



Youth Soccer Coaching Guide

7th Grade – 8th 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>.



Soccer Dribbling and Juggling Warm-up

This soccer drill is a great warm-up drill that allows players to work on touching the ball with all parts of the foot. If you want to improve player's footwork and dribbling skills, this is an excellent start to each practice.

Drill Setup

Either use the center circle of the field or build a circle with cones.

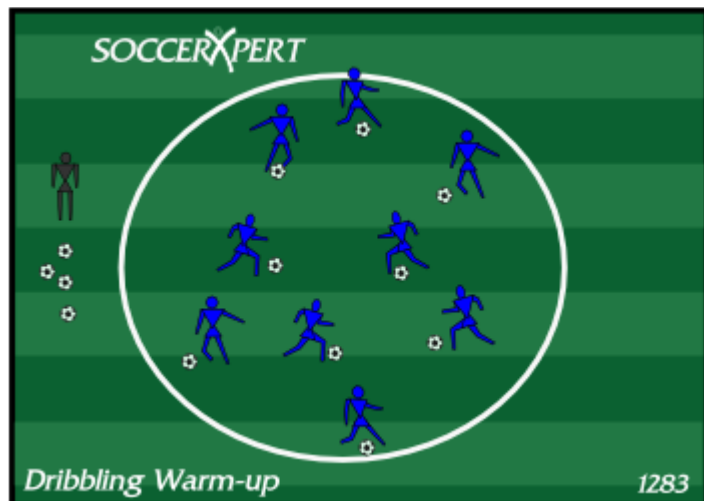
Each player needs to have a ball and start inside the circle.

Drill Instructions

Have players dribble anyway they want inside the circle as long as they are using both feet for 2 minutes. Have the players juggle for 1 minute using feet only trying to alternate from right to left. Have players dribble with inside and outside of each foot with the following pattern: right foot - inside, outside, inside, outside then switch to left foot inside, outside, inside, outside and continue to switch feet. Do this for 2 minutes. Have players juggle with their thighs and feet for 1 minute. Again instruct players to switch feet while juggling. Have players work on cuts and turns. The players should be instructed to cut the ball quickly and have a short sprint after cutting or turning the ball. Make sure players are exploring with inside and outside of the foot cuts and staying with the ball when they cut. Do this for 2 minutes. Now instruct the players to juggle again. This time juggle with the feet and pop the ball to the chest and back down to the feet. Do this for 1 minute. Now have players turn the pace up a notch and play full speed working on cuts, turns, and avoiding collisions. Push players to work hard for 1 minute straight.

Drill Coaching Points

- Make sure the player is continuously lifting their head and checking their surroundings; this will help players find space and avoid other players.
- Make sure players keep the ball close to them while in congested areas; this will help them move the ball more quickly to avoid other players and obstructions.
- Encourage players to use all parts of their feet while dribbling (inside, outside, top, bottom).



Soccer Drill Skill Focus

Dribbling - Soccer Dribbling Drills



Combination Play

This soccer passing drill focuses on improving 1-2 combination play. This passing combination drill encourages good movement off the ball.

Drill Setup

Create a grid that is approximately 20 X 25 yards.

Set one player on three of the corner cones (B, C, and D).

The remaining players create a small line on the 4th cone (A).

The player at the beginning of the line starts with the ball.

Start with one ball in the beginning.

Drill Instructions

Player A playing a long ball into Player B and follows his pass. Player B lays the ball off back to player A and player B sprints around his cone towards player C. Player A plays a ball to player C who plays the ball into the run of player B and C sprints around the cone. Player B plays a long ball to player D, player D plays a ball into the run of player C, and the movement continues.

