

Coaching Curriculum

Active Start Program
U5 & U6

U5 & U6 Curriculum

Welcome to the U5/6 Coaching Curriculum.

This LIVE document will provide you with activities and ideas appropriate to the young kids you are working with.

Comments have been turned ON. Feel free to ask questions or contribute some more ideas for everyone who may access this document. I will attempt to answer any questions I can and would encourage all other coaches to add any thoughts or ideas they may have to help enhance each activity so we can

You may download this document in MS PowerPoint format or print it directly as is.

Select Program Curriculum

Program Introduction

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Cool Down & Wrap-up

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U5/6 Program Introduction

Player Characteristics and Coaching Methodology

Overall objective of the U5/6 program

- Fun and enjoyment delivered through a soccer experience.
- Players may not pick up a single skill but as long as they can associate soccer with FUN you have done your job.

Characteristics of the U5/6 Player

- Ego-centric, Poor motor skills, Inability to perform certain tasks due to underdeveloped ligaments flexibility etc...,
- Unable to understand certain instructions due to underdeveloped cognitive centers - Be patient and use simple language,
- Less efficient cooling system - Constant water breaks recommended.

Coaching Methodology for the U5/6 Player

- Players should be encouraged to experiment through failure. Guide the players in the right direction, avoid telling them how to get there.
- Nothing a child does at this age is ever wrong...it is all part of the learning process. Constant encouragement is a must.
- Keep all players active as much as you can and encourage parent participation as often as possible.

U5/6 Program Introduction

Suggested Session Structure

The drills and activities presented here provide you with general ideas for content for the 45 to 60 minutes you have on field. Every practice you plan should follow the general session structure outlined below.

Welcome & Free Play (10 to 15min)

Acknowledge every player. Make them feel welcome. As the players arrive have them take a ball and start playing however they want (watch out for safety issues). Encourage mom or dad to get involved and share this time with their child. As the coach, get out there and start stealing the ball from players and let them steal it back from you. Have fun with this and encourage your assistants to do the same.

Technical Activity / Game (15 to 20min)

Activities for this portion of the practice are contained in these slides.

Avoid lines for these activities. Every player should be active and with a ball. Most of the time you can keep the player active and engaged with only one activity BUT sometimes the players will get bored so you may have to transition into a second activity in order to keep their interest.

Final Game (15 to 20min)

Activities for this portion of the practice are contained in these slides.

U5/6 Program Introduction

Transition & Player Management Activities

At this age, with short attention spans the ability to transition from one activity to the next is crucial. If you cannot transition well a 60 minute practice is spent trying to corral the kids. Below are a few 'transition activities' you should consider to help manage your players.

This not That – Similar to “Simon Says” players are to copy you when you say “DO THIS” but should not copy you when you say “DO THAT”. Use various body movements to have fun with this (arms in the air, hands on your bum, balance on one leg, hop around in circles). When you start playing this game with a couple of kids the rest of the group will come over to join in. You now have their attention to introduce the next activity.

Do as I say – players line up single file facing you, there is a line of red cones to one side and a line of yellow cones to the other side of them. The lines are about 3 to 5 yards away from the players. Get the players jogging on the spot. When you say “Yellow” the players should run to the yellow line and wait there until the coach asks them to come back to the middle. Reward the players who thought correctly and quickly or show improvement. You can make it more challenging by pointing to the red line but calling “yellow”. Players must do as you say.

Rock Paper Scissors – Players stand about 1 yard apart with a stationary ball between them. They stand with their feet together at the ankles facing each other. They play Rock, Paper, Scissors; the winner of RPS gets to kick the ball at the loser. The loser can attempt to jump out of the way of the kick. If the kicker hits the opponent the kicker gets one point, if the kicker misses then the opponent gets 1 point. Play best of three or five or seven...

Technical Activities / Games

Choose any of the activities suggested below as you see fit and based on the ability and motivation of your players. All of these activities should be preceded by a warm-up (i.e. the Welcome and Free Play time) and followed by one of the scrimmage games presented later in this document. Repeating sessions is OK and encouraged. Young players can gain a lot of confidence from successfully anticipating what is next but there is a balance between repeating a session and maintaining player motivation - use your best judgement based on the players you have.

