

Planning progression

These eight practice plans will give you a good start to the season. Whichever playing level you choose to coach, always be conscious of the ability of your athletes. If your players seem to be experiencing difficulties with a drill, look carefully at your choice of drill or your explanation before criticizing your athletes for their poor performance.

You must expect to make some adjustments for the abilities of your players. Perhaps your players need more time on some skills and less on others. Be flexible. Try to progress at a speed compatible with the abilities of your players. When planning your own practices, remember to include the six key practice components into each session.

Soccer drills and scrimmages

This section of the manual includes a selection of drills and games to develop basic soccer skills. Also included are self-test drills which allow players to check the proficiency of their skills throughout the season. Many of the drills have variations which increase their difficulty. Coaches working with older players may want to change the names of the drills to something more appropriate for that grade level.

Using drills

When selecting drills for your soccer practices, draw from both the players' manuals and the group drills in this section. Here are some guidelines to help you use drills effectively:

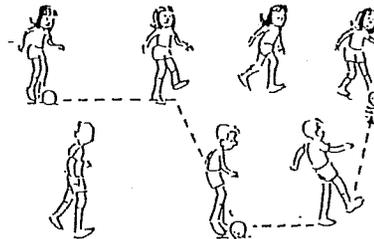
- Use individual and partner drills frequently. These give each player more of an opportunity to practice and handle the ball than group drills do.
- Use group drills (a) when there are only one or two balls for an entire team, (b) where only one or two players at a time can shoot, (c) to practice teamwork, and (d) to slow down the pace. Group drills leave players standing around.
- Arrange your players so that everyone has room to practice at the same time. This ensures plenty of activity. It also allows a youngster to practice and make mistakes without fear of being ridiculed in front of teammates.
- Do not feel that drills need to have winners and losers. Players will know whether or not they did the drill successfully by whether they made the shot or completed the pass. It is not necessary or helpful to rank players by the best or the worst.

Passing and shooting drills

Take a walk

ORGANIZATION: Players pair up and pass the ball to each other. Then, players walk along the field passing the ball back and forth and gradually progress to passing while jogging and running.

COACHING POINTS: Emphasize accurate, quick passes, and proper receiving techniques.



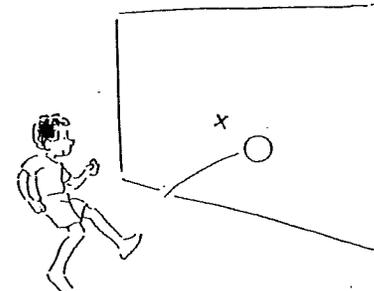
VARIATIONS:

- **Pass Ahead.** Partners pass ahead, leading players with the ball.
- **Pass Through Cones or Legs.** Partners can pass through cones to each other, or through each other's legs.
- **Pass and Shoot.** Partners pass the ball to penalty circle and shoot at goal.

Wall volley

ORGANIZATION: Each player has a ball and practices passing against a kicking wall. Players can pick a spot low on the wall for passes on the ground or high on the wall for lofted passes.

COACHING POINTS: Accurate, controlled passes are better than powerful, uncontrolled passes. Encourage players to develop passing and shooting skills using both feet.



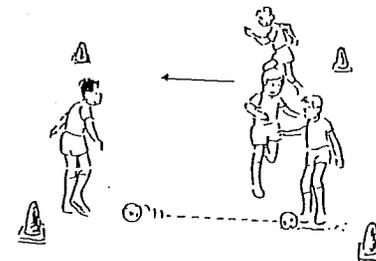
VARIATIONS:

- **Shoot to the Corner.** Paint the outline of a goal on the kicking wall and practice shooting to the corner of the wall.
- **30-Second Wall Volley Skill Check.** Players pass as many times as possible in 30 seconds. Encourage players to record scores in the charts located in their players' manuals.

Pass and move

ORGANIZATION: Three players pass the ball inside a grid with one defender trying to intercept. The object is to teach players to pass to players who are open and to move to an open area after passing.

