



U8 PRACTICE 7 – USYS CURRICULUM

Date:

4/6/23 @ 5:45 PM

Duration:

60 minutes

Overview:

- 2v2 to Small Goals (Defending) - 10 minutes
- 1v1 to Small Goals - 10 minutes
- 2v2 to 4 Small Goals (Defending) - 10 minutes
- 3v2 to Goal - 10 minutes
- Scrimmage - 20 minutes

Description

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

OVERVIEW

Sometimes being defensive is a good thing! Improve your team's ability to [pressure](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=LFSVNRE7kisLSd7iv7vqK) the opponent and limit time and space.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- [Pressure](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=LFSVNRE7kisLSd7iv7vqK) the player with the ball
- Win the ball
- Protect the goal... and have FUN!

WHAT TO SAY

__What should you do if you see an opening to your goal?__

Move to block your goal

__What is a good moment to steal the ball?__

When the attacker lets it get too far away

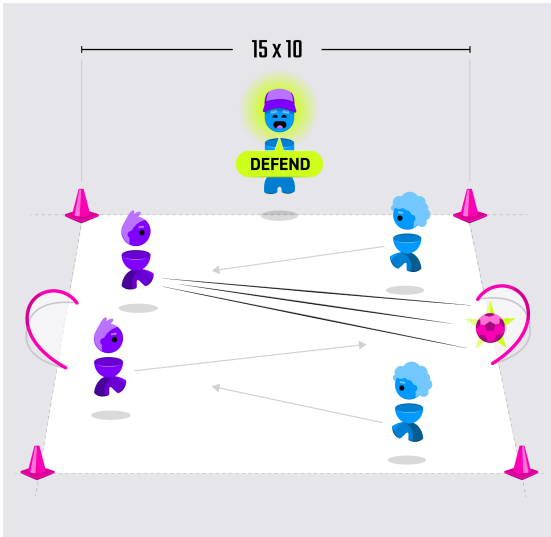
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Soccer 101: [What Is Pressure](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=LFSVNRE7kisLSd7iv7vqK)

- Soccer 101: [How to Do a Poke Tackle](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=5JVxEKWQa7NbBdKfusVXxP)

2v2 to Small Goals (Defending)

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Hold the door! Set up small goals and focus on defensive skills and strategy in this small-sided activity.

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

Especially at younger ages, attacking players are still learning to dribble and pass, and may rush to the ball in their excitement and make errors that help defenders.

Expect both defenders to move to the ball. Remind them that only one needs to move to the ball and the other one helps behind them.

COACHING TIPS

A good rule of thumb for younger defenders: If you can't steal it, how do you make sure the other side doesn't score?

As players become more familiar and skilled, you can encourage the defender closest to the ball to get close enough to the attacker to "get their head down" so they are more focused on shielding the ball, which makes it difficult for the attacker to find their teammate to pass to.

The first defender can then take a slightly diagonal position so the attacker can only dribble left or right (but not both), to "push" that attacker towards the second defender. The second defender's job is to help their teammate protect the goal using the same strategy.

Remind defenders to advance towards an attacker quickly, approach slowly, then quickly get into position: "Quick-slow-low"

MAKE IT HARDER

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

MAKE IT EASIER

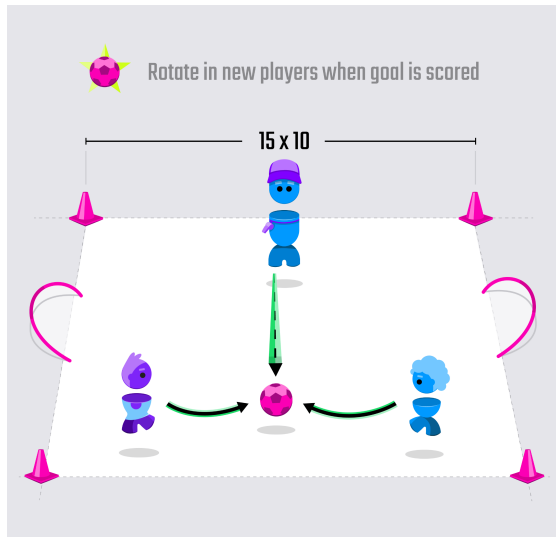
Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders to stop the attack.

CHANGE IT UP

You can add one more small goal to each endline and put them in corners so players now have twice as many opportunities to score, but cannot score in the center. This makes the game more challenging for defenders and encourages them to use the sideline as an additional defender.

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

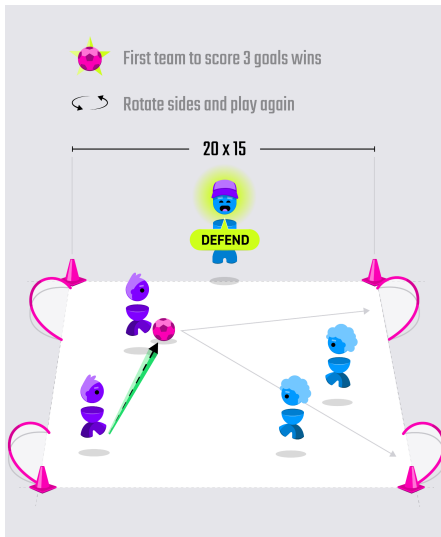
You can introduce a change in position before the game begins—have players pop up from sitting or lying on their stomachs before initiating play. This adds an element of agility development to the game.

