

# ALBION JUNIORS

**CURRICULUM**  
**STAGE ONE: U7 - U9**



## **ALBION JUNIORS BELIEVES EVERY PLAYER DESERVES THE BEST POSSIBLE SOCCER EXPERIENCE.**

Whether they dream of one day playing the Soccer World cup or simply want to have fun with their friends. We believe that if we introduce soccer to the children when they are young, this will set the stage for a lifetime of enjoyment.

Albion Juniors provides a roadmap to play soccer at the recreational, competitive or high performance EXCEL levels, with the aim of encouraging lifelong participation.

For players under the age of 10, many of whom are lacing up cleats for the first time, the goal of this approach is simple:

## **GET KIDS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GAME**

### **STAGE TWO (U7 - U9)**

Allows children to develop their movement ABCs agility, balance, coordination, and speed and learn the basics of the game while emphasizing fun, cooperation, and maximum time on the ball.

# THE ROLE OF THE COACH

**Teacher. Mentor. Role model.  
Cheerleader. Parent.  
Occasional disciplinarian.**

Soccer coaches wear many different hats, particularly when they're training young players, many of whom are lacing up their cleats for the first time. You might find yourself leading a fun activity one minute and reining in a distracted player the next.

You must be flexible, because a session or drill that was meant to last 10 minutes might need to be switched up after half that time to keep the players engaged.

Above all, make sure everyone is enjoying the session including you.

Being a coach is demanding, but it's also incredibly rewarding. There's nothing quite like witnessing the thrill a young player gets when they score their first goal, or make a fantastic pass. And the lessons a child learns from a good coach can last a lifetime.

The objective isn't just to develop better soccer players—it's to develop wellrounded people who are disciplined, persistent and able to work well with others.

Shaping the lives of young people is a tremendous responsibility. As a coach, you must do everything you can to foster a player's love for the game, and to help them achieve their potential.

Good coaches seek out new ways to develop their knowledge of the game and how players learn. This toolkit is designed to get you started.

But it's not just about what you teach. It's about how you teach.

Ultimately, it's your personality and enthusiasm that will have the biggest impact on your players.

# COACHING TIPS

Every soccer player is unique and it's important to understand and appreciate the differences between players at various age levels.

When you're planning a training session, consider the group of players you're working with and the outcomes you want to achieve, and choose your coaching method accordingly. In no particular order, here are five coaching techniques that will give you some options to help meet the needs of individual players:

## 1 COMMAND:

The coach tells the player what to do and demonstrates it ("I want you to pass the ball to your partner.").

## 2 QUESTION & ANSWER:

The coach leads with a question and requests an answer from players ("Which one of your teammates could you pass the ball to?").

## 3 OBSERVATION & FEEDBACK:

The coach and players observe an activity and discuss the outcome ("Let's watch and see what happens.").

## 4 GUIDED DISCOVERY:

The coach asks a question and issues a challenge ("Can you show me how you would get the ball past the defender?"). The player then demonstrates how he/she would do it.

## 5 TRIAL & ERROR:

The players and/or coach decide on a challenge, and the players are encouraged to find their own solutions with minimal support from the coach.

Remember, a method that works well with one player may not be effective with another. So it's important to be flexible, to set realistic goals, and to give positive feedback as often as possible. It's also important to remember that, no matter

how wonderful a coach you are, it's very difficult to force a player to be interested in your training session when he or she really doesn't want to be there. Make the experience lots of fun and all your players will want to come back the next time.

# OUR PREFERRED TRAINING MODEL

Albion Juniors recommends a “station” approach to training. Players move from one skill-building activity to the next at regular intervals. The time spent on each activity varies based on the age of the player.

This method is not only more fun for young, but also allows training sessions to be tailored to a team’s individual needs, depending on the number of players, the number of parents and coaches present, and the available facilities.

Each training session is built around four activity stations, one focusing on General Movement skills, one on Coordination, one on Soccer Technique and another on Small-Sided Games.

Addressing all four of these training “pillars” at each practice session will help develop well-rounded young players with a foundation in physical literacy, solid soccer skills and, ideally, an enduring love of the game.

## TRAINING TEMPLATE

**FOR PLAYERS AT THE ACTIVE START STAGE, TRAINING SESSIONS SHOULD BE 45-60 MINUTES LONG AND COMPRISED OF:**



**This toolkit will give you ideas for specific activities under each of the four training pillars. How you set up your training sessions is entirely up to you. For example:**

One coach or parent working with a single group of players on a half field can simply switch up the “pillar” activities throughout the session.

If you have a full field, two or more coaches/parent volunteers and 7 or more players, you may choose to divide the players into two or more groups and have them rotate through stations being run simultaneously.

# STAGE ONE: U7 - U9

# SOCCER TECHNIQUE

**A PLAYER'S SOCCER TECHNIQUE WHICH REVOLVES AROUND CORE SKILLS SUCH AS PASSING, RECEIVING AND CONTROLLING THE BALL WILL IMPROVE THROUGH:**

- GETTING LOTS OF TOUCHES ON THE BALL.
- FUN COMPETITIONS THAT MOTIVATE PLAYERS TO USE DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES.
  - PLENTY OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK.
  - OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE QUICK DECISIONS
- ABOUT THE BEST TECHNIQUE TO USE IN A GIVEN SITUATION.

At the FUNdamentals stage , technique drills should make up about 20% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 75-minute training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, control, passing, and shooting.

## **TIP**

These activities will help players develop a better feel for the ball by building their skill around core techniques like passing, controlling and receiving. Individual development is paramount at this stage, so be sure to use fun competitions and games and plenty of positive feedback to encourage players to keep practicing and to challenge themselves.

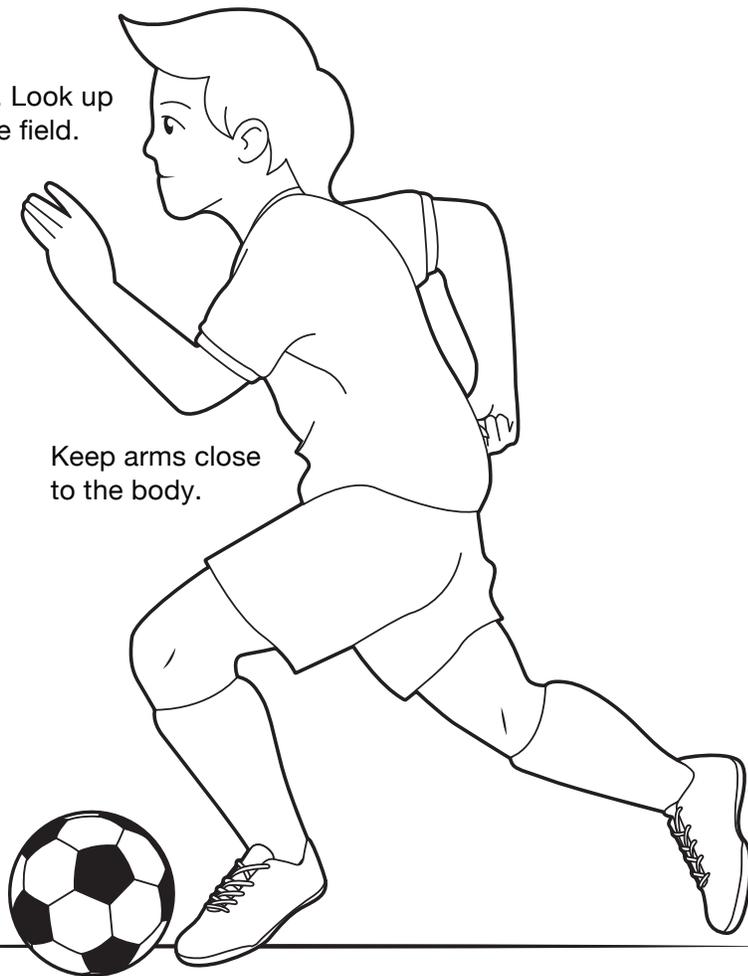
# DRIBBLING

“Dribbling” means making friends with the ball and using your feet to move it in a controlled way.

Watch the ball. Look up often to see the field.

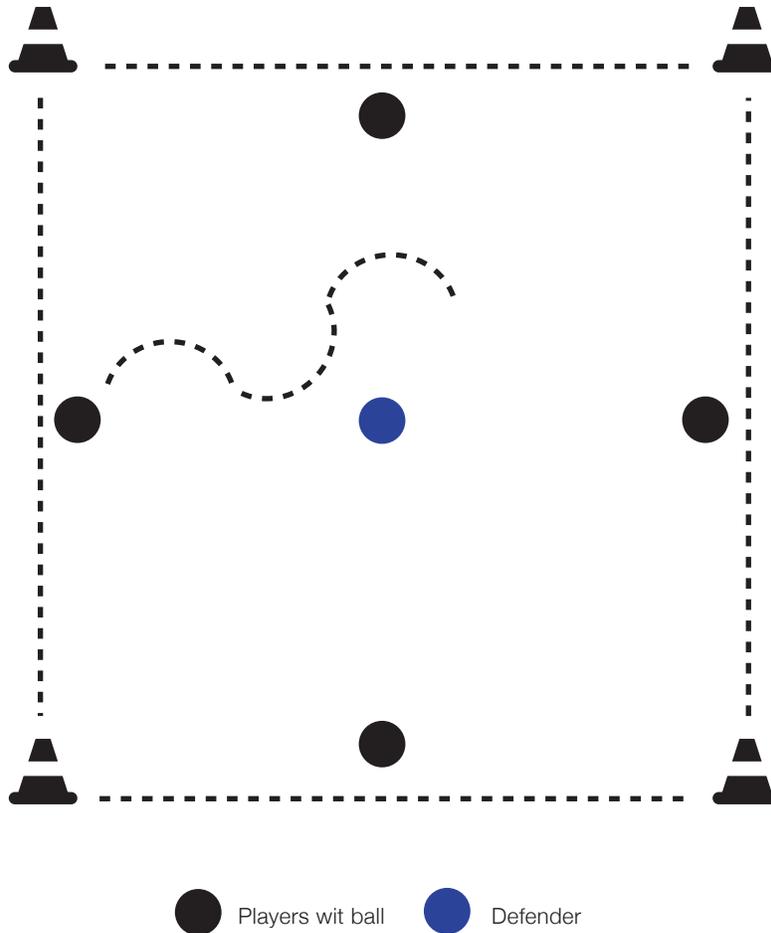
Keep arms close to the body.

Keep ball as close as possible.



# DRIBBLING

## ACTIVITY 1: "DRIBBLE TAG"



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### SET UP:

Five players, 4 of them with a ball. Player without a ball (the defender) goes to the centre of the field.

