

U4 & U5

Pirates of the Caribbean

Kids soccer drills need to be fun... and this one certainly delivers! Pirates of the Caribbean is a game designed for coaching the U4 age group. It needs a lot of energy from you as a coach.

preparation

Take a look at the simple layout of the drill below. To set-up you will need a cone for the kids to stand behind to begin. You will then need colored pinneys (or cones) down the other end to act as the treasure!



Explanation

To begin you will need to get the kids excited about playing soccer. Tell the young players that this game is "...a fun game called pirates of the Caribbean. What noise do pirates

make?" The kids will make an 'arghhh' noise. Then you need to tell them that pirates love treasure and the treasure is down the other end of the island.

The kids will need to go one at a time and pick up **one** piece of treasure (cone/pinney) and bring it back to the pirate ship.

1. To get the young 3 and 4 year olds to understand this game, play the first round without soccer balls.
2. The second time they should kick a soccer ball down with them.

progression

A nice little progression to this and other kids soccer drills is adding cones leading up to the treasure so the kids have to weave in and out of them before getting to the end. By placing the cones down the young players have to dribble the soccer ball in different directions - not just straight.

You could also encourage a race parallel with each other to see who can get the most treasure in the quickest time!

coaching points

-> Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball

-> See if the kids can change direction by placing the bottom of their foot on the ball and rolling it behind them. This will eventually turn into the drag-back turn.

Sleeping Bear

A fun U4 soccer practice drill that kids will love is the 'sleeping bear'. This is a simple drill but effective at getting the young 3 and 4 year olds to dribble the soccer ball.

Preparation

You will need the kids lined up next to one another with a soccer ball each at their feet. The coach or a parent will act as the sleeping bear down the other end of the marked out area.



Explanation

This game is all about getting the kids to take little touches of the soccer ball. The kids begin the game by shouting out altogether "What time is it sleeping bear?" The sleeping bear (who will be pretending to sleep talk) will respond with either one-o'clock, two-o'clock, three-o'clock or four-o'clock.

If the bear says three-o'clock, the kids will take three small touches/kicks of the soccer ball toward the bear. This continues until the kids get close to the sleeping bear. The bear will then wake-up and chase the kids back to where they started. Don't be too scary though or they will cry!

Progression

A useful progression to this soccer practice drill is to see how quickly the kids can get back to where they started after the bear wakes up. They must take their ball with them remember. Also, get the kids to show you their drag-back turns and reward the best ones.

****Drag back turns need to be performed by young players using a size 3 soccer ball or they will find it very difficult and trip over the ball.****

Coaching points

-> Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball

-> See if the kids can change direction by placing the bottom of their foot on the ball and rolling it behind them. This will eventually turn into the drag-back turn. Do this when the bear wakes up!

-> Get the kids to say with you 'oh no big toe' to encourage them not to use their toes to kick the ball.

Tunnel Ball

Coaching youth soccer needs to be fun, especially when the the young players are only 3 or 4 years old.

It can be difficult coaching this age group when all they want to do is run to their mum and dad.

This game was created to allow the kids to be close to their parents whilst playing to stop them from wondering off or getting upset.

Preperation

You will need a marked out area as shown in the diagram by the white lines. The kids will need a soccer ball each and you will need to get as many parents to help you as possible. The more mum's and dad's that participate the better the drill will work for their kids (tell them this!)



Explanation

The parents will be standing inside the area, spread apart from one another with their legs together.

The kids will be next to you and on your command will dribble (kick) their soccer ball in and out of where their parents are standing still. This is a good time to get some coaching points in.

When you shout "tunnel ball" the parents will open their legs wide and the young players have to kick (pass - inside of foot) the ball through the legs of the adults. The kids should then retrieve their ball and continue to dribble.

progression

When coaching youth soccer remember to be patient and if something isn't working be prepared to change it.

A nice little progression for this game can be to get the kids to crawl through the adults legs after they have kicked their ball through. Kids love getting dirty and being mischievous and this will add a little fun to the game.

coaching points

-> Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball

-> See if the kids can change direction by placing the bottom of their foot on the ball and rolling it behind them. This will eventually turn into the drag-back turn. Do this step by step with them!

-> Get the kids to say with you 'oh no big toe' to encourage them not to use their toes to kick the ball between the parents legs.

