

U8 ACTIVITIES



Igniting a passion for the game must be the number one objective for coaches of this age group. The aim of the coach is to keep their soccer experience fun, enjoyable and to foster a desire to play.

General Characteristics of the U-8 Age Group

- Like to show skills—need approval
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence (most can ride a bicycle)
- Lack sense of pace—go flat out, chasing the ball until they drop
- Still in motion—twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements
- Still into running, jumping, climbing and rolling
- Boys and girls are still quite similar in physical and psychological development
- Attention span is a bit longer than the U6 age group
- Developing playmates
- More into imitation of the big guys (sports heroes becoming important)
- Still very sensitive—dislikes personal failure in front of peers, making ridicule from the coach in front of the group very destructive
- Still do not believe in the concept of the team at all costs
- Inclined more toward small group activities

Typical U-8 Training Session

- Should not exceed one hour
- Free play or a warm-up, each player with a ball, dynamic stretching and soccerastics -approximately 15 minutes
- Some individual body awareness activities
- Introduce partner activities
- A mixture of individual and partner activities. Add more maze-type games. Introduce target games with a variety of player combinations: 1v1, 2v1, 1v2 and 2v2—approximately 25 minutes.
- Game of 4v4, two goals and no goalkeepers—approximately 20 minutes

Warm-Up "Buddy Up"

LESSON PLAN U8 "STRIKING THE BALL"

Players are in pairs, each pair has one ball. One partner kneels/sits and rolls ball to their partner. The partner standing then passes ball back to the kneeling partner and then goes to a new person.

"BUDDY UP"



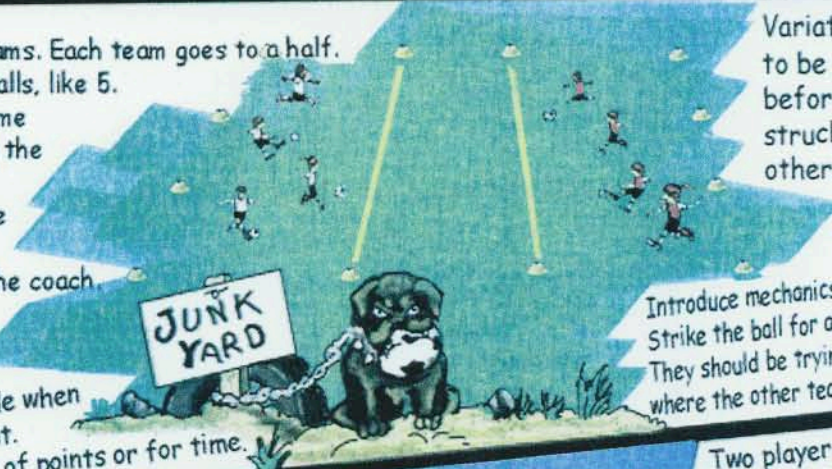
- a) Inside of foot
- b) Laces (just introduce)
- c) Go to kneeling partner who rolls ball between legs. Standing partner then chases, turns and passes ball back.

Introduction to mechanics of striking the ball
Note: Don't get too caught up with them using their laces.
Can they get it back to the kneeling partner without making them move?

1st Game Junkyard Soccer

Divide team into two teams. Each team goes to a half. Use an odd number of balls, like 5. The objective of the game is to strike the ball into the other team's yard. Each team wants to have a clean yard when time is called by the coach.

The team that has the fewest balls on their side when time is called gets a point. Play to a certain amount of points or for time.



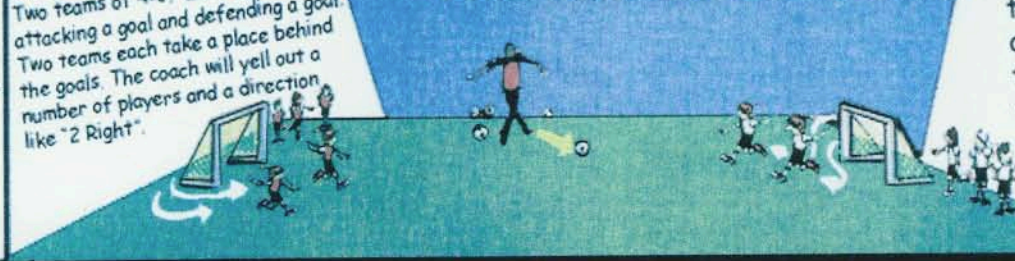
Variation: Require a pass to be made to a teammate before the ball can be struck back to the other half.