Drill Variations

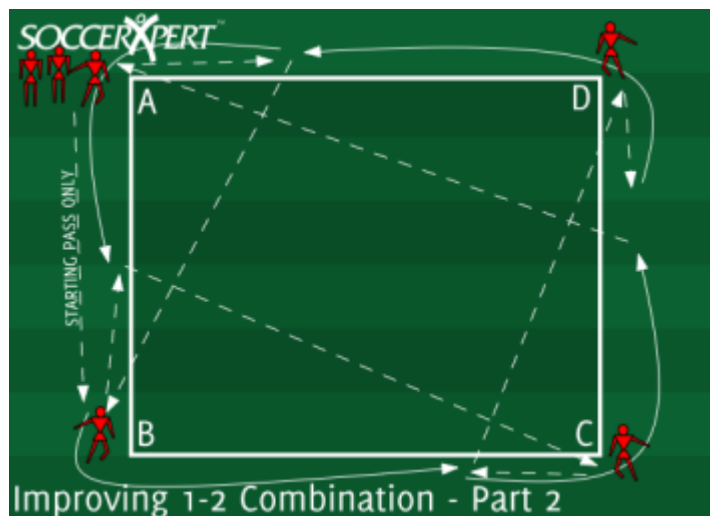
- Add a second ball. Start with a ball at two opposite corners of the grid (A and C).
- Change the direction of the play.

Drill Coaching Points

- Focus on accurate passing with good pace on the ball.
- Focus on good communication among players.
- Focus on good movement before and after the pass.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Passing
- Receiving





Four Corners Passing Game

The Four Corners Passing Game is a great soccer passing drill to focus on changing the point of the attack, and timing of runs and passes.

Drill Setup

In a 40X40 yard area, create four grids that are about 5x5 yard in each corner of the larger grid.

Split the group into two teams and put one team in an alternate color.

Drill Instructions

While each team is in possession of the ball, this team should pass among their teammates to keep possession. A point is scored by passing the ball to a teammate that is inside one of the smaller corner grids. The teams can score in any of the corners. However, they cannot score in the same area twice in a row.

Drill Variations

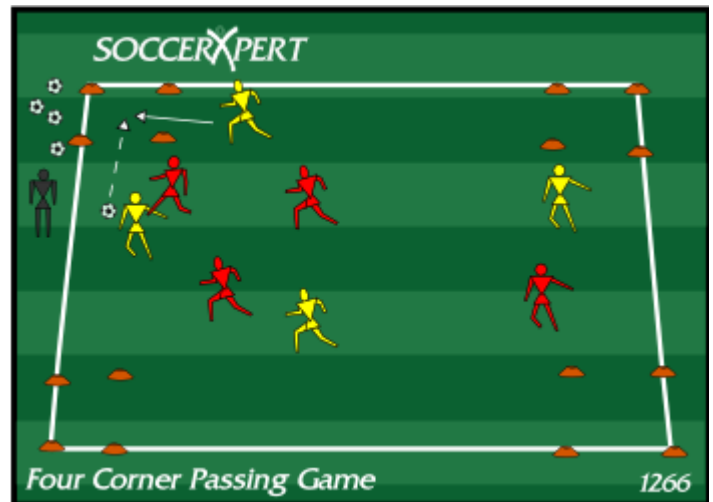
- Do not allow players to stand inside the grids waiting for a pass. Instead, instruct the players to work on the timing of the runs and timing of the pass to connect inside the grid.
- Change the scoring rule and only award a point when a give-and-go is performed with the player that is in the grid.

Drill Coaching Points

- Focus on the weight and accuracy of the passing
- Make sure players without the ball are supporting the player with the ball at all times
- Make sure the timing of the runs and timing of the pass are in sync.
- Make sure players change the point of attack and are not forcing passes into congested areas

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Passing
- Receiving
- Possession
- Defending
- Attacking





Finding the Target Player

The Finding the Target Player possession passing drill is designed to encourage midfield and defensive players to look up the field to find the "Target Player" and play into that Target player.

Drill Setup

Create a large grid approximately 40X40 yards. Adjust the size of the field based on the number of players and their age.

Divide the team into two even teams in alternate jerseys.

