



# TIPS FOR FUN AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

**#1 KEEP IT FUN:** Picture yourself at the bank and your the last person in a 12 person line. Any fun? Same thing for the kids. Avoid using lines in your drills or activities. [More on avoiding lines below...](#) Another good practice tip is not to have elimination games in which a player sits if he loses. Chances are good that if he lost, he needs to practice and not be sitting. A way to avoid this is have them perform a skill when they get knocked out – tick tocks, ball toe touches, etc.

**#2 HAVE A PLAN:** You won't be stumbling for ideas with 24 eyes looking at you. You will look more professional. Fold it in half and tuck it in on the side of your waistband for quick access to it. After practice, use it to write what worked good and what you would change. Keep them as records so you know what and when you practiced. [BLANK Practice Plan](#) also [Sample WORKING Plan](#) below... Plan extra activities in case one bombs.

**#3 ARRIVE EARLY:** Have all your cones laid out for two or three activities. No down time in between drills. No time for kids to get into mischief. HAHA

**#4 USE SMALL SIDED GAMES:** [Why small sided games? See below...](#)

**#5 USE PROGRESSIONS:** [Progressions - see below...](#)

## OTHER TIPS for FUN EFFECTIVE SOCCER PRACTICE

-**Have an odd number of players?** Use the extra player as a target player (a player that plays on both teams). This will give you numbers up on either offense or defense. This can be useful to show the team success in a certain area. Or use extra player as "ball buddy" to keep player busy.

-**Last player to practice is on "cone duty"**. Cone duty is picking up all the cones and gear at the end of practice. I guarantee the player won't be late too often.

-**Keep it simple.** Don't use big fancy words.

-**Fake it.** If you had a bad day at work and you are not enthusiastic about being at practice then you have to fake it.

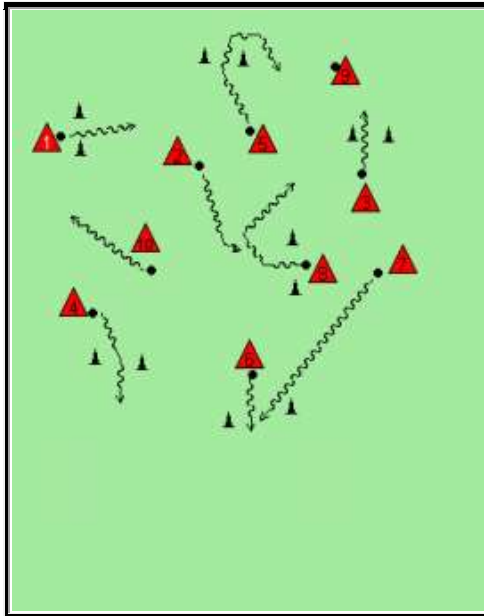
-**If a drill or activity is not working,** don't be afraid to change it or even stop it all together.

# WHY AVOID LINES

IF YOU WERE A KID AND PLAYER # 8  
WHICH GAME WOULD YOU WANT TO PLAY?

## GAME #1

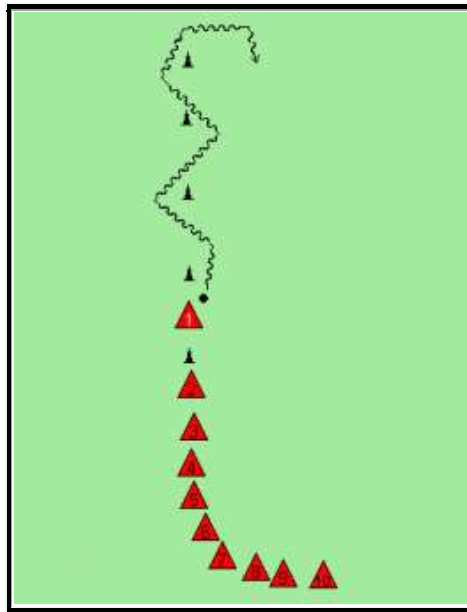
**The Game-** 10 players with soccer balls try to dribble through as many gates as possible in 5 minutes. If two players balls touch, those players have to do five push ups and then continue dribbling.



**This game Player #8 dribbles soccer ball for all of the 5 minute activity.**

## GAME #2

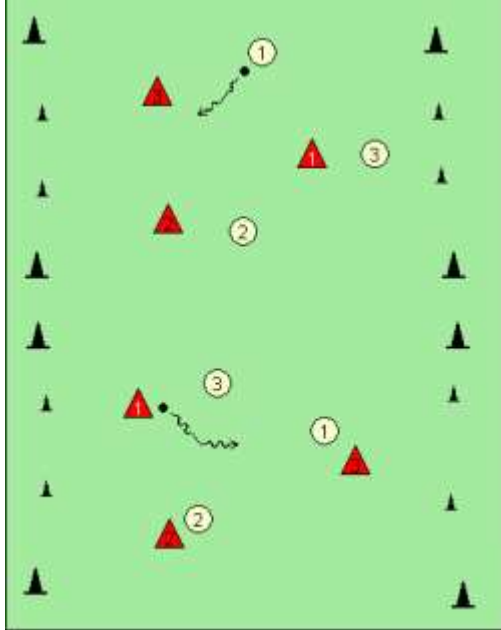
**The Game-** 10 players each take turns dribbling through the cones. The coach uses stop watch to keep track of times.



