

**Tucker Youth Soccer Association
U6 and U8 Coaching Activities**

Game 1 : “Grid Game”

Players jog in a limited area without the ball. Periodically, coach gives an instruction which players must execute -- any players failing to comply must perform a 'forfeit' of some kind such as sit-ups, pushups, sprint, etc. **Some examples:**

- a. "Groups of n" where n is any number from 1 to the number of players present. Some players will be unable to make a 'group of n' if the number of players present is not evenly divisible by n -- try to ensure that these players are not always the ones left out.
- b. "Simple Simon" where players must imitate what the coach does without any verbal instruction (e.g. if the coach goes down on one knee, so must the players -- last one or two to comply do a forfeit).
- c. "Link": players must link up another player or players depending on the number of players you request.
- d. "Shorts/shirts/socks" all players wearing same color must stand together, e.g. if coach says "shorts" all players wearing same color shorts have to locate each other.

You can think of more variations. Follow each pause with more jogging, but vary the rhythm so that sometimes there is a long wait between instructions while other times several instructions come quickly one after the other.

Game 2: “Circle Activity”

There's a multitude of these, including 'pass and follow', 'man on/turn/hold', 'monkey in the middle' and so on. As players improve, put multiple balls into play and impose restrictions (one-touch play, alternate side-of-the-foot and lofted passes, etc). Also ones where half the players are on the outside, half on the inside; the players on the inside look to the players on the outside for a thrown-in ball, receive it and one-touch it back (vary the service so that the ball is thrown to feet, to thigh, to chest, to head).

Game 3: “Threes” (Alternate these)

3-man pass and move; 3 players in triangle. Each player passes and then runs between the other two players.

Small triangle: one-touch passing across next player's body to far foot to encourage opening up (right foot first, then left foot)

Volleys: two players alternately serve thrown balls to the third player for him to volley back to them. Start with low balls about 30-50 cm off the ground, progress to higher and higher balls (obviously these need to be thrown to the side of the player). Service should be rapid enough so that the player volleying is in constant movement.

Game 4: “The American Tunnel”

Divide players into groups of 5-6. All players in each group except for one make a tunnel (side by side, hands and feet on the ground, butts in the air). On coach's signal, the other player bowls a ball through the tunnel, runs to the end of the tunnel and collects the ball, bowls it back through the tunnel and joins the end of the tunnel. The player who was at the other end of the tunnel stands up, retrieves the bowled ball and repeats the exercise. The tunnel will move slowly down the field - make it a competition between the groups over a 25-40 m distance. This is a strenuous exercise and should be used after players have done an initial warm-up.

Game 5: “Tag”

Players move in a restricted area. Two players are 'it' (give them each a pinnie to hold) -- they are not allowed to tag any player who has a ball. Give the remaining players a number of balls smaller than the number of players (how much smaller will depend on players' skill, but you will need at least two balls in play). A player who is tagged or who plays a ball out of bounds becomes 'it'.

Game 6: “Red Light – Green Light”

For the very young Under 6 the game of Red Light – Green Light is an easy game to learn and teaches the children to keep the ball close and under control. As in the game we played in our youth, one player is “IT”. He stands at one end of the field with his/her back to the others and calls out red light, green light one, two, three and then turns around. The players meanwhile have been dribbling toward him/her and must stop, with their foot on top of the ball, when the player turns around. Anyone moving must go back to the beginning to try again.

Game 7: “North –South – East and West”

Players dribble where the coach tells them to, i.e. a direction as suggested in the title or you can make it a color or an animal, whatever. This again teaches the children to keep the ball close and, hopefully, shows them how to change a direction.

Game 8: “Draw”

This is a very popular game with the younger crowd. Place players in 2 lines facing each other. Place one soccer ball in the middle of the each two players. The object of the game is to draw the ball back using the sole of the foot. The command to “Draw” is given by the coach. The fun part is that the coach has to tell a story in which he uses the word “draw” to signal the players. For example: Willy and his sister were working on cleaning their rooms. Willy said “where should I put these socks? And his sister replied, “In your Drawer.” Make up really silly stories. You can add progression to this activity by having the players jog in place, have the players only use the non-dominant foot, have the players move up a ladder if they win and down if they lose the round and see who can get to the top first.

Game 9: "Get Em"

Here is a game which involves both passing and dribbling that is fun and engages players quickly. Also, although primarily an individual exercise that allows for differences in ability level, if the players are ready, it can quickly become a cooperative game where players work together to solve a challenge.

Each player will need a ball. Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. All the other players around the outside of the grided space. Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'. The game is over when all of the players have been caught. The last player caught is “It” and starts with the ball for the next game. If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It". Coaching Points of Get-Em

! Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard.

! Players not caught should run, jump, and use zig-zag movements. ♦ A variation can be added by having all players play with a ball

Game 10: "Running Bases"

Here is another game that emphasizes dribbling that is fun and challenging for players. Again, primarily it is an individual game that could lend itself to small group cooperation if the players are ready.