Each team should build a 10X10 grid on their attacking end and place one target player in this grid. (see diagram)

Drill Instructions

The two teams play against each by keeping possession from the opposing team. The team in possession should be looking to play a flighted ball into their team's target player who is inside the 10X10 grid.

If the target player successfully controls the ball inside the box that team is awarded a point.

The player that played into the target player then becomes the target player.

Drill Variations

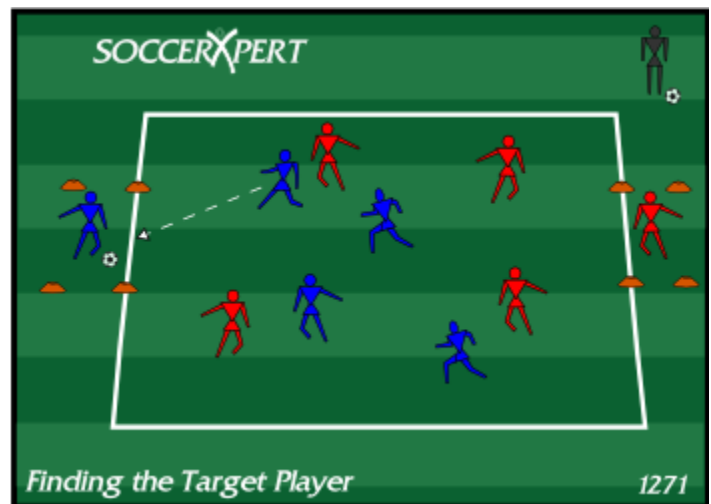
- Create a larger box for the target player and add a defender with the target player (have the defensive player be somewhat passive at first)

Drill Coaching Points

- Make sure players are getting their heads up quickly to find the target player
- Make sure players play the target player early.
- Make sure there is a clear distinction of playing "kickball" and playing early.
- Make sure it is a purposely placed pass rather than accidental.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Possession
- Passing
- Defending
- Receiving





Split the Defenders Passing Game

The split the defenders passing game, soccer passing drill is excellent for a little more advanced player from 10 years old to 14 years and focuses on passing to split two defenders.

Drill Setup

Create a grid approximately 18x18 yards.

Divide the team into three teams of two players.

Build multiple grids for additional games.

Switch the paired teammates to other grids to work with other players.

Drill Instructions

Two teams work together on the outside of the grid while the two defenders work on the inside of the grid. The four players on the outside keep possession and keep the ball from the defending team in the grid. The outside team scores a point when their teammate passes the ball between two defenders (SPLIT), and their teammate cleanly receives the pass from across the grid. If a player on the attacking team makes a mistake, he and his partner become the defenders and the team winning the ball comes outside the cones and joins the other attackers. When the defensive team gets split, they have to win the ball one extra time. So for example, if the two defenders get split two times before winning the ball, they must win the ball three times before switching with the attackers.

Drill Variations

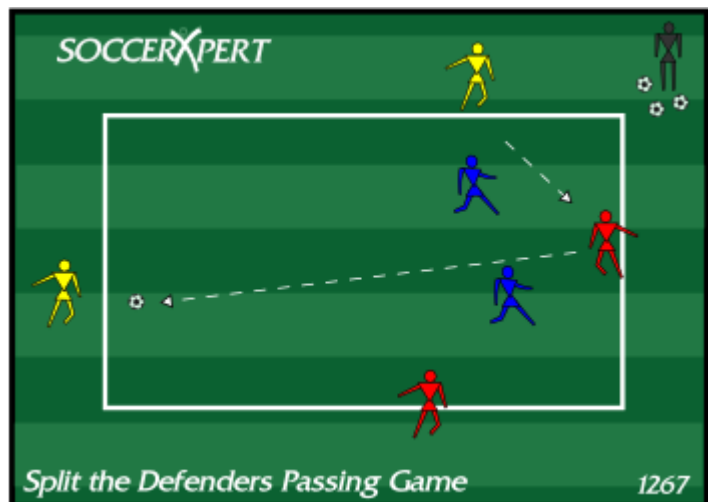
- Limit the number of touches per outside player
- Play the same game, but expand the grid 3-5 yards on all sides and have the players play inside the grid instead of outside the grid.

