

# YMCA Youth Sports Philosophy

Over the past few years, the YMCA has noticed some alarming trends in youth sport programs: the pressure for more rigorous competition and higher achievement. These trends come from adult-oriented attitudes and the misconception that youth sport programs are scaled-down versions of professional sports. This is not only false, but also dangerous.

**The YMCA stresses child-oriented attitudes by keeping winning in perspective, having fun, improving physical fitness, and working with the whole child.** The YMCA wants the quality of play to improve in order to meet the needs of all participants whatever their ability and skills.

The YMCA does not encourage the elimination of competition or winning. Winning is essential to enjoyable competition. However, it is the “striving to win” that yields the joy of sports.

The key for parents and coaches is to keep winning in perspective. It is this key that holds the YMCA Youth Sports program together. Competition will happen in youth sports without any external pressures. **It is important to keep competition at a level appropriate for the athlete.**

The YMCA would not be whole without its commitment to Christian emphasis. The goal of the Youth Sports program is to help the child grow to his or her fullest potential in mind, body, and spirit: activity helps the body grow; thinking advances the mind; and belief makes our spirit grow.

**The Mission of the YMCA of Austin is to put  
Christian principles into practice through  
programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body**

# Value Coaching

Coaches are the most important people in our organization. They determine the kind of experience our athletes have with sports. We are committed to the principles of positive coaching and expect our coaches to be “Double- Goal Coaches”. First, help players learn life lessons and positive character traits from sports. Second, *strive* to win. The following is what we expect from our coaches during the coming the season.

1. Model and teach your players to honor the game by teaching the elements of ROOTS – Respect for: Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates, and one’s Self.
  - Hold a parent/guardian meeting to encourage important stakeholders to accept your team’s double goal philosophy. This could be held after the first practice.
  - Reinforce positive attitudes during practices.
  - Seize teachable moments to talk with players about honoring their sport.
  
2. Help players redefine what it means to be a “Winner” in terms of mastery, not just the scoreboard:
  - Teach players the ELM Tree of Mastery – Effort, Learning, and bouncing back from Mistakes.
  - Reward effort, not just good outcomes. Look to recognize players even when their efforts are unsuccessful.
  - Encourage players to set effort goals that are related to how hard they try.
  
3. Fill your players’ Emotional Tanks.
  - Use encouragement and positive reinforcement as your primary method of motivating.
  - Strive to achieve the 5:1 “Magic Ratio” of 5 positive reinforcements to each criticism/correction.
  - Schedule “fun activities” for practices, so players will enjoy their sport.
  - Learn to give kid-friendly criticism so players will be able to hear it. Criticize in private, and sandwich criticism in between positive feedback.
  
4. Converse with your players at every practice and every game.
  - Review honoring the game, the ELM Tree and the Emotional Tank throughout the season.
  - Remind players about these three concepts before and after every game.
  - Ask questions and encourage players to speak and contribute during team meetings.

At the end of the season we will survey your players and their parents to give you feedback on how you did at implementing these positive coaching principles during the season. We will share the results with you. Thank you for all your time and effort!

# Positive Reinforcement

(Taken from wecoachkids.com and the Positive Coaching Alliance)

Keeping sports fun for kids should be the goal of all youth coaches. Constantly being criticized will take all the fun out of it. It is important to give children clear and honest feedback, but as youth coaches how we go about that is very important. Created directly from research that looked at how athletes responded to coaching techniques, the Positive Coaching Alliance has created the term Filling the Emotional Tank. A coach who uses these techniques understands that giving clear and specific, positive feedback will fill the player's emotional tank, which will then allow the child to better hear and benefit from the corrective feedback. PCA recommends a 5:1 ratio for feedback. Try to give feedback on things the player is doing well or in which he or she is improving five times for every one piece of critical feedback. Think about how many things a softball player has to do right to hit the ball out of the infield. Instead of just constantly criticizing the one or two things the player is not doing right, make sure you are pointing out all the things the player has mastered.

Reinforcing the positive also has a great effect on creating players who are willing to take risks. It helps them to see that mistakes are a natural part of the game and of mastering the skill. As you reinforce positive behaviors you will be setting a great example for your young athletes to follow. Teammates who can make room for each other to make mistakes will support each other and create an atmosphere that encourages risk and is fun to be a part of.

