

## U8 Drills

For 6 and 7 year olds, this may be the first time some of these players have participated in soccer. Many parents don't start their kids in organized sports until they are in school. They are still at the age where they are just getting the hang of running and kicking, following directions and playing well with others. We start introducing the concept of dribbling (ball control) and passing. We teach them about offense roles and defensive roles. Again, the number one priority at this age is having FUN.

### a fun soccer coaching game to improve kicking

This game is called "Keep your yard clean" and is one of those simple, fun games that young children never tire of playing.

It's very easy to set up and explain and you can play it with as few as four and as many as 24 players.

**Objectives:** To improve kicking technique.

**Set-up:** Create a playing area with flat cones big enough for the number and age of your players. With 10 six-year-olds I would use a 20-yard square area. With 20 eight-year-olds, 40 yards square would be more appropriate.

The playing area needs a halfway line.

Divide your players into two equal teams and put one team in each half of the playing area.

Each player has a ball.

#### How to play:

- When you shout "go!", the players try to keep their half (i.e. their "yard") clear of balls by kicking their ball over the halfway line and kicking back any balls that their opponents kick into their yard.
- Players are not allowed to cross the halfway line.
- After a couple of minutes, call time.
- The team with the fewest balls in their yard wins the game.

**Progression:** Kick with your non-kicking foot only.

Players have dribble the ball around a cone that has been set up in the middle of their "yard" before kicking it back.

Create a "neutral area" between the two teams where no player is allowed. This area can be as small as one yard and as big as 10 yards wide. The width is determined by how far the players can kick the ball.

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### a simple soccer game children will love

The best coaching games are usually the simplest, and "1v1 Wars" is both simple and one of the best. Children from five to 15 love to play it!

**Objective:** To encourage a "be first" mentality and to take quick shots on goal.

**Age group:** U6s to U10s.

**Number of players:** Whole squad.

**Set-up:** Place a small goal at one end of a 20x10 yards playing area. Place a flat cone on the end line opposite each goal post.

Use a goalkeeper and divide your squad into two teams. Place each team next to a goal post. You stand to one side of the

playing area with a supply of balls.

**How to play:**

On your command, the first player in each line runs around the cone in front of their post. As they run, you play a ball into the playing area midway between the cones and the goal. Both players try to be first to the ball and score in the goal.

**Scoring:** One point for a goal, one point if you can stop the player with the ball from scoring for 30 seconds.

If the ball goes out of play, players return to their teams.

The first team to 10 points wins the game.

**Variation:** Instead of one goal on the end line, put one small goal on both sidelines. No goalkeeper is used.

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**attack and defend**



**Objective:** To improve attacking and defending skills as a warm-up or as part of a coaching session.

**Age group:** U8s to U14s.

**Set up:** Create a 20-yard square for every four or five players as shown below.

**How to play:** One player starts in the middle zone and has a choice of which defender to attack. The player then attempts to score.

If the player is successful, he returns to the middle zone, collects a ball and attacks another defender.

If the defender manages to stop the player, the defender runs into the middle zone, collects a ball and attacks the defender of their choice.

The practice is continuous and can be played with one or more additional players in the middle for increased intensity.

Your players will soon learn that good defending will give them the chance to attack and score.

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## Basic ball control soccer skills

a great basic soccer drill to coach ball control techniques to young players

age group: all age groups

### Set up

- Use a 10 by 10 yard square grid marked out with a cone at each corner.
- Put players in groups of three.
- One ball to each group.
- Two players with the ball (players 1 and 2) are positioned on one side of the square and the third player (player 3) faces them on the other side.

### Action

The player with the ball (player 1) passes to the player on the opposite side of the square (player 3).

Player 3 receives the ball with the inside of the foot and takes the ball a couple of yards to the side in one action.

On his next touch he passes the ball with his other foot back across the square to player 2.

After two or three minutes change player 3.

### Coaching points

Remind players that it's important to give a good pass so it is easier for their team mates to receive the ball and control it away with their first touch.

Allow two touches to start before limiting players to one touch.

Remind the receiving player to move toward the ball.

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## Small-sided keepaway game for ball control and first touch

Small-sided keepaway 1-0 game

age group: All ages

### Description

The 1-0 game is an excellent example of a small-sided game that can be used to coach a variety of topics.

As well as ball control and first-touch soccer skills, this game requires teams to attack with speed when they need to score. So the game also focuses on transition.

But save your observations on how well your players switch from attack to defence for another day - coach one topic at a time!

