

Season Plan for 8- to 9-Year-Olds

At this age, kids will begin to explore tactics that help them keep possession of the ball, attack the goal, and defend space. Added focus will be given to playing under control as a team and on ways to stop shots and distribute the ball.

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.

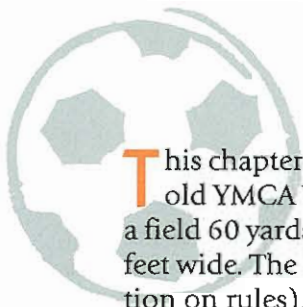
8- to 9-Year-Olds

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1A	To play the 6 v 6 game, focusing on adhering to start and restart rules	Individual attack and defense skills	Start and restart rules; Throw-ins; Corner kicks	General fitness Physical activity makes you fit, contributing to cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility.	Four core values We'll stress four core values: caring, honesty, respect, responsibility.
1B	To maintain positions and understand the offside rule	Positional roles	Offside rule; Fouls; Unwritten rule about admitting fouls; Direct and indirect free kicks	Safety It's important to notify your coach whenever you hurt yourself, even if you think it's a minor injury.	Honesty You need to play by the rules and be honest if you break one.
2A	To narrow the shooter's angle and gather the ball effectively while defending goal	Narrowing shooter's angle; Gathering ball; Defending your goal	Goalkeeping	General fitness It's important both to warm up and cool down.	Responsibility Working and playing as a team works better than paying as a bunch of individuals.
2B	For goalkeepers to stop shots and distribute the ball appropriately	Stopping shots; Rolling, throwing, punting the ball		Flexibility Stretch until you feel a pull but no pain; hold for 10 seconds.	Respect Respect opponents by shaking or slapping hands at the end of a game.
3	To keep possession of the ball by effective passing, ball control, and support play	Controlling ball under pressure; Providing support for teammates	Personal fouls	Healthy habits Drink enough water during practice.	Responsibility Cheer for your teammates when you're on the sideline.
4	To penetrate the defense and attack the goal, using a target player	Keeping possession and attacking; Passing ball forward through defense; Shooting from a target player feed	Review offside rule.	Safety Stay in your own space.	Caring Compliment players—even opponents—on good plays.
5	To receive and play long passes	Getting ball to target player quickly; Making long passes; Receiving ball with thigh and chest		Cardiorespiratory fitness Aerobic endurance is important for health.	Caring Share the ball—don't be a ball hog!

8- to 9-Year-Olds (continued)

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
6	To defend space by marking opponents	Marking opponents		Cardiorespiratory fitness As your heart beats faster, it pumps blood and delivers oxygen to muscles faster.	Respect Celebrate victories in ways that don't embarrass opponents.
7	To channel opponents to the weak side and win the ball	Channeling and tackling opponents		Muscular strength and endurance Muscles adapt to harder work by getting stronger.	Respect Respect officials, and thank them at the ends of games.
8	To make and play a first-touch pass	Making and playing a first-touch pass		Training and conditioning Improve your physical conditioning by practicing/playing longer.	Responsibility Teamwork means helping each other.
9	To beat an opponent while dribbling	Dribbling by defender while under control		Muscular strength and endurance The longer you play before your muscles tire, the more muscular endurance you have.	Caring Everyone gets a chance to learn and play.
10	To score from a cross	Crossing the ball; Scoring from a cross		Healthy habits Check off your healthy habits as you do them.	Caring Forgive teammates for mistakes.
11	To turn corner kicks into goal-scoring chances	Setting up corner kicks		Training and conditioning Your body loses conditioning if you stop exercising. Use it or lose it.	Responsibility Learn from your mistakes and take responsibility for trying to improve.
12	To defend against corner kicks	Defending corner kicks		Healthy habits Good eating habits are important for physical activity and for life. Eat healthfully and avoid junk foods.	Respect Be caring, honest, respectful, and responsible.

Practice Plans for 8- to 9- Year-Olds



This chapter contains the 14 practice plans you'll use with your 8- to 9-year-old YMCA Winners soccer players. The plans are based on a 6 v 6 game on a field 60 yards long and 40 yards wide. The goal should be 6 feet high and 16 feet wide. The ball used should be a size 3 (see chapter 14 for more information on rules).

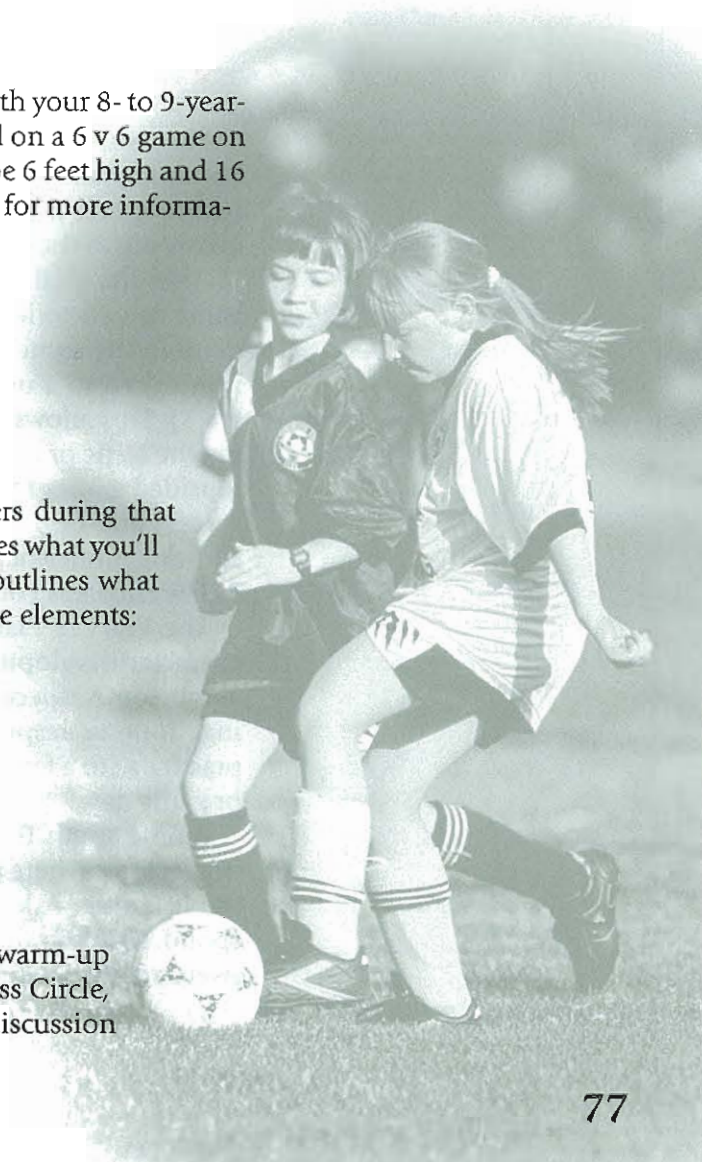
Each plan contains the following sections:

- ⊙ Purpose
- ⊙ Equipment
- ⊙ Practice Plan

Purpose focuses on what you want to teach your players during that practice; it is your main "theme" for that day. *Equipment* notes what you'll need on hand for that practice. The *Practice Plan* section outlines what you will do during each practice session. It consists of these elements:

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

You'll begin each session with about five minutes of warm-up activities. This will be followed by five minutes of a Fitness Circle, during which you lead players through an activity and discussion



about an item that relates to their fitness. Then you'll have your players play a modified soccer game. You'll look for your cue to interrupt that game—your cue being when players are having problems with carrying out the basic goal or aim of the game. At this point you'll "freeze" the action, keeping the players where they are, and ask brief questions about the tactical problems the players encountered and what skills they need to "solve" those problems. (Review chapter 8 for more on interrupting a game and holding a question-and-answer session.) We provide discussion questions in each practice plan. (Note: In the first week of practice, the games are not followed by questions; this begins in week 2.) In addition, we provide coach's points, when appropriate, with games and skill practices as points of emphasis in most effectively conducting the practice.

Then you'll teach the skill that the players need to acquire to successfully execute the tactic. Chapter 13 contains descriptions of all the skills, so a page reference will be given to guide you to the appropriate description. During this skill practice session, you'll use the IDEA approach:

- ⊙ Introduce the skill.
- ⊙ Demonstrate the skill.
- ⊙ Explain the skill.
- ⊙ Attend to players practicing the skill.

Your introduction, demonstration, and explanation of a skill should take no more than two to three minutes; then you'll attend to players and provide teaching cues or further demonstration as necessary as they practice the skill according to the practice plan.

After the skill practices, you will usually have the athletes play another game or two to let them use the skills they just learned and to understand them in the context of a game. Note that in Game 1 when players are being introduced to a new tactic or skill, they will play an even-sided game (e.g., 3 v 3). This allows them to encounter the challenges they will face in executing the tactic or skill in competition. Then in most Game 2s they should play lopsided games (e.g., 3 v 1, 4 v 2) to increase their chances of experiencing success and beginning to master the new skill. However, if your players are showing proficiency with the new skill, you can use even-sided games in Game 2. The choice is yours; for more on this issue, see chapter 8.

The Practice Plan section concludes with a Team Circle that focuses on character development. You will lead players in an activity and discussion about some aspect of soccer that relates to one of the four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Following this, you'll wrap up the practice with a few summary comments and remind them of the next practice or game day.

A note about Team Circles: these times are meant to be true discussions—not lectures where you're doing all the talking and your players are doing all the listening. Ask the questions provided, and wait for your players to respond. Don't immediately feed them the answers that we provide. These answers are meant simply to help you guide the discussion. Your role in Team

Circles is as much to ask questions and get players to respond as it is to dole out information.

You will find a variety of skill levels among your 8- to 9-year-old players. Here are suggestions on how to modify a practice to make it either more or less challenging, according to the needs of your players.

