YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.

2

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY:

COACH'S TOOL KIT
STAGE TWO – FUNDAMENTALS

CANADA SOCCER BELIEVES EVERY PLAYER DESERVES THE BEST POSSIBLE SOCCER EXPERIENCE.

Whether they dream of playing for Canada's National Teams or simply want to have fun with their friends, taking the right approach to the game when children are young sets the stage for a lifetime of enjoyment.

The Canada Soccer Pathway provides a roadmap for players of all ages and aspirations who want to play soccer at the recreational, competitive or high performance EXCEL levels, with the aim of encouraging lifelong participation. The Pathway is built around the principles of Long-Term Player Development (LTPD).

For players under the age of 12, many of whom are lacing up cleats for the first time, the goal of this approach is simple:

GET KIDS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GAME.

2

STAGE TWO:

FUNDAMENTALS

(U-6/U-8 F, U-6/U-10 M)

Allows children to develop their movement ABCs—agility, balance, coordination, and speed—and learn the basics of the game while emphasizing fun, cooperation, and maximum time on the ball.

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THE ROLE OF THE COACH

Teacher. Mentor. Role model. Cheerleader. Parent. Occasional disciplinarian.

Soccer coaches wear many different hats, particularly when they're training young players, many of whom are lacing up their cleats for the first time. You might find yourself leading a fun activity one minute and reining in a distracted player the next.

You must be flexible, because a session or drill that was meant to last 10 minutes might need to be switched up after half that time to keep the players engaged.

Above all, make sure everyone is enjoying the session—including you.

Being a coach is demanding, but it's also incredibly rewarding. There's nothing quite like witnessing the thrill a young player gets when they score their first goal, or make a fantastic pass. And the lessons a child learns from a good coach can last a lifetime.

The objective isn't just to develop better soccer players—it's to develop well-rounded people who are disciplined, persistent and able to work well with others.

Shaping the lives of young people is a tremendous responsibility. As a coach, you must do everything you can to foster a player's love for the game, and to help them achieve their potential.

Good coaches seek out new ways to develop their knowledge of the game and how players learn. This toolkit is designed to get you started.

But it's not just about what you teach. It's about how you teach.

Ultimately, it's your personality and enthusiasm that will have the biggest impact on your players.

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY: COACHING TIPS

Every soccer player is unique and it's important to understand and appreciate the differences between players at various age levels.

When you're planning a training session, consider the group of players you're working with and the outcomes you want to achieve, and choose your coaching method accordingly.

In no particular order, here are five coaching techniques that will give you some options to help meet the needs of individual players:

1 COMMAND:

The coach tells the player what to do and demonstrates it ("I want you to pass the ball to your partner.").

2 QUESTION & ANSWER:

The coach leads with a question and requests an answer from players ("Which one of your teammates could you pass the ball to?").

3 OBSERVATION & FEEDBACK:

The coach and players observe an activity and discuss the outcome ("Let's watch and see what happens.").

4 GUIDED DISCOVERY:

The coach asks a question and issues a challenge ("Can you show me how you would get the ball past the defender?"). The player then demonstrates how he/she would do it.

5 TRIAL & ERROR:

The players and/or coach decide on a challenge, and the players are encouraged to find their own solutions with minimal support from the coach.

Remember, a method that works well with one player may not be effective with another. So it's important to be flexible, to set realistic goals and to give positive feedback as often as possible. It's also important to remember that, no matter how wonderful a coach you are, it's very difficult to force a player to be interested in your training session when he or she really doesn't want to be there. Make the experience lots of fun and all your players will want to come back the next time.

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY: OUR PREFERRED TRAINING MODEL

Canada Soccer recommends a "station" approach to training. Players move from one skill-building activity to the next at regular intervals. The time spent on each activity varies based on the age of the player (see "Training Template").

This method is not only more fun for young players—who tend to have short attention spans—but also allows training sessions to be tailored to a team's individual needs, depending on the number of players, the number of parents and coaches present, and the available facilities.

Each training session is built around four activity stations, one focusing on **General Movement** skills, one on **Co-ordination**, one on **Soccer Technique** and another on **Small-Sided Games**. Addressing all four of these training "pillars" at each practice session will help develop well-rounded young players with a foundation in physical literacy, solid soccer skills and, ideally, an enduring love of the game.

TRAINING TEMPLATE

FOR PLAYERS AT THE FUNDAMENTALS STAGE (U-6/U-8 GIRLS; U-6/U-10 BOYS), TRAINING SESSIONS SHOULD BE 60-75 MINUTES LONG AND COMPRISED OF:

20%	20%	20%	40%
GENERAL MOVEMENT	COORDINATION	SOCCER TECHNIQUE	SMALL-SIDED GAMES

This tool kit will give you ideas for specific activities under each of the four training pillars. How you set up your training sessions is entirely up to you. For example:

One coach or parent working with a single group of players on a half field can simply switch up the "pillar" activities throughout the session.

If you have a full field, two or more coaches/parent volunteers and 12 or more players, you may choose to divide the players into two or more groups and have them rotate through stations being run simultaneously.

2

STAGE 2—FUNDAMENTALS (U-6/U-8 F, U-6/U-10 M)

SOCCER TECHNIQUE

A player's soccer technique—which revolves around core skills such as controlling the ball, dribbling, shooting, fakes, turns, and passing—will improve through:

- Getting lots of touches on the ball.
- Fun competitions that motivate players to use different techniques.
- Opportunities to make quick decisions about the best technique to use in a given situation.
- Plenty of positive feedback.

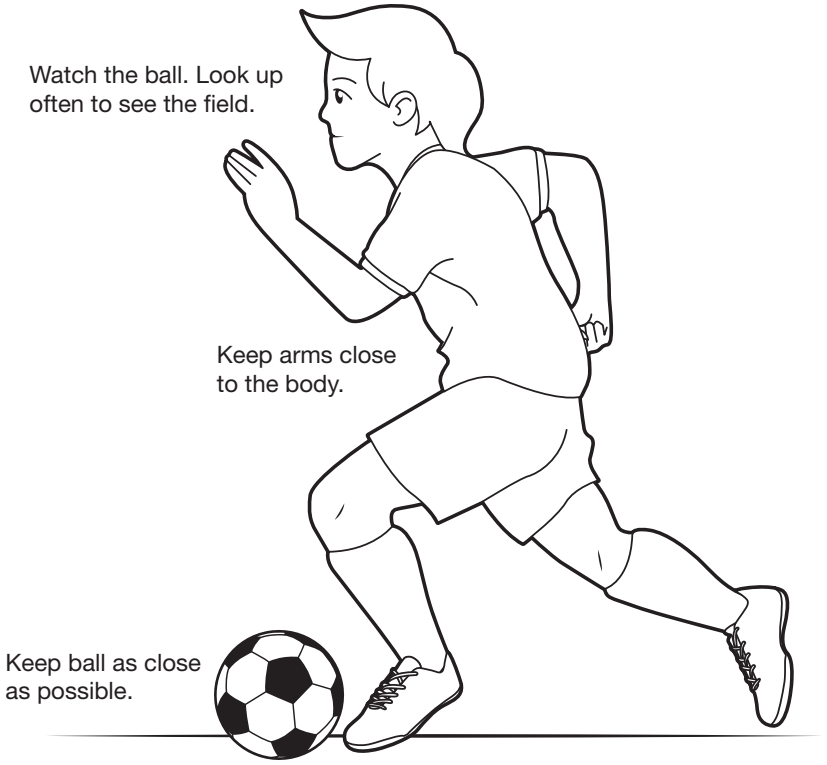
At the FUNdamentals stage (U-6/U-8 Girls; U-6/U-10 Boys), technique drills should make up about 20% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 75-minute training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, control, passing, and shooting.

TIP

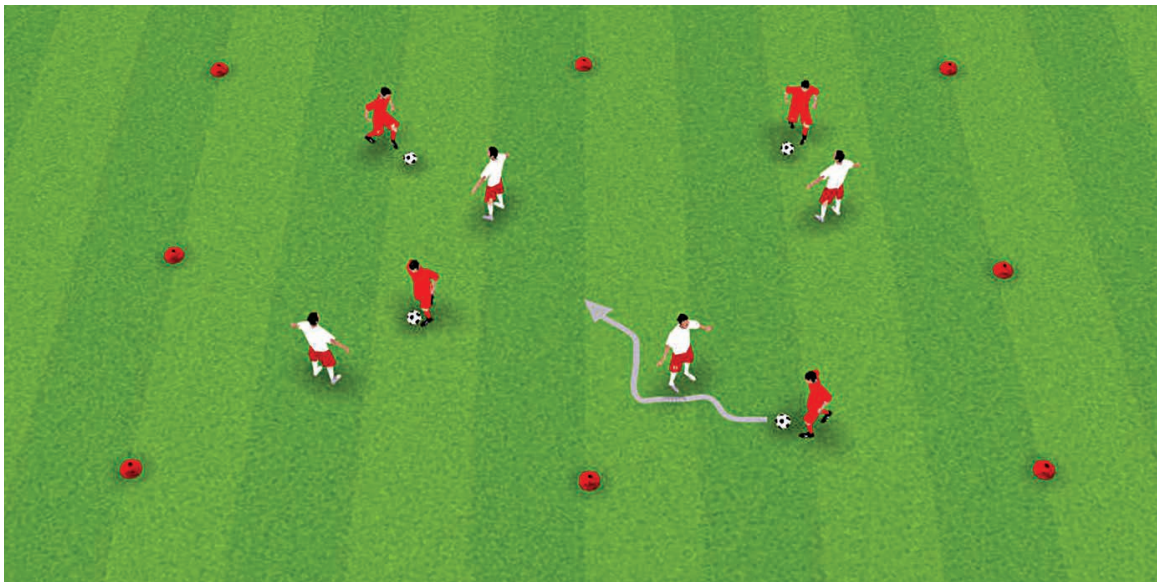
These activities will help players develop a better feel for the ball by building their skill around core techniques like passing, controlling and receiving. Individual development is paramount at this stage, so be sure to use fun competitions and games—and plenty of positive feedback—to encourage players to keep practicing and to challenge themselves.

DRIBBLING

"DRIBBLING" MEANS MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE BALL AND USING YOUR FEET TO MOVE IT IN A CONTROLLED WAY.



DRIBBLING
ACTIVITY 1: "FAKE AND TURN"



SET UP:

- Up to 16 players, 4 with no ball ("free" players).

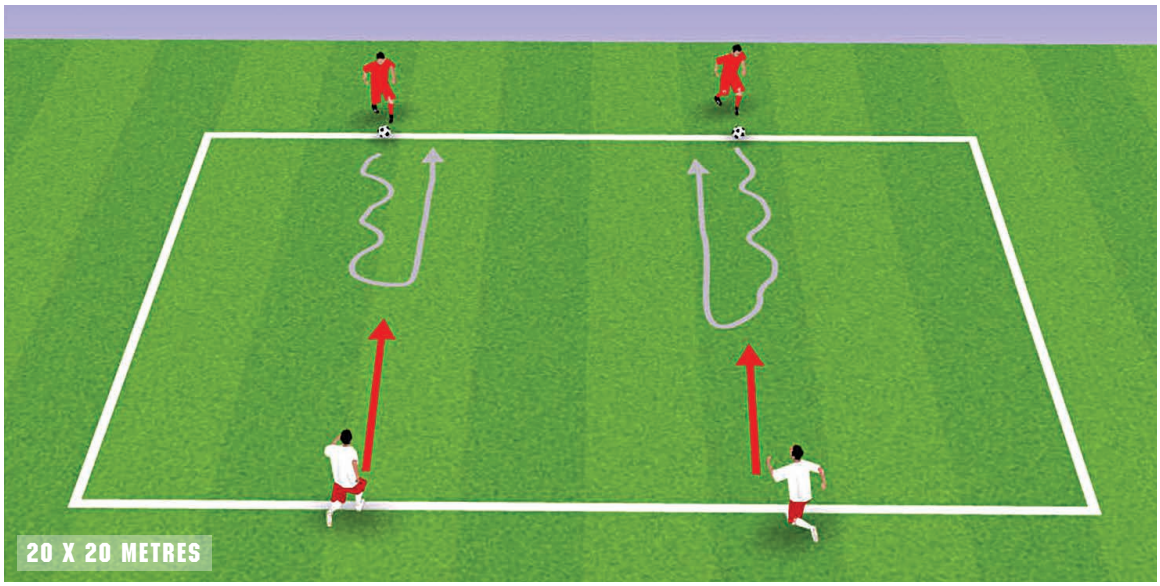
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Dribble!" – use your dribbling skills (i.e., fakes and turns) to move the ball around the field and get it past the "free" players, who get in your way but don't try to take the ball.
- "Switch!" – rotate players into the "free" role.

OPTIONS:

- How many free players can you dribble past in one minute?
- "Challenge!" – free players try to take the ball; if successful, they get to dribble.

DRIBBLING
ACTIVITY 2: "ACROSS THE CHANNEL"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.

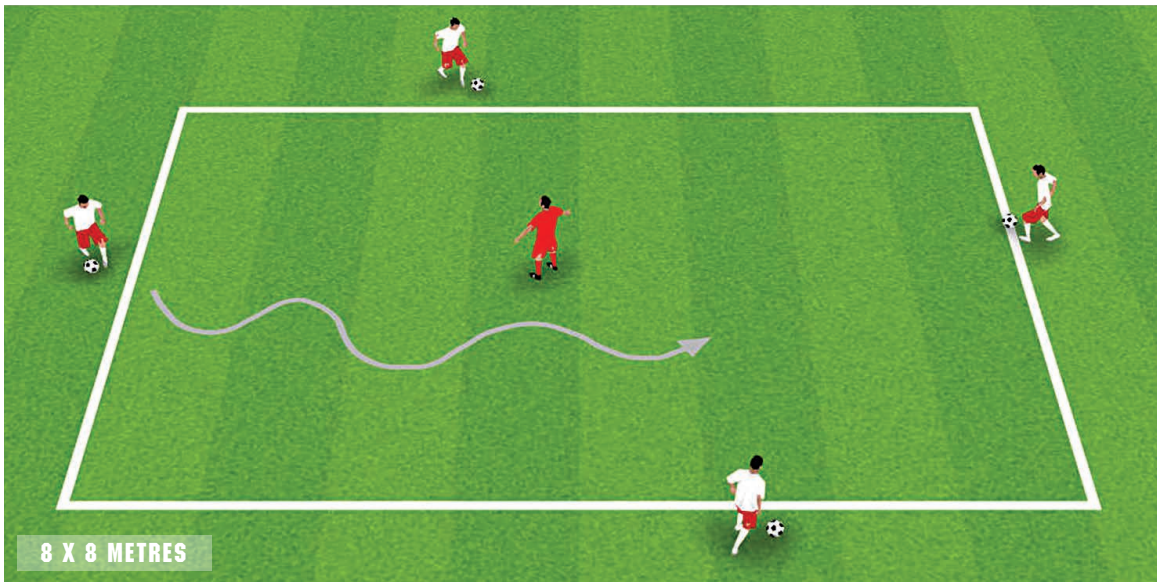
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – Player 1 dribbles the ball across the channel towards Player 2.
- "Challenge!" – Player 2 tries to take the ball away before Player 1 can turn and dribble back. If Player 2 doesn't win the ball, Player 1 gets a point. On the next turn, Player 2 starts with the ball and Player 1 challenges.
- "Switch!" – rotate partners.

OPTIONS:

- Decrease the distance between players.
- "Forward!" – instead of turning and dribbling back, players with the ball get 2 points if they can dribble the ball over their partner's start line.

DRIBBLING
ACTIVITY 3: "DRIBBLE TAG"



SET UP:

- Five players, 4 of them with a ball.
- Player without a ball (the defender) goes to the centre of the field.

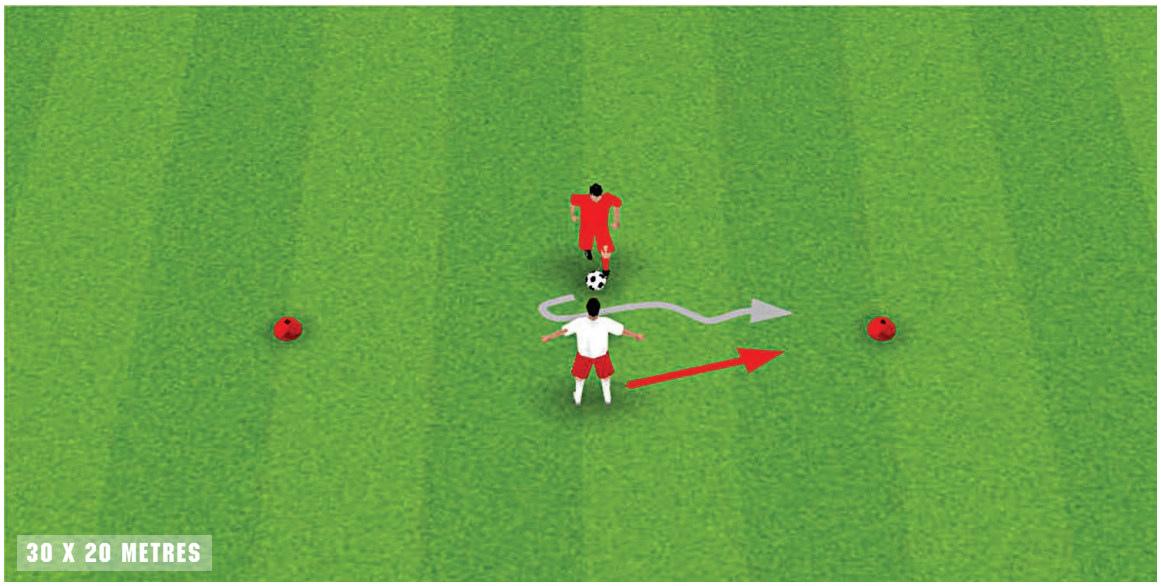
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – players on the outside begin dribbling around the edge of the field, and then dribble across while the defender tries to tag them with his/her hand. If a player gets tagged once, they keep going. If a player gets tagged twice in the same crossing, they become the defender.

OPTIONS:

- Instead of tagging players, the defender tries to take the ball away. If successful, the other player becomes the defender.

DRIBBLING
ACTIVITY 4: "RACE TO THE TARGET!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.

