



## U8- WEEK 1

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**Date:**

4/6/23 @ 5:45 PM

**Duration:**

60 minutes

**Overview:**

- Dinosaur Tag - 10 minutes
- Island Hopping - 10 minutes
- 1v1 to Endline - 10 minutes
- Scrimmage - 30 minutes

**Description****GETTING STARTED WITH PRACTICE:**

These are set up in the play-practice-play format, which means you will open with a scrimmage as your kids are arriving, and close with a scrimmage after learning the skills included in the activities here. You will need to adjust your times accordingly.

**Opening Scrimmage:**

Set up two small fields right next to each other with a 5 yard space in between. can be 10x20, but feel free to work with the space that you have. Place a small goal on each end line to create two mini-fields (Note: If you don't have small goals, it's OK to use cones, water bottles or bags to create small goals or targets).

As soon as the first two players arrive for practice, have them start playing a game. The game starts 1v1. As players arrive, the game

becomes 2v1, then 2v2 up to 3v3. Once 1 field is at 3v3, start a second game on the field next to it.

Key words to instruct them are phrases like "Go to goal" and "keep the ball."

#### GUIDED QUESTIONS TO ASK:

When do you go straight to the opponent's goal? What can you do if someone is blocking your path to the goal?

#### ANSWERS:

If you see an opening to the goal, go straight to the goal. You can dribble around them or pass to a teammate.

Encourage players to dribble to goal. At the first break, ask questions which generate thoughts about when to dribble. Second break, elicit answers from the same questions to determine the level of understanding from the players.

PLAYER ACTIONS: Pass or dribble forward, Spread out

KEY QUALITIES: Read and understand the game, Take initiative

MOMENT: Attacking

#### SKILL ACQUISITION:

Dribbling- Surface of the foot and ball, quality of the touch

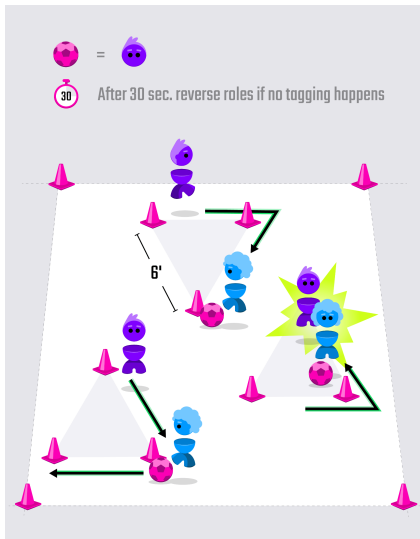
Passing- Surface of the foot and ball, Pace and accuracy

Receiving- Body, position, the surface of the foot and ball, the first touch

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

# Dinosaur Tag

Duration: 10 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Jurassic...Tag? This dribbling activity puts an emphasis on speed and changing direction. With dinosaurs.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- 3 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 set up 1 triangle with 2-yard long sides for each pair of players.
- Every player has a ball. One player is the Park Ranger and the other is a hungry Velociraptor, who's chasing their dinner.
- Each pair of players dribbles around the outside of their

- triangle. If the Park Ranger gets tagged, the Ranger and Raptor switch roles.
- Players can change direction any time they wish, but must stay at their triangle.
- After about a minute, switch roles if players haven't already succeeded at [tagging the other](#).

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

Some chasers might never catch up to the one they're chasing. Keep rounds short and ensure players rotate so they get to be both dinosaur and dinner.

The player being chased may panic, lose control of the ball, and have to bring it back to the triangle. Just encourage them to focus on keeping the ball close using [small touches](#).

Turning the ball at the corners of the triangle might also be a challenge. Experience (and practice) is the best teacher.

## **COACHING TIPS**

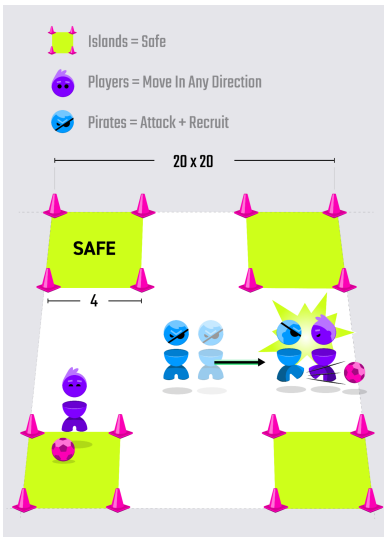
Consider pairing up players of similar ability so play is balanced. Encourage players to use both feet to dribble and point out that if they stay close to the triangle, it's easier to avoid being tagged. This encourages them to keep the ball under close control by default. Players should use both the [inside and outside of the feet](#) when dribbling to move as quickly as possible.