- ⊙ If players cannot control a ball under pressure, give them a bit more space, which allows them more time. However, to challenge a player's control, restrict the dimensions of the playing area.

- ⊙ A skill practice or game can be made simpler or more challenging by adjusting the nature of the defense. Tell players to be either a *cold* (low-pressure), *warm* (moderate-pressure) or *hot* (high-pressure) defender, depending on the abilities of opponents. This is particularly important during skill practices because players need the opportunity to be successful when they have the ball. You might have cold defense played against a weak player but warm or hot defense played against a stronger player.

- ⊙ Some players control the ball better than others and can dominate a game. To challenge these players, restrict them to two or three touches of the ball at a time so they have to control the ball quickly and bring other players into the game. Similarly, you might restrict better players to using just one foot or a particular surface of the foot.

- ⊙ When players are "feeding" teammates practice balls (such as during goalkeeping practice), they can decrease or increase the difficulty by varying the speed and height of feeds. Lower, slower feeds are easier to control than higher, faster feeds.

Note: The numbers referred to in games and skill practices—for example, 3 v 3—always assume one goalkeeper per team among those numbers, unless otherwise noted. So if a game description says "3 v 3," there are two field players and one goalkeeper per team.

Following are practice plans for the two weeks of your preseason and then for the 10 weeks of your competitive season.

Key to Diagrams				
		Ball	GK 	Goalkeeper
		Cone	M 	Midfielder
		Pass	F 	Forward
		Run	FD 	Feeder
		Dribble	T 	Target
		Shot	S 	Shooter
X		Field Player	ST 	Striker
A		Attacker	W 	Winger
D		Defender		

Week 1—Practice 1

PURPOSE

To play the 6 v 6 game, adhering to start and restart rules.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per player (if possible)
- One portable goal per five players
- One cone or other marker per player if possible
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

1. Players dribble in space—that is, run with the ball, keeping it within playing distance (one ball per player).
2. Players dribble and turn on signal.



Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Following the warm-up, gather the players and lead them through a series of stretches for the major muscle groups (see chapter 15 for stretches). After you lead them in stretches, begin 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

The team is still gathered in a group after stretching. "Now that we're all loosened up, I want everybody to run in place at a slow pace. Now a bit faster. Good. Now everyone stop." Choose a child to demonstrate a long, strong kick. "That was a great kick. Now I need all of you to dribble the ball to each other and practice passing." Have children pass two times each. Next, have them perform a leg stretch. "Those four activities we did are a part of soccer, but they also are ways to improve your fitness. Each activity helps to improve a different area of fitness. Running improves your *cardiorespiratory fitness*, kicking helps your *muscular strength*, dribbling helps your *muscular fitness*, and stretching helps your *flexibility*. Throughout the season we'll be learning more about fitness in our Fitness Circles."

Week 1—Practice 1

Game 1 (5 minutes)

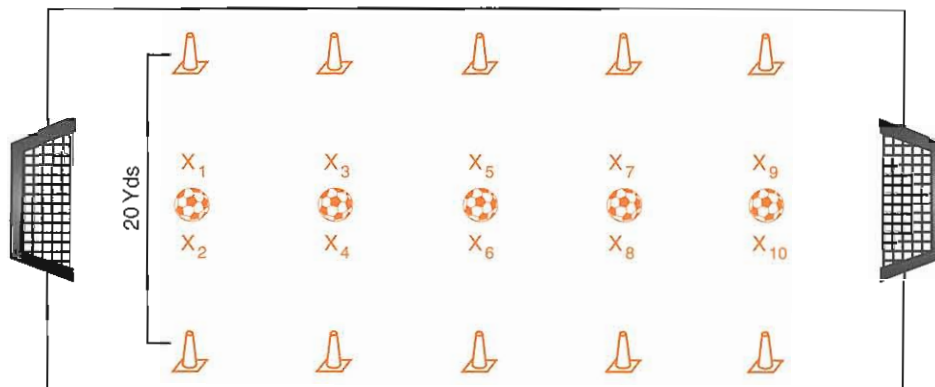
Following the Fitness Circle, get the kids to play a game. Follow most games with a time of questions and answers—with *you* asking the questions and your *players* providing the answers (about what the goal of the game was and what skills and tactics they needed to perform and succeed in the game). For many games, we provide diagrams or figures showing how the game is begun. We also often provide “coach’s points” for you to pass along to your players during the games.

Goal

Players will practice individual attack and defense skills (i.e., dribbling, shooting, marking, tackling, goalkeeping).

Description

1 v 1—Each player tries to score on an opposing player by hitting the opponent’s cone, with cones about 20 yards apart (i.e., the length of the playing area is 20 yards).



Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal:

Through playing a game, players will review (or learn anew) game rules, including start and restart rules (see page 267), throw-ins (see page 269), and corner kicks (see pages 268–269).

Description:

3 v 3 (no GKs)—Each team of three tries to score into a goal; introduce rules one at a time during game play.



☞ Don't assume that most players have played soccer before. Be prepared to explain how throw-ins, goal kicks, and corner kicks are taken. It will be worth stopping a game for a few minutes to have players practice taking throw-ins from each other.

☞ Discuss positions for the five-player game (see page 82).

☞ Allow players to retake goal kicks and corners so they get more practice when these situations arise.

Week 1—Practice 1 (cont'd)



Coach: What happens at the start of a game?

Players: Kick off.

Coach: What happens after a goal is scored?

Players: Kick off.

Coach: What's the call when you kick the ball out of bounds beyond your own goal line?

Players: A corner kick for the opposing team.

Coach: What's the call when you kick the ball out of bounds along the touchline?

Players: A throw-in is given to the other team.

Coach: What happens when you kick the ball out of bounds beyond the opponents' goal line?

Players: A goal kick is given to the other team.

In the first two practices we don't include skill practices. But after the first two practices, you'll follow Game 1 with a skill practice, during which you'll introduce, demonstrate, and explain a skill or tactic, and then attend to your players as they practice that tactic. The question-and-answer session, in which your players tell *you* what skills and tactics they needed to be successful in the game, lead directly to the skill practice. We often provide coach's points with the skill practices; 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.

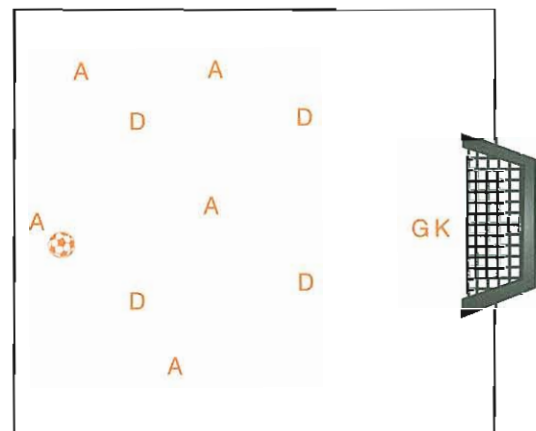
Game 3 (20 minutes)


Goal

Players will adhere to rules during game play.

Description

Players play 5 v 5. Be sure to rotate the goalkeeper, as this is a new position for them—goalies aren't used in YMCA Rookies soccer.



 Talk about the best way to cover the whole field. Designate roles and rotate positions.

Week 1—Practice 1

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Conclude practice by gathering your players and leading them through the same stretches you led them through in the Fitness Circle. After stretching, form a “Team Circle” to conduct an activity and discuss a concept or issue that involves character development. These should not be lectures—you want your players’ active participation. Following the discussion, wrap up the practice with a few comments (see “Wrap-Up” below).

Key Idea: Four core values

Gather players into a circle. “Everyone hold hands. We’re going to keep holding hands as a group, trying to keep the ball in our circle. We’ll pass slowly and remember to hold hands at all times.” Repeat for 10 passes. “Drop hands. If you were just passing, it would have been much easier. But when we think of working together as a team, it takes more effort. We need to put just as much effort into being good teammates, with everyone doing their part. We’ll talk about four qualities or values that help us be better players—*caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility*. These qualities are just as important as kicking and passing. Give me an example of each of the four values.” Listen to their responses and discuss.

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice and give them a sneak preview of its emphasis: the offside rule.



Week 1—Practice 2


PURPOSE


To maintain positions in the full game and understand the offside rule.


Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- One portable goal per five players; or use cones for goals if necessary
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams



 Don't tell players, "defenders must stay back here in front of the goal." This leads to players rooting themselves to one spot. Soccer is a fluid game; defenders should move forward to support the attack even though their main responsibility is defending.

 Young forwards often drift back to their own end of the field in pursuit of the ball. As a result, their team has no one to pass the ball forward to. Explain this to the forwards and encourage them to stay forward.

 The offside rule is not easy to grasp. Walk your players through situations to help them understand when a forward is or is not offside.

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players in pairs pass and move.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Safety

Gather children into a group. Choose one player to act out being injured (limping) and have a second player get a coach to report the injury. "What did you see happening?" Listen to their responses. "When you get injured, it will probably look like what was acted out. If it hurts, you should stop and let me know right away. Don't pretend it doesn't hurt. Usually, injuries are not bad, but sometimes they can be serious. If you get hurt even a little, I need to check your injury. If you see a player who looks hurt or in pain, or if you saw her get injured, let me know. Telling me if you're hurt helps me keep you safe during games and practices."

Game 1 (20 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn positional roles and responsibilities. Specifically, players will learn the following positional duties:

Goalkeeper (GK)

- Handle the ball
- Save shots
- Distribute the ball to teammates

Defender

- Defend space in own half
- Mark players
- Support the attack

Midfielder

- Receive the ball from defense
- Distribute the ball to forwards
- Contribute to attack

Week 1—Practice 2

Forward

- Attack goal
- Apply pressure to defense when you lose the ball

Description

Play 3 v 3 games.