Suggested Activities Presented in the Following Slides

General Ball Control & Motor Coordination Activities

Dribbling and Possession Games

1v1 Competitive Activities

With each of your activities feel free to encourage the parents to work with their child. This is especially important for near the beginning of the season when everything is new for the players. As they get comfortable with the group each individual will move gradually away from working with mom or dad toward competing against other players

Technical Activities / Games

General Ball Control & Motor Coordination

Technical Activities / Games

General Ball Control & Motor Coordination

Every player should have a ball during this portion of the practice. Players will move around the area with the ball and follow your instructions. Different ideas are presented over the next two slides. You can pick and choose from these different activities to keep players active and practicing skills for up to 15 minutes. Allow sufficient time for the players to experience success with each activity.

Player Management - “Captain’s!” - When the coach call out “CAPTAINS!” each player should stop the ball with the bottom of their foot and stand tall and proud with one foot on the ground and one foot on the ball (like they are the captain of their team). Give a ‘High 5’ to the first few kids to do this each time you call it (it will encourage good listening).

Be energetic and build the anticipation - If you want the kids to have fun, YOU need to have fun. Avoid going through the motions and start thinking like a kid...they are itching to go, so try to hold them at bay for just a little bit to build the anticipation and then let them release it. Maintain control of the group (use “Captains”, or “High 5’s” or transition activities to keep their interest and reward positive behaviour rather than attempting to correct poor behaviour. If you are consistent with this then the kids will fall in line easily)

Dribbling - Encourage the use of all 6 surfaces of the foot - inside, outside, bottom, toe, laces, heel. Early sessions should emphasise the bottom and inside of the foot.

Slow - Ask the players “what is something that moves slowly?” When they answer, ask them to dribble like that (i.e. dribble slowly like a slug!)

Technical Activities / Games

General Ball Control & Motor Coordination

Motor Coordination

Players have free movement inside the designated area. They can be encouraged to run with the ball in different ways (as outlined below).

Progression - Coach asks a player for a cue word (i.e. a flavour of ice cream, or a type of animal, colour or shape and associate that 'thing' with a specific skill). Coach links the cue word to a movement (listed below). On the coach's command players should execute the movement (as was demonstrated by the coach). Let players practice that one movement for a minute before adding a second movement, then a third. Have no more than three movements. Once they know three movements you may call out the cue's in various order and celebrate as the players execute the movements.

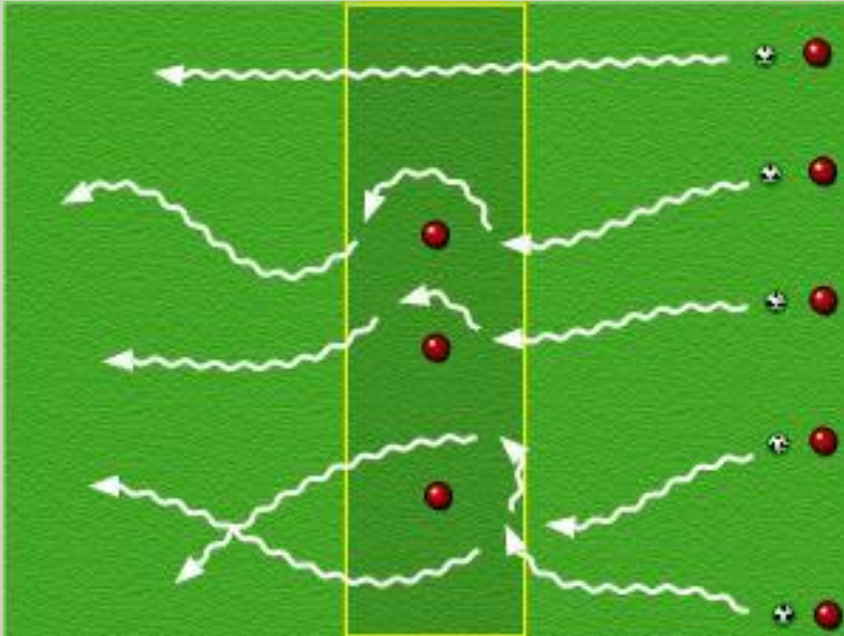
- Running with the ball - Have fun and encourage players to dribble the ball using BIG steps, SMALL steps, SIDEWAYS steps, BACKWARDS steps, LOW steps, HIGH steps, LONG steps, SHORT steps, ONE FOOTed hops etc...
- Toe taps on the ball – hopping from foot to foot to push the bottom of their foot onto the top of the ball.
- Shuffles – tapping the ball from side to side using various surfaces of the foot
- Fast Forward – rolling the ball forward using various surfaces of the foot
- Rewind – rolling the ball backwards using various surfaces for the foot
- Around the world – with the ball stationary, players run circles around the ball while always facing the same direction