### HOW TO:

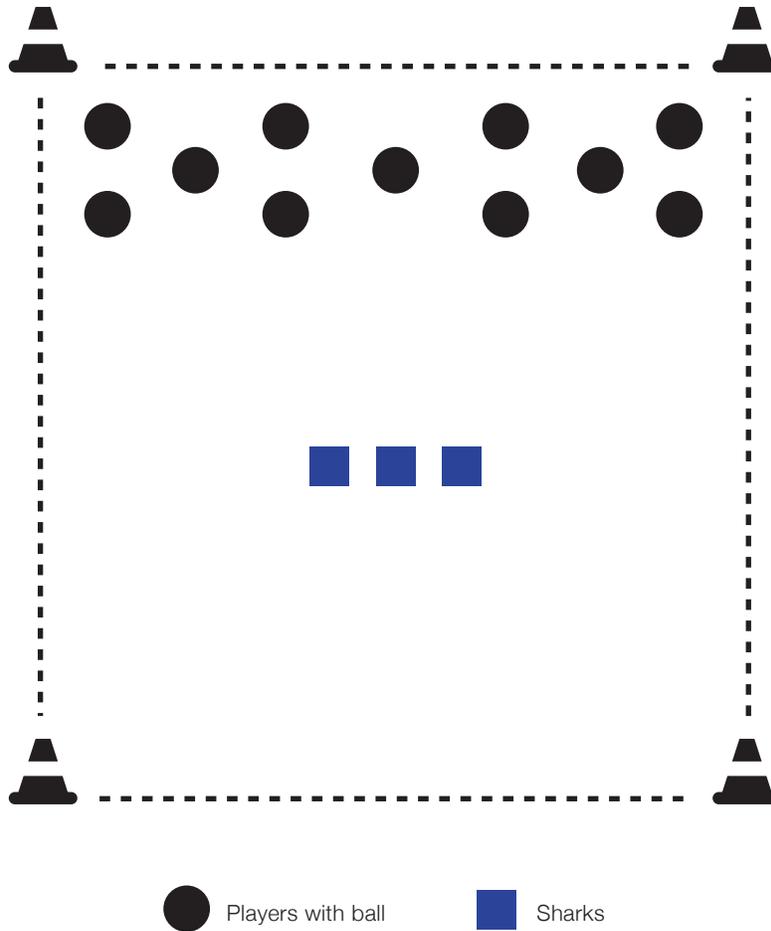
“Go!” – players on the outside begin dribbling around the edge of the field, and then dribble across while the defender tries to tag them with his/her hand. If a player gets tagged once, they keep going. If a player gets tagged twice in the same crossing, they become the defender.

### ALTERNATIVE:

Instead of tagging players, the defender tries to take the ball away. If successful, the other player becomes the defender.

# DRIBBLING

## ACTIVITY 2: "SHARKS AND MINNOWS"



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### SET UP:

25 x 30 yard grid

### HOW TO:

3 players start as sharks, the rest are minnows. Minnows start on one end of the grid each with a ball. Sharks start in the middle of the grid.

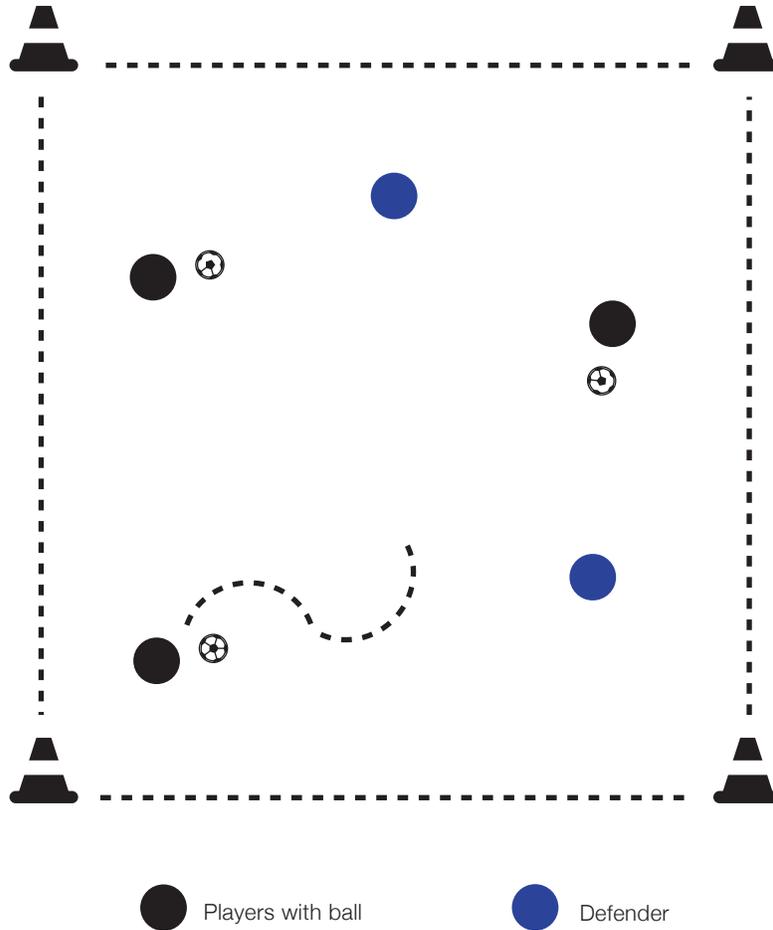
Coach says "go" and each minnow must try and cross the water to the other side without getting the ball kicked out by a shark. If a ball is kicked out the minnow becomes a shark. Game ends when only one minnow remains.

### COACHING POINTS:

Keep head up and avoid traffic.

# DRIBBLING

## ACTIVITY 3: "FAKE AND TURN"



### SET UP:

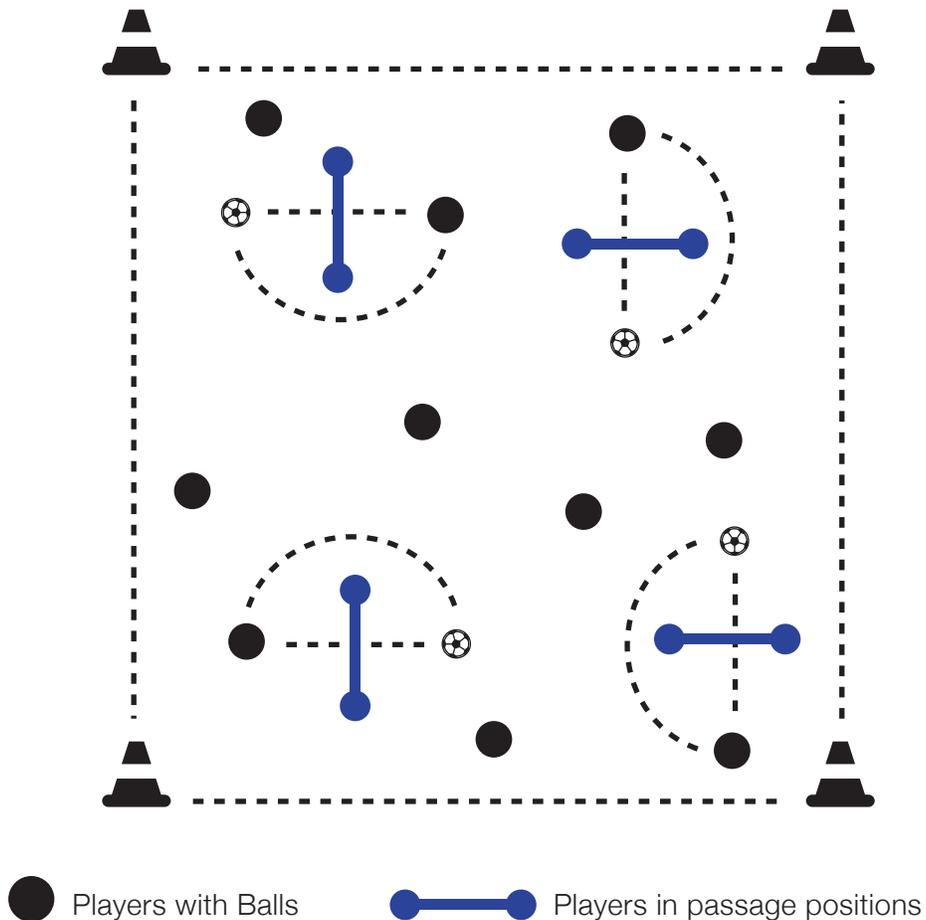
20 x 20 yard grid.

### HOW TO:

"Dribble!" – use your dribbling skills (i.e., fakes and turns) to move the ball around the field and get it past the "free" players, who get in your way but don't try to take the ball. "Switch!" – rotate players into the "free" role.

# DRIBBLING

## ACTIVITY 4: "THROUGH THE PASSAGE"



### SET UP:

30 x 30 yard grid. 1/4 of the players are the passage ways.  
The rest have a ball.

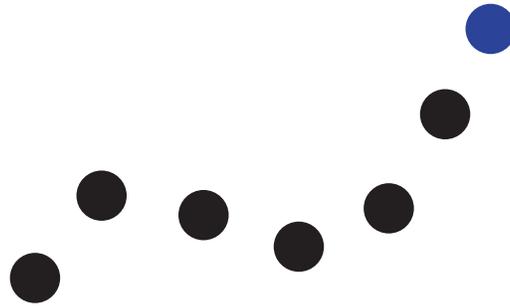
### HOW TO:

The passage players do different variations every time, legs spread wide, push up position, side plank position (sideways pushup using one hand), etc...

Players with a ball must dribble inside the grid while lightly touching the ball through the passage and running around the passage to receive the ball on the other side. Switch passage players every minute.

# DRIBBLING

## ACTIVITY 5: "FOLLOW THE LEADER"



● Followers    ● Leader

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### SET UP:

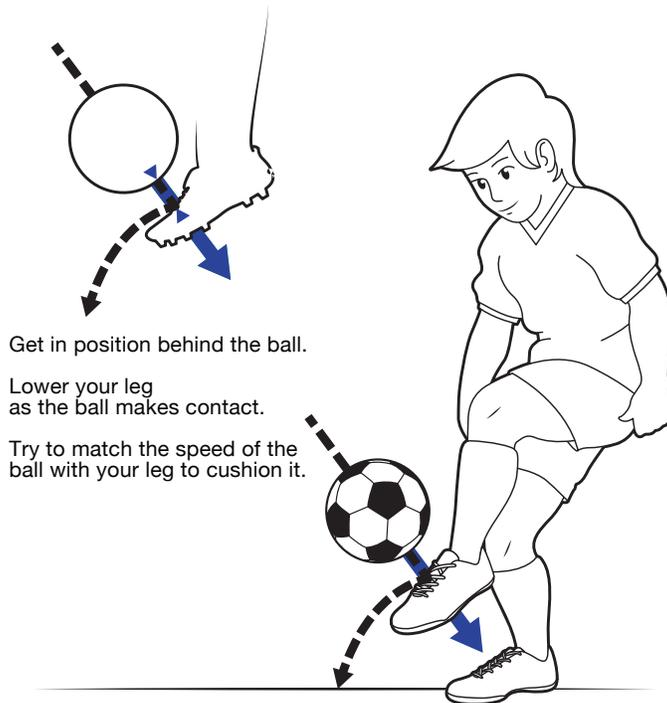
Have players get into small groups. Each player has a ball..

### HOW TO:

Designate one player as the leader. Have them perform tricks and zig zag trying to fake the followers out. Switch the leader every so often. Have followers ask questions about a skill they might have been lost on.

# CONTROL

“Control” means using your feet and other parts of your body (except your arms and hands) to keep the ball close.



Get in position behind the ball.

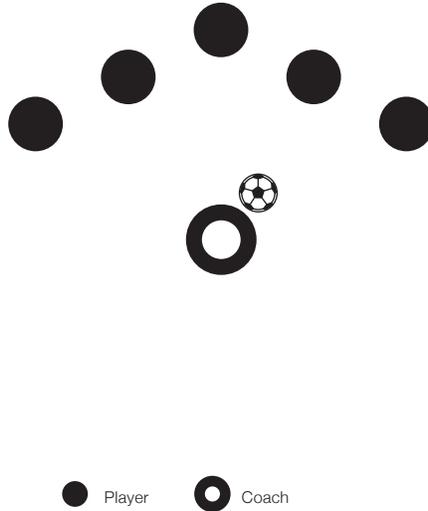
Lower your leg as the ball makes contact.

