

JASA Skill of the Day

U4-U6

- **Control (freeze)**-Placing one foot (lightly) on the ball while balancing on the opposite foot (on ground). Some children may need to have their arms out line and “airplane” for balance. You can also ask the children the “squash a bug”. Use control any time you want the players to stop and listen for directions.
- **Toe Taps**- Ask players to switch control feet... Repeat. Players will tap the top of the ball repeatedly making sure they do not stomp on the ball losing balance. Over time players will increase speed of the toe taps making sure they touch the ball every time.
- **Dribbling**-Moving the ball around the field (using various speeds) in a controlled manner. Players should be encouraged to keep the ball close and take tiny or baby kicks if needed. Players can use the inside/outside of the foot or the toe.
- **Pull back**- Start by placing a foot on the ball (control position). Players will then pull/roll the ball behind them and dribble off in the opposite direction. Encourage players to keep the ball close. Over time players will be able to pull back in one fluid motion. This move can be used to escape crowded areas or defenders.
- **Pop Corn (tick tock like a clock)**- Standing in one area players will move the ball back and forth between their feet(side to side) You can have the players pretend each touch of the ball make the sound of popcorn....pop pop pop pop or a clock tick tock tick tock.
- **Change Speed**- Have the players dribble slowly like a turtle then fast like a cheetah/rabbit. Always encourage the players to keep the ball close. When demonstrating slow like a turtle the coach can get low like a turtle and speak s-l-o-w-l-y.
- **Step Over**-Demonstrate by standing behind the ball, stepping over the ball with one foot, and then turning on that foot to dribble in the opposite direction. Players should practice this move with a stationary ball. Over time players will be able to perform the step over with a moving ball in one fluid motion.
- **Inside Chop**- Ask the players to slowly dribble the ball in one direction, then “chop” the ball with the inside of the foot in a new direction. Encourage players to keep the ball close as they dribble away. This move is good to avoid collisions or defenders.
- **Outside Chop**-Similar to the inside chop, ask players to dribble slowly and chop the ball with the outside of the foot (little toe) to change direction and dribble to a new area.
- **Zig Zag**-Players will combine the inside and outside chop to “zig zag” or move the ball side to side. Coaches can get player in a rhythm by calling out zig zag zig zag with each touch of the ball. As players get older this move will create and set a foundation of comfort and control with the ball.
- **Scoop**-Start by standing behind the ball, putting your toes at the bottom of the ball, and lifting your foot to scoop the ball gently in the air. This is a difficult skill. But it is important to challenge the players to try new tricks to manipulate the ball. Encourage the players to gently scoop the ball vs kicking the ball with power.
- **Jump Move**-Start by standing behind the ball, and the jumping both feet over the ball, turning around, and dribbling in the opposite direction. Over time the players will be able to more easily jump over the ball or even a moving ball.
- **Roll over Move**- Start in the control (freeze) position. Ask the players to roll/move the ball with the bottom/sole/cleats of their shoe/foot. The ball and foot should move across their body and not away from their body. Players should start slowly and repeat rolling the ball over 4-5 feet then repeat with the opposite foot. Over time players will be able to use the roll over move more quickly and to protect the ball. This is a difficult move to perform but is critical to the foundation of player development.
- **Passing and trapping**-When they pass they should use the inside of the foot as much as possible. At young ages players will use their toe. This is okay and should not be the focus of the coach, only the idea to pass a controllable ball (soft). Stopping the ball with the inside of the foot is called trapping. Passing should not be a focus until U7. If passing is taught avoid lines or statics activities. Players should be moving around when passing (usually only to the coach). Players at early ages are egocentric and do not typically understand passing or sharing the ball with another teammate. Passing can be practiced by hitting targets like other balls, cones, the coaches’ feet etc.
- **Offense/defense**-To teach offense and defense make sure the children understand the direction of each. When you are on offense you are trying to score a goal (on their soccer cave/castle/home base). When you are on defense you are protecting/guarding you goal (soccer cave/castle/home base). Coaches can hang the same color pinnie in the goal the each team is protecting to help remind them. They could also use stuffed animals inside the goal. Ex Blue is protecting the Bear goal and scoring on the dinosaur goal.