
Blackhawk Area Soccer Association
P.O. Box 1602 - Chippewa
Beaver Falls, Pa 15010

Basic Requirements for U8 Children

Rules

- 1) Pushing
- 2) Handling: Players may not touch the ball while in play at this level with the exception of the goalie in the goal box. The exception to this rule is when the ball is passed back to the goalie intentionally; the goalie may only play this pass with their feet.
- 3) Goal Kick / Corner Kick: Players should learn the difference between them. Goal kick is when the ball passes over the end line (goal line) last touched by an attacker; Corner kick is when ball crosses end line last touch by a defender.

Skills

- 1) Scissors Move (encourage this move, don't expect them to use it in a game)
- 2) Shooting with the laces
- 3) Heading & Receiving

Positions (terminology)

Offense

- 1) Near side Forward
- 2) Center Forward
- 3) Far side Forward

Defense

- 1) Near side defender
- 2) Far side defender

CHARACTERISTICS OF U8 CHILDREN

Pace and coordination skills are better than U6 players, but U8's are still learning some movement skills.

Boys and girls are still physically similar.

Multiple tasks are still difficult.

Difference between real and un-real is important, so rules take one more meaning.

They seek and need approval from adults.

They are developing and understanding of the concept of sharing.

May verbalize the "team," but the team concept is still NOT understood.

Lack sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.

U8 CURRICULUM

Coaching Emphasis-Individual Play with "Some Passing and Fun: Coaches Should continue to emphasize fun and encourage their U7/8 players to be ball-oriented (i.e., active in moving towards the ball at all times. etc.). 1v1's continue to be important. however, older/more insightful children should be gradually encouraged to move away from the "swarm" around the ball. **NO LINES, NO LAPS and NO LECTURES.**

Game Format: 6v6 3 forwards, 2 defenders and goalie.

Roster Size: Maximum of 10

Soccer Knowledge: What constitutes a foul, throw-ins (for players at some clubs), what we do when we lose the ball, etc.

Team positions: *NONE* Shape can be addressed, i.e., "Magic Diamond". (two back players, two wide players and one forward). the children can be set-up in a diamond to start the game and at other natural breaks in the game (Kick-offs, goal-kicks, etc). During the game, children must be allowed to run around freely. *****UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES, SHOULD CHILDREN BE MADE TO STAND IN POSITION, STAND ON A LINE, TO STAND BACK OR STAY IN A CERTAIN AREA, ETC.*****

Technical Emphasis: The following techniques should be covered (mostly indirectly) through the use of developmentally appropriate GAMES. The key techniques to be covered are:

1. Dribbling and running with the ball.
2. Short passing (with multiple surfaces).
3. Shooting the ball (with multiple surfaces with emphasis on striking the ball with the "laces").

In addition, the following techniques can be addressed indirectly through games:

1. Turning with the ball.
2. Receiving the ball.
3. Shielding the ball.

Tactical Emphasis: Several areas can be covered with U7/8 players gradually by the recreational coach:

1. Players need continual reinforcement to be ball-oriented (i.e., always moving towards the ball at all times).
2. Once most players are ball-oriented, coaches can also focus on those players (it is very rare that it will be all players) who show a willingness to break out of the "swarm" around the ball. As coaches see this happen, they need to encourage it and help teammates recognize a moment to pass. Under no circumstances should coaches force children, who are not ready developmentally to "spread out," to stop being ball-oriented.
3. Encouragement and indulging of players that run with the ball and/or dribble past defenders to move the ball forward.
4. Everybody attacks together and everybody defends together. If players are ball-oriented this should happen naturally. No players should be assigned to stay 10 yards in front of the goal all game.
5. When the team is not in possession of the ball, what do players do... work to get the ball back (this is not a green light to run defending clinics, but coaches need to clarify the difference between attack and defense with their players).

Practice/Game Schedule: One "1 hour" practice per week. Game Saturday mornings (NASC will Specify day & time).

Recommended Activities: Tag games with (and without) the ball, gate games, 1v1 games, 2v2 games and small-sided scrimmages.

Player Equipment: Size 3 ball, athletic shoes, appropriate clothing, shin guards and high socks over the shin guards.

U8 MODIFIED RULES

The field: 50 x 30 yards (approx.) recommended.

The goal: 6 feet wide by 4 feet high (approx.). Cones or flags can be used if goals with nets are unavailable.

The ball: Size 3 is recommended.

Players: Number on the field at one time: 4. Each player shall play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. (Number of players on the roster NASC will notify coaches).

The kick-off: One team will be designated to kick-off at the start of the game. Kick-off is intended to insure possession and can go forward or backward to a teammate. The ball is not kicked "football style" to the other team. Opponent must be five (5) yards from the center mark while kick-off is in progress.

Duration of Game:

A. The game shall be divided into four (4) equal, twelve (12) minute quarters.

B. There shall be a two (2) minute break between quarters one and two another two (2) minute break between quarters three and four.

C. There shall be a half-time break of five (5) minutes.

Ball out of play: When the ball goes completely out of the boundary line, a player from the opposite team should place the ball at a point near where it went out of play and dribble it or kick it back into play. Opposing players must be five yards away. Once the ball has been reentered, it can be touched by anyone.

Practice Schedule One "60 minute" practice per week. (NASC will Specify day & time).

Games: Will be played on Saturday mornings at the designated times

Equipment: Players should wear athletic type shoes. Soccer shoes are not necessary but are OK. Players must wear shin guards and must be covered by a pair of high socks. Shorts are recommended. Clothing should not be restrictive. Every player should have a soccer ball or have access to one at practices and games.

