



US YOUTH SOCCER COACHING EDUCATION
ASSISTANT COACH SERIES

U6 and U8
**PRACTICE
ACTIVITIES**
for the Parent Coach

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this activity guidebook is to give you the youth coach, an idea of what should be covered throughout the typical season. The activities reflect the philosophy of the original US Youth Soccer Parent/Coach Primer. All sessions will key on development in a low-stress, fun-filled environment to give you an organized structure from which you may apply to the particular needs of your team. You should be able to create your own sessions once you understand the essential ingredients.

A practice session should progress from simple to more complex activities:

1. Organizing activity: Emphasis on preparing the player both physically and mentally for the training session. General motor ability (i.e., balance, coordination and flexibility) should also be enhanced. All of the above should be followed by stretching of the various parts of the body. Young players don't need stretching, but it's a good habit for them to begin early.
2. Individual activities: This portion will cover fun-filled methods that can improve a young player's technique in a playing, non-drill manner.
3. Games: These games will challenge the player (without the pressure of high numbers) to improve a variety of the needed skills. It also gives players the opportunity to touch the ball more often.
4. Final game: This time will be used to familiarize the player with the different aspects of playing in a match situation.

The successful coach at this level is the one who can imagine these activities through a player's eyes. A coach at this level must create a fun-filled environment that will have players excited to return.

Learn more about Small-Sided Games at
www.usyouthsoccer.org/coaches/SmallSidedGames/

CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDER-6 CHILDREN

Short attention span.

Most are individually oriented (me, my, mine).

Activities based on characteristics should be individually based.

Constantly in motion.

Go flat out.*

Psychologically easily bruised.

Little or no concern for team activities.

Physical and psychological development for boys and girls quite similar.

Eye/hand or eye/foot coordination most primitive.

Love to run and jump.

Prefer large soft balls and Nerf balls.

Catching skills not developed.

Can balance on good foot.

*This refers to their racing about in games until complete exhaustion sets in, at which point they stop, breathe, then restart at a torrid pace again.

CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDER-8 CHILDREN

Attention span beyond U-6 but still not extended.

Inclined more toward group activities.

Still in motion.

Still very sensitive. Dislike personal failure in front of peers.

Beginning to develop physical coordination. Most can ride a two-wheeler at this point.

Still enjoy running, jumping, climbing and rolling.

Prefer real balls through imitation of the big guys. Sports heroes becoming important.

Still lack sense of pace. Go flat out.

Activities should be individually based and with pairs of players.

THE PLAYER

The needs and capabilities of players set the philosophy and methods of coaching. We can look at the desired final product, a high-level, world-class soccer player, and create a progressive developmental program that will, over time, allow some to reach the highest standards. At the same time, the soccer experience must be a positive and rewarding one to all those who participate. Each player that steps on the field has different needs and potential. For a variety of reasons, each player will succeed at very different levels. As coach, you can accomplish this by setting individual levels of expectation.

Try as a coach to be open to the needs (physical and psychological) of your players. Understand that soccer is just another vehicle through which we all try to add to the lives of those who participate. Certainly we hope to develop players with a wealth of talent, but at the same time we hope to promote good character and responsibility in young people.

Don't let the value of winning completely overshadow the value of learning. Don't assume that every training method must directly correlate with the game of soccer. For example, games that involve movement and the use of hands can be of value to the coordination of your players. The two are not meant to be the same. A young player must go through years of preparation before he can begin to imitate top flight soccer. Give players a chance to learn and enjoy the very special years of their growth.

Don't let the notion of demonstration scare you. Use that good old American ingenuity that has gotten us where we are today. Bring in a local high school or college hero to demonstrate, or for that matter, a player at least two years older than your players. They'll love him. After all he really knows everything; he's two years older. Most importantly - have fun!

The following are the Principles of Youth Coaching and should be considered as you put together your practice.

1. Developmentally appropriate

Are your activities appropriate for the players you are dealing with?

2. Clear, concise, correct information - brevity, clarity, relevance

Make sure you are giving the players information in a way they can understand. It is also important that the information you give them is in fact correct.

3. Simple to complex

Your practice should begin simple and build into complex activities.

4. Safe and appropriate training area

Make sure the area is safe for the players to play in and the size of the area is appropriate for their level of play.

5. Decision making

The players should be put into decision-making situations. There should be a large number of decisions made on the field by the players not the adult directed. Let the players take ownership of the game.

6. Implications for the game

Do the activities make sense in terms of the game of soccer?

Coaching Activity Checklist

Are the activities fun?

Are the activities organized?

Are the players involved in the activities?

Is creativity and decision making being used?

Are the spaces used appropriate?

Is the coach's feedback appropriate?

Is the coach guiding or controlling the players in the activity?

Are there implications for the game?

SESSION 1 | Dribbling

ACTIVITIES

Organizing activity - (10-15 Minutes)

- A. Start by having players dribble in and out of each other with their hands. At your command, have them stop their balls with various parts of the body as identified by colors. Example - red is right hand, blue is left foot, rainbow is forehead, etc
- B. Have players jog with a ball at their feet in the same direction. When you call a number, that many players must come together with balls touching each other. Example: the call is three, the units of three must be formed by the players. Those players unable to form a unit of three do three half-push-ups
- C. On command, have the players throw the ball from behind through their legs, do a forward roll, and retrieve it.
- D. Throw the ball in the air, clap three times, leap in the air and catch it. Change the variables to suit your objectives, e.g., throw ball and touch the ground or throw ball and touch the ground with an elbow, etc.

Individual Activities (10-15 Minutes) Emphasis Dribbling

- A. Have players dribble their ball in large spaces and try to cover the space. Example: several may choose the penalty area, while others the center circle, etc. Demand that they be creative.
- B. Put out as many cones or markers as there are players. Have players dribble randomly until you command they dribble to a cone. They should all run to the nearest marker and freeze with the ball.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. This prepares the body and mind for the session to follow.
 - B. This builds hand/eye coordination and general movement abilities.
 - C. This game improves dribbling in a fun, competitive environment.
 - D. Emphasis here is on a visual tracking and dribbling to a designated place.
-
- A. Observe ball control and balance.
 - B. Beyond the dribbling and movement enhancement, you are asking the player to expand the decision-making process.