Reinforcing the positive does not simply mean saying "nice job." That's a good start, but specific comments that describe the behavior you are seeing will have the most impact. The praise should also be earned and deserved. Empty praise can do more harm than good and kids may start to doubt their own self worth. Darrell Burnett, Ph.D., in his book It's Just a Game, Youth Sports and Self Esteem, points out that children will filter out praise that does not fit their own self image. The praise needs to be specific, honest and clear. One way to achieve this is to tell them exactly what you want to see them do and then reinforce that positive behavior when you see it. For example:

*"I told you that to learn to catch you really need to watch the ball. I saw you really watching it into your glove that time and you came much closer to catching it. Keep that up and I know you will master this."*

*"I asked you to not run through the middle of the drill and I like the way that you consistently come around the cones now."*

*"We talk a lot about being a good teammate on this team. I saw you comfort John after that goal was scored. That showed terrific sportsmanship. He is lucky to have you as a teammate."*

The PCA recommends using a chart to write down the positive plays you see during a game. This creates a great wrap-up tool. Quick notes to yourself on Susan making the run to back up third base, or Sam quickly getting back on defense after having the ball stolen, or John not arguing with the referee when he did not like the call, will give you a great tool to use either right after the game or at the beginning of the next practice. Write down things in advance that you worked on in practice and

make a quick note when you see it. Have categories for effort, teamwork, and sportsmanship and jot a quick note when you see those skills demonstrated. Specific praise of the efforts you see from your players in the game will help them and you remember that in victory or in defeat the focus is on the process of mastering skills and giving your best effort, not the outcome. By doing these things, you will reach your target of being a double goal coach.

## *Encouraging Trial and Error*

Making mistakes is an important part of learning for everyone, but especially for children. Children have spent their entire lives learning from mistakes and that is not going to stop because they sign up for youth sports. They are, however, going to be more sensitive to making them in front of all the other kids. Your job as a coach is to lessen this sensitivity or you may risk inadvertently teaching your players not to take chances. Mistakes are a natural part of the learning process and are equally as important a part of mastering a skill as getting it right. Being able to learn from the mistake, shake it off and try again will be a skill that will carry that child far in life. As parent/coaches who are coaching children, teaching this skill may be the most important life lesson you teach.

Some of your players will have the confidence and self esteem to make a mistake and not take it personally. They will keep at it until they get it right. Lucky them. Others, however, will go to any extreme to avoid touching the ball in order to keep from making a mistake. To some coaches this might look like lack of hustle or determination. When kids are afraid to fail, the pressure in sports can become overwhelming. The pressure to perform without mistakes drives away many talented athletes from playing.

How do you teach kids the concept that mistakes are a learning tool? By the way you behave as you coach. Do you inadvertently drop your head and kick the ground when a player strikes out? Or do you just move on to the next batter and then find time to remind the player that being a hitter means striking out. It is important to tell the kids on day one that you coach a team on which everyone takes chances and learns new skills, and that you expect everyone to make mistakes if they plan on getting any better or learning anything at all. Then you model that every minute of every practice, of every game.

## *Tips for Great Practices*

(Taken from wecoachkids.com)

Keep in mind that the number one reason kids play sports is to have fun and make friends. Successful practices will emphasize these two elements, fun and friendship. Stop all drills and “working” on skills. Start playing games that the kids will love while developing the skills they need.

***Come with a plan:*** Come to every practice with a plan and be willing to vary from that plan as you see the response from the kids. When coaching the youngest kids (5-8) learn from every elementary school teacher. Most teachers of this age group will tell you that they spend a majority of the time in the first week or two just teaching class routines. The children learn classroom jobs, where things go, where to sit, how to move from one activity to the next and all the other social skills that create community and order. They would also remind you that this age child has a very short attention span. Get their attention quickly, make them stay focused for 15 minutes or less, and then move on to another activity.

***Discipline:*** Just because you are committed to making practices fun does not mean that you should forget discipline. Sports have rules that players need to learn and respect. Start teaching that in practice by expecting the players to respect and follow practice rules. Having rules that all players follow will create a safer practice environment, a sense of community and a sense of control for the players. You don’t need many rules, but a few good rules will go a long way in making it easier for everyone to have a positive experience.

***Make everything a game:*** The kids are playing sports to have fun. They do not come to practice at this age to “work” on anything. They are there to have fun with their friends and your goal is to get everyone wanting to come to practice. To improve your practices, replace many of the drills with skill building practice games instead. Having the kids play skill-based games in practice will improve their skills, build their fitness and increase the energy of practice. Your players will start playing at full speed, they will be playing with a competitive spirit, the situations will be more game like, and they will be having more fun.

