

Season Plan for 3- to 5-Year-Olds

At this age, children need understanding and skills to enable them to play a game. Tactically, this means helping them see the need to keep the ball and to attack the goal, and also to try to stop their opponents from scoring.

Overview of the Season Plan

The Season Plan on the next page provides a weekly guide and addresses tactical and skill components, and other activities that are fully detailed in the Practice Plans document. The Season Plan has five components:

- **Purpose:** The purpose of the practice is your main focus.
- **Tactics and Skills:** Tactics are knowing what to do during the game (and when to do it), and they require an understanding of the problems faced by each team during the game and how those problems can be solved. Ways to maintain possession of the ball would be tactics. Skills are the physical skills traditionally taught, such as passing or shooting the ball or controlling the ball during play.
- **Rules and Traditions:** You will teach the rules of the sport to young children gradually, as part of playing games and learning skills. Traditions are those unwritten rules that players follow to be courteous and safe, such as raising your hand when you foul someone or playing cooperatively with the others on your team.
- **Fitness Concepts:** Even young children can understand some simple concepts about health and fitness, such as the idea that exercise strengthens your heart, so some of these are suggested as the focus for brief discussions during practice.
- **Character Development Concepts:** The four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility—can all be related to many situations that arise while playing basketball. For example, playing cooperatively with teammates shows that you care about them. Again, we'll suggest some specific ideas for briefly discussing character development values.

Four- to Five-Year-Olds

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1	Playing the 3 v 3 game—boundaries, rules	Starting and restarting the game Scoring into the goal	Start and restart rules (no throw-ins yet) Modified boundaries	General fitness Participation in sport improves fitness.	Four core values The four core values are introduced.
2	Playing the 3 v 3 game under control	Dribbling under control—keeping the ball close; using the inside and outside of the foot	Rule—No use of hands on the field!	Cardiorespiratory fitness Your heart is a muscle.	Responsibility to others Players should stay under control.
3	Playing the 3 v 3 game as a team	Passing with the inside of the foot Passing in a game Partner passing practice—stationary and moving		Muscular strength and endurance Playing soccer strengthens leg muscles.	Honesty If you foul, raise your hand and tell the coach.
4	Keeping possession of the ball	Passing and receiving Receiving and dribbling under pressure in a game		Safety equipment and rules Wear proper safety equipment.	Caring Take turns with teammates.
5	Keeping possession of the ball as a team	Supporting the teammate with the ball—being in position to “help”	Soccer is a team sport—all players on the team work together.	Healthy habits Eat nutritious foods and get enough sleep.	Caring Support teammates when they make a mistake.
6	Keeping possession in the game	Passing, receiving, and supporting under pressure		Flexibility Stretching makes muscles more flexible.	Responsibility It’s important that everyone work hard during practice.
7	Attacking the goal	Shooting at the goal—stationary and moving ball		Muscular strength and endurance Your leg muscles get stronger when you practice kicking.	Respect Be respectful to opponents.
8	Attacking the goal in the game	Shooting at the goal—moving ball under pressure		Training and conditioning Being active outside of practice is important.	Responsibility Share team duties with the coach.
9	Defending space	Marking (guarding) opposing players—where to stand, following the opponent	Marking means guarding your opponent.	Muscular strength and endurance Practicing kicking strengthens thigh muscles.	Respect for your opponent Shake hands with opponents at the end of a game.
10	Defending your own space in the game	Moving to challenge for the ball Pressuring the ball carrier		Healthy habits List and discuss healthy habits.	Keeping perspective on the game Learn and have fun while playing.

Note: The plan is for use with the 3 to 5 age group referenced in the YMCA's "Coaching Soccer" online course.

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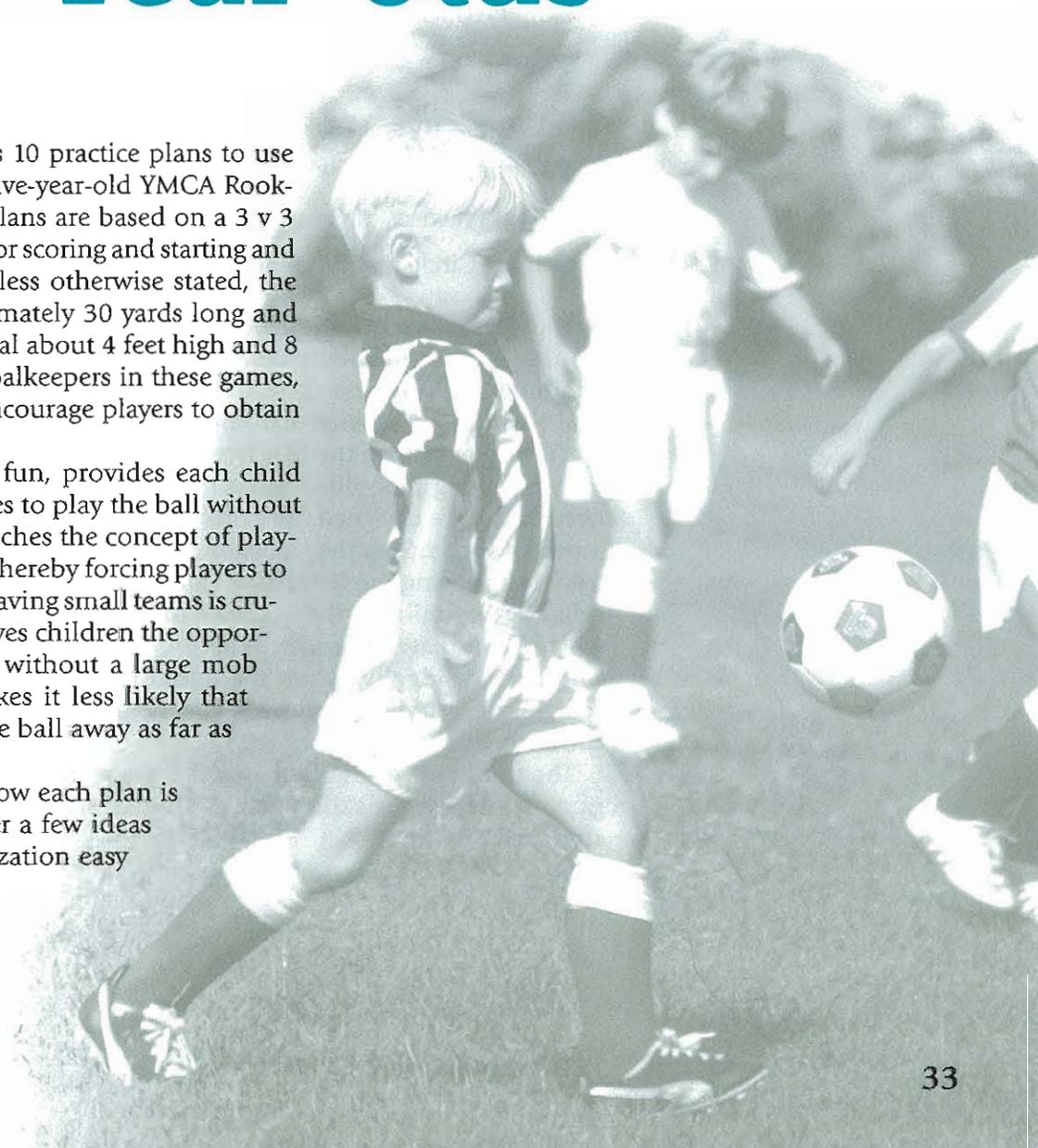
Practice Plans for Four- to Five-Year-Olds



This chapter contains 10 practice plans to use with your four- to five-year-old YMCA Rookies soccer players. The plans are based on a 3 v 3 game with simple rules for scoring and starting and restarting the game. Unless otherwise stated, the field should be approximately 30 yards long and 20 yards wide, with a goal about 4 feet high and 8 feet wide. Include no goalkeepers in these games, and use a size 3 ball. Encourage players to obtain and wear shin guards.

This game format is fun, provides each child with many opportunities to play the ball without undue pressure, and teaches the concept of playing within a boundary, thereby forcing players to try to control the ball. Having small teams is crucial at this stage, as it gives children the opportunity to have the ball without a large mob around them. This makes it less likely that they will simply kick the ball away as far as possible.

Let's look briefly at how each plan is organized, then consider a few ideas to make practice organization easy for you.



Coaching YMCA Rookies Soccer

Each plan contains the following sections:

- ⊙ Purpose
- ⊙ Equipment
- ⊙ Practice Plan
- ⊙ Coach's Points
- ⊙ Variations

Purpose focuses on what you want to teach your players during that practice; it is your main theme for the day. *Equipment* notes what you'll need on hand for that practice. We'll address the *practice plan* in depth in just a moment. *Coach's points* are helpful reminders for you, points of emphasis to most effectively conduct the practice. We include *variations* to games at the end of each plan, providing you with modifications to keep skill practices and games fun and interesting and to help players of varying skill levels.

