



Coach's Season Handbook

Six ready-to-run practices and game-day guidance

Built around Play-Practice-Play

DIVISION C | 1ST-2ND GRADE

You do not need extensive soccer or coaching experience. Set up the field, follow the plan and keep the players moving.

- **Before players arrive**

Bring cones, pinnies and one ball per player when possible. Read the practice page and set up the arrival activity first.

- **As players arrive**

Send each player directly into the arrival activity. Avoid gathering everyone for a long opening talk.

- **Explain briefly**

Show an activity in about 30-60 seconds. Use one or two coaching cues, then let players try it.

- **Keep them active**

Use one ball per player, pairs or small groups. If players are waiting, change the setup so more can participate.

- **Adjust as needed**

Skip, simplify or extend an activity based on the team. The plan is a helpful default, not a test.

- **End with play**

Give players time to play freely and apply what they practiced. Encourage effort and good decisions without directing every touch.

The goal: more touches, more decisions, more enjoyment.

These six principles make practices easier to coach and more valuable for every player.

- **1. Keep every player active**

Minimize standing and long lines. Use one ball per player, pairs or small groups so everyone gets frequent touches.

- **2. Keep coaching simple**

Follow the plan, focus on a few cues and adjust when an activity is not working.

- **3. Teach through the game**

Use game-like activities that help players see options and make decisions.

- **4. Teach at the team's level**

Start simply, watch how players respond and add challenge when they are ready.

- **5. Build fundamentals over time**

Revisit core skills throughout the season. Players will develop at different rates.

- **6. Make soccer enjoyable**

Keep sessions positive and energetic. When coaches have fun, players are more likely to participate and try again.

KEEP THEM MOVING. KEEP IT POSITIVE. HAVE FUN.

DIVISION C | 1ST-2ND GRADE | 80 MINUTES | SIZE 3 BALL | 7V7, NO GOALKEEPER

What players are ready to learn

Build confidence with the ball, learn basic rules and begin to recognize teammates, opponents and open space.

Core skills to emphasize

- ☐ **DRIBBLE** Control the ball and change direction
- ☐ **PASS** Use the inside of the foot and receive under control
- ☐ **STRIKE** Make clean contact and shoot accurately
- ☐ **DEFEND** Stay between the attacker and the goal
- ☐ **SUPPORT** Spread out and help the player with the ball
- ☐ **RESTART** Learn throw-ins, kickoffs and goal kicks

How to coach this age

Keep explanations short and demonstrations visual. Give every player a ball whenever the activity allows. Praise effort, technique and good decisions. Ask simple questions such as, “Where is the open space?”

EXPECT A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERIENCE

Teach the fundamentals to everyone. Use the easier and harder options to meet players where they are.

Play-Practice-Play: Watch, Teach, Apply

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Begin with a game, teach one focus and return to play. Keep explanations brief so the ball does most of the teaching.

1. PLAY: WATCH

Start a small-sided game with limited instruction.

Watch for:

- What is going well?
- Where are players struggling?
- Is today's focus still useful?

2. PRACTICE: TEACH

Demonstrate activities connected to the focus.

Coach simply:

- One cue at a time
- Let players try
- Make it easier or harder
- Avoid long lines

3. PLAY: APPLY

Return to a game and look for players using the skill.

During play:

- Encourage good choices
- Pause only for a quick point
- Let players solve problems
- Keep the game flowing

A quick adjustment guide

Too hard? Enlarge the space, remove pressure or allow more touches.

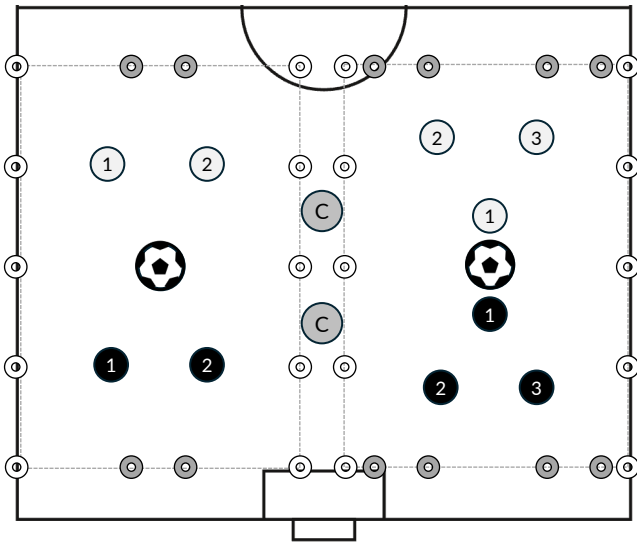
Too easy? Shrink the space, add a defender or add a simple challenge.