The Game Each player will need a ball, except those that have been designated as "It". Players that are "It" need to carry a colored pennie or flag in their hand. Players with a ball try to dribble without being tagged. If they are, they exchange places with the "tagger" (The "tagger" hands the pennie to the dribbler and takes their ball). Dribblers are safe in one of the designated bases. Only one player is allowed in a base at a time. if a new player enters a base, the old player must leave the base. Add "taggers" when the players find the game to be easy. It seems about right to have one base for every 3 players, but, this number can be adjusted either way to make the game constantly interesting. This game can also be played by only allowing the "tagger" to "get" someone by kicking their ball away, not just "tagging" the person. (a variation on Shark) Experiment with different combinations of "taggers" and bases to keep the players engaged.

Game 11: "Basic Passing Game U7: Trick or Treat"

Set Up and Execution: Make a square with pretty small sides - players line up on each side. Put an adult in the middle of each side (that means four adults) holding a dozen or so flat cones (you could use anything else similar size and shape). 50 cones or 50 slips of construction paper will do. On a go signal, players dribble across the square, stop the ball with a foot on it, say "Trick or Treat", take a cone from an adult, turn the ball, dribble back across, take a cone, etc. When all the cones are gone, who has the most? This requires dribbling at speed, avoiding the clump in the middle, controlling the ball around an opponent, but minimal coordination holding the cones. After a few rounds dribble across the square, dribble around the coach, and then stop the ball, say "Trick or treat," etc. Or place the adults randomly in the square, moving at a walking pace. This makes them keep their heads up and look for the target (i.e. the adult)

Game 12: "Run and shoot"

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

Game 13: "Cone soccer"

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

Game 14: "Strong sides"

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

Game 15: "Striker!"

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

Game 16: "Possession"

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

Game 17: "Line activity"

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

Players rotate positions:

- Simple cut back move: 1 line. Have players start at midfield and dribble half way down sideline with coach providing minimal pressure. When coach says 'cut' the player cuts the ball toward the middle and then finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure.
- Reverse move (U6s can begin to do this; U7s ought to be able to do it): 1 line. Players and coach stand on endline next to goal. Coach passes ball ahead. Player has to run and reverse ball, then turn and shoot (or dribble back and shoot).
- Pass to partner: 2 lines: one along sideline and another toward the center of the field. Same as above, but this time, when coach says pass, the player passes to the wide-open teammate. The teammate must be yelling 'pass it to me.' The play finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure. Also, this is the foundation for 2 v 1 or 3 v 1...As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal a pass.
- Throw-in play: 2 lines: one along sideline and another toward the center of the field. The coach (standing on the field 4-5 feet in front of players on the sidelines) has a ball and rolls it out of bounds. He tells the first player in line along the sideline to 'go get it and throw it in.' The coach points to where it went out of bounds and tells the player to throw it in from there, encouraging the player to hurry and watching for proper technique. The throw in goes to the teammate who is yelling 'pass it to me.' The throw in made in front of the waiting teammate. After the throw is made, both players run to the goal. The play finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure. This can be done with 3 v 1. As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal a throw-in.
- Goal kick play: 3 lines: one taking goal kick and 2 lines 10 yards ahead of kicker. Kicker kicks to one of the players who, with other teammate, runs and takes a shot.

Game 18: "Numbers"

The exercise is good for 1 vs. 1 dribbling skills. It is especially good on a hot day as the kids defending can rest a bit. Divide the kids into 2 groups. If you have ten kids, say, assign each kid a number between one and five. So each team has a number one, a number two, etc. Try to make sure the kids with the same number are evenly matched. Set up two very wide "goals" with pylons. Spread the five kids on each side across each goal line. Call out one or more numbers, and those kids come out to play 1 vs. 1, 2 vs. 2, etc. and the rest of the kids stay spread across the goal line as defenders. Throw a ball from the sideline into the centre and let them play it until a goal is scored, the defenders stop it, or it goes out of bounds.

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

Game 19: "Monkey in the Middle"

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

Game 20: "Ice Monster"

Mark off an area for the game to be played and select one kid to be the "Monster". Have the rest of the kids (each with a ball) dribble around within the area. The "Ice Monster" attempts to touch each player's ball, at which point those players "freezes" with their foot on the ball. If a player's ball goes out of bounds, they also freeze. The last remaining unfrozen player gets to be the new Ice Monster for the next round.

Game 21: "Cops and Robbers"

Have the kids (each with a ball) line up on one side of the field. These guys are the "Robbers". Have two more kids (the Cops) facing the Robbers somewhere near halfway to the other side. The object is for the Robbers to dribble to the other side without having a Cop tackle the ball away. If a robber loses his ball to a cop, he goes to jail (designate a small area off to the side or use a Goal structure.) Have the Robbers repeat the crossings until there are only 2 left. Make these guys the new cops, pull everyone out of jail and start over.

