



# Grades 5-6 Session 5: Pressuring and Covering Defenders

Category: Tactical: Defensive principles  
Skill: U12

Pro-Club: Loudoun Soccer Club  
Dan Raben, Leesburg, United States of America

## dribbling warm-up (10 mins)



**Objective:** encourage individual dribbling and creativity to challenge defenders later in session

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

each player in grid with a ball  
dribble around grid, finding space and avoiding collisions

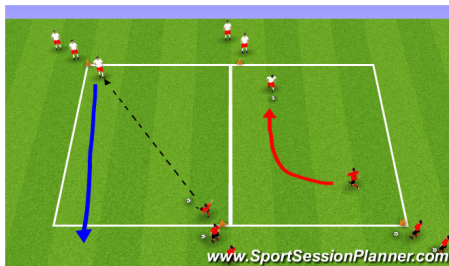
use dribbling rhythms/patterns (soccer box, toe taps, etc.) and encourage attacking moves

**Key Points:**

\*every step is a touch – body low, use front foot to dribble

\*head up and on swivel to find and attack space – use pinky toe to push ball in stride with burst of speed

## 1v1 channels (10 mins)



**Objective:** introduce key 1v1 defending principles (role of the 1st defender)

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

Play starts from defender serving ball to attacker

Objective: dribble over opponent's endline - includes transition if defender wins possession

**IMPORTANT: YOU WILL NEED TO DEMONSTRATE THIS**

Play ends with goal or ball out of bounds

Players keep track of own points

**Key Points:**

\*Get out fast to pressure ball: big steps to cover ground, little steps to close space but leave "tackling" space (1-1.5 yards)

\*Bend run – force player to side

\*Stance: feet staggered and "rounded", body weight on front foot, knees bent, arms out for balance and to battle

\*Patience – "block their path" and "contain"

\*Separate from the ball from big touch or tight space:

1 Back-foot tackle

2 Step in between ball and player with big touch – shield

3 Shoulder tackle – lean in and bump player off ball

## Get Out of There to Endlines (15 mins)



**Objective:** introduce covering (2nd defender)

**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

\*Coach serves ball into space and calls number ("3"); that number of players enters field.

\*Players run down touchline and around corner flag or cone before entering field.

\*Objective: dribble over opponent's endline. Play ends with goal or ball out of bounds.

\* Progression:

"Plus 1" – in middle of play, call "Plus 1" for each team to add a player – creates delayed pressure and support.

**Key Points:**

\*Communication: "I got ball" from 1st defender, "Delay", "Force in" or "Force out" from 2nd defender

\*2nd Defender: mark loose in large space – must defend opponent and space while covering teammate; mark tighter in small space - can't play man-to-man in large space

\*Changing roles between 1st and 2nd defenders in flow of game – diagonal movement (drops and pinches in)

\*Recovery runs when beat

## 7v7 game (20 mins)



**Objective:** apply all previous concepts into game environment

**Duration:** 15-20 minutes

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

full scrimmage - no restrictions

1-2-3-1 formation with 7v7 game play

**Key Points:**

\*communication: I got ball, drop, shift, step

\*compact defensive shape

\*quick counter attacks - win ball, attack forward quickly if possible

\*recovery runs in transition - diagonal toward own goal

\*decision-making in defensive third - capture ball and start possession vs. clearing big and out



# Grades 5-6 Session 6: Finishing

Category: Technical: Shooting  
Skill: U12

Pro-Club: Loudoun Soccer Club  
Dan Raben, Leesburg, United States of America

## Description

### 2v2 games (5 mins)



**Objective:** activate players from the start by scrimmaging

**Duration:** 5-10 minutes

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

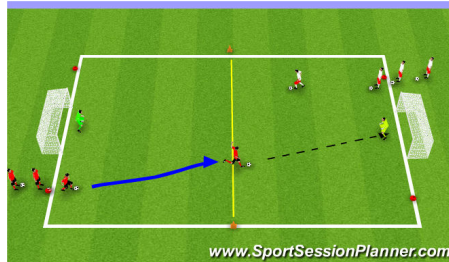
\*two small sided fields to play 2v2 or 3v3

\*add players to game as they arrive

**Key Points:**

few if any - get them playing!

### shooting off the dribble (10 mins)



**Objective:** introduce technical points from finishing off the dribble

**Duration:** 10 minutes (5 mins on right side, then change sides of field to shoot from left side)

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

\* 2 goals with goalkeepers on field 2x depth of the penalty area (e.g. 20-28 yards long). 4 cones placed on side of each goal as starting points. Two cones identifying middle of field.

\* play begins when first person in each line dribbles toward goal. Must release shot near midfield.

\* after shooting, collect ball, and then move to end of opposite line.

\* next player starts as player ahead of them is shooting

\* Variation/Progression: add an attacking move (scissor, jab step, etc.) before shooting.