SESSION 1 (continued)

ACTIVITIES

- C. Play follow the coach. Every player follows the coach dribbling around the field. Along the way, coach does goofy things like hopping on one foot, rolling on the ground, sitting and spinning on the ball, etc. Show players that coach has fun too.

Games (10-15 minutes)

- A. In groups of three, play 1 v. 2. The one who has the ball must dribble and keep it. Those who don't have a ball try to get one.
- B. Set up a game in which two teams of five to six players line up across from each other at a distance of 15 yds. On command (call players by name), one player from each side runs to win the ball and dribbles it back to the team. The other player tries to prevent this from occurring and attempts to dribble back to the other line. Keep score.

Final game (10-15 minutes)

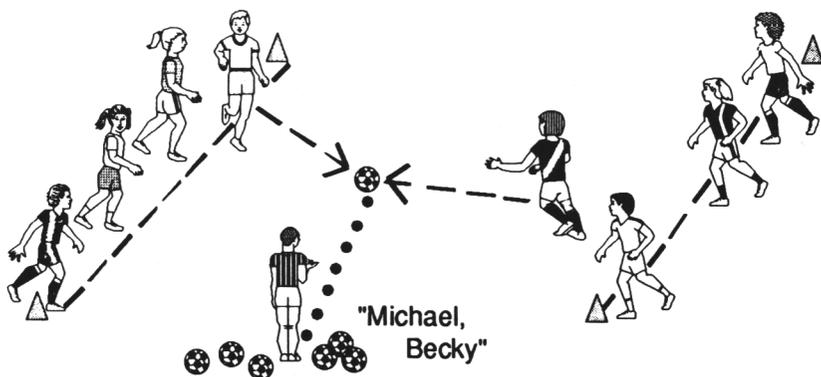
- A. Play 3 v. 3 or 4 v. 4, with no goalkeepers. Have one extra team of equal numbers. They rest until you switch them. This allows for recovery.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- C. The varied movement patterns that you demonstrate will simply put the players in positions that will help them improve their general coordination and balance. Along the way, enjoy yourself.

- A. Both A and B in this section create situations in which players become familiar with the pressures of the game.
- B. Speed of response and ability to beat an opponent are emphasized. Don't start with a ball in the middle. Roll or kick it out so they must react to it.

- A. Let them play! Here they can learn everything. They should have a great time.



SESSION 2 | Shooting

ACTIVITIES

Organizing activity (10-15 minutes)

- A. Using the lines marked on the field, have players with feet together hop back and forth over the lines. Have them hop quickly, then slowly.
- B. With the lines of the penalty box as base, play a game of tag. Change the conditions to have the 2 to 3 "it" players hold a sock while the others run about with a ball.
- C. In alligator cross, half of the players are lying on their bellies, while the others must go from an imaginary boat to shore. Crossing players must dribble a ball and the "gators" may only reach out with their arms to tag those crossing. Make the crossing space smaller as players improve at dribbling.
- D. Have all players moving about on half of the field, playing balls with their feet. When coach gives a signal the players must pick up their ball and run to the nearest line. The last one on the line must perform a "joke penalty".

Individual activities (10-15 minutes)

Emphasis – Shooting (Striking the ball)

- A. Players stand with their back to goal and their feet apart. Each player releases his ball through his feet, and then chases it to shoot on goal.
- B. With the same situation as above, have the player release the ball over his head and shoot on goal before the third bounce.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. See how high and how low they can jump. Watch for the agility and coordination of the players.
 - B. Challenge the players with a ball to be creative by changing direction and pace.
 - C. Place the gators in random places so the dribblers will have to use body swerves to avoid being tagged.
 - D. Observe coordination and acceleration. Also, players must exercise good vision to find the nearest line.
-
- A. Emphasize quickness of release rather than power.
 - B. Eye/foot coordination is necessary to get the ball on goal.

ACTIVITIES

- C. Coach holds the ball somewhere inside the penalty area. When coach points at a player, that player runs toward the coach. Coach rolls the ball on the ground at the oncoming player's feet. The player must spread his legs to allow the ball to pass, then turn and shoot.

Games (10-15 minutes)

- A. Set up games of 2 v. 2 with goals approximately 10 yds. apart. As quickly as a shot is taken or the ball leaves the area, coach provides another ball.
- B. This game is called shoot 'em up. The players are sitting and balls are rolled or bounced to them. The player then shoots on goal.

Final game (10-15 minutes)

- A. All of the players are in the penalty box, and four goals are set on the lines. Divided into two teams, each team scores as many goals as possible in any of the goals. Coach serves all balls one at a time.

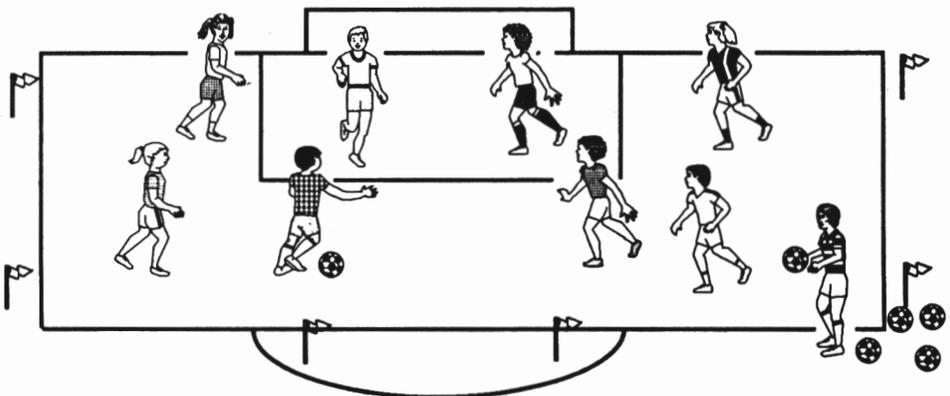
EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- C. Most players will want to stop the ball first. Don't allow that; keep the ball moving.

- A. This is designed for rapid shooting. If many shots aren't being taken, bring the goals in closer.

- B. Sometimes goals are scored when players are in very unorthodox positions. Create those situations.

- A. This is a good opportunity for coach to observe which of the players will really extend to score goals.



