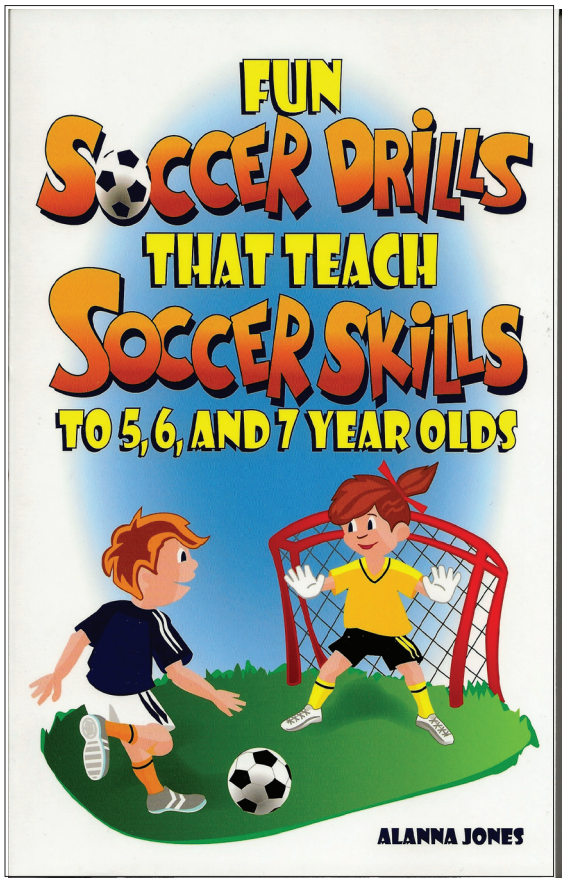
Fun Soccer Drills that Teach Soccer Skills to 5, 6, and 7 year olds



By Alanna Jones

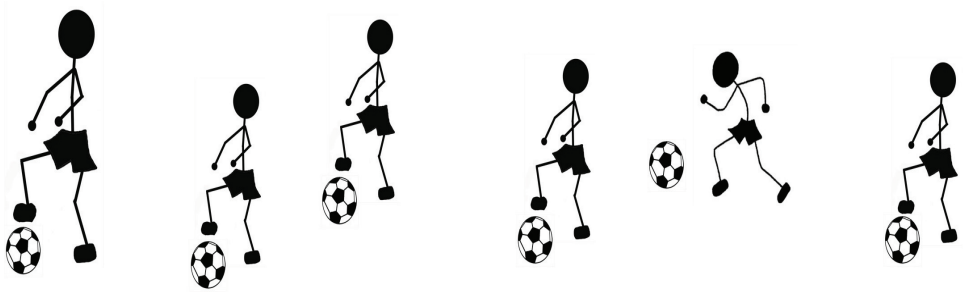
Follow the Coach

Skills
Varied

Drill Description
Each player lines up in single file with a ball behind the coach, who also has a ball. The coach leads the team around the field while doing several soccer-related things with the ball (i.e., dribbling, kicking, throw-ins, etc.) or funny things (i.e., run while holding the ball on top of your head, touch your elbow to the ball, sit on your ball, etc.). At any time the coach can quickly turn around and, if he finds any player who is not following the action, then the coach gets one point; if all of the players are following the direction, then the team gets a point. At the end of the activity if the coach has more points than the team does then the whole team must do an exercise, silly song, or whatever the coach requests. If the team accumulates more points than the coach, they get to think of something silly or an exercise for the coach to do.

Variation
Play *follow the leader* with different commands, and the last player to follow the command must go to the end of the line. You may allow the player in the front of the line to take three turns calling out commands before going to the end of the line and trying to work his way back to the front.

Coaching Tips
Talk about the ready stance of lightly bouncing on the balls of your feet with legs slightly bent, and have the players show you they are ready before starting this drill. Between tasks, you might want to yell "ready stance."