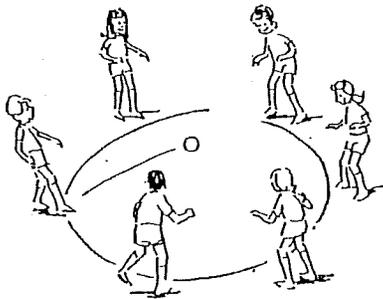
COACHING POINTS: Players should move to the side of the defensive player rather than hiding behind the defensive player. Defensive player should try to anticipate passes and move toward the passer to reduce the passing angle.



Circle passing

ORGANIZATION: Players form a circle and pass to each other. Pass to any player in the circle except to players on either side of the player with the ball.

COACHING POINTS: Passes should be crisp and accurate. Powerful passes are difficult to receive.



VARIATIONS:

- **Pressure Passing.** One player is in the middle of the circle and tries to intercept passes.
- **Pass Around.** Player in the middle of the circle passes around the circle to each player.

Soccer golf

ORGANIZATION: Select a course with trees, sprinkler heads, fence posts, and so forth, as "holes." Players shoot around the course, keeping track of the number of passes it takes to hit a hole.

COACHING POINTS: Soccer Golf is a good game to practice lofted and curve passes.

Scramble

ORGANIZATION: Three or more players line up, passing the ball between each other. The player who passes runs around to the other side in time to receive the next pass.

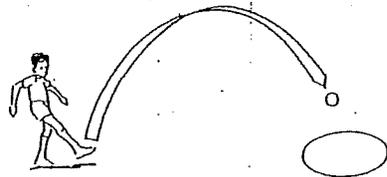
COACHING POINTS: Encourage one-touch control and accurate passes. Players should pass accurately.



Target passing

ORGANIZATION: Players stand away from a circle of rope, bicycle tire, or some type of hoop and try to pass the ball into it. Passes on the ground should stop inside the hoop. Lofted passes or head passes should first bounce inside the hoop.

COACHING POINTS: Emphasize correct passing and heading techniques. As players become better skilled, they should move farther away from the hoop.



Volley/half-volley practice

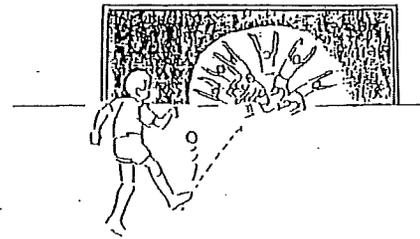
ORGANIZATION: Players pair up and take turns tossing and kicking volleys or half-volleys. Begin with easy tosses, moving farther apart as players improve.

COACHING POINTS: Begin with volleys using the inside of each foot. Progress to using the top of the foot. Stress the importance of timing and balance for volleys and half-volleys.

Roll and shoot

ORGANIZATION: Line up players in front of penalty area and roll or toss balls for shots to goal. Wait for each player to retrieve his or her ball before tossing to the next player.

COACHING POINTS: Stress accurate shots away from the center of the goal.

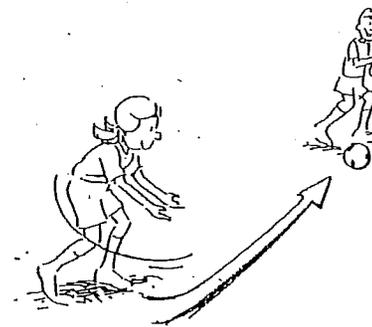


Trapping and control drills

Toss or pass and trap

ORGANIZATION: Players pair up and toss or pass the ball to each other. Receiving player traps the ball.

COACHING POINTS: Emphasize moving to the ball, reaching out the foot, leg, or chest to meet the ball, cushioning the ball, and keeping the ball close to the feet.



VARIATIONS:

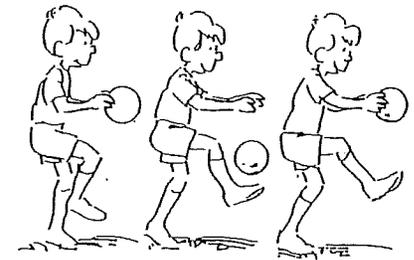
- Trap with inside, outside, and top of feet.
- Trap with top of thigh.
- Trap with chest.