Not engaging? Change the game before adding a long explanation.

Why Small-Sided Games Work

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In 1v1, 2v2 or 3v3, each player gets more touches, makes more decisions and spends less time waiting.



SET IT UP

- Use two small areas when attendance allows
- Use cone goals or the field goal
- Make teams of 2-3 players
- Play short rounds and rotate

COACH IT

- Explain rules in under a minute
- Let players play before correcting
- Encourage spreading out and trying again
- Coach individuals briefly on the sideline

Adjust the numbers

Work with the players you have. Use 3v3, 2v2, 3v2 or 1v1. If attendance is low, set up one small-sided field instead of two. Keep teams small so every player stays involved.

Change the goals

To encourage players to spread out and find space, give each team two small goals to attack. Use cone goals near the corners. Players must look up, choose a goal and move away from bunching.

Six-Practice Season Plan

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Each plan is ready to run and follows a logical progression, with skills introduced, reinforced and applied throughout the season.

#	FOCUS	WHAT PLAYERS PRACTICE
1	Ball Control & Dribbling	Control, changing direction and protecting the ball
2	Passing & Moving	Passing, receiving and supporting a teammate
3	Striking & Finishing	1v1 attacking, quick shots and clean contact
GR	Game Readiness	Spacing, defending and essential restarts
5	Creating Space & Support	Reducing bunching, width and passing options
6	Defending & Transitioning	Engaging the ball, staying goal-side and recovering

FIT THE PLANS TO YOUR SCHEDULE

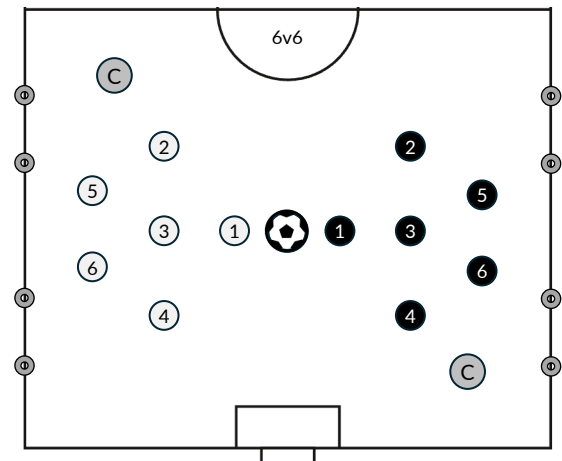
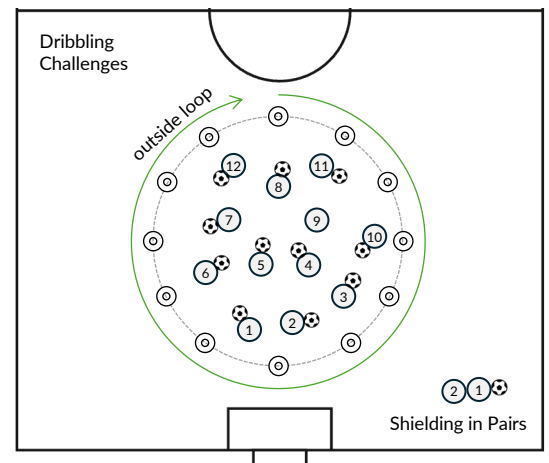
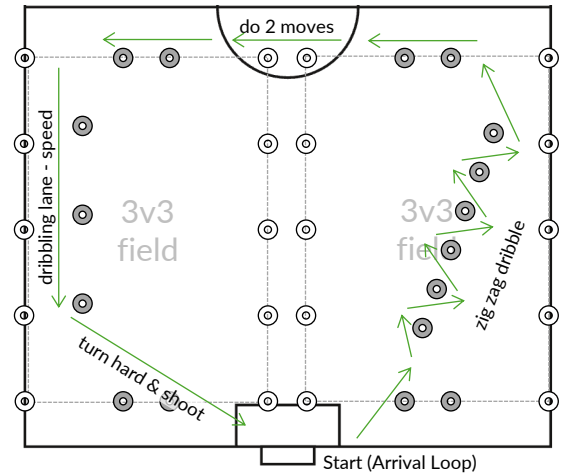
The number and timing of practices will vary by league schedule. Use the Game Readiness session for your final practice before the first game. Complete the remaining plans in order as your schedule allows.