Technical Activities / Games

Dribbling and Possession

Technical Activities / Games

Dribbling and Possession



Sticky Seaweed

- A Player or Coach starts in the middle section. They are the “seaweed”. All others start on the edge of the area. The others are “fish”.
- The seaweed is restricted to the central area only and must keep one foot planted in place.
- The fish must swim from one side to the other and protect their ‘food’ (ball) from getting caught in the seaweed.
- If their food gets caught they now become seaweed.
- Play kids vs parents (kids start as seaweed then flip the roles).

Technical Activities / Games

Dribbling and Possession

Red Light / Green Light

- Players are on line with ball and coach is 15 to 20yds away .
- Coach says “Green Light” and players move forward with ball
- Coach says “Orange Light” and players begin to stop ball with the bottom of their foot
- Coach says “Red Light” and all players should be stopped with the ball under their feet.
- Once a player gets in line with coach they have made it through the intersection. Continue until all players are across.
- Do NOT punish poor skill by sending the player back to the beginning, instead simply congratulate those who succeeded in their efforts to control the ball.
- Parents can accompany thier child during the game to help instruct the technique of stopping the ball with the bottom of the foot.

Freeze Tag

- Players dribble around the area and try to keep away from those who are “it”
- Once tagged the the player who is “it” you must stand with your feet apart and hold your ball above your head.
- To be freed someone must pass their ball between your legs
- Game continuea until everyone is tagged or for set time limit.
- Change up those who are “it”
- Progression - Instead of being tagged, those who are ‘it’ must kick your ball out of the area for you to be frozen. Players can be coached on using their body to protecting the ball (shielding).

Donkey Tails Tag

- Players puts a pinnie in their waistband. This is their ‘tail’
- Players chase each other and ‘catch’ other tails while protecting their own. Ask players to twist, spin, change directions to protect their tail (no hands allowed to guard tail).
- Set time limit. Can catch multiple tails. Most tails wins.
- Progression - Change the size of area for a different challenge. All players must dribble a ball.

Technical Activities / Games

Dribbling and Possession



Squirrels and Acorns (ignore the colours in this diagram)

- Split the group into 4 teams, with 1 team in each corner.
- One player (squirrel) at a time can leave their corner (nest) to get a ball (acorn) and bring it back.
- Once the acorn is in the nest the next squirrel can venture out to gather the next acorn
- Play until all the acorns have been gathered out of the middle.
- Players can begin by picking up the acorns.
- Progress to having the players use their feet only to dribble the acorns.
- Progress to playing a timed game where squirrels can steal acorns from other nests. (squirrels in that nest cannot defend).

