



U14 PRACTICE 2 – USYS CURRICULUM

Date:

4/6/23 @ 5:00 PM

Duration:

90 minutes

Overview:

- Scrimmage - 25 minutes
- Shield-Steal - 10 minutes
- 4v4 to 4 Goals (Defending) - 10 minutes
- 4v4 to Endlines (Defending) - 10 minutes
- 4v4 to Small Goals (Defending) - 10 minutes
- Fcb Scrimmage - 25 minutes

Description

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

OVERVIEW

The focus of this session is on small group [defending](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=2Fjzn7ikhh3n9XndY3U6rz). Help your team understand how to step up and make the field more compact (i.e. make it shorter) when the ball is in the opponent's half.

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 gets numbers behind the ball and closes openings

WHAT TO SAY

__Who should pressure 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 do we step as a team?__

When we have possession or when the opponent has the ball in their half, and we have pressure on the ball

__When does the defense drop?__

When there is no pressure on the ball, or it looks like the person on the ball has room to play it long

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Soccer 101: [What Is Defending](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=2Fjzn7ikhh3n9XndY3U6rz)

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

- Soccer 101: [What Is Cover](yougotmojo://content/post?postId=1sFIN3PNHGmTVQjcbeFgRd)

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

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.

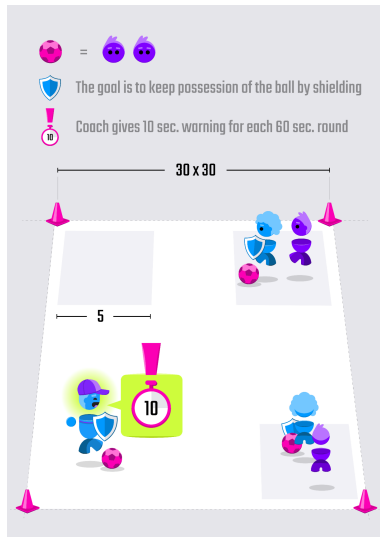
DO IT AT HOME

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

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

Shield-Steal

Duration: 10 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Behold, the almighty shield. This activity develops players' shielding and ball control skills.

WHAT YOU NEED

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

SETUP

- Divide players into pairs and use 4 cones to create a small grid for each pair, recommended size: 5 x 5 feet.
- Give each pair a ball.
- One player in each pair starts with the ball and tries to maintain possession, while the other player tries to steal the ball. Tell players the goal is to have possession of the ball when you call time.
- Before they begin, instruct the players on how to [how to](#)

- [shield the ball](#) (see Coaching Tips).
- Play several 60-second rounds, giving players 10-second warnings before calling time, then play more rounds, alternating roles so all players get several turns both shielding and stealing.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Younger players may have a more difficult time grasping this concept. That's OK. This is a skill worth introducing, and will develop with time and repetition. It can take several years to master shielding.

Some players may be especially competitive. Ooh-rah! If you see certain players dominating, try to match players according to ability or size.

COACHING TIPS

[How to shield the ball](#): explain to players that they want to make their bodies wide and hold the arm closest to their opponent up “as if holding a shield” while keeping the ball on the foot furthest from their opponent. Shielding is more about holding on to your own space than taking the competitor's space.

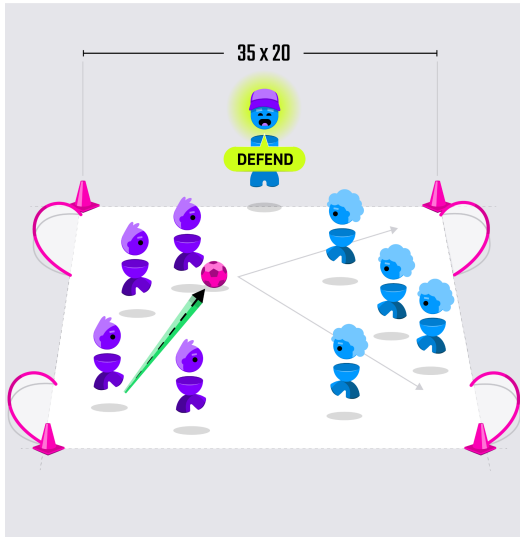
To keep their body between the ball and their opponent, the shielding player should pivot slightly whenever the other player tries to move, using their body to shield the ball instead of running away and being chased and the sole of their foot to control and move the ball. If you start to see players running away instead of making an effort to shield, add a rule that no running is allowed.