**Key Points:**

\* Prep touch (final touch before shooting) – push ball in front and slightly outside of your body

\* Head up to find goal, then head down to find ball

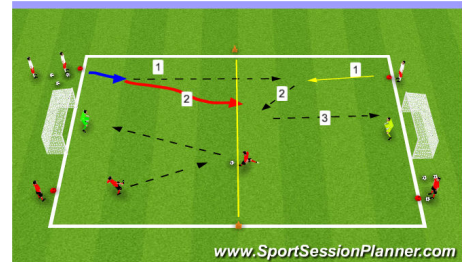
\* Final step is a short hop to transfer weight – point placement foot in direction of goal, arm out for balance

\* Ball Striking Technique:

1. generate power through short hop;
2. pull leg back from the hip and swing forward;
3. unhinge the knee as leg swings forward;
4. point kicking foot down and lock ankle;
5. strike the ball with the 1st metatarsal (the big toe bone - more specific than striking it with your laces); and
6. follow thru by landing on your kicking foot in direction of goal to ensure power and accuracy

\* Surface selection - use of inside foot (foot open, toe up and heel down, ankle locked, knee bent) for close-range shots vs. in-step from distance

### 1-touch finishing (10 mins)



**Objective:** introduce 1-touch ball striking technique

**Duration:** 10 minutes (5 on one side, then switch directions to generate reps with opposite foot)

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

\* same field set-up as previous activity but with four lines

\* play begins when shooter dribbles forward

\* teammate across field checks/shows for ball. Dribbler strikes ball toward teammate.

\* teammate lays ball off at angle toward middle of the field (1 or 2 touch depending on ability)

\* dribbler then strikes the ball with a 1-touch finish.

\* players switch lines.

\* after 5 minutes, change direction of the play so that players receive reps with opposite foot

**Key Points:**

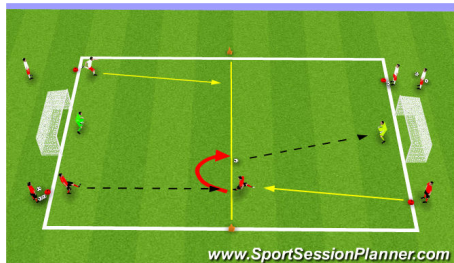
same points as previous exercise but extra emphasis on:

placement foot must touch ground sooner  
solid contact more important than generating power (ball already has kinetic energy since it's in motion)

body/chest over ball to keep it low

follow-thru is critical - make sure you land on kicking foot to keep the ball low

### back to goal finishing (10 mins)



**Objective:** generate finishing reps with back to goal

**Duration:** 10 minutes (5 minutes in one direction, then 5 minutes the opposite)

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

- \* same set-up as previous activity
- \* play begins when shooter checks toward teammate at opposite line
- \* teammate passes ball to them as they approach midfield
- \* shooter turns with 1st touch, then finishes toward goal.
- \* players switch lines, and activity repeats.
- \* switch directions of play to generate reps with opposite foot.

**Key Points:**

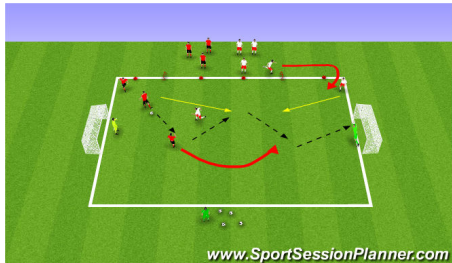
\* same as previous activity with extra emphasis on:

showing for the ball - eye contact, calling for it, burst of speed when showing

1st touch - turning with ball using inside or outside of foot

turn inside to produce good shooting angle

### Get Out of There! (10 mins)



**Objective:** generate and finish scoring opportunities against pressure

**Duration:** 10 mins

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

- \* Coach plays ball into space and calls a number ("Two" means 2v2) and players enter field. Add obstacles before entry if desired.
- \* Objective: teams attempt to score goal.
- \* Play until ball is out of bounds, goal is scored, or coach yells "Get Outta There!"
- \* Players return to lines for next play.
- \* Variation: coach calls color instead of number for numbers up sequence (Red = 3 for red, 2 for white)

**Key Points:**

\* aggressive mentality - shoot within range and when window opens

\* follow through for rebounds

\* head up to see window and make best decision (dribble, pass, or shoot)

\* surface selection - instep from distance vs. inside of foot vs. toe poke

### 7v7 game (10 mins)



**Objective:** apply concepts and techniques from previous activities into full game

**Duration:** 10 mins

**Description (rules, number of players, grid size, etc.):**

two teams  
full rules (throw-ins, corner kicks, etc.)

**Key Points:**

team shape - stay connected as the ball moves up and down the field, and to offer supporting options

finishing - crack a shot when the window is open and you're within range