Technical Activities / Games

Dribbling and Possession

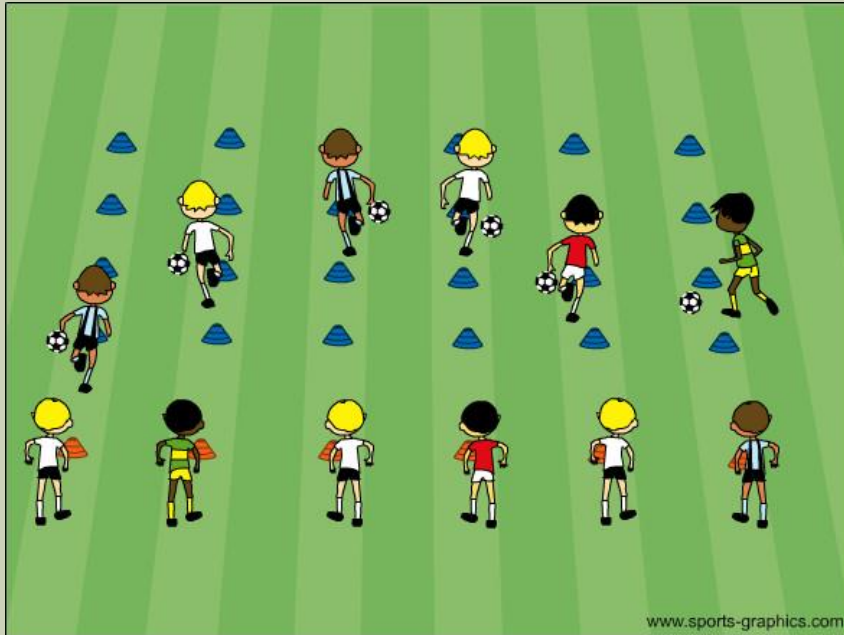


Mixed Bag

- Players move around with ball at feet
- Players can execute various ball control and coordination skills (as described earlier [HERE](#))
- Players can dribble the ball through the gates...keeping their head up to find the open one...play musical gates (like musical chairs)...hum a tune and when you stop see who is not in a gate
- See how many gates they can dribble through in 30s.
- Players now dribble to a gate and turn away using the bottom of the foot to pull the ball back...do right foot only...left foot only.
- Players dribble the ball to the gates and then pass the ball thru (between) and run around to receive on the other side
- Players pass the ball along the cones and run around to receive on the other side.
- See how many they can do in 30s...let them try to beat their score.

Session 1

Relay Races



Organization

- Two or Three players per line
- Set up 'relay' cones 1-2yds apart with the 'start' cones a bit further from the rest
- Full length of relay should be 10-12yds
- Each line should have a couple of balls (one to use plus spares)

Progression

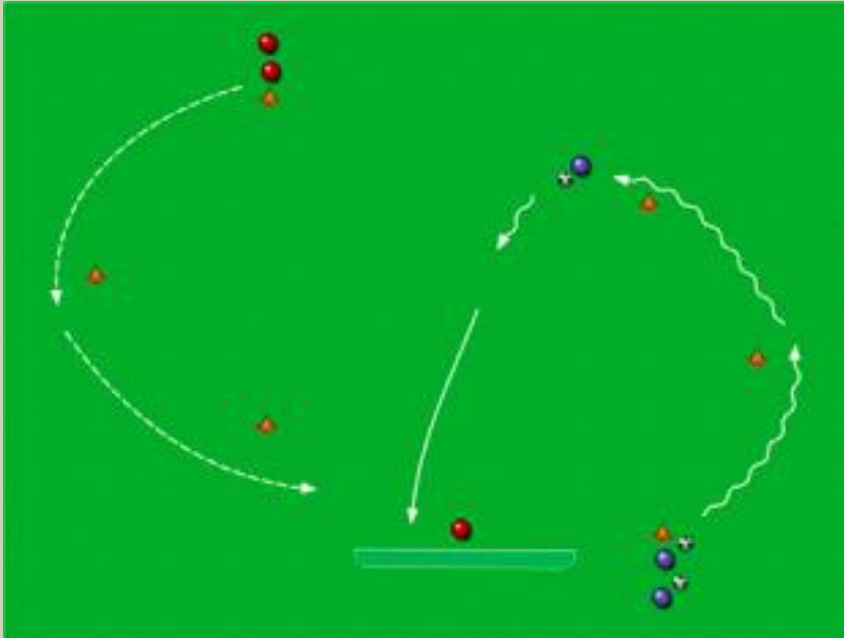
- Start with ball above head, bunny hop to the end and back
- Put ball between knees, zig-zag through cones and back
- Dribble ball straight to end and back
- Dribble ball through cones and back
- Dribble ball to end, stop it and run back. Partner runs to turns the ball and dribbles back