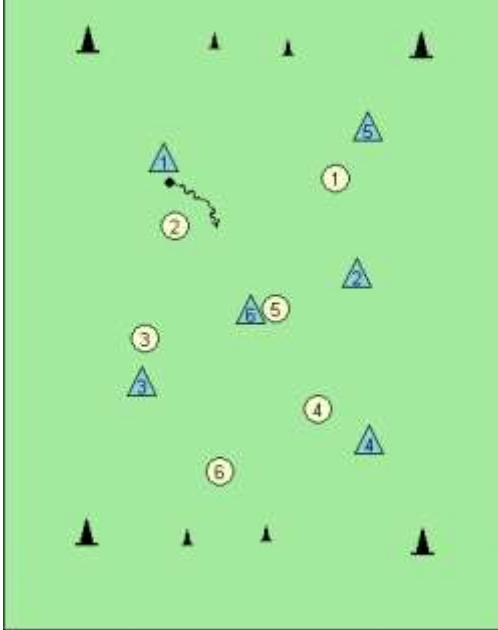
**This game Player #8 dribbles soccer ball for about 30 seconds.**

# WHY SMALL SIDED GAMES

**Example #1**  
2 small sided 3v3 games



**Example #2**  
1 6v6 game



The biggest advantage for small sided games- **players will touch the soccer ball more.** In example #1, there are two players touching the ball compared to only 1 player touching the ball in example #2.

In both examples, all the basic soccer principles are there (offense, defense, 1st attacker, 2nd attacker, etc) but in example #1, those principles are easier for the players to recognize, identify and learn from.

In example #1, ALL players are one pass away so all players are in the game.

In example #1, more players will get opportunities to score which **creates excitement.**

# PROGRESSIONS

- **Pick One Skill or Theme for Your Practice**
- **Start with Fundamentals with no Pressure**
- **Slowly Increase the Level of Difficulty and Pressure**
- **Progress to Large Sided Game with Goals**

In other words, instead of spending 5 minutes on dribbling, 5 minutes on passing, 5 minutes on defense. Use progressions to slowly and thoroughly develop a skill or theme for your practice.

**Here is an example if passing is the skill a team needs most.**

The example below uses 5 progressions, you may decide in some practice sessions to use only 3, some may use 6-7.

Start the practice with a **warm up** that uses passing to get the kids running.

Once players are warmed up, work on passing **technique** with **no pressure** (example- players pair up and pass back and forth to each other focusing on technique).

Next, add **some non-defensive pressure**. It could be passing for accuracy (two players passing between gates) or maybe passing against the clock.

Then add **some defensive pressure** in a small sided game. Use games or drills that will insure some **passing success**. Example: "monkey in the middle". 4 passers against 1 defender.

Then progress to a 2v2 ,3v3, or 4v4 small sided game with **full pressure**.

Lastly, progress to a **large sided game with goals**.

Finish with a **warm down**.

# Tips for Coaching Your Own Child

**Make sure you are coaching for the right reasons.** Are you coaching to help your child and others become better? To spend quality time with your kid? Or are you coaching because you think you can help your child make it to the Majors?

**Talk to your son/daughter.** LISTEN FIRST. Why are they playing? What do they think of the idea about you coaching? Tell them why you would like to coach.

**Establish rules.** Let your kid know that you will be treating them like every other player on the team. And you will be fair but firm when correcting or disciplining them.

**Have a meeting with the team and parents before the season.** Outline your goals and expectations.

**Enlist the help of your assistant coach.** Ask him/her to make sure you don't show any favoritism towards your son or daughter but just as important, that you don't go too far the other way.

**Be good at what you are coaching.** No kid wants their father or mother to be the butt of any criticism.

**Take off your coaches' hat at home.** No need to rehash every play at the dinner table. Be a great mom or dad. Spend some extra time away from the court or field just having fun as a parent.

# PRACTICE OUTLINE

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Team \_\_\_\_\_

Objective \_\_\_\_\_

Warm Up

Coaching Points

Individual Skills/Activities

Small Group/Activities

Large Group/Activities

Warm Down

Sample

PRACTICE OUTLINE

Date April 15 Team U-8 chargers

Objective Proper technique - Push Pass

Freeze every 30 secs.  
to 1 min. - stretch

Coaching Points

Warm Up

Groups of 3 - A B --- C

B Passes to C - B runs behind C  
C Passes to A - etc.