Try to match the speed of the ball with your leg to cushion it.



# CONTROL

## ACTIVITY 1: “HEAD IT CATCH IT”



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### SET UP:

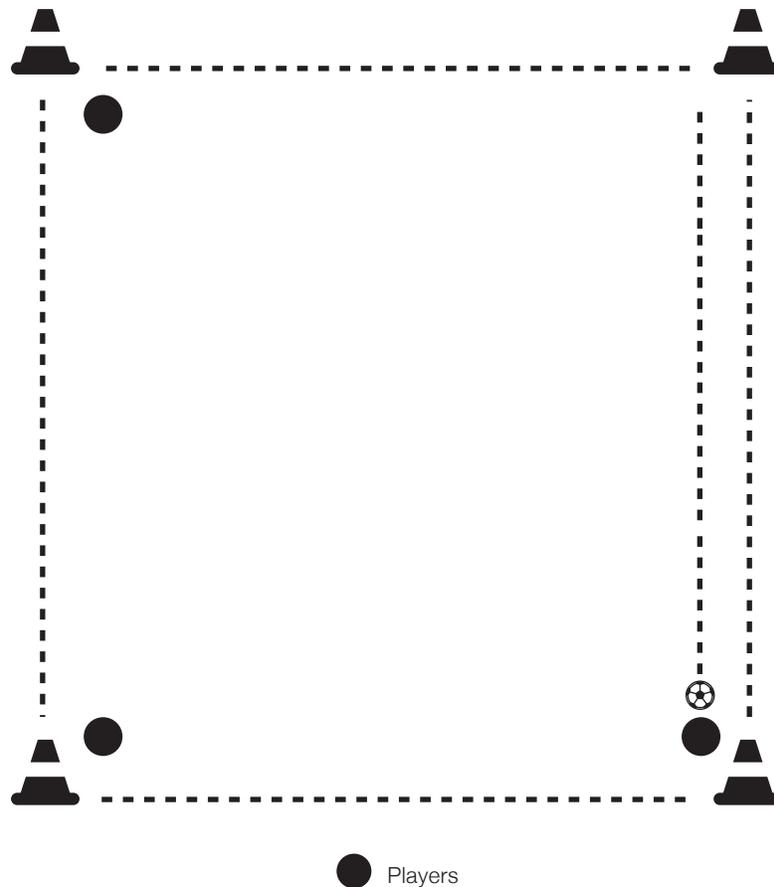
Players stand in a semi circle.

### HOW TO:

Coach tosses the ball to one player at a time. If you say “head it” the player should catch it and if you say “catch it” the player should head it. Do a practice round and then players must sit when they get it wrong. This is a silly game that kids love to play. A great game to end practice with.

# CONTROL

## ACTIVITY 2: "QUICK CONTROL"



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### SET UP:

Working in groups of 3. Players start on 3 corners of a large square.

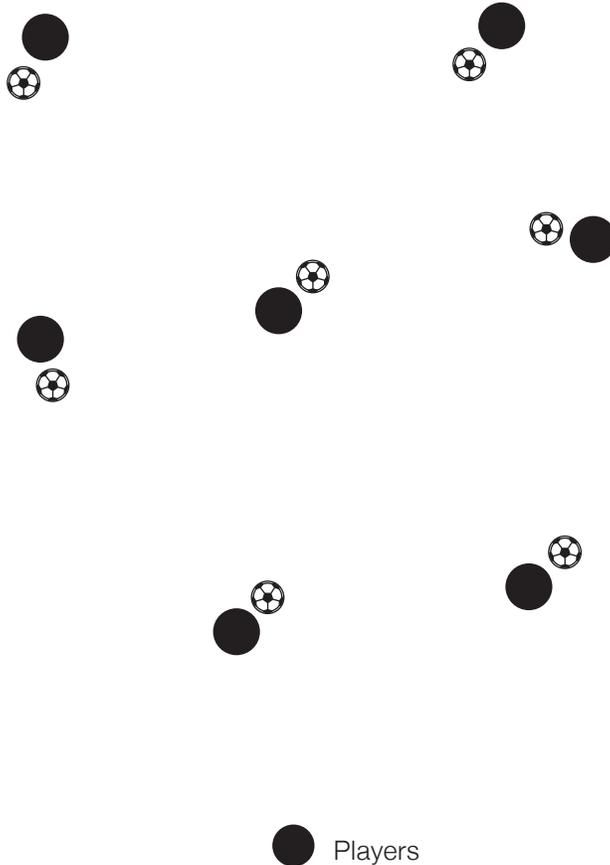
### HOW TO:

"Go!" pass to either teammate, then run to the empty corner. Remember to use the inside of your foot when passing. When you receive a pass, use one foot to control it, then pass it back quickly with the other foot.

"Switch feet!" use your other foot to control and/or pass

# CONTROL

## ACTIVITY 3: "SOCCER SHIPS"



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### SET UP:

Everyone has a ball.

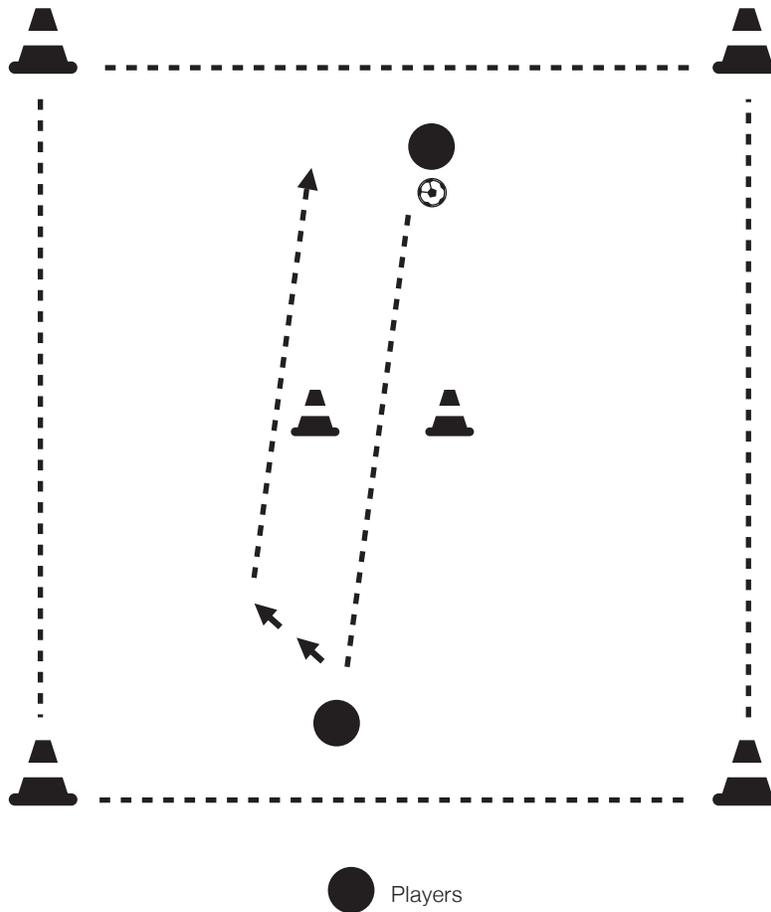
### HOW TO:

Kids start sailing soccer ships by dribbling around, play stop and go. Have the kids keep the ball close. Call out stormy waters and roll the ball back and forth using the bottom of the foot acting as if the ship is rocking back and forth.

Call out "climb" and do taps on the ball and lookout to see if pirates are coming. Yell pirates "climb down" by doing taps on the ball and sail away at super green. Get sea sick and then swab the deck by boxing the ball. Repeat things in random order. End the game by docking the ships.

# CONTROL

## ACTIVITY 4: "THROUGH THE GATE"



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### SET UP:

Working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.

### HOW TO:

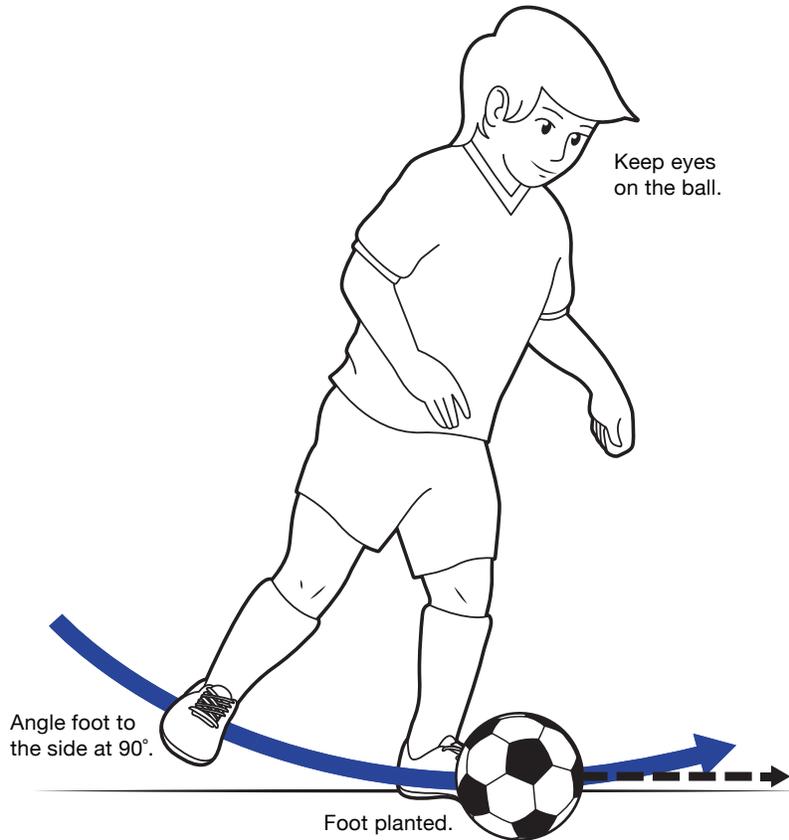
Players start on opposite sides of the field with a gate in the middle.

"Pass!" – start by passing the ball back and forth through the gate. When you receive a pass, use one foot to control it, then pass it back quickly with the other foot.

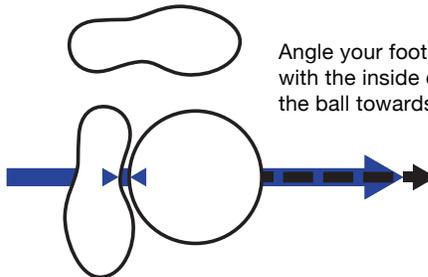
"On the outside!" Player 1 passes through the gate and Player 2 controls it on the first touch, and passes back outside the gate. Alternate using the inside and outside of each foot to control the ball.