Practice 1 | Ball Control & Dribbling

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Build confidence changing direction and protecting the ball.

5 min	Arrival Loop Dribble the cone course. Finish with a shot. Retrieve the ball and repeat.
20 min	Play: 3v3 Let players play; watch how they control and protect the ball.
20 min	Dribbling Challenges Outside Loop Dribble around the outside. On command, stop, turn, change direction. Traffic Jam Dribble through the middle. Keep the ball close, look up, avoid others. Red Light, Green Light Change speeds and change direction. Watch out for others.
10 min	Shielding in Pairs One player protects the ball with the foot and body while a partner applies light pressure. Switch often.
25 min	Play: 6v6 Encourage a change of direction before passing or shooting.



COACHING CUES

Keep it close. Look up. Change direction. Use your body to protect the ball.

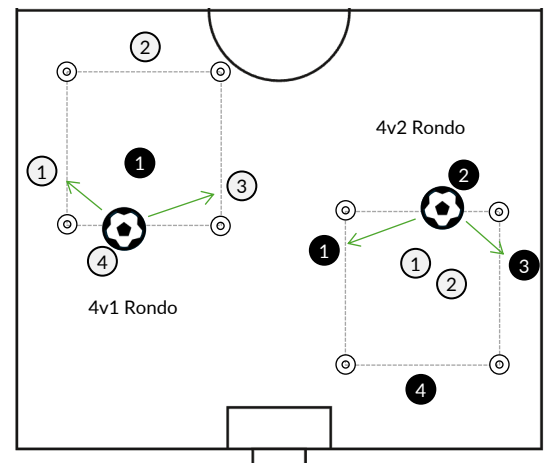
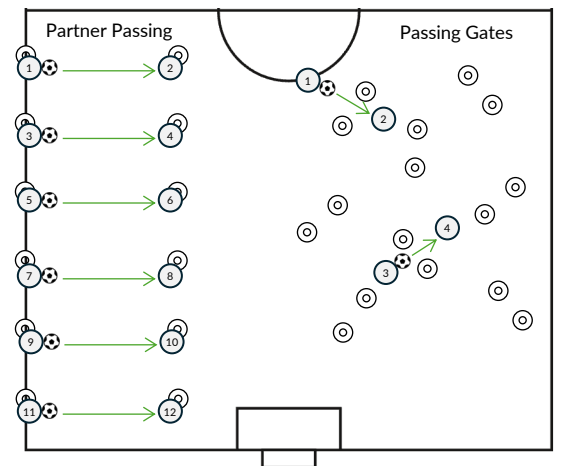
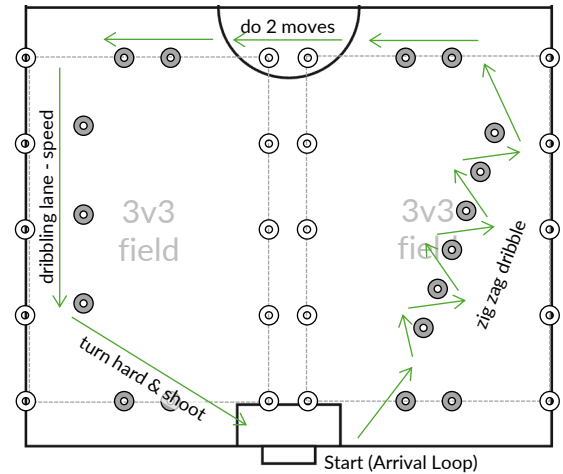
Take short water breaks during transitions as needed.

Practice 2 | Passing & Moving

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Pass accurately, receive under control and move to help.

5 min	Arrival Loop Dribble the cone course. Finish with a shot. Retrieve the ball and repeat.
15 min	Play: 3v3 Watch players spread out, move after passing and give teammates an option.
10 min	Partner Passing Pass with the inside of the foot. Receive with a soft first touch.
10 min	Passing Gates Pairs pass through a gate, then move to a new one. Lead the receiver into space.
10 min	Rondo Split into two groups. Four players keep the ball against one or two defenders. Move around the box to create passing options.
30 min	Play: 6v6 Encourage players to pass, move and support the ball. Use 2 goals at each end.