SESSION 3 | Striking the ball properly

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

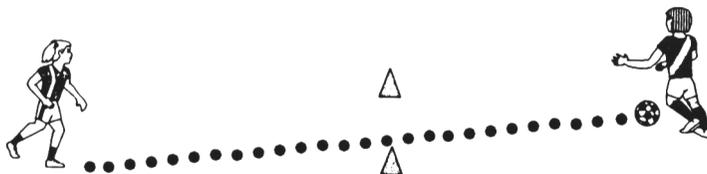
- A. Each player lies on his stomach, with arms and legs extended as far as possible.
- B. Coach calls out different body parts, which will be the only parts that touch the ground (e.g. one foot and one hand, one elbow and one knee, forehead and both knees, both knees only, chest and feet).
- C. Ask players to walk like crabs, (seated but walking on hands and feet). Throw out a ball or two that they should kick among themselves.
- D. Put out half as many cones as there are players. Ask players to dribble randomly until you signal. At this point they should leave the ball and run to the nearest cone. Only two players to a cone. Repeat.

Individual activities - Striking the ball properly

- A. Ask players to run and kick an imaginary ball in slow motion.
- B. Place a small (2 yd.) goal between two players. Ask them to strike the ball back and forth to each other, through the goal.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Get ready!
 - B. Fun and balance are the objectives.
 - C. Ask them to try to tag each other.
 - D. Activities like this demand a decision and an action.
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- A. Give a demonstration. Stress slow, slow, slow.
 - B. Give a quick demonstration. Have a goal between each pair.



ACTIVITIES

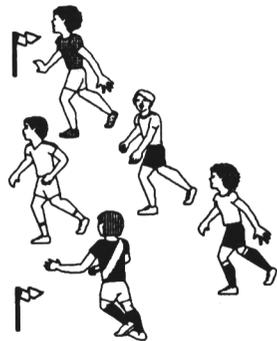
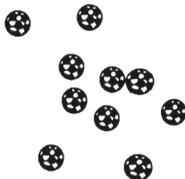
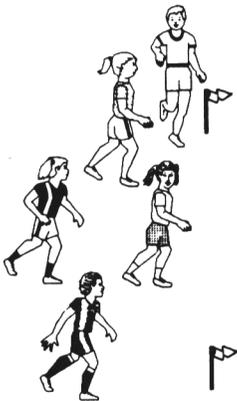
- C. Add some competition to Activity B by asking who can score the most goals in 30 seconds. Repeat.

Games

- A. Divide players into two teams. Have teams opposite each other, outside a defined area 15 x 15 yds. Place eight to 10 balls randomly in the area. On coach's signal, both teams should rush into the area and try to bring a ball back to their side.
- B. This will seem a bit crazy but give it a try on a hot day, just for fun. Fill up some water balloons and let your players try to kick them with the instep.

Final Game

- A. Divide into two teams and play soccer.



EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- C. Competition adds both pressure to perform and excitement

- A. Keep score. You should be able to repeat this game quite a few times.

- B. This is just pure fun.

- A. Let them play and enjoy!

SESSION 4 | Dribbling

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

- A. Create a circuit activity that involves running, dribbling, shooting, skipping, ball tossing and catching within the penalty area. From a starting point each player must dribble to a bench on its side. There he executes a wall pass, receives the ball and runs to shoot on goal. Coach stands in the goal (and attempts a world class save) where he sends the player on his way with a bouncing ball.
- B. Have each player dribble to a spot marked with two cones where he passes through, then stops the ball and throws it as high as he can. Upon catching the ball he skips quickly back to the starting point.

Individual activities (10-15 minutes) Emphasis - Dribbling

- A. In a large area have the players move the ball about using just the sole of one foot. After a short period have them switch to the other foot.
- B. Have players move about in an area using only their heels.
- C. Combine A and B by having players switch between sole left and heel right and so on.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Design a circuit that best meets the needs of your team. Ask players to pass through the course 3 times. Coach being a part of the circuit makes it more exciting for the players.
 - B. Watch the skipping closely, it's a good indication of coordination.
-
- A. Standing on the support foot properly is the key to balance in this activity.
 - B. Players must be aware of what is behind them by turning their heads.
 - C. See how well the players can adjust to changes in directions.

ACTIVITIES

Games (10-15 minutes)

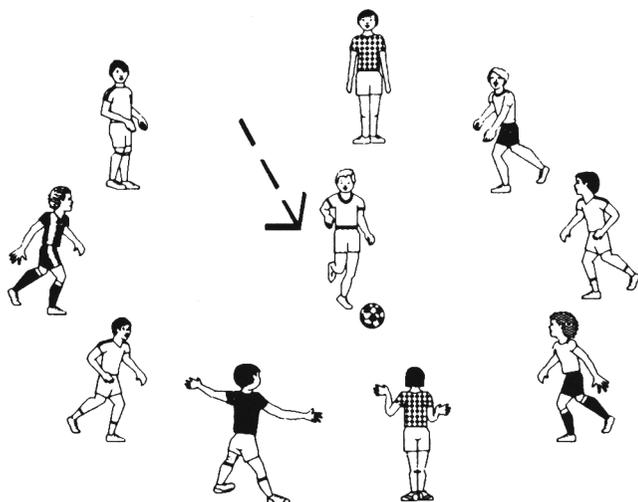
- A. Place four or five players in a line. The first player has a ball at his feet. He begins walking and the others in the line must follow his path. On command he leaves the ball for the second player who proceeds to dribble while the first player goes to the end of the line. Pick up the pace as they get the idea.
- B. Ask players to stand in a circle with one ball at one player's feet. This one dribbles the ball to any other player in the circle who proceeds to do the same.

Final game (10-15 minutes)

- A. Coach will need as many as four to six goals (cone goals) for this activity. Divide players into two teams. The teams can score in any goal of their choice. To score, players must dribble through the cone goals rather than shoot.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Encourage directional and pace change by telling them that straight dribbling is boring.
 - B. Their tendency will be to dribble directly across the circle, encourage changes of direction.
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- A. Place the goals at different angles and suggest that when one player scores he can't score again until somebody else on his team does. Everybody gets to dribble.



