



YMCA of Greater Charlotte Youth Soccer Practice Playbook

U-6 Soccer Division Practice-Play



Welcome to the YMCA of Greater Charlotte,

The YMCA of Greater Charlotte is very excited that you have chosen to be a coach. No single job is more important to the mission and vision of the YMCA than a youth sports coach. YMCA values: of caring, respect, responsibility, honesty, and faith are the foundation to connecting, giving back, nurturing the potential of every child and supporting our neighbors. This foundational impact requires a core of committed youth volunteer coaches who have a desire to see their communities encouraged and players' lives transformed.

The YMCA has put together this resource guide to help you as a coach and to make your job as easy and achievable as possible.

As a coach you have the opportunity to teach, mentor, motivate, encourage, and guide your players as they develop as soccer players and young people with character. Positive role models can help players grow mentally, physically, and emotionally as they promote confidence and positive self-image for athletes.

In this guide, all the practice sessions have been broken down in very simple terms, each with a soccer theme and a character quality that relates to life. Soccer skills and life skills are linked together so that it is natural for you to teach and talk about both at once. On the soccer side, our practices follow a very easy progression of: warm-up, teaching a skill, playing a small game with that skill. At the end of each practice, teams will have the opportunity to play a scrimmage against other U-6 teams!

In whatever you do, we encourage you and your players to enjoy your time together and to have fun... that is what they will remember!

Below you will find a key for the diagrams in the sessions:



The YMCA Sports Philosophy

Everyone Plays.

We do not use tryouts to select the best player, nor do we cut kids from YMCA Youth Sports. Everyone who registers to play is assigned to a team. Remember, we are more interested in developing children's character.



As a coach, you must ensure that all players receive equal playing time and every player plays at least half of every game.

Fair Play.

Fair play is about more than playing by the rules. It's about you, your players and players' parents showing respect for all who are involved in YMCA Youth Sports. It's about you being a role model of good sportsmanship and guiding your players and families to do the same.



As a coach, set the example of good sportsmanship and reward players and parents for showing respect to all involved in YMCA Youth Sports.

Positive Competition.

We believe competition is a positive process when the pursuit of victory is kept in the right perspective. The right perspective means adults make decisions that put the best interests of the children above winning the contest. Learning to compete is important for children and learning to cooperate in a competitive world is an essential lesson in life. Learning to win is just as important as learning to lose.



As a coach, help your players set goals that are not about winning or losing. This way, no matter what the score of the game, your players learn that no matter what the score is, there is value in playing the game.

Family Involvement.

We encourage parents to be involved appropriately along with their child's participation in sports. In addition to parents being helpful as volunteer coaches, officials and timekeepers, we encourage them to be present at practices and games to support their player.



As a coach, give parents responsibilities that will benefit the team –like bringing healthy snacks and water.

Sports for All.

YMCA Youth Sports is an inclusive program, meaning that children who differ in various characteristics, including physical ability, race, gender, religion or ability are included in participation.



As a coach, support and appreciate the diversity of children in your community and encourage your players and parents to do the same



As a coach, emphasize the importance of having fun, reminding parents and players that the benefits of physical activity in childhood are long-lasting.

PRACTICE-PLAY MODEL

The Practice-Play Model is a grassroots philosophy that places the needs of the player first. Our goal through the implementation of this program is to place the players in as many game-like situations as possible. Our goal is to encourage a fun atmosphere of excitement and new experiences. Our practice-play model follows a very easy progression of: warm-up, teaching a skill, playing a small game with that skill. At the end of the practice portion, all teams will play a scrimmage against another U6 team. Please utilize this U-6 Soccer Coaches Playbook which supports the following outline:

(5 minutes) Fun first!

Spend your first five minutes of practice fostering an environment of cooperation, trust, and fun through interactive games that get the players ready for practice. Our curriculum provides one game for each practice.

(15-20 minutes) Learn second!

Transition from your warmup in to the practice portion of your time with your players. Take this opportunity to encourage players as they are challenged to develop through different exercises laid out in the curriculum. Players should experience success and improvement as a part of their growth individually. Your job as the coach is to keep their spirits high while also providing short instruction. Their greatest teacher, will be the experiences they encounter through the drills and games.

(30-35 minutes) Play third-Scrimmage!

