



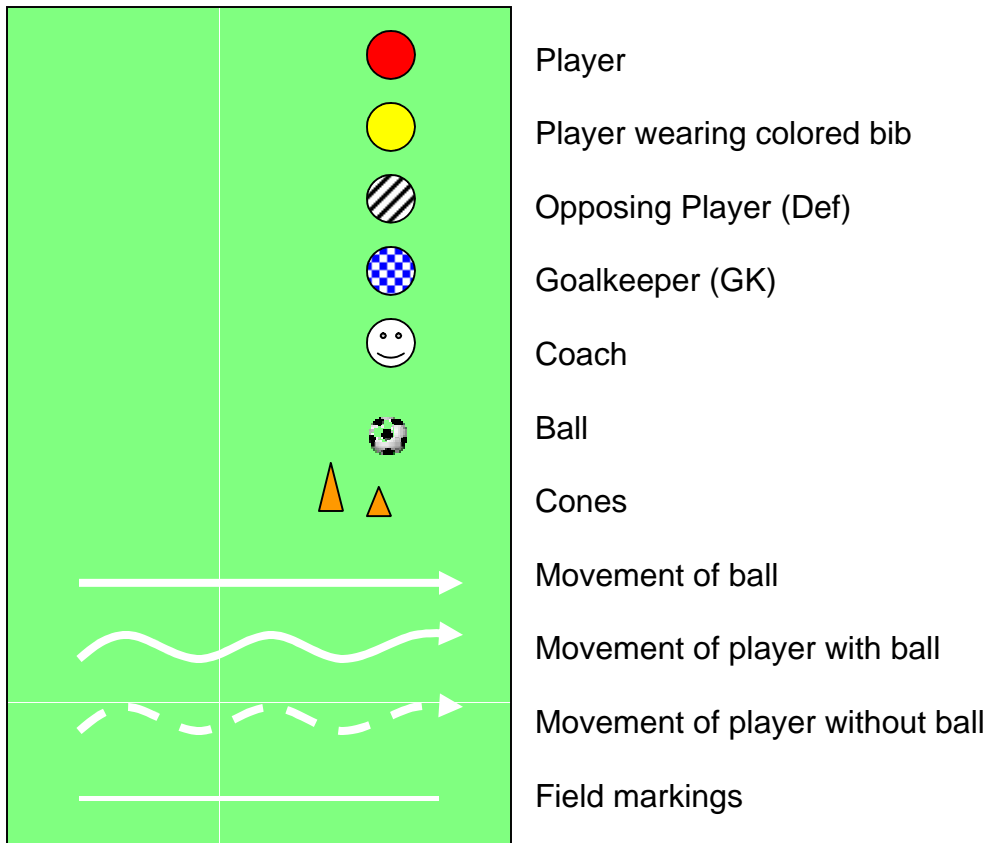
## Practice Games



The following practice games and activities have been designed to manage and control the group in one area as much as possible. Coaching organization is of utmost importance when coaching players at this young age, so as much time should be spent practicing as opposed to setting up cones or explaining too many rules.

Remember at this age that focus should always be placed on the child's individual technical development, and these practices have been designed to allow for the maximum participation of each child and maximum touches on the ball for every player in the team.

### Key to Diagrams:

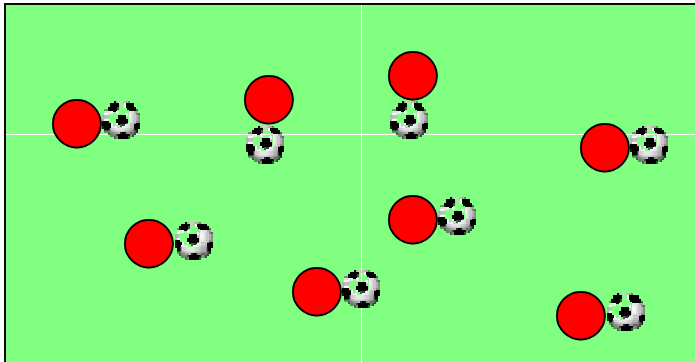




## Dribbling and Turning practices

### 1) Individual footwork

Players dribble around the grid using all surfaces of their foot. Keep ball inside grid. Don't bump into other players. Stop ball with foot when coach calls "freeze". Try to be in a space away from other players when coach calls "freeze". Introduce a new turn each time this practice is done.