***Expectations of skill games and drills:*** When conducting a skill building practice game or a drill for the first time, make sure your expectations are in line. If you are coaching kids who have probably never done the drill before, don’t expect to see them mastering the skill. You have to teach the drill before you can coach the skill. For the first several times the kids do a new drill, just focus on having them understand what they are supposed to be doing. Where do they start, where do they go, where do they kick the ball? And make it easy. Don’t say, “Don’t run back up in the middle of the drill.” Instead, set up cones where you want them to run and say, “Run this way after you shoot.” Until this part is mastered they cannot begin to master the skill. Keep drills simple and don’t constantly teach new ones. Young kids like consistency. Use the same drill over and over and just build on it to add new challenges.

***A couple of other ideas to get the most out of your limited practice times:***

- Start practice with a favorite game to increase on-time attendance and get everyone in the right spirit from the start.
- Get the kids out of lines whenever feasible and keep the lines short when it's not.
- Make sure every child is touching the ball as many times as possible, not just the ones who excel.
- Lose the words “drill” and “working” from your vocabulary and start talking about playing games and having fun at practice.
- Make time for team building. At the end of practice, five minutes on the playground or a game of dribble tag with the coach may be the most memorable part of the season for some kids.
- Don't panic that you don't have enough time in practice. You never will. Your job is to keep them coming back and build their love for the game. Achieve that and there will be plenty of time.
- Make sure they see YOU having fun too.

*Implementing these practice suggestions will likely help your athletes to have fun and develop friendships. At the same time, they will be developing the necessary skills to be successful.*

# Skill Development Games for Soccer

(Taken from wecoachkids.com)

## Why use games instead of drills?

Skill building games are meant to make sure kids enjoy practice, but there are also many benefits to using game based drills. Because the players will be having more fun they will give more effort and practice at a game-like pace. The games allow them to have fun and appreciate the game while learning and practicing the skills they need to master their sport.

## Practice Game Guidelines:

- Have every player touching the ball as much as possible.
- Use games that keep all kids playing until the end. Don't have the weak players get knocked out and watch the stronger players get more touches.
- Avoid rewarding "winners" and punishing "losers" (push ups, laps, etc).
- The games should replicate true game skills to be effective.
- Shorten or ideally eliminate lines.
- Keep it simple. The games should be easy to explain and to set up.
- Don't have too many different games. Find a few games that the kids love and just expand the game as they need more challenges.

Let them play without worrying about proper execution of the skill. After a couple of times through the game ask them what they need to do well to win the game. When you hear answers like "dribble in control" or "make good passes" you can then make suggestions for how to achieve that. With a little creativity you can probably turn many of the drills you are currently using into games. Have fun.

## Soccer Games

Soccer is a wonderful game to introduce children to sports. If you can make sure every player has 200-300 touches on the ball at each practice, they will improve their skills. The games below are designed to generate many touches while teaching skills and field awareness. As your players' skills improve, increase your expectations of the practice game's execution and add elements to the games to continue challenging their skills. Following are some suggested games to get you started.

### **Hit the Coach** (dribbling and shooting)

- **Skills taught:** In this game the players will practice stop and go dribbling in a crowd. They will have to keep their head up in order not to run into other players and to find their target. They will also learn how to shoot or pass off the dribble when the opportunity is right.
- **How the game works:** Each player has a ball. Pick an inbounds area and use cones to establish it. The younger the children, the smaller the playing area should be. On the coach's call, the game starts. The players dribble the ball around and try to hit the coach, who is running all around in the inbounds area. After they hit the coach 5 times, the coach has to make an animal noise selected by the last player to hit the coach.
- **Tip:** This game works well as a practice starter since the kids love it and you can begin with as few as 3 players with more joining as they arrive. Make sure they see you having fun and really put

some effort into those animal noises. (Copyright, [Soccerhelp.com](http://Soccerhelp.com) used with permission)

### **Freeze Tag** (great warm up, dribbling, passing, defense)

- **Skills taught:** The players will practice keeping the ball away from a defender and how to take advantage of a defender's decisions.
- **How the game works:** Set up an in bounds area and give each player a ball except for one. The player without the ball is 'it' and tries to freeze you by touching (not kicking away) your ball. When this happens the player is frozen and must lift the ball above their head and spread their legs wide to create a "goal." The player can be 'un-frozen' when another player kicks the ball through the frozen players legs. Play until all players are frozen or the player that is it is exhausted.
- **Tip:** This is another great warm up game. The players will just show up and start playing. If your players are not able to get everyone frozen you can add a second chaser.

