



Youth Soccer Coaching Guide

Pre-K – 2nd Grade

Coaching Tips:

There are some important tips that will make your first time as a soccer coach a pleasant one for players, parents, and most of all you.

1. **Have FUN!** Have a good time and make it FUN for the players. A coach's interaction with the players should always be positive and the more the coach engages with the kids, the more they will respond.
2. **Be FAIR.** Being fair is very important too. It is a coach's job to make sure each player has equal playing time, make sure players play each position, and be sure to include everyone.
3. **Be POSITIVE.** Being positive includes every interaction with players, parents, officials, and other coaches. It's always good to set this standard at the beginning of the year so that your parents and players are all on the same wave length.
4. **Ask for Parent Involvement.** At the beginning of the year, ask for parent assistance during practice. This will help get parents involved with their child's play and will help you reduce the player/coach ratio. This is especially helpful in younger players. For young players, try to keep the ratio about 4 kids to each coach. As the kids get older, the ratio can grow as much as 8 kids for each coach. This ratio will depend greatly on your kid's age and skill.
5. **Focus on TEAMWORK.** As a coach, you often will have one or two star players on your team. It is important to grow these players and make them even stronger players; however, it is important to focus on teamwork to get the work done.
6. **Set GROUND RULES.** Before the season starts, meet with the team and parents and establish the ground rules. You will want to cover things such as:
 - i. sideline behavior – make sure they know they are welcome to cheer, but it is up to the coach and the assistant to do the coaching
 - ii. have players arrive to practice and games on time
 - iii. notify the coach if absent or late to game or practice
 - iv. players are to sit with the team while not in the game
7. **Know what to practice.** As a new coach, it is hard to come up with games that are appropriate for that level of player. Make sure you are playing small-sided games with younger kids which will focus on game-like situations. Also, make sure you prepare properly and have everything you need to coach soccer. For example, cones, goals, balls etc.

For more practice ideas, visit <https://www.soccerxpert.com/drills>.



Simon Says

This soccer dribbling drill is for U6 and U8 players. This drill focuses on dribbling and keeping close control for quick instructions. This is a fun soccer drill that also works on listening skills for the younger player.

Drill Setup

Create a 20X30 grid with cones.

Position the players inside the grid.

Each player with a ball.

Drill Instructions

Play Simon Says with the team as the players' dribble in the grid. If a player does something they are not supposed to, issue them a GOTCHA. See who gets the least number of gotchas.

Examples of commands could be: Change direction, stop the ball, stop the ball and put your belly on the ball, etc.

Also, try to throw in a trick or two like kick the ball as far away as you can.

Drill Variations

- Without ball
- With ball in hand
- With ball

Drill Coaching Points

- Have players do actions like clapping in between their legs and skipping to increase body awareness.
- Focus on dribbling skills and keeping the ball close and under control.
- Focus on players listening skills.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling





Sharks and Minnows

This drill focuses on younger players and their ability to dribble out of pressure. This drill can be used to focus on the player using their body to protect the ball by placing their body in between the ball and the defender.

Drill Setup

Build a grid approximately 20X25 yards. This field should be adjusted based on the skill level and number of players participating.

Two players are designated the SHARK start in the middle of the grid without a ball.

The remaining player starts with a ball on one of the end lines.

Drill Instructions

The minnows, the players with the ball, attempt to swim from one end line to the other while keeping their ball away from the sharks. The sharks attempt to gain possession and knock the minnows ball out of the grid. Once this happens, the minnow becomes a shark. The last minnow standing wins the competition.