Always finish your day with an opportunity for your players to play and compete! Give instruction that teaches the rules of the game and helps them to participate while avoiding any advice related to strategy or tactics. The goal of this time would be that the players enjoy their time while learning the rules of the game. Close up your day with 1-2 short takeaways. These coaching points should teach the game and tie the character word of the day to a relevant situation each child can remember

Rules of the Scrimmage

Ball: Size 3

Players Equipment: Shin-guards are mandatory, cleats are recommended

Team Size: 4 field players (4 v 4) - Minimum of 3 players of team to play

Game Time: 4, 8 minute quarters (Halftime will be 1 minute)

In the spirit of the YMCA, each player is expected to play an equal amount of time during each game and must play in both halves. Unless a team only has 4 or fewer players, NO player can play the entire game.

1. No Goalie
2. Coach(s) positioning: Coaches will be allowed on the field to help officiate and run the game as well as coach players.

3. Substitutions and Rotations: Will be made in between quarters unless an injury is present.
4. Start and Re-Start of play: When the ball goes out of play, the coach will play a ball back onto the playing field to the team who did not play the ball out.
5. After a goal is scored/beginning of new quarter: Re-start of play begins at midfield.
6. Teams will rotate kick-offs from quarter to quarter.
7. Goals: Goals may be scored from anywhere on the field except on kick-offs.
8. Off-sides: Off-sides will NOT be called in this age group.
9. Penalty Kicks: No penalty kicks in this age group.
10. No score or standings will be kept.
11. Teams will **NOT** switch sides at half-time in this age group.
12. Teams and spectators will sit on opposite sides of the field.
13. For the safety of the players, absolutely no jewelry or gum allowed

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FIRST PRACTICE

WITH ENCOURAGEMENT

PRACTICE #1

COACHING POINTS:

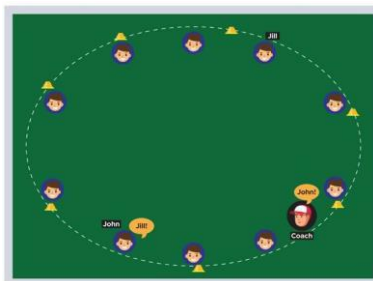
First practice is always a little tough.

- Remember that the players don't know each other so try to make them at ease and have fun
- Learn everyone's names as quickly as possible
- *Encourage players to try their best and make new friends!*

Encouragement is saying or doing things that build others up.

WARM UP: NAME TAG

- Have players form a circle, choose one player to be it. That player stands in the middle of circle, players in the circle cannot move
- Coach calls John's name, the player who is it runs to tag John
- If John is tagged before he can say another player's name John is now it, and the coach will say another name, "David"
- If David says another player's name before he is tagged, then the player who is it must now try and tag that player (i.e. Jill)



RULES OF SOCCER: REVIEW

- Have players line up for kick off with the ball on the center spot, all players on defending half of field
- Tell the players that the direction you are facing is the goal you are attacking, the goal behind is the goal you are defending
- Next tell the players that the out of bounds on the sides are for kick-ins.
- Take all the players to the sides and have them practice kick-ins.

RULES OF SOCCER (CONT.)

- Have each player go after their ball and dribble it across to the other side line and repeat the exercise as many times as necessary.
- Next tell the players that the lines behind the goal are for kick-ins.
 - If the attacking team kicks the ball behind the goal, it's a goal kick for other team.
 - Have each player place the ball on the corner of the goal box and kick it back into play.
 - After kicking goal kick, they go get their ball and dribble across to the other side and repeat the exercise.
 - If the defending team kicks the ball over the goal line, it is a corner kick.
 - Have one player place the ball on the corner and kick it back into play while the others try to kick it in the net. Repeat until everyone has done the corner kick.

SMALL GAME: COACHES V PLAYERS

- Now that the players understand the basics, play a game against them and use every scenario as a teaching moment.
- Purposely make mistakes (ex. Touch it with your hands, confuse a goal kick and corner kick, kick it in your own goal) to see if anyone corrects you. If not, be sure to ask the players if you're doing the right thing.



LARGE GAME: SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach.
- Remember the emphasis of this practice is to teach them the rules first.