### **Red Light, Green Light** (dribbling in control)

- **Skills taught:** Change of speed and dribbling in control.
- **How the game works:** This well known children's game makes a great drill. All players start on one side of the field with a ball. Coach yells "Green Light" and turns their back to the players. Yell "Red Light" and then turn back around. All players should have moved forward and now be standing still with one foot on the ball. Any player still moving or without his or her ball, gets sent back to the starting line.
- **Tip:** If you have players not moving very fast, ask a parent to join in and have the kids try to beat the parent.

### **Advanced Red Light, Green Light or Student Driving** (dribbling in control)

- **Skills taught:** Change of speed, direction and heads up dribbling.
- **How the game works:** Using a similar concept to the above game, add left turns, right turns, U-turns. Have the players play within a square area (the more players the larger the area.) Increase and decrease speed on the whistle. When anyone reaches a boundary instruct them to make either a reverse, or left or right turn. Have all players avoid "crashing" and have them race to return the car to the designated parking area at the end.
- **Tip:** Initially start this drill with all players on one side of the square area. As they improve, have players spread out on all sides of the square to make it more difficult to maneuver.

### **Traffic** (dribbling in a crowd)

- **Skills taught:** This game helps players learn to dribble with attention to the players around them.
- **How the game works:** Create a square playing area roughly 10 ft by 10 ft. Divide the players into two groups. Set one group up on the north side of the square and the other team on the east side. Each player has a ball. On the start all players must cross the square, make the turn when they get to the other side and come back. Make it a race to see which team can be the first to get its players across and back 3 times.
- **Tip:** Increase the square size to give more room to less skilled players.

**Kickball** (passing, trapping)

- **Skills taught:** In this game the players will practice trapping, one touch passing, working as a team and moving without the ball to receive a pass. It is also a good fitness drill for the runner.
- **How the game works:** Set this up like a kickball game using cones to lay out the bases. All the players are in the field except for the player up to bat. The “pitcher” passes the ball in and the kicker kicks it as far as she can and starts to run the bases. She continues to circle the bases until all the players in the field have touched the ball. The field players must one touch or trap the ball and pass to another field player until everyone has touched it. At this point the runner is out and a new runner takes her place.
- **Tip:** Divide into 2 small games if you have too many players on the field for this to work well with your players’ skill level.

**Monkey in the Middle** (passing, trapping, spacing)

- **Skills taught:** The players will learn to pass under pressure, receive a ball and get rid of it quickly and how to move around to get open.
- **How the game works:** Another game that many kids will already know makes for fun on the soccer field. Divide the kids into groups of 4. Three players set up in a triangle with one ball leaving one player in the middle. The 3 players in the triangle pass the ball around while the middle player tries to get it. If he gets it, the passing player goes into the center.
- **Tip:** Depending on skill levels, add another player to the middle, designate small areas that triangle players must stay in to pass and receive the ball. For younger players, it's helpful to have a coach join and talk about spacing. This is a good drill to group players by ability in order to keep it fun for everyone.

**Team Keep Away** (passing, trapping, defense, teamwork)

- **Skills taught:** More skilled players will really enjoy this game. They will be learning teamwork, passing, trapping, and spacing. They will also practice quick transitions from offense to defense.
- **How the game works:** This is a team based variation of *Monkey in the Middle*. Using half the field or less, divide the players up into 2 teams. Start them on opposite sides of the field with 1 ball for every 3 players. Reduce this to 1 ball to every 2.5 players for a more advanced game. (Ex: if you have 5 players on each team you can use either 1 or 2 balls per team; with 7 players 2-3 balls.) Teams play against each other trying to steal and keep as many balls as possible. Play for a timed period to see which team has the most balls when play is stopped. Play several times.
- **Tip:** Use jerseys to prevent confusion.

**Topple Ball** (shooting accuracy)

- **Skills taught:** This is a game that gives the coach an opportunity to teach correct kicking technique and the value of really spotting your target before striking the ball.
- **How the game works:** Set up a cone in the middle of a large circle with enough cones spaced around it for all players. Each player gets a ball and stands by a cone. The cone in the middle has a ball balanced on top of it. On the coach’s call, everyone shoots and tries to knock the ball off. Have the players run and retrieve a ball and set up to play again.
- **Tip:** Divide the kids into 2 groups and have one team compete against the other.