Referee: A referee is not required, but recommended at this age group. Coaches should monitor play on the field and enforce rules regarding rough play, handballs, and rule

violations approved for this age group. All fouls result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team.

DRIBBLING

Dribbling: Guide the ball with both feet, use all surfaces of the foot, upper body is bent slightly over the ball, keep the ball in close when in a crowd, using light touches, push it further out in front when given more space. player pushes the ball does not kick it.

- 1) Dribble in place juggling the ball between the feet left to right (Tic Toc-Just as you would juggle a basketball with the hands left to right) always encourage keeping their heads up.
- 2) Dribble from one end of the field and back or around the field alternating the inside of both feet and keeping the ball one step away.
- 3) Dribble from one end of the field and back or around the field alternating the outside of both feet and keeping the ball one step away.
- 4) Set up a dozen of cones three to five yards apart in a straight line have the players dribble in and out, up and back.
- 5) Set up a dozen of cones three to five yards apart staggered, have the players dribble in and out, up and back.
- 6) Set up cones three to five yards apart in a circle have the players dribble in and out and have the players exit the circle dribbling towards the goal for a shot.
- 7) use your imagination for any other type of dribbling exercise.

U8 Related Dribbling Games

World Cup: For those of you who don't know what World Cup is, it's a game where a group of players will break off into a bunch of teams of 2's players each. So, if you have a team of 15 players, you would have 6 teams of 2 players each, plus one team of three's. The server (usually the coach) plays a ball into the middle of the teams and each team tries to get the ball and score on the one goal.

There are a lot of variations to this game. Some people play it where each team picks a country that they represent and each time they score a goal, the team who scored must call out the name of the country they represent (so if the Brazilian team scores, they would yell "Brazil"). This could be a game where the first team to score steps off the field and each subsequent team to score steps off. The last team on the field loses. Or, you could do it where the first team to score 5 goals wins (remember, for each ball that is out

there it's basically 2 v 12 plus a keeper because whichever team has the ball, all of the others are trying to stop them from scoring). Other variations would be to allow more than one ball on the field at a time. Or, you could have the balls served in from different angles (for example, have the ball served in like a corner kick).

Most kids have a blast playing this but the problem is, they usually don't see how this game relates to the game of soccer. The reason I chose this game to write about was the tendency I have seen of players to simply be afraid to shoot the ball. They have an opportunity to hit a shot but instead are looking for the perfect shot and as a result, they ended up not getting any shot hit at all. Playing World Cup encourages players to look to take a chance and hit a shot because the likelihood of getting a perfect shot in that type of game is very slim so kids are willing to hit a shot the first opportunity they get. The willingness to hit a shot is one of the qualities that separates the true goal scorer from the rest so playing games that encourage this trait will help to develop goal scorers. However, most kids don't see this game as working on developing the habits of a true goal scorer. The best thing to do is let kids play World Cup (or other games like this) and afterwards ask them if they hit any shots in these games that they wouldn't hit in a real soccer game. Almost every one of them will say they did. Emphasize that there are very few "bad" shots in soccer and the only way to score goals is to take shots. Then, have them go out and play it again. Follow this up with a regular scrimmage and encourage them to take as many shots as they can.

Use games like World Cup to develop the goal scorers mentality. Then do everything you can to take this attitude that is developed in these training games and transfer it onto full sided games.

PASSING

Inside of the Foot Pass: The planted foot is next to the ball pointing toward the target, kicking foot is raised, toe up strikes middle of ball, ankle is locked, contact area is between ball of foot and the heel on the inside of the foot.

Outside of Foot Pass: Angle approach to direction of the pass, toe down, ankle locked, and foot angled slightly in, contact surface is the outside of the laces, upper body is leaning slightly over the planted foot.

1) Make two lines; have players face each other approximately 10 to 15 yards apart and pass the ball back and forth using both feet, (note encourage the players to use the left foot 50% of the time more than the right foot during these exercises). Every time three to five minutes or so make the players move approximately five yards closer and keep on passing. the players should stop the ball before passing. Keep on doing the exercise until they are approximately five yards away from each other this time make them do a one - touch pass, this helps their coordination and keeps them on their toes.

2) Make two lines; one player passes the ball to the other player. The other player will run towards the ball and tries to shoot it towards the goal. The players shooting the ball

should line up approximately 15 to 20 yards away and centered on the goal. Rotate the two lines so everyone gets a chance to shoot. Make players practice using both feet.

U8 Related Passing/Receiving Games

Passing/Receiving: Two players start approximately 20 yards apart and Player A passes the ball to Player B. As soon as Player A passes the ball to Player B, she sprints BACKWARDS away from the ball. Player B sprints forward to get to the ball and plays the ball first time back to Player A. The key is that after each pass, there is a HARD 5 yard sprint BACKWARDS and when the ball is played to a player, she then sprints FORWARD to meet the ball. Do this for two minutes hard and you will really have to concentrate to keep the ball in play (the burning of the legs will be a nice reminder).

Next, do the same thing except now take two touches. The first touch should take the ball to the side and the next touch should be a hard driven ball. Again, once the ball is played, sprint back away from the pass. Also, once a ball is played the other player should sprint to the ball to receive it as soon as possible.