**Coaching Points:**

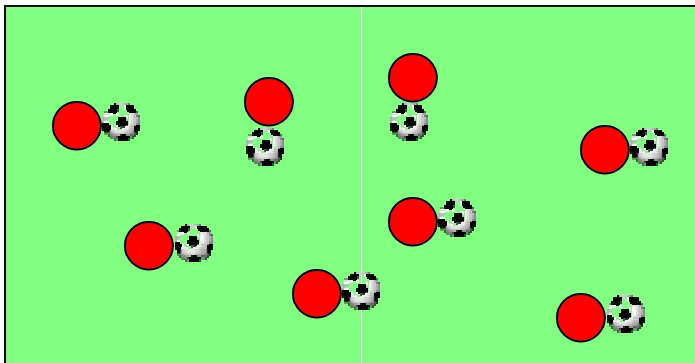
- Small soft touches when to keep ball under control
- Head up to find space

**Progressions:**

- Divide into 2 groups, take in turns to stand like statues – the other ½ dribble around them
- Statues stand with feet apart, players try to dribble the ball through their legs (nutmeg)

### 2) Do as I say

Similar to individual footwork practice, but this time every time coach calls out a body part (e.g. forehead) players must stop their ball, touch it with their forehead then carry on dribbling. Add other commands, such as "toe-taps" or "side-to-sides". Introduce a new turn each time this practice is done.



**Coaching Points:**

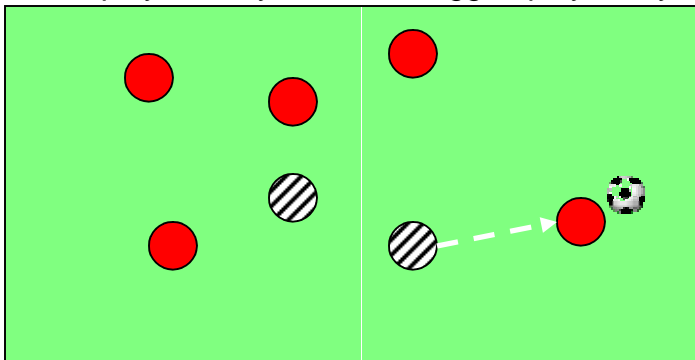
- Small soft touches to keep ball under control
- Head up to find space
- Turn slowly to keep control
- Accelerate into space

**Progressions:**

- Add cones and have players turn around a cone to work on timing

### 3) Stuck in the mud

Each player has a ball except 2 "mud-monsters". Players dribble around the grid trying to avoid the monsters. If the monsters tag them they are stuck in the mud and must stand still holding their ball above their head with feet apart. Other players may "free" the tagged players by "nutmegging" them.



**Coaching Points:**

- Head up to see where monsters are
- Move to space away from monsters
- Anticipation

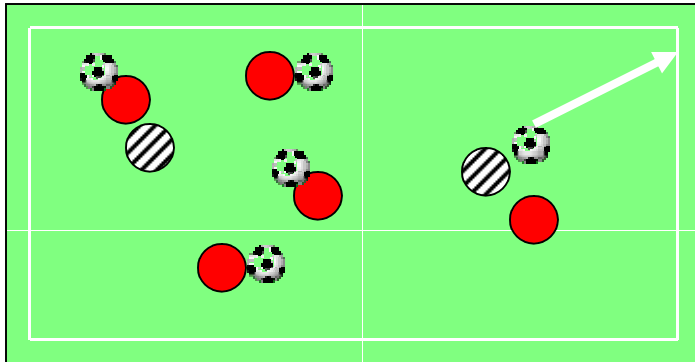
**Progressions:**

- Add more defenders (or "mud-monsters") as necessary.



**4) Mr. Gorilla**

Similar to stuck in the mud, except this time the defenders (or “Gorillas”) must try and kick other player’s balls out of the area. Gorillas must stay on their feet and tackle with feet only. Try and introduce the technique of shielding the ball here (hide it from the gorillas).



Coaching Points:

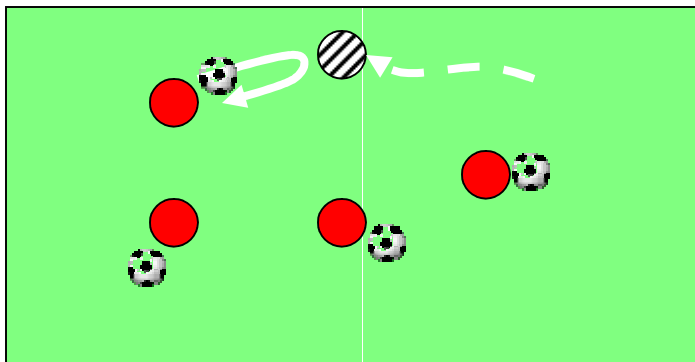
- Correct shielding technique (sideways on, put body in between defender and ball).
- Use a “drag-back” turn to move ball away from Gorillas

Progressions:

- Give players 2 lives, and once they have been knocked out of the area twice they are out and must practice shielding technique outside the area until the last player is out.