Drill Coaching Points

- Make sure the attacking players are moving for their partners and opening up in space.
- Make sure balls are passed with good pace and on target
- Encourage players to communicate verbally and with their body and hands.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Attacking
- Passing
- Defending
- Receiving
- Possession





Quick Transition Game

This soccer drill is an excellent way to focus on attacking and defending and is ideal for teaching the basic principles of soccer. The game can be modified to illustrate many aspects of the game.

Drill Setup

Create a 35X45 yard field with two goals at either end.

Split up the team into three teams of 4 players and give each team a color (Blue, Red, & Yellow).

Place a goalkeeper in each goal.

Drill Instructions

Start with the Yellow team attacking the Blue team. The Red players start with two players at each of the two goals acting as neutral supporting players to both colors playing. If the Yellow team scores on the Blue team, the Yellow team has to quickly retrieve the ball from the goal and attack the goal on the opposite end-line. The Blue team steps off to become the supporting players along the outside while the Red team steps on the field to play against the Yellow team. Continue to rotate off the team getting scored on with the supporting team. The first team to 5 goals wins.

Drill Variations

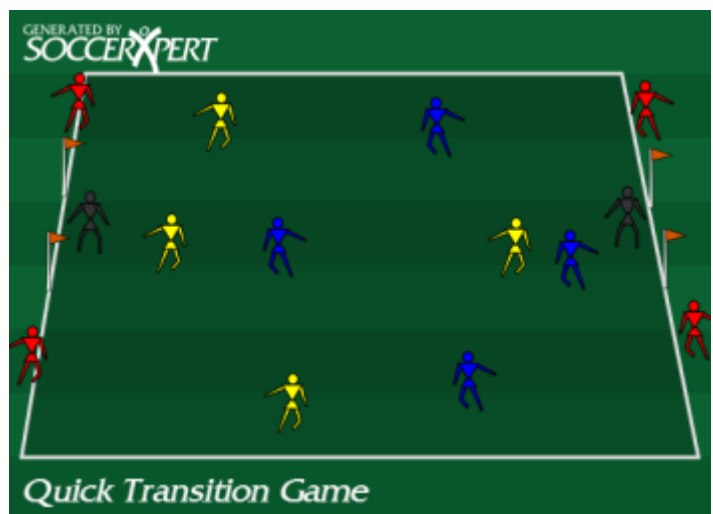
- Make supporting players play in 1 touch.
- Make the attackers have to play through the supporting players before they can score a goal

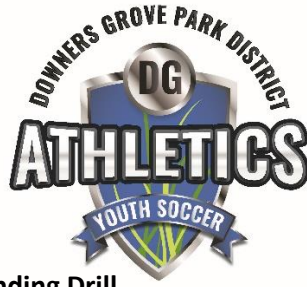
Drill Coaching Points

- Focus on basic Defending principles.
- Focus on basic Attacking principles.
- Encourage players to play through the supporting players to make play easier.
- Make sure supporting players are moving to good space/angles to properly support the play.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Possession
- Passing
- Defending
- Receiving
- Attacking
- Crossing
- Shooting





Attack vs. Defense Shooting and Defending Drill

The Attack vs. Defense Shooting and Defending drill is one that the kids love. The players will get to work on both attacking (shooting) and defending skills and if ran correctly, very fast paced.

Drill Setup

Create a grid that is as wide as the penalty box, and approximately 25-30 yards from goal.

Place a goalkeeper in the goal.

Split the remaining players into two groups (Red and Yellow).

The two groups will line up on opposite sides of the file on the cone set farthest from the goal.

Make sure that every player has a ball.

Drill Instructions

On the coach's command, the first player in the Red group dribbles the ball with speed at the edge of the penalty box and quickly has a shot as they approach. Immediately after the Red player shoots, the first player from the yellow group dribbles at the penalty box as the Red player defends his attempt. After the Yellow player shoots, they immediately defend the next red player who is now attacking.