### **Ultimate Soccer** (passing, spacing, field awareness)

- **Skills taught:** This is a fun way to have the players practice passing, spacing and getting ahead of the ball.
- **How the game works:** It is played like Ultimate Frisbee. Divide the players into 2 equal teams and have them set up on either end of the field. Establish an end zone at each end with cones. The “kick off” team will kick the ball long to the other team. The receiving team traps the ball and the player that does so can make a few dribble moves but then *must* pass to a teammate to advance the ball up the field, they cannot dribble the ball to advance the ball. The goal is to move the ball up the field to a player in the end zone area who “scores” by trapping the ball in the end zone. The team without control of the ball should try to steal passes and mark open players, but the defensive players cannot steal the ball directly from a player who has control.
- **Tip:** For less skilled players, play more offensive players versus fewer defenders.

### **Relay Passing** (passing, trapping)

- **Skills taught:** Use line relays to learn to use every part of both feet to pass.
- **How the game works:** Depending on the number of players, divide them into 2 or 3 equal groups. Line the players up in evenly spaced parallel lines. Vary the distance between players based on skill and type of pass you have them execute. Start with simple instep passes. The first player in line passes to the next who must trap the ball and make the turn to pass to the next player. Begin with the players making their own choice in which foot to use and then increase the complexity. Have them trap left, pass right, or trap right and pass left. There is no end to the different ways to do this game: *Backwards pull passes:* All players face forward. The first player in line pulls the ball backwards to make a pass to the player behind. Next players traps and makes pull pass to the next player. *Heel pass:* Trap and use the heel to kick the ball backwards. *Top poke pass:* Trap and use the toe to poke the ball forward.
- **Tip:** The relay line does not always have to be straight. Set the players up in a square or a zigzag to create a situation where the ball is receive and then passed in multiple directions.

### **3 to Score** (passing, getting open)

- **Skills taught:** Use this game to improve field awareness of teammates and passing skills.
- **How the game works:** Divide the players into 2 equal teams and establish a playing area roughly half the size of the field. Have the players spread out all over the playing area. Toss the ball in to start. The goal is to gain control of the ball and make 3 passes in a row between teammates. If the defense intercepts then that team tries to make 3 passes in a row. After a team completes 3 passes it counts as a score and the coach restarts the game with a thrown in. Play for a certain amount of time or until 10 points are scored.
- **Tip:** For players that are more skilled require 5 passes to score but decrease to just 2 passes for beginning players.

### **Soccer Croquet** (passing, dribbling)

- **Skills taught:** This fast-paced game will help the players learn teamwork, passing and dribbling in a crowd.

- **How the game works:** Have each player get a partner, 1 ball and spread out on the sideline. Set up the field by placing sets of cones about 2-4 feet apart (to create a goal) all over the playing area. When the coach blows the whistle, one player dribbles the ball out and makes a pass through any goal to their teammate. The teammate then dribbles the ball to the next goal to make the pass through. The players can go through the goals in any order they want but they must pass to their teammate through every set of cones before returning to the sideline with their ball.
- **Tip:** For younger players use less goals. To increase difficulty set a time limit for how long the pairs have to complete the course.

#### ***Throw-In Relay*** (throw ins to the player)

- **Skills taught:** This relay will teach quick thrown in technique.
- **How the game works:** Divide your players into 2 equal teams. Break each team into 2 equal lines facing each other with about a 15-20 feet space. The first player in line using correct thrown in technique, will throw the ball to their teammate in the line 15 feet away. That player traps the ball then passes it back to the line it came from where the second player in line now picks it up. The first players in line that have already thrown and trapped the ball now run and take a place in the back of the opposing line. The throwing and trapping continue until the first player that threw the ball is at the beginning of the thrown in line. The 2 teams play at the same time and whichever team finishes first, wins.
- **Tips:** Increase or decrease the length of the throw depending on the players' skills.

#### ***Throw-in Relay 2*** (throw ins to the open space)

- **Skills taught:** This game focuses on throwing the ball to the open space for the receiving player to receive.
- **How the game works:** Establish a throwing line on the sideline and a receiving line on the field. Set up 2 cones to create a small goal about 40 feet away. The throwing player should throw the ball towards the goal and the receiving player must run onto the ball and make at least 2 touches before passing it through the cones. The receiving player retrieves the ball and dribble/passes it back to the thrown-in line where the next player awaits. Players switch lines and continue to all players have thrown and received. If you have enough players, divide the group into 2 teams to race each other, otherwise time the players the first time through and create a timed goal to beat.
- **Tips:** For more advanced players move the receiving line back so they can get a running start.

## Example Practice Plan

### **Week 1**

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Skipping & Heel Kicks**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Stuck in the Mud,

#### 10-15 minute Game:

The playing area is a 20 by 20yard grid. Each player has a ball apart from two. The players dribble their ball around the grid trying to avoid the two defenders who have to try and tag them. If they are tagged they hold their soccer ball above their head, and leave their legs apart. The only way they can get out of the mud is by having one of the dribbles pass their own soccer ball through the player's legs. Can the defenders tag all of the dribbles?