Introduce mechanics of striking the ball
Strike the ball for a purpose.
They should be trying to strike the ball where the other team can't get it back quickly.

2nd Game "Shootout" No Goalkeepers

Two goals are placed on the ends. Two teams of 4-6. Each team is attacking a goal and defending a goal. Two teams each take a place behind the goals. The coach will yell out a number of players and a direction like "2 Right".

"SHOOTOUT!"



Two players from each team run by the right side of the goal and then come in. The coach can call any number and direction. After the coach yells out a number and a direction, they roll in a ball for the players. Play for time or a certain amount of points.

Scoring goals
Concept of parallel play

Game 4v4 No goalkeepers

4v4
JUST LET 'EM PLAY!!!

PLAY A 4v4 GAME WHERE 1 GOAL EQUALS "ONE MILLION" POINTS!



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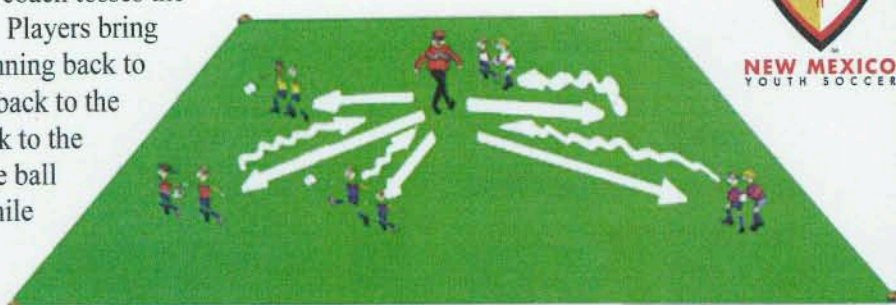
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US LESSON PLAN: PASSING



Warm-Up

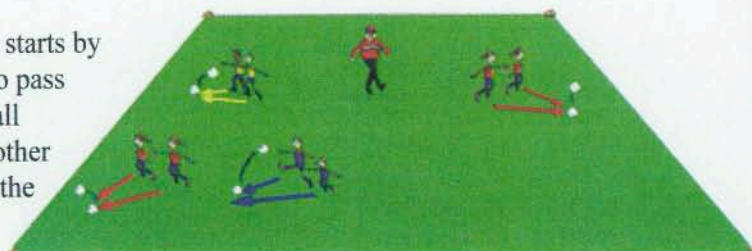
Retrieval activity in pairs -- getting them to work together. Every pair gives their ball to the coach and the coach tosses the ball out for each player to collect individually. Players bring the ball back by: 1) picking up the ball and running back to the coach; 2) picking up the ball and hopping back to the coach; 3) picking up the ball and skipping back to the coach; 4) running after the ball and passing the ball back to the coach. The coach walks around while the players dribble the ball back to them.



2ND ACTIVITY

"Marbles"

Players get into pairs. Each player has a ball. One player starts by passing his/her ball out front. The other player attempts to pass their ball and hit the other player's ball for a point. If a ball gets hit, then the player who hit the ball starts off with another "break." Progress to moving quicker. Give two points if the players can pass and hit a moving ball.

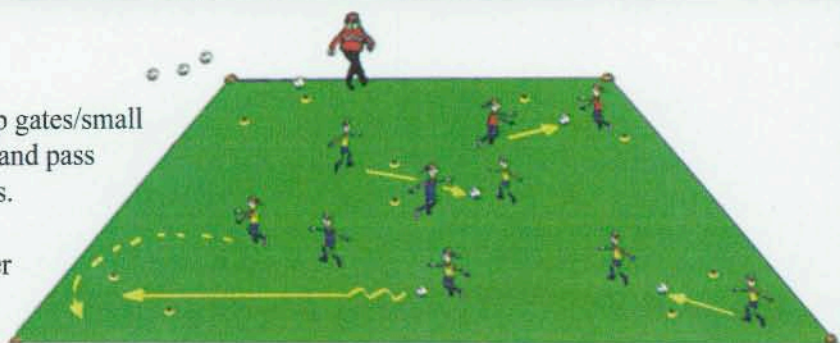


3RD ACTIVITY

Gates Passing

All players have a ball inside a playing area. Set up gates/small goals throughout the playing area. Players dribble and pass the ball through as many of the gates as time allows.