COACHING CUES

Plant beside the ball. Pass with the inside of the foot. First touch into space. Pass, then move.

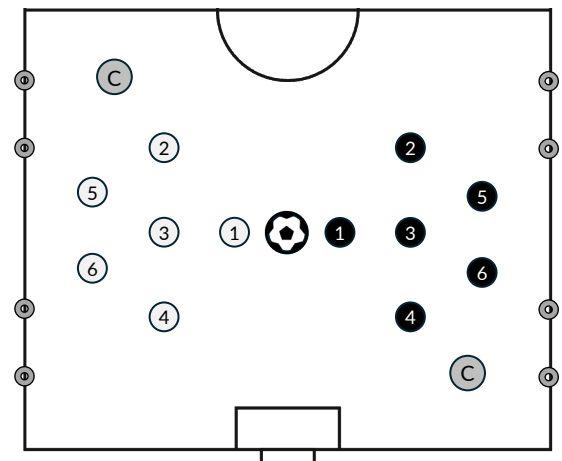
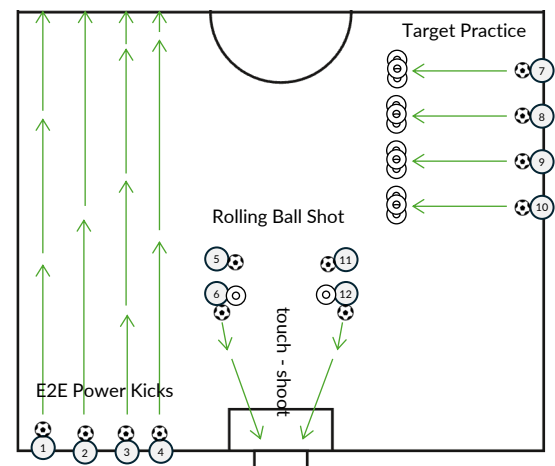
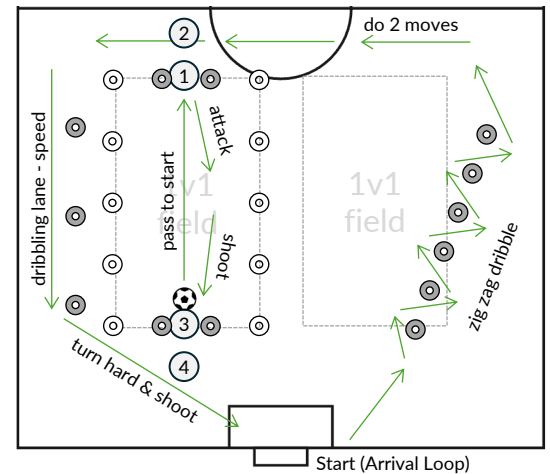
Take short water breaks during transitions as needed.

Practice 3 | Striking & Finishing

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Build clean striking technique, move the ball forward and shoot confidently.

5 min	Arrival Loop Dribble the cone course. Finish with a shot. Retrieve the ball and repeat.
20 min	Play: 1v1 Quick Fire Defender passes to attacker and defends. Attacker drives forward and shoots quickly.
10 min	End-to-end (E2E) Power Kicks Point toe down, lock the ankle and follow through. Kick toward halfway, turn and repeat. Coach players as they go.
10 min	Target Practice Kick, retrieve and repeat until targets fall. Reset them for another round.
10 min	Rolling Ball Shot Touch ball forward, shoot while rolling.
25 min	Play: 6v6 Attack forward and shoot when the opening appears.



COACHING CUES

Go forward. Get the ball out from your feet. Accuracy before power. Shoot when the opening appears.

