



2021



# CAPALABA BULLDOGS

# COACHES HANDBOOK





## Welcome to the 2021 Miniroos season at Capalaba Football Club.

We're excited to see so many new faces, and glad to see so many familiar ones too. Miniroos is the new Football Federation of Australia name for small-sided football programs across the country.

Miniroos is about fun, mastering skills and learning to love the game of football. Capalaba Football Club is passionate about our Miniroos and we aim to support and nurture these young players as the future of our club and the sport.

### Capalaba Football Club

#### Meet the Football Support Team:

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# Children's soccer is not adult soccer!

## Organised soccer today

Unfortunately, youth coaches are all too often judged by how many games their players win, by whether they rank high in the standings or win championships. This is reinforced by the expectations of parents, who hope to see their children win. Taking adult soccer as their model, they often transpose its Standards, objectives and methods onto children's and youth soccer.

The results:

- The focus is not on the needs and interests of the children.
- Many practice activities are not appropriate for children (e.g. too monotonous).
- The kids are under the external control of score-oriented coaches and players; they're unable to play freely and without interference.

Children's soccer has objectives and methods all its own. Check the comparison in the list to see whether your club's approach to children's soccer fits the guidelines listed



## What this means for children's soccer

Today it's a rarity, but once it was common in much of the world: In the backyards, in the country fields, in the city park-wherever there was a little room to play, soccer-loving boys and girls kicked the ball. No matter where kids got together, it wasn't long before two teams were picked. Special rules always made for exciting games. Balls (and ball-like objects) were wildly diverse: big balls or small balls, tennis balls, cans - as long as you could kick it around, you had a game. In this way, kids acquired enormous skill with the ball.



There's no turning back the hands of time. But instead of mourning the past, we have a great opportunity to bring some important traits of street soccer into our organized children's training:

- Offer unstructured games during practice, and "street soccer afternoons" at your club. Give kids
- The freedom to try things out at practice.
- Use attractive "street soccer" games to motivate kids to kick around with their friends in their free time.
- Don't try to manage every little detail; let kids be creative!





# Children's soccer should be different from adult soccer

## Practice

- Adult soccer is oriented toward performance and competition
- Children's soccer: new experiences, fun, learning soccer

## Match Play

- Adult soccer: game formation, tactics
- Children's soccer: free play without interference

## Objectives

- Adult soccer: championship, promotion
- Children's soccer: basis for lifelong enjoyment of sports

## Success

- Adult soccer: final score
- Children's soccer: positive experiences and learning for all children!

## Coach

- Adult soccer: judged by success (score)
- Children's soccer: judged by progress of all children

To fully develop their creativity and enjoyment of the game, children have to have the freedom to try things out at practice, to play freely and without interference.





# A new approach to children's soccer

## Guidelines for practice, match play and player guidance

### Children's soccer today: Basic requirements

The score-oriented approach to children's training criticized above is the cause of many of the problematic trends we find unacceptable today:

- Many of the "prodigies" who performed exceptionally at the U10 or U12 level are no longer able to achieve their full potential at higher levels.
- Many players turn their backs on their clubs, on soccer or on sports altogether just before they reach the adult level, sometimes as early as U14 (dropout problem).
- Children's soccer is frequently dominated by tactics training, much too soon and too one-sidedly. Important basic coordination skills are neglected.

If we add the social changes described earlier, plus the physical problems and lack of activity among children today, then the challenge to all clubs becomes clear: We need a fundamentally new approach to children's soccer!

### Thus, some important objectives

- First we have to ask ourselves: What are children like? What do they want? In the street soccer of the past, kids organized their own games the way they wanted. Today our job is to share the excitement of soccer with children by offering the same kind of "free soccer" in our clubs.
- The coordination problems caused by the restriction of children's physical activity must be remedied. Therefore we must emphasize a well-rounded basic athletic training program with a focus on coordination training.
- The aim of every children's soccer division should be not to win games, but to develop and promote every player. Every child is equally important!
- Player guidance must not be restricted to practice and match play. Non-soccer-related activities like weekend trips, camping and other group activities should automatically be part of the program.
- Children's development- not just athletic development, but general personal development- should be a major focus for responsible youth coaches.

Soccer clubs should offer practice and match play that is age-appropriate and in line with children's individual needs and desires. Our job is to compensate for the lack of physical activity in today's restricted world.

### The primary objectives of children's soccer

- Share the excitement of soccer with children!
- Offer children a well-rounded basic athletic training program.
- include both challenges and encouragement in your program.
- Give children guidance on the field and off.
- Provide responsible youth coaches for children's training.





## Making your program age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate

### A basic structure for youth training

The practice of dividing youth teams into age groups (see below) is simply a way of making it easier to organize tournaments. First and foremost, children's practice and match play must respect child development. Therefore youth promotion is divided into four basic levels, each with its own objectives. This is an aid to coaches in making their practices and matches age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate. This system of levels provides all clubs with a clear basic structure for youth training. Basic instruction (age six and under): The main focus is on developing and training a broad repertoire of motor skills (not just soccer: climbing, jumping, throwing, simple games with a variety of balls, etc.). This way they develop movement skills applicable to any sport. Soccer clubs have a special responsibility here, because many children start organized sports with them.

### YOUTH TRAINING MODEL

#### U 6 and under

- Teaching a wide range of movements
- Experiencing the fun of unstructured play

#### U 7 /U8 and U 9/U 10

- Developing coordination
- Learning the rudiments of basic techniques
- Enjoying the game of soccer

#### U11/U12 and U 13/U 14

- Training technical/tactical elements (individual and group tactics)
- improving one's game

#### U15/U16 and U 17/U 18

- Teaching specific techniques and tactics Soccer training



So how do we put together play and practice sessions that are age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate for children's soccer? First, they should be structured according to four basic building blocks (see diagram at right). Of course each concept may be weighted differently, according to age and ability level, but the building blocks provide a good general guide.



### Building block 1: General movement training

General training always comes before specialization in a single sport. In light of our children's often-serious lack of physical activity, sports clubs and coaches must follow this rule. This means that play sessions with small children should never consist exclusively of soccer games! The array of possibilities for cultivating children's general motor skills is enormous:

- movement exercises like running, jumping, hopping, climbing or balancing;
- simple games without the ball (see the Info box on page 23);
- diverse games with, on and around equipment- including entire "movement landscapes" (especially for indoor practice).

Today it's generally agreed that kids need a broad and general motor training program before they can acquire the necessary skills for playing soccer. But beyond that, neglecting general movement training disregards children's needs and leads to motor skill problems; it can even have a negative effect on personal development.



## **Building block 2: Soccer-oriented movement training**

There's a certain fascination about the ball, especially for children. A wide range of movement exercises with many different balls develop and promote motor coordination in general; so do small-sided ball games. The games and exercises included in this building block help kids play creatively and safely with balls that roll, bounce, fly, etc - no heavy balls, though!

## **Building block 3: Soccer-specific technique training**

It takes a solid foundation of movement training and coordination before soccer-specific technique training can begin to be effective. As kids get older, age-appropriate technique exercises and activities should play a bigger role in practice, along with small competitions, motivational technique games, and solo exercises (e.g. technical dribbling speed). Objective: an age-appropriate, attractive and gradual introduction to soccer techniques.

## **Building block 4: Playing soccer**

Of course, every play or practice session with children should also involve playing soccer. The main focus should be on unstructured small-sided games on goals, free of externally imposed rules (developing children's enjoyment of the game of soccer).

## **Building block 1: General movement training**

### **Lots of kids lack physical experience**

When children arrive at their first soccer practice, they may not have had any athletic experiences, soccer or otherwise, either at school or in their free time. More likely, they have physical problems: They can't run backwards or hop; they're overweight or have bad posture. On top of that, they also tend to lack experience in group sports: They push others aside, can't hold still, act aggressive or fail to participate.

As a coach, it's not your job to discover and root out the many causes of these problems. However, physical problems and undesirable behaviors can be at least partially eliminated or minimized by comprehensive athletic activity. And they must be eliminated, because when kids don't get enough physical activity, their physical well-being, health, social integration (e.g. into a sports team) and self-confidence all suffer.



## Variety is key

So, your first job is to provide kids with a whole world of movement, as diverse as possible. Of course, young children should be exposed to soccer during practice, but not just soccer! A training program that is too narrowly focused on soccer can be taxing to the point of damage, especially for the very young. Physical stresses are often too intense and too repetitive for children's joints, bones and ligaments.

## Aspects of Coordination in Soccer



### Differentiation

- a "feel" for the ball (both feet)
- solid ball control (both feet)
- accurate, properly weighted passes



### Equilibrium

- balance during 1 v. 1 play (ground/air)
- balance while executing hip turn kick (both feet!)



### Rhythm

- timing on shots and fakes
- fast footwork



### Orientation

- perceiving and dealing with situations appropriately
- positional play, e.g. within a defense system
- proper position on jumps (header, etc.)



### Reaction

- racing for the ball, intercepting passes
- goalkeeper plays, e.g. on close-range shots

## General Movement Training

Tip 1	Tip 2	Tip 3	Tip 4
			
<p><b>Simple games</b> Coordination training must involve diversity and variety. Simple games are ideal for providing this. Ideally, you should start each practice session with a motivational game.</p>	<p><b>Different balls</b> Don't just use soccer balls! Foam balls, plastic balls, balloons, etc. can be played with using feet, hands, and/or head, providing complex training for several aspects of coordination at once. But remember: Never use balls that are heavier than soccer balls!</p>	<p><b>Indoors</b> Indoor training (e.g. during winter) provides virtually ideal conditions for coordination training. Use gym equipment for obstacle course relay races, balancing on upside-down benches, games with tires and multiple balls, etc.</p>	<p><b>Competitions</b> Running coordination exercises and exercises with balls are best organized as <b>competitions</b>. This gets kids motivated, even when they have to execute specific movements accurately under time pressure.</p>
Tip 5	Tip 6	Tip 7	Tip 8
			
<p><b>Complementary sports</b> No single sport can develop all aspects of coordination equally. Other sports are not your competition; they're an important complement and a valuable source of physical activity.</p>	<p><b>Intense concentration</b> Coordination exercises require children to focus intensely. That means: Including just a few exercises in each session is a better way to achieve your objective than an exhausting coordination marathon.</p>	<p><b>Let them try it</b> Coordination exercises motivate kids to experiment, try out exercises and even invent new ones. Give them the freedom they need and promote their creativity, e.g. by letting them share their own exercises.</p>	<p><b>A must at every session</b> In children's soccer, coordination training is the top priority. That's why every practice session should include coordination exercises, either at the beginning, in the middle or at the end.</p>



## Speed training

For children, speed goes hand in hand with coordination. Both develop fastest between the ages of six and 10, as the arms and legs undergo their growth spurt. But don't make the mistake of trying to "train" speed by making kids do repetitions until they collapse! For a child, even one 50- to 70-yard sprint can be too much.