Repeat this rotation throughout the drill.

Drill Coaching Points

Attacking:

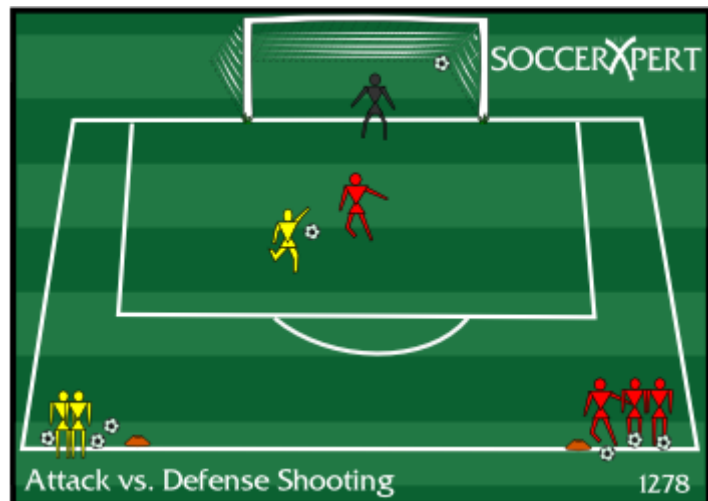
- Make sure the attack is quick, controlled, and the player gets the shot off quickly
- Put the shot on target even when under pressure.
- Dribble with speed.

Defending:

- Transition Quickly from Offense to Defense

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling - Attacking
- Defending - Shooting





1v1 Competition

This drill is great to focus on 1v1 play. It is flexible and can be used to work on the offensive side or the defensive side. On the offensive side you can get attackers to attack the defenders with speed, quick change of pace with an explosive touch to get away, getting behind the defensive players and shooting at half chances. On the defensive side, you can focus on closing down quickly, forcing the attacker to the side and closing down the attack.

Drill Setup

Place a cone about 25 yards from the goal. Split the team into 2 teams with each group wearing alternate jerseys. Place a keeper in the goal. The defending team starts by the goal with a large supply of balls. The other team attacks by starting at the cone 25 yards from goal. Each team plays for 5 minutes.

Drill Instructions

The 1st defender plays a ball into the 1st attacker and steps out to defend. The attacker attempts to beat the defender. Award a point to the attacking team for each goal scored. After scoring a goal, or the defensive player wins the ball, the next defender plays a ball into the next attacker and play continues. Each team attacks for 5 minutes and defends for 5 minutes. The team with the highest goal count wins. Play 2 games awarding a winner after each match. If each team wins a match, play another round to break the tie.

Drill Coaching Points

Offensive:

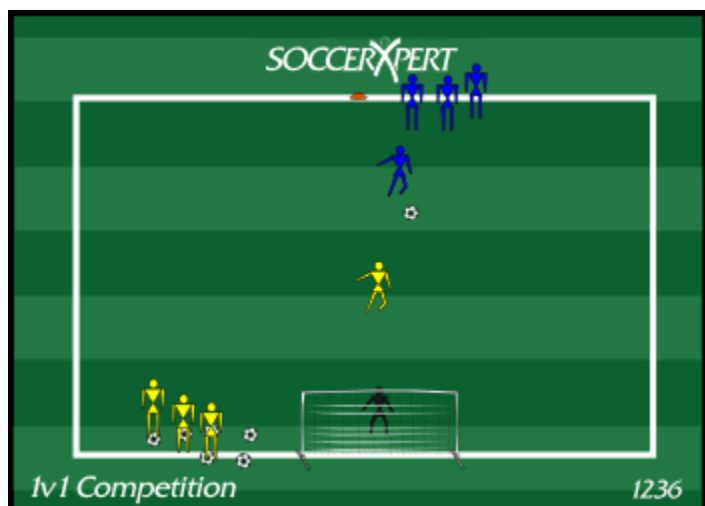
- Attack defender with speed
- Quick explosion to get away
- Try to get behind the defender
- Shoot at any half-chance

Defensive:

- Close down quickly
- Force the attacker to the weak side
- Break it down
- Close the attacker down.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Attacking
- Defending
- Shooting





2v2 Challenge

This 2v2 soccer drill focuses on putting players in 2 vs. 2 situations while attacking the goal. The dynamics of the games works on transitioning, and fitness demands on the players can be intense at times.