The practice plan section outlines what you will do during each practice session. It consists of these elements:

- ⊙ Warm-Up
- ⊙ Fitness Circle
- ⊙ Game 1
- ⊙ Skill Practices or Games
- ⊙ Team Circle and Wrap-Up

You'll begin each session with 5- to 10-minute warm-up activities. (*Note:* All times given in the practice plans are approximate.) Follow this with 5 minutes of the fitness circle, during which you briefly talk with players and lead them in an activity that relates to health or fitness. Then, in game 1, you'll be working on the first two steps of the four-step process for teaching soccer: playing a modified soccer game and helping them discover what they need to do. We designed the game to focus players' attention on a particular aspect of soccer. Start the game but, when it's clear that the players are having trouble achieving the goal of the game, stop the game and ask questions and get answers similar to those shown in the plans. The questions and answers will help the players see what skills they need to solve tactical problems in the game. (Occasionally, when the question-and-answer section precedes the coach's cue, ask the questions *before* the players begin the game and use the cue during the game.)

The third part of the four-step process is teaching the skills identified in game 1 through the skill practices. In each skill practice you'll use the IDEA approach to

- ⊙ introduce the skill,
- ⊙ demonstrate the skill,
- ⊙ explain the skill, and
- ⊙ attend to players practicing the skill.

Chapter 8 contains descriptions of all the skills, so we will give a page reference to guide you to the appropriate description. The introduction, demonstration, and explanation should be brief, to fit young children's short attention spans. Then, as the players practice, you will attend to individual children and guide them with coaching cues or further demonstration.

After the skill practices, you will finish the four-step process by having the children play another game. This lets them use the skills they just learned and to develop their understanding of how to use those skills in the context of a game. Note that in game 1, when players are being introduced to a new tactic or skill, they usually will play an even-sided game (such as 3 v 3). This allows them to encounter the challenges they will face in executing the tactic or skill. Then, in most game 2s, they play lopsided games (such as 3 v 1 or 3 v 2) to increase their chances of experiencing success and beginning to master the new tactic or skill. However, if your players are showing proficiency with the new tactic or skill, you can use even-sided games in game 2. The choice is yours; for more on this issue, see chapter 4.

The practice plan section concludes with the team circle, which focuses on character development. You will take about five minutes to talk to your players and lead them in an activity that relates to one of the four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Following this, you'll wrap up the practice with a reminder of the next practice day and time and a preview of what you will teach in the next practice session.

A note about fitness and team circles: these times are meant to be true discussions—not lectures in which you do all the talking and the players do all the listening. Ask the questions provided and wait for your players to respond. Don't feed them the answers that we provide; we intend these answers only to help you guide the discussion. Your role is as much to ask questions and get players to respond as it is to dole out information.

The plans in this chapter, combined with the information in the rest of this book, should give you what you need to lead practices. Just remember to be patient and caring as you work on skills. Different children will progress at different rates, and it's more important that they learn the sport in a positive way than that they learn quickly.

Figures 6.1a-b and 6.2 show some simple ways to set up the field for 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 activities. Don't spend a lot of time setting up sidelines for these games. Simply encourage players to come back to their own fields if they stray.

Key to Diagrams

	= Ball
	= Cone
	= Pass
	= Run
	= Dribble
	= Shot
X	= Field player
A	= Attacker
D	= Defender
C	= Coach
FD	= Feeder
R	= Retriever
	= Small goal
-----	= Field boundaries
	= Rolling the ball

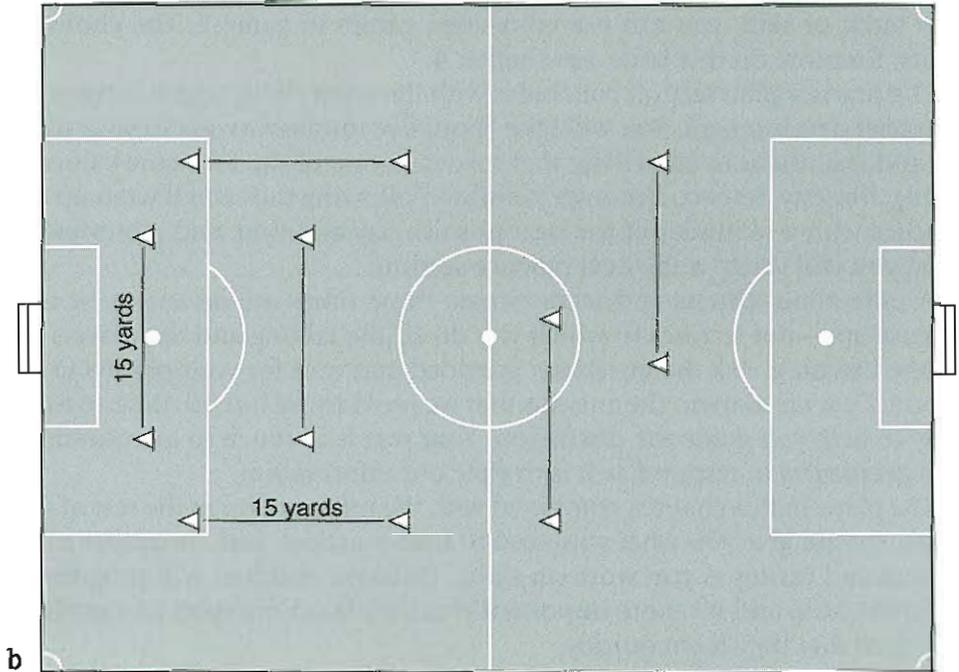
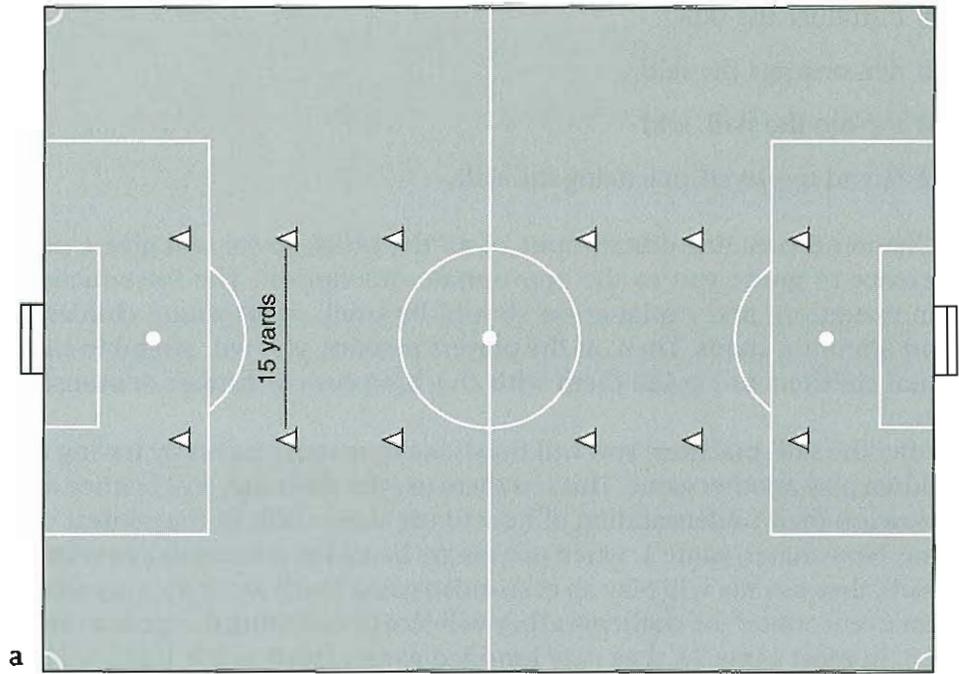


Figure 6.1 Setup for 1 v 1 activities.

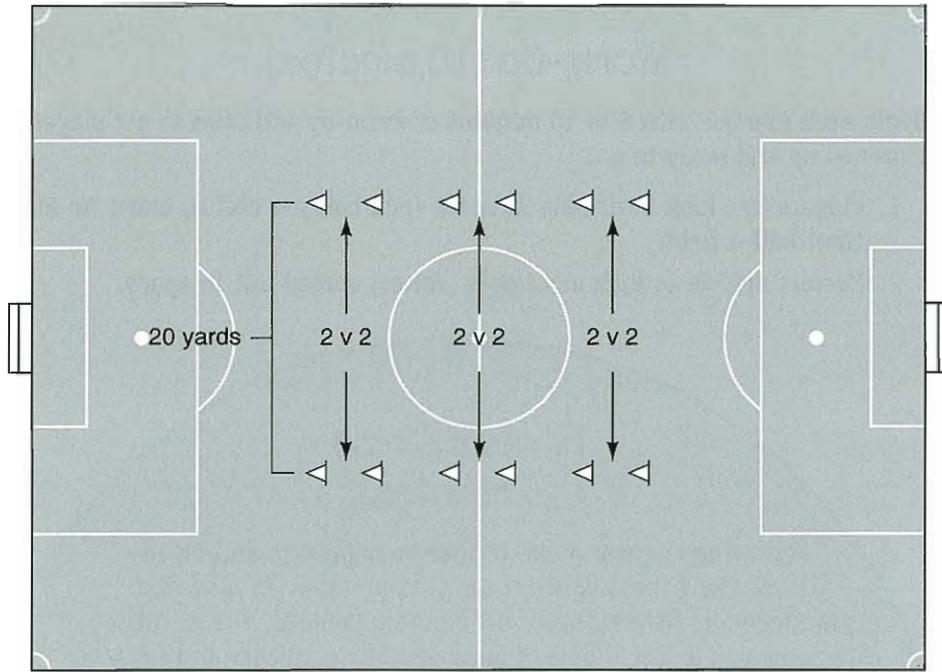


Figure 6.2 Setup for 2 v 2 activities

Practice 1

PURPOSE

To play a 3 v 3 game, focusing on boundaries and rules. The objective is for players to be able to play a 3 v 3 game of soccer in a predetermined area while adhering to simple start and restart rules.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per player (if possible)
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team
- One cone (or other marker) per player (if possible)
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Begin each practice with 5 to 10 minutes of warm-up activities to get players loosened up and ready to go.