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+.

4v4 to 4 Goals (Defending)

Duration: 10 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

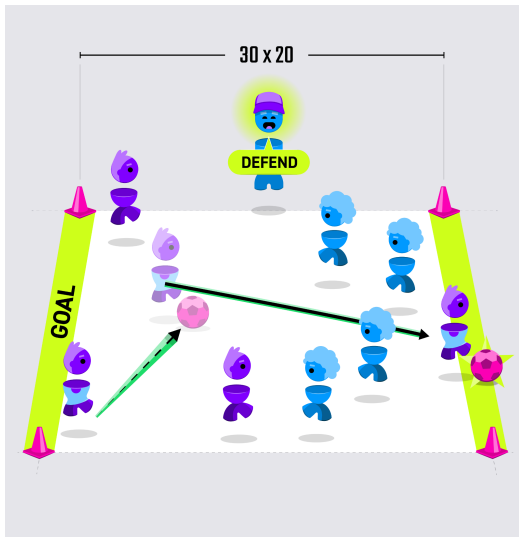
Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders.

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.

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

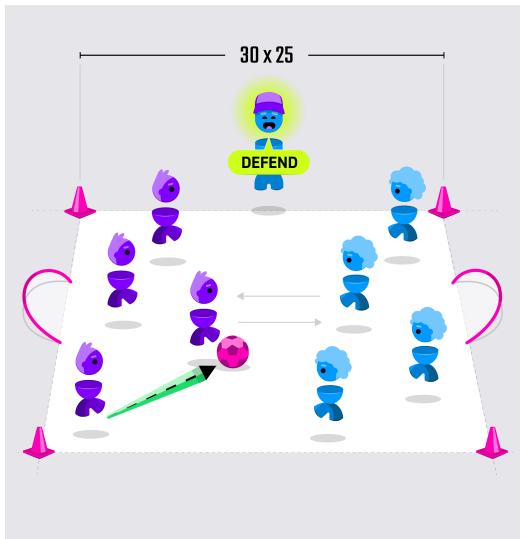
Making the space smaller makes it easier for defenders to beat attackers.

CHANGE IT UP

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

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

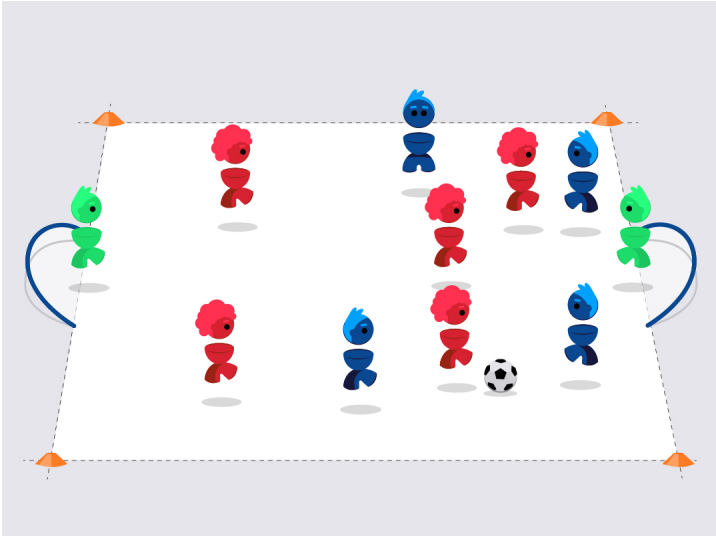
attackers.

MAKE IT EASIER

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

Fcb Scrimmage

Duration: 25 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.