

Activities and Games

"I can do this....can you?"(motor movements): Coach demonstrates various motor movements without the ball(ex: skipping, hopping on one leg, jumping in place and doing a 360 degree turn, balancing on leg with hands out).

Variations:-Allow the kids to invent something to do.

"Try this.....(receiving, ball control)": Coach demonstrates various exercises with the ball (ex: tossing ball into the air and catching it, tossing ball into the air and clapping before catching it, tossing the ball into the air and touching it with the foot before it touches the ground, or various footwork on the ball like "rapid toe touches").

Variations:-Allow the kids to invent something to do.

Pendulums(ball control):Move the ball from the inside of one foot to the inside of the other foot.

Variation:-How fast can the players move the ball from foot to foot?How far apart can their feet go and still move the ball between their feet?

Snake Dribbling(dribbling): In small groups of two to three, players follow the leader while dribbling. Switch the leader so every child gets a turn to lead.

Variation: Coach is the leader. Try it first without dribbling the balls

The Sprinkler(warm-up, dribbling, passing, teamwork): Every player with a ball. On coach's command, players hand balls to coach and coach tosses the balls in various directions. Players must bring the ball back to the coach as quickly as possible on the dribble with their feet.

Variation:Players bring ball back while bouncing the ball with the hands.Players bring the ball back while touching it to their heads.Players bring ball back with their elbows.Allow U6-U8 players to work in pairs bringing the ball back with a certain number of passes, body parts, or touches per player.Vary how far you toss the ball.Coach moves around the area constantly so players have to keep their head up when bringing the ball back to the coach.

Red Light...Green Light!(dribbling):Every player has a ball at the starting line. Designate a finish line approximately 15-25 yards away. Players attempt to be the first to drive their car (dribble the ball) over the finish line. On the coach's command of "green light!", players dribble towards the finish line. On the coach's command of "red light!", players must "hit the brakes"(stop their ball immediately with the bottom of the foot). Any player that cannot stop their ball immediately must go back even with the last person.

Variation:Vary the surfaces of the foot that the player must dribble or stop the ball with.Vary the body surface that the players stop the ball with (ex: elbow, knee, head).Try it first without the ball.

Body Part Dribbling(dribbling, flexibility):In a designated grid, players dribble and on the coach's command they stop the ball with the body part called out by the coach. Keep your head and eyes looking up so you don't run into anyone.

Heads Up!(dribbling):In a designated area, players dribble their ball. Coach holds out a certain number of fingers on his hand at waist level (ex: two fingers). Players must shout out, without stopping their dribble, the number of fingers the coach is holding out.

Variation:Coach moves about the area so players really have to concentrate on dribbling with their heads up.

Sharks and Minnows(dribbling):Every player with a ball lined up on the end line of a designated grid. A player in the middle is designated as the "Shark". Grid should be long and narrow. On the coach's command, players attempt to dribble their ball across the "ocean" (open space) to "safe land" (the other end line). If a player is tagged by the shark, they become a shark next round. Continue until there is one minnow left.

Variation: Try the game without balls first. Shark has to kick the minnow's ball out of the grid before they become a shark

Crazy Cones(dribbling, passing):In a designated area, set up numerous cones (or big plastic cups). On the coach's command, players attempt to knock over all the cones by passing their ball against them. Player who knocks over the most cones wins.

Variation: Divide into two teams and have a competition. Vary the surface of the foot they are allowed to touch the ball with. Designate a player that tries to stand the cones up after they are knocked over. If the team can knock over all the cones at once they win!

"New Ball!":3v3 game with two small goals. Every time the ball goes out of play, coach immediately introduces a new ball to play. After all the balls are gone, players gather them up and bring them back to the coach.

Race Car Driver(dribbling):In a designated area, set up 6-8 small "tunnels" (two cones approx. 5-6 feet apart). On the coach's command, players attempt to drive their cars (dribble their balls), through as many tunnels as possible in a designated time period. If a player crashes their car (ball or player runs into a cone, another person, or another ball), they must go to the garage (coach) and get the car fixed (ex: a ball skill) before re-entering the area. Player who drives through the most tunnels wins!

Variation: Vary the width of the tunnels.

Math Dribble(dribbling):Every player with a ball dribbling in a designated area. Coach calls out 1, 2, or 3. Players dribble into groups of number called out by coach (ex: a group of two or a group of three).

Variation: Coach calls out "3-1" or "1+1"

Tag(dribbling):All players with a ball in a designated area. One player without a ball designated as the "tagger". On the coach's command, players dribble and avoid being touched by the tagger. If tagged, player has to perform a ball skill (ex: 3 headers) before entering play again. Switch tagger after a short interval.

Variation: Make tagger dribble a ball also. Player tagged switches with the tagger. Play the game without using balls.

Knee Tag(dribbling):Every player with a ball in a designated grid. On coach's command, players dribble and attempt to tag any other player on the knee. Players count how many knees they tag in a certain time period.

Variation: Play without balls to begin with. Play with two teams. Players may only tag someone on the other team.

Behind the Back Tag(dribbling):Every player has a ball in a designated grid. Each player must keep one hand behind their back at all times. On coach's command, all players dribble and attempt to tag any player on the hand held behind the back. Players count how many hands they tag.

-Play with two teams. Players may only tag someone on the other team.

Stuck in the Mud(dribbling, passing):Every player with a ball. One player designated as a "tagger". On coach's command, all players dribble and avoid the tagger. If tagged, players are "stuck in the mud" (frozen). Players that are stuck in the mud must hold their ball above their head, spread their legs, and yell "Help! Help! I'm stuck in the mud!". Players can get out of the mud if another player passes a ball between the "stuck" player's legs. Tagger attempts get every player "stuck in the mud". Switch tagger after a short interval.