1. Players free kick or dribble in space (one ball per child), using no more than half a field.
2. Players dribble or kick at targets (cones) spread out in space.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Following the warm-up, gather your players and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice. In this first practice your fitness topic will be more general, but in future practices you'll often discuss more specific concepts and issues such as safety, flexibility, healthy habits, and more.

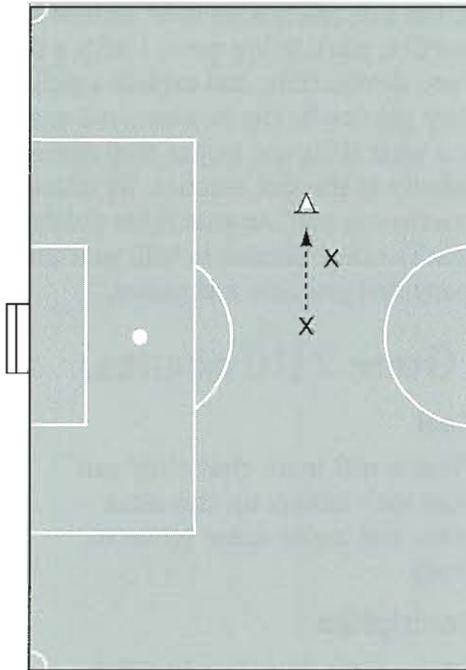
Key Idea: General fitness

Gather children about 10 to 15 feet away from a goal or cone. "Everyone jump 10 times. Our muscles help us jump. When you use your muscles a long time without getting too tired, it improves your *endurance*, which means you can run longer without getting tired. Now run really fast to the goal and back." Wait for them to return. "Running strengthens your heart and lungs. Now touch your toes; try to keep your fingers down there while I count to 10. Stretching makes you flexible, like a rubber band. When we play soccer, our bodies run, kick, and move. It makes our bodies stronger and improves our fitness, which means we can run and play longer and faster. Having good physical fitness is important for soccer and for being healthy. At every practice we'll talk about fitness in our fitness circles."

Practice 1

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Following the fitness circle, get the kids playing a game. After letting the players play a while, interrupt the game for a time of questions and answers—with *you* asking the questions and your *players* providing the answers (about what the goal of the game was and what skills and tactics they needed to perform to succeed in the game). For many games, we provide diagrams or figures showing how to play the game. Also, we often provide coach's points for you to pass along to your players during the games.



Goal

Players will learn that they have to attack a goal (cone) to score in soccer. Each team attacks a different goal (cone).

Description

1 v 1—Each player tries to hit a cone using only his or her feet, not hands. (No need for any other rules right now!)

When the question-and-answer section precedes the coach's cue, ask the questions *before* the players begin the game. Use the cue during the game.

Coach: Which way do you go when you get the ball?

Players: Toward the cone.



"Go toward the cone."



Practice 1

(cont'd)

COACH'S point

In games 1 and 2, watch that players don't stray too far from their cones or goals and into other games. Just redirect them if they stray. Setting up the cones for play across the field at various points will minimize the likelihood that games will spill over into each other.

In the first practice we don't include skill practices. However, after the first practice, you'll follow game 1 with a skill practice, during which you'll introduce, demonstrate, and explain a skill or tactic, then attend to your players as they practice it. The question-and-answer session, in which your players tell you what skills and tactics they needed to be successful in the game, leads directly to the skill practice. We often provide coach's points with the skill practices so you can pass these points along to your players. We also provide coach's cues—phrases to help your players focus on the task at hand—during many skill practices and games.

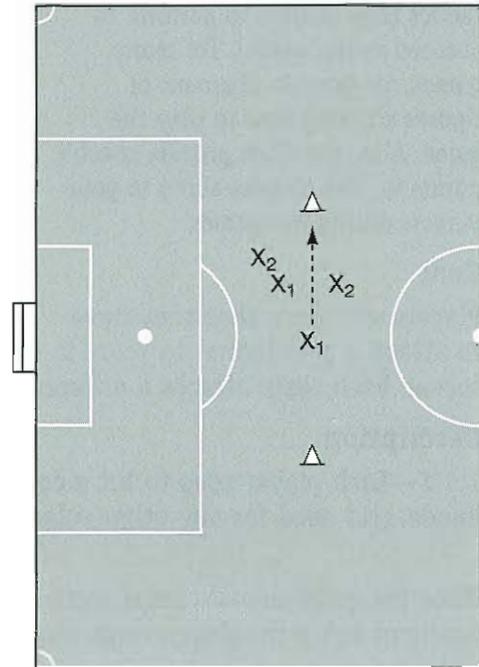
Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn that they can play with others on the same team and try to score (cone or goal).

Description

2 v 2—Each pair tries to score by hitting a cone or by kicking into a small goal.



Coach: Who is on your team?

Players: (Name of teammate)

Coach: Which goal are you trying to score in?

Players: That one. (Have them point.)

Coach: Where do you kick the ball to score?

Players: In the goal. (If they say "in there," have them show you.)

COACH'S cue



"Score in the goal."

Practice 1

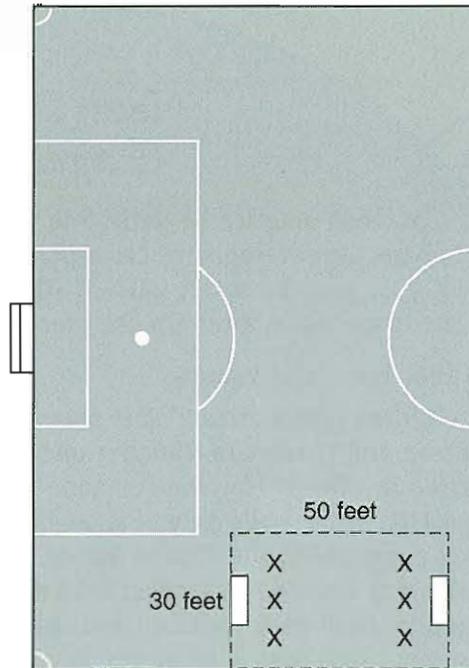
Game 3 (20 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn appropriate ways of restarting the game when the ball goes out of play.

Description

3 v 3—Each team of three tries to score into a small goal. For each pair of teams, mark a playing area no larger than 50 by 30 feet.



Coach: How do we start the game?

Players: With a kickoff at the center. The other team must go back into its own half.

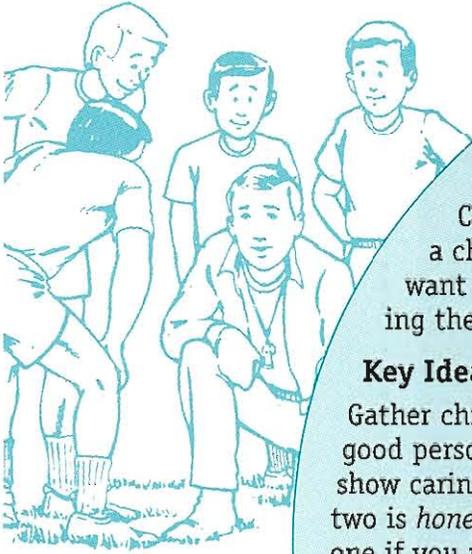
Coach: What happens when the ball goes out-of-bounds?

Players: The other team gets to kick it in. (Don't allow throw-ins yet.)

Coach: What happens after you score a goal?

Players: A kickoff at the center. The team that scored must go back into its own half.





Team Circle (5 minutes)

Conclude practice by gathering your players and discussing a character development concept. These aren't lectures; you want your players' active participation in these discussions. Following the discussions, wrap up the practice with a few comments.

Key Idea: Four core values

Gather children into a circle. "This season we'll talk about four qualities of a good person and teammate. Number one is *caring*. Can you tell me ways you show caring to others? Helping someone up when they fall? Good! Number two is *honesty*. What ways do you show honesty? How about if you tell someone if you played with their game or toy? That's honesty. Number three is *respect*. Do you know what respect is? One thing that shows respect is listening to adults when they speak to you, like you're doing now. Number four is *responsibility*. One way to show you're responsible is to pick up after yourself. Don't wait for others to pick up for you." Ask them to share ways they show the four values in other areas of their lives. "Good teammates show these values to each other. We'll talk more about these four values during the season."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—playing soccer with control.

Variations

Try to have enough balls and cones so that all players get plenty of touches and chances to score. This is the point of the warm-up and the 1 v 1 game. If the number of balls and cones available is limited, have players pair off and pass the ball to each other before hitting a cone.

Practice 2

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Have players practice close dribbling. Tell players “Keep the ball close when you run,” as they practice. Also, tell players that you will blow your whistle occasionally during practice. When you blow the whistle, they should stop and put a foot on the ball to show they have it under control.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Children gather into a group. “Everyone hold one hand up and make a fist. Squeeze your fist tightly, then let go. Keep tightening and letting go.” Children continue for 10 counts. “Your heart is a special muscle that tightens and relaxes just like your fist is doing. Your heart is about the size of your fist. Let’s put our fists over our chests. Every time it tightens, or beats, your heart pumps blood all over your body. When you run during soccer, your heart beats faster. The beat slows down when you slow down. Let’s run with high knees for 15 counts while we count together. Stop and feel your heart beat by putting your hand over your chest.” Model for players. “Running strengthens your heart and lungs and improves your fitness.”

