

## **Elective Drills**

Any of these drills can be done for as long as they are working well for your group. Also, it is best if you don't do all one type of drill in a single day. Alternate between shooting, dribbling, and passing drills during any single day in order to keep things fresh. Repeat drills as necessary in order to further emphasize a skill. Don't forget to do a demonstration in order to help your players understand exactly what they will be doing.

- **Passing (groups of 2):** Players pass the ball back and forth to each other from about 15 feet apart. The drill alternates between passing without rules to passing with rules. Such as right foot only, left foot only, stopping the ball, sweeping (first touch on the ball moves it to either side with the inside or outside of the foot), one touch (each player kicks the ball without stopping it first).

Acquired Skills: Players learn to make and receive passes more accurately while becoming more comfortable with the ball at their feet.

*Coaching Tips:* A player's shoulder and planting foot (the foot not kicking the ball) will determine where the ball goes. They should both be pointing at the target with the planting foot directly beside the ball and the shoulders over the ball. Short passes are typically made with the instep (the inside of the foot) for the best accuracy.

- **Receiving Long Balls (groups of 2):** Partners take turns receiving or "fielding" balls thrown to them in the air from about 10 feet away. Balls should be tossed (most likely underhand) to the player at chest height, waist height, knee height, foot height from the air, and any height in-between in order to simulate a ball kicked to them from a long distance.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to receive passes made from a distance and how to take control of the ball from the air.

*Coaching Tips:* In order to save time, it works best to have one player throwing the ball with one receiving it. Half way through the exercise, have the players switch positions. Make sure the balls are tossed lightly so that players may focus on where and how to receive the ball.

- **Long Passes (groups of 2):** This drill is largely dependant upon space, but is quite effective in preparing a player for long passes that may be needed in a game situation. Follow the same rules for regular passes, but at a distance of 30 or more feet away.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to make and receive long practices while getting a feel for how hard they must kick a ball in order to make it go a certain distance.

*Coaching Tips:* A player's shoulder and planting foot (the foot not kicking the ball) will determine where the ball goes. They should both be pointing at the target with the planting foot beside the ball, and the shoulders not directly over the ball. Some long passes may require a ball to be kicked with the laces (part of the foot which is covered by the laces) but the instep is usually more accurate if it can generate enough force to complete the pass.

- **Wall Passing (groups of 2):** Make a 30 foot long line of cones with about 5 feet between each cone. Form a line at the end of the cones with each partner on one side of the cone. Partners pass the ball to each other back and forth between each opening in the cones and then return to the line to wait for their next turn. Start slow and then have them speed up.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to make and receive passes on the move while getting the idea that you have to make yourself open in order to receive a pass.

*Coaching Tips: These passes should also be made with the instep, but will have to be played into open space as opposed to directly to the feet of their partner.*

Variation: If this activity seems too advanced for your players you can line them up individually, each with their own ball. Stand facing the line about 15 feet away and 10 feet to the side. The player then passes you the ball and continues running past you into space where you have passed the ball to them. Once they get the hang of it, rotate the players into your position.

- **Dribbling (individual):** Line the players up side by side with their own ball, about an arm's length apart. Players then dribble the ball down the field in a straight line alternating between slow (ball is kept close to the feet), fast (space between ball and feet allows the player to run faster), left foot only, right foot only, and weaving through cones (from a single-file line).

Acquired Skills: Players learn to control the ball while moving.

*Coaching Tips: Have several coaches watching players and offering critique. Things can get out of control without supervision and this is a drill that must be practiced correctly in order to really make an impact.*

- **Touchwork (individual):** Players are lined up single file with a good amount of space separating them from each other; and each player with their own ball. At your command, players will rotate between several drills. Knocking the ball back and forth between their own feet, while standing in the same spot; running sideways and rolling the ball over the foot to the left, running sideways and rolling the ball over the foot to the right, and dribbling the ball and stopping it with the bottom of your foot.

Acquired Skills: Players increase their agility with the ball and master control while dribbling.

*Coaching Tips: Have several coaches watching players and offering critique. Things can get out of control without supervision and this is a drill that must be practiced correctly in order to really make an impact.*

- **Relay Race (3 teams):** Divide the group into three equal teams, each standing in a line 30 feet away from their own 30 foot line of cones (Players at one cone, 30 feet away begins a cone at every 3rd foot with 10 cones). The first player in each line has a ball, starts by dribbling to the cones, then weaves through the cones down and back, and passes the ball to the next player in line. The next player in line cannot move until the ball comes to them; they cannot run out to meet the ball. They continue as the first player did until all players are finished. The first team done wins!

Acquired Skills: Players get a feel for what it means to dribble and pass accurately while under pressure.

*Coaching Tips: Cones are really a must for this drill. Make sure the teams are spread out so that they don't get into each other's way. Keeping the ball at one's feet is a must for dribbling through cones.*

- **Fakes or "Jukes" (individual):** Players each have their own ball and line up single file. A single cone is 15 feet away from the line. Each player individual approaches the cone with the ball at their feet and performs the "move" as if the cone were an approaching player. Rotate between several different moves or fakes.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to attack with the ball and allude oncoming defenders.

