

Considerations and Ideas for the U10-U12 player

THE PLAYERS

General Observations Of Players From The Ages Of Eight To Twelve

Children of the same age may differ a good deal in motor skill development. A child's physical skills develop in a particular sequence: first they learn to crawl, then to walk, and then to run, jump and hop, in that order. There is a developmental sequence in learning a single technique too. As players practice a particular technique such as shooting they use their bodies more effectively each time and reach a higher level of development in that technique.

Children progress through motor development sequences at their own rate. Players of the same age may be at different development levels because of differences in motor ability and in the amount of time they have practiced the technique. The important thing is that each player shows continued progress.

Children of the same age will differ in physiological development (bone growth and muscular strength). Stars within youth soccer are often more advanced physiologically than others their own age.

They are loaded with energy and must be given rest periods. Compared to other periods in a child's life these are the slow years in physical growth, making it the best time to learn new techniques.

Children in the U10 and U12 age groups should have training sessions with a focus on teaching ball skills and Fair Play. They are now capable of learning more combinations on offense and defense. They need a variety of decision making environments. The training atmosphere must be psychologically positive with correction. Individual basic skills with an emphasis on keeping ball possession are crucial activities. Much of the practice time should be free play with trial and error, discovery and experimentation. They need training time sharpening advanced competitive skills against match opponents; this means practice games. Weekends should be fun and competitive games. They gain technical skills and game insight by playing in simplified soccer situations. Tactically work on the roles of attack and defense and the basic principles of play. Exercises should focus on endurance, rhythmic movement, flexibility and running mechanics. The coach guides them on the application of where it all fits into the game and the parts of the field. Their matches should be 5- to 8-a-side. Selection (try-outs) should not begin until the U13 age group. Overall there must be less emphasis on the match result and more emphasis on the players' performances.

- Children are just starting to learn about teamwork. Expect frequent argument. Do not interfere with their arguments, as it is a part of their learning process. Team games call for social and mental skills that they are just starting to develop.
- They have not learned to accept mistakes – their own or others.
- You should not expect the children to play a team game the way adults would. You should bend the rules to fit their physical and mental maturity. Fewer players result in more touches with the ball and equipment should be suitable to their age and size resulting in better play.
- They lack the ability to make quick decisions.
- Adult reactions to their efforts are often mistaken and become a blow to their self-confidence. They are in need of understanding and encouragement.

Sideline Ethics

Define appropriate sideline behavior. This would be for players, spectators and the staff. Don't allow yourself or spectators to verbally abuse the players or the officials. **REMEMBER: A COACH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS/HER SIDELINE!**

Some things to discuss early in the seasonal year are:

- Encourage parents to cheer for all players, not just the "good ones." Know the difference between cheering and "oh my goodness, what are you doing out there?"
- Discourage coaching by spectators from the sidelines, as this will confuse players.
- Referees, especially young ones, are doing a difficult job. Let them do it.
- Criticism of officials usually results in the children learning the wrong lesson from the adults surrounding the field.
- Be a positive role model and set the standard of good sportsmanship.
- Do not negatively question or argue with officials.
- Do not engage in unsportsmanlike communication with opponents or their spectators.
- Maintain integrity. Your demeanor on and off the field will say a lot about you for a long time.
- Know and keep the rules and regulations of the local, state and national organizations.
- Always work within the spirit of the Laws of the Game. Do not "bend the rules" to your advantage.
- Regardless of the outcome of matches, wins and losses and trophy presentations, your actions as coach will always be how people remember you.

TRAINING SESSIONS

- Action as soon as possible. Have the team working at the outset without an involved and complicated explanation.
- Remember you are coaching players, not skills.
- Involve as many of the players as possible and try to ensure that each one has a specific job.
- Demonstration position – select a suitable demonstration position. This is important and certain basics should be followed:
 - Coach must see every player...do not begin to speak until all are in front and standing still...the players nearest you should crouch down.
 - Immobilize all soccer balls...have all balls out of the players' reach as you speak...if coaching in the activity, get the ball yourself.
 - Do not speak into a strong wind.
 - Players should not be asked to look into the sun at the coach...it is better that the sun is in the eyes of the coach.

