
A Practical Guide For Teaching Soccer To 4-6 Yr Olds

Part of the U.K. Elite Soccer STEPS2SUCCESS™ series

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STEPS
2 **SUCCESS**

WHY THIS GUIDE IS ESSENTIAL?

There are numerous soccer books on the market, full of useful practices and drills to use with your children. Unfortunately, such books invariably contain only what the title suggests—lists of activities. Very little practical information is given as to the aspect of using the practices.

The purpose of this guide is to give such help and advice to coaches and parents. It aims to answer some typical questions, which inevitably arise:

- How should I use these practices?
- When should I use them?
- Why should I use a particular practice?
- How can I combine practices to the best effect?
- How can I bring them to life and make them fun?
- How can I adapt the practices if they are not effective?

This book lays out some basic but invaluable guidelines for planning and organizing practices, developing and progressing them, and above all, for making them **FUN!**

In addition, it contains a section of exciting games to bring your practices to life. Each game revolves around a story theme, which allows the children to let their imaginations run wild. Once again, each game is not only explained, but important questions are answered:

- What skill does this game address?
- What equipment will I need?
- What is the aim of this game?
- Which coaching points should I stress during this game?
- How can I develop a system of scoring to make this game **FUN!**

In summary, everything in this manual is geared to ensuring that every game you play with your children represents an exciting and effective learning experience.



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WHY YOUNG CHILDREN PLAY SOCCER

When coaching young children it is important to consider the reasons for their participation. It is equally important to look at our own motivating factors in choosing to coach, and to consider if they are appropriate for the age group we are working with.

The vast majority of young children will participate for the following reasons:

- Having Fun

There can be little doubt that at this age the main aim for the child is to have fun. If they are having fun they will be motivated to listen and to learn. If they are not having fun they will simply not want to play and may not want to attend soccer practice again. This has clear implications for the style of session that we deliver for the children. Surely our primary aim is to keep the children interested for as many years as possible and to impart a love of the game. We do this through exciting and stimulating practices.

- Being With Friends

The social benefits of soccer cannot be overestimated. In this environment the children make new friends and can develop their relationship with established friends through a common interest. Often the presence of friends and the opportunity to interact is more important than the game itself. This is sometimes difficult for adults to remember despite the fact that games such as golf often provide a similar outlet.

- Excitement of Competition

There are many exciting games in this book for the children to enjoy. There is an element of competition in each of them, which will without doubt motivate the children to participate enthusiastically. However, the coach will play a very important role in shaping the childrens' attitude towards competition. An important lesson for children to learn is how to cope with winning and losing. Therefore, the way the coach reacts to the winners and losers of different activities will be noticed and absorbed by the children. If winners get a big high five and the losers are ignored what are they to conclude? This is especially the case if it is the same children winning and losing each time.

- Learn and Improve Skills

This might not be the initial factor that motivates the children to play. However, within a short period of time many of the players will acquire a ball and take enough interest to start practicing various skills at home. They take pleasure in mastering skills that they have been taught so that they can show their family, coach and friends a level of competence. The positive reinforcement that follows improvement further encourages this development.

It is crucial that the coach considers these factors when planning and delivering a session. If the children are improving, having fun and keep coming back to play soccer then the coach must be succeeding. This should be our yardstick!

WHAT A COACH CAN EXPECT FROM PLAYERS AT THIS AGE

Coaches often become frustrated when watching young children attempting to play soccer, mainly because they are expecting too much of the children. The game that the coaches are exposed to on television or even in the local travel leagues will not be the same game that 4-6 year old children play. A realistic approach that focuses on the successes of the players rather than their inadequacies will facilitate a much more enjoyable experience for coach and players alike.

A child's performance is determined by their level of experience in addition to their cognitive development. Children aged between four and six years perceive the world in a very different way to children only two years older and in a vastly different way to adults. Let's look at the way our players will relate to the game.

Approach to the game

- Children will be largely self-centered and co-operation is very difficult
- The result of a game will be easily forgotten (great!) unless constantly reinforced by a coach. Expressed attitudes toward winning and losing are generally imitations of parents and coaches.

Rules

- The rules should be kept fairly simple at this age. Strict adherence to soccer rules will hinder the flow of the game, however, they should be introduced gradually as part of the educational experience

Possessing the ball

- Some players will want to possess the ball for themselves (egocentricity). Other players will deliberately avoid the ball at all costs. Their concept of team during the game is limited to sporadic celebrations if someone in their color scores a goal. They may cheer the opposition goal by mistake or be completely ambivalent.
- They will be set on scoring immediately on receiving the ball. This will involve shooting or dribbling directly to goal.
- They will not be composed on the ball. Everything is happening very quickly.
- The individual will regard the ball as rightfully his/hers.
- Teammates will crowd around the ball because they want it. They will happily dispossess their own player.

Defending

- Players will either watch the ball as an observer or chase after the ball in whatever direction it is traveling. Getting goal side to protect their goal is not a great concern.

Players will only watch and follow the ball; they will not look for areas of space to run into. Through experience some of them will begin to position themselves just outside of the 'crowd' knowing that the ball will spill out at some point. They will then have space to attack.

Techniques

- Receiving the ball: Players will intercept the ball. They will not prepare their body to receive it in a controlled manner
- Dribbling: Players will travel in straight lines usually towards goal
- Sending the ball: This comprises of kicking towards goal from virtually any position

In light of these characteristics it is recommended that players of this age are involved in 3 v 3 and 4 v 4 scrimmages. Our aim as coaches is to ensure maximum activity and involvement with each player having as many touches on the ball as possible. Make the goals wide so that the scrimmages are high scoring thus heightening the enjoyment level.

FUN IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

Soccer is a great game, which should be fun for everyone who plays. When young children play soccer one can see the fun they are having by the energy and enthusiasm they put into their game.

Unfortunately, the same energy and enthusiasm does not always carry over into practice. Too often children appear disinterested or unmotivated when working in practice or situations, largely because they see the activities as pointless or boring. Unfortunately young children cannot rationalize that the repetition of techniques is essential to building up skills! Thus the foremost goal of the coach is to make practicing such techniques exciting, stimulating and every bit as fun as games.



Practice is obviously necessary if children are to develop as soccer players. Therefore, the coach must provide a learning environment in practice, which is conducive both to improvement and development, and to having a great time. Not only will the children learn more in such an environment, but you as a coach will enjoy your practices, gain more from them, and really start to see some results.

How then can this fun learning environment be created?

CREATING A FUN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

There are a number of factors to consider when trying to create such an environment. The following 'Rules of Thumb' help to ensure that the children enjoy and look forward to their practices, and gain maximum benefits from them.

1. COACH MUST HAVE FUN

There is a saying: 'Enthusiasm is caught, not taught'. This is especially true of coaching. Children are quick to pick up on the coaches' mood so your performance in practice will be reflected in the performance of your children. An enthusiastic, motivated coach will tend to have enthusiastic, motivated children to work with. The following are things to consider:

- a) Tone of voice: Much of your enthusiasm is conveyed by your tone of voice. Excitement is infectious, and if you sound enthused and energetic, your mood tends to be caught by the children.
- b) Share a joke: Children love to laugh and joke so encourage and instigate this at the right times. This way the children have fun, get the laughter out of their systems, and are ready to concentrate when you need their attention to make a coaching point.
- c) Join in: No matter how limited your soccer skills, the children love to see their coach join in (be careful not to hurt them or yourself!). It gives them a chance to get their revenge, and brings you down to their level for a change. It can also be a timely reminder of the difficulty of some of the skills you are asking them to perform!

2. ALWAYS GIVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Making mistakes is an integral part of the learning process, providing that the child then receives positive feedback as to how to correct that mistake the next time. Therefore it is important that the children are willing to try things and have no fear of being incorrect. Criticism such as: 'That was a terrible shot' is not only very discouraging; it has no value in terms of learning. Avoid criticizing errors and instead begin with a positive statement before adding your coaching point, for example: 'You struck that ball well. If you can follow through with your foot you will get a lot more power. Keep up the good work.' This is known as the 'Feedback Sandwich' where the feedback is preceded and followed by positive statements.

3. AIM TO ENSURE SUCCESS

Whatever your practice, set targets and goals so that all the children can have initial success. For example:

- Shooting: Why not initially make the goals in 'Super Strikers' ten yards wide and close together?
- Passing: Ensure the gates in 'Knights of The Round Table' are wide enough for the children to succeed. They can be narrowed at a later stage.
- Dribbling: Limit the number of traffic cops to one in the game of 'Traffic Lights'.

The child's initial reaction must be 'Hey, I can do this'. Children who successfully meet a given challenge will readily attack a tougher challenge, whereas children who immediately experience failure will simply opt out. The level of difficulty can then be progressively increased for the children who are consistently achieving success, thus moving each child on within his or her capabilities.

4. INTRODUCING COMPETITIONS

It is only natural that children want to compete with one another. Not only is competition exciting to children, it is a sure way of holding their attention. Even the smallest of activities can be adapted to involve competition. A simple exercise such as passing in pairs can be enlivened by incorporating it into a game such as 'Knights of The Round Table' and asking questions such as:

- How many gates can you visit in thirty seconds?
- Which is the first pair to visit all the gates?
- Can everyone try to beat his or her previous score?
- Which dragon can slay the most knights?

Similarly in a shooting activity such as 'Super Strikers' you can ask:

- Who is the first to score five goals?
- Who can score the most goals in the next five minutes?

Inevitably, technique will break down a little given the element of competition, but more importantly you will have injected fun and excitement into the practice. You can always take time to go back over technique and reinforce coaching points without the competition, before returning to the game again.

5. MAINTAIN COMPETITION

It is important that each child or group has a feasible chance of winning if you are to maintain his or her enthusiasm. Using a simple handicapping system can attain this goal.

- 'David and John, you made ten passes first, so this time you two have to make twelve passes'.
- 'Nicole, you won the dribbling race so this time you cannot start until I blow the whistle a second time'.
- 'Mary, you are scoring easily, so let's make the goal a little smaller for you'.

Another 'tactic' could be to subtly change partners to pair some weaker children with some stronger children. Not only does this tend to even up the competition, but also it may help to introduce an element of co-operative learning. Children learn from watching and working with others who are more competent, especially when they are friends and teammates. The key here is knowing your children!

6. COACH THROUGH GAMES

Games are a proven medium for ensuring maximum attention to a task. There are countless soccer games, which can be utilized to teach valuable skills while the children are having fun (see the games section). Too often, however, games are set in motion by the coach and the children have fun, but learn very little. With attention to the following points, you can ensure that the learning process continues at the same time:

- Try to play games, which require the use of skills you have been working on in that particular practice.
- Before playing, emphasize which skill is most important to that particular game, and then concentrate on coaching one or two points relevant to that skill.
- During the game, take individuals aside for a few seconds to give them extra help. The remainder are still having fun and learning as they continue playing.
- Use scoring and time keeping to add to the excitement, and don't forget to handicap or place conditions on winners to maintain the excitement and the challenge!
- Build up the children's' enthusiasm and interest by asking questions and issuing challenges:
 - 'Who thinks they're going to win this game?'
 - 'Who thinks they can beat their previous score?'
 - 'Can any of you make ten passes in fifteen seconds?'

Once you are confident that learning can still take place while you are playing these games, you can start to use them for different purposes: Warming-up; Increasing interest levels; practicing a skill in a more open environment; reinforcing skills covered in previous practices; or simply for the fun of playing the game as an end in itself.

USING THE GAMES

WHICH GAMES SHOULD I USE?

Use the games that are relevant to your theme of the day. If your theme is 'dribbling' then select from the dribbling activities in the book, ensuring that you begin with the simpler games and then progressing to variations on the game or to more complex activities. Your theme may be developed over two or three weeks thus providing continuity and progression. It should be remembered, however, that the games can be easily adapted to use within other themes e.g. a defending game could be used to promote dribbling skills. The important thing to remember is not to actively coach both skills in the same session. Stick to your theme!

DO I NEED TO USE THE STORIES?