Only use age-appropriate games and competitions to train speed. Kids experience their first significant increase in speed between the ages of six and eight. Between nine and 12, improvements in strength and coordination lead to further increases in running speed and speed in general.

On the following page, we present some sample age-appropriate speed training activities. There are certain guidelines you should follow for all speed oriented exercises, to avoid overtaxing your players:

- Sprints should be no longer than five to 15 yards, depending on player development.
- Children need longer rest periods: For example, follow a 15- to 20-yard relay race with approximately one minute of rest.
- Be sure to let players rest completely between sprinting competitions: no jogging back to the start as in adult soccer!
- Setup exercises so that no one child has to do multiple sprints in a row (e.g. playing tag or ball games in teams).

Once players have mastered the basic aspects of speed, they can begin simple soccer-specific speed training (ages eight to 12). Mainly, this means 1v1 competitions, simple ball games in teams, and technique-oriented dribbling competitions. The important thing is for players to master the necessary technical prerequisites first.

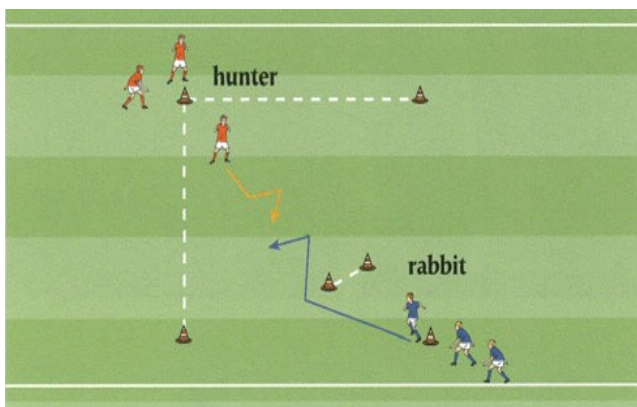


# Activities for Children's Speed Training

## Reaction and takeoff speed

- Tag and chase games
- Day and night (two rows; the row called runs away)
- Slalom sprints
- Team relays, racing by numbers

### Example: Rabbit and hunter

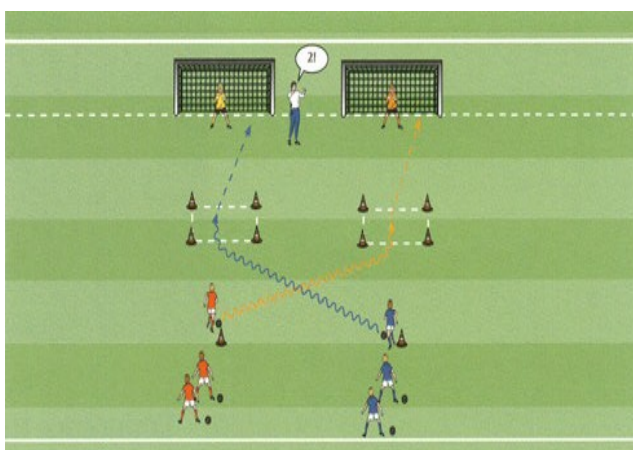


- The rabbit stands at one corner of a 10 x 10-yard field.
- The hunter stands at the opposite corner (about three yards in).
- As soon as the rabbit comes out of its burrow and runs past (or through) the small goal, the hunter comes to life.
- The rabbit tries to get across one of the lines without being tagged by the hunter.
- Afterwards, players switch roles and positions.

## Soccer-specific games

- Types of competitions:
- combined forms, e.g. sprint to the ball and shoot
- dribbling and shooting
- Small-sided soccer games (1 v. 1, 2 v. 2)

### Example: One-on-one shootout



- Depending on the coach's signal, the first two players either dribble straight ahead into the shooting zones ("one!") or cross paths, dribbling into the opposite shooting zones ("two!"). Either way, they finish with a shot.
- The first player to shoot (from the shooting zone) scores one point.
- Each successful shot scores an additional point.



## Building block 2: Soccer-oriented movement

### Training

#### Soccer-specific coordination training

For kids under the age of six, coordination training takes the form of a variety of non-soccer-specific movement exercises. Eight- to 12-year-olds and advanced six-to eight-year-olds can start doing soccer-specific coordination exercises as well. This **specialized** form of coordination training extends and systematically builds on general coordination training.

As players get older and improve their abilities, they execute soccer-specific techniques (dribbling, passing, shooting, etc.) with increasing confidence. The movements have become familiar and can now be incorporated into specialized coordination training.

The reason: In the long run, players have to develop a feel for the ball and solid ball skills so they can concentrate on other things besides ball control. Therefore, we recommend the following schedule for general and soccer-specific coordination training:

#### **Six and under:**

Becoming familiar with the ball via a wide variety of general movement exercises

#### **Ages six to eight:**

Developing comprehensive ball handling skills via solo exercises, partner exercises and small-sided ball games

#### **Ages eight to twelve:**

Building a solid feel for the ball (basic “ball magic” exercises)

Games with a variety of balls



Simple games with balls



Basic “ball magic” exercises



Movement exercises in pairs and threes



## Building block 3: Soccer-specific technique training

### From playing to learning

No question about it: Learning basic soccer-specific techniques is clearly one of the major objectives of children’s soccer. However, the focus of training always depends on children’s level of development. The diagram below shows the importance of each of the four building blocks at each age level.

### Under six: No technique training!

At this age level, the focus is squarely on general, non-soccer-specific movement training. Playing soccer is just one activity among many. This is the only way to properly promote the physical and mental development of kids at this age.

### Six to eight: Learning by playing!

Here the focus shifts to small-sided soccer games on goals. By playing soccer on two goals, kids acquire the rudiments of the major technical skills, almost without even trying. Practice reinforces technique training with age-appropriate exercises and competitions.





## **Eight to 12: Reinforcing basic techniques!**

The transition from play to training begins between the ages of eight and 10. At the previous age level, “practice” was kept short to leave plenty of time for “play,” but now the systematic learning and reinforcement of basic techniques becomes a higher priority. Thanks to increased self-confidence and concentration, plus a greater readiness to learn and perform, focused and systematically structured technique training can begin by age 10 at the latest. Once they’ve entered the “golden age of learning” (around age 10), learning techniques becomes virtually effortless for many children. This situation is so favorable that players should even be allowed to try out difficult techniques like the bicycle kick: It’s fun, and it motivates them to practice on their own. Of course, once techniques have been learned, they have to be applied to game situations. Therefore, 1 v. 1 play (in the form of small group games) should be apart of practically every practice session at this age level

### **Dribbling is a must!**

Which soccer techniques are most important in training? With six- to eight year-olds, our primary objective is to teach the rudiments of dribbling, passing and shooting (rudiments = approximations of the ideal technique; movements may not yet be smooth, rhythmic or efficient).

Dribbling is number one in children’s soccer. Thanks to the exceptionally high number of touches provided by a wide variety of exercises, kids easily acquire a feel for the ball while dribbling. Little by little, they learn to dribble the ball with more control and closer to the foot.

Gradually they gain the ability to look up from the ball and monitor the game. The sensitivity they acquire here is also helpful for learning other techniques. And boys and girls want to dribble! It makes sense to take advantage of children’s self-motivation and use it for training.

With eight- to 12-year-olds, we begin systematically teaching dribbling, the instep kick, passing, receiving, and faking. Once kids have mastered dribbling, learning a variety of simple fakes becomes the next key concept. Versatile and effective 1 v. 1 play is the objective for this age level.

Heading, on the other hand, should be practiced sparingly in children’s soccer, with few repetitions. And most importantly: Use lightweight balls!



## Building block 4: Playing soccer

### Spotlight on small-sided soccer games

The conditions and activities of adult soccer are not appropriate for introducing six-to 10-year-old children to the game. We can't say it often enough: Children's training has to be different from adult training! Games with big teams (e.g. 8 v. 8 or 11 v. 11) are completely wrong for children's training.

Instead, age-appropriate objectives and activities are required for what is many children's first intensive contact with soccer. Children's training should focus clearly on small-sided games on goals.

The reason: Children learn soccer best by playing a lot, experiencing the fascination of soccer in all its intensity-just as kids once did in street soccer. These experiences of the game form the foundation for a stable and long-lasting motivation to play soccer, and ultimately for the positive development of youth soccer. The Situations in small-sided games are easier for kids to keep track of (see Info diagram at right). And the nature of the game remains unchanged: Kids are always playing "proper" soccer - the way they want to play it.

### 4 v. 4: an ideal game for children

The ideal game is 4 v. 4 on goals, the smallest game possible that includes all the technical/tactical elements of the "big" game. Obviously other sizes are possible too, such as 2 v. 2 or 3 v. 3 on goals. One complete practice session each week should consist exclusively of small-sided soccer games. The simple activity of playing on two goals allows children to acquire the rudiments of the most important technical/tactical skills. "Learning by playing" is reinforced by motivational exercises involving basic techniques (dribbling, passing, shooting), These should be interesting and varied, so that they also foster players' creativity and intuitive feel for the game.

### But why 4 v. 4?

4 v. 4 is a structure based on children's unstructured play and the street soccer of the past, For kids, it's attractive, exciting, instructive and full of new experiences. The basis of 4 v. 4 is an idea that's easy for kids to understand: shooting and blocking shots. With its manageable environment, 4 v. 4 teaches all the essential technical and tactical elements and objectives of the "big" game (11 v. 11 ). At the same time, kids are not overwhelmed by overly long running paths and passes, and because the goals are closer together, they get to shoot sooner and more often, racking up all-important positive experiences. Finally, all players are involved in almost every attacking and defensive play. With teams this size, mutual support becomes a must!