SESSION 5 | All Skills

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

- A. Start by having players dribble in and out of a dozen randomly placed cones in a defined area 20 x 20 yds.
- B. Ask players to dribble until coach gives a signal. At this time they should try to roll the ball (bowling by hand) and knock over as many cones as possible in a short period of time. Then they resume dribbling.
- C. Ask players to lie down and "roll along like a log" in any direction.
- D. Play Simon Says related to touching the ball with various body parts. For example "Simon Says touch your ball with the bottom of your foot. - With your nose (oops! caught you!)"

Individual activities - All Skills

- A. Ask players to execute a variety of skills, one after another.
 - 1. Dribble quickly.
 - 2. Strike the ball, chase it, strike it again with your other foot.
 - 3. Throw your ball up, make it stop in front of you.
 - 4. Head the ball out of your own hands, chase it, sit on it and spin.
 - 5. Dribble in slow motion, freeze on command.
 - 6. Crawl on hands and knees while moving your ball with hands, forehead, knees, or feet.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Stress controlling the ball without knocking over cones.
 - B. Players replace all cones they knock over and keep track of the number they knock over. Compare scores. Repeat the game to better scores.
 - C. If they roll into anyone they should immediately roll in a new direction.
 - D. Go fast and try to trick them with this old game. Go through the motions yourself.
-
- A. Mix it up. Go from one skill to another. No one skill should last for more than 20-30 seconds. Add rest time when needed. Don't let them get bored with anything. Discontinue when players seem to be losing interest. Make them laugh.

ACTIVITIES

Games

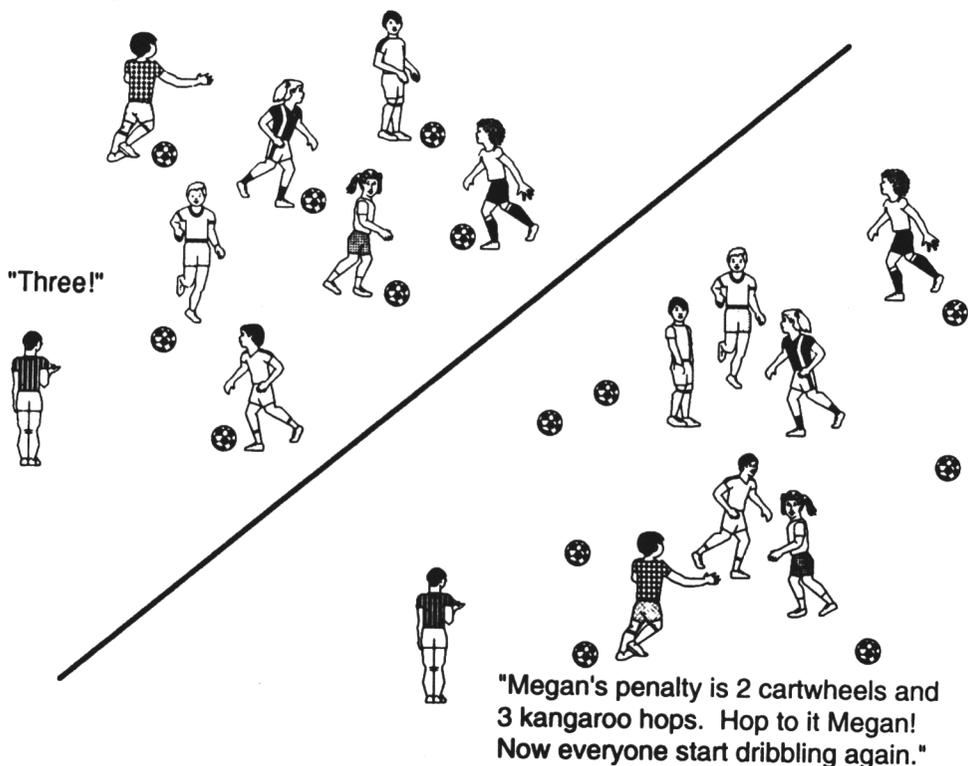
- A. In pairs, play tag. One player dribbles until the other (with no ball) catches him. Ball possession changes at this point.
- B. The Numbers Game: Ask all players to dribble in and out of each other until coach calls a number (two, three, five, etc). Players should leave the ball and form a group of that size.

Large Group Activity

- A. Divide players into three or four equal teams and play on a small field using two goals. Two teams rest while two teams play.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Repeat and change partners regularly. Give rest time when needed.
 - B. Help those who seem to struggle at first. Ask players who don't make it into a group to perform a joke penalty like half a sit-up.
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- A. Change teams every two minutes.



SESSION 6 | Body Movement

ACTIVITIES

Organizing activity (10-15 minutes)

- A. Simon Says or Coach Says is still one of the best kinds of warm-up activities available. Using oral commands activates the player's body and mind.
- B. After a few minutes of Simon/Coach says, introduce the ball and continue with ball related Simon/Coach says.
- C. Players stand on a line facing coach about 20 yards away. Coach calls out a color. Any player wearing that color may run. Coach tries to tag one or more of the runners. Every runner tagged becomes "it" with Coach in the middle.
- D. As with Simon/Coach Says, play the same color game as in C but introduce the ball.

Individual activities (10-15 minutes) Emphasis - Body Movement

- A. Have players move around in the center circle imitating an animal that coach names. Coach should name a variety of animals which will change the player's actions from crawling, to standing, to flying, to swimming movements.
- B. See how the same activity works with a ball to be carried by the animal. How does a bird fly, yet carry a ball? Let them sort it out.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Observe the enthusiasm or lack of it displayed by some players. Use your observations to build the session.
 - B. Watch to see which players are or are not comfortable with a ball.
 - C. Emphasize body swerves and change of pace while running to avoid being tagged.
 - D. Observe who can run with some semblance of ball control.
-
- A. Some players are reasonably coordinated and can do quite well, while most struggle a little.
 - B. Some creative solutions will be employed by a few players. Encourage this.

ACTIVITIES

- C. Wiggle a jump rope on the ground while players move around in the circle jumping over this rope or snake. Try the same game by rolling a ball and asking players to pick it up and jump with it in their hands.