This is your choice but when delivered clearly the stories enhance the practice enormously. The children become animated and happily take on the roles of the characters they are playing. Your ability to enthuse and to become animated will be 'caught' by the children and their response is a direct reflection of your energy.

WILL THE CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THE GAME STORY?

The games may initially appear complex to the coach but they are actually very simple once they have been read a couple of times. The children will understand the game story if you deliver it concisely. A key point here is that the coach must do the preparation before the session begins. The coach must fully understand the story and the game before teaching the players otherwise confusion and frustration will arise.

Once the session begins you may need to gradually add detail each time you play the game rather than giving them all the information at once. It depends on the game itself and on the group you are working with. For example there is a big difference between four and five year olds in their ability to assimilate information.

IS IT APPROPRIATE TO REPEAT THE GAMES?

This is important and necessary. It will take time for the children to understand the rules of the game and only then will they improve and begin to master the skills. Each time they play the game you will have opportunities to address individual weaknesses and to gradually increase the difficulty level by adding more pressure. The children will often ask to repeat certain favorite games because of the fun they are experiencing.

HOW IS THE USE OF THE GAMES EDUCATIONAL?

The whole experience of co-operating, communicating and competing with their peers in a positive learning environment is inherently educational. In addition to this, some of the games are educational in their story line and opportunities will arise where children will want to explore the nature of the story more fully. For example in 'Tony Tiger' we are dealing with issues of conservation and protection, and in 'Jurassic Park' we are dealing with the related issue of extinction. 'Traffic lights' can be related to dangerous driving and the need to be in control. Maybe these storylines can be further developed in a sequel game or an extension of the existing one. It is amazing what creative ideas spring forth when one is engaged so fully in imaginative stories and characters. You may surprise yourself!

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING A PRACTICE

Most coaches have relatively little time to work with their team. Therefore, it is important that each practice is planned and organized in such a way as to ensure maximum productivity within that time. The quality of your practice is vital because unfortunately the old adage, 'Practice makes perfect' is a myth. 'Practice, in fact, makes permanent!' If a child continually practices using a poor technique, it follows that the child will simply 'learn' that poor technique. However, a well-planned, high quality practice, where players are shown and encouraged to use correct techniques, will lead to children learning those correct techniques.

Careful attention must be paid to the following factors to ensure that you get the most from your practice:

1. EQUIPMENT

In order to meet the aims and objectives of your practice, you need to have the appropriate equipment available to you.

- a) **Balls (size 3):** Try to have a ball per child where possible. The more time children spend with a ball at their feet, the more comfortable and confident they will feel with it. Having one ball per child allows even warm-up activities to enhance the child's soccer skills. For example, why run laps of the field when dribbling a ball in different directions in confined space serves the same physical warm-up purpose and simultaneously improves ball control? A warm up with the ball has the added psychological benefit of focusing the children on the tasks to come. It is also important that the balls are the correct size, after all, a five year old will never successfully learn to pass a ball that comes up to his or her knees.
- b) **Cones:** These are extremely useful for marking out your practice areas. Large cones can be useful for making extra goals, making targets, marking corners of areas etc. While small cones are useful for sub-dividing fields and areas.
- c) **Pinnies / Scrimmage vests:** These are useful not only for scrimmaging but for any activity involving opposition. For example, 'Sharks' is more easily played, and coached, if the sharks (defenders) are easily recognizable in red pinnies.

2. THEME

Try to choose one theme, or two related themes for the bulk of your practice. This allows the children to concentrate and focus their attention on what is being taught. Trying to cover too much in one session (an inevitable temptation!) tends to result in confusion and a lack of retention on the children's part. For example, a theme for your practice may be 'dribbling with the ball'. It could progress as follows:

- Warm up: Dribbling games with no pressure
- Dribbling games with some pressure
- Conditioned Scrimmage to reinforce theme
- Scrimmage

During the entire session avoid making comments or coaching points related to anything other than dribbling. This enables the children to stay focused throughout.

3. AREA

Time taken to mark out areas with cones or other markers is time well spent. Children find it hard to visualize area and space without physical boundaries. If you simply ask them to stay in an area about 10 yards square it will rapidly turn into a 20 or 30 yard triangle! Not only does this cause confusion and interference between groups, it will ultimately detract from the aim of your practice. For example if they are playing 'Traffic Lights' in too small an area then the children will

have problems maintaining control of their ball. Always be aware of the possible need to adjust the size of your areas. In the example given above the lack of success by the players may indicate the need to make their area larger, (giving them more time and space to control the ball). Similarly, at some point, the area may need to be made smaller to increase the difficulty of the practice.

4. ADAPTABILITY

It is inevitable that some practices or games you plan will be pitched at a level, which is too high or too low. Similarly, within a practice some individuals will master a skill or technique far quicker than others. Therefore it is important that you are able to adapt. Be prepared to move on or increase the difficulty of the task for groups or individuals who are no longer being challenged. For example you may restrict your best striker to using his/her weaker foot for a period of time. At the same time a step backward may be needed if a task proves too much of a challenge and success is not being achieved.

5. MAXIMUM ACTIVITY

Children must receive maximum exposure to a task if they are to master it. Therefore, always try to create a learning environment where children have as many attempts at a task as possible ensuring the constant repetition of the desired technique. This can be achieved by:

- a) Avoiding long lines. Why have a line of twelve children, all waiting to shoot into one goal? Why not instead set up two extra goals using cones, and have three lines of four, maximizing each child's contact with the ball.
- b) Avoid games or activities which involve children being 'out' as a result of poor performance. We call these activities games of exclusion where the child who is eliminated is often the one who requires most practice. Instead, why not give 'lives' or chances which can be lost, or award points for success.

For example ask:

'Who still has all five lives?'

'Who has the most points?'

This ensures that everyone is involved in the practice all of the time, while still giving the opportunity to create some competition.

- c) Use all the techniques discussed earlier to make your practices fun. This will ensure that the children want to be active throughout the practice. Without doubt, children learn most effectively during activities that they enjoy doing.

6. BE IN CHARGE

Children need to know whom they should be listening to and why. The ability to listen is an important and underdeveloped skill among children. However, they can only process a limited amount of information at one time. Practices become confusing to them and lose their purpose when too much (sometimes conflicting!) information is given by too many people. For example in 'Beat The Keeper' the main coaching points might be to strike through the center of the ball with the laces and to aim for the corner of the goal.

Helpful parents are invaluable assistants, as long as they remain just that.... assistants! Set up your practice emphasizing one or two coaching points, and then ask your assistants to circulate reinforcing those points. This helps to keep the children on-task and can ensure that fair play is prevailing!

DEVELOPING A PRACTICE

“Progression is the key!”

Equally important as the planning of your practice is the progression or development once it is underway. Your practice should follow a logical pattern or sequence, which allows the children to learn and develop skills in a cumulative fashion, through tasks, which become increasingly demanding. This section is aimed at demonstrating exactly how to develop your practice in this manner.

1. WARM-UP

A warm-up can be defined as 'any activity which prepares the body and mind for further exertion'. There are no hard and fast rules as to what should be included, only the common sense rule of beginning slowly and gently, and gradually increasing the intensity of a given activity.

Coaching manuals will tell you that a warm-up activity should include any or all of the following: walking; jogging; running; striding; stretching-both static and dynamic. While this is entirely true, as a coach of children it is important to remember two key factors:

- First, you are coaching young children with short attention spans who are easily bored.
- Second, you are coaching soccer!

Every warm-up activity can be adapted to incorporate a ball. With a little thought and preparation, every warm-up activity can be related to the theme you have chosen for your practice.

2. INTRODUCE THEME

As you head into your main theme, explain why particular movements or activities were encouraged in the warm-up. At this point, try to demonstrate exactly the kind of technique you are looking for in the practice. You can always use one of the 'better' children to demonstrate if you are not confident of your own technique. Remember; pick out only one or two key coaching points to stress. For example, with passing you may pick:

- Eyes fixed on the ball, strike it with the inside of your foot.

For dribbling, your points to stress may be:

- Use a soft touch and dribble into a space

Points such as this have great impact, and are easier to focus on than a whole speech about what you are looking for!

3. DON'T DIGRESS

Once you have made your key points, concentrate on coaching only those points. Practices become confusing to the children and lose their purpose if you digress and make random coaching points. For example, when coaching passing, avoid the temptation to give coaching points or criticism as to why a shot was missed. You can work on shooting on another day.

Also, try not to labor the point. If an error is common to the whole group, stop the practice, quickly make your point, and restart. If, however, the error is only with one or two individuals, try to take them aside for a quiet word. The game can continue with your assistants supervising.

4. DEVELOP YOUR THEME

Whatever your theme, try to use practices in a logical sequence so that the theme is gradually being developed. A technique is learned most effectively in a no pressure situation. It becomes a skill when it can be performed on a regular basis, under pressure, and at the right time.

Therefore aim to progress from basic technique practices through to 'game type' skill practices. This may be done during one practice, or over several weeks.

Let us take the example of improving the children's passing over short distances:

- a) Begin by allowing the children to practice the technique with no pressure at all. Teach the 'push pass' technique through a fun game such as 'Knights of the Round Table' reinforcing your one or two key points.
- b) Once they have achieved some success, start to introduce a little pressure such as a time limit or a number target.
- c) Progress further by introducing some real pressure. For example, the group of 'Knights' (attackers) are now challenged by a number of 'Dragons' (defenders). You may initially wish to restrict the number of defenders. Now the children must start to think not only about their technique, but also how and when to apply it: 'In which direction should I take the ball on receiving it? When shall I pass?'
- d) Play a scrimmage, but with certain conditions enforced to encourage use of the right technique at the right time, thus developing the technique into a skill.
- e) Unconditioned scrimmage.

5. CONDITIONED SCRIMMAGES

Conditioning a scrimmage enables the creation of a game situation while still encouraging or enforcing a particular skill. To continue the theme of passing, a number of conditions can be placed on the scrimmage to encourage the children to pass:

- Insist on at least three passes per team before shooting.
- Award an extra goal if a team can make three passes without losing possession.

With thought, scrimmages can be conditioned to encourage the use of any particular skill you have been working on. However, the coach must select criteria carefully so that the children are challenged but not frustrated because the task is too difficult!

6. UNCONDITIONED SCRIMMAGE

The final stage of skill development is to remove all conditions. Not only does this allow you to see how much has been learned, it also allows the children to enjoy some unrestricted play. Conditions can always be reintroduced to reinforce or recap a coaching point.



SESSION PLAN

Club	Session	Date
Session Title	Individual Possession	
Objectives	To Dribble in Control Of The Ball	
	To Maintain Possession When Under Pressure	

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
<p>1. Warm Up</p> <p>Traffic Lights. Players move around their area with ball: Green: Go, Red: Stop Fast Cars: Quick dribbling Slow Cars: Jogging Reverse: Drag back turn</p>			<p>Head up. Close control Change of speed and direction Different surfaces of feet: Inside/ outside/laces.</p>
<p>2. Sharks</p> <p>Eight players dribble their ball around the area. On coaches command three or four 'Sharks' (without ball) enter the area and try to get soccer balls by putting their foot on top of a ball. The soccer players try to protect their balls by moving into space and shielding. Begin with 5 points and lose one each time caught! Rotate sharks!</p>			<p>Awareness of sharks: Heads up Shield the ball to protect. Dribble to space. Keep ball close.</p>
<p>3. Cops and Robbers</p> <p>Four Cops go after the eight Robbers who are carrying stolen treasure. If the cop tags the robber then they are caught and go to jail with their ball. They can only be freed if another robber breaks into jail and gives a 'high five'. How many Robbers are 'at large' at the end of the minute?</p>			<p>Look around to see Cops and captured Robbers Remain in control</p>
<p>4. Conditioned Scrimmage (Optional depending on time)</p> <p>4 v 4 with no GK's. Teams score by having a player dribble through any of the four wide goals. Variation: Use 2 or more balls</p>			<p>Turn away from pressure Accelerate into space</p>
<p>5. Regular Scrimmage</p>			

COACHING THE SCRIMMAGE

A universal challenge for coaches of young children is to stop them 'bunching' around the ball. The most frequently asked question at coaching clinics for 'Nippers' is 'How do we stop this?' From the outset it should be understood that this is a natural phase of the development of children at this age. Their understanding of the game is that the ball is there for them to possess and to play with. The idea of standing where the ball *is not*, is an alien concept. Children do not realize (or care) at this stage that if they stand away from the ball they are just as likely to get it (and probably for a longer period of time!).

