



U8 PRACTICE 8 – USYS CURRICULUM

Date:

4/6/23 @ 5:45 PM

Duration:

60 minutes

Overview:

- 2v2 to Small Goals (Defending) - 10 minutes
- You Shall Not Pass - 10 minutes
- Team Shield-Steal - 10 minutes
- Team Knockout - 10 minutes
- Scrimmage - 20 minutes

Description

This practice is part of the __US Youth Soccer National Grassroots Curriculum__.

OVERVIEW

Develop your team's individual and group defending skills. Players will look to close openings and space to prevent the ball moving forward.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Protect the goal
- Steal the ball
- Help your teammates... and have FUN!

WHAT TO SAY

__How do you steal a ball away from an opponent who is dribbling?__

*By tackling or [poking the ball away](yougotmojo://content/post

?postID=5JVxEKWQa7NbBdKfusVXxP)*

__What should you do if your team does not have the ball?__

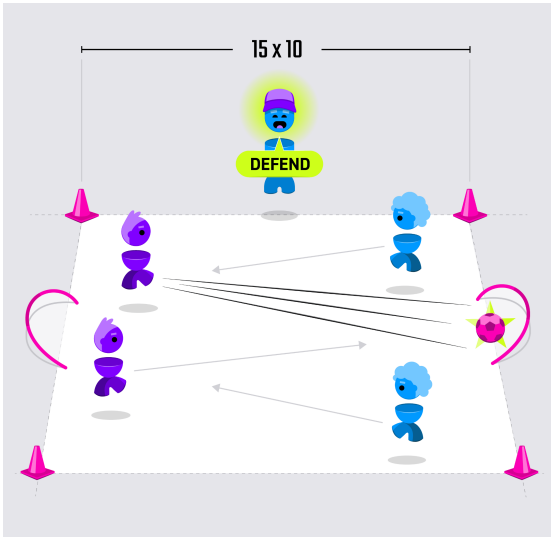
Player closest to the person with the ball needs to pressure; other players should try to get behind the ball and support the person pressuring

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Soccer 101: [What Is Cover?](yougotmojo://content/post?postID=1sFIN3PNHGmTVQjcbeFgRd)
- Soccer 101: [Block Tackling](yougotmojo://content/post?postID=6AY9yNvQ2d2zoHdheAhldp)
- Soccer 101: [Poke Tackling](yougotmojo://content/post?postID=5JVxEKWQa7NbBdKfusVXxP)
- Watch: [Why Kids Need Brain Breaks](yougotmojo://content/post?postID=4NleA9Ay6ox2TzIHy9pttO)

2v2 to Small Goals (Defending)

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Hold the door! Set up small goals and focus on defensive skills and strategy in this small-sided activity.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 8 cones
- 1 ball
- 1 pinnie per 2 players
- 2 small goals

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of a grid for every 6-10 players, recommended size: 15 yards long x 10 yards wide.
- Place a small portable goal or pair of cones placed 6 feet apart on each endline.
- Divide players into 2 teams, one on each endline, and give one team pinnies.

- Play starts when 2 players enter from each endline and one team initiates play by passing the ball to each other and advancing towards their goal.
- Players scrimmage and score by shooting the ball into the goal or between the cones, below knee-height.
- If a player scores or the ball goes out of bounds, new players rotate in and a new round begins.
- If you have enough players for 2 grids, you can position yourself in the middle and run 2 activities at the same time so players get more touches on the ball.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Especially at younger ages, attacking players are still learning to dribble and pass, and may rush to the ball in their excitement and make errors that help defenders.

Expect both defenders to move to the ball. Remind them that only one needs to move to the ball and the other one helps behind them.

COACHING TIPS

A good rule of thumb for younger defenders: If you can't steal it, how do you make sure the other side doesn't score?

As players become more familiar and skilled, you can encourage the defender closest to the ball to get close enough to the attacker to "get their head down" so they are more focused on shielding the ball, which makes it difficult for the attacker to find their teammate to pass to.

The first defender can then take a slightly diagonal position so the attacker can only dribble left or right (but not both), to "push" that attacker towards the second defender. The second defender's job is to help their teammate protect the goal using the same strategy.

Remind defenders to advance towards an attacker quickly, approach slowly, then quickly get into position: "Quick-slow-low"

MAKE IT HARDER

Making the space larger makes it harder for defenders to stop the attack.

