



Coaching Manual

**Under 6 & 7
8 Week Program**

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1. Introduction

This handbook and curriculum represents a collection of information from many different sources. We are indebted to all of those who contributed material. Corey Moscoe produced most of the original material and also did most of the research for this project. The concept and editing are the work of Michael Gove.

2. Weekly Activities

Week 1

<u>Duration</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 MINS.	<u>Tick-Tock.</u> Pass the ball from inside of left foot to inside of right foot and back (similar to a grandfather clock). <u>Hat Dance.</u> Lightly touch ball with bottom of right foot then with left. Ball should remain still. Increase speed for both (looks like Mexican hat dance).
5 MINS.	<u>Body Parts.</u> Dribble ball inside a 20x20 yd grid and players stop ball with a particular body part upon the coach's command. (For example, the coach yells knee, the players all stop the ball with their knee and then continue on the coach's command).
2 MINS.	Water Break
10 MINS.	<u>2 Squares.</u> (1) Continue <u>Body Parts</u> ; add a 2nd grid and have players on command dribble their ball into new square. (2) Then split the players in half (half of the players in each grid) and continue. Upon coach's command, the players must switch grids (dribble their ball into the other grid and try to avoid collisions). (3) Now, upon the coach's command, the players leave their ball, switch grids, and find another ball to continue dribbling in that grid.
2 MINS.	Water Break
35 MINS.	<u>Scrimmage</u> with water breaks and substitutions.

Week 2

Duration

10 MINS.

Activity

Quick Touches. Each player has a ball and they all line up on the sideline (spread out). Each player will dribble the ball with very quick touches and pretty slowly in the following manner for 20 yards:

- Inside Foot – every step they take, they should be touching the ball with the inside of their right foot. Repeat back. Then repeat with left foot.
- Shoelaces – every step they take, they should be touching the ball with their shoelaces on their right foot. Repeat back. Then repeat with left foot.
- Outside Foot – every step they take, they should be touching the ball with the outside of their right foot. Repeat back. Then repeat with left foot.

2 MINS.

Water Break

10 MINS.

Fetch. Each player has a partner and one ball per pair. The pair brings their ball to the coach who tosses it away. Based on the coach's command, the pair must return the ball in the manner required. For example, the coach will yell "3 hands and 1 knee" and the pair must return the ball to the coach with 3 hands and 1 knee touching the ball at all times.

2 MINS.

Water Break

35 MINS.

Scrimmage with water breaks and substitutions.

Week 3

Duration

10 MINS.

Activity

Turns. Each player has a ball and they all line up on the sideline (spread out). Each player will dribble the ball for 7 yards and then turn, go back to original line, turn and repeat with the following types of turns:

- **Inside Cut** – at the line, the player should reach out his/her right foot and cut the ball back using the inside of their right foot. This should be a 180-degree turn (turn to the left). Continue several times then try with left foot (turn to the right).
- **Outside Cut** – at the line, the player should reach out his/her right foot and cut the ball back using the outside of their right foot. This should be a 180-degree turn (turn to the right). Continue several times then try with left foot (turn to the left).
- **Pull Back** – at the line, the player should reach out his/her right foot and pull the ball back using the sole of their right foot. This should be a 180-degree turn and they should turn in the direction of the ball (their foot constantly is in contact with the ball during the turn – turn to the right). Continue several times then try with left foot.

2 MINS.

Water Break

10 MINS.

Knock-Off. Split the players in half. Place several domes randomly spread out in a 30x30 yd grid. Place a soccer ball on each dome. One team goes at a time and each player for that team has a ball. Their objective is to knock-off all the balls from the domes by kicking their ball into them. Each team gets a turn and the team that knocks off all the balls in the quickest time wins. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

2 MINS.

Water Break

35 MINS.

Scrimmage with water breaks and substitutions.

Week 4

<u>Duration</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 MINS.	<u>Roll.</u> Each player has a ball and they all line up on the sideline (spread out). Each player will roll the ball with the bottom of their foot for 15 yards, turn, and repeat back to original line. Repeat several times using both feet.
2 MINS.	Water Break
10 MINS.	<u>Gates.</u> Split the players in half. One team without a ball randomly spreads out in a 30x30 yd grid and stands with their legs spread apart (a little more than shoulder width). Each player from the other team has a ball and dribbles around the grid trying to touch their ball thru as many legs as possible. This event should be 2 minutes and the players should remember how many legs they split. The teams will then switch roles to determine which team split more legs. Repeat 2 or 3 times.
2 MINS.	Water Break
40 MINS.	<u>Scrimmage</u> with water breaks and substitutions.