INSTRUCTIONS:

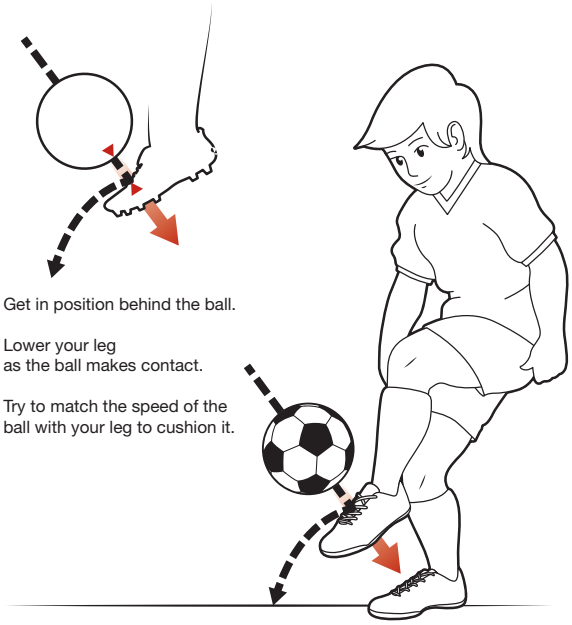
- Players start facing each other between 2 target cones.
- "Go!"– Player 1 tries to dribble the ball to either target cone without Player 2 touching it. (Player 2 can challenge for the ball only after it has moved.) If Player 1 gets the ball to the target under control, it's a point. On the next turn, Player 2 starts with the ball in the middle and Player 1 challenges.
- "Switch!" – rotate partners.

OPTIONS:

- "Keep going!" – the player with the ball keeps dribbling back and forth between markers as many times as possible without their partner taking the ball. If their partner challenges and wins, it's their ball.
- How many points can you get in 1 minute?

CONTROL

"CONTROL" MEANS USING YOUR FEET AND OTHER PARTS OF YOUR BODY (EXCEPT YOUR ARMS AND HANDS) TO KEEP THE BALL CLOSE.



Get in position behind the ball.

Lower your leg
as the ball makes contact.

Try to match the speed of the
ball with your leg to cushion it.

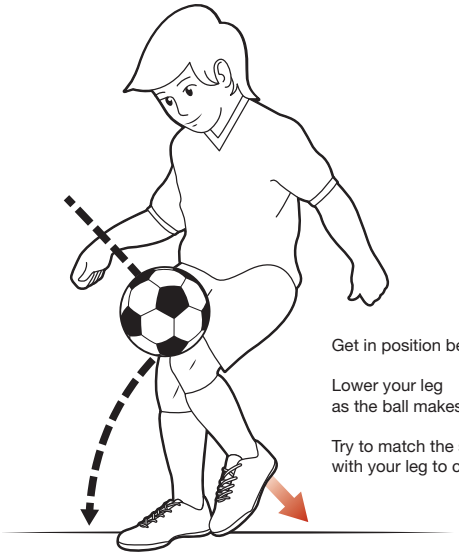
Top of Foot (Laces)

Get in position behind the ball.

Lower your leg
as the ball makes contact.

Try to match the speed of the
ball with your leg to cushion it.

Inside of Foot



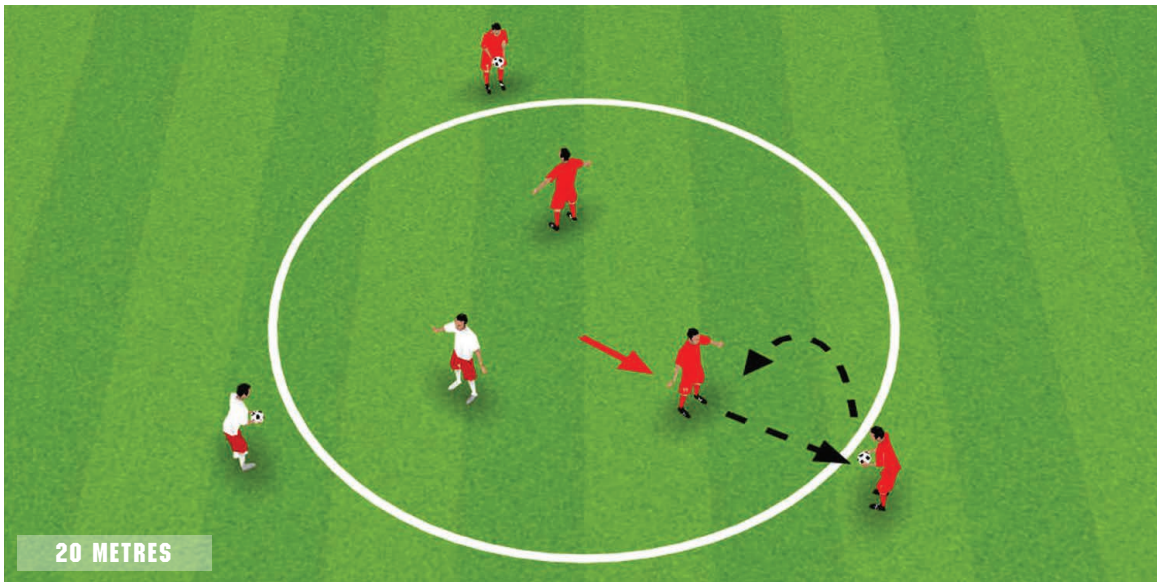
Get in position behind the ball.

Lower your leg
as the ball makes contact.

Try to match the speed of the ball
with your leg to cushion it.

Thigh

CONTROL
ACTIVITY 1: "INSIDE OUT"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.

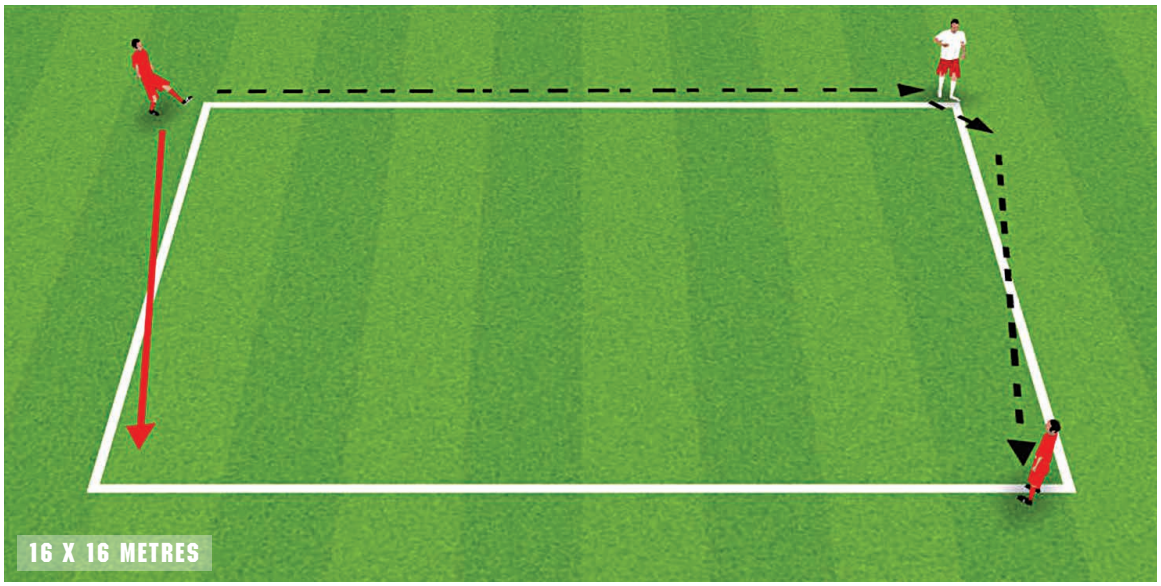
INSTRUCTIONS:

- Player 1 has the ball and starts outside the circle, Player 2 starts inside.
- "Go!" – Player 2 runs toward Player 1, who throws the ball to the ground inside the circle. Player 2 controls it with his/her feet before passing it back to Player 1.
- "Switch!" – after 1 minute, inside players move to the outside, and work with a different partner.

OPTIONS:

- Throw to partner's waist area for thigh control.
- Throw to partner's chest area for chest control, and volley back using the inside of the foot after controlling with the chest, or let the ball hit the ground and pass back (depending on skill level).

CONTROL
ACTIVITY 2: "QUICK CONTROL"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in groups of 3.
- Players start on 3 corners of a large square.

INSTRUCTIONS:

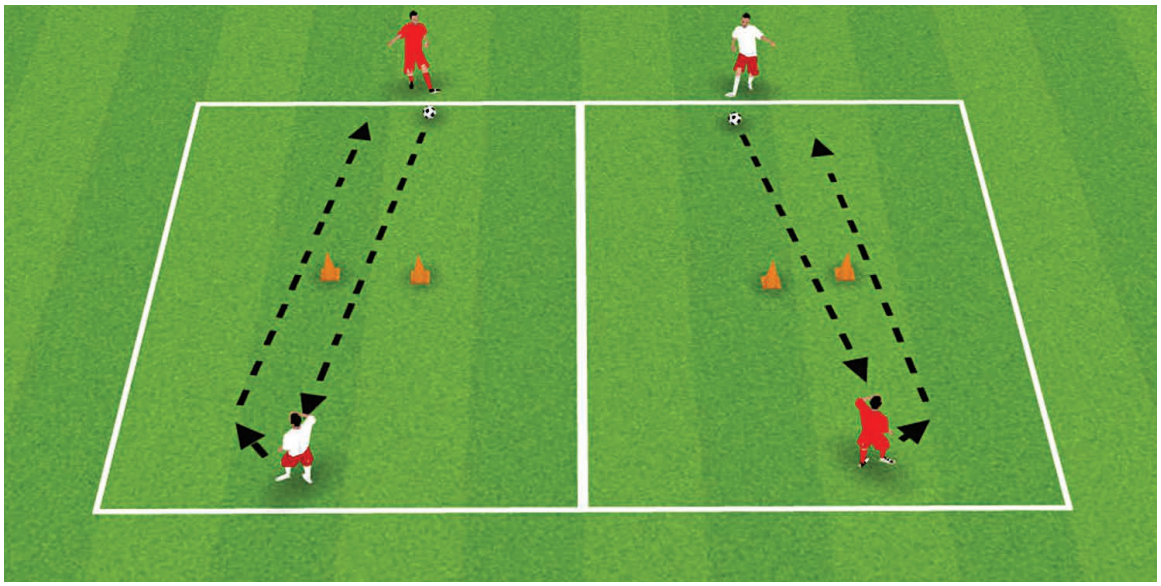
- "Go!" – pass to either teammate, then run to the empty corner. Remember to use the inside of your foot when passing. When you receive a pass, use one foot to control it, then pass it back quickly with the other foot.
- "Switch feet!" – use your other foot to control and/or pass

OPTIONS:

- "Throw in!" – instead of passing, Player 1 throws the ball to Player 2, who controls it with foot, knee or chest before a volley or pass to Player 3. Player 1 runs to the empty corner. Player 3 picks up the ball, throws it to Player 2, etc.
- Vary the height and speed of pass, or bounce it in to increase the challenge.
- Remember to control the ball across your body (right thigh to left foot, etc.).

CONTROL

ACTIVITY 3: "THROUGH THE GATE"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.

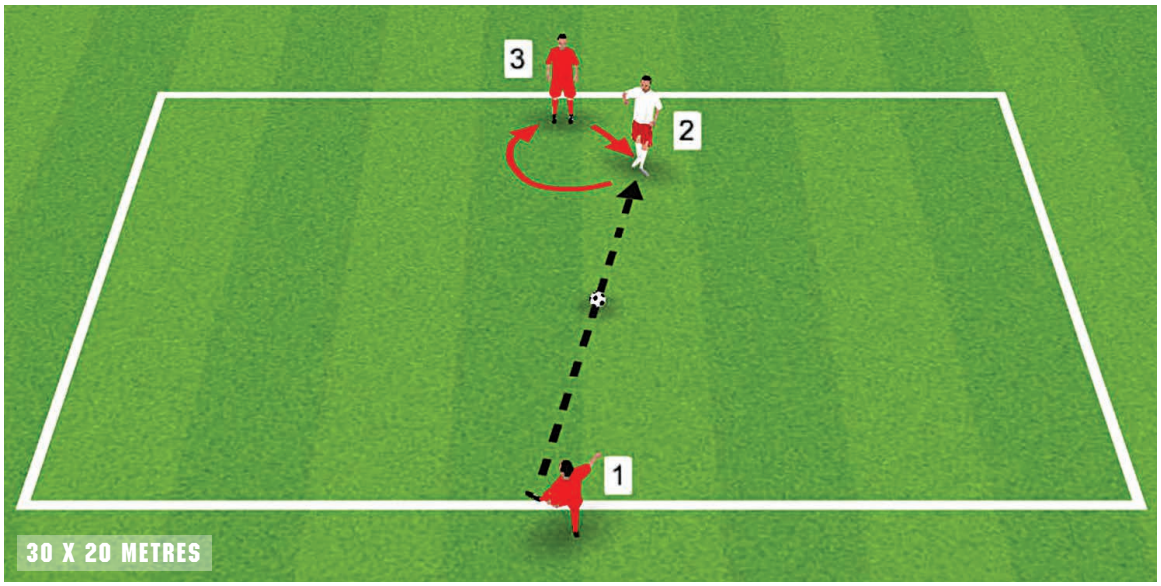
INSTRUCTIONS:

- Players start on opposite sides of the field with a gate in the middle.
- "Pass!" – start by passing the ball back and forth through the gate. When you receive a pass, use one foot to control it, then pass it back quickly with the other foot.
- "On the outside!" – Player 1 passes through the gate and Player 2 controls it on the first touch, and passes back outside the gate. Alternate using the inside and outside of each foot to control the ball.

OPTIONS:

- "Throw in!" – Player 1 throws the ball to Player 2, who controls it with the foot, thigh, or chest before passing it back to their partner's feet through the gate. Control the ball so that it moves across your body (e.g., left thigh to right foot).
- Add a goalkeeper to defend the gate.

CONTROL
ACTIVITY 4: "CONTROL AND TURN"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 3; 1 ball per group.
- Player 1 is the server, Player 2 the receiver and Player 3 the defender.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – Player 1 passes to Player 2 who uses the first touch to make a half turn to face Player 3. As the defender, Player 3 prevents Player 2 from moving any further, but does not try to take the ball. Player 2 turns back and passes back to Player 1.
- "Switch feet!" – Use your other foot to receive and/or pass.
- Swap positions after 3 turns: Player 1 becomes Player 2 etc.

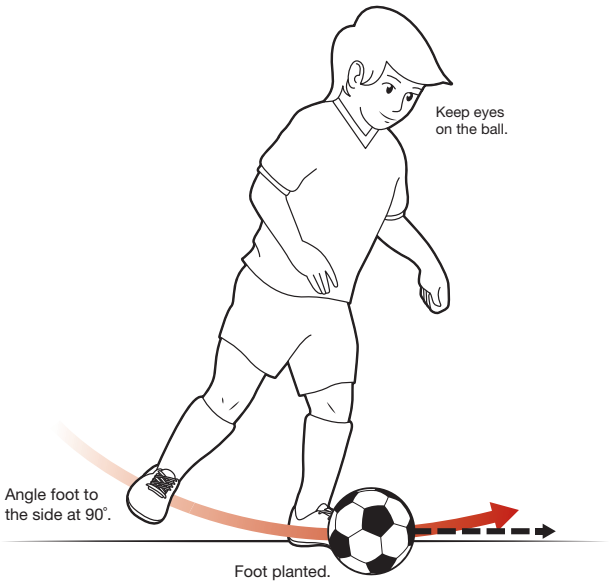
OPTIONS:

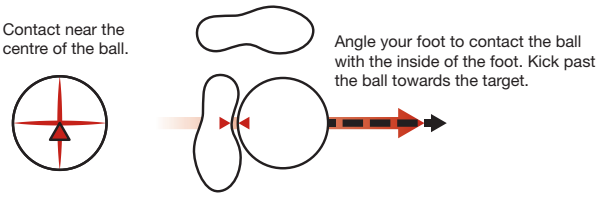
- "Throw in!" – Player 1 throws the ball in the air at varying speeds and heights, and Player 2 has to use the foot, thigh, or chest to control the ball before turning with it and trying to go past Player 3.
- "Challenge!" – Player 3 tries to take the ball from Player 2.

PASSING

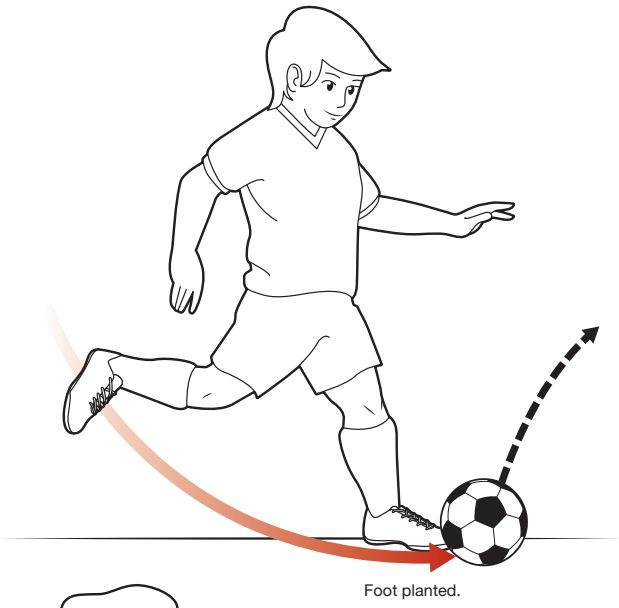
"PASSING" MEANS USING YOUR FEET TO GET THE BALL TO YOUR TEAMMATES IN A CONTROLLED WAY.