Assistant Coaches

If you are fortunate enough to have other adults volunteer to assist you with the team then look for assistance with team management/administration and coaching. The assistant coach (es) does not necessarily need to have experience as a player or coach to be helpful to you. Let the parents, your volunteer base; know this and they'll then be more likely to assist you. An assistant coach could simply help with supervision, practice and game organization, first aid, etc. Some adults will be more comfortable starting with these responsibilities and then ease themselves into helping you to actually coach the players. Whatever tasks you assign to your assistant be sure you communicate clearly and often. It is important that the coaches working with the players are on the same page. An assistant coach can be a real benefit to you, but only if you invest the effort to build a good working partnership.

How To Run A Training Session

Avoid the three L's: Laps, Lines and Lectures! There's no more surefire way of boring the kids than the three Ls. Running laps is a waste of precious time when the kids could be combining fitness with skills. And as we've said before, every child should have a ball, then there's no need to wait in line for their turn. Use activities that have all of the children involved. And keep your comments and instructions brief. A lecture is the last thing a child wants when soccer time is supposed to be a fun time. A well organized practice will leave no idle time for their minds to wander.

A training session should focus on one theme!

1. Warm-up: without the ball at first to challenge their physical fitness growth; i.e., at this age the fitness focus is on balance, agility, rhythmic movement and eye/hand & eye/foot coordination. Psychologically this needs to be FUN physical challenges – NOT – a calisthenics approach.
2. With the ball – simple challenges first and as their technique improves over time then increase the challenge of doing things with the ball. Activities done with the ball could be done with either the feet or hands.
3. Fun game-like activity that is done with the ball. Run four or five different activities now. The length of each activity depends on how much fun the kids are having and their attention span.
4. Finish with a small sided (4v4-6v6) match. If you have more children in attendance then set up a second match.

Throughout the season the coach allows the players to experiment and discover the ball skill being taught on their own. The coach should do some demonstration of the skill a few times during the session. Also during the session call out some of the key coaching points on how to execute the ball skill.

Praise loudly and positively when a player does the skill correctly — Positive Reinforcement!
Encourage them to try to do new things with the ball throughout the soccer season.

Training Themes:

First week: Dribbling with the Head up

Second week: Dribbling to keep possession

Third week: Passing

Fourth week: Passing to keep possession

Fifth week: Receiving (some may call this trapping but it is now called receiving)

Sixth week: Shooting/Striking The Ball

On the following pages, there are 6 sample lesson plans. Note: Most activities are also on the US Youth Novice Coach DVD U10-U12 version.

Blank Lesson Plan

Topic: _____ Date: _____

Warm-Up	Organization (Diagram)	Key Coaching Points
Small Sided Activity (1v1-3v3 or maze type activity with pressure)		
Expanded Small Sided Activity (Has a direction 3v3-5v5. Game to 4 goals, 6 goals, Targets)		
4v4/5v5 to Two Goals		
Cool Down		

Techniques:

Dribbling-Coaching Points: Control of ball and body, Head up (awareness), Bent knees (balance), change of direction, feints, change of pace, Body between ball and opponent (shielding), Sideways stance of body (shielding), Use of arms for balance and to make space, Bravery!

Passing- Coaching Points: Approach to ball, Ankle locked, toe point up, strike middle of ball (shorter passing), strike ball at angle for longer passing, strike bottom half of ball for longer passing, placement of non-kicking foot for short passing and long passing, head steady, eye contact.
Receiving-

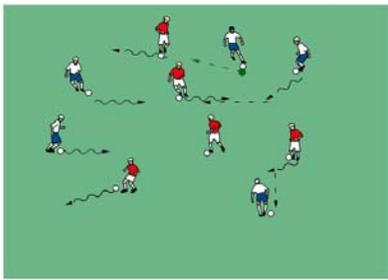
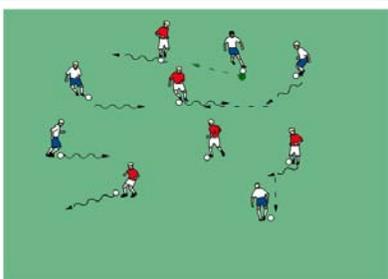
Receiving-Coaching Points: First touch and importance of cushioning ball, take a touch away from pressure, first touch sets up 2nd touch, get in line with the ball, select controlling surface early, open body up to see as much of field as possible, read the path of the ball, keep ball moving-don't stop ball.