Games (10-15 minutes)

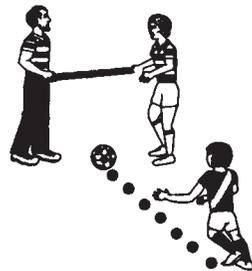
- A. With one ball, three players must keep the ball moving using various body parts. Each player must take a turn touching the ball once. Coach calls out the body part to be used.
- B. The same three players sitting in a small circle must keep the ball moving with just the bottoms of their feet. If the ball goes outside their circle they must all move crab style to set up again and continue to play.

Final game (10-15 minutes)

- A. All of the players are on the same team. Coach and an assistant (ask a parent to help) walk about with a stick held by one at each end. The challenge is for players to strike the ball under the stick (a moving goal) and between the adults for a goal.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- C. This exercise helps them take charge of their self space. See if they can jump to land at the same spot where they launched.
- A. Observe how well the players move their bodies to accommodate the conditions you establish, e.g. move the ball with an elbow.
- B. This is eye/foot coordination in a primitive state.
- A. Through coach's movements, have players spread out over the field. Don't expect to see much passing.



SESSION 7 | Heading

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

- A. Ask players to dribble in and out of each other in a defined area.
- B. Pause and explain that they should pretend to be cars in a parking lot. Players must avoid traffic and collisions. When other cars are in their area they must use their foot-break and change directions.
- C.
 1. Ask players to balance with one foot on the ball. Switch or alternate feet as fast as possible.
 2. Ask them to balance the ball on the forehead while doing a deep knee bend. Repeat five times.
 3. Have them lay down with the ball under the back, and roll back and forth while trying to stay balanced over the ball.

Individual activities Emphasis - Shooting

- A. Give a quick demonstration of proper shooting technique.
- B. Place 15 to 20 cones over an area 30 x 30 yds. Send the players out on a hunting trip to shoot at any cone they see. Have them keep track of the number of hits. The only requirement is that they set up any cone they knock over.
- C. Use coach as a moving target.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Emphasize ball control.
 - B. This puts the skill of dribbling in terms that are exciting to young players. You must be excited to get them excited.
 - C. These activities all stress the players balance. Coach should give a good picture of each activity. Have some fun while demonstrating.
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- A. Don't expect perfect form. Give them an idea and let them shoot the way their body allows them.
 - B. Set time limits and get them excited about moving from one cone to another. The more they do this, the more they'll like it.
 - C. At this age there is no real danger. Don't run over any players, and make sure they understand that kicking balls at other players is not tolerated.

ACTIVITIES

Small Group Activities (10-15 minutes)

- D. Set up a 6 yd. goal of cones. Place players on one side. On your signal each player shoots at the goal. When all shots are taken, players run through the goal and get ready to shoot again from the other side. Repeat as long as they're having fun. For added fun, be the goalie.

Game

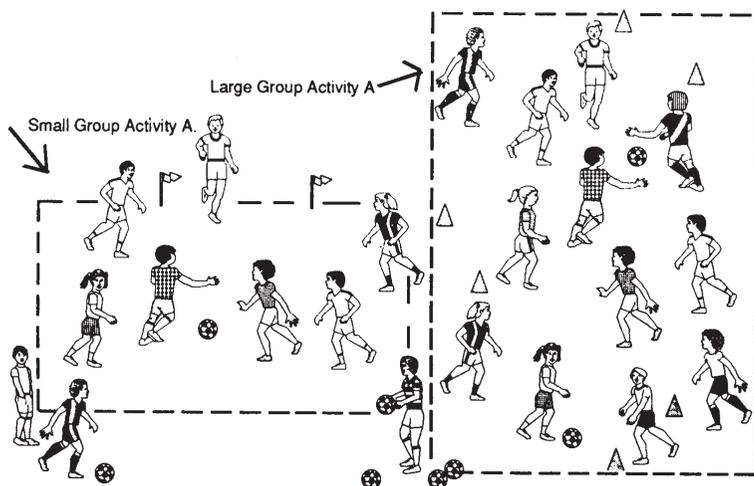
- A. Play 3 v. 3 to one full-sized goal. Have a large supply of balls to keep the action going. As soon as a shot occurs send in another ball. Keep the players going for about a minute. Change the six players and repeat.

Final Game

- A. Divide the group into two teams (different colors). Set up three small goals with cones (3 yds.) Tell players they can score at any goal they choose. Play with one ball at first, add another later so that more shots will occur.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- D. Shooting will improve in direct proportion to the number of shots taken. Their bodies will adapt if repetition occurs.
- A. Use extra players to retrieve balls. This game improves shooting in a realistic manner. Don't talk, let them shoot again and again. A goal without a net will be very helpful.
- A. Notice that with two balls the players will appear to be very unorganized. Just keep balls in the middle and they'll love it!



SESSION 8 | Ball touching and large muscle activity

ACTIVITIES

Organizing activity (10-15 minutes)

- A. With arms extended players shuffle about in a confined space and may not touch another player.
- B. Have players leaning forward, bent at the waist with knees stiff. With two hands they must move a ball around the area without either hand lifting off the ball.
- C. Players are in pairs sitting with knees slightly bent and toes touching. Both reach forward and clasp hands then proceed to execute a rowing motion.
- D. Rag-tag is played with a soft piece of material tied into a firm knot. The player who is it must throw the knotted rag at the other player's legs. Others try to dodge.

Individual activities (10-15 minutes) Emphasis - Ball Touching and Large Muscle Activity

- A. Have each player throw a ball in the air, execute a forward roll and catch the ball before it bounces three times.
- B. Partners stand facing each other about eight yards apart. They must throw a ball with two hands from over head so that the ball bounces three times before it is caught by the partner. Repeat with two bounces, then on bounce.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Players must have lateral movement as well as forward and backward experiences.
 - B. This balance activity also necessitates movement with vision.
 - C. Observe the cooperation or lack of it on the part of the players.
 - D. See how well come of the players can scheme to avoid getting tagged.
-
- A. Don't look for great success here, but hope for good tries.
 - B. Observe to see how many of the players can use their bodies to accommodate the conditions of the activity.

ACTIVITIES

- C. Partners stand one yard apart, back-to-back. The ball then is passed with two hands overhead and back between legs. Have them repeat the pass by twisting from side-to-side.

