

Teaching Juggling the Ball

Admittedly, soccer juggling isn't an essential skill to have in a match, since you'll rarely find yourself having the time or the need to juggle in that kind of fast paced environment. However, learning how to juggle has other important benefits that will come in helpful in a match.

The basic technique to juggle a ball in soccer is to use your feet for this purpose. Simply roll the ball slightly towards you with your sole, then quickly place your foot under it and bring it up in the air.

When you juggle using your feet, hit the ball with the upper part of your foot, with your knee slightly bent. Make sure you hit directly under the ball, otherwise it might run away from you. You'll have to find your tempo when juggling and you'll soon find out what force you need to apply under the ball so that you allow yourself time to retract the foot and at the same time, make sure you don't give too much height to the ball.

When you've mastered juggling with your feet, you can move onto juggling with your thighs. Juggling in soccer doesn't rely on the thigh so much as the foot or the head, but there will be cases when you'll want to use your thighs.

The advantage is that the ball will be much closer to your body, so in case you hit it too hard or too softly, you have time to correct your body position and get the ball back up in the air. You will also relax your feet slightly by juggling on your thighs, so if you're trying to set up some soccer juggling record amongst your friends, you'd better learn how to do it properly.

Juggling on your head is spectacular, but requires more technique and concentration than if you would do it on your foot or thigh. However, sometimes you'll feel the need to relax both your feet for a bit and in that case you'll have to, literally, use your head. Hit the ball directly on its equator, giving it a vertical motion with the help of your neck. Make sure you use the upper part of your forehead to hit it, otherwise it could take a totally unwanted direction.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USGL9Nm7VBI>

Fun Juggling Games that Teach Skills

NOTE: Several of the games listed are "knock out" games where the losers are knocked out and the last player left is the winner. Since the first ones knocked out are often the ones who need the most practice, those knocked out should be required to do something to either get back into the game or to keep them working on their ball skills until the game is over. One possibility is to set up a parallel game for those knocked out to participate in.

P-E-L-E

Play with two players. First player juggles one, second player has to match. First player then juggles two and second player matches. First player then juggles three and so on. When a player misses, the other player gets a letter - first P then E then L then E. After awarding a letter, the players start out at one again. The first player to spell PELE is the winner. This can be played thighs only, feet only, head only or any combination.

Black Jack (21)

Play with two or more players. First player juggles as many touches as they can and keeps track of count. Second player goes after first misses. After second player misses, first player goes again starting count where they missed in first turn. For example if player got five touches in first turn, they would start second turn at six. First player to Black Jack (21) wins. This game can also be made more challenging by restricting it to certain body parts.

Combinations

Work to get "called" combinations. For example "Around the World" would be left foot, left thigh, head, right thigh, right foot.

Juggling with Movement

Start at one spot and walk/jog/run while juggling the ball. See how far you can go without dropping the ball. One variation of this is to start at the outside of the penalty area on the field, juggle up to the goal area and shoot/volley the ball into the net without letting it hit the ground.

Timed Juggles

See how many touches the player can get in a certain amount of time. We do a three minute timed contest. They don't have to be consecutive without a miss. This works great for getting the players focused and working hard for a certain time period and is great for aerobic fitness.

Team Juggling Contest

Have each player juggle and see how many touches they can get. Add the total touches for the whole team and create a team record. If they beat their team record, the coaches run a lap around the field. If they don't beat their record, the players run a lap around the field. When the kids are not very good jugglers, it doesn't take very long. I have seen huge improvements in my teams' juggling skills by doing nothing more than this in practice. It's just enough focus to get them working on their own.