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to control the ball.

Description

3 v 3—You review these rules with players:

- What constitutes a goal (see page 138)
- No use of hands during the game
- How to start and restart a game (see pages 135–136)

PURPOSE

To play a 3 v 3 game, focusing on controlling the ball (as opposed to kicking it anywhere). The objective is for players to be able to move with the ball (dribble) during the 3 v 3 game.

Equipment

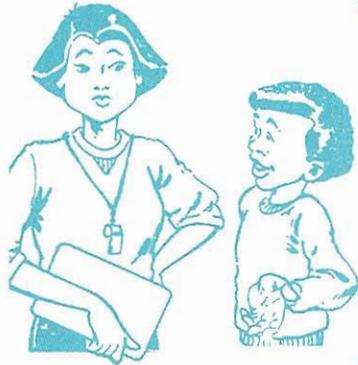
- One soccer ball per player (if possible)
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Practice 2 (cont'd)

COACH'S cue



"Run with the ball."



Coach: How can you get the ball up the field?

Players: Run with it.

Coach: What do we call this in soccer?

Players: Dribbling.

Coach: When you dribble the ball, should it be close to you or far away?

Players: Close to you.

Coach: What part of the foot should you use to dribble—the inside, the outside, or the toe?

Players: The inside or outside.

Skill Practice 1 (5 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to control the ball while dribbling (see pages 124–125).
2. Practice controlling the ball while dribbling.

Description

Individual—Each player dribbles in space and changes directions when you call "turn."

COACH'S point



 Young children are unpredictable. When you ask them questions, you may not get the answers you are hoping for. You may need to probe. Ask "What else?" Or give them choices: "Do you think it is this or that?"

COACH'S cues



"Keep the ball close."

"Use the inside and outside of both feet."

"Push the ball gently."

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to control the ball with the inside or the outside of the foot while dribbling (see page 124).

Practice 2

- Practice controlling the ball while dribbling with the inside or outside of the foot.

Description

Individual—First demonstrate dribbling with the inside and outside of the foot. Then have the players dribble individually while you call “turn” and “inside” or “outside” of foot.

COACH'S cues



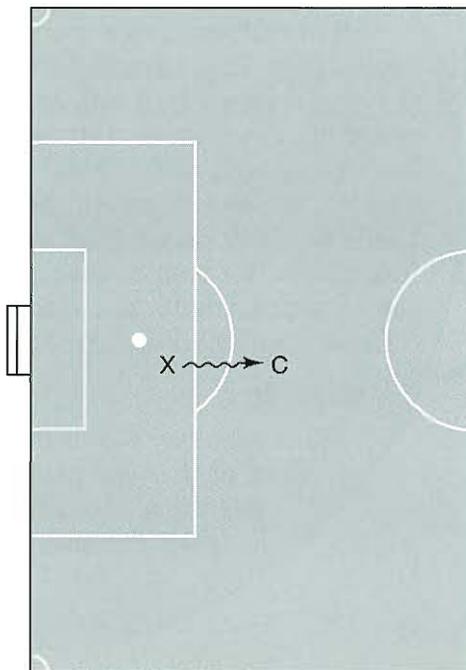
- “Keep the ball close.”
- “Use the inside and outside of both feet.”
- “Push the ball gently.”
- “Turn inside” or “Turn outside.”

Skill Practice 3 (5 minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to move the ball to avoid an opponent (see page 124-125).
- Practice moving the ball to avoid an opponent.

Description

Individual—Each player dribbles with control to avoid an opponent, which is you. The players move freely with the ball, but must avoid you when they see you.



COACH'S cues



- “Move the ball away from me.”
- “Keep the ball close.”
- “Use the inside and outside of both feet.”
- “Push the ball gently.”

Practice 2

(cont'd)

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to avoid opponents when they have the ball during game play.

Description

3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on the skill proficiency of your players)—Players control the ball while running. Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense. (See chapter 4 for more on the use of lopsided games.)

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into a group. "I want us all to pretend we're eggs. Eggs have shells that can break. What would happen if we bumped into each other as eggs? Right. We would crack and break. Let's move around the field being eggs. Don't bump each other or we'll break!" Continue for about one minute. "We were all careful not to bump each other so our 'shells' wouldn't break! That was great! You were in charge of or 'responsible' for your moving. When we're careful of each other, we're responsible for our space and other players' space. This shows responsibility during practice and games."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—playing as a team.

Variations

A variation on skill practice 2 is to play Follow the Leader, having the players follow you and dribble as you move about the playing area at slow speed, dribbling with both feet.



Practice 3

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

- 1 v 1—Each player tries to hit a cone using only his or her feet, not hands.
- Players free kick or dribble in space (one ball per child), using no more than half a field.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Muscular strength and endurance

Gather children into a circle. “Everyone find your own space so you don’t bump your neighbor. You’re going to run in your own spot for 30 seconds, then stop. Ready? Go!” Time children and verbally let them know the time remaining; stop them at the end of the time. “What part of the body did we just use the most when we ran?” Encourage their responses.

“When we play soccer, which part of your body do you use the most?” Wait for their responses. “Muscles in our body help us move our legs. Playing soccer will help our leg muscles get stronger and grow bigger.”

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will work with a teammate to score.

Description

2 v 2—Players kick to cones or small goals.

COACH'S cue



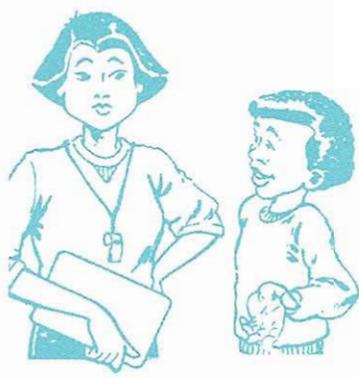
“Help each other.”

PURPOSE

To play a 3 v 3 game as a team, focusing on passing to teammates. The objective is for players to be able to advance the ball by passing to teammates.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team
- One cone per player (if possible)
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams



Coach: How can you help each other and work together to score? (You might have to prompt the answer by showing them an example. Put two players on the field, one close to the goal and the other farther back with the ball. Then ask "What is the quickest way for you two to get the ball into the goal?")

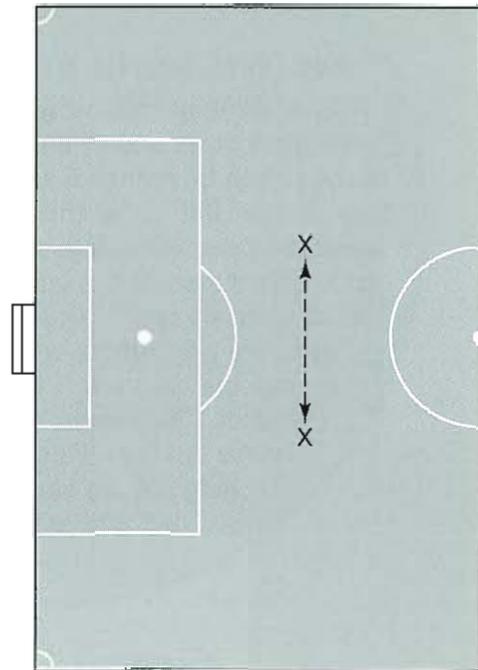
Players: Pass the ball forward toward the goal.

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to pass accurately to a partner (see pages 125–127).
2. Practice passing accurately to a partner.

Description

Pairs—First demonstrate the proper passing technique. Then have partners practice passing, both when stationary and when moving the ball.



COACH'S cues



"Get close to the ball."

"Face your partner."

"Turn your foot out" (so they use the inside of the foot).

"Follow through toward your partner."

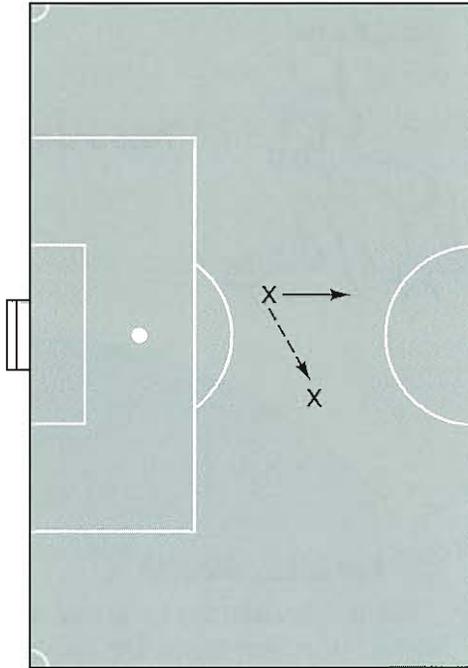
Practice 3

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to move to support a teammate with the ball (see pages 121–122).
2. Practice moving to support a teammate with the ball.

Description

Pairs—Tell partners to practice getting the ball from one end of the field to the other without running with the ball. Ask “How do you do it?” They should answer “Pass and move forward.” After they practice passing the ball and score at the other end, they come back.



👉 Notice that some players need more attention than others with skill practice 2. Observe which pairs are struggling and provide them with a little extra help.

COACH'S cue



“Pass and move ahead of your partner.”

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to pass and move ahead during the game.

Description

3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on the skill proficiency of your players)—Each team of three tries to pass often during the game. Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense.

COACH'S cue



"Pass and move ahead."

