

## So, you're a coach! Here's what we need from you

- ⚽ Teach these kids to love the game
- ⚽ Engage, encourage and enjoy
- ⚽ Be prepared, positive, professional and passionate
- ⚽ If you are having fun, they will too
- ⚽ Yes, it's that simple



## Tips to make your coaching career a success

- ⚽ LOOK THE PART. BE A GREAT ROLE MODEL.
- ⚽ Never be on time! Always be early.
- ⚽ Be organized and share responsibilities with assistant coaches.
- ⚽ **Quickly get the player's active**
- ⚽ Delegate duties. Assistants and parent helpers are key. **Parents in this age group should actively participate in most activities!**
- ⚽ Have your sessions planned before you arrive. Use the session format in this guide to ensure a consistent, purposeful practice, each and every time.

## Objectives as a U4 coach

- ⚽ Provide a positive and fun introduction to soccer. Develop a love for the game!
- ⚽ Develop fundamental movement skills.
- ⚽ Develop comfort and confidence with a ball.
- ⚽ Playing one on one, with an adult.
- ⚽ Create a positive fun environment where success can be achieved.



## Understanding your U4 players

- ⚽ Can be shy, don't force participation. Welcome happily when they are ready to join!
- ⚽ Short attention spans, will become distracted easily!
- ⚽ Egocentric, the ball is their very own possession and will very unwillingly be relinquished.
- ⚽ Enjoy being successful and praised for those successes.



- ⚽ Call out a number signaling the bee with that number to run to collect the “pollen”.
- ⚽ The bee will dribble it back to their hive.



- ⚽ Introduce different turns to retrieve the balls.
- ⚽ Players must keep returning to the field to collect pollen, whenever their number is called.



- ⚽ To progress the activity, reduce the number of balls in play.
- ⚽ Players can steal pollen from other hives!

## Beehive

**Purpose** This small sided game emphasizes close control and dribbling with the laces. You can introduce the speed of dribble, change of direction and simple attacking and defending strategies.

**Organization** 15\*15-yard grid, with four ‘beehives’ made out of cones, in each corner. All players organized into four teams, each team in a different coloured pinnie. At least one ball for each player, arranged in the center of the grid.

**Directions** Explain to the players that there are four beehives, close to a field of flowers, with the bees’ favorite pollen. Each bee has to supply the hive with three pollen balls to win the game. Arranging four teams of 3 bees, give each bee a number or character name. Position each team behind a ‘hive’. All the pollen (balls) are in the center. The objective is to see which team can supply their hive with 3 pollen balls the fastest. The game starts when you call out a number. That player from each hive must run, collect the pollen (ball) and dribble it back to the hive.

### Objectives & Tips

Are the players dribbling with the laces and performing different turns, when collecting the ball?

Use assistant coaches and parents for crowd control; helping to keep players behind their hives and reminding them when it’s their turn.

Switch it up! Adding more balls will make this activity easier. Less balls will increase difficulty and create 1v1 duels.

## Fetch

**Purpose** This activity is a great introduction to dribbling and ball mastery. Your players are constantly moving and touching a ball. A great way to activate the players in the beginning of a session.

**Organization** 25\*25-yard area with extra room to roam, outside the square. Enough balls for each player to have one. You will need 2 or 3 extra helpers. Encourage the parents to join in!

**Directions** Have the players arrange themselves in a circle around you, each with a ball. Kneel, so you are at their level. Explain that you will roll each of their balls into the playing area and it's their job to catch it and dribble it back to you. Roll to varying distances. Involve the other coaches/parents to ensure all players are moving! Add in different challenges. I.e.: Have them dribble the ball to another coach/parent helper, reach the ball before it stops moving and preform toe taps, (right foot, left foot, outside, heel) before dribbling back etc.

### Objectives & Tips

Add in many skills and objectives. Talk about the surfaces of their feet: inside, outside, laces, heels and soles.

Change the activity to suit your players. If some require more of a challenge, increase the difficulty or create simpler tasks for others.

Switch it up! Alternate the serve height and direction to transition into another activity such as a body-part dribble or a tag game.



- ⚽ Players gather around you in a circle, each with a ball
- ⚽ Use this time to demonstrate some different moves!



- ⚽ Roll the balls randomly throughout the grid.
- ⚽ Players chase the ball attempting to reach before it stops moving.



- ⚽ Additional coaches/ parents join in.
- ⚽ Have the players alternate between the servers.



- ⚽ Start with introducing the rules of the game.
- ⚽ Players dribble in the safe zone, awaiting your commands!



- ⚽ Introduce the swamp and the crocodiles.
- ⚽ Players earn a point each time they cross the swamp.
- ⚽ The crocodile is trying to tap their ball!



- ⚽ Divide players into 4 teams and have one team as the crocodiles!
- ⚽ Other teams attempt to cross using special moves.