Coach: How far forward can players go in a game if the defenders come up the field?

Players: To the last defender—otherwise you're offside.



Game 2 (25 minutes)

Goal

Players will gain an initial understanding of the offside rule (see page 291).

Description

Players play the 5 v 5 (see figure on page 82). Take the opportunity to explain the offside rule to them as they play.

Team Circle (5 minutes)


Key Idea: Honesty


Gather children into a group. "Think about the rules in soccer. I am going to tell you a rule. Raise your hand if you think it's something you should let the official know happened." (Examples: hand ball, tripping, kicking the ball out of bounds, running into the goalie.) "You should let the official know about all of those rules being broken, even if the official does not see it. Raising a hand or telling officials is an honest thing to do when you break a rule, even if it's an accident. It's important to be honest when you break a rule in practice and in games. This will make you a better player and a better person."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice; remind them of the next practice, and give them a sneak preview: the emphasis will be on goalkeeping.

COACH'S
point

 Infractions of the offside rule are punished by an indirect free kick. Introduce free kicks and distinguish between a direct free kick (a player can shoot directly into the goal) and an indirect free kick (the ball must touch another player before entering the goal). See pages 270–271.

 Review fouls; see page 269.



Week 2—Practice 1

PURPOSE

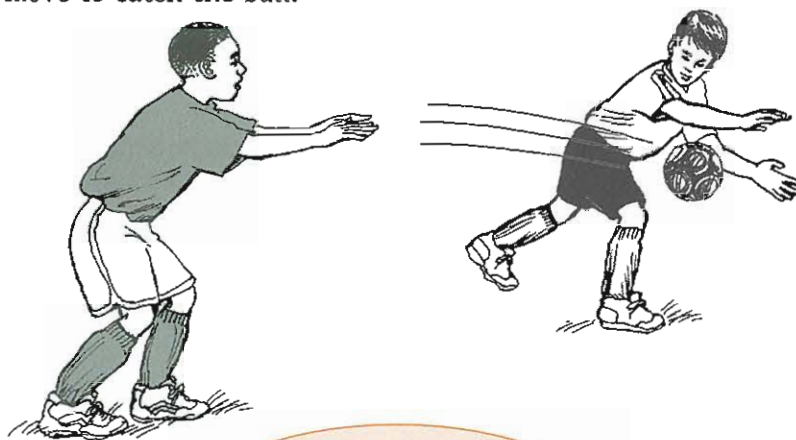
For goalkeepers to narrow the shooter's angle and then to gather the ball effectively.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- One portable goal per five players
- Two cones (or other markers) per player if possible
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players in pairs pass the ball hand to hand, throwing so that the hands must move to catch the ball.



Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: General fitness

Gather children into a group. "Everyone think of a hill. Get a picture of a hill in your mind. Close your eyes and see it in your mind. You see it? Now pretend we're all bicycling up that hill. We start at the bottom and slowly climb. We have to work harder and harder as we make it to the top. Then we gradually start pedaling back down the hill, which is not as hard as going up . . . That hill is the way your body will move every practice. We start slow with a warm-up. As you ride up the hill, this is how we move in the middle of practice. Toward the end of our practice, we gradually start to come back down the hill, slowing our bodies down. This is called the cool-down. A warm-up and cool-down are important parts of healthy fitness."

Game 1 (10 minutes)


Goal

Players will learn to come off the line toward the ball to narrow an opponent's shooting angle.

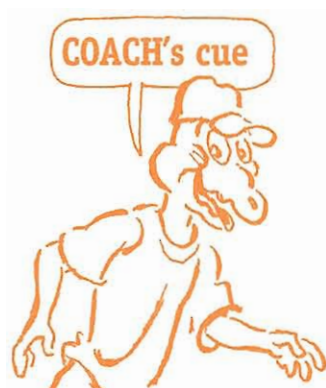
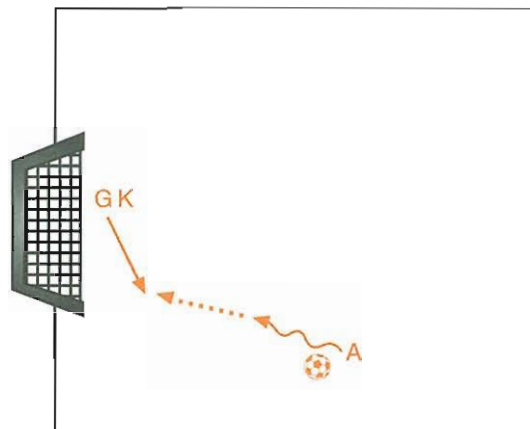
Description

1 v 1 using a full goal. Defenders earn a point every time the offensive player *doesn't* score.

**COACH'S
point**

 Game 1 requires a lot of cones so that each player can construct a goal. Keep the goals about 10 to 15 yards apart. If cones are not available, or if you lack space, play 2 v 2.

Week 2—Practice 1



"Move toward the ball!"

Coach: Where does the GK move to make it harder for the shooter?

Players: Toward the ball.

Coach: Then what?

Players: Stop the ball.

Coach: How?

Players: By gathering it.

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

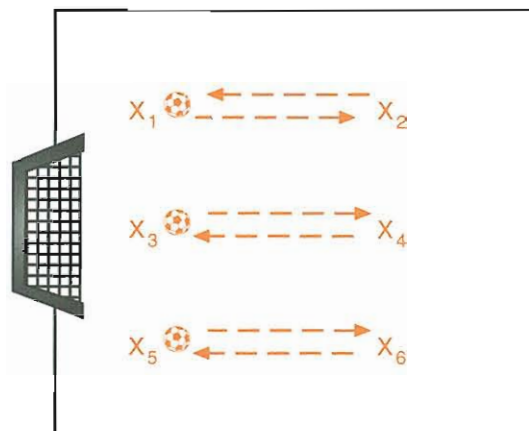
1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *gather the ball* (see page 257–259).
2. Practice gathering the ball.

Description

Players in pairs practice appropriate gathering techniques, feeding each other at low, medium, and high levels, and at different speeds.



Week 2—Practice 1 (cont'd)



COACH'S CUES



"Get in line with ball."
"Take the ball into chest."
"Hug it!"

COACH'S point

Do partner practices with players no more than 5 to 10 yards apart—don't waste time by having them spread out over the field.

Go over goalkeeping rules; see page 272.

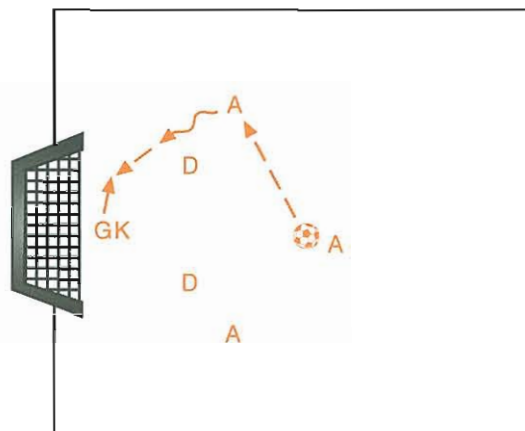
Game 2 (25 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to narrow the angle and gather the ball during game play.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games; rotate GKs so every player has a turn.



Week 2—Practice 1

COACH'S cues



"Come to the ball."
"Get in line with the ball."
"Take the ball into chest."
"Hug it!"

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into groups of two partners. "Everyone stand and balance on one foot." Wait while everyone gets his or her balance. "Now one of you offer your shoulder for your teammate to lean on. If you're leaning on your partner's shoulder, try to balance on one foot again . . . Change places. If you were leaning before, let your partner lean on your shoulder and stand on one foot." Wait until everyone has balanced with the help of a partner. "Now come back here. Wasn't it easier to balance when you were leaning on your partner? It works that way in soccer, too. When you help each other during practices and games, we work better as a team; each of you can contribute. Your teammates count on you to contribute to the team. That is being responsible to your team."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind them of the next practice and give them a sneak preview: the focus will be on saving and distributing the ball as goalkeeper.



Week 2—Practice 2

PURPOSE

For goalkeepers to defend the goal by stopping shots and distribute the ball using appropriate techniques.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- One portable goal per five players
- Two cones (or other markers) per player if possible
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players play a 1 v 1 game, using a full goal; the goalkeeper dives to save the shot. Players trade off being GK. Attacking player can try to score by throwing or shooting.

COACH'S cue



"Dive off the near foot if necessary" (i.e., dive off the left foot while diving left).

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Flexibility

Gather children into a circle sitting down with their legs stretched in front of them. "Think of stretching a rubber band as far as you can. What happens if you stretch the band too far?" Listen to their responses. "That's right. It breaks. Muscles work in sort of the same way. Stretching your muscles too far can tear and injure them. But it's important to stretch your muscles for them to be flexible. Everyone reach forward and try to touch your toes, but stretch only until you feel a slight pulling in your leg muscle—make sure it doesn't hurt." Tell them to hold the stretch for 10 counts without bouncing. "Stretching your muscles is important to keep them flexible, but you shouldn't feel pain. The main soccer muscles to stretch are the front of your thighs (quadriceps), the back of your thighs (hamstrings), and the back of your lower legs (calves)." Demonstrate stretching each muscle group.

Week 2—Practice 2

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn different ways of distributing the ball when they're playing goalkeeper.

Description

Players play 3 v 3. Goalkeepers distribute the ball to teammates by one of three methods: rolling it, overarm throwing it, or punting it. The defense earns a point every time the goalkeeper successfully distributes the ball.

Coach: What should the GK do when he or she gets the ball?

Players: Pass it to a teammate.

Coach: How?