Variation: a) players work in pairs and must pass through a gate to their teammate who is on the other side.



4TH ACTIVITY "Gates"

4 Gate/Goal Game

Divide into two teams of 3-4 players each. Make a goal with flags, cones, etc., in the corners of the field, but they are diagonal. Coach has a supply of balls in order to keep the game flowing. When a goal is scored or the ball goes out, the coach plays in a new ball. The object of the game is to score through any of the 4 corner goals. The only way to score is to pass the ball through the goals.



4v4 game with no goalkeepers.

Play 4v4 game with no goalkeepers

LET THEM PLAY!



U8 LESSON PLAN: BALL POSSESSION



WARM UP TAG

The coach picks two people who must chase everyone else and tag them. Tagged players can't move until you allow them. The chasers don't have a ball; all others do.

For the U8 age group go to a 20 x 20 yard grid. Use as many cones as needed to clearly define the grid to the players. Keep in mind that the younger they are the less likely they are to comprehend boundaries. Don't be overly concerned when they dribble out-of-bounds. Simply corral them back toward the grid.

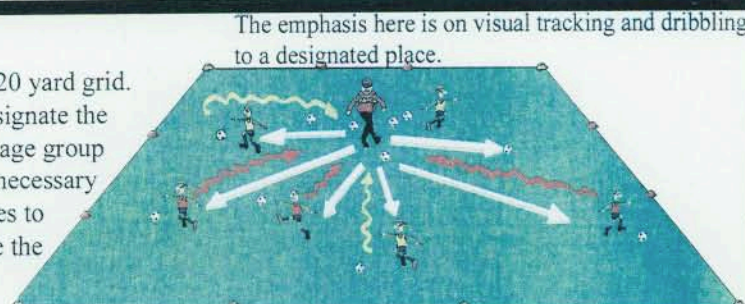


This game improves dribbling in a fun; competitive environment.

2ND ACTIVITY BALL RETRIEVE

The coach has a pile of 6 or 7 balls. The coach kicks or throws these in all directions. The players should chase any ball and dribble it back to the pile at the coach's feet. Never letting the pile get down to zero is the player's objective. Balls are thrown or kicked 10-20 yards.

The space is a 20 x 20 yard grid. Use tall cones to designate the corners. For the U8 age group more cones will be necessary along the border lines to concretely designate the grid.



The emphasis here is on visual tracking and dribbling to a designated place.

3RD ACTIVITY DRIBBLE TO THE CONE

Put out as many cones or markers as there are players. Have the players dribble randomly until you command they dribble to a cone. They should all run to the nearest marker and freeze with the ball.

Beyond the dribbling and movement enhancement you are asking the players to expand their decision making process.

Use either a 10 x 10 yard or 15 x 15 yard grid as you see appropriate for the players' abilities.

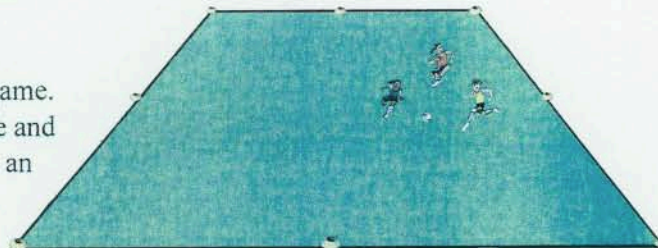


4TH ACTIVITY 1 VS. 2

In groups of 3, play 1v2. The one who has the ball must dribble and keep it. Those who don't have a ball try to get one.

The activity creates situations in which players become familiar with the pressures of the game. Speed of response and the ability to beat an opponent are emphasized.

For the U8 age group use a 10 x 10 yard space or up to 15 x 15 yards.



5TH ACTIVITY 50/50 BALL

Set up a game in which two teams of 3-4 players line up across from each other at a distance of 15 yards. On command (call players by name), one player from each side runs to win the ball and dribbles it back to the team. The other player tries to prevent this from occurring and attempts to dribble back to the other line. Keep score when playing this activity with the U8 age group.

In this activity players become familiar with:
-The pressures of the game.

-Speed of response and the ability to beat an opponent

Don't start with a ball in the middle. Roll or kick it out so they must react to it.

Use a 20 x 20 yard grid in which are the two 15 yard lines. When a player dribbles back across his or her team line they should try to keep the ball from going out of the grid.