Drill Setup

Split the group into two teams with a keeper in goal. Place two cones approximately 20-25 yards from goal about 30 yards apart. Instruct one team to line up behind one cone and the other team line up behind the other cone. Don't worry about lines as these players will be involved very quickly. Create a 5X5 yard about 10-15 yards past the two cones, and place all the balls in this box.

Drill Instructions

Have 2 players from each team enter the playing area. To start the game, assign one team to defend and one team to attack. The attacking team goes to goal, while the defensive team attempts to shut down the attack.

If the defensive team wins the ball, they must quickly dribble the ball to the square and leave the ball. At this time, two new teammates from their team step out and get a ball from the square and start attacking the goal. The two original attackers that lost the ball must sprint back to their line freeing up 2 new defenders to step out and defend.

If a player shoots and the keeper saves it, or the shot misses the goal, the shooter must quickly get their missed shot and dribble it back to the 5X5 box. That player will then go to the end of their team's line and await their turn again. Once the shooting player dribbles back into the 5X5 box, his team can send in another man to even up the match at 2v2. In the meantime, the other team sprints to the 5X5 box attempting to catch the team who just missed a shot in a man-down situation.

Drill Variations

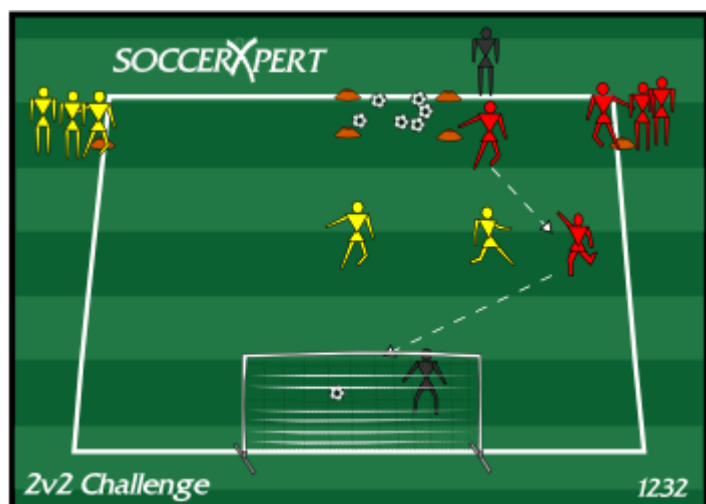
- Limit players touch.
- Keep track of offside.

Drill Coaching Points

- Build attack quickly and off balance the defender.
- Quick transition between defense and offense

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| - Dribbling | - Shooting | - Attacking |
| - Passing | - Receiving | - Possession |





3v1 Early Support

This 3v1 soccer drill focuses on supporting the player with the ball, early support, moving without the ball, proper supporting angle, and good distance of support.

Drill Setup

Create two 12X12 grids with a common side. Split into two groups of three players (3 red and 3 yellow). Place the three red players and one yellow player in one grid. The remaining two yellow players are in the other grid. The single yellow player in the red grid starts as the defender. The three red players need a ball.

Drill Instructions

Play a 3v1 in the first grid with three reds offensive players and one yellow defensive player. The offensive players focus on early support, good angles, proper supporting distance, and giving the player with the ball two passing options. The yellow defender's objective is to gain possession of the ball. If the yellow defender gains possession of the ball, they pass to a yellow teammate in the other grid. The yellow defender then joins his team in the grid to maintain possession. One player from the red team enters the new grid as a defender. The red defending player now tries to win possession and return the ball into the other grid with their teammates. The defenders rotate defenders with a new defender each time.