Week 5

<u>Duration</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 MINS.	<u>Green Light, Yellow Light, Red Light</u> . Each player has a ball in a 30 x 30 yd grid. The players all dribble within the grid and perform action based on coach's command. Green light means the players dribble at a fast pace, yellow light means the players dribble at a slow pace, red light means the players all stop their ball. The players could also practice their turning here.
2 MINS.	Water Break
15 MINS.	<u>Tunnel Ball</u> . Split the players in half. Each team lines up in a straight line (front to back) and spread their legs apart, forming a tunnel. This is a race between the teams. The first player in each line must pass the ball thru the tunnel and then get back in the front of the line. The last player in the line collects the ball, brings it to the front and repeats the process. The first team to complete a full cycle wins. Repeat 3-4 times.
2 MINS.	Water Break
35 MINS.	<u>Scrimmage</u> with water breaks and substitutions.

Week 6

Duration

10 MINS.

Activity

Quick Touches. Each player has a ball and they all line up on the sideline (spread out). Each player will dribble the ball with very quick touches and pretty slowly in the following manner for 20 yards:

- **Inside Foot** – every step they take, they should be touching the ball with the inside of their right foot. Repeat back. Then repeat with left foot.
- **Shoelaces** – every step they take, they should be touching the ball with their shoelaces on their right foot. Repeat back. Then repeat with left foot.
- **Outside Foot** – every step they take, they should be touching the ball with the outside of their right foot. Repeat back. Then repeat with left foot.

2 MINS.

Water Break

10 MINS.

Shadow. Each player must find a partner and everyone has a ball. One partner (leader) dribbles around and their partner must follow (shadow) their every move (this is just like Follow the Leader). The leaders should change directions and speeds throughout. Partners switch roles and repeat 2-3 times.

2 MINS.

Water Break

35 MINS.

Scrimmage with water breaks and substitutions.

Week 7

Duration

10 MINS.

Activity

Turns. Each player has a ball and they all line up on the sideline (spread out). Each player will dribble the ball for 7 yards and then turn, go back to original line, turn and repeat with the following types of turns:

- **Inside Cut** – at the line, the player should reach out his/her right foot and cut the ball back using the inside of their right foot. This should be a 180-degree turn (turn to the left). Continue several times then try with left foot (turn to the right).
- **Outside Cut** – at the line, the player should reach out his/her right foot and cut the ball back using the outside of their right foot. This should be a 180-degree turn (turn to the right). Continue several times then try with left foot (turn to the left).
- **Pull Back** – at the line, the player should reach out his/her right foot and pull the ball back using the sole of their right foot. This should be a 180-degree turn and they should turn in the direction of the ball (their foot constantly is in contact with the ball during the turn – turn to the right). Continue several times then try with left foot.

2 MINS.

Water Break

10 MINS.

Ball Tag. Each player has a ball within a 30x30 grid except for tagger. Players dribble within the grid and try to avoid the tagger. The tagger runs around and touches any players ball to freeze them. Players can unfreeze themselves by performing the Hat Dance (taps on top of the ball with the bottom of their feet) 10 times. Continue for 1-2 minutes and switch taggers.

2 MINS.

Water Break

35 MINS.

Scrimmage with water breaks and substitutions.

Week 8

Duration

15 MINS.

Activity

Relay Race. Divide the players into 3 or 4 teams (no more than 4 players per team). Setup a relay race where players must dribble between domes, around cones, perform Hat Dance, etc. Vary events to make it fun. First group to finish wins. Repeat 3-4 times.

2 MINS.

Water Break

40 MINS.

Scrimmage with water breaks and substitutions.

3. Things You Can Expect

As coaches of these younger players there are things that we know that we can expect during training and games. If we know what to expect, we will be more effective in dealing with the hundreds of situations that come up. This will help us relax, and, in turn, allow us to enjoy the unpredictable nature of working with these children even more. Here are some of the things that we can expect:

- Most players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.
- No matter how loud we shout, or how much we "practice" it, they cannot or will not pass the ball.
- Somebody will come off the field in need of a toilet. Somebody will stay on the field in need of a toilet.
- The only player to hold a position is the goalkeeper (if you play with one). Don't even consider teaching positional play.
- Twenty seconds after the start of a game, every player will be within 5 yards of the ball.
- Several players will slap at the ball with their hands, or pick it up. Several parents will yell at them not to do that.
- A model rocket that is launched from a nearby field will get 99% of the player's attention. By all means, stop whatever you are doing and go watch for a couple of minutes!
- During a season, you will end up tying at least 40 - 50 shoelaces.
- They will do something that is absolutely hysterical. Make sure that you laugh!