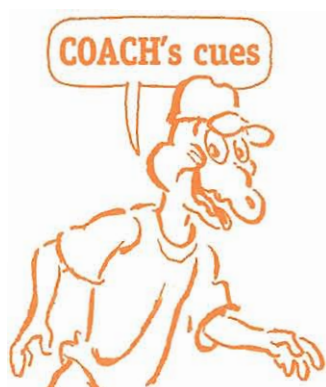
Players: Depends on where the open teammate is.

Skill Practice 1 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *roll the ball* (see page 262).
2. Practice rolling the ball.
3. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *overarm throw the ball* (see page 262).
4. Practice throwing the ball.
5. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *punt the ball* (see page 263).
6. Practice punting the ball.

Description

Players pair up and practice the three skills.



Roll—"Step with the opposite foot and roll."

Throw—"Step with the opposite foot."

"Use a straight arm overarm throw."


Punt—"Take a long step."

"Drop and kick the ball."

"Use the laces." (as the contact surface)

"Follow through to the target."



 Demonstrate distribution techniques as you give the cues.

Week 2—Practice 2 (cont'd)

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal

Players will practice distributing the ball effectively during game play.

Description

Players play 3 v 3. Goalkeepers distribute the ball to teammates by one of three methods: rolling it, overarm throwing it, or punting it. Rotate so everyone gets to play GK. The defense earns a point every time the GK successfully distributes the ball.



☞ Stress good decisions in choosing distribution techniques. The decision depends on the relative positions of open teammates and defenders.

☞ Make sure that each player has a chance to distribute the ball as the GK during game play.

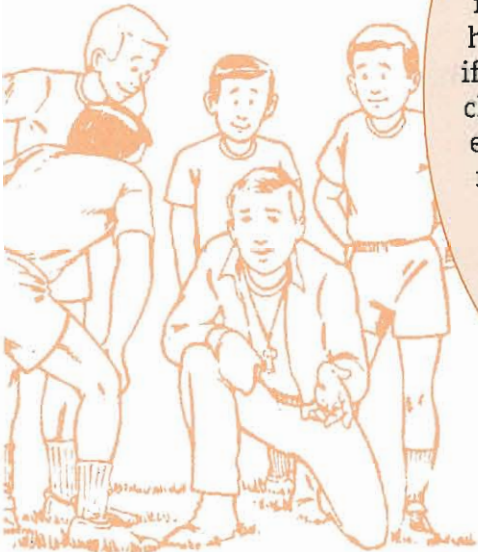
Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather children into two lines standing opposite each other about five feet apart. "I want each line to walk toward each other and give each person in the other line a high-five. Imagine that the other line is your opponent for a game. Show me how you would act toward an opponent and what you would say if it was the end of the game and we lost the game. Start." Assist children if necessary. Listen to responses some children provide to each other. "At the end of each game it is important to show respect for your opponent. We do this by slapping hands and saying something like 'good game,' even if we lose the game."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice, and remind them of the next practice: ball control and providing support for your teammate with the ball.



Week 3

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Pass and move in pairs.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather children into a group. "Everyone run in place for 15 seconds. Ready? Go! . . . Now stop! Whenever we run and kick during our practice, our body starts to get warm. When our bodies get really warm, what do you think happens to cool them off?" Wait for their responses. "Our bodies start to sweat. Sweat is the water that comes out of all the pores in your skin. Then the sweat evaporates into the air. Since your body sweats to cool off, what do you think we need to put back into our bodies?" Wait for someone to say, "water." "That's right.

Drinking enough water every day is an important healthy habit. You'll need to drink more water if you're running and playing a lot. I want to challenge all of you to drink one glass of water a day for every year of your age. How many is that? . . . Eight? Nine?

I know you can drink that many glasses a day!"

Game 1 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will effectively pass and control the ball under pressure in game play.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games without GKs. Give teams an extra point for four consecutive passes.

PURPOSE


To keep possession of the ball by effective passing, ball control, and support play.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per two players
- One portable goal per five players
- One cone (or other marker) per player, if possible, to mark out 10 x 10 yard grids (if no lines are available)
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams



COACH'S
point

 Supporting players should not get stuck with a defender between them and the ball. If they do, the passer is unable to reach them.



Coach: Other than good passing and receiving skills, what else does the passer of the ball need?

Players: Someone to pass to—supporting teammates.

Coach: Where should supporting teammates be?

Players: In open space.

Coach: Any open space?

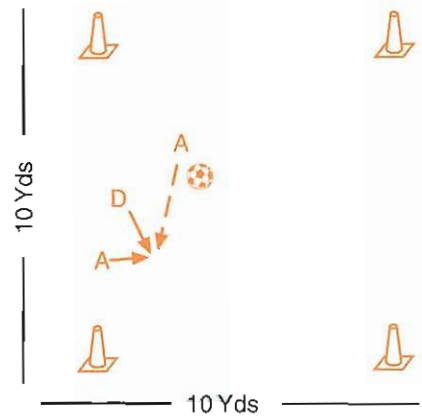
Players: A space in which the passer can get the ball to him or her.

Skill Practice 1 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *provide support* for teammates with the ball (see page 234).
2. Practice providing support for teammates with the ball.

Description

Play 2 v 1 games in 10- × 10-yard areas marked by cones. Players should focus on providing good angles of support against cold, warm, and hot defenses as necessary. The goal is to get six passes. Players should learn that the supporting player should move “off the ball” so the passer always has a teammate to pass to.



👉 The goal is for the two players to make six passes without losing the ball. The defender *must* go to the ball or the games will not work.

👉 Rotate the defender every few minutes.

COACH'S cue



“Move to open a passing lane!”

Week 3

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to provide support to their teammates with the ball during full game play.

Description

Players play 3 v 1, 4 v 2, or 6 v 3 games, depending on their skill proficiency (see chapter 8 for help on deciding how to use lopsided games). Rotate goalkeepers; give extra points for four consecutive passes.

COACH'S cues



“Support the player with the ball.”
“Move to open a passing lane.”

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into two groups; one group will spread out and dribble and pass to each other. The other group will be to one side, as if on the sidelines during a game; they should be silent for the first 30 seconds of the activity. After 30 seconds, have them cheer and encourage on-field players; continue this activity for 30 more seconds. “When players are on the sidelines during a game, they should be encouraging their teammates, no matter what’s happening in the game. This is being responsible to your team. It helps players keep trying hard even if they are losing or have made some mistakes. How did it feel when you were playing and the sideline players didn’t encourage you? How about when they did encourage you?” Listen to both responses and have players compare feelings.

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice, and remind players of the next game.

COACH'S point



Off-the-ball movement is critical in soccer; take your time in teaching it. Walk groups through, if necessary, to show effective supporting movements.



Week 4

PURPOSE

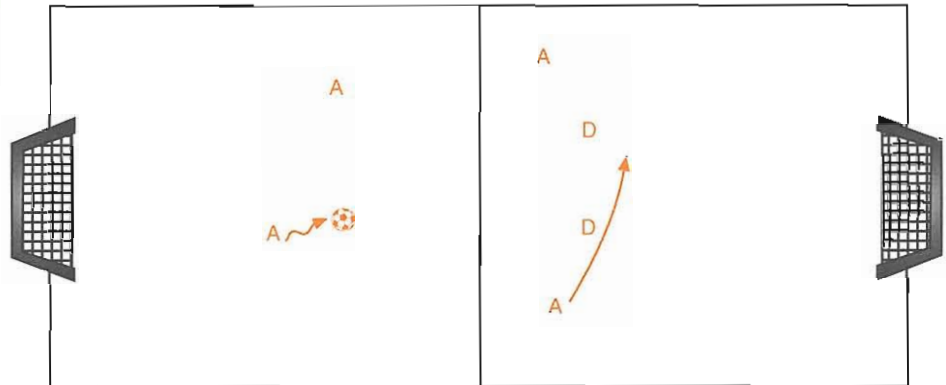
To penetrate the defense and attack the goal by using a target player.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- One portable goal per five players
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players play a 4 v 2 game in which their goal is to make six passes. Instruct players to move to support positions so that the passer can split (i.e., pass between) two defenders. Any pass that splits the defenders counts double.




COACH'S cue



"Move to create the defense-splitting pass."

COACH'S point

 Instruct attackers to draw their defenders apart so a wide enough gap is created in which the defense can be split.

Week 4

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Safety

Gather children into a group. "Pretend you're a 'player in a bubble.' Walk around and work at not bumping into your teammates to make sure their bubbles don't break." Keep children in a confined area. Time them for one minute. "Now we'll do the same thing while jogging." Time for 30 seconds. "It's important not to bump into other players—that is a foul, even if it's an accident. It's important to play as safely as you can. Thinking about the other players' bubbles will help you stay in your own space when you play soccer."

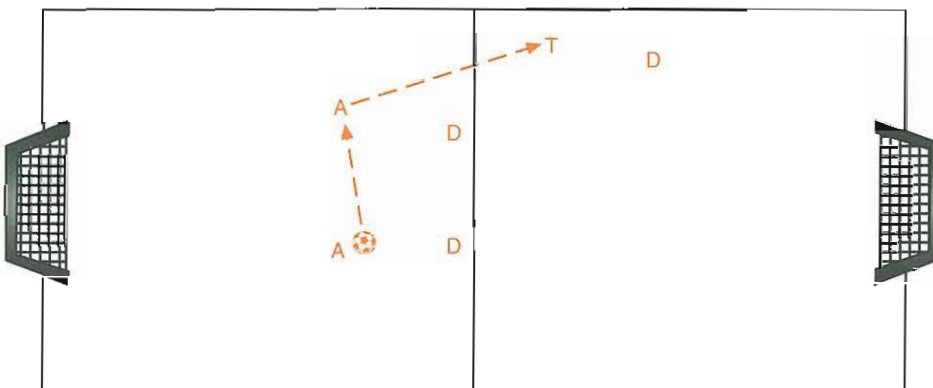
Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to pass the ball forward through a defense.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games. Play with the target player in the attacking half. The offense scores a point when they successfully get the ball to the target player.



