YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.

1

CANADA SOCCER PATHWAY:

COACH'S TOOL KIT

STAGE ONE – ACTIVE START

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.

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STAGE ONE:

ACTIVE START

(U-4/U-6 M/F)

Gives the youngest players the opportunity to develop basic movement skills like running, jumping, landing, kicking, throwing, and catching in a fun setting built around informal play and positive reinforcement.

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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 Coordination, 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 ACTIVE START STAGE, TRAINING SESSIONS SHOULD BE 45-60 MINUTES LONG AND COMPRISED OF:

25%	25%	25%	25%
GENERAL MOVEMENT	COORDINATION	SOCCER TECHNIQUE	SMALL-SIDED GAMES

This toolkit 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.

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STAGE 1—ACTIVE START U-4/U-6

SOCCER TECHNIQUE

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

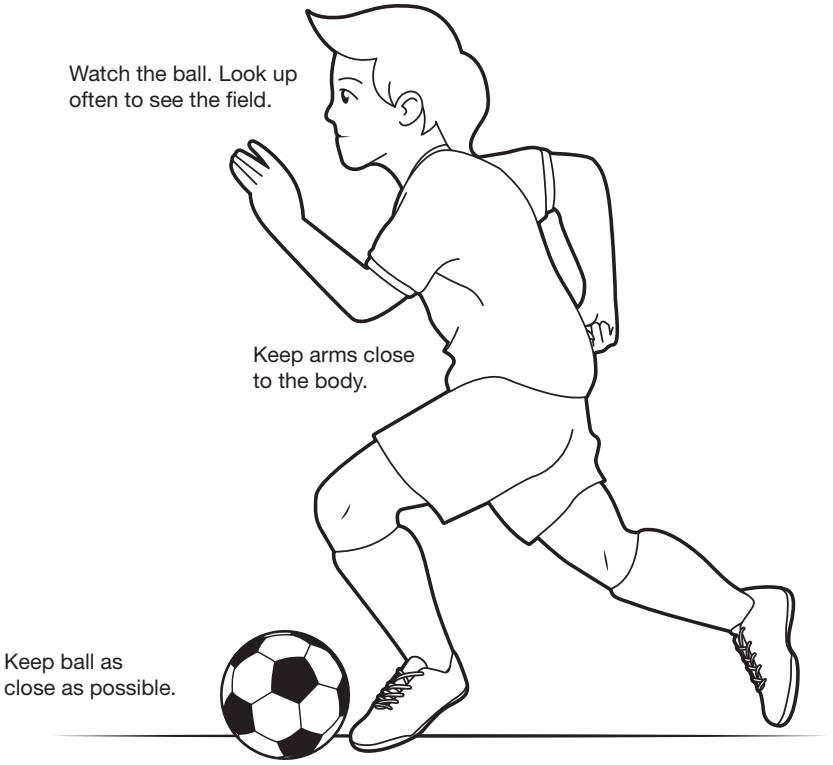
- Getting lots of touches on the ball.
- Fun competitions that motivate players to use different techniques.
- Plenty of positive feedback.

At the Active Start stage (U-4/U-6), technique drills should make up about 25% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 1-hour training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, control, passing, and shooting.

TIP These activities are intended to teach the basics of soccer, but don't get too hung up on replicating exactly what you see in this Tool Kit. With the youngest players, less structure is often better. Sometimes it's enough to let the kids just have fun with the ball. So go with the flow and use your enthusiasm and energy to keep them engaged.

DRIBBLING

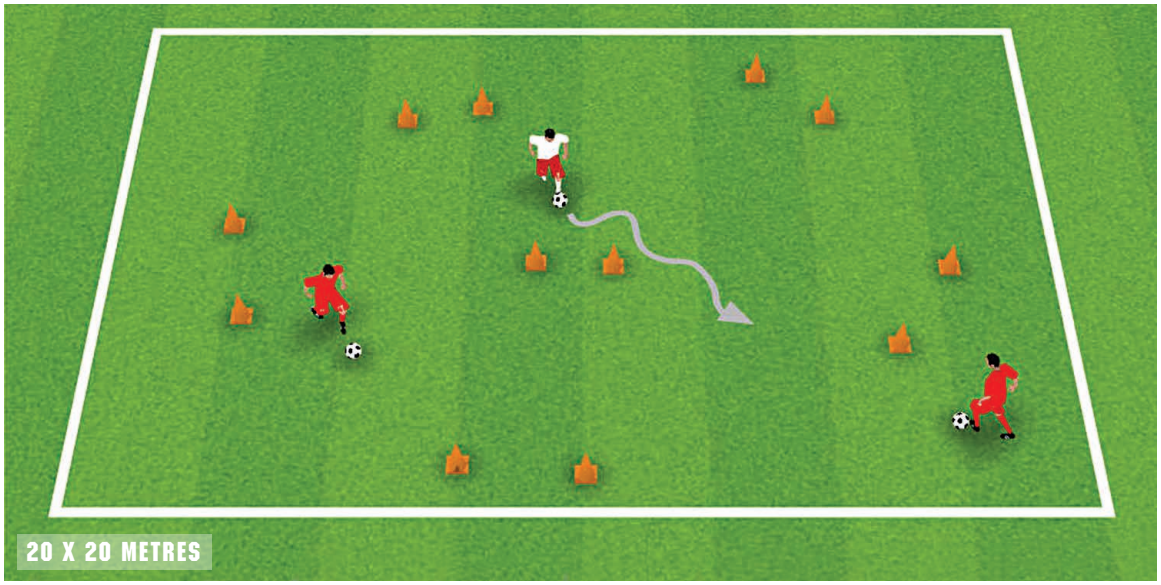
"DRIBBLING" MEANS MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE BALL AND USING YOUR FEET TO MOVE IT IN A CONTROLLED WAY.



DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 1: "SURVIVOR"

IMAGINE YOU'RE ON AN ISLAND, SURROUNDED BY WATER.



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.

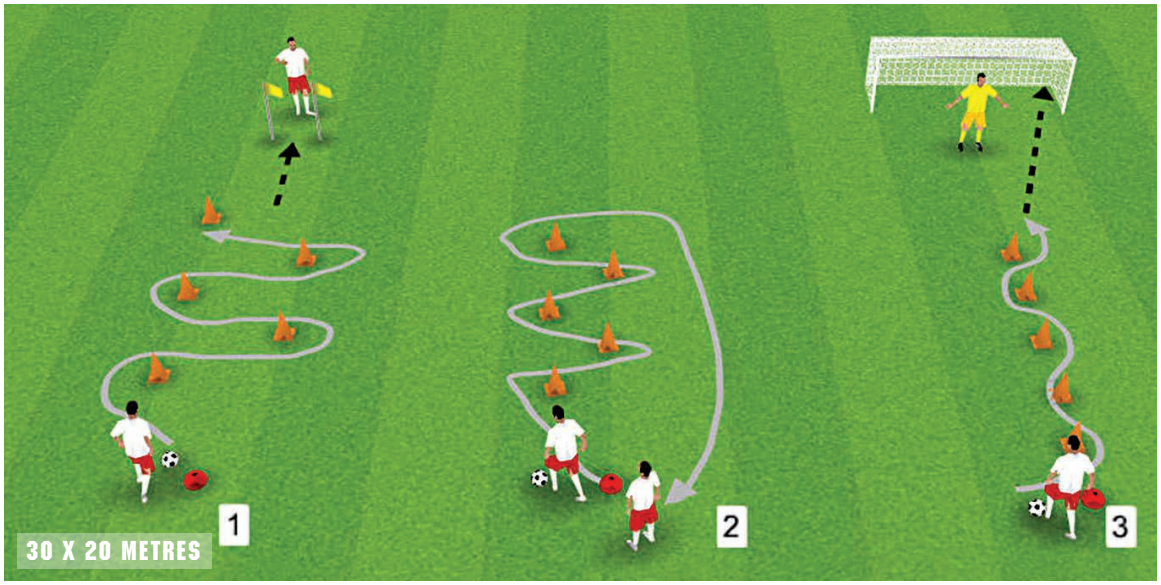
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – use your feet to move the ball around the island, but don't let the ball go in the water!
- "Stop!" – use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball.

OPTIONS:

- Dribble around as many palm trees (cones) as you can (in 30 seconds).
- Knock over as many palm trees as you can with the ball (in 30 seconds).
- "Trade!" – trade balls with another player.
- "Turn!" – put your foot on the ball. Roll it backwards. Turn and continue dribbling in the opposite direction.
- "Dive!" – pick up your ball and jump in the water.

DRIBBLING
ACTIVITY 2: "RELAY RACE"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball, in groups of 4.
- In each group, number each player 1, 2, 3, or 4.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Line up in order with Player 1 in front at the start line.
- "Go!" – one at a time, use your feet to move the ball around the cones to the end, and then come back to the start line. Take your ball to the back of the line.
- "Stop!" – use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball.

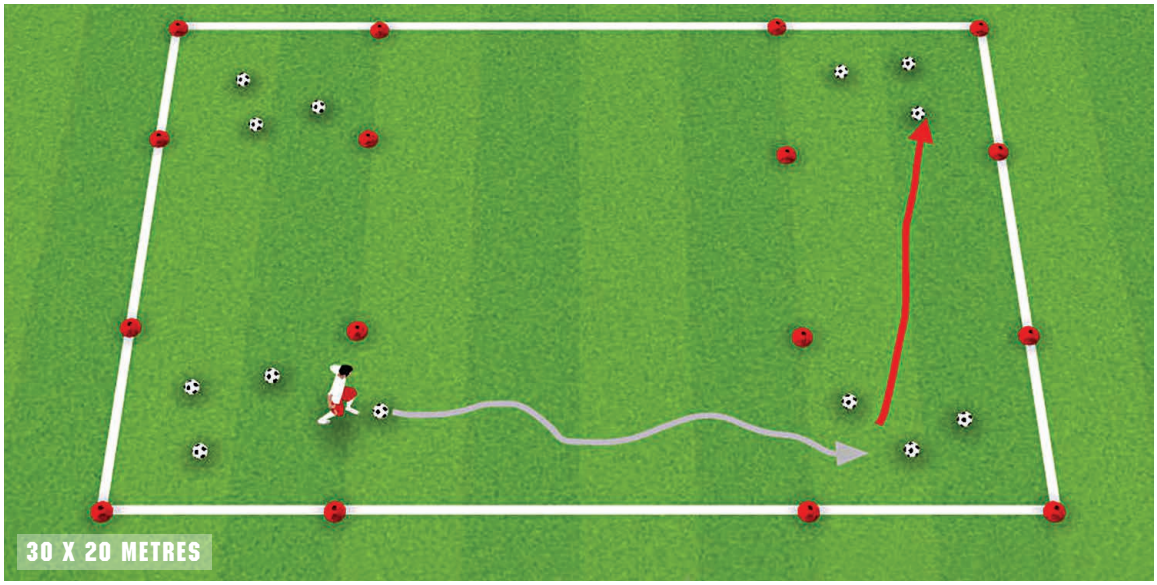
OPTIONS:

- Split each group so that 2 players are at opposite ends of the cones. One ball per group. Player 1 dribbles around the cones to the opposite end, and passes to Player 2, who dribbles back through the cones and passes to Player 3, etc.
- Use 2 cones to make a net. Player 1 dribbles through the cones then shoots the ball into the net. Player 1 goes to the back of the line and Player 2 has a turn, etc.
- Use any part of your foot to move the ball: challenge yourself!

DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 3: "SPECIAL DELIVERY"

IMAGINE YOU'RE A MESSENGER DELIVERING PACKAGES FROM ONE HOUSE TO ANOTHER.



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.
- Put 3 extra balls in each corner box.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – use your feet to move the ball (your "package") to a corner box. Use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball. Leave that ball in the corner box, take a different ball, and use your feet to move the new ball to another corner.
- "Stop!" – use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball.

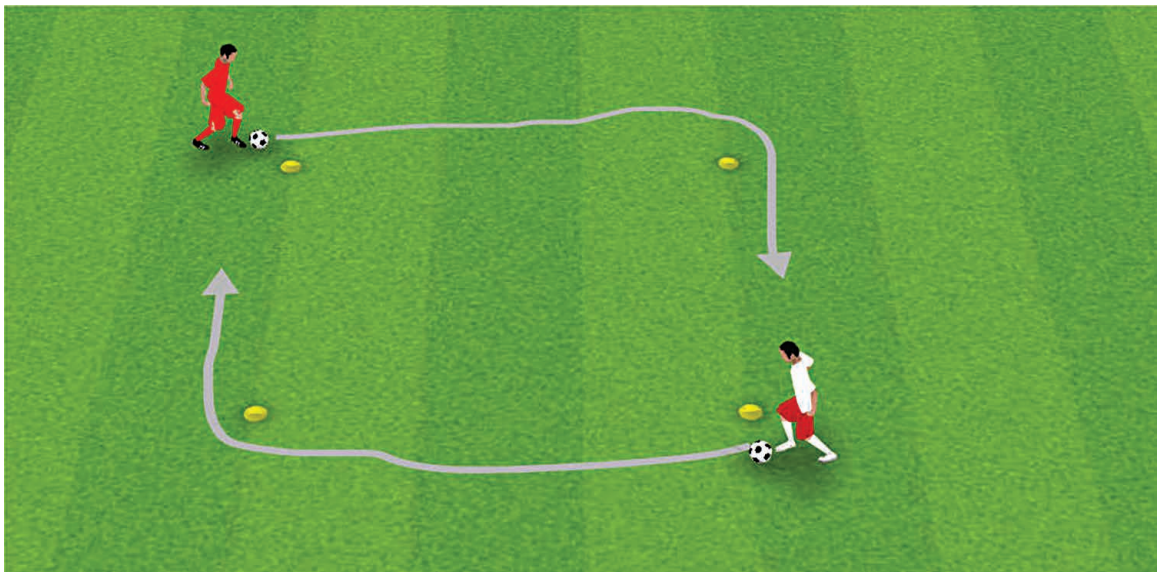
OPTIONS:

- "Turn!" – put your foot on the ball. Roll it backwards. Turn and continue dribbling in the opposite direction towards a different corner.
- "Visit" as many squares as you can (in one minute).
- "Stay away from the mean dogs!" Coaches and/or parents block entry into one or more of the corner boxes. Players can only dribble into the open corner box(es).

DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: "CATCH ME IF YOU CAN"

IMAGINE YOU'RE AT THE EDGE OF A POND FILLED WITH ALLIGATORS.



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball, working in pairs.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – use your feet to move the ball around the outside of the pond and try to catch your partner, but don't let the ball go in the water!
- "Stop!" – use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball.

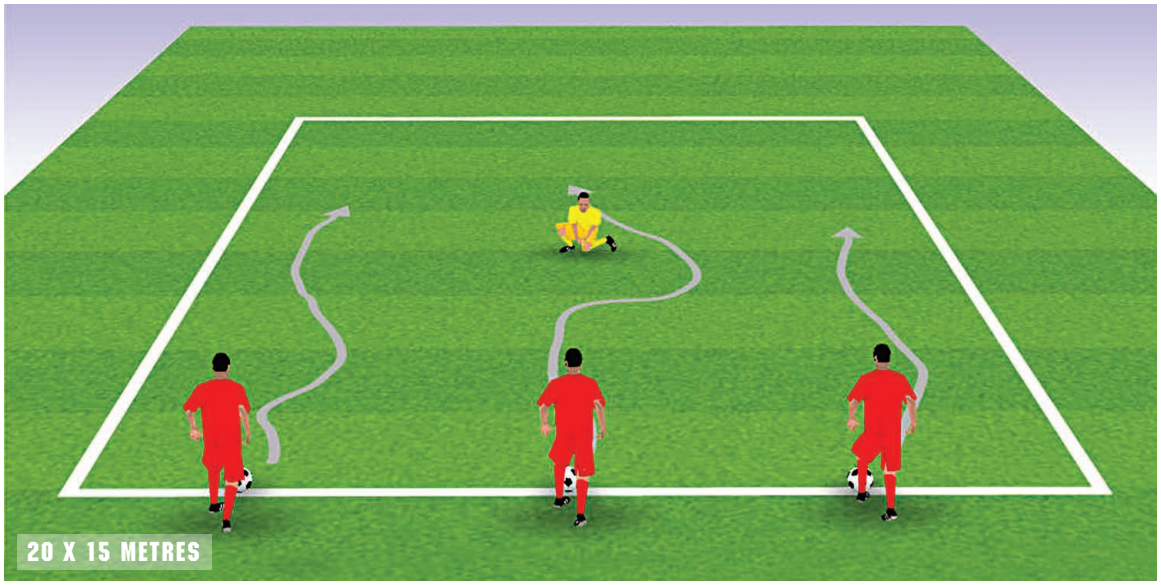
OPTIONS:

- "Turn!" – put your foot on the ball. Roll it backwards. Turn and continue dribbling in the opposite direction and try to catch the other player.

DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 5: "TROLL"

IMAGINE YOU'RE TRYING TO CROSS A BRIDGE THAT'S HOME TO A NASTY TROLL.



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.
- A coach or parent is the "troll," and moves on all fours or in a crab position.