4. Basic Info for Parents of Under 6 Players

Since parents of kids at this level are most often first time participants in the game of soccer, here are some hints about how most coaches handle practices and games.

- Every player who attends at least one practice during the week will be allowed to play at least half of the game.
- Parents must be at least 3 yards from the touch-line (sideline). Home team selects which side to sit on. No one can be at the ends of the fields.
- We play two 8-minute quarters per half with a 1-minute break between quarters and a 5-minute half-time break.
- We field a maximum of 3 players and must field a minimum of 3 players.
- The field is normally 30 yards long by 20 yards wide. The goal area is about 8 feet wide and 4 feet high.
- There are no penalty kicks, no direct free kicks, and offsides will not be enforced.
- No slide tackling by any player. Sliding to get the ball is allowed but having contact with another player while on the ground is not.
- Basic knowledge to be learned at this age level is the shape of the field, the touchlines and the direction of play. Basic skills to be learned are warm-ups and stretching, dribbling, basic ball control, use of inside of foot, and sharing the ball.
- The major goal at this age, as well as Under 7 and 8, is to allow the kids to have fun playing soccer. That means no running up of the score on a weaker team. Parents should support a coach's decision to pull players or to move stronger players from offense to defense or even to remove the very strong player for a while to allow the other team to experience the fun and excitement of scoring. You can also allow the other team to add an extra player if necessary.
- Any time a team is leading by 4 goals, adjustments should be made to allow the other team a chance to experience success as soccer players.

5. Characteristics Of U-6 Players

- Short attention span. ·
- Can attend to only one problem at a time.
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated.
- May or may not understand or remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on; what goal they are going for. We need to be patient and laugh with them as they get 'lost' on the field. ·
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise often. Give "hints", don't criticize. ·
- Need generous praise and to play without pressure. No extrinsic rewards (trophies, medals, etc.) should be given for winning. ·
- Prefer "parallel play" (Will play on a team, but will not really engage with their teammates. Thus, 3 against 3 games are, in reality, 1 against 5 games because they all want the ball at the same time. ·
- Very individually oriented (me, mine, my). ·
- Constantly in motion, but, with no sense of pace. They will chase something until they drop. They are easily fatigued but recover rapidly.
- Development for boys and girls are quite similar.
- Physical coordination limited. Eye - hand and eye - foot coordination is not developed. Need to explore qualities of a rolling ball.
- Love to run, jump, roll, hop, etc.
- Prefer large, soft balls.
- Catching or throwing skills not developed.
- Can balance on their "good" foot.

6. Involving The Parents

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-6 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed.

Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are listed below:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling. (Phone chains.)
- Choosing a team administrator-someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, and shin guards (Cleats are not mandatory.)
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-6 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

7. Coaching Rational

It is important to understand at the outset that players coming to any sport prior to the age of 6- years old, in general, do not do so by their own choice. As a result, their coaches need to give them something about which to get excited. Further, at this age, learning to play soccer is secondary to most other things in their lives. With the above assumptions, lets look at some things that we can do to energize the U-6 players, and, hopefully, get them to the point where they will enthusiastically initiate the sign up for next year!

- Each session should be geared around touching the ball as many times as possible. Involve the ball in as many activities as possible. Basic movements such as running, skipping, hopping, etc. need to be emphasized. If these can be done while kicking, catching, rolling, or dribbling a ball... all the better! ·
- Training should not last for more than one hour. This is primarily due to physical fatigue and attention span considerations. Train once or twice a week. Any more than this may lead to their and your burnout.
- Have as many different kinds of activities ready as you can get into one hour. Emphasis needs to be placed on what is FUN! ·
- Every player should bring his or her own size #3 ball. ·
- Remember, although they may have very similar in birth dates, their physical and / or mental maturity may vary as much as 36 months. Activities need to accommodate these individual differences whenever possible. ·
- Team play and passing is an alien concept to these players. They know that if they pass the ball, they may never get it back. In fact, they often will steal it from their own teammates. Do not get uptight if they do not pass, let them dribble to their heart's content. ·
- Plan for at least four, 90-second drink breaks, especially in warmer weather. Their "cooling system" is not as efficient as in older players.

8. Typical Training Session

Here are some items that should be included in a U-6 training session:

Warm-Up

A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that may or may not involve the ball. They can chase their ball when it is thrown by the coach, bringing it back with different parts of their body. Or, they can chase someone with their ball at their feet. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, again, hopefully done with the ball. "Soccernastics" activities are very appropriate, like: rolling the ball with the bottom of their feet, with their elbows, backwards, with the back of their neck while holding on to it; throwing it up and catching it; keeping it up with their feet while sitting.