“Words have the power to help, to heal, to hurt, to harm, or to humiliate.”
What are you using words for?

DRIBBLING

WITH DETERMINATION

PRACTICE #2

COACHING POINTS:

Dribbling is running with the ball.

- Keep ball close
- Keep your head up
- Use different surfaces of your foot
- *Encourage kids when they excel and when they struggle!*

Determination is the inner drive we use to reach our goals

APPLICATION: APPLYING “DRIBBLING WITH: DETERMINATION” TO LIFE

What to look for:

Look for players in your drill who are having trouble getting the concepts. You can also observe how kids handle losing in the scrimmage, notice the way they respond to the adversity. Are they showing determination?

What to say:

“Everyone messes up. Everyone falls short. The determined person is different because they get back up and try again! Remember this as you dribble today. Be determined to be the best you can be!”

What to take away:

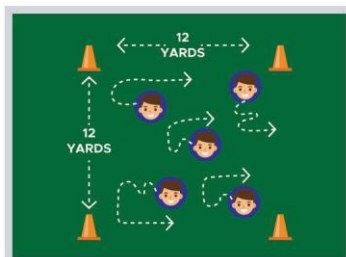
Help your team understand that challenging situations are everywhere. At home, at school and on the field there are opportunities to show determination all around you. Ex. “Determination helps you reach your goals. Use this week to be determined on and off the field!”

Be positive when you instruct, for example: “Good work, I like your effort!”;
 “Work on dribbling with the left foot, keep working hard!”
 Be determined to teach being determined!

WARMUPS

NUMBERS

- 12 x 12 grid, start with no soccer balls
- Assign a number to each side of the grid
- As players are moving, say one of the numbers and the kids race to corresponding side.
- Ease into aggressive movements (warm up)
- Change movement inside grid to help the warm up process



SMALL GAMES

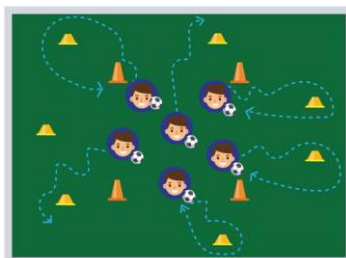
KNOCKOUT

- Set up large square, players dribble
- Coach says, “Knockout!” players will protect/shield their ball while looking for opportunity to kick other players’ ball out of square
- If player’s ball exits square, they are eliminated from the game or they do a consequence to get back in (example: 10 jumping jacks)
- Purpose: dribbling, shielding, awareness



DRIBBLE CIRCLE

- Set up small circle
- Set up bigger circle around
- Player dribbles ball inside small circle. Coach blows whistle, players dribble around big circle cone and back to small circle. First person back wins.
- Purpose: dribbling, turning/cutting, and speed



SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach.
- Remember the emphasis of this practice is to be determined in dribbling and to never give up even if the ball is taken away.



PASSING

WITH TEAMWORK

PRACTICE #3

COACHING POINTS:

Passing is moving the ball from one person to another.

- Use the inside of foot with ankle locked to strike ball
- Use plant foot to direct pass
- Encourage players to trust teammates and to communicate
- *Inspire players to work hard for one another!*

Teamwork is the ability to work together towards a common goal.

APPLICATION: APPLYING “PASSING WITH TEAMWORK” TO LIFE

What to look for:

Try to find a player who chooses to use teamwork instead of doing it on their own.

What to say:

“It can be tempting to do everything by yourself in soccer. Sometimes you may think you can score 1, 2, or even 3 goals just by dribbling and not sharing the ball. However, if you make a habit of working with your teammates, everyone is a part of helping the ball move faster and greater things are accomplished. The best soccer teams in the world are the ones that have the best teamwork!”

What to take away:

Teamwork is coming alongside teammates to accomplish something greater than you could do as individuals. Using teamwork divides the task and multiplies your success. Ex. “We cannot do everything ourselves. We need each other, even at home, we can contribute our gifts and talents to our families to do chores or help with our brothers and sisters. When we all are included, everyone benefits!”

TEAMWORK DIVIDES THE TASK AND MULTIPLIES THE SUCCESS.