Technical Activities / Games

1v1 Competition

Technical Activities / Games

1v1 Competition

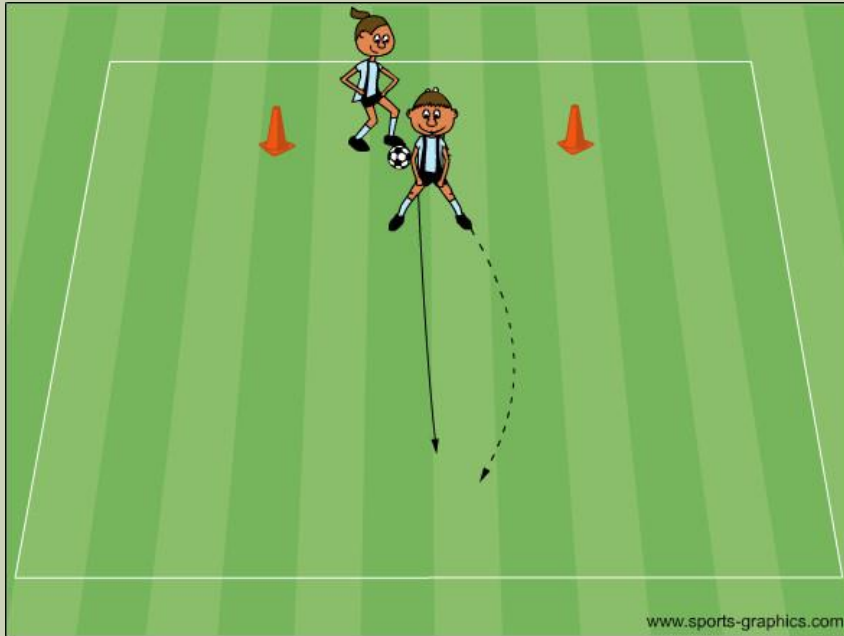


Around the Horn

- Line the players as shown in the diagram. Run the activity against TWO nets if more than 6 or 8 players.
- One player will dribble a ball away from the net (blue players on the right) and stay to the outside of the cones. At the same time one player will run toward the net (red players to the left) and stay to the outside of the cones.
- The player dribbling the ball attempts to score a goal while the player running toward the net attempts to defend the goal.
- Both players will then switch lines.
- Add a 5 second time limit for the attacker to shoot...you count down so they can hear, this will speed up the process.
- Give the attacker a bonus point if they shoot before 5 seconds is up. Give the defender a bonus point if they are active and close down the attacker to prevent the shot.

Technical Activities / Games

1v1 Competition



1v1 Through The Legs

- Pair the players together.
- Each pair will have a goal to score on (these can be two cones set up a few yards apart).
- One player (the attacker) stands about a yard in front of the goal, facing away from net with their legs apart. The other player (defender) stands behind them with the ball.
- When both players are ready the defender will “pass” the ball between the legs of the attacker. The attacker will go out to get the ball, turn and attempt to score a goal against the defender.
- Players will then switch roles.
- Vary the size of the goal to the ability of the player.
- Have the players keep track of their scores. Have parents help by supervising and keeping players on task. Circulate and give lots of support to each group.
- Some players can stay fully engage with this activity

Technical Activities / Games

1v1 Competition



1v1 Dribble & Shoot

- Two teams start on either side of net, one team with ball, one without.
- Run the activity against TWO goals if you have more than 6 to 8 players.
- Players compete against each other.
- Attacker must dribble around cone and shoot before defender can run around opposite cone and win the ball.
- Players change lines after each shot
- Vary the distance and angle of each cone to control how quickly the defender can get to the ball.

Scrimmage Games

direction and the concept of “stealing” the ball from an opponent (or having it “stolen” from them). Progress from SIMPLE to COMPLEX when introducing your scrimmage games. The games below have been presented in that simple to complex progression.

With any game, be consistent and get them playing quickly. You can use these games to introduce the players to the “rules” of the game (corner kicks, kick-ins etc...). Encourage positive competition and ‘good’ soccer (i.e. using their skill to control and dribble the ball and not simply kick-it). Attempt to match players up against appropriate opponents (aggressive vs aggressive, fast vs fast etc.).