Game 22: "Pirate" (or Monsters)

A keep away game. Coaching points: concentrate on the player's close dribbling and screening techniques. Everybody inside a circle (center circle is fine) with a ball. One player without a ball is the Pirate. Everybody starts dribbling around. The Pirate player tries to steal a ball from any player and pass it out of the circle - now, the two players are Pirates and go after the others.....then three, then four. Finally only one player is left with a ball. He/she becomes the

Game 23: "Pirate"

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

Game 24: "Kick out"

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

Game 25: "Give and go"

This one is good for getting the kids to move after they make a pass. It is appropriate for kids a little older, who pass the ball but like to stop and really admire their better passes. Everyone spaces themselves around the center circle. Give the ball to one person and they call out someone's name and pass to them. They then run to the receiver's position in the circle. The receiver upon hearing their name called steps forward to receive the pass and yells "I got it!" The sequence is then repeated. Several things are accomplished besides getting them used to movement. The "I got it!" yell addresses the problem of nobody playing the ball in a game because they thought the other was going to play it. We all learn each other's names quickly. Invariably, someone is always left out so start a countdown from 10 to 0 and they have to figure out who has been left out (the left out person should be quiet). They start yelling among themselves to figure out who it is and this fosters communication on the field. (It's pretty humorous too). After a few practices, they get it down so they look pretty sharp. Then you toss in another ball. They love it! Now they have to think a bit because people are moving and two are busy with the other ball.

Game 26: "Egg Hunt"

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. At the other end of the field is a goal called the "basket". Blow the whistle and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get all the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. Time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task. The kids really like this game. The more balls (eggs) the better. You should see them score, and turn right around and go back for more balls.

Game 27: "Marbles"

Split your team into two groups and line them up behind two opposing lines. Each player should have a ball. Place an unusual color (or size) ball in the middle. This is the marble (a #2 ball works well). Have them try to move the marble across the other team's line by striking it with a ball. After the game starts, don't require them to use their own ball, they are free to use any other ball they can find. At first the players may get really excited and kick the marble. If this happens, call time-out and put it back. **Variation: eliminate the teams and play it in a circle. The game is over when the ball exits the circle.**

Game 28: "Teach the parents"

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

Game 29: "Plain Games!"

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

Game 30: "Bees"

One they really seem to like is to dribble in an area (tell them they are bees and to buzz), then after awhile, have the coaches (or a few parents) walk around inside the area. It is the job of the "bees" to "sting" the big people with the ball (a pass or kick). The need to keep looking for a target and hitting it. They really seem to enjoy this one.

Game 31: "Shark and minnows"

Teaches kids with the ball to shield it from an opponent and teaches kids without the ball how to take it away from an opponent. Use pylons to create a 15-yard square. One player, the shark, starts outside the square without a ball. All other players, the minnows, start inside the square with a ball. When the coach yells, "Shark's getting hungry!" the shark starts running around the outside of the square and the fish start dribbling around inside the square. When the coach yells, "Shark attack!" the shark enters the square and has 30 seconds to send as many balls as possible outside the square. When a ball leaves the square for any reason, the corresponding fish must leave the square and stay out until the coach gives the "Stop!" command at the end of the 30 seconds. A fish has done well if still alive. The shark has done well if few fish survived. Choose a new shark and play another round until every player has been the shark once.

Game 32: "Camp Town Races"

Line up all the players on one end of the field. They each have a ball. On the whistle, they all dribble to opposite end, shoot ball into goal, get ball out of goal, and run back and finish with a shot on opposite goal. The first one to finish is the winner. Ask them "Who is going to win the race?" They all learn to say "The player who can dribble it the straightest!" A variation is to start half at one end and half on the other. This really teaches them to try to do it fast while maintaining possession. This activity really helps players deal with the balls that pop out of the bunch

Game 33: "Wave Game"

Another game is with a 20x20 area (easily could be bigger). Have all the kids with a ball at one end. Their job is to dribble inside the square to the other end. Start with the coach or other person in the middle. They are to try and kick the ball out of the area. If a person loses their ball, they help in the middle. Play starts on a go command, so there is a big wave of people trying to get across.

Game 34: "Rapid Fire"

Can also play this where the person in the middle has all of the balls and they try to hit the runners (below the waist) with a good pass/kick. For U7s, this can be a bit hard

Game 35: "Catch up"

Players spread out around the edge of a circular playing area. Coach calls out two numbers and those players have to swap places. Second player called attempts to beat first player to their place. Player 9 was called first then Player 5. Player 9 must have been ready and listening as they look like getting their first. Repeat, but players must run into the centre and touch the cone before trying to get to the other player's place first. Player 1 was called first but was not on their toes and ready to go as Player 6, who was called second, looks like they will get there first. Repeat, but calling out numbers next to each other, with the higher number first. The first player called must run clockwise around the outside of the circle and the second player has to try and catch them before they get round the circle. Player 11 was called first and has made a good start, being well ahead. Player 10 is still chasing hard to catch up. Player 11 has to get back to their own place before being caught. If Player 10 does catch up to Player 11 they jog back across the circle to their own starting positions whilst the coach calls out another two numbers. (Or, if you're players are up for it, make Player 11 carry Player 10 back to their place piggy-back style).