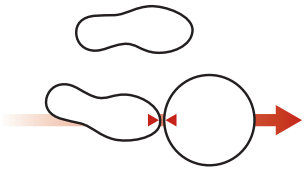
Push Pass

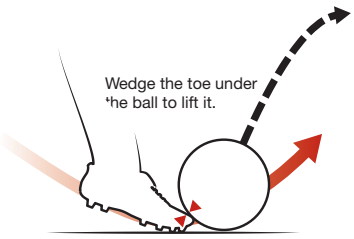




Chip Pass

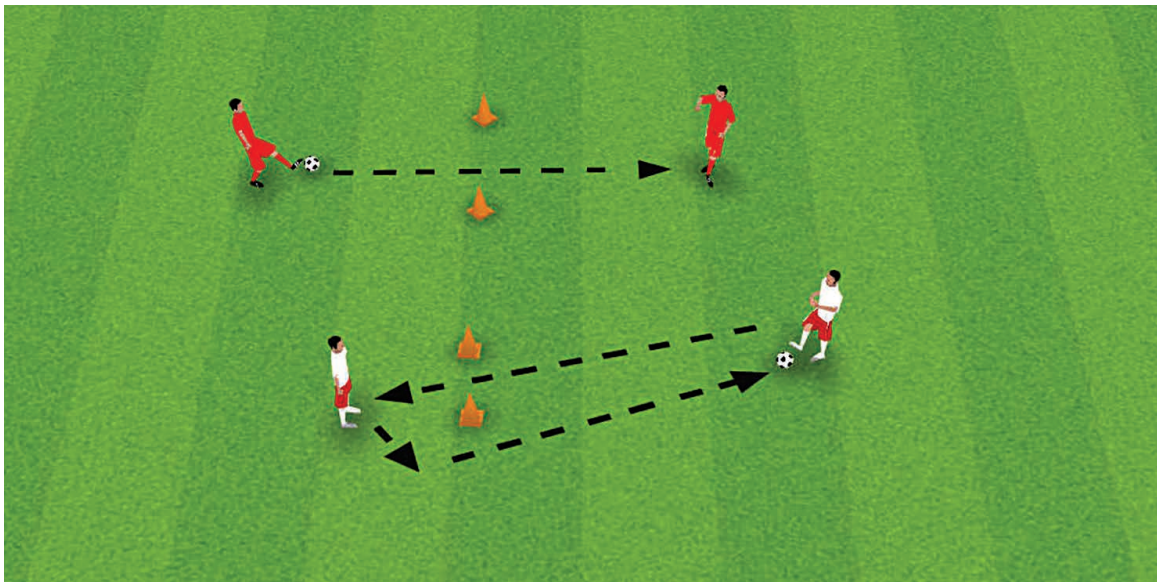






PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: "PASSING PARTNERS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.

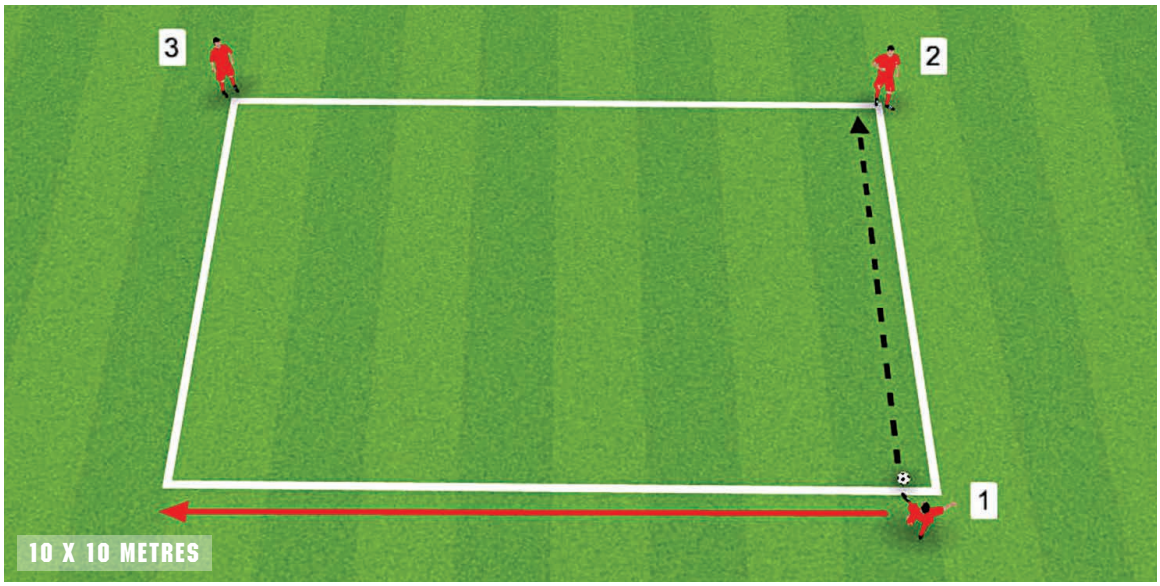
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – pass the ball back and forth with your partner. Try to use only 2 touches each time: receive the ball and then pass it back quickly. Use one foot to pass, the other to receive.
- "Switch feet!" – use the opposite foot to pass and/or receive.

OPTIONS:

- How many times can you pass in 30 seconds?
- Add a gate between the players: Player 1 passes the ball through the gate and Player 2 receives the pass with one foot, then passes it back outside the gate with the other foot.
- Receive the pass using the outside of one foot and pass it back using the inside of the same foot.

PASSING
ACTIVITY 2: "THREE CORNERS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in groups of 3; 1 ball per group.

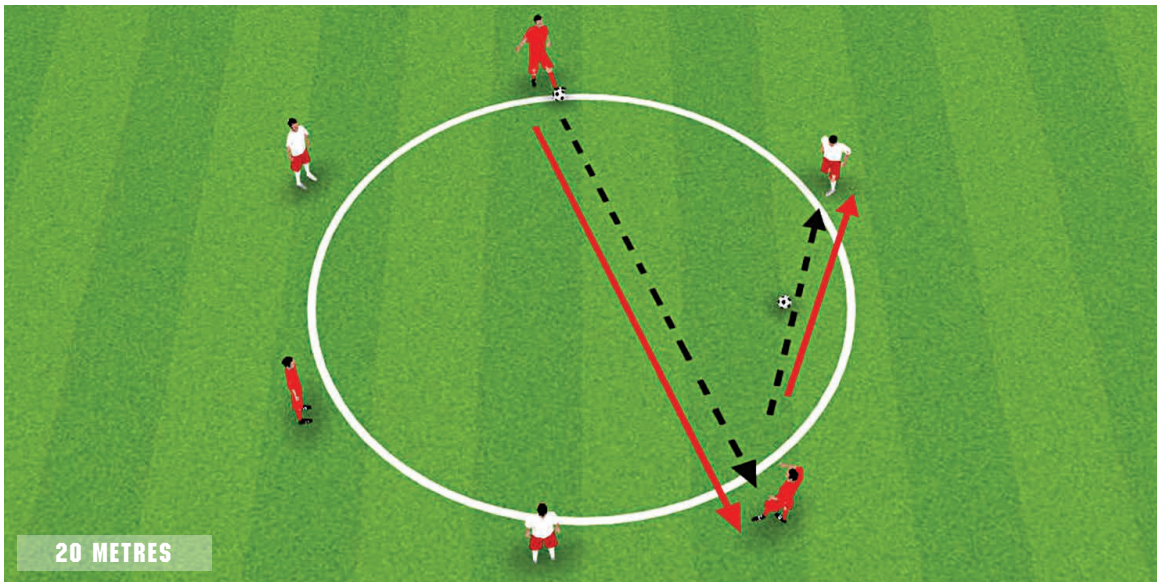
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – Player 1 passes along the sideline to Player 2, then runs to the empty corner. Player 2 receives the ball and passes along the sideline to Player 3 before running to the empty corner. Player 3 receives the ball and passes to Player 1, etc.
- Remember to use the side of your foot when passing. When you receive a pass, try to use just 2 touches: control the ball with one foot then pass back quickly with the other foot.
- "Switch feet!" – use your other foot to control and/or pass.

OPTIONS:

- Allow a player to pass to either teammate before running to the open corner.
- Player 1 passes to the open corner and Player 2 runs to receive it. Player 2 passes to the open corner and Player 3 runs to receive it, etc.

PASSING
ACTIVITY 3: "CIRCLE PASS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players in a large circle; 1 ball to start.

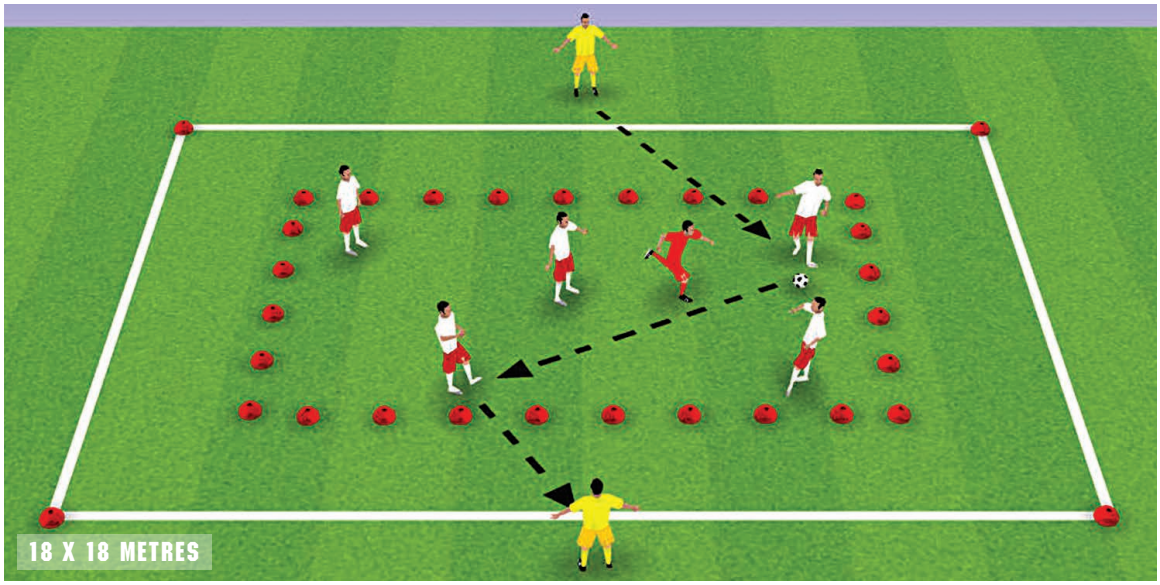
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – player with the ball gets 2 touches: one to enter the circle and one to pass to a teammate. The first player follows his/her pass to the other side of the circle. The receiving player then has 2 touches to receive the ball and pass to a different teammate, then follow their pass, etc.

OPTIONS:

- Use multiple balls.
- One player stays in the middle of the circle, passing to different players on the outside, who receive and pass back in one touch. Rotate players after 30 seconds.
- Multiple players (i.e., 2-4), each with a ball, stay in the middle, passing to different players on the outside. After each pass they follow the ball, run around the outside player (overlap) and come back into the middle to receive a return pass and continue. Rotate players after 1 minute.

PASSING
ACTIVITY 4: "DANGER ZONE"



SET UP:

- Eight players (2 target players, 5 passers, 1 defender); 1 ball.
- One central square (the "danger zone") inside a larger square (the "neutral zone"), marked out with cones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

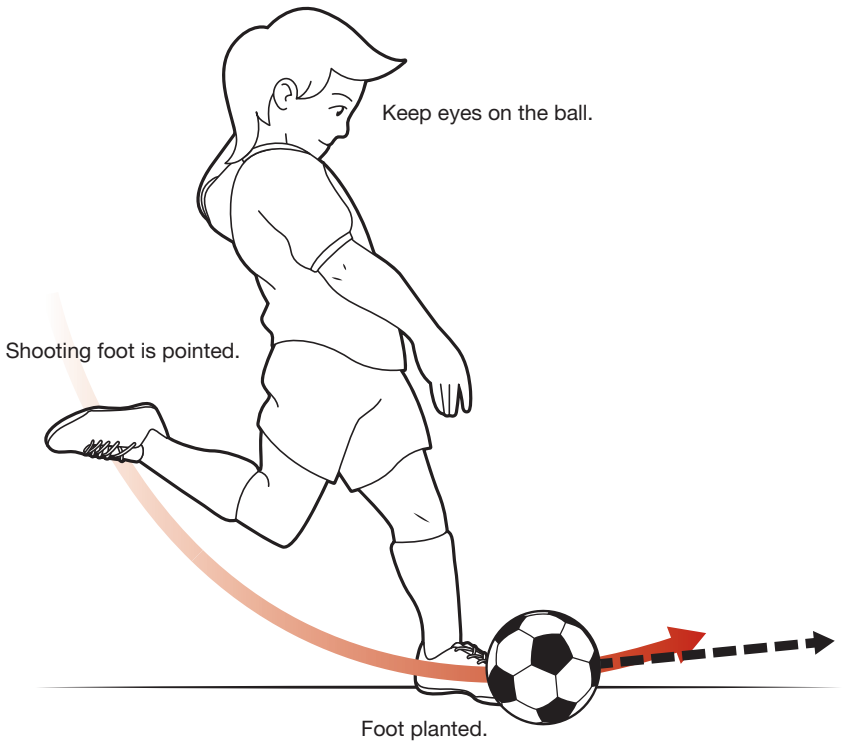
- Two Target players stand on opposite sides of the neutral zone; passers and defenders start inside the danger zone.
- "Go!" – 1 target player passes the ball into the danger zone. The passers keep the ball away from the defender and pass to the other target player.
- If under pressure, passers should dribble the ball out to the neutral zone, where the defender can't challenge. This will allow the passers to regroup before executing the next pass through the danger zone.
- "Switch!" – players swap roles after 5 minutes.

OPTIONS:

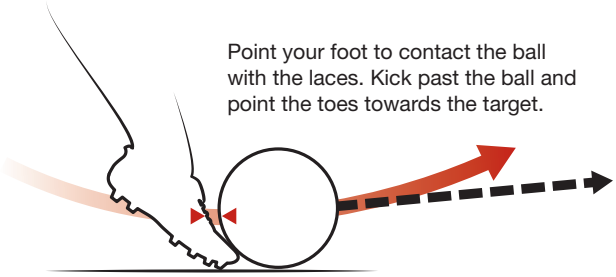
- Add a second defender.
- When a target player receives the ball, the player who passed it swaps roles.

SHOOTING

"SHOOTING" MEANS USING YOUR FEET TO GET THE BALL INTO THE NET.



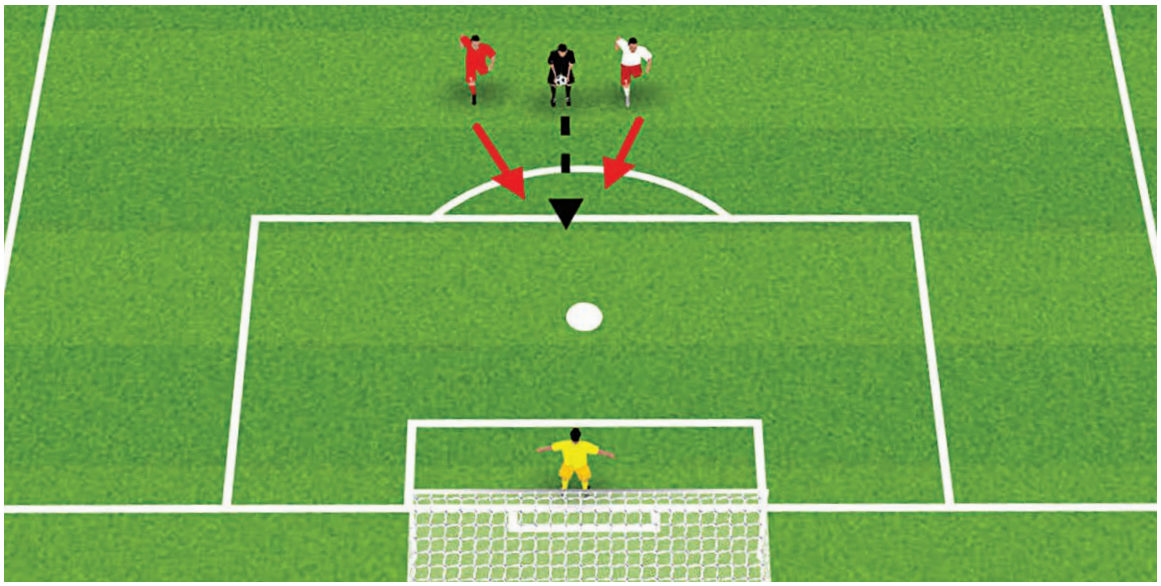
Contact near the centre or the bottom of the ball.



Point your foot to contact the ball with the laces. Kick past the ball and point the toes towards the target.

SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 1: "SOCCER 1 V 1"



SET UP:

- Up to 10 players, working in pairs; 1 goalkeeper.
- Players form 2 lines on either side of a coach.

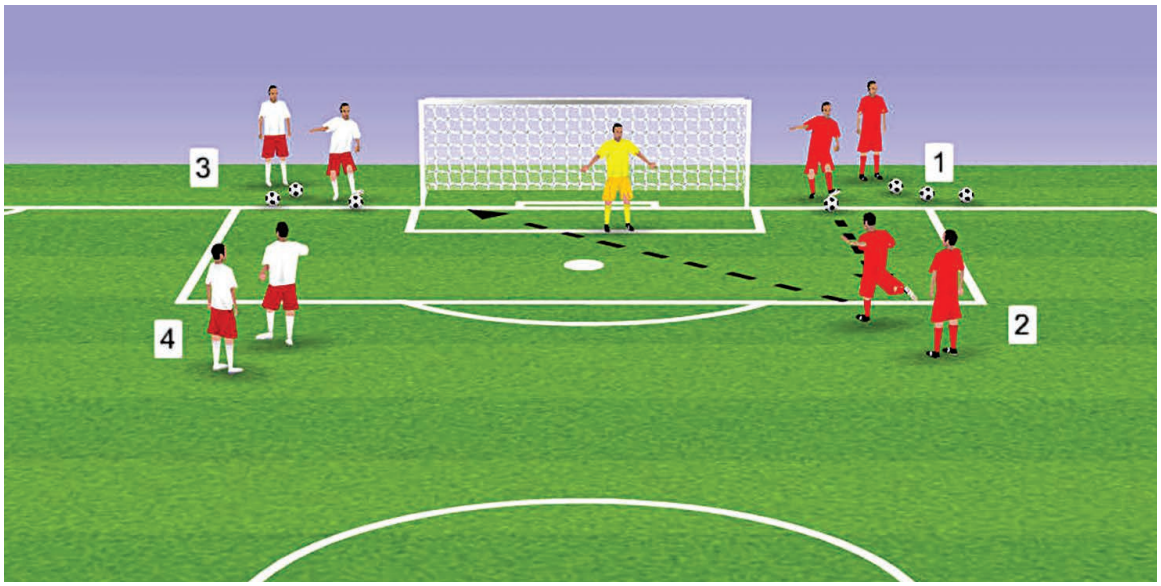
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – when the coach serves the ball, the two players at the front of the line chase it. The first player to the ball tries to shoot on goal while the other player tries to take the ball away and then shoot.

