

TINY KICKERS SOCCER PRACTICE IDEAS

Keep your yard clean

This game is simple, fun, and easy to adapt to account for various team sizes and experience.

THE GAME:

- Create a 'neutral area' between the two teams where no player is allowed. This area can be as small as one yard and as big as 10 yards wide. The width is determined by how far the players can kick the ball.
- Each player starts with a ball at her or her feet.
- On command, each team tries to keep their side of the game zone free of balls by kicking their ball over to the other team's side.
- After an appropriate amount of time (when the balls become too scattered, or the players are losing focus), stop the game and count which side has the most balls on their side.
- Distribute the balls evenly for another try if the players are still interested.

After players have found some success with this basic game, try these variations:

- Players can only use their left foot.
- They can throw the ball back.
- They must dribble the ball around a cone that has been set up in the middle of their "yard" and then kick it back.

Red light, Green light

This should be familiar to most U6's. Again, the game is fun, simple to set up, and has direct application to the game of soccer. It is particularly good for reinforcing dribbling and ball control skills.

THE GAME

Each player has a ball, except the one player that is designated as the "light".

Lines from start to finish should be approximately 20 - 30 yards.

Players start from the line opposite the "light".

The "light" then turns away from the group shouting out "GREEN LIGHT".

At this signal, the players start to dribble towards the "light".

When the "light" turns round, calling "RED LIGHT", players must freeze and stop their ball.

If the "light" catches players or a ball still moving that player must take 5 steps back.

The first player to cross the line where the "light" is standing is the winner and becomes the new "light".

You can start the game without using balls for younger players, then have them roll the ball with their hands, then use their feet.

Dribble Relay

The basic game is Team 'A' racing team 'B' by dribbling through a series of gates. If a player loses control and misses a gate they have to regain control and go through the gate.

One variation is to have a small 'square' at the end. The children have to stop the ball in the square, then sprint back and high-five the next player before he/she can start. Another variation is to have several parents positioned at different places along the 'course' and have a different one hold up a number of fingers at random times during the race - and award points to the player that sees it and correctly yells out the number first. This encourages the children to play with their heads up.

Freeze Tag

Set up a large rectangle with cones and have the players dribble in the rectangle. After a short time, take the ball away from one or two players who then become "it." Any player whose ball is touched by an "it" player becomes frozen and has to stop dribbling, spread her legs apart, and hold her ball above her head. He is frozen in this position until another player dribbles her ball between the frozen player's legs. Switch the "it" players often and make it a contest to see who can freeze the most at one time.

Follow the leader

Pick a leader and have her dribble anywhere on the field, encouraging her to make lots of turns, changing speed, etc. All other players have to follow the leader and do whatever that player does. Switch leaders often.

Last Man Out

Play in a large grid. All the players stand at a cone about 20 feet from a group of balls. There is one less ball than the number of players. On the coach's command, the players run to the balls, get one and begin dribbling. The player who didn't get a ball tries to steal one from the others. The coach keeps time and after a preset period has passed, the coach stops the game. The player who doesn't have a ball has to perform a minor penalty (such as running round the grid) before re-joining the game.

Tag

Very simple and surprisingly effective. Mark off a grid or circle. Everybody has a ball. Whoever is "it" must dribble to another player and tag her. The other players avoid being tagged by dribbling away from "it." If the player being chased loses her ball outside the grid, dribbles out of the grid, or is tagged, he is "it" and the game continues.

Ball Tag

Just as simple as 'Tag' and just as useful! Everyone has a ball and dribbles in a confined area. The player who is "it" must pass her ball so that it hits another player's ball. The player whose ball was hit then becomes "it."

Egg Hunt

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. If you have an unusual coloured ball --make it the Golden Egg or something similar). At the other end of the field is a goal. I use a portable goal and call it the "basket." Blow a whistle and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. Time them with a stopwatch.

Snake

Players are grouped into threes. First player is the "head" of the snake, and does not have a ball. She's essentially the leader in a follow-the-leader game. Second player has a ball at her feet, and must follow the head of the snake, dribbling wherever she goes. Third player is the "rattle". No ball, just following. Emphasise to the "heads" to vary their lead -- some fast, some slow, some sideways, some stopping, etc. I let one lead for about 20 seconds or so. Then, on a whistle from a coach, 2 drops the ball to 3 and becomes the head of the snake. The rattle (3) becomes the dribbler and the former head circles around to become the rattle.

Under Pressure

Get all the kids dribbling around in a grid then remove one, two, or three balls depending on how much pressure is needed. Then announce that whoever has possession of a ball after 1 minute is a winner. If they can chase someone out of bounds they automatically win that ball. Count down the last 10 seconds out loud to increase the pressure. The children who finish without a ball have to perform a token penalty - a couple of pushups, run a lap of the grid, etc.

The Name Game

Players stand in a circle and pass the ball to one another, but they must call out the name of the person they are passing to. This is great at the beginning of the season, so they (and you!) learn everyone's names. If the players are doing well and you have enough players, add additional balls.