

## Soccer Practice Drills

(Suggested for younger players)

### **Guiding Principles**

1. Give the players as much opportunity to touch the ball as possible. Just about everything you do should involve contact with the soccer ball.
2. Emphasize teamwork. Encourage the players to help and promote each other. Younger players LOVE to best the grownups, so arrange competitions so that the players try to beat their coach(es).
3. Promote success. The whole intent of most activities is that the players be successful, so feel free to modify and adapt them as you feel appropriate if the children have problems
4. Make it fun!!

### **Warm-Ups**

1. Have players sit on the ground with their legs extended straight in front of them. Have them roll the soccer ball around their feet and behind their back to help stretch hamstrings (some players might have to bend their knees slightly).
2. Have the players drop the ball from chest level, hit it back up with their thigh and catch it. Alternate legs. As the players' skill improves, have them hit the ball once with each thigh between the drop and catch.
3. Whistle-Stop: have players line up and sprint away from the coach on the "GO" command. Have players stop and freeze when the coach blows the whistle. Resume running again on the "GO" command. This drill teaches "whistle discipline" and teaches the players to stop when they hear the whistle. The whistle should thus only be used to call "STOP". A verbal command should be used for "GO". As skills develop, this game can be played with players dribbling the ball (see "Skills Development" section below).

### **Agility Drills**

1. Lay a cone on its side (or use the flat cones if you have them). With both feet together, have the players jump over the cone from side to side and front to back.
2. Have the players sprint in one direction and switch direction on coach's command.
3. Have players put one foot on the ball. Switch feet on coach's command.
4. Have the players and coach lie on the ground (face-up or face-down). On coach's "START" command, players and coach should get up to standing position as fast as possible. (See if they can beat the coach to their feet). The first person up gets to call "START" next time.

## Skills Development

1. Follow the leader: Have players follow the coach around the practice field while dribbling the ball. Encourage the players to keep the ball close to them and under control while dribbling. Switch to allow each player to be the leader.
2. Dribble relay: Have players line up in two teams and place a cone about 30-50 feet away. The first player on each team dribbles the ball to and around the cone and back, passing it to the next player. Additionally, you can have the last player on each team kick the ball into the goal.
3. Have players dribble the ball in one direction and switch directions (maintaining control of the ball) on coach's command.
4. Arrange cones into a large circle or square. Have all players except one (or except the coach) dribble the ball. The player without the ball tries to steal the balls from the other players and kick them out of the circle or square. Continue until all players are "out". The last one out is "it" for the next round.
5. Red Light / Green Light: Coach is traffic cop and stands away from the players. They dribble toward him when he yells "green light" and must stop (and keep control of the ball) when he yells "red light". Players who lose control of their ball must return to start. The first person to reach the coach becomes the traffic cop for the next round.
6. Monkey in the Middle: Arrange players in a circle (perhaps around the midfield circle). One player (or coach) stands in the middle. Players around the rim try to pass a ball across the circle without allowing the player in the middle to intercept the pass. If a pass is intercepted, the passing player becomes "it".
7. Freeze Tag: All players dribble within the designated area (about half of the field). One player (or coach) is "it". If the player who is "it" tags another player, that player must pick up the ball, spread his/her legs apart and not move until another dribbling player kicks his/her ball between the legs of the frozen player. If this happens, the frozen player may resume dribbling. Continue until all the players are frozen.
8. Giant's Game: Players have a home base and one player is "The Giant". The Giant has a cave (sitting behind a tree, etc.) The coach stands between home base and the cave. Players ask the coach, "Mommy (or Daddy) can we come out to play?" The coach responds, "Sure, but don't go near the giant's cave." The Giant runs out of the cave and tries to tag as many players as possible before they can dribble back to their home base. Whoever the Giant tags becomes a giant for the next round. Continue until only one player is left dribbling.
9. The Crab Game: Line up players on one side of the field (about a quarter of the field), each with a soccer ball. One player (or coach) is in the middle in a "crab walk" position. The crab must try to stop the players from dribbling across the field to the other side (which is "base") by kicking their ball away. Any player whose ball is kicked away becomes a crab as well. Continue until only one player remains dribbling.
10. Scrimmage: Arrange scrimmages with other teams or pit the players against the coach(es).