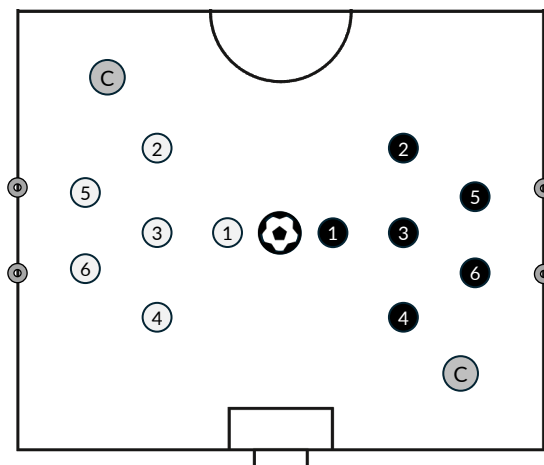
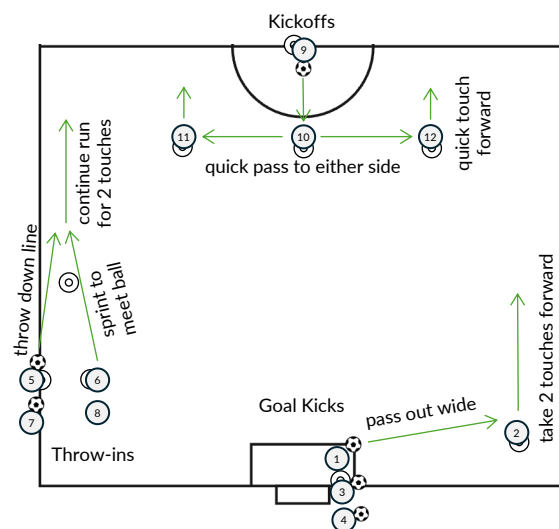
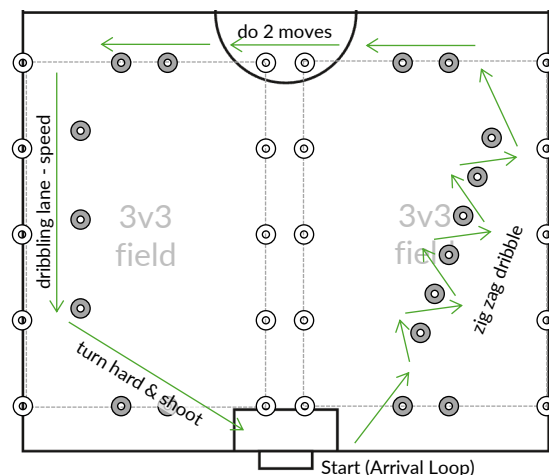
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Game Readiness | Use Before the First Game

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Learn common restarts and move the ball wide, away from goal and downfield.

5 min	Arrival Loop Dribble the cone course. Finish with a shot. Retrieve the ball and repeat.
20 min	Play: 3v3 Use directional goals and natural restarts. Watch for width, the correct direction of attack and recovery toward goal.
5 min	Why Wide and Away? Compare shots from the side and center. Wide angles make shooting harder, so move the ball wide and away from goal.
25 min	Essential Restarts – Rotating Stations GOAL KICKS Pass wide. Receiver takes a fast touch forward. Passer becomes receiver. THROW-INS Throw down the line. Teammate times the run and takes a touch forward. KICKOFFS Kick back, pass wide, move forward. Practice twice and rotate positions.
25 min	Play: 6v6 Use natural restarts; add four goals to encourage width.



COACHING CUES

Restart quickly. Goal kicks wide and away. Throw-ins down the line. Kickoffs back, then wide. Move to support.