WARM UPS

NUMBERS RUNAROUND

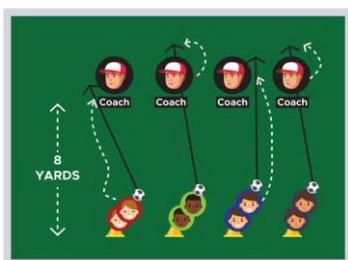
- 10 x 10 yard grid, no soccer balls
- Players run inside grid
- Coach calls number, players get into groups of that number; player outside the group loses a “life”
- Be prepared if 1 or 2 players are always left out
- Can add math problems
- Purpose: Communication, teamwork, and instinct



SMALL GAMES

ZOO

- Put players into as many lines as there are coaches
- Coaches stand 8 yds. away facing their team with legs spread shoulder width
- First player attempts to pass the ball through the coach's legs
- If the pass goes through coach's legs coach must run and retrieve ball making the sounds and motions of his favorite animal. If player misses, he or she must do the same to retrieve ball and get back in line.



SCRIMMAGE

- Divide teams up evenly and have them play against each other while your referee/coach
- Remember the emphasis of this practice is to use the proper passing technique and communicate with each other.



SHOOTING

WITH CONFIDENCE

PRACTICE #4

COACHING POINTS:

Shooting is a hard pass intended to go into the goal.

- Strike the center of the ball with laces or instead with ankle locked down
- Lean forward and swing through the ball
- *Encourage your players by reminding them of past successes*

Confidence is believing you can do something.

APPLICATION: APPLYING “SHOOTING WITH CONFIDENCE” TO LIFE

What to look for:

Look for a player who is not afraid to try something new.

What to say:

“When we believe we can do something and give our best effort, we are able to accomplish great things. Even when we fail, we can’t learn and try again. Don’t give up or be afraid to try something new. Be confident that your best is good enough. You never know what you are capable of!”

What to take away:

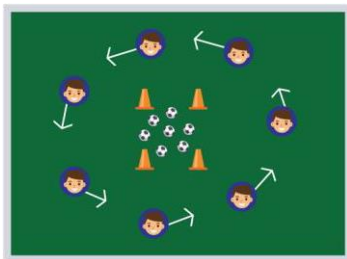
Confidence comes from the successes you experience from doing your best. Ex. “When you are confident, you believe you can do something. When you have this positive attitude great things can happen. Don’t doubt your natural abilities. Always try your best and don’t be afraid to try something new.”

“Confidence comes not from always being right, but not fearing to be wrong.”

WARM UPS

MUSICAL SOCCER BALLS

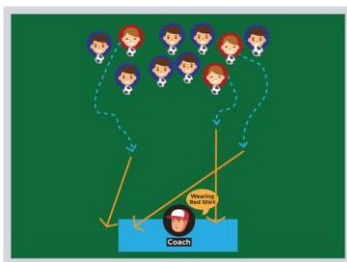
- Players run around outside circle of soccer balls
- When music stops, find a ball to sit on
- Eliminated players join coach in middle and help sing! Coaches can sing good kids songs or use “start” and “stop”
- Purpose: communication, reaction and anticipation



SMALL GAMES

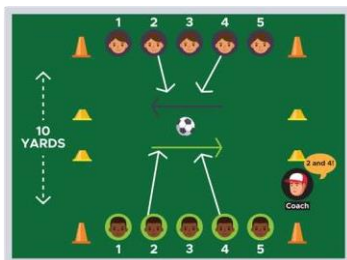
CATEGORIES

- Have players sitting on balls about 10 yards away from goal in group
- Start to call out different categories (i.e. hair color, birthdays, cleats colors, shirt colors, etc...)
- If player meets criteria, they go and shoot and score



STEAL THE BACON

- Make grid, divide players into two teams
- Number players based on skill standing on sideline
- Call a number. Players with that number run around back of goal enter field and score on opponents' goal.
- Ball kicked out of bounds, choose to:
 - 1) Enter another ball, or
 - 2) Call new number



SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach.



DRIBBLING

PRACTICE #5

WITH SELF-CONTROL, FOCUS, AND HEART

COACHING POINTS:

Dribbling is running with the ball.

- Keep ball close (skill/technique)
- Head up (awareness)
- Beat knees (balance)
- Change of pace and direction
- Use different surfaces of your foot
- *Encourage kids when they excel and when they struggle*

Self-control is control over your feeling or actions

Focus is to direct your attention or effort at something.