Individual Activities

Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not a real 1 v 1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or "Red Light - Green Light", or a game where players are trying to knock their ball through gates. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "looser sits".

Play The Game

Move on to the real game, but, make sure it is a 2 v. 2, or 3 v. 3, game. Switch the game every 5 minutes or so. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. It is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

Warm-Down & Homework

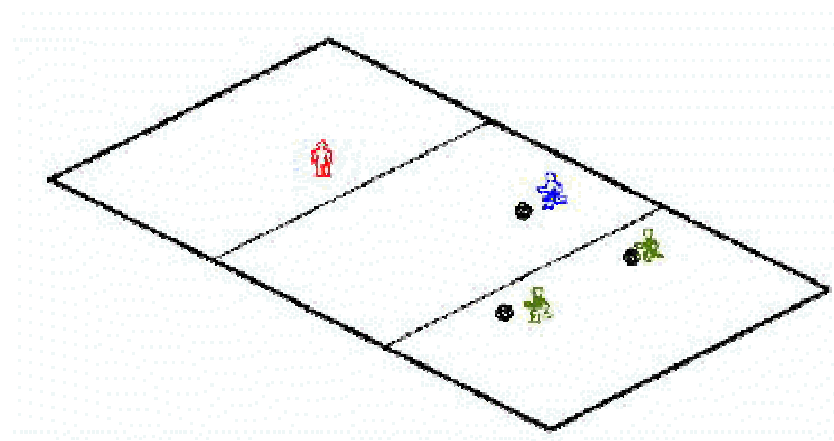
Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their thigh and then catch it. It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

U-6 Practice Idea - "Keep Your Yard Clean"

Here is a game that involves kicking and is a good example of parallel play in that it involves all players on the team at one time, but, they are all acting as individuals during the game. This allows for individual differences in skill. The game is simple, fun, and easy to adapt to account for team size and experience.

THE GAME: Create a 'neutral area' between the two teams where no player is allowed to enter. This area can be as small as one yard and as big as 10 yards wide. The width is determined by how far the players can kick the ball. Each player starts with a ball at his / her feet. On command, each team tries to keep their side of the game free of balls by kicking their ball over to the other teams side. After an appropriate amount of time (when the balls become too scattered, or, the players are loosing focus), call the game and count which side has the most balls on their side. Distribute the balls evenly for another try if the players are still interested. After players have found some success with this basic game, try these variations: ·

- Players can only use their left foot.
- Throw the ball back.
- Punt the ball back. ·
- Dribble the ball around a cone that has been set up in the middle of their "yard", then, kick the ball back.



U-6 Practice Idea: "Red Light...Green Light"

Here is a game that should be familiar to most U-6's. Again, the game is fun, simple to set up, and has direct application to the game. The skill that it is targeting is dribbling.

THE GAME: Each player has a ball, except the one player that is designated as the "light". Lines from start to finish should be approximately 20 - 30 yards. Players start from the line opposite the "light". The "light" then turns away from the group shouting out "GREEN LIGHT". At this signal, the players start to dribble towards the "light". When the "light" turns back around, calling out "RED LIGHT", players must freeze their bodies and their ball. If the "light" catches players or a ball still moving, that player must take 5 steps back. The first player to cross the line where the "light" is standing is the winner and becomes the new "light". You can start the game without using balls for younger players, then have them roll the ball with their hands, then use their feet

9. Drills For Small Children

Tip: Keep team numbers reasonable (avoid long boring lines), for example use two goals for two different groups so lines are half as long.

Run And Shoot

Have the players in two lines by the center circle. Have a player from one line start moving towards the net and feed him/her a ball from beside the net. They have to dribble toward the net and shoot. Normally avoid any drills with line-ups, however this one works because the kids move quickly through the line. You should have lots of parents to help collect balls and keep kids moving through the lines.

Cone Soccer

Play 1v1 with one player against one player, each has a cone as a goal. This is every player; nobody stands and watches. The object is to hit the cone; there are no boundary lines, etc. This is nothing but 1v1 dribbling with a little bit of long passing/shooting, etc. They figure out very quickly that they have to beat their man and nothing else will do. After about five minutes, everybody switches to somebody they haven't played yet. This way nobody is hopelessly outmatched against the same player for very long. They hate to stop doing this until about forty minutes or so when their tongues are hanging to the ground (it's also a good conditioner). This also teaches individual initiative - nobody else is going to stop the opponent; nobody else is going to score the goal.

Strong Sides

The team concept is best taught with unbalanced drills (i.e., 2 v. 1, and 3 v. 2, etc.)-- this is true for players of all ages, but especially with younger players. This will make the benefit of team play obvious and it will "let the game be the teacher". Start with 2 v. 1 drills, then when the players clearly recognize the value of combining to beat one player-- either to beat and score or to maintain possession-- consider a move to 3 v. 2 (vary the amount of space the drills are carried out in-- space is almost another subject).