### Set up

Pitch Size 40 x 20 – or at the discretion of the soccer coach, but basically a standard 4 v 4 pitch

☑ Number of teams – 2

☑ Team sizes – 4-6 players

☑ Bibs optional

☒ Goals – 5-a-side or mini-soccer goals

### Action

The game begins as a normal 4 v 4 game with the usual rules.

When a goal is scored, the team that scored must try and keep possession and can't score into the goal. If they do, the goal is disallowed and a goal kick is awarded.

If the other team equalise and make it 1-1, either team can then score to make it 2-1. To win the game, the team in the lead has to keep possession until the final whistle.

### **Coaching points**

Watch for a good first touch by the receiver and quick movement following a pass.

Players should, by now, be getting more comfortable on the ball and have time to consider their options when in possession. Is this happening? If not, why not?

Decision making - does the team that is 1-0 down need to play with a goalkeeper? He can come out of goal and create an overload situation but will your players work this out for themselves?

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### **Ball control step-up drill for push pass and first-touch**

Criss-cross ball control step-up drill

age group: All ages

#### Description

Criss-cross is a simple, unopposed soccer drill designed to improve the push pass and first touch. It allows the soccer coach to work with a number of players in a fairly small area.

#### Set up

Make a 15-yard by 15-yard square grid with marker cones at each corner.

☒ Between two and four players stand at each cone.

☒ One football at two adjacent cones.

#### Action

Players pass - two touch - to the player diagonally opposite, then run to disc on their right.

### **Coaching points**

☒ Is body language relaxed and balanced?

☒ "Play on your toes"

☒ Eye contact and communication.

☒ Accuracy and pace of pass.

☒ Strike through mid-line of ball, keep it down.

- ☒ Contact with inside of foot - not with toe end.
  - ☒ Follow through in direction of pass.
  - ☒ First touch - withdraw foot on contact.
  - ☒ Get receiving foot off the ground, "soft ankle".
  - ☒ Move quickly following pass.
  - ☒ Encourage players to aim for a high standard.
  - ☒ Older players should be able to recognise and correct their own faults.
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### how to choose the size of your playing area

So you thought that size didn't matter....

Well, in soccer coaching anyway, it definitely does.

The size of the playing area you use when coaching can have a dramatic impact on the outcome of your soccer coaching drill session.

Basically, the larger the area the easier it is for your players to experience success. So when coaching young or inexperienced players you should always set up a relatively large grid when, for example, you're playing games like keepaway.

A good starting point is 10 yards or meters of length for every player in the team or group. For example, a 4v4 soccer coaching drill designed for young players should be 40 yards or meters long.

The width is determined by the type of game you're playing. 'Soccer like' games such as keepaway should normally be played on a rectangular pitch so that they are realistic. So your 4v4 game of keepaway with young players would be played in a 40x30 grid.

But sometimes you will have an objective in mind that requires a different shape.

For example, a really good game for encouraging players to get their heads up and pass quickly is the **Four Goal Game** (see below).

This game is most usefully played on a pitch that is wider than it is long in order to increase the number of decisions your players have to make.

When your players begin to experience success during a soccer coaching drill, it's time to make the playing area smaller. This puts them under more pressure and helps them develop their soccer skills further. you can also impose restrictions such as making them play two-touch at the same time.

So now you know what size grid you need and you're ready to set out your cones.

But before you do that, check the field for hazards especially holes, broken glass and dog excreta.

Then place the first cone down in line with another object behind it such as a tree.

Then walk backwards, keeping the first cone and the reference object in view. Drop a cone every 5 to 10 yards until you get to the end.

When you get to the end of the first line, turn 90 degrees and drop cones as you're walking backwards again and you'll

end up with nice straight lines and a properly sized grid!

### **Four Goal Game**

**Objective:** To develop passing and encourage players to play with their heads up and switch play quickly. It's also good for teaching pressure, cover, balance in defence.

**Age group:** U8s upwards.

**Equipment:** cones, bibs and a football.

**Number of players:** Whole team.

**Set up:** use a square grid suitable for the number of players and their skill level. For a 5v5 game with eight year olds, I would use a 40x40 grid. Place four small goals in each corner. No goalkeepers.

**How to play:** Each team defends two goals at one end and attacks the two at the far end. The players attempt to 'pull' the bulk of the defenders over to defend one goal before switching the ball suddenly towards the less well-guarded goal and trying to score there.

**Progression:** (a) Play one- or two-touch soccer. (b) award extra points for goals which come directly from the team switching play.

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### **First-touch basic ball control**

Basic ball control drill to develop players' first-touch soccer skills

age group: All ages

#### Set up

Cones, 1 ball per group of 3 players, players are in groups of three with a ball to each group, two players with the ball on one side of the square and the third player on the opposite side

#### Action

Player 1 (the player with the ball) passes to the opposite player (player 3) and sprints around the back of him.

