



U8 PRACTICE 5 – USYS CURRICULUM

Date:

4/6/23 @ 5:45 PM

Duration:

60 minutes

Overview:

- 2v2 to Small Goals (Attacking) - 10 minutes
- Goalkeeping: Hands Warmup - 10 minutes
- Goalkeeping: Pairs Passing and Catching - 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

At this age, all players should rotate into goal at various points during the season. Some players may enjoy it more than others, but try and let everyone have a chance.

Remind players that it is a learning experience and they should just try their best—mistakes are part of learning. This session is a chance for them to get used to playing the position and also incorporates some shooting, too. Play __2v2 to Small Goals__ at the beginning with goalkeepers and play __1v1 to Small Goals__ before the scrimmage with them, too, instead using small goals. Do not try any diving at this age!

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Players try to get their body behind the ball when catching or scooping the ball
- Players get their hands behind the ball (make a triangle with their hands)
- Players get low when rolling the ball
- Players use both feet when receiving the ball

WHAT TO SAY

__Where should the keeper's body be when trying to catch the ball?__

Try to move to get behind it

__What should a keeper do when the ball is rolling to them?__

Step to the ball to scoop it up.

__Why is it important to have your first touch when receiving out from under you?__

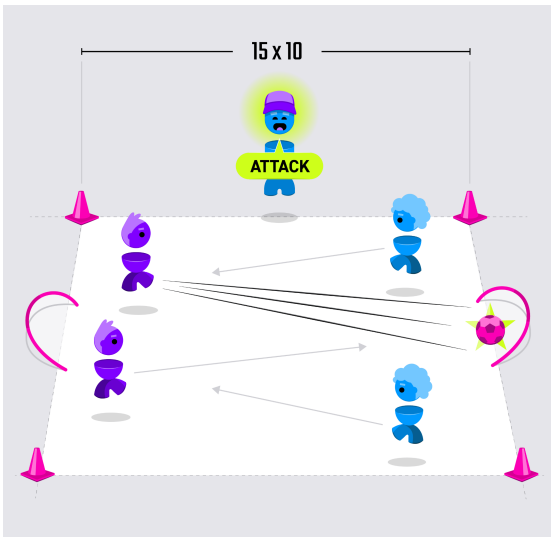
Makes it easier to step in and pass with the second touch.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Soccer 101: [Goalkeeper Distribution](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=3Q5Jvfzk64w5wTI9rZAOIL)
(Just focus on rolling at this age)
- Soccer 101: [Goalkeeper Footwork](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=6njIGvCgUwuZXXHNbVBXQR)
- Soccer 101: [How to Do a Basket Catch](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=5aUg3qjB9iaX2ss7kv5eCE)

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+.

Goalkeeping: Hands Warmup

Duration: 10 minutes

DESCRIPTION

This activity teaches proper catching technique and aids the GK's communication as well

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1 ball per player

SETUP

- Each player holds a ball in their hands. (You can use this for just GKs or to introduce all of your team to the GK position if you are rotating)
- Players walk around the space while bouncing their ball on the ground to catch it themselves with proper catching technique.
- Have them bounce the ball hard and not always directly to their own hands so that they must reach to catch to both the right and left.
- Once players are comfortable catching their own ball have players exchange balls by bouncing their balls to each other while still walking around. They focus on proper catching technique as they do so.
- Once they are comfortable catching from another's bounce to them, have them use only their own ball again and now have them toss the ball in air to practice catching higher balls.
- Stress that they catch it as high as they can while yelling "keeper" and bringing their knee up when they jump to both jump higher and to serve as protection were an opposing player challenging them. Make sure they do this every toss and catch.

- After a while have players toss high balls to each other thus changing the perspective of the catch.

COACHING TIPS

Catching technique: Ask players to connect their thumbs and index fingers to make their hands into the shape of a diamond with their palms facing away from them. This is the recommended shape of their hands when catching a ball. (The "W" shape is also popular. It's a more open version of the diamond catch, with thumbs connected.) The thumbs will be directly behind the center of the ball when catching and the hands will be slightly towards the sides of the ball. You may wish to manually have players hold a ball with this hand-shape to make they understand.