**5) Monster Turnaround**

Each player dribbles around the area using all surfaces of the foot. Two monsters run around the grid and try and stand directly in front of the dribblers (cannot touch balls). The dribblers must use the inside hook or inside turn to get away from the monsters.



Coaching Points:

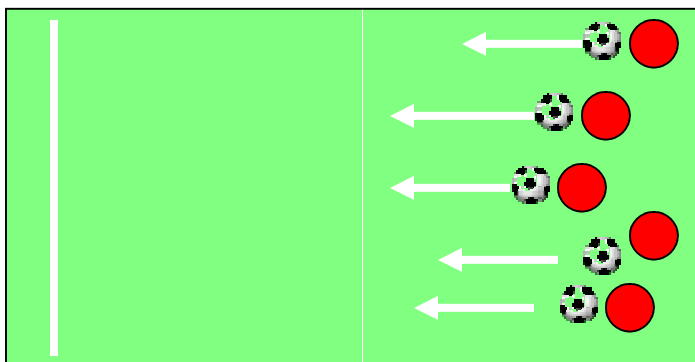
- Correct inside hook technique
- Correct inside turn technique (see moves, turns and fakes page)
- Timing of turn (begin approx 2 yards away from defender)

Progressions:

- Monsters attempt to kick balls out of the area to eliminate players

**6) Traffic Lights**

All players with a ball at one end of a 30 yard-long grid. When coach shouts “green light” players begin using small touches to dribble ball towards opposite end. When coach shouts “red light” players must freeze. Any players not in control of their ball with their foot must return to the start. First player to the opposite end under control of their ball is the winner.



Coaching Points:

- Lots of small touches to keep control
- Quick reactions to commands

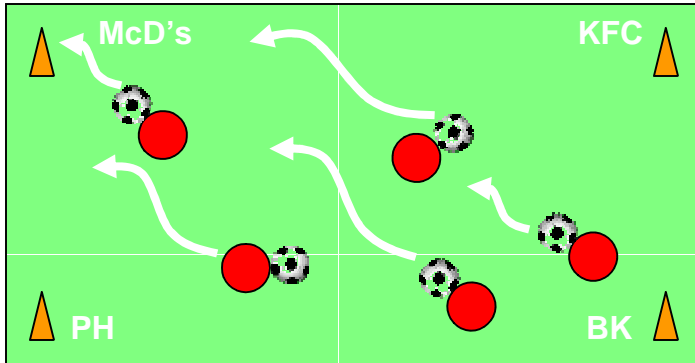
Progressions:

- Introduce “yellow light” command and have players perform toe-taps etc.
- Instead of shouting coach silently turns around to make players start and stop. This encourages players to look up between their touches.



**7) Fast Food Game**

Players dribble their soccer balls inside large area. When the coach calls out the name of a fast food restaurant (e.g. McDonalds) the players dribble their ball as quickly as possible to the corresponding grid. Last one there gets no food.



**Coaching Points:**

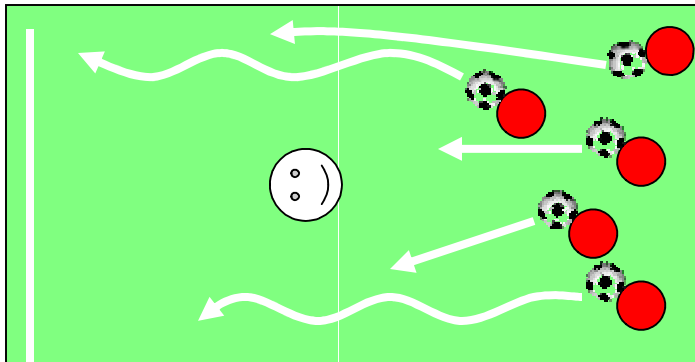
- Keep ball close to the body
- Use different parts of the foot / learned turns to change direction and stop the ball
- Change speed once the coach calls out the command.