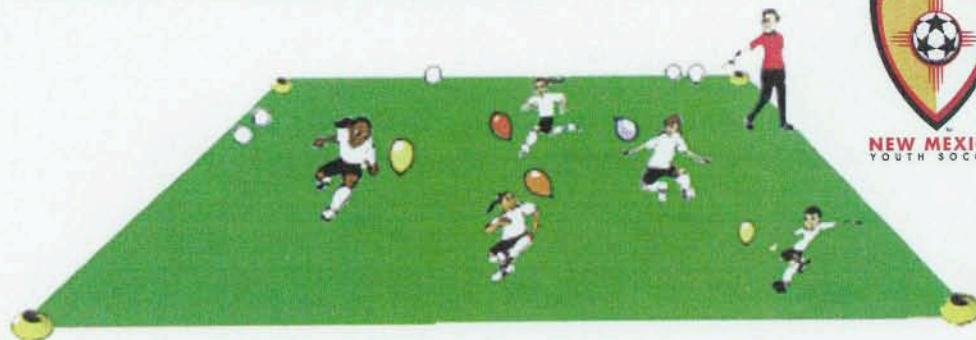
LESSON PLAN: US RECEIVING



Warm-Up:

"Juggling Balloons or Beach Balls"

Each player tries to keep their balloon or beach ball up in the air using any body part except for hands. Count how many touches. If it falls to the ground, pick it up and try again.



- Follow object/ball with your eyes
- Move to get behind and in line with it
- Don't stretch for it

2ND ACTIVITY:

"Juggling with a Partner"

Same as warm-up, but now 2 players compete against other pairs to keep the object up in the air using as many touches in 3-minute period.

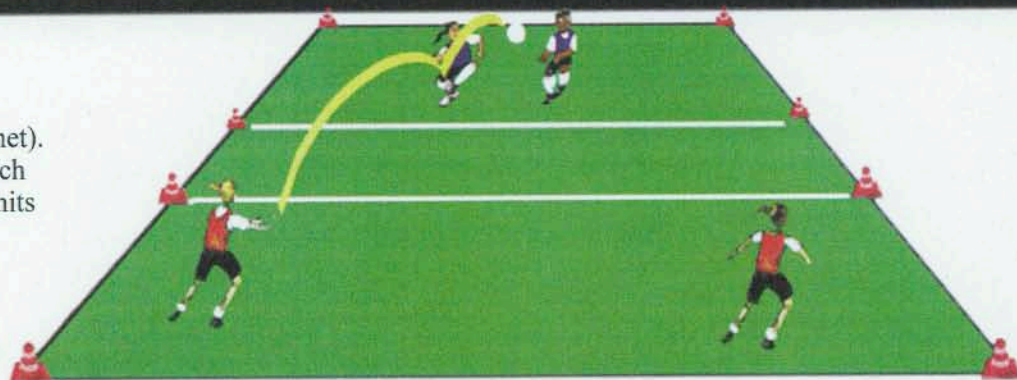


- Move to get behind and in line with object
- Select the surface quickly

3RD ACTIVITY:

"Soccer Newcomb"

(use size 3 ball, not too inflated)
20x15 (one yd. "dead space" for net).
2 teams of 2 play toss-receive-catch over the net. If caught, point; if hits ground, no point -- toss it over. Allow 1 bounce. Partner helps catch/control.



- Move quickly to get behind and in line with flight of ball
- Select surface early
- "Withdraw" on contact

4TH ACTIVITY:

"Toss-control-catch"

4v4 in 40x30-yard area (includes 5 yd. end-zone on each end).
Toss-receive-catch to advance ball.
If ball drops to ground, goes to other team.
Score by receiving and catching in your end zone.
Opponent cannot block the toss.



- Move to the ball
- Select surface early
- Look, get heads up quickly
- Move to open space

5TH ACTIVITY:

"The Game"

4v4 in 45x30 with 4-yd-wide goals, no GK.
Coach is Boss of Balls. Toss new one to a player after a goal or out of play. 1 pt for goal, 2 pts for volley goal.