# PASSING

**“Passing” means using your feet to share the ball with your teammates in a controlled way.**

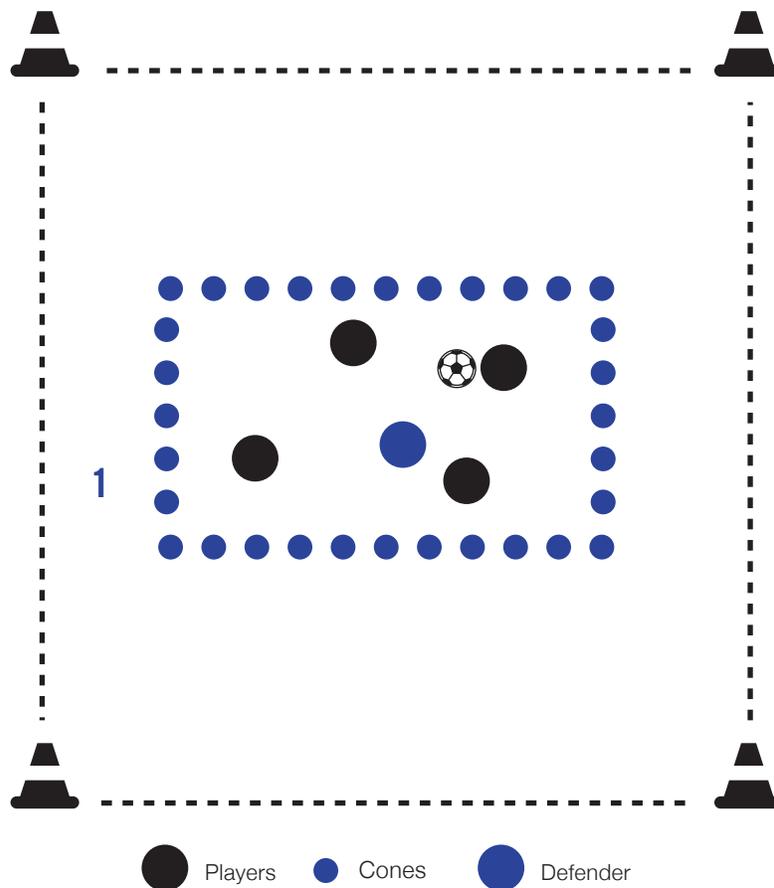


Contact near the centre of the ball.



# PASSING

## ACTIVITY 1: “DANGER ZONE”



### SET UP:

Five players (4 passers, 1 defender); 1 ball. One central square (the “danger zone”) inside a larger square (the “neutral zone”), marked out with cones.

### HOW TO:

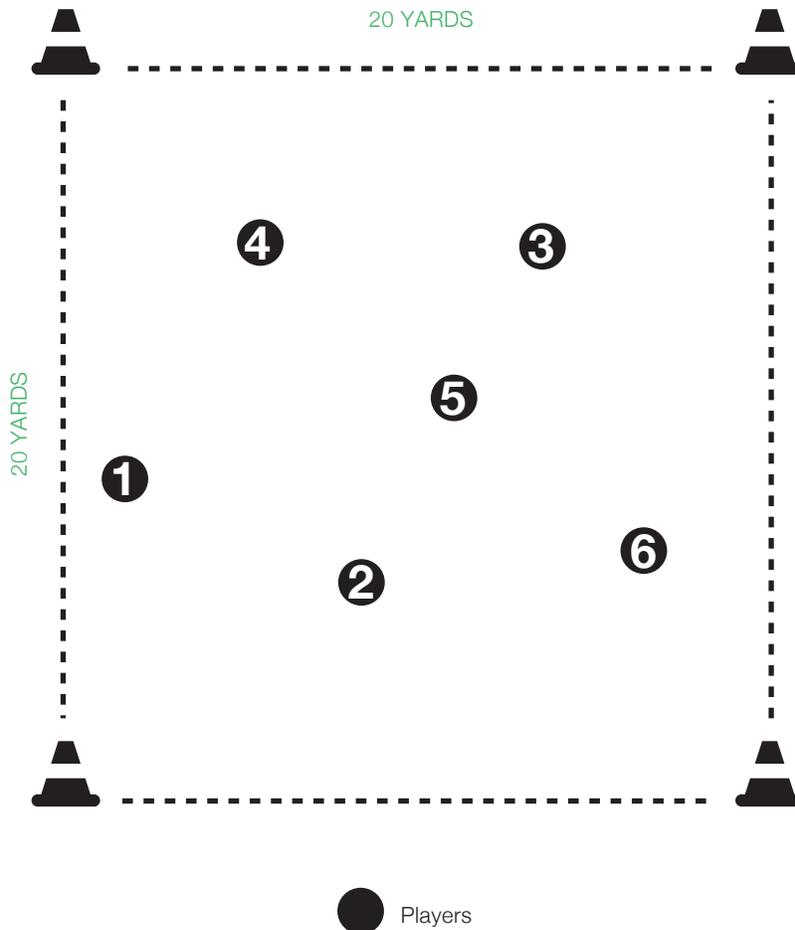
The passers keep the ball away from the defender and pass to the other player. If under pressure, passers should dribble the ball out to the neutral zone, where the defender can't challenge. This will allow the passers to regroup before executing the next pass through the danger zone.

### ALTERATIONS:

“Switch!” players swap roles after 5 minutes.

# PASSING

## ACTIVITY 2: "NUMBER PASSING"



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### SET UP:

30 x 30 yard grid.

### HOW TO:

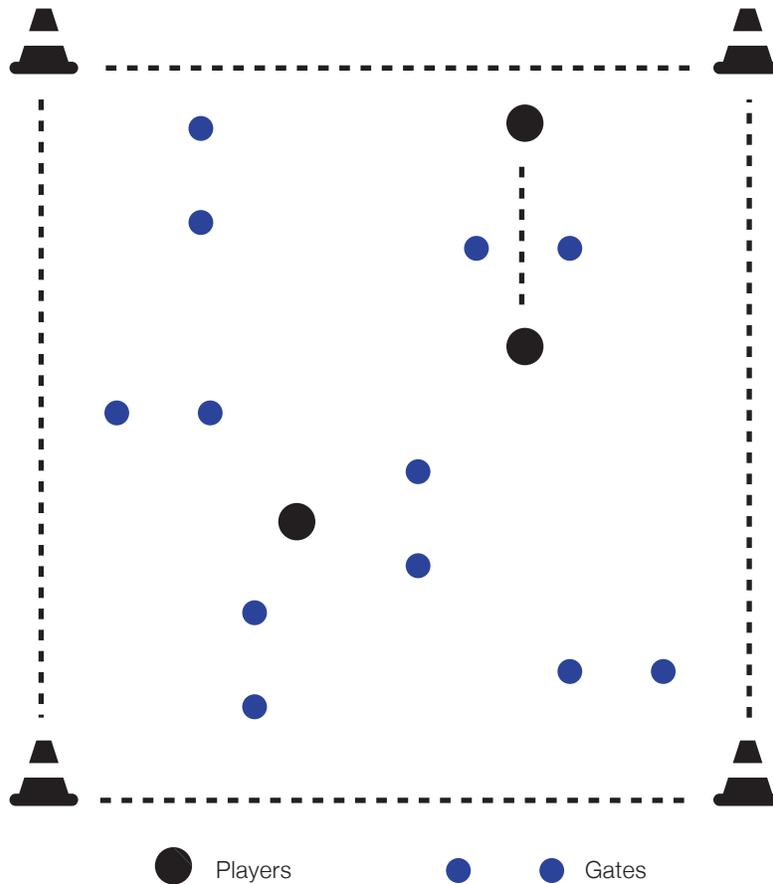
Give each player a number. The players must pass in order. 1 passes to 2, 2 passes to 3, 3 passes to 4, etc. For larger teams break the team into multiple groups.

### CHALLENGES:

Try one touch, two touch, count using names, make area smaller or have a defender.

# PASSING

## ACTIVITY 3: "PASS/MOVE THROUGH GATES"



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### SET UP:

Make several gates 6 yards apart with cones throughout the grid

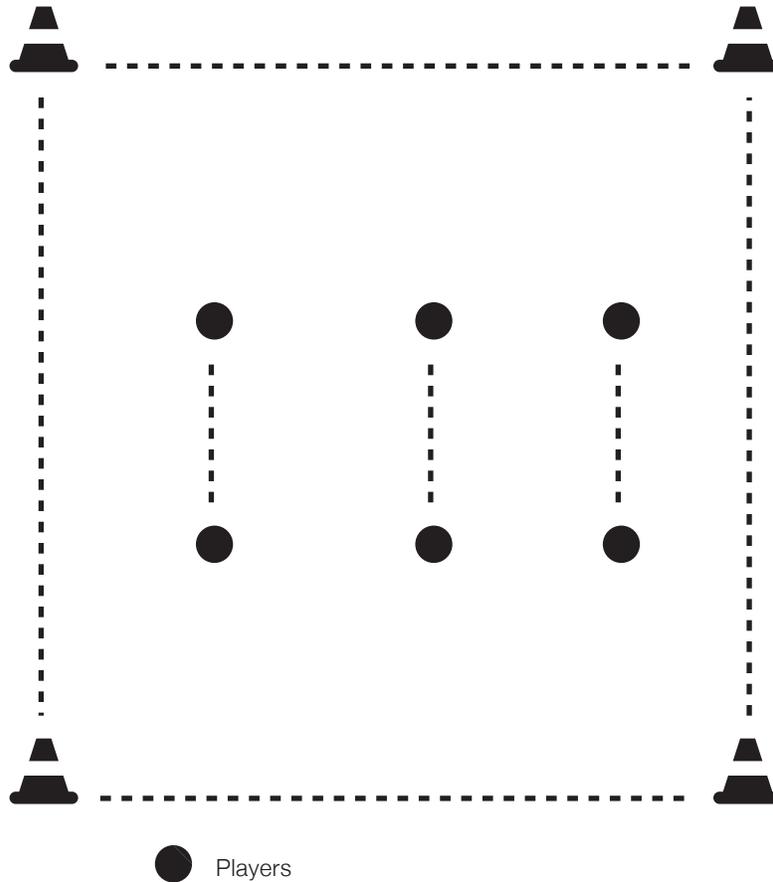
### HOW TO:

Players are in groups of 2 or 3 must travel to all the gates, passing through them to a teammate on the other side. Have them work for 5 minutes to get the feel, then move onto competition.

Which group can get through the most in 1 minute? Who can get through all of the gates the fastest? Make it 1 or 2 touch if possible. Make sure kids are getting heads up and calling out names of teammates when looking to pass.

# PASSING

## ACTIVITY 4: "SCORE!"



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### SET UP:

Working in pairs, with one ball per pair.