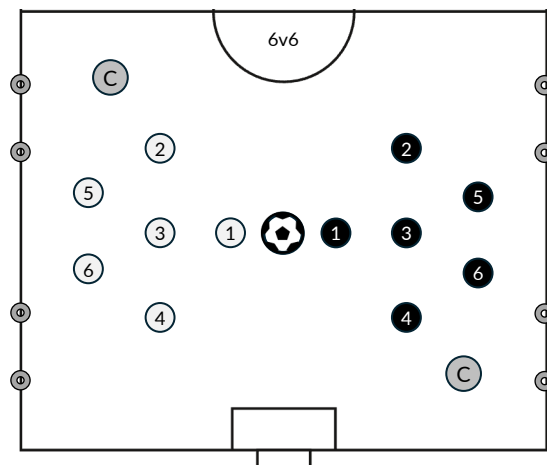
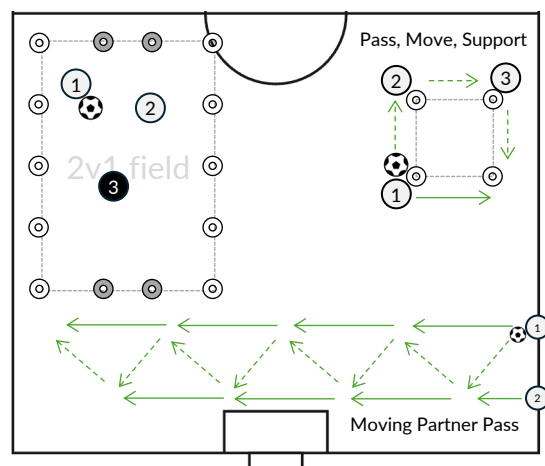
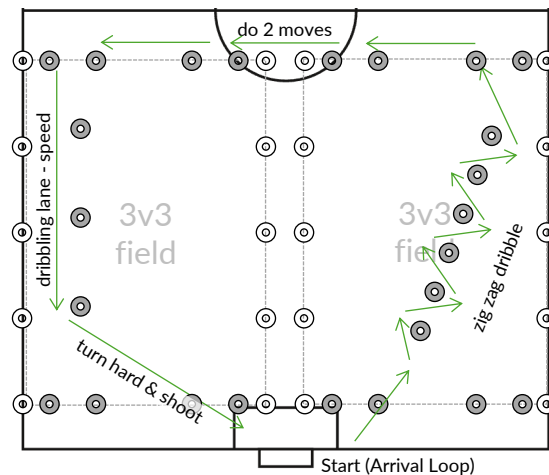
Take short water breaks during transitions as needed.

Practice 5 | Creating Space & Support

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Reduce bunching, create width and support the ball.

5 min	Arrival Loop Dribble the cone course. Finish with a shot.
20 min	Play: 3v3 to Four Goals Let them play. Four goals encourage width; watch who moves to support.
10 min	Pass, Move, Support Three players use four corners. Pass, then move to the empty corner to support.
10 min	Moving Partner Passing Partners travel across the field, passing slightly ahead. Stay even and maintain space between each other.
10 min	2v1 Support Game Two attackers score through either goal. The off-ball player moves wide or behind to help. Rotate the defender often.
25 min	Play: 6v6 Goals count double after using width or completing a pass before scoring.



COACHING CUES

Spread out. Find open space. Pass, then move. Give the player with the ball two options.

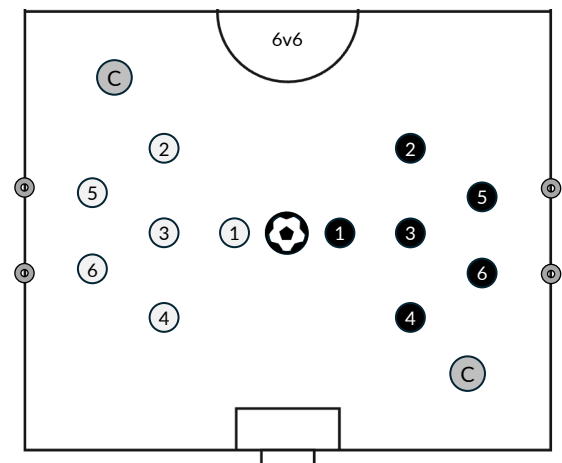
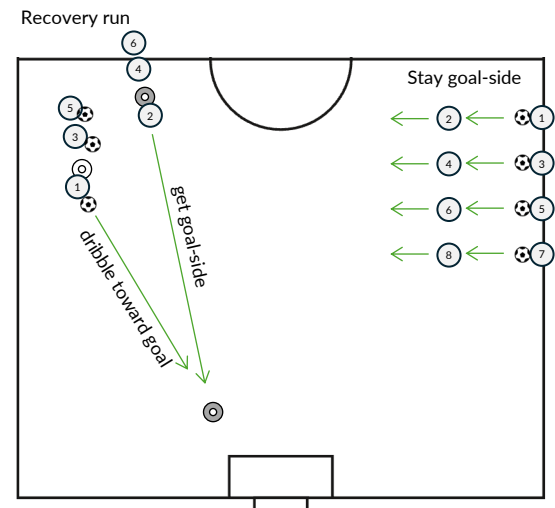
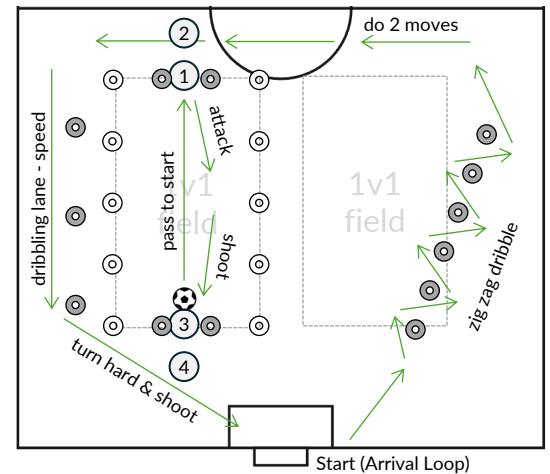
Take short water breaks during transitions as needed.