Heading- Coaching Points: Use top of forehead (hairline) to contact ball, Neck should be firm on contacting the ball, Keep eyes open, Head is moved forward-not up and down, Follow thru, Arms and elbows up for protection and thrust. Attacking-Head top half of ball and low, Defending-Head high, far, and away!

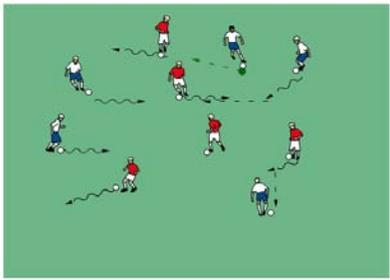
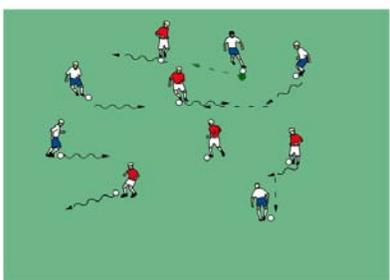
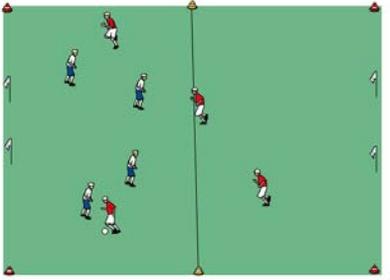
Finishing- Coaching Points: Toe down, ankle locked, head, chest, and knee over ball, head is steady, strike top half-center of ball, land on striking foot, placement of non-striking foot, hit the target.

Week One

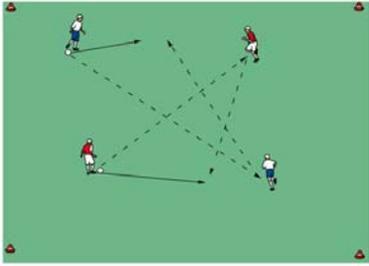
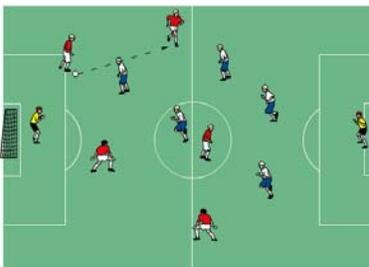
Topic: Finding Space (Dribbling with the head up)

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
1			
<p>Warm-Up (10 minutes)</p> <p>Grid Dribbling</p>	<p>All players have a ball inside a grid. If they don't all have a ball then to share with someone.</p> <p><i>After a bit, stop and stretch.</i></p> <p>Instruct the players to dribble and stay away from each other. After a short bit stop players and see if the group is equally spread out around the grid.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dribbling w/Head up • Find the space.
2			
<p>First Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>Hospital Tag</p>	<p>All players have a ball inside a grid. Players try and tag players in the arm. If a player gets tagged on arm, they have to hold that arm. If get tagged on the other arm they hold it. Finally if they get tagged in the knee, they dribble to a place outside the grid, do 10 touch-ups (toe taps on ball) and then can go back in and tagging people. Play 2-3 rounds.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding space to be safe • Changing Direction • Changing Speed • Head up!
3			
<p>Second Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>3v3/4v4 Endzones</p>	<p>Divide players into groups of 3. Play 3v3 inside a grid of about 25x20. A team gets a point if they can dribble to the endline and stop the ball.</p> <p>Variation: Add a second ball.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding Space with ball • Changing direction
4			
<p>Game (20-25 minutes)</p> <p>3v3-4v4 fewer players to get maximum touches.</p>	<p>Play to small goals. Just use the previous game and make two small goals on each end.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding Space with ball • Changing direction
<p>Cool Down</p>	<p>Juggling challenge</p> <p>Who can keep the ball up in the air with only using their feet the most?</p>		<p>The goal will be to improve their juggling score each week.</p> <p>Wk 2 goal is 5 juggles.</p>