### HOW TO:

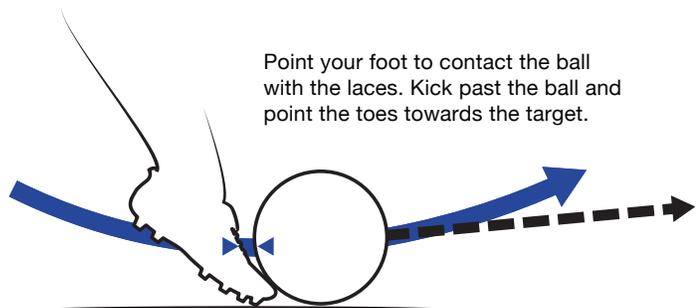
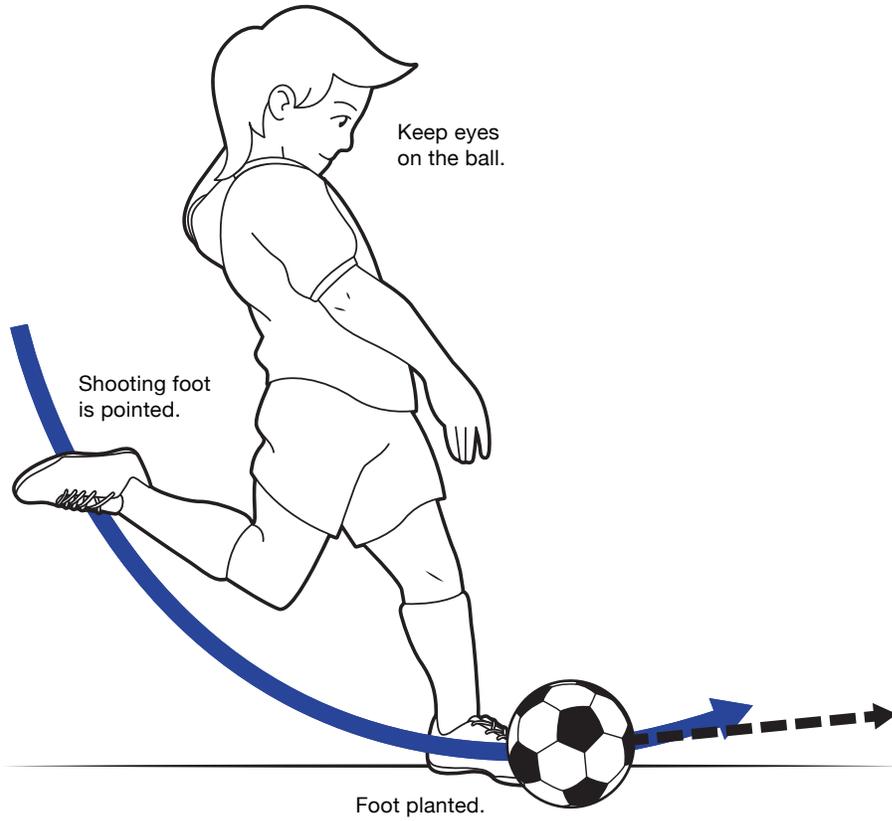
Pass the ball back and forth with your partner. Try to use only 2 touches each time: receive the ball and then pass it back quickly. Use one foot to pass, the other to receive.

### ALTERNATION:

"Switch feet!" – use the opposite foot to pass and/or receive.

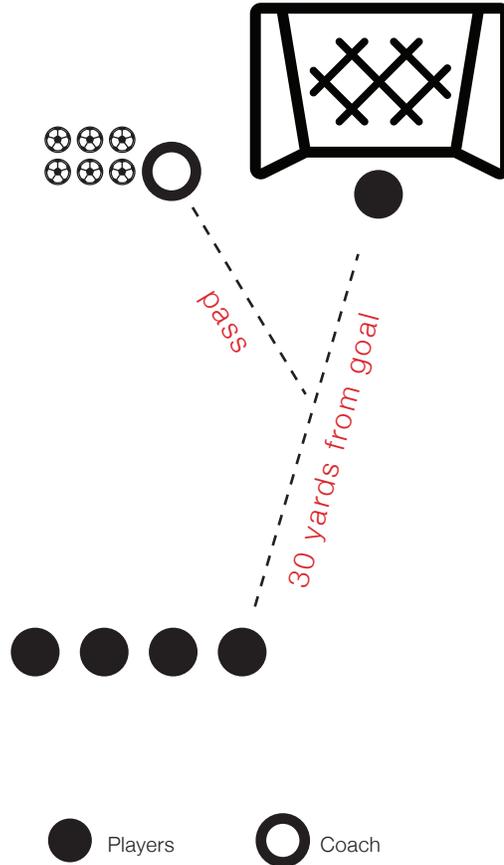
# SHOOTING

**"Shooting" means using your feet to get the ball into the net.**



# SHOOTING

## ACTIVITY 1: "LIGHTNING"



### SET UP:

Shooting Drill. Game of accuracy and speed

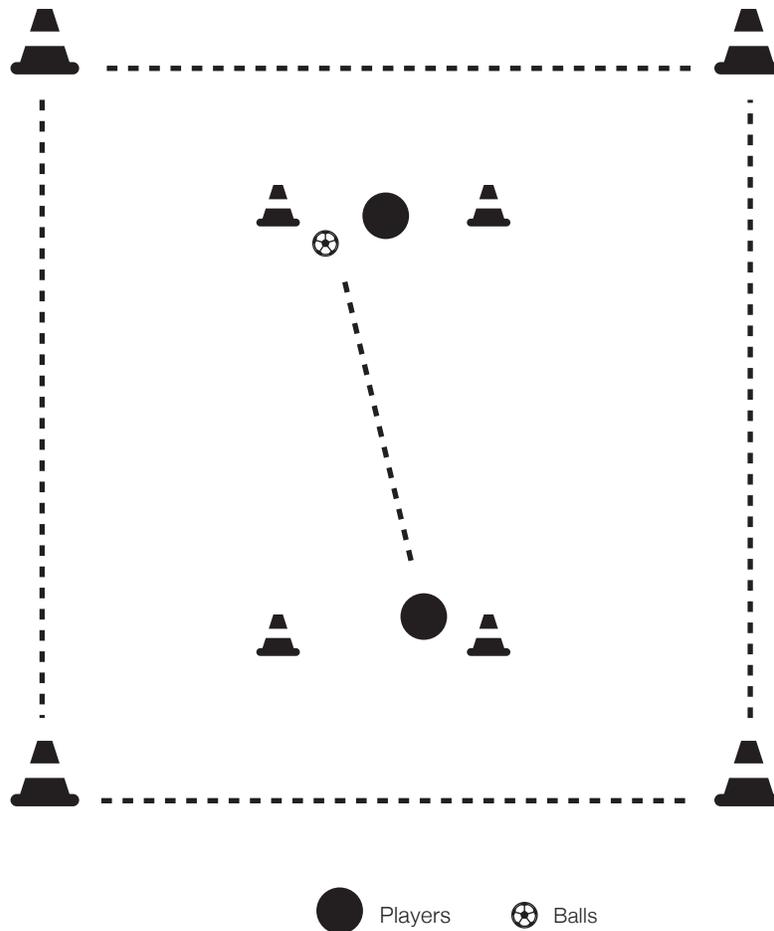
### HOW TO:

Players start in a single file line about 30 yards from the center of the goal. One player begins in the goal as goalie. The coach is to the right of the goal with all of the balls. Coach passes the ball towards the first player in line. First player shoots on goal with first touch. If the shooter makes a goal the player who is goalie is out of the game and the person next in line must sprint to the goal and be goalie for the next player shooting and the original shooter returns to the end of the line.

If the shooter misses or the shot is saved, the goalie returns to the end of the line and the person who took the shot becomes the goalie while the ball is played to the next player in line. The game continues until one person remains.

# SHOOTING

## ACTIVITY 2: "THROUGH THE GATE"



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### SET UP:

Working in pairs, One ball per pair.

### HOW TO:

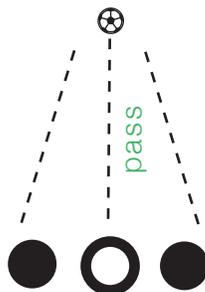
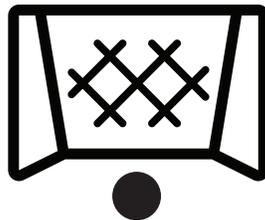
"Shoot!" – use the top of your foot (laces) to shoot the ball past your partner. Each time you score you get a point. Take 5 shots and then switch roles.

### OPTIONS:

- Shoot with your other foot.
- Each time you score, move your goal back one pace.
- "Switch!" pair up with another partner.

# SHOOTING

## ACTIVITY 3: "THROUGH THE GATE"



Players



Coach

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### SET UP:

Working in pairs; 1 goalkeeper.

### HOW TO:

When the coach serves the ball, the two players at the front of the line chase it. The first player to the ball tries to shoot on goal while the other player tries to take the ball away and then shoot.

### ALTERNATIVE:

Have players start in different positions: Seated, Lying on their backs, In a push-up position.

# STAGE ONE: U7 - U9

# GENERAL MOVEMENT

- AGILITY – RUNNING, CHANGING DIRECTION, SPEEDING UP / SLOWING DOWN, AND STOPPING.
- BALANCE – HOPPING, JUMPING AND LANDING.
  - COORDINATION – COMBINING DIFFERENT MOVEMENTS, MOVING WITH THE BALL, FALLING AND GETTING UP SAFELY.

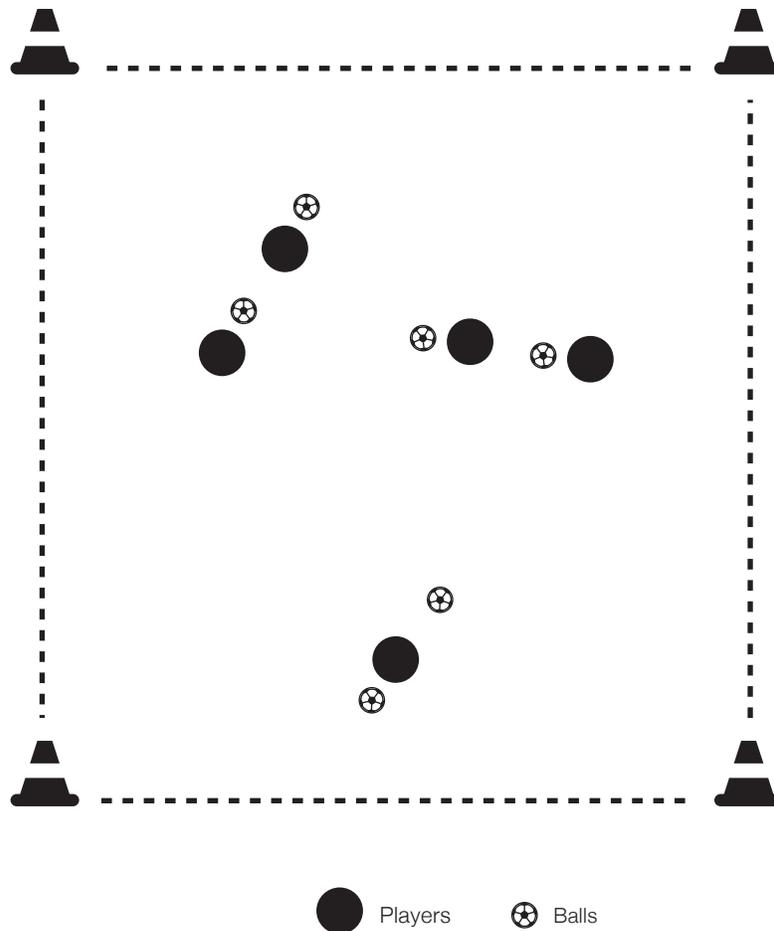
General movement activities should make up about 20% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes to 75-minute training session). At this age, coaches can introduce fun circuits and obstacle courses that combine different movements such as spinning jumps, sideways jumps and jumping over hurdles to challenge players in different ways.

## TIP

It's important to keep young players active and engaged. In this Tool Kit, you'll find options for each activity that will allow you to switch it up often. Every few minutes, challenge your players with something different that goes beyond the basic drill: have them move in different ways, use time restrictions or have them compete with each other to get them excited and keep them interested.

# GENERAL MOVEMENT

## ACTIVITY 1: “TRUCK & TRAILER”



### SET UP:

Each with a ball, working in pairs inside a “parking lot.” One player is the “truck” and the other is the “trailer.”