#### **Coaching points:**

1. Keep your head up while dribbling.
2. Shield the ball from the defender, by putting your body between the ball and the defender...
3. Pass the ball through the player's legs with inside of foot.

### Down on the Farm,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 20 by 20yard grid, with gates made by cones placed 2yards apart. Players pretend to be sheep and dribble the soccer balls through the gates on the farm.

1. The coach becomes a sheepdog and attempts to round the sheep up. (bark accordingly)
2. Coach becomes angry farmer and attempts to stop sheep going through gates by standing in the gate as they approach. Sheep have to turn and try to run through another gate.

#### **Coaching points:**

1. Keep your head up so you can see where the sheepdog is.
2. Keep your ball close to you shield it from the sheepdog.
3. Dribble through the gates quickly.

Go over the technique of the **Roll-Back** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*). 5 minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take the remaining time of your session.

## Week 2

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Skipping & Heel Kicks**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Robin Hood,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 10 by 20yard grid. Set up a line of gates with cones side across the center of the grid. Players stand facing their partner on the outside of the grid either side of the gates in the middle. (Along the 20yard side) Robin Hood has to shoot the ball between the cones to their partner on the other side. (Distance from the cones can be changed due to ability and age of players) How many passes can they complete in a minute?

#### **Coaching points:**

1. Approach ball from a slight angle.
2. Take a couple of steps to approach ball.
3. Use the inside of the foot; pull toes up to lock ankle.

### Tortoise Soccer,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 15 by 25yard grid. Play a normal game but players have to walk around and not run. Instruct players to go no closer than 5yards to anyone else on their team. You can also create more time and space for player on the ball by saying no one can be tackled, the ball can only be intercepted.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Spread out as much as possible – explain why.
2. Remember – you can't pass through players.
3. Don't hide behind players to receive ball.

Go over the technique of the **Roll-Back** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*). 5 minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take the remaining time of your session.

### Week 3

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **High Knees & Ankle Flicks**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

#### Coconut Shy,

##### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 10 by 20yard grid. Place 7 tall cones across the center of the grid, and split the players into two teams. The teams are either side of the tall cones on the outside of the grid. They must pass the balls with inside of their foot and try to knock the tall cones over to score a point. Play the game for 1 minute or until all cones are knocked down, whichever comes sooner. The distance the players are away from the ball will be determined by the skill level.

##### **Coaching points**

1. Use correct technique to pass with inside of foot.
2. Rush to get another ball after you have taken one shot.
3. Work as a team to retrieve balls.

#### Crabs on the Beach,

##### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 10 by 20yard grid. Place a goal at one end of the grid and split the players into 2 groups. One group is a goalkeeper and two defenders; the other group is the remaining players with a ball. The players stand on the opposite end of the grid away from the goal. The two defenders have to move in a crab like action. On your command the players have to dribble their ball around the crabs, and score in the goal. See how many goals they can score in a minute.

##### **Coaching points**

1. Dribble around crabs and not through them.
2. Try and shoot when the ball is moving into the corners of goal away from the goalkeeper.
3. Dribble back as quickly as you can so they can go again.

Go over the technique of the **Back-Heel** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*). 5 minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Week 4

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **High Knees & Ankle Flicks**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Teletubby Play land,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 25 by 25yard grid. Each Teletubby has a cone which is their home, they are asleep to start the game but when the sun (you) raises up in the sky (raise a ball above your head) they start dribbling the ball around inside the grid. When the sun yawns they need to dribble back to their home as quickly as possible. The first one home wins a point, first Teletubby to earn 5 points wins. (*The points system is optional*).

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep the balls moving around when the sun is up.
2. Turn quickly and get home when sun yawns.
3. Keep the ball close when moving around – explain why.

### Fast Food Game,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 30 by 30yard grid, with 5 by 5yard grids in each of the four corners. Let the players choose the name of the four fast food chains. Get the players to dribble their ball around inside of the grid call out a name of a fast food chain and the players have to dribble their ball into the corresponding corner, the first one there wins a point, the first player to 5 points wins. For variation you change your mind after shouting one name out so players get to learn to turn quickly.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep ball close to your feet.
2. Use different turns to help change direction quickly.
3. Move at speed when trying to get to corner.

