

Soccer Activities for Home:

Soccer is a great sport for kids to play to develop motor skills. In addition to developing their physical skills, children also begin to develop self-regulation by first learning to self-regulate their body movements. For instance, in a game of Freeze Tag children must stand still when they have been tagged until someone comes and unfreezes them. This gives them practice in standing still, a necessary skill for school. Children must be able to sit still and stand still at various times throughout their day.

Tom Fleck and Ron Quinn have written an excellent book, *The Baffled Parent's Guide to Great Soccer Drills*, that I highly recommend. I have taken some of the more age-appropriate drills and activities and listed them below.

Body Parts Dribbling

Begin by dribbling around in a marked space. Someone calls out various body parts and everyone else must stop their ball with that body part e.g. elbow, knee, forehead. This teaches ball control by keeping the ball close to your feet. This activity also helps to develop body awareness and body control. (Page 44)

Follow the Leader

Players line up and follow the leader who can be a coach, parent or other player. Mix in a variety of movements such as skipping, hopping, crawling, rolling, tumbling, and jumping. This game can also be played with soccer balls with the leader dribbling all around the field, dribbling with their left foot and right foot and dribbling with the inside and outside of his/her foot. This helps with motor control as well as self-control. (Page 59)

Off to the Zoo

Players in this game move around in a circle or within a field or yard imitating animals you call out. Name a variety of animals - some flying, some crawling, and some swimming. This helps to improve agility, balance, imagination and body control. (Page 51)

I Can Do Something Without the Ball, Can You?

Challenge your child by saying, "I can do something without the ball, can you?" and start skipping. Your child should imitate your skipping. Then repeat the challenge and demonstrate another movement such as hopping, running and clapping hands, walking backwards, etc. Next

allow your child to take the lead and issue the challenge. This promotes body awareness and improves motor skills and creativity. (Page 42)

I Can Do Something With the Ball, Can You?

Challenge your child this time to do something with the soccer ball. It can be anything. For instance, he can throw the ball in the air and clap one time before catching it. This is also a great opportunity for kids to start to learn to juggle as they will invariably say they can kick it with their foot two times in a row or touch it with their head two times in a row, etc. (Page 43)

Red Light, Green Light

All players line up on a line on the field and the coach, parent or another player stands on a line on the other side of the field. The person that is it will face away from the players and call out "Green Light!" and the players start to dribble across the field towards the opposite line. When the person that is it calls out "Red Light!" players have to stop right away before the person that is it can turn around and catch them moving. Any player caught moving has to go back to the line and start over. The first player to make it across to the opposite side of the field is the winner and they become the new "it" person. This helps improve listening, ball control and self-control. (Page 96)

Pairs Ball Retrieval

Have players in pairs. The coach or one player from each team throws the ball 15 or 20 yards away and calls out a number, e.g., "7". The pair must retrieve the ball and bring it back to the coach or a designated base making that number of passes back and forth. This helps them work together and accomplish a goal by passing the ball back and forth the required number of times. It also helps them with accuracy and pace as they need to be able to pass to their partner's feet. This promotes teamwork and learning through a shared activity. (Page 45)

Movable Goal

Two coaches or parent(s) hold a beach towel or pool noodle and walk around the field. All players have a ball and try to score as many goals as they can by shooting through the movable goal. This helps with coordination, ball control and shooting as well as spatial reasoning. (Page 77)

Knockout

Everyone has a ball in a designated space. When the game begins, everyone is dribbling around trying to protect their ball while attempting to kick someone else's ball out of the playing area. When a player loses their ball, that player is out of the game and should work

on a skill while they wait to rejoin the game. The last player left with their ball is the winner.
(Page 72)

Other Popular Kid's Games:

Freeze Tag

In this popular kid's game, one person is it and runs around trying to tag all the other players. Once a player has been tagged, that player must stay in that frozen position until someone tags him or her to unfreeze the player. The game ends when all players are frozen. A variation of the game is to have players crawl through a frozen player's legs to unfreeze them.

Duck, Duck Goose

Children sit in a circle with one child standing outside of the circle. The child standing (the Goose) is "it" and walks around tapping other children on the head calling "Duck," "Duck," "Duck," etc. until he/she taps someone on the head and calls "Goose". The child that was tapped and called "Goose" must get up and chase the old goose around the circle and try to touch him/her before he/she can be seated in the empty spot. If the Goose is tagged, then he/she remains it. Otherwise the game continues with the new Goose starting the game over.

Simon Says

In the game Simon Says, players are given instructions of things to do by the leader which must be done only when the order begins with, "Simon Says." When someone follows an order that didn't begin with Simon Says, that player is out of the game. To make this a motor skills game give lots of instructions to do things like skip, hop, crawl, roll, tumble, jump, etc. This game can also be played with soccer balls and the players are ordered to do things involving their ball.

Partner Passing Through the Gates

Place two cones or markers about 2 steps apart (6 feet). Partners pass back and forth trying to score by passing the ball between the two cones or markers. This helps with accuracy; especially when kids are learning to use the inside of their foot. This is also a great activity to help kids improve their counting. When two children are paired together at different developmental stages in counting it becomes a shared activity. The better counter (a peer) will actually be helping the other player learn to count using higher numbers as they complete more and more passes.

Dribbling Relay Races

Form 2 or more teams and have a relay race. Each team member must dribble to the designated spot and then turn around and dribble back to the starting point. The first team to have all of their players complete the run dribbling their ball wins.

Sharks and Minnows

One person is the shark and everyone else with a ball is a minnow. The minnows must dribble their ball across a marked out space without losing their ball to a shark. If a minnow's ball is kicked away, then that person also becomes a shark and the game continues until all minnows are eaten by the sharks. This fun and challenging game helps to improve ball control and the ability to escape danger while dribbling/controlling their ball. It also teaches direction as players must move from one side of the field to the other side.

Fleck, T., & Quinn, R. (2002). *The baffled parent's guide to great soccer*. Camden, ME: Ragged Mountain Press.