Drill Variations

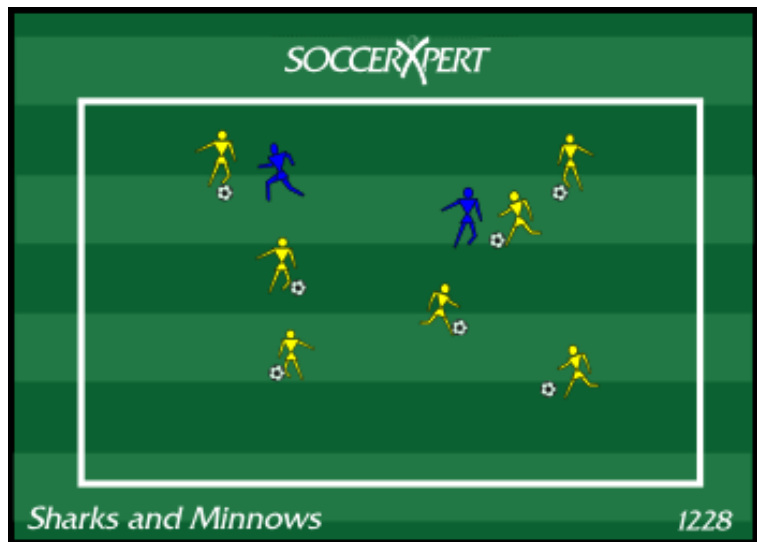
- Players only use left foot to dribble.
- Players use outside of feet to dribble.
- Players use sole of feet to dribble.

Drill Coaching Points

- Keep the dribblers under control and not panicked once the sharks get near them.
- Inform players to keep the ball close within playing distance.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling





Red Light, Green Light

This drill will focus on dribbling with the ball close to stop quickly.

Drill Setup

Start all of the players on one sideline shoulder-to-shoulder, each with a soccer ball.

The end-line is the opposite sideline.

The coach should move 15-20 yards away from the closest player.

Drill Instructions

With the coaches back to the players, yell "GREEN LIGHT," and the players try to dribble to the coach. The coach then yells "RED LIGHT," the players must quickly stop the ball. The coach should wait a moment and then turns to face the players. Any player moving must go back to the farthest person from the coach.

Drill Variations

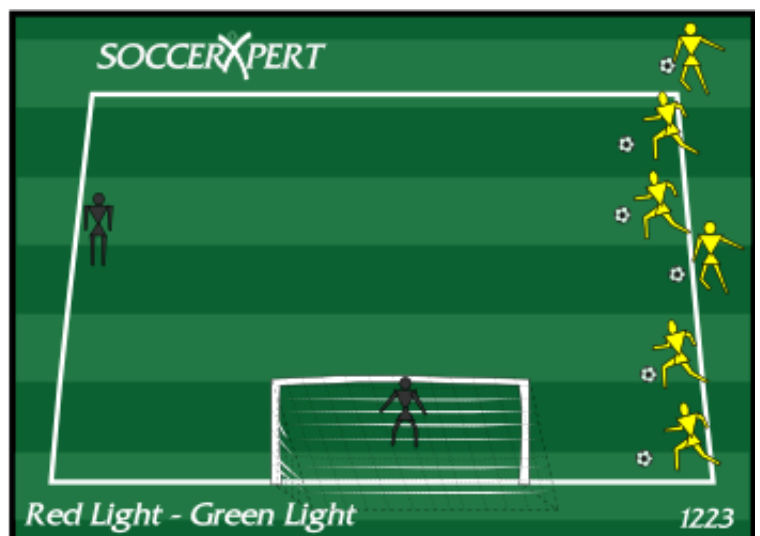
- Limit the players to dribble with their right foot only; left foot only.
- Limit the players to dribble with the bottom of the foot only.

Drill Coaching Points

- Listen to coaches commands.
- React quickly to verbal queues.
- Dribble with speed, but keep the close.
- Make sure the players hold the ball close so they can stop quickly.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling





Extreme Tag Soccer Game

The Extreme Tag soccer game is a fun soccer drill that focuses on young soccer players dribbling skills and aids in player awareness. It is a great drill that causes players to change directions quickly to find space to avoid being tagged.

Drill Setup

Create a grid that is approximately 20X20 yards.

The size of the grid can vary depending on the number of players.

Each player should have a soccer ball.

Drill Instructions

Players dribble around in the grid trying to avoid a tag from the other players. The tag must be below the player's knee to receive credit for the tag. Each successful tag below the knee will result in a point being awarded to the tagging player. If the player gets tagged, a point is subtracted from their total.