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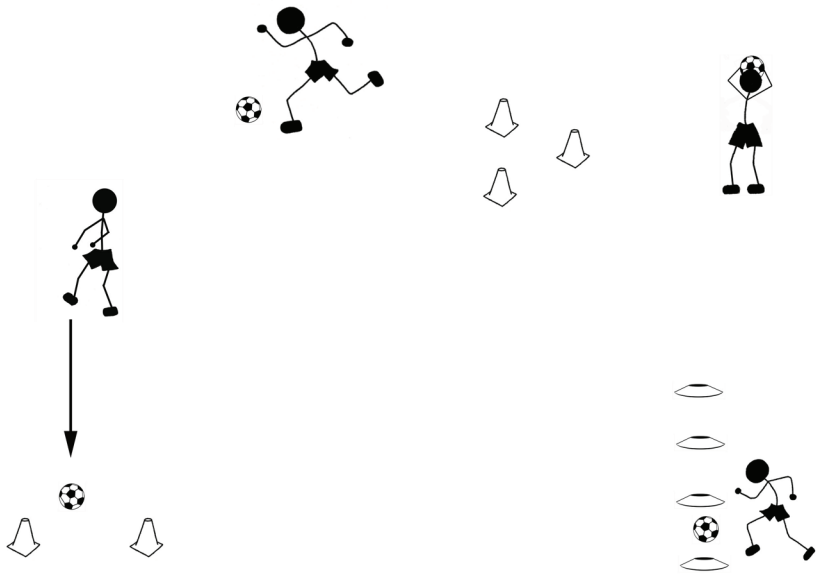
Soccer Obstacle Course Chase

Skills
Varied

Drill Description
Make an obstacle course that requires players to run, dribble, kick, and throw-in. You might even use coaches or parents for different sections of the course where the players have to dribble around, kick to, etc. Set the team up in a line with your fastest players first. Give each person the same amount of head start before sending the next person. Challenge the players to catch up to, and to pass the person in front of them when going through the course.

Coaching Tips
If you set the course up in a large area with plenty of space between each obstacle the players will get lots of exercise during this drill. This is a good time for a coach to observe the techniques of individual players to see what skills the team needs to work on the most.



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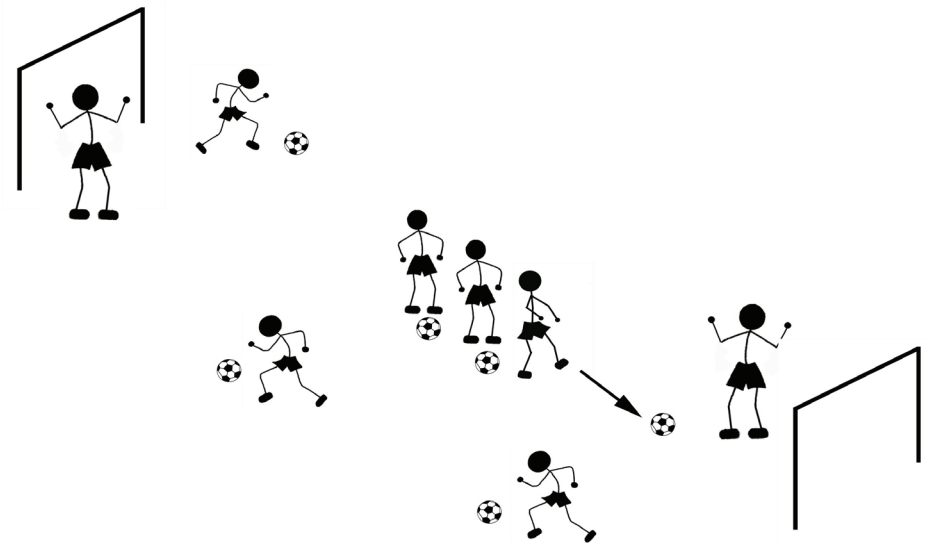
Running Shooting Running

Skills
Shooting after a break away run

Drill Description
Use a mini soccer field, full field, or set up two goals to make your own field. The coach and the assistant coach start out as goalies, with one in each goal (or have a player be goalie at one end and the coach at the other). Everyone starts at the coach's goal with a ball. The coach calls out the name of one person at a time, who takes a shot on goal. The shooter then retrieves his own ball before dribbling down to the other end where he shoots on that goal; after shooting on the second goal, each player dribbles back down to shoot on the coach, and so on, back and forth until the coach calls "stop." Make a big deal about having them count how many times they scored, and for a reward give a water break after every three goals.

Coaching Tips
As a goalie, don't try as hard to stop shots from weaker players; then everyone gets a water break at about the same time. My players really like this drill and have fun running and running even when it seems like they would want to quit.



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Breakaway

Skills
Keeping the ball in control during a breakaway towards the goal

Drill Description
Players line up in a two single file lines at the center of the field one yard apart, facing the goal. Each person has a ball. The coach yells "go" and the first person in each line dribbles as quickly as she can toward the goal and then takes a shot on goal. Set up a cone line that they must pass before taking a shot. This can be done with or without a goalie. The coach gives one point at his discretion to any player who keeps the ball in control when dribbling and one point for each goal that is scored and one point to the player who scores first.

Variations
To prevent players from over dribbling and losing control of the ball, set up a box where players must be inside when they shoot.