Coach: When the target player has the ball, what should teammates do to continue an attack?

Players: Provide support and prepare for a return pass.



COACH'S cue



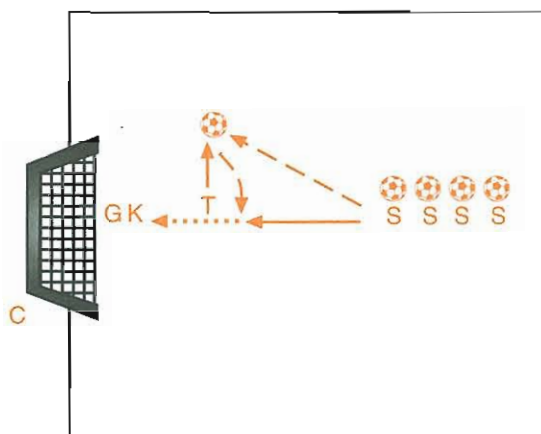
"Get the ball to the target player!"

Skill Practice 1 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *shoot from a target player feed* (see page 249).
2. Practice shooting from a target player feed.

Description

Players shoot from the target player feed. They pass to the target player, provide support for the return pass, and receive and shoot the return pass.



COACH'S cues



"Pass to the target player!"
"Provide support for the return pass!"

Week 4

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal

Players use the target player to create shooting opportunities during game play.

Description

Players play 3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 games, depending on their skill proficiency. They play with the target player in the attacking half (see the figure on page 97). Goals from the target player feed count double.

COACH'S cue



"Use the target player!"

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

Gather children into groups of two and give each group one ball. Players should dribble and pass the ball to each other, making sure to distribute the ball to their partners. "Each of you should say two good things about your partner's skills. Then come back to me in a group. Begin." Wait for them to regroup. "What were some of the comments your teammates told you?" Listen to their responses. "What kind of value or quality is it when you go out of your way to say something good about a teammate's playing?" Listen to responses and encourage discussion as needed. "Caring is one of our core values. You show you care about your teammates when you encourage them."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about the practice and reminders for the next game.

COACH'S point



☞ Review the offside rule. See page 271.

☞ Penetration is critical to teach. When players find and exploit gaps in a defense they are penetrating. This may be a difficult concept for 8- and 9-year-olds to grasp; don't get frustrated. Focus them on passing forward to the target player as quickly as possible. If they do this, chances are they will make some penetrating passes.



Week 5

PURPOSE

To receive and play long passes.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- One portable goal per five players
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players pass and move in pairs. Increase distances and encourage players to get the ball off the ground.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather children into a circle. "Remember the hill we imagine we bicycled up a few practices ago? We start slow going up, then go faster toward the top and come slowly back down. Let's start up that hill by running in place slowly, getting a little faster, faster, and now really fast . . . Now start to slow down. A little slower. Slower. And stop." Run with children to model. "That was a short version of moving during our practice. We run faster to make our heart and lungs stronger; this is called *cardiorespiratory fitness*. We start slowly and then gradually slow down at the end of the practice to help our hearts pump blood and carry oxygen from our lungs to our muscles."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to get the ball to the target player as quickly as possible.

Description

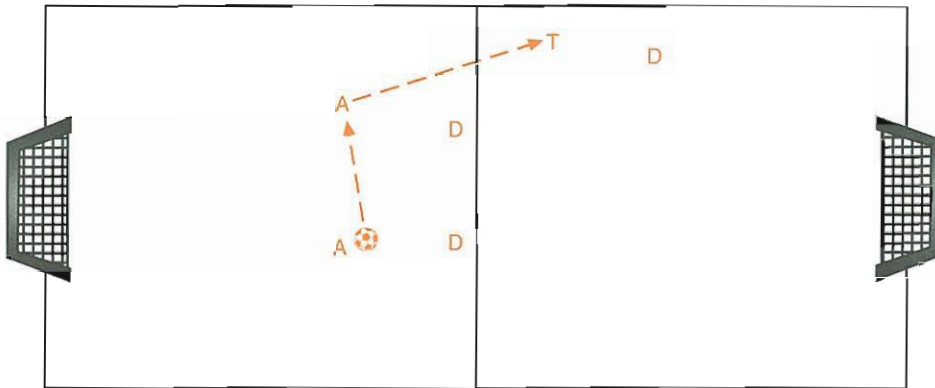
Players play 3 v 3 games without GKs. The target player is in the attacking half. The offense earns a point for successful passes of 10 yards or longer to the target player.

Coach: What is the quickest way to get the ball forward from defense to your target player?

Players: Long pass.



Week 5

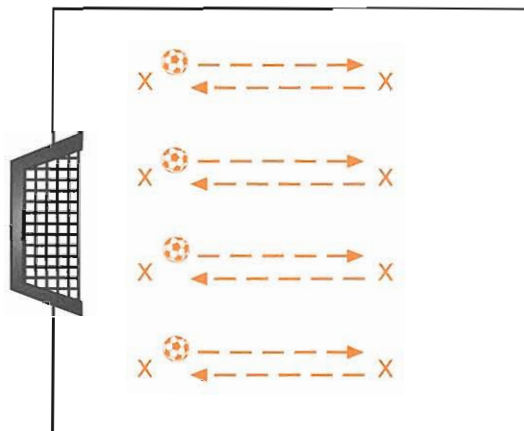



Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *make long passes* (see page 242).
2. Practice long passes.

Description

Players practice long passing in pairs.



 Have pairs spread out over the field. They can vary the distances over which they pass according to their ability.

COACH'S cues



“Long step to the ball!”
“Strike your foot under the ball.”
“Use the laces.” (as the contact surface)
“Follow through to the target.”

COACH'S point

☞ Encourage players to practice these skills independently by using either a parent or friend to feed, a wall to rebound from, or just by throwing the ball up themselves.

☞ It is difficult for young players to kill a bouncing ball. Encourage them to drag the foot across the ball, receiving it between the foot and the ground but at the same time keeping it moving.

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *receive the ball with the thigh and the chest* (see pages 245–247).
2. Practice receiving the ball with the thigh and chest.

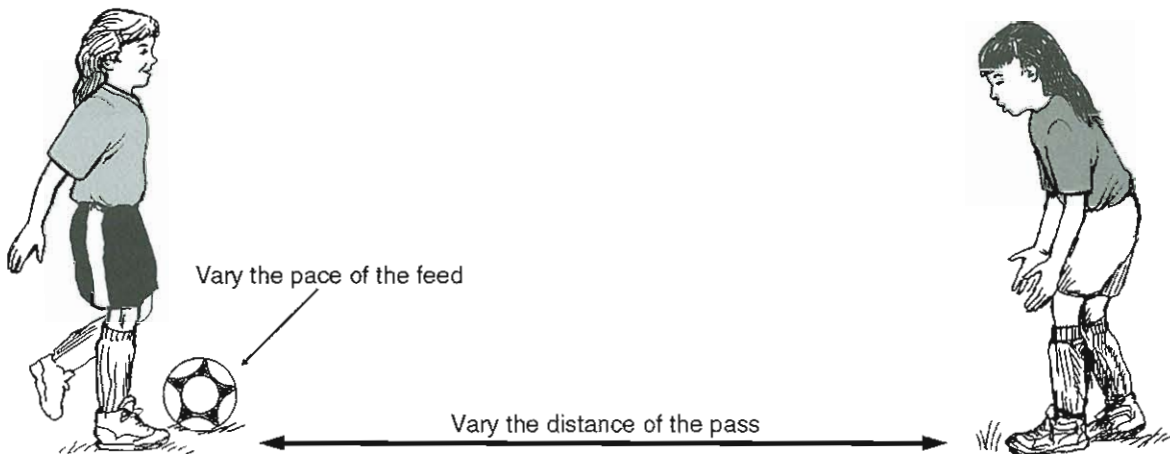
Description

Partners feed each other long balls, varying the distance and pace of the feeds to simplify or challenge as needed.

COACH'S cues



- “Get in line with the ball!”
- “Bring your thigh [or chest] to the ball.”
- “Withdraw your thigh [or chest] on contact.”
- “Kill the bounce.”



Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will successfully pass the ball to the target player and create scoring opportunities.

Description

Players play 3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 games (no GKs), depending on their skill proficiency. The target player is in the attacking half. Get the ball forward as quickly as possible and support the target player (see the figure on page 101). The offense scores a point for successful passes of 10 yards or longer to the target player.

Week 5

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

Gather children into a group and choose two to demonstrate with you. You will dribble the ball and have the two children work to get in position to receive a pass. Keep dribbling, and do not pass to them. "Were the other players in good position to get a pass? . . . Why didn't they get the ball? . . . I didn't pass the ball, did I? Why didn't I? That's right—because I'm a ball hog! You can see how it makes you feel when one person keeps the ball too long. Sharing the ball so everyone gets a chance shows that you care about your teammates." Have players get into groups of three and dribble and pass the caring way. Bring players back together. "Raise your hand if you think that caring is an important quality or value on this team? It is important!"

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and reminders for the next game.



Week 6

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Play a “tag” game, to encourage chasing opponents.

