



U8 PRACTICE 2 – USYS CURRICULUM

Date:

4/6/23 @ 5:45 PM

Duration:

60 minutes

Overview:

- 2v2 to Small Goals (Attacking) - 10 minutes
- Gates Dribbling - 10 minutes
- Shadow Dribbling - 10 minutes
- 1v1 to Small Goals - 10 minutes
- Scrimmage - 20 minutes

Description

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

OVERVIEW

Here is a fast-paced session that focuses on ball control and dribbling past opponents to create scoring chances.

Players at this age group are still developing their dribbling skills, but they are also more aware of other players and able to work with them.

Their attention span is better than at U6, but make sure to keep directions concise and use demonstrations in your explanations.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Balance and coordination are keys to dribbling and changing

direction

- Players running with the ball to take space
- Players recognizing when they can no longer dribble

WHAT TO SAY

__What part of the foot should you use to dribble forward?__

Laces, to increase speed

__What parts of the foot could you use to dribble sideways?__

Pinky toe to go outside, big toe to go inside or to change direction

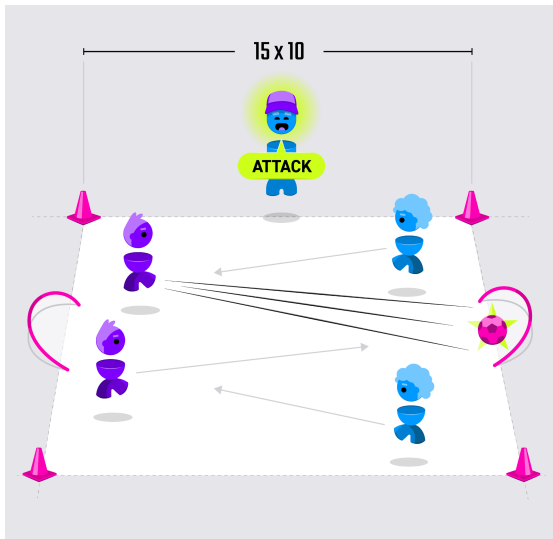
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Watch: [5 Things New Coaches Should Know]([yougotmojo://content/post?postId=11ZqfERIXXhVT7xw0cXf8o](https://yougotmojo.com/content/post?postId=11ZqfERIXXhVT7xw0cXf8o))

- Soccer 101: [Dribbling with Different Parts of the Foot]([yougotmojo://content/post?postId=31eQPT3p5YsostKdlHSErf](https://yougotmojo.com/content/post?postId=31eQPT3p5YsostKdlHSErf))

2v2 to Small Goals (Attacking)

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Ready. Set. Attack! Set up small goals and help them develop good offensive attack strategies.

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

When players are on the attack, expect them to run parallel (instead of 1 running ahead). There will also likely be more dribbling than passing, depending on the players' experience.

Attackers may be so excited, they may burst out wildly and make mistakes- turnovers are common.

COACHING TIPS

When they gain possession of the ball, encourage players to create chances to score by immediately looking for open space and taking the ball somewhere new and closer to their goal. Ask players, "How can you and your teammate get around the 2 defenders?" It's simple: Try to pass around them. Hey hey, now we're playing soccer!

MAKE IT HARDER

Making the space smaller makes it harder for attackers to get past defenders.

MAKE IT EASIER

Making the space larger makes it easier for attackers to get past defenders and score.

CHANGE IT UP

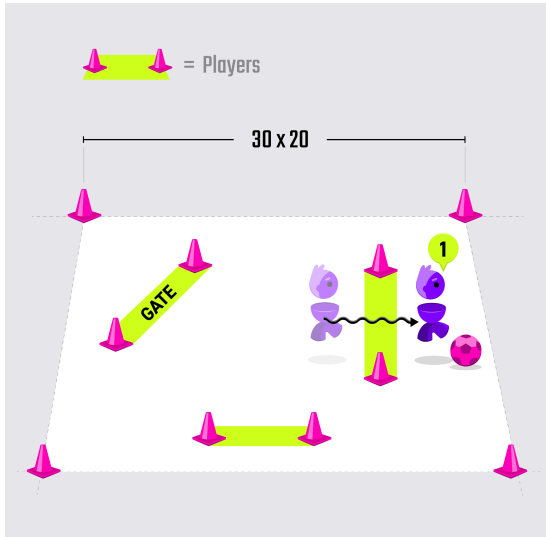
You can add 1 more small goal or pair of cones to each endline and move goals to the corners so players have twice as many opportunities to score, but cannot score in the center.

DO IT AT HOME

Players can keep working on their skills at home with a game we call [1v1](#), only available with MOJO+.

Gates Dribbling

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

This dribbling game helps with speed dribbling and turning direction with the ball.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 20 cones
- 1 ball per player

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 30 yards long x 20 yards wide for every 6-10 players.
- Randomly place pairs of cones arms-length apart throughout your grid to create small goals- aka gates- about twice as many gates as you have players.
- Players dribble around the space, trying to take their ball through as many gates as possible until you call time,

- keeping count of goals scored.
- After a couple minutes, call time and take a break. Then start a new round, encouraging players to try to make at least one more goal than they did the previous round.
- As coach, you can manipulate the game length to ensure they're successful.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Expect players to push the ball far away from their feet. They'll just knock the ball and run instead of little touches. (That's OK—you might say, "So, once you get through the gate, should your touches be big or small?" They should be small to go in another direction.)

Turning the ball to go to a new gate may be a challenge for them—encourage them to try their best and praise their effort. As coach, you can introduce pressure by walking from gate to gate—now you're the gatekeeper and the player can't score on that gate. You can block gates on stronger players more often to challenge them to the level of their ability.