Coach says

Soccer coaching tips for younger players can be difficult to explain. The best way to learn is through just doing it - getting out there and coaching. Hopefully this U5 drill called 'coach says' will allow you to see how best to coach the young 4 year olds.

Preparation

You will need a marked out area wide and long enough for the amount of players you have available. Each of your players will need a soccer ball each. You may also need some cones if you wish to progress from the simple version of this game.



Explanation

This game is incredibly straight-forward. The drill is similar to 'simon says' but instead involves soccer related activities. As the coach you will be standing amongst the players.

Everytime you say "coach says... " the kids must perform that task given. However, if you do not say "coach says" at the beginning of the sentence the kids must stay still or carry on the previous task. If a child performs the task without you saying 'coach says' then a fun little forfeit must be given.

Get the kids doing a wide variety of tasks from dribbling, to turns, to putting parts of their body on the ball and exchanging soccer balls with other players.

progression

This is a great drill to get soccer coaching tips in for the kids. To make the drill more fun and challenging you could add cones and get the kids to dribble amongst them. You could also add a goal with a volunteer goal-keeper (parent, assistant coach) to take shots from the kids on your command.

coaching points

-> Make sure the kids use little touches and demonstrate what happens if you kick the ball too far in the drill.

-> See if the kids can change direction by placing the bottom of their foot on the ball and rolling it behind them. This will eventually turn into the drag-back turn. Do this step by step with them!

-> Make sure the kids use the inside and outside of their feet whilst dribbling - not their toes.

-> Make sure the inside of the foot is used when making a pass

Body parts

A fun little soccer drill that kids will love is 'body parts'. This is a straight forward game that gets the kids to dribble the soccer ball and also assist in their body balance.

Preparation

You will need a marked out area not too large to keep the kids close to you. The kids will need a soccer ball each and you will need one too to show them what to do.



Explanation

This soccer game is about getting the kids to use different parts of their body to balance on the soccer ball. On your command the young kids will dribble their ball around the area. Once you shout out a part of the body (e.g. foot) the kids have to stop dribbling and put that part of their body on the ball.

When you call "carry on dribbling" the kids will do just that and await the next body part. Try using parts of the body which may be difficult for them to balance on e.g. their knee, elbows, head, back.

Progression

To make this drill more fun get the kids to do animal impressions. For example, tell the kids to sit on the ball and act like a chicken. Perhaps they could put the ball between their legs and hop like a kangaroo. Use your imagination and keep it fun.

Coaching Points

-> Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball

-> See if the kids can change direction by placing the bottom of their foot on the ball and rolling it behind them. This will eventually turn into the drag-back turn. Do this step by step with them!

-> Get the kids to say with you 'oh no big toe' to encourage them not to use their toes to dribble the ball.

U6

Stuck in the mud

Football training drills such as this one are great to help the kids practice their dribbling skills and turns. Stuck in the mud is a simple drill that kids will love.

Preparation

Have a look at the straight-forward set-up for this drill below. All you will need is the kids to have a soccer-ball each and a coned off area big enough for the amount of kids you have to dribble around comfortably.

One child will not have the ball and will be the mud monster.



Explanation

Stuck in the mud is a simple drill. You will need one child to volunteer as the mud monster and the other kids to have soccer balls at their feet and dribble around the area.

Once you say 'go' the mud monster will try and tag the other kids with soccer balls. Football training drills like this put real emphasis on shielding themselves away from opposing players.

Once a child has been tagged they pick-up their soccer ball and hold it above their head as shown in the center of the diagram. The kid who has been tagged will then shout 'help, i'm stuck in the mud'.

To rescue the kid who has been tagged, another child must kick (pass) the ball between the players legs to free him.

The game continues until the mud monster has tagged all players and no-one can therefore be rescued.

Progression

There are plenty of little things you could add to make football training drills like this suitable for your own team. You could say that the mud monster has to kick players balls out of the area in order to make them stuck, with the kid collecting their ball and returning.

If the kids are struggling to rescue people because the mud monster is too quick, offer a safe 'no-catch' option. If a child is stuck in the mud they can hold their ball in one hand and offer their other hand to a kid who's not yet been caught.

Once the two kids are holding hands neither can be caught and the free kid then passes his ball between the legs of the caught player.

Coaching Points

-> Make sure the kids use little touches and demonstrate what happens if you kick the ball too far in a game.