PURPOSE

To defend space by marking an opponent during game play.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per four players
- One portable goal per five players
- One cone (or other marker) per pair of players if possible
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather children into a circle and give one child a ball to hold. “What does the heart pump to the whole body?” Listen to responses until someone says “blood.” “What does the blood carry to the muscles?” Listen until someone says “oxygen.” “We’re going to pretend that the ball is oxygen and that you’re big blood vessels or tubes that carry the blood. Dribble the ball to the person next to you.” Each child should touch the ball, only with his or her feet, until the ball completes the circle. “The oxygen in your blood starts at your heart and travels to your lungs, legs, arms, and brain.” Try assigning a part of the body to each player. “Playing soccer helps your heart and lungs get better at getting oxygen to your muscles—this is called *cardiorespiratory fitness*.”

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to mark opponents during game play.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games. The focus is on marking. The defense earns a point when a defender stays between the ball handler and the goal. The offense earns a point when the ball handler slips past the defender.

COACH'S cue



“Mark your opponent!”

Week 6

Coach: Where is the best place for the defender to be to mark an opponent?

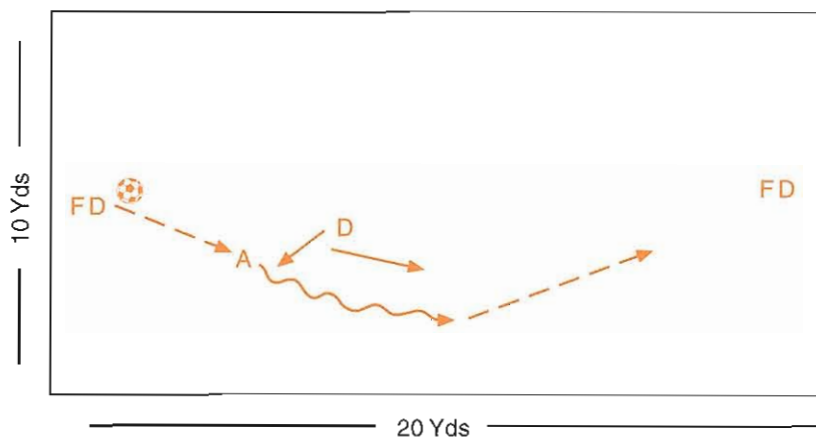
Players: *Between the opponent and the goal.*


Skill Practice 1 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *mark an opponent* (see pages 250–251).
2. Practice marking an opponent.

Description

Players learn the correct goal-side marking position. Play 1 v 1 games with two feeders in a 20- × 10-yard area. A feeder feeds player A, who is marked by player D. Player A has to get the ball to the other feeder.



 Have the 1 v 1 start fresh each time a feeder receives the ball. This will enable the marker to take up the correct marking position every time.

COACH'S cue



“Stay goal-side—between your opponent and the goal!”

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal

Midfielders and defenders will mark opposing players closely.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games without GKs.



👉 As their opponent gets closer to goal, players should mark tighter. As the ball gets closer to the opponent, the defender should mark tighter.

COACH'S cue



"Goal-side marking!"

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather children into a group near two cones 10 feet apart. Act out two examples of celebrating for good play or a win. One should be exaggerated and obviously inappropriate, the other modeling the kind of celebrating you'd like to see from your team. "If you think the first example I showed you is the way to celebrate a good play, stand by this cone. If you think the second is the best way to celebrate, stand by this one." All children should vote. After all players have voted, ask them why they voted the way they did. "The second example is the kind of celebrating that shows respect for your opponents."

Wrap-Up

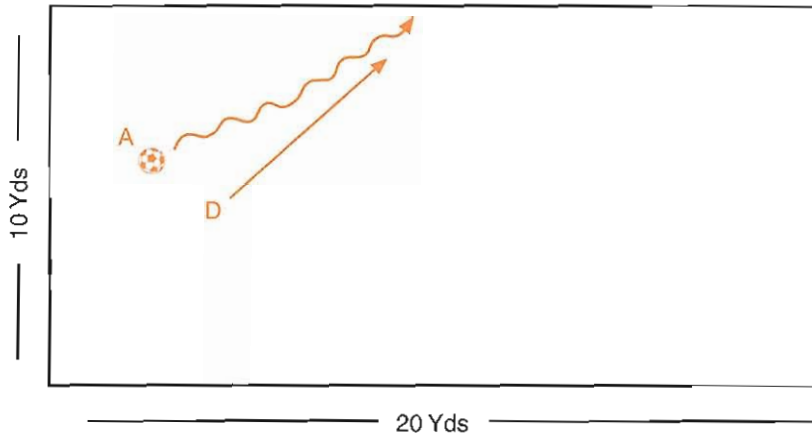
Make summary comments about practice and reminders for the next game.



Week 7

Warm-Up (15 minutes)

Play 1 v 1 games (in areas about 20 yards long, maximum) in which the defender pressures the opponent, trying to channel him or her toward the weak foot.



PURPOSE

To channel an opponent to the weak side and win the ball.

Equipment


- One soccer ball per pair
- One portable goal per five players
- One cone (or other marker) per player if possible
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Muscular strength and endurance

Gather children into a group in their own space. "We're going to move different directions in our own space. I will point to a direction and the whole group should jog slowly in that direction. When I put my hand up, everyone stop." Point to directions of: forward, one side, the other side, and backward. "When you jog in different directions, you use different muscles. It's important to improve your muscular strength and endurance in all your muscles in your body. We can do that by practicing jogging different directions, passing and kicking the ball, and spreading out on the field."

COACH'S point

 The warm-up is intended to help players think about how they can position to make it harder for the opponent. By positioning to one side, the defender can force an attacker to move in the other direction with the ball.

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will mark an opponent and win the ball.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games without GKs. The defense earns a point if it wins the ball.

Coach: What do defenders need to do when their opponent gets the ball?

Players: Tackle the opponent.



Skill Practice 1 (5 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *tackle* (see pages 252–254).
2. Practice block tackling.

Description

Players practice block tackling in 1 v 1 games.

COACH'S point

☞ This is a cooperative practice. On the count of three both players tackle the ball and trap it between them. A good solid tackle will give them feedback they will hear and feel.

COACH'S cues



"Get close to the ball."

"Use the inside of the foot."

"Keep your knee bent and leg firm."



Week 7

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal

Players will mark tightly and win the ball in the tackle.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games without GKs. The focus is on close marking by midfielders and defenders.



"Mark tight and win the ball!"



☞ Encourage players to stay on their feet in the tackle. A defender on the ground is of no use if he or she does not win the ball.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather children into a group and choose one child to help demonstrate. He or she will pretend to be an official; you'll be a player. Dribble the ball and pass it out of bounds. Direct the child to blow a whistle or make a sound to stop play. Bring the ball back to the child. "What did I do when the whistle sounded?" Listen to their responses. Discuss stopping when they hear the whistle, bringing the ball to the official, and not arguing about the call. "You need to respect the officials and their decisions at all times. It also shows respect to the official when you thank them at the end of the game."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and reminders for the next game.



Week 8

PURPOSE

To play a first-touch pass (a pass with no prior control touch) when needed—i.e., when a defender is very close—during game play.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair
- One portable goal per five players
- Two cones
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players in pairs, 5 to 10 yards apart, practice quick passing, alternating passes with two touches and one touch.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather children into a circle. “Everyone run in place for 10 seconds . . . Now stop. Now run in place for 20 seconds . . . Stop. Next we’ll run for 30 seconds . . . Stop. When you run, you’re improving your body’s physical conditioning in your heart, lungs, and muscles. Every time you play soccer a little bit longer and let your body get a little more tired, your body improves its physical conditioning. When your body has better conditioning you can make longer passes, keep up with opponents, and play longer without getting too tired.”

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to release the ball quickly after receiving it.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games without GKs. Most players must make three touches—two to control and one to shoot or pass. Designate one player per team to make only one touch. Alternate this player who gets only one touch.

Week 8

Coach: When you are under pressure do you have time to control the ball?

Players: No.

Coach: What should you do when the ball comes and you have no time?

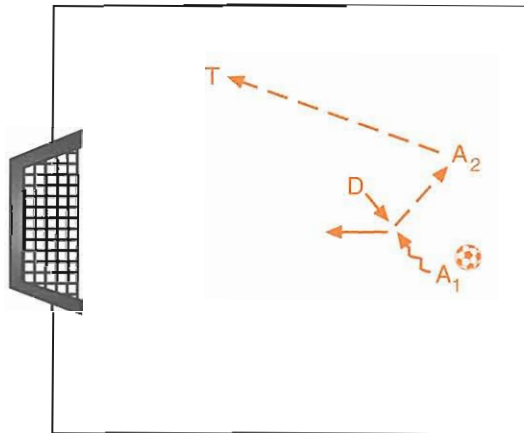
Players: Pass it immediately. (That is, on one touch.)

Skill Practice 1 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to use a *first-touch pass* (give and go) to beat a defender (see page 242).
2. Practice first-touch passing.

Description

Players in 2 v 1 games pass to a target player. Conditions of this game are the defender must go to the player with the ball, and two attackers must get the ball to the target player.



COACH'S cues




"Give the pass."


"Go for the return."

"Return pass behind the defender."

"Pass to the target player."



 The initial passer must run behind the defender. This way the ball can be played behind the defender.

 The ability to play a first-touch pass is critical for high-pressure situations. The younger players will find this difficult but persevere with them in situations with less pressure.

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal


Players will use the first-touch pass during game play.

Description

Players play 3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 games, depending on their skill proficiency. Give a point for successful first-touch passes when they're executed when they should be.



**COACH'S
point**

 Encourage early passing and freeze the game at appropriate times to show where a give and go could have been used, or to review a give and go that has just been executed.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children between two cones about 10 feet apart. "What are some different ways you can move the ball down the field and score?" Listen to their responses. Provide the example of several players working together to move the ball and score as one choice. Give the example of one or two players working without many other teammates as the other choice. "Which of the two is the best example of teamwork? If you vote for the first group, stand at this cone; if you vote for the second group, stand at this one. If everyone makes good teamwork their responsibility, we can all work together to be successful. When you're responsible to your team, you become a better player."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and reminders for the next game.



