

Red Light Green Light

Players spread out along one end line of your practice area, each with their own ball. The coach stands at the opposite end line, facing away from the team, and yells "Green Light". Players begin dribbling towards the opposite end line, but as soon as the coach yells "Red Light", they must freeze with control of their ball under their foot. Upon yelling "Red Light", the coach turns around and tries to spot any players who have not yet frozen. Any "caught" players have to go back to the initial end line and start over. Play continues until all players have made it to the finishing end line. Make it fun!

I recommend that cones or discs be used to set side boundaries as well also, you might want to play this game first without balls until the players get the hang of it. The speed of dribbling can be mixed up as well.

Hit the Coach

Definitely a favorite for the U5 players. Players begin with a ball and opposite the coach. The object is to dribble around a defined area trying to hit the coach with their ball. Teach "small touches" when dribbling and keeping their heads up to follow the coach and see other players.

Each hit on the coach is worth one point - once the players get 3-5 points the coach has to make the sound of the players favorite animal (the more animated you are the more fun the kids will have). Have fun!

Catch the Tail

Set up a defined playing area. I would recommend starting this game without balls first. One player wears a tail (simply a pinnie tucked into their shorts) and tries to keep away from the other players. Perhaps the coach could wear the tail for the first game as some players may never want to wear it. If a player's tail is removed the player that grabs it should wear the tail and continue running to stay away from the other players.

Add soccer balls to the players chasing the tails. They now have to dribble their balls under control while trying to grab the tails. This game can be played in squared area or from line to line. Have fun!

Freeze Tag

Set up a defined dribbling area. Each player has their own ball. The game begins with all players dribbling around within the defined area. The coach then chases the players trying to tag them. When a player is tagged, they must freeze, hold the ball high above their heads, and spread their feet apart. The player remains frozen until a teammate dribbles their own ball through the frozen player's legs, after which the player is unfrozen and continues dribbling around.

You may want to have a second or even third coach help with the chasing. Older kids can take turns as the chaser as well. This is a great dribbling game that also encourages teammates to help each other out.

Body Parts

Set up a defined dribbling area with cones or discs. Each player has their own ball. The game begins with all players dribbling around within the defined area. The coach then yells out a part of the body, such as "Elbow", and all players must stop dribbling and gain control of the ball with that body part. It sounds kind of silly, but especially younger kids think it's a ton of fun.

Don't hold back with the parts you call. The crazier the better. The ones I usually use include: Foot, Knee, Elbow, Forehead, Ear, Bottom, Stomach, Back of the Head ("Don't Fall Asleep!"), etc.

Cops and Robbers ("Frogger" - "robber" hop like a frog)

Players spread out along one end line of your practice area, each with their own ball (the "Cops"). Start with one player, without a ball, who is the "Robber". The Robber starts out 25 feet or so in front of the rest of your team. The goal is for your players to dribble from one end line to the other, without getting their ball stolen by the Robber.

I recommend that cones or discs be used to set side boundaries as well. When the Robber steals a ball, that player then becomes the Robber for the next round. As play progresses add a second Robber, third, etc.

Sharks and Minnows

Teaches kids with the ball to shield it from an opponent and teaches kids without the ball how to take it away from an opponent. Create a square with cones as the dribbling area. One player, the shark, starts outside the square without a ball. All other players, the minnows, start inside the square with a ball. When the coach yells, "Shark's getting hungry!" the shark starts running around the outside of the square and the fish start dribbling around inside the square. When the coach yells, "Shark attack!" the shark enters the square and has 30 seconds to send as many balls as possible outside the square. When a ball leaves the square for any reason, the corresponding fish becomes a hungry shark. Play until one minnow remains.

Choose a new shark and start another round.

The Blob

Players spread out along one end line of your practice area, each with their own ball. Start with two players, without balls, standing side-by-side with their inside arms latched to each other, thereby making up "The Blob" (make it sound really creepy!). The Blob starts out 25 feet or so in front of the rest of your team. The goal is for your players to dribble from one end line to the other, without getting tagged by "The Blob". If they do get tagged, they then join The Blob by latching on in the same fashion to an outside end. The Blob continually grows bigger and bigger by repeating this challenge.

I recommend that cones or discs be used to set side boundaries as well. Remind "The Blob" members that their arms must stay latched together! The kids get a big kick out of it when The Blob grows and members unknowingly start to pull in different directions. In the end this also teaches teamwork and working together.

Egg Hunt

This another silly game that young kids love. It works year-round, but especially right around Easter.

Start by making a circle with discs large enough to fit all of your players balls into. Ask your players to tell you what an Egg Hunt is. After everyone understands the idea of finding eggs and collecting them in their basket, explain that the circle of discs is actually a big basket, and that all of the balls in it are eggs.