### Soccer with small teams on small fields

- lots of touches
- lots of involvement
- lots of shooting situations
- manageable game
- short paths to the goal, exciting game



## The advantages of 4 v 4

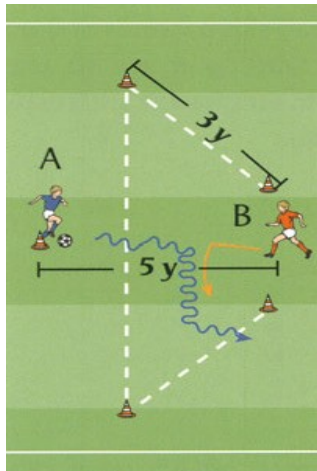
- Small-sided soccer games on goals automatically guarantee exciting, enjoyable and effective training for children and youth players.
- 4 v. 4 is the smallest game possible that includes (and therefore teaches) all the basic situations and technical/tactical elements of the “big” game.
- 4 v. 4 can be played at every age level, regardless of players’ age or developmental level. It provides entertaining, variable and diverse play for all players.
- It’s relatively easy for youth players to apply the technical/tactical skills they’ve learned to the 11 v. 11 game later on.
- The 4 v. 4 structure allows you to teach the features of an attractive, modern playing style such as: attack-building via precise combinations; creative solo plays; risky, inventive attacks; and energetic, determined defending focused on quickly winning the ball back.





# Simple Small Sided Games on Goals

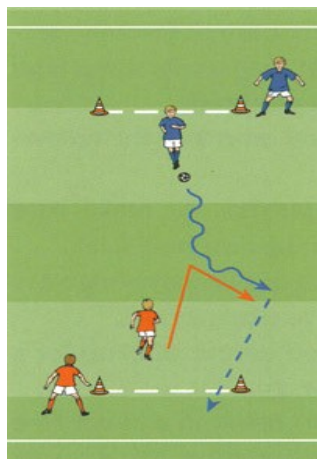
## 1 v. 1



### OPTION 1

#### 1 v. 1 with advantage for attacker

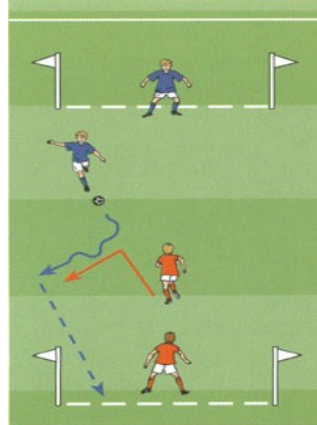
- Player A tries to dribble through either goal.
- As soon as A touches the ball, B moves in to keep A from breaking through.
- Afterwards, players switch roles.



### OPTION 2

#### Alternating 1 v. 1s on two small goals

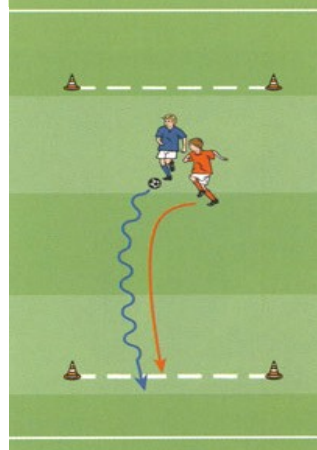
- Four players play in each 12 x 12-yard field.
- Two play 1 v. 1; the others wait behind their respective goals (2-3 yards wide).
- Playing time is one minute; afterwards, players switch roles.



### OPTION 3

#### 1 v. 1 on two goals with goalkeepers

- Four players play in a 15 x 15-yard field.
- Two play 1 v. 1 on small goals (up to four yards wide); the others are goalkeepers.
- After one minute, players switch roles.



### OPTION 4

#### 1 v. 1 on two goal lines

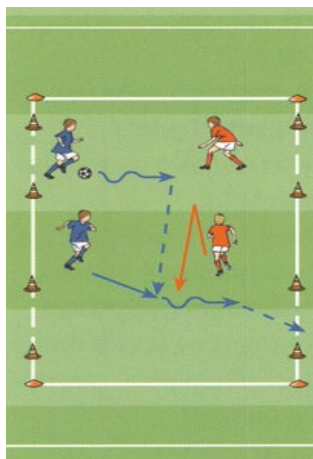
- The player with the ball attacks; the other defends.
- The object is to dribble across the opposition's goal line (12 yards wide, yards apart)
- Maximum playing time is one minute. 1 v. 1

## 2 v. 2

### OPTION 1

#### 2 v. 2 on two small goals each

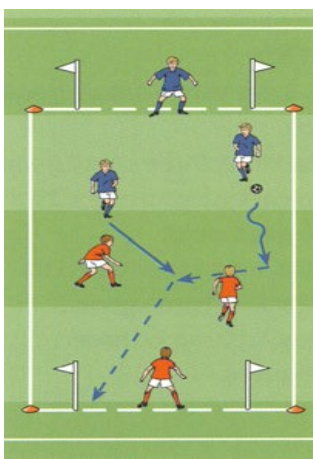
- Setup two goals (2-3 yards wide) on each sideline of a 15 x 12-yard field.
- Attackers can attack both goals.
- Playing time is two minutes.



### OPTION 2

#### 2 v. 2 s on two goals with goalkeepers

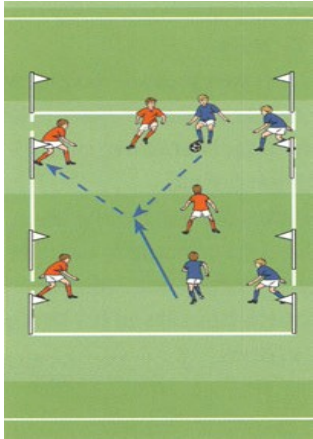
- Two teams of three play on a 20 x 20-yard field.
- Two from each play 2 v. 2 on small goals (4-5 yards wide); the others are goalkeepers.
- Playing time is two minutes; afterwards, rotate keepers.



### OPTION 3

#### 2 v. 2 on two goals each with keepers

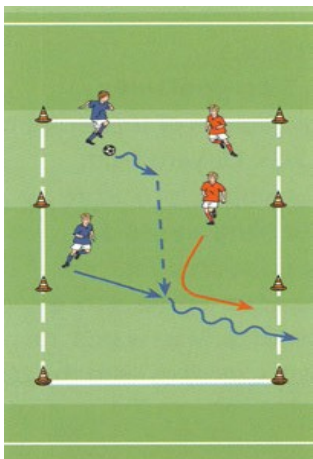
- Two teams of four play on a 20 x 20-yard field.
- Teams play 2 v. 2 on two small goals each (four yards wide) with keepers.
- Playing time is two minutes; afterwards, keepers switch with field players.

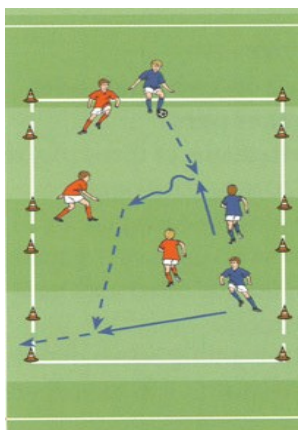


### OPTION 4

#### 2 v. 2 on two goal lines each

- Mark out two five-yard goal lines on each sideline of a 15 x 12-yard field.
- Attackers try to dribble across either goal line.
- Playing time is two minutes. 2 v. 2



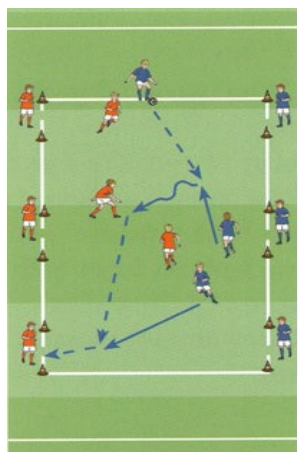


## 3 v. 3

### OPTION 1

#### 3 v. 3 on three small goals each

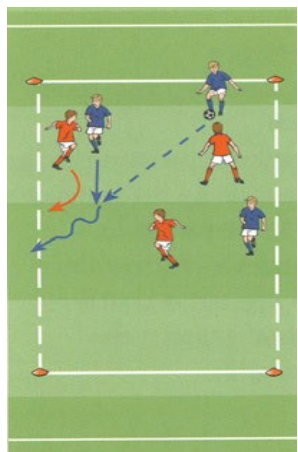
- Mark out three small goals on each sideline of a 25 x 20-yard field.
- Attackers are allowed to attack all three goals.
- Playing time is three minutes.



### OPTION 2

#### Alternating 3 v. 3s on three small goals

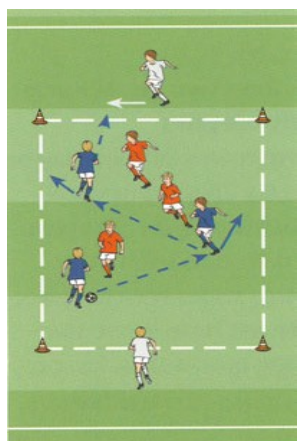
- Two teams of six play on each field.
- Three from each play 3 v. 3; the others wait behind their respective goals.
- Playing time is two minutes; afterwards, players switch roles.



### OPTION 3

#### 3v. 3 on goal lines

- Two teams of three play on a 20 x 15-yard field.
- The object is to score by dribbling across the opposition's goal line.
- Maximum time is three minutes; afterwards, do easy exercises with the ball.

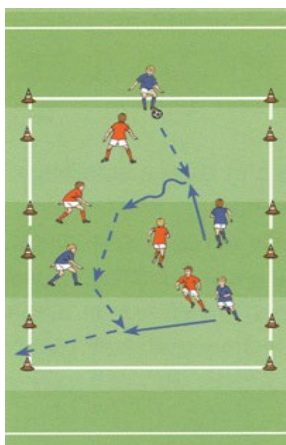


### OPTION 4

#### 3v.3 from passer to passer

- A neutral passer stands behind each endline of a 25 x 20-yard field.
- Teams on the field play 3 v. 3 to complete combinations from passer to passer.
- Rotate passers after three minutes.



