

WEST ISLIP SOCCER

U5 Practice Recommendations & Games

Fun is the #1 objective of youth soccer – Practice or games should be fun first.

Soccer Practice Guidelines:

- Avoid drills and lines
- Use games instead of drills
- Feelings are very important – have a good time, give them freedom to make mistakes
- Coaches job is facilitator
- Kids given freedom to achieve at their own level – no bar of expectation that all must cross

U5 Soccer Games for Practices:

- **Math game** – dribbling coach calls out a simple math problem the players get together in a group with that number of players and hold up hands when ready
- **Hospital tag** – hold body part tagged (wound) while dribbling, 3 wounds and you must go to hospital – to get healed to 5 toe taps and then return to play
- **1v1 – play to cone** – score by ball touching cone under control, can't touch cone (Score) if defenders foot is on cone then you can't score on that cone played a "full field" game with restriction that they must dribble 5 touches before you can pass ball ok to shoot any time
- **Soccer Simon Says** – All of the girls dribble around in a box and on command from "Soccer Simon" do various ball control/moves (pull backs etc), leave their ball and collect another, pass to the nearest player, sit on the ball etc. (be inventive!). Throughout the game, the girls are instructed to keep looking up so that they don't run into anyone else or touch anyone else's ball. If they are caught by "Soccer Simon", they have to put their hands over their head, bend over shaking their head and say "oh no, you got me Soccer Simon".
- **Stop with body parts** – Continue in the box and have the girls stop the ball with various body parts, ie. knee, elbow, nose, hand. Rather than a voice command, the assistant coach or I would touch the body part that we wanted the kids to use. This way, they have to keep looking back and forth between both coaches who are moving around in the box for the commands. All while keeping control of their own ball and avoiding their team mates.
- **Nutmeg soccer** – Split the kids into two groups. One group spreads out within the box and stands still with their legs apart. Each of these players are given different colored pinnies. Each of the players in the other group has a ball. On the coach's signal, the players with balls try to score by "nutmegging" as many of the other kids as possible within a minute or so. After

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- they have been going for a little while, tell them that they can only score on "nutmegs" with red bibs. Keep changing the instructions as to where they can score... for example blue bibs, white socks, blonde hair, glasses, coaches etc. This keeps them looking up to see where they have to go next. Have the kids keep track of how many scores they get within the allotted time period and do a couple of rounds so that they can try to beat their record. If the kids are moving too slow, add a shark without a ball that runs around and tries to kick the other kids balls away.
- **4 Goal 3v3 scrimmage** – Divide your team into 3v3 or 4v4 games with two goals at each end. Let them play for a while. Pick a point in the game when everyone is clustered around one goal and freeze them. Ask them to take a look at the open goal and ask them which goal would be easier to score on - the one they are currently trying to blast through or the open one on the other side of the field. They will usually see the light. Let them play some more.
 - **Beehive** - Provide a 20 yd x 20 yd. grid (or approximately 1sq. yd. per player). Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside grid randomly using correct techniques and avoiding other players. Players should practice inside and outside foot dribbling, stopping changing direction and pace, and maintaining control while in the beehive.
 - **King of the Ring** - Provide a 20 yd. x 20 yd. Grid. Each player has a ball except one player (or coach) who is "it". Players start to dribble inside the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is "it". Players may re-enter grid after retrieving their ball.
 - **Attack and Protect** - Provide a 20 yd by 20 yd grid. Each player has a ball. Players dribble around the grid trying to kick each other's ball out of the grid while protecting their own ball.
 - **Shadow Dribbling** - Have players pair up, each player with a ball. Leader dribbles while second player follows, also dribbling. Remind players to keep their heads up. Encourage creative dribbling - changes in direction, pace, and technique. Stress control and change leaders frequently.
 - **One-on-One** - Players pair up, each couple with a ball in a grid. Player with the ball is "on the attack" and the other player is the defender. The attacking player tries to dribble to any of the cones (aside from the one behind her/her) and touch the cone with the ball. Defending player tries to prevent this. Players switch possession of ball when attacker accomplishes her goal or when ball goes out of bounds.
 - **Bees** - One they really seem to like is to dribble in an area (tell them they are bees and to buzz), then after awhile, have the coaches (or a few parents) walk around inside the area. It is the job of the "bees" to "sting" the big people with the ball (a pass or kick). The need to keep looking for a target and hitting it. They really seem to enjoy this one.

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- **"Sharks Island" or "Freeze Tag"** - Again, mark of an area (20x20, or whatever makes sense for the number of kids) and have each kid with a ball (minnows). Then release a shark into the area (one of the kids without a ball). The sharks job is to get the other kids balls. I play for just a touch, can also have kick out of the area. Once a ball has been played, the dribbler (minnow) is frozen, have them take the ball over their head and put their legs apart. To be unfrozen (released), another player (minnow) needs to put a ball between their legs (usually dribbled). Switch the sharks every 30 seconds to a minute.

- **"Sharks & Minnows"** – Mark an area (20x40 or whatever makes sense for the number of kids) and have each kid with a ball (minnows). All the kids start at one end of the rectangle. Start with one Shark in the middle of the field. When the shark is ready they yell “minnows come in my ocean”. The minnow’s objective is to reach the other end of the area with the shark(s) trying to kick their ball out of bounds. Once a minnow is attacked, they become a shark at the next start. After all kids have reached the other end the sharks reset to the middle of the field and begin again when ready. Continue until all minnows have been eaten by sharks.

- **"Wave Game"** - Another game is with a 20x20 area (easily could be bigger). Have all the kids with a ball at one end. Their job is to dribble inside the square to the other end. Start with the coach or other person in the middle. They are to try and kick the ball out of the area. If a person loses their ball, they help in the middle. Play starts on a go command, so there is a big wave of people trying to get across.

Basic Practice Structure (for older groups):

- Prepare practice plan ahead of schedule.

- Introduction – Speak to the kids and talk about what practice will entail.

- Warm-up – Each kid should have a ball. Get their feet moving and hearts pumping. (in the older age groups this should be related to the practice topic)

- Fundamental – Working on Skill (practice topic) with no pressure

- Match Related – Add pressure to the Fundamental (i.e. time, space, defenders).

- Match Condition – During a small sided game have rules related to Skill (i.e. must make 2 passes before shooting).

- Conclusion – wrap-up.