



## U14-DEFENDING- WEEK 3

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**Date:**

4/6/23 @ 5:00 PM

**Duration:**

90 minutes

**Overview:**

- Scrimmage - 25 minutes
- 4v4 to Small Goals (Defending) - 10 minutes
- 4v4 to Endlines (Defending) - 10 minutes
- Flying Numbers - 10 minutes
- Liverpool - 10 minutes
- Advanced Scrimmage - 25 minutes

**Description**

PLAYER ACTIONS: Protect the goal, Make it and Keep it compact, Pressure, Cover & Balance

KEY QUALITIES: Read the game, Take initiative, Focus

MOMENT: Defending

**SKILL ACQUISITION:**

Pressure: Angle and Speed of approach, Distance, Body position, Tackle choice (poke or block)

Cover: Distance, body position.

Thanks to our friends at Massachusetts Youth Soccer for this practice plan!

# Scrimmage

Duration: 25 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.

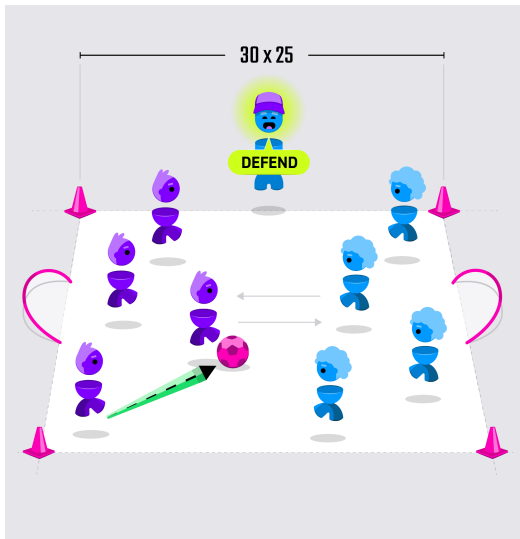
## **DO IT AT HOME**

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

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

# 4v4 to Small Goals (Defending)

Duration: 10 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

Players work on group and individual defending skills in this 4v4 scrimmage with small goals.

## 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 8-12 players, recommended size: 30 yards long x 25 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 4 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, defenders can gain an advantage because attacking players are still learning to dribble and pass, and may rush to the ball in their excitement.

Expect some defenders to mistime their approach and miss the ball when trying to poke it away. They may come in too fast, which enables the attacker to just dribble around them. While they want to get to the attacker quickly, remind them to then get low and slow as they approach.

## **COACHING TIPS**

The defenders should work together to try to get the attackers to pass the ball sideways or back and take away time and space. Taking away time means getting pressure to the ball and slowing the attacker down. Taking away space means staying connected and compact, preventing attackers from getting down the field.

If individual defending is good, can the group of defenders come together and get compact? This also helps overcome individual defending mistakes. The first defender provides pressure, the next provides cover, and the other defenders provide balance. As a group, can they be like a fist? Nothing gets through the fingers.

## **MAKE IT HARDER**

Making the space larger makes it harder for defenders to stop

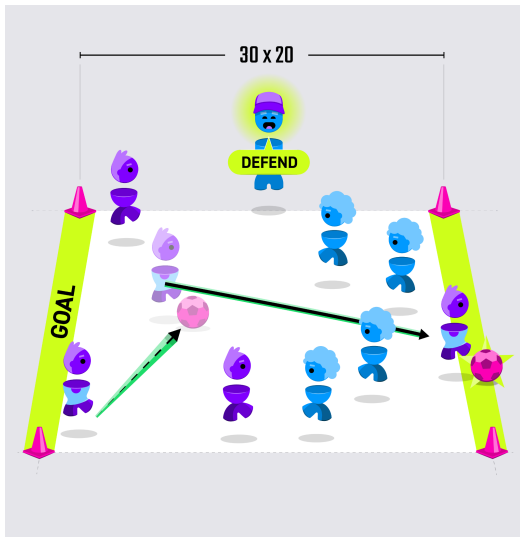
attackers.

## **MAKE IT EASIER**

Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders to beat attackers.

# 4v4 to Endlines (Defending)

Duration: 10 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

Now it's time to defend. Focus on defensive skills with a scrimmage session that emphasizes working collectively to deny the opponent space.