Possible changes: All these chasing/catching activities can then be done with a ball.

Game 36: "Circle – dribbling"

If more than one player gets to the middle when Nemo is found, they could swap possession of toy to confuse sharks. Player who finds Nemo could also pass their ball to the outside of the circle for another player to control in order to rescue him.

Game 37: "Escape to victory 1"

Red players have a ball each and all stand in a coned safe zone in the centre of the circle. Yellow players are partnered with a red player and stand inside the outer circle playing area. Red players have to try and escape the playing area by dribbling their ball through one of the larger cone gates around the edge of the circle. Yellow players have to try and prevent this from happening. Red player 1 has made a break for a cone gate but has had the ball kicked out of play by their yellow partner. Red player 2 has made a break in a different direction out of the safe zone and the yellow partner is trying to catch up to make a challenge. Red players 3 and 6 have turned to dribble towards a different cone gate as their yellow partners are tight on their shoulders. Red players 4 and 5 have not yet left the safety zone but are looking to turn and make a break into space not covered by their yellow partners. Play until all the red players have escaped through a cone gate or have had their balls kicked out by their yellow partners. Red players return to the central safety zone and the game is repeated. After 3 turns the players swap roles. Play several rounds and keep a running total of scores - partner v partner or red team v yellow team

Game 38: "Close the gate"

Red players have a ball each and must try and keep possession of their ball. Blue players must try and pressure the red players and kick their ball out of the playing area. Red players are allowed to dribble out of the playing area but only through one of the larger cone gates spaced out around the edge of the circle. Blue players cannot leave the playing area. Red players 1 and 7 have escaped out of cone gates and are dribbling around the outside of the circle to re-enter the playing area through different gates. Red player 5 has had their ball kicked out of the playing area. The player must retrieve the ball and re-enter through a cone gate. Red player 8 is under pressure from a blue player so has turned towards a cone gate to escape to safety if necessary. Play for 1/2 minutes then swap two red players with the blue players. The next pair of blue players has to try and kick more balls out of the playing area than the previous pair. Play until all the group have taken the role of the blue players. **Possible changes Play 5 v 3 depending on the age or ability of the group. If you play with a larger group make sure you have more cone gates than blue players.**

Game 39: "Finding nemo"

Hide 'Nemo' (toy fish) under one of the tall cones in the centre of the circle, surrounded by a small circle of round cones. Blue players are the sharks protecting the cones in the centre of the playing area. Red players are Nemo's friends trying to rescue him. On a signal from the coach, red players can try to run into the centre without being tagged. If tagged, the player must return to outside and wait until next turn. If a red player gets to the middle they are safe and can lift up 1 cone to try and find Nemo. If Nemo is not found the players have to try and run back to the outside of the circle (with the cone) without being tagged. If they make it there is one less cone to search under but if they get tagged the cone is replaced back in the centre. If one of the players find Nemo then must get back to the outside of the circle, without being tagged, in order to rescue him. If tagged, the Coach hides Nemo back under a cone for the game to continue on the next signal from the Coach. Change sharks if Nemo is rescued and challenge them to guard him more safely ie. take more turns/cones lifted to be rescued. Red players start with a ball and must dribble to the coned area in the centre of the circle - must stop the ball within the safe area to lift a cone. Sharks try to kick their ball out of the circle to make them go back to the start. If Nemo is not found the players have to try and dribble back to the outside of the circle (with the cone) without being tagged. If they make it there is one less cone to search under but if they get tagged the cone is replaced back in the centre. If one of the players find Nemo then must dribble their ball to the outside of the circle, without being tagged, in order to rescue him. If the ball is tackled and kicked out, the Coach hides Nemo back under a cone for the game to continue on the next signal from the Coach.

Game 40: "Circle races"

Player pairs stand evenly spaced around the circle. On signal from the Coach, player 2 starts by crawling between the legs of Player 1, running to the middle of the circle and then back between Player 1's legs to finish. Change round player places and repeat. Repeat but this time players have to run around the outside of the circle. Possibilities are endless but here are just a few suggestions such as: run and touch any 4 cones in the circle run and crawl through 2 other players legs run around player on opposite side of circle All or a selection of races can then be repeated whilst dribbling a ball. Ball can be passed through partner's legs to start and finish the race.