Players in one line dribble and try to score while players in the other line (who do not have a ball) act as a defender when you say, "go." The defender line might be placed slightly behind the other line.

Have one player go at time and simply give points for goals made.

Coaching Tips
Younger players often lose control of the ball when they are in break away situations and even though they have an open goal they'll miss the entire goal or kick it over the end line before having a chance to shoot. This drill helps them practice getting a shot on goal. Encourage players to shoot on goal when close enough to make a goal. Young players like to hear the coach tell them how many points they received after each attempt. In the end nobody will be able to keep track of the total number of points, which is a good thing.

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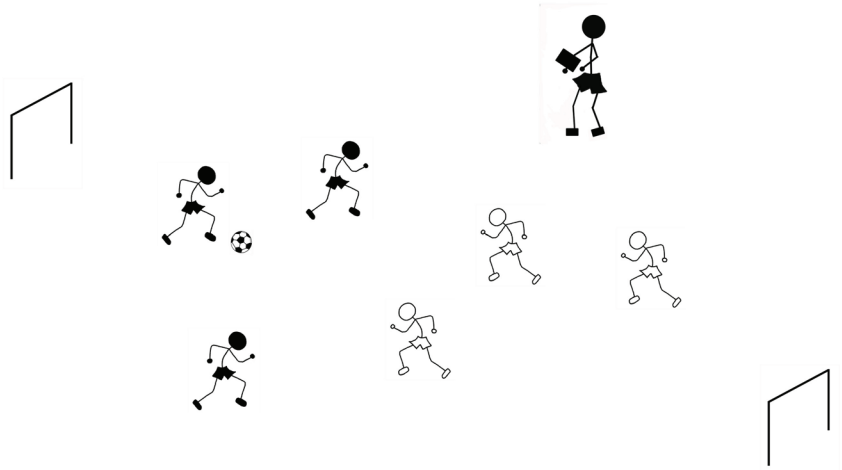
Playing for Points

Skills
Getting open
Passing down field
Breakaways
Defending

Drill Description
Divide the group into teams of three or four and play small sided games but for each game give out points for the following…
2 points if you pass to someone who can score
2 points if you are open for a pass near the goal
1 point if you score
1 point if you stop a breakaway
1 point if you have a breakaway and shoot before the other team gets to you
1 point if you stop a goal
If there are enough coaches (or parents) available, assign one to each team and give them a clipboard with the above list of points on the side and room for the player's names on the top. Each coach should watch her team (or both teams if there aren't enough coaches) and write down points during the game. After the scrimmage announce points and emphasize what each player did correctly. For added fun offer a small prize (candy, stickers, etc) for each point made or for each player who made at least five points.

Coaching Tips
This drill worked wonders for my girls team to get them to focus on spreading out and being in position for a pass. Of course there are always a few players who need to be given a few points for even attempting to accomplish any of the things on the list, even if they were not successful.



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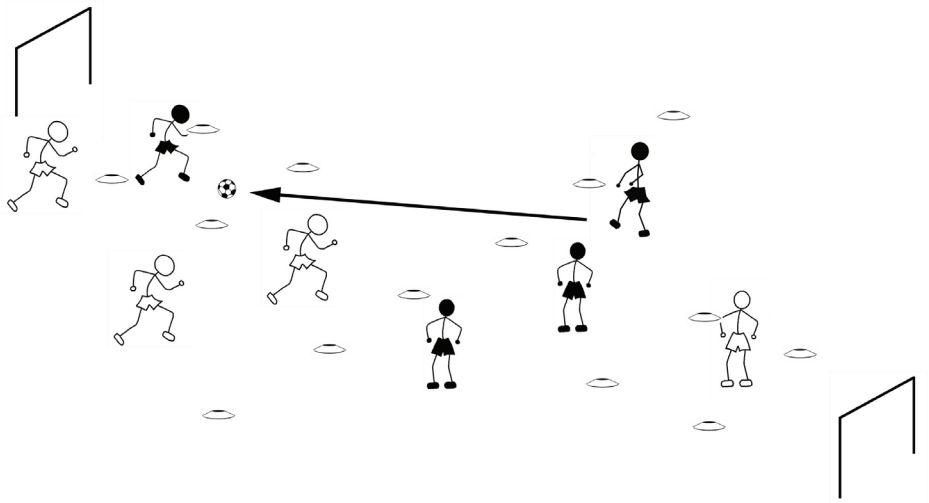
Magic Boxes

Skills
Passing the ball up field to an open player

Drill Description
Make a small field with the centerline clearly defined by cones or discs. In front of each goal about five yards out, use cones to make a square big enough for a player to move around when trying to get open in front of the goal. Divide the group into two teams with one team on each side of the line. Select one player from each team to go to the "magic box" on the other side of the field from where their own team is. For this game the players on each team cannot cross the centerline but can pass any ball that comes to their side to their player in the "magic box" who then tries to score. Players who do not have a ball try to prevent the player in the box on their side from getting a ball and scoring without going into the box. Start with three balls and then add balls or take them away depending on the flow of the game. Switch off players who are in the "magic box" so everyone gets a turn.