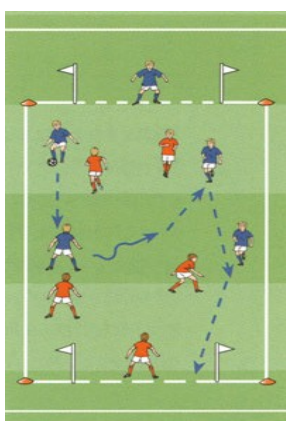


## 4 v. 4

### OPTION 1

#### 4 v. 4 on three small goals each

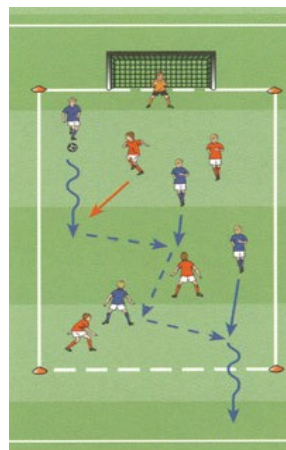
- Mark out three small goals on each sideline
- of a 30 x 20-yard field.
- Attackers are allowed to attack all three goals.
- Playing time is four minutes.



### OPTION 2

#### 4 v4s on two goals with goalkeepers

- Each team has five players; one from each defends a five-yard-wide goal.
- Rotate goalkeepers after every successful shot.
- Playing time is four minutes.



### OPTION 3

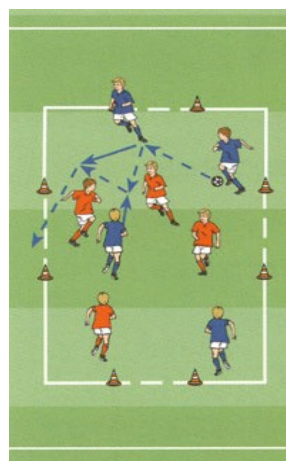
#### 4v. 4 on one goal and one counterline

- Team B has four field players; Team A has the same plus a keeper.
- A defends a five-yard-wide goal; if they win the ball, they “counter” by dribbling across B’s endline.

### OPTION 4

#### 4v.4 on four small goals

- Mark out a small goal on each side of a 25 x 25-yard field .
- Each team defends one “corner” of the field (two goals) and attacks the other.
- Playing time is four minutes.

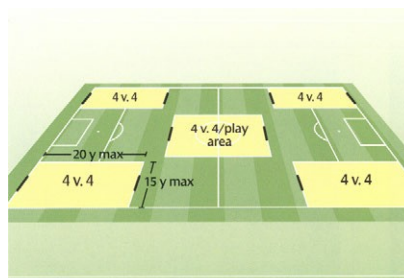




# Age Appropriate Match Formats for Players under Eight

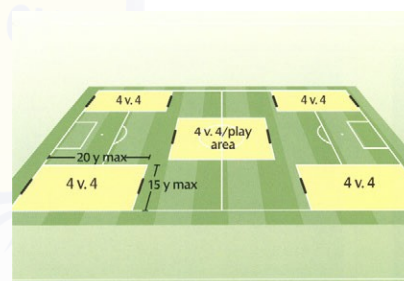
## Under age six

- **Team size:** four players, with or without goalkeeper
- **Game:** 4 v. 4 (without keeper), 4 + 1 (with keeper)
- **Field size:** up to 20 x 15 yards
- **Goal width:** up to two yards
- **Match structure:** "play days"
- **Ball:** lightweight ball (size 4)



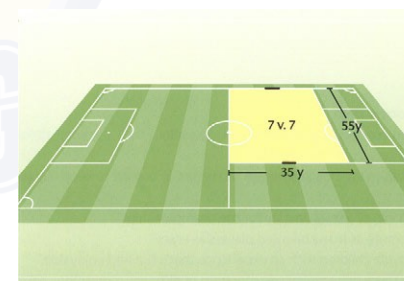
## Ages six to eight

- **Team size:** five to seven players (including goalkeeper)
- **Game:** 5 V. 5 to 7 V. 7
- **Field size:** approx. 35 x 25 yards (5 V. 5/ 6 V. 6) or 40 x 35 yards (7 v. 7)
- **Goal width:** 5 x 2 yards
- **Match structure:** no championships
- **Ball:** lightweight ball (size 5)



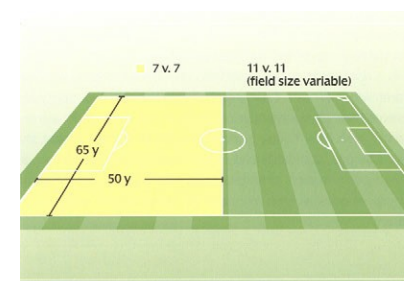
## Ages eight to 10

- **Team size:** seven players (including goalkeeper)
- **Game:** 7 V. 7
- **Field size:** approx. 55 x 35 yards
- **Goal width:** 5 x 2 yards
- **Match structure:** regional-level tournament
- **Ball:** lightweight ball (size 5)



## Ages 10 to 12

- **Team size:** seven or 11 players (including goalkeeper)
- **Game:** 7 V. 7, 11 V. 11
- **Field size:** 65 x 50 yards or variable (11 v. 11)
- **Goal width:** 5 x 2 yards
- **Match structure:** championship tournaments
- **Ball:** lightweight ball (size 5)







## Education Principles for Youth Coaches

### Educational principles for youth coaches

Practical tips that work

All children are equally important!

Share your own enthusiasm for the game.

Provide a positive environment free of fear.

Participate in exercises whenever you can.

Familiarize yourself with every child's personal situation.

Schedule extra time for pure play.

Model positive values and standards.

Have a sense of humor!

Decide the "rules of the game" together with the kids.

Praise means reinforcing self-confidence.

Avoid pressuring players to perform.

Take an active interest in your players!

It all comes down to caring about kids!



# Playing and Practicing with Five- to Six Years-Olds

## What are five- to six-year-olds like?

Small children are constantly on the move! Start a play session with some time for unstructured play, and kids will run around like crazy, jumping, climbing, playing, shooting, etc. For five- to six-year-olds, movement is a basic and integral part of a developmental process that involves all five senses.


By providing a wide variety of physical activity-far more than soccer alone-we:

- foster children's strengths, e.g. curiosity, spontaneity, an urge to move and play, an enjoyment of physical activity and a willingness to take risks;
- awaken a desire to learn and a willingness to do what it takes to master difficult challenges;
- help to compensate for the lack of physical activity and the sensory overload of today's world;
- promote development: not only physical, but also mental, emotional and social.

In short, comprehensive movement training has a profound effect on personal growth and should therefore be a part of every play session for four- to six year-olds. A one-sided fixation on exclusively soccer-specific objectives, benchmarks and activities is not age-appropriate and should be rejected automatically. To put it more bluntly, failure to provide a sufficient variety of physical activity disregards children's needs and negatively affects their physical well-being, social integration, self-confidence and self-reliance.

## Understanding five-to six-year-olds

Physical potential	Behavior
<p><b>Kids this age</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ have a strong desire to move and play</li> <li>▶ get tired quickly</li> <li>▶ are extremely flexible</li> <li>▶ have relatively un-developed muscles</li> <li>▶ are not very coordinated</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kids this age</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ are curious</li> <li>▶ are extremely self-centered</li> <li>▶ focus primarily on the coach</li> <li>▶ have powerful imaginations</li> <li>▶ have short attention spans</li> </ul>
<p>So provide a variety of physical activities in every session!</p>	<p>Kids' relationship to the coach is extremely important!</p>



## Building blocks for ages five to six: An overview

<p><b>1 Comprehensive movement training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general movement training (basic activities with objects and materials, parcourses and rotations)</li> <li>• races and relays</li> <li>• tag and running games</li> <li>• playful, age-appropriate gymnastics</li> </ul>		<p><b>3 Playing soccer</b></p> <p>Games for small teams on small fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from 2 v. 2 to 5 v. 5 (maximum)</li> <li>• numbers-up games</li> <li>• with simplified rules</li> <li>• with a variety of goals (poles, boxes, mats, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2 Soccer-oriented movement training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general ball training: games with various balls</li> <li>• simple games with the ball</li> <li>• shooting games and competitions</li> </ul>		



# General Ball Training

## Ball across the river

### Setup

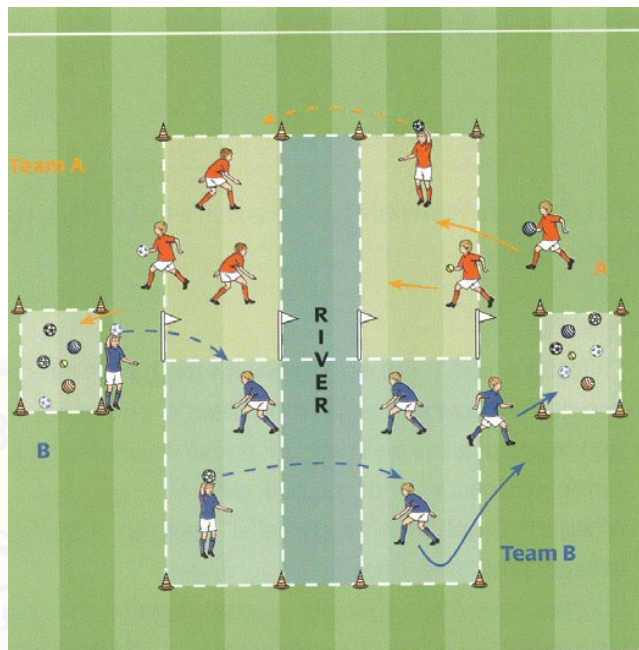
- Using cones, mark out a 20 x 20- yard field with a five-yard-wide “river” down the middle,
- Mark out a 2 x 2-yard “ball castle” on each side of the field,
- Clearly separate ball castles from the field,
- Divide 10 to 16 children into two teams and distribute the same number of balls to the two ball castles.

### Sequence

- Each team stands in its own half, with children evenly distributed on both sides of the river,
- Each team has its own ball castle,
- The children on the same side as their ball castle get balls from there and throw them across the river to their teammates, who quickly put them in the opposition’s castle.
- Practice round: Teammates switch roles (throwing/ catching),
- Competition: After one minute, which castle has fewer balls in it? Alternative: each ball placed in the opposition’s castle counts as a goal. Which team can score more goals in one minute?
- Next round: Teammates switch roles.