MAKE IT EASIER

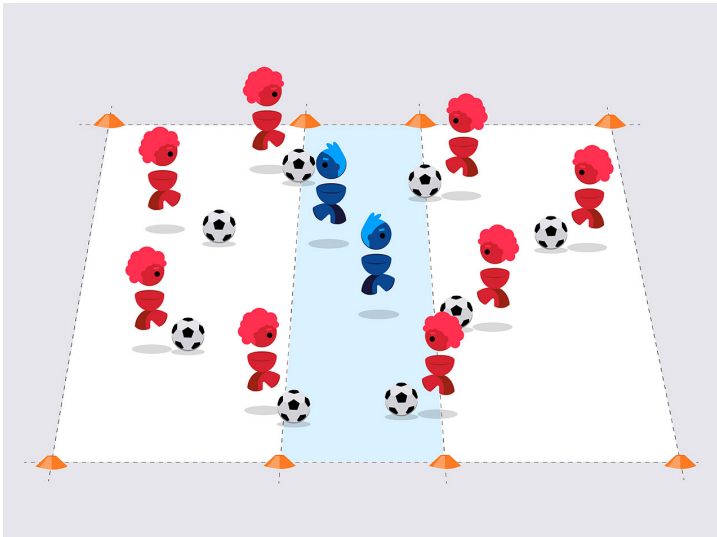
Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders to stop the attack.

CHANGE IT UP

You can add one more small goal to each endline and put them in corners so players now have twice as many opportunities to score, but cannot score in the center. This makes the game more challenging for defenders and encourages them to use the sideline as an additional defender.

You Shall Not Pass

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Make it across the field without losing possession in this game from FC Barcelona.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 8 cones
- 1 ball per player

SETUP

- Use 4 cones to make a rectangular space, recommended size: 15 yards long x 20 yards wide. Use 4 more cones to divide the space into 3 zones, 2 zones on the ends and 1 in the middle.
- Pick 2 defenders and assign them to the middle zone. The rest of the group spreads out across the two end lines, each with a ball.
- On your call, the players with possession have to make it

- across to the other side. The two end zones are safe, but in the middle, the defenders are free to try to recover the ball.
- If a defender recovers the ball, the player who lost possession joins them in the next round.
- Keep playing until everyone is a defender.

WHAT TO EXPECT

In the actual game, it's easier to get past defenders when there's more space between them. The offense can open up the field by drawing defenders to the sides.

The defenders should work together, too, and discover new strategies like linking arms and moving as one—then, exploding apart.

COACHING TIPS

Encourage players to spread out and use the space to their advantage, rather than constricting the playing field and tipping the advantage to the defenders.

Even though each player has their own ball, make sure they're still working together and coordinating strategies for success.

Demonstrate to your players how to properly lure defenders into one area to create free space elsewhere.

MAKE IT EASIER

Make a rule that defenders cannot keep possession—they can only pass the ball back to the coach or restart the process.

Remove the penalty for losing possession.

MAKE IT HARDER

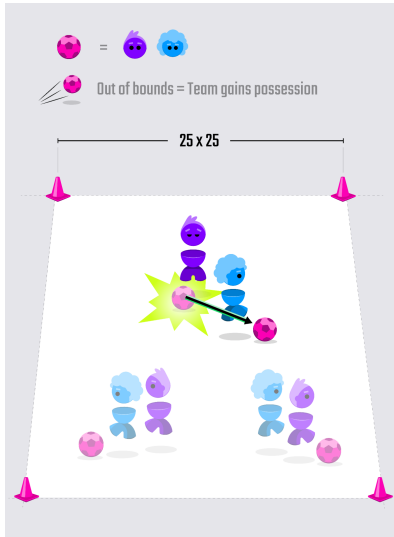
Every time a player turns the ball over to the defense, that player links hands with the defender, creating a “chain” that now plays defense in unison.

DO IT AT HOME

Players can keep working on their skills at home with a game we call [Watch Your Back](#), only available with MOJO+.

Team Shield-Steal

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Stronger together! This game helps players develop shielding and ball possession skills.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 4 cones
- 1 ball per 2 players
- 1 pinnie per 2 players

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 25 x 25 yards.
- Divide players into 2 teams, one in pinnies. Use half as many balls as you have players, giving half of the balls to each team to start.
- The 2 teams compete to keep and gain possession of as many balls as possible.

- Play several 60-second rounds. The team with the most balls at the end of each round wins. Give teams an opportunity to strategize how to protect their balls between rounds.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Some players may get carried away and be too aggressive. Keep an eye on this to make sure it doesn't get out of control.

COACHING TIPS

Encourage teams to work in small groups. At least 2 players working together will be more successful at stealing a ball.

Conversely, players should shield the ball when in possession. If a player is defending the ball from more than one attacker, encourage that player's teammates to try to get to an area without opposing players, so the player being pressured can pass them the ball.