-> Make sure the kids use the inside and outside of their feet whilst dribbling - not their toes.

-> Make sure the kids focus on accurate passing and do not get too flustered once the mud monster comes.

Through the gates

Football coaching should be about showing children the basics and then allowing them to learn and make their own mistakes.

Preparation

Take a look at the diagram below. The players will have their own ball each and be spread out in the area.



Explanation

This drill is very good at getting the young players to dribble in different directions at pace and with good control. On the coaches command the players will dribble their soccer ball around the area and dribble through as many gates as possible.

Once the kids have been through the gates the game needs to advance to adding in tricks and turns. Different variations are where after a player has been through a gate they have to do a trick or skill. Take a look at what I recommend below:

1. Drag back / pull back turn
2. Inside hook turn
3. Outside hook turn
4. Scissors (skill)

*** To see football coaching skills and turns... please click on the 'skills & tricks' page on the left hand side ***

The great thing about this coaching drill is that there are loads of different variations to the game. At the end of each game where the players have gone through the gates ask the kids

how many they went through and get some players to demonstrate to everyone their turn/skill with plenty of positive feedback then a small helpful comment / progression.

For example, "Jimmy, well done on doing such a great turn. Lets show everyone again... that was really good! Next time, how about looking over your shoulder before you turn to make sure you don't bump into anybody"

There are loads of different skills and turns and additional mini games you can add into the 'through the gates' game. The older and more competent players should have more complex drills but will still enjoy this football coaching drill.

Progression

Try adding more gates with a time restriction so the players have to dribble faster to get through all the gates. This will ultimately put pressure on them and it will be harder to begin with to control their ball. In contrast you could try only having 3 gates in a smaller area so the kids are more likely to bump into each other and therefore good control on the ball, looking up and changing direction are very important to this football coaching drill.

Coaching Points

-> Make sure the kids use little touches and demonstrate what happens if you kick the ball too far in a game.

-> Make sure the kids use the inside and outside of their feet whilst dribbling - not their toes.

-> Demonstrate every turn that you use and show the players how this could work in a game situation.

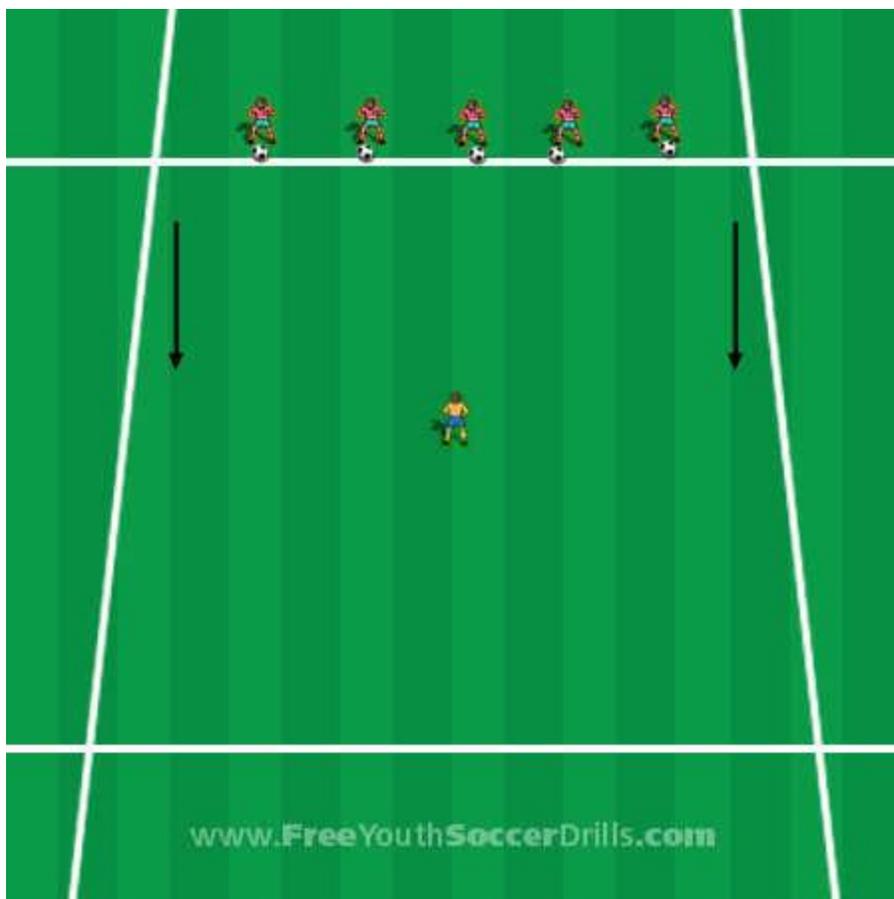
-> Make sure the kids change direction frequently and keep their heads up to see where they are going and ensure they do not bump into anyone.

