

PRACTICE GAMES FOR YOUNGER PLAYERS

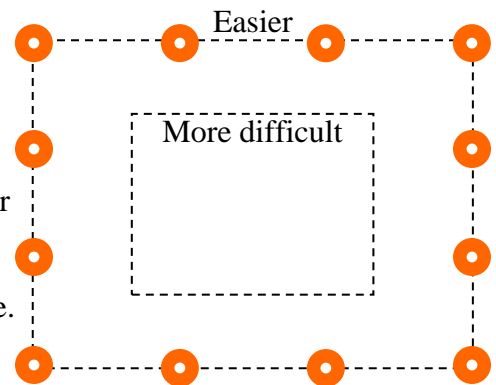
For younger players, the *games approach* provides the ideal environment for fun and learning. These are examples of games you can use in your warm-up or practice sessions. Most games involve soccer balls, but a few do not. Those that do not have a ball are designed to help the players to develop agility.

Use cones or disks to outline a rectangular boundary for most practice games – this helps players to learn faster. Use enough to ensure that the players can easily recognize the boundaries.

For most games, the smaller the rectangle, the greater is the difficulty for the players. The rectangle should be small enough for some difficulty, but large enough for success as well.

Begin with a larger rectangle and make it smaller as skills improve. If the activity is too easy or too difficult, just quietly move the cones without stopping the action.

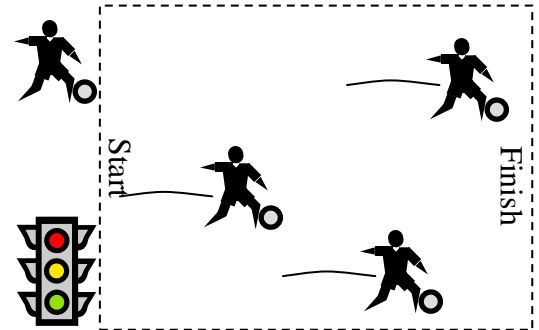
The first games listed below are for skill development with one player per ball. The last games are small-sided games with more than one player per ball



Skills Development – one player per ball

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

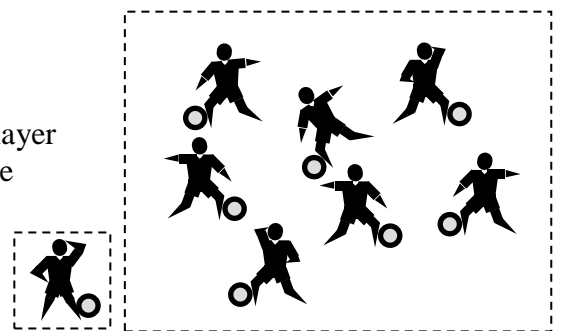
Start all players on one sideline of a grid. Each has a ball. The objective is to be the first to the other side. When the coach calls “green light,” the players dribble as fast as they can towards the other line. When the coach calls “red light,” players must stop with their ball under control. If they are still moving or their ball is more than one yard from their feet, they go back to the start line!



Make it fun by trying to make the players laugh. If they laugh or smile, they also have to go back.

HOSPITAL TAG

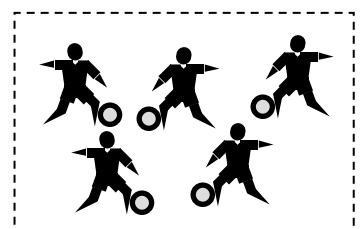
Lay out a grid and a small square nearby (the hospital). Each player dribbles a ball and tries to tag the other players. If a player is tagged, he must place his hand on the tagged location while continuing to dribble. When he is tagged the third time, he dribbles to the hospital to become free again.



To work on agility, play this game without soccer balls, using two players as the taggers.