## **DO IT AT HOME**

Players can keep working on their skills at home with a game we call [Crazy 8s](#), only available with MOJO+.

# Island Hopping

Duration: 10 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

Pirates ahead! This activity helps players learn to get away from an attacker by finding open space to take the ball to.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- 16 cones
- 1 ball per player

## SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 20 x 20 yards. Set up four 4 x 4 yard squares (islands) in each corner of the grid.
- Ask for 2 volunteers to be Pirates. All other players start on islands, each with their own ball. The Pirates start in the middle of the grid without a ball.
- The players who aren't Pirates try to dribble with the ball from island to island without being tagged by a Pirate.

- Islands are safe zones that the Pirates cannot enter.
- If a player gets tagged, they become a Pirate, too. They kick their ball outside the grid, and the activity continues until all players have been tagged and become Pirates.
- You can play multiple times rotating the players who start as Pirates so everyone has a turn.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

Everyone will want to be a Pirate. Be sure to change Pirates regularly so everyone gets a turn.

Some players may be reluctant to leave the islands. You can encourage them to take chances, but don't push too hard if they're not comfortable.

When you're down to the last 2-3 island hoppers, it can be intimidating for them to leave the islands! You can stop at 2 players left and make those players Pirates the next round.

## **COACHING TIPS**

Unlike other tag-style games, this activity promotes autonomy because they get to choose where to go and when and it pushes players to be deliberate about those choices. You can encourage island hoppers to keep their heads up to always be aware of where the Pirates are and to find open islands quickly.

Encourage players to use small touches to get around the Pirates, then bigger touches to explode away. If the game moves very quickly, you can slow it down by making the grid larger.

## **CHANGE IT UP**

Try placing the island randomly in the grid, but make sure there's ample space between each.

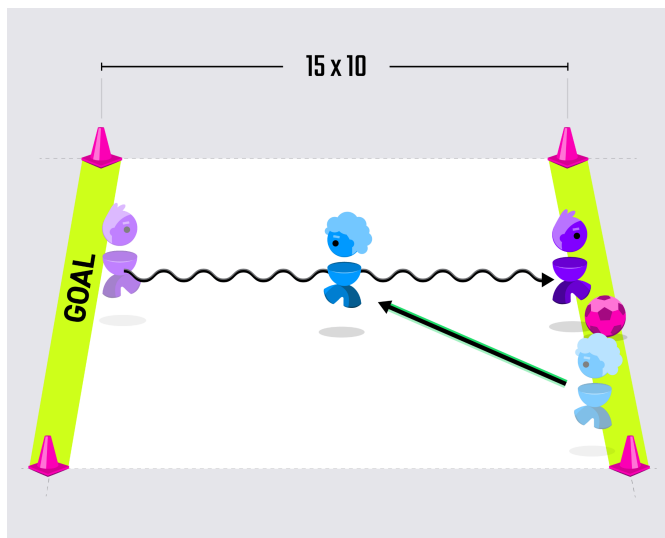
## **DO IT AT HOME**

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[Crazy 8s](#), only available with MOJO+.

# 1v1 to Endline

Duration: 10 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

Get ready for a showdown. This activity helps players develop individual attacking and defending skills.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- 8 cones
- 1 ball per player

## 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.
- Divide players into 2 teams, one on each endline. Note: Younger players may need bigger "endzones" marked with 4 cones.
- Play starts when 1 player enters from each endline and the coach plays in a ball.
- Players scrimmage and score by dribbling over their



- opponent's 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**

Expect the ball to change possession quite a bit and for players to tire pretty quickly. It's a very demanding game, especially for younger players. Stacking each endline with at least 1 other player lets them get a round to air up.

Depending on how players are paired up, some may dominate others, so either switch up pairings frequently—or try to match players of similar ability.

## **COACHING TIPS**

Teach attacking players to use their speed when dribbling. Encourage them to try simple moves they can do that do not slow them down.

Encourage defending players 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](#) and hopefully make their own attack.

## **MAKE IT HARDER**

Making the endzones or grids narrower makes the game harder for the attacking player and easier for the defending player.

## **MAKE IT EASIER**

Making the endzones or grids wider makes this game easier for the attacking player and harder for the defending player.

## **CHANGE IT UP**

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

You can introduce a change in body 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 [2-for-1 Dribbling](#), only available with MOJO+.

# Scrimmage

Duration: 30 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+.