Striker!

Divide players into two teams. Station each team at a corner post of the goal, standing off, but facing the field. Place a keeper in goal facing the field. Coach/assistant stands behind the center of the goal with a supply of balls. Coach tosses a ball over the crossbar to about the penalty spot. A player from each team both sprint to the ball and attempt to control it, turn, and get a shot off. The second to the ball defends (if he then wins the ball, then he tries to shoot). When there is a score, save, or ball goes out of play, restart the same way with a different pair of players. May want to limit amount of time each

pair has to attempt to score as some kids will dribble all over the field if you let them and everyone else gets bored. Limit the area that the combatants can "fight" in to the penalty area.

Possession

Picture a square about 20 yards to a side. Coach is at one corner. Two teams are at each of two corners to immediate right and left of coach. Coach serves balls between the two teams first players in line from each team attempt to receive ball and turn and pass to their own team. Second player to the ball attempts to defend, prevent turn, or gain possession and turn and pass to his team. Score one point for turning and passing and successful reception. This keeps the two players in line and the second players in line who are the receivers into the game. Receivers cannot enter field but can adjust position along a line to receive pass. Coach can vary the service to handicap one player or another, serve hard, soft, air balls, or into the space beyond the two lines, etc. Coach controls time and with cones lays out the space for play (if no one can turn and pass within a few seconds, no points and the next players are up; dribble out of bounds and the same thing-- get back in line and coach serves another ball).

Line Drills

Although you should limit the number of line drills, the following drills are very helpful in teaching younger players important fundamental aspects of the game (all these are on a field stepped off to regulation size, preferably with a regulation goal).

Players rotate positions:

- Simple cut back move: 1 line. Have players start at midfield and dribble half way down sideline with coach providing minimal pressure. When coach says 'cut' the player cuts the ball toward the middle and then finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure.
- Reverse move (U6s can begin to do this; U7s ought to be able to do it): 1 line. Players and coach stand on end line next to goal. Coach passes ball ahead. Player has to run and reverse ball, then turn and shoot (or dribble back and shoot).
- Pass to partner: 2 lines: one along sideline and another toward the center of the field. Same as above, but this time, when coach says pass, the player passes to the wide-open teammate. The teammate must be yelling 'pass it to me.' The play finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure. Also, this is the foundation for 2 v 1 or 3 v 1..As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal a pass.

10. Dennis Mueller's Kindergarten Soccer Games

I have had a request about what to do with kindergarten kids. Here are things I've done that seem to work.

Rule #1: be nice and have fun.

Rule #2: if things aren't working give it a minute then move on.

Rule #3: when more than one kid losses focus, change activity.

Dribbling

Every player with a ball.

Rules

- Every player must keep moving and not run into anyone else.
- When coach says "one" they must stop and put their right foot on the ball (never mind that most cannot yet tell right from left just tell the lefties to use their other right foot).

Ask what part of the foot you should use when dribbling, you'll get lots of answers. The correct one is all parts (trick question). Show how to pull ball back with sole of foot. Ask them to try it after you say start.

When they are dribbling around, say "ONE"; once they are all stopped, tell them that now when you say "TWO" they are to stop and sit on the ball. "START", "TWO", now show some other dribbling technique, for instance cutting the ball across with the inside of the foot. "START", "ONE", Tell them to move faster and to keep their heads up. "START", "TWO". If they did go faster, they probably had some collisions. Ask them how to avoid them. (Right answer is just like cars on Route 1, go slower in traffic and speed up when no one is around and always pay attention to what the other drivers are doing.)

Tell them when you say "THREE" to stop and put their nose on the ball. "START", "THREE", START, encourage them to find space on the field, help them say "there's space over here", "now its over in the other corner". etc. Do several of the stops and starts to get them a little silly and maybe introduce another dribbling move. Other things Four³/₄ - elbow, FIVE³/₄- left ear, etc.

Sharks And Minnows

Need a moderate space with boundaries (about the dimensions of one long, for these guys, kick). All but one player (the shark) has a ball. The shark tries to kick the minnows' balls out of the area when the coach says to start. First let the minnows retrieve their ball and continue, then play poison where the minnows become sharks after they lose their ball and continue play until all the balls are gone. Retrieve the balls and go again.

Use a few cones to make a 10 to 15 yard square. Have all players with ball inside area. Tell them to try and kick each other's ball out, but to keep their ball in. If their ball is kicked out, they must sprint after it and bring it back inside as quickly as possible. Stop them, ask them to count how many times they can kick someone else's ball out. Start up again. Stop and ask who had more than 2,4. Now ask them to count how many times their ball is kicked out. Start and stop again, forget to ask for total.