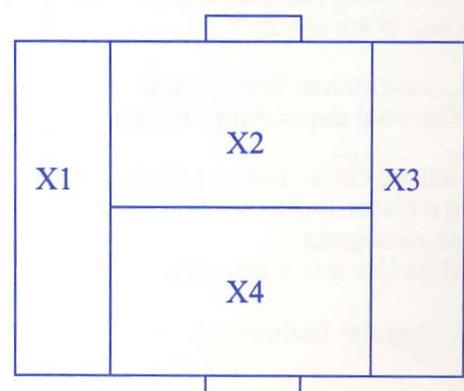
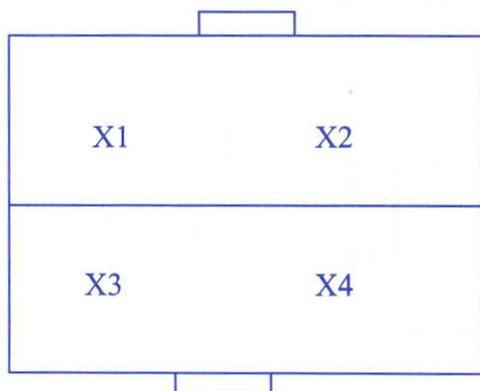
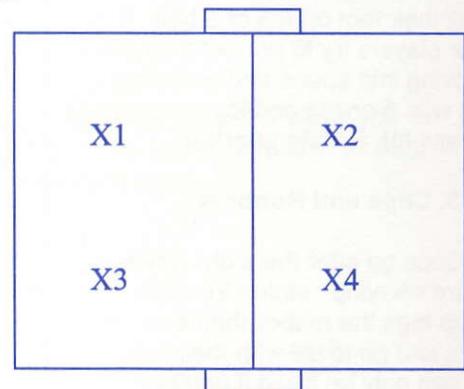
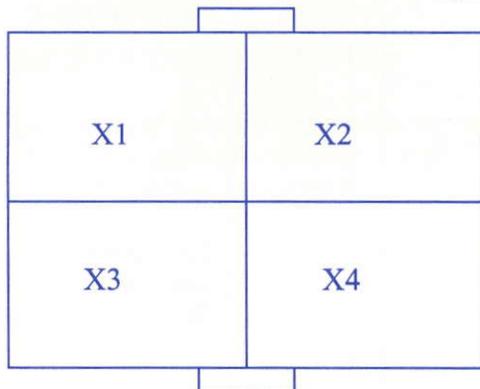
Telling them, or worse still shouting at them is not educationally sound and will frustrate them, whilst teaching them nothing. Developing their positional sense is an ongoing and gradual learning process.

Strategies

- Ensure that the scrimmages are small sided, preferably no more than 4 v 4 outfield players. If needs be, have a rotational system where one or more players rests (for a short period of time!) as the others play. If there are a large number of players then have two small-sided games running simultaneously, with an assistant refereeing the other game.
- Stop the play when the children are in a 'bunch'. Highlight the situation and ask them what difficulties it causes. Then throw the ball to the player who 'finds the biggest space'.
- If a player is in possession of the ball and a teammate comes within 5 yards then turn ball over to the other team.

The scrimmage can also be conditioned to ensure that the players are spread out. Zones can be incorporated which keep children in specific areas of the field. It is important that the field size is not too large, as this would make the children feel removed from the game. Play five minutes conditioned play and then five minutes 'free' play and so on. If the ball goes out of play then the coach could throw the ball to a player who has not touched the ball for a few minutes.

Zonal Suggestions



Zonal games allow players more time and less pressure on the ball. They also encourage players to pass the ball. Positions should of course be rotated.

Progressions:

- Player can dribble with the ball into the next zone
- Player can move into next zone if he/she passes the ball into that zone first

It should be remembered that the last ten minutes of the session should be a regular scrimmage with no conditions or zones, where the children learn through playing and having fun. Minimum intervention by the coach and maximum enjoyment for the players is key at this point.



GAMES FOR FUN AND LEARNING

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KEY TO DIAGRAMS



Cone



Defined areas



Player with a ball



Opponent giving chase without a ball



Dribbling with the ball



Running without the ball



Striking a ball

Lord Of The Rings

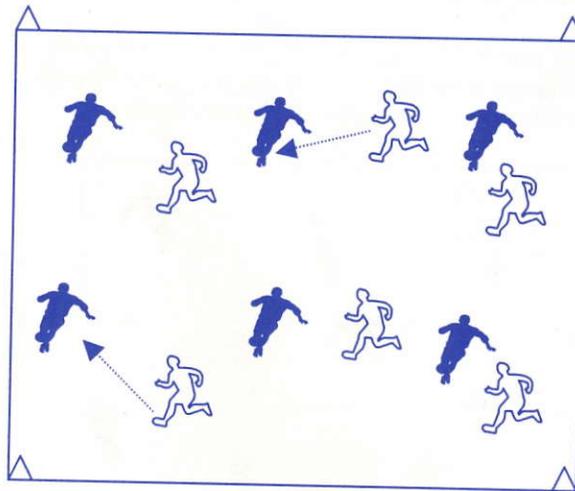
Game Story: Frodo and his friends are carrying the magic ring from Rivendale to Mount Doom but they are being chased by the Dark Riders.

Skill: Dribbling

Equipment: Cones, 1 ball per pair of children.

Aim: Dribble with close control of the ball

Organization: Spread the children out in a large area (approx. 40 yards by 40 yards). One of each pair has possession of a ball, and on your signal, those children (Hobbits) dribble anywhere within the area, trying to lose their partner (Dark Rider) until you give the signal to stop (time period of approximately 30 seconds). Dark Riders do not try to win the ball, but merely attempt to stay within touching distance of the Hobbit. All players must freeze on your command of 'Stop'. They are not allowed to kick the ball away but must remain in close control.



Coaching Points:

- Keep ball under close control
- Use all the parts of your feet (inside, outside, sole) to change direction
- Change speed and direction to lose the Dark Rider
- Keep the head up to see where the other Hobbits and Riders are

Scoring Options:

- A point is awarded for escaping the Rider
- Rider gets a point for staying in contact
- Winning team is the one with the most rings (balls): See variation 3 below

Variation:

- Have fewer Riders than Hobbits (less pressure)
- Make the Riders pair up and hold hands thus slowing them down
- The Riders are allowed to steal the ball (ring) thus making the game continuous
- The Riders and Hobbits have a ball each
- Pairs can be changed to match winners together and make a little tournament

Crazy Crops

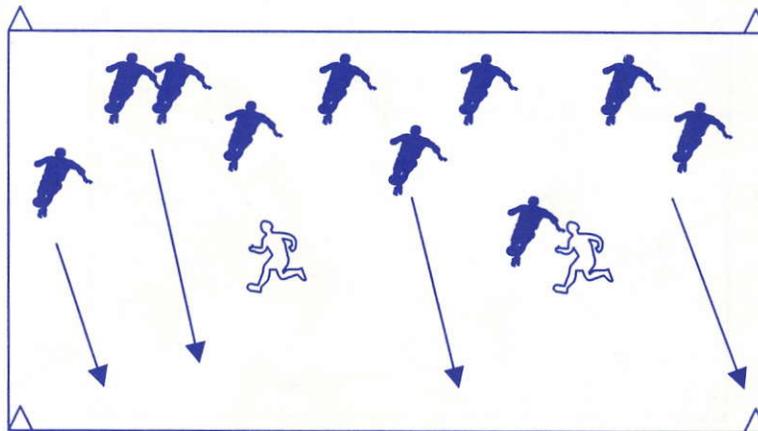
Game Story: The wizard has set the soccer players an impossible challenge. They cannot attend the special 'wizard' school (Hogwarts) unless they prove themselves to be intelligent and resourceful by crossing the dreaded swamps of Voldemort. The problem is that the swamps are infested with dangerous crocodiles that are extremely hungry. Who can complete this journey?

Skills: Dribbling

Equipment: Cones to mark area, 1 ball per child

Aim: To beat an opponent

Organization: Two players start as crocodiles in the middle of the area and all other players try to dribble past them to reach the far side of the swamp. If a crocodile steals a player's soccer ball then that player becomes an addition to the group of crocodiles. On the coaches command the players dribble across the area again from the other side.



Coaching Points:

- Keep ball close: Must dribble the ball across the swamp, not kick it!
- Look up to see other players and crocodiles
- Move quickly into space
- Change direction to avoid crocodiles

Scoring Options:

- Last three players are the winners
- If players survive five turns going across the area then they have defeated the crocodiles
- Players gain a point each time they cross

Variation:

- Players continue back and forth without stopping. Time limit imposed. How many crossings can they make?
- Players link arms to make one large crocodile

Foxes and Farmers

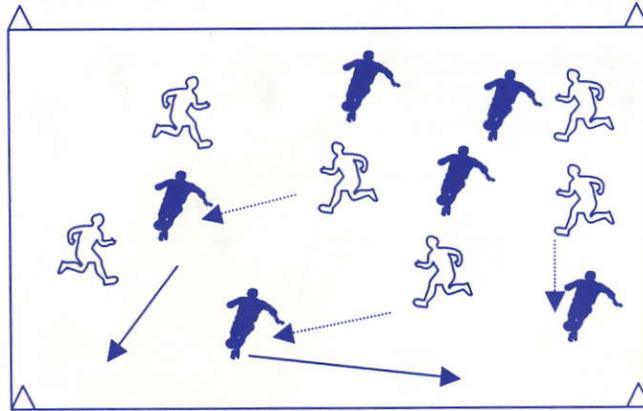
Game Story: The foxes have been upsetting the farmers because they have been sneaking onto the farm and scaring the other animals. The farmers have decided to try and catch these foxes so that they will no longer cause any trouble.

Skill: Dribbling

Equipment: 4 cones, 1 ball per child, minimum of 1 pinnie per pair of children

Aim: To dribble the ball away from your opponent by changing speed and direction.

Organization: Spread the children out in a large area with a ball each. Half of the group has a pinnie hanging out of their shorts (foxes) and it is their aim to dribble their ball around the area and to prevent other players (farmers) from 'stealing' their tail. When a farmer steals a tail he/she announces it by shouting 'Got your tail', tucks it in shorts and then becomes a fox. The other player then becomes a farmer and can steal a tail from any player.



Coaching Points:

- Keep ball close and under control
- Change of speed and direction to get away from opponent
- Keep head up- be aware of space and opponents
- Use inside/outside of feet and laces

Scoring Options:

- Winners are those players who possess a tail after a set time
- Play with two teams and the team with most tails is the winning team.

Variation:

- Begin with only three farmers thus reducing pressure
- Every player has a ball

Treasure Island

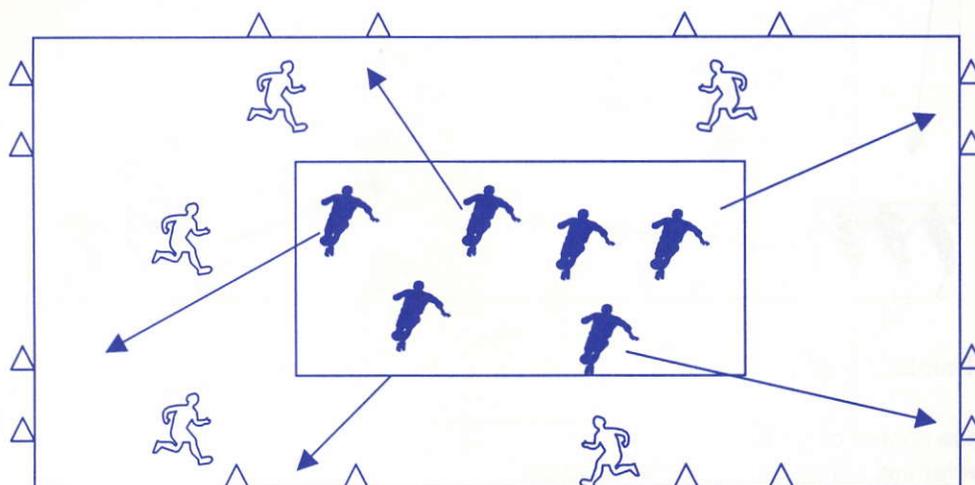
Game Story: The children have discovered treasure on an island. But have been surrounded by a group of giant octopus that will not let them escape. The children are running out of time.