INSTRUCTIONS:

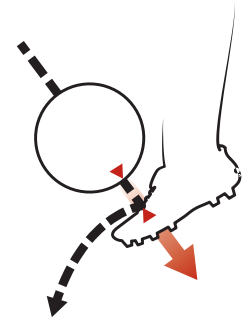
- "Go!" – use your feet to move the ball across the bridge. Don't let the troll get the ball, and don't kick your ball off the bridge!
- "Turn!" – put your foot on the ball. Roll it backwards. Turn and continue dribbling in the opposite direction, back to the other side of the bridge.
- If your ball gets caught or falls off the bridge, you become a troll too!

OPTIONS:

- Players, standing upright, take turns being the troll.
- Start with more than one troll in the middle of the bridge.

CONTROL

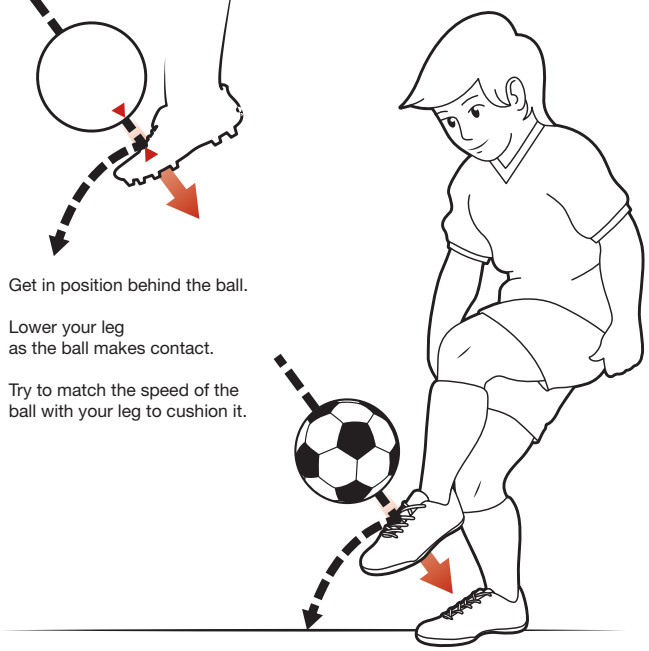
"CONTROL" MEANS USING YOUR FEET AND OTHER PARTS OF YOUR BODY (EXCEPT YOUR ARMS AND HANDS) TO KEEP THE BALL CLOSE.



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.



Get in position behind the ball.

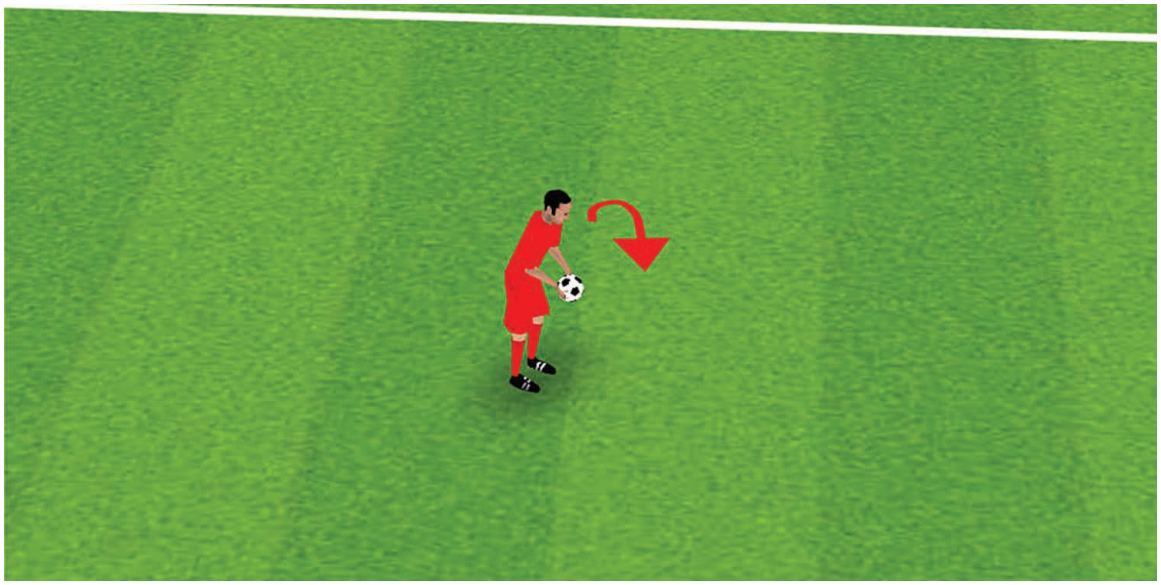
Lower your leg
as the ball makes contact.

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

CONTROL

ACTIVITY 1: "JUGGLING 101"

JUGGLING IS A FUNDAMENTAL SOCCER SKILL. PLAYERS USE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE BODY (E.G., FOOT, THIGH) TO KEEP THE BALL FROM TOUCHING THE GROUND.



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Juggle!" – **1.** Hold the ball in your hands. Throw it up and catch it 2 times. Then drop it and use the top of your foot to gently kick it back up. Try to catch the ball before it touches the ground. Use the other foot. **2.** Same as #1, but this time let the ball bounce and try to catch or kick it again after the bounce. **3.** Same as #2, but try to kick it up twice in a row without letting it bounce, then catch it. Use the other foot.

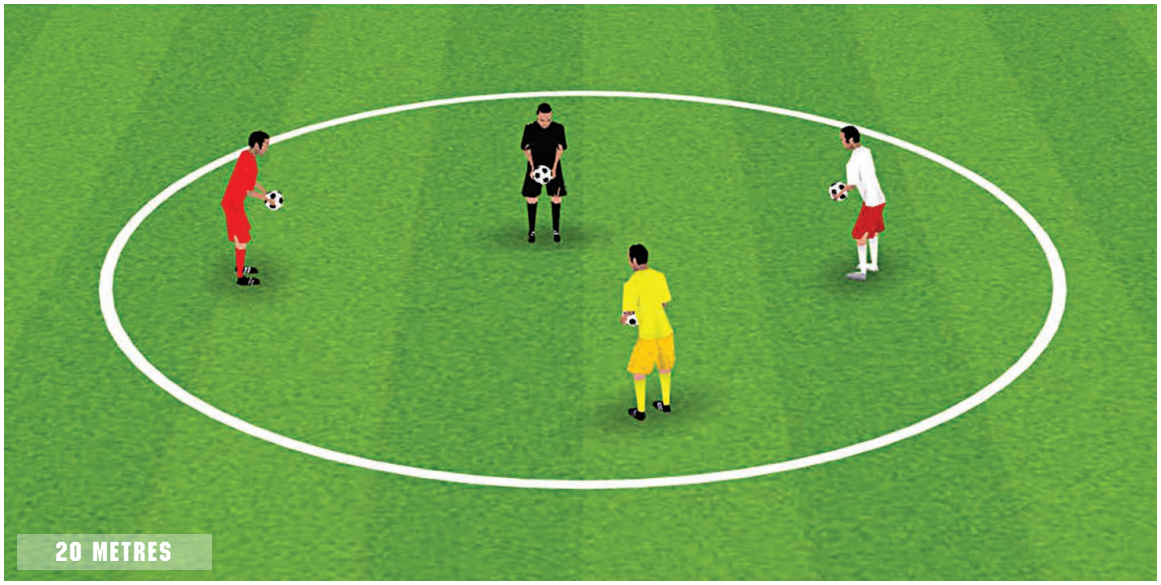
OPTIONS:

- Hold the ball in your hands, drop it onto your thigh, then catch it. Use the other thigh. Alternate thighs, catching the ball each time. How many can you do in a row without letting the ball touch the ground?
- Set your record for juggling – how many times can you touch the ball with your feet and thighs without catching the ball or letting it bounce on the ground?

CONTROL

ACTIVITY 2: "COACH SAYS"

THIS IS A SOCCER VERSION OF THE GAME "SIMON SAYS."



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.

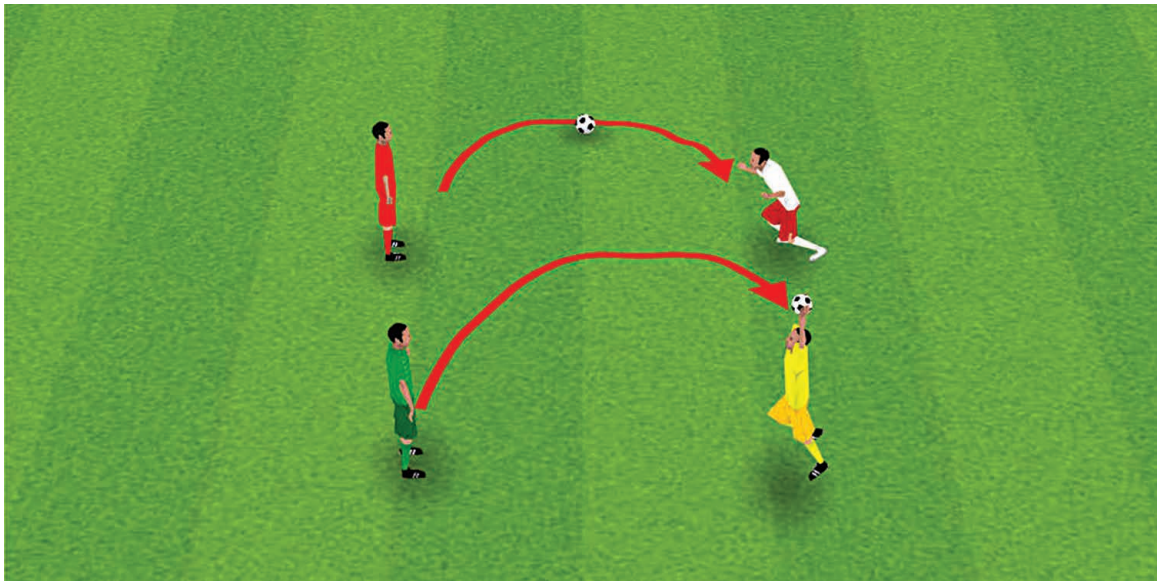
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Listen!" – when "coach says" do this, you do it. But if you don't hear "coach says," don't do it!
- "Coach says" throw the ball up and catch it; "coach says" throw the ball up, kick it and catch it; "coach says" use your other foot; etc.

OPTIONS:

- Instead of juggling, "coach says" drop the ball onto your foot and use the top of your foot like a pillow to gently lower the ball to the ground. "Coach says" use your other foot.

CONTROL
ACTIVITY 3: "CONTROL BUDDIES"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, divided into pairs, with one ball for each pair.

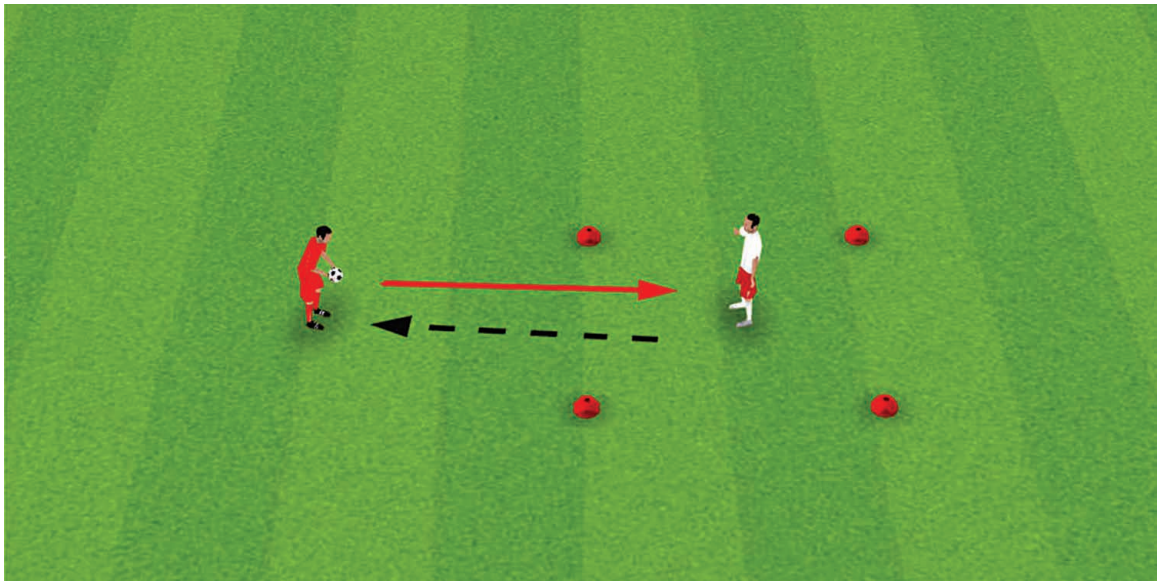
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Throw!" – throw the ball to your partner so he/she can catch it and throw it back.
- "Control!" – Throw the ball gently towards your partner's feet. Your partner uses the inside of the foot to control the ball. When the ball stops moving, your partner will pass it back using the inside of the foot. Do this 5 times, then switch.

OPTIONS:

- When your partner throws the ball, use the top of your foot (laces) to gently cushion the ball and lower it to the ground. Use your other foot.
- Your partner throws the ball to one side or the other. Shuffle your feet to get in line with the ball and then control it with your foot.
- "Clap!" – Clap twice while the ball is in the air, before using your foot to control it.
- "Spin!" – Control the ball, spin in place, then pass it back to your partner using the inside of your foot.

CONTROL
ACTIVITY 4: "CONTROL AND PASS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, paired up with a parent, with one ball per pair.
- Each player stands inside a small square.

INSTRUCTIONS:

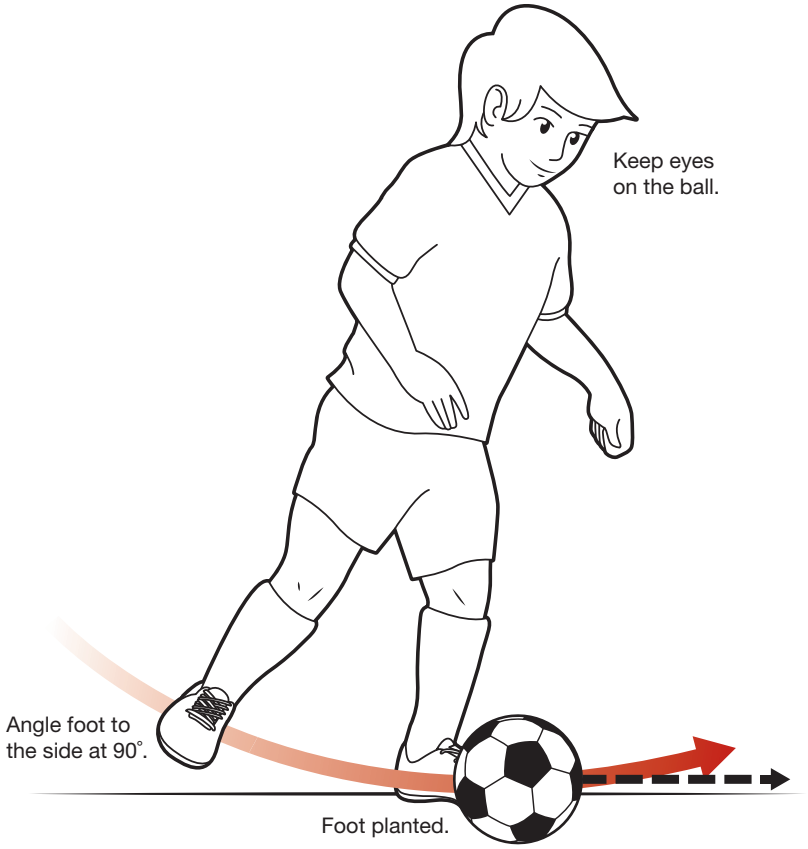
- You stand inside the square, and your parent stands outside and rolls the ball to you.
- "Control!" – use the inside of your foot to control the ball inside the square. Pass it back to your parent using the inside of your foot. Do the same thing using your other foot.

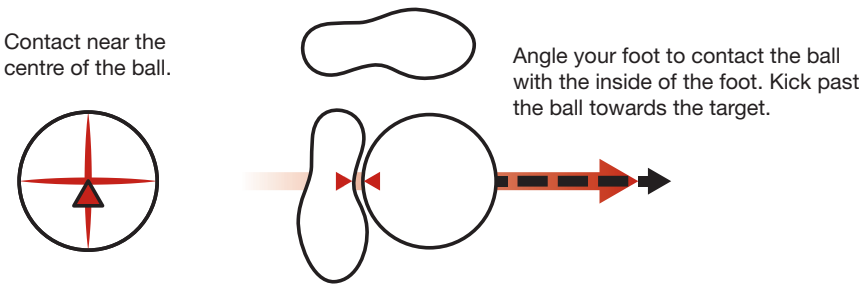
OPTIONS:

- Your parent throws the ball so that it bounces on the ground before you control it with the inside of your foot and pass it back. Use your other foot.
- Your parent throws the ball in the air without a bounce. Control it with the inside of your foot, staying inside the square, before passing it back. Use your other foot.
- Do the same thing, but use the top of your foot to cushion the ball and lower it to the ground.