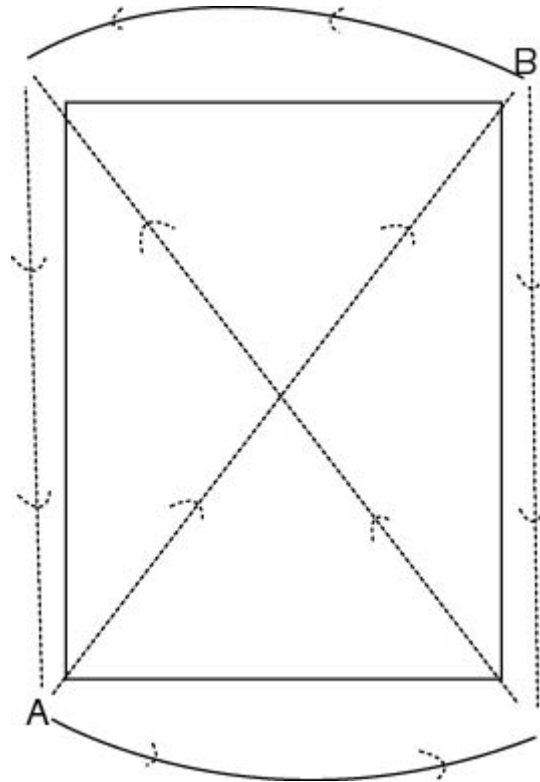
If the inside of the foot was used to receive the balls in the previous exercise, next use the outside of the foot. Everything else still applies.

There are numerous variations that can be added to this activity such as chips, turns etc. The key is going to be to make sure the players are stretched properly (if not, there can be so problems with pulls and cramping of the legs) and to have them work as hard as they can at all times. Give ample time to rest between sets.

Going to meet the ball is one of the biggest problems in youth soccer. This simple exercise works on doing this over and over again which will help to make it a (good) habit. Emphasize to your players that they must go and meet the ball but right before the ball gets to them, they must slow down in order to control the ball properly. Have them alternate feet for each of the passes and receptions.

Do this exercise 2-3 times a week over the course of an entire season and I believe you will see a noticeable improvement in your teams passing and receiving (it should only take 12 minutes per session or so).

Passing to the Correct Foot: This is best using a 15 x 8 area. There are two players and one ball. The key is the players must stay outside of this 15 x 8 area. One player makes diagonal passes and the other player makes straight passes. For example, in the diagram below, Player A makes diagonal passes to Player B who then makes a straight pass down the line back to Player A who has made the proper run to get to the spot early. The keys here are that the passes must be made to the outside foot on each pass and also it must be hit with the proper pace to challenge the other person to get to the space in time.



Not only does this activity work on passing, but it also gets the players in the habit of making runs following the pass. As you can see in the diagram above, the runs are not straight but instead are bent runs to increase the angle to receive the ball as much as possible.

Do this for two minutes and then have the players switch roles so Player A makes straight passes and Player B makes diagonal passes.

There are many variations you can add such as one side chipping the ball and the other bringing it down and playing it on the ground back.

RECEIVING

Outside of Foot Trap:

- 1) Point the toe down and roll the foot over so that the outer edge is pointing toward the ground, bending the knee, and pulling the foot towards the opposite side of the body. Experiment so that you can turn the front of the foot into as flat a surface as possible to receive the ball.
- 2) Turn slightly away from the ball, so that the knee of your receiving leg can point towards the incoming path of the ball.

3) Make contact with the ball, catching the ball so that the middle of the foot is vertically centered on the ball and the foot basically wraps around the ball (with the toes at the lower edge and the heel at the upper opposite edge of the ball).

4) As the ball meets the foot, relax the knee so that the lower leg can swing freely inward ("give"), which allows you to take speed off the ball and allows the ankle to aid in trapping the ball as your leg "gives" backward.

Wedge Trap:

1) Plant foot is turned slightly outward, with knee bent.

2) Receiving leg is bent and foot is turned sharply outward with heel dropped down, so that lower leg/foot makes an "L" shape.

3) Lift receiving foot off of the ground about 4-5 inches, so that contact with the incoming ball is made just below the top of the ball.

4) Relax the foot/leg as the ball makes contact, so that the ball is cushioned to a stop.

U8 Related Receiving Games

Turning and Receiving: Interval aerobic endurance session. Players work in threes with one ball over a 30 yards distance. Players 1 and 2 give and receive a 2-yard pass.

Rules:

1. Each player in turn works by dribbling the ball between the two cones 30 yards apart.

2. As the player approaches each end, he gives and receives back a 2-yard pass from his colleagues, turns and continues to dribble to the other end.

3. Players work at three-quarter pace but not a sprint, your ball should be kept close and under control.

4. As one player works the others 'actively', recover by giving a short pass back and by keeping moving staying on their toes.

5. Add another ball to increase the intensity. So there is a ball at each end and the player runs without a ball.

6. The work time for each player should be as follows: 30 seconds, 45 seconds, 1 minute and 1 minute 30 seconds. These times should be repeated twice giving each player an exercise time of 7 minutes and 30 seconds.

7. Workout lasts for 22 minutes and 30 seconds.

Exercise:

1. One touch.

2. Two touches.

3. Headers. Outside players pick the ball up and throw it to the middleman who heads back.

4. Half volleys.

5. Left foot volleys. Throw the ball to feet. Middlemen tell servers which foot you want it thrown to. Change middlemen.

6. Right foot volley

7. Chest and volley back.

8. Servers choice

SHOOTING

Shooting: Shooting is an important skill, because this is the skill used to score. All players love to score a goal. Teaching the proper shooting technique will help the player to increase his chances of scoring when given the opportunity.

1) The kicking leg should be planted beside the ball.

2) The non-kicking foot should be planted beside the ball.

3) The eyes should be kept on the ball while shooting.

4) The kicker should strike the ball with the instep or laces of his kicking foot.

5) The kicker should strike the ball forcefully.

6) The kicking foot should follow through completely.

7) The player should aim for the corners.

8) Players should be told to shoot every chance they get. This puts added pressure to the defensive team.