Skill: Dribbling

Equipment: Cones, 12 balls, pinnies for Octopi

Aim: Dribble the ball to a target area

Organization: Half of the group (children) begins in the small area (Island) with 2 balls (treasure) each. The other half (octopi) begins outside of the large area. On the coaches signal the children dribble their ball out of the area and through any open gate to place it safely home. They then return to the Island to take another item of treasure home. If there is no more treasure on the Island then they help friends by being available for a loose ball or pass. The octopi try to steal the treasure and take it back to the Island.



Coaching Points:

- Keep the ball close when dribbling
- Keep head up to see opponents and 'open' gates
- Change direction and speed in order to beat opponent
- Remain in control of the ball
- Use of turns to change direction

Scoring Options:

- Children win if they can deliver all treasure safely within a specified time period
- Octopi wins if they prevent the delivery of treasure in time period
- Player who delivers most treasure is the winner
- The octopus who captures the most treasure is the winner

Variation:

- Vary the number of players on each team to increase / reduce pressure
- Vary the number and size of the gates to make easier / more difficult
- Vary the number of balls in the middle

Cuckoo's Nest

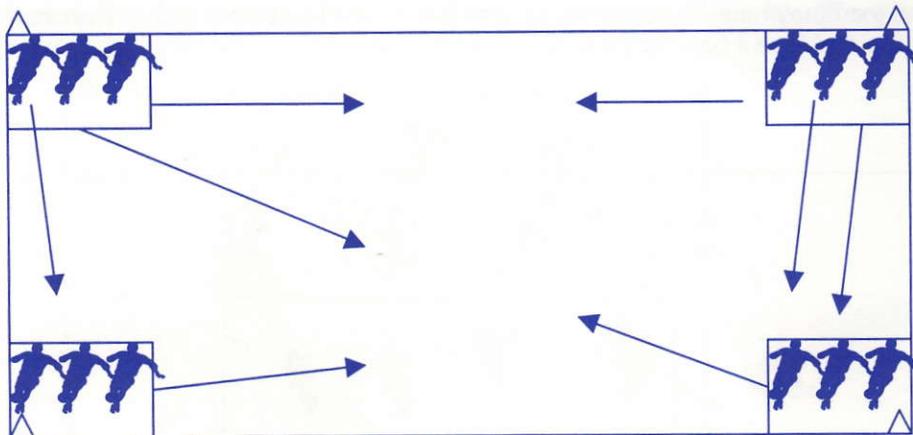
Game Story: The cuckoos are in their nests. They have just found out that other birds have moved into the area and have decided to take as many of their eggs as possible.

Skill: Dribbling

Equipment: 12 cones, 1 ball per child

Aim: To dribble the ball to a target area

Organization: Arrange the cones to form four small areas (nests) in the corners of the area, with three players (birds) in each with their eggs (balls). On the coaches command the birds fly out of their nests and try to steal as many eggs as possible from the other nests. They cannot steal from birds who are already carrying an egg.



Coaching Points:

- Close control of the ball
- Awareness of free balls and other players
- Speed of dribble
- Communication with team-mates

Scoring Options:

- Team with most eggs within specified time period are the winners
- Individual who steals the most eggs is the winner
- First team to have four / five balls in their nest are the winners

Variations:

- Begin with all the balls in the center of the square
- Allow birds to steal from other birds and nests

Sharks

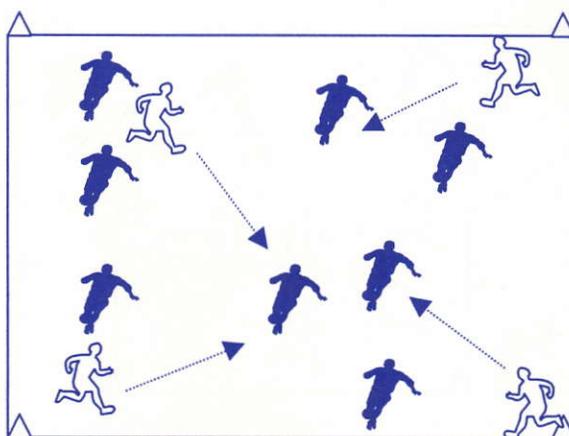
Game Story: A group of soccer players have been shipwrecked by a storm at sea and are in highly dangerous waters where sharks are lurking. These hungry sharks have not eaten for a long time and their favorite diet is soccer balls. The players must swim quickly away from the sharks in order to protect their ball until help arrives.

Skill: Dribbling and Shielding

Equipment: Cones, minimum of 8 balls, pinnies for sharks

Aim: Dribble around area keeping close control of the ball

Organization: Spread the children out in a large square. Choose four children to be sharks and start them in the four corners. On the coach's signal the remainder of the children swim (dribble) around the sea (square), trying to prevent the sharks from making contact with their ball. The sharks meanwhile try to bite (touch) as many of the balls as possible.



Coaching Points:

- Keep the ball under close control
- Place your body between the ball and the sharks ('Shield it') to avoid the ball being bitten
- Keep your head up to be aware of where the sharks and other children are
- Turn away from the oncoming sharks

Scoring Options:

- Begin with ten lives and lose a life each time a shark touches your ball
- Shark receives a point for each ball contacted

Variation:

- Sharks can steal a ball -child then goes after a shark
- Increase or decrease number of sharks to vary pressure

Cat and Mouse

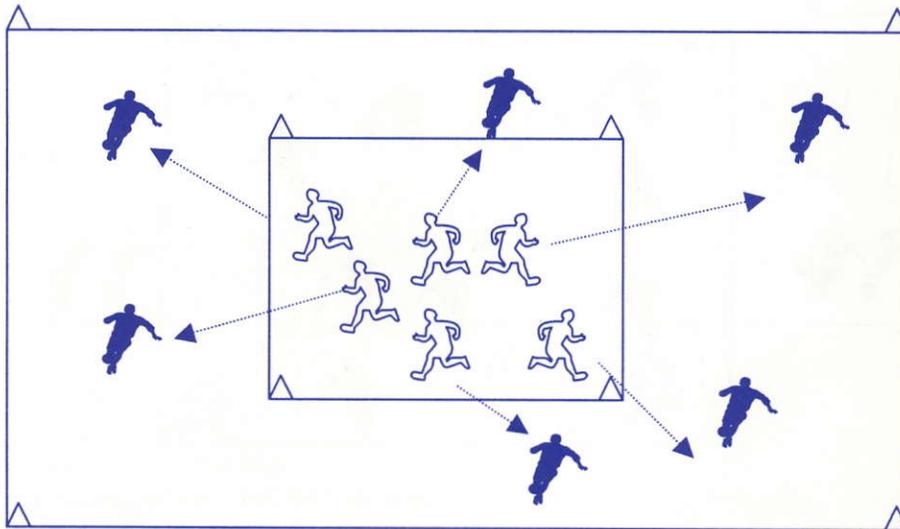
Game Story: The mice were sleeping in their hole when the cats came in and took their cheese. The mice are very hungry and have bravely decided to go after the cats.

Skill: Dribbling and Shielding

Equipment: Cones, 1 ball per child, 12 or more pinnies

Aim: To maintain possession and keep head up whilst dribbling

Organization: Arrange the cones to make a square and a smaller square within it. Half of the players (mice) dribble within the smaller area. The remaining players (cats) dribble in the larger area with 2/3 pinnies (cheeses) tucked in their shorts. Players can perform toe-taps and other skills whilst dribbling. On the coaches command the brave mice come out of their hole to chase the cats. The mice aim to steal a pinnie (cheese), place it back in their hole and then go after more. If a cat has lost his /her cheeses then he / she can enter the mouse hole to take them back.



Coaching Points:

- Keep the ball under close control
- Keep your head up to be aware of players and boundaries
- Change of speed and direction to find space

Scoring Options:

- How many cheeses does each cat possess after a given time
- If all the cheeses are taken by the mice then the game is over
- The first mouse to take three cheeses to the mouse hole is the winner
- The mice have a set period of time to get all the cheese else the game is over

Variation:

- Vary the number of mice to increase/decrease pressure
- Make the hole much bigger. Begin the game with mice in possession of cheeses. The aim of the cats is to enter the mouse hole and steal as many cheeses as possible. The first cat to take three cheeses and leave the hole is the winner.

Star Wars

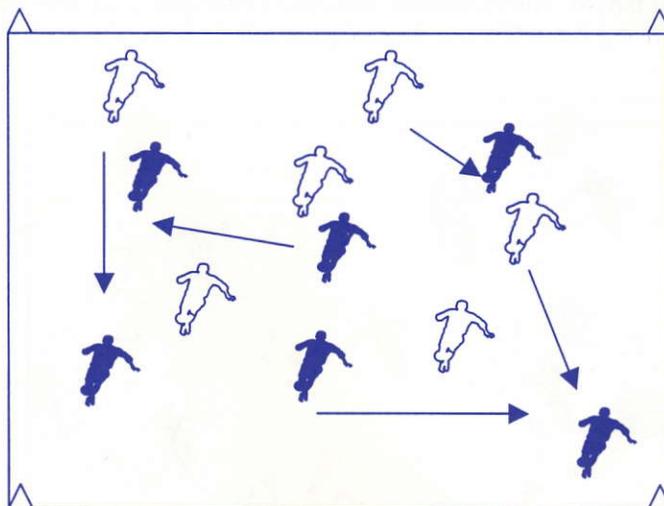
Game Story: The Jedi Knights are under attack and must fight back against Darth Maul and his warriors so they can save the universe.

Skill: Dribbling and Shielding

Equipment: Cones, 1 ball per child, 6 pinnies for 1 team

Aim: To maintain possession of your soccer ball in a tight area.

Organization: Arrange the cones to make a square and spread the children out in two teams, with a ball each. They begin to dribble around the area protecting their ball and trying to get Laser 'hits' on their opponent (i.e. poking an opponent's ball away). If they are hit three times they must recover (sit on their ball) until a teammate 'High fives' them to bring them back into the game.



Coaching Points:

- Keep the ball close and the head up.
- 'Shield' the ball from opponents by continually turning to keep your body between them and the ball.
- Stay in control

Scoring Options:

- Winning team is the team with most players standing at the end of a set time period
- First team to get three players of the opposition sat down (injured) are the winners.
- First player to get five 'hits' on the opposition is the winner.

Variations:

Play as individuals rather than teams. Gain and lose lives when poking balls

Star Trek

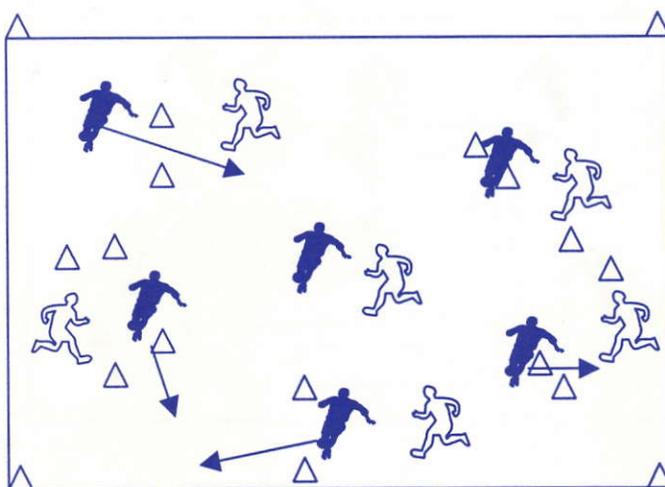
Game story: The soccer players have been given a very dangerous mission. They have been ordered to fly their spaceships from Planet Earth to explore space and find new worlds. The mission is particularly dangerous because there are alien spaceships (defenders) trying to prevent them from landing on these other planets.