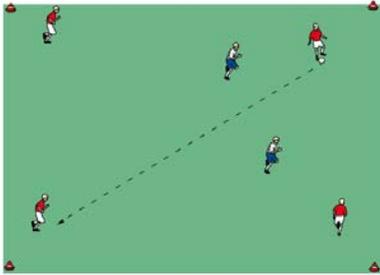
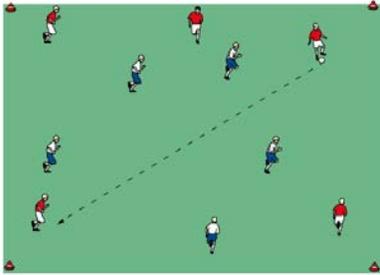
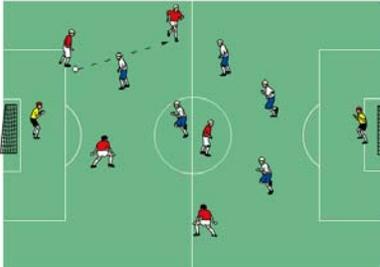
Week Two
Topic: Dribbling to keep possession

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
1			
<p>Warm-Up (10 minutes)</p> <p>“Change” into Musical Balls</p>	<p>All players have a ball inside grid. When coach yells “change” they leave their ball and go and dribble someone else’s ball.</p> <p>Variations:</p> <p>1) Instead of coach yelling “change” nominate a player to do this.</p> <p>2) Take out a few balls and when yell “change” a couple of players will not have a ball. Have players keep their own score as to how many times they always get a ball.</p>		<p>Dribbling w/Head up Find the space. Find space where no one is.</p>
2			
<p>First Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>“Knockaway”</p>	<p>All players have a ball inside a grid. When coach yells “go” they keep their ball but tries to “knock” someone else’s ball away. If a player’s ball gets knocked away and it stops rolling then that player has 5 touchups. If they get their ball knocked away and they can get to the ball before it stops rolling then no touchups. No one is eliminated. Repeat 2-3 more times.</p>		<p>Shielding</p> <p>Keep body between ball and player trying to knock their ball away.</p>
3			
<p>Second Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>All Up and Back</p>	<p>Divide players into groups of 3/4. Two goals on each end. This is a normal game EXCEPT that before a player can score his/her teammates must be at least to the halfway point of the field. This will force the player with the ball to “hold” it up until his/her teammates get to at least the midway line. Once that occurs a team may try to score.</p>		<p>Finding Space with ball</p> <p>Changing direction</p> <p>Players start to communicate and tell each other when they can shoot.</p>
4			
<p>Game (20-25 minutes)</p> <p>3v3-4v4 fewer players to get maximum touches.</p>	<p>Play to small goals. Just use the previous game and take out the halfway line restriction.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding Space with ball • Changing direction
<p>Cool Down</p>	<p>Juggling challenge</p> <p>Who can keep the ball up in the air with only using their feet the most?</p>		<p>The goal will be to improve their juggling score each week.</p> <p>Wk 3 goal is 10 juggles</p>

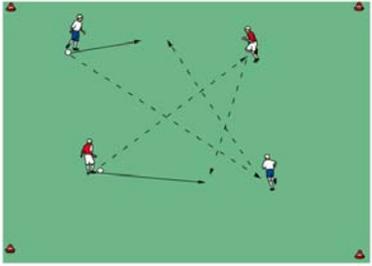
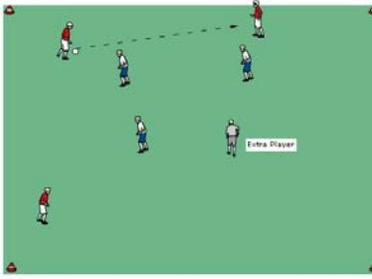
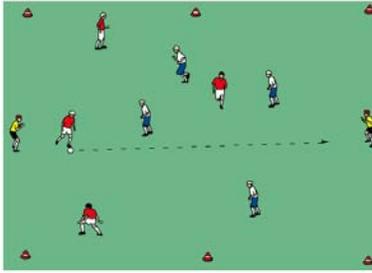
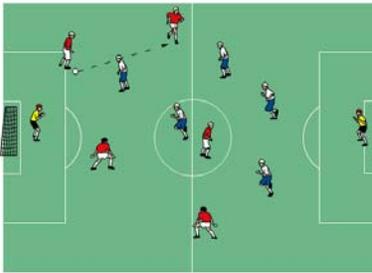
Week Three
Topic: Passing-Introduction