Games (10-15 minutes)

- A. In groups of three, players face each other in a small circle and hold a ball between their foreheads. Once in place, the players attempt to move about while keeping the ball in place on their foreheads without using hands.
- B. Players with a partner sit side-by-side with one ball between their ankles raised off the ground. The challenge is to transfer the ball between partners without using hands. Try the same activity with knees.

Final game (10-15 minutes)

- A. Play across the field in 4 v. 4. On the coach's command, all players freeze and the player nearest the ball is permitted to pick up the ball and kick it as far as he chooses.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- C. Encourage the more successful players to become quicker and those struggling to attempt the activity to practice slower.
- A. This is a cooperative effort that requires the proper amount of applied pressure for success.
- B. Some of the players may be able to execute this with their eyes closed. If so, that's real skill.
- A. Coach should be certain that every player gets at least two or three good whacks at the ball.

SESSION 9 | Heading

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

- A. Have players begin by dribbling in and out of each other in a confined area.
- B. Have players bend over, throw their ball through their legs, run to the ball, place one hand on it and run around it twice without losing contact. Repeat several times.
- C. Ask half the team to spread out and stand still with their legs spread wide. Ask the other half to jog around with ball in hand, rolling it through as many pairs of legs as possible.
- D. Have players dribble in and out of each other. On coach's signal all players jump into the air and try to fly like a bird. As they return to earth they should collapse and roll gently on the ground. Repeat: dribble, fly, land and roll.

Individual activities

Emphasis - Heading

Although heading is not generally a part of the game at this age, it doesn't hurt to expose players to the skill in a gentle way.

- A. Ask players to move around, on hands and knees, pushing the ball with different parts of their head.
- B. Ask players to move around randomly while striking the ball out of their own hands with the forehead and area above the temple.
- C. Set out six 4-yd. goals in a square 30 x 30 yds. Ask players to move from goal to goal scoring as many goals as possible in a given time. Again they serve the ball to themselves and head the ball.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Which players are constantly getting caught standing straight up?
 - B. Player agility and flexibility plus ball technique can be observed.
 - C. Here the coach can observe the mechanical speed of players reacting to a verbal command.
 - D. Coach can observe the natural speed of players since the ball is left behind.
-
- A. Watch the eye/body part coordination and timing.
 - B. If they roll it too far, they can't catch the ball, too slowly and they can't lift it: understanding pace.
 - C. Success from the thigh is only achieved if the thigh is parallel to the ground.

ACTIVITIES

Game

- A. Divide players into two teams (two colors). Construct a small playing field with cones, complete with 2-yard goals. The field should be about 15 x 20 yds. Run a series of 1 v. 1 games. Keep score. Start each game with the ball in the center. Ask each player to balance with one foot on the ball, until coach say "Go"! They play until someone scores or for about a minute.

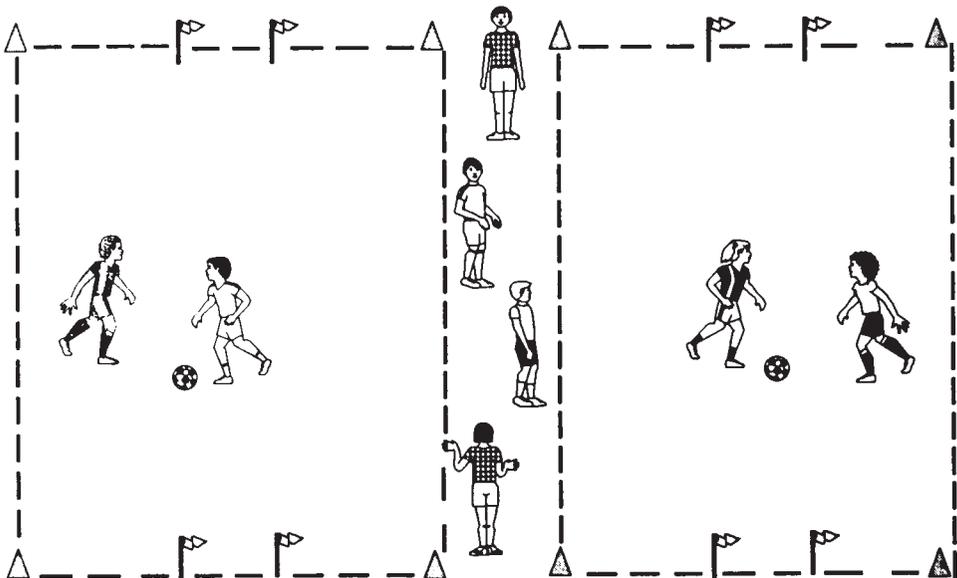
Final Game

- A. Construct a field that is suitable for the same two teams. Ask them to play real soccer just like their weekend games!

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Be an organizer! Remember players don't like to sit. They like to play! You can set up two fields if numbers are high.

- A. Keep them active!



SESSION 10 | Vision

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

- A. With players moving around freely in the penalty box area, the coach calls a color. Whoever is wearing that color is it. He chases and tags for 10 seconds. All tagged players must stand frozen for a count to be taken.
- B. Play the same activity, but with the ball. Players dribble about until a color is called, then they may pick up their ball and run.
- C. Have players kneel on one knee, place their hand on the other and close their eyes. Coach goes to some part of the field and gives a signal to go. At the signal, the players open their eyes, find the coach and quickly dribble to him.
- D. Play C with one ball per player. If they catch on, don't be a stationary target. Move.

Individual activities (10-15 minutes)

Emphasis - Vision

- A. Have players dribble in the center circle. When players see coach hold up some fingers, they must sit and hold up the same number of fingers. The first one that does this correctly becomes coach.
- B. Play the same activity but introduce a "stealer" (a player moving around without a ball, holding his two socks. He may steal a ball).

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. This is a means of activating the player's mind and vision.
 - B. Why pick up their ball and run? They are not yet ready to accelerate and scheme and change direction all at once.
 - C. The first clue they get is audible, the second visual. See how well they use clues.
 - D. Once coach begins to move they must make all kinds of dribbling adjustments. Excellent!
-
- A. In order to play here successfully, they must dribble with their eyes up away from the ground.
 - B. Now some real problems surface. They have a ball, they are looking for you and they must guard against the "stealer".