Variation
Add an additional magic box on each side so that players can dribble to and then pass to the person in the magic box in front of the goal, before returning to their side. Only one player can dribble into a box at a time.

Coaching Tips
After your team gets the concept of passing to someone who is in the magic box in front of the goal emphasize passing to this area in the game and for players to try to get open in front of the goal in the 'box'.



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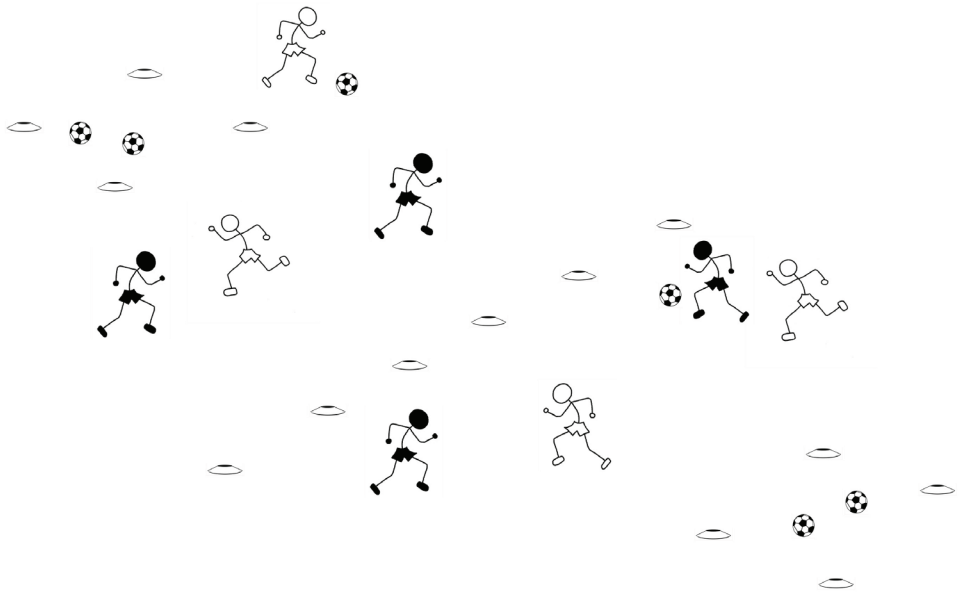
Capture the Ball

Skills
Dribbling with speed
Dribbling against a defender

Drill Description
Using disc cones, set up a line across the field and divide the team into two even groups with one team on one side of the line and one on the other. On each side, make a box out of cones that is at least five yards behind the center line. Place three balls inside each box. Players try to go across the line and get the balls back to their own side without getting the ball taken away from them before they cross the line. Once a player runs across the line she can get tagged before getting to the box and sent back to her own side; if she makes it to the box she is safe till she leaves the box. Defenders may not enter into the box on their own side. When a player is dribbling out of the box the defenders may take the ball away and then the ball goes back into the box and the player must return to her side before trying again. Any ball that is successfully dribbled across the line is added to the box on that team's side. The first team to get all six balls is declared the winner.

Coaching Tips
This can be one of those never ending games since the balls can go back and forth. I like to call the game to an end and declare it a tie when both teams have three balls again.



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Chase

Skills

Speed while dribbling
Shielding the ball from a defender
Taking the ball away from someone running with the ball when you are the defender

Drill Description

Everyone starts out with a ball except for one person who is "it." Give the group a destination some distance away that they must dribble to and back from. Those with a ball must dribble as fast as they can while the "it" person tries to take anyone's ball away. Once a person has her ball taken away then she becomes "it" and tries to take someone else's ball away. (She cannot take the ball away from the person who took it away from her.) The play continues this way until everyone returns to the start line.

Variations

Dribble to several different locations and designate a different person to be "it" once you reach each destination.

For larger groups start out with two or three people who don't have a ball.

Set up a large square and put a pile of balls in the middle. There should be one less ball than there are players. On the "go" signal everyone runs to get a ball. The one person who does not get a ball must steal one or chase someone out of the square to get that individual's ball. At the end of a time limit, the person who does not have a ball must do something funny, such as perform a dance or sing a song for the group (or whatever consequence you decide upon).