The first player to 5 wins that round.

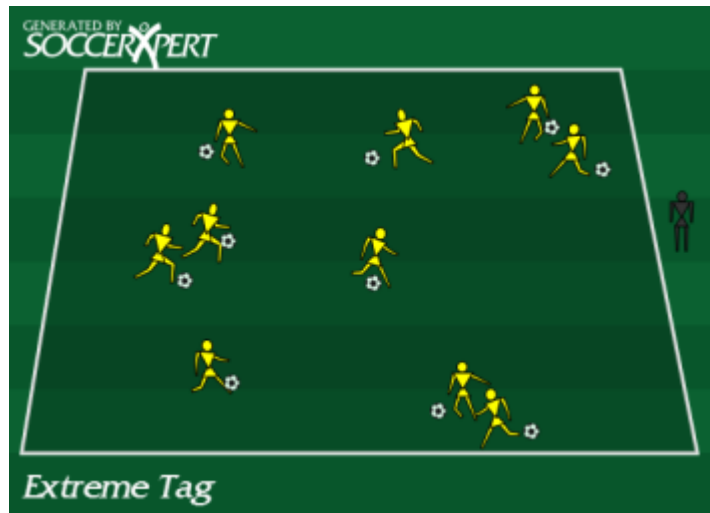
Play a couple of rounds depending on the length of time each game takes.

Drill Coaching Points

- Make sure players are dribbling with their head up
- Instruct players to find open space.
- Players will want to leave their ball when being chased, so make sure the players keep their ball in close control.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling





Shadow Dribbling

This shadow soccer dribbling drill uses partners who do not attempt to gain possession of the ball but adds extra pressure as they follow the dribbler around and tries to imitate the lead dribblers every move.

Drill Setup

Create a small grid approximately 20X20 yards.

Instruct players to pair up each player with a soccer ball.

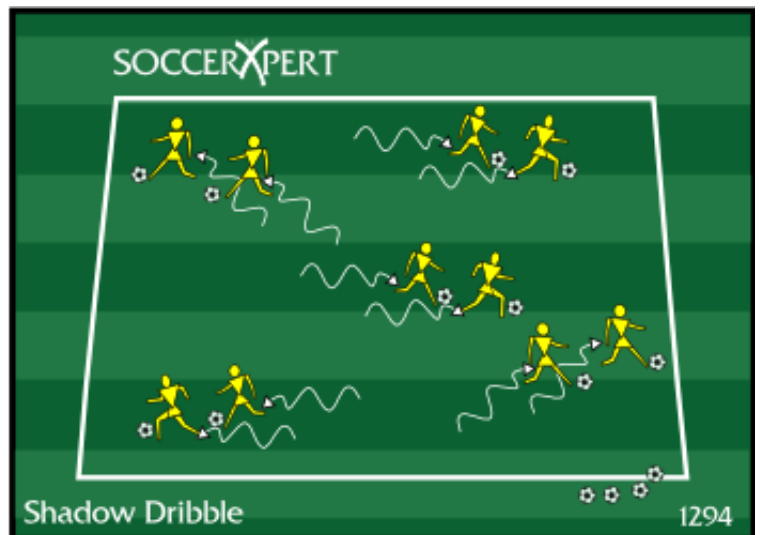
Drill Instructions

The lead dribbler dribbles around inside the grid while the shadow dribbler attempts to mimic the lead dribbler's every move by keeping a good close distance.

Change leaders after a minute.

Drill Coaching Points

- Lift head, eyes up
- Close control
- Control of body movements
- Use all parts of their feet while dribbling (inside, outside, top, bottom)
- Change of direction & pace
- Find space
- Dribble with speed
- Encourage players to be creative



Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling



Snake in the Grass Soccer Game

This soccer game is designed to work on young players' coordination and body movements.

Drill Setup

Create a small grid approximately 15X15 yards.

All of the players should be inside the grid.

The coach should designate two players to be the "snakes" by lying on their stomachs.

Each of the players begins with one of their hands on the snakes in the grass.