Heart is playing with passion and energy because you love and want to play.

APPLICATION: APPLYING SELF-CONTROL, FOCUS & HEART TO LIFE

What to look for:

Find the player on your team who is a great listener and always does what you ask

What to say:

"In practice today let's all try to control ourselves by listening to our coaches. Let's focus on doing what they say, end playing by the rules!"

What to take away:

Self-Control is thinking before acting and then choosing to do the right thing. Ex. "Having self-control may mean forgiving someone instead of getting upset with them or thinking before you act or say something. Having self-control is always a good choice!"

Be positive when you instruct, for example: "Good work, I like your effort!";

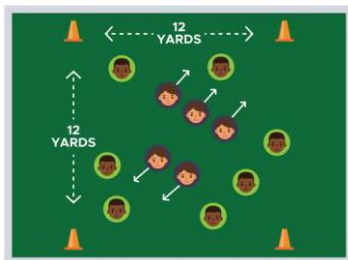
"Work on dribbling with the left foot, keep working hard!"

Be determined to teach being determined!

WARM UPS

PAIRS TAG

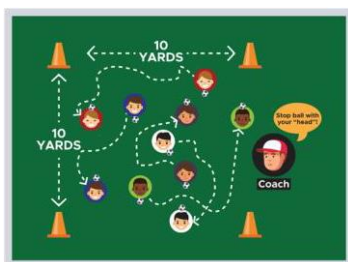
- 20 by 20 grid, no soccer balls
- Two pairs of players holding hands are “it.” Other players run in grid. Players tagged join hands with the connected players and tag others. Last one remaining wins.
- Purpose: Communication, direction, and teamwork.



SMALL GAMES

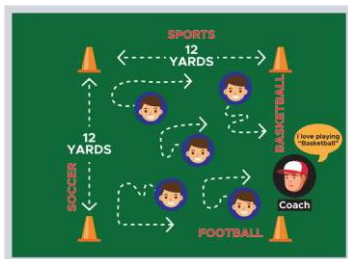
BODY PART GAME

- 10x10 grid, Everyone has ball
- While dribbling in square, coach yells or points out a body part to stop ball with
- Players stop ball with that body part
- Continue dribbling, be creative with body part.



STORY TIME

- 10x10 grid, everyone has ball, each side of square has “noun” associated with it (ex. Sports, Soccer, Basketball, Football)
- While dribbling in square, coach tells story using the “nouns” from each side
- Players dribble as fast as they can to side that corresponds with “noun”
- Continue dribbling, be creative with story, keep kids moving quickly



SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach.
- Remember the emphasis of this practice is to encourage them to dribble at different speeds and in different directions.



PASSING

PRACTICE #6

WITH SHARING, TEAM WORK, AND HELPFULNESS

COACHING POINTS:

Passing is moving the ball from one person to another.

- Use the inside of foot with ankle locked to strike ball
- Use plant foot to direct pass
- Encourage players to trust teammates and to communicate
- *Inspire players to work hard for one another!*

Sharing is choosing to give things, time, or effort to help the team!

Team Work is the willingness to work with others to reach a goal.

Helpfulness is the willingness to support or assist other people.

APPLICATION: APPLYING SHARING, TEAM WORK & HELPFULNESS TO LIFE

What to look for:

Try to find a player who chooses to use teamwork instead of doing it on their own.

What to say:

“Soccer is not very fun if no one ever passes you the ball. Even though you may want to do everything by yourself and you think you can score 1, 2, or even 3 goals just by dribbling alone, not sharing the ball with your teammates makes them feel sad and left out. Let’s try to help everyone feel that they are a part of the team!”

What to take away:

Teamwork is coming alongside your teammates so that everyone can play better. Using teamwork helps everyone have fun and feel included. Player can help their schoolmates feel included when they feel left out. Ex. At school you can include other people who feel left out! Whether it is playing on the playground, picking partners for a sports drill, or choosing a place to sit for lunch, there are lots and lots of people who feel left out. Try to best to include people this week so everyone is happy! This is what a good friend does!”

