



U12 PRACTICE 4 – USYS CURRICULUM

Date:

4/6/23 @ 5:45 PM

Duration:

90 minutes

Overview:

- Scrimmage - 25 minutes
- Team Knockout - 10 minutes
- 4v4 to 4 Goals (Defending) - 15 minutes
- Shrinking Field - 10 minutes
- Fcb Scrimmage - 30 minutes

Description

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

OVERVIEW

At U12, players are learning to defend in small groups and understand defensive team shape. Communication is very important. Encourage players to have a voice on the field.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Players recognize when to [pressure](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=LFSVNRE7kisLSd7iv7vqK) the ball
- Players are controlled in their approach to the ball to avoid stepping in and getting beat
- Defending team looks to get numbers behind the ball and close openings
- Defensive shape with [pressure](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=

LFSVNRE7kisLSd7iv7vqK), [cover](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=1sFIN3PNHGmTVQjcbeFgRd) and [balance](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=1RPHoqCjHj5EpvfhUnSoH6)

WHAT TO SAY

__Who should [pressure](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=LFSVNRE7kisLSd7iv7vqK) the ball?__

The person closest to it

__How should you approach the ball carrier?__

Fast approach to the ball at angle to force the player one direction and then smaller steps as you get closer

__Who should help the person pressuring the ball?__

The next-closest players become [covering](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=1sFIN3PNHGmTVQjcbeFgRd) players

__When should you try to steal the ball?__

When the player takes a [big touch](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=1WS6C8l2qjgg6hQkK9OUw1) or puts their head down

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Soccer 101: [What Is Balance](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=1RPHoqCjHj5EpvfhUnSoH6)

- Watch: [The Importance of Positive Feedback](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=6SD08JOkE8fDQ0BtDihcUH)

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.

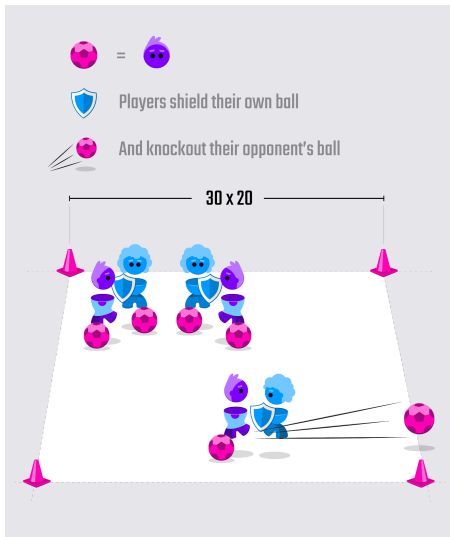
DO IT AT HOME

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

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

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

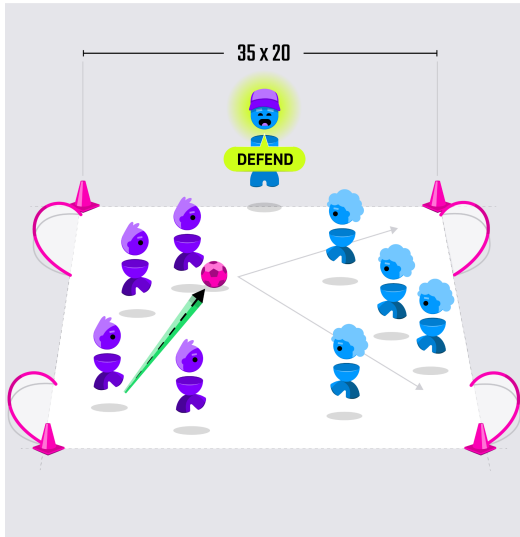
To encourage passing and teamwork, start this activity with fewer balls.

DO IT AT HOME

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

4v4 to 4 Goals (Defending)

Duration: 15 minutes



DESCRIPTION

This quick transition game forces players to both attack and defend immediately when the ball changes ownership.

WHAT YOU NEED

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

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 35 yards long x 20 yards wide for every 8-12 players.
- Place a small portable goal or pair of cones placed 6 feet apart at each end of each endline, 4 goals in all.
- Divide players into two 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 goals.
- Players scrimmage and score by kicking the ball into either of their goals or through 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.
- There are no goalies, corners or throw-ins. If a ball goes out of bounds, it's a kick-in.
- If you have enough players for 2 grids, you can position yourself in the middle and run 2 games 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, which can benefit defenders. However, with two goals to defend, defending players can still get frustrated. If turnovers are not happening naturally, rotate players so everyone gets turns attacking and defending.