Go over the technique of the **Back-Heel** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*).  
5minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Week 5

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Knees In & Knees Out**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Star Wars Challenge,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 20 by 20yard grid. Place 8 tall cones around inside the area (Empire battle cruisers). You have 4 defenders (Jedi pilots) who try and stop the rest of the players (X-Wing pilots) from knocking the tall cones down with their soccer ball. Get players to add in sound effects for more fun. If a cone is knocked down a defender picks it up, and once all the cones are down the game is over. Also set a time limit of 2 minutes just incase the cones do not get knocked down.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Look around for open tall cone to knock down.
2. Use the inside of your foot to pass ball onto cone.
3. Strike the ball firmly to knock cone down.

### Switch Fields,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is two 15 by 15grds, that are 5yards apart. Divide the players into two groups. Players start out by dribbling their own soccer ball in their separate fields.

1. When the coach raises one hand each team must switch grids while dribbling their ball.
2. When the coach raises both hands the players must again switch grids but before they do, they must run around one of their end cones.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep the close to you.
2. Keep your head up to see when the coach's hands go up.
3. 3. Accelerate with the ball once the coach's hands go up.

Go over the technique of the **Inside-Hook** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*).  
5minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Week 6

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Knees In & Knees Out**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Star Wars Challenge,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 20 by 20yard grid. Place 8 tall cones around inside the area (Empire battle cruisers). You have 4 defenders (Jedi pilots) who try and stop the rest of the players (X-Wing pilots) from knocking the tall cones down with their soccer ball. Get players to add in sound effects for more fun. If a cone is knocked down a defender picks it up, and once all the cones are down the game is over. Also set a time limit of 2 minutes just incase the cones do not get knocked down.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Look around for open tall cone to knock down.
2. Use the inside of your foot to pass ball onto cone.
3. Strike the ball firmly to knock cone down.

### Switch Fields,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is two 15 by 15grds, that are 5yards apart. Divide the players into two groups. Players start out by dribbling their own soccer ball in their separate fields.

1. When the coach raises one hand each team must switch grids while dribbling their ball.
2. When the coach raises both hands the players must again switch grids but before they do, they must run around one of their end cones.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep the close to you.
2. Keep your head up to see when the coach's hands go up.
3. 3. Accelerate with the ball once the coach's hands go up.

Go over the technique of the **Inside-Hook** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*).  
5minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Week 7

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Heel Flicks & Ankle Flicks**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Ten-pin Bowling,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area for each team is a 5 by 10yard grid. Separate the players into groups of no more than 3. Place 6 tall cones at the end of each grid, the players stand in a line 10yards away at the end of their grid, and they take it in turns to try to knock the tall cones down. If a player knocks any cones down he races and stand them back up so his teammates have a full target to aim at, they then rush and retrieve their ball and go to the back of their line. The first team to knock a total of ten cones down wins. Make sure one player in each team counts the number of cones knocked down for their team. *(If children are too young ask a parent to help).*

#### **Coaching points**

1. Use the correct passing technique –inside of foot.
2. rush to stand cones back up – good teamwork
3. Take turns to pass at cones.

### Escape from Jurassic Park,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 10 by 10yard grid. 4 scientists are surrounded by a group of raptors. (player with soccer balls) The raptors try to catch the scientists by striking them below the knee with their ball, once a scientist as been hit, they turn into a raptor. The game is over when only raptors remain. Play is for a time limit just incase players do not get hit.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep you head up to see where scientists are running to.
2. Pass with the inside of the foot.
3. Pass the ball firmly, so scientists don't have time to move.

Go over the technique of the **Outside-Hook** turn *(Videos of all the skills can be found on the website)*. 5minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Week 8

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Heel Flicks & Ankle Flicks**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid

### Teletubby Play land,

#### 10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 25 by 25yard grid. Each Teletubby has a cone which is their home, they are asleep to start the game but when the sun (you) raises up in the sky (raise a ball above your head) they start dribbling the ball around inside the grid. When the sun yawns they need to dribble back to their home as quickly as possible. The first one home wins a point, first Teletubby to earn 5 points wins. (*The points system is optional*).

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep the balls moving around when the sun is up.
2. Turn quickly and get home when sun yawns.
3. Keep the ball close when moving around – explain why.

### Fast Food Game,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 30 by 30yard grid, with 5 by 5yard grids in each of the four corners. Let the players choose the name of the four fast food chains. Get the players to dribble their ball around inside of the grid call out a name of a fast food chain and the players have to dribble their ball into the corresponding corner, the first one there wins a point, the first player to 5 points wins. You can for variation change your mind after shouting one name out so players get to learn to turn quickly.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep ball close to your feet.
2. Use different turns to help change direction quickly.
3. Move at speed when trying to get to corner.