Another game is to give 1/2 the players balls and tell the others to take a ball away and try to keep it. Players with a ball after 1 minute win. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

Arrange them in pairs. If you have an odd number, have one play with you. Play 1v1 keep away for 1 minute. Player in possession after 1 minute is winner. Rearrange the pairs and go again for a total of 3 or 4 times.

Passing

Have them find a partner, one ball per pair. This will take a little while so you might tell them to come back from the break with a partner and a ball before you dismiss them.

First have them pass the ball back and forth while standing about 3 yards apart. They will look hopeless.

Stop them and ask what part of foot to use for short accurate passes on the ground. (Answer is inside of foot, show them what you mean; that part of the foot between the heel and ball of foot.) Have them resume. Point out that a pass is no good if it can't be received by their teammate. Ask what that means (answers on ground, within reach, not too hard, not too soft, when it is expected, for example it does no good to pass to a teammate's back, or to one picking dandelions)

Stop them ask them how to receive the ball (answer: cushion the ball so it slows and is left in front of you so you can step forward to pass it, Don't let them stop the ball under their foot, or so close that the ball is stuck between their feet and must be moved before it can be kicked, tell them the ball should be kept moving) Now you will also have to tell them to back up after they pass the ball or else, they will end up too close together. Resume.

Stop and tell them to do two-touch passing (you probably will have to ask what Two-touch is and find a correct respondent). Resume

Stop tell them that you want to count the number of passes in a minute and to start on your command. Start and time for one minute. Ask each pair how many passes, repeat.

Tell them to do one-touch passing. Time them for one minute while they count. Offer praise, "that's very good", That's better than I though a bunch of 6-year olds would do", etc.

Now tell them to pass and move after they pass. Tell them to keep track of their partner, to avoid the other players (It's harder than it looks), and not to dribble (two- or three -touch).

If you have an even number break them up into equal groups. 2v2 or 3v3 is good, but 4v4 is confusing and will need a good neutral player or two to work, if you have an odd number pair yourself, or an older sibling with the obviously weakest player.

If you do pairs, have them play keep-away for one minute. Encourage the player without the ball to move to get open and the defenders to challenge for the ball and to deny passing lanes. Team with the ball after one minute wins. Go again. Go again. Keep reinforcing the idea of getting open on the attack (in a position where your teammate with the ball can see you, where you are not too close, but close enough and where the other team can't intercept the pass).

If you do 3v3, consider using a neutral player to help the team with the ball. Again, reinforce the need to move to get open. Point out what happens if you hold the ball too long before passing (you get ganged-up on). Keep such observations very brief and generally make them in the form of a question (to which you will likely get lots of wrong answers, just say "no, that's not what I'm looking for" or "that's it!" when you get the right answer).

If the neutral player is reasonably talented, have them ask the players to get open whenever there is no good target. The neutral player needs to move to be a good receiving position all the time. The better the neutral player, the more players that can be involved.

Tell the players with the ball to make the longest pass they are capable of to a teammate who is open. (Not the longest kick, but the longest pass to the teammate farthest away from the other team's players; Same comments about passes as before, within reach, on ground, not too hard, not too soft).

Shooting

Players love to shoot and score. Almost anything that gets lots of shots in a short time is fine. With 6 or fewer, a simple line taking turns and retrieving the balls works fine. Have them stay out of the way of each other's shots.

For more than 6, you need to keep the "standers" occupied some way. Having them serve a ball to the shooter, then move to the shooting line and the shooters retrieve ball and move to serving line.

Easiest serves are those coming from behind and slightly to the side of the shooter, also ball must be on ground and in front of shooter. The shooter should be facing sideways so he can see both the ball coming and the goal at which she will shoot. Next easiest are serves coming from the goal on the ground back to the shooter who is facing the goal; hardest serves are those coming across the field from either side.

If a larger goal is available, a parent as keeper (preferably a totally inept keeper) is lots of fun.

The youngest will be lousy servers and you will have to decide if it is "working" when you have them serve. If not simply change the activity.

One version of the setup: Line in front of goal about 15 yards out. First player in line has no ball. Second player in line pushes the ball from behind to in front of the first player so that the ball is rolling towards the goal. The first player catches up to the ball and takes a first time shot. First player retrieves ball and goes to end of line, second player moves to front of line ... (You will have to instruct them about passing the ball slowly enough that the first player can reach it, but hard enough that it does get in front of him.