Drill Variations

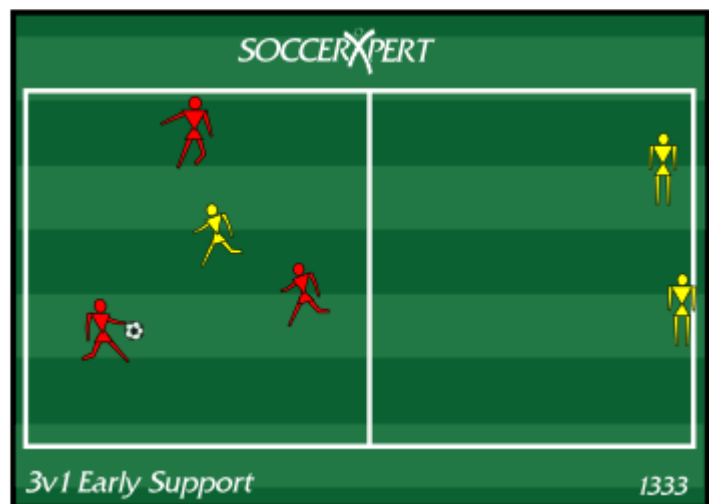
- Limit the players number of touches

Drill Coaching Points

- Early support - start supporting before the ball is received.
- Good angle - support in undefended space where the pass cannot be intercepted by the defender.
- Players must move, even without the ball.
- Supporting players should create a triangle to support both sides of the attacker with the ball.
- Focus on a good first touch in space towards a supporting player.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Passing
- Attacking
- Receiving
- Possession





3v2 Flying Changes

This drill is designed to focus on all aspects of the game in a 3v2 situation. Mainly runs of attackers, angle of support, passing vs. shooting decisions, defensive shape, and recovery runs, along with working on mental attentiveness.

Drill Setup

Set up two goals facing each other about 35-40 yards apart. Place a goalkeeper in each goal. Split the team into two teams with even players (blue and red). Place a cone on the left and right side of the field marking the center of the field. The red team starts from the cone on one sideline, and the blue team starts at the cone on the other sideline.

Drill Instructions

Three blue players step out with a ball and become attackers. Two red players step out and defend. If the attacking team (blue) score, they are distributed a new ball and attack the other goal. The defenders (red) step off, get back in their line, and two new defenders (red) would step on to defend the other goal. If the attackers (blue) do not score, they step off, and the two (red) defenders become attackers, and an additional (red) player joins the attack. Two new (blue) defenders step out to defend the goal red is attacking. This is a very fast paced and dynamic game. Make sure the keepers in each goal have an adequate supply of balls. There shouldn't be any pauses between changes to incorporate quick transition and to focus on paying attention.

Drill Variations

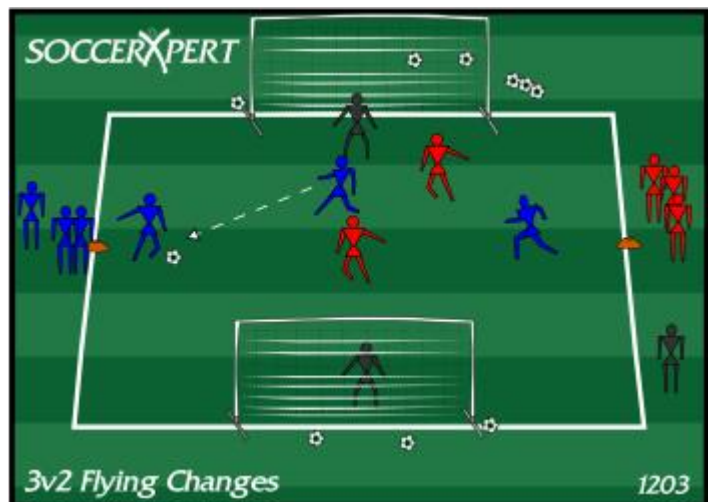
- Change the number of players 2v1 or 1v1
- Restriction added - must beat defender before shoot