Individual Skills

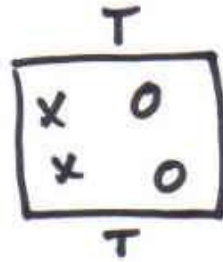
Pair up - Pass to Partner

Pair up - Pass inbetween  
cones

- Non kicking  
to pointed  
towards target

Small Group

2 v 2 - TEAMS  
can use players  
on the outside.  
Switch Players



- Knee bent
- Ankle locked
- Use inside of foot
- Strike center or above center of ball

Large Group

4 v 4

- Follow thru
- Balance

Warm Down

Assign player a #  
1 passes to 2, 2 to 3

# NEW COACH FAQS

## I got my roster, now what?

-Call Parents

-Introduce yourself and give them your phone #

-Tell them where and when practice will be.

-What players will need to bring to practice. Water bottle, shin guards, a soccer ball and what size. Cleats are preferred.

IMPORTANT- Have players bring their own soccer ball. It is tough to have a fun effective practice with 12 to 18 players and only a few soccer balls. Another benefit is that you know that they will have one at home and can use it to practice with. Plus, it is easier on you if each player brings one ball so the coach doesn't have to bring 18 soccer balls to practice. Soccer ball size requirements vary. Generally a size 3 for 5-7, size 4 for 8-11, size 5 for 12 and up but check with your league. [Top](#)

## What will I need for my first practice?

-A practice plan or outline. We discuss this later.

-Some extra soccer balls.

-Some practice cones.



-Stop watch

-First aid kit

-Proper attire-you should wear clothing befitting a soccer coach. [Top](#)

### **Why do I need a Practice Plan?**

-It's the key to a smooth running practice

-You will look more professional. Fold it in half and tuck it in on the side at the waistband of my shorts for quick access to it.

-You won't be stumbling for ideas with 24 eyes looking at you.

-After practice , use it to write what worked good and what you would change.

-Keep them as records so you know what and when you practiced. [Top](#)

### **What should I be practicing?**

Until you have a game or scrimmage it is hard to tell. So start off with the basics. Usually passing, dribbling or defending is a good place to start. Once you have a scrimmage or game, you will be able determine one or two items that will need the most work (passing, support or spreading out, etc.).

Next, create a practice plan for one of those items or themes. Usually dedicate the whole practice to that theme. In other words, do not spend 5 minutes on dribbling, 5 minutes on

passing, 5 minutes on defense. Their skills in the area that they need the most will not change enough using that practice model. Instead, use progressions and focus your practice on one skill or theme.

For instance, if you saw passing as the skill the kids needed most work, start your practice with a warm up that uses passing to get the kids running. Next, work on their passing technique with no pressure (passing in pairs focusing on technique). Then add some pressure, whether it is passing for accuracy or maybe passing against the clock. Next add a defender in a small sided game. You can create games or drill that will insure some success. Example: “monkey in the middle”. 4 passers against 1 defender. Then progress to a 2v2 or a 3v3 small sided game. Using small sided games insures more touches on the soccer ball. And the game itself is easier to understand. Then, progress to a large sided game with goals. Last thing should be a warm down.

You can see how after this practice, their passing skills are bound to improve. Use the next game to identify another weak area and do it all over again. [Top](#)

### **What are some tips for planning a good practice?**

-Keep players active at all times. Get to the field early and set everything up before hand !!!! Another reason to arrive early is to check the field conditions and make sure that it is safe to play on.

-Avoid the three L's. Laps, lines, and lectures.

-Keep it FUN.

-Keep it simple, especially for young players. Don't use fancy words or complicated drills.

Don't be afraid to change things if something that isn't working. [Top](#)

### **Is there a special Practice Plan form?**

This one works for all age groups and abilities. Or use a simple index card. The most important thing is you have a plan. [Top](#)

[Blank practice plan](#)

[Sample of a working practice plan](#)

### **Should I have a parent meeting?**

You should have a team meeting as soon as possible and definitely before the first game. Prepare a "handout" with everything clearly stated. Use the handout as your notes. Pass the handout at the end of the meeting.

Tell parents to make sure their spouses, if they are not there, know the team policies. Make sure they cheer for good defensive plays as well as offensive. The handout should include you and your assistant's name and phone numbers. You should also discuss team goals, parent conduct on the sideline and playing time.

If you are having the meeting at your practice field, make sure you are facing the players. This way, you can keep an on your players and the parents will focus on what your saying and not what their kids are doing. This is also effective when talking to your players. [Example of handout.](#)

[Top](#)

### **What do I need to know for game day?**

HAVE FUN. Both you and the players should have fun. Don't get too worked up about it. Hopefully your goal isn't winning. As long as the kids try their hardest, they are good sports and most importantly, that they have fun then you did your job.

### **What should my game day strategy be?**

HAVE FUN. Notice the theme here? If you are coaching younger kids, it will be beehive soccer. Don't worry about it. The game is the best teacher. Eventually, with a little bit of help from you, they will figure it out. On offense, they will eventually figure out if they get open and get a pass they will have a clear look at the goal. And they will figure out on defense, that if the whole team goes after the soccer ball, no one will be covering the open second attacker on the other team.

**Hopefully, this answered some of your questions. One of the great things about being a soccer coach is you can always learn something new.**

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