*Coaching Tips: If you don't already know some moves, it is far too difficult to describe them on paper. Ask around and search the internet for videos, but if you can't find any this may not be a good drill for your camp. Variation: If you can't find*

any fakes to use, then try this variation. Two lines 15 feet apart, one player has the ball and approaches a coach 20 feet away and passes to their partner in order to keep the coach from coming into contact with the ball.

- **Shielding (groups of 2):** Two players and a ball each have their own space. The player with the ball keeps their arms up, butt out, with the ball at their feet. The goal is to keep the other player at your back so that they may not reach the ball. Although the defending player may have their arms up, it is against the rules for either player to swing or push with their arms. Players switch positions after a few minutes.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to maintain possession of the ball against pressure.

*Coaching Tips:* This is a useful skill, but reiterate the importance of keeping your head up and looking around. This skill should only be used in a game long enough to hold on to the ball until help arrives or a pass can be made. This is a physical drill, but players should not actually be pushing each other.

- **Every Man for Himself (individual):** An easy postlude from the previous drill, this game is always a highlight. Make a tight square, depending on how many players you have. Each player has to protect their own ball while trying to kick other player's ball out of the square. If a player's ball goes out of the square, they are out and the last player with a ball in the square wins.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to be mindful of their surroundings while both defending and attacking the ball.

*Coaching Tips:* It's safe to let this one go on its own. Make sure to repeat the game several times so that players who were out quickly get another chance.

- **Heading (groups of 2):** One player lightly tosses the ball to the other player who heads the ball back to them. They should be standing around 8 feet apart. On the coaches command, the player "heading" the ball rotates between heading it to the feet, body, and head of their partner who is throwing them the ball. The player throwing the ball picks it up, no matter where it is played, and tosses it back to the head of their partner. Switch after a few minutes. Finally, players pass the ball to each other back and forth from head to head.

Acquired Skills: Players learn the basics of hitting and directing the ball with their head.

*Coaching Tips:* Once again, the shoulders will direct where the ball goes. Headers are made with the entire back as the force, not the neck, and the shoulders squarely pointed at the target. The part of the head that makes contact is the center of the forehead; not the side or top of the head.

- **Shooting (individual):** Players stand in a single file line facing the coach who is 30 feet away. In turn, they pass the ball to the coach who stops the ball. The player runs at the ball and kicks it toward the goal. After a while, the coach moves 30 feet to the side as well. Then the player passes the ball diagonally to the coach and runs straight toward the goal. The coach gives the player a leading pass which they must shoot without stopping.

Acquired Skills: Players learn the basics of shooting the ball and practice making one-touch shots on the run.

*Coaching Tips:* Most shots are made with the laces (part of the foot that is covered by criss-crossing laces on the shoe). A player's shoulder and planting foot (the foot not kicking the ball) will determine where the ball goes. They should both be pointing at the target with the planting foot directly beside the ball and the shoulders over the

ball. If no goal is available, this drill can be done against a fence, wall, or many coaches willing to chase the ball.

- **Quick Shots (small groups):** Groups of 5-9 players with one less ball the number of players in a group. One player stands facing the goal at the edge of the penalty area; 18 yards away from the goal. The remaining players form two lines facing the shooter, on both sides, each with a ball at their feet. Alternating sides, the ball is passed from the line to the shooter who must strike the ball only once toward the goal. When all the balls are played, the next person becomes the shooter. No goal keeper is necessary. Rotate several times between all the players.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to shoot the ball directly from a pass into the shooting area, as well as how to make accurate passes into the field of play.

*Coaching Tips: The same tips from the "Shooting" drill still apply. This is meant to be a fast-paced drill but it is important that balls are played accurately to the shooter just inside or outside of the 18 yard mark. If you are dealing with primarily younger players you can have them shoot from a closer distance.*

- **Finishing (individual):** The coach is standing in the goalie position with the players facing the goal in a single file line about 20 yards away. The players take turns approaching the goal and the coach rotates between bouncing, throwing, rolling, kicking, etc. the ball. Players then take no more than one touch on the ball before shooting it at the goal.

Acquired Skills: Players learn the basics of shooting a moving ball simulating deflections or clears from the goal keeper.

*Coaching Tips: The same tips from the "Shooting" drill still apply. Balls should be played at all heights in varying locations in front of the goal to give the students the most amount of practice and the widest range of experience. They should be approaching the ball at full speed.*

- **Crosses (2 teams):** Break the players into teams of no more than eight, so long as each team has a partner team. One team defends the goal, while the other team shoots at balls played from the corner (or from about 30 yards from the center of the goal). Once the defensive team clears the ball, play stops and another ball is sent in. Switch after several tries or when a team scores.

Acquired Skills: Players learn to shoot the ball directly from a pass into the shooting area, as well as how to make accurate passes into the field of play.

*Coaching Tips: Use a coach as the goal keeper and to send the ball in from the corner. If the group is primarily younger players, send the balls in from a closer distance. Practice shirts are helpful in order to tell teams apart. This drill will most likely use skills learned from all of the passing and shooting drills. For this reason it is considered advanced.*