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# defending practice plan

## a model practice to encourage defensive play

from [oregonyouthsoccer.org](http://oregonyouthsoccer.org)

Appropriate for U10-U12 soccer players

### Warm Up

For these exercises, **PLEASE ENSURE** each player  
has shinguards on! Give all players a ball.

Get players to dribble in a 20 x 15 yard grid. The  
grid can also be made larger depending on the  
ability of the players. On command 'CHANGE'  
players have to leave their own football and find  
another to continue dribbling. This gets kids to be  
aware of what is going on around them.

Various stretches- Stretch hamstring and calf  
muscles. Dribble again. Stretch calf and Achilles  
tendon. Get a partner to put pressure on the ball  
with the ball of the foot, with their heel on the  
ground. Dribble again. Lift inside of foot to groin  
to stretch the glutemous maximus (butt!)

Play 6 v 1 with 6 balls. Player without a ball has to  
try and steal one. Players stay within the grid.

After 1 minute or so, the player without the ball  
gets a quick exercise. Then take one more ball out  
so it is 5 v 2 with 5 balls. At end of a minute, 2  
players will be without a ball and get an exercise.

Then take one more ball out so it is 4v3 with 4  
balls. At end of a minute, 3 players will be without  
a ball and get an exercise. This helps players to  
dribble keeping their the ball within the frame of  
their body, and to hold off an opponent.

**In this period there has been no official  
instruction on how to defend the ball!**

### Fundamental - Tackling

Coach may want to introduce the block tackle at  
this point, for timing, rhythm etc. Coaching points  
include-. Low center of balance, knees bent. May  
want to start with players with a hand on their  
partner's shoulder. Develop rhythm, 3, 2, 1 go.



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Then develop to take a step **in**.

**Restricted Tackling** - In a rectangle of 15 x 25 yards, play 4 v 4 and create a small goal on each end line. Number each team 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each number can only tackle his opposing number. This allows plenty of, chances to dribble, as rarely are similar numbers close to each other, at least at the beginning!

### Match Related

In same 20 x 15 grid area, play 1 v 1 to small goals (same as 'Get out of here' game above). The Coach has the supply of balls on the mid-line and plays the ball in. Let players go through once each without any instruction.

Then introduce the Coaching points:

- > Curve defensive run to get between ball and goal (so they can't shoot on empty net!)
- > Defender must pressure ball quickly, but then 2 - 3 yards away slow down and get under control.
- > Get correct stance, (one foot in front of other) not square like basketball! Tell kids why!
- > Do not have to win ball, just keep between the attacker, ball and goal - block shot on goal.
- > If defender manages to turn the attacker, get in tight & don't let turn and face you again!

Award goals if not quick enough pressure on the ball. Then demonstrate how easy it is for the attacker to turn the defender if too tight. Get distances correct with regard to the speed of the opponent. First of all passive defending. Then let the defender tackle. If they win the ball, go for opponent's goal. Teams keep scores. Play for five minutes or so. Coach defender in the game.

Ask other players to keep concentrating on what the on-field defender is doing well and doing poorly. This way they have the opportunity to learn from each other. Disallow goals if rest of team are not paying attention to what is going on the field.

Once concepts have been determined, introduce 2 v 2. Coach the defensive shape and concept of keeping 2 players at angle goal-side to support.

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Let the first defender know that the way he/she approaches the ball will determine what position the second defender takes up.

There is no offside! If attackers run goal-side of the last defender award a goal. The supporting defender must have both opponents in front of him at all times.

### **Match Conditions (no restrictions)**

Then develop to play 4v4 to targets in a 20 x 30 yard grid. Have to score by chipping the ball into a semi-circular end zone. Then play 4v4 on field with both teams also having a goalkeeper. In this stage it is best to let the game flow and not stop it every time a mistake occurs. A coach can call out what to do next time as the game continues!

### **Summary**

Work defending session once every 3-4 practices at the age groups U-10 through U-14.

*Mike Smith*

*OYSA Recreation Head Coach*