One way to begin this is to have the first player facing the goal with his legs spread and the second player passes between the first player's legs. That at least puts the ball between the player and the goal and as long as the pass is not too hard, the first player should be able to get a shot off.)

Other Games

1v1: Have the players find someone of comparable ability. Use two pairs. Have one pair serve as "goals" standing with their legs spread apart and the other two compete to score. Tell them the goals must be scored by shooting on the ground. After one minute, goals and players switch.

If you have an odd number of pairs, use parents as "goals".

11. Scrimmage

Encourage the team with the ball (attackers) to spread out and to move to get open. Encourage the defenders (team without ball) to get between the ball and the goal (goal-side) (or between an attacker who is "up front" and the goal).

Don't worry about the finer points of throw-ins, offside, etc. Do prohibit sliding tackles, encourage the attackers to shoot, defenders to get back as soon as they lose the ball.

Defenders are everyone on the team that doesn't have the ball. Attackers are everyone on the team that does have the ball. When no one has the ball, deciding whether you should act like a defender or an attacker is hard to determine, but the team that gets it right most often usually wins the game.

The scrimmage will most likely look like a swarm around the ball. If the coach must engage in some tactical instruction, have one player play behind the swarm to collect any balls coming to him and play the ball forward to space in front of and to the side of the swarm.

Later introduce players to the sides of the swarm to collect any balls to the side or passes from behind and then dribble forward and shoot or pass to the middle. Finally, add a player in front of the swarm to serve as a target.

Now with 4 players outside the swarm, the remaining few players are just midfielders, the others are just in good supporting positions. Encourage the swarm to pass to any teammate outside the swarm, yes a pass back is good and should be tolerated, even if it is a bit risky for K-3 s. The players outside the swarm should be rotated frequently.

It will take K's all fall to get to the point where more than a couple will play outside the swarm. Except, for those who are really not playing at all and just standing with no clue as to what is going on, encourage those to get into the swarm and get involved.

Do not relegate the only kid with a booming kick to stay back all the time. The point here is to learn and not to restrict the chances to learn in an effort to win or avoid an embarrassing loss.

Of course, there are lots of variations on all of these and you probably have your own favorite. With these guys silly games are not a bad idea. Just remember these little ones have trouble staying focused on one activity for too long, so make lots of changes. If something isn't working, change after a very short time, especially if you don't have a clear way to make it easier or more fun to do.

12. Soccer-Related Games For Very Young Children

Wee ones love the idea of a "new" game, so it is a good idea to change the rules of the game or change the game every 10 minutes to keep interest. Instructions have to be broken into little steps and kept very brief. If you can not do it and show it in about 20 seconds, then do it in stages, demo part 1, then expand to part 2 etc.

The key to little kids soccer drills is for every player to have a ball and a variety of 'games', and drills that include every player. After playing soccer related games, pick one aspect of the game (dribbling, or shooting, or passing) and build the rest of your practice session around that.

Numbers

The exercise is good for 1v1 dribbling skills. It is especially good on a hot day as the kids defending can rest a bit. Divide the kids into 2 groups. If you have ten kids, say, assign each kid a number between one and five. So each team has a number one, a number two, etc. Try to make sure the kids with the same number are evenly matched.

Set up two very wide "goals" with pylons. Spread the five kids on each side across each goal line. Call out one or more numbers, and those kids come out to play 1v1, 2v2, etc. and the rest of the kids stay spread across the goal line as defenders. Throw a ball from the sideline into the center and let them play it until a goal is scored, the defenders stop it, or it goes out of bounds.

Variation: Colors. Use two each of different colored pinnies, armbands, or stickers to place on shirts, as younger kids will have trouble remembering numbers.

Monkey In The Middle

All players form a circle and choose someone (the "Monkey") to be in its center. The players forming the circle pass one ball among them while the person in the center tries to gain control of the ball. When this happens, the person in the circle who last touched the ball goes to the center. Some level of competitiveness develops but never on an individual basis and the "losers" quickly get a chance to redeem themselves.

Ice Monster

Mark off an area for the game to be played and select one kid to be the "Monster". Have the rest of the kids (each with a ball) dribble around within the area. The "Ice Monster" attempts to touch each player's ball, at which point that player "freezes" with his or her foot on the ball.

If a player's ball goes out of bounds, they also freeze. The last remaining unfrozen player gets to be the new Ice Monster for the next round.

Cops And Robbers

Have the kids (each with a ball) line up on one side of the field. These guys are the "Robbers." Have two more kids (the Cops) facing the Robbers somewhere near halfway to the other side. The object is for the Robbers to dribble to the other side without having a Cop tackle the ball away. If a robber loses his ball to a cop, he goes to jail (designate a small area off to the side or use a Goal structure.)