COACHING TIPS

Encourage players to keep their heads up to see the next gate to score on and take their first touch after scoring in that direction. To encourage soft touches to keep the ball close, have players hold their arms out to make a circle. Tell them that's their force field—if the ball stays in their force field, awesome. If it goes out, they want to get the ball back in.

Some kids might figure out that they can just keep scoring on the same goal—this is very creative. After a bit, congratulate them, then introduce a new rule that you have to go to a new gate every time or can only score 3 times at one gate. (If they can game the game, that's good stuff! You as a coach don't want to discourage this—acknowledge it's clever and move on.)

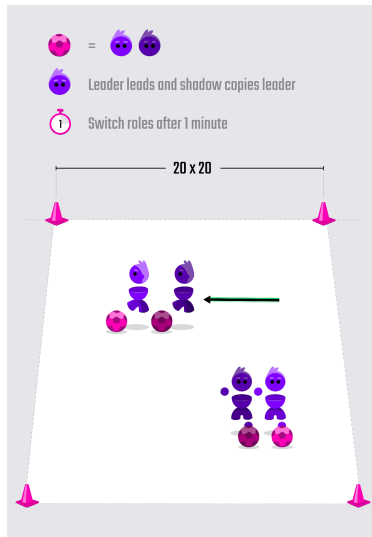
DO IT AT HOME

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

[Speed Dribbling](#), only available with MOJO+.

Shadow Dribbling

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

This activity helps players develop the ability to react quickly to other players' movements. Copy that.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 4 cones
- 1 ball per player

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 20 x 20 yards.
- Divide players into pairs and give every player a ball.
- One player in each pair is the leader and dribbles around the space however he/she wishes, changing speed and direction frequently and throwing in a move or two, if they know any.
- The second player is the shadow and must follow the

- leader, copying their moves.
- After a minute, have the leader and copycat switch roles.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Some players will think of this activity as follow dribbling vs. copycat dribbling. Make sure they do try to copy every move—you can help by demonstrating this for them.

Some shadows may not be able to physically keep up with the leader. If you can, try to pair players according to their ability.

Controlling the ball and getting their head up at the same time will be a challenge. Encourage them to do their best and praise their effort.

COACHING TIPS

Because they have to follow another person, this activity takes players out of their habits and safe zones. For example, players often prefer dribbling with a particular foot, but they have to try new things according to whatever the leader is doing. This is so helpful for improving their skills.

Encourage players who are leading to be creative and try new things. If you see a player execute a move well, praise them. Stop the activity for a few seconds and ask the player to show everyone that move. Then ask all players to try executing that move while they are playing this activity and restart.

CHANGE IT UP

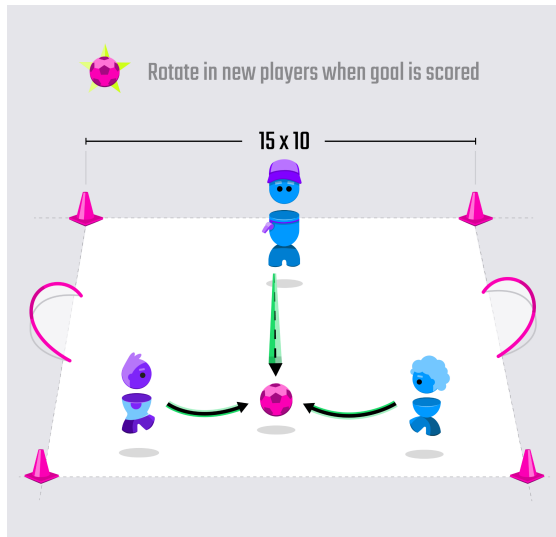
Instruct players to dribble with only the left or right foot during the activity. After a few minutes, switch to the other foot.

DO IT AT HOME

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

1v1 to Small Goals

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Goooooal! This game helps players develop individual attacking and defending skills.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 8 cones
- 1 ball

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of a grid for every 4-5 players, recommended size: 15 yards long x 10 yards wide.
- Place a small goal on each endline using 6 ft. portable goals or 2 cones placed arms-length apart.
- Divide players into two teams, on one each endline. Play starts when 1 player enters from each endline.
- Players scrimmage and score by passing or shooting the ball into the goal (below knee-height to avoid injuries).

- 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 both at the same time so players get more touches on the ball.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Expect the ball to change possession quite a bit and for players to tire pretty quickly. Stacking each endline with at least 1 other player enables players to alternate and take a break between rounds.

Depending on how players are paired up, some can dominate others, so switch up pairings frequently—or try to match players according to ability.

COACHING TIPS

Encourage attacking players to use their speed when dribbling and to try simple moves they can do that do not slow them down. Also teach players to always look at the goal first when they win the ball back, to see if they can shoot right away.

Defending players need to make sure they block the shooting opportunity at all times. Encourage them to first try to slow the attacker down (“don’t dive in”), stay between the attacker and the goal (“protect the goal”) and then wait for a good time to [poke or steal the ball away](#) (if the attacker has exposed the ball) and hopefully make their own attack.

MAKE IT HARDER

Making the goals smaller makes the game harder for the attacking player and easier for the defending player.

MAKE IT EASIER

Making the goals larger makes this game easier for the attacking player and harder for the defending player.

CHANGE IT UP

You can introduce a change in position before the game begins—have players pop up from sitting or lying on their stomachs before initiating play. This adds an element of agility development to the game.

DO IT AT HOME

Players can keep working on their skills at home with a game we call [1v1](#), 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+.