Week 9

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players free dribble, changing pace and direction. They try to beat the coach when he or she gets in the way.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Muscular strength and endurance

Gather children into a group. "Stand with your arms straight out from your sides. Give enough space so you don't bump your neighbor. Circle your arms like this." Demonstrate. "Keep going until you get very tired, then stop." Wait until the last child stops. "Do your arms feel tired? That is called muscle fatigue. Muscles can keep moving and tightening only for so long before tiring out. The longer you can play before your muscles tire out, the more *muscular endurance* you have. You can improve your muscular endurance by playing soccer."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to run at opponents with the ball.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games. Players attempt to beat their opponents with the dribble. The offense earns a point when a dribbler beats an opponent. Instruct the players no to bunch up; there should be space behind the defenders. Rotate GKs every few minutes.

COACH'S cues



"Mark tight!"

"Beat the opponent with the dribble!"

PURPOSE

To beat an opponent while dribbling the ball under control.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per player (if possible)
- One portable goal per five players
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams



Coach: When should you try to beat a defender with the ball? (You might need to set this up: "Should you try it in this situation or that situation?")

Players: When there is space behind the defender.

Coach: In what part of the field are you likely to find the most space?

Players: Wide. (Along the sides of the field.)

Coach: How can you beat the defender most easily?

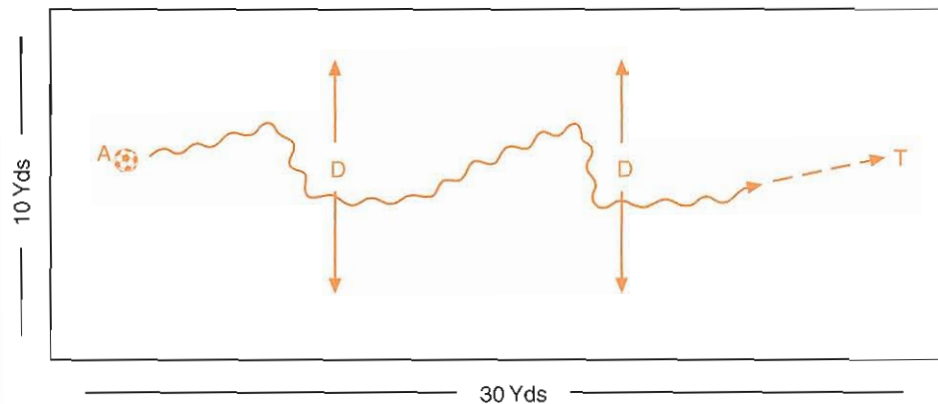
Players: Push the ball past the defender and run.

Skill Practice 1 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *dribble* by a defender under control (see page 240).
2. Practice dribbling.

Description

Play 1 v 2 games in 10 × 30 areas. Player A must beat two defenders in succession and get to the 30-yard line with the ball. Defenders can only move sideways. If a defender wins the ball from player A, he or she gives it back and player A continues, finishing by passing to the target player (T). Player T then becomes the attacker and player A becomes one of the defenders.



COACH'S cue



"Push and run!"

Week 9

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal

Players will attack defenders with the ball at appropriate times during game play.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games. The offense earns a point when a dribbler beats an opponent.



"Run at the defenders if there is space."
"Push and run—accelerate!"

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

Gather children into a group and choose three children to demonstrate. These three will dribble and pass down the field about 20 feet and then back to the group. Set up another group to do the same activity. Rotate players into the two groups until they all get a turn. Bring team back together to discuss. "What was happening every time a new person came into the passing group?" Listen to their responses. Discuss many players getting playing time. "When we share playing time, it shows that you care about your teammates. Players who care about each other want the whole team to get a chance to play. That way everyone can contribute to the team. It is more important that everyone get a chance to learn and play than it is to only play our best players so we have the best chance of winning."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and reminders for the next game.



Though some players might be able to execute intricate moves, emphasize that the simplest way to beat an opponent is to push the ball by and accelerate ("push and run") because the defender has to turn while the dribbler does not.

The ability to run past defenders with the ball is a useful attacking weapon, but it cannot be done all the time. Players need to identify situations where there is space behind a defender for them to attack.



Week 10

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

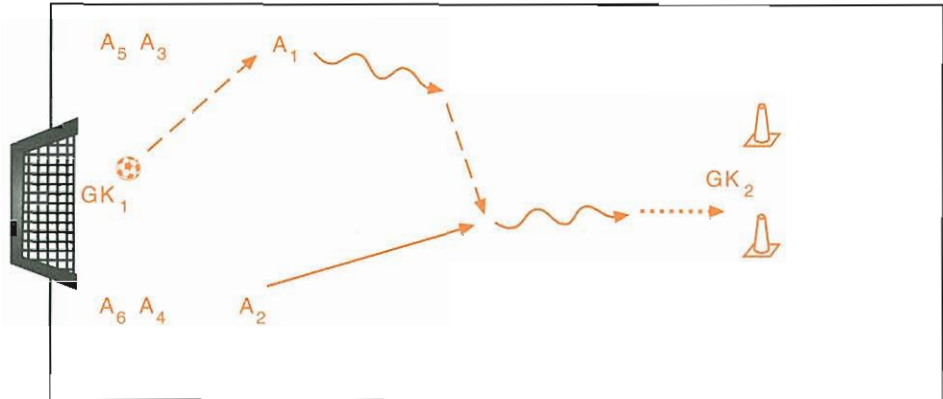
PURPOSE

To cross the ball and score from the cross.

Equipment

- ✓ One soccer ball per player, if possible
- ✓ One portable goal per five players
- ✓ Two cones
- ✓ Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

GK₁ distributes the ball to A₁, who dribbles down field and crosses to A₂. A₂ dribbles and shoots toward cones guarded by GK₂. GK₂ then distributes to A₃, who dribbles and crosses to A₁, who shoots on GK₁. Then A₃ and A₄ take A₁'s and A₂'s places.



COACH'S cue



"Dribble and cross into the center."

Week 10

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather children into a group. "What are healthy habits?" Listen to their responses. "Why do you need to practice healthy habits?" Listen to their responses and encourage discussion of how healthy bodies and minds are important to sports. "Practice healthy habits every day to take care of your bodies—the same way we practice soccer to improve our skills and get to be better players. Keep the list of healthy habits in your mind." Have a list of examples written on a piece of paper clipped to a clipboard, including brushing your teeth; no smoking, alcohol, or drugs; eating healthy foods; and getting plenty of sleep. "Check each item off when you have done that habit during the day." Have a pen to actually check an item off the list. "Every day start your list over again. Doing all the habits daily keeps you healthy."

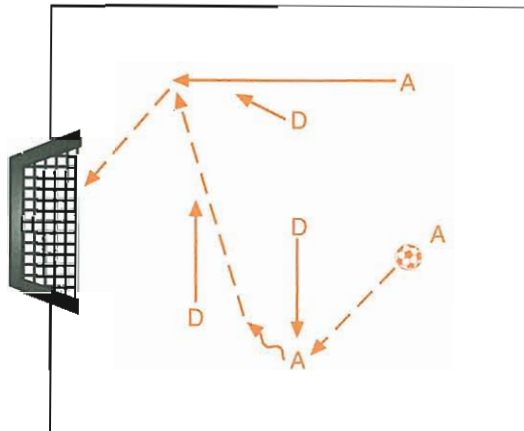
Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to cross the ball during game play.

Description

Play 3 v 3 games without GKs. Use a short and wide field. Play begins with the offense attempting to score from a cross. They earn a point only if they score from a cross.



COACH'S cues



"Pass the ball wide!"
 "Cross the ball."
 "Score from the cross!"



Coach: When players have the ball out wide, how can they create a scoring chance?

Players: Cross the ball.

Coach: Then where do other players need to be to score?

Players: In the center.

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to score from a *cross*.
2. Practice scoring from a cross.

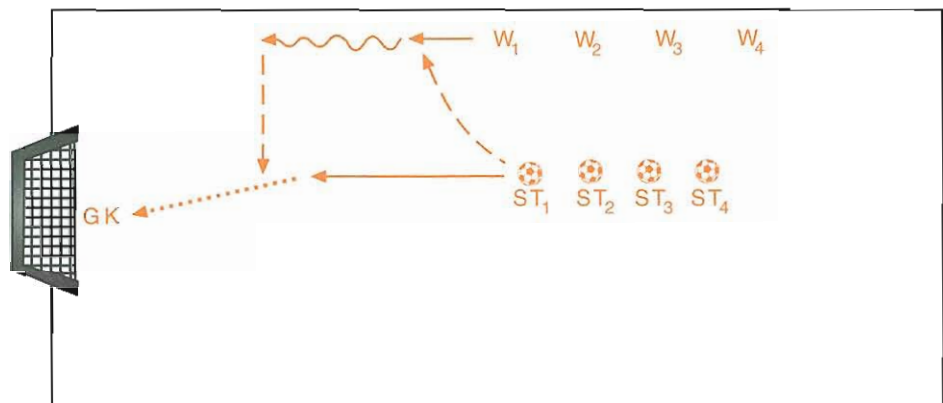
Description

Pair up players. The striker passes to the winger, the winger crosses, and the striker meets the cross to score.



☞ Encourage players to "hold the run" so they are moving forward when the ball gets into the center. It is harder for a defender to mark a moving player.

☞ Whether crosses are in the air or on the ground, encourage players to cross the ball so that it is moving away from the goalkeeper and toward the oncoming striker.



Week 10

COACH'S cues



"Pass to the winger!"
"Move forward and meet the ball on the run!"
"Score!"

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will use the width of the field to cross the ball and score.