Skill: Dribbling and Shielding

Equipment: 12 cones, 1 ball per pair of children,

Aim: To dribble the ball to target areas by constantly changing speed and direction.

Organization: Arrange the planets (pairs of cones) randomly within the area. Spread the children out in pairs, one of them in possession of the ball. On your signal, the child in possession attempts to fly (dribble the ball) to any of the planets (go through the gateway). They then proceed to another planet. The alien craft (defender) attempts to prevent the attacker from visiting the planet by arriving there first (i.e. blocking the gate). Keep the game short, as it is intense.



Coaching Points:

- Keep the ball close in order to change direction quickly
- Change direction and speed in order to beat your opponent or go to a different Planet
- Keep your head up to avoid other people and other balls
- Shield the ball from your opponent

Scoring Options:

- Who scores the most points in a given time period?
- Who is the first to reach a given number of points?

Variation:

- The defender is allowed to steal the ball and, if successful, continues with the task of visiting different planets, so game is continuous

Dungeons and Dragons

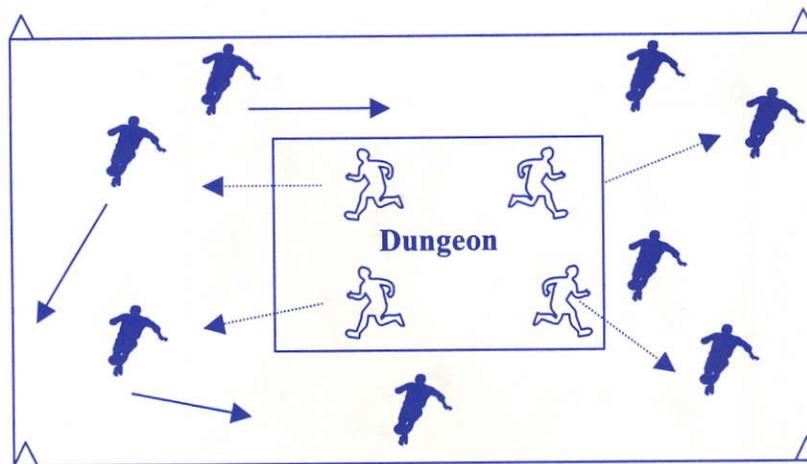
Game Story: The knights are traveling around the soccer kingdom. Their job is to keep the skies clear of dragons. Their aim is to capture all the dragons and place them in the dungeon.

Skill: Dribbling and Shielding

Equipment: Cones to mark outside and inside areas, ball for each dragon, pinnies for knights

Aim: To maintain possession of the ball by turning away from pressure

Organization: The four knights begin in the dungeon area (without balls) whilst the eight dragons dribble their balls around the outside area. On the coaches command the knights fly out of the dungeon in pursuit of the dragons. If they steal the dragon's ball and put their foot on it then he/she has been captured and must go to the dungeon and sit on their ball. They can only be freed from the dungeon if a fellow dragon touches them on the head. Play for a limited time period, as the game is very intense!



Coaching Points:

- Keep ball close to body
- Turn away from pressure
- Place body between the ball and the defender
- Keep head up so as to be aware of opponents and boundaries

Scoring Options:

- How many dragons can remain free by the end of the set time
- How many dragons can the knights capture in set time
- If all dragons are captured then the game is over and knights win

Variations:

- Increase number of knights to increase pressure
- Knights must steal the ball and dribble it back to the dungeon for that dragon to be captured

Tony Tiger

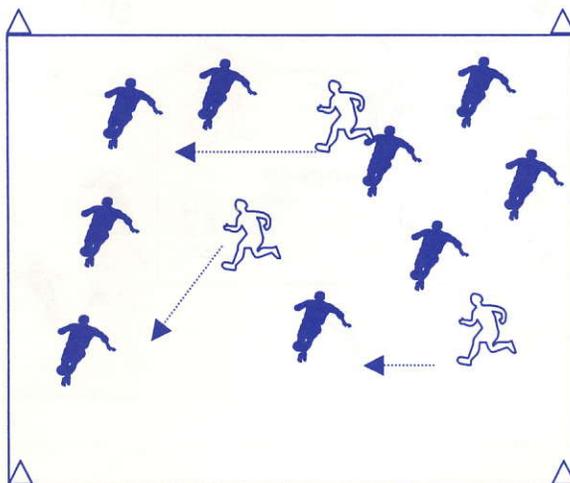
Game Story: Tony Tiger and his friends, the Siberian tigers, are desperately worried that they may become extinct. The poachers in their country are making them very unhappy by taking them away from their families. They have decided it is time for action and that they are going to capture all the poachers so that they cannot upset them any more.

Skill: Dribbling and Passing

Equipment: Cones to mark area, minimum of 9 soccer balls, pinnies for Tigers

Aim: To maintain possession by dribbling the ball away from the opponents

Organization: Spread the children out in a large square area. Choose three children to be the tigers and start them at the side of the grid. On coaches signal the remaining players (poachers) dribble around the square and try to avoid the tigers that are meanwhile attempting to capture them. If a poacher is tagged (with two hands) then they put the ball on their head and their feet wide apart. Someone must pass a ball between their legs to free them.



Coaching Points:

- Keep ball close and under control
- Use body to shield ball
- Use of turns to move away into space
- Keep head up-be aware of space and opponents

Scoring Options:

- Player gains a point for each poacher freed
- Winner is the last player remaining when the tigers have captured everyone else
- Winning team of tigers is that group which captures the players in the shortest time

Variation:

- Vary the number of tigers to increase/decrease pressure

Lion King

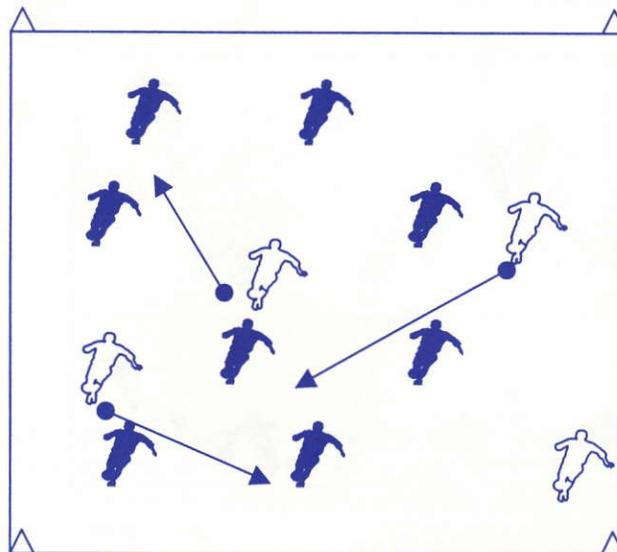
Game Story: Simba the lion has gone on vacation. On hearing this news the hyenas have decided to leave the Elephant Graveyard and move into the Pride lands in an attempt to move all the lions out. The lions are very upset as there are many hyenas and they are very ferocious. The only way to regain their territory is by bravely capturing all the hyenas before Simba returns.

Skill: Dribbling and Passing

Equipment: 4 cones, 1 ball per child

Aim: Pass the ball accurately to hit a moving target

Organization: Spread the children out in the designated area (small). A team of lions (four children) is given a ball each and their task is to dribble around the area, passing their ball against the balls of the hyenas (remaining players). The task of the eight hyenas is to dribble anywhere in the area to escape the lions. If the ball of a lion hits them or their ball then they must put the ball on their head and stand with feet apart. They can only be freed again by another player passing their ball through their legs.



Coaching Points:

- Dribble to get close to people before passing at them
- Look up before striking the ball
- Kick with the inside of the foot
- Kick the center of the back of the ball
- Follow through with your foot in the direction you wish the ball to go

Scoring Options:

- Which lion captures most hyenas?
- Can the lions capture all the hyenas in a set time?
- Which group has captured the most hyenas at the end of a given time?

Variation:

- Play equal teams. Hyenas can try to capture lions by tagging them with their hands.

Knights Of The Round Table

Game Story: A group of brave knights are on a quest to free the princess who is locked in the Dragon's Tower. Before they can open the tower they must collect all the special keys from the outer gates. Once they have visited all the outer gates they can enter the Dragon's Tower and complete their mission. Time is running out!

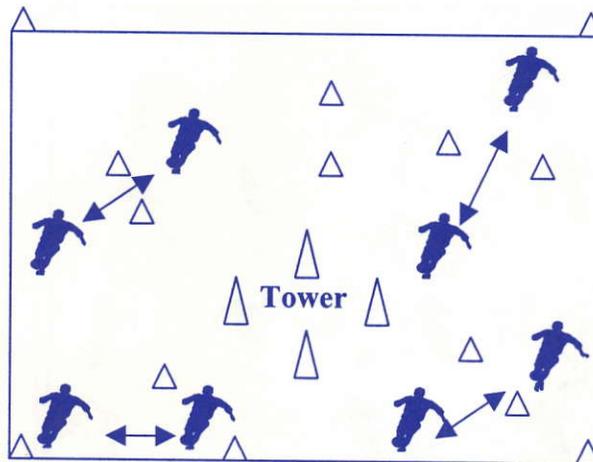
Skill: Dribbling and Passing

Equipment: At least 12 cones, 1 ball per pair of children

This game works better with more gates, otherwise there is confusion and congestion!!

Aim: To pass the ball accurately through a static target

Organization: In a large area (approx. 40 yards by 40 yards) arrange cones in pairs to form 'gates'. Children get into pairs and begin the game opposite each other on either side of the gate, one of the pair with a ball. When the game begins, 'A' passes through the gate to 'B', who controls the ball and passes back. They exchange a fixed number of passes e.g. 3 before dribbling with the ball to another gate. They then repeat the process. After visiting each gate they race to the middle into the tower.



Coaching Points:

- Non kicking foot points towards partner
- Pass with inside of foot and ankle locked
- Keep ball close whilst dribbling
- Communication with partner

Scoring Options:

- Count the number of gates in a given time
- First pair of knights to travel through a given number of gates
- First pair of knights to visit all the gates and get to the tower

Variation:

- Use laces to pass through the gate (encouraging shooting technique)
- Knights have ball each and dribble through the gates

Progression: Can add two or three dragons to add pressure. They move around the area trying to prevent the passes (or knights dribbling) through the gate but do not steal the ball. In the passing game the knights now only have to complete one pass at each gate.

Jurassic Park

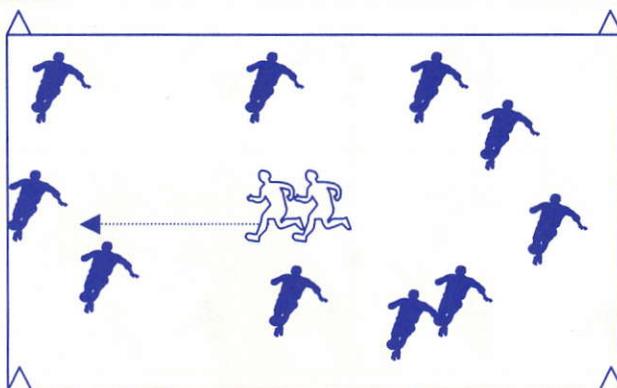
Game Story: The soccer players have made special machines, which allow them to go back in time. They have decided to go back to the Jurassic Period when dinosaurs roamed the planet. The players are trying to take dinosaur eggs with them but the dinosaurs are trying to stop them.

Skill: Dribbling and Passing

Equipment: Pinnies, cones to mark square, minimum of 10 balls

Aim: Keep possession of ball by dribbling or passing.

Organization: Ten players are spread out within the square with a ball each. Two players hold either end of a pinnie (or link arms) to form a dinosaur whose aim it is to capture all the soccer balls (eggs). They do this simply by knocking a ball out of the area. Any player, who loses his/her egg to the dinosaur or dribbles it out of play, then helps the other players by being available for a pass or a loose ball. The game is over when all the eggs have been captured. Introduce new dinosaur.