Coaching Tips

As a coach you might allow the last person to take away your ball; that way you are the only one at game's end without a ball.

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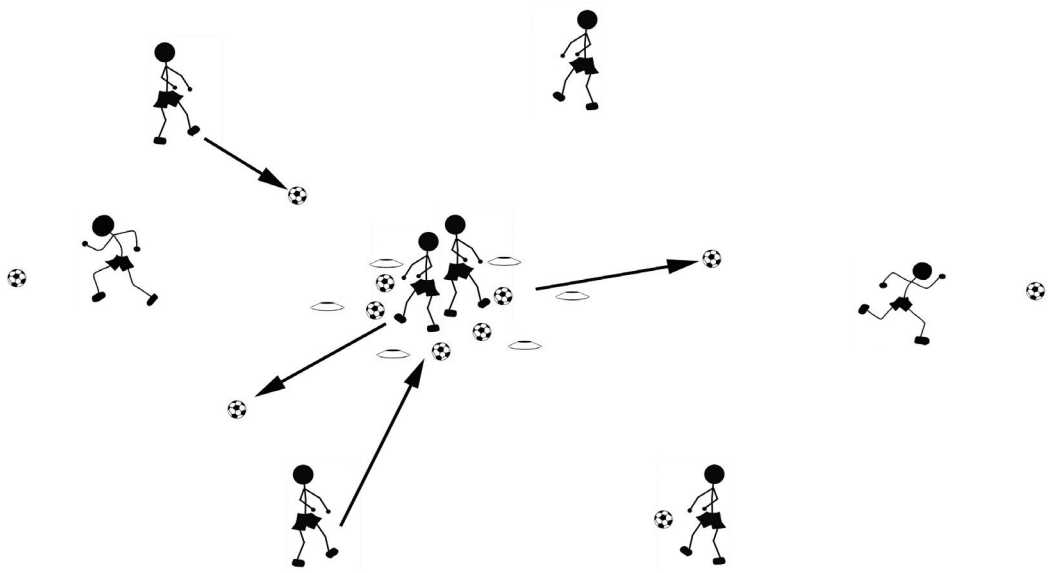
Hot Potato Ball

Skills
Quick movement

Drill Description
Set up a circle of cones or use the center circle of a regulation size soccer field. Select one or two players to stand in the middle of the circle while everyone else stands around the outside with the soccer balls. On the "go" signal, everyone on the outside of the circle kicks his ball into the circle. Those in the middle kick all of the balls out and must stay in the middle until there is a moment when there are no balls in the circle. Once a ball is kicked out, it can be kicked back in by anyone.

Coaching Tips
A fun high paced drill that most players really like. If the players in the middle kick the balls far out it is easier for them to win the game.



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Up and Over

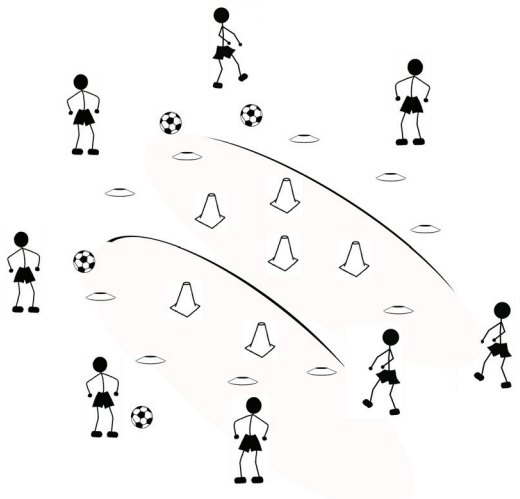
Skills
Kicking a ball a long distance in the air

Drill Description
Make a circle using disc cones that are ten to twenty yards in diameter. Use the smaller size for younger kids but always make it challenging. Inside the circle, place as many cones as you have scattered around. Divide the team into pairs with each person across the circle from her partner with one ball between them. The player with the ball tries to kick it up over the circle to her partner without it touching the ground inside the circle or without knocking over a cone. If a player successfully kicks a ball over the circle then she gets to tell the whole team something they have to do five times (jumping jacks, sit ups, twirls, etc.). If a player hits a cone and knocks it over, this player has to do five jumping jacks (or whatever you specify at the beginning of the game). If no cones are hit or the ball hits the ground in the circle, nothing happens and the other partner gets a turn.

Variations
If the kick goes up and over the circle, the kicker gets to yell a cheer and jump up in the air with excitement instead of making the others do an exercise.

Instead of trying to kick it over the cones, each player tries to hit the cones when kicking to her partner and gets one point for each cone that is knocked over.