Practice 6 | Defending & Transitioning

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Close space, stay goal-side and cut off the path to goal.

5 min	Arrival Loop Dribble the cone course. Finish with a shot. Retrieve the ball and repeat.
20 min	Play: 1v1 Quick Fire Defender passes. Attacker drives and shoots; defender closes and stays goal-side.
10 min	Stay Goal-Side Move across the field in pairs. Defender shuffles backward, keeping the attacker and ball in front. Switch roles and return.
10 min	Recovery Run Attacker drives to goal. Defender races to the goal-side cone, faces the attacker and defends the shot. Switch roles.
10 min	Sharks & Minnows Three sharks defend as others dribble across. Win a ball and switch roles.
25 min	Play: 6v6 When possession changes, react quickly: attack forward or recover goal-side.



COACHING CUES

Nearest player closes space. Others recover goal-side. Stay patient and cut off the run. Win the ball, then attack.

Take short water breaks during transitions as needed.

What Does Our Team Need?

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Use this after the first few games. Assess the team as a whole, then choose a focus for a warm-up or later practice.

TEAM SKILL	GOING WELL	KEEP BUILDING	NEEDS FOCUS
Controlling the ball	☐	☐	☐
Dribbling away from pressure	☐	☐	☐
Passing and receiving	☐	☐	☐
Moving after passing	☐	☐	☐
Spreading out and supporting	☐	☐	☐
Defending between attacker and goal	☐	☐	☐
Recovering when possession is lost	☐	☐	☐
Understanding positions and restarts	☐	☐	☐
Communicating and working together	☐	☐	☐

Our next focus: _____

What the team already does well: _____

Activity Menu: Ball Control & Passing

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Use these as substitutions or game-day warm-ups. Type labels show each activity's primary purpose.

TYPE	ACTIVITY	HOW IT WORKS	ADJUST IT
SKILL BUILDER	Traffic Jam	Every player dribbles in one area, changing speed and direction.	Easier: enlarge the area. Harder: weaker foot or smaller area.
ENERGIZER	Red Light, Green Light	Every player dribbles; stop on red and go on green.	Add yellow for slow and other colors for turns.
SKILL BUILDER	Shielding in Pairs	One player protects the ball while a partner applies light pressure.	Begin with no stealing; then allow the defender to win it.
SKILL BUILDER	Passing Gates	Pairs pass through gates and move to another gate.	Use wide gates; then count clean passes in 60 seconds.
SKILL BUILDER	Pass and Follow	Groups pass around a triangle and follow each pass.	Use two touches; then add a passive defender.
SMALL-SIDED GAME	Four-Goal Game	Small teams can score through either of two goals.	Larger field is easier; require a pass to add challenge.

Activity Menu: Attack, Defense & Energy

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These activities build game habits or quickly restore energy and engagement.

TYPE	ACTIVITY	HOW IT WORKS	ADJUST IT
SMALL-SIDED GAME	1v1 Quick Fire	Attacker receives a pass, attacks immediately and shoots as the passer defends.	Move defender farther away; then reduce space or time.
SKILL BUILDER	Finish After a Pass	A player receives a pass across the body and finishes quickly.	Stop the ball first; then try a one-touch finish.
SKILL BUILDER	Stay Goal-Side	Defender stays between the attacker and goal as the attacker moves.	Walk first; then add a dribbling attacker.
ENERGIZER	Clean Your Backyard	Teams move balls out of their half until time is called.	Use a larger area; then require controlled passes.
ENERGIZER	Sharks & Minnows	Players dribble across while defenders try to win a ball.	Start with one defender; add more or reduce space.
ENERGIZER	Freeze Tag with a Ball	Everyone dribbles; tagged players freeze until helped by a teammate.	Coaches tag slowly; then require a turn to become free.