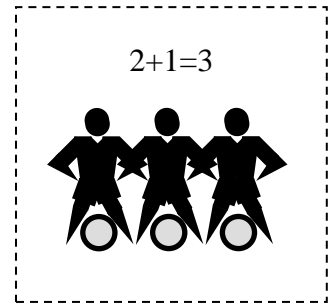
EVERYBODY’S IT!

Every player starts with a ball in a grid. On command they dribble their ball and attempt to tag teammates on the back without leaving their ball. You cannot tag the same player twice in a row. Players try to get as many tags as possible within the allotted time.



MATH DRIBBLE

Every player has with a ball in a grid. On command, the players dribble in the grid. The coach then gives the players an equation and the players must get into group equal to the answer to the equation. For example, the coach yells “2+3” and the players must quickly get into groups of five. Players should dribble their ball to the group and link their arms to signal that they have the correct amount. The last player(s) to get into a group get a special activity such as star jumps, donkey kicks, or alien push ups.



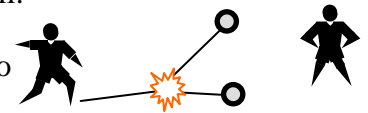
BODY PART DRIBBLE

Every player starts with a ball in a grid. On command all players dribble in the grid. The coach then yells out a body part and the players must immediately stop the ball with that body part. This activity helps players to learn to keep the ball under control and close enough to stop quickly.



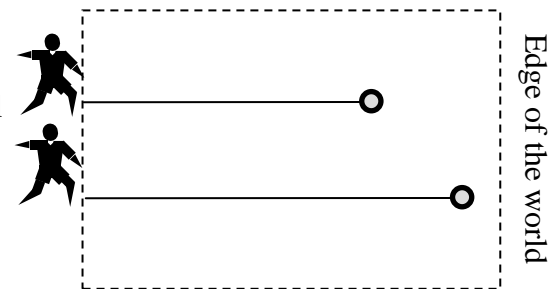
MARBLES

This game does not have a grid. Players are in pairs and each player has a ball. Player A passes his ball out about 5-10 yards. Player B tries to pass his ball into Player A's ball. If B hits it, he kicks his own ball out 5-10 yards for A to try to hit. If B misses it, it is A's turn to try to hit the other ball.



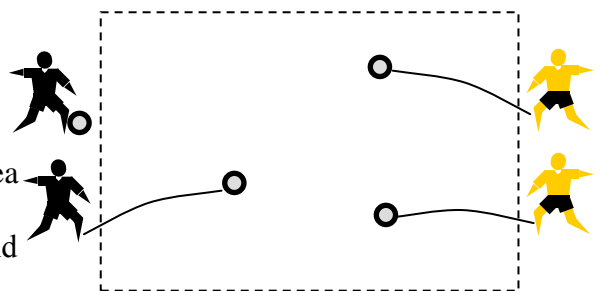
EDGE OF THE WORLD

This is a good resting activity to follow a strenuous one. Players are on one line with their ball and try to pass their ball as close as possible to the edge of the world without falling off.



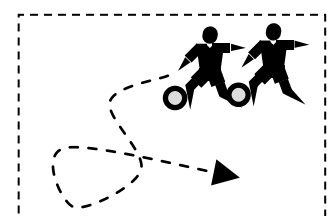
JUNKYARD SOCCER

The game begins with two teams facing each other on two parallel lines. Each player has a ball. The objective is for one team to pass all their balls into their opponent's area. Players must control and pass balls that come into their area back into their opponent's area. **NO WILD KICKING IS ALLOWED ...** the first touch should be to stop the ball and the second touch to pass it.



SHADOW DRIBBLING

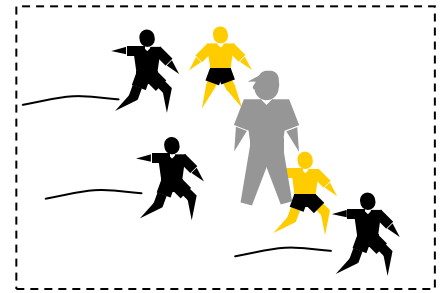
Group players into pairs, each with a ball. The lead player dribbles randomly. The player behind him dribbles and attempts to stay in the lead player's shadow. At the end of one minute, players switch roles.