Coaching Points:

- Keep your head up and be aware of the dinosaur, teammates and boundaries.
- Change speed and direction to avoid the dinosaur.
- Look up before passing and time the pass to avoid the dinosaur.
- Communicate with teammates.

Scoring Options:

- The dinosaur has a limited amount of time to capture all the eggs; otherwise it has been defeated.
- The winning player is the one who has made highest number of accurate passes.
- The winning dinosaur is the one who has captured all the balls in the shortest time.

Variation:

- Increase the number of dinosaurs to add more pressure.
- Have three children make a dinosaur instead of two, in order to reduce pressure.
- Player who has ball kicked out becomes part of the dinosaur

Robin Hood

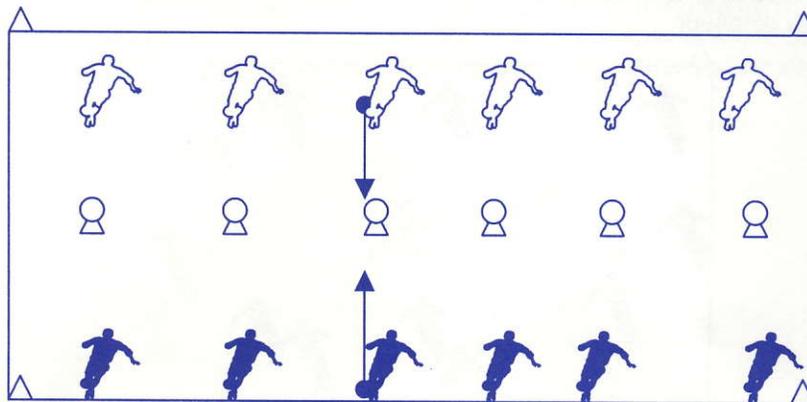
Game Story: Robin Hood is looking for a partner to help him storm the castle and rescue Maid Marian. He can only take one person and is looking for someone who can fire an arrow straight at its target. There may be some battles ahead!

Skill: Passing.

Equipment: Ten cones, one ball each.

Aim: To pass your ball accurately to hit a static target.

Organization: Players get into pairs with one ball between two of them. They face each other with a ball placed on a cone halfway between them (can just use a tall cone to knock over). Coach decides on appropriate distance. They take it in turns to pass/shoot at the ball in the middle scoring a point each time they hit it. Rotate partners regularly.



Coaching Points:

- Use inside of foot for passing
- Lock ankle and strike center of the ball
- Jump onto non-kicking foot
- Place non-kicking foot alongside ball and pointing towards the target.
- Follow through in direction of target

Scoring Options:

- First player to three points is the winner
- First pair to score five is the winner
- Player with most points in given time is the winner
- Player to win most games wins the tournament

Variations:

- Use of laces to practice shooting
- Take central cones out and place three 'distinctive' balls in the center. Aim is for your team to fire their balls at the center balls and knock them to the other side. Retrieve balls stuck in the middle but fire from behind line.

Gladiators

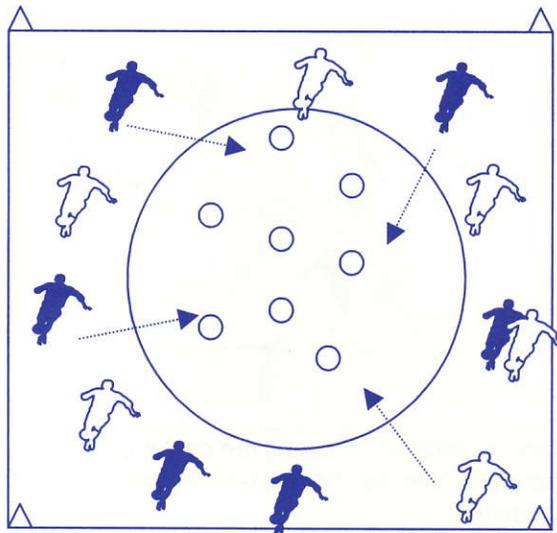
Game story: Two teams of gladiators are lined up outside the stadium ready for the big challenge. On the command the gladiators enter the arena and fight for the prizes of the day, the magic soccer balls. The winning team is the team that has captured most of these special balls at the end of the challenge.

Skill: Defending and Tackling

Equipment: 8 cones, 1 soccer ball per pair of children, pinnies for one team

Aim: To win and keep possession of a ball for a given time

Organization: Arrange the cones in a large circle and the spread the children around the outside. Place the balls randomly inside the circle, for example, eight balls for twelve children. Gladiators (children) begin to jog around the circle and then on your command 'Gladiators', enter the circle and battle to keep possession of a ball. Coach passes balls back in to the arena if they come out. Game ends on your signal, at which point, some of the gladiators will be without a ball and one team will have more than the other.



Coaching points:

- Keep your ball close to avoid losing it
- Place your body between the ball and opponents to avoid being tackled
- Constantly move into open space to avoid opponents

Scoring options:

- Award a point to those gladiators in possession of a ball at the end of the game
- Award a point to the winning team

Variation:

- Four or five gladiators start in the arena with a ball and other gladiators come in and try to take the balls

Pirates

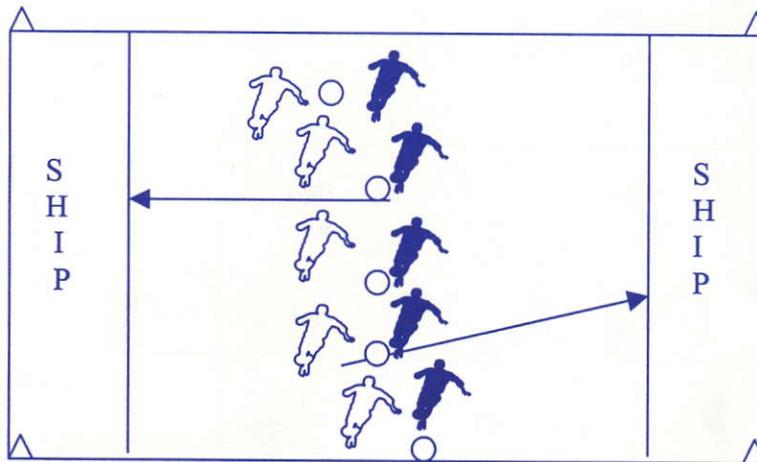
Game Story: The lost treasure has been discovered in the middle of the sea. Two pirate ships have come into the area searching for this lost gold and arrive at the same time. Some of them even climb into the other ship to steal the gold!

Skill: Defending and Tackling

Equipment: 12 cones, 1 ball per child

Aim: To steal the ball from an opponent and dribble to your own area

Organization: The treasure (balls) is placed in the center of the field with a pirate (player) from each team facing one another, one foot from the ball. On 'Go' the pirates wrestle the treasure from their opponent and dribble it home to their own ship (goal). Once all the balls from the sea (central area) have been taken then the pirates may steal the treasure from their opponents ship and place in their own.
Pirates can steal from the opposition at any time.



Coaching Points:

- Tackle with inside of foot contacting just below the center of the ball
- Lock the ankle and attempt to 'wrestle' the ball over the opponent's foot
- Standing foot alongside ball
- Get weight over the ball
- Get goal side of the ball before challenging

Scoring Options:

- Team of pirates with most treasure in their ship after a given time are the winners
- First team to get a certain amount of treasure into their own ship are the winners

Variation:

- Play with one ball per child. Thus the initial confrontation is repeated before the game becomes continuous.
- Play with four ships and four teams of pirates. The game starts with each team inside the area and all the balls (enough for one each) in the center of the field. On 'Go' the game begins. The winning team is the first team to get three balls (chests of treasure) in their ship.

Jungle Mania

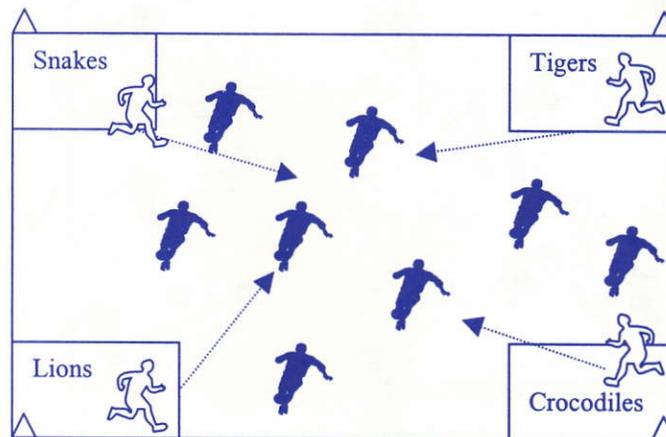
Game Story: The terrified children are stranded in the jungle and are trying unsuccessfully to find their way home. They need to do this before it gets dark. First, they must pass through a very dangerous area where there are poisonous snakes, ferocious tigers, soccer ball eating crocodiles and lions. If they come under attack the only option they have is running away. Look out!

Skill: Defending and Tackling

Equipment: 10 cones, 1 ball for each of the 'children', pinnies for the animals

Aim: To steal the ball from the opponents and dribble it back to your area

Organization: Eight of the children dribble their soccer ball anywhere in the square but are not allowed to stop. Can include commands such as 'toe taps', 'fast feet', 'dragback' etc. There are four designated areas within the jungle (square). These four areas contain snakes, tigers, lions and crocodiles respectively. If the coach shouts 'snakes' then those children come into the square and try to steal soccer balls and take them back to their area. The dispossessed players then become snakes! The same applies if the coach shouts 'tigers', 'lions' or 'crocodiles'. When the coach calls 'sleep' the animals then retreat to their home.



Coaching Points:

- Keep your eye on the ball
- Apply pressure to opponent
- Accelerate away when you win the ball (counterattack)
- Be patient

Scoring Options:

- Team of animals who has 'captured' the most players are the winners
- The players who have not been 'captured' after a given time are the winners
- The player who has captured the most opponents is the winner

Variation:

- The animals must also dribble a ball and tag the soccer players to capture them

Lifeguards

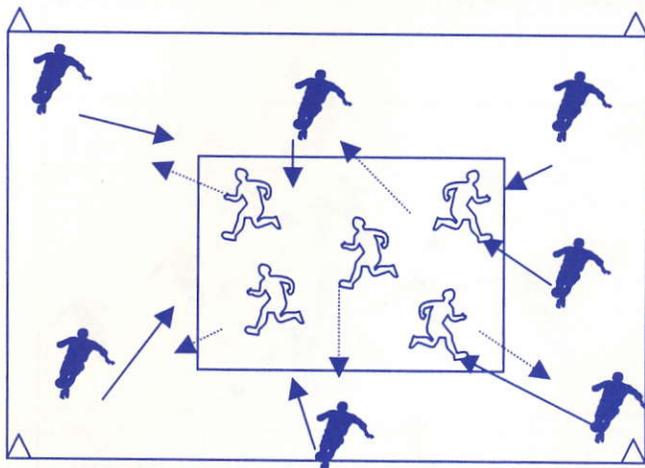
Game story: The sharks around Soccer Island are particularly hungry and have been swimming in shallow waters searching for food. The lifeguards have been told to be extremely vigilant, as the sharks have been getting dangerously close to the beach. If they see any sharks in this area they must scare them away.

Skill: Defending and Tackling

Equipment: 12 cones, minimum of 9 balls,

Aim: To prevent players dribbling into your defensive area.

Organization: Five lifeguards (players) without a ball, position themselves within the shallow water (central square) that they will be defending. They cannot leave this area. The remaining seven players (sharks) each have a ball and position themselves outside this area. On the coaches command the sharks will try to dribble the ball into the shallow waters and will remain there for as long as they can. If the lifeguards kick their ball out of the area then they try again.



