

Coach Clinic prepared for:

Hendricks Community Soccer, Ages 3-14

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All ages: Individual skill and development should be the focus. Results based soccer at young ages doesn't make kids better soccer players. Focus on **individual skill (footwork)**, **shape**, and **goalside defensive positioning**. Let kids have a ball at their feet as much as possible. Maximize the number of touches players will get in a practice. Remember: **the game is the best teacher!**

**Dribbling:** This is the foundation of soccer, and essential to all other skills. A 1v1 match-up is what the game breaks down to, yet dribbling and 1v1 ability is where I see the most deficit in American soccer players. Some players are gifted scorers, some can pick out the perfect pass, others are hard-nosed defenders, but ALL players should be able to dribble and beat an opponent effectively.

**Coerver footwork:** Maximizes touches on the ball (skill description attached)

Ages 3 and up

- Step-ups
- Pendulums (tick-tocks)
- Pull-back
- Rake

Ages 6 and up

- Hooks (inside of foot, outside of foot)
- Step-over
- Cryuff
- Inside-out
- Matthews
- Drag-back and flick

These type of activities should be done daily with players, and I even do advanced varieties on technical training days with my high school players.

Have players dribble around in a controlled space. On the coach's command, players will do a specified activity (pendulums, step-ups), then players will dribble around again and process repeats. Players can practice turn moves like pull-backs, rakes, etc while they are dribbling around

For older players, place cones in the training area and the players can pretend the cones are defenders. Players can dribble towards a cone and perform a move on the cone defender.

Dribbling Games to play:

Ages 3-6

Dribble knee tag: Players dribble around a confined space trying to tag other player's knees. If a knee is tagged that player is out and does step-ups, pendulums, or another move until the game is over. The

player's ball must not more than a yard away from them when they tag an opposing player's knee. (Can also do this game by kicking other players' balls out of a confined area.)

**Pac-Man Dribble:** Players with the ball are "ghosts" with one player as Pac-Man. Players dribble around the area while Pac-Man tries to kick their ball away. Once the ball is kicked away, those players become Pac-Man as well.

**Red-Light Green-Light:** Players dribble across an area, going when the coach says green light and stopping on red. Players dribble as fast as they can while keeping the ball closely in front of them. I like to use red and green cones, so the players have to keep their heads up and look ahead.

**Sharks and Minnows:** Players (minnows) get on one side of field with a ball, one shark in the middle. Players try to dribble across the field to the opposite end while the shark tries to kick the ball out of bounds. When a minnows ball is out of play, they become a shark.

**Gate Maze Dribbling:** Place cones throughout the training area in pairs about three feet apart. Upon command, players dribble a ball through as many "cone gates" as they can in the time specified. Sixty seconds work well. Repeat the exercise a few times so players can try and beat their own score.

### **Passing:**

Don't worry about introducing passing before age 7 because kids can't (and most of the time won't) do it. It has been proven to not be appropriate to teach and practice under the age of 7. Proper passing and trapping technique with the inside of the foot should be emphasized, as well as passing with both feet. Passing back and forth is ok, but passing with movement is a better activity, more game like, and ideal to help teach kids off the ball movement.

Passing games to play:

Ages 7-8

**Gate Maze Passing:** Place cones throughout the training area in pairs about three feet apart. Players get a partner and one ball between them. Upon command, players dribble a ball and pass to their partner through as many "cone gates" as possible in the time specified. Sixty seconds work well. Repeat the exercise a few times so the players can try and beat their own score.

- A progression for this game is to put the players in 2 different teams, and the way they "score" is by passing through the cone gates to people on their own team. Teaches possession and passing; more suitable for 9-10s, but can work at this age in smaller numbers.

**Pac-Man Passing:** Each player has a ball in a confined area of approximately 20 x 20 yards. Adjust the space to accommodate the number of players. All but two players must place their ball outside the area. The two players with the ball are the Pac Men. Pac Men dribble their balls and attempt to hit other players below the knee with a pass. Players try to avoid being hit by running, dodging and jumping. Once a player is hit, he/she gets their ball and becomes a Pac Man. The game continues until all players have been hit and have their ball. The activity encourages dribbling and passing to a moving target, decision making, changing direction, cardio-respiratory endurance, and allows all ability levels to play equally. If players are hit early, they will have more opportunity to dribble. If they manage to avoid getting hit until near the end of the game, their challenge increases greatly.

**Shape:**

It is never too young to introduce team shape. At 4v4, kids should be in a diamond shape to provide depth, width, and height, or in kids terms back, up, and wide.

Better to teach roles rather than positions: all players on the field play offense and defense, but every team needs to have width, depth, and height.

Kids understand the term “spread out”, and can be taught to do this on a field very easily. US Soccer actually uses this term to tell kids to get into their roles.

As kids progress out of 4v4 into 7v7 and 9v9, they will still understand the back, up and wide concepts with added players on the field.

**Favorite Activities**

[4v4 Palooza](#) lets the players experience the game with different objectives in mind that help teach understanding of concepts and skills. This is beneficial from young ages all the way up through my high school players.

[Rondos](#): 3v1, 4v2, 5v2, ages 9 and up