Drill Instructions

When the coach yells "SNAKE IN THE GRASS" the non-snake players attempt to avoid the snakes as the snakes attempt to slither around on their stomach and touch a non-snake player. As a player is touched, that player also becomes a snake.

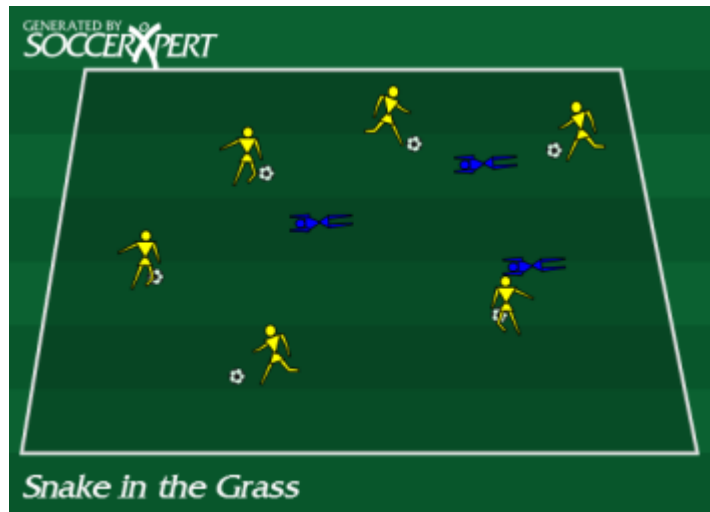
The activity continues until everyone is a snake.

Drill Coaching Points

- This soccer game is designed to work on young soccer players balance, coordination and body movement.
- As the children attempt to avoid the snakes, they will move in all directions and should be encouraged to run, jump, cut, turn, etc to avoid the snake.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling





Soccer Ball Smash

The Soccer Ball Smash soccer passing drill will focus on the player who is just learning to pass, as this drill will focus on passing accuracy.

Drill Setup

Create a large grid approximately 40X50 yards.

Pair up each of the players and make sure each player has a ball.

The two partners should stand near to each other inside the grid but spread away from other groups of players when starting this drill.

Drill Instructions

Instruct player 1 to pass his ball forward. After Player 1's ball stops moving, player 2 then passes their ball at player 1's ball in an attempt to hit player 1's ball. If player 2 misses, then player 1 tries to hit player 2's ball from where it landed previously. Each time a player hits their opponents ball, they collect a point.

The first player to 5 wins that match.

Drill Variations

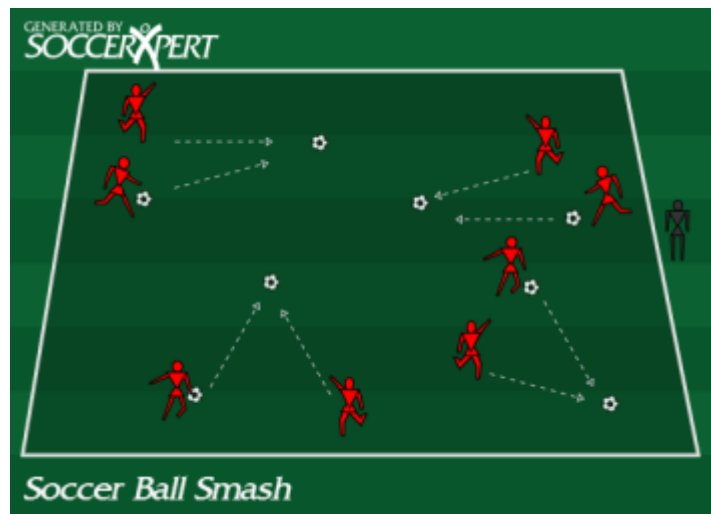
- Alternate the groups and repeat.
- Limit players to passing with certain parts of the foot: inside, outside, instep

Drill Coaching Points

- Make sure the players are striking the ball with the right surface of the foot.
- Make sure the weight of the pass is good
- Watch the plant foot to make sure it is pointing to its target.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Passing





The Passing Name Game Warm-up

The objective of this soccer drill is to help young players improve the speed of play by thinking a step-ahead of the play.