Game 41: "Umbrella game"

Why the Umbrella game you may ask? Well I came up with this game when I took a U11 school team to an outdoor 5-a-side soccer tournament. The start was delayed and all I had was a ball and an umbrella. We found a spare area of grass, stuck my umbrella in the ground and we played 4 v 2 possession and then a 3 v 3 small-sided game, with no coned playing area, trying to hit the umbrella. The kids loved it and I've used it ever since. Three red players try to keep possession of the ball against one blue player. They can dribble or pass anywhere within the circular playing area. If the blue player wins the ball or kicks it out of the playing area then they swap with the red player who made the mistake. The red players score by passing the ball to hit a taller cone in the centre of the circle. If they achieve this the blue player stays as the defender. If the red players score three times then swap the defender. Set up a small, coned circular exclusion zone around the central cone if the defender insists on standing next to the cone all the time. Possible changes Play 4 v 1 or 5 v 2 depending on the age and ability of the group. Play 3 v 3 as a small-sided game - if a team hits the central cone they keep possession and restart anywhere around the edge of the circle.

Game 42: "Cone signals"

Players have a ball each and dribble around the playing area keeping control of the ball and their heads up. Coach holds up a coloured cone and the players have to perform the skill/instruction that matches that cone. The coach will have to introduce these one at a time and allow the players time to practise. A few suggestions for skills/instructions are as follows:

Green - players dribble around area

Red - players stop and put foot on the ball

Orange - players touch ball between insteps of both feet without moving

White - players sit on the ball

Blue - players pick up the ball and hold it above their head

Yellow - players use left foot only.

The possibilities are endless. If you don't have many different colored cones then use signals or hold up a ball for one skill, a cone for another, wave a bib/pinny for another and so on.

Game 43: "Goldmine"

Teams of 3/4 start inside each grid at the corners of the playing area. Place a large number of balls in the middle of the playing area - each of these is a gold nugget buried deep in the mine. Players work together in each grid passing the ball to each other. When a team has completed ten passes one of them has to put on a mining helmet (cone) and run into the mine to get a golden nugget (ball). They then dribble the ball back to their square and start again to complete another ten passes. The teams have progressed as follows: Top left - the team has completed ten passes and a player is on the way back from the mine with a gold nugget. Top right - the team have still to complete their ten passes before going to the mine. Bottom left - the team has completed ten passes and a player has just put on their mining helmet to go into the mine. Bottom right - the team has already got a gold nugget and has started on their next set of ten passes. A different player must put on the helmet and go into the mine each time. Each team has collected three gold nuggets from the mine. The team in the bottom right is just about to win as a player is running out to collect the last gold nugget. Put the balls back in the middle and play again. Keep a running total of the number of gold nuggets collected by each team.

Game 44: "Controlling the air"

Firstly, the soccer coach divides the team in half. The players form two single file lines one behind the other with the opposing teams facing each other. The soccer coach will require a number of training balls ready that can be thrown into the air one at a time. Each player must jump in and fight for control of the ball and get it back to their line. Obviously, no touching the ball with the hands! The player that doesn't gain control may have to do push ups or sit ups, to be determined by the soccer coach. From a coaching perspective, if more running is required in this soccer activity, players can be moved further apart to increase the distance required to travel.

Game 45: "Protect the ball"

This soccer activity requires a player to buddy up with another player. The first player stands next to a soccer ball, with their feet spread about a shoulder width part. The second player stands on the outside shoulder of the first player. The second player must get a touch on the ball. This can be by whatever means the player wants as long as it is with their foot and no fouls are committed. The player with the ball closest to them has to learn to protect the ball and maintain their balance. Each player to switch roles a number of times before the soccer activity is finished.

I'm closer. As with the second activity, players buddy up with a partner. This soccer activity is similar to the second except instead of trying to get a touch on the ball, the second player has to force themselves between the first player and the ball. If the first player is forced away from the ball, they then have to work back and try to regain their original position.

Game 46: "Wave Game"

Another game is with a 20x20 area (easily could be bigger). Have all the kids with a ball at one end. Their job is to dribble inside the square to the other end. Start with the coach or other person in the middle. They are to try and kick the ball out of the area. If a person loses their ball, they help in the middle. Play starts on a go command, so there is a big wave of people trying to get across.

Game 47: "Rapid Fire"

Can also play this where the person in the middle has all of the balls and they try to hit the runners (below the waist) with a good pass/kick. For U7s, this can be a bit hard...

Game 48: "Run and shoot"

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

Game 49: "Cone soccer"

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

Game 50: "Strong sides"

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

Game 51: "Striker!"