Scrimmage Game Suggestions

1v0 to a single goal with ball moving away from goal

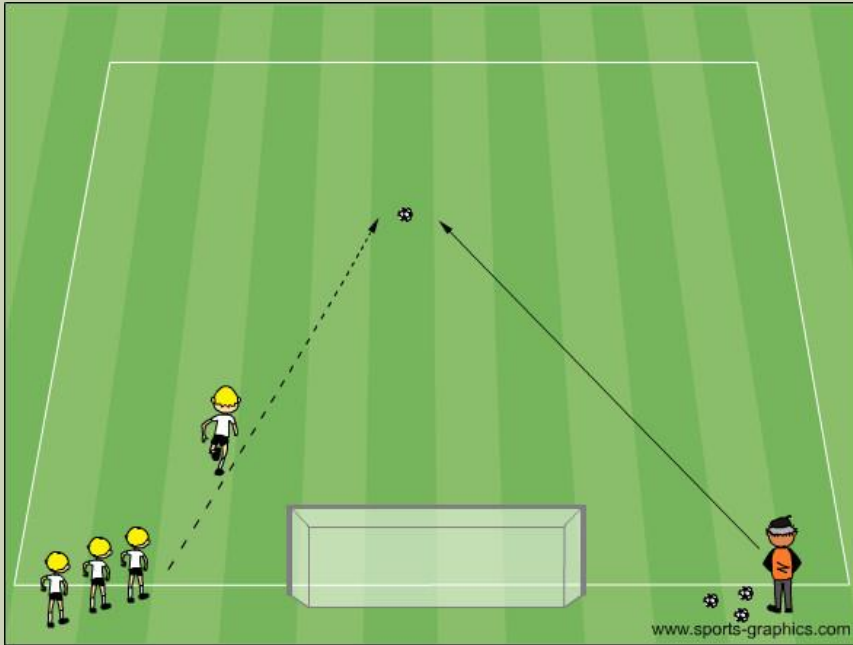
1v1 to a single goal with ball moving away from goal

3 Goal Game

Numbers Game

Be sure to plan for AT LEAST 15 to 20 minutes of scrimmage time at the end of each session. Scrimmaging should not be an afterthought.

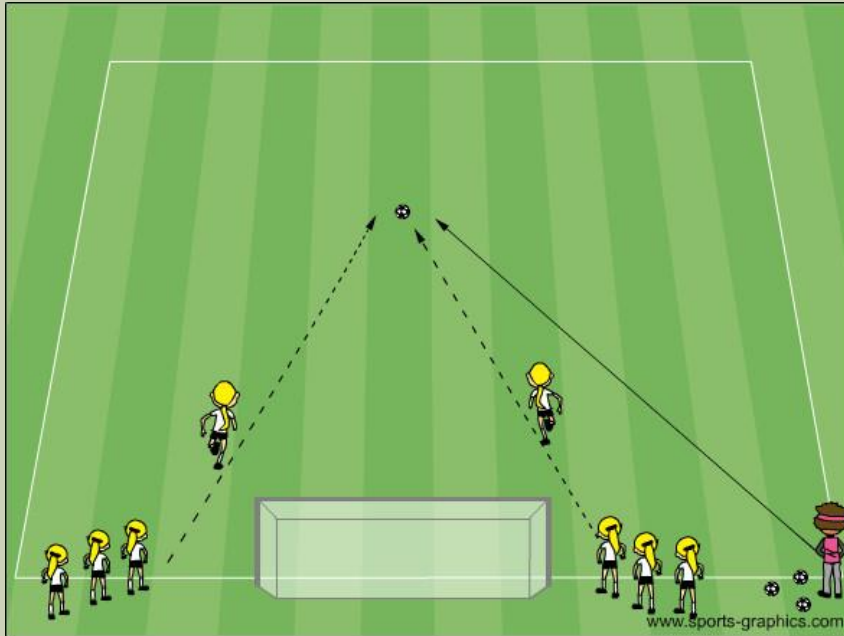
Scrimmage Games



1v0 to Single Goal w/ Ball Moving Away

- This is the most basic form of the game. Start with this activity for players that are very new to the game and don't yet understand direction or the objective of scoring a goal
- Players start to one side of the goal
- Use TWO goals if more than 6 or 7 players
- Coach plays the ball away from goal and the first player in line attacks the ball, controls it and turns to score on goal.
- Coach can add a 5 second time limit to encourage quicker play.
- Coach can start in the goal, play the ball out and act as a GK to challenge the stronger attackers
- Use parents and have the players turn to attack mom or dad and score a goal.