PASSING

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

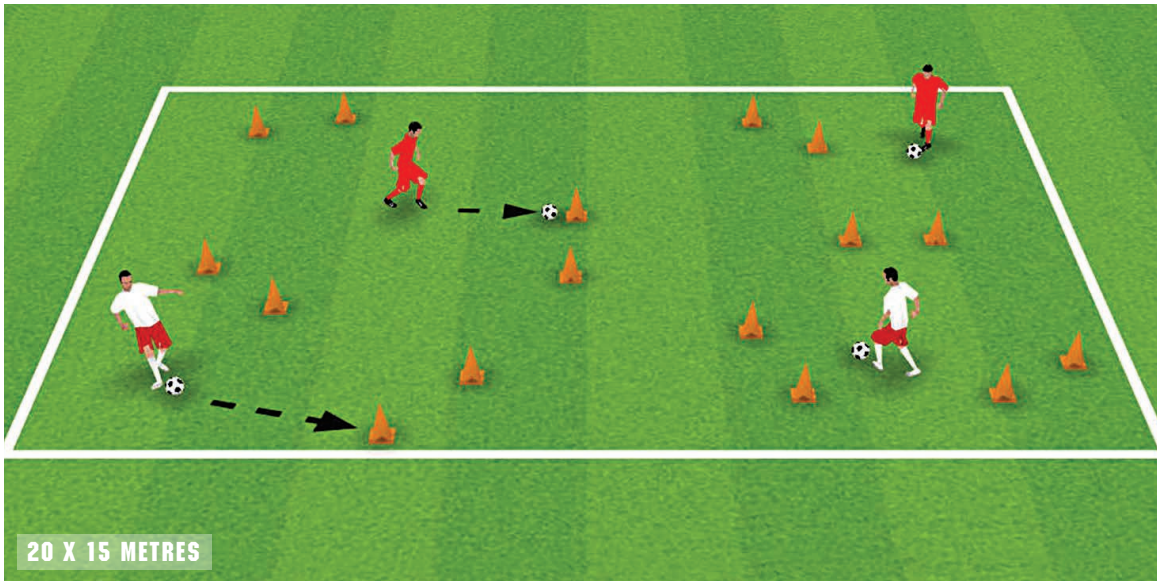




PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: "SHARK ISLAND"

IMAGINE YOU'RE ON AN ISLAND SURROUNDED BY SHARK-INFESTED WATERS.



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.

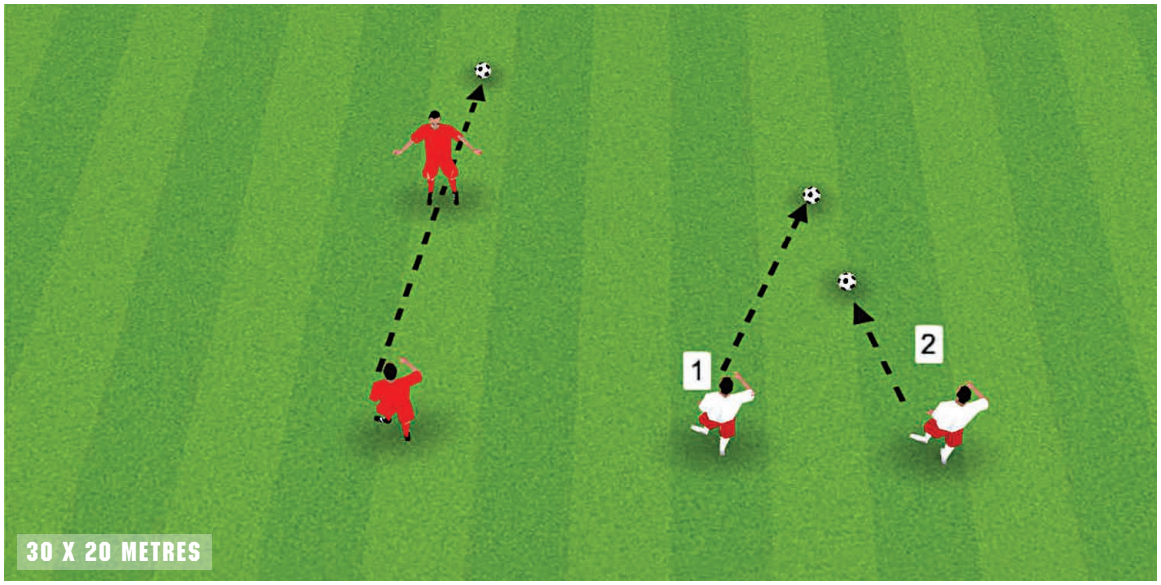
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – use your feet to move the ball around the island, trying not to touch a cone or fall off into the water.
- "Pass!" – Use your foot to pass the ball and try to knock over the cones. Try to knock them all down (in 30 seconds).

OPTIONS:

- In pairs, with one ball between them. "Pass!" – use your foot to pass the ball to your partner on another part of the island, without knocking over any cones.
- Pass back and forth with your partner as many times as you can (in 30 seconds) without knocking over any cones or falling off the island.

PASSING
ACTIVITY 2: "SCORE!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs, with one ball per pair.

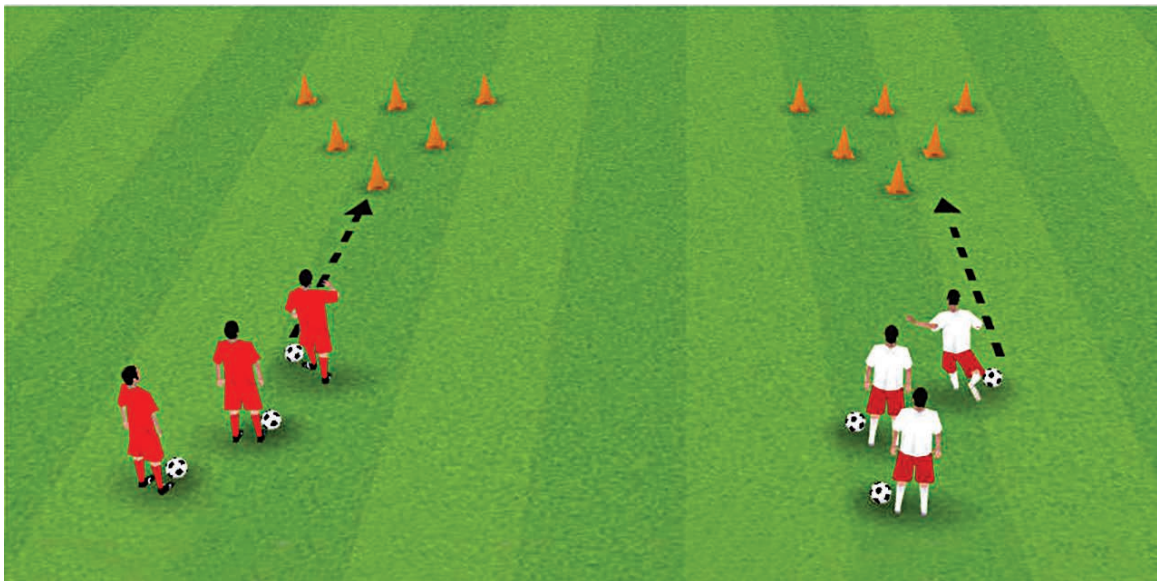
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Score!" – use your foot to pass the ball through your teammate's legs to score a point, then switch.

OPTIONS:

- "Marbles:" Both players have a ball. Player 1 passes his/her ball. Player 2 passes his/her ball and tries to hit the other ball to score a point, like in a game of marbles. Repeat the game until Player 2 scores a point, then switch.

PASSING
ACTIVITY 3: "BOWLING"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.
- 4 teams of 3 players each.

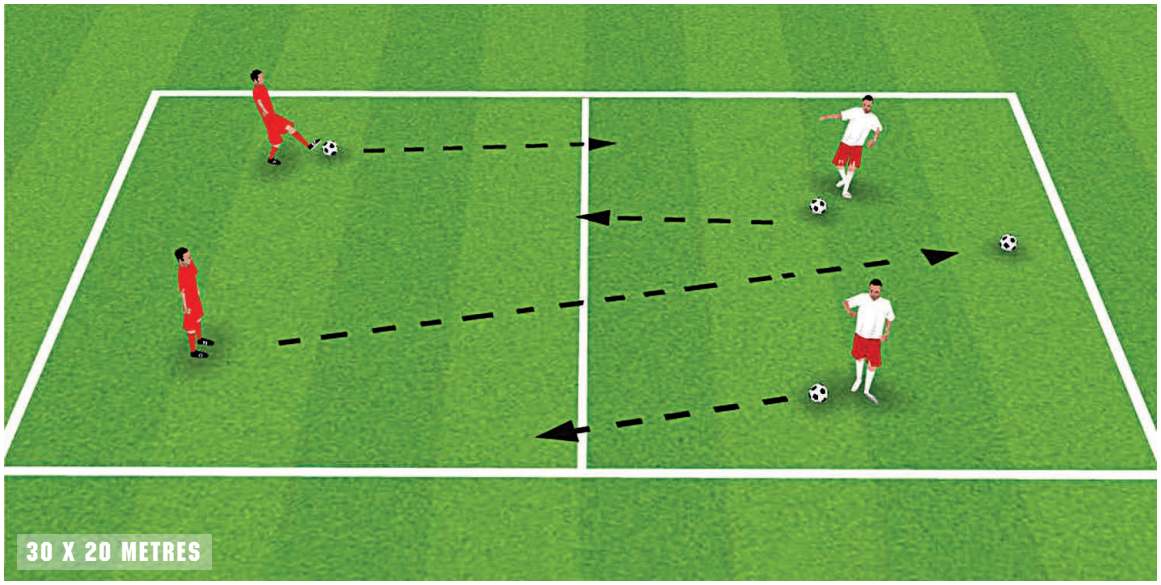
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Bowl!" – use your foot to pass the ball and knock over as many cones as you can. If you miss the cones, run to get your ball and dribble back to the start line before passing again.
- When you've knocked over at least one cone, get your ball and dribble to the back of the line to wait your next turn.
- The first team to knock down all the cones wins!

OPTIONS:

- Adjust the distance between the cones, or have the players stand farther back.
- Use your other foot to pass the ball.

PASSING
ACTIVITY 4: "CLEAN YOUR ROOM!"



SET UP:

- Up to 8 players, each with a ball.
- In teams of four, with each team living in one "room."

INSTRUCTIONS:

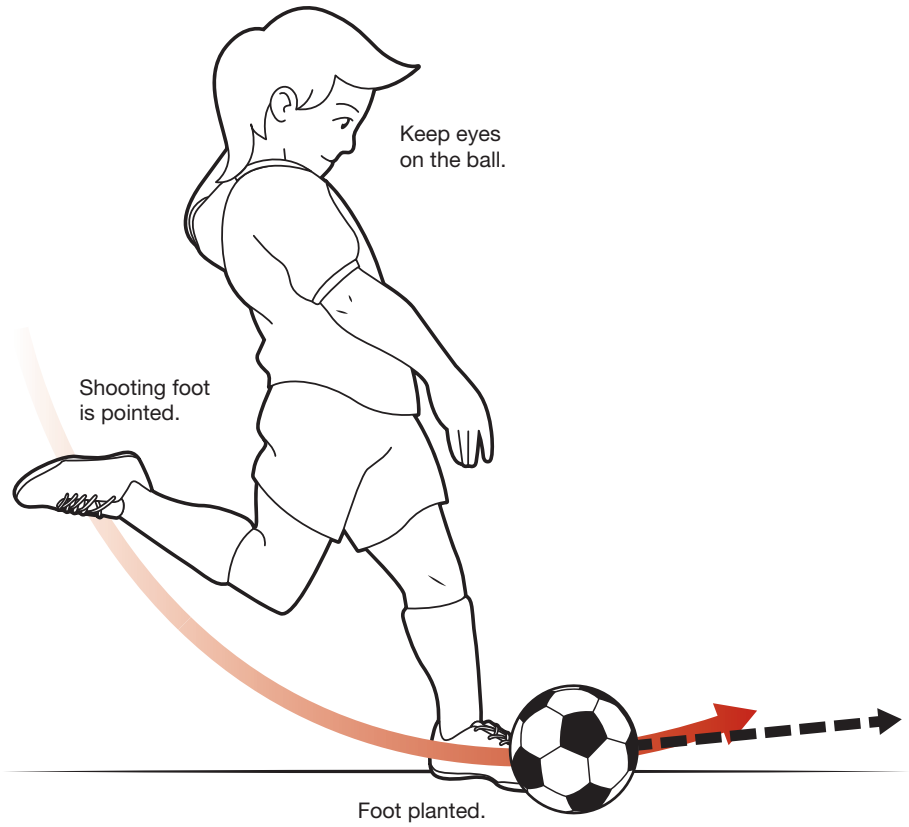
- "Clean your room!" – pass your ball into your opponent's room while keeping your own room tidy. If you see another player's ball come into your room, pass it back across.
- "Stop!" – Use the side of your foot to stop the ball. The team with the fewest balls in their room wins!

OPTIONS:

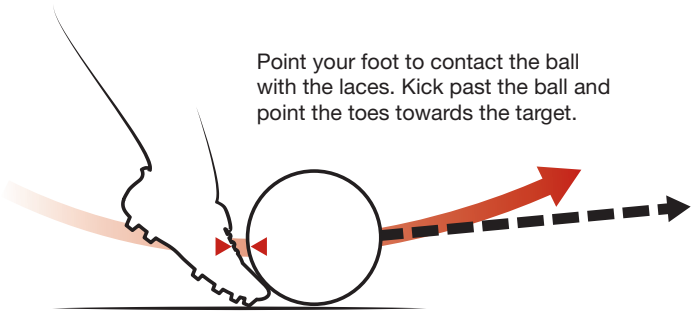
- Pass the ball with your other foot.
- If a ball goes too far and ends up outside the "room," the coach takes it out of the game.

SHOOTING

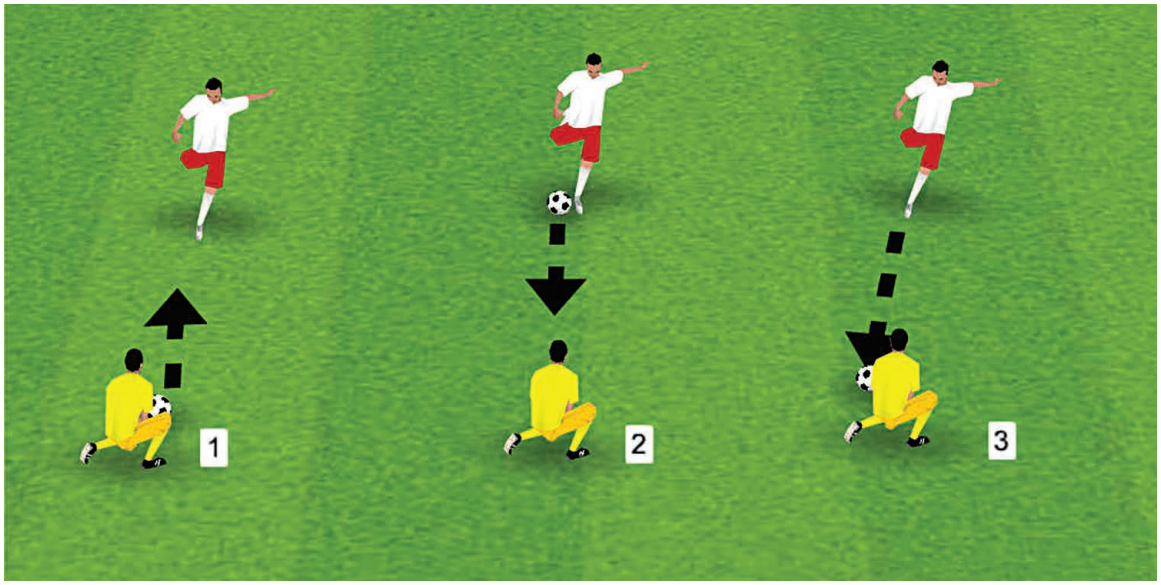
"SHOOTING" MEANS USING YOUR FEET TO GET THE BALL INTO THE NET.



Contact near the centre or the bottom of the ball.



SHOOTING
ACTIVITY 1: "GROUND BALL"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each one paired up with a parent or another teammate. One ball per pair.

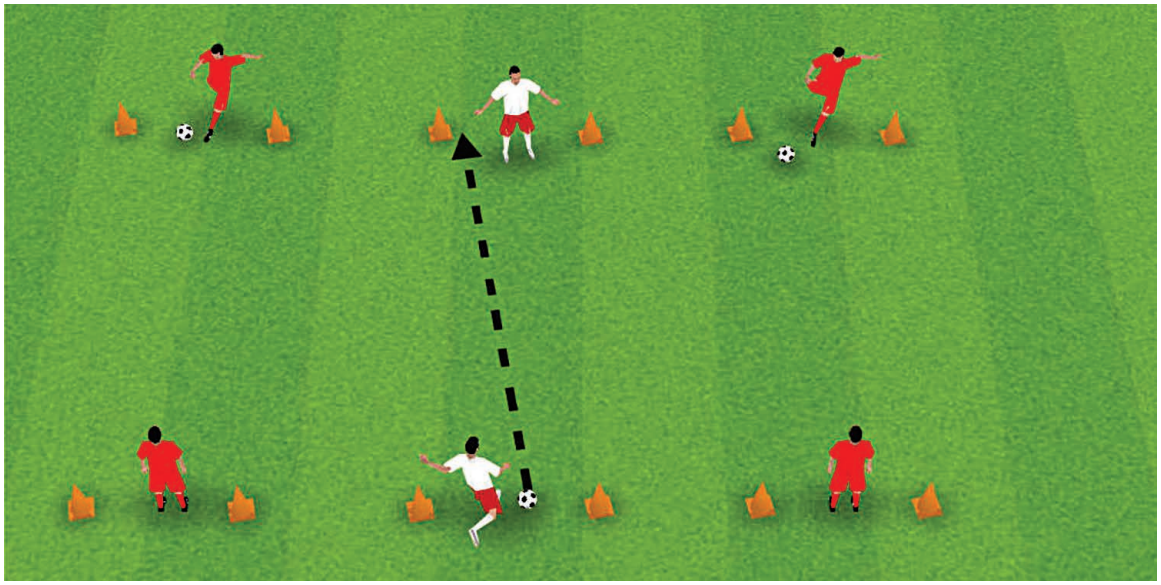
INSTRUCTIONS:

- One partner kneels, while the other remains standing. The person kneeling will roll the ball towards their partner's feet.
- "Shoot!" – use your foot to shoot the ball gently along the ground into your partner's hands. Try to use the top of your foot (laces) to contact the ball.