OPTIONS:

- Have players start in different positions: **1.** Seated. **2.** Lying on their backs. **3.** In a push-up position.
- One player is the designated attacker, the other the defender. The coach serves the ball from different angles: **1.** From behind the attacker. **2.** From the side. **3.** From the goal line.

SHOOTING
ACTIVITY 2: "PARALLEL PLAY"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in 4 small groups; 1 goalkeeper.
- Number the groups 1-4.

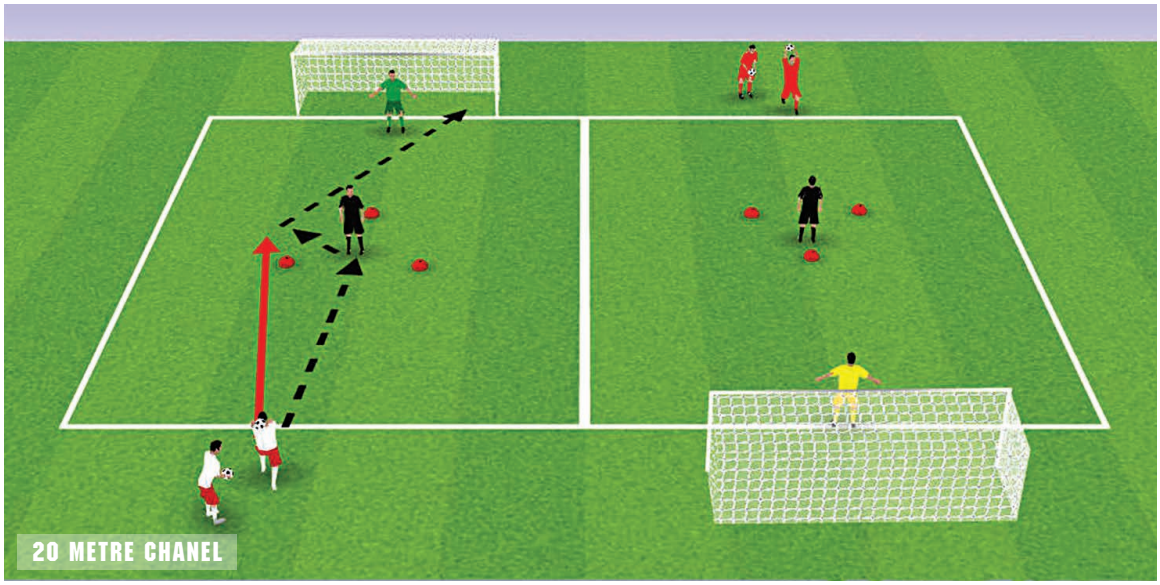
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – the first player in Group 1 passes to the first player in Group 2, who receives the ball and shoots on goal. Repeat with Groups 3 and 4. Remember to control the ball and shoot in just 2 touches.

OPTIONS:

- "On the diagonal!" – Group 1 passes to Group 4. Group 3 passes to Group 2.
- "From the side!" – Groups 1 and 3 pass from the sides of the penalty area.
- "Challenge!" – After passing the ball, Group 1 and Group 3 players come out to challenge the shooter.

SHOOTING
ACTIVITY 3: "BERMUDA TRIANGLE"



SET UP:

- Up to 10 players, each with a ball, working in 2 teams; 1 goalkeeper.
- Coach/parent stands inside a triangle marked out with cones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

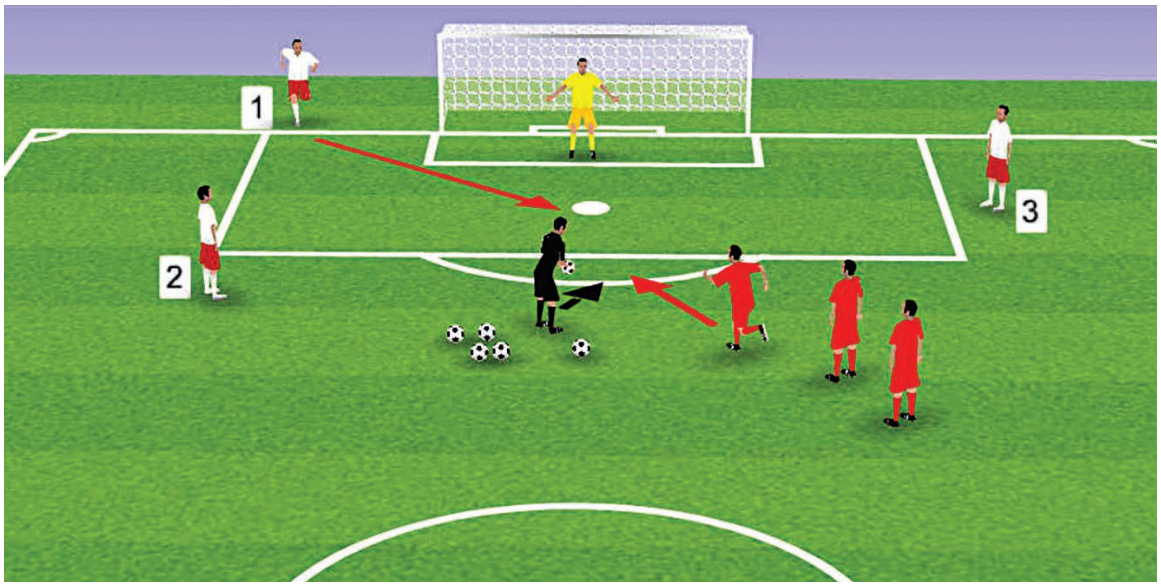
- "Go!" – the first player in line throws the ball to the coach/parent. The coach/parent catches the ball and rolls it to their left or right. The player chases the ball and shoots on goal, then runs to the back of the line.
- "Ground pass!" – instead of throwing the ball, the player passes to the coach/parent. The coach/parent passes it back just beyond the triangle. Players try to get the ball past the coach/parent in just one touch (with the inside or outside of the foot) before shooting.

OPTIONS:

- "Challenge!" – Put a player in the triangle rather than a coach/parent, and have them come out to challenge for the ball after passing it to the shooter. After one turn, the shooter moves to the triangle, and the player in the middle moves to the back of the line.

SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 4: "1-2-3 DEFENSE!"



SET UP:

- Up to 8 players (5 strikers; 3 defenders) plus 1 goalkeeper.
- Number the defenders 1-3.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – the coach rolls the ball forward. The first striker in line chases the ball and tries to shoot on goal while Defender 1 tries to block the shot and win the ball. Defender 2 challenges the second striker and Defender 3 the third striker before starting again with Defender 1, and so on.
- "Switch!" – when all the strikers have had 3 turns, rotate positions.

OPTIONS:

- Coach shouts out the Defenders' numbers randomly each time so the striker has to make a quick decision about where the challenge is coming from.
- Send out 2 strikers and 1 defender to create a 2 v 1 challenge. Add a second defender to create a 2 v 2 situation.

2

STAGE 2—FUNDAMENTALS (U-6/U-8 F, U-6/U-10 M)

GENERAL MOVEMENT

General Movement activities include:

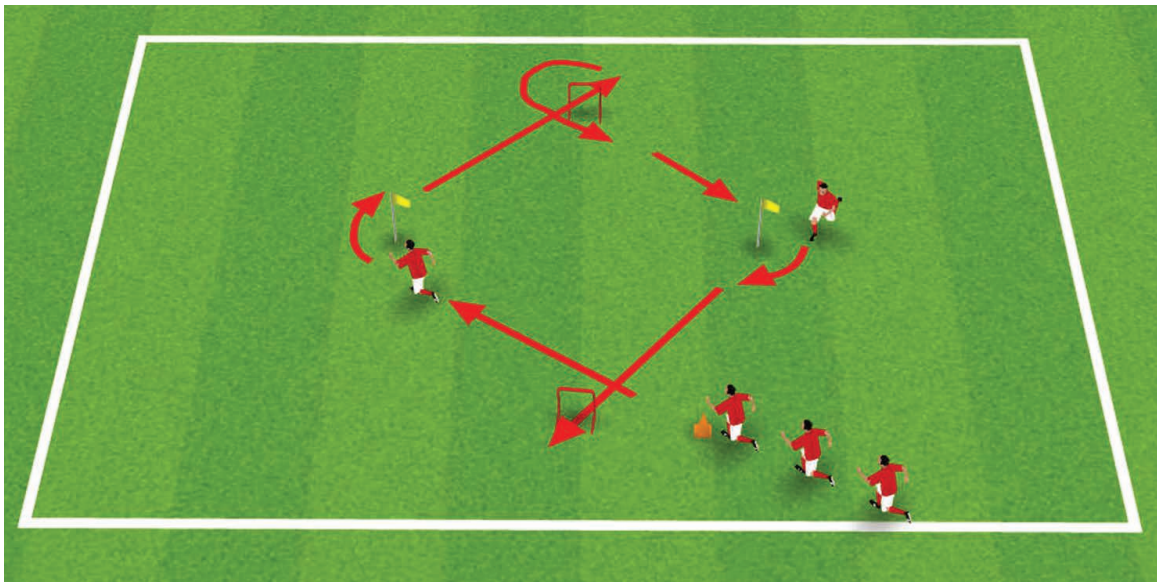
- Agility – running, changing direction, speeding up / slowing down, and stopping.
- Balance – hopping, jumping and landing.
- Coordination – combining different movements, moving with the ball, falling and getting up safely.

At the FUNdamentals stage (U-6/U-8 Girls; U-6/U-10 Boys), general movement activities should make up about 20% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 75-minute training session). At this age, coaches can introduce fun circuits and obstacle courses that combine different movements—such as spinning jumps, sideways jumps and jumping over hurdles—to challenge players in different ways.

TIP

It's important to keep young players active and engaged. In this Tool Kit, you'll find options for each activity that will allow you to switch it up often. Every few minutes, challenge your players with something different that goes beyond the basic drill: have them move in different ways, use time restrictions or have them compete with each other to get them excited and keep them interested.

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 1: "CONES & HURDLES"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players
- Use cones and hurdles alternately to mark out a circuit, as shown.
- Modify the circuit depending on the available equipment (i.e. have players jump over cones or balls and crawl through teammates' legs if hurdles aren't available).

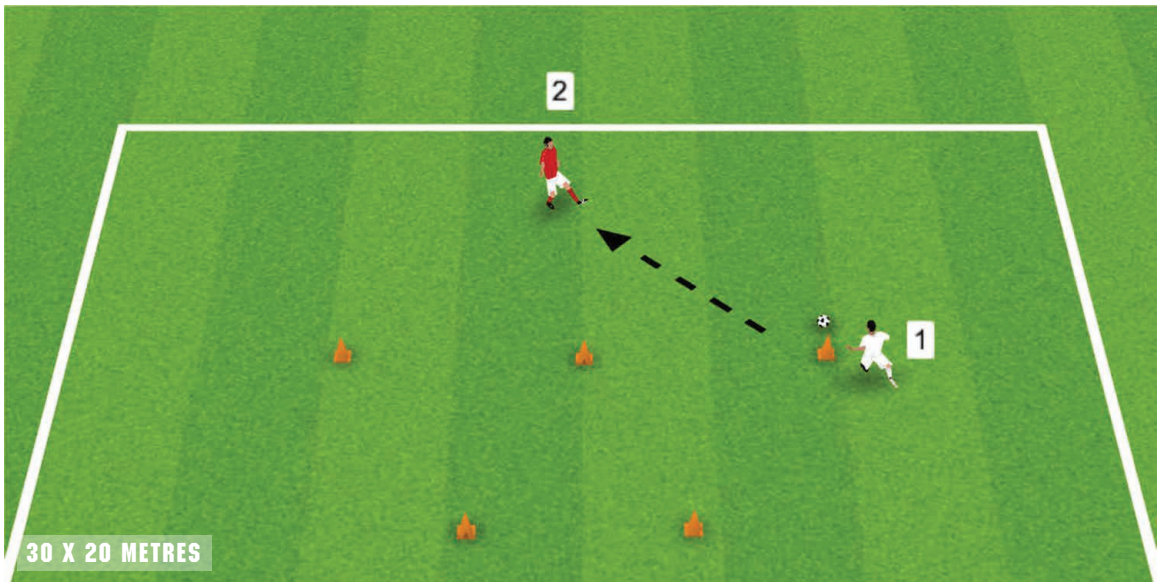
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – finish the circuit as fast as you can (depending on available equipment): **1.** Run around the first cone. **2.** Turn and sprint to the first hurdle, then crawl under it. **3.** Sprint around the second cone. **4.** Jump over the second hurdle. **5.** Sprint to the last hurdle, jump over it and finish! As soon as your feet hit the ground, the next player starts.

OPTIONS:

- Turn it into a race by timing the players as they go through the circuit one at a time.

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 2: "PARTNER PASS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.
- Use cones to mark out a circuit in the shape of a "W", as shown.
- Players move through the circuit one at a time, supported by their partners.

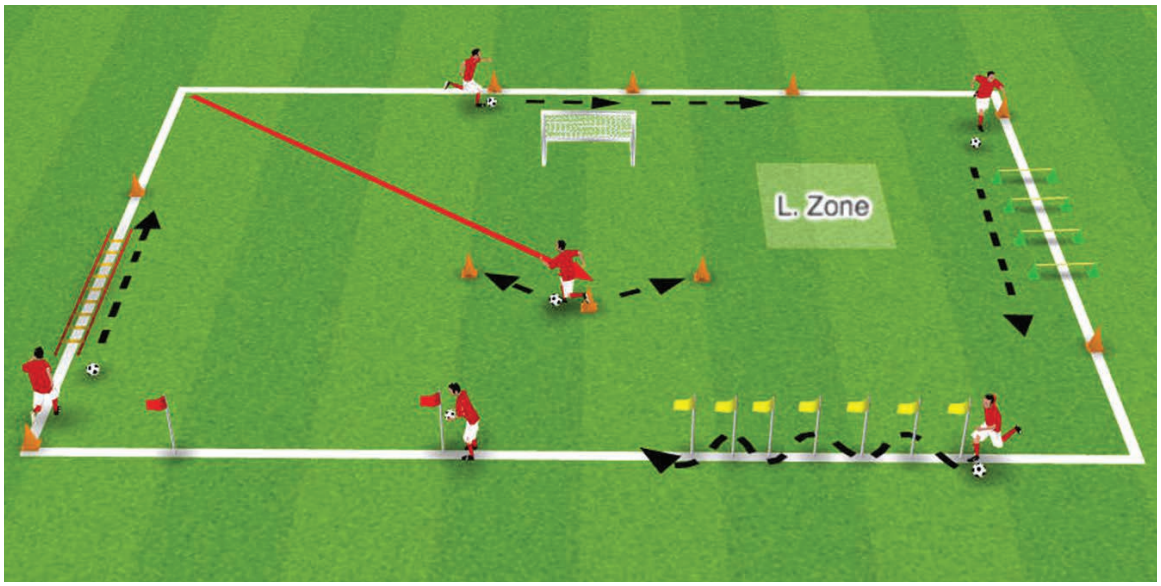
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – Player 1 starts by receiving a pass from Player 2 and passing it back. Then Player 2 follows with the ball on the outside while Player 1 moves through the circuit as quickly as possible, tracing the shape of the letter "W": **1.** Run to the first cone backwards. **2.** Pivot and run forward to the next cone (the middle point of the "W"). Receive a pass from your partner and pass it back before moving on. Continue this pattern (backwards then forwards/pass) to the last cone, then shuffle sideways to the finish.

OPTIONS:

- Players dribble a ball through the circuit instead of receiving passes from their partners.
- Challenge players to pass with one touch (i.e. without controlling the ball first).

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 3: "6 STATION CIRCUIT"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players.
- On a large field, use cones, markers and/or hurdles to set up 6 different skill stations, as shown. Skills may include: **1.** Running with the ball using your right foot. **2.** Running with the ball using your left foot. **3.** Weaving the ball in and out of cones.

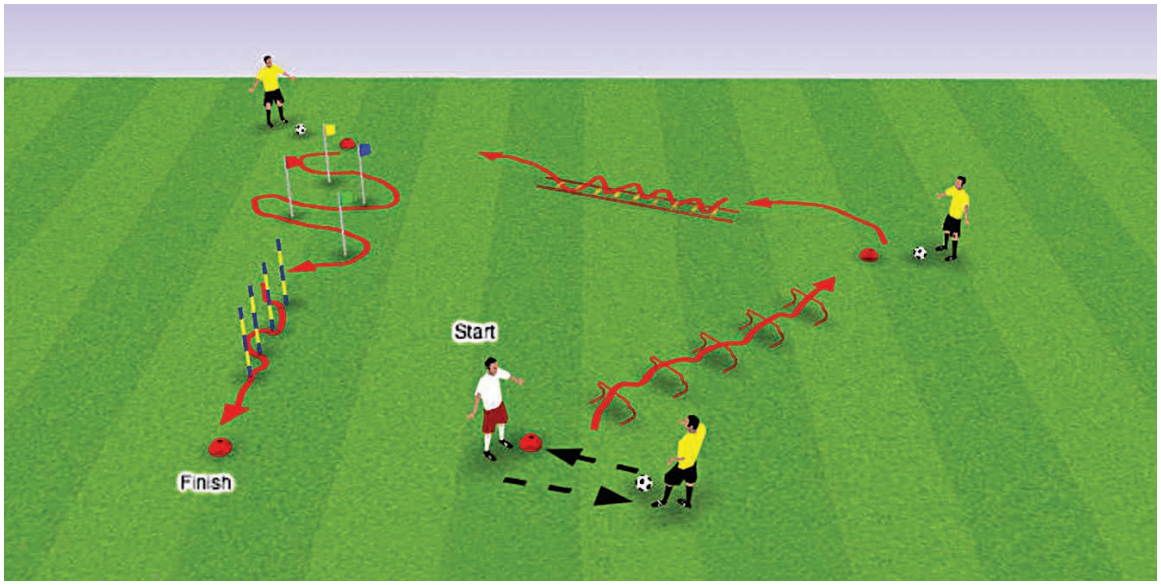
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – players move through the circuit as fast as they can. When the 1st player in line completes Station 1, he/she moves to Station 2 and the 2nd player starts. Continue until all the players have moved through the circuit 3 times.