## Crocodile Swamp

**Purpose** This activity incorporates dribbling skills, ball mastery and changing direction. A great game for activating the players!

**Organization** 25\*25-yard grid and a smaller 10\*10-yard area in the center. The center zone is the 'swamp'. BEWARE, players only enter on your command!

**Directions** Explain to the players they are lost in a Floridian swamp, infested with hungry crocodiles! They are safe as long as they are outside the swamp area. However, to score a point they must risk safety and cross through the swamp, which they only do on your instruction! Have them start by dribbling around in the safe zone. Introduce the direction of the dribble, left or right. When it is time call out "Cross the swamp" all the players must cross over the swamp, remaining in control of their ball. Add different ways to change direction, moves to beat an opponent etc. Enter the swamp as the 'crocodile coach' and attempt to tap the players' ball, when they enter. If they make it through, without being tapped, they earn a point.

### Objectives & Tips

Repetition and reinforcement of dribbling and ball mastery skills are key! Introduce inside and outside of the foot cut moves.

At an early age, teach players to preform cut moves with the correct surface of the foot, so that the ball is furthest away from pressure.

Switch it up! Create a team game by dividing into four teams, with one in the center as the crocodiles.



## Pyramid Challenge

**Purpose** This is a fun and fast paced activity, where the ‘Egyptians’ (players) must avoid the ‘serpent snake’, in an attempt to build their pyramid. The dribbling activity also emphasizes take on moves to beat a defender and is an opportunity to teach about dribbling to space.

**Organization** 15\*20-yard grid with an additional 5-yard zone, at one end. 14 balls are all randomly placed in the end zone, each representing a ‘pyramid stone’. All players start in the opposite end, facing the balls. While you the ‘serpent snake’ stand in the middle of the playing area.

**Directions** Tell the players they are attempting to build a magnificent pyramid with the stones in the opposite end of the valley. They must avoid the serpent, collect a stone and dribble it back to the building site. Have a parent in the building zone to assist the ‘Egyptians’ in building a three-tiered pyramid (9 on the bottom, 4 in the middle and 1 on top). If tagged by the ‘Serpent’ the ‘Egyptians’ becomes a ‘serpent helper’, tagging other players. The ‘Egyptians’ win if they build the pyramid, before all are captured!

### Objectives & Tips

Players dribbling with the laces, performing different take on moves, to beat the serpent. Discuss big space and little space. Switch it up! Captured players go to the sides and fire boulders (pass balls), to hit the ‘Egyptians’ below the knee.

- ⚽ Egyptians start in the end opposite of the pyramid stones.
- ⚽ Serpent coach stands in the middle.
- ⚽ Egyptians cross the valley to gather stones for their pyramid.



- ⚽ Egyptians must avoid the serpent’s tag.
- ⚽ After collecting the stone, they must dribble it back to the building zone; and make a 3 tiered pyramid.



- ⚽ Add cones for width.
- ⚽ Captured Egyptians attempt to hit players with “boulders” passed from the sidelines.



- ⚽ Each team has a doctor waiting safely in the hospital.
- ⚽ Game begins with all the “school kids” dribbling in the playing area.



- ⚽ Each team attempts to pass their ball into the opposing team’s ball and injure the players.
- ⚽ The doctor must leave the hospital to provide treatment!



- ⚽ If the doctor is hit or all players injured the game is over.
- ⚽ Play again!!

## *Doctor! Doctor!*

**Purpose** Requires all players to be moving constantly and working together!

**Organization** 20\*30 yard playing area. Divide players into two teams, each with a different coloured pinnie. In each end zone, create a 5\*5 yard ‘hospital’. One player from each team is a ‘doctor’.

**Directions** Explain to the children they are playing in the school yard. If they get hurt, the school doctor is on hand to patch them up and get them playing again. If, however, there was no doctor on hand, there would be no one to provide medical assistance. Doctors wait in the ‘hospitals’ while all the other players dribble around the playing area. When you say “GO”, all the ‘school kids’ must pass their ball in an attempt to hit the other teams ball. If a ball is hit the ‘school kid’ must sit on their ball and yell “DOCTOR! DOCTOR!” The doctor runs out to help the injured player (give a high-5) and they can resume playing. The doctor is now out of the hospital and is at risk if hit by the opposing teams ball! Teams must protect their doctor to win the game. The game ends when a doctor is hit or all players on one team are injured.

### **Objectives & Tips**

Players must keep their balls moving to make it harder to be hit by the opposing team.

Join in with your players and set the tone and intensity by being the doctor.



- ⚽ First player dribbles out towards the center.
- ⚽ The dribbler must dribble through the gate before scoring.



- ⚽ Players are encouraged to use cut moves to change direction.
- ⚽ Work with players to use a move to keep ball away from pressure.