WARM UPS

NUMBERS RUNAROUND

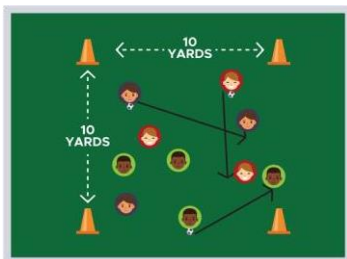
- 10 x 10 yard grid, no soccer balls
- Players run inside grid
- Coach calls number, players get into groups of that number; player outside the group loses a “life”
- Be prepared if 1 or 2 players are always left out
- Can add math problems
- Purpose: Communication, teamwork, and instinct



SMALL GAMES

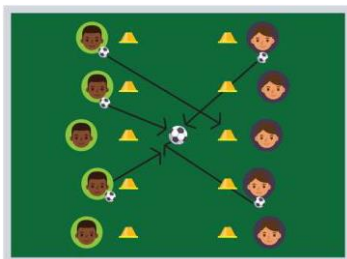
SEQUENCE

- Split your team into groups of three or four and give each child in the group a different number.
- Have the children try to pass sequentially, working up from 1,2,3,4 and then sit down
- Next, have the groups race 1-4 and then back down 4,3,2,1
- Add variety: use only left foot, count up in odds, then evens or have the kids all move around in the same space to make it more challenging



DIFFUSE THE BOMB

- Two teams set apart by an 8 yard “no go” zone.
- The ball, wrapped in a pinnie, is the bomb
- Players pass their soccer balls to knock the bomb from the middle to the opposite side
- Team who can get ball into opposition’s side wins round



SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach.
- Remember the emphasis of this practice is to use proper passing technique and communicate with each other



SHOOTING

WITH CONFIDENCE, POSITIVITY, AND BRAVERY

PRACTICE #7

COACHING POINTS:

Shooting is a hard pass intended to go into the goal.

- Strike the center of the ball with laces or instead with ankle locked down
- Lean forward and swing through the ball
- *Encourage your players by reminding them of past successes'*

Confidence is believing you can do something.

Positivity is thinking about the good qualities of someone or something.

Bravery is doing something that you know is difficult or scary.

APPLICATION: APPLYING “SHOOTING WITH CONFIDENCE” TO LIFE

What to look for:

Look for a player who is not afraid to try something new.

What to say:

“When we believe we can do something and give our best effort, we are able to accomplish great things. Even when we fail, we can’t learn and try again. Don’t give up or be afraid to try something new. Be confident that your best is good enough. You never know what you are capable of!”

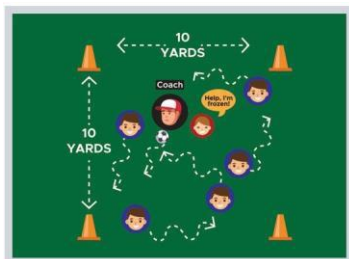
What to take away:

Confidence comes from the successes you experience from doing your best. Ex. “When you are confident, you believe you can do something. When you have this positive attitude great things can happen. Don’t doubt your natural abilities. Always try your best and don’t be afraid to try something new.”

WARM UPS

SOCCER DODGEBALL

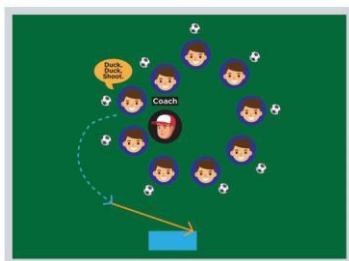
- Make grid
- Coach dribbles while players run around grid and avoid getting hit by the ball. Players hit must freeze in open leg stance. When friend crawl through their legs, continue running.
- Choose half of the players to be “it” with ball. Keep ball on ground.
- Purpose: dribbling, passing- not shooting and movement



SMALL GAMES

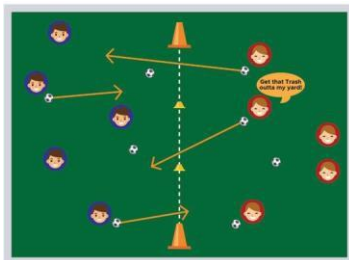
DUCK, DUCK, SHOT

- Have all of the kids sit on their soccer balls in a circle, about 10-12 yards away from the goal
- The coach will then walk around the circle saying “Duck, Duck, Duck...” When he picks a player he will “Shoot!”
- That player will stand up, dribble their soccer ball to the goal, and try to score. Add a goalie if needed.
- If you need variety, have players chase each other and if they catch someone they get to shoot the ball!