### HOW TO:

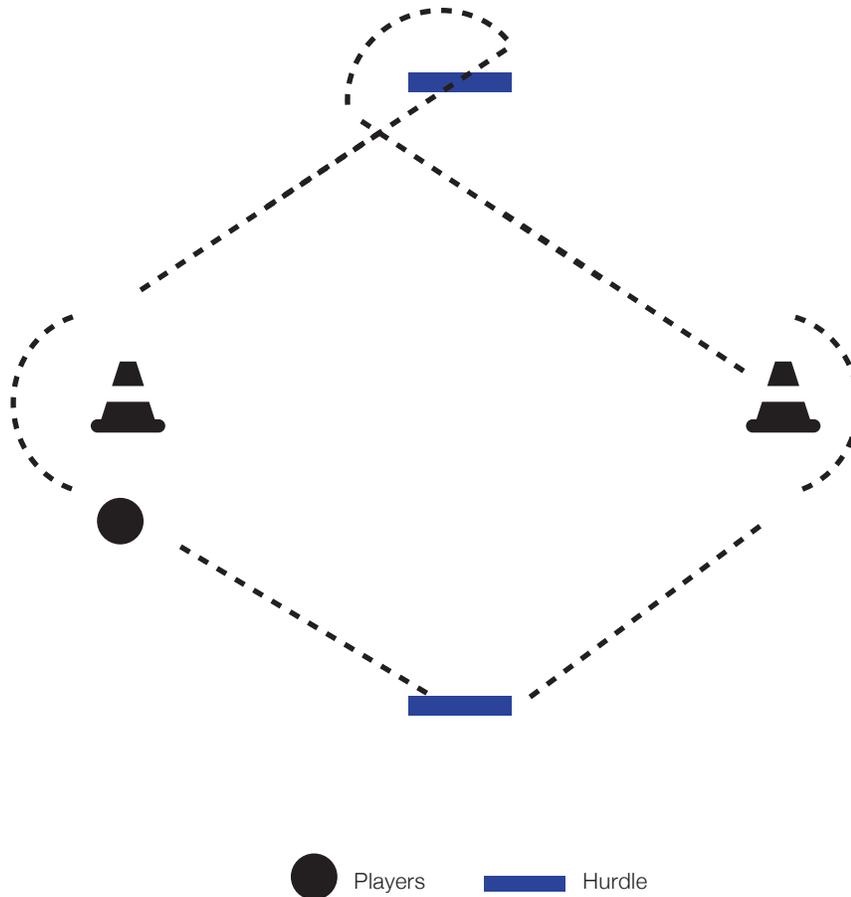
“Go!” as the Truck, use your feet to move the ball around the parking lot. As the Trailer, follow your truck as closely as possible. Trucks and trailers: keep your heads up and don’t hit any other vehicles!

### OPTIONS:

“Switch!” – Trucks and trailers switch roles.

# GENERAL MOVEMENT

## ACTIVITY 2: “CONES & HURDLES”



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### SET UP:

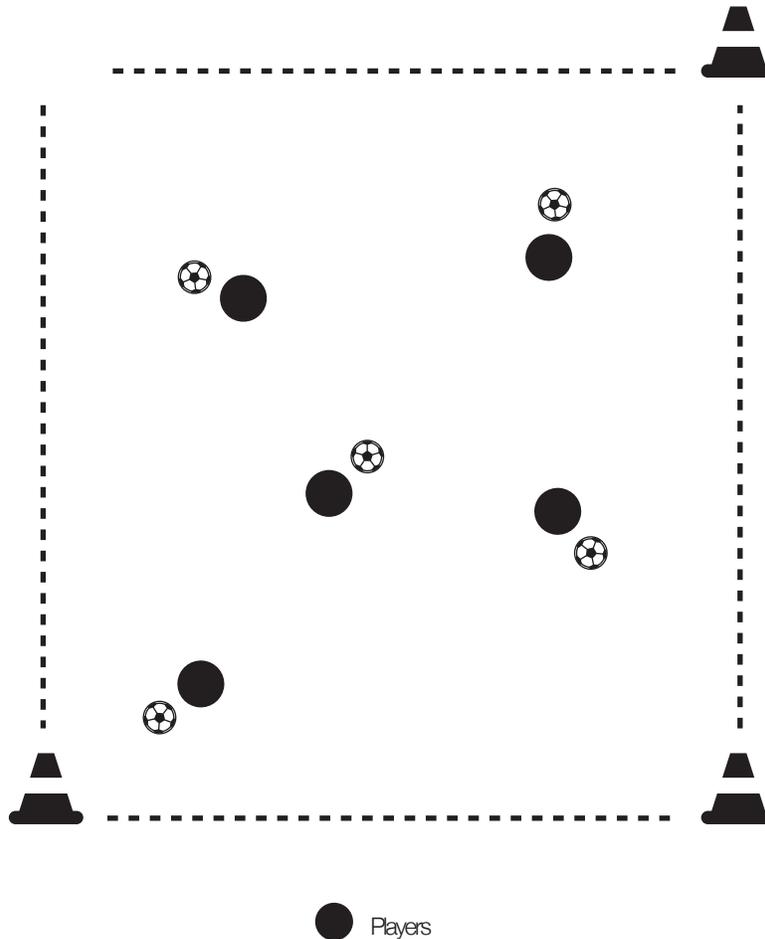
Use cones and hurdles alternately to mark out a circuit, as shown. Modify the circuit depending on the available equipment (i.e. have players jump over cones or balls and crawl through teammates' legs if hurdles aren't available).

### HOW TO:

Finish the circuit as fast as you can (depending on available equipment): Run around the first cone. Turn and sprint to the first hurdle, then crawl under it. Sprint around the second cone. Jump over the second hurdle.

# GENERAL MOVEMENT

## ACTIVITY 3: "THINK FAST!"



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### SET UP:

15 x 15 yard grid. Every player has a ball.

### HOW TO:

Players dribble around the grid using all parts of the foot. Left and right. Get them comfortable dribbling. Teach them a new move each practice such as, step-over, V-turn, L-turn, chop inside the foot, chop outside of the foot. Coach yells out commands such as turn, stop, chop, bottom of the foot, outside only, left or right only, etc

# STAGE ONE: U7 - U9

# COORDINATION

- THE USE OF FUN GAMES AND ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP AGILITY, BALANCE AND SPEED.
- GETTING LOTS OF TOUCHES ON THE BALL.
  - USING ALL PARTS OF THE FOOT.
- LEARNING TO CONTROL THE BALL IN THE AIR.

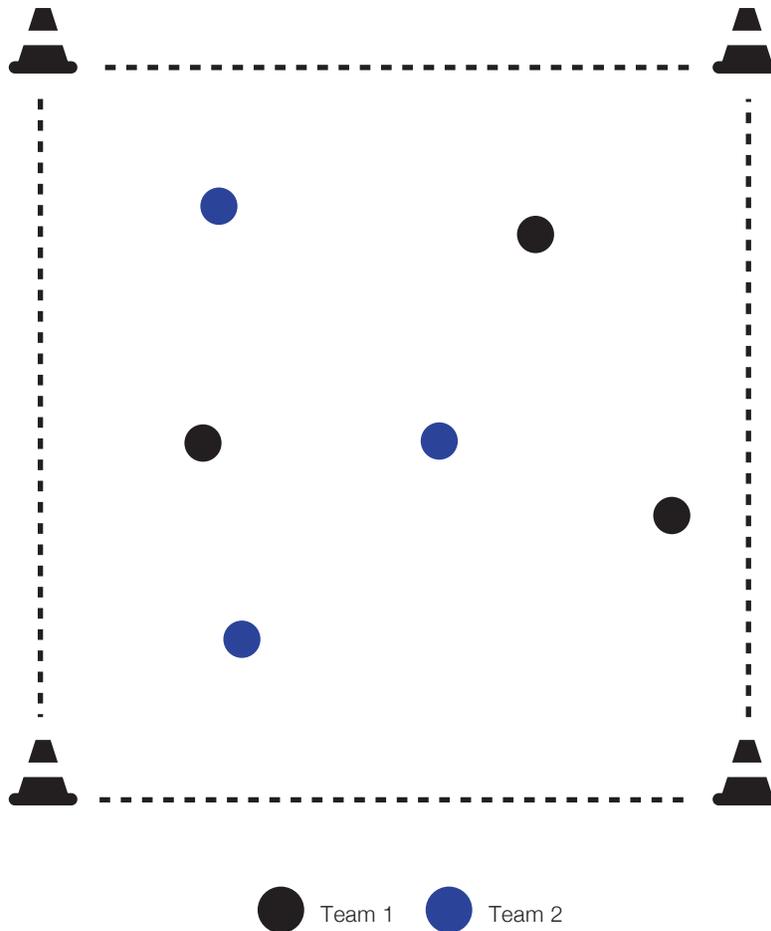
Coordination drills should make up about 20% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 75-minute training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, controlling the ball and passing to improve coordination.

## TIP

At this stage of development, continuing to build a player's physical literacy (running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing, and catching, etc.) through fun games is key. As players start to become friends with the ball, encourage them to use all 6 parts of the foot (inside, outside, laces, sole, heel, and toe) to control it and to try moving it in different directions.

# COORDINATION

## ACTIVITY 1: "CAPTURE THE PINNIES!"



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### SET UP:

In 2 teams. No ball to start. Each player has a pinnie (or an old t-shirt) tucked into his/her shorts, hanging down roughly to the hem of their shorts.

### HOW TO:

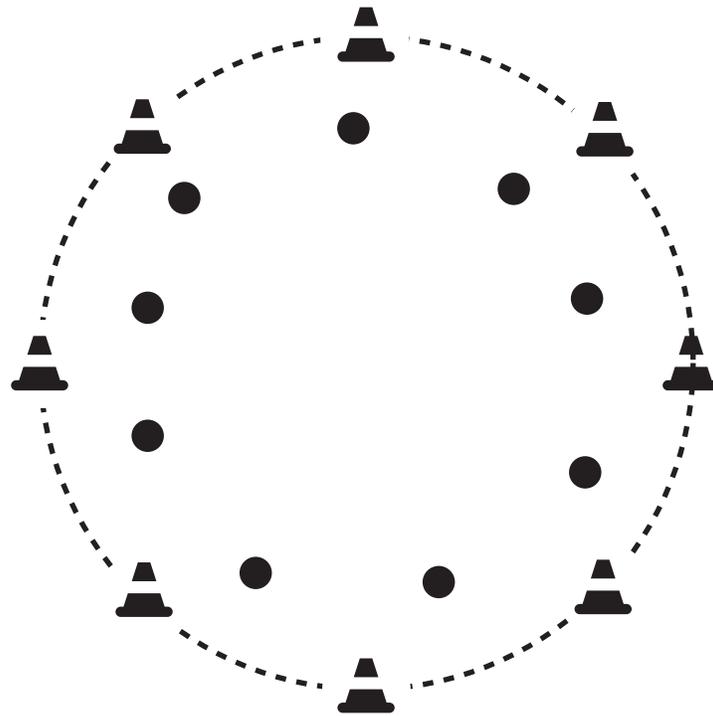
Run around the field and try to "capture" all the opposing team's pinnies by pulling them out of their shorts. The last player with a pinnie gets a point for their team.

### ALTERNATION:

Introduce a "knockout" format, where players who lose their pinnie (or have their ball kicked out of bounds) have to leave the field.

# COORDINATION

## ACTIVITY 2: “REACT—FAST!”



● Players

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### SET UP:

Up to 12 players in a circle; no ball to start.