Drill Setup

Form a circle with each of the players on your team.

Start with one ball.

Drill Instructions

To play the name game, the player with the ball passes to a player. Before the receiving player receives the pass, they must yell the name of the next player in which they are going to pass. Upon the next player receiving the ball, they must yell the name of the next player in which they are going to pass. This is designed to make the players think a step ahead of the play.

Make sure that each player has at least two touches on the ball; one touch to receive the pass, and the other touch to make the pass.

Encourage players not to make a pass back to the player they received the pass from, and to pass to different people each time.

Drill Variations

- Create a grid and play the same game as above except players are free to move about the grid.

- Add a second ball.

Drill Coaching Points

- Remind players to be thinking ahead to determine who they want to pass.

- Good first touch

- Quality passes

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Passing

- Receiving





Alien Tag Soccer Game

This will focus on agility, vision, and awareness, but best of all, it's fun.

Drill Setup

Create an area about 20X20. Call this space Mars. Two players will need balls. They will be the aliens.

The remaining players are inside the grid with a pool noodle each (without a ball). They are the spaceships.

Drill Instructions

Have the spaceships hold either end of the noodle to create the front of their spaceship. Their goal is to avoid the aliens who are kicking space rocks (soccer balls) at them. Aliens have a ball, and the coach should have a few spare balls if the "space rocks" are hurled into space.

If an alien hits the spaceship (any part of the player) with the ball, the spaceship must spin out of control and crash to the ground.

For the first iteration, let the spaceships get back into the game after some minor repairs (5 jumping jacks or something like that).

Drill Coaching Points

- This game should be fun for the kids. The coach can improve their experience by making noises, crash sounds, or yelling "heeeeeelp" when a ship goes down.
- The spaceships should have their heads up and looking around to avoid the aliens.
- Make sure the players move by telling making them crash if they aren't moving.
- The aliens must dribble the ball and aim for the space ships so this will be a good start to controlling the ball and shots/passes.

Make it fun for the kids.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Passing





Ouch!

A FUN soccer drill for younger players to introduce dribbling, looking up and correctly striking the ball at a target. And best of all, it's a fun soccer game for the players and coach!

Drill Setup

Build a grid 20X30 (may adjust if too large or small).

Every player begins in the grid with a ball.

The coach and assistant coach start in the grid without a ball.

Drill Instructions

The coaches jog around in the grid and players try to kick their balls and hit the coaches. The players get a point each time they hit the coach. The coach should yell OUCH each time they are hit to make the game FUN.

For younger players, the coach can walk around their knees.

Drill Variations

- If the players are struggling to hit the coach, the coach should stop for a couple of seconds to give the players a chance.

- Use different parts of the foot: Inside, Instep, Right and Left foot.

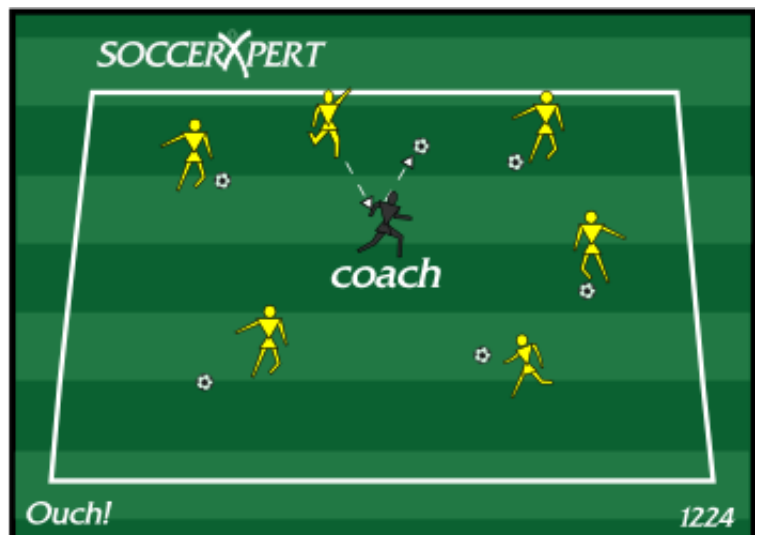
Drill Coaching Points

- Encourage players to get their head up and look for the coaches while dribbling.