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

Game 52: "Possession"

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

Game 53: "Line Activities"

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

Players rotate positions:

- Simple cut back move: 1 line. Have players start at midfield and dribble half way down sideline with coach providing minimal pressure. When coach says 'cut' the player cuts the ball toward the middle and then finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure.
- Reverse move: 1 line. Players and coach stand on endline next to goal. Coach passes ball ahead. Player has to run and reverse ball, then turn and shoot (or dribble back and shoot).
- Pass to partner: 2 lines: one along sideline and another toward the center of the field. Same as above, but this time, when coach says pass, the player passes to the wide-open teammate. The teammate must be yelling 'pass it to me.' The play finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure. Also, this is the foundation for 2 v 1 or 3 v 1...As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal a pass.
- Throw-in play: 2 lines: one along sideline and another toward the center of the field. The coach (standing on the field 4-5 feet in front of players on the sidelines) has a ball and rolls it out of bounds. He tells the first player in line along the sideline to 'go get it and throw it in.' The coach points to where it went out of bounds and tells the player to throw it in from there, encouraging the player to hurry and watching for proper technique. The throw in goes to the teammate who is yelling 'pass it to me.' The throw in made in front of the waiting teammate. After the throw is made, both players run to the goal. The play finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure. This can be done with 3 v 1. As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal a throw-in.

Game 54: "Numbers"

The exercise is good for 1 vs 1 dribbling skills. It is especially good on a hot day as the kids defending can rest a bit. Divide the kids into 2 groups. If you have ten kids, say, assign each kid a number between one and five. So each team has a number one, a number two, etc. Try to make sure the kids with the same number are evenly matched. Set up two very wide "goals" with pylons. Spread the five kids on each side across each goal line. Call out one or more numbers, and those kids come out to play 1 vs 1, 2 vs 2, etc. and the rest of the kids stay spread across the goal line as defenders. Throw a ball from the sideline into the centre and let them play it until a goal is scored, the defenders stop it, or it goes out of bounds. Colours. Use two each of different colored pennies', armbands, or stickers to place on shirts, as younger kids will have trouble remembering numbers.

Game 55: "Monkey in the Middle"

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

Game 56: "Ice Monster"

Mark off an area for the game to be played and select one kid to be the "Monster". Have the rest of the kids (each with a ball) dribble around within the area. The "Ice Monster" attempts to touch each player's ball, at which point that player "freezes" with their foot on the ball. If a player's ball goes out of bounds, they also freeze. The last remaining unfrozen player gets to be the new Ice Monster for the next round.

Game 57: "Cops and Robbers"

Have the kids (each with a ball) line up on one side of the field. These guys are the "Robbers". Have two more kids (the Cops) facing the Robbers somewhere near halfway to the other side. The object is for the Robbers to dribble to the other side without having a Cop tackle the ball away. If a robber loses his ball to a cop, he goes to jail (designate a small area off to the side or use a Goal structure.) Have the Robbers repeat the crossings until there are only 2 left. Make these guys the new cops, pull everyone out of jail and start over.

Game 58: "Pirate (or Monster)"

A keepaway game. Coaching points: concentrate on the player's close dribbling and screening techniques. Everybody inside a circle (center circle is fine) with a ball. One player without a ball is the Pirate. Everybody starts dribbling around. The Pirate player tries to steal a ball from any player and pass it out of the circle - now, the two players are Pirates and go after the others.....then three, then four. Finally only one player is left with a ball. He/she becomes the Pirate the next game. Bomber. Just like above except the "IT" player has a ball and tries to roll/throw it at the other player's and knock their ball out of the circle.

Game 59: "Kick out"

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

Game 60: "Give and go"

This one is good for getting the kids to move after they make a pass. It is appropriate for kids a little older, who pass the ball but like to stop and really admire their better passes. Everyone spaces themselves around the center circle. Give the ball to one person and they call out someone's name and pass to them. They then run to the receiver's position in the circle. The

Game 61: "I Can Do This"

The coach begins the activity by saying "I can do something can you?" and demonstrating a physical activity such as jumping jacks. The children then do the same. The coach demonstrates several other physical activities such as: skips, one-legged bounces; star jumps, rolls, etc. After demonstrating several times the coach asked the children, "what can you do?" and takes their suggestions.

receiver upon hearing their name called steps forward to receive the pass and yells "I got it!" The sequence is then repeated. Several things are accomplished besides getting them used to movement. The "I got it!" yell addresses the problem of nobody playing the ball in a game because they thought the other was going to play it. We all learn each other's names quickly. Invariably, someone is always left out so start a countdown from 10 to 0 and they have to figure out who has been left out (the left out person should be quiet). They start yelling among themselves to figure out who it is and this fosters communication on the field. (It's pretty humorous too). After a few practices, they get it down so they look pretty sharp. Then you toss in another ball. They love it! Now they have to think a bit because people are moving and two are busy with the other ball.

Game 62: "Egg Hunt"

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. At the other end of the field is a goal called the "basket". Blow the whistle and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get all the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. Time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task. The kids really like this game. The more balls (eggs) the better. You should see them score, and turn right around and go back for more balls.

Game 63: "Teach the parents"

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

Game 64: "Just plain Games!"