ACTIVITIES

- C. Coach stands in front of the group with a ball. Coach then puts the ball in various positions, e.g., over his head, between his feet, behind him, on his knee, on his right shoulder, etc. players imitate.

Games (10-15 minutes)

- A. In groups of three, two players have a ball and a player in the middle has no ball. The middle player faces one of the players with a ball who serves it on the ground or in the air. When the player receives the ball, he sends it back to the server and turns to the other player. Repeat the action three times then switch roles.
- B. This is an activity for five to six players. One player throws the ball in the air and calls the name of one of the others. The player whose name is called runs to the ball, collects it and immediately yells halt. The other players freeze. The player with the ball places it on the ground and kicks it to one of the other players.

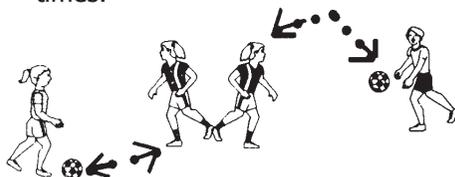
Final game (10-15 minutes)

- A. Play a regular soccer game with goals. At any given time coach yells "clouds in the sky" at which time all of the players freeze and drop to the ground. The moving ball continues to roll until it touches a player or goes out of bounds. If it touches a player, that player's team gets a goal. If it rolls into the goal, it counts for three goals.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- C. Set up the proper number of grids to avoid long lines. You can deal with defensive problems but emphasize dribbling.

- A. Let this go for about 30 seconds and then give them a rest. Repeat several times.



- B. You won't see a lot of passing but that's okay. Dribbling is the area to be improved.

- A. This will improve those who are good dribblers and also force those who normally won't dribble to goal to give it a shot.

SESSION 11 | Striking the Ball

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

- A. Begin by asking players to move in and out of each other while pushing their ball with hands only.
- B. Play the same activity except that on the coach's signal, all players must roll their ball away and chase down any other ball. They should then continue to move the ball with hands only.
- C. Ask players to dribble in and out of each other randomly.
- D. On coach's signal players kick their ball approximately 10 yards outside of the dribbling area which is 15 x 15 yds. They should then continue on with any other ball they pick up.

Individual activities - Striking a Ball

- A. Give a quick demonstration of the proper way to strike a ball. Let them try.
- B. Put four to five players in a circle designated by cones. All other players should surround the circle and have a ball in hand. The job of the outside players is to roll balls into the circle and collect them as the inside players kick them out of the circle. Inside players must constantly clear all balls out of the circle.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. This activity is a bit different and works on balance and changing directions.
 - B. Try to cause confusion by getting the players going in every direction. Avoid collisions.
 - C. Same as above except that this relates more to soccer. Change speed and directions.
 - D. Get them moving in a hurried fashion.
-
- A. Show them as well as you can, or have a player who strikes the ball (kicks) well demonstrate.
 - B. Define the game in terms that players can identify with such as, asking outside players to mess up the circle with balls. Ask inside players to keep the inside area clean by kicking all balls out. Change the roles regularly.

ACTIVITIES

- A. Divide into two teams (different colors). Set up a large 20 x 30 yd area with no goals. Ask players to play 3 v. 3 with the challenge of kicking the ball over their opponents' end line. Keep score and change players about every minute.

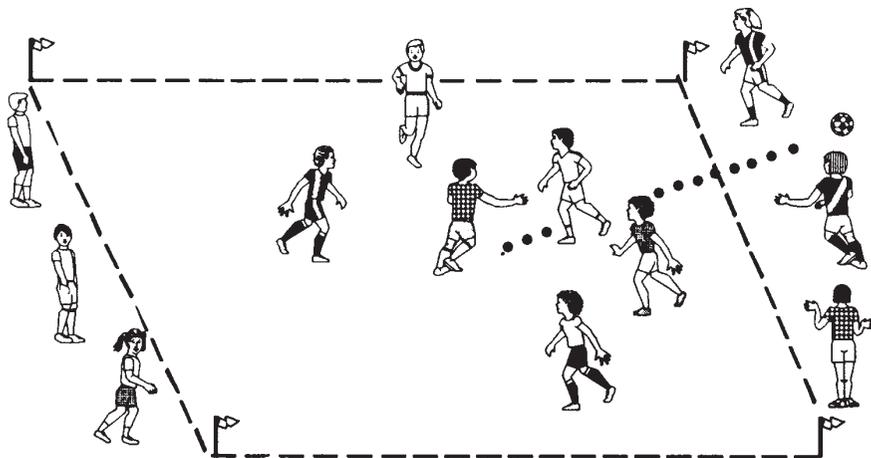
Final Game

- A. Play the same game as above in a large enough area to accommodate your full team (two teams in different colors). Again each team scores by kicking the ball anywhere over the opponent's end line.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. This game brings in most of the normal soccer game but expands the goal area to encourage scoring more goals (striking balls). Keep balls in play and players moving.

- A. Make the field small enough so many goals are scored but large enough so players aren't cramped.



"One point for the Blue Team!"

SESSION 12 | Goalkeeping

ACTIVITIES

Organizing activity (10-15 minutes)

- A. Have players sit with legs wide apart. Ask them to reach with right hand to right foot, then left hand to left foot. Hold the position. Now stretch right hand to left foot, hold, then left hand to right foot.
- B. With players on their backs and arms stretched on the ground above their head, have them bring feet up overhead to touch toes to fingers.
- C. Still on their backs/shoulders, have them do bicycle peddling and long stride walking movements.

Individual activities (10-15 minutes)

Emphasis – Goalkeeping (not really but allows players to use their hands for a practice)

- A. From a kneeling position, players throw the ball into the air, hop to their feet, and catch the ball. Have them try this from a sitting position.
- B. Standing with legs spread apart and the ball held behind them, players must release the ball forward between their legs then sprint to pick it up. Go again.
- C. Have players lie on their stomachs with a ball in their hands. On signal they must roll over on their backs, throw the ball into the air with both hands and catch it.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. This is an opportunity for you to observe flexibility in the players. Try to have them do it rhythmically, i.e., right to left then left to right.
 - B. Stretching is a fine means of getting ready to play.
 - C. Change the pace of movement from very rapid to slow motion. Encourage twisting and turning variations too.
-
- A. Eye/hand, upper body coordination and lower body agility are all a part of this activity.
 - B. Coach will need to assist with the release at first; but once they practice some, they'll be just fine.
 - C. This is a total body movement activity with a ball in flight as a further distraction. Patiently repeat this exercise several times.