**Progressions:**

- Add a time limit within which the players must get to the restaurant

**8) Beat the Crabs**

Players begin with the ball at their feet at one end of the grid. They attempt to dribble past the coach on crab position and get to the other end. If the crab can trap the ball between its feet the player is out and becomes a crab. Likewise players become a crab if they dribble their ball out of the area.



**Coaching Points:**

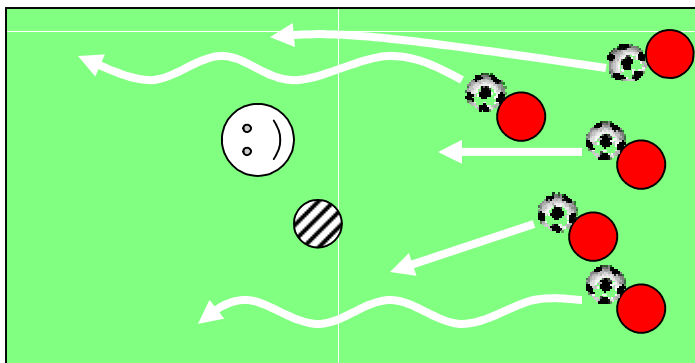
- Use inside and outside of foot to weave in and out of the crabs
- Head up to pick gaps / space
- Close control when near crabs
- Accelerate into space

**Progressions:**

- Make grid narrower as practice goes on
- Add goal with GK at the end of the grid

**9) British Bulldogs / Sharks and Minnows**

Similar to "Beat the Crabs" but this time the coach is on his/her feet. After a couple of times getting through the coach kicks a ball out. That player joins the coach in the middle.



**Coaching Points:**

- Use inside and outside of foot to weave in and out of the sharks
- Head up to pick gaps / space
- Close control when near defenders
- Accelerate into space

**Progressions:**

- Instead of kicking ball out defenders now have to dribble the ball back over the start line.



**10) Speed Dribble**

Divide team into four equal teams. Players race against each other to dribble to the opposite line. Winners only count if they can keep the ball under control. Encourage players to experiment with different dribbling techniques e.g. inside/laces etc.

	<p>Coaching Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive running style</li> </ul> <p>Progressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players need to take a certain number of touches</li> <li>• Players must use a certain foot or both feet</li> <li>• Must stop ball on half way line then continue</li> <li>• Players dribble down, turn and come back</li> </ul>
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**11) Slalom Dribble**

Divide team into four equal teams. Players race against each other to dribble to the opposite line. Winners only count if they can keep the ball under control. Players must dribble in and out of the cones to the opposite end line

	<p>Coaching Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage control over speed to start</li> </ul> <p>Progressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players use inside and outside of dominant foot to weave in and out</li> <li>• Players use inside and outside of weaker foot to weave in and out</li> <li>• Players experiment using both feet</li> <li>• Must dribble completely around each cone before continuing to the next</li> </ul>
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**12) Team Races**

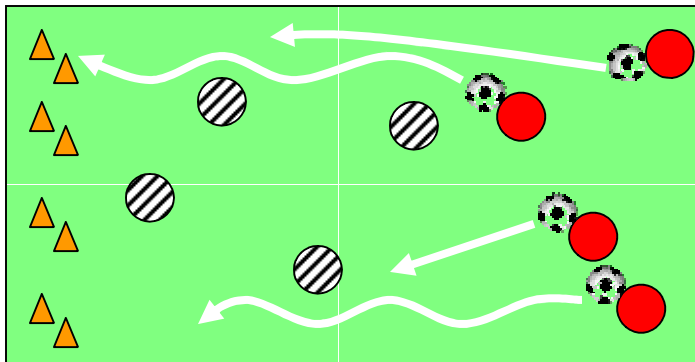
Divide team into four equal teams. Each player races to the end line and must turn using a specified turn – Inside hook, drag back, spin turn etc... Add some fun races – ball between knees, up shirt etc...

	<p>Coaching Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage control over speed to start</li> </ul> <p>Progressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players use inside and outside of dominant foot to weave in and out</li> <li>• Players use inside and outside of weaker foot to weave in and out</li> <li>• Players experiment using both feet</li> <li>• Must dribble completely around each cone before continuing to the next</li> </ul>
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**13) Treasure Hunt**

Line all of tall cones up on one end line. Half of group at opposite end with a ball each. The other players try to defend the cones (treasure). Team with balls try to dribble past the defenders and knock the cones over. If they are successful they carry their treasure back to the end line. If they are tackled they must return to their starting position before they start to attack again.