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
<p>1</p> <p>Warm-Up (10 minutes)</p> <p>Paint The Grass</p>	<p>Four players and two balls. Have players partner up with someone and share one ball. Have each pair make a square with 4 cones about 10x10, 15x15, etc.</p> <p>Tell players to pass the ball back and forth with their partner in their square. Instruct the pairs to try and "paint" as much of the square as possible with their ball. In other words after they pass, move to a new spot and receive a pass from their partner. Give each square a time limit.</p>		<p>Keeping the ball on the ground</p> <p>Foot strike the middle of the ball.</p> <p>Toe is pointed outside (like a golf putter).</p> <p>See which pair can make the most passes on the ground in a minute.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>First Activity (10 min)</p> <p>3v1 Keepaway.</p>	<p>3 players in square keep the ball away from one. One defender holds a vest in their hand. If the one player steals the ball they have to dribble outside of the square and hand their vest to the person they got the ball from. Three players count the number of passes.</p>		<p>Keep the ball moving.</p> <p>Pass with correct part of foot.</p> <p>What other parts can they use? (outside, heel)</p> <p>See which group of three has the most passes.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Second Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>4 Corner Goals</p>	<p>Two teams of 4-5 players. Each team attacks two corner goals, each team defends two corner goals. A goal is scored when the ball is passed on the ground through one of the two corner goals.</p>		<p>Keep ball on ground</p> <p>Eye contact when passing to teammate.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Game (20-25 minutes)</p> <p>Play 4v4-6v6 to goals.</p>			
<p>Cool Down</p>	<p>Juggling challenge</p> <p>Who can keep the ball up in the air with only using their feet, thighs, head, the most?</p>		<p>The goal will be to improve their juggling score each week.</p> <p>Wk 4 goal is 12 juggles.</p>

Week Four
Topic: Passing to keep possession

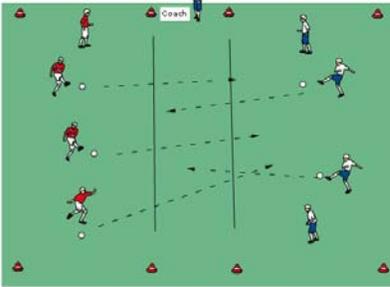
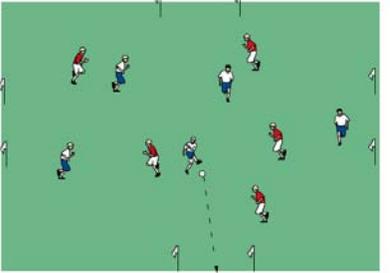
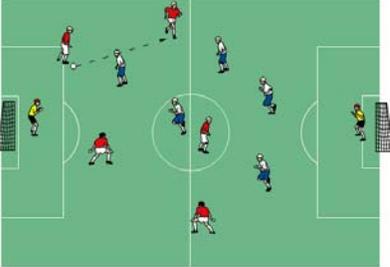
Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
1			
<p>Warm-Up (10 minutes)</p> <p>“Checkout” passing</p>	<p>Divide players into pairs; each pair has a ball.</p> <p>Mark out a 15 x 15-yard field. Put 10 cones on the sidelines around the field.</p> <p>Partners pass, dribble and move.</p> <p>After each pass, the passer runs (or “checks out”) around a cone and receives a pass from their teammate inside. Players have to run around a cone on a different side every time.</p>		<p>After they pass, move to cone.</p> <p>When they pass to their teammate who is coming onto the field, make accurate passes.</p>
2			
<p>First Activity (10 min)</p> <p>4v2 Keepaway</p>	<p>4 play against 2 keep away. When the 2 defenders win the ball, they try to get out of the square by either dribbling or passing. A point is scored whenever the 4 players pass successfully without the 2 defenders winning the ball. Switch defenders after 2 minutes so every one gets a turn. Bonus point is scored when they pass the ball between (split) the 2 defenders.</p>		<p>Keep the ball moving.</p> <p>Pass with correct part of foot.</p> <p>What other parts can they use? (outside, heel)</p> <p>See which group of three has the most passes.</p>
3			
<p>Second Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>“21” Keepaway Game</p>	<p>Two teams of 4-5 players. One ball is used. Teams play keep away against each other and count the total number of passes. The objective is to get “21” total passes first. They do not have to 21 passes in a row and probably will not be.</p>		<p>Keep ball on ground</p> <p>Eye contact when passing to teammate.</p> <p>Sometimes pass short, Sometimes long.</p> <p>Make the easiest pass.</p>
4			
<p>Game (20-25 minutes)</p> <p>Play 4v4-6v6 to goals.</p>			
<p>Cool Down</p>	<p>Juggling challenge</p> <p>Who can keep the ball up in the air with only using their feet, thighs, head, the most?</p>		<p>The goal will be to improve their juggling score each week.</p> <p>Wk 5 goal is 15 juggles.</p>