Build Your Own Practice Plan

Practice focus: _____

Date: _____

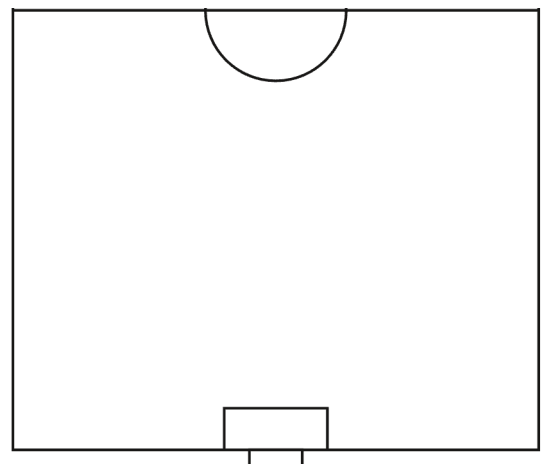
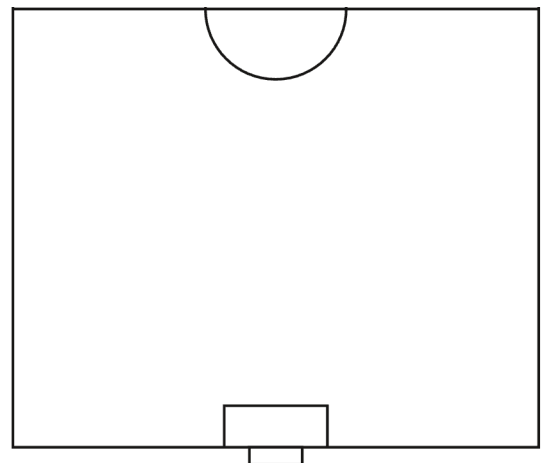
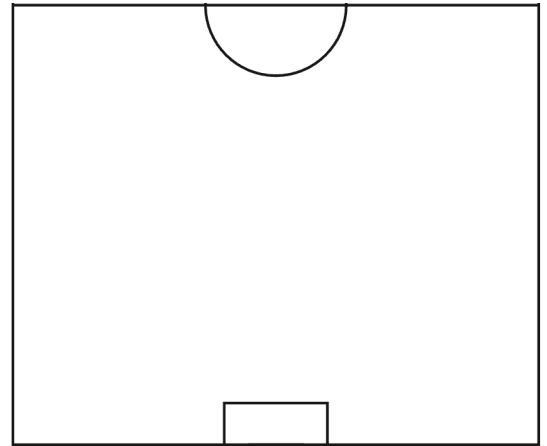
What should players learn or improve?

Arrival

**Opening
Play**

**Practice
Activities**

Closing Play



Coaching cues: _____

Game day is another chance for players to touch the ball, make decisions and enjoy soccer. Coach the players without trying to play the game for them.

- **Know the full game-day flow**

20-minute warm-up, four 10-minute quarters, plus short quarter breaks and a brief halftime.

- **Use the warm-up well**

Start the arrival loop as players arrive, then run one skill activity. Leave time for referee check-in, captains and positions.

- **Coach mainly from the sideline**

Give feedback to substitutes and players coming off the field, when they can listen and respond. Keep on-field directions brief so players learn to make their own decisions.

- **Rotate for participation**

Substitute at even intervals. Balance playing time and rotate positions instead of favoring the strongest lineup. A lineup or substitution app can help.

- **Keep it positive and balanced**

Praise effort and good decisions. If the score becomes lopsided, coordinate with the other coach and ask the leading team for three passes before shooting.

- **Use the game to plan ahead**

Afterward, note one team strength and one need to address in the next warm-up or practice.

Brief cues help. Continuous shouting does not.

When an activity takes too long

Skip the next activity or shorten it. Do not rush players through transitions just to complete the page.

When players are waiting

Add another ball, create a second station, divide into smaller groups or let waiting players practice with a ball.

When energy or attention drops

Take a water break, simplify the activity or choose an ENERGIZER from the activity menu.

When ability levels vary

Keep the activity but change the challenge. Give developing players more space and time; give advanced players less space or added pressure.

When extra hands are available

Use one coach to lead while others run stations or roam. Recruit a parent when an activity needs more stations than coaches.

After the session

Write down one team strength and one priority for next time. Small observations make future coaching easier.

HAVE FUN WITH IT

Your energy, patience and enjoyment will be contagious.