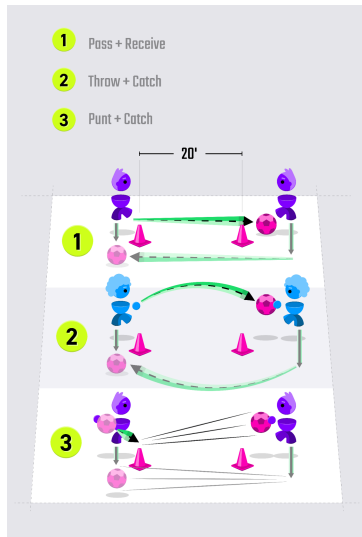
(If a player's hands are too small, they can move the thumbs slightly apart to accomplish grasping the ball.)

High catching: The hand formation is the same for catching high balls but the thumbs/hands now make contact with the ball a bit towards the underside of the ball, whereas the contact point previously was the middle of the ball. Once players catch the high balls have them practice securing the ball to their chest with both hands. Make sure players yell "keeper" for every catch and try to catch the ball as high as possible.

For older players (age 12+), build to distributing after the high ball catch. Have players practice keeping the ball high after the catching and quickly looking for a place to play the ball.

Goalkeeping: Pairs Passing and Catching

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Expose GKs to both footskills and varied catching skills in a simple format

WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 cones per 2 players
- 1 ball per 2 players

SETUP

- Set up 2 cones about 20 feet apart and have one GK stand at each cone.
- Players start by passing the ball to each other taking only 2 touches per turn.
- If a GK receives the pass from his/her partner to the left of their cone, they must use their first touch to move the ball to the right of the cone and pass the ball back on the second touch.

- If the ball comes to the right of their cone, they must use their first touch to move the ball to the left of the cone and pass the ball back on the second touch.
- Players pass back and forth this way for a few minutes, passing with the right foot when passing on the right side of the cone and the left foot when passing on the left side of the cone. This helps simulate receiving back passes.
- Next, have players throw the ball to each other at chest high to the left or right of their cone, then quickly throw it back, working on proper catching and throwing technique. This gets players in the habit of thinking to distribute quickly and familiar with motion of doing so.
- After a few minutes, have players punt the ball to each other from this same distance with each making a save and punting back to their partner. This helps players work on catching and punting accuracy.

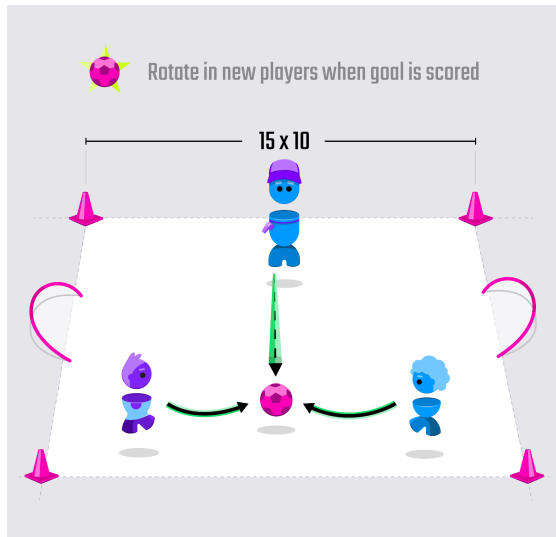
COACHING TIPS

Encourage GKs to get their body moving forward when they receive a ball so their first touch can be taken proactively and with momentum. We want them to learn to receive and distribute both cleanly and quickly, so push the pace once they appear to be getting the hang of it.

Encourage GKs to use both feet during this activity since passes they receive from defenders will not always be accurate. Being comfortable using both feet helps keep the ball out of trouble if forwards press.

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+.