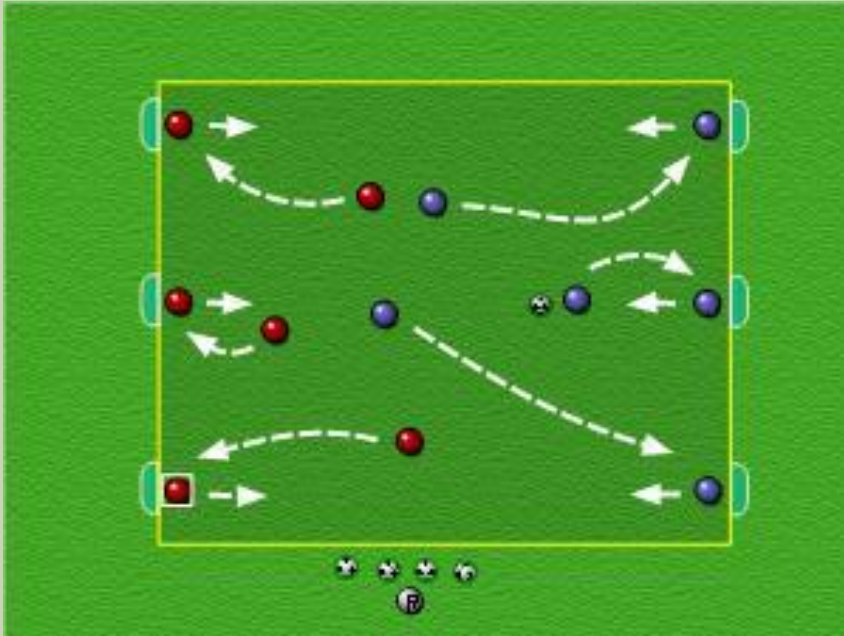
Scrimmage Games



1v1 to Single Goal w/ Ball Moving Away

- This is the next step in complexity of the game. This activity will help introduce players to the 'battle' of competition
- Two lines of players start on either side of the goal
- Use TWO goals if more than 8 to 10 players
- Coach plays the ball away from goal and the first player in each line runs out and competes to control the ball, turn and score a goal while the opponent is doing the same.
- The player who has the ball is the attacker and attempts to score, the player who doesn't have the ball is the defender and attempts to prevent to goal.
- If the defender wins the ball they now try to score and the other player defends.
- Coach can start in the goal, play the ball out and act as a GK to challenge the stronger attackers
- Use parents and have the players compete against their parent to score.

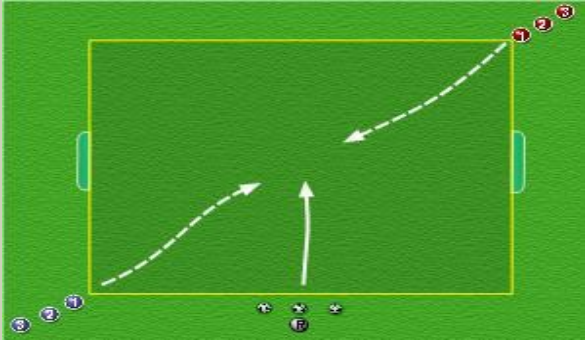
Scrimmage Games



THREE Goal Game (Switching Game)

- Players are split for two balanced teams of 4 to 6 players. 3 players will act as GK and 3 will play out.
- On coaches command (SWITCH!) the players who are out will switch with the GK's.
- Teams can score on any of the three goals
- Play is continuous until a goal is scored, the ball is out of play or the coach calls for a switch
- Play with 2 goals if 4 players on a team or alternate between 2 goals and 3 goals if 5 players
- Emphasize quick shooting
- Vary size of goals if needed (i.e. the whole end line could be a goal)

Small Sided Games



Numbers Game (1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4...)

- A great game to help manage your numbers and pair players up against similar opponents
- Typical area size is 20x30yds.
- Each player is given a number, when the coach calls out a series of numbers, those players compete against each other.
- All players could have a unique number OR each player on one team can have a set of numbers that matches an opponent on the other team.
- Play 1v1, 2v2 or 3v3
- For FUN have player hold hands or link arms when they come on to the field

Cool Down & Wrap Up

Have the kids help pick up the equipment. Make it fun...have them pick up cones like an elephant or a sumo wrestler.

Be sure to acknowledge the efforts of everyone and leave them feeling positive about their experience and looking forward to their next time together.