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

Game 65: "Camp Town Races"

Line up all the players on one end of the field. They each have a ball. On the whistle, they all dribble to opposite end, shoot ball into goal, get ball out of goal, and run back and finish with a shot on opposite goal. The first one to finish is the winner. Ask them "Who is going to win the race?" They all learn to say "The player who can dribble it the straightest!" A variation is to start half at one end and half on the other. This really teaches them to try to do it fast while maintaining possession. This drill really helps players deal with the balls that pop out of the bunch.

Game 66: "Snake in the grass"

In an area 15 yds x 15 yds, two children begin by being "snakes" by lying on their stomachs. The other children's starting position is with their hands touching the "snakes." On the command "snake in the grass" the children try to stay away from the snake while the snake slithers around trying to catch a child. When any child is caught he/she becomes an additional snake. The activity continues until everyone is a snake

Game 67: "Pressure passing"

Players stand evenly spaced around the circle. Player 1 starts by passing the ball to any other player in the circle, in this case Player 2. Player 1 then follows the pass to put pressure onto Player 2. Player 2 has to control and pass quickly to another player in the circle before Player 1 prevents the pass. Player 2 then follows the pass to put pressure onto Player 3. This time, Player 3 has to control and pass quickly to another player in the circle before Player 2 prevents the pass. Player 1 takes the place of Player 2 in the circle to be available for another pass. **Possible changes Play as passive pressure or fully committed to prevent pass.**

Game 68: "Find the Coach"

The coach has all the children close their eyes and while their eyes are closed the coach moves. On the command, "find the coach" the children open their eyes and run to tag the coach. This progress from the coach staying still to the coach moving even after the children has opened their eyes.

Game 69: "Shadow Dribble"

The coach dribbles a ball him/herself and the players follow while dribbling their ball. The coach does both dribbling moves and goofy things for the children to mimic. Include here not only dribbling basics, but also tumbling, balance and rhythmic exercises.

Game 70: "Balls Galore"

Divide the team into two groups and play on a normal U6 game field with goals (if possible). Play a normal 3v3 game with the exception of playing with more than one ball. The coach can add in more soccer balls as he/she sees fit. Gradually take out balls until the game is left with only one ball and then move directly into the match in activity number five below.

In an area 20 yds x 20 yds, each child runs around trying to tag as many other children as possible while not being tagged themselves. Each bout lasts for 30 to 45 seconds.

Game 71: "Knee Tag"

The kids dribble and try to tag others on the knee to collect a point for each tag

Game 72: "Number Game"

Create a small 1v1 field approximately 15X20 with two small goals on each endline. Split the group into two even teams and assign a number to each player in each group. For instance if you have 5 players in each group, number off 1-5 in each group. One group should wear alternate jerseys.

The coach will play a ball into the area and call out a number. Those players must then sprint onto the field and play a 1v1. The game should continue until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds.

Game 73: "Pirate Game"

Build a circle approximately the size of the center circle with a net, goal, coach in the middle of the circle. The actual size of the circle will vary depending on the age and skill level of the players. With all players in the playing area, dedicate 9 players with the ball, and 3 players without a ball will be the "Pirates". Instruct the "Pirates" without the ball to defend the players with the balls. Once the Pirate wins the ball, they attempt to score on the goal or net or circle or coach in the middle of the circle. If the Pirate scores the goal, that player too becomes a Pirate. Play continues until the last player with the ball wins. If the pirates have a hard time getting started, the coach can help the pirates at first.

Game 74: "OUCH"

Build a grid 20X30 (may adjust if too large or small). Every player must be in the grid with a ball. The coach jogs around in the grid and players try to kick their balls and hit the coach. The players get a point each time they hit the coach. The coach should yell OUCH each time they are hit to make the game FUN. Make sure the players are striking the ball with the proper part of the foot. If the players are struggling to hit the coach, the coach should stop for a couple seconds to give the players a chance. Use different parts of the foot: Inside, Instep, Right and Left foot

Game 75: Marbles

Split your team into two groups and line them up behind two opposing lines. Each player should have a ball. Place an unusual color (or size) ball in the middle. This is the marble (a #2 ball works well). Have them try to move the marble across the other team's line by striking it with a ball. After the game starts, don't require them to use their own ball, they are free to use any other ball they can find. At first the players may get really excited and kick the marble. If this happens, call time-out and put it back. Eliminate the teams and play it in a circle. The game is over when the ball exits the circle.

Game 76: "Dribble to Africa"

Either use the center circle of the field or build you a circle with cones. Each player needs to have a ball and start inside the circle. Have players dribble anyway they want inside the circle as long as they are using both feet for 2 minutes. Have the players juggle for 1 minute using feet only trying to alternate from right to left. Have players dribble with inside and outside of each foot with the following pattern: right foot - inside, outside, inside, outside then switch to left foot inside, outside, inside, outside and continue to switch feet. Do this for 2 minutes. Have players juggle with their thighs and feet for 1 minute. Again instruct players to switch feet while juggling. Have players work on cuts and turns. The players should be instructed to cut the ball quickly and have a short sprint after cutting or turning the ball. Make sure players are exploring with inside and outside of the foot cuts and staying with the ball when they cut. Do this for 2 minutes. Now instruct the players to juggle again. This time juggle with the feet and pop the ball to the chest and back down to the feet. Do this for 1 minute. Now have players turn the pace up a notch and play full speed working on cuts, turns, and avoiding collisions. Push players to work hard for 1 minute straight.