Coaching Tips
I often have this drill set up when the players start showing up for practice and pair them up as they arrive; this way it is easy to give each player individual attention when assessing their kicking skills. If you have players with more skill than the others, set up cones for them to kick from that are farther away from the circle for an added challenge.



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Passing Into the Square

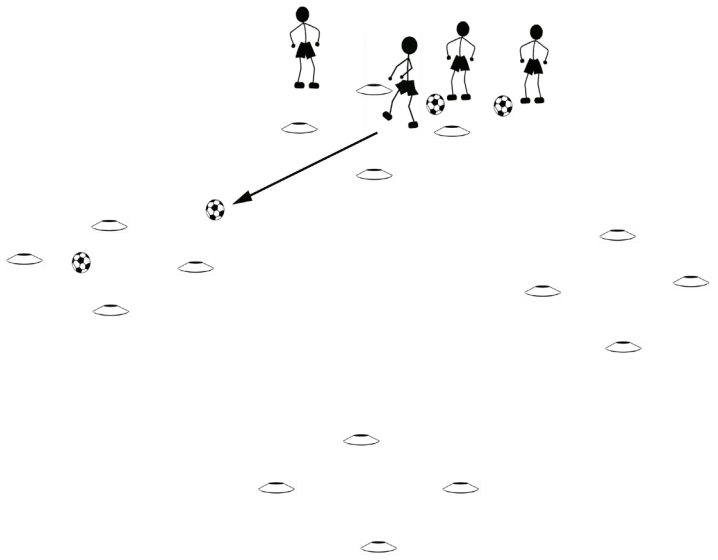
Skills
Accurate passing
Controlling the weight of your pass

Drill Description
Using cones or disc cones set up four small squares two yards by two yards, each placed ten yards apart from the others, thus forming a large square with the small squares as the corners. Start in one square, and everyone has a ball and tries to kick it so that it rolls into the next square and comes to a stop inside the square. Everyone should kick to the same square but take turns. If a ball stops inside the square, the kicker gets a point. After everyone has kicked, go to the square the balls are in and the players kick to the next square from this spot. Continue around the square in this manner until one player gets four points and declare him the winner. If you have a large team, divide the group into smaller teams and set up several squares.

Variations
Set up a large circle of squares and divide the group into small teams of two to four players. Start the game with one team in every other square and have them move around the circle, kicking into the next square.

Set up one square for each player in a large square or rectangular shape with space between each square. When you say "go," everyone passes into the next square, moving in a clockwise direction. Each player is passing into a square that another player is already standing in. After each round, everyone goes to the square they were just aiming at and kicks their next ball from there. After taking a turn at each square, ask the players how many points they got.

Coaching Tips
This drill is good for players who blast the ball hard even when just passing to their own team or players who kick it too soft.



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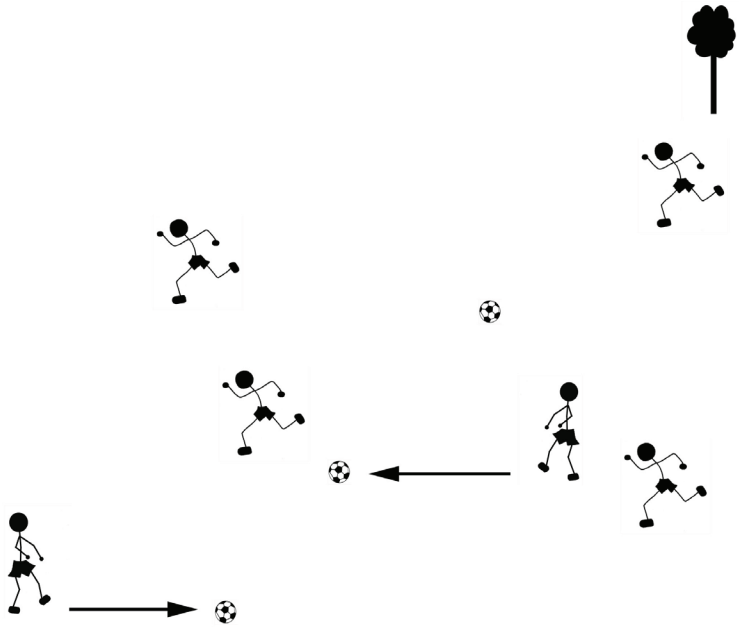
All of Your Team

Skills
Varied

Drill Description
Divide the group into pairs and have them pass back and forth with their partners until you yell, "All (your team name)…" and give a command that everyone must do. You might have them hop to a tree, run to the goal post, skip around the coach or anything else you can think of. After completing the task, each person must get back together with his partner and continue passing back and forth until the next command.