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Honesty

Gather children into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. "Can you touch the ball with your hand in soccer? Even if it's an accident? Those of you who think it's okay to touch the ball, stand by this cone. Those who think it's not okay, stand by this one." Wait for children to choose. Then ask them why they chose the cone they did. "Touching the ball with your hand, even if it's an accident, is a foul. What should you do if that happens? Those of you who think you should just keep playing, stay at this cone; those of you who think you should raise your hand and give the ball to the other team, go stand by that cone." Wait for everyone to finish choosing. "It's important to be honest about fouls. If you touch the ball with your hand, even if nobody sees it, raise your hand and give the ball to the other team."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—keeping possession of the ball.

Variations

In skill practice 1, more advanced players will pick up the skill quickly. Have these players also use the outside of the foot (by turning the foot inward rather than outward).

Practice 4

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Repeat skill practices 1 and 2 from practice 3.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Safety equipment and rules

Bring a small piece of cardboard or a clipboard that can be used as a shield. Get one child to demonstrate. Provide a ball and have the child kick the ball at you at a medium effort. "Watch where the ball goes when Julia kicks it." Allow the ball to hit your legs. Then put the board in front of you, between you and the child kicking. Have the child kick again. "Now watch where the ball goes. This board is just like a shin guard that we wear on our legs. Wearing shin guards protects our legs just like the board protected my legs from the ball." Give each player a turn kicking the ball.

"Can you think of other ways to be safe that you should remember to do when you play soccer?"

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will remember to move the ball downfield by passing.

Description

3 v 3—Each team of three tries to pass often during the game.



"Pass and move ahead."

PURPOSE

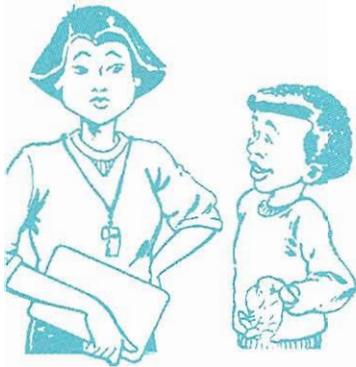
To keep possession of the ball, focusing on passing and receiving. The objective is for players to be able to receive the ball and dribble with it under control during game play.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team or two cones per team of three
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams
- A small piece of cardboard or a clipboard



 Emphasize and encourage passing in the game. Freeze the game when you see it happen, and point out good passing, receiving, and dribbling under control.



Coach: What do you need to do when the ball comes to you?

Players: Stop it.

Coach: How do you stop it?

Players: (Various answers, to which you could respond, "Yes, you can.")

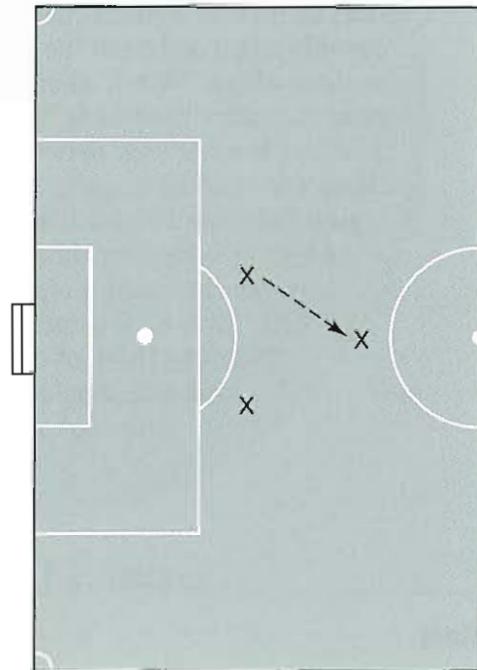
Coach: Why don't we practice stopping the ball when it comes?

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to receive a pass and control the ball (see page 128).
2. Practice receiving passes and controlling the ball.

Description

Groups of three—Each group passes in a triangle formation, focusing on receiving the ball.



COACH'S cues



"Get behind the ball."

"Use the inside or outside of the foot."

"Push the ball gently toward the player you will pass to next."

"Make the next pass."

Practice 4

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to receive a pass and move with the ball under control (see page 128).
2. Practice receiving passes and moving with the ball under control.

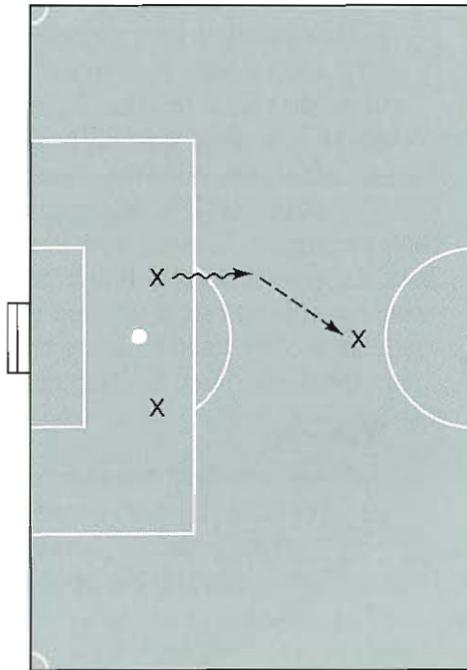
COACH'S cue



Demonstrate skills! A good picture paints a thousand words.

Description

Groups of three—In a triangle formation, each person receives the ball and dribbles a little before passing.



COACH'S cues



"Push the ball into space."
"Dribble keeping the ball close."
"Find a teammate and pass."

Practice 4

(cont'd)

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn how to receive the ball and dribble under control.

Description

3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on skill proficiency of your players)—Each team of three tries to pass often during the game. Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

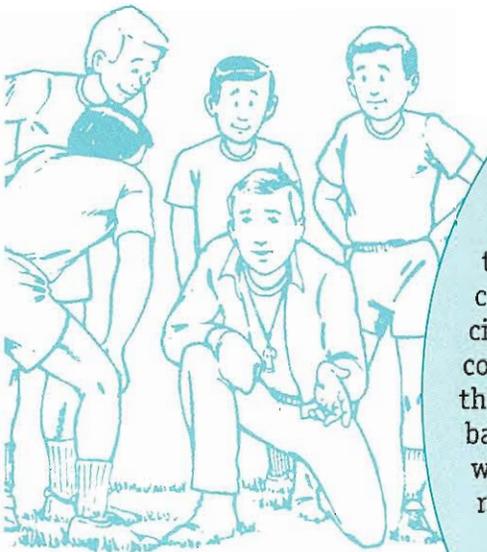
Gather children into a circle. Stand in the middle of the group with a ball. Pass to each child and give him or her a turn to pass back to you. "I am going to pass the ball. If a pass comes to you, pass the ball back to me." Work around the whole circle. Talk to the children about playing and learning when they come to practice. "Who had a turn to touch the ball?" Wait for their responses. "I made sure everyone had a chance to touch the ball. Raise your hand if it felt good to be able to have a turn. How would you have felt if you did not have a turn?" Listen to their responses. "We need to share the ball and take turns so everyone can learn and play. Sharing and taking turns shows you care."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—supporting your teammates.

Variations

- Encourage better players to use both feet during practices. Also, have better players move the triangle over the field as they pass.
- Spend extra time with weaker players to help them control the ball when it comes. This is a critical skill for all players to acquire.



Practice 5

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Repeat skill practices 1 and 2 from practice 4. Use skill practice 2 with the better players.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather children into a circle. "When your body doesn't eat healthy foods and get enough sleep, it moves slowly. Let's pretend we have no energy to move because we didn't eat enough healthy foods or get enough sleep." Begin to move slowly and encourage children to follow. Move extremely slowly. "Everyone stop. Now I am going to fill your bodies up with healthy foods." Act out giving them foods. "Pretend we're sleeping. When I say 'Wake up!' you can move faster because you have enough energy and enough rest. Wake up and move faster. Stop! What are some other healthy habits you have learned?"

Examples: daily exercise, brushing teeth, saying no to drugs, no smoking. "It's important for everyone to practice healthy habits."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will try to help teammates. (Explain that a regulation game has 11 v 11 and that all players spread over the field so they can help or support each other.)

Description

3 v 3—Each team tries to have teammates help each other during the game.

Coach: Where can you go to help a teammate who has the ball? (You may have to show them an example. Put a defender in front of the player with the ball so that the player who wants to receive the ball has to move away into space. Then ask "If Katie has the ball here, where can Matthew go so that Katie can pass to him?")

Players: To space.

PURPOSE

To keep possession of the ball by supporting teammates who have it. The objective is for players to be able to move to a good position to receive a pass when a teammate has the ball during a game.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per team of three
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team or two cones per team of three
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams



Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to stay in space to receive passes (see page 122).
2. Practice staying in space to receive passes.

Description

Teams of three, unopposed—Each team tries to make four passes as it moves to the end of the field.

COACH'S cues



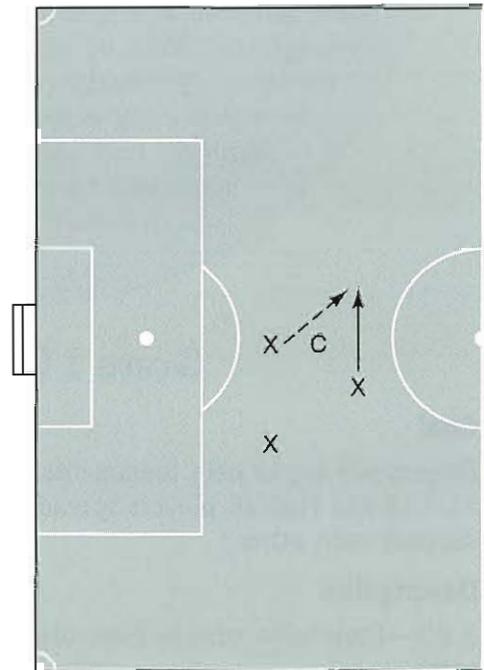
“Pass and move forward into space.”
“Receive and pass to a teammate.”