MAKE IT HARDER

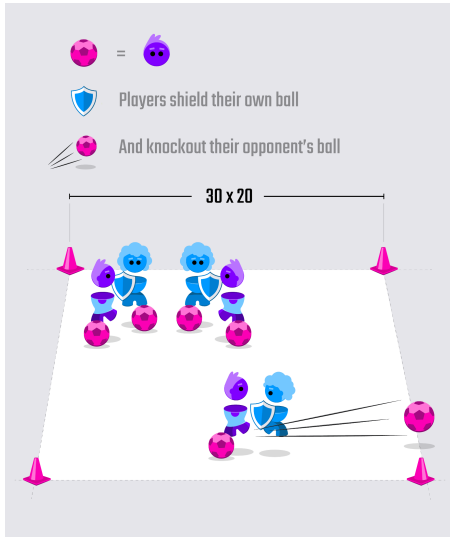
Making the grid smaller makes it harder for shielding players to maintain possession of the ball.

MAKE IT EASIER

Making the grid larger makes it easier for shielding players to maintain possession of the ball.

Team Knockout

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

This activity helps players develop shielding and ball possession skills.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 4 cones
- 1 ball per player
- 1 pinnie per 2 players

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 30 x 30 yards.
- Divide your players into 2 teams, one in pinnies.
- Every player has a ball.
- Both teams compete to kick the other teams' balls out of the grid and vice versa, while trying to shield their own balls.

- If a player's ball is kicked away, they help their teammates protect their balls, while continuing to try to knock the other team's balls away.
- Play several 60-second rounds. The team with the most balls at the end wins the round. Give players a break after the round to come up with a strategy to protect their balls during the next round.

WHAT TO EXPECT

More than 1 attacker may try to knock away a player's ball in a given moment. In these situations, encourage that player's teammates to get into a good position to support them.

Players might forget that they can pass in this game. Remind them that it's a helpful way to work together.

Some players may get carried away and get overly aggressive. Keep an eye on this to make sure it doesn't get out of control.

COACHING TIPS

Encourage players to protect their ball with their body to prevent their ball from getting kicked out.

Encourage teammates to work together to double-team opposing players.

If teams appear to be unevenly matched, rotate players between rounds to ensure a better balance.

MAKE IT HARDER

Making the grid smaller makes it harder for players to protect their balls and easier for defenders to knock them away.

MAKE IT EASIER

Making the grid larger makes it easier for players to protect their balls and harder for defenders to knock them away.

CHANGE IT UP

To encourage passing and teamwork, start this activity with fewer balls.

DO IT AT HOME

Players can keep working on their skills at home with a game we call [Square Dancing](#), only available with MOJO+.

Scrimmage

Duration: 20 minutes

DESCRIPTION

The best part of the practice, obviously.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 4 cones
- 1 ball
- 2 goals

SETUP

- Set up a goal on each endline and divide your players into 2 teams with one team in pinnies (if you have them) to scrimmage. Use small goals, large goals or pairs of cones placed arms-length apart.
- Grid size should adjust to the age of players:
 - for 5 and under, recommended size: 30 yards long x 20 yards wide
 - for 7-8, recommended size: 35 yards long x 20 yards wide
 - for 9-10, recommended size: 60 yards long x 40 yards wide
 - for 11+, recommended size: 75 yards long x 50 yards wide But don't let grid size stop you from playing—you can scrimmage with whatever space you have.
- Goalies are optional for ages 9+. There are no [corner kicks](#) or [throw-ins](#). If a ball goes over the sideline, restart play with a kick-in. Keep it simple.
- Goal kicks are optional for balls that cross the endline but miss the goal. The team with possession should back up to midfield to receive it. Otherwise, the coach can play a new

- ball in to restart play.

WHAT TO EXPECT

For many players, scrimmage is the best part of practice, perhaps because it most closely resembles the real game—and they come to play. This is their time to shine, not the coach's time to [puppeteer](#). Pay attention to how they're putting concepts from the practice session into play while scrimmaging and during breaks, point out examples of players doing this well.

COACHING TIPS

Try to ensure players are evenly balanced—if you have a few strong players, make sure they're evenly split between teams. Provide more [specific encouragement and praise](#) than direction: “Good job dribbling to a new space,” for example, vs. just “Good job.” You can add rules to encourage players to do what you want them to do (ex: if a player is [keeping the ball too long](#), add a rule that players can only use 3-4 touches.)

MAKE IT HARDER

Increasing grid size makes it harder for defenders. Decreasing grid size makes it harder for attackers.

MAKE IT EASIER

Decreasing grid size makes it easier for defenders. Increasing grid size makes it easier for attackers.

CHANGE IT UP

You can put 2 goals on each endline instead of one goal per endline. More goals: more fun.

DO IT AT HOME

Players can keep working on their skills at home with a game we call

[1v1](#), only available with MOJO+.