Go over the technique of the **Outside-Hook** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*). 5minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Alternative Practice Plan 1

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Skipping & High Knees**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Indiana Jones and Temple of Doom,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 10 by 20yard grid. Two pairs of players stand at the side of the grid facing each other with a supply of balls. Other players (Indiana Jones) stand at one end of the grid. The Indiana Jones' have to run to the other end of the grid without being hit by a boulder (ball) that is fired at them by angry natives. If you get hit below the knee you then join the natives. The last Indiana to get hit is the winner.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Look up to see where the Indiana's are.
2. Try and aim ball into front of their run – explain why.
3. Pass the ball with the inside of the foot.

### Frogs and Flies,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 20 by 20yard grid. Four players (frogs) have 2 soccer balls between them. They have to try to tag as many flies as they can with their tongues (balls). They can pass their ball to one of their teammates if they are closer to a fly. Once a fly has been hit below the knee they become a fly. Last fly is the winner.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep their balls moving.
2. Look up to see where the flies.
3. Work with your teammate to get the flies.

Go over the technique of the **Cradle** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*).  
5minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Alternative Practice Plan 2

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Skipping & High Knees**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

Robin Hood,

10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 10 by 20yard grid. Set up a line of gates with cones side across the center of the grid. Players stand facing their partner on the outside of the grid either side of the gates in the middle. (Along the 20yard side) Robin Hood has to shoot the ball between the cones to their partner on the other side. (Distance from the cones can be changed due to ability and age of players) How many passes can they complete in a minute?

**Coaching points:**

1. Approach ball from a slight angle.
2. Take a couple of steps to approach ball.
3. Use the inside of the foot; pull toes up to lock ankle.

Tortoise Soccer,

10-15 minute game:

The playing area is a 15 by 25yard grid. Play a normal game but players have to walk around and not run. Instruct players to go no closer than 5yards to anyone else on their team. You can also create more time and space for player on the ball by saying no one can be tackled, the ball can only be intercepted.

**Coaching points**

1. Spread out as much as possible – explain why.
2. Remember – you can't pass through players.
3. Don't hide behind players to receive ball.

Go over the technique of the **Cradle** turn (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*). 5 minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

### Alternative Practice Plan 3

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Knees In & Knees Out**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

King of the Jungle,

10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 25 by 25yard grid. Divide the players into two groups. Each player has a ball. Teams have to dribble the ball around inside of the grid, and try to kick the opponent's balls out of the grid while maintaining control of their ball. Once your ball is kicked out you can help your teammates keep possession of their ball. The team with the last ball in the grid wins.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep the ball close
2. Shield your ball from the opponents.
3. Support your teammates when you lose your ball.

Feed the Chicks,

10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 20 by 20yard grid. Split group into two teams. The mother hens have the soccer balls, the chicks do not. The chicks squeak for food, and receive some from the mother hen (ball). Once they receive it the must give it back and then look for food from another mother hen.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep your head up so you can see the chicks.
2. If you see hungry chicks pass the ball to them quickly.
3. Pass the ball with the inside of your foot.

Go over the technique of the **Roll-Back turn while moving** (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*). 5 minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.

## Alternative Practice Plan 4

Dynamic stretch: Cones are placed to make a 20yard by 10yard rectangle. This week's stretch will be **Knees In & Knees Out**; Each stretch needs to be completed twice across the 20yards of the grid.

### Coconut Shy,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 10 by 20yard grid. Split players into two groups. Place 8 cones around inside of the grid, and put a soccer ball on top of them. One team has a soccer ball and must try and knock the balls off the cones while the other team tries to stop them. If the other team wins the ball then roles are reversed.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep your head up to see which coconuts are undefended.
2. Shoot with the correct part of the foot.
3. If a coconut is defended look for a teammate to pass to.

### Do as I say,

#### 10-15minute game:

The playing area is a 20 by 20yard grid. Players dribble their ball around inside of the grid. As they dribble the ball around the coach will shout out a body part and the player must touch the ball with that part before they move on. After they have practiced for a while, the coach will add 'The coach says'. If he doesn't say that before naming a body part the players ignore him.

#### **Coaching points**

1. Keep the ball moving and close to you.
2. React quickly to the coach's instruction.
3. Keep your head up so you don't run into anyone.

Go over the technique of the **Back-Heel turn while moving** (*Videos of all the skills can be found on the website*). 5 minutes.

Using small cones mark out a field 15 by 20 yards and play 3v3, rotate in any resting players every 3-4 minutes. This will take for the remaining time of your session.