Game 77: "Down and Back"

Start by making a grid approximately 20X20 yards. Split the team into two groups. Each player should have a ball. Instruct each group of players to line up outside the grid facing inward on two adjacent sides of the grid (half of the group on one side, the other half on the side next to the other group). On the coaches' command, instruct the players to dribble to the other side of the group and back to the starting position (down and back). The first player back in each group gets a point. The first player to 5 wins that set. Play 3-4 sets.

- restrict players to touches with a certain foot or part of the foot. (Example: left foot only, or outside of the foot only)
- Have the player turn or cut when they reach the opposite side of the grid
- Place even groups on all four sides of the grid and play the same game. - Make the grid a bit larger and have the players dribble with speed

Game 78: "Hitter and Dodgers"

With disk cones, outline a grid that is about 15X15 yards. You might want to make it a bit bigger or smaller depending on the age and number of kids you have. You will need to have a ball for each player; however, only 3 players start off with balls. The remaining balls should be placed outside the grid. The three players with balls are called the "hitters". The remaining players should start off scattered throughout the grid they are the "dodgers". Instruct the "hitters" to dribble inside the grid and attempt to pass the ball to any of the "dodgers" and hit them with the ball. The "dodgers" are attempting to avoid being hit by the "hitters". If a "dodger" is hit, he must collect a ball from the extra balls outside the grid and join the hitters. The last players standing win.

Game 79: "Simon Says"

Outline a 20X30 grid with cones. Each of the players need a ball. Play Simon Says with the team as the players dribble in the grid. If a player does something they are not supposed to, issue them a GOTCHA. See who gets the least number of GOTCHA's. Examples of commands could be: Change direction, stop the ball, stop the ball and put your belly on the ball... etc. Also, try to throw in a trick or two like: kick the ball as far away as you can.

Game 80: "Mutli Goals"

Make a 40X40 grid. Split your team into pairs with one ball per pair. Randomly set up small goals (approx 2-3 yards wide) with flags within the grid; one goal per pair. Each pair should begin at their window. Each team will play 1v1 using their goal only. Goals are scored by dribbling across the goal line. Goals can be scored from either side of their own goal. Players play 1 to 2 minute games and rotate players. Open it up where each pair can score on any of the other goals. They are still paired up with only their partner and should not interfere with any other pairs going on. Goals can still be scored from either side of the goals by dribbling through the goal.

Game 81: "Meet a Friend"

Build a grid that is 15X20 yards using cones. Each of the players get inside the grid. All the players run around randomly inside the grid. The coach calls out various types of greetings, which each players then has to carry out with others: shake hands, high fives (one hand), high fives (other hand), shoulder to shoulder, back to back, etc

Game 82: "Soccer Gauntlet"

Make a grid approximately 20x15 yard. Instruct one defender to stand inside the grid without a ball. The remaining players will start on the end line with a ball. On the coach's command, all of the attacking players dribble at speed to the other side line avoiding the defender. If the defender wins the ball and kicks the ball out of the grid, that attacker becomes an additional defender (without a ball) on the next series. The last player to make it through the gauntlet wins the game.

Game 83: "Guard the Castle"

Set up a grid that is 12 X 12 yards. Organize the team into groups of four. One of the four players should wear an alternate jersey and be the designated defender (guarder of the castle). Take a ball and place it on the top of a disc cone in the middle of the grid, this will become the "castle". If you do not have disc cones, a tall cone will work just as good. It will be up to the 3 attackers to pass the ball around the defender in the grid in attempt to knock down the castle with a pass. The castle is considered knocked down when the ball is knocked off the cone or the tall cone is knocked down with a pass. * Depending on the age level and skill of the players, you can remove the 12 x 12 grid limitations, or make the grid smaller for very skilled players.

* If players are standing next to the cone, you can build a 3x3 grid and not allow players to step into that small grid.

* Require players to complete a certain number of passes before they are allowed to knock down the castle.

* Play 1v1 and focus on dribbling skills.

Game 84: "Jammed Packed Dribbling"

To begin this drill, create a circle with disc cones that is approximately 20 yards in circumference. Make sure each player has a ball, and instruct them to line up around the outside of the circle. Have the players begin the soccer drill by dribbling around the outside of the circle all in the same direction. The coach should inform the players to listen for certain queues and perform those actions once the coach shouts the command. These commands are:

- JOG - players should dribble at a comfortable speed
- FULL SPEED - players should dribble at their top speed