- Move to the ball
- Move to open space
- Look
- Choose surface early

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U-8 LESSON PLAN: COOPERATIVELY COMPETING (EMPHASIS ON DRIBBLING)



Warm-Up

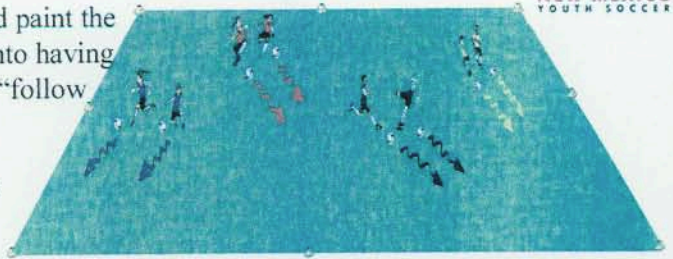
"Paint The Square"

Players pair up with a teammate. They each have a soccer ball.

Tell them to pretend the ball is a paint brush and as a pair try and paint the entire square by dribbling the ball around the square. Progress into having them create or "paint" a picture with the ball by dribbling. Like "follow the leader". Make sure you have them switch who the leader is.

Guided Discovery question: How can you and your partner "paint" more of the field?

Answer: Communicating and getting our head up while we dribble.



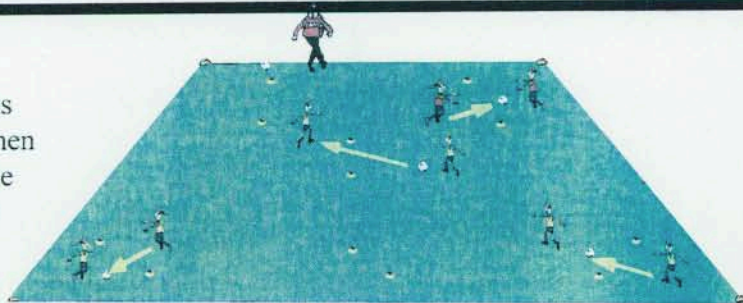
1st Activity-

Buddy "Gates"

Players are still paired up with their teammate. Small goals (gates) are created in the field. Each pair scores a point when either of the two dribbles through a gate. After they dribble through they need to find their teammate so they can pass the ball to them. Progress to adding parents/coach blocking a gate so they have to choose another one.

Guided Discovery question: How can you and your partner score more points?

Answer: By getting our head up after we dribble through the gate to score.



2nd Activity "Two headed Sharks"

This is a variation of "sharks and minnows". Players are paired up with a teammate and share one ball. Two players are in the middle and each share a bib, towel, etc (do not link arms). The "two headed" shark can not split up. The two players in the middle are it. They are trying to tag someone who has a ball. If a player gets tagged then they along with their partner are it and become a two headed shark as well. The paired up players that are not "it" try to get their ball from one end to the other end without getting tagged by a "two headed" shark. The one rule is that both players in a pair must dribble the ball to the other line. This will force them to play with their teammate.

Guided discovery question: How can you and your partner make it easier to not get tagged?

Answer: By spreading out and also coming to help when they are about ready to be tagged.



3rd Activity

"Matthews" Line Game

This is a 4v4 game but it is always played with 2 balls going at the same time. The object is to dribble the ball over a line. When a team scores by dribbling over a line, they look for a new ball that is delivered by the coach. An extra point is scored if the player that dribbled over the line can tell the coach who passed them the ball. This will encourage them to pass a little bit more.

Guided Discovery Question: How do you know when to dribble and when to pass?

Answer: We can dribble when we have space. We need to pass when someone comes to try and get the ball from us.

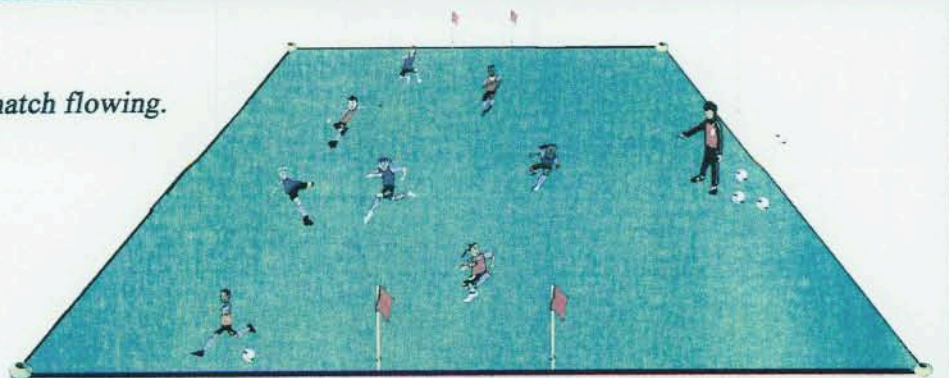


Final Activity-The Match

Play 4v4 to goals

Coach has a supply of balls to keep match flowing.

