

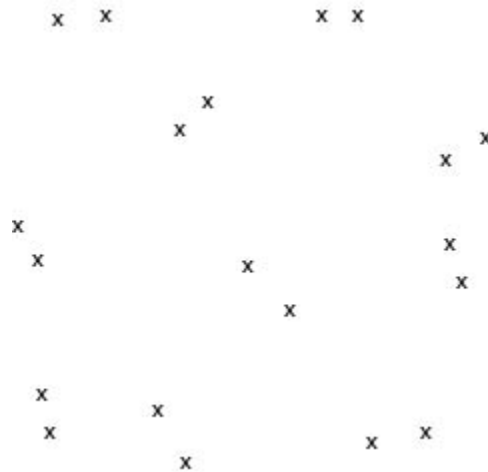
Skills taught: Dribbling and defending

Age: U8 and up

Equipment needed: cones or discs, pinnies or scrimmage vests, balls

The first part of this drill is a good warm up drill for the start of practice.

Using an area of about 30 yds. x 40 yds, set up a number of gates (see diagram). A gate is two cones set up to form a goal. The cones should be set 2 yds apart to form a gate. For the U8's and even the U10's you might want to set them 3 yds apart. I usually set up 2 or 3 more gates than the number of pairs of kids at practice. So, if I have 12 kids, that is 6 pairs, so I would set up 8 or 9 gates.



the x's = cones

Divide the players into two groups or teams, the reds and blues. Match up a red and a blue player. Each pair should have a ball. This is simply a 1v1 game where the players try to score points by dribbling through as many gates as they can. The red player starts with the ball and tries to score as many goals as possible. If the blue player wins the ball, then he tries to score goals. The only restriction is that the players cannot dribble through the same goal two times in a row. All players play at the same time. After a set period of time (about 5 minutes), stop the game and get the scores. Then have them switch partners. Maybe you match up the top goal scores against each other. You can do this three times and get a very strenuous work out.

The next progression of this drill (which will begin to work with spacing and switching fields) is for U10 players and up. It is set up the same way with the gates remaining the same. But now it is all the reds vs. all the blues. Start the game with only one ball in play. In order to score a goal, the ball must be passed through a gate and received by a teammate. Those are the only rules that need to be explained. Start them off playing a 5-minute game with a 1-minute break at "halftime". This break is very important because typically, the first 2-3 minutes of this game is chaotic. At first the players will try to

dribble to a gate and then pass the ball through to a teammate who is marked up. During the halftime, explain to the players that it actually takes 3 players to score a goal, not just the two they have been trying to use (the player with the ball and the target through the gate). The three players are: the player with the ball, and the two players who are working together to find an open gate. Once they find an open gate, the player with the ball can pass the ball to one of these open players who then play it through the gate to the other one. Once they start to think in terms of needing three players to score a goal and that two of them must find an open (or unmarked) gate, then they will start to experience success in this game.

As the players get accustomed to this game, they will get more comfortable with playing with their heads up and looking to players who have proper support and spacing.