Description

Players play 3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 games, depending on their skill proficiency. The offense earns a point only if they score from a cross.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

Gather children into a group near two cones 10 feet apart. "Let's imagine we're playing in a game and one of your teammates passes to you. The pass is kicked too far away from you, and you can't get to the ball. Pretend you say, 'What a terrible pass! Get out of here until you learn how to play soccer!' How would you change your comment to sound more positive and make the person feel better?" Listen to their responses. "It is important to make positive comments and not get upset when your teammates make mistakes. This shows you care about your teammates."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and reminders for the next game.



Week 11

PURPOSE

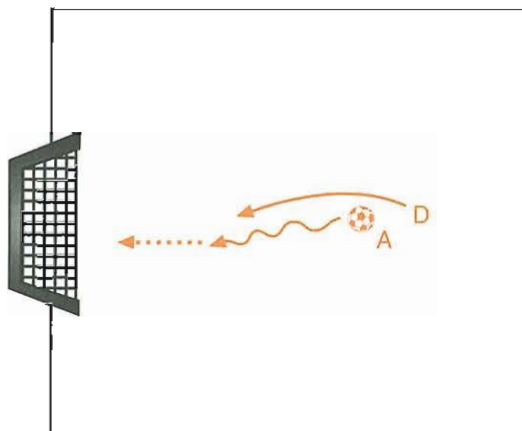
To work as a team to turn corner kicks into goal-scoring chances.

Equipment

- One soccer ball per pair of players
- One portable goal per five players
- Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

1 v 1—Players dribble and shoot into goal under pressure. Place a defender behind the attacker; the defender cannot move until the attacker begins the run to goal. The defender, slightly behind the attacker, chases the attacker to the goal as the attacker dribbles and shoots.



Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Split children into two or three groups. Give each group a ball. Instruct them to make a circle, then dribble and pass to others in their group. Continue for one minute, then bring everyone together. "Let's say that activity finished our practice. Now you're finished with practice for the week. What could you do tomorrow to stay active and practice skills that are similar to or the same type of thing we do in practice?" Listen to their responses. Discuss running, dribbling, kicking, and other ball-handling skills. "Your body loses its conditioning when you stop using it! It's important to stay active outside of soccer practices. This helps keep you fit for soccer."

Week 11

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to create scoring chances from corner kicks.

Description

Review corner kick rules (see page 268). Play 5 v 5 games. Begin each play with a corner kick. The offense earns two points for goals scored off a corner kick.



"Score from the corner kicks!"

Coach: Where do you need players to stand to make the most out of your corner kicks?

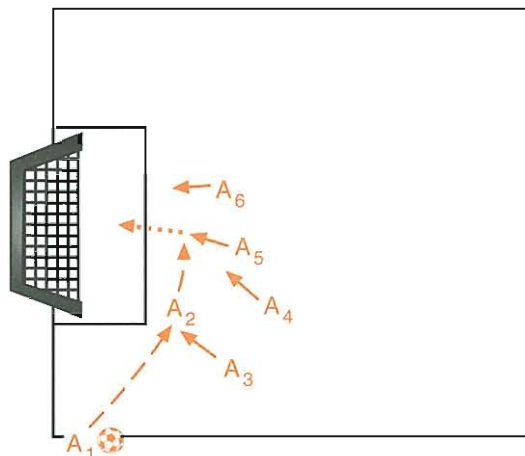
Players: Various responses (see figure 14.3 on page 269 for best options).

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to set up *corner kicks* (see pages 268–269) to create the best scoring chance.
2. Practice corner kicks.

Description

Players practice corner kicks near the post corner, unopposed. To simplify, cross the ball on the ground. To challenge, cross the ball in the air and add two defenders.



- The best way to create scoring chances from corners is by using the near-post corner. The player on the near-post (A2) is the target for the corner taker; A2 is there to redirect the ball to the center of the goal area. The remaining attackers should start their runs further out so they are moving when they meet the ball.

COACH'S cues



"One player [A_2] on the near-post."
"Others [A_3, A_4, A_5, A_6] ready to run in."
"Aim for [A_2], who flicks the ball back for other players moving in."

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal


Players will convert corner kicks into goals during game play.

Description

Players play either 5 v 5, 3 v 1, 4 v 2, or 6 v 3, depending on their skill proficiency. Begin each play with a corner kick. The offense earns two points for goals scored off a corner kick.

COACH'S point



 Tell the players that you will be calling for corner kicks even when one hasn't been given away because you want the teams to practice them.

Week 11

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into a group. Choose one child to demonstrate with you. Let the player know you'll be passing the ball and that he or she should pretend to be in position to score a goal. Make a bad pass to the player. Identify that the bad pass was your mistake. "Raise your hand if you think it's a part of learning when you make a bad pass." Give them time to raise their hands. "Now raise your hand if you think a bad pass means you are not a good player." Give them time to raise their hands. "Everyone makes mistakes, and when you make one it does not mean you're not a good player. It does mean you might want to practice more."

Wrap-Up

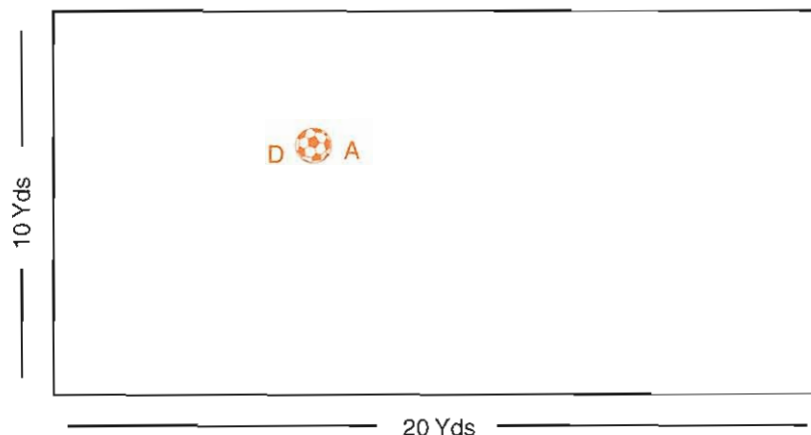
Make summary comments about practice and reminders for the next game.



Week 12

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Play 1 v 1 in a 20- × 10-yard area. Review individual marking skills. See pages 250–251.



PURPOSE

To mark opponents while defending a corner kick.

Equipment

- ✓ One soccer ball per pair of players
- ✓ One portable goal per five players
- ✓ One cone (or other marker) per player, if possible
- ✓ Different colored vests or shirts to differentiate teams

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather children into a group. “What kinds of food do you think are the best to eat when you play soccer?” Listen to their responses. Encourage discussion to talk about the difference between healthy foods and unhealthy foods. Healthy food choices include fruits, vegetables, grains or cereals, lean meats, plant proteins, and nut butters. Discourage soda, high-sugar foods, fatty meats, chips, and fried foods. “Your body needs all types of food to be healthy. Let’s think of three healthy snacks you could eat that would give you energy to practice.” Listen to responses and encourage everyone to contribute. Vote on whether the foods they name are the best choice or not. “Eating healthy snacks that give you extra energy to play soccer is a healthy habit you should be practicing every day.”

Week 12

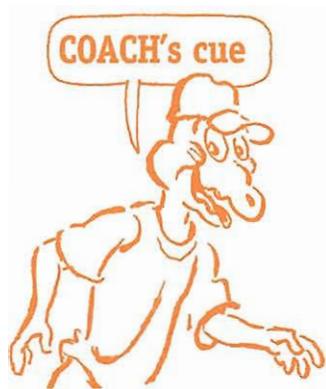
Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will learn to prevent scoring chances from corner kicks.

Description

Play 5 v 5. Use half the field, and begin each play with a corner kick. The defense scores a point each time the offense fails to score on the play.



"Stop the offense from scoring from the corner kicks!"

Coach: How can you prevent opposition from scoring at corner kicks?

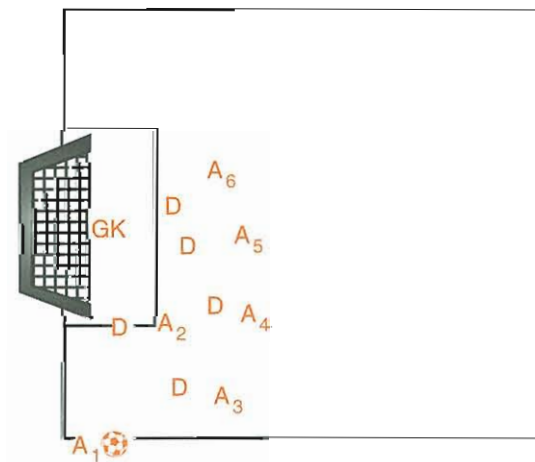
Players: Mark them tightly.

Skill Practice 1 (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *mark during corner kicks* (see page 239).
2. Practice marking during corner kicks.

Description

Players practice marking during corner kicks.



COACH'S cues



"Mark tightly 1-on-1."
"Move with your opponent!"
"Win the ball if possible."

Game 2 (20 minutes)

Goal

Play tight defense during corner kicks.

Description

Players play 5 v 5, 2 v 4, or 3 v 6, depending on their skill proficiency. Begin each play with a corner kick. The defense scores a point each time the offense fails to score on the play.



☞ Stress tight marking inside the penalty area so that it becomes difficult for opposing forwards to win the ball.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather children into groups of two. "Each of you tell your partner two or three ways you saw other players show respect this season. I'll give you two minutes." After two minutes, group all children together again. "Tell us what some of the examples were." Listen to examples and discuss. "It's important to notice respect being practiced and to talk about what we saw. All season we have been working on both soccer skills and being good teammates. Improving both of those areas tells me you have respect for yourselves and your teammates."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and reminders about the final game.