Drop, kick, and catch

ORGANIZATION: This is a good drill for players to learn how to juggle and how to develop a "feel" for the ball. Hold the ball over the foot or thigh, then drop, kick, and catch. As players improve, encourage them to kick the ball twice, three times, and as many times as possible

before catching. Players can also learn to juggle using the head by tossing the ball, heading, and catching.

COACHING POINTS: Stress watching and moving to the ball.



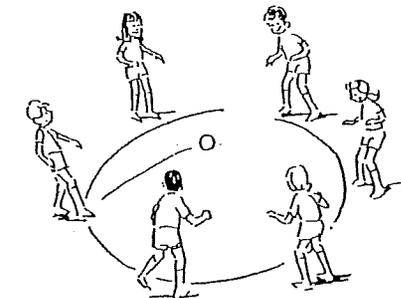
VARIATIONS:

- Keep the ball in the air using the legs, feet, and head.
- **Juggle Skill Check.** Players count the number of times they can juggle. Encourage players to record their scores in the juggle record chart in the players' manuals.

Juggle around the world

ORGANIZATION: Each player chooses the name of a country; then everyone forms a circle and juggles the ball around the world. Players can call out the name of a country and juggle the ball to that player; that player then calls out another country and passes. Also, players can head the ball around the world.

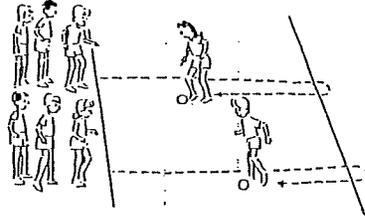
COACHING POINTS: Keep the ball in the air as long as possible by watching and moving to the ball.



VARIATIONS:

- **Dribble Around Cones Skill Check.** Mark a starting line and turnaround line 10 yd apart and space six cones evenly apart between the lines. Players are timed as they dribble in and out of the cones to the turnaround line and back. Encourage players to record their time in the record chart in their players' manuals.
- **Shuttle Run Skill Check.** Use the same starting line and turnaround line used for Dribble Around Cones. Players are timed as they dribble to each line twice. Encourage players to record their time in the record chart in their players' manuals.

COACHING POINTS: Players will dribble faster using both feet and controlling the ball rather than kicking the ball hard and running fast.



Whistle dribble

ORGANIZATION: Use a whistle and point in the direction players are to dribble or use commands such as "stop," "forward," "right," and "left."

COACHING POINTS: Players will enjoy this fun drill because of the spontaneity of your commands, so keep them guessing. Also, this is a good drill to practice changing directions quickly, as players must do in game situations.

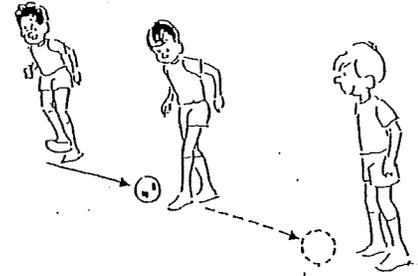


Offensive play drills

Passing line

ORGANIZATION: Players line up across the field and pass the ball to each other. Begin passing while walking and gradually progress to passing while jogging, then running.

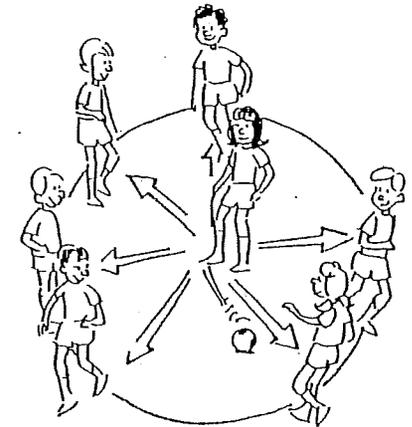
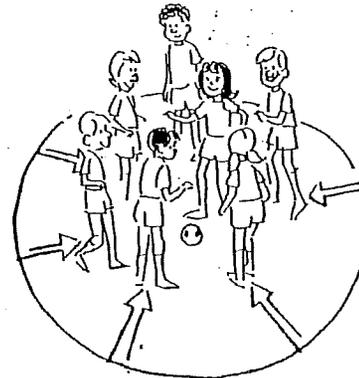
COACHING POINTS: Players must keep their heads up in order to be aware of the ball and of other players. Emphasize controlling the ball with one touch, then passing.