Sharks & Minnows

Football training drills for five and six year olds should be educational but they also need to be fun. Sharks & Minnows is a simple game but one that can also coach the right technique and skills.

Preparation

Take a look at the diagram below for this Sharks & minnows game. You will need a marked out area with all of the young players at one end of the square and the coach in the middle.



Explanation

Sharks & minnows is a game more than a drill that will get the young players excited about playing soccer and therefore ideal as a warm up game.

All the young players will have a ball each at the end of the square and await the coaches orders. Explain to the players that you are a shark swimming around in the sea and they are fish who must get to the other end of the sea with their soccer ball without the shark eating them.

As I said, this game is designed to be fun, so..... there is a song / rhyme that must be sung before the game can begin.

The coach says: "Fishy, fishy swimming in the sea"

The players respond with: "Sharky, sharky you can't catch me"

The coach can shout "go" and now the players aim to dribble their soccer balls to the other side without getting caught by the shark (coach). The coach should allow all players to get to the other side first time around. After this, it is at the coaches discretion how many fishy they catch every round. At the beginning of each round the song will be sung again. Once a player has been caught they should sit at the side until there is one fishy left.

Football training drills like this one can be adapted to the players you have available and you could allow the players to be sharks too if you feel it would work.

*** Demonstrate clearly how to change direction with the ball using your feet! ***

Progression

At the end of each successful dribble from one end to the other, the coach could ask the fishy's a question regarding what technique the players should use. E.g. "How many feet should we use to dribble with the ball?" Of course, answer is 2. You could allow the fishy's to go around the Shark if they produce a good piece of skill such as the scissors.

Coaching Points

-> Make sure the kids use little touches and demonstrate what happens if you kick the ball too far in a game.

-> Make sure the kids use the inside and outside of their feet whilst dribbling - not their toes.

-> Make sure the kids change direction frequently and keep their heads up to see where they are going and ensure they do not bump into anyone.

Flintstones

Free soccer drills that will coach your players vital skills to become good soccer players. This game is called the Flintstones.

Preparation

Take a look at the diagram below. The players will be split up equally into the four corners as shown with soccer balls placed in the center.



Explanation

This drill is a competition of speed and accurate dribbling. The four separate teams from each corner will compete to get the most soccer balls back to their homes. Tell them that they are the Flintstones and they need rocks to build their homes stronger (which will be the balls).

On your command one person from each corner will run toward the center, collect a soccer ball and dribble it back to their starting point. Once all of the soccer balls have been collected count up the amount of balls and award a point to the team with the most.

The next game is the same but this time the players will dribble the ball into the middle, one at a time from each corner, and run back to their starting point until all the balls are back in the center.

There are so many variations to this game and I will show you a few next - lets keep these soccer drills educational too!

Next, the players should do the same as the first game, however, this time when they collect a ball they must do the drag back turn. Demonstrate this turn with them.

"foot on top of the ball, roll the ball behind you, turn and follow the ball".

Keep playing this game throughout the season until you have covered many new turns such as the inside hook, outside hook, cruyff turn and step-over to name a few.

As well as free soccer drills, you can see free skills and tricks by clicking on the below link

Progression

A nice little way to end this game is by having a free-for-all collect and return game.

All the players run off at once to collect a soccer ball (only one at a time) and take it back to their starting point. They must keep going to others 'houses' to steal a ball and take it back to their own home.

The players are not allowed to take a ball that is being dribbled nor can they protect their own balls from being stolen.

Coaching Points

-> Make sure the kids use little touches and demonstrate what happens if you kick the ball too far in a game.

-> Make sure the kids use the inside and outside of their feet whilst dribbling - not their toes.

-> Demonstrate every turn that you use and show the players how this could work in a game situation.