U8 Related Shooting Games

Shooting and Creating Space

Organization Pitch is two penalty areas apart approx 20 yards x 40 yards.

There are two corridors for the Wingers 10 yards wide.

Play 4 v 4 in the middle and eight players on the outside. Players are allowed three touches inside and one touch outside. You can pass to any of your teammates. Change insides with outsides. Adjust # of players accordingly

1. Score from a Cross = 2 Goals
2. Score from move inside = one Goal.

CHECKING (STOPPING)

Checking (Stopping) the Ball: With the ball moving forward at a slow roll put the plant foot (usually the non-dominant foot) beside the ball and do a quick hop on the plant foot as soon as it comes down. While you are airborne with the hop, lightly tap the top of the ball with the opposite foot (which will naturally be coming over the ball in the normal stride). **DO NOT** put any weight on the tapping foot. A very slight tap on the ball will cause it to stop. Continue forward to land on the tapping foot, then turn back to get the ball. Older players will be able to turn in the air and do a "rooster-tail" type of hockey stop (landing with the foot already turned sideways so that they can immediately push off the opposite direction).

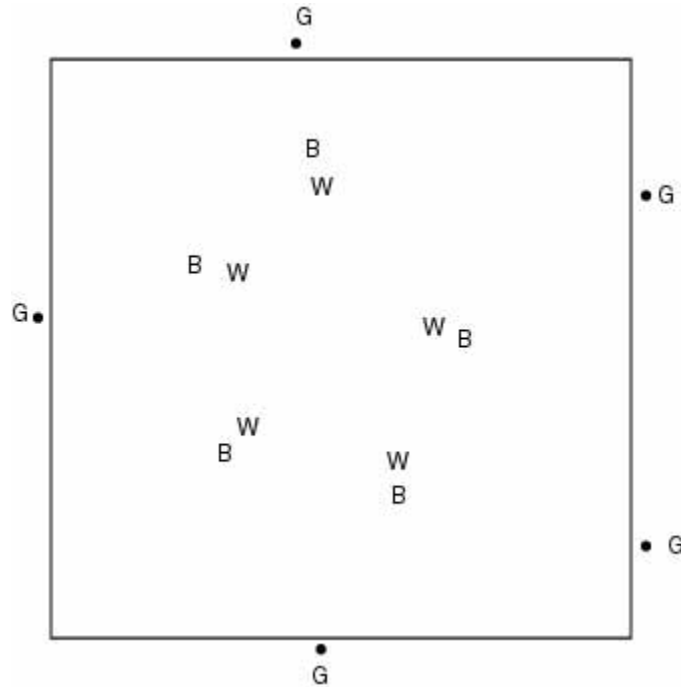
A) Have each player with the ball simply dribble around and work on stopping the ball with a check (stop) move. This move is not as hard as it sounds and most players U8 and above can master it without real difficulty.

B) Make the players play 1v1 using their dribbling skills and practice the check move.

C) Form three columns with the players facing down field. At your command the first row starts dribbling forward, when the command is given, the players are to check the ball and start dribbling to the right. When the command is given, again the players are to check the ball and start dribbling forward again. When the command is given again the players check the ball and start dribbling to their left etc. Allow plenty of space to accomplish the exercise. When finished send the next row and repeat until they, all practice the skill.

U8 Related Checking (Stopping) Games

World Cup: Let's assume there are 15 players in the training group. Break them into 3 groups of 5's with different color bibs. Use a grid that is 40 x 40 (size can vary depending on space available as well as age of the players). Have one group spread out on the outside of the grid and the other two groups are in the middle. The two middle groups match up 1 v 1. See diagram below for an example of the setup



In the diagram below the Blue team (B) is on offense and the White team (W) is on defense. For a 2 minute period the Green players (G) on the outside try to pass the ball into a B player who then one touches the ball back to the G. After the 2 minute period is over the B's go to the outside, the W's become the offensive group and the G's become the defensive group. After a 2 minute period they switch again and the G's become the offensive group, the W's go to the outside and the B's become the defending group.

After the first rotation you can change the rules so that the offensive players in the middle must receive the ball and take 3 touches on the ball before playing the ball back to the player on the outside. This allows them to work on receiving the ball with pressure and maintaining possession. This is the type of things that a forward might have to do when receiving the ball while checking back to the ball.

The next rotation might have the offensive player in the middle receiving the ball and then having to play the ball to a different player on the outside. This will work on receiving the ball and turning with a player on the back. The outside players are working on playing the ball in a way that allows the offensive players to receive the ball and turn. If the defending player is on the attacking players right shoulder, the ball would be played

in toward the left side of the attacking player so she can turn away from the defending player. Also, the players are working on communication as the players in the middle should be calling for the ball and the players on the outside should be letting the players on the inside know which way to turn and who is open for the return pass.

There are numerous other things you can do with this setup and not only does it work on many technical and tactical aspects of the game but it's also excellent fitness work if done at full speed.

SHIELDING

Basic Possession with Body: Break players into two groups about 15 yards apart. Players each have a ball and face each other. each player picks out a shadow partner.

A) Each pair of players then dribbles the ball to the center of the field. As the players approach, they prepare to shield the ball from the on-coming player. At first start with a simple swivel of the hips so that the players pass each other, the body of the player shields the ball from the body of the opponent. When they pass each other, they swivel back the other way and complete their run to the far end of the field. In essence, you have two 90° swivels and the players pass each other back-to-back.

B) The next progression is for them to use a spin move as they approach. The first spin move is to make a 360° turn using four (4) small chopping steps with the inside of the foot or there will be a collision. After several runs like this progress to an outside of the foot turn again using four (4) very light touches on the ball to make the move.