OPTIONS:

- Introduce a "Learning Zone" as the last stop on the circuit, where players can work on specific skills the coach has identified as needing extra attention. This is an opportunity for the coach to correct players' form, if needed, and to give positive feedback.

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 4: "TRIANGLE FUN!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 3-4.
- Use cones, markers and/or hurdles to mark out a circuit in the shape of a triangle, as shown.
- Players move through the circuit one at a time, supported by 2-3 partners on the outside, each of them with a ball.
- Modify the circuit depending on available equipment.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – move through the circuit as fast as you can: **1.** Start by receiving a pass from a partner and passing the ball back. **2.** Run and jump over 6 mini hurdles. **3.** Receive a pass from a partner and pass back. **4.** Run, then bound through 6 rings set wide apart, placing alternate feet inside each circle. **5.** Receive a pass from a partner and pass back. **6.** Sprint forwards, weaving in and out of 6 cones set wide apart, then 6 set close together. **7.** Receive and pass back to finish.

OPTIONS:

- Add a goal at the end so players have to receive a pass then score to finish.
- Challenge players to pass in one touch (i.e. without controlling the ball first).

2

STAGE 2—FUNDAMENTALS (U-6/U-8 F, U-6/U-10 M)

COORDINATION

A player's coordination will improve by:

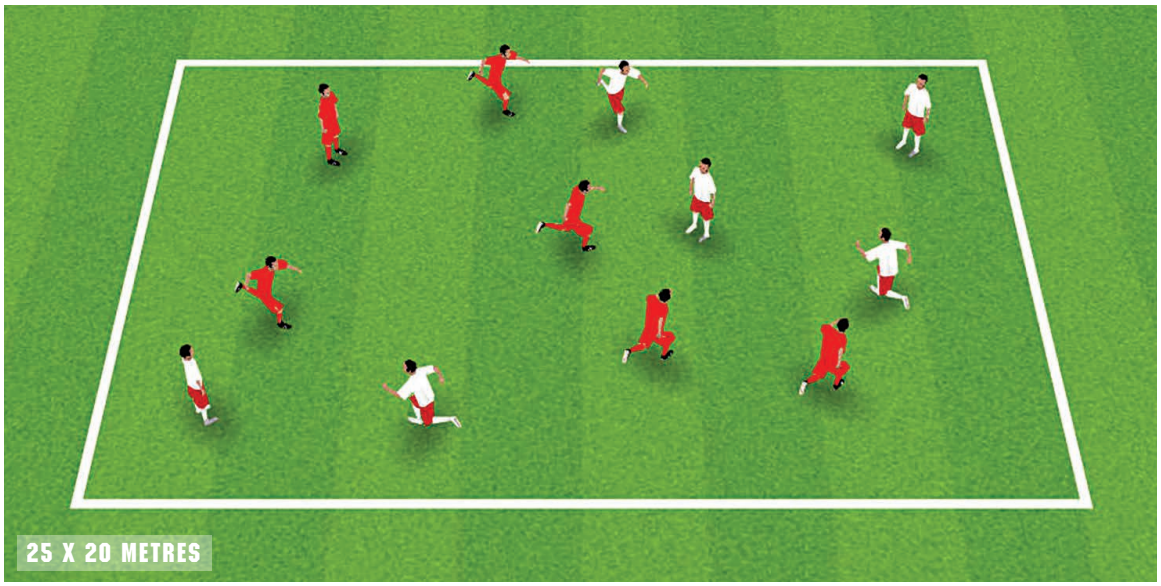
- The use of fun games and activities to develop agility, balance and speed.
- Getting lots of touches on the ball.
- Using all parts of the foot.
- Learning to control the ball in the air.

At the FUNdamentals stage (U-6/U-8 Girls; U-6/U-10 Boys), coordination drills should make up about 20% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 75-minute training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, controlling the ball and passing to improve coordination.

TIP At this stage of development, continuing to build a player's physical literacy (running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing, and catching, etc.) through fun games is key. As players start to become friends with the ball, encourage them to use all 6 parts of the foot (inside, outside, laces, sole, heel, and toe) to control it and to try moving it in different directions.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 1: "CAPTURE THE PINNIES!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams. No ball to start.
- Each player has a pinnie (or an old t-shirt) tucked into his/her shorts, hanging down roughly to the hem of their shorts.

INSTRUCTIONS:

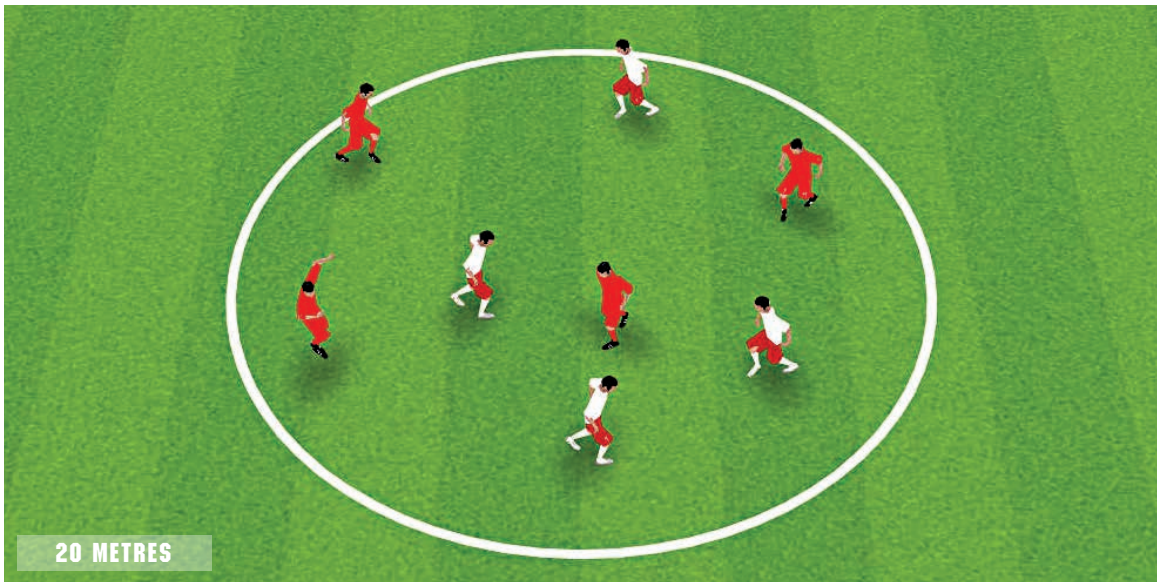
- "Go!" – run around the field and try to "capture" all the opposing team's pinnies by pulling them out of their shorts. The last player with a pinnie gets a point for their team.

OPTIONS:

- Each player has a ball, and must dribble it around the field while trying to capture the pinnies.
- Introduce a "knockout" format, where players who lose their pinnie (or have their ball kicked out of bounds) have to leave the field. The last remaining player wins a point for their team.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 2: "REACT—FAST!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players in a circle; no ball to start.

INSTRUCTIONS:

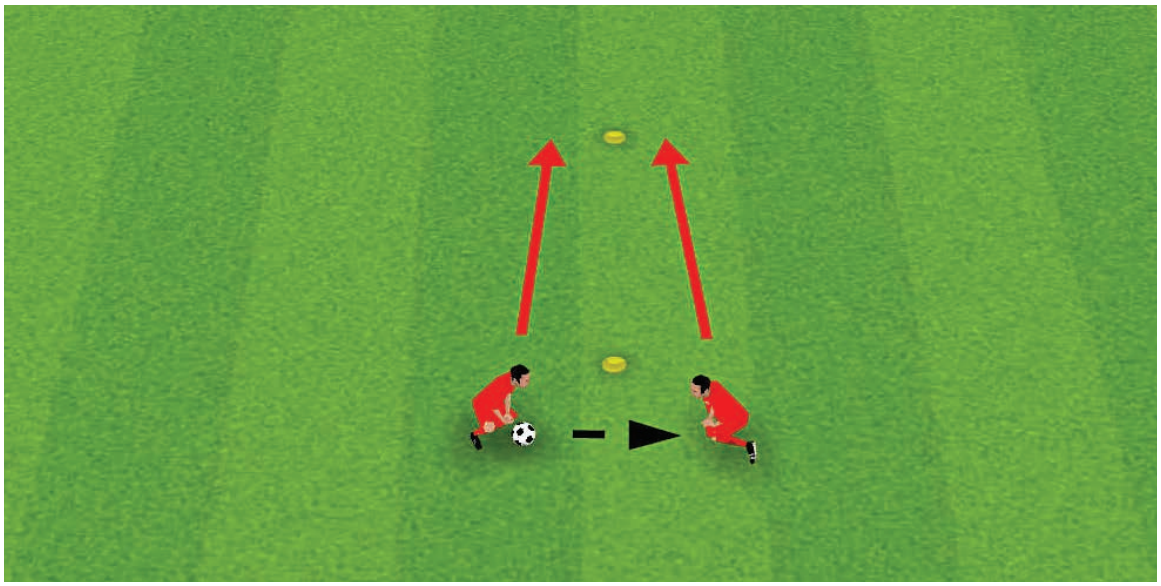
- "Go!" – players run freely around the circle.
- "Listen!"– change the way you're moving on the coach's command: **1.** Run backwards. **2.** Shuffle to the side. **3.** Jump in place. **4.** Sit down and get up fast; keep running. **5.** Knees up. **6.** Kick your heels back. **7.** Touch the inside of your foot, etc.

OPTIONS:

- Each player starts by dribbling a ball around the field.
- "Listen!" – **1.** Turn and dribble in the other direction. **2.** Dribble to the side. **3.** Jump in place with the ball between your knees. **4.** Throw the ball up and catch it. **5.** Drop the ball, volley it with your thigh, then catch it, etc. Continue dribbling.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 3: "DEADLY DUOS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.
- Place 2 markers about 5 metres apart. Players start on opposite sides of one marker.

INSTRUCTIONS:

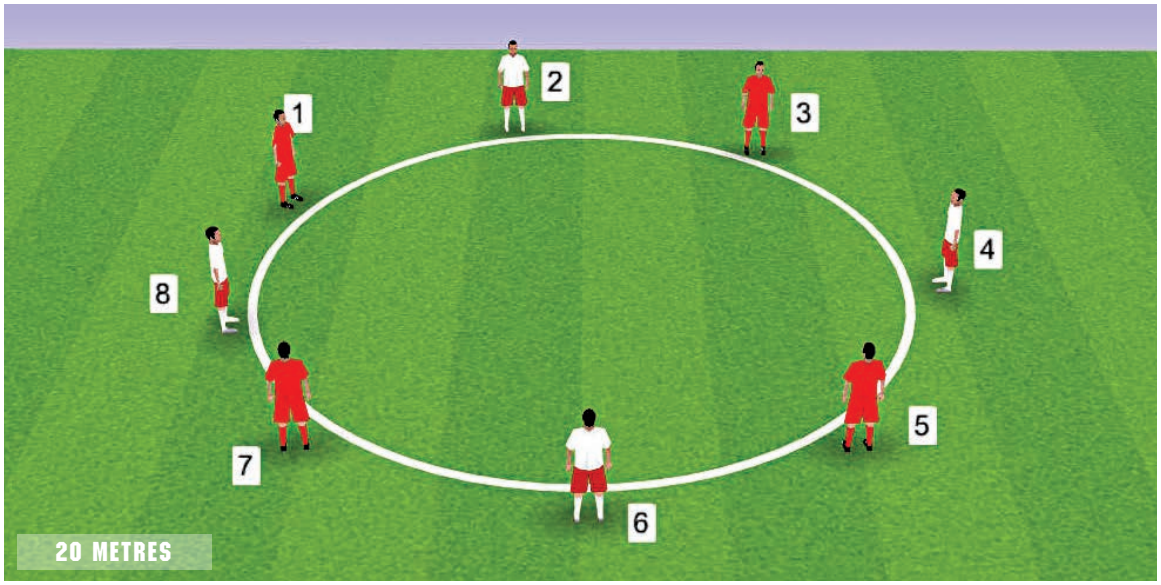
- "Go!" – roll the ball to your partner along the ground. Your partner picks it up and both of you run as fast as you can to the next marker. Then your partner rolls the ball to you and you both run back. Continue for 30 seconds.
- "Throw it!" – instead of rolling the ball, throw it. Continue for 30 seconds.

OPTIONS:

- Volley! – throw the ball to your partner so he/she has to volley it back with the foot before you both run. Repeat when you get to the other marker. After 30 seconds, switch roles.
- "Pass!" – pass the ball to your partner and he/she will dribble it up the field, around the next marker and back. When they pass the ball back to you, it's your turn! Continue for 30 seconds.
- "Chase!" – partners start at opposite markers, one of them with the ball. The player with the ball has to dribble clockwise around the other marker while their partner chases them around the same circuit.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: "AROUND THE WORLD"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, sitting or standing in a large circle.
- Number each player (1-12).

INSTRUCTIONS:

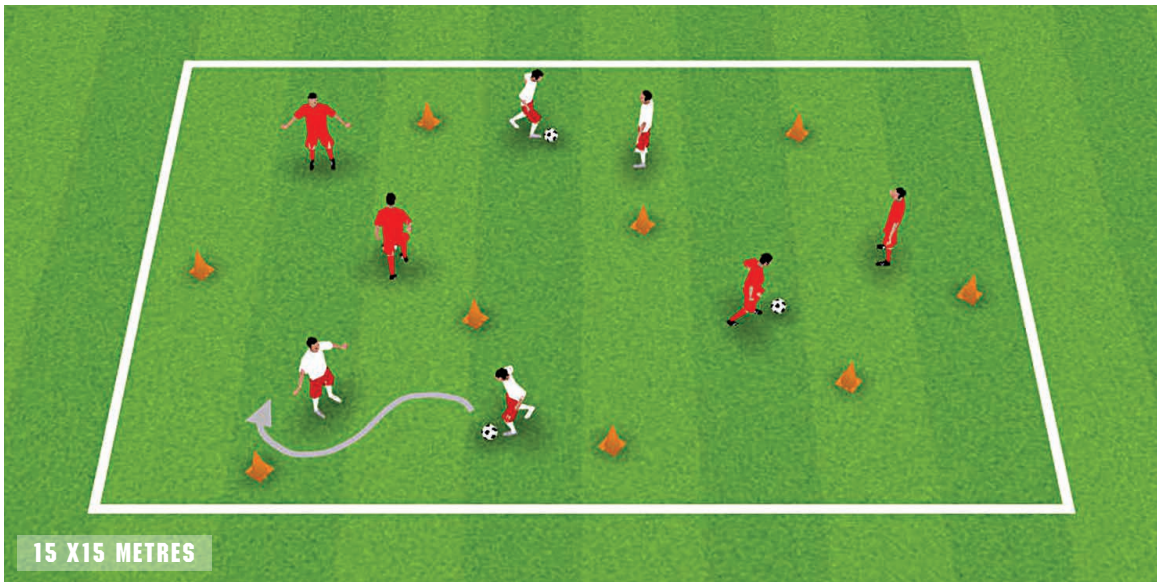
- "Go!" – when the coach calls your number, travel around the outside of the circle and return to your spot as fast as you can.
- "Listen!" – move as your coach tells you to. **1.** Run forwards. **2.** Run backwards. **3.** Shuffle to the side. **4.** Hop with your feet together. **5.** Skip, etc.

OPTIONS:

- Each player has a ball: "Forwards" – players dribble the ball forward around the circle. "Turn!" – players turn and dribble in the other direction. "Weave!' – players must weave in and out of their seated teammates as they dribble around the circle.
- Players use only their left or right foot, or a certain part of the foot (i.e., inside, outside, laces) to move the ball.
- "Race!" – call out 2 numbers at once. The first player back wins!

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 1: "THE WEAVE"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; 1 ball per pair.
- Distribute cones randomly around the field. One partner starts with the ball, the other stands with fellow "resting" players on the field amongst the cones.

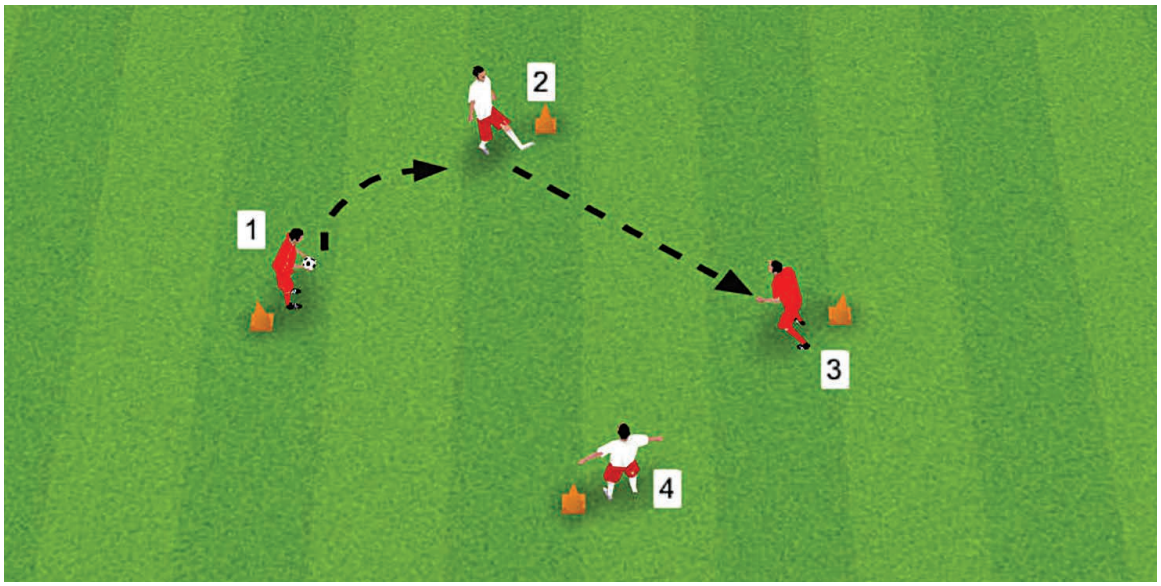
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – players with the ball begin dribbling freely around the field.
- "Listen!" – follow the coach's instructions: **1.** "Weave!" – dribble around the resting players, weaving in and out. **2.** "Circle!" – weave around a resting player then fully circle one cone. **3.** "Change!" – leave your ball where it is, run to a teammate's ball and continue dribbling. **4.** "Legs!" – pass the ball through your partner's legs from wherever you are, then crawl through his/her legs to continue.
- "Switch!" – partners swap roles after 2 minutes.