Coaching Points:

- Awareness of position of attackers and fellow defenders
- Keep eye on the ball
- Go to an attacking player who is unchallenged rather than one who already is challenged
- Stay close to the attacker

Scoring Options:

- If the shallow water is free of sharks after a set time then the lifeguards have won
- If any sharks are in the shallow water after a given time then the sharks are the winners.
- The winning players are the sharks that are in the shallow water after a given time.
- The winning players are the lifeguards who have ejected the most sharks from the shallow water

Variations:

- Vary the number of sharks/lifeguards to increase/reduce pressure maybe going 1 v 1

Progression:

- Sharks begin at the periphery of large area. Lifeguards must come out of central area to apply pressure and stop sharks entering shallow water.

Spiderman

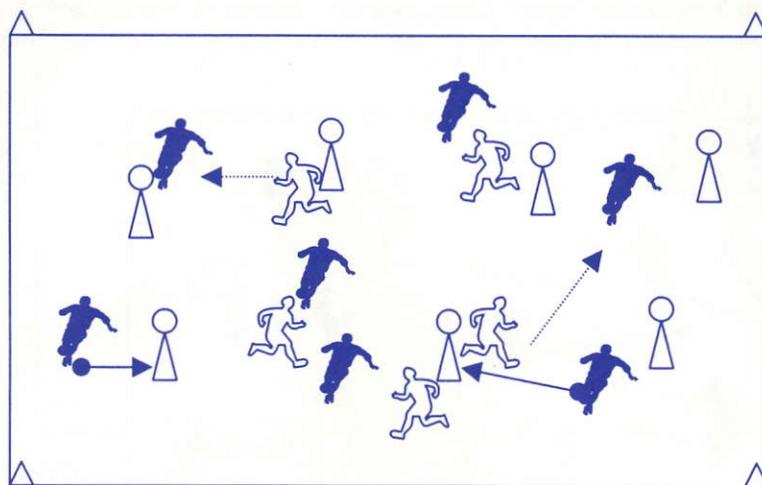
Game Story: The Green Goblin and his friends are trying to take over the world. They have come to cause trouble and are knocking all the houses down. Spiderman is trying to rebuild them before they all disappear.

Skill: Defending and Tackling

Equipment: 12 cones, one ball per child plus five distinctive balls (different color or size) to make a 'house', pinnies for the Goblin and friends

Aim: To defend a target area

Organization: Seven players in pinnies act as Green Goblin and friends, five players act as Spiderman and friends. There are seven houses (balls on cones/ or just use tall cones to knock over) in the area. The Goblins try to fire their balls against the houses whilst the Spiderman tries to fix them (put balls back on cones). Spiderman's friends can also block the front of the house to prevent the ball hitting it. If all the houses are destroyed then the goblins have won.



Coaching Points:

- Awareness of opponents
- Block the target
- Surfing position
- Poke the ball away if attacker gets too close

Scoring Options:

- Goblins win if all houses are destroyed
- Which group of 'Spidermen' best protects the houses
- Goblin who knocks most houses down is the winner

Variation:

- Spiderman and friends can pursue goblins in order to force them away from the houses
- Increase / reduce pressure by varying number on each team

Darth's Revenge

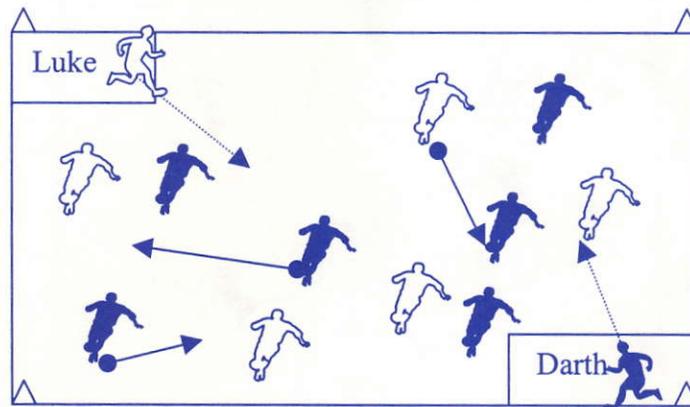
Game Story: Darth Vader's warriors are chasing Luke Skywalker and the Jedi Knights. They are firing the lethal space balls at each other. These are special space balls because if you are hit by one you will be 'frozen' to the ground and unable to move. The only way to escape is if Luke or Darth make a daring journey from their spacecraft to save you.

Skill: Dribbling and Shooting

Equipment: Cones to mark area, one ball per child, pinnies for one team

Aim: To shoot ball against a moving target

Organization: The two teams spread themselves out within the playing area. One designated player from each team is Luke Skywalker or Darth Vader and positions him/herself in the spacecraft ready to be called out. The players dribble around the area and attempt to strike their ball against the lower legs or ball of an opponent. If they have been hit (frozen) then they must sit on top of their ball, and can only be saved if Luke or Darth (depending on which team) run out and revive them (touch them on the head). Luke/Darth then returns to the spaceship. However, if they are hit along the way then the game is all over. Restart the game with two different heroes/villains.



Coaching Points:

- Strike the ball with the laces
- Point toe down and keep ankle locked
- Place non-kicking foot alongside the ball
- Keep your head up and be aware of opponents

Scoring Options:

- Team with no / fewest captured players after a given time are the winners
- Team who has hit most players is the winning team
- Player who has hit most opponents is the winner
- Team that loses its leader is defeated

Variation:

- When Darth/Luke has healed three players he/she switches with that player thus a new leader is installed
- Each team has two leaders

Harry Potter

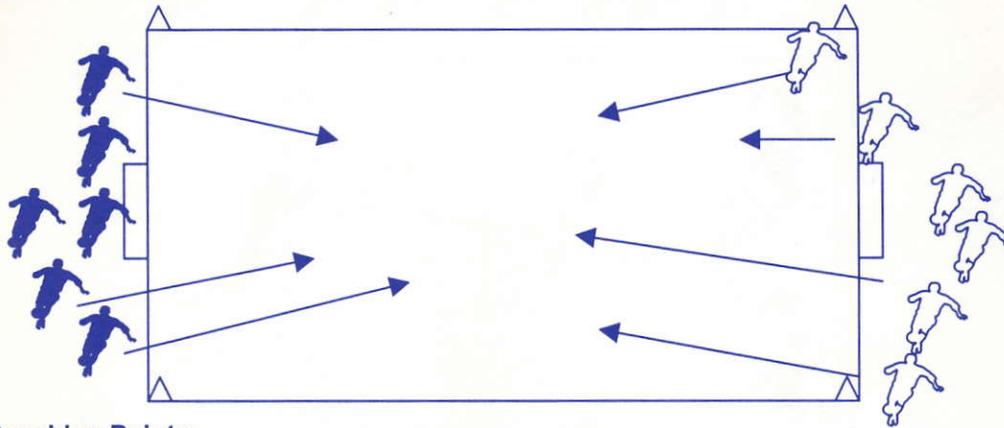
Game Story: Harry Potter and his Gryffinder team take on Draco Malfoy and his Slithering team in the great game of Quidditch. They have to score as many goals as possible within a limited time period.

Skill: Dribbling and Shooting

Equipment: 10 cones, one ball per child, pinnies for one team.

Aim: To beat an opponent and shoot into the goal.

Organization: Play begins with two teams at opposite sides of the field behind their goal. The balls are positioned all over the field (preferably not in the center where there may be a mass collision!). On the coaches command the players race towards the nearest ball and dribble it to the oppositions' goal where they attempt to score. They can then go after any other ball to do the same regardless of whether an opponent is in possession of it! If a ball goes out of play then it is 'dead' and cannot be retrieved (unless coach throws it back in). When there are no more balls in play the winning team is the team that has scored most goals.



Coaching Points:

- Keep head up in order to see the opponents, goal and boundaries
- Keep the ball close and under control
- Use change of direction and speed to avoid opponents
- Shoot with laces

Scoring Options:

- Winning team is the one that scores most goals in given time period
- Winning player is the one who scores most individual goals
- Winning team is the first team to score five goals
- Winning player is the first player to score two goals

Variation:

- Each team has a designated goalkeeper
- Players cannot challenge an opponent who is already in possession of a ball

Shootout

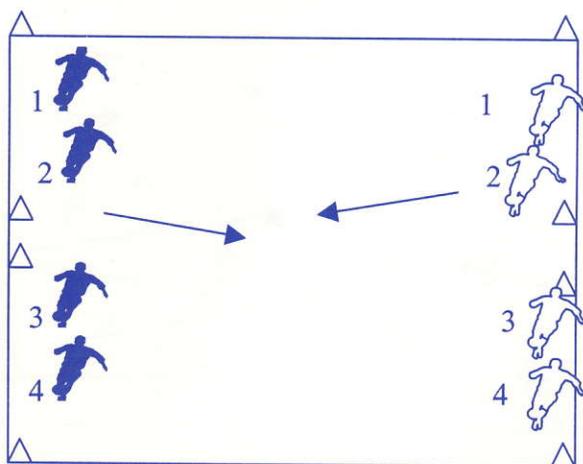
Game Story: The best two teams in the world come together to play in the World Cup Soccer Final, USA and England. The winning team will be the world champions!

Skill: Dribbling and Shooting

Equipment: 4 cones, a number of balls to keep the game flowing

Aim: To beat your opponent(s) and score a goal

Organization: Use the cones to make a mini field, with the goals approximately 30 yards apart. Divide the children into two teams and have the teams stand at their respective end lines (although not in the goal) facing each other. Give each member of one team a number, and number the other team to correspond (so there will be two number 1's, two number 2's etc.). Roll a ball to one side of the field and then call out two or three numbers e.g. one and two. The first number takes up a position in goals whilst the other numbers goes 1 v 1 (2 v 2 etc) to goal. (Avoid putting the ball in the center where collisions occur. The emphasis is on dribbling not tackling). Players have forty seconds in which to score!



Variations can include placing goalkeepers in the goal throughout the game (not including them in the numbers); or calling two or three numbers instead of one.

Coaching Points:

- Attack your opponent with speed but keep ball close
- Try fakes as you approach but make one decisive move to beat your opponent
- Shoot as soon as you get a clear view of the goal

Scoring Options:

- Goals are scored for each team, as they are in a regular soccer game
- The first team to a given score are the winners

Comment: It is important that children are not standing around for long periods of time. If there are large groups of players then the game needs to be set up on two fields (parent coach and assistant refereeing) so that there is maximum participation.

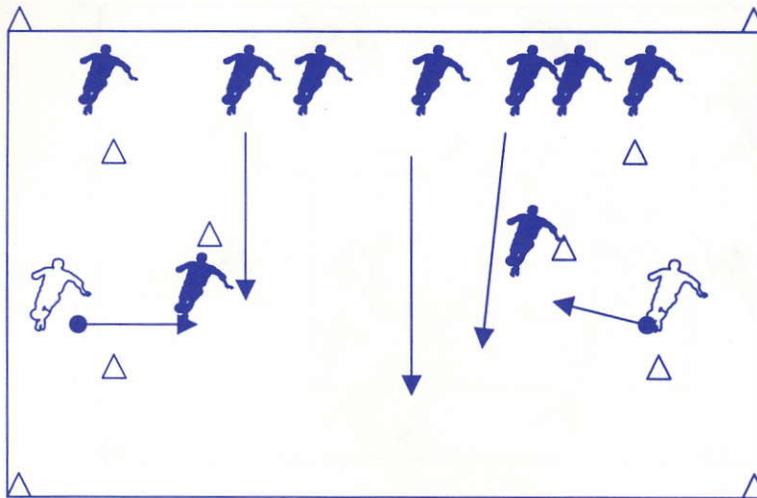
Laser Laces

Game Story: The Jedi knights are on a mission to safely pilot their spaceships through a dangerous part of the universe. Enemy aircraft are firing their lasers at them as they pass through and they must try to avoid them.

Skill: Dribbling and Shooting

Equipment: Cones to mark the area, 1 ball per child

Organization: Begin with 10 players (Jedi Knights) lined up along a line with a ball each. The two remaining players line up on either side of the valley ready to fire their lasers at the spaceships (balls) passing by (quickly retrieve after firing or use another ball). On the coaches command the knights attempt to cross Alien Valley. If a knight's spaceship is hit then they are captured and become one of the aliens. The aim of the knights is to see how many times they can pass through the valley without getting hit.