**Coaching Points:**

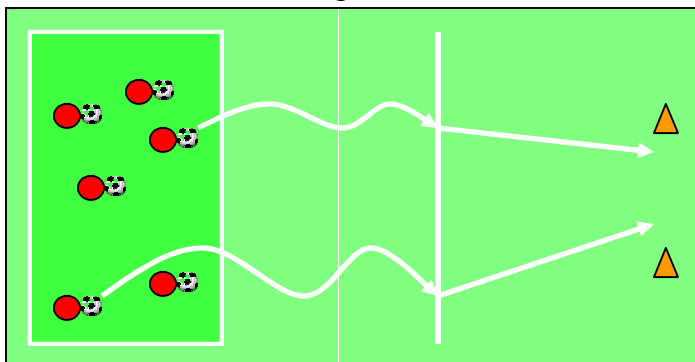
- Encourage control over speed to start

**Progressions:**

- Players use inside and outside of dominant foot to weave in and out
- Players use inside and outside of weaker foot to weave in and out
- Players experiment using both feet
- Must dribble completely around each cone before continuing to the next

**14) Break Out**

All players with a ball dribble inside a grid. When their names are called they break out and race their opponent to the 5 yard line where they attempt to pass their ball into an open goal. They then recover their ball and dribble back around the outside of the grid.



**Coaching Points:**

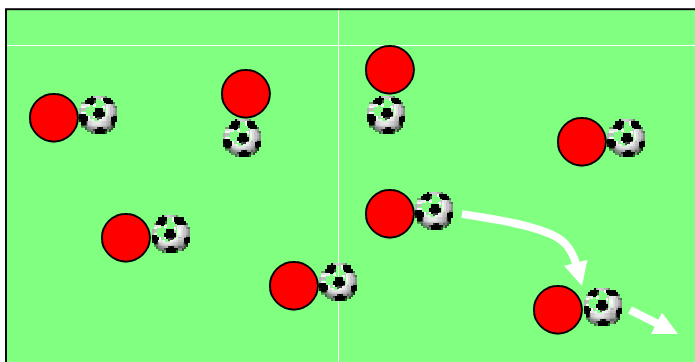
- Accelerate into the space when name is called
- Use correct turning technique when changing direction to head for the goal

**Progressions:**

- Move line back and have players shoot the ball in with their laces
- Make the goals bigger and put GK's in

**15) King of the Ring**

All players with a ball dribble inside a grid. Players must try and kick other players' balls out of the grid whilst maintaining control of their own ball. Once a player's ball is out of the grid they are eliminated.



**Coaching Points:**

- Correct shielding technique, sideways on, body in between the player and the ball
- Use foot farthest from defender
- Bend knees
- Keep your head up to see opponents

**Progressions:**

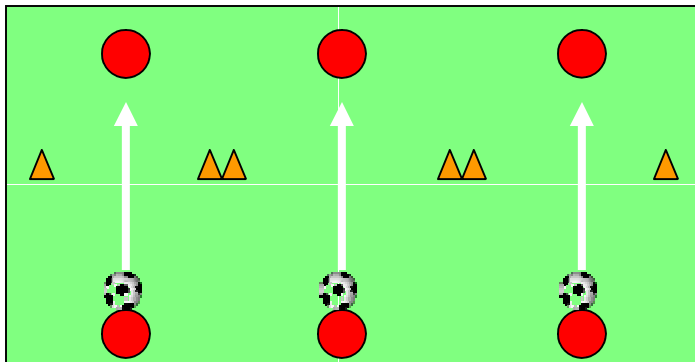
- Introduce second chance ring
- Give players "extra lives" as necessary



## Passing and Control practices

### 16) Robin Hood

Set up a line of gates with cones side by side. Players have to shoot the arrow (ball) through the gate to score a point. The distance from the players to the gate should be dependent on their ability. How many points can they get in 1 minute?