Have the Robbers repeat the crossings until there are only 2 left. Make these guys the new cops, pull everyone out of jail and start over.

Pirate (Or Monster)

A keep away game; coaching points: concentrate on the player's close dribbling and screening techniques. Everyone gathers inside a circle (center circle is fine) with a ball. One player without a ball is the Pirate. Everybody starts dribbling around.

The Pirate player tries to steal a ball from any player and pass it out of the circle - now, the two players are Pirates and go after the others, then three, then four. Finally only one player is left with a ball. He/she becomes the Pirate the next game.

Variation: Bomber. Just like above except the "IT" player has a ball and tries to roll/throw it at the other player's and knock their ball

Kick Out

Everyone dribbles and shields their ball within a circle while trying to kick everyone else's ball out, and simultaneously to protect their own. You can't kick someone else's ball out if your ball isn't in the circle. If your ball goes out you have to leave the circle it gets down to two kids in a duel. The coach may participate to keep the game from becoming too competitive, as the ones eliminated early may feel bad.

Give And Go

This one is good for getting the kids to move after they make a pass. It is appropriate for kids a little older, who pass the ball but like to stop and really admire their better passes.

Everyone spaces themselves around the center circle. Give the ball to one person and they call out someone's name and pass to him or her. They then run to the receiver's position in the circle. The receiver upon hearing their

name called steps forward to receive the pass and yells "I got it!" The sequence is then repeated.

Several things are accomplished besides getting them used to movement. The "I got it!" yell addresses the problem of nobody playing the ball in a game because they thought the other was going to play it. We all learn each other's names quickly.

Invariably, someone is always left out so start a countdown from 10 to 0 and they have to figure out who has been left out (the left out person should be quiet). They start yelling among themselves to figure out whom it is and this fosters communication on the field. (It's pretty humorous too).

After a few practices, they get it down so they look pretty sharp. Then you toss in another ball. They love it! Now they have to think a bit because people are moving and two are busy with the other ball.

Egg Hunt

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. At the other end of the field is a goal called the "basket". Blow the whistle and turn them loose.

The object of the game is to get all the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. Time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task.

The kids really like this game. The more balls (eggs) the better. You should see them score, and turn right around and go back for more balls.

Marbles

Split your team into two groups and line them up behind two opposing lines. Each player should have a ball. Place an unusual color (or size) ball in the middle. This is the marble (a #2 ball works well). Have them try to move the marble across the other team's line by striking it with a ball. After the game starts, don't require them to use their own ball, they are free to use any other ball they can find.

At first the players may get really excited and kick the marble. If this happens, call time-out and put it back.

Variation: eliminate the teams and play it in a circle. The game is over when the ball exits the circle.

Teach The Parents

During the last practice of the season have a scrimmage between the parents and the players (with the coaches helping the players). This serves a couple of purposes. The kids love this game. They get a chance to show their parents what they can do and they enjoy beating their parents. **(The parents never win, the coaches make sure of that.)** Also, since many of the parents have never played soccer it shows them how difficult the game really is. The hope is that a parent may now think twice before "yelling" at a child for missing and "easy" shot in a game. Everybody seems to enjoy this scrimmage.

13. Just Plain Games!

For warm-ups, play games that are not soccer related, but promote physical activity and are a lot of fun. Simon says, freeze tag, team tag, take-away, etc. Remember that the kids aren't showing up to play soccer; they're showing up to have fun. Have fun with them.

Shark And Minnows

Teaches kids with the ball to shield it from an opponent and teaches kids without the ball how to take it away from an opponent. Use pylons to create a 15-yard square.

One player, the shark, starts outside the square without a ball. All other players, the minnows, start inside the square with a ball. When the coach yells, "Shark's getting hungry!" the shark starts running around the outside of the square and the fish start dribbling around inside the square. When the coach yells, "Shark attack!" the shark enters the square and has 30 seconds to send as many balls as possible outside the square.

When a ball leaves the square for any reason, the corresponding fish must leave the square and stay out until the coach gives the "Stop!" command at the end of the 30 seconds.

A fish has done well if still alive. The shark has done well if few fish survived. Choose a new shark and play another round until every player has been the shark once.

Camp Town Races

Line up all the players on one end of the field. They each have a ball. On the whistle, they all dribble to opposite end, shoot ball into goal, get ball out of goal, and run back and finish with a shot on opposite goal. The first one to finish is the winner. Ask them "Who is going to win the race?" They all learn to say "The player who can dribble straight!"

A variation is to start half at one end and half on the other. This really teaches them to try to do it fast while maintaining possession. This drill really helps players deal with the balls that pop out of the bunch.