- Make sure the players are striking the ball with the proper part of the foot.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Passing





Clean Your Room

This soccer game is a great drill for U5 through U8 players. The clean your room soccer drill will focus on dribbling under pressure while also working on defensive pressure as an individual or a small group.

Drill Setup

Create a grid that is approximately 15 X 15 yards. You should adjust the size of the area depending on the size, skill set, and the number of players. Assign one player to "clean the room." This player will act as the defender to knock everyone's ball out of the grid.

Every player other than the room cleaner needs a ball.

Drill Instructions

Start by having the players dribble around free in the grid. The coach should release the room cleaner into the grid. The room cleaner's job is to steal the ball from the dribbling players and kick the ball out of the grid. The dribblers must retrieve their balls and attempt to get back into the grid as quickly as possible. The room is "clean" once all of the balls are out of the grid at one time. The room cleaner should kick the ball out of the grid as far as they can to give them a chance to get all of the players.

If a player is struggling to clean their room, a 2nd room cleaner can be sent to assist.

Drill Variations

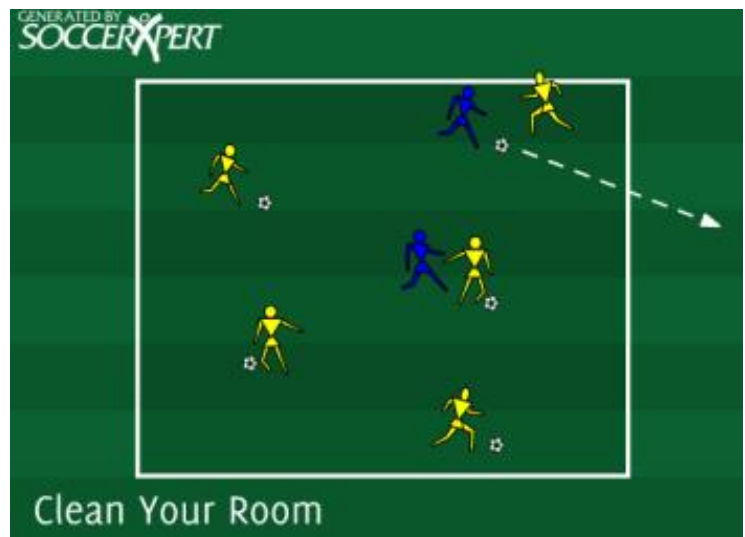
- Start with 2 room cleaners (defenders).
- Make the players do 10 jumping jacks before entering the grid. This will give the defender a bit more time to clear other balls out of the grid.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Possession
- Defending

Drill Coaching Points

- Instruct the room cleaner (defender) to pressure players with the ball quickly and kick the ball out of the grid as far as possible.
- Dribblers must be aware of the defender (pressure) and remain calm and protect the ball.





The Numbers Game

The Numbers Game soccer drill focuses on the 1v1 situational play for younger players. This 1v1 drill works on all dynamics of this game such as dribbling, shooting, shielding, turning and beating an opponent.

Drill Setup

Create a small 1v1 field approximately 15X20 with two small goals on each end line.

Split the group into two even teams and assign a number to each player in each team. For instance, if you have 5 players in each team, number off 1-5 in each team. One group wears an alternate jersey.

Drill Instructions

The coach plays a ball into the area and calls out a number. Those players assigned to that number sprint onto the field and play a 1v1.

The game continues until a team scores a goal or the ball goes out of bounds.

Drill Variations

- Have more than one 1v1 going at the same time.
- Call out two or more numbers to create a 2v2 or 3v3.

Drill Coaching Points

- Encourage players to take on their opponent.
- Encourage players to shoot when they have a chance of a goal.
- Instruct the players to protect the ball when necessary.