OPTIONS:

- Players start by throwing the ball in the air and controlling with their chest, thigh or foot before dribbling.
- "Pass!" – players pass to their partner from wherever they are. The "resting" partner picks up the ball and throws it back. The receiving player controls the ball with the chest, thigh or foot before dribbling.

COORDINATION—CONTROL
ACTIVITY 2: "DIAMONDS"



SET UP:

- Players work in groups of 4; 1 ball per group.
- Use cones to mark out a diamond shape. Number players from 1-4.

INSTRUCTIONS:

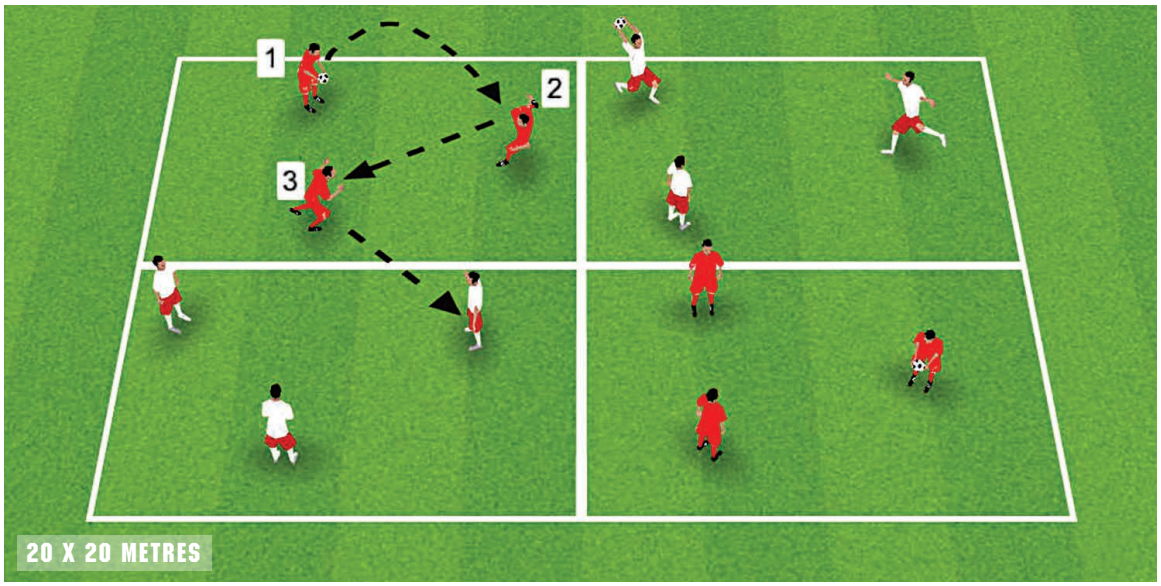
- Players move the ball in a clockwise direction.
- "Go!" – Player 1 throws the ball to Player 2, who controls it in 2 touches (i.e. thigh to foot) and passes to Player 3.
- Player 3 picks up the ball and throws it to Player 4, who controls it in 2 touches and passes to Player **1.** Repeat 3 times, then switch so Player 2 starts with the ball.
- Pass with your other foot.
- "Change direction!" – start moving the ball counter-clockwise.

OPTIONS:

- Have each player follow his/her throw or pass (i.e., Player 1 passes/throws to Player 2, then moves into Player 2's position). Continue until all 4 players are back at their starting positions.
- Player 2 starts with the ball on the next turn, going in the other direction around the diamond.
- Instead of ground passes, have players try to keep the ball in the air and use their foot to volley it around the diamond, catching the ball in between if necessary.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 3: "RAPID TRANSFER"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 3-4; 1 ball per group.
- Number players 1-3 (or 4)

INSTRUCTIONS:

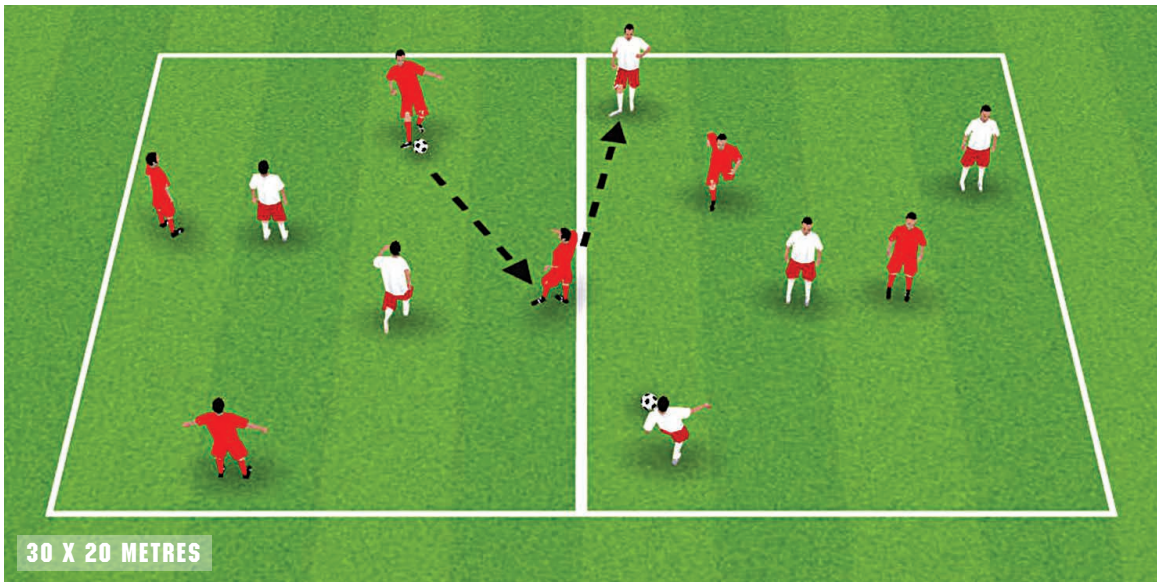
- "Go!" – use your hands to pass the ball from Player 1 to Player 2 to Player 3, etc.
- "Transfer!" – at any time, a player in one group can toss their ball for a player in the adjacent square to catch. This is a trigger for the other 3 groups to transfer their balls in the same direction into the next square, until each group again has one ball. Continue passing in your group until the next transfer.

OPTIONS:

- When the ball is transferred from one square to another, have the receiving player control the ball using the chest, thigh or foot, rather than catching it.
- "No hands!" – players use their feet to pass and control the ball within their group, and to transfer to another group.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 4: "RONDO SWITCH"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 groups; 1 ball per group.
- Each group has 4 attackers and 2 defenders, and play in adjacent squares.

INSTRUCTIONS:

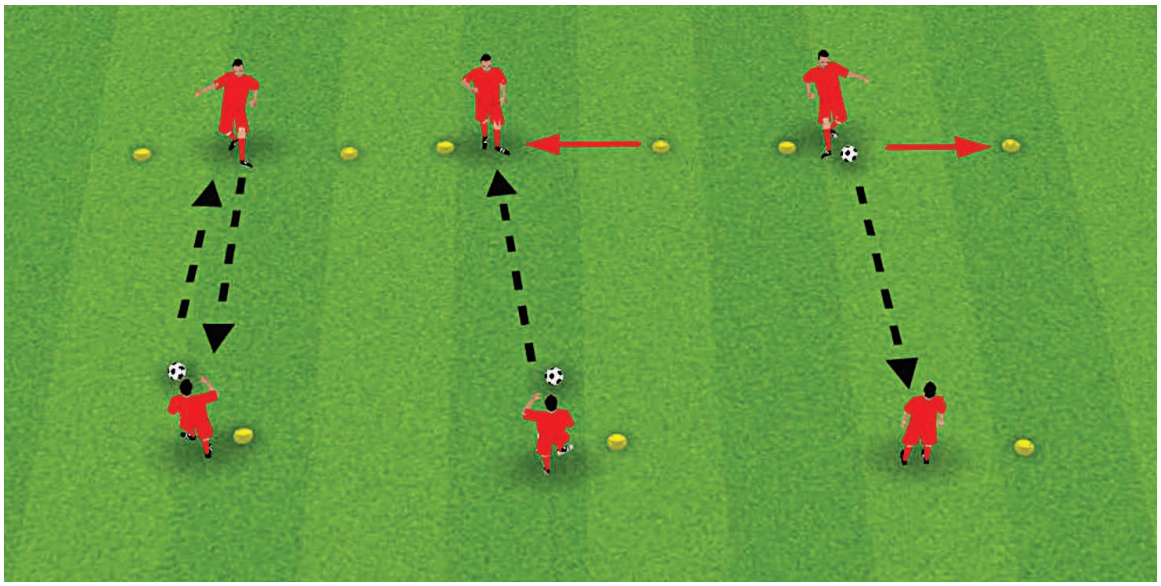
- "Go!" – attackers try to complete 5 passes in a row. Defenders must win the ball 3 times before swapping roles with the attackers.
- "Transfer!" – any player, at any time, can pass the ball to someone in the next square—a trigger for players in the receiving square to immediately pass their ball to an attacker on the other side.

OPTIONS:

- Give each defender a ball so they have to dribble while trying to intercept the attackers' passes.
- Use additional defenders to create a 4 v 3 or 4 v 4 situation.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: "LATERAL MOVES"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs.
- Use 2 cones to mark out a gate at one end, with a single marker centered opposite.
- One partner (Player 1) starts at the single marker, the other (Player 2) stands in the middle of the gate.

INSTRUCTIONS:

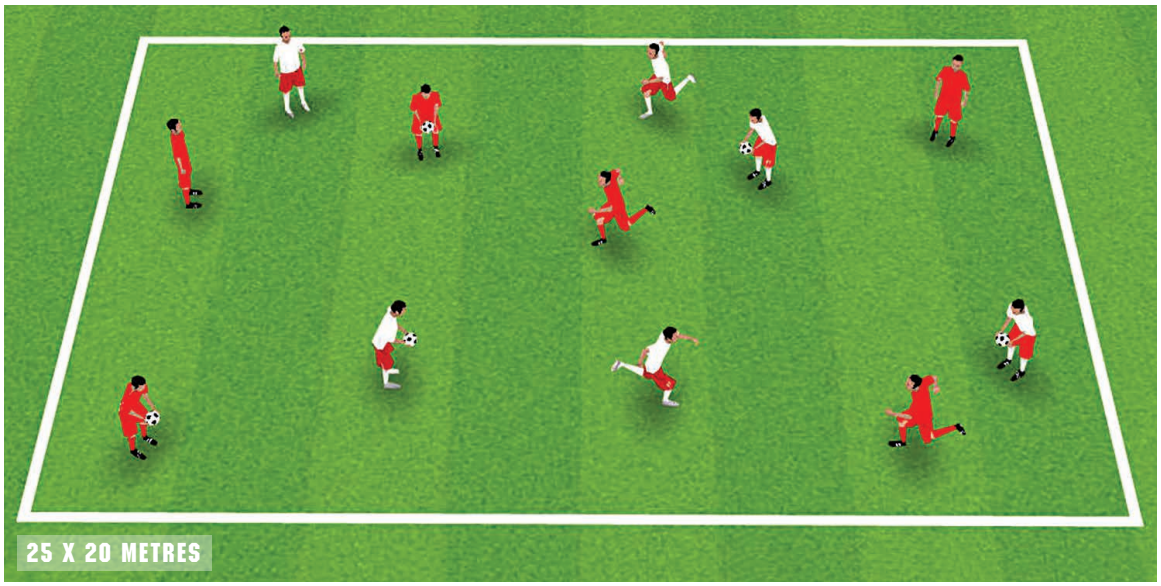
- "Go!" – Player 1 passes to Player 2 who controls the ball with the foot and quickly passes it back. Player 2 moves laterally to touch the cone on his/her right. Player 1 passes the ball quickly toward the centre of the gate, so Player 2 has to either control or pass while moving. Player 2 passes back to Player 1 again, and moves laterally to touch the other cone. Continue with Player 2 moving laterally after each pass.
- "Switch!" – after 5 passes back and forth, players swap roles.
- After touching the cone, the receiving player passes back using only one touch on the front foot. The passer then plays it back in one touch, if possible.

OPTIONS:

- Instead of passing to the centre, Player 1 passes to one of the side cones. Player 2 runs to it and passes back, in one touch if possible. Then Player 1 passes to the cone on the opposite side.
- "Throw it!" – instead of ground passes, Player 1 throws the ball to Player 2 to control with the chest, thigh or foot and pass back, or volley back with the foot or thigh.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 2: "LAST PLAYER STANDING"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams. No ball to start.
- Each player has a pinnie (or an old t-shirt) tucked into his/her shorts, hanging down roughly to the hem of their shorts.

INSTRUCTIONS:

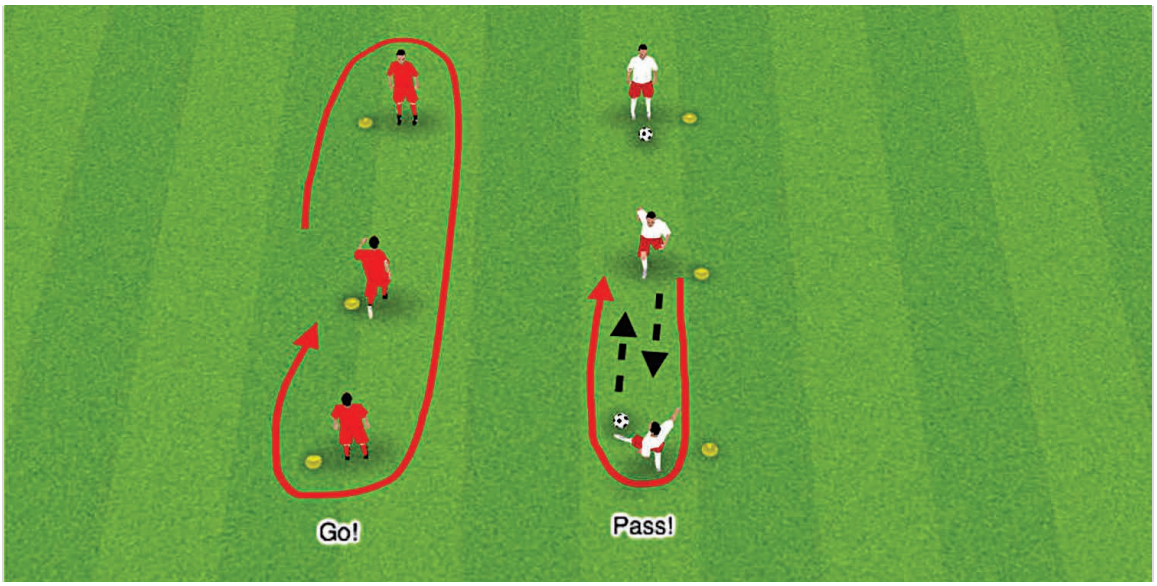
- "Go!" – run around the field and try to take all the opposing team's pinnies by pulling them out of their shorts. The last player that still has a pinnie in their shorts gets a point for their team.

OPTIONS:

- Introduce 5 soccer balls: instead of taking pinnies, players can eliminate the other team by passing one of the balls and hitting an opposing team player below the knees (as in dodge ball).
- Combine the above exercises so that players can either take pinnies or pass to hit below the knee to eliminate opposing players.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 3: "RACE TO PASS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in teams of 3; 2 balls per team.
- Teams line up parallel to each other on the field, with one player in the middle (the "racer").

INSTRUCTIONS:

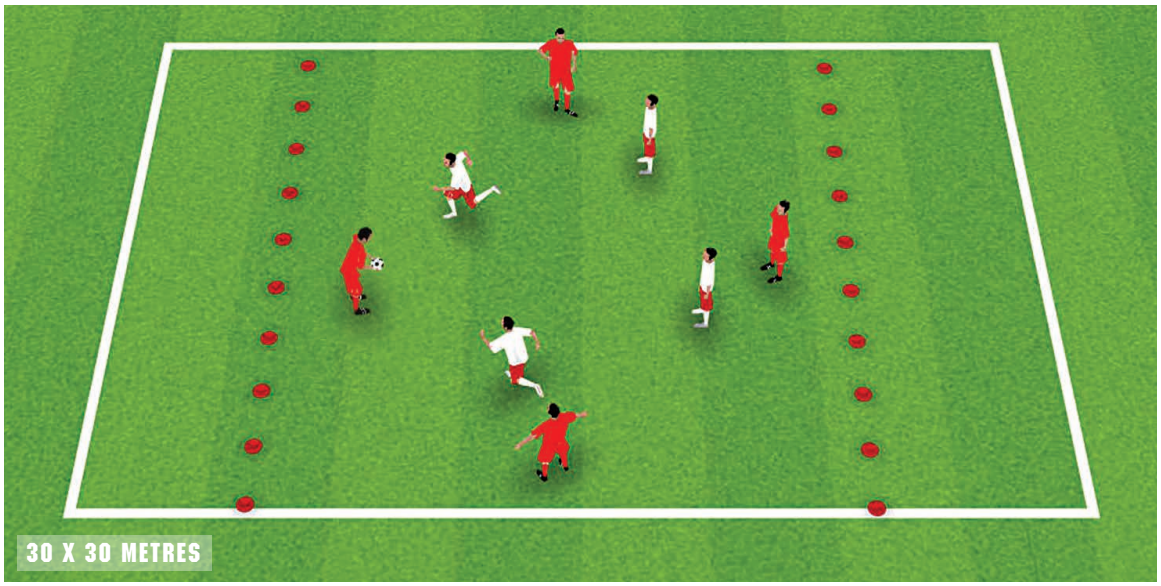
- End players each have a ball.
- "Go!" – racers have to sprint to one end, run around one teammate, then sprint to the other end and run around the other teammate. Repeat 3 times.
- Pass!" – racers run towards one teammate, who passes the ball. The racers control the pass with one foot and pass back with the other before running around that teammate and repeating at the other end.
- Repeat 3 times then run back to the middle cone. The first racer back to the middle gets a point for their team.
- "Switch!" – players swap positions until all 3 have had a turn as the racer. The team with the most points wins!