COACHING TIPS

Encourage defenders to 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.

MAKE IT EASIER

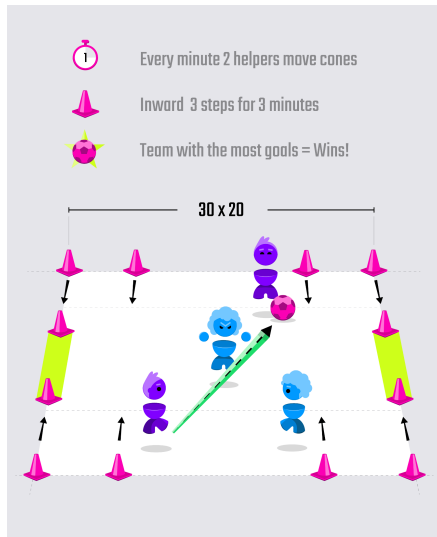
Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders.

CHANGE IT UP

To help players develop ball control and speed dribbling skills, you can adjust the game so that players must dribble through the goal in control of the ball in order to score.

Shrinking Field

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

This small-sided game becomes progressively more challenging for the attacking team.

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: 30 yards long x 20 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 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 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.
- 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.
- “Shrinking Field” rules: Every minute, move the cones to reduce the width of each endline by 3 steps each side (approximately 2 yards). Continue to shrink the endlines every minute of play.
- There are no corners, throw-ins or goalies. If a ball goes out of bounds, it's a kick-in.
- Play 3-minute rounds. The team with the most goals 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.

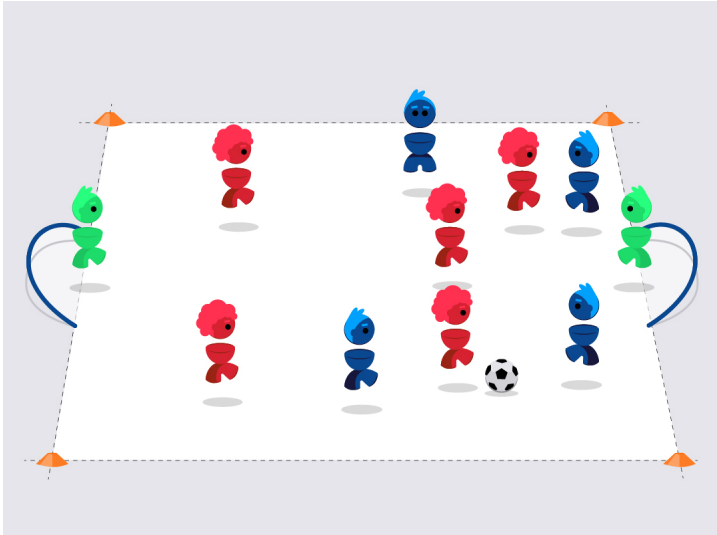
DO IT AT HOME

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

[1-2 Punch](#), only available with MOJO+.

Fcb Scrimmage

Duration: 30 minutes



DESCRIPTION

It's time to put everything you've practiced into action. This is scrimmage, FC Barcelona-style.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 4 cones
- 1 ball
- 1 pinnie per 2 players
- 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.
- Try to play with teams of equal size. If you have an extra player, that's OK. Have them switch between teams so everyone can practice playing with an advantage or

- disadvantage.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Scrimmage is every player's favorite part of practice. Don't worry about whistles, offside, or corner kicks. Here, we want to emphasize the fundamentals of the game without losing sight of the fun.

COACHING TIPS

Feel free to give your players feedback and ask them about their strategy on the field.

Encourage players to spread out, no matter what zone they're in and whether they have possession. Make sure they know the value of moving constantly without the ball.

Players should ask themselves, "Where is the defense? What can I do to attract them so I can create space for my teammates?"

Encourage players to think about how to set up a finish. Where should they go? How should they coordinate a plan of attack?

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 or two, to help your offense focus on finishing.

Restrict the defenders from pressing.

MAKE IT HARDER

Install side lanes and restrict movement of certain players.