Player 3 taps the ball to the side, first touch, as the sprinting player 1 comes around him.

The sprinting player passes first or second touch to the player facing him (player 2) who repeats the action.

After a couple of minutes change player 3.

#### **Coaching points**

Make this drill competitive by seeing how many passes each group can make in a minute or how long they can go without making a mistake.

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### **Ball control challenge to get players shooting from own half**

Ball control drill to get players using one-touch and shooting skills

age group: All ages

## Set up

Mark out a short, wide pitch with big (10-yard wide) goals at either end and a halfway line. Divide the players into two teams of 3 or 4. Each team defends a goal

## Action

The game starts with each team spread out in their half of the pitch.

The coach stands on the centre line and rolls a football to one of the teams.

Their objective is to score a goal by shooting from within their own half.

## Rules

☒ No goalies.

☒ Players must stay in their own half of the pitch at all times. Each player on the team must touch the ball at least once before a shot can be taken.

☒ The ball must not be allowed to stop - if it does, possession is passed to the other team.

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## **big goals, small goals game**

This is a good game for improving communication skills among your players. The players attacking the two small goals have to work together to score in an unguarded goal.

The team attacking the large goal has two goals to defend with just four players. Talking to each other is required!

**Skill level:** intermediate

**Set up:** place two small goals at one end of a 30 yards by 40 yards area and a full-size goal at the other end.

Divide your squad into teams of four and five.

**How to play:** the team with five players has a goalkeeper and four outfield players. This team attacks the two small goals. The team of four attacks the large goal.

**Coaching points:** encourage good, loud communication between the players.

The team of five should be trying to switch play from one side of the playing area to the other quickly while the team of four (attacking the large goal) need to think about what to do if they lose the ball. For example, should two players be assigned to protect each goal?

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## **break out**

**Objective:** To improve passing, receiving and shooting skills.

**Age range:** U9s to U13s.

**Set up:** Create a 30x20 yards playing area with a 10-yard box at one end and a goal at the other, as shown below.

Divide your players into two teams of four plus a keeper.

**How to play:**

One team works in the box, passing the ball between themselves and attempting to keep possession from a single pressing player from the other team.



1. The white team play keep-ball against a single defender in the 10 x 10 yard area.

If the pressing players win possession or force the passing team to kick the ball out of the box, they break out of the box, receive a pass from you and shoot at goal.

If the passing team manages to make 10 consecutive passes, the pressing player leaves the box and another player enters.

The pressing team gets a point for every goal it scores, the passing team gets a point for every set of 10 passes.

Each pressing player has two turns in the box then switch the teams around.

**Progression:** Allow the passing team to send one player to chase any pressing players that are about to shoot at goal.

Replace the box with another goal and play a small-sided game (SSG) where a 'goal' is awarded for 10 consecutive passes.

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### build up soccer game

**Objective:** To build attacks out of defence back using quick, accurate passes.

**Age group:** U8s to U14s.

**Set up:** Create a playing area about 60x40 yards or use a seven-a-side pitch.

Place two small goals at one end. These can be marked with poles or cones. Put a full-sized goal at the other end of the playing area.

Divide your players into two teams, distinguished by training vests.

One team has an extra player.

#### How to play:

- The team with the extra player defends the large goal and has a goalkeeper.

- All restarts begin with the goalkeeper who has to pass or roll the ball out.

**Coaching points:** Encourage possession, ("if you can't shoot, pass... if you can't pass forward, pass back") quick, accurate passing, good communication and supporting play (movement off the ball).

**Variations:** Give one team two extra players and restrict them to two or three touches before they must pass or shoot.

The team with fewer players gets two points for every goal it scores.

Play five-minute games. Teams can only win by one goal - see The 1-0 Game.

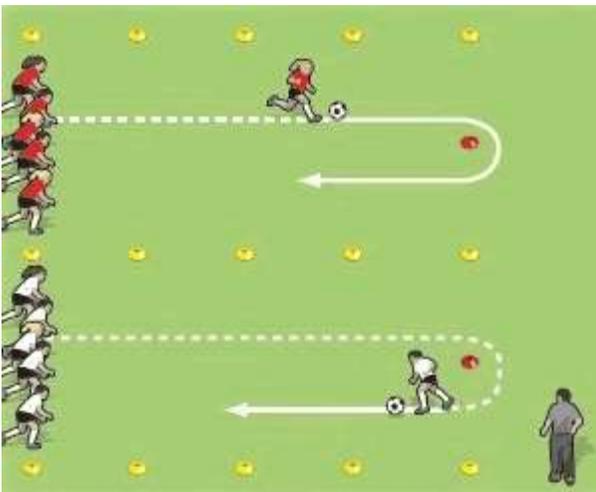
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### chain gang

**Objective:** To encourage teamwork.

**Set up:** Divide your players into teams of six or less.

- Create a 30x15 yards channel for each team, using flat cones.
- Place a turning cone at the end of each channel.
- Each team needs one ball.