Explosion

ORGANIZATION: Players stand in a circle, passing a ball to a "passer" inside the circle. After each pass, players take a step toward the passer until the ball cannot be passed. Then, the passer calls out "Explosion!" and players run back to the outside of the circle.

COACHING POINTS: This game demonstrates the difficulty of passing to teammates who crowd together and the importance of spreading out the offense.



Fake-out

ORGANIZATION: Players pair up and face each other. One player has a ball and tries to fake out and dribble away from the other player.

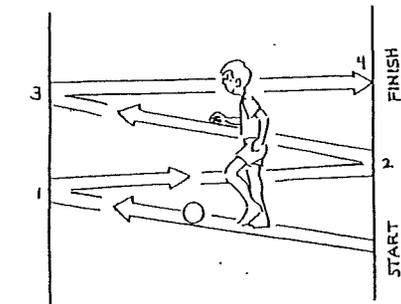
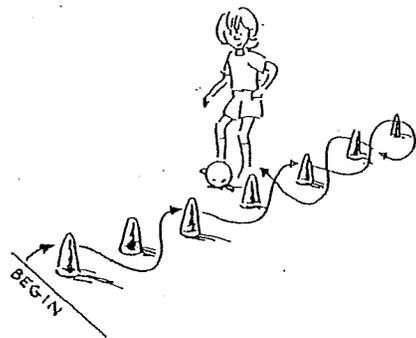
COACHING POINTS: Players must watch the defender to fake him or her out. This drill also teaches players to dribble the ball close to the feet.



Offside practice

ORGANIZATION: Two teammates play defense (one plays goalie) and two play offense. Offensive players try to pass the ball for a shot while defensive players try to make offensive players be offside.

COACHING POINTS: Ideal game to practice actual game maneuvering to receive passes and to be aware of offside. Stress communication among offensive players and among defensive players.



Dribble/relay races

ORGANIZATION: Players line up at one side of field and race each other, dribbling to the other side and back again. Players can choose several teams to have relay races. Each team member dribbles across the field and back, then passes to the next teammate.

Pepper

ORGANIZATION: One player called the passer stands in front of some teammates. These players pass the ball in the air until the passer makes a poor pass or lets the ball touch the ground. If other players make poor passes or let the ball touch, they move to the end of the line. Players at the front of the line take the passer's position.

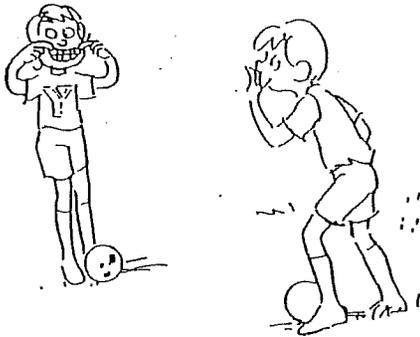
COACHING POINTS: Players should try to develop a feel for the ball playing Pepper. Also, players can play Pepper heading the ball.

Dribbling drills

Funny dribble

ORGANIZATION: Players pair up and dribble the ball while making funny faces at their partner.

COACHING POINTS: Use any part of the foot to dribble. This is a drill for fun and enjoyment.



Duck, duck, goose

ORGANIZATION: Players form a large circle and sit down. Coach selects one player to dribble the ball around outside of circle. Player walks dribbling the ball and must lightly touch head of each seated player and say the word *duck* or *goose*. Seated player remains in position if called duck, but if called goose, must get up fast and chase the dribbler. In the meantime the dribbler must dribble the ball as fast as possible around the circle and sit down in goose's position before being tagged. Goose takes dribbler's role if tag is not made.

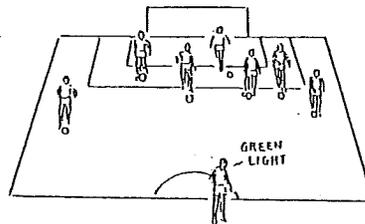
COACHING POINTS: Fun drill for young players. Useful for developing change of speed when dribbling. Make sure everyone gets a chance to be the goose.