Week Five
Topic: Receiving

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
<p>1</p> <p>Warm-Up (10 minutes)</p> <p>Paint The Grass (repeat)</p> <p>Emphasis is on receiving the ball.</p>	<p>Four players and two balls. Have players partner up with someone and share one ball. Have each pair make a square with 4 cones about 10x10, 15x15, etc.</p> <p>Tell players to pass the ball back and forth with their partner in their square. Instruct the pairs to try and “paint” as much of the square as possible with their ball. In other words after they pass, move to a new spot and receive a pass from their partner. Give each square a time limit.</p>		<p>Keeping the ball on the ground</p> <p>Cushion ball, don't stop it.</p> <p>Good touch allows you to make a good pass.</p> <p>See which pair can make the most passes on the ground in a minute.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>First Activity (10 min)</p> <p>3v3+1 Keepaway</p>	<p>Two teams of 3. One player is selected to always play with the team on attack. This way there is always an extra player to get more chances to keep and receive the ball. A point is scored whenever a team of 3 gets 5 passes in a row.</p>		<p>Keep the ball moving.</p> <p>Take your first touch away from pressure.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Second Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>4v4/5v5 to target</p>	<p>Two teams of 4/5. Each team puts a target player on each end. A point is scored whenever a team gets the ball to their target player. After 2 minutes change the target player.</p>		<p>Can they receive the ball in way to get it to the target.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Game (20-25 minutes)</p> <p>Play 4v4-6v6 to goals.</p>			
<p>Cool Down</p>	<p>Juggling challenge</p> <p>Who can keep the ball up in the air with only using their feet, thighs, head, the most?</p>		<p>The goal will be to improve their juggling score each week.</p> <p>Wk 6 goal is 20 juggles.</p>