DO IT AT HOME

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

2v2 to 4 Small Goals (Defending)

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Today's focus: Defend. This quick transition activity gets players used to transitions between offense and defense.

WHAT YOU NEED

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

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 20 yards long x 15 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 2 players enter from each endline and one team initiates play by passing the ball to each other and advancing towards their goals.
- Players 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.
- 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. They may rush to the ball in their excitement and make errors that help defenders.

Expect both defenders to move to the ball. Remind them that only one needs to move to the ball and the other one provides support.

COACHING TIPS

A good rule of thumb for younger defenders: If you can't steal it, how do you make sure the other side doesn't score? In this game, the additional goal increases the difficulty for defenders.

As players become more familiar and skilled, you can encourage the defender closest to the ball to force the attacker to "get their head down" so they are more focused on shielding the ball than finding a teammate to pass to.

The first defender can take a slightly diagonal position so the attacker can only dribble left or right (but not both). That "pushes" that attacker towards the second defender. The second defender's job is to help their teammate protect the goal using the same strategy.

Remind defenders to advance towards an attacker quickly, approach slowly, then quickly get into position: "Quick-slow-low."

MAKE IT HARDER

Making the space larger makes it harder for defenders.

MAKE IT EASIER

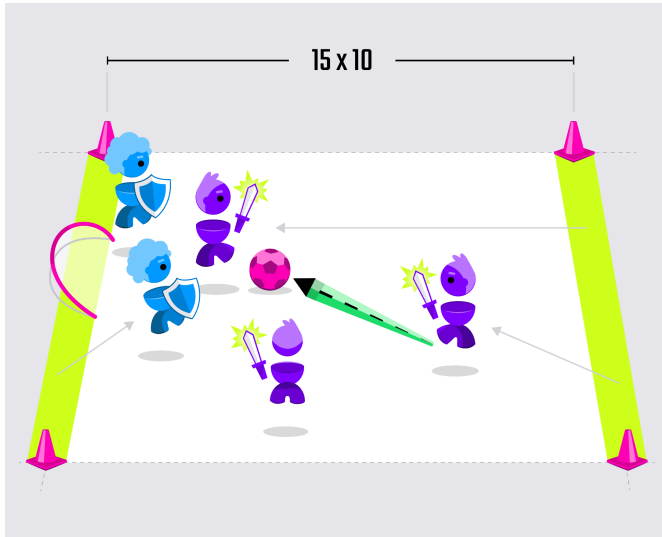
Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders.

CHANGE IT UP

Rotating the goals 45 degrees towards the center of the field changes the positions from which players must attack and defend the goals.

3v2 to Goal

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

There's strength in numbers. Teach players how to use an extra attacker to get around defenders and score.

WHAT YOU NEED

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

SETUP

- Place 4 cones to mark the corners of your grid, recommended size: 15 yards long x 10 yards wide.
- Place a small goal on one endline, or use 2 cones placed arms-length apart.
- Divide your players into two teams, one on each endline, and give one team pinnies. On the goal side, 2 players enter as defenders and are met by 3 attackers entering from the

- other side.
- Play starts when the attacking team initiates play by passing the ball to each other and trying to score on the goal. If a defender steals or intercepts the ball, they can also score by dribbling over the attackers' endline with the ball within a hula hoop's distance of the body.
- If a player scores or the ball goes out of bounds, new players rotate in and a new round begins. (After a few rounds, rotate players between endlines so both sides get turns attacking and defending.)
- 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

At the younger ages, both defenders may go towards the ball, while the 3 attackers may clump together instead of spreading out. Encourage defenders to stagger their positions so the second defender can provide support if the first defender is beaten. Attackers should spread out to create passing opportunities when the attacker with the ball encounters pressure.

Because this activity strongly favors attackers, defenders can get discouraged. Remind them that it's meant to be challenging, and make sure to rotate players between endlines so everyone gets turns both attacking and defending.

COACHING TIPS

Encourage the attacker with the ball to attack the goal with speed and try to score. If a defender gets in the way, the attacker should try to find an open teammate and pass the ball. Attackers must work together to make sure they find positions to receive a pass and take a shot.

MAKE IT HARDER

Making the grid smaller makes it harder for attackers to beat defenders. You can also limit the number of touches per player (such

as a 2-touch maximum).

MAKE IT EASIER

Making the grid larger makes it easier for attackers to beat defenders.

CHANGE IT UP

Use your normal full-size goals (depending on your age group) and add a third player to the defending team to act as goalkeeper. If the goalkeeper makes a save, they can distribute the ball to their defenders who try to score by dribbling the ball across their endline. Between rounds, rotate players to ensure everyone has a turn at goalkeeping, defending, and attacking.

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+.