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to create a passing lane away from the defender (see page 123).
2. Practice moving to create a passing lane away from the defender.

Description

Teams of three—You oppose each group for one or two passes, then move to the next group when it begins.



COACH'S cues



“Move away from me so he (or she) can pass to you.”
“Pass the ball by me.”

Practice 5

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to pass the ball effectively before shooting at the goal.

Description

3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on skill proficiency of your players)—Each team tries to pass the ball three times before shooting at the goal. Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

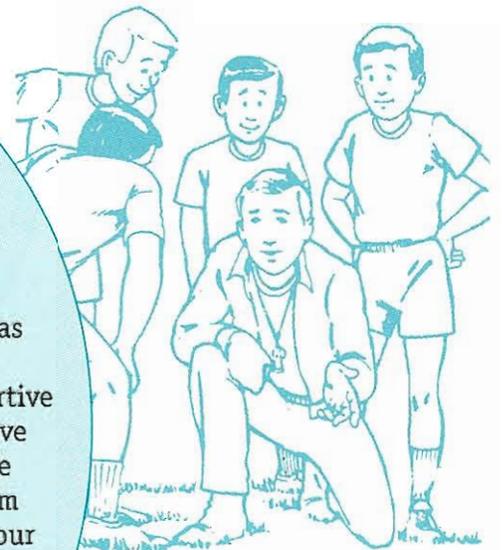
Gather children into a group about 10 feet from two cones that form a goal. "Let's pretend we're playing a soccer game. Watch what I do with the ball." Tell a child in the group you're passing to him. Make a bad pass. "That pass wasn't very good, was it? What would you say to me so that I don't feel bad about the pass?" As children respond, have each player who makes a supportive comment take an open shot on goal. If players make nonsupportive comments, encourage them to change their words to become more supportive; after they have changed the words, have each of them take an open shot at the goal. "It's very important to support your teammates, especially when they make mistakes. Saying something that makes someone feel good shows you care."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—keep-away games.

Variations

- Encourage better players to use both feet.
- Make better players work harder to get the ball around you in skill practice 2.



Freeze game 2 occasionally to show players where good supporting positions are. Watch that players don't try to support by getting too close to teammates who have the ball. This only makes the game more crowded, so encourage them to stay in space to receive a pass.

Practice 6

PURPOSE

To keep possession of the ball in a game, focusing on passing, receiving, and supporting under pressure. The objective is for players to be able to keep possession of the ball in the 3 v 3 game by passing well, receiving the ball effectively, and supporting teammates who have the ball.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per team of three
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team or two cones per team of three
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams
- A rubber band

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Repeat skill practice 2 from practice 4.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Flexibility

Bring a rubber band to use as a prop. "This rubber band is like our muscles. When I pull it, it stretches; when I let go, it pulls back to its original shape." Demonstrate with the rubber band, stretching it out and back, using a gentle, slow action. "Your muscles work the same way. When you reach and stretch, your muscles are stretching just like the rubber band. When your body comes back, your muscles go back to their original shape. Everyone reach down to the ground with your arms slowly, and then bring your arms back up." Have children repeat three times. "Your leg muscles need to stretch because you use them the most in soccer; stretching makes your leg muscles more flexible. When muscles are flexible, it keeps them from getting hurt and makes the muscles feel good."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to keep the ball away from the other team and score.

Description

3 v 3—Each team tries to pass three times before scoring a goal. If they do, give them an extra point for that goal.

Coach: How can you keep the ball as a team?

Players: Pass.

Coach: What do you need to do as well as passing?

Players: Receive and control.

Coach: If a player with the ball wants to pass, what does he or she need? (Again, you may need to set this up in a demonstration.)

Players: Someone to pass to.



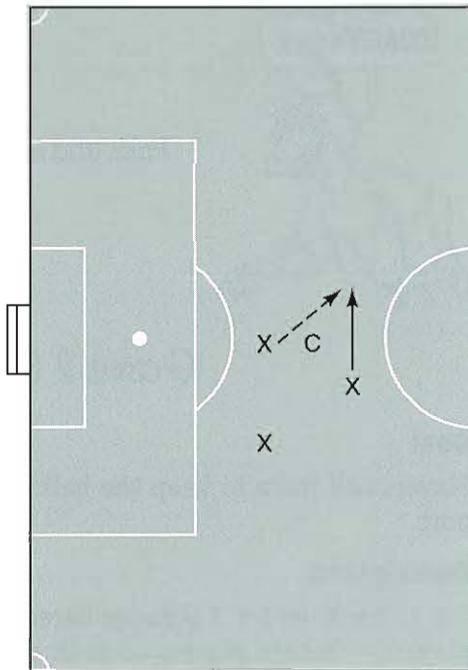
Practice 6

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to create a passing lane around a defender (see page 122).
2. Practice moving to create a passing lane around a defender.

Description

Groups of three—Each team tries to pass in a triangle formation, with you opposing.



COACH'S cues



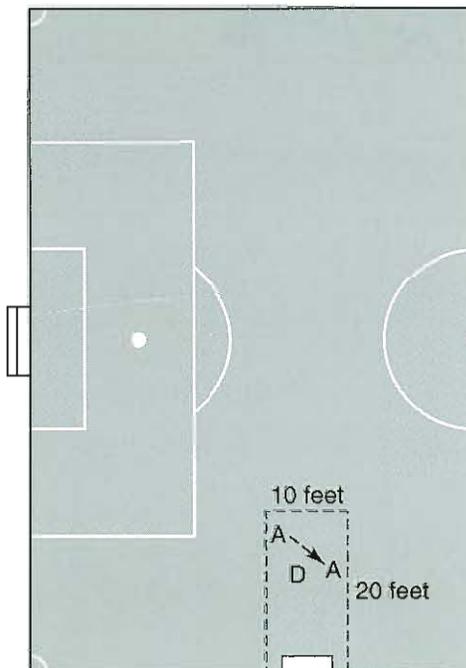
“Move to help your teammate.”
“Pass and control the ball.”

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to support a teammate under pressure (see page 122).
2. Practice supporting a teammate under pressure.

Description

2 v 1—Players practice in an area 20 feet by 10 feet with a small goal. The two attackers must pass three times before scoring in the goal while defended by the third player.



COACH'S point



Remember to have the players rotate playing the defender in skill practice 2. If necessary, guide players to the right answers as you ask questions by setting up scenarios (e.g., if Katie wants to pass to Michael or Kolicia, where do they have to be?).

Practice 6

(cont'd)

COACH'S cue



"Pass and move quickly."

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to keep the ball by good passing, control, and support.

Description

3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on the skill proficiency of your players)—Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense.

COACH'S cues



"Pass and support."

"Move forward."

"Control the ball."

Practice 6

Team Circle (5 minutes)

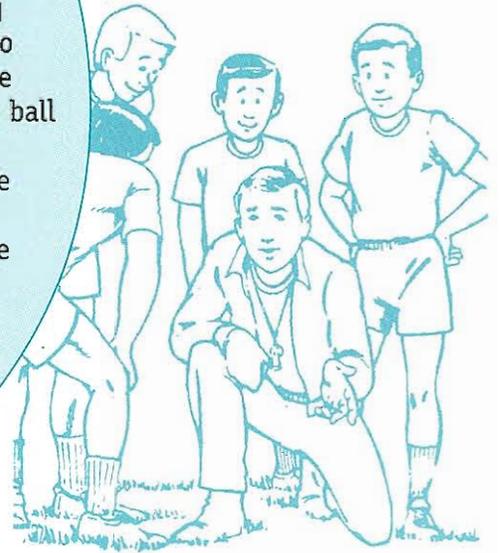
Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into a circle. You're in the middle of the circle with a ball. You'll try to kick the ball out of the circle.

The children will have two chances to keep the ball from escaping the circle. During one turn they'll use minimal effort, and during the second they'll use their maximum effort. "I am going to try to kick the ball out of the circle. Everyone work together to keep the ball in the circle. Pretend that you are snails that can't get to the ball fast enough." Begin to dribble and try to get the ball out of the circle, reminding players that snails move slowly. "This time move like busy bees that fly fast and keep moving." Repeat activity, encouraging players to be "busy bees." "When you try to be like busy bees, you're being responsible to your teammates."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—shooting at the goal.



Variations

Apply more pressure to better players during practice 1. This will challenge their control.