C) Start with two (2) players a shielder and a person trying to get the ball. Player #1 is the shielder. The shielding player has the ball to the outside of their body. A common mistake is to have the ball between their legs. You want the entire body between the defender and the ball.

D) The shielder get **LOW**, almost as if they were sitting in a chair. A common mistake is to stand almost straight up. The problem with this is very easy to demonstrate, have a player stand straight up with the ball at their outside leg. A defender trying to steal the ball is allowed to get as close to the ball carrier as they want and try to poke the ball away. They should be able to easily reach the ball. Now have the attacker "sit in the chair." Again have the defender get as close as they want and try to poke the ball away. You will see that they cannot do it. By sitting in the chair, i.e. getting low, the attacker has created their own space denying it to the defender.

Basic Possession with Arms: After proper stance has been demonstrated you need to show them how to hold their arms. Players must play with their arms up and away from their bodies. There must be a space between the arm and the body of the player. What is described above is legal play. You can shield with your arms as long as you do not push your opponent away from them. That is the common mistake that players make and refs call.

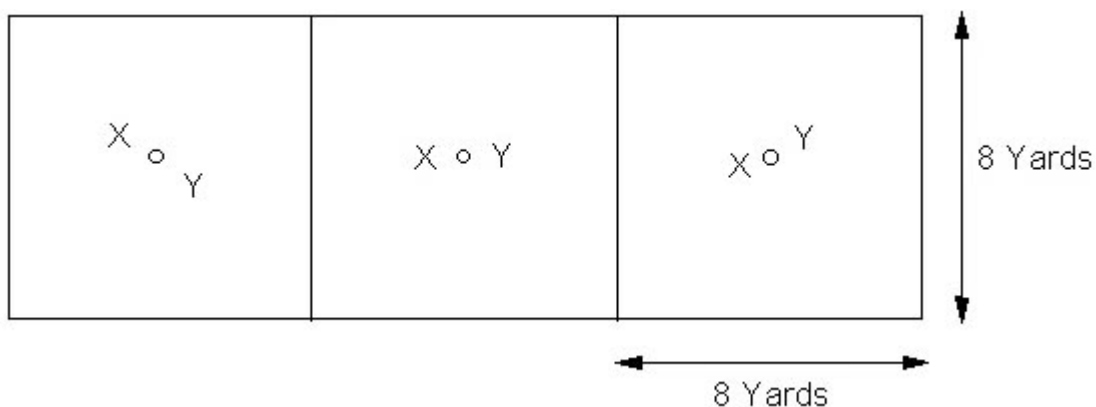
A) Put the ball aside for a moment and just have two players assume the roles of shielder and defender. Have the defender try to encroach on the shielder's space by leaning into their shield arm.

B) Have the players switch positions with each other and let them go at it for a while. They will have a lot of fun with this. It teaches aggressiveness (within the rules) and build's confidence.

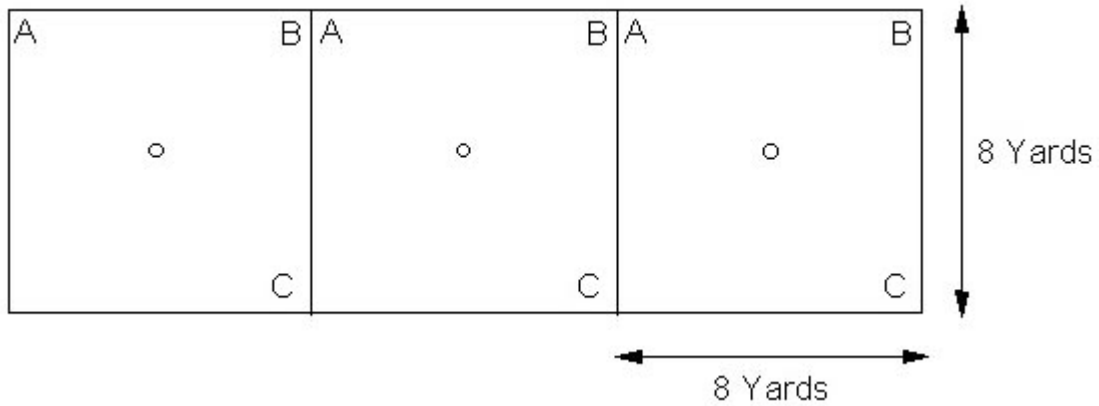
C) The next step is to introduce the ball. Set players up as described above but this time let the shielder hold the ball or by moving their ball around with the outside of their foot (if the player tries to cut in front) and the inside of the foot, (if the player tries to come from behind). Do not let the ball handler move from their spot on the field. This is not a drill to see who can out run the other. Switch position after every "win". Stress stance and arm

U8 Related Shielding Games

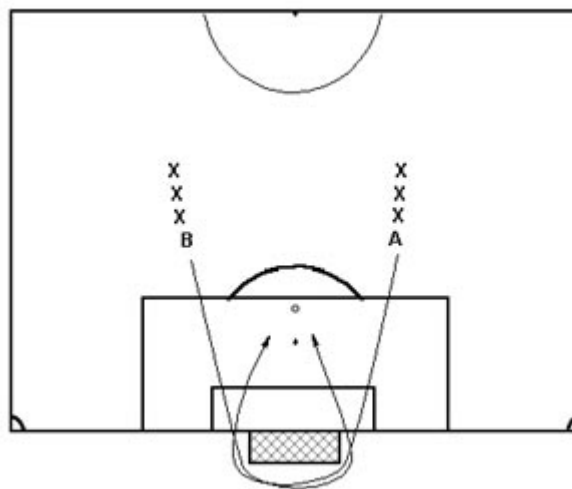
Shielding: The first part of the aggressiveness drills is to have an 8 x 8 grid for each two players in your group. The two players are working on shielding. One player starts with the ball and when the coach says "go" the other player tries to win the ball from the first player who is trying to keep the ball by shielding. If the second player wins the ball, then she tries to shield the ball for the remainder of the 10 seconds. The key is to emphasize that the player without the ball is trying to legally win the ball and that soccer is a CONTACT sport so this is a great way to work on it. This can be done as a competition where each player starts with the ball 10 times and see who has the ball the most times at the end of the 10 second periods. See the diagram below for the setup.