**How to play:** The first player dribbles a ball up the channel, around the cone and back to his team mates.

The starting player then links arms with the second player on his team and they dribble the ball up the channel, around the cone and back to their team mates again.

Another player joins the chain gang after each lap until all the players are in the chain.

The whole team must negotiate the course without breaking and keep their ball under control.

If the chain breaks, the team must start that lap again.

Change the starting player between every race.

Play the best of three or five races.

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### chain gang races

**Objective:** To practise running with the ball and working as a team.

**Age range:** Chain Gang Races is suitable for children from the age of four but I've used it with all age groups, even 13-year-olds, and they all loved it!

**Set up:**

- Mark out two lanes about 20 yards long and five yards wide.
- Place a large cone or pole at one end of each channel.
- The players are divided into two teams and start at the opposite end.

**How to play:**

The first player dribbles a ball up the channel, around the cone, and back to their team mates.

The starting player then links arms with the second player on their team and they dribble the ball up the channel, around the cone, and back to their team mates.

An extra player joins the chain gang each time, until all the players are in the chain.

The whole team must negotiate the course and the turn without breaking and must keep the ball under control.

If, at any time, the chain breaks, players must start again from the line without adding an extra link.

Play five rounds and see which team wins the most races.

**Progression:** One or more players in the chain gang must dribble a ball.

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## chase

**Objective:** For older players (13+) to improve fitness. For younger players, to improve flexibility and co-ordination.

**Age group:** U6s to U16s.

**Set up:** Create a playing area large enough for your players to move around in safely.

For twelve 10-year-olds, it should be about 20x15 yards.

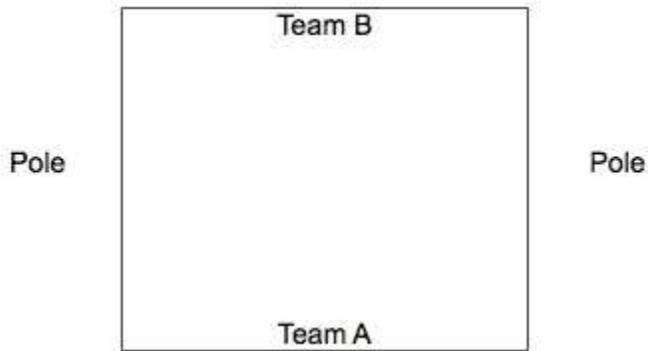
Place a pole or distinctive cone on each side of the playing area, about five yards from the sideline.

Split your players into two teams.

Each player tucks a training vest into their waistband. Use a different colour for each team (e.g. team A has red vests, team B has yellow vests).

Send each team to opposite ends of the playing area.

### Starting position



#### How to play:

On your command, players try to take a vest from a player on the other team and drop it on the ground.

If a player loses his vest, he must run around one of the poles outside the playing area and rejoin the game, picking up his vest and tucking it into his waistband as he returns.

Play for one minute. The winners are the team who have the most training vests when you call "time".

Play best of three.

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#### coach accurate shooting with this football game

This game is designed to encourage your players to shoot quickly and accurately as well as follow up on their shots in case the keeper drops the ball.

**Age group:** U8s to U13s.

**Set-up:** Divide your squad into two teams of between four and six players. If you have more than 12 players, set up two games.

- Create a 30x20 yards playing area.
- Place a team behind each end line.
- Make a goal in the centre of the playing area with poles or corner flags.
- Place a cone about eight yards away from each goal to mark the point at which your players should take their shot.
- Place a few balls at both ends of the playing area.

#### How to play:

1. To start the game, team A sends one of its players to be goalkeeper.
2. The first player in team B dribbles a ball (at speed) to the marker cone and shoots. This player follows their shot in and tries to score if team A's goalkeeper drops the ball.
3. Whether team B's player scores or not, team A's goalkeeper retrieves the ball and returns to her team.
4. The shooter from team B is now in goal. She faces the first player from team A who dribbles out and shoots.

After taking their shot, this player takes over in goal and so on.