Red light, green light

ORGANIZATION: Every player has a ball and lines up along one end of the field. One player is selected as the caller and stands at the other end and calls the commands, "red light" or "green light." Players can dribble toward the coach on "green light" but must stop quickly on "red light" because the caller spins around to spot any moving players. Players seen moving are sent back to the starting position. Players try to get beyond the caller without being spotted.

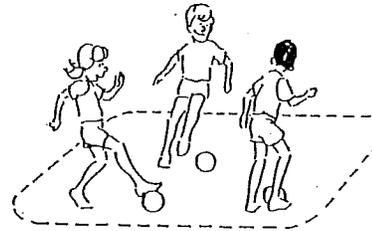
COACHING POINTS: Good with younger players. The variation puts players in position of making fair calls. To ensure honesty, it may be necessary for an assistant coach or a player to watch the moving players.



Wiggle dribble

ORGANIZATION: Each player has a ball. Players gather inside a grid area and dribble, trying not to touch the other players or the balls.

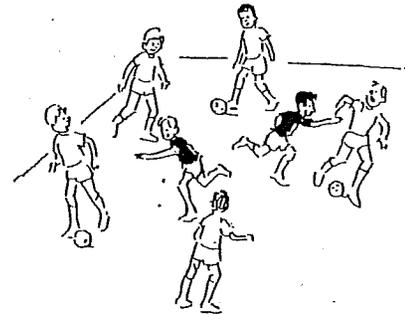
COACHING POINTS: Good game to teach players to look up when dribbling.



VARIATIONS:

Pacman. Two players are selected to be pacmen and stand outside grid until the game begins. All other players dribble the ball inside the grid. Pacmen try to tag the players who are dribbling the balls. If tagged, the player is "frozen" until another player passes a ball through the frozen player's legs. Game ends when all players are frozen.

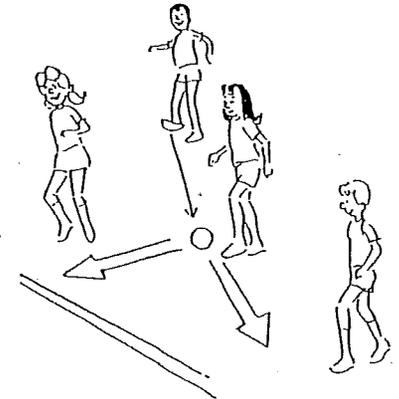
Space raiders. Choose two players to be "raiders." All other players dribble the balls inside the grid. Raiders try to steal the balls without fouling. Players who lose the balls become raiders and must help steal the balls. Game ends when every player loses the ball. This can be made more difficult by specifying the foot players must use to dribble. Can divide into teams and see how many balls each team can steal in 60 seconds.



Dribble, dribble, pass

ORGANIZATION: Players pair up and practice dribbling and passing. Each player touches the ball to gain control, dribbles once with each foot, and passes to partner.

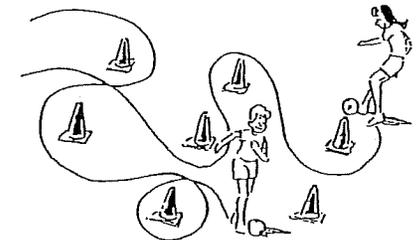
COACHING POINTS: A good drill to practice touch control and dribbling with each foot. Begin with players walking. Progress to jogging, then running at game speed.

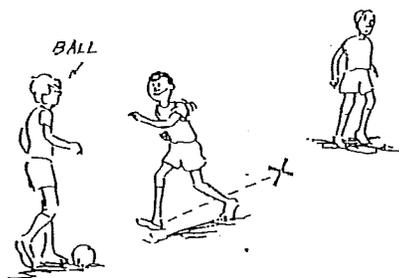


Zig-zag

ORGANIZATION: Set up cones or other markers 6 to 10 ft apart. Players dribble in zig-zag motion around the cones. This can be practiced around cones marking grid practice area.

COACHING POINTS: Players should dribble as fast as they can control the ball. As players become better skilled, they can speed up and change directions as they dribble around cones.