Next, switch from 2 players to 3 players in a grid. Start with a player in each corner with the ball in the middle. When the coach says "go" each player tried so win the ball and keep it by shielding it from the other 2. This also should be done as a contest. If the ball goes outside of the grid, they all lose that battle. See the diagram below for this setup.



Now that the players are used to winning the ball and keeping it, we now add winning the ball, keeping it and then going to goal. Start with two lines approximately 25 yards from the goal. When the coach says "go" the first player in line A sprints around the goal going toward the post nearest her first. At the same time, the first player in line B goes around the goal toward the post closest to her. The ball is on the top of the 18 and the first player to the ball, wins it, shields it until she can find the opportunity to turn and then goes to goal. If the second player then wins the ball, she then goes to goal. This drill works on conditioning, aggressiveness, shielding, finishing, goalkeeping and defense. The coach should have the next two players in line start as soon as the two in front of them get near the ball. This drill can have as many as 12 field players going to one goal without there being too much standing around. See the diagram below for the setup.



The last step in this progression is to have a 6 v 6 game with two goals on a small (40 x 30) field. The ball gets served into the middle and either team can win the ball and score on either goal. This will encourage the players to fight to win the ball since defending in this game is very difficult. Be careful to watch for fouling as it is possible for this game to get out of hand if not monitored properly.

LACES KICK

Laces Kick: Start with players, each with a ball, seated on the ground. Point out the big bone that runs along the inside laces of the foot. This is the hardest surface of the foot, and is the area which they will use to make a laces kick. Have them toss the ball up in the air, and try to hit the ball solidly in the center with the big bone of the foot.

Now, put them in pairs. One player will bend over and hold the ball with the hands, while the other player works on the foot position needed to make the big bone of the foot come into contact with the center of the ball. Players with big feet often have to turn the foot sharply to the side and turn the knee inward to get this optimal contact. Furthermore, as they continue to grow, they may need to periodically redo this exercise to find the correct foot position, so coaches should not overlook the need to do this if a player suddenly becomes unable to do a low shot after having prior success.

Next, work on the correct distance for the plant foot. One of the most common problems with young players is a tendency to put the foot too close to the ball, which makes it almost impossible to make good contact with the ball. Tell the players to leave plenty of room for their hips to swing, because they will get power from the swing of the hips/legs.

Finally, work on the proper approach to the ball. Put the player at an angle to the side of the ball, usually around 35 degrees, and back at a distance that he will need to take 3 steps to reach the ball. Note that a right-footed player will step L, R, and then put his L foot beside the ball. As the non-kicking foot is planted, the kicking leg is drawn back; the ankle of the kicking foot is locked with the toe down; and the knees of BOTH legs are bent so that the knee of the kicking foot comes over the ball as contact is made with the ball.

Coaching Note: Do not skip the phase of checking out the proper foot positioning. It is critical that the players be allowed to experiment with the positioning which feels “best” to them and they will automatically feel when they are making solid contact. The coach can make the rounds and to check each player while they are experimenting with their foot position.

Once both partners have tried this basic positioning, put partners across from one another at a distance of about 30 feet, each player with a ball, lining up the partners so you have two lines of players work on their kicks. To maximize touches, allow both players to go at the same time and allow players on one side to use any ball, which comes their way. While they are working on these skills, walk around and correct technique as necessary.

Common Problems: ·Erratic shots caused by failure to lock the ankle/foot

·Tip: to get players to lock the ankle with the foot in the ‘down’ position, encourage them to curl their toes into the bottom of their boot.

·Shot not staying low, caused by foot position too low on the ball or by putting the plant foot too far behind the ball.

·No power on the shot, caused by poor leg swing or improper of plant foot.

·Stubbed toe, caused by poor run angle and/or failure to bend leg of kicking foot and/or failure improper foot angle.

·Tip: cut the bottom off of a Styrofoam cup and use the inverted upper half as kicking tee; shorten the tee as the player improves.

·Lifting the head, which causes the ball to become air-borne or the shot to be erratic.

·Tip: get the players to focus on a particular panel of the ball and “watch their foot hit the ball”.

Once the players have learned the basic mechanics of the shot itself, they are ready for the next stage, which is to teach the follow-through. In order to impart the maximum power to the ball, the player must continue to run through the shot, ending in a high kick worthy of can-can dancer, with his/her head/nose almost coming into contact with his kicking leg. To do this, it is easiest to practice the move without the ball. Simply put the players on the field and tell them to select a spot, which represents the ball such as a mound of grass, or spot marked on the dirt. Have them start their run so that their foot will go over the spot; and then practice leaping through the contact with the ball so that they go over the spot and land on their kicking foot.

Coaching Note: Some players who are worried about stubbing their toes may be afraid of an exaggerated follow-through. For these players, it is sufficient initially if you can get them to run through the kick and land on their kicking foot.

Now, put the players back into their two lines. Because of the increased power, and the need to run forward, have the two lines alternate on doing these kicks and leave plenty of space so that nobody gets hit by a shot. Let players see how much extra power is achieved by the follow-through.