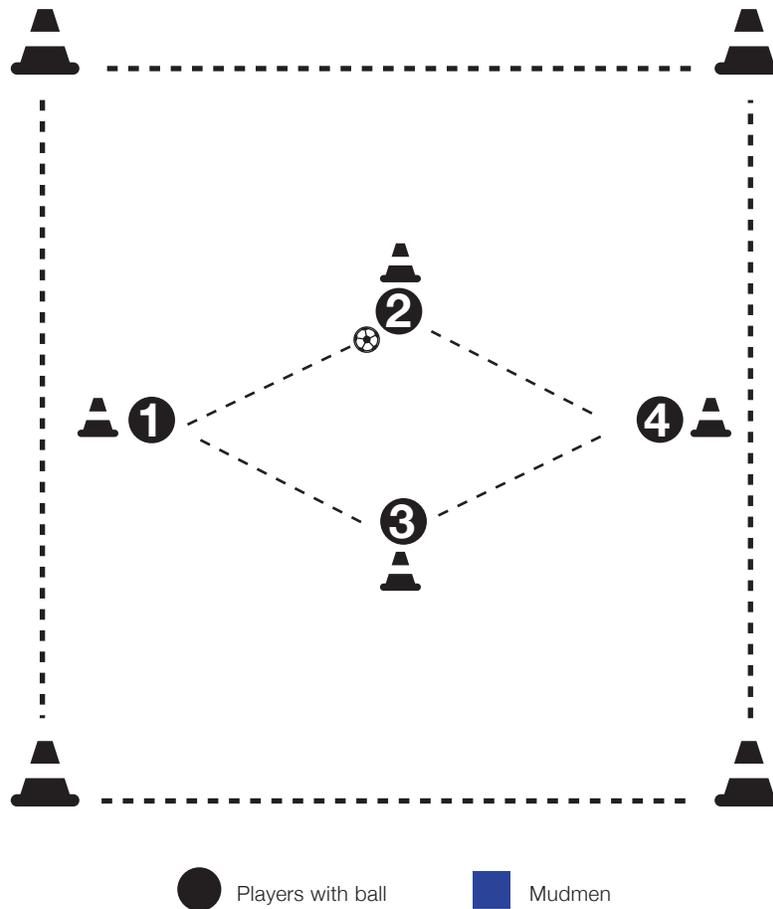
### HOW TO:

Players run freely around the circle. “Listen!” change the way you’re moving on the coach’s command:

1. Run backwards.
2. Shuffle to the side.
3. Jump in place.
4. Sit down and get up fast; keep running.
5. Knees up.
6. Kick your heels back.
7. Touch the inside of your foot.

# COORDINATION

## ACTIVITY 3: "DIAMONDS"



### SET UP:

Players work in groups of 4; 1 ball per group. Use cones to mark out a diamond shape. Number players from 1-4.

### HOW TO:

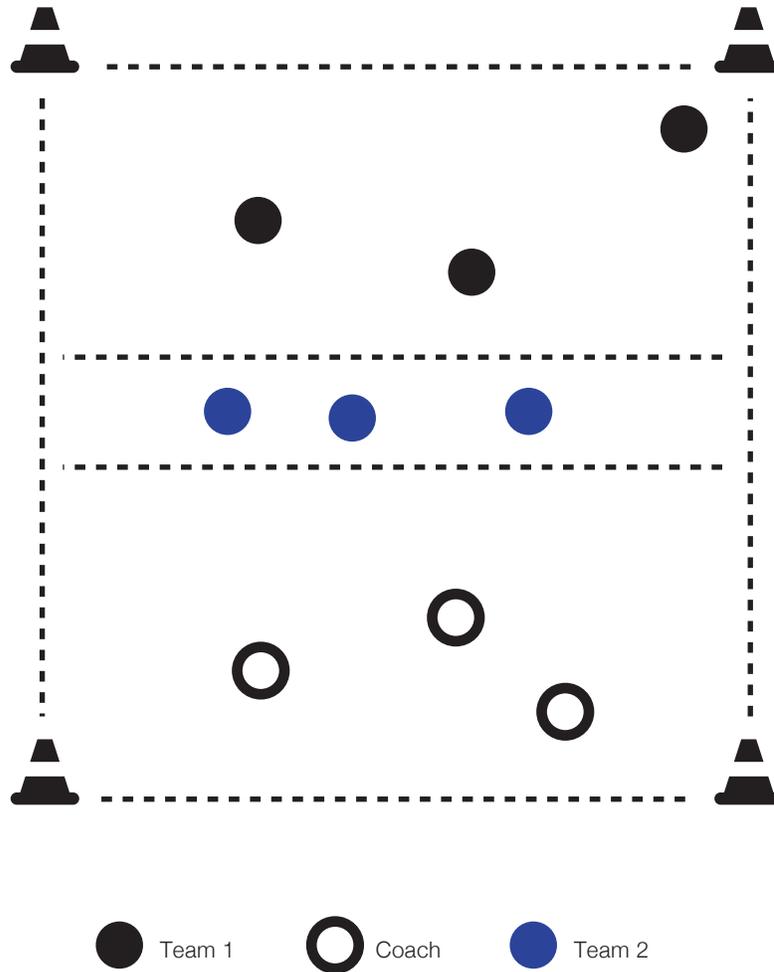
Players move the ball in a clockwise direction. Player 1 throws the ball to Player 2, who controls it in 2 touches (i.e. thigh to foot) and passes to Player 3. Player 3 picks up the ball and throws it to Player 4, who controls it in 2 touches and passes to Player 1. Repeat 3 times, then switch so Player 2 starts with the ball.

### ALTERNATIONS:

Pass with your other foot. "Change direction!" – start moving the ball counter-clockwise.

# COORDINATION

## ACTIVITY 4: "ISLAND"



### SET UP:

Divide players into 3 equal teams. Make 3 connecting grids. 2 big areas and 1 small area.

### HOW TO:

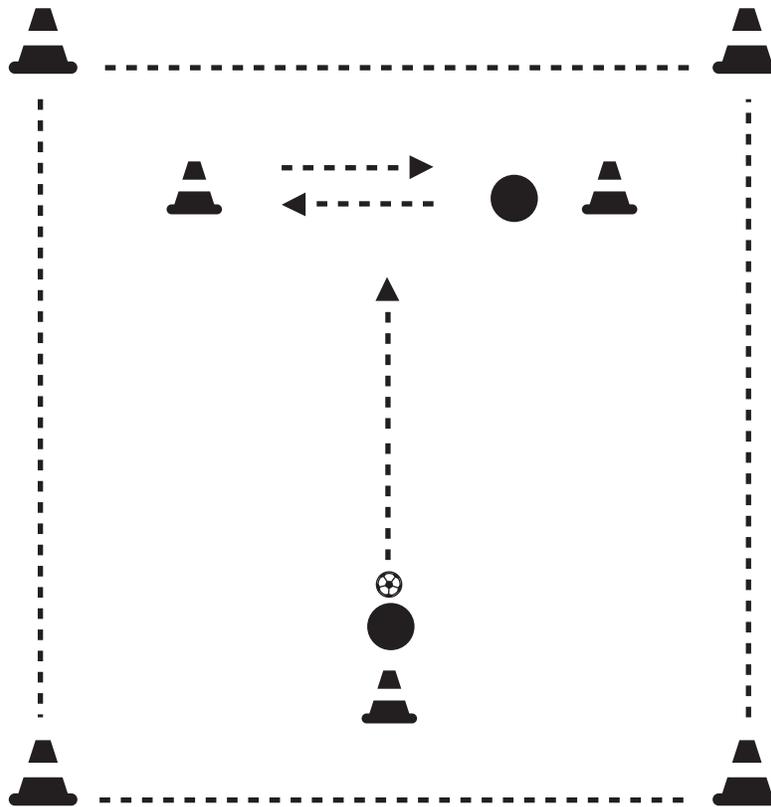
Team 1 starts with the ball, while team 2 is in the middle grid as the blockers. Team 1 must connect 5 passes and then pass through the blockers to team 3. Switch the middle team out.

### ALTERNATIONS:

Add a defender into the passing grid.

# COORDINATION

## ACTIVITY 5: "FREEZE TAG"



● Players with ball

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### SET UP:

Working in pairs. Use 2 cones to mark out a gate at one end, with a single marker centered opposite.

### HOW TO:

Player 1 passes to Player 2 who controls the ball with the foot and quickly passes it back. Player 2 moves laterally to touch the cone on his/her right. Player 1 passes the ball quickly toward the centre of the gate, so Player 2 has to either control or pass while moving. Player 2 passes back to Player 1 again, and moves laterally to touch the other cone. Continue with Player 2 moving laterally after each pass.

# STAGE ONE: U7 - U9

# SMALL - SIDED GAMES

- ARE FUN!
- WILL MOTIVATE YOUR PLAYERS MORE THAN ANY OTHER ACTIVITY.
- SHOULD INVOLVE SMALL GROUPS PLAYING IN SMALL AREAS.
- PROVIDE PLAYERS WITH THE BEST CHANCE TO PRACTICE INDIVIDUAL SKILLS.
- SHOULD INVOLVE AN AGE-APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF DECISION-MAKING (HOW AND WHEN TO PASS THE BALL TO OTHER TEAMMATES).

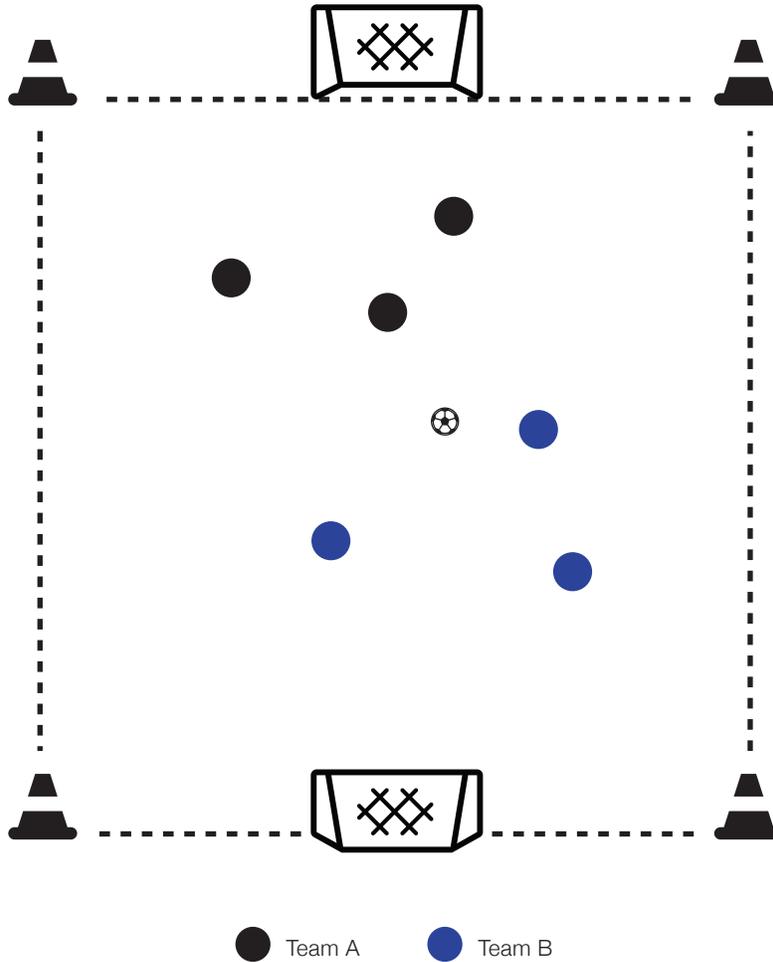
Small-sided games should make up about 40% of practice time (i.e., 30 minutes of a 75-minute training session). The following games are designed

## TIP

Many of the activities in this Tool Kit revolve around individual or group competitions. If pinnies aren't available to distinguish competing players from one another, old t-shirts in colours that differ from the team's uniform work too!