Variation
Give "points" to the team that makes it back together first after each command.

Coaching Tips
Walk around when players are in pairs so that they must be aware of where you are as well as pay attention to the partner.



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Earthquake

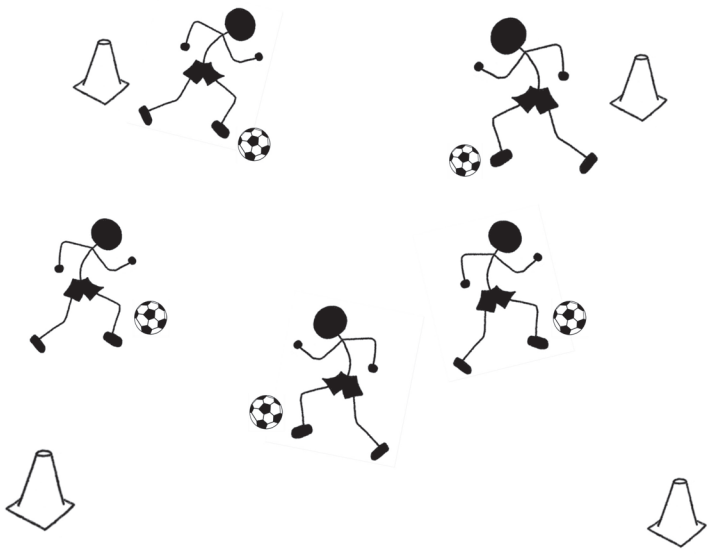
Skills
Moving quickly to the ball
Working together as a group

Drill Description
Set up a square big enough for everyone inside to have room to dribble freely. The players dribble around in the area, avoiding one another and avoiding the coach who puts pressure on slow moving players. When the coach yells "earthquake" everyone must leave her own ball and find a new one before the earthquake is over (after the coach counts to five). If any player has not found a new ball by the end of earthquake, then the whole team must run a lap around the square or do some other activity announced by the coach.

Variations
Use disc cones to make small triangles around the field. When the coach yells "earthquake," each player must find a triangle to stand in for safety before the count of five.

Set up cones around the outside of the square. When the coach yells "earthquake," each player must dribble around one of the cones and back into the square. No two players can dribble around the same cone.

Coaching Tips
Remind players to dribble with their head up to see where they are going and to keep the ball in control when dribbling. Also emphasize teamwork by encouraging players to quickly find a new ball when the one they want is taken by another player.



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Pass the Player

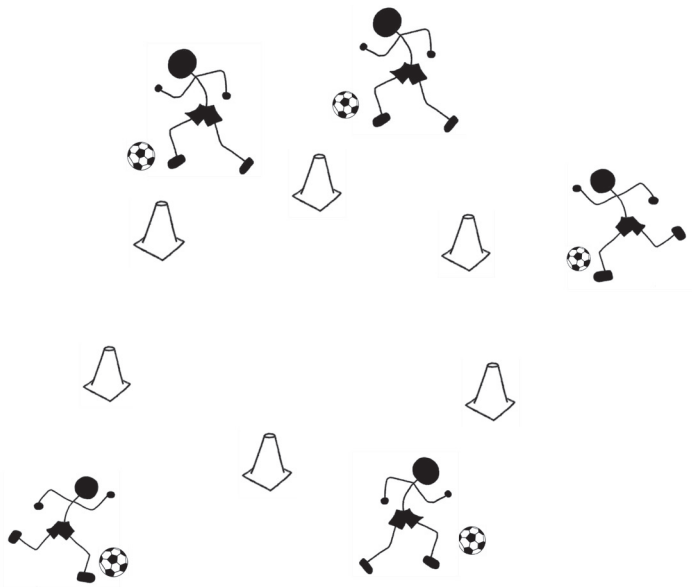
Skills
Quick and controlled dribbling
Out running other players

Drill Description
Set up the cones as a large circle at least ten yards in diameter. Everyone spreads out around the circle and is without a ball for the first round. Let the group know which direction to run, and on the "go" signal everyone runs around the outside of the cones and tries to pass as many other players as he can. Each time someone passes another person he yells out a number counting how many people he passes. After one minute yell "stop" and have everyone announce the number of people they have passed. After doing this once without soccer balls, have everyone get a ball and do the same drill while dribbling.

Variations
Half of the players dribble a ball while the other half runs without a ball. Those who do not have a ball try to pass those who do, and keep track of how many they pass.

Divide the group into pairs and have partners start out on opposite sides of the circle from each other. Both partners run in the same direction, and the one with a ball tries to dribble as many laps as possible without getting tagged by his partner. Once a player is tagged, the pair starts over and switches places with each other.