Coaching Points:

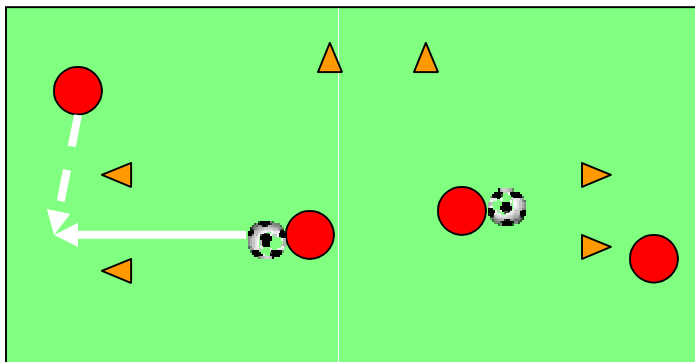
- **ABC:**
- Angle
- Body (point non-kicking foot to target)
- Contact (inside of foot, middle of ball)
- Pull toes up to lock ankle

Progressions:

- Increase distance from gate
- Make gates smaller
- Limit players to two-touch

### 17) Through the Gates

Set up a series of small gates around the grid. Players in pairs with a ball per group. Players must move around area and to score a point must pass through a gate to a teammate who must control the ball to score point. How many points can they score in 30 seconds?



Coaching Points:

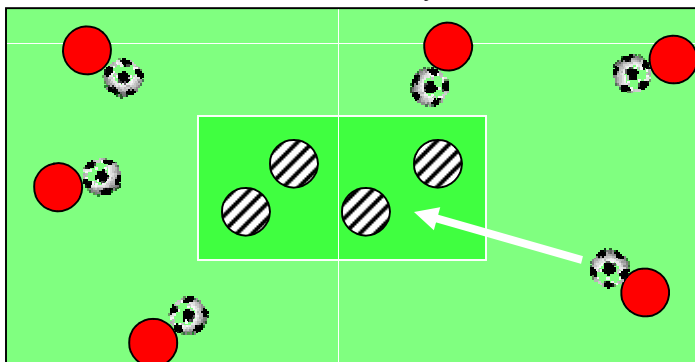
- **ABC**
- Communication
- Make eye contact with partner
- Reasonable distance between pair

Progressions:

- Have one pair become defenders and try and block gates to intercept passes
- Have defenders move around area and try to kick balls out

### 18) Cops and Robbers

Four "Robbers" are surrounded by a group of "Cops" (who have a ball each). The Cops try to catch the Robbers by striking them **below** the knee with their soccer balls. Robbers try to avoid the soccer balls, once hit they become a cop.



Coaching Points:

- Head up to pick a target (don't just kick)
- Use only inside of foot
- Pass firmly by stepping into the pass and following through to the target
- Pass to feet or space?
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Progressions:

- Add a time limit to get everybody out and introduce fun forfeits



**19) Coconut Shy #1**

Place pointed cones spaced apart in the middle of the channel. Divide groups into two teams. Each team stands on one of the end lines. Teams score points by knocking over the cones. If they knock one over they fetch it and place it on their end line. Team with the most cones wins.



Coaching Points:

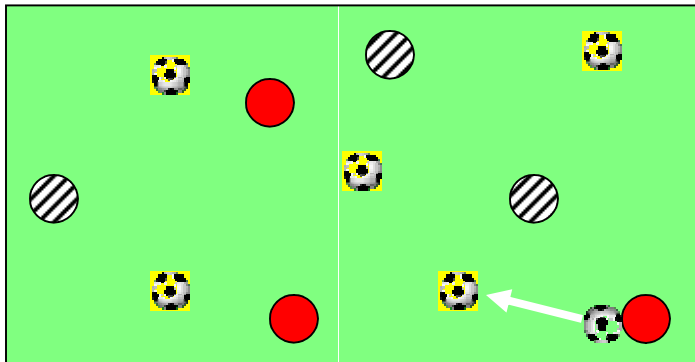
- Keep your head up so you know where to aim
- ABC
- Step into pass
- Follow through
- Focus on precision, not speed

Progressions:

- Must play passes with weaker foot only

**20) Coconut Shy #2**

Split into two teams. Place eight flat cones around the grid with a ball on top of each. The team in possession has to knock over as many balls (coconuts) as they can. Other team has to try and stop them.