Instep Drive: · Support foot beside the ball and pointed at the target

· Kicking foot pointed down and locked throughout the shot and follow through

· Body weight is moving forward and through the shot, landing on the kicking foot
Instep Drive Training The following exercises are submitted not as one or two training sessions, but as examples of exercises that can be used in a training session, based upon the age and skill development of the players.

Warm Ups: · Two men pass and move.

- Stretch the ankles by rotating them while standing on one foot; then press the toes into the ground and try to drive the front of the foot forward and down with the upper leg; this should give the player a sense of driving the lower leg with the upper.
- By standing sideways to and grabbing onto a stationary object, swing a leg slowly until maximum swing is reached; switch legs; stress the leg swing being driven with the upper leg. Technical Exercises
- Have the players pass back and forth in the two man groups using the instep; move through the technical points above, individually focusing on each one; the players should not one-touch their kicks at this point; increase the power of the pass and distance between the players gradually
- Have one player hand serve the ball to an area below her partner's knee; this is to reinforce the foot-down kicking position throughout the kick. Click here [U8 GAMES](#)

U8 Related Laces Kick Games

- **Ghost kicking**--to reinforce the support foot beside the ball, place a ball in front of a goal and have the players plant their foot just wide of the ball and pretend to kick an imaginary ball just beside it; the coach should watch that the plant foot is in the proper position, i.e. neither too far behind nor too far ahead of the ball; that the kicking foot is pointed down; and that the follow through is well forward. In some areas, coaches emphasize that the player should land on the kicking foot and keep moving towards the target, which helps with a proper follow-through.
- **Shoot and tend goal**--set up cones 6-8 yards apart, with groups of 3-5 players; one player is between the cones facing another player with ball; the player with ball dribbles a step or two and takes a shot; the shooter then trades places with the goalkeeper as the player on the other side of the goal collects the ball and shoots on the new goalkeeper, becoming the next goalkeeper after his shot
- **Close-in shooting**--on a goal, have the players take a short dribble and shoot from about 6 yards out with "some" power; the purpose is to develop some confidence of hitting the goal during the learning phase; the coach should stop all bad habits that start to form as the players try to increase their power; stress keeping the ball low through proper placement of the plant foot and by getting the body over the ball; gradually increase the distance of the shot on goal
- **Pass and shoot**--set two cones about 20 yards out from each post; divide the team into two groups, one on each post; one player starts his run from a post to around the cone in front of him; the player at the far post passes to the player as he rounds the cone; after receiving the pass, the player sets up his shot with as few touches as possible and shoots; the shooter collects his shot and goes to the other line and the original passer starts his run around his cone to receive a pass from the other post player.

Tactical Exercises · Off the dribble--half the players are dribbling a ball in an area above the penalty area; each player has a number, starting with one; the other half are behind the goal collecting balls; they are numbered as well, starting with one; when the coach calls out a number, that player quickly dribbles the ball into the penalty area and shoots; the player behind the goal with the shooter's number collects a ball and switches with the shooter

· **Back angles**--have a player dribble to the goal line then pass the ball to a player running in on goal

· **Through ball**--player A has ball just wide of one goal post about 35 yards out from the goal line and passes the ball to player B who is making a run towards the opposite post from about 35 yards out; B is to shoot on the second touch

· **Wall pass**--one player is 25 yards out from the goal line between two groups of players who are 35 yards out, the first player of group one dribbles and plays a wall pass (i.e. "give and go") combination with the middle player and shoots the return pass; immediately after the wall pass the first player in the second group plays a wall pass combination with the middle player on the other side; after a series of passes, the middle player is switched out Match Related Exercises or Games

· **Keep Your Yard Clean** Set up two parallel lines of cones far enough apart so that it will take a reasonable shot to get across. The area between the cones is "no mans land." Divide the team in two groups, one group on either side of "no mans land," each player with a ball. Instruct the players to get rid of all the balls on their side by kicking them as hard as they can to the other team's side. No one can go into "no mans land." Play for 3 minutes. Whoever has the least number of balls on their side wins. Watch for kids backing up, and lining up the ball like a goal kick. Stress getting rid of the ball as quickly as possible. You may need to even up teams if it seems unbalanced.

· **4v4 Shooting Game** Move two goals about 20 yards apart; play teams of three or 4 with goalkeepers. Start with all balls in the goals, evenly divided between the two either keeper starts play by tossing a ball on the field. When a ball goes out of play, the nearest goal keeper puts another ball in play as soon as possible; players are urged to shoot on their attacking goal as often and as they can.

TRAPPING

Trapping: Trapping is how a player stops a moving soccer ball, so that he can gain control of it. Trapping can be done with the feet, thigh, chest, or head.

- Follow these steps for successful trapping.

1. The player should get in front of the ball.

2. The player's eyes should be kept on the ball.
3. The player should move the part of the body that is doing the trapping in the same direction that the ball is moving. This will 'cushion' the ball, helping it to stop close to the body.
4. The player should use the inside of his foot if possible.
5. Practice using both feet.
6. Remember to relax and cushion the ball.
7. For a thigh trap:
 - A. The player should lift his thigh up parallel to the ground.
 - B. When the ball hits his leg, he should lower his thigh towards the ground.
8. For a chest trap:
 - A. The player should bend backwards at the waist to cushion the ball, so that it drops down toward his feet. .

BASIC HEADING

Individual Work: Start by letting some air out of several balls to make them a bit soft. Take an old pair of pantyhose, and tie a ball in the crotch area, then tie the ball to the top of the goal with the legs. Put up several balls at varying heights.

As players arrive, give them a quick illustration of the basics of heading and then let them experiment with the hanging balls.