Practice 1

PURPOSE

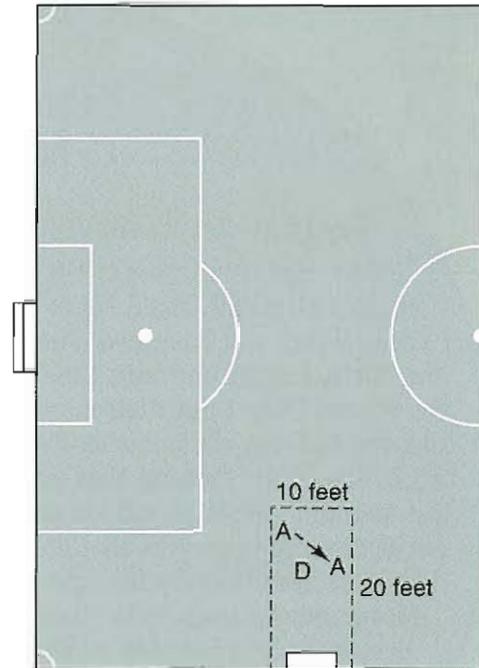
To attack the goal, focusing on shooting a stationary and moving ball. The objective is for players to be able to shoot a stationary or moving ball accurately at the goal during practice and game play.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team or two cones per team of three
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Groups of three—Players play 2 v 1 in an area 20 feet by 10 feet with a small goal. They must pass three times, then shoot into the goal.



Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Muscular strength and endurance

Gather children into a group. Show children the differences between a kick with minimal effort and one with close to maximum effort. "Watch how far the ball goes when I kick it two different times." Show both kicks to children. "Let's make a circle, and you show me how you would kick the ball. Pretend you're kicking a ball, and show me a short kick. Now step back two big steps and show me a long kick that will make the ball go across the circle." Highlight the ball going farther in the second kick. "You can kick the ball farther when your muscles in your legs are strong. Your muscles in your legs get stronger when you practice kicking."

Practice 7

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to attempt shots at the goal.

Description

3 v 3—Players try to score as many goals as they can.

Coach: What do you have to do to score?

Players: Shoot.

Coach: When you shoot, where should you aim the ball?

Players: At the goal.

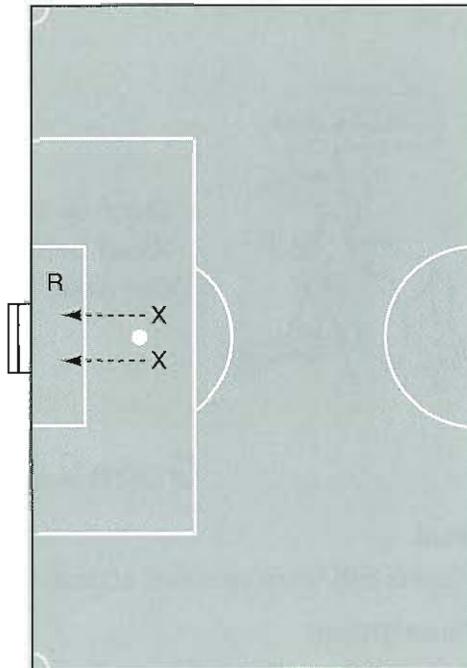


Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to accurately shoot a stationary ball into the goal (see page 129).
2. Practice accurately shooting a stationary ball into the goal without pressure.

Description

Groups of three—Have one retriever and two shooters. Each shooter shoots a stationary ball into the goal he or she is attacking.



COACH'S cues



“Get close to the ball.” (Use a long stride to plant the nonstriking foot beside the ball.)

“Use the laces to kick the ball.”

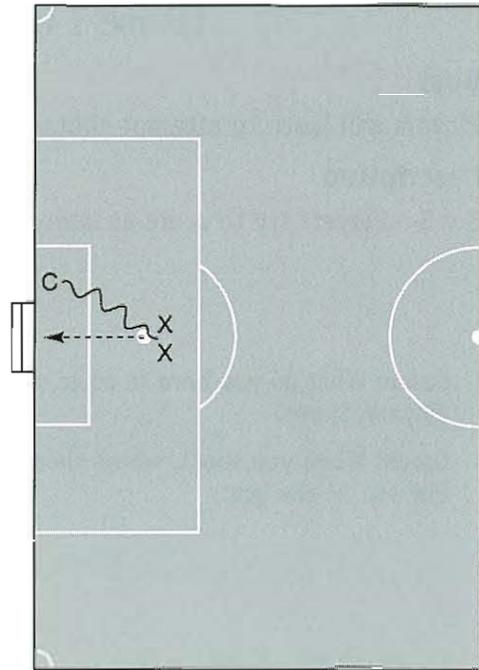
“Keep the toe down as you shoot.”

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to accurately shoot a moving ball into the goal (see page 129).
2. Practice accurately shooting a moving ball into the goal.

Description

Groups of three—You or one of the teammates rolls the ball forward so the shooters can move in and shoot the moving ball.



COACH'S cues



- “Catch up to the ball.”
- “Shoot before the ball stops rolling.”
- “Get close to the ball, use laces, toe down.”

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to shoot accurately in the game.

Description

3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on the skill proficiency of your players)—Emphasize shooting to score. Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense.

COACH'S point

Have teams count the number of goals they score in game 1, and see if they can score more in game 2. This way they see the value of practice.

Practice 7

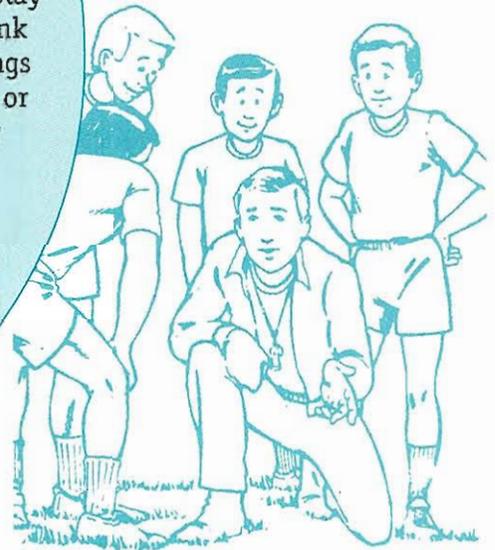
Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather children into a group. "I'm going to ask you some questions about things I notice on this team. Tell me if you agree. Do you try to learn new skills at practice? Do you work hard to improve your skills? Do you help your teammates? Do you follow directions? Do you feel good about yourselves when you play a good game?" Listen to responses following each question. "Think about players who will be your opponents. What qualities or things do they have or do? Are they the same as you?" Listen for "yes" or "no." "It's important to think of our opponents in the same way we think of ourselves. You respect yourself, and you should respect your opponents. They are a lot like you and are learning the same things."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—shooting under pressure.



Variations

Have better players shoot from farther away during the practices.

Practice 8

PURPOSE

To attack the goal, focusing on shooting a moving ball under pressure. The objective is for players to be able to shoot under pressure from a defender during game play.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team or two cones per team of three
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Players shoot a stationary ball into a goal.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather children into a circle. "What will you do tonight after you eat dinner?" Wait for their responses. "At the end of the day, what do you do?" Encourage children to discuss sleep. "Let's pretend you are at your homes, and you climb into bed to go to sleep. Everyone lie down. Now let's pretend it's morning and a new day. You don't have soccer practice today. Your body needs to move every day to stay in good physical condition for soccer. What should we do to move our bodies?" Wait for their responses. If a child suggests an activity (e.g., biking, walking, swimming), have everyone pretend to do that activity. Then have them "sleep" again, wake up, and choose another physical activity idea.

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to shoot often.

Description

3 v 3, shooting to goals

COACH'S cue



"Shoot when you have a chance."

Practice 8

Coach: Do you always have a lot of time to shoot in a game?

Players: No, sometimes you have to hurry.

Coach: When do you have to hurry?

Players: When an opponent is close to you.

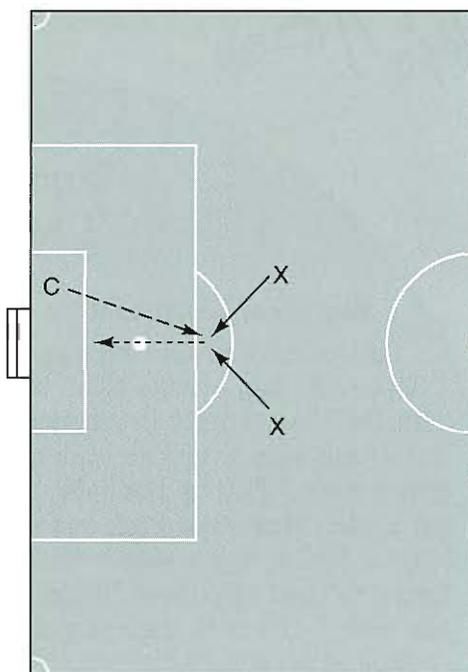


Skill Practice (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to shoot accurately under pressure (see page 129).
2. Practice shooting accurately under pressure from a defender.

Description

Pairs of players—You feed the ball between two players who chase it toward the goal. The first player to reach the ball must shoot as quickly as possible. This teaches shooting under pressure.



COACH'S cues



"Chase hard."
"Shoot quickly."

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goals

Players will learn to attempt more shots and shoot accurately under pressure during game play.



For the skill practice, the best place to start feeding the ball is from the middle of the field. When one of the first pair has scored, the pair returns to the starting point by coming back down the sides of the field while you feed the next pair. As it takes players some time to return to the starting point, this practice might involve several pairs.

Practice 8

(cont'd)

Description

3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on the skill proficiency of your players)—Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense.

COACH'S cue



"Shoot quickly when you get the chance."