Coaching Points:

- Look up to see where target is
- Strike the ball with the laces
- Point toe down and lock the ankle
- Place non-kicking foot alongside ball and point towards target
- Kick the ball aggressively and follow through

Scoring Options:

- The last Jedi Knight to get hit is the winner
- Alien who hits most spaceships is the winner

Variations:

- Begin with different numbers of knights and aliens
- Aliens must dribble up and shoot the ball on the move

The Grinch

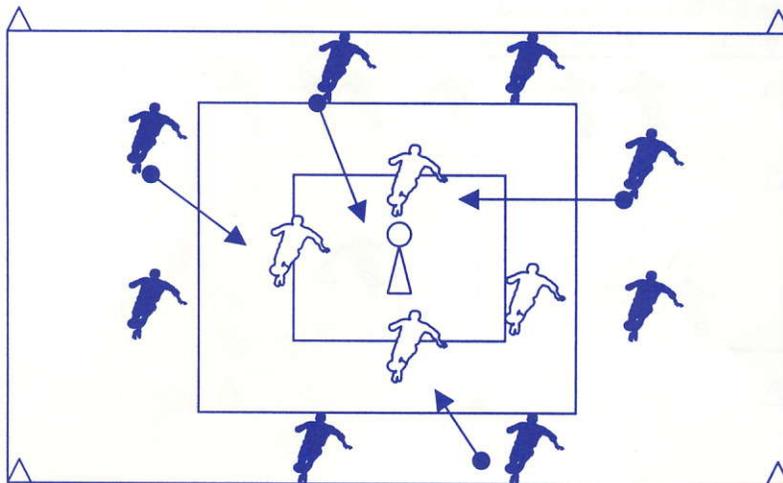
Game Story: The children are protecting the last Christmas present. The Grinch is trying to steal Christmas and has taken all the other Christmas presents away.

Skill: Dribbling and Shooting

Equipment: Cones to mark area, 1 ball for each of the Grinches (Shooters)

Aim: To strike the ball accurately towards target

Organization: Four players defend each side of the square, which contains the Christmas present (ball on a cone or tall cone) by using hands or feet. The remainder of the players (Grinches) surrounds the perimeter of the large square with a ball each, dribble around and fire at the Christmas present to knock it off its tree. If they hit it then the game is over. Players kick loose balls out.



Coaching Points:

- Look up to see target but look at ball when striking
- Shoot with laces
- Point toe down and lock ankle
- Place non kicking foot alongside the ball
- Dribble ball to create best shooting angle

Scoring Options:

- The Grinch who knocks the Christmas present off the tree is the winner
- The children protecting the present win if it is still intact after set time period
- The team of Grinches who steal Christmas in the shortest time are the winners

Variations:

- Change the number of Grinches and children
- Add more Christmas presents to protect
- Change size of areas

Cannon Balls

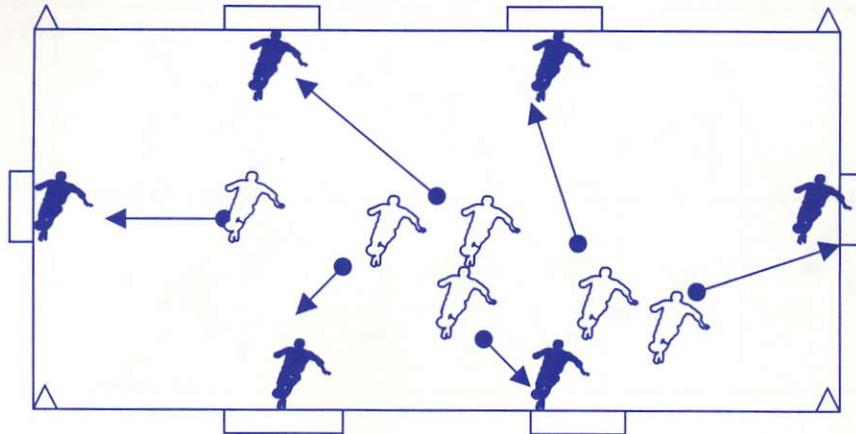
Game Story: Peter Pan and friends are firing their cannonballs past Captain Hook and into his pirate ships. Captain Hook's pirates are working hard to protect their treasure.

Skill: Dribbling and Shooting

Equipment: Cones to mark six goals, one ball per two players

Aim: To dribble at speed and shoot on goals

Organization: Begin with half the group in goals (pirates protecting the ship) and the other half (Peter Pan and friends) with a ball (cannonball) each in the center of the area. On the coaches command Peter Pan and friends attack the goals and shoot. If they score they retrieve their own ball and attack another goal. If the goalkeeper saves it then he/she throws it back to the attacker who then attacks a different goal. How many can they score in a set time period?



Coaching Points:

- Strike the ball with laces
- Point toe down and keep ankle locked
- Place non-kicking foot alongside ball and pointing towards target
- Strike ball as it is moving forward to generate power

Scoring Options:

- The player to hit most ships in set time is the winner
- The first player to hit six ships is the winner
- The pirate who saves most shots is the winner

Variation:

- Reduce the number of pirates blocking ships (GK's) and have two equal teams competing in the center (e.g. 3 v 3 in the center going to four goals). Play with three balls. Coach now feeds ball in after a goal is scored. If GK saves then throw to large space

Space Invaders

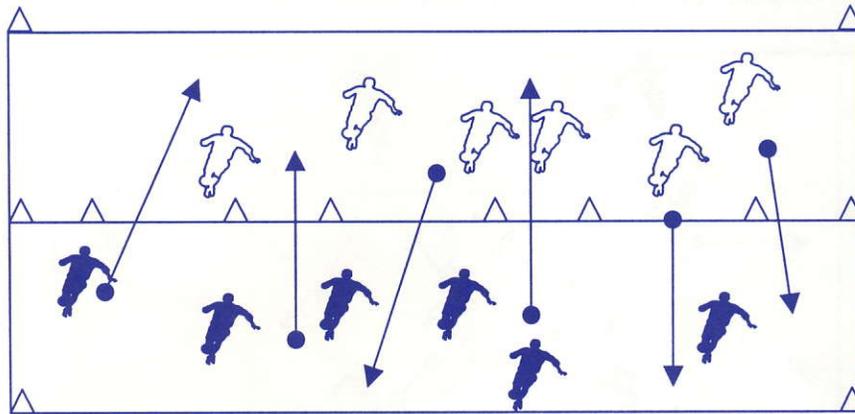
Game Story: The Space Invaders are firing lasers into the soccer field. The soccer players must protect their field and fire their lasers straight back else they will be defeated.

Skill: Shooting

Equipment: Cones to mark area, 9 balls between 12 children, pinnies

Aim: To strike ball with power and accuracy

Organization: Players are divided into two equal teams with each team occupying one half of the area divided by the central line. Players must strike any ball in their half sending it into the opposing half. The aim is to clear your half of the field of balls.



Coaching Points:

- Strike with laces
- Point toe down and lock ankle
- Non-kicking foot alongside ball and pointing at target
- Follow through the ball to generate power

Scoring Options:

- Team with fewer balls in their area is the winner
- If a team has more than 6 balls in their area then the game is over.

Progression:

- Place four large goals across the central line. Teams must shoot the balls through the goal
- Add four GK's. Play with four balls

Super Strikers

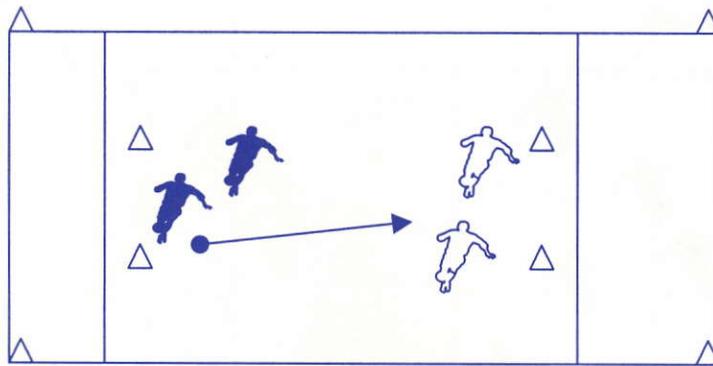
Game Story: The United States is searching for a pair of 'Super Strikers' to compete for their country. The best strikers have been brought together to determine who will play in the World Cup tournament. Rotate pairs after each five minutes to determine the champions.

Skill: Shooting

Equipment: 4 cones and 1 ball for each group of 4 children

Aim: Shoot between 2 cones and past the two opposing goalkeepers

Organization: Use the 4 cones to make two goals approx. 10 yards wide. A pair of attackers position themselves in one goal and another position themselves in the other. One pair begins with the ball and tries to shoot it past their opponents, who act as goalkeepers to try and save the ball. If it is saved, that pair simply put the ball down and immediately try to shoot it back again (creating a continuous shooting game). Encourage the children to shoot without venturing more than 3 or 4 yards from their own goal. The pair should more or less take it in turns.



Having spare balls positioned behind the goals adds to the continuity of the game. Insist that the game is played at speed!

Coaching Points:

- Place non-contact foot alongside the ball
- Point the toe down to strike ball with laces
- Follow through with your foot to gain power
- Follow through in the direction you wish to go

Scoring Options:

- Which pair scores the most in the given time
- Create a tournament between the pair

Variations:

- Striking a stationary ball
- Touching the ball forward for yourself, thus striking a moving ball
- Passing the ball forward for your partner to strike

Captain Hook

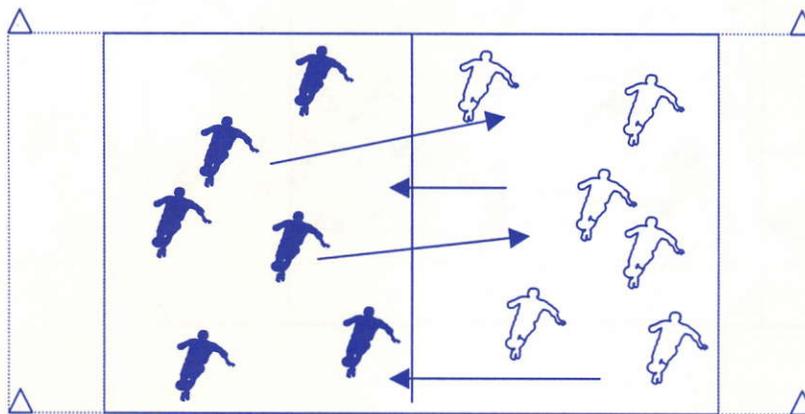
Game Story: Captain Hook and his pirates have been challenged by Peter Pan and the Lost Boys for supremacy of the sea. These two great ships meet in the middle of the ocean and start battle. The only way to defeat the enemy is by carrying 'fireballs' across the opposition deck to the back of the ship.

Skill: Dribbling and Goalkeeping

Equipment: 10 cones, pinnies for a team of 6, one ball per two players

Aim: To dribble ball through the opposition territory to score

Organization: Begin with one team positioned in one half of the field and the other team spread out in the other half. Two players (or more) in each half start with a ball (fireball). On the coaches command the players with the fireballs attempt to dribble through the opposition team to deposit the ball in the End zone. The opponents are all goalkeepers who try to steal the ball by diving on it or picking it up. As soon as they have stolen the ball they may counterattack by charging across the opposition deck. If the player scores or loses possession they immediately return to their half of the field.



Coaching Points:

- Goalkeepers move body to get in line with ball
- Bend knees and side step to get in line
- One goalkeeper challenges at a time
- Goalkeepers have hands at their side and feet shoulder width apart in a 'set' position

Scoring Options:

- Team that scores most goals is the winner
- Player who scores most goals is the winner
- Goalkeeper who saves most balls is the winner

Variations:

- Players cannot use their hands and are therefore defenders rather than goalkeepers.
- Have the players as defenders and a goalkeeper in a goal instead of End zones. Goalkeeper rolls new ball in after each goal is scored.