Coaching Tips
This is a great drill for demonstrating the need for controlled dribbling. Players who have less control will end up far wide of the circle and easily get passed on the inside by teammates who are dribbling in control.



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Throw-in Challenge

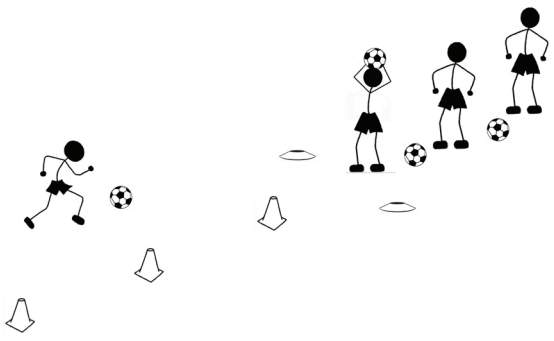
Skills
Making accurate throw-ins
Being able to make a long throw-in

Drill Description
Make a sideline using cones or use an existing sideline on your practice field. Set up one cone in the field about one yard away. Set up a second cone two yards out (one yard behind the first) and then another one three yards out. Players line up on the sideline in a single file line facing the cones and each player has a ball. Each player takes a turn taking a throw-in and tries to hit the first cone. Players go to the end of the line after each try. After hitting the first cone a player then tries for the second cone when it is his turn again. Challenge players to be the first one to hit the third cone. There can be several lines of this going on at once, with only two or three players in each line.

Variations
Make this a relay race. Each time a player on one team hits a cone, he can grab that cone and place it on top of the next cone and this becomes the target for the whole team until a player hits it. The first team to hit all of the cones wins.

For an additional challenge, add more cones or space the cones further apart.

Coaching Tips
This is a great drill to have set up when players arrive to practice and can join in. Only count cones as a hit when one is hit by a properly taken throw-in. Players can get good exercise running after each throw-in taken, before getting back in line, which is another good reason to have this set up as a warm up drill when practice begins.



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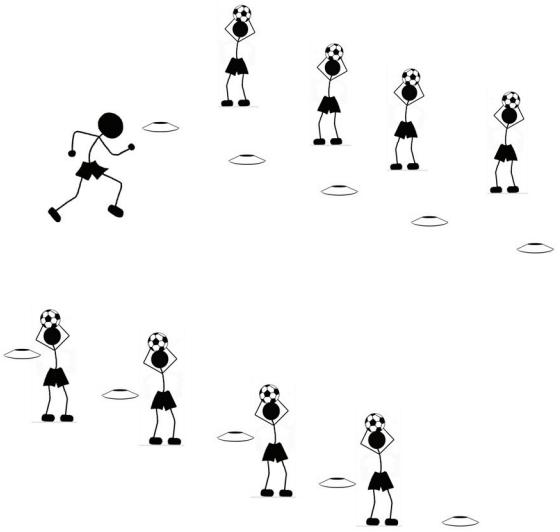
Moving Coach Target

Skills
Throwing in to a moving target

Drill Description
Each player lines up on the sideline with a ball. The coach runs down the field and everyone throws in to try and hit the coach in the feet while she is running. After throwing in, the kids should run to get their ball and run to the other sideline for another round of throw-ins. Go back and forth a few times to keep them moving.

Variation
Have them throw-in one at a time and run onto the field toward the goal for a pass from the coach and then take a shot on goal.

Coaching Tips
Younger players think it is fun to do anything where they get to go after the coach. The more dramatic you are about being hit the more fun the players have with this drill. Emphasize proper throw-ins with both feet on the ground and keeping both hands on the ball when throwing.



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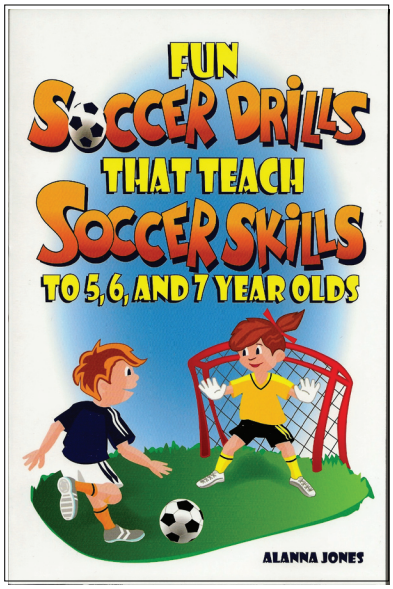

plus variations for many of the drills to add to the number of games found in this book!

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