OPTIONS:

- Shoot with your other foot.
- "Stay on your toes!" – take a few quick steps towards the ball and then shoot.
- "Spin!" – spin around after each shot.

SHOOTING
ACTIVITY 2: "THROUGH THE GATE"



SET UP:

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

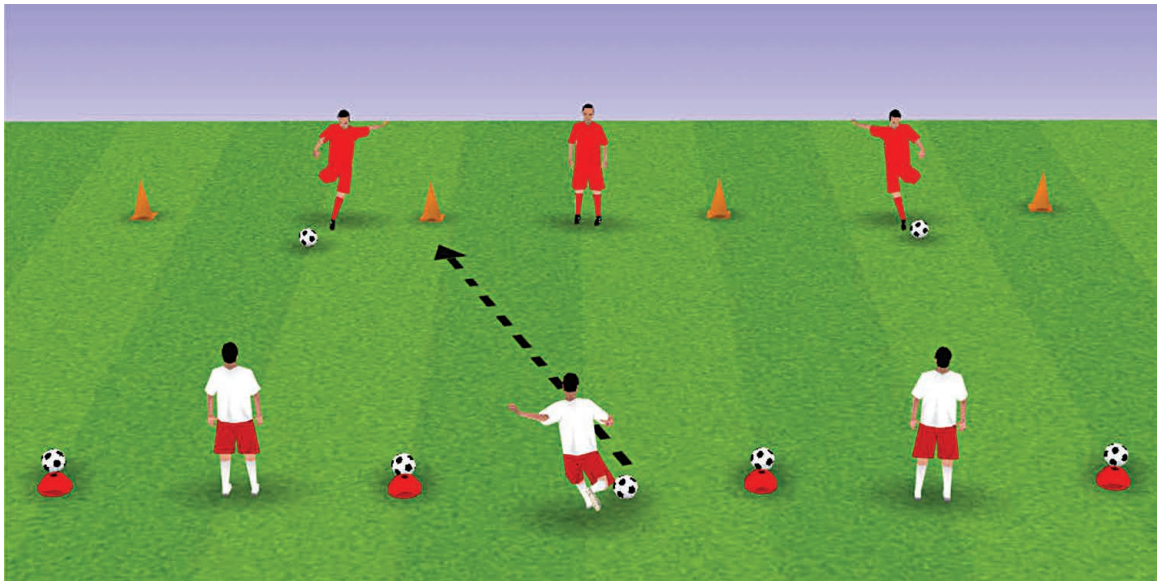
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Shoot!" – use the top of your foot (laces) to shoot the ball past your partner. Each time you score you get a point. Take 5 shots and then switch roles.

OPTIONS:

- Shoot with your other foot.
- Each time you score, move your goal back one pace.
- "Switch!" – pair up with another partner.

SHOOTING
ACTIVITY 3: "KNOCK IT OFF!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball, working in 2 teams.
- Line up cones with balls balanced on them.

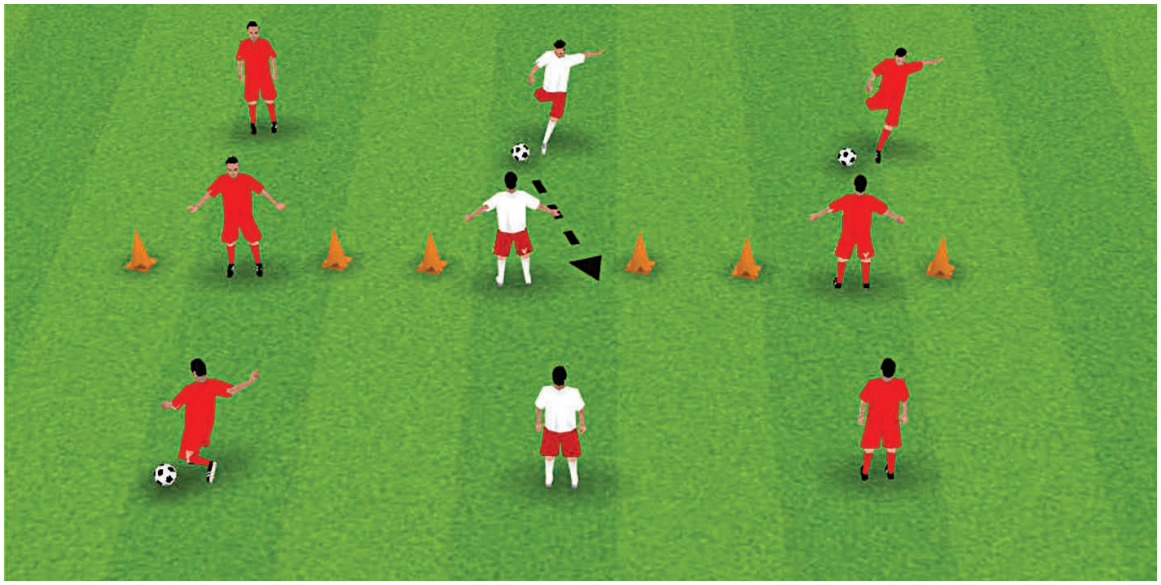
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Shoot!" – using only the top of your foot (laces), shoot your ball towards a marker on the opposite side and try to knock the ball off (or, if using pointed cones, to knock over the cone).
- The first team to knock all the balls off of their opponents' markers wins.

OPTIONS:

- Allow one goalkeeper per team to move up and down the line to stop shots before the balls hit the targets.

SHOOTING
ACTIVITY 4: "MONKEY IN THE MIDDLE"



SET UP:

- Work in groups of 3 with a parent or teammate in the middle as goalkeeper.
- One ball per group.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Shoot!" – use the top of your foot (laces) to shoot the ball past the goalkeeper.
- If the goalkeeper saves the ball, he/she turns around and rolls it to the player at the opposite end.
- The first player to score 3 times switches places with the goalkeeper.

OPTIONS:

- Shoot with your other foot.
- The goalkeeper bounces the ball to the player who tries to keep the ball low (below waist height) to score.

1

STAGE 1—ACTIVE START U-4/U-6

GENERAL MOVEMENT

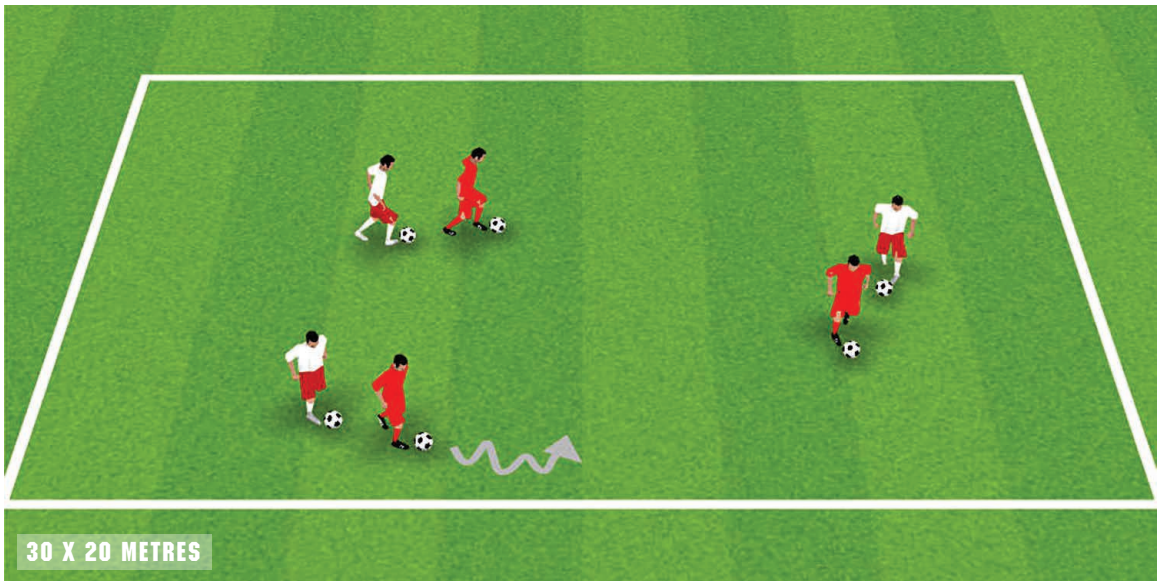
General movement activities include:

- 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.

General movement activities should make up about 25% of practice time at the U-4/U-6 level (i.e., 15 minutes of a 1-hour training session). At this age, the emphasis is on being able to run with the ball under control, or "making friends with the ball."

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. Every few minutes, challenge your players with something different that goes beyond the basic drill: keep the rules simple, but use time restrictions or have them compete with each other to get them excited and keep them interested.

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 1: "TRUCK & TRAILER"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball, working in pairs inside a "parking lot."
- One player is the "truck" and the other is the "trailer."

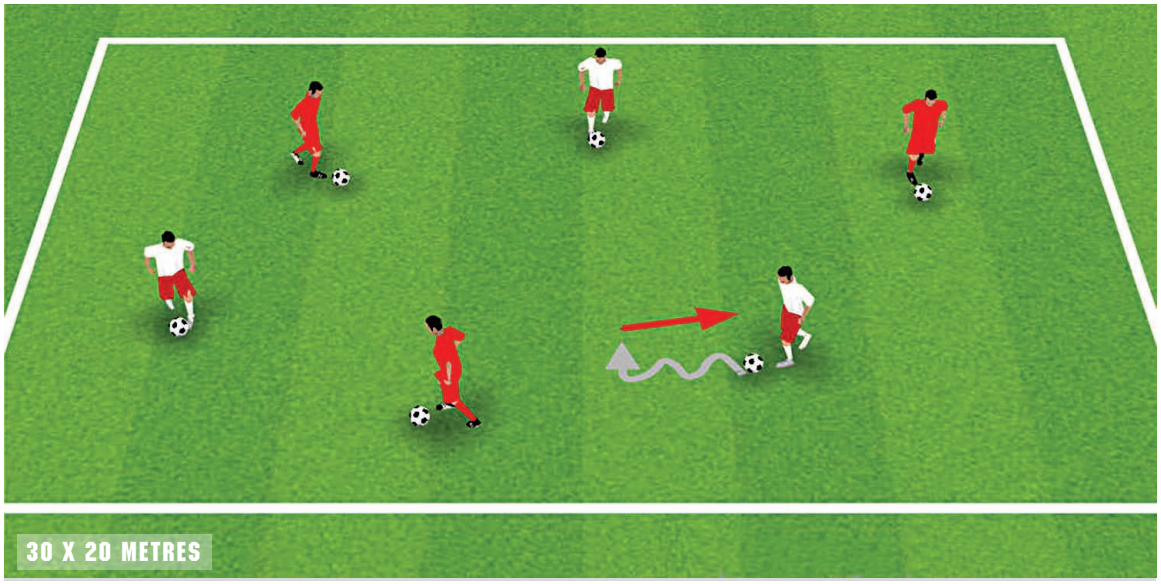
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – as the Truck, use your feet to move the ball around the parking lot. As the Trailer, follow your truck as closely as possible. Trucks and trailers: keep your heads up and don't hit any other vehicles!
- "Switch!" – Trucks and trailers switch roles.

OPTIONS:

- "Speed up!" – trucks start moving faster.
- "Turn!" – trucks change direction.
- "Park!" – use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball.

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 2: "THINK FAST!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.

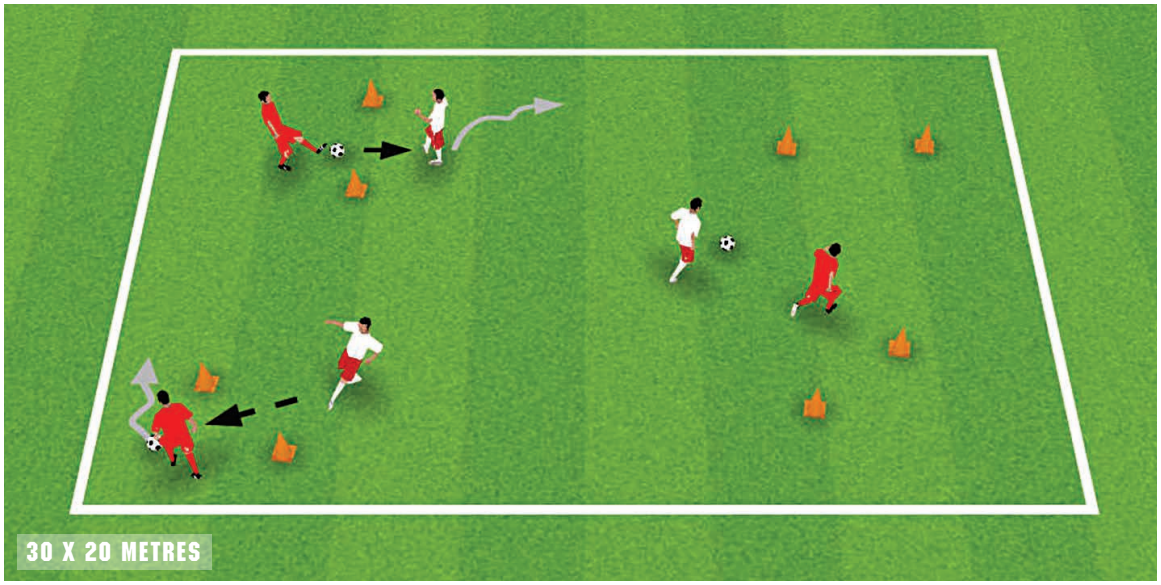
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – use your feet to move the ball around the field.
- "React as fast as you can!" **1.** "Stop!" – use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball. **2.** "Turn!" – put your foot on the ball. Roll it backwards. Turn and continue dribbling in the opposite direction. Keep your head up and avoid bumping into anyone.

OPTIONS:

- "Step over!" – step over the ball and move it another direction.
- "Fake!" – pretend to pass or shoot, then continue dribbling.
- "Explode!" – change speed quickly and move the ball into an open area.

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 3: "THROUGH THE GATE"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, working in pairs; one ball per pair.
- Use cones to create a series of gates spread out evenly around the field.

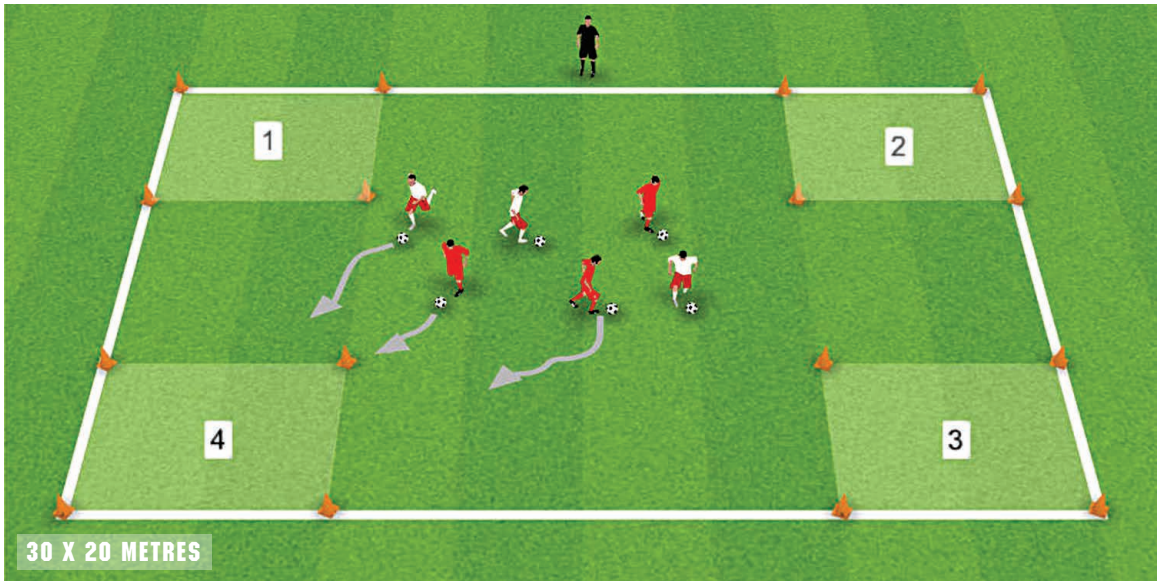
INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – players with the ball use their feet to move the ball around the field. Players without the ball stay close to their partner and call out their name when they're in a good position to receive a pass. Score a point by passing the ball through a gate to your partner.
- "Set a record!" – see how many points you can score in one minute.

OPTIONS:

- Have a coach or parent move around, trying to block the players' passes.

GENERAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVITY 4: "TO YOUR CORNER!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.
- Use cones to make four corner boxes; number each corner from 1-4.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – use your feet to move the ball around the middle of the field. Keep your head up and avoid running into anyone.
- "To your corner!" – when you hear the coach call out a number, dribble the ball as fast as you can to that corner. The first player to get there wins a point!
- "Stop!" – use the bottom of your foot to stop the ball when you get to the corner.

OPTIONS:

- "Turn!" – instead of stopping at the corner, put your foot on the ball. Roll it backwards. Turn and continue dribbling back to the middle of the field.
- "Speed up!" – move the ball faster after you turn it.
- Players work in pairs, with one ball per pair.

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STAGE 1—ACTIVE START U-4/U-6

COORDINATION

A player's coordination will improve by:

- Getting lots of touches on the ball.
- Using different parts of the foot.
- Using the inside of the foot when passing and receiving the ball.

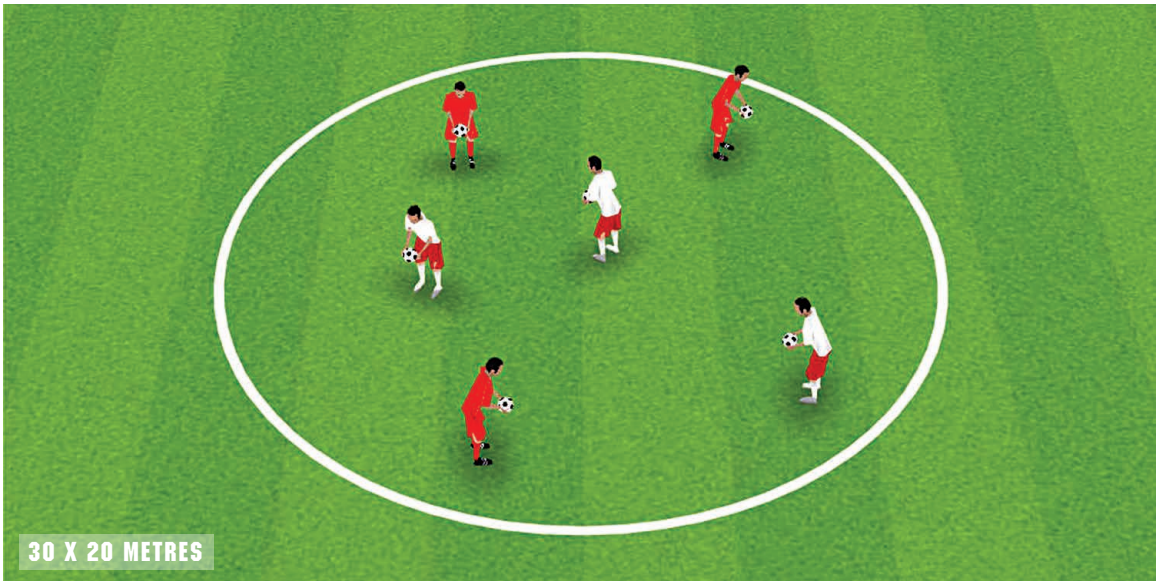
At the U-4/U-6 level, coordination drills should make up about 25% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 1-hour training session). The following activities focus on dribbling, controlling the ball and passing to improve coordination.

TIP

At this stage of development, physical literacy (running, jumping, skipping, etc.) is key. Don't worry if players aren't mastering technique with the ball just yet – work on their coordination using both sides of the body and help them get comfortable moving forwards and backwards. Above all, let the kids have fun!

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 1: "PARTS OF THE BODY GAME"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball.
- Have the parents form a large circle (or "island").

INSTRUCTIONS:

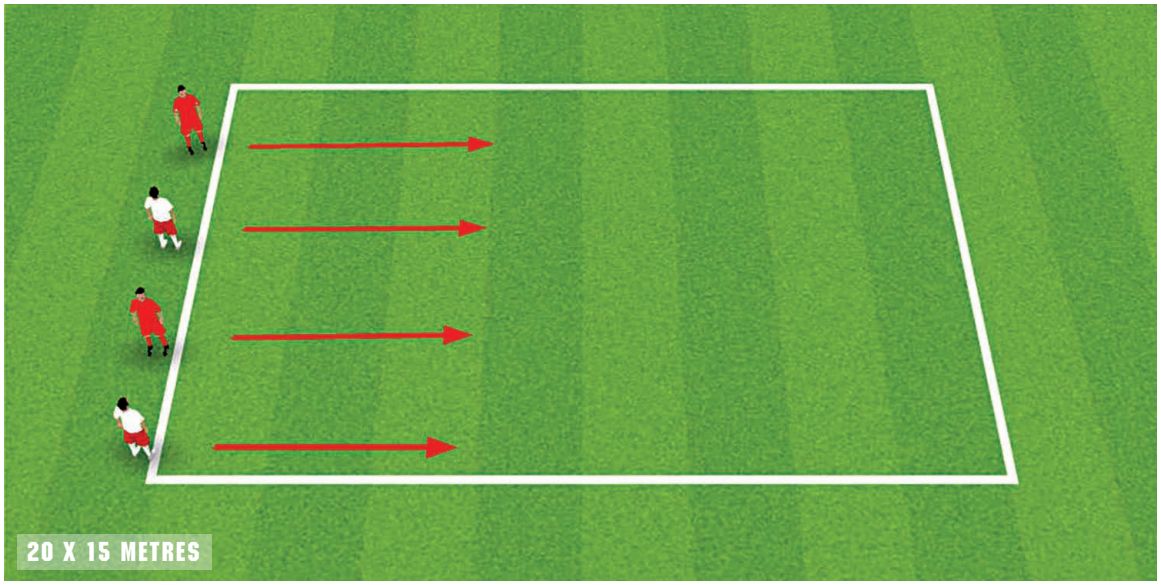
- "Go!" – run around the island holding the ball in your hands. Make sure to keep your head up and avoid bumping into anyone. Don't fall off into the water!
- "Listen!" – when your coach calls out a part of the body (e.g., foot, hand, elbow, knee, etc.), place the ball on the ground and put that part of your body on the ball as fast as you can. Pick up the ball and keep running.

OPTIONS:

- Parents line the boundaries and pretend to be sharks.
- Move around the island carrying the ball while doing the bunny hop. Hop on one foot. Crawl like a bear and roar. Do the crab walk.
- "Dribble!" – use your feet to move the ball around the island.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 2: "FREEZE!"



SET UP:

- Up to 6 players.

INSTRUCTIONS:

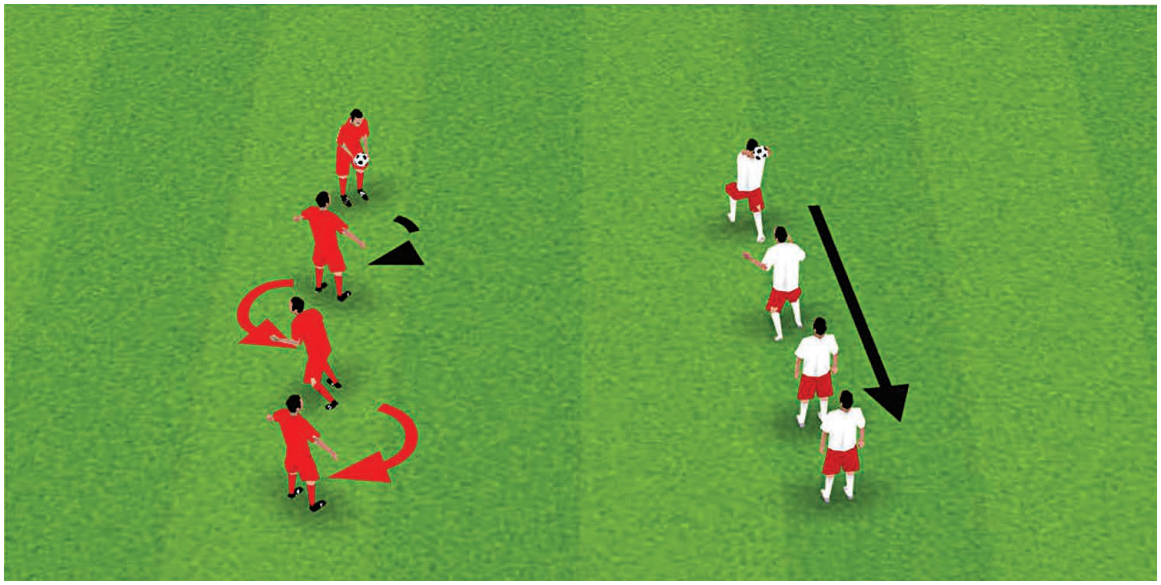
- "Go!" – start to run forwards towards the finish line.
- "Change!" – **1.** Run sideways. **2.** Hop on one foot, then the other. **3.** Bunny hop with both feet together. **4.** Skip. **5.** Roll. **6.** Crawl and roar like a bear. **7.** Crab walk.
- "Freeze!" – stop where you are and don't move until your coach says "go."

OPTIONS:

- Each player has a ball; i.e., **1.** Hop with the ball between your feet or knees. **2.** Bounce and catch the ball as you skip or run.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 3: "RELAY FUN!"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, lined up in 3 equal groups, with one ball per group.
- Number the players from 1 to 4. Player 1 holds the ball in his/her hands.

INSTRUCTIONS:

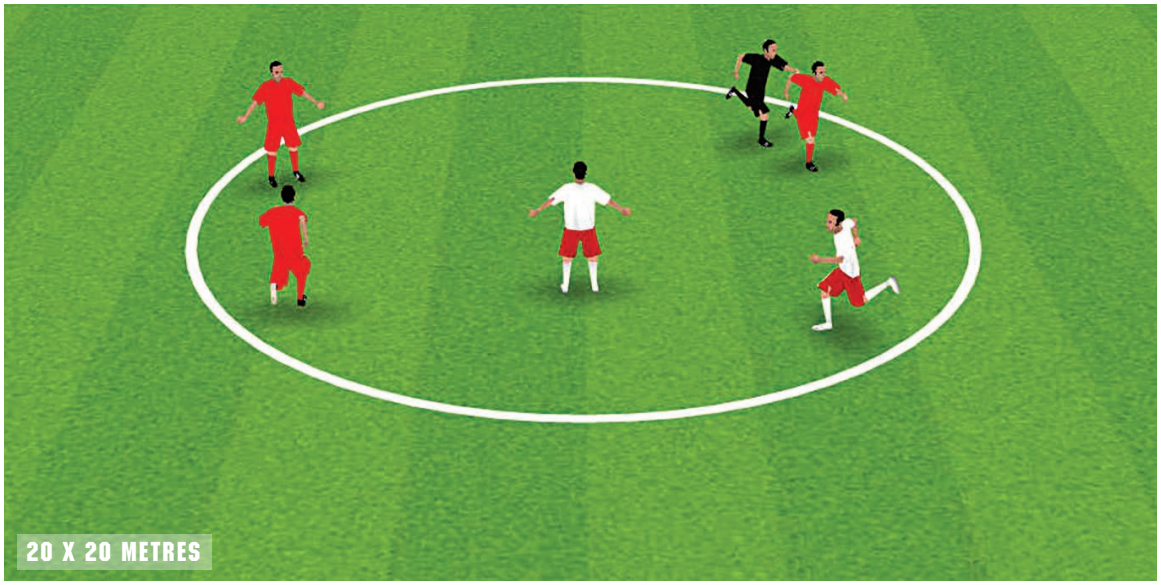
- "Over under!" – Player 1 leans back and passes the ball overhead to Player 2, who bends and passes the ball between the legs to Player 3, who passes the ball overhead to Player 4. Player 4 drops the ball and dribbles to the front of the line, and the "over under" starts again.

OPTIONS:

- "Twist to the side!" – with feet pointing forward, Player 1 rotates the upper body to pass the ball behind to Player 2, who rotates the upper body in the opposite direction to pass to Player 3, etc. Player 4 drops the ball and dribbles to the front of the line, and "twist to the side" starts again.
- "Roll!" – Player 1 rolls the ball back between all the players' legs to Player 4, who dribbles it to the front of the line and the "roll" starts again.

COORDINATION—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: "QUICKSAND"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players.
- Have the parents form a large circle, with one parent or coach inside it.

INSTRUCTIONS:

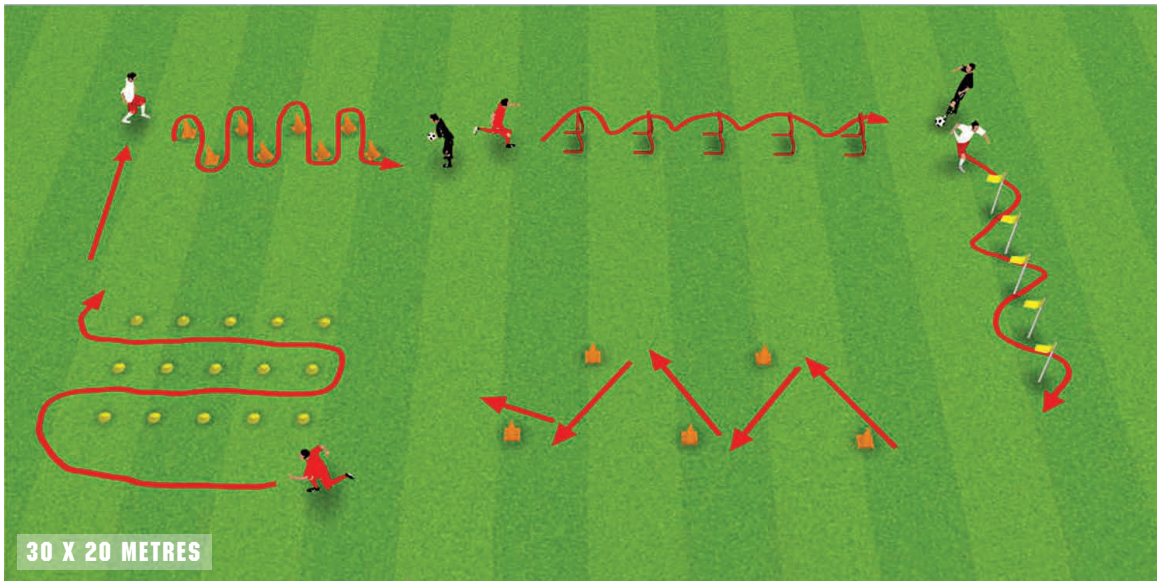
- "Go!" – the coach/parent inside the circle is the "tagger." Run around the island and try not to get tagged. If you do, you're stuck in quicksand until a teammate crawls through your legs to set you free. Keep your head up and make sure not to bump into anyone, and don't fall off the island!

OPTIONS:

- Run around with a ball in your hands, or bounce the ball as you run.
- "Dribble!" – use your feet to move the ball. Pass the ball through your teammates' legs to free them from the quicksand.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 1: "OBSTACLE COURSE"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players.
- Arrange cones, flags, hoops, markers, or hurdles in various ways to get players working through a circuit of different movement patterns.

INSTRUCTIONS:

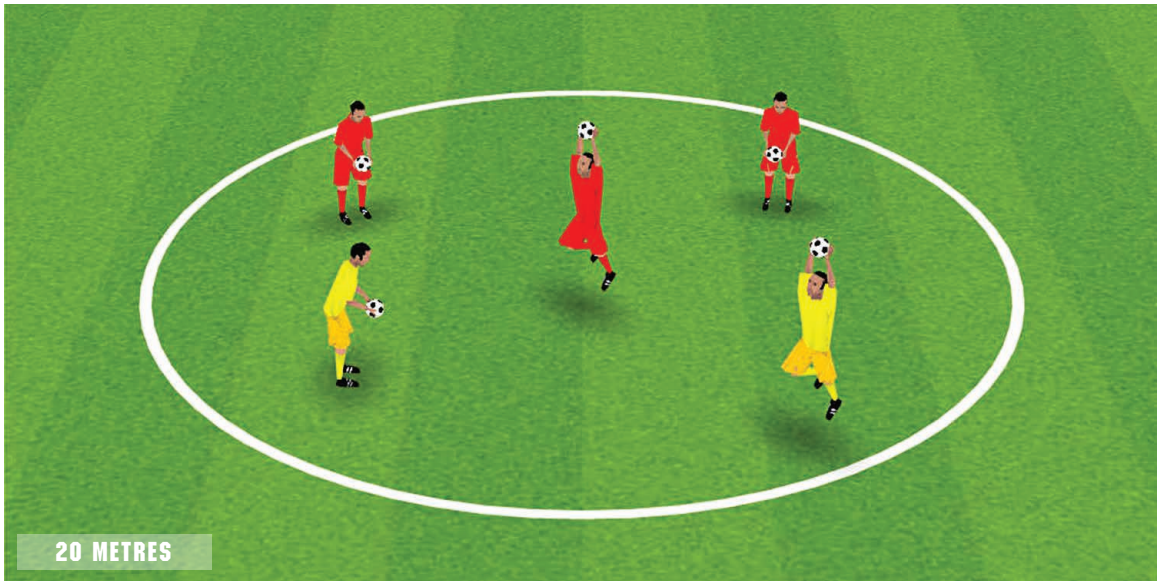
- "Go!" – start at the first station and move clockwise around the course; start by running forwards. Keep your head up, and be careful not to bump into anyone.
- "Change" – Instead of running forward: **1.** Hop with both feet. **2.** Hop on 1 foot. **3.** Skip. **4.** Run backwards. **5.** Crawl and roar like a bear. 6. Walk like a crab.
- Parents can follow and cheer on the players!