OPTIONS:

- Have players make one-touch passes.
- Instead of ground passes, have end players throw the ball to the racer, who has to control the ball with the chest, thigh or foot before passing it back, or volleying it back with their foot.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 4: "INTO THE END ZONE"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- One team starts with the ball in their hands.
- "Go!" – score a point by moving the ball up the field by throwing it back and forth with your teammates, finishing with a pass into the other team's end zone. If you have the ball, stand still until you pass it.
- Introduce the offside rule: Remember, you can't wait in the end zone to receive a pass, but you can run across the opposing team's line to receive it after the ball is thrown.

OPTIONS:

- Put a neutral player in each end zone, so teams have to pass the ball from one end zone to the other to score a point.
- "No hands!" – use your feet to move the ball up the field. Teams must pass at least 3 times before making a pass into the end zone.

2

STAGE 2—FUNDAMENTALS (U-6/U-8 F, U-6/U-10 M)

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

- Are FUN!
- Will motivate your players more than any other activity.
- Should involve small groups playing in small areas.
- Should involve an age-appropriate level of decision-making (how and when to pass the ball to other teammates).
- Provide players with the best chance to practice individual skills.

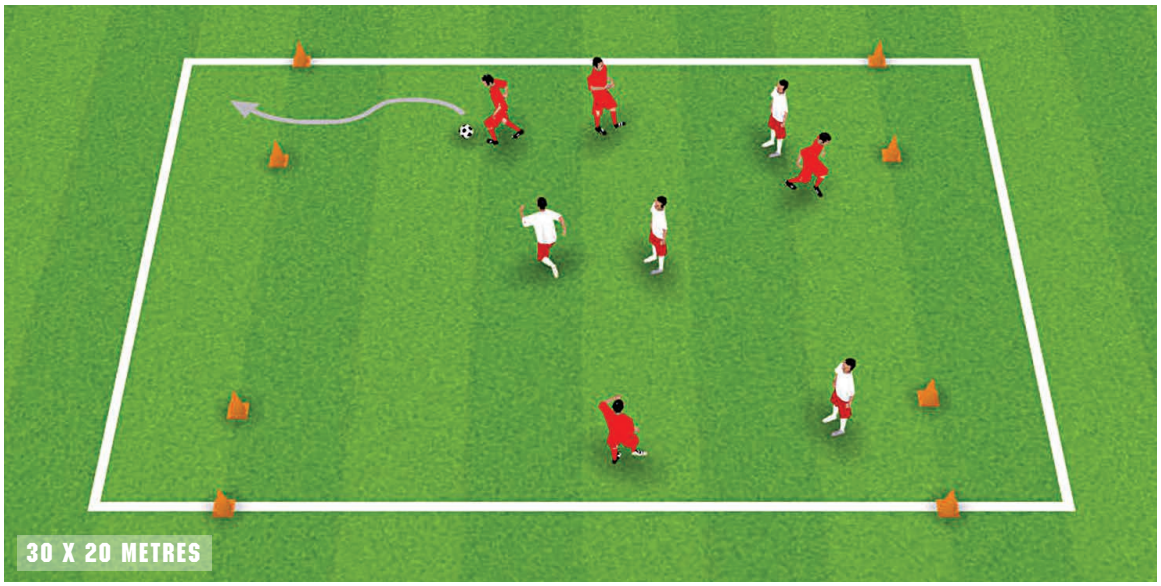
At the FUNdamentals stage (U-6/U-8 Girls; U-6/U-10 Boys), small-sided games should make up about 40% of practice time (i.e., 30 minutes of a 75-minute training session). The following games are designed to work on dribbling, passing and shooting skills.

TIP

Many of the activities in this Tool Kit revolve around individual or group competitions. If pinnies aren't available to distinguish competing players from one another, old t-shirts in colours that differ from the team's uniform work too!

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 1: "THROUGH THE GATES"



SET UP:

- Up to 8 players, in 2 teams; 1 ball.
- Use cones to mark out 4 corner gates.

INSTRUCTIONS:

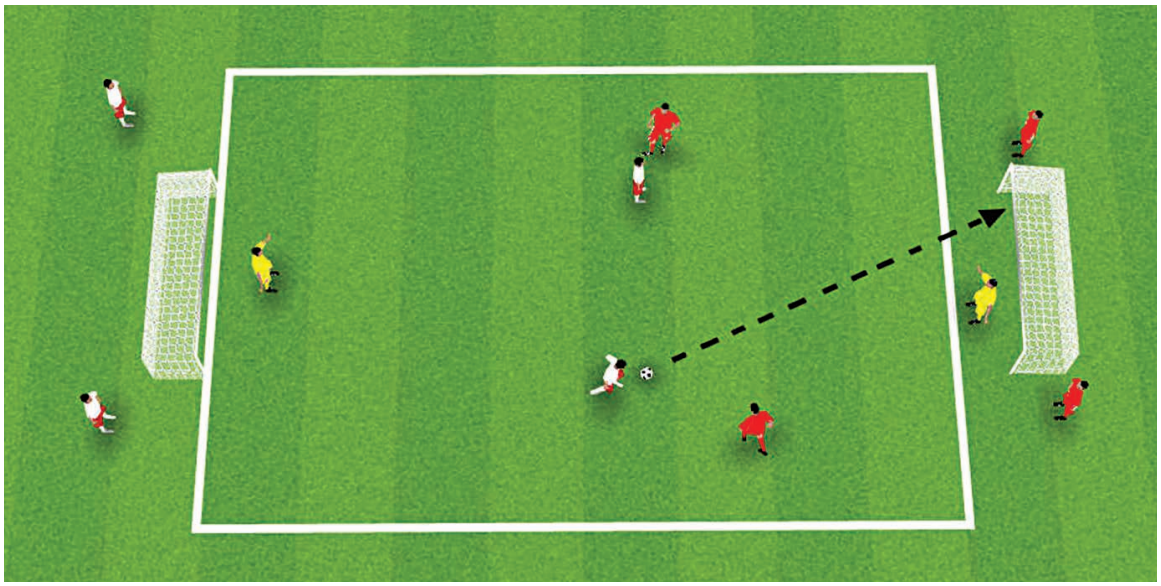
- "Go!" – your team scores a point by dribbling the ball through one of the other team's gates. Work with your teammates in an attacking "triangle," where the two players on the outside support the dribbling player by getting into space and providing options for passes.

OPTIONS:

- Allow players to pass to a teammate through a gate to score.
- Add a third gate in the middle of the field that either team can use to score.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 2: "DUO ATTACKS"



SET UP:

- Up to 8 players, in 2 teams, plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Players work in pairs within each team. One pair starts on the field, the other stands on either side of their team's goal.

INSTRUCTIONS:

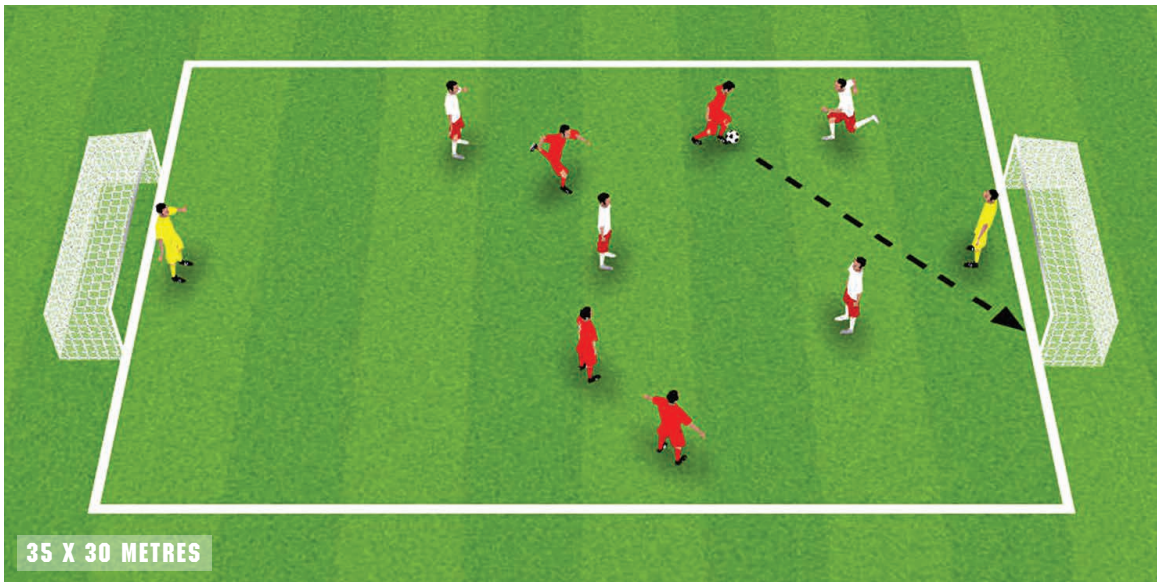
- "Go!" – both teams gain points by scoring on the other team's goal. To start, Team 1 players try to score on Team 2's goal, with Team 2 players defending. If Team 2 wins the ball, they try to score on Team 1's goal. When the ball is kicked out of play (i.e. it goes out of bounds or one team shoots and misses), the 2 players on the other team come out from beside the goal to relieve their teammates and take possession of the ball.

OPTIONS:

- Rotate goalkeepers.
- The players with the ball have to shoot within 10 seconds of gaining possession.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 3: "SOCCER RUGBY"



SET UP:

- Two teams of 4 players plus 2 goalkeepers.

INSTRUCTIONS:

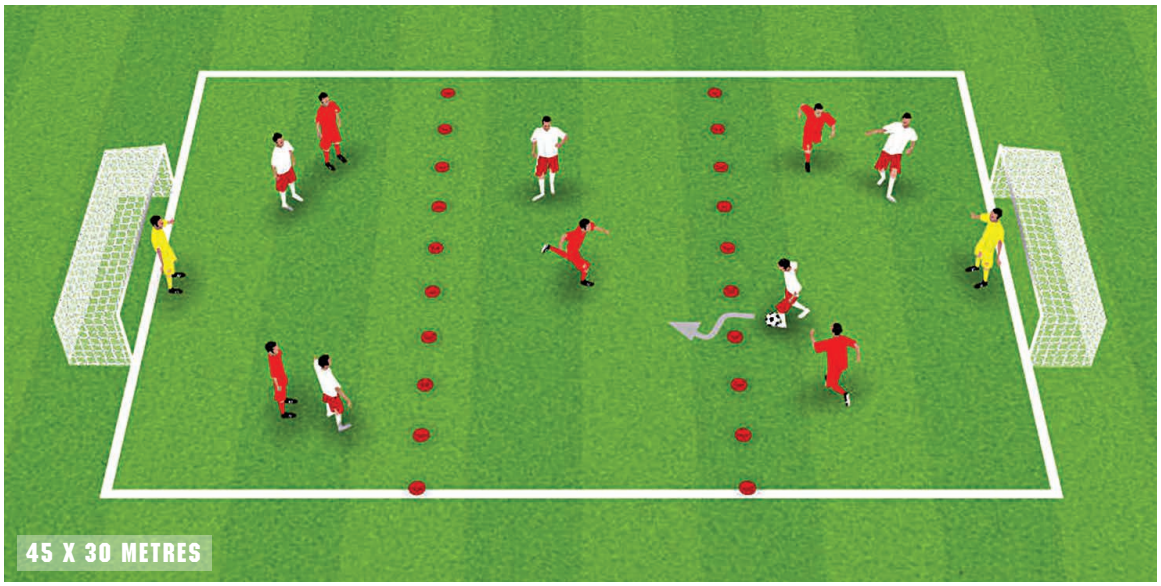
- "Go!" – proceed with a normal soccer game but players can't pass the ball forward, they can only dribble forward before shooting on goal. Teammates provide support from behind or beside the dribbler (i.e., they find open space to receive a pass), as in rugby.

OPTIONS:

- Rotate goalkeepers.
- An attacking player must dribble past at least one defender before shooting on goal.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: "3 ZONE FUN"



SET UP:

- Up to 10 players, in 2 teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Use cones to mark out 3 equal zones on the field.

INSTRUCTIONS:

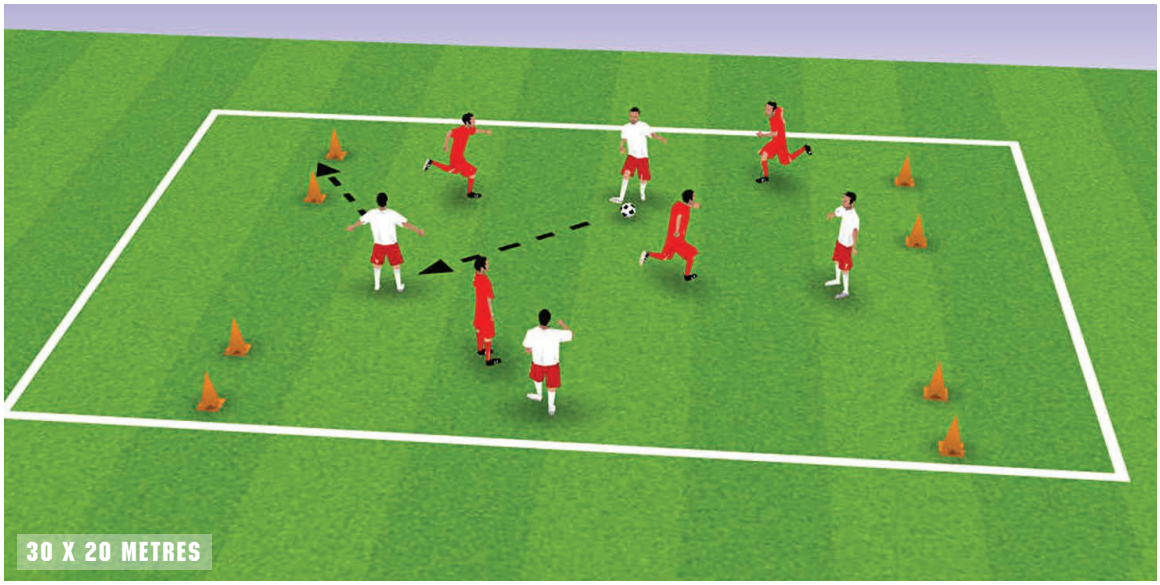
- "Go!" – to start, players are distributed as shown in the three zones. Proceed with a normal soccer game but players can only leave their zone by dribbling. If a team loses the ball, all the players on that team must return to their original zones.

OPTIONS:

- Rotate goalkeepers.
- An attacking player must dribble past at least one defender before shooting on goal.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: "GATE PASS"



SET UP:

- Eight players, in 2 equal teams.
- Four corner gates marked out with cones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

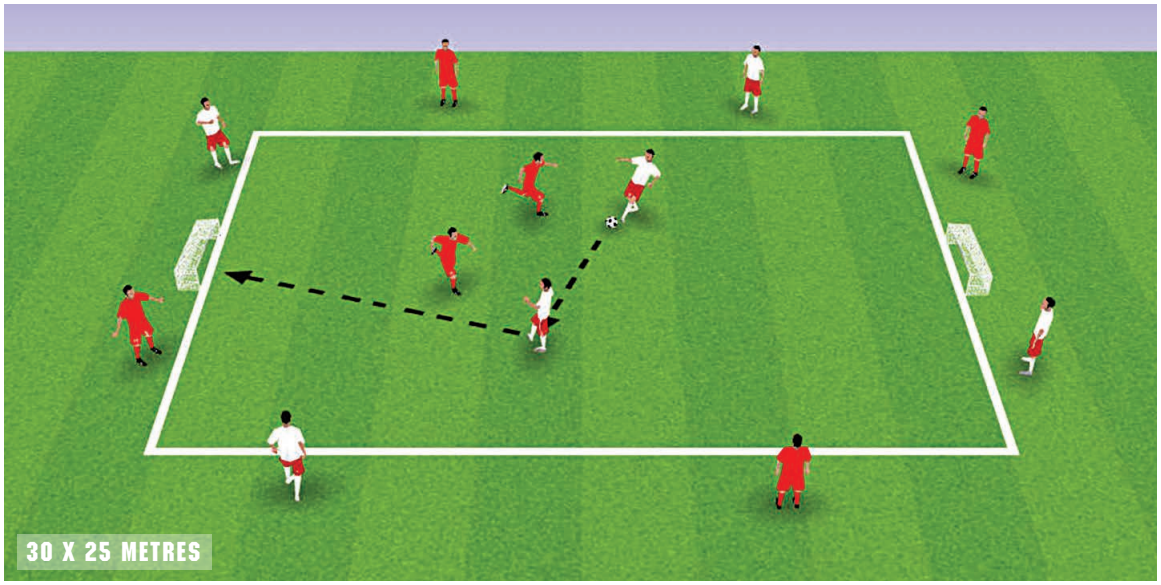
- "Go!" – score a point by passing the ball through one of the other team's gates. When your team has the ball, work with your teammates in a triangle, with the two side players getting into space for a pass to support the teammate with the ball.

OPTIONS:

- Players must pass through the gate to a teammate (who receives it under control) to score a point.
- Add a 3rd gate in the middle of the field where either team can score.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 2: "EDGE WORK"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 equal teams.
- Number each player 1-6.
- Players start around the edge of the field (no players from the same team can stand next to each other).