Variation: Divide group into two teams. Team that avoids getting every player stuck in the mud wins.

Squares(dribbling with their head's up):Split kids into 2 groups, 1 in each square, on command they leave their ball and switch squares to find a new one.

Variations:Try it without a ball.Dribble ball over to the other square.

Keep Your Yard Clean(Dribbling, Passing, Receiving, Striking the Ball):Divide your area into three zones. Put half the players, each with a ball, in each of the end zones. An "empty lot"(empty zone) separates the two teams. Keep your yard clean by kicking the trash (passing the ball) over the empty lot and into the other team's yard. Play for a designated time period. Team with the cleanest yard (least amount of balls) wins. Empty lot needs to be big enough to protect the players from getting struck in the head/face with the ball.

Variations:Try to pass through the other team's yard and into their "house" (space behind the yard).Throw the trash into the neighbor's yard (throw-ins).Make players "inspect the trash" (stop it with the inside of the foot) before kicking into the other teams yard. This will keep balls from flying everywhere!Dribble the trash into the opponent's yard.

Moving Goal(dribbling, receiving, passing):Every player with a ball dribbling in a designated grid. Two coaches form a goal by standing as far apart from one another as possible while holding a shirt (or ball bag or whatever you have useful), with one hand each, between them at head level. The "coach goal" should move rapidly around the grid and players attempt to dribble their ball through the moving goal as many times as possible.

Variation:More than one moving goal (solicit parents to help).Have the players pass in pairs through the goal for a point.

Steal the Bacon (dribbling, passing, shooting, defending, small group play):Two teams with a player from each team designated the same number as a player on the opposing team. Teams are placed behind the end lines on opposite ends of the field. Coach tosses a ball into the field and calls out a number of the players (ex: "2's!"). Players that are called out enter the field and attempt to score on the opponent's goal.

Variation:Coach calls out two or three numbers and teams play 2v2 or 3v3 against each other (ex: "1's and 3's!").

Many goals(dribbling, passing):In a designated area, set up numerous (5-7) cone goals ranging from 3-6 feet in width. Every player has a ball and on the coach's command they attempt to dribble through as many goals as possible in a time period.

Variation:Cannot dribble through the same goal twice in a row.Players work in pairs and must pass through the goals. Players must play a "one touch" pass through the goals.Two teams compete by adding total points scored.

Knockout (Dribbling and Shielding): All players in a designated area with a ball. On the coach's command, players try to knock other players' balls out of the grid, without losing possession of their own ball. If a player's ball is knocked out, They must perform a ball skill (ex: pendulums) before re-entering play. If a player can retrieve their ball before it leaves the grid, they can keep playing.

Variations:Play with two teams attempting to knock the opponent's balls out. Make the grid very small to encourage shielding.

Coaching Goals for the Spring 2005 Season

Y-Kickers Age 3-4

Ball Mastery: This will be a slow introduction to the soccer ball. Many kids are going to want to pick up the ball and run with it everywhere they go. That is natural and sometimes encouraged (see Coordination/Agility). Because the kids are only interested in their own ball, use this as an advantage in teaching the skills of dribbling. Coaches should encourage the use of both feet. The goal of the season is for players to have the ability to dribble with the inside of the foot, outside of the foot and their laces and to be able to change directions and stop the ball on the coach's command. Players should be familiar with the ball touching all of the "receiving" surfaces of the body (feet, thighs, chest, and head).

Coordination /Agility: A fair amount of practice time should be spent improving their agility and coordination on every level. This includes hand-eye coordination, foot-eye coordination, motor movements, jumping, changing directions, running, and so on. Use as many games and activities as possible to encourage their development as athletes. This may even include catching or running with a ball in their hands.

Striking a Ball: The ball is immensely bigger than their feet, not to mention their legs. This is of minor concern for the players, right now. However, they need to be exposed to the motor movement of striking a ball with their laces.

Heading: Although the ball will rarely be at head level, it is a good idea to introduce the head as a surface to touch the ball. Allowing the players to put their head on the ball in a non-threatening way eases the fear of heading a ball. This can be done by each player holding a ball in their hands and heading the ball without it leaving their hands.

Rules of the Game: This age group won't understand every rule, yet. The important rules are how to score a goal, which direction they need to be going in, and where and what to do when the ball is out of bounds. Make sure these rules are used and explained in practice so it won't be such a shock in games.

Tactical Situations : About the only thing the players will understand about this will be where to safely stand on restarts (kick-offs, goal kicks, free kicks, and kick ins).

Characteristics of Y-Kickers Players

1. Must gradually become comfortable with the team environment (a coach that is not a parent, other new faces, rules, etc.). Parents must be hands-on.
2. Differences between boys and girls are minimal.
3. Easily fatigued...yet recovery is rapid (use many activities...short in duration).
4. They need to explore qualities of rolling and bouncing balls.
5. Play consists of a high degree of imagination and pretend activities (ex:the ball is a race car and you are driving it")
6. Use symbols to represent objects in the environment (ex: cones can be called trees or bushes)
7. Can only understand small bits of information at a time (use simple rules and add on as they get the hang of it...maybe allow let them to first play the game without the balls)
8. Very egocentric...everything is "me, me, me!"..concept of other players around them is limited. They do not understand why they should pass. This is why we play small sided games (1v1, 2v2, 3v3)
9. Most influential person in their life is a parent.