OPTIONS:

- Place a parent with a ball at the end of each station. The parent tosses the ball to the player, who controls it with the foot and passes it back before moving on.
- "Dribble!" – use your feet to dribble the ball through the course.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 2: "UP AND CATCH"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, each with a ball. Have the parents form a large circle.
- Each player has a partner.

INSTRUCTIONS:

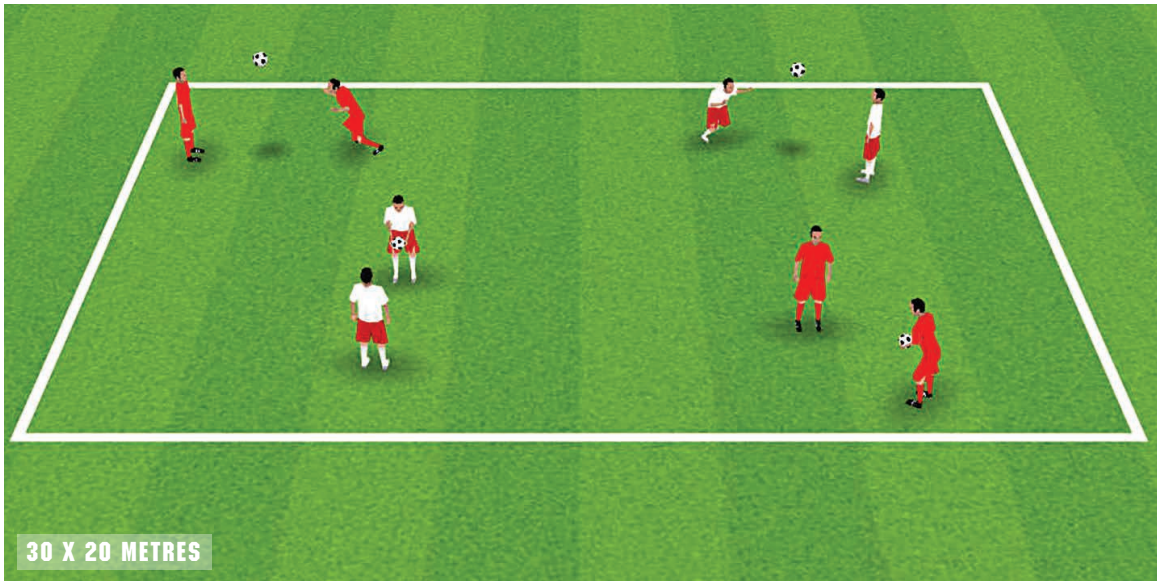
- "Go!" – hold the ball in your hands and start to move around inside the circle. Keep your head up and be careful not to bump into anyone.
- "Up and catch!" – throw the ball up and catch it.
- "Clap and catch!" – throw the ball up and clap once before you catch it.
- "To your partner!" – throw the ball to your partner and try to catch their ball at the same time.

OPTIONS:

- "Kick and catch!" – drop the ball, kick it back up gently and try to catch it.
- "Drop and control!" – drop the ball, let it bounce and then use the side of your foot to control it before picking it up again.
- Have the players do the activity while hopping, balancing on one foot, or spinning around once before catching the ball.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 3: "MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE BALL"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, paired up with a parent or partner, one ball per pair.

INSTRUCTIONS:

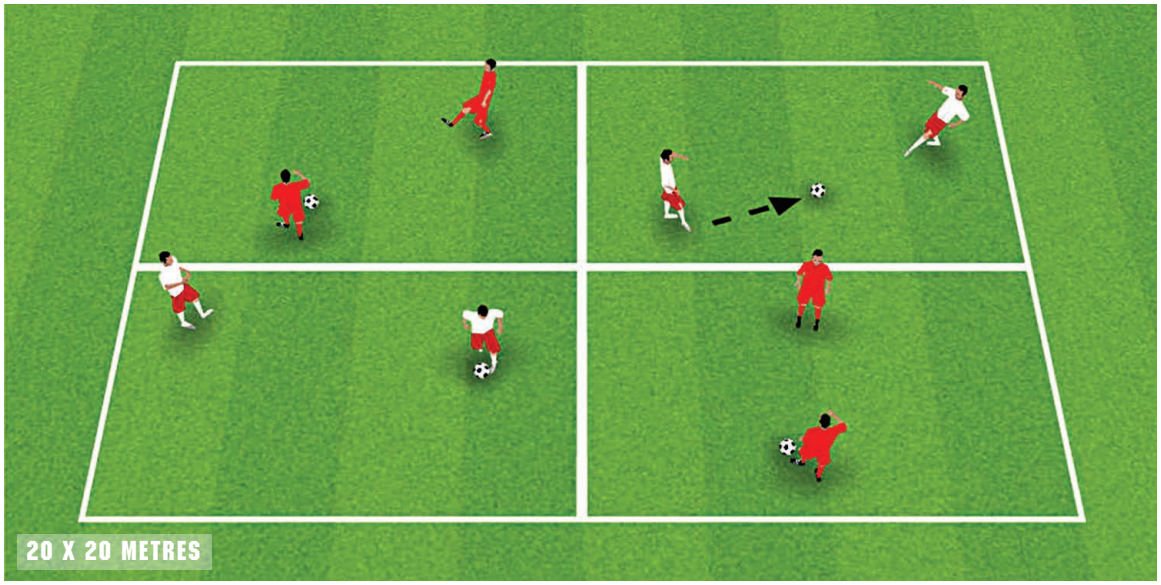
- "Go!" – use your hands to throw the ball back and forth.
- "Volley!" – when your partner throws the ball, try to volley it back gently using your foot so your partner can catch it again. Do it five times then switch roles with your partner.

OPTIONS:

- "Control!" – have your partner throw the ball at the ground, then use your foot to control it. Pick the ball up and throw it back.
- "Shuffle!" – have your partner throw the ball to one side. Shuffle your feet to get in line with the ball and stop it with the inside of your foot before picking it up and throwing it back.
- Increase the distance between partners.

COORDINATION—CONTROL

ACTIVITY 4: "PAIRS IN SQUARES"



SET UP:

- Up to 16 players, each with a partner, working inside a large area divided into smaller squares, marked out with cones
- One ball per pair, up to 2 pairs per small square

INSTRUCTIONS:

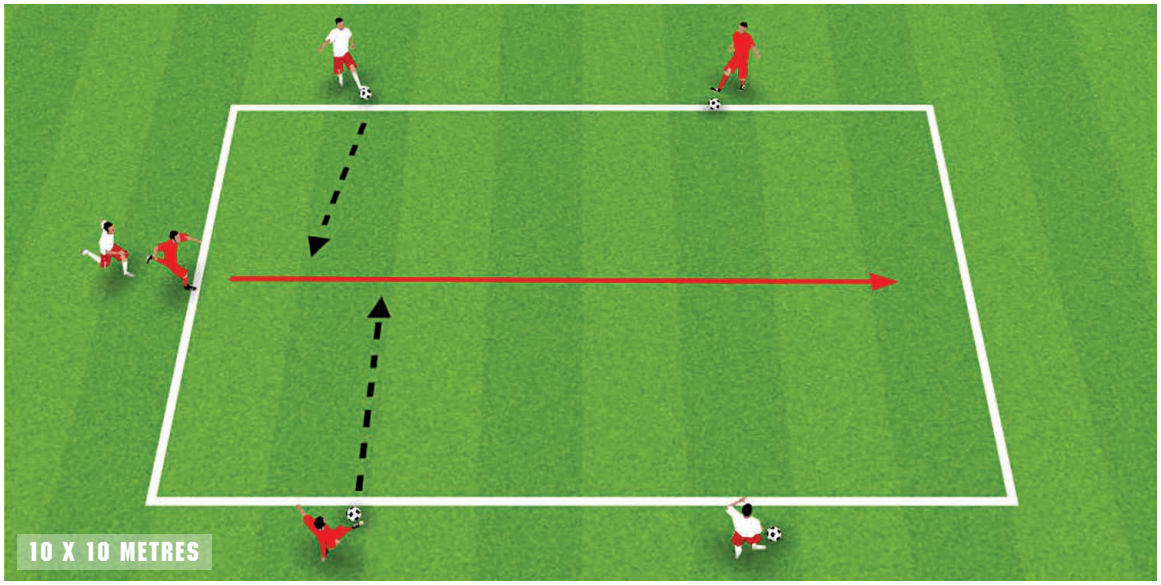
- "Go!" – pass the ball back and forth with your partner while staying inside your square. Start by using your hands to throw the ball and catch it. Make sure to get in line with the ball when you see it coming!
- "Listen!" – when your coach says to change the way you're passing, do it!
  1. Pass the ball with the inside of your foot, then the top of your foot (laces). Use any part of your foot to control the ball when you're receiving a pass.
  2. Throw a bounce pass to your partner, and they will use their foot to control the ball before picking it up and bouncing it back to you.

OPTIONS:

- Work in groups of 4, with one ball per group.
- Number players from 1 to 4 and have them pass in that sequence.
- "Switch!" – rotate squares 2 players at a time so everyone has an opportunity to work with different teammates.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: "VALLEY OF DOOM"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, all but 2 of them with a ball.
- Players with a ball line up on either side of field
- Players without a ball start on one end line.

INSTRUCTIONS:

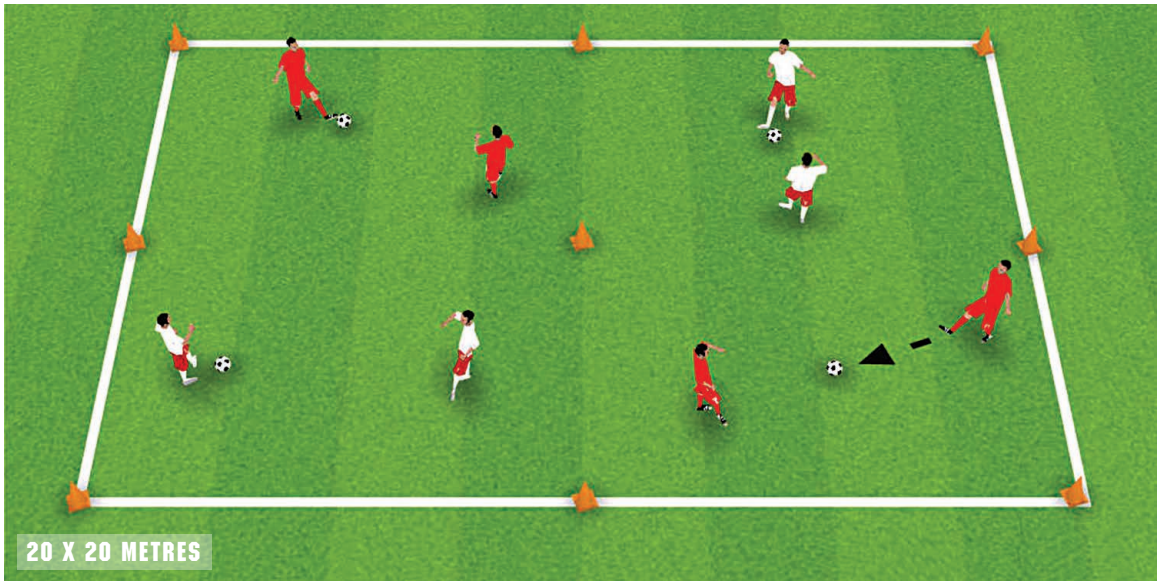
- "Go!" – players at the end line try to score a point by running through the "valley of doom" without being touched by soccer balls passed by their teammates. Remind the players with soccer balls to use the inside of their foot to pass.
- "Switch!" – when one set of players has made it through the valley, the two players on the sidelines closest to the start become the next pair of runners:

OPTIONS:

- As runners, hop, skip or bunny hop down the field while dodging soccer balls.
- Pass the ball with your other foot.
- Widen the valley so players have to pass farther.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 2: "SQUARE PASS"



SET UP:

- Up to 16 players, in pairs, with one ball per pair.

INSTRUCTIONS:

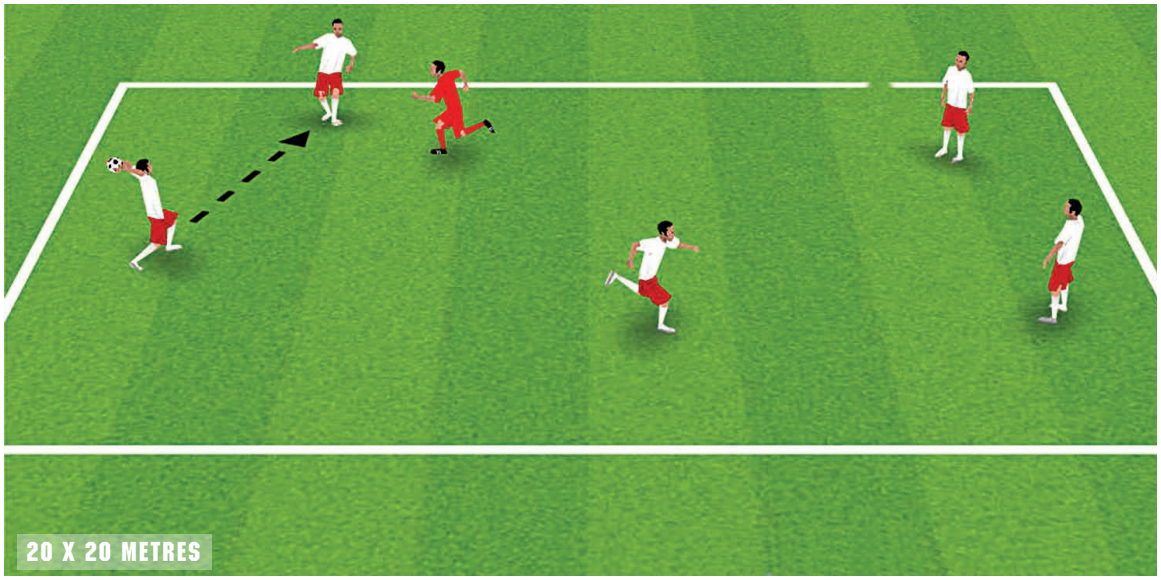
- "Go!" – pass the ball with your partner, staying inside your square. **1.** Throw the ball and catch it. **2.** Pass with the inside of your foot. **3.** Pass with your laces. **4.** Throw the ball and have your partner use their foot or thigh to gently knock it back ("volley").

OPTIONS:

- When passing with the foot, touch the ball only once.
- Work in groups of 4 players rather than 2, using the same exercises. Number the players from 1 to 4 and have them pass in that sequence.
- "Switch!" – rotate corners a couple of players at a time.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 3: "FREEZE TAG"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players; one ball.
- One player is "it"; another player starts with the ball.

INSTRUCTIONS:

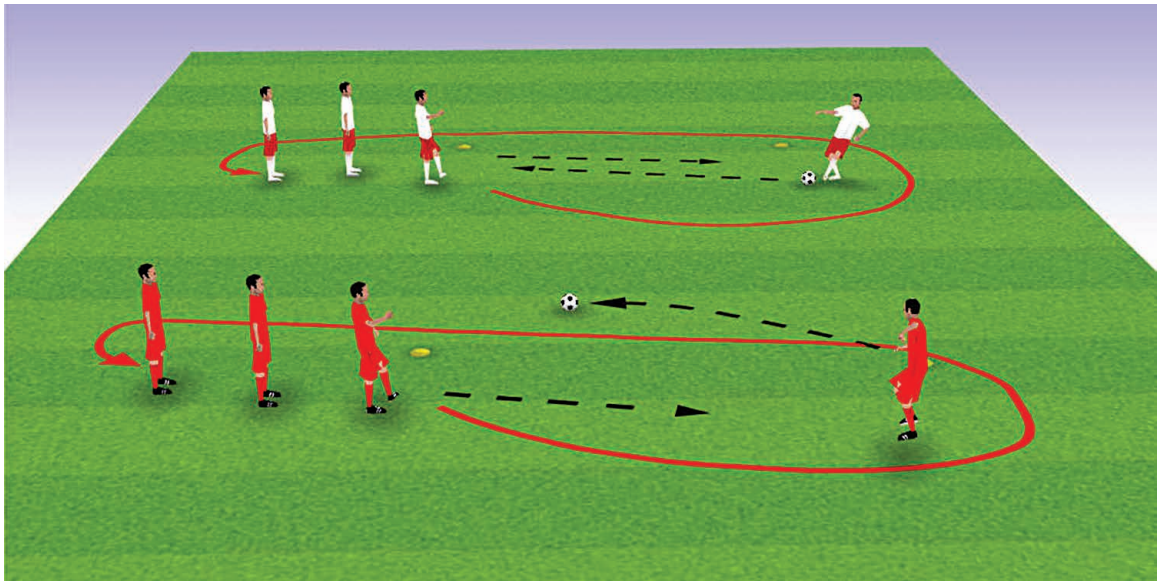
- "Go!" – if you're "it", try to tag the other players by touching them with your hand. If you have the ball, you cannot be tagged. Save a teammate by throwing the ball to them before they get tagged. If you get tagged, you're frozen. You're back in the game when a teammate crawls through your legs.
- "Switch!" – the player holding the ball becomes "it."