### Tips

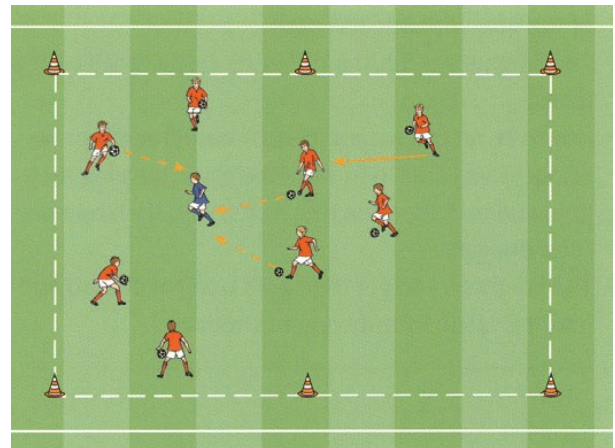
- Use a wide variety of lightweight balls: tennis balls, foam balls, mini soccer balls, etc.
- Use existing markings on the field or gym floor.



## Simple Ball Games

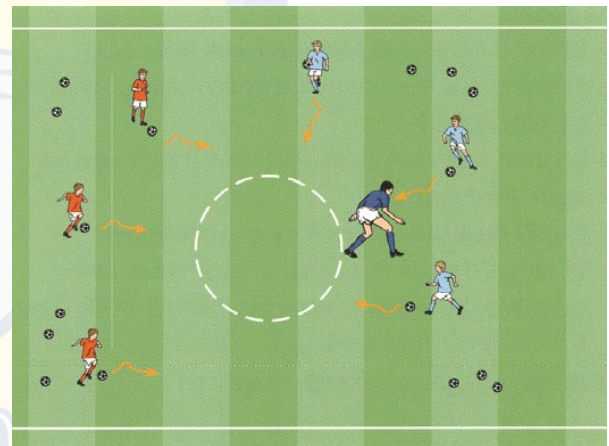
### Ball across the river Catch the robber!

- Field size should be appropriate for the bank robber's (coach's) level of fitness.
- Each police officer (child) has a ball.
- To arrest the robber, the police have to "shoot" him with their balls 10 to 15 times.
- The robber yells "ouch!" each time he's hit.



### Hunters versus the bandit

- Mark out a circle six yards in diameter.
- The children are hunters, hunting buffalo (balls, vests, etc.) and bringing them back to the village (circle) for their families. However, outside the village lurks a bandit who waits to steal the buffalo.
- The hunters try to get their buffalo past the bandit and into the village.
- afterwards, they go hunting again.
- Variation: One child helps the bandit.



# Playing and Practicing with Six to Eight Years Olds

## Objectives and Concepts for Six to Eight



<b>Movement training</b>
General movement skills
Diverse athletic abilities
Skillful, creative ball handling
<b>Playing soccer</b>
Fun and enjoyment
Basic elements of techniques
Team spirit and creativity

The traditional practice session structure is still not appropriate at this age level. Six- to eight-year-olds don't need a focused warm-up program; they want to get going right away-and they should! It makes sense to schedule "playtime" before the welcome and introduction phase, just as it did for four- to six-year olds.

Fill the early part of the session with tag and ball games that are easy to understand and get started on. That way, you satisfy children's urge to play and be active right from the start. It also makes it easier to deal with the little ones later on, when they're not so "antsy" anymore. Practice sessions should revolve around a combination of motivational technique-based games and simple exercises for teaching basic techniques.

Ideally, the basic techniques (especially versatile dribbling) should be combined with motivational shooting exercises. Be sure to spend as much time playing as you do practicing: Finish up with small-sided soccer games on goals. In addition to your closing ritual, it's not too early to start holding a sort of closing discussion with your six- to eight-year-olds. But unlike in professional soccer, this team meeting has only one purpose: to praise the children and get them excited for the next session!



### Building block 1

#### GENERAL MOVEMENT TRAINING

General movement skills like running, jumping and falling are fundamental for developing optimal soccer performance later on. Therefore, training at this age level focuses primarily on developing coordination.



#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- Tag and running games
- Back-and-forth relays
- Playful development of basic movement skills (running, jumping, falling, rolling, hopping, etc.)
- For indoor training:
  - obstacle course
  - games with equipment
- Kid gymnastics
  - playful movement exercises (e.g. crawling between a partner's legs), whole-body strengthening

### Building block 2

#### SOCCER-ORIENTED MOVEMENT TRAINING

Six- to eight-year-olds should develop general mobility by practicing with a **variety** of balls. Take advantage of the **entire** range of available balls for simple movement exercises and games. That way, you develop coordination and perception simultaneously.



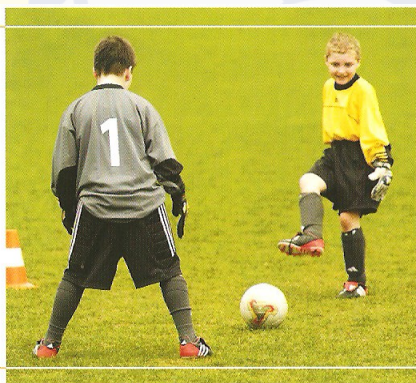
#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- General coordination training with the ball:
  - solo exercises with various balls
  - exercises for groups of two or three
  - competitions and shooting exercises
- Simple ball games

### Building block 3

#### SOCCER-SPECIFIC TECHNIQUE TRAINING

Six- to eight-year-olds need to learn the rudiments of the most important basic techniques (**dribbling**, passing, faking, shooting) in a playful way. Thus, you should constantly alternate between playing and practicing, incorporating small competitions into your exercises.



#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- Focus on: dribbling:
  - dribbling games
  - technique exercises
  - slalom dribbling (and shooting)
  - learning simple fakes
- Focus on: shooting:
  - learning the instep kick
  - rotations, relays, pair/team competitions
- Focus on: passing:
  - with the inside of the foot (also as a shooting competition)

### Building block 4

#### PLAYING SOCCER

Small-sided soccer games ("street soccer") should also be a part of every practice session. Here too, children should be **free** to play **without** restrictions, and to compete **without** pressure to win. It all comes down to fun and the enjoyment of unstructured play.



#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

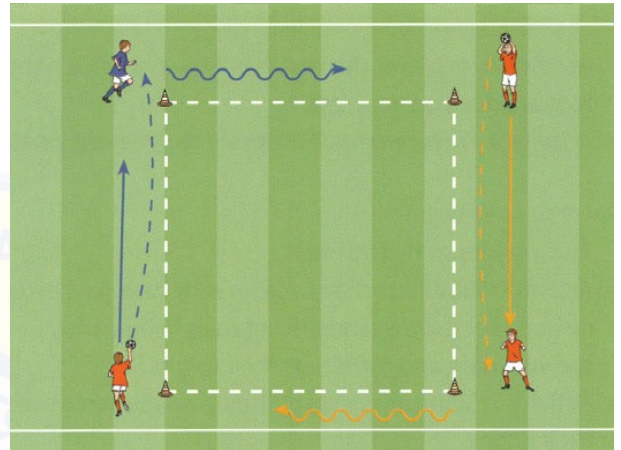
- Small-sided soccer games: 2 v. 2, 3 v. 3, 4 v. 4 and numbers-up games to develop cooperation
- Small-team tournaments: 3 v. 3, 4 v. 4
- Mixed training: One group plays soccer while the other does technique exercises, for example (rotate groups afterwards)



## Tag and running games

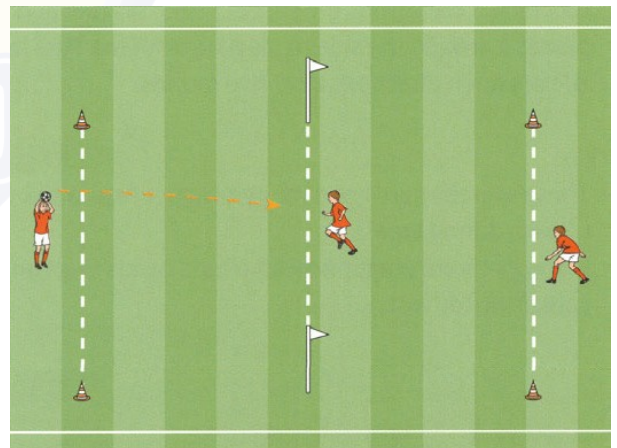
### Throw and dribble tag

- Four players stand at the corners of a 6 x 6-yard field; two (at diagonally opposite corners) have soccer balls.
- Activity: Player A throws the ball to Player B (player to A's left) and runs after it. B dribbles to the next corner, picks up the ball and throws it to C, etc.
- Players try to catch up with the players ahead of them.
- During the second round, players move to the right.



### Three-player dodgeball

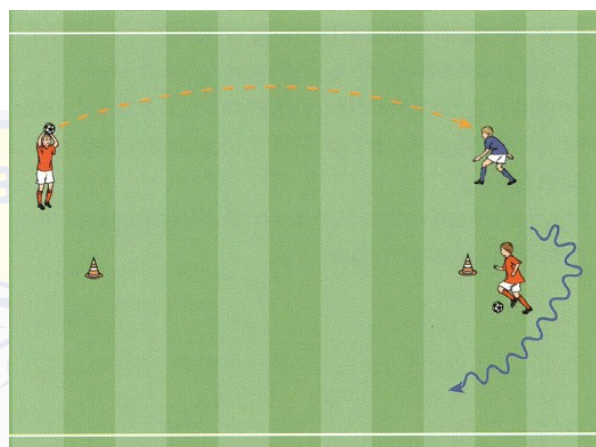
- Setup three small goals (three or four yards wide) at five-yard intervals.
- One player stands in each goal; the one in the middle goal has to stay on the goal line.
- The other two try to hit him with the ball (= one point).
- If he catches the ball, he scores one point and trades places with the thrower.
- Variation: Players rotate each time someone scores.



As these examples show, tag and running games can easily be combined with technique exercises involving the ball. They also expand the familiar repertoire of games with new configurations and exciting competitions.