Coaching Points:

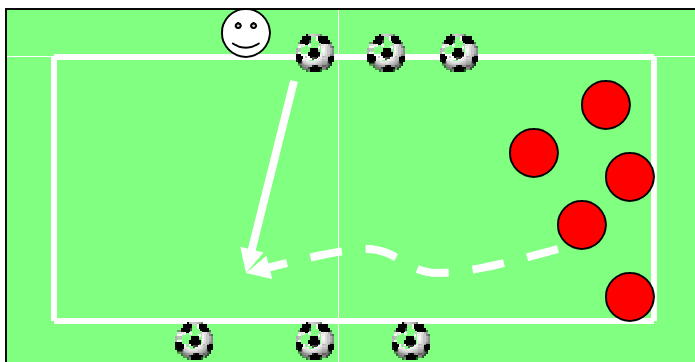
- Keep your head up to see which cones are not defended
- ABC
- Don't force "the pass": Turn away and go for a cone that is not defended.
- Keep possession

Progressions:

- Less coconuts, bigger area

**21) Cowboys and Indians**

Players without a ball (Indians) at one end line with the coach (Cowboy) on one sideline with a supply of balls. Players aim to make it to opposite end line without getting hit by a ball below the knee. Once hit they are out and become a cowboy. Keep going until all players are hit, remember to quickly collect balls each round and use both sidelines.



Coaching Points:

- Inside of foot – keep ball on ground!!!
- Head up to see target
- Timing of pass
- Weight of pass

Progressions:

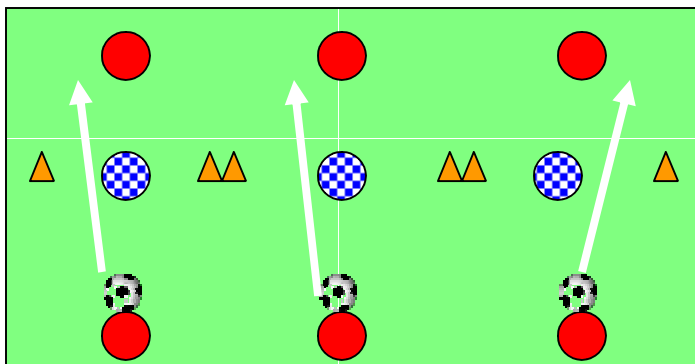
- Vary distance of pass
- Have players running across dribble a ball



## Shooting practices

### 22) Goals Galore

Set up a line of goals with cones side by side. Players have to shoot the ball through the goal to their partner to score, rotating GK's every minute or so. Distance of players from goal depends upon ability level. How many goals can you score in 1 minute?



**Coaching Points:**

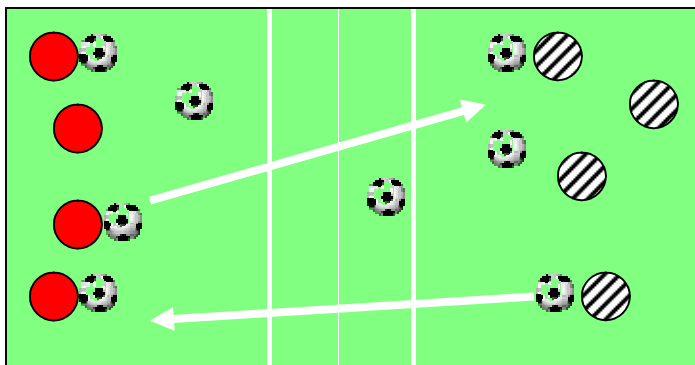
- Approach ball from an angle – why?
- Try not to toe poke at ball – why?
- Take a couple of steps run up – why?
- Introduce laces concept

**Progressions:**

- Move line back and have players shoot the ball from a greater distance

### 23) Shoot Out

Divide group into two teams, each team is only allowed in their third of the grid. Players shoot their ball into the other teams' grid, and then try and return the other teams balls also. When the coach calls "freeze" the team with the least number of balls in their area is the winner



**Coaching Points:**

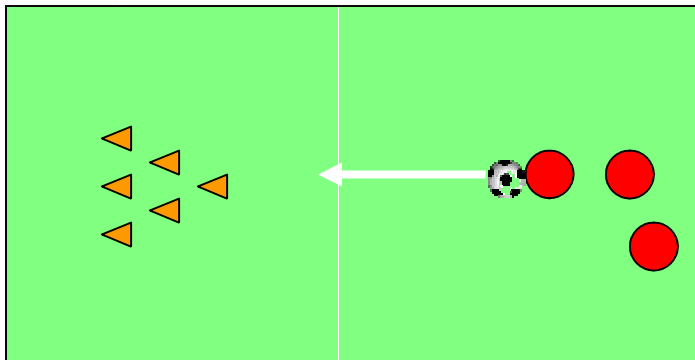
- Try to use laces to shoot
- Take a touch instead of trying to shoot balls off –balance
- Strike through middle of the ball