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

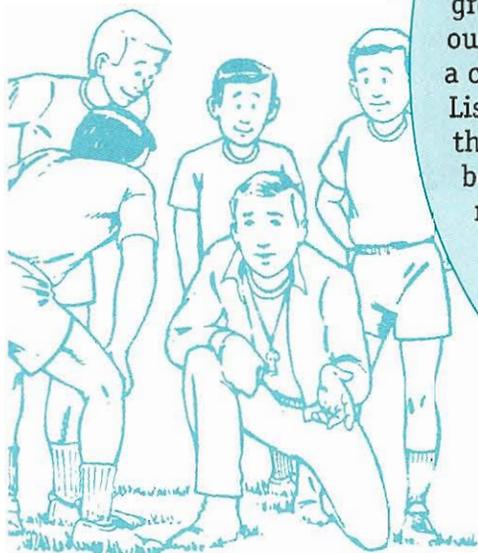
Gather children into a group. Dump five to six balls out of a mesh ball bag, leaving them where they stop. "Pretend we just finished one activity in practice and we're getting ready to do something else. Everyone walk away from the balls and make a group circle." Pick up the balls, then go to the group. Dump balls out again. "Now come back and you pick up the balls, then go make a circle. Which way makes it faster for me to get to your circle?" Listen to their responses. "What do you think we should do with the balls?" Listen to their responses. Discuss picking up equipment before doing another activity. "We can have more fun and learn more when we work together. That is a shared responsibility between the coach and the players."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—guarding or marking your opponents.

Variations

- Keep the feeds simple for weaker players. A low, rolling ball is easy to control and shoot.
- Vary the feeds for better players so the ball bounces a little, making control before the shot more challenging.



Practice 9

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

1 v 1—Each player tries to hit a cone using only his or her feet, not hands.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Muscular strength and endurance

Have children spread out in a group. “Put your hand on the front of your thigh, then lift it up and set it down. Did you feel the muscle get tight when you lifted it up and then relax when you set it down? Try it again five times.” Assist players if needed. “Muscles tighten, or contract, when you move. You use the thigh muscles, or quadriceps, when you kick the ball in soccer. The more you practice kicking the stronger your thigh, or quadriceps muscles, will get; that’s called improving your muscular strength.”

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to stop the other team from getting the ball.

Description

3 v 3, shooting to goals

Coach: How can you stop players on the other team from getting the ball?
Players: Stand close to them.

Coach: If I want to pass to Katie, where can Matthew go to make it hard for Katie and me?
Players: Next to Katie.

PURPOSE

To defend space, focusing on marking (guarding) opponents. The objective is for players to be able to defend space in a game by marking opposing players.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team
- One cone (or other marker) per player (if possible)
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams



Skill Practice 1 (5 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to follow an opponent (see page 130).
2. Practice following an opponent.

Description

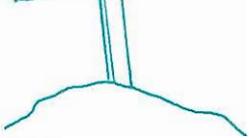
Pairs—When you call “go,” one player tries to get away from the other. When you call “stop,” the players switch roles, then repeat.

COACH'S cues



“Watch your opponent.”
“Stay close to him or her.”

COACH'S point



In skill practice 2, you may need to take over as feeder, depending on the ability of the third player to feed accurately. Rotate the third player into the practice every two or three trials.

Skill Practice 2 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to mark an opponent who is trying to receive a pass (see page 130).
2. Practice marking an opponent who is trying to get free to receive a pass.

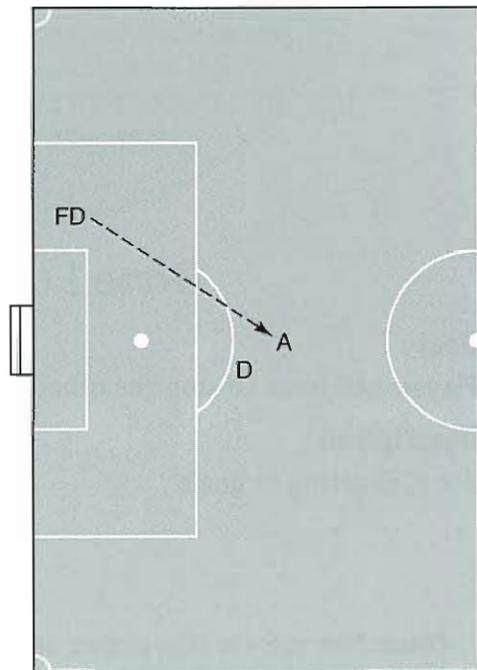
Description

Groups of three—One player feeds the ball to the attacker. The attacker tries to get free from the defender. Play stops when the attacker or the defender has the ball in space; they then do it again.

COACH'S cue



“Mark your opponent.”



Practice 9

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to mark effectively when on defense in the game.

Description

3 v 3



"Mark an opponent when the other team has the ball."



Freeze game 2 occasionally to check on whether players know who they should be marking.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather children into a single-file line near two cones about 10 feet apart. "I am going to walk down the line two times. Remember how it feels each time I pass you." Walk down the line and nod to each player. Repeat, but this time tell each player "great game" or "nice play today" and shake his or her hand. "Which time that I passed you made you feel better?" Ask children to stand near a cone that represents their choice. "Shaking hands and saying 'good game' are important traditions that show we appreciate our opponents' efforts in a game. It shows respect for your opponents." Divide team in half and have them practice an end-of-game "respect ritual."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice day and time, and give them a sneak preview of that practice—challenging your opponent for the ball.



Variations

Use a ball in practice 1. Player A can try to get away from player B while dribbling a ball.

Practice 10

PURPOSE

To defend your own space in a game, focusing on pressuring the ball. The objective is for players to be able to pressure opponents who have the ball during game play.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- Two portable goals (8 feet by 4 feet) per team
- One cone (or other marker) per player (if possible)
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

1 v 1—Each player tries to hit a cone or small goal using only his or her feet, not hands.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather children into a group. Mark boundary areas. "When I say, 'go!' you are all going to run as fast as you can, without bumping each other, staying in this area. Ready, go!" Children run for about a minute or until they get tired. "You had enough energy to run. But when you don't take care of your body, you can get tired much faster playing soccer. I am going to say a habit, and you shout if it's healthy or unhealthy." (Examples: taking drugs, smoking, brushing teeth, drinking plenty of water, getting plenty of sleep and rest, eating a variety of foods.) "Can you think of any others? Healthy or unhealthy?"

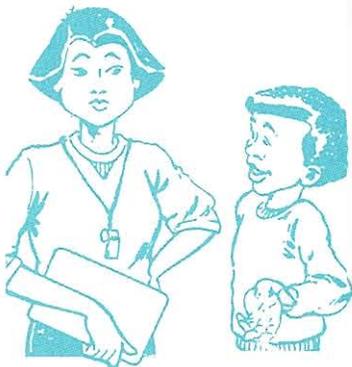
Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to watch an opponent and stay close.

Description

3 v 3—Each team tries to stop the other team from scoring.



Coach: If the opponent you are marking gets the ball, where should you move?
Players: Closer to him or her.

Coach: As the opponent you are marking gets closer to your goal, where should you move?
Players: Closer to him or her.

Coach: How should you move (quickly or slowly)?
Players: Quickly.

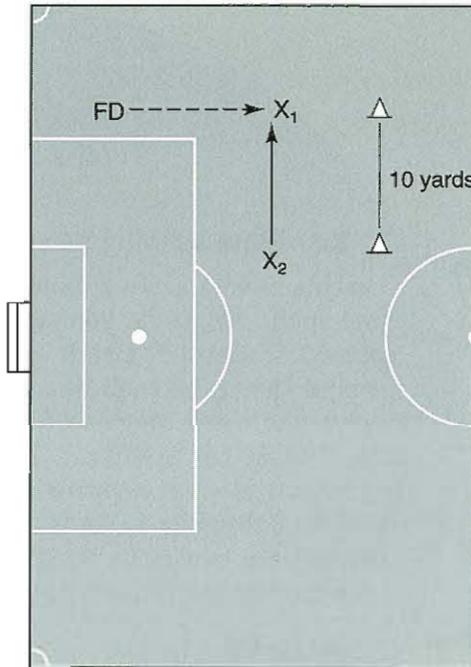
Practice 10

Skill Practice (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to pressure an opponent in possession of the ball (see page 130).
2. Practice pressuring an opponent who is in possession of the ball.

Description

Groups of three—Set the cones about 10 yards apart. Players 1 and 2 each have a cone, and each stands by the cone to start. A feeder feeds the ball to player 1. Player 2 closes the gap as quickly as possible, trying to prevent player 1 from dribbling to player 2's cone. Rotate the feeder into the practice every two trials.



COACH'S cues



"Go to the player with the ball."
"Move quickly."

Game 2 (15 minutes)

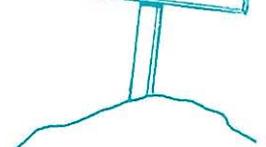
Goal

Players will learn to mark tightly and pressure the ball carrier during game play.

Description

3 v 3

COACH'S point



Freeze the game from time to time to show good marking and to check that players are marking appropriately.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Keeping perspective

Gather children into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. "What did you most enjoy learning about in soccer this season?" Listen to their responses. "Players who thought they tried their best to learn, stand by this cone. Players who think they had fun this season, stand by this one. Both of those are important. You should try your best and have fun no matter what happens during the season. The most important thing in soccer is to have fun playing with friends and to learn new skills. I think you all did that! Next year is another chance to have fun and make new friends!"

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about what everyone learned over the season. Encourage players to come back next year!

Variations

In the skill practice, vary the distance apart that players start. High-ability players can start farther apart, giving the defender more distance to cover to close down the space.