OPTIONS:

- More than one player has a ball and can "save" their teammates.
- Instead of passing with your hands, use your feet.
- "Dodge ball:" the player who is "it" has the ball. To freeze other players, throw the ball to hit them below the knees.

COORDINATION—PASSING

ACTIVITY 4: "PASS RELAYS"



SET UP:

- Up to 12 players, in groups of 3 or 4.
- One player stands with a ball at a marker facing their teammates, who are lined up behind second marker.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – the player with the ball throws it to their teammate at the front of the line. That player catches it and throws it back, then runs around the thrower all the way back to the end of the line. Continue with the second player, third player, etc. When all players have gone, the player at the front of the line becomes the thrower, and the thrower moves to the back of the line. Continue relay-style until all the players have had a turn as the thrower.

OPTIONS:

- Instead of your hands, use your feet to pass the ball back and forth.
- Drop the ball and use your thigh or foot to gently volley it to your teammate, who catches it and volleys it back.
- Instead of running, skip or hop around the thrower.

1

STAGE 1—ACTIVE START U-4/U-6

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

- Are FUN!
- Will motivate your players more than any other activity.
- Should involve small groups playing in small areas.
- Provide players with the best chance to practice individual skills.

At the U-4/U-6 level, small-sided games should make up about 25% of practice time (i.e., 15 minutes of a 1 hour training session). The following games are designed to work on dribbling, passing and shooting skills.

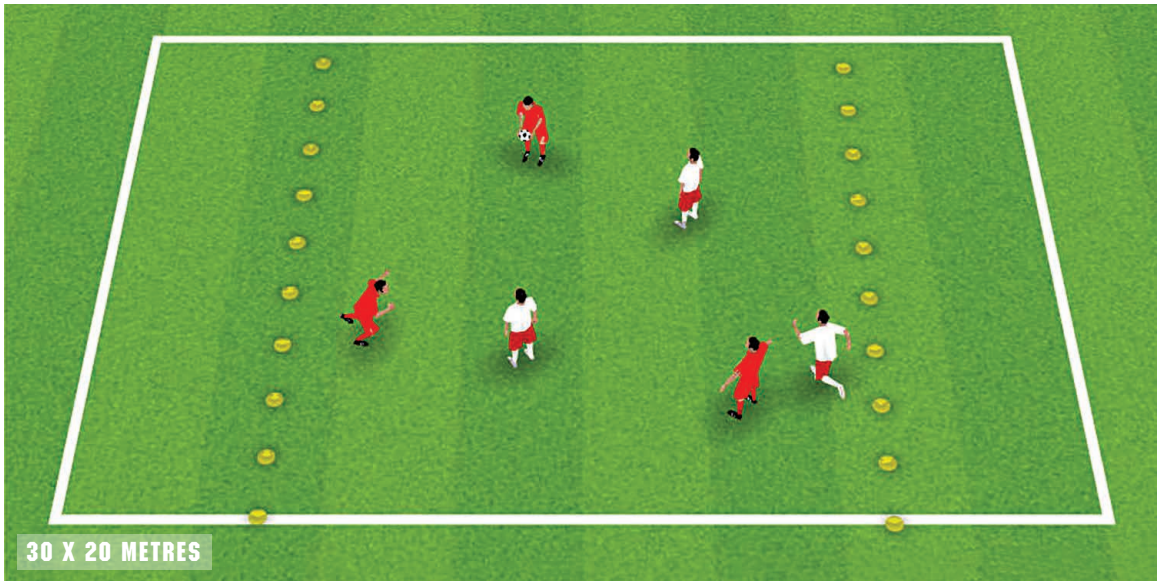
TIP

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: "FLAG FOOTBALL"

EVER PLAYED FLAG FOOTBALL? HERE'S SOCCER'S VERSION.



SET UP:

- Two teams of 3 players each. 1 ball.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- "Go!" – carry the ball with your hands and try to score by running into the end zone. If a player on the other team touches you when you have the ball, it's their turn to try and score in the other end zone. You can avoid being touched by throwing the ball to one of your teammates.

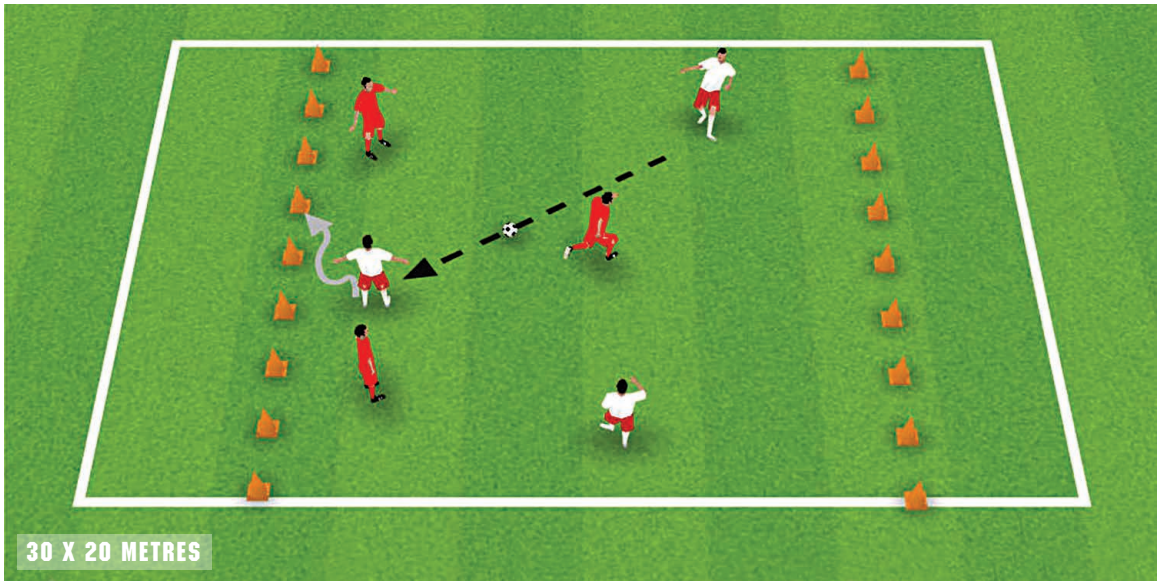
OPTIONS:

- "No hands!" – use your feet to dribble the ball into the end zone.
- "No hands and no tag!" – instead of tagging the other team, use your feet to take the ball away.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 2: "TIMBER!"

GET READY TO KNOCK DOWN SOME TREES!



SET UP:

- Two teams of 3 players each.

INSTRUCTIONS:

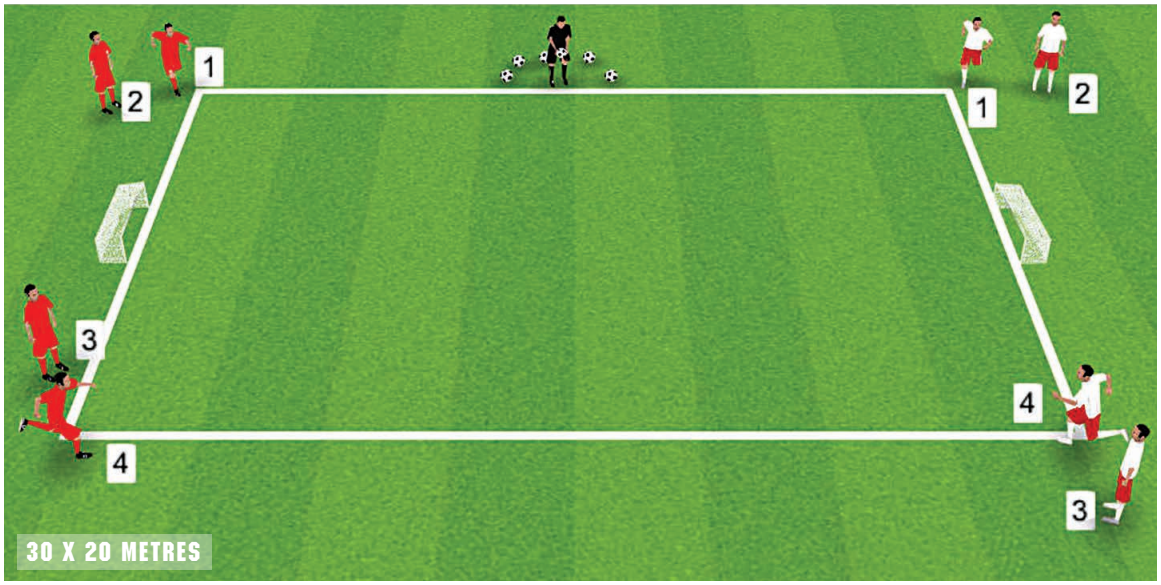
- Same as Activity 1 – Flag Football, but this time you score a point by throwing the ball to knock over a "tree" in the other team's end zone.

OPTIONS:

- "No hands!" – use your feet to dribble the ball into the end zone. Pass the ball with the side of your foot to pass to a teammate or to knock over a tree and score a point.
- "No hands and no tag!" – instead of tagging the other team, use your feet to take the ball away.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 3: "4 CORNERS"



SET UP:

- Four equal teams of up to 4 players, two players per corner on either side of goal. Use different-coloured pinnies, if available, and give the teams animal names (i.e.,"Lions" and "Tigers") for added fun.
- Number the players on each team from 1 to 4.

INSTRUCTIONS:

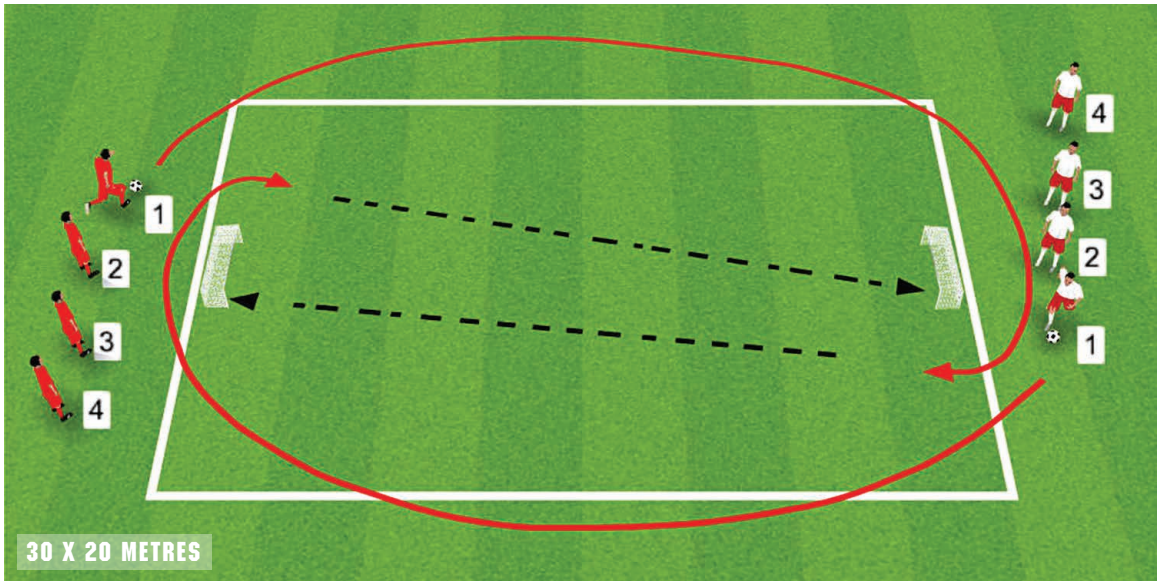
- When you hear the coach call out your number, come to the middle of the field.
- When the coach rolls the ball into play, the Tigers try to score on the Lions' goal and vice-versa.
- Use your dribbling skills to move the ball towards the goal. If you can't score, pass the ball to your teammate using the inside of your foot.

OPTIONS:

- "No hands!" – use your feet to dribble the ball into the end zone. Pass the ball with the side of your foot to pass to a teammate or to knock over a tree and score a point.
- "No hands and no tag!" – instead of tagging the other team, use your feet to take the ball away.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—DRIBBLING

ACTIVITY 4: "RACE TO GOAL"



SET UP:

- Two teams of 4 players.
- Number the players on each team from 1 to 4.
- Players stand behind their team's goal, with a ball each (diagram).

INSTRUCTIONS:

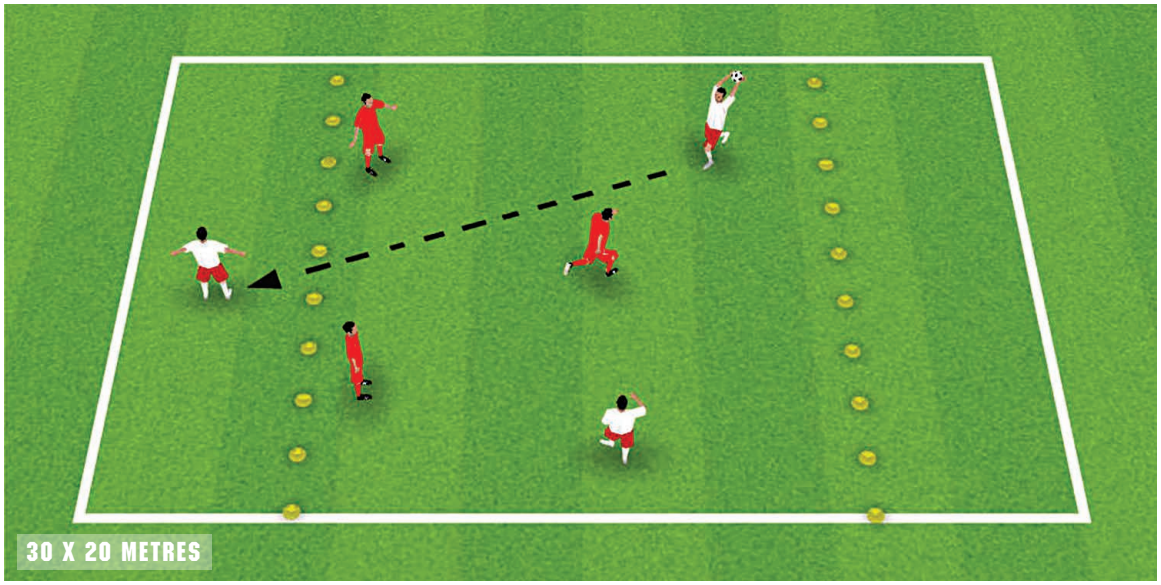
- "Go!" – when the coach calls your number, dribble your ball as fast as you can around the field, until you get to the other team's goal. Dribble around the back of the goal, then dribble onto the field and try to score in the net. The first player to score gets a point for their team.

OPTIONS:

- Call out more than one number at a time.
- Involve the players who have not been called. Allow them to prevent the other team from scoring.
- Add a parent or coach as goalkeeper at each end.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 1: " TOUCHDOWN!"



SET UP:

- Two teams of 3 players each; one ball.

INSTRUCTIONS:

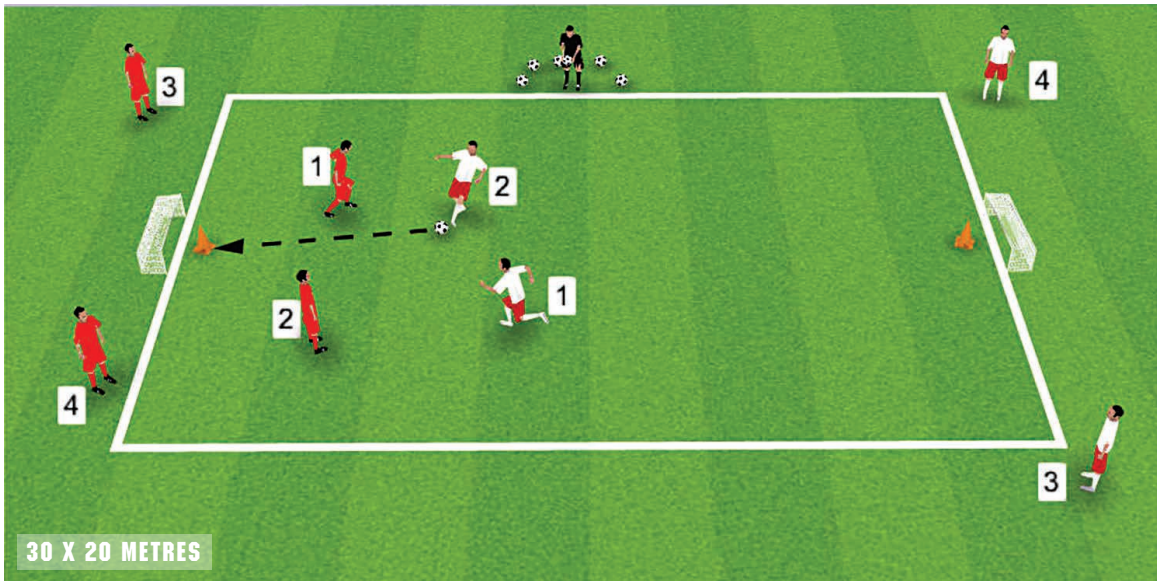
- "Go!" – use your hands to throw the ball to your teammates. If a player on the other team tags you when you have the ball, it's their ball.
- Try to score by throwing the ball to a teammate in the opposing team's end zone. If your teammate catches the ball, it's a goal!

OPTIONS:

- "No hands!" – use your feet to pass, and instead of tagging the other team, use your feet to take the ball away. Remember to use the side of your foot when passing!