**Progressions:**

- Move teams further apart as shooting technique gets better
- Introduce 3 or 4 goals on the end line to try and shoot through to score an extra point

### 24) Soccer Bowling

Set up tall cones (probably 6) like they would be at the 10-pin bowling alley. Players take turns to shoot at the pins and see how many they can knock over. A good technique practice but should only be used for very small groups



**Coaching Points:**

- Try to use laces to shoot
- Head up to see target
- Strike through middle of the ball
- Follow through with foot to target

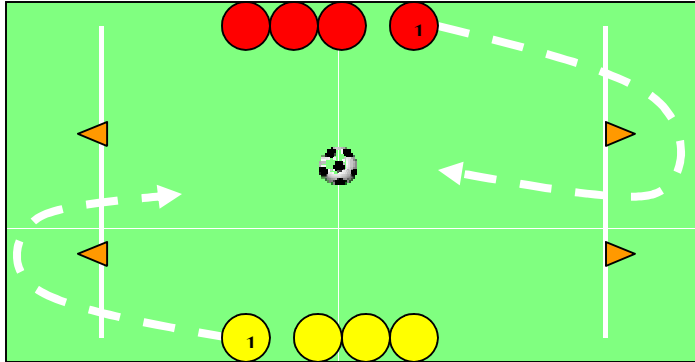
**Progressions:**

- Move pins further away as shooting technique gets better
- Have them shoot a moving ball



**25) Numbers game #1**

Divide team into 2 teams and number opposing players off against each other. When coach calls number players run through back of their goal and compete 1v1 trying to score in opposing goal. Keep a running score and add fun elements such as players must do 5 star-jumps in their goal before starting.



Coaching Points:

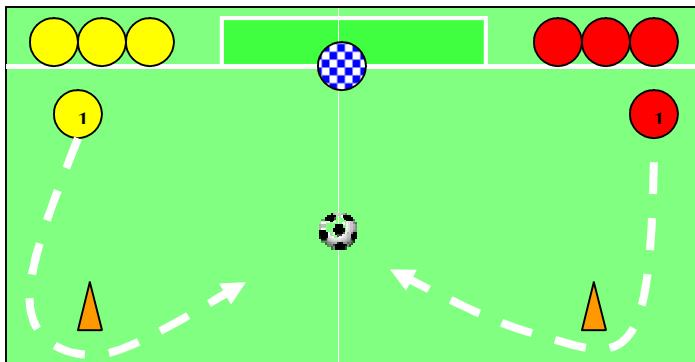
- Head up to know here opponent is
- Don't have to beat opponent to shoot
- Don't just kick
- Goals scored with toes do not count

Progressions:

- Call more than one number
- Must make a pass before shooting

**26) Numbers game #2**

Divide team into 2 teams and number opposing players off against each other. When coach calls number players run around their teams' cone and compete 1v1 trying to score in the big goal with GK. Keep a running score and add fun elements such as players must do a forward roll before starting.



Coaching Points:

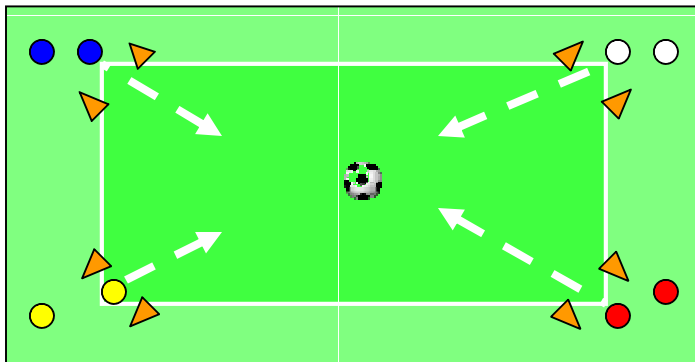
- Head up to know here opponent is
- Don't have to beat opponent to shoot
- Don't just kick
- Goals scored with toes do not count

Progressions:

- Call more than one number
- Must make a pass before shooting

**27) 4 goal knockout**

Similar to numbers game (#1), but this time divide team into 4 teams and number opposing players off against each other. When coach calls number players run through their teams' goal and compete 1v1 trying to score in any of the other teams goal. When a goal is scored on, the team from that goal are eliminated. Play until 1 team wins then begin again. Keep a running score.



Coaching Points:

- Head up to know here opponent is
- Don't have to beat opponent to shoot
- Don't just kick
- Goals scored with toes do not count

Progressions:

- Call more than one number
- Must make a pass before shooting