To start the game, you'll simply throw out all the eggs into your playing area, as fast as you can, and then your players will quickly chase them down and dribble them back to the basket. It sounds basic but with little kids it works.

Find Your Ball

Similar to Egg Hunt, and also basic, but again the young kids find it fun.

The players start at one end line. All the balls are in the middle of the field. At the far end line is a circle of cones or discs.

To start the game, you'll simply call out your players by name. That player runs to the middle of the field, finds their ball, and then dribbles it toward the far end of the field into the circle you set up. This sounds dull, but little kids like the anticipation of having their name called out, and are eager to get to the far circle. It's not good enough to use every day, but the key is variety and this one is fine for at least using once or twice during a season. Good for getting the kids started and active.

Doctor Tag

Set the field up with a defined dribbling area. At one end or corner of the field you'll also need to set up a small square of discs or cones about 10 feet square. This area is the "Hospital".

Introduce the game asking if your players know what germs are and what they do. The

likely answer you'll get is "they make you sick". Then, ask who we sometimes have to go see when we get sick, the answer we're looking for of course being the "Doctor".

In this game, players will dribble around with their own ball. One of the players, without a ball, will start off as a "Germ". The germ chases the players as they dribble around, and tries to tag them. If a player gets tagged, they have to dribble to the "Hospital" to see the doctor. Once at the hospital, the player does a small challenge (three toe touches on top of ball, three dropping foot juggles, three circle moves, etc.), and then re-enters the game. For variety, add a second, third germ, etc.

Musical Balls

This game is taken from the popular "Musical Chairs" game.

For young players start each player dribbling within a defined area. When you yell "Switch", the players leave their ball where it lies, and then scramble to find a new ball (one left by another player). Everybody finds a new ball and nobody is knocked out. Play this for a few switches then move on.

Go Shopping!

This game is a variation of Musical Balls, and uses a defined dribbling area (with cones or discs).

Set up the storyline by asking your players "Who likes to go shopping?" Take a minute to ask them what they like to shop for (you'll get some funny answers).

Then explain that the whole team is going to go shopping for new balls, and that they'll find them at the "Mall", which is your entire dribbling area.

The game starts with the players dribbling around the "Mall". When you yell "Go Shopping!", the players are to leave their ball and go buy a new one, by claiming a ball that someone else has left.

After a round or two of this, then tell them to look out for "Burglars" (the coaches), who will try and steal the balls first!

Monster Attack

Tell the players that a Monster is coming to try to steal their pet ball and that they must keep it away from the Monster by dribbling it around the field (tell them they must stay inside the field). The Coach is the monster. This game teaches dribbling under pressure, turning with the ball, controlling the ball ("small touches" when dribbling)

Ideas: drag your leg like Frankenstein, make monster noises, make a face, and say things like "Don't let me get your ball!!!" But don't actually scare them. The idea is just to have them try to get away. Don't catch the players, just have fun.

ball tag

from FineSoccer.com

a fun warm up game that works on passing, receiving, vision and communication.

Age groups: all ages

Number of players: whole team

Set up: the size of the grid will vary depending upon the numbers involved as well as the level of the players but for 10-14 players a 25 x 25 grid would be about right.

Basic game: start with two players each holding a bib. These two players are "it" in a simple game of tag. If either of the two "it" players tags another player, the player who was tagged gets the bib and becomes it. This should get all of the players moving a bit to start.

Progression: next we add two footballs into the grid. A player who has possession of a football can't be tagged. The "it" players don't try to steal the ball but rather they try to tag a player who doesn't have a ball. This is where the passing, receiving, vision and communication come into play. If a player is being chased and is about to be tagged, a teammate with the ball should pass her the ball in order to give her safety. This will require the players with the ball looking to see who is in danger of being tagged. It will also require the players without the ball who are being chased to be running while looking for a ball and calling for it (just like they should be doing in a game).

TIP: With younger or less experienced players you might want to start with them holding the balls and they can throw and catch using their hands and then progress up to using soccer skills.

Summary: while this is a very simple game, it's one that your players will enjoy and will also allow them to work on some extremely valuable ball and communication skills at the same time.

soccer drills and games that improve dribbling skills

Beehive

Provide a 20 yd x 20 yd. grid (or approximately 1sq. yd. per player). Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside grid randomly using correct techniques and avoiding other players. Players should practice inside and outside foot dribbling, stopping changing direction and pace, and maintaining control while in the beehive.

King of the Ring

Provide a 20 yd. x 20 yd. Grid. Each player has a ball except one player (or coach) who is "it". Players start to dribble inside the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is "it". Players may re-enter grid after retrieving their ball.

Attack and Protect

Provide a 20 yd by 20 yd grid. Each player has a ball. Players dribble around the grid trying to kick each other's ball out of the grid while protecting their own ball.