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Passing
- Heading
- Shooting
- Receiving
- Crossing
- Possession
- Defending
- Attacking

Drill Coaching Points

- Changes in the direction and speed of play
- Appropriate use of 1st touch
- Proper use of short or long passing
- Quick transition
- Good passing/shooting decisions
- Proper offensive and defensive shape
- Paying attention/following the game





4v3 Attack vs. Defense

This attacking soccer drill is a great drill to focus on finishing. Since the attackers have the numerical advantage, they should learn how to exploit their advantage and finish with a shot on goal.

Drill Setup

Set up a 30 X 30 grid with one side playing to goal. Coach assigns 3 defenders who wear an alternate jersey. The attackers begin with the ball. Place a keeper in goal.

Drill Instructions

Instruct the players to exploit their numerical advantage and finish with a shot on goal. Attackers should move the ball looking for the open player and holes in the defense. Defenders should attempt to break-down the attack and to gain experience in how to cover a man-down situation. Defensive players should complete a pass to the coach to end the attack. The coach should then give the ball back to the attackers to build the attack again.

Drill Variations

- Increase the number of attackers (or decrease the number of defenders) if scoring chances are infrequent.
- Increase the number of defenders (or decrease the number of attackers) if scoring chances are too frequent

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Shooting
- Attacking
- Passing
- Receiving
- Defending
- Crossing

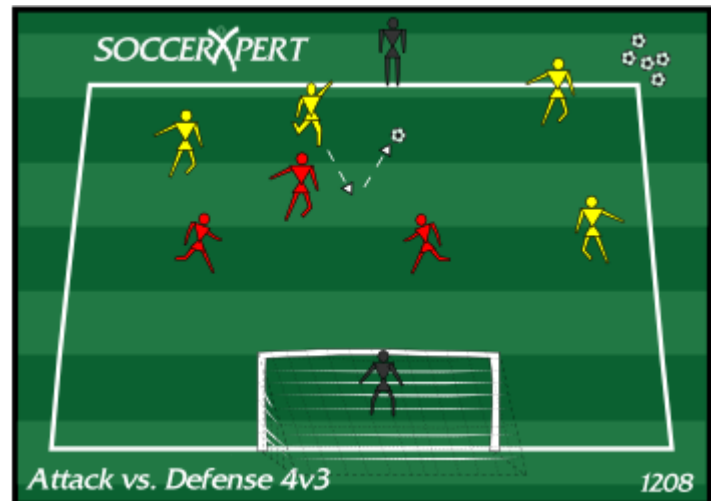
Drill Coaching Points

Offensive:

- Quickly switch the point of attack to off-balance the defense.
- Play quick both physically (1 and 2 touch) and mentally (think ahead).
- Make sure the players are attacking at the appropriate times

Defensive:

- Contain the play and keep the ball in front of the defense.
- Early pressure and do not allow space behind the defenders.





7v7 Scrimmage

A 7v7 scrimmage is a great way to end most of your training sessions. The 7 vs 7 allows players to focus on team tactics in realistic training situations and respond to problems presented in the full-sided game.

Drill Setup

Create a field approximately 60 X 40 yards.

Two full-size goals on each end-line.

Split the teams evenly into 7 vs 7. Six field players per team and a goalkeeper in each goal.

For younger players with fewer field players, reduce the size of the field and number of players.

Drill Instructions

- Play a small sided game with match conditions.
- All game rules apply. Throw ins, corner kicks, goal kicks, etc.

Drill Variations

- Add minor restrictions to focus on a specific topic.

Drill Coaching Points

- Let the game be the teacher.
- Correct team shape.
- Speed of play.

Soccer Drill Skill Focus

- Dribbling
- Passing
- Crossing
- Possession
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- Defending
- Receiving