# SMALL - SIDED GAMES

## ACTIVITY 1: "STREET SOCCER"



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### SET UP:

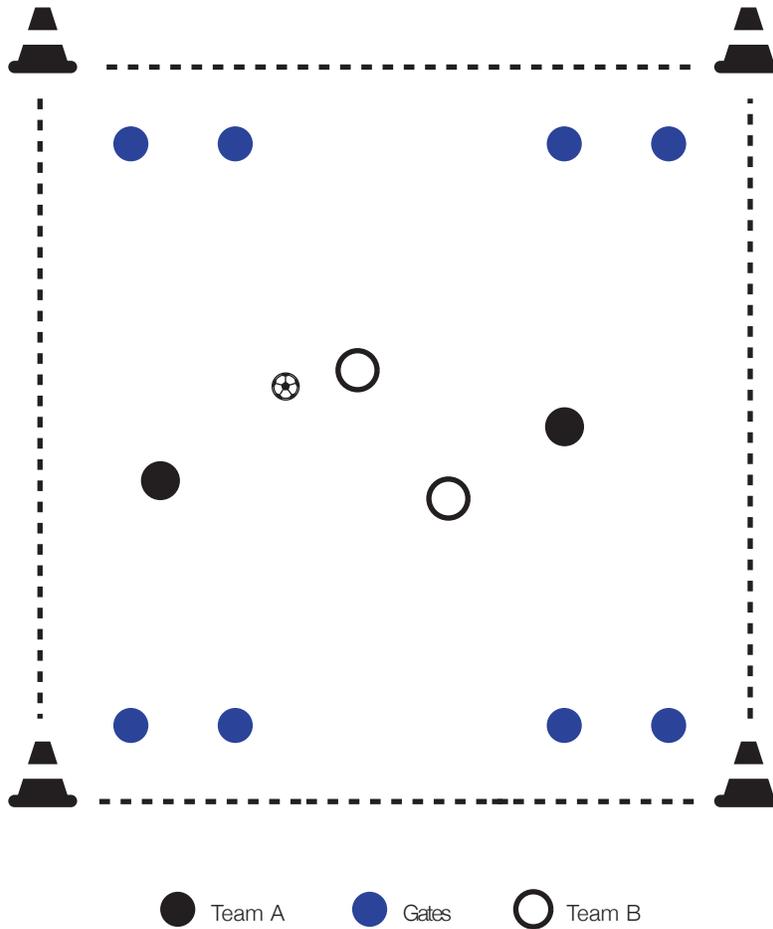
Break team into games of 3 players verses 3 players or 2 verses 2 if you have lower numbers. Fields should be around 20 x 15 yards with a goal on each end. Adjust for numbers.

### HOW TO:

Each player gets a number (example 1-24). Split into teams of 3 at random. Kids get 3 points for a win, 1 point for a tie, and 1 point per goal scored in the game. Coach asks at the end of each game how many points they earned, record it on paper. Split players up into random teams again and repeat point system. Player with the most points at the end is the winner.

# SMALL - SIDED GAMES

## ACTIVITY 2: "THROUGH THE GATES"



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### SET UP:

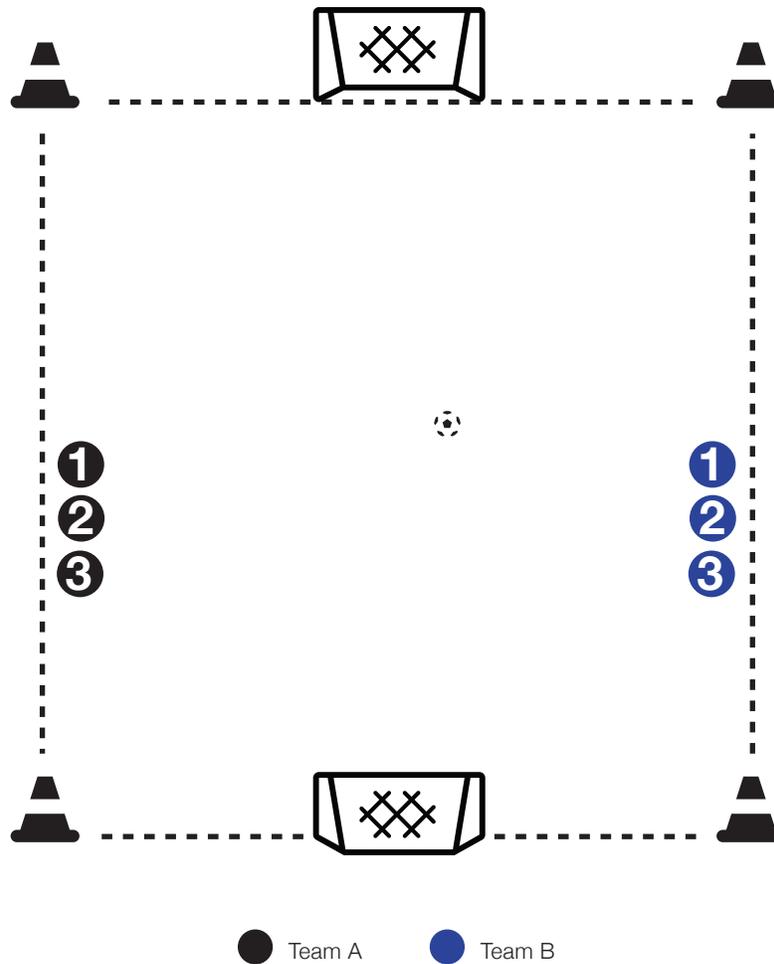
Two players, in 2 equal teams. Four corner gates marked out with cones.

### HOW TO:

score a point by passing the ball through one of the other team's gates. When your team has the ball, work with your teammates in a triangle, with the two side players getting into space for a pass to support the teammate with the ball.

# SMALL - SIDED GAMES

## ACTIVITY 3: "NUMBERS"



### SET UP:

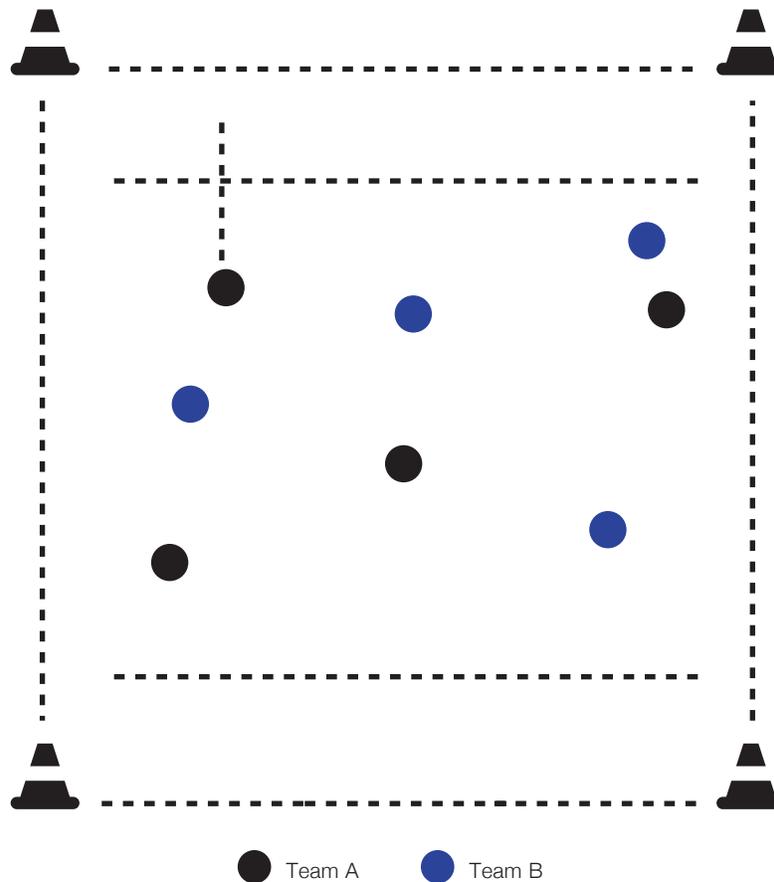
Form equal teams of up to 4 players,  
Use different-coloured pinnies, if available, and give a number to each player

### HOW TO:

When you hear the coach call out your number, come to the middle of the field.  
The coach rolls the ball into play, the "one" try to score on the "two" goal and vice-versa.  
Use your dribbling skills to move the ball towards the goal. If you can't score,  
pass the ball to your teammate using the inside of your foot.

# SMALL - SIDED GAMES

## ACTIVITY 4: "TOUCHDOWN"



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### SET UP:

30 x 25 yard field with 5 yard end zones.

### HOW TO:

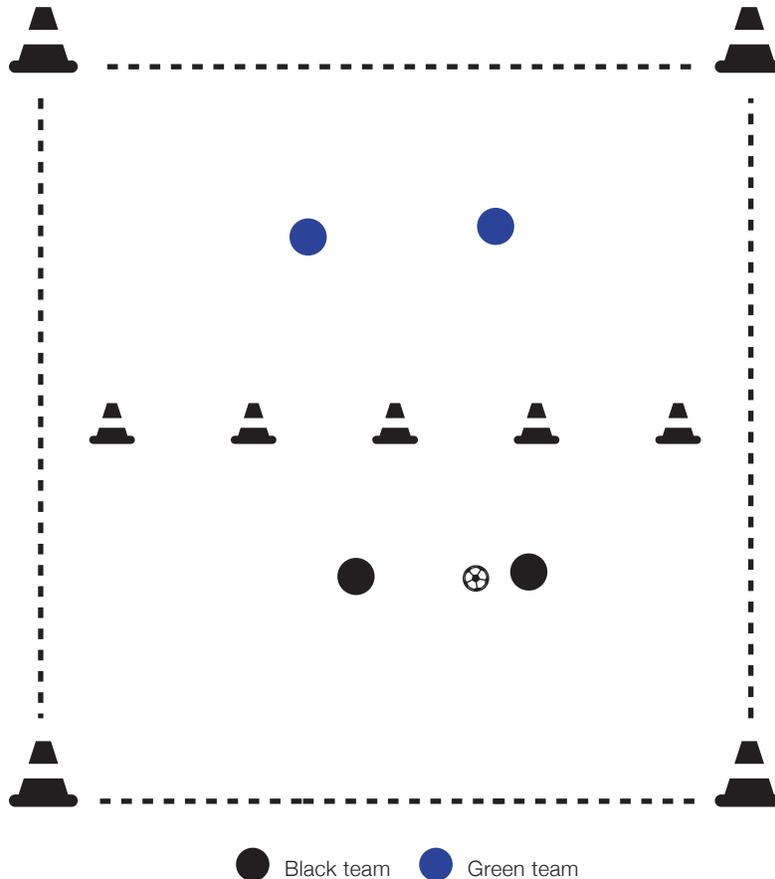
2 teams. Players must connect a certain number of passes inside of main grid before dribbling into designated end zone. Play first to 5 points.

### ALTERNATIONS:

"Switch" by passing the ball with hands only. Heads up, talking, movement of the ball and open passing lanes.

# SMALL - SIDED GAMES

## ACTIVITY 5: "SOCCER TENNIS"



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### SET UP:

A miniature court. 20x8 yard grid with cones across center to signify the net.

### HOW TO:

2 players per team. 4 per court. Each team gets one bounce on their side. Must volley over the line of cones to opponents side. Winner determined by end of time or reaching designated points. Points are obtained when other team fails to volley it back or the ball bounces too many times. Serves are taken from the back.







# ALBION JUNIORS

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