Shadow Dribbling

Have players pair up, each player with a ball. Leader dribbles while second player follows, also dribbling. Remind players to keep their heads up. Encourage creative dribbling - changes in direction, pace, and technique. Stress control and change leaders frequently.

One-on-One

Players pair up, each couple with a ball in a grid. Player with the ball is "on the attack" and the other player is the defender. The attacking player tries to dribble to any of the cones (aside from the one behind her/him) and touch the cone with the ball. Defending player tries to prevent this. Players switch possession of ball when attacker accomplishes her goal or when ball goes out of bounds

U4/U5/U6 ACTIVITIES

- 1) Tag---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in a defined space while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing more than one game, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. Version 2: Players must tag other players' knees.
- 2) Hospital tag---Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot on their body where they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal the injuries of all the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game.
- 3) Body Part Dribble---In designated area, coach has all players dribble a soccer ball. When coach yells out the name of a body part, players must touch that body part to the ball as quickly as possible. Coach should vary body parts and rate at which he calls out body parts. At times, call out body parts consecutively (i.e. tummy, nose, elbow) during one stoppage or call out two body parts at once (i.e. both hands or both feet).
- 4) Red light/Green light---All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says "red light", players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says "yellow light", players must dribble very slowly. When coach says "green light", players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with the frequency of "light" changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add other color lights and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.).
- 5) Snake---In an appropriate space, have all players dribble their soccer balls, except for 2-3 players (the snake). The snake players hold hands or lock arms and work together to tag the other players.

The players dribbling the balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands or lock arms with the snake. The snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must work together and stay connected...they cannot break into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss.

6) Freeze Tag---Everyone has a ball and coach can pick one or two players who are the Freeze monsters. Freeze monsters (with ball) try and dribble around and tag other players (who also have a ball and are dribbling around). The frozen player must stand still holding their ball over their head. Players can become unfrozen if the coach comes over and unfreezes them OR the coach can have the other players unfreeze each other (by simply touching them again). If all players are frozen, game ends and the coach can have new Freeze monsters. **Progression:** Freeze monsters can now try to freeze (tag) the other players by kicking their soccer ball at someone else's soccer ball or at their feet. Version 3: Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players; players can unfreeze each other.

7) Capture the Balls---Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coach's command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each base to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again.

8) Free Dribble---Everyone dribbling a ball, using insides, outsides, and soles of their feet. Players can dribble with speed (outsides of the feet and toes), try moves of their choice or moves that the coach introduces, or they can change direction. The Coach can manipulate the session by calling out different commands..."stop, go, turn, tap". Kids can carry the ball towards someone and try a move. Version 2: As players get comfortable, the coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

9) Kangaroo Jack---All players except two or three begin with a ball. Players without balls are kangaroo jacks and must hop like a kangaroo and try to tag players. If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a kangaroo as well until all players are turned into kangaroos.

10) Ball Tag---Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball, by kicking it at another player's feet or ball. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Options: If the players tag the coach, they are awarded 10 or 20 points. If the players tag other selected players, they can be awarded 50 or 100 points etc.

11) Moving Goal---2 coaches use a pennie or an extra piece of clothing to form a movable goal with each coach serving as a post and the shirt serving as the crossbar. Players each have a ball and try to score by kicking their ball through the goal. However, the coaches constantly move and turn to force the players to keep their head up and to change direction as they dribble.

12) Paint the Field---Every player dribbles their ball in the area defined. You explain to them that their ball is actually a paintbrush and wherever it rolls on the ground, it paints that area. The task is to paint as much of the area as possible in the time allotted by dribbling their soccer balls all over the grid. **Progression:** Can ask them to paint with only their left foot, then their right foot.

13) Pirate Ship---Set up a 20x20 grid (Pirate ship deck) with a small 6x6 grid (safe shark cage) just in one of the corners of the field. Coach makes up variations and adds them to their pirate ship journey one at a time. Variations on the ship can be: Scrub the deck-players must roll the ball back and forth with the sole of their foot, then coach can ask them to do this while moving all around the Pirate Ship deck. Hoist the sail-players can knock the ball back and forth between their feet (foundation), then dribble all around the Pirate Ship deck as fast as they can. Walk the plank-players must do toe touches on their soccer ball, then dribble all around the Pirate Ship deck as fast as they can. Shark attack-Coach (aka: 'Shark') runs after players and they have to try and

dribble their soccer ball into the 6x6 (safe shark cage) before the 'shark' catches them.

14) Gates---Set up many pairs of cones (with roughly 2 yards in between pairs) all around the playing area. These pairs serve as gates or many mini-goals. Players each have a ball and must dribble through the gate in order to score. Have players count how many goals they score in 30 seconds and when playing a second time ask them if they can beat their score by one goal. Coaches can vary this by asking players to dribble with left foot or right foot. If players end up dribbling back and forth through only one goal, set up a rule to protect against this.