REC SEASON IS TO ASSOCIATE SOCCER WITH FUN****

To help you succeed at obtaining these objectives, your practice plans should always:

1. Be no more than 30-45 minutes
2. Avoid drills that involve the players lining up and waiting for their turn
3. Consist of multiple, little games that get all players as many touches as possible
4. Ensure each activity lasts no more than 5-7 minutes
5. Minimize time spent standing around and explaining things
6. Have a couple of 'backup' activities in case the players are not engaged

Below is a list of some activities you can incorporate into your weekly practice plans (and, if you have other activities that keep ALL players actively engaged, feel free to incorporate them into your practice plans as well -- whether you make them up yourself or find them online):

1. Warmup - Toe Taps, Tick Tock, etc. (get the players to warm-up with their ball)
 - Toe Taps - place the bottom of their foot on top of the ball and alternate feet doing this faster and faster (okay to start slow)
 - Tick Tock - place the ball between their feet and have them knock the ball back and forth between their feet (they will have trouble with this, it's okay. Let them know that it is hard and show them you have trouble too!)
 - Run in place
 - Jump up and down and act silly
 - Touch your toes and stretch up to the sky as far as they can

2. Hit the coach (Ball Control, Kicking, Dribbling, Speed Change):

- Each player has a ball and dribbles within the designated space. The goal for the players is to kick the ball and hit you with it. Once they kick the ball into your legs, they get to tell you what animal to act out. Then you must act like that animal. (dog, cat, cow, kangaroo, etc.) Make sure everyone gets a chance to hit you. Coaches move around and make it fun and challenging for the players to hit them.

3. Red Light, Green Light (Dribbling, Stopping):

- When the coach says, “Green Light” the players begin dribbling from one end of the field to the other and STOP their ball by putting their foot on the ball when the Coach says, “Red Light”. Go slow the first time and challenge them to go faster each time. Repeat at least four times. You can also add in different color lights while the players are dribbling across the field (“yellow light” - players dribble slowly, “purple light” - players hop back and forth over ball, “orange light” – players run around the ball, “black light” - players dance, “blue light” – players make silly faces, etc.)

4. Volcanoes (Dribbling):

- Set up a bunch of cones in a random formation within your box. The players must dribble the ball through the cone maze and come out on the other side without hitting any of the volcanoes (cones). Coaches can make an exploding noise if they are hit. They start out slow. Have the players do it a few times and encourage them to speed up each time. Also, encourage them to see if the whole team can avoid knocking over any volcanoes.

5. Race and Score (Dribbling and Kicking):

- Players will dribble from one end of the field to the other and kick (Shoot) the ball into the goal. Repeat at least three times. If they are having fun, do it more.

6. Walk the Dog (Dribbling):

- The Coach will tell the players to walk their dog by dribbling slowly around the practice area. The coach will yell “Oh no, my dog got loose” and the players will kick their ball hard and chase it. But they need to be quick, or the Dog Catcher (coaches) will get their dog. Once the players have their ball again the Coach will tell the players to “walk their dog” ... Repeat several times

7. Egg Hunt (Awareness, Running, Dribbling, Scoring):

- Scatter the balls at one end of the field. Have the players line up along the opposite end line. On “GO” they run and find their egg (ball) and dribble back and put it in the basket (score in the goal).

8. Sleeping Bear (Kicking, Stopping):

- The players line up on the white line with a soccer ball at their feet and begin the game by shouting out altogether "What time is it sleeping bear?" The sleeping bear (Coach) will respond from the opposite white line with 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, etc. If the bear says 1:00, the kids will take 1 small touch/kick of the soccer ball toward the bear (2:00 = 2 touches/kicks, 3:00 = 3 touches/kicks, etc.). This continues until the kids get close to the sleeping bear. The bear will then wake-up and chase the kids back to where they started. You can mix it up and reverse rolls (have the kids act as the sleeping bear and coach lines up and does the small kicks).

9. Sharks & Minnows (dribbling):

- line players up on one side of field all with a ball at their feet (minnows). Pick one player to start at the middle of the field without a ball (shark). On a “go” command, the minnows try to dribble to the other side of the field. The shark tries to steal the ball from as many minnows as possible before they reach the other end of the field. Minnows that successfully dribble to the other side of the field are safe. Minnows that had their ball stolen become sharks. Turn the remaining minnows around as a group and repeat the exercise going the other direction. Continue until only 1 minnow is left with a ball and that player starts the next game as the shark.

10. Freeze Tag (dribbling, kicking):

- Divide the players into 2 teams. One team has each player with a ball, the other team does not have any balls. Use the lines to define a space for the game. Players with a ball dribble then kick the ball trying to hit a player on the other team. As players are hit with a ball, they are frozen. Once all the players are frozen have teams switch roles. As players get better at freezing their opponent, allow the unfrozen players to crawl through the legs of frozen players to unfreeze them.

11. Popcorn Game (dribbling):

- All the players have a ball at their feet. Coach gets down on a knee and acts as the popcorn machine. Players dribble the ball to the coach; coach picks up ball and throws it out in the air for the player to chase and dribble back.