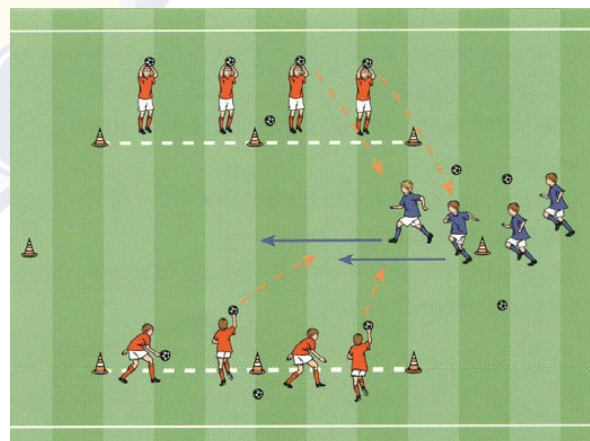
### Throw/dribble rotation.

- Setup two cones five to eight yards apart.
- Player A stands at the first cone. Band C at the other. A and C have one ball each.
- Rotation : Player A throws the ball to B; each one moves to the next station while C dribbles to the first cone , and so on.
- Team competition: Which group of three can complete three dribbling runs in the time allotted?



### Moving target (team competition)

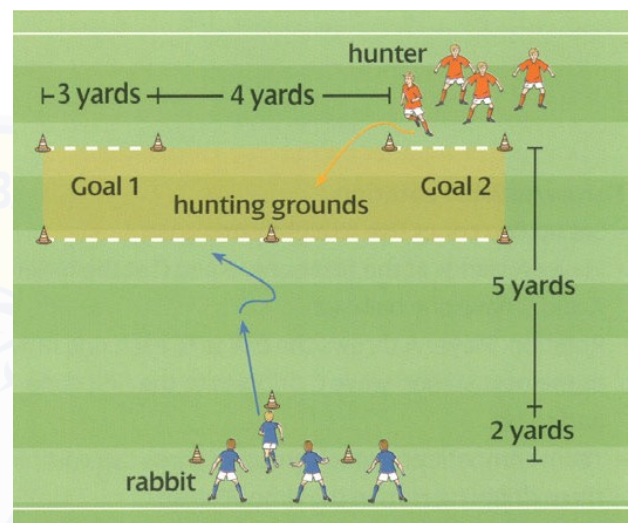
- Mark out two throwing lines 10 yards apart and place a cone at each end of the field.
- Divide players into three teams: one on each line and the third at one of the cones.
- The first two teams throw four to six balls back and forth. On command, the third team runs (or dribbles) to the other cone while the others throw balls at them.
- Each team makes three runs: Who can get the most hits?



# TAG AND RUNNING GAMES (FOCUS ON:TURNING)

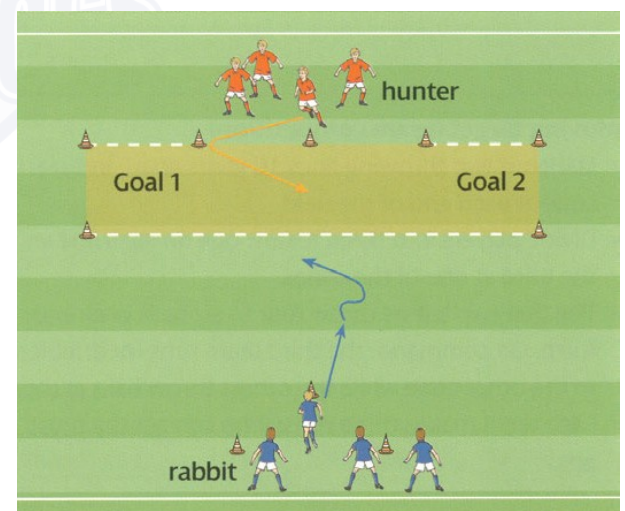
## Hunter and rabbit 1

- At the coach's signal, the hunter runs around Goal 2's near post and into the hunting grounds.
- At the same time, the rabbit runs toward Goal 1.
- Depending on what the hunter does, the rabbit tries to run through Goal 1 or Goal 2 (coach decides which direction).
- Players switch roles after each round (partners compete against each other).



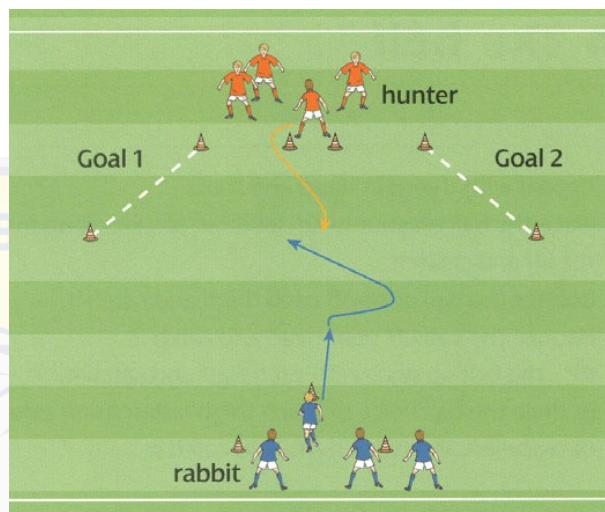
## Hunter and rabbit 2

- Now play begins when the hunter runs to the near post of Goal 1 or Goal 2.
- The rabbit watches the hunter and heads toward the opposite side.
- Depending on what the hunter does, the rabbit tries to run through Goal 1 or Goal 2.
- Players switch roles after each round (partners compete against each other).



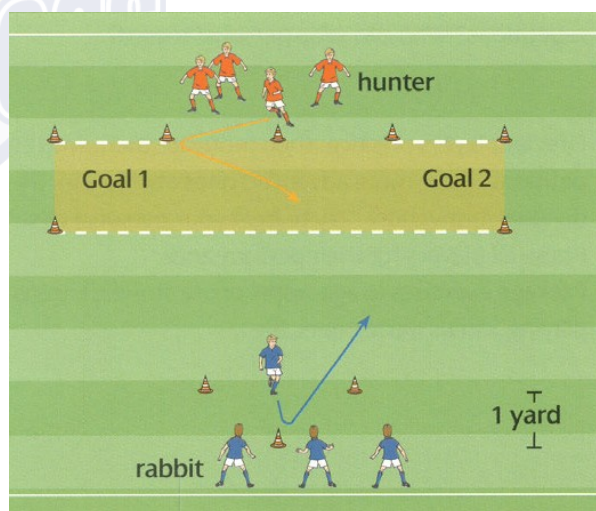
### Hunter and rabbit 3

- Now the hunter starts out facing away from the rabbits. Play begins when the hunter turns left or right and runs past the corresponding goal into the hunting grounds.
- The rabbit heads for the opposite side, then tries to run through Goal 1 or Goal 2, depending on what the hunter does.
- Variation: Any rabbit that gets through is allowed to shoot at a goal with goalkeeper (have balls ready).
- Players switch roles after each round.



### Hunter and rabbit 4

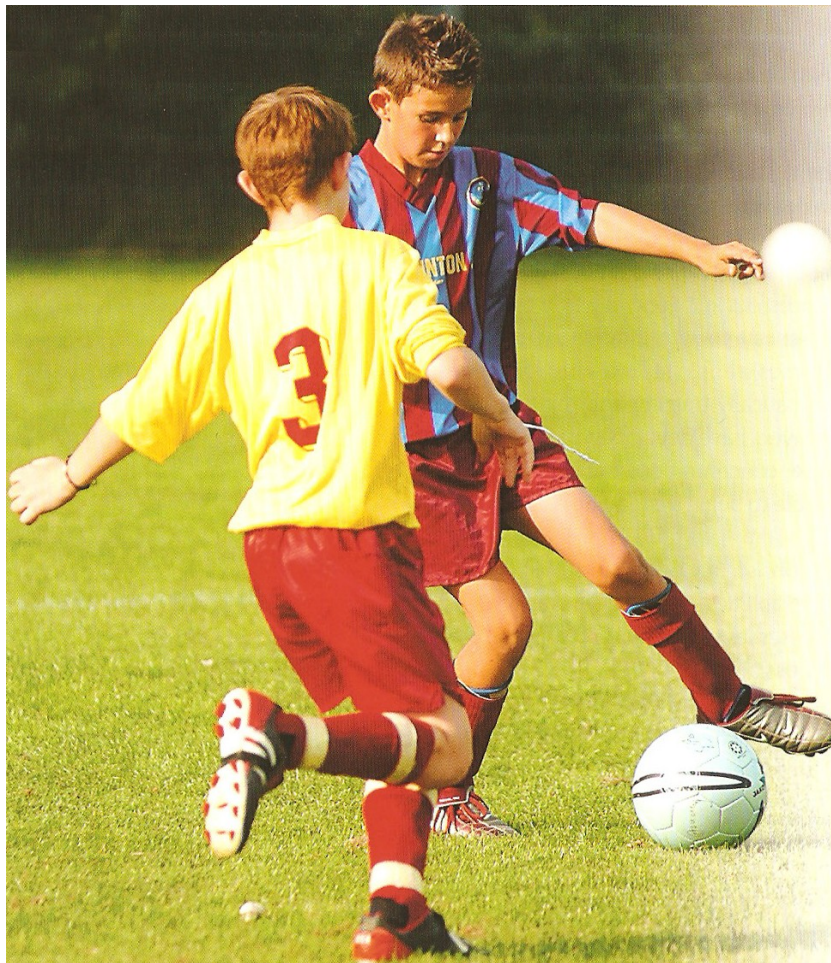
- The rabbit stands in front of a cone, facing away from the hunter. Play begins when the rabbit runs to the cone, touches it and turns around.
- At the same time, the hunter runs to the near post of Goal 1 or Goal 2.
- The rabbit heads for the opposite side, then tries to run through Goal 1 or Goal 2, depending on what the hunter does.
- Players switch roles after each round (partners compete against each other).





## Practicing with Eight- to 12-Year-Olds

### Objectives and Concepts for Age Eight to Twelve



**Soccer-specific  
movement training**

**Coordination with  
the ball**

**A variety of  
challenges**

**Technique training**

**Exciting games and  
competitions**

**Lots of repetitions  
(reinforcement)**

**Playing soccer**

**Simple, concept-  
oriented soccer games**

**Trying out new  
techniques**





## Take developmental differences into account

At this age level, developmentally appropriate training means taking basic athletic/biological differences into account. Experienced coaches know that developmental phases overlap, and that eight- to 12-year-olds often differ significantly, both mentally and physically. So it makes sense to put biological age ahead of chronological age when you're putting practice groups together.