Week Six

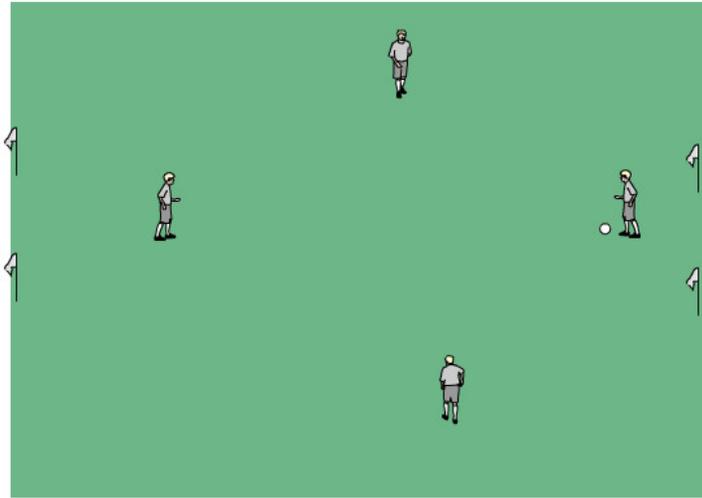
Topic: Shooting/Striking The Ball

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
1			
<p>Warm-Up (10 minutes)</p> <p>Junkyard Soccer</p>	<p>Divide team into two teams. Each team goes to a half. Use an odd number of balls, like 5. The objective of the game is to strike the ball into the other team's yard. Each team wants to have a clean yard when time is called by the coach. The team that has the fewest balls on their side when time is called gets a point. Play to a certain amount of points or for time. Variation: Require a pass to be made to a teammate before the ball can be struck back to the other half.</p>		<p>Introduce mechanics of striking the ball</p> <p>Toe down, ankle locked, laces.</p> <p>Strike the ball for a purpose.</p> <p>They should be trying to strike the ball where the other team can't get it back quickly.</p>
2			
<p>First Activity (10 min)</p> <p>“Get Outta Here”</p>	<p>This is a very fun shooting game. Divide the teams into two. Each team gets to the right and left of the coach outside the field. The Coach has all of the balls. Each team sends two players out at a time. Two small goals are on each end. Coach plays ball in. Whichever team scores stays. If the ball goes out of bounds, they are both out of there and two players from each team step on.</p>		<p>Shoot quickly.</p> <p>If you don't have a shot, pass to someone who does.</p>
3			
<p>Second Activity (10 minutes)</p> <p>5v5 goals galore</p>	<p>Two teams of 5. Four goals are made on each side. Each team tries to be the first to score on all 4 goals. Rule: If they score on one goal, they can't go back until the score on another. Variation: Use more than one ball at a time.</p>		<p>Score quickly.</p> <p>If you don't have a shot, pass to someone who does.</p>
4			
<p>Game (20-25 minutes)</p> <p>Play 4v4-6v6 to goals.</p>			
<p>Cool Down</p>	<p>Juggling challenge</p> <p>Who can keep the ball up in the air with only using their feet, thighs, head, the most?</p>		<p>The goal will be to improve their juggling score each week.</p> <p>See who can get the most.</p>

Sample Formations for Game

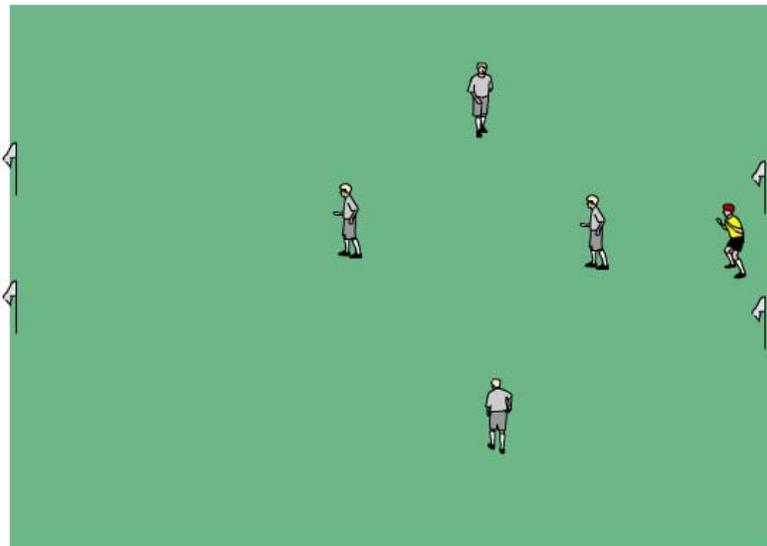
4v4 Formation (no goalkeeper)

Diamond Shape



5v5 including goalkeeper

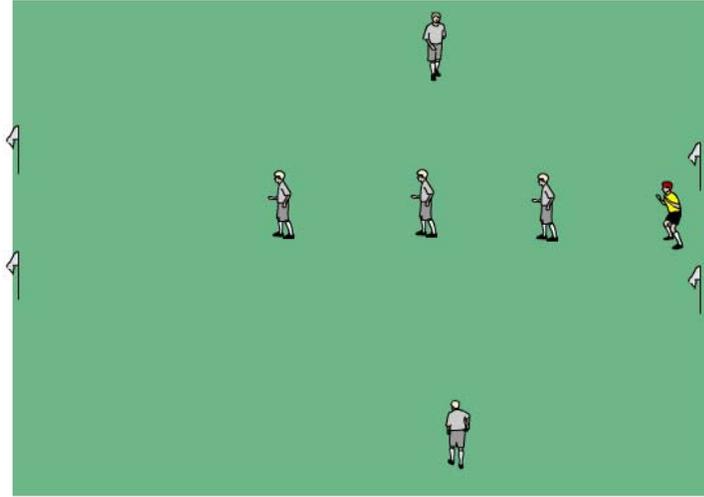
(Four field players and one goalkeeper)



6v6 including goalkeeper

“Diamond with a player in the middle”

(Five field players and one goalkeeper)



7v7 including goalkeeper

(1-2-3-1)