ACTIVITIES

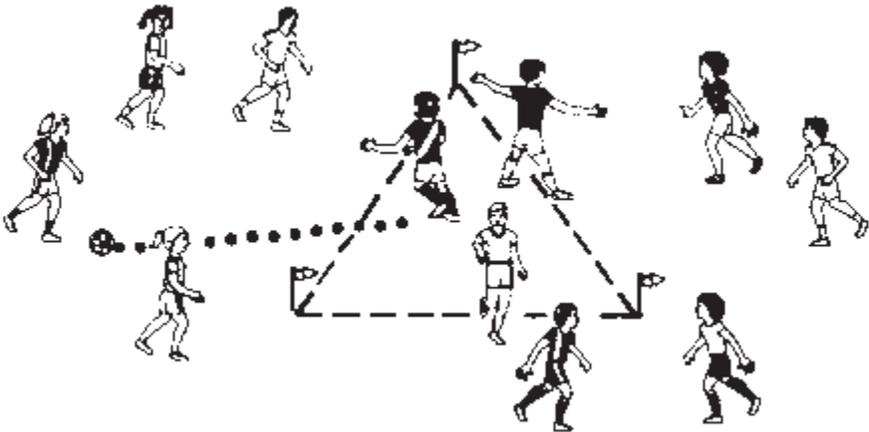
- A. With players in a circle with one ball, ask one player to roll the ball to another. The receiving player must pick it up and throw to one of the other players. The second receiving player then rolls his release. Roll, throw, roll, throw...
- B. One player is in the center of four goals set on a 20 x 20 yd. grid. Each goal has a goalkeeper. The player in the middle may shoot on any goal he chooses.

Final Game (10-15 minutes)

- A. Set up a triangle in the middle of the field. This will act as a 3-sided goal and should be defended by three goalkeepers. All other play outside the triangle and may not go through the space.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Emphasis is on eye/hand coordination for air and ground balls.
 - B. Although goalkeeping is the topic, don't miss this chance to observe shooting on goal. Be sure to rotate goalkeepers so that every player gets a chance to play keeper.
-
- A. Once they get the knack of this game they'll want to play it all of the time. Many ball touches means plenty of fun.



SESSION 13 | Balance

ACTIVITIES

Organizing Activity

- A. Begin by asking players to dribble in and out of each other.
- B. Ask players to continue dribbling until coach calls out a body part, e.g. hand, knee, forehead, elbow. At this signal each player should stop his ball with that body part.
- C. Have players alternate between bouncing and catching, and throwing straight up and catching. The better they are the higher the throws and bounces.
- D. Ask players to throw their ball anywhere, run to it, kick it, fetch it. Repeat

Individual activities Emphasis - Balance

This session will serve to develop balance. Although it is not a skill in itself, balance is essential to all motor skills.

- A. Ask players to get into different balancing positions:
 - 1. With ball in hand, make a bridge.
 - 2. Hold the ball in front of you while standing on one leg.
 - 3. Bounce on your ball in a seated position.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. Make players smile, avoid collisions, move in different directions.
 - B. Balance is being developed. Make them bend, squat and lean. Keep them laughing. Give a brief pause and then get them dribbling again. Repeat.
 - C. This will develop general motor ability and they'll have fun. Challenge them with, "Who can throw the highest and still catch".
 - D. This will develop a number of skills. To make a game of it, ask players to freeze when they've completed the series. Then change the series.
-
- A. These positions and others you think of will cause children to become more aware of their center of gravity.

ACTIVITIES

- B. Ask players to hop after you (chase you) on one foot, the other foot, both feet.
- C. Set down two rows of cones 5 yds. apart.
 - 1. Have players run forward and backward between them.
 - 2. Ask them to shuffle sideways, back and forth between the cones.
 - 3. Have the players skip forward and backward. This is difficult.

Games

- A. Define a 20 x 20 yd area of play with cones. Ask players to dribble and protect their own ball. Have one less ball than the number of players.
- B. With the same field arrangement, subtract a number of balls so that only half of the players have a ball. In this way you have created a number of 1 v. 1 situations.

Final game

- A. Divide the group in half and play regular soccer.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- B. Make a game of tag out of it. Challenge them; make them laugh!
 - C. Stress speed. Allow rest if needed.
-
- A. If you have no ball, get one; if you have one keep it.
 - B. This is the beginning of shielding or possession. Let them experiment with it and have a good time.
-
- A. Let them play!

SESSION 14 | Ball Touching

ACTIVITIES

Organizing activity (10-15 minutes)

- A. Players jog about the field with coach saying "grass - right hand", or "grass - left hand", or "grass - both hands", or "grass - chin". Each call requires players to put that body part to the ground.
- B. With the same idea as above, here each body part called goes airborne, e.g., right knee in the air, left elbow in the air, left eyebrow in the air, etc.
- C. Play shadow tag with players running around trying to step on another player's shadow. This becomes real fun when each player has a ball to run with at his feet.
- D. Have players play "stooping tag". Two players are "it" and the rest run about in an area dribbling a ball. If a player is running with his ball and gets tagged, he is "it". If before being tagged he is in a stopping position, that is a "base" and he is safe.

Individual activities (10-15 minutes)

Emphasis - Ball touching

- A. Have players sit while rotating the ball on the ground around their entire body. Next, tell them to slip it under their back by keeping their shoulders on the ground and raising the lower back.
- B. Each player hops about in an area with each hop coinciding with a bounce of his ball.

EMPHASIS/COACHING POINTS

- A. This will improve coordination and the ability to work with a partner.
 - B. Good touch on the ball will be enhanced. Ask players to increase speed as they master this technique.
 - C. Stretch ankles, lower legs, hamstrings, thighs, lower back, and neck. (see illustrations on page 46.)
 - D. This activity will increase a variety of motor skills. Let them do it at their own pace.
-
- A. Don't allow the leaders to move in straight lines. Change leaders every once in a while.
 - B. Allow adequate rest before you send the players to the next object.