### Kids this age:

- love to play and be active
- are better able to concentrate (both mentally and physically)
- are more balanced emotionally

For children who develop normally, chronological and biological age match. Children who develop faster than normal are taller and heavier than those who develop more slowly. They're also stronger, with greater cardiac volume and a higher maximum oxygen intake. Accelerated development has a positive effect on motor performance, while delayed development has a negative effect. There's little danger of working the "early bloomers" too hard, but there is a real risk that they won't be sufficiently challenged if they practice together with their "normal" and "late" counterparts.

### The "golden age of learning" is here.....

Despite these developmental differences, it's still generally true that a transition from "playing" to "learning" is underway. General movement training (e.g. tag, running games and simple ball games should still be a part of every session, but now it's time to start systematically training and reinforcing basic techniques little by little.

By age 10, players have developed the positive characteristics-self-confidence, improved concentration and a willingness to learn and perform-that make it possible to begin systematic technique training. As a coach, it's up to you to adapt the consistency, scope and intensity of your technique training to fit each player's abilities-especially at age 10.

You'll need to judge whether a given child possesses the mental and physical prerequisites that make systematic training possible. For coaches, systematically teaching the fundamentals of soccer requires, first of all, an awareness of the major concepts and principles of training. However, to teach basic techniques in a way that's age-appropriate, motivational and tailored to the individual child, you'll also need certain "tools of the trade," which you'll find in the pages that follow.



## Building blocks for ages eight to 12: An overview

### Building block 1

#### GENERAL MOVEMENT TRAINING

General movement skills continue to be part of practice, but they become more soccer-specific (e.g. running coordination exercises) and are complemented by stretching and strengthening programs. This building block is especially appropriate for warm-up.



#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- Tag and running games
- Running and jumping coordination
- Rhythm and coordination exercises
- Strengthening exercises
- Stretching exercises
- Coordination/strength parcourse (especially for indoor practice)

### Building block 2

#### SOCCER-ORIENTED MOVEMENT TRAINING

By now, players have become familiar with the basic properties of the ball (rolling, bouncing, shooting, etc.). Now specific aspects of ball handling become more important as players prepare for the technique training ahead (building block 3).



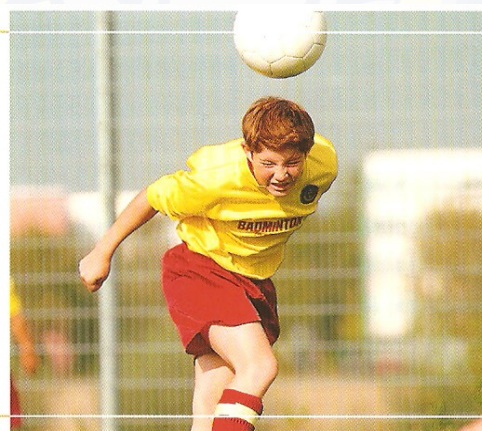
#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- Solo exercises with one ball or two
- Partner exercises with one ball or two
- Solo/partner ball skill exercises against a wall
- "Ball magic" and juggling exercises
- General movement exercises with follow-up plays, e.g. shot or diving header

### Building block 3

#### SOCCER-SPECIFIC TECHNIQUE TRAINING

Having previously focused on dribbling, shooting and passing, players now learn all other soccer techniques. Attention spans are longer, so practice segments can last longer; technique training becomes systematic.



#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- Exercises in defined spaces
- Exercises that include shooting
- Competitive exercises
- Age-appropriate line exercises
- Practice games

### Building block 4

#### PLAYING SOCCER

When players were younger, they played unstructured games because the main purpose of these games was motivation. Now games have special rules designed to reinforce the session's main technical concept—e.g. numbers-up (passing) and numbers-down games (dribbling) on goal lines.



#### PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- From 1 v. 1 to 7 v. 7
- Numbers up, down and even
- Focused games with various field sizes and/or various goal types, numbers and layouts
- Tournaments
- With neutral players and passers



## The techniques: An overview

### NOTE

It's time to start systematic technique training!



### Transition from playing to training

At this age level (specifically between ages 10 and 13), players make the transition from “playing” to “training.” Practice sessions should still include a wide range of games and physical activities, but the focus gradually shifts to systematically learning and reinforcing the basic techniques. By age 10, players possess the personality traits—self-confidence, focus and a willingness to learn and perform (“golden age of learning”)—that make it possible to begin systematic technique training. The techniques to teach are:

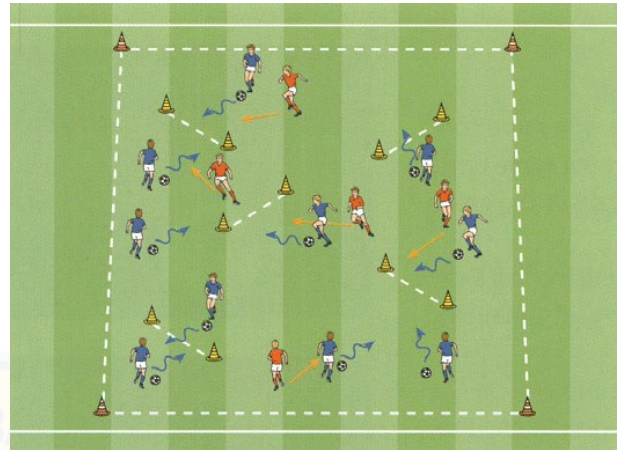
- 1 Dribbling
- 2 Faking
- 3 Shooting
- 4 Passing
- 5 Receiving/controlling the ball
- 6 Heading



## Fun technique exercises: Dribbling

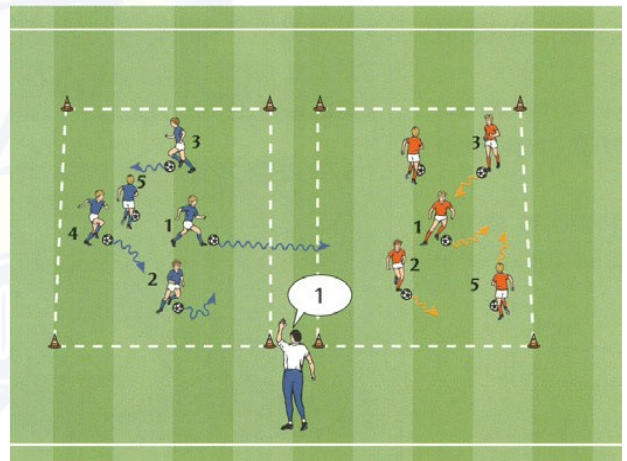
### Goal hunters

- Setup five small goals (1.5 yards wide) in a 10 x 15-yard field.
- All players take the field; two-thirds of them have balls.
- These players dribble through the goals (dribbling through the same one twice is not allowed).
- The remaining players try to stop them and win their balls.
- Who can dribble through the most goals in two minutes?



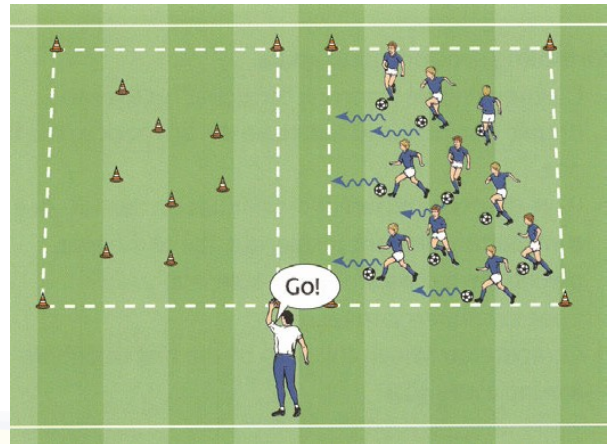
### Number tag with ball

- Mark out two 12 x 12-yard dribbling fields.
- Form two teams of equal size and assign one to each field; number the players on each team.
- At the starting signal, Player A 1 dribbles into the other field and tries to tag Player B1.
- Then A 1 dribbles back and sends out A2, etc.
- Competition: When the last player returns, stop the clock. Which team is faster?



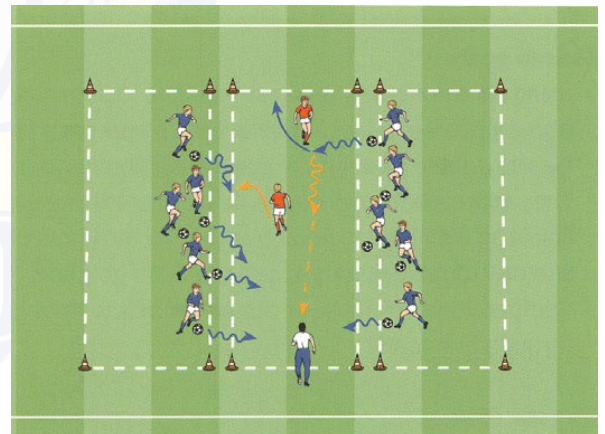
## Cone dribbling

- Mark out two fields about 10 yards apart.
- Players dribble in one field. The other field contains two cones fewer than the number of players.
- At the coach's signal (visual/ auditory), each player dribbles to the other field as fast as possible and stops at a cone. Players who can't find cones of their own get the "privilege" of doing an extra exercise.
- Variation : Put out tires instead of cones.



## River pirates

- Mark out three fields.
- Most players dribble in the two outside fields; they switch fields at the coach's signal.
- Two (or three) pirates wait in the river (middle field) and try to steal all the gold (balls) as the others dribble past.
- The pirates pass these balls to the coach on the sideline (pirates' cavel. Which pair of pirates can steal all the gold fastest?
- Players who lose their gold have to juggle.