Tackle practice

ORGANIZATION: Players pair up and practice tackling the ball from the front and from behind and practice sliding.

COACHING POINTS: Begin with tackling from the front and progress to tackling from the back; then practice slide tackling. Stress tackling the ball rather than the person.

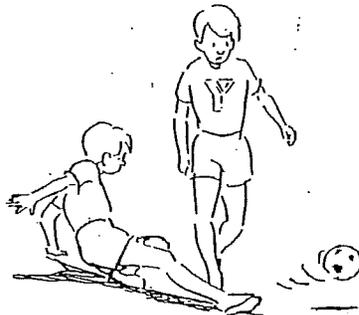
VARIATIONS:

- **Front Tackle.** One player walks with the ball as the defender approaches and tackles the ball, pushing it beyond the offensive player. Progress to tackling as dribbler jogs, then runs at game speed.



- **Slide Tackle.** (For 7th to 9th grade players only.) Teach sliding on a grass field, loose dirt surface, or wet plastic sheet. Players hold up hands as they bend the back leg and lay back. Progress from sliding without the ball to

tackling loose balls, to tackling balls dribbled slowly, and to tackling balls dribbled at game speed.



Clear ball to side

ORGANIZATION: Pair up players. Offensive player dribbles the ball toward the goal. Defensive player tries to tackle and clear the ball to the side of field.

COACHING POINTS: Stress the importance of offensive players controlling the ball and defensive players staying between the ball and goal.

Vacuum cleaner

ORGANIZATION: Players practice goalkeeping by rolling balls to each other and scooping them up like a vacuum cleaner. Progress to passing the ball with feet to taking easy shots.

COACHING POINTS: Fun drill to teach proper goalkeeping technique. Players should move in front of the ball, bend down to meet the ball, and scoop up the ball.



Goalie dive practice

ORGANIZATION: (For 7th to 9th grade players only.) Teach diving after balls from a kneeling position. As players become comfortable catching the ball and falling on the ground, progress to diving from a squatting position, then to a crossover step and dive.

COACHING POINTS: Follow instructions for diving explained in the *Strikers Manual*. Allow players to progress at their own rates. Some players will not want to dive after balls, whereas others will enjoy the challenge.



Effective scrimmaging

The coach plays

Coaches who possess good soccer skills often enjoy playing in the scrimmages. This can be an effective and enjoyable teaching technique when coaching players who lack skill development and

playing experience. Playing with the coach gives athletes the chance to see good soccer skills and motivates them to perform as well as they can. However, to be effective, it is important that coaches remember that the purpose of their participation is to further player development, not to impress or embarrass their players. When the coach plays, it often helps to introduce some or all of the following restrictions:

- The coach plays on the team that has the ball. If the ball is turned over, the coach switches teams and always remains on offense.
- The coach can only pass—no dribbling or shooting.
- The coach cannot receive throw-ins or take free kicks or corner kicks.

Full-court or small-sided games?

Small-sided scrimmage formats, for example, 2 on 2 or 3 on 3, give everyone the chance to handle the ball and to take an active part in play. This is especially valuable for the less skilled or less experienced players who might otherwise tend to be ignored by the better players. Playing different types of minigames, such as No Dribble Minigames, allows players to concentrate on certain skills. Increased contact with the ball because of fewer players will produce a faster rate of improvement. Occasional full-court games are fine—in fact, they are essential when preparing players for league competition—but do not play them all the time. There are many activities that will give your players competition and still permit maximum participation and involvement. Remember, Y Soccer is intended to give all players an enjoyable and beneficial playing experience. Following are some other scrimmage ideas:

Soccer baseball

ORGANIZATION: Establish a field with home plate, bases, and out-of-bounds lines. Divide players into teams of even ability, and play ball. Pitchers pass the ball to kickers with their feet. The runner is out if touched with the ball, if the ball reaches the base before the runner, or if the ball is passed back to pitcher before the runner reaches first base.

COACHING POINTS: Keep the game moving and the players interested in the game by not keeping outs. Each team "bats" until each player has kicked. Of course, outs are important because they keep players off the bases and out of scoring position.