5. The first team to score X number of goals wins.

**Coaching points:** Impress on your players the need to dribble at speed, shoot quickly and follow their shot.

If the shooter does not follow her shot and get into goal quickly, the opposition will have an open goal to shoot at!

You can, if you wish, encourage a finishing mentality by awarding two goals if a player scores from a fumbled shot.

You probably won't need to, but make sure the next shooter doesn't wait for the goalkeeper to get ready. They should start to dribble at goal as soon as they have the ball.

Vary the distance to goal and the size of the goal so players can experience success then make it harder by increasing the distance to goal and making the goal smaller.

**Note:** Although this game involves players waiting in line, the speed of the game means they should only be waiting for a few seconds.

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### **coaching game to improve ball skills and communication**

This game is called "Keep Your Bedroom Tidy".

**Objective:** To improve ball skills, communication and teamwork.

**Age range:** U5s to U9s.

**Number of players:** Whole team.

**Equipment required:** Some flat cones, a few larger traffic style cones or poles one ball for every player.

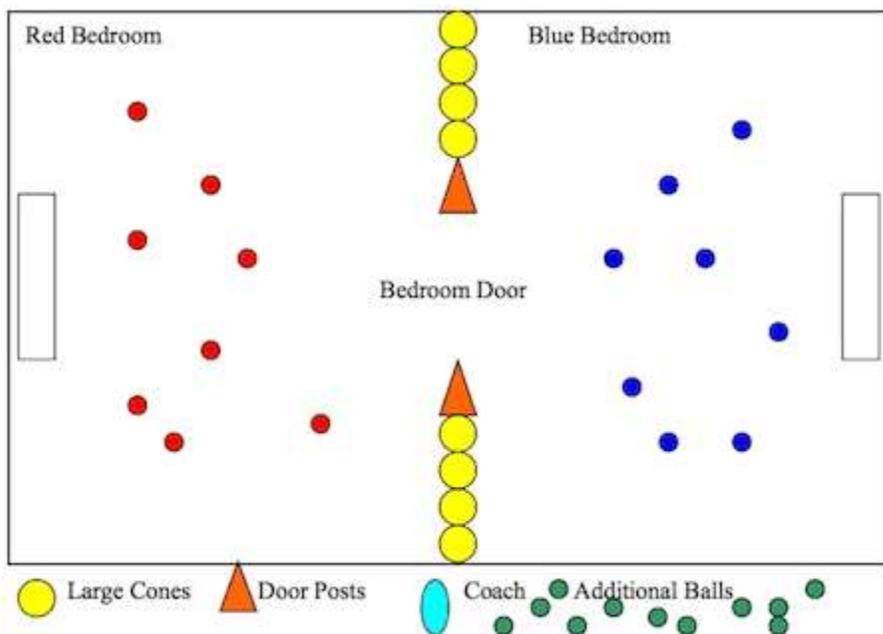
**Set-up:** Create a 30x20 yards playing area with a goal at each end.

A row of cones is spread across the centre of the pitch with larger cones or poles representing the "bedroom door".

Two teams are placed facing each other, each in their own bedroom.

All players have a ball at their feet.

You stand at the side of the area with a few additional balls.



**How to play:** The game starts with each player moving around their bedroom, controlling a ball.

Before the game starts, demonstrate a couple of turns and ask the players to try them as they dribble around the playing area.

### Drag back

Stop or slow the ball by stepping on it with the sole of your foot. Run past it by a few feet, pivot on one foot, turn quickly and run back the way you came, collecting the ball as you go.

### The stop and go

As you are dribbling the ball (usually with an opposition player alongside you), you suddenly slow down then explode away. The most effective technique is stop the ball completely with the sole of your foot then quickly push the ball forwards again with the instep (laces).

Then tell your players to swap balls with a partner to encourage communication.

While players are moving around they are asked to select a captain.

Then shout *"Keep your bedroom tidy!"*.

- All players retire to their bedroom and kick their balls through the Bedroom Door into their opponent's bedroom.
- The captain can select players to stand near to the door to intercept and return balls kicked by the opposition.
- Other players will move around the bedroom collecting balls that have gone further into their bedroom.
- Should a player score in the opponent's goal their team gets five points and the ball stays in the goal.
- Play for two or three minutes then stop the game.
- The balls in each bedroom are counted.
- One point is given for each ball - don't forget five for any balls in the goal.
- The team with the fewest points has kept their bedroom tidiest and wins the game.

During the game, you can throw additional balls into each bedroom to keep the game interesting.

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[http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/soccer\\_games\\_and\\_drills\\_by\\_age\\_goup.htm#](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/soccer_games_and_drills_by_age_goup.htm#)