The key coaching points for heading are:

1. Put feet in a wide fencer or boxer stance, with knees bent and weight centered evenly (see a good description below on teaching this stance)
2. Keep the neck stiff, and use the waist/back to move the head toward the ball.
3. Eyes OPEN!
4. Mouth CLOSED!
5. Hit ball with the forehead area between hairline and eyebrows.

6. If you hit the ball on its bottom half, the ball will go up.

7. If you hit the ball on the upper half, the ball will go down.

As a rule, defensive headers should go HIGH, WIDE, and FAR, while offensive headers should be aimed towards ground (as ground balls are harder for keepers to handle). Therefore, defenders usually will aim for the bottom half of the ball, while attackers usually will aim for the top half. Initially, of course, what you really want is the courage to try the technique, so do not get too concerned about where the ball is hit.

If you do not have any pantyhose available, another option is to do the following:

1. Everyone holds ball in front of face in two hands and gently taps ball against forehead a few times. Concentrate on eyes open, mouth closed. [Note: eyes WILL reflexively blink when ball is struck but should be open up until that point.

2. Everyone now "heads" the ball out of their hands and catches it. Ball should start being held against player's forehead. Player then pulls head/upper body BACK while holding ball stationary and then STRIKES ball. Again concentrate on eyes open, mouth closed, hit with proper part of forehead.

3. Everyone get a partner, 1 ball per pair, stand about 5 yards apart. Player 1 heads ball to partner using technique described in #2 above. Partner catches and heads back. Again, coach repeats eyes open, mouth closed, and strike through the ball.

4. Players now all drop balls and face coach in a basic "boxer's stance," e.g. one foot forward, one back, well balanced. (To get players in this stance, coach asks players to bounce around on toes pretending to be boxers, throwing imaginary jabs, etc. On "Freeze," players simply hold their stance and will be in proper position).

Coach (only if available): "Now look at that big iron bar right in front of you, reach out, and grab onto it with both hands about shoulder width apart Like this (coach demo). Feel it? Big and solid. Now hold on to the bar and lean your upper body back like this (coach demo). Then use the bar to PULL your body forward. Repeat this a few times and toss in blood-chilling karate scream ("yaaaaggggghhhh!") when body comes forward."

Correct those who do not get their arms out far enough, those that do not get a good lean backwards, those that merely drop their hands to their sides when their body comes forward.

Everyone get a partner. Working player assumes proper stance, gets backward lean, and partner tosses underhand lob to be headed back. Repeat 5 times and switch. Coach circulates and corrects eyes open, mouth closed; hit with forehead; being sure that working player stretches arms FORWARD, leans upper torso BACK, and uses arms to PULL upper body through ball.

Small Group Work: When the players have had several minutes to experiment with heading, put them in pairs, with one partner between a set of flat cones about 3 yards apart and the other outside. Have the "keeper" toss the ball to the outside player, who then tries to head the ball back across the line. Let them try to score on the "keeper," as this turns the drill into a game, and the partners can have a contest over who can score the most out of 5 tosses.

Once good success has been achieved, divide the pairs up so that you have groups of 3. Use the extra player as a shadow defender, who just stands behind the receiver. Rotate players around after five headers. Now, introduce the idea of getting your arms up to shield your face and head from another player who may be trying to get the ball too. Allow the shadow to start jostling and trying for the ball (but only at about half speed). Continue with rotations.

Progression 1: Set up in threes, two balls per trio, players in a triangle with about 3-5 yards between them. Working player receives underhand lobs alternately from partners. Lobs from partner A must be headed up to partner's head; lobs from partner B must be headed to partner's feet. Run for a minute and switch-working player. Coach corrects the basics as above; emphasizes also good serve. This progression may be too advanced for younger players, who tend to do better by learning one specific skill at a time (e.g., heading downward).

Progression 2: Move players farther apart (about 5-7 yards), and put one ball down. Player A serves underhand lob to B who heads to C. Player C serves A who heads to B, and so on. The difference here is that players are getting a ball coming from one direction and heading it in a different direction as opposed to the simple back-and-forth in the basic work. Emphasize moving entire body to enable powerful headers struck with forehead. This progression, and the progressions which follow, probably will be too difficult for players under about age 10-11.

Progression 3: Groups of four with two balls, players in a diamond with approx. 5 yards between players. Single working player receives underhand lob serve, locates player without ball (other than server), and heads to him. Next lob comes immediately. These results in the working player having to deal with balls from variety of angles, identify a target, and perform header. As players improve, increase distance and allow non-working players to move around.

Progression 4: 6 players plus coach and assistant (or a couple of parents), each with a ball set up on the outside of an area about 20*20. Working players set up in center of area. On "start", working players make eye contact with outside player and check to them, receive underhand lob for [coaches choice: attacking header, defensive header, leaping header, diving header for more advanced players], then continue on around outside of server and re-enter grid to look for another server with ball. Run for a minute and then have players switch roles.

Scrimmage Option 1 (for younger players): Allow a regular scrimmage, but count any goals off headers as 2 points. Alternatively, count ANY header as a 1-point. If you taught headers and chest traps consecutively, you might count either a chest trap or header as a goal.

Option 2 (for players 11+): Set up a field 30x40 yards with small cone goals, divide into two teams with different color pinnies and play "toss-head-catch" as follows: Sequence MUST be a "toss" followed by a "head" followed by a "catch". Object is to move down field and score on header. Ball turns over to other team if player goes out of sequence or ball is not caught off the header or header is not done correctly. Variation: If you combine the teaching of heading/chest traps into one session, or did consecutive sessions, you can modify the rules to allow either header or chest trap. For older players, you can add flat chest trap, followed by flick-up of ball for header by another player, into the sequence.