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 2: "HOT POTATO"



SET UP:

- Four equal teams of up to 4 players, two players per corner. Use different-coloured pinnies, if available, and give the teams animal names (i.e.,"Lions" and "Tigers") for added fun.
- Number the players on each team from 1 to 4.
- Place a target cone at the midline on both sides of the field.

INSTRUCTIONS:

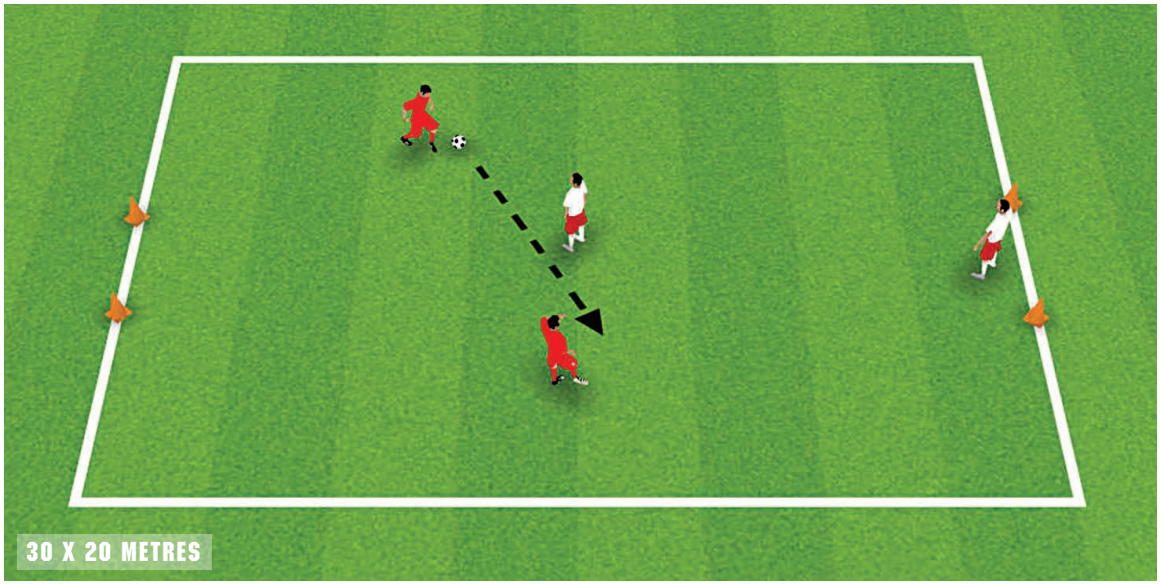
- When you hear the coach call out your number, come to the middle of the field. The coach will call out 2 players per team.
- When the coach rolls the ball (the "hot potato") into play, each team tries to hit the other team's cone. But no player can keep the "hot potato" more than 2 seconds, and must either pass the ball to a teammate or shoot at the cone.
- Remember to use the side of your foot when passing, and the top of your foot (laces) to shoot!

OPTIONS:

- Instead of a target cone, use cones to mark out a goal, and add a goalkeeper.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 3: "2 AGAINST 1"



SET UP:

- Four players total (2 per team) with a goal at each end.
- Give animal names to the teams (i.e., "Cats" and "Dogs") for added fun.

INSTRUCTIONS:

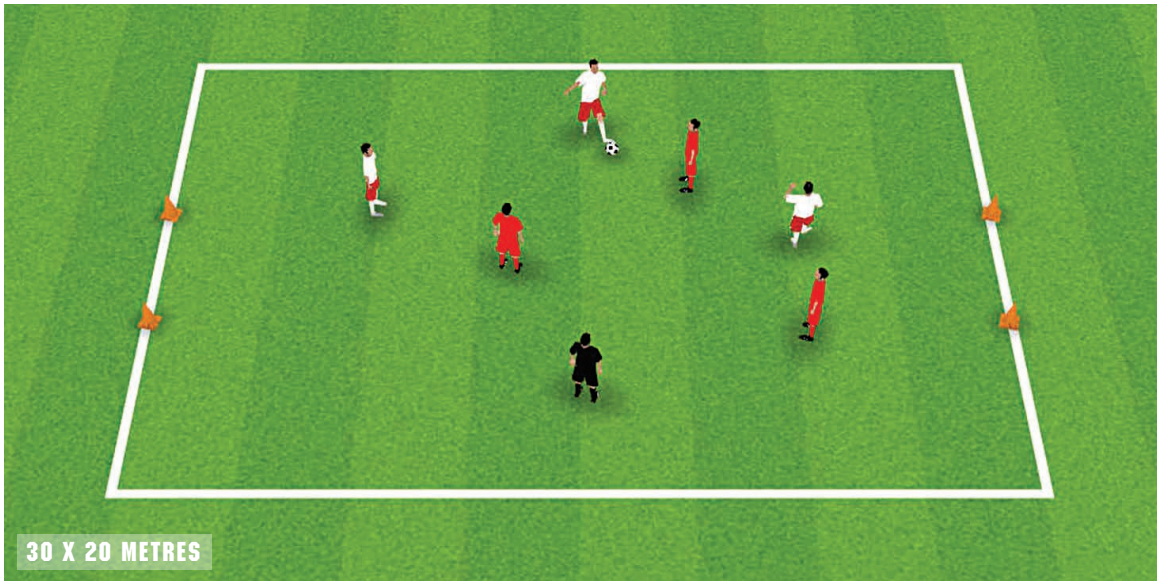
- The Cats have the ball and try to score on the Dogs' net. One of the Dogs becomes the goalkeeper. The Cats must make at least one pass before shooting. If the Dogs get the ball, it's their turn to try to score.
- Remember to use the side of your foot when passing!

OPTIONS:

- "No hands!" – when you're the goalkeeper, you can only use your feet.
- Same game with three players per team.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—PASSING

ACTIVITY 4: "PASS TO SCORE"



SET UP:

- Two teams of three players plus 1 neutral player.
- Neutral player wears a hat (or a different coloured t-shirt) and helps whichever team has the ball.

INSTRUCTIONS:

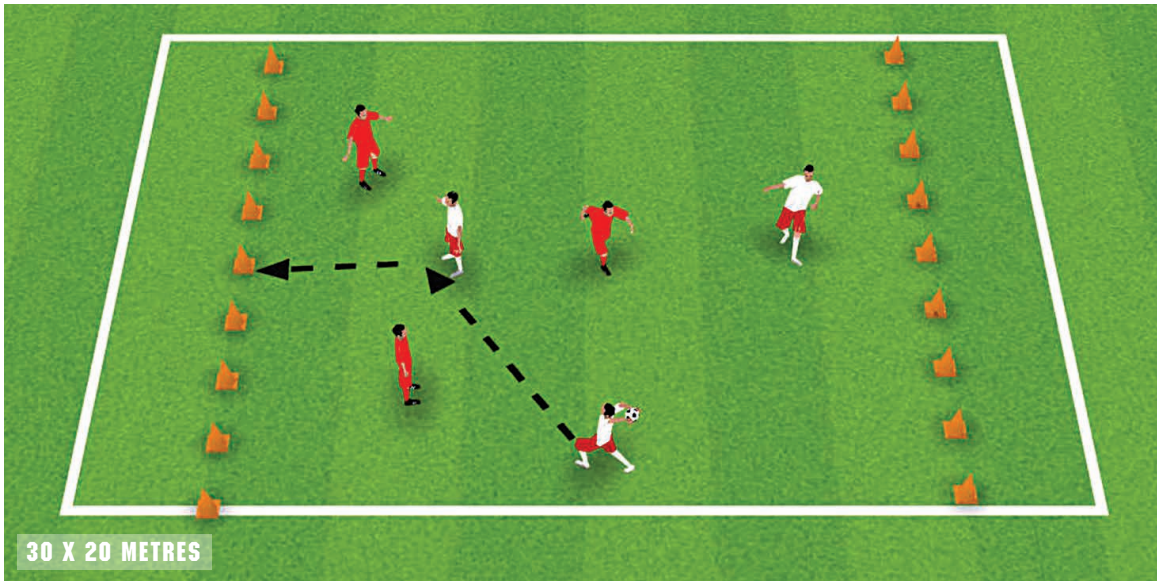
- "Go!" – your team gets a point if you can pass the ball three times without the other team touching the ball. After 3 passes, you're allowed to shoot on goal to try to score another point. Remember to use the side of your foot when passing!

OPTIONS:

- Increase the number of passes to 5 to score a point.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 1: "KNOCKDOWN"



SET UP:

- Two teams of 3 players each; one ball.

INSTRUCTIONS:

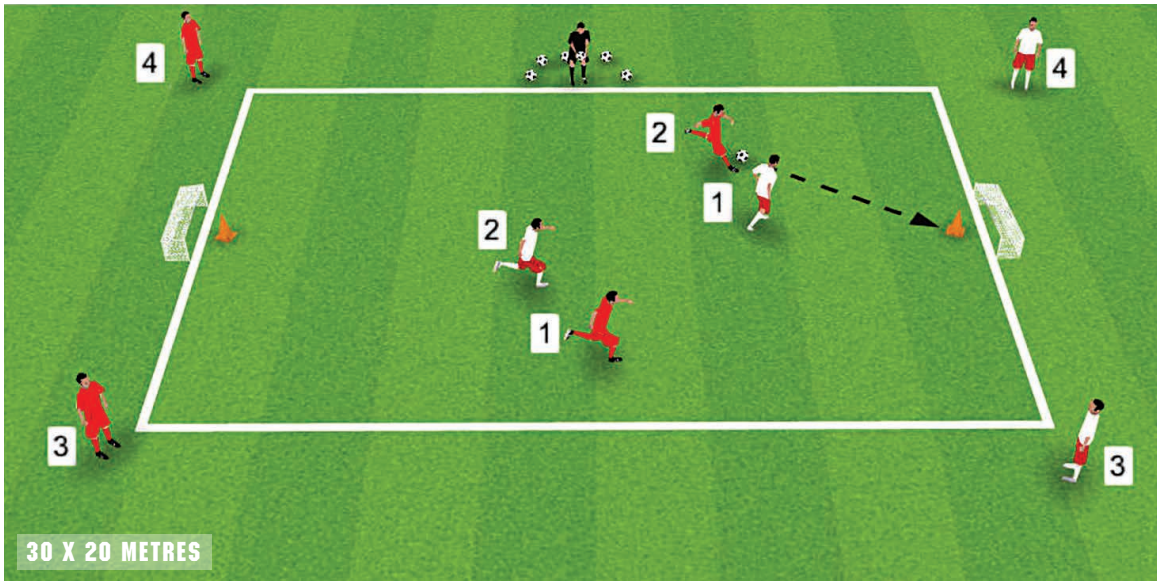
- "Go!" – use your hands to start with, and pass by throwing the ball to your teammates. If a player on the other team tags you while you have the ball, then the other team gets the ball.
- Score by throwing the ball and knocking over a cone.

OPTIONS:

- "No hands!" – use your feet to pass and shoot. Instead of tagging, use your feet to take the ball away from the other team. Remember to use the top of your foot (laces) when shooting!

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 2: "USE YOUR LACES!"



SET UP:

- Four equal teams of up to 4 players, 2 players per corner. Use different-coloured pinnies, if available, and give the teams names (i.e., Toronto FC, Vancouver Whitecaps FC, Montreal Impact) for added fun.
- Number the players on each team from 1 to 4.
- Place a target cone at the midline, on both sides of the field.

INSTRUCTIONS:

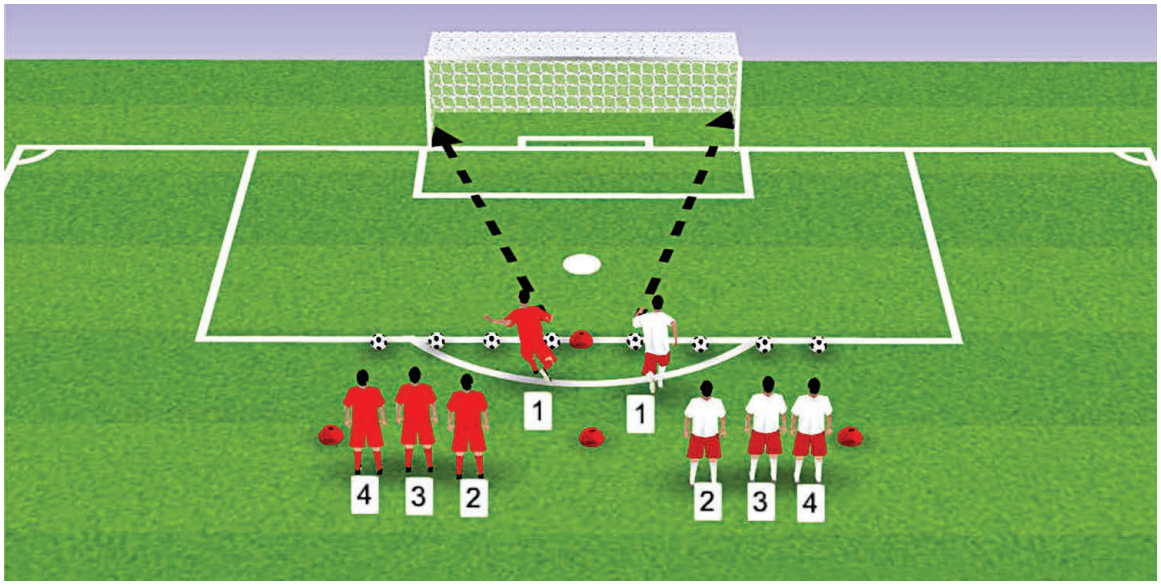
- When you hear the coach call out your number, come to the middle of the field. The coach will call out 2 players per team.
- When the coach rolls the ball, you and your teammate try to get the ball, then shoot it to knock over the other team's cone.
- Use the top of your foot (laces) to shoot!

OPTIONS:

- Instead of shooting at target cones, use cones to mark out a goal, and add a goalkeeper.

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 3: "WILD WEST SHOOT-OUT"



SET UP:

- Two teams of 4 players, lined up with a ball each.
- Number the players on each team from 1 to 4.

INSTRUCTIONS:

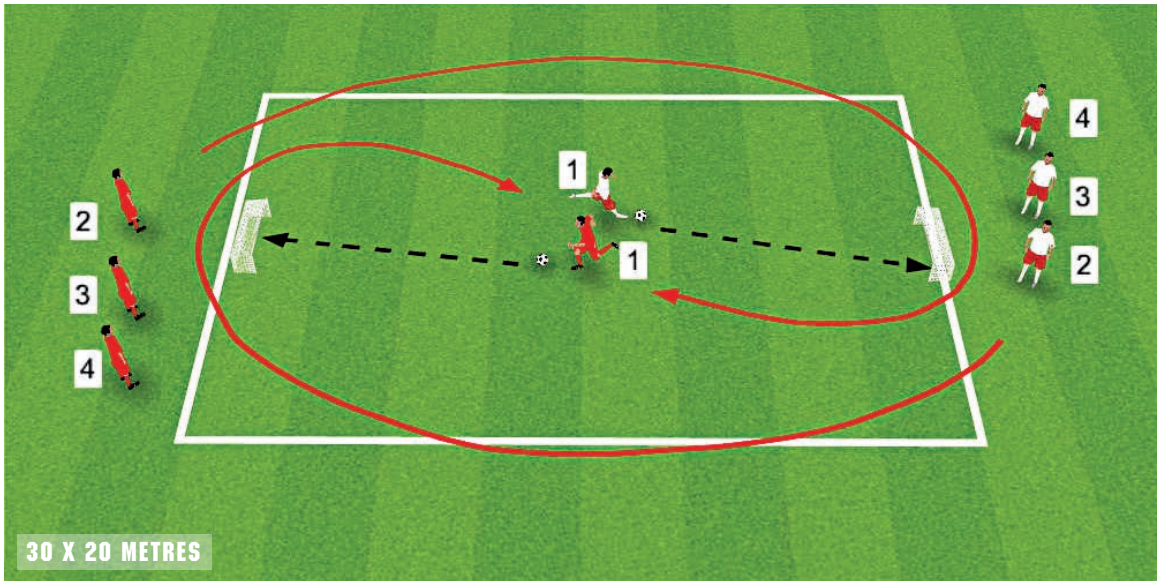
- "Go!" – Player 1 on each team runs up and shoots on goal, then runs back and tags Player 2. The game continues until all the players have had a shot on goal. The team with the most goals wins.
- Remember to use the top of your foot (laces) when shooting!
- In the case of a tie, the first team sitting down after the last shot wins.

OPTIONS:

- Lie on your back, belly or in the push-up position at the start.
- Have a parent or coach be the goalkeeper, trying to stop 2 shots at a time!

SMALL-SIDED GAMES—SHOOTING

ACTIVITY 4: "AROUND THE TRACK"



SET UP:

- two teams of 4 players.
- Number players on each team from 1 to 4.
- Teams stand behind goals at opposite ends of the field.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- The coach rolls two balls into the middle of the field.
- "Go!" – when the coach calls your number, run as fast as you can around the field, clockwise, until you get to the other team's goal. Then run onto the field, take a ball and shoot to score on your net. The first player to score gets a point for their team.
- Remember to use the top of your foot (laces) when shooting!

OPTIONS:

- Call out more than one number at a time and allow opposing team players to defend their goal.
- Add a parent or coach as goalkeeper at each end.

NOTES

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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.

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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

Northwest Territories Soccer Association
nwtkicks.ca

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