## WHAT YOU NEED

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

## SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of a grid for every 8-12 players, recommended size: 30 yards long x 20 yards wide. Note: Younger players may need bigger "endzones" marked with 4 cones.
- Divide players into 2 teams, one in pinnies, and place them on opposite endlines.



- Play starts when 4 players enter from each team and one team initiates play by passing the ball to each other and advancing towards the endline they're attacking.
- Players scrimmage and score by dribbling over the endline with the ball under control- within a hula hoop's distance of their body. No wild toe-bashing here!
- 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**

Because the endlines provide so much real estate on which to score, this game can be difficult for defenders. If they're consistently getting frustrated, you can narrow the width of the field so the attacking team has less space to score.

Expect some defenders to mistime their approach and miss the ball when trying to poke it away. They may come in too fast, which enables the attacker to just dribble around them. While they want to get to the attacker quickly, remind them to then get low and slow as they approach.

## **COACHING TIPS**

The defenders should work together to try to get the attackers to pass the ball sideways or back and take away time and space. Taking away time means getting pressure to the ball and slowing the attacker down. Taking away space means staying connected and compact, preventing attackers from getting down the field.

If individual defending is good, can the group of defenders come together and get compact? This also helps overcome individual defending mistakes. The first defender provides pressure, the next provides cover, and the other defenders provide balance. As a group, can they be like a fist? Nothing gets through the fingers.

## **MAKE IT HARDER**

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

### **MAKE IT EASIER**

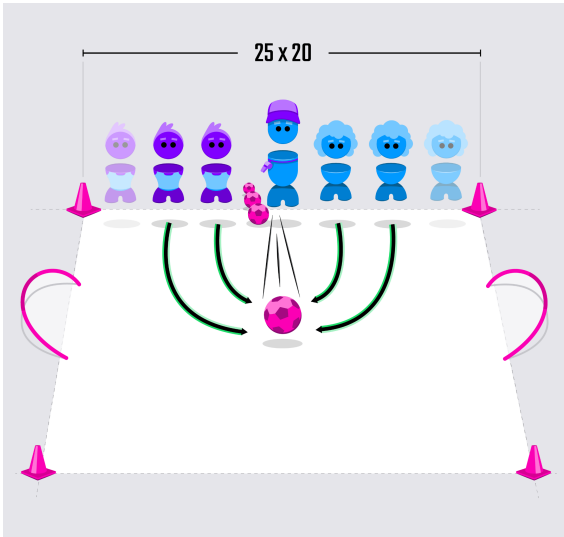
Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders to beat attackers.

### **CHANGE IT UP**

It is a natural progression to start playing this activity to endlines and progress to small goals.

# Flying Numbers

Duration: 10 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

This fun activity alternates between 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4 opportunities for players.

## WHAT YOU NEED

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

## SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 25 yards long x 20 yards wide. Divide players into 2 teams, one on each endline, and give one team pinnies.
- Place a small goal or pair of cones placed arms-length apart on each endline. Players score by passing or

- shooting the ball into the goal or between the cones, below knee-height.
- As coach, you stand at the midline, with many soccer balls.
- One team lines up to the left of the coach and the other to the right.
- Play out a ball and call out a number combination to indicate how many players each team sends in (1v1, 2v2, 3v3) to scrimmage and try to score, changing up the number of players you call each round. Players enter from the front of the line.
- You can also call a different number of players from each team to give one team an extra attacker. (Make sure players know you're doing it so they don't view it as unfair.)
- Each time a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds, players return to the end of their team's line and a new round begins.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

Players may receive the ball from the coach and immediately shoot. While this is important when the goal is open, some players may always shoot and never pass—even when they have a better opportunity to score by passing. If this happens consistently, encourage them to look for a teammate first before shooting or add a rule that players must pass the ball at least once before they can take a shot.

## **COACHING TIPS**

Ask players, “When you get the ball, can you shoot? And if not, can you get it to a teammate who can?” to remind them that working together can produce results.

If some players are dominating, try to match them with players of similar ability, or play the ball towards a less-skilled player to ensure everyone gets plenty of touches on the ball.

## **MAKE IT HARDER**

Making the grid smaller makes it more difficult for the attacking

team.

## **MAKE IT EASIER**

Making the grid larger makes it easier for the attacking team.

## **CHANGE IT UP**

You can have players line up and enter from the endline instead of the midline—or place 1 team at an endline and 1 at the midline—this changes the teams' starting position.