GET THAT TRASH OUTTA' MY YARD!

- Setup one large square grid dividing it in the middle with 2 lines of small cones, creating an empty space between them
- Spread soccer balls out evenly on both sides of the grid. Split your team in half and have one team on each side.
- The soccer balls are the trash, the grids are the yards. Describe the different pieces of trash like Coke bottles, diapers, candy wrappers, etc.
- Object of the game is to shoot the soccer ball out of your side (your yard) and into the other team's side (yard). Every time a player shoots it they must yell "get that trash outta' my yard!"
- Encourage the players to yell loudly and have fun!



SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach.

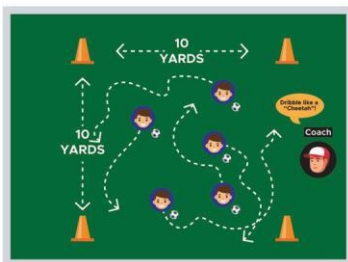


FUN PRACTICE GAMES

PRACTICE #8

ANIMALS

- 10x10 grid, everyone has ball
- While dribbling in square, coach yells out name of animal
- Players dribble like that animal, i.e. fast like a rabbit/cheetah or slow like a turtle/elephant, etc.
- Continue dribbling, be creative with animal choices



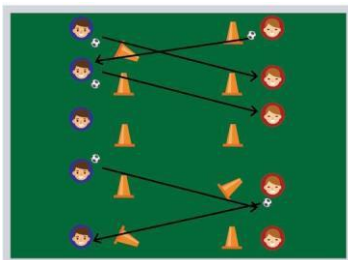
RELAY/OBSTACLE COURSE

- Dribbling relay race with obstacles
- Can include fun and silly challenge with skills
- Coach can choose to time players make two courses and make it a competition



STORM THE CASTLE

- Set up 2 rows of 5 TALL cones (these are castles)
- Have the rows separated by 5-10 feet of empty space (this is the moat)
- Have players stand behind one row of castles with their soccer ball
- Object of the game is to knock over an opposing castle using your passing skills
- When you knock a castle over yell "storm the castle!" Team that knocks all the castles over wins!



LARGE GAME: SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach.



SESSION #9 WITH CHARACTER TRAIT		PRACTICE	COACHING POINTS:
COACHING POINTS:			
Session: _____			_____ min
Definition: _____			_____ min
_____			_____ min
_____			_____ min
Character Trait: _____			
Definition: _____			

WARM UP

TECHNICAL/TOUCH

SESSION

PRACTICE

E#10 WITH CHARACTER TRAIT

COACHING POINTS:

_____ min

_____ min

_____ min

_____ min

COACHING POINTS:

Session: _____

Definition: _____

Character Trait: _____

Definition: _____

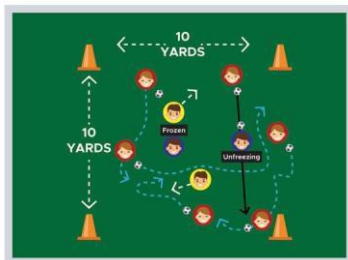
WARM UP

TECHNICAL/TOUCH

EXTRA GAME IDEAS

SOCCER FREEZE TAG

- Make a square big enough for all of the players to run around in
- One or two players are “it.” These players try to tag the other players who are dribbling the ball. If they are tagged, then they must stand with the ball above their head, and with their legs open. If someone who is free passes the ball through their legs then they can rejoin the game.



ALIEN ATTACK

- Any amount of space will work
- Everyone has a ball (missiles)
- If hit with “freeze bomb” player is frozen until someone passes the ball through legs
- Objective is to kill alien by hitting alien with “missile” 3x



RED LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT WITH SOCCER BALL

- Coach stand 15 yards from players who are in a line facing coach
- Commands: Green light means dribble toward coach. Yellow light means slow dribble. Red light means stop and sit on ball. Players moving when light is red are sent back to the starting line. Optional: Black light means dancing.
- First person to coach wins
- Emphasize keeping the ball close.