Small-Sided Games – more than one player per ball

RED ROVER/ SHARKS AND MINNOWS/ NEMOS AND BRUCES

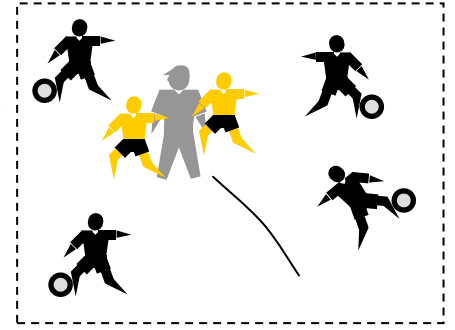
All players start in a line at one end of the grid, with the coach in the middle. The coach calls “Red rover, red rover, send everybody over” (or substitute boys, girls, or shirt colors if big numbers). The coach tries to tag players, who, in turn, try to reach the other side of the grid safely. If they do, they turn around and wait for the coach to call again. If they are tagged then they are “it” in the middle with the Coach.



Do this also with each player dribbling a ball. This helps them to learn to look up while dribbling.

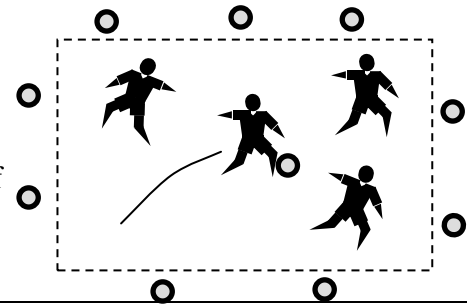
BLOB/LINK TAG

The coach is “it” and all the players have a ball in a grid. If the coach tags someone or their ball, that player’s ball is knocked out of the grid and he is also “it.” The coach should usually get the best dribbler first to allow the weaker players to get more touches. The coach and the tagged player link arms to form a “blob” and try and tag somebody else. This continues until everyone is the blob.



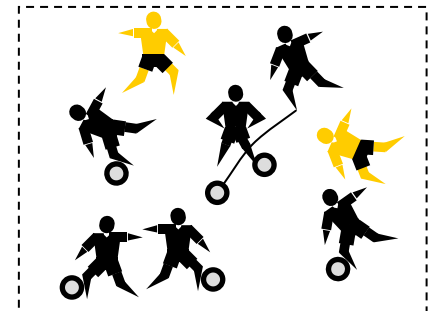
PAC-MAN

Place the balls just outside of the grid within easy reach. The players try to stay inside the grid. One player, usually a better player, starts with a ball inside the grid. On command, the player with the ball has to dribble the ball under control while attempting to tag the others. If he tags a player, that player gets his ball and attempts the same.



FREEZE TAG

Players are in a grid. Every player starts with a ball except for two taggers in a scrimmage vest. After 3 seconds, the taggers are free to tag anyone with a ball. If tagged, players have to freeze with their legs apart and their ball by their side. They can be unfrozen by another free player dribbling their ball up to them and passing their ball through the frozen player’s legs. Swap taggers after 1 minute or if they freeze everybody!



This can also be played without the ball, just as a tag game. To be unfrozen, free players crawl through the legs of the frozen players.

FOUR-GOAL GAME

Each team defends and attacks two small goals. Play develops as in a regular soccer game. This game encourages players to spread out, look around the field and make lateral passes.



STEAL THE BACON

Divide the players into two teams which line up facing each other about 25 feet apart. A ball is midway between them. Give each player on one team a number and players on the other team the same numbers. Call a number and two players race to get the ball. The player that gets to the ball first tries to dribble it back to his line and the other player tries to steal the ball and return it to his line. Each success scores a point. For variety, call more than one number for 2v2 or 3v3 play. The team with the most points wins.