"CELEBRATE"



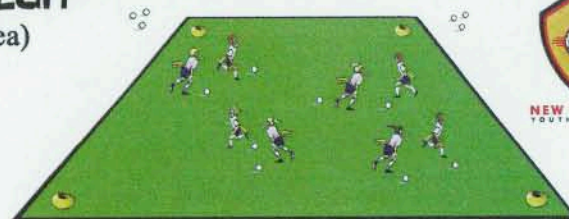
US LESSON PLAN



1st Activity (warm-up)

TAIL TAG (in a defined area)

Each player has a vest/bib tucked into the back of their short. They dribble around until the game is started by the coach. When the game starts, the goal is to steal as many tails as possible. (Keep playing if yours get stolen.) Who grabs the most? Then, play again to see who grabs the most and who is the last to lose their tail!

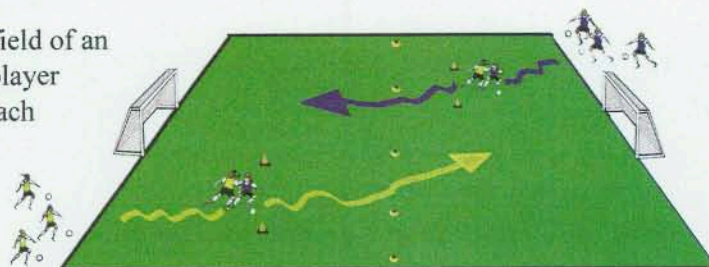


Progressions: Each player dribbles a ball, too. Players dribble the ball in a specific method.

2nd Activity

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

Divide players into two groups, one on each end line of a field of an appropriate size. The two teams face each other and each player has a ball. Mark the centerline with a flag or tall cone on each sideline, calling the line between the flags the "bridge". Place one defender on each bridge at the entrance. The players have to dribble past the guard to get to the other side to shoot. Then let 4 roam inside the two bridges.

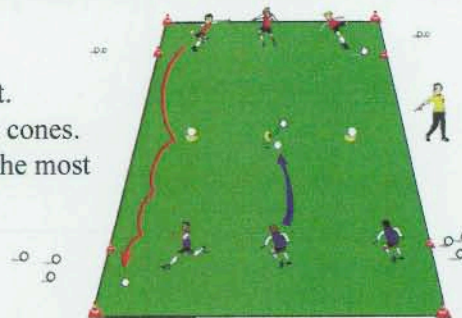


Progressions: At the start allow players to go through as a group. Then have them try to get through individually.

3rd Activity

BALL HUNTING

On the baseline of a rectangular area are 6-8 players. In the middle of the playing area are three cones, each with a ball on top of it. The players shoot from the lines simultaneously trying to knock balls off the cones. Balls that are knocked off are immediately put back on the cones. Who hits the most balls in two minutes?

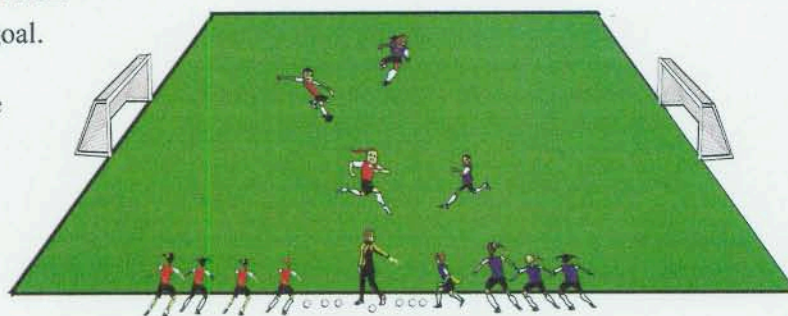


Progressions: Shoot using any surface, shoot using laces, shoot using inside of foot, etc.

4th Activity

"OUT OF THERE"

Reds attack the left goal, and Blues attack the right goal. If a ball goes over a sideline or end-line everyone is "outta there"! If a team scores they stay on and the other team swaps two players in ASAP. The coach throws balls in quickly as possible as demanded by the game. The coach doesn't say anything when throwing balls in, they control who is out!



Progressions: Play 1 v 1 then 2 v 2

5th Activity (the game)

3 v 3 OR 4 v 4



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