## Learning to shoot

Which aspects of shooting are important at this age level? For hard shots and long passes, the technique to use is the instep kick. Shooters need to be able to use different types of instep kicks, depending on where they are in relation to the goal. Aspects to work on (in addition to both-footed shooting):

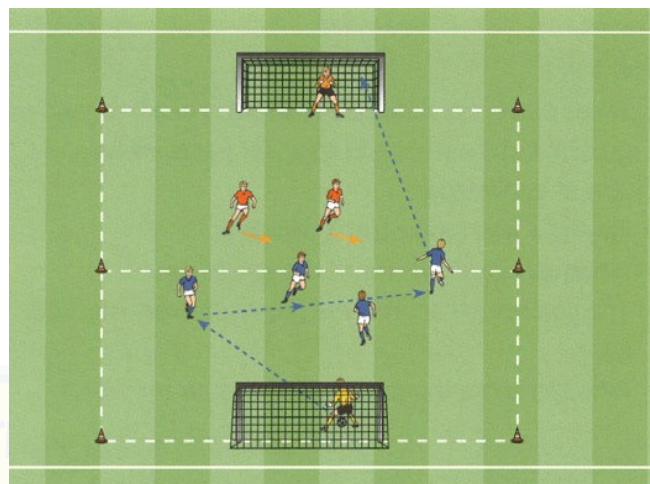
- **Shooting power:** Shooting power is the product of a combination of strength and technique. Putting more strength into your shot does not necessarily make it more powerful! The key is to execute the movements with the proper technique, which is why we put special emphasis on instep kick technique at this age level.
- **Precision:** In children's soccer, there's no such thing as too much target practice. Applying too much strength is also bad for precision—which is exactly what you need to play an accurate pass to your teammate, or to place your shot just beyond the keeper's reach.
- **Technical versatility:** In order to be able to shoot at the goal in any situation, players need to start mastering instep kick variations now.
- **Opposition pressure:** In soccer, players have to be able to execute all shooting techniques on the run and under opposition pressure. But at this age level, we still practice shooting with minimal opposition pressure or none at all.



## Fun technique exercises: Shooting

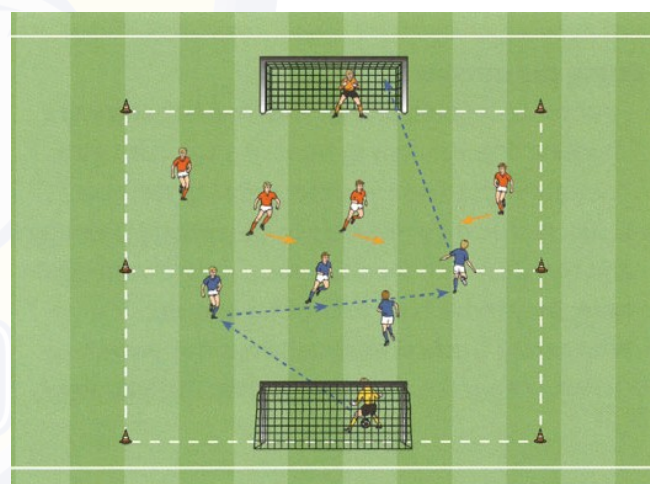
### 4 v. 2 plus two goalkeepers

- Setup two goals with goalkeepers and mark a centerline (field length depends on players' ability level).
- Assign two players to one half and four to the other.
- The team of four passes the ball back and forth inside its own half, waiting for the right moment to shoot at the opposition's goal.
- Their opponents try to block all shots and potential shooting paths in their half.



### 4 v. 4 plus two goalkeepers

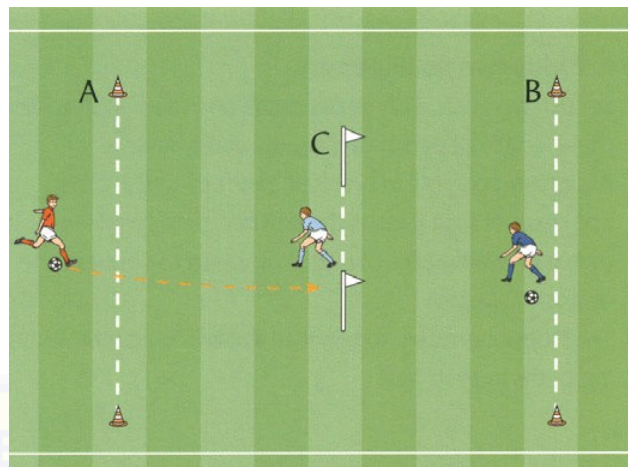
- Setup is the same as above, except with two teams of four; each stays in its own half.
- The attacking team passes the ball back and forth inside its own half, waiting for the right moment to shoot at the opposition's goal.
- Their opponents try to block potential shooting paths in their half.
- After one team shoots, the other team gets the ball.



## Motivational shooting exercises: Competitions

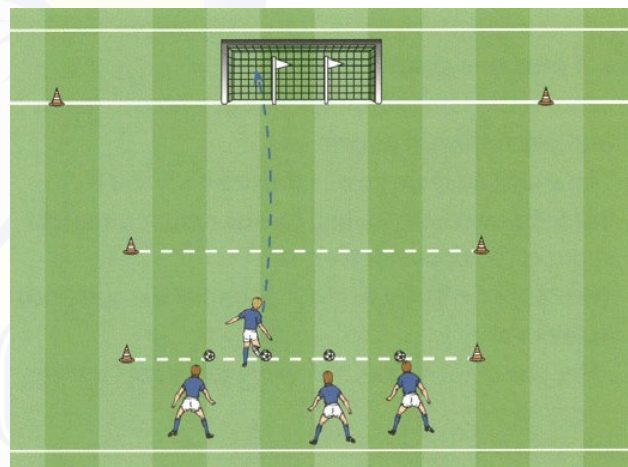
### 1 v. 1 v. 1

- Three players practice on both sides of a five-yard-wide goal: A and B each stand 15 to 20 yards away, and C acts as goalkeeper.
- Players A and B take turns shooting.
- Whoever scores becomes the goalkeeper.
- The goalkeeper scores one point for every blocked shot.
- Who can score the most points in four minutes?



### Hitting the outside

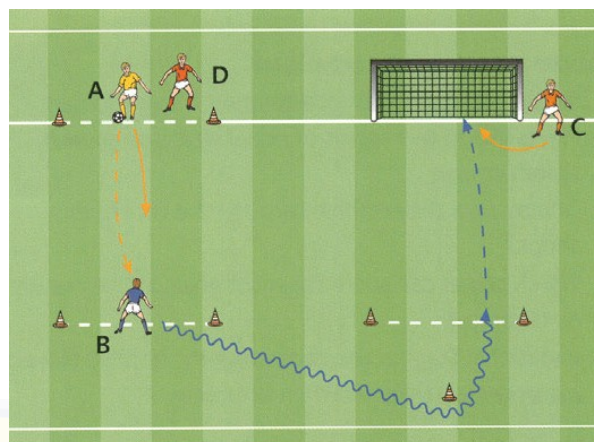
- Four to six children line up with one ball each on a shooting line 12 yards in front of a standard goal.
- They attempt to hit the outer third of the goal.
- If successful, they move up to the second shooting line and try again with the weak foot. If they score again here, they move back to the first line, etc.
- Who can be the first to switch lines five times?
- Or: Who can score the most goals in five minutes?



## Motivational technique exercises: Shooting

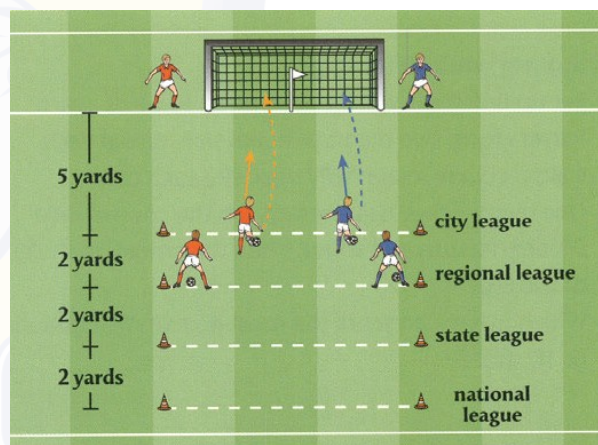
### Shooting rotation

- From the shooting line, Player A shoots through the small goal to B, then runs to B's position.
- B receives the ball, dribbles around the far cone to the second shooting line, shoots, and then moves to C's position.
- C gets the ball out of the goal and lines up behind D, etc.
- Competition: Who can score 10 points first? (Players can shoot at both goals.)



### Promotion and relegation

- Mark out four lines and label them as shown.
- The first player from each team of three stands at the "city league" line and tries to score on his side of the goal (divided by a pole).
- If the second shooter also scores from the same line, the team moves up. If they miss twice in a row, they move back down.
- Which team can be the first to reach the "national league" (or score twice from there)?

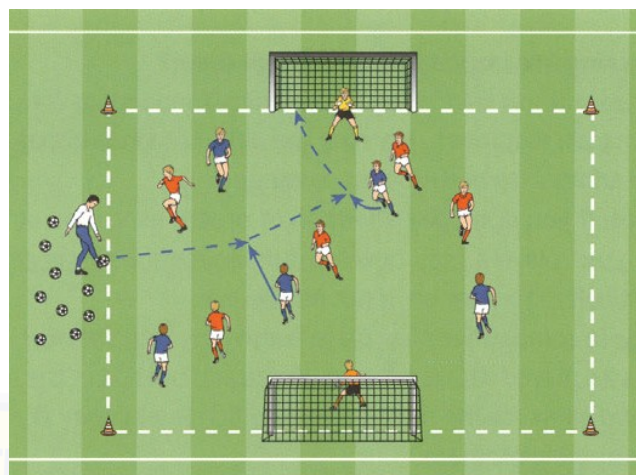




## Technique-oriented shooting games

### Laying Eggs

- Divide players into two teams and mark out a field with a goal and goalkeeper on each endline.
- The coach stands on the sideline with 10 balls and starts with a “neutral” pass onto the field.
- Teams try to score as quickly as possible. Each time they do, the coach passes another ball onto the field.
- Which team can “lay the most eggs” in the opposition’s “nest?”



### 3 + 2 neutral players v. 2 + goalkeeper

- Setup two goals 20 yards apart.
- Divide players into two teams of three, plus two neutral players.
- One player from the defending team acts as goalkeeper; the other two defend on the field.
- The attacking team works together with the two neutral players to score.
- When they score or lose the ball, their opponents start a new attack together with the neutral players.