INSTRUCTIONS:

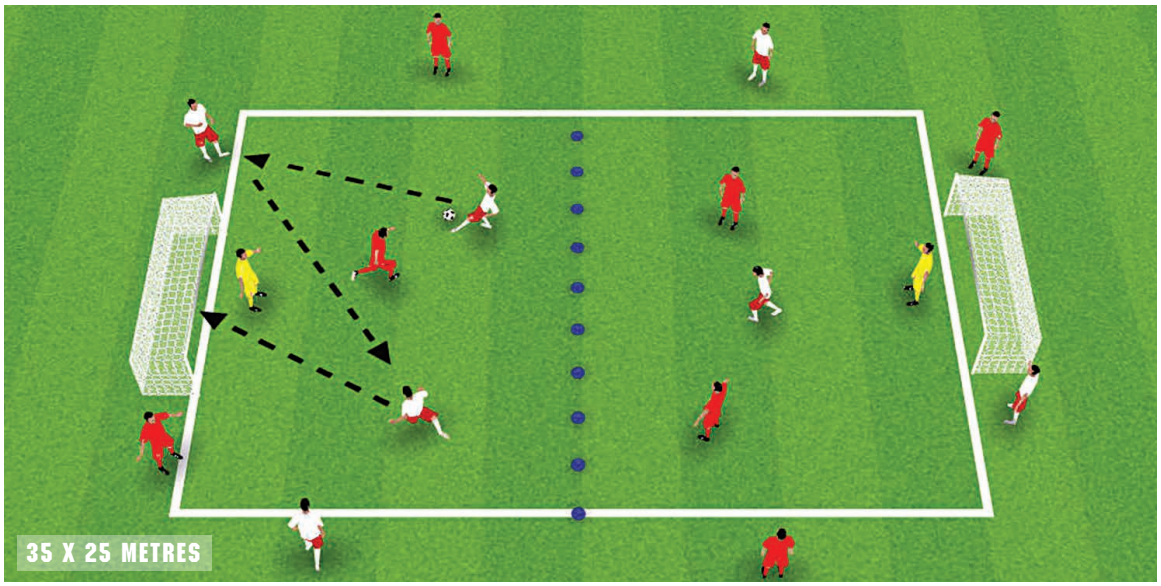
- "Go!" – the coach shouts out 2 numbers and the corresponding players run onto the field to play 2 v 2 and try to score on the other team's goal. Players must make 3 consecutive passes before shooting on goal. The team with the most goals wins!
- "Switch!" – when the ball goes out of play or a goal is scored, call the next 2 numbers and continue until all players have had at least one turn.

OPTIONS:

- Award an extra point if a team makes 5 consecutive passes.
- Allow players on the field to pass to teammates around the edge, and award a goal if all the players on one team get a touch without the opponent winning the ball.
- Add a goalkeeper at each end.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 3: "2 V 1 HALF-FIELD ATTACK"



SET UP:

- Up to 14 players, in 2 equal teams; 1 goalkeeper per team.

INSTRUCTIONS:

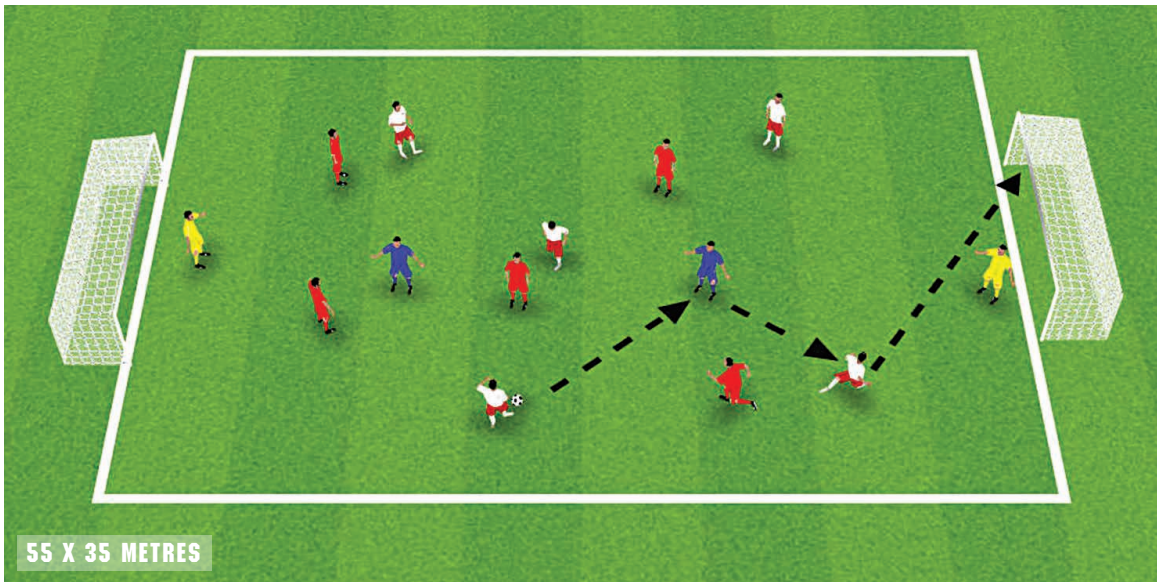
- The 2 attackers and 1 defender in each half cannot leave their respective zones. Position additional support players around the edge of the field, on the sidelines or beside the goals (no 2 players from the same team can stand next to each other).
- "Go!" – proceed with a 2 v 1 game. Attacking players can also pass to their teammates around the edge of the field. Remember: try to control and pass in just 2 touches!
- "Switch!" – rotate players on and off the field every 3-4 minutes, and swap roles frequently. Continue until all players have had a turn as attackers and defenders.

OPTIONS:

- Rotate goalkeepers.
- Add players to create a 4 v 2 and, eventually, a 4 v 3 game if attackers need the additional challenge.
- Allow support players to come onto the field when they receive a pass, to add an additional attacking player. If the other team wins the ball, that player returns to the edge of the field.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 4: "DOUBLE NEUTRAL"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams; 1 goalkeeper per team.
- Play up to 5 v 5, with 2 additional neutral players (in different coloured pinnies or t-shirts).

INSTRUCTIONS:

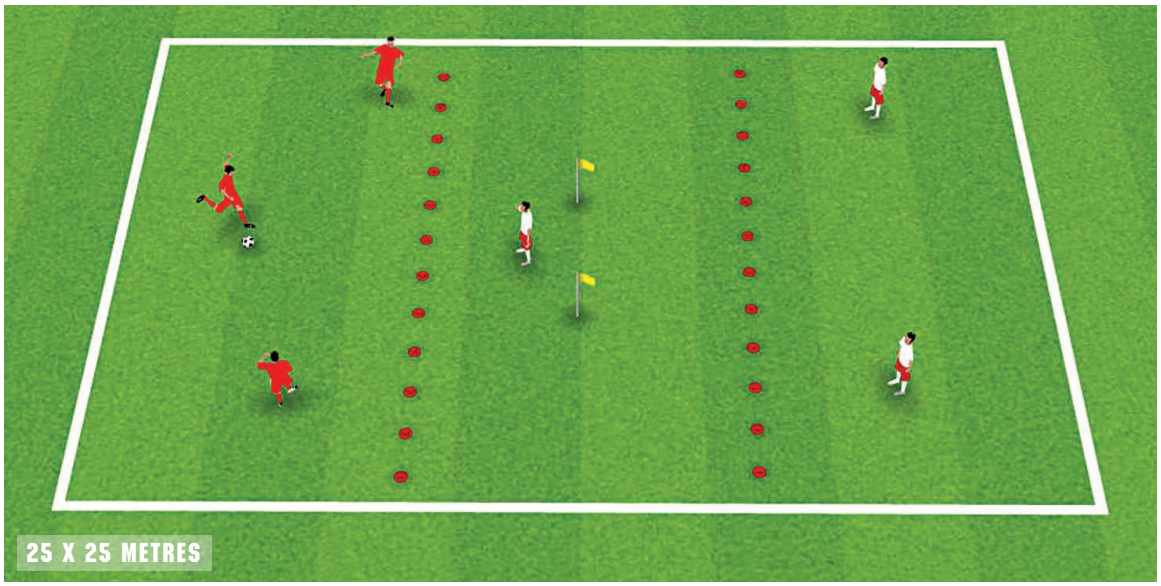
- "Go!" – proceed with a normal soccer game, with neutral players supporting whichever team has the ball.
- When the ball goes out of bounds, use kick-ins rather than throw-ins to reinforce proper passing technique.
- Teams must make at least 3 consecutive passes before shooting on goal.
- Try to pass quickly in just 2 touches (one to control the ball, the other to pass).

OPTIONS:

- Rotate goalkeepers.
- Remove the neutral players and play 6 v 6.
- Teams must make at least 5 consecutive passes before shooting on goal.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 1: "SHOOT ON SIGHT"



SET UP:

- Two teams of 3 players each.
- Use cones to divide the field into 3 equal zones. In the middle zone, use 2 flags or cones to mark out a goal. Team 1 players are the attackers and start with the ball. Team 2 players start as the defenders.

INSTRUCTIONS:

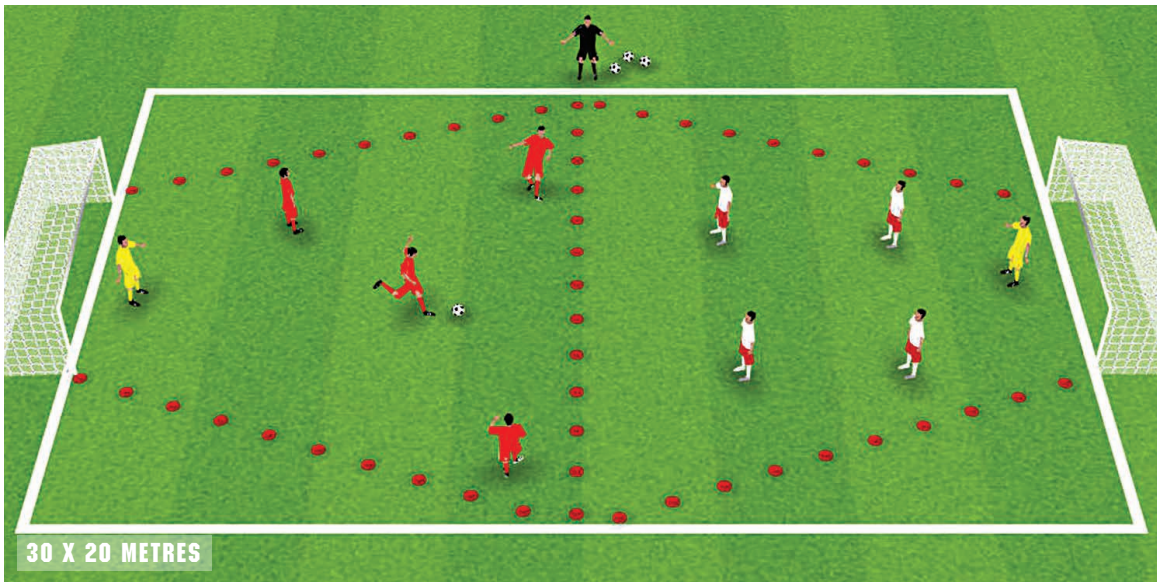
- "Go!" – one player from Team 2 goes into the middle zone as the goalkeeper. Team 1 tries to score. After each shot on goal (unless the shot rebounds back into the attacking team's zone), the teams switch roles.
- Players must shoot from inside their zone.

OPTIONS:

- Teams get an extra point if they score a one-touch goal (i.e. pass to a teammate who shoots with his first touch).
- Add a defender to support the goalkeeper and create a 3 v 1 game.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 2: "SHOOT THE DISTANCE"



SET UP:

- Eight players, in 2 teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- Use cones in diagonal lines on both sides of the field to narrow the playing area from the halfway mark to the goal posts.

INSTRUCTIONS:

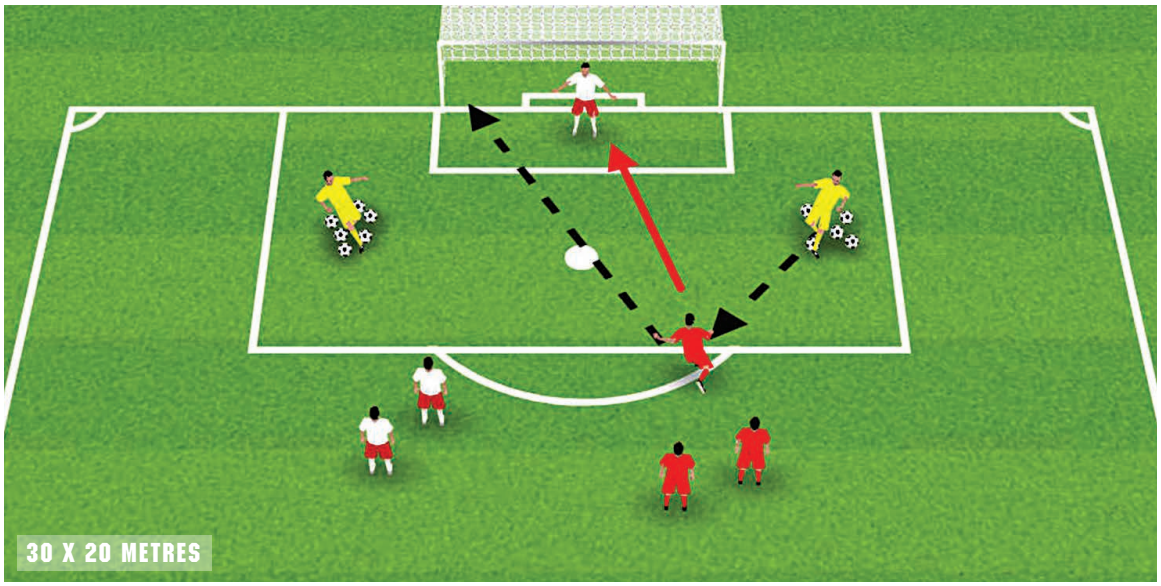
- "Go!" – the coach serves the ball onto the field. Players try to score at every opportunity but can only shoot from their half of the field.

OPTIONS:

- Teams get an extra point if they score a one-touch goal (i.e. pass to a teammate who shoots with his first touch).
- Add a defender in each half who can challenge for the ball.
- Add a striker in each half who tries to score on rebounds.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 3: "SHOOTER, KEEPER, FETCHER"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams; 1 coach/parent per team as the server.
- Teams line up at the edge of the goal area, with the servers slightly ahead on opposite sides. The last player in line for Team 2 acts as goalkeeper for Team 1's first shot.

INSTRUCTIONS:

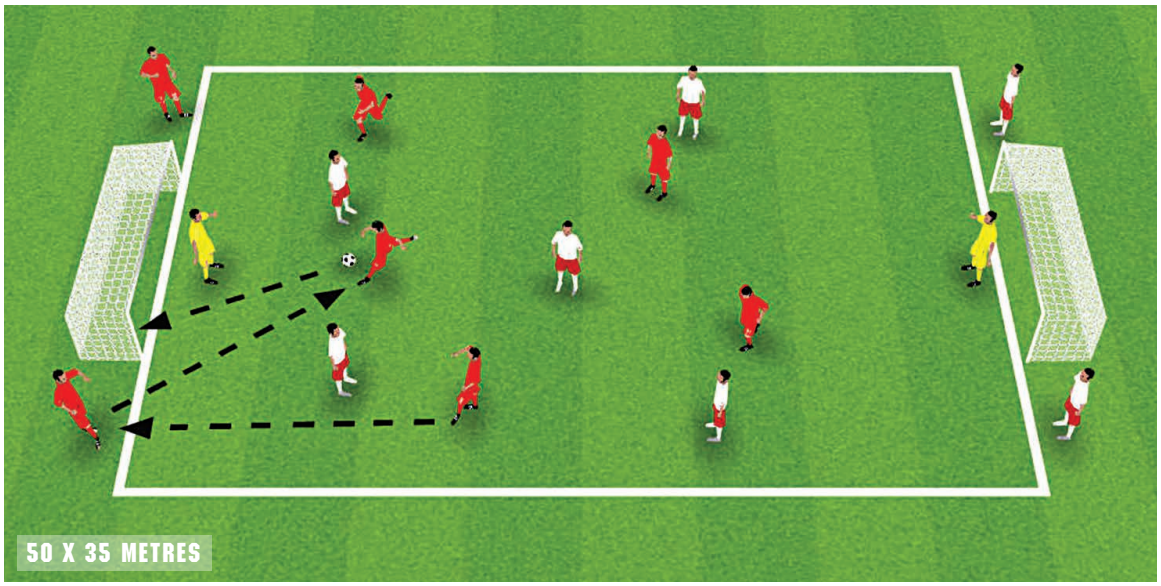
- "Go!" – coach/parent serves the ball to the 1st Team 1 player, who runs forward and shoots on goal. As soon as their shot is done, the Team 1 player becomes the goalkeeper, while the previous goalkeeper fetches the ball, returns it to the server and runs to the back of his/her team's line.
- The other coach/parent serves the ball to the 1st Team 2 player.
- Repeat, with shooters becoming goalkeepers each time.
- Remember to strike the ball on your laces! The first team to score 10 goals wins!

OPTIONS:

- Have servers bounce-pass the ball, so players have to control it with the foot or thigh before shooting.
- Add challenges to work on different shooting skills, i.e.: 1. Shooting with the other foot. 2. Shooting on the first touch without controlling the ball first.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 4: "1-2-TARGET!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in 2 teams; plus 2 goalkeepers.
- 4 players from each team start on the field; 2 target players from each team stand on either side of the opposing team's goal.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – proceed with a normal soccer game, but players can only shoot on goal after receiving a return pass from one of their team's target players.

OPTIONS:

- Rotate the goalkeepers.
- Teams get an extra point if they complete a one-touch goal (i.e. without controlling the ball first).
- Change the position of the target players so they're standing closer to the sidelines in the attacking half of the field.

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CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY IS A ROADMAP FOR PLAYERS OF ALL AGES WHO WANT TO PLAY SOCCER AT THE RECREATIONAL, COMPETITIVE OR EXCEL LEVELS. IT IS BUILT AROUND THE PRINCIPLES OF LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AND ENCOURAGES LIFELONG PARTICIPATION.

LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT STAGES

LEVEL OF PLAY	PHYSICAL LITERACY			
EXCEL	1 Active Start	AGE 4-6		
COMPETITIVE	2 FUNdamentals	AGE 6-8	AGE 6-9	
RECREATIONAL	3 Learning to Train	AGE 8-11	AGE 9-12	
	4 Training to Train	AGE 11-15	AGE 12-16	
	5 Training to Compete	AGE 15-19	AGE 16-20	
	6 Training to Win	AGE 18+	AGE 19+	
	7 Active for Life	ALL AGES		

YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY AND LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT, PLEASE VISIT CANADASOCCER.COM/PATHWAY

CANADA PATHWAY

YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY AND LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT, PLEASE VISIT

CANADASOCCER.COM/PATHWAY

Canada
Sport Canada
pch.gc.ca

British Columbia Soccer Association
bcsoccer.net

Alberta Soccer Association
albertasoccer.com

Saskatchewan Soccer Association
sasksoccer.com

Manitoba Soccer Association
manitobasoccer.ca

Ontario Soccer Association
ontariosoccer.net

Fédération de soccer du Québec
federation-soccer.qc.ca

Soccer New Brunswick
soccernb.org

Soccer Nova Scotia
soccerns.ns.ca

Prince Edward Island Soccer Association
peisoccer.com

Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Association
nlsa.ca

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nwtkicks.ca

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