You can also assign players a number within each team (both red and blue players numbered from 1-7 and up) and call out specific numbers ("2 and 5," "1, 3 and 7") instead of lining up players. This enables you to more evenly match players according to ability.

## **DO IT AT HOME**

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

# Liverpool

Duration: 10 minutes

## DESCRIPTION

This small-sided game emphasizes defending and counter-attacking by awarding points according to where on the field a team wins the ball.

## WHAT YOU NEED

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

## SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 40 yards long x 30 yards wide for every 6-10 players. Divide players into 2 teams, one on each endline, and give one team pinnies.
- This game can be played 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3, 4 vs. 4 or more. If you have an odd number of players, you can give one team an extra attacker or add a neutral player who is all-time offense.
- Place a goal on each endline using 6 ft. portable goals or pairs of cones placed 6 feet apart. Players score by passing or shooting the ball into the goal or between the cones, below knee-height.
- “Liverpool” rules: Teams earn 2 points per goal if they win the ball in their opponents’ attacking half. All other goals are worth one point. This encourages players to try to win the ball back immediately with a strong counter-attack.
- Play starts when players on one endline initiate play by passing the ball to each other and advancing towards their

- goal. At this point, either team can score. Both sides can attack, both sides will defend, so whoever has the ball is attacking when they have it.
- There are no corners, throw-ins or goalies. If a ball goes out of bounds, it's a kick-in.
- Play short rounds. The team with the most points at the end wins the round.
- If you have enough players for 2 grids, you can position yourself in the middle and run two games at the same time so players get more touches on the ball.

## **COACHING TIPS**

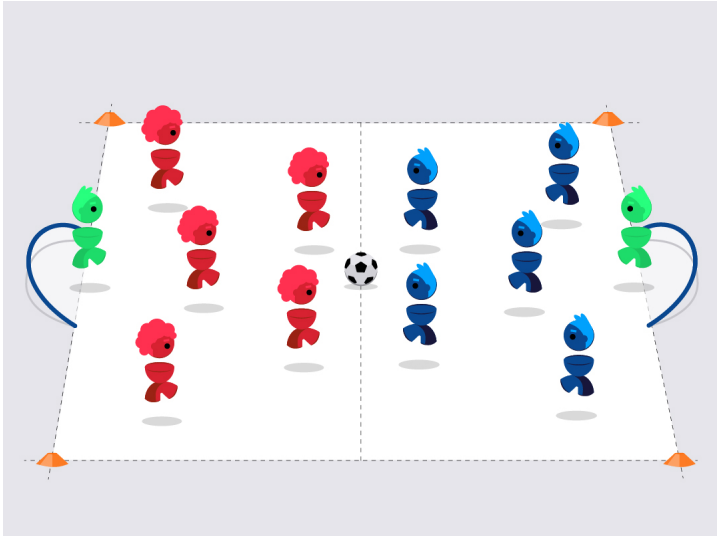
Provide specific encouragement and recognition. Think: “Good job dribbling to open space” instead of just “Good job.”

During a scrimmage, continue to emphasize the coaching points you stressed during your practice. If you worked on maintaining possession, stress that in the scrimmage. If you worked on defensive teamwork in your practice, focus on that.

It’s also great to just observe your players and let them play here. Observing enables you to see what’s working and where to focus in future sessions.

# Advanced Scrimmage

Duration: 25 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

It's time to practice what it's like to play a match at full speed. This is an advanced scrimmage, FC Barcelona-style.

## WHAT YOU NEED

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

## SETUP

- Use 4 cones to make a rectangular space, recommended size: 20 yards long x 15 yards wide. Place goals at each end.
- Divide players into 2 teams, and get ready to play at full speed. That means with all the rules and regulations of an actual game.



## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

Scrimmage is every player's favorite part of practice—and now, we're taking it to the next level.

Here, we're playing in a 3-2 formation, but you can use whatever tactics you want.

Players should have as much fun as possible, while still learning the flow of what it's like to play a full match.

## **COACHING TIPS**

Engage players in discussion about their play. Feel free to ask them questions about their decision making.

Encourage players to think about how to move without the ball and create space or passing lines for their teammates.

Stay positive and remember to praise players when using the Barça style—passing the ball, finding space for their teammates, and having fun.

## **MAKE IT EASIER**

Remove a defender every time the ball switches sides and create an inherent advantage.

## **MAKE IT HARDER**

Expand to a full-size playing field. Game on.

## **DO IT AT HOME**

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