



World Cup Recreational Soccer

SMALL-SIDED SOCCER – BASIC ELEMENTS

Small sided soccer offers superior player development opportunities at all levels of youth play. The success formula is simple: one ball with fewer players = more touches for everyone. Meanwhile, 3 v 3 and 4 v 4 alignments allow for positioning and classic ball movement strategies, while smaller goals require and reward precision shot making.

Positions in Soccer:

Although small-sided soccer tends to be less formal with specific positions than the traditional game, it may help you to use some position designations and alignments for your teams. There are a number of different names for the positions, some commonly used ones are listed below.

Forwards/Strikers: Initiate kick-offs and act as the offensive players whose primary job is scoring goals.

Center Forward: a type of forward who plays furthest up the field towards the opponents' goal and in the middle width of the field versus the sidelines.

Halfbacks/midfielders: as the name implies, these players are positioned in the middle of the field, feeding balls to the forwards and assisting the defense

Wings: forwards or midfielders that play up and down one sideline or the other

Fullbacks/Defenders/Sharks: one or more players who tend to play further back as the last line of defense.

Goalkeepers/Goalies/Keepers: players whose job is to defend the goal. In the traditional full-sided game, there is one goalkeeper per team, and they are the only players who can use their hands. There are NO GOALIES in small-sided soccer. Avoid using this term for your defenders. Some of our practice drills material uses the term "goalie" – just substitute with "defender" or "shark" and make sure the players only use their feet – no hands allowed!

Alignments:

For the youngest ages (Fours), most current literature discourages coaching specific positions and alignments as the emphasis in small-sided soccer is placed on encouraging kids to kick, dribble, and get in the action. Introducing strict positions too early can potentially stifle natural aggression or be confusing to the youngest players. Positions or not, in the youngest age group, you'll most likely find all 6 players on the field going after the ball like chickens after feed. Enjoy the show and hope your players are at least going in the right direction!

In the Fives and Sixes, you can start to introduce positions. It is not uncommon to designate one player as a defender (or "shark") to have the special job of defensive specialist, perhaps playing a few yards back from the pack to get a loose ball and defend against fast breaks.

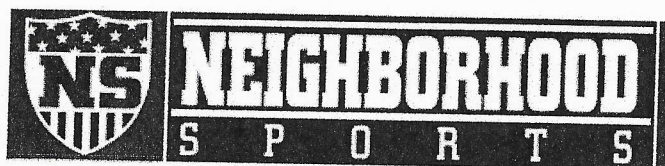
To the extent you choose to use positions, below are some common alignments. Think in terms of creating "triangles" (3 v. 3) and triangles or diamonds in 4 v. 4, where players are positioned with passing options to either side, with the players forming the points of a triangle or diamond (four sided).

3 v. 3 Alignments:

- 2 forwards/wings and 1 defender/shark
- 1 forward and 2 wings
- 1 forward, 1 halfback, 1 fullback

4 v. 4 Alignments:

- 3 forwards and 1 defender/shark
- 2 wings, 1 midfielder/halfback, 1 defender
- 2 wings, 2 defenders
- 1 forward, 2 midfielders, 1 defender



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PRE-GAME WARMUPS

Take 10-15 minutes to warm up prior to the game, on the field of play if possible. Every player should have a ball. Below are a few common drills to help your players get ready for the big game. These can be run in progression as part of the normal pre-game routine.

1. Passing back and forth in pairs or triangles. Practice crisp, accurate passes and good trapping/ball control.
2. Dribble to the goal & shoot – line up near mid-field and dribble one at a time towards the goal. Shoot on goal, retrieve shot and dribble around the outside to stay out of the way of the next player
3. 2 by 2 passing – line up two players side-by-side. One ball. Pass back & forth a few times on the way to goal & shoot on goal.
4. Pass to coach on side, run down field, coach gives a crossing pass in front of goal, control ball & shoot. One player at a time. Coach switches sides after a round or two to feed passes from both sides.
5. Add a shark and have 1 v 1 battles until a shot is taken or the defender kicks the ball away. A good way to warm up your sharks.



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BASIC SOCCER SKILLS AND DRILLS

- a. Dribbling – dribbling is the foundational skill for success in soccer. In the youngest age groups, we want the players to become comfortable with the ball, able to direct it with **both** of their feet.

Show tops/ side to sides warm-ups

Basic Juggling off thigh; juggling off foot

Dribbling with laces, inside of foot, outside of foot, right foot only, left foot only, Brazilian (laces) v. European (side of foot), stop & turn/reverse

Red Light/Green Light

Dribble through cones: snake pattern & dribble through gates

Volcano –dribble around a defined space, avoid cone “volcanoes” in the middle

- b. Passing/Trapping – emphasize passing with side of foot at this age for maximum surface area and control. Show proper trapping of the ball to cushion/stop ball.

Static pass back & forth

Passing down the field in waves – 2 x 2

- c. Shooting – emphasize position of plant foot near ball for maximum stability & control. Parts of the foot (laces or inside of foot) to take the shot. Discourage straight on toe kicking

Around the world – drill to shoot at different angles on goal

Crossing passes, trap & shoot

Crossing passes, one touch shooting

- d. Defense – knees bent , on balls of feet

Practice shuffle moves side to side

Sharks & Minnows Game; Pony - dribbling & defense

1 v 1, 2 v 1

- e. Player Formations

Demonstrate the Triangle and Diamond