- ⚽ If the defender wins the ball, they can attempt to score on either goal.

## 1 V 1 to Goal

**Purpose** 1v1 to goal gives the player an opportunity to score a goal after they have performed an introductory move. The activity includes dribbling, take on moves and goal scoring.

**Organization** a 15\*15-yard square with two goals, on opposite sides, located centrally along the line. On the other two sides of the area, set up 2 cones opposite each other. Ideally, set up two areas in order to maximise the amount of playing time for each player. Divide the players into four teams, with each team in a different coloured pinnie. Two teams in each area.

**Directions** This activity is most appropriate for players who have progressed from introductory dribbling activities. Each team is arranged behind a cone, facing each other. One team starts with the balls. The first player in line dribbles the ball toward the center of the square and the first player from the other line, comes forward to defend. Once the dribbler goes through a cone gate he can dribble towards either of the goals, to the left or the right. The defender attempts to win the ball and score in either goal.

### Objectives & Tips

The goals are strategically placed to enable you to work with the players on dribbling laterally and using different cut moves before scoring.

Use assistant coaches and parents, so the players receive more playing time and touches.

Switch it up! To increase the difficulty, allow players to play in teams of two, passing between them.



- ⚽ All players dribbling anywhere on the race track.
- ⚽ Introduce different commands “red flag” =STOP!



- ⚽ Have parent helpers stand close off the gates in “pit lane”.
- ⚽ Race cars must find and open gate.



- ⚽ Parents/Coach move in and out of different gates.
- ⚽ Add 2 police to chase after the speeding cars!

## Pit Stop

**Purpose** An excellent activity to activate the interest and focus of young players quickly. Consistent with individual focus at the first stage of development, you can differentiate the difficulty of the activity.

**Organization** 20\*20 yard playing area. Randomly place six gates, made out of cones, throughout the grid (pit lane). Gates should be two yards apart. All players have their own ball and can dribble anywhere within the grid. Add conditions to emphasize different skills, such as the space of the dribble, changing direction and dribbling to space.

**Directions** Explain to the players they are on a race track with many twists and turns. To begin the race, you will introduce different signals: ‘Green flag’ means the players can dribble at any speed they want. ‘Red flag’ means there has been an accident and all cars must stop (place foot on ball). ‘Final lap’ means players must dribble at full speed. Add many other conditions to include turns and other ball mastery skills. During the race, the cars need refueling and new tires. Players must go through gates when you call “Pit stop”! Assistant coaches/parents can help to close off different stops and create more of a challenge!

### Objectives & Tips

Players are dribbling with their laces and heads up, to see if lanes are open or closed!

Add a point system to add extra excitement. One point per pit stop!

Switch it up! Vary the conditions to increase or decrease the difficulty. Add a police officer (player without a ball), to chase after speeding players.



- ⚽ Players dribble throughout the space, waiting for your instruction.
- ⚽ Start with simple body parts!



- ⚽ A good opportunity to teach rules, such as hand balls!
- ⚽ When you shout “hands” players all yell back “NO HANDS IN SOCCER COACH”!



- ⚽ Increase the challenge by calling a series of body parts.
- ⚽ Have the players place more than 1 body part at a time.

## Body Ball

**Purpose** Gives young players the opportunity to experiment with the ball in a fun activity. Incorporates both laughter and skill development. Players learn to use the surfaces of their feet and keep their hands off the ball!

**Organization** 25\*25-yard grid. All players each have a ball dribbling throughout the space.

**Directions** Players are to dribble around the area, listening for your instruction. When you call out a body part, the players have to stop and place that body part on the ball. Start off simple, keeping the instruction to a single body part, I.e.: head, tummy and bottom. Increase the complexity by calling out “Left foot”, “Right knee”, “Left elbow” etc. This game creates a great opportunity to discuss the ‘no hands’ rule. Tell the players when you instruct them, to use their hands, they are to all shout “NO HANDS IN SOCCER, COACH”!

### Objectives & Tips

Get the players laughing, moving and touching the ball!

Introduce players to left and right and the ‘hand ball rule’.

Kneel, so you are eye level with your players and establish eye contact!

Switch it up! As players become proficient, increase the difficulty by calling a series of body parts they need to repeat, such as “Tummy, nose, and ear”. Or, call out two body parts at once, such as “Right hand and left foot”.



## Spiders Web

**Purpose** Spiders web introduces young players to the concept of dribbling to space, within a confined area. As more players join the web less open space is available. This is an excellent teaching moment for the coach to discuss heads up, looking for space and changing direction.

- ⚽ 3 players link and start the “web”
- ⚽ Remaining players dribble around the jungle!

**Organization** 20\*20-yard grid. Nine players, each with a ball, can dribble anywhere within the space. Three players start the ‘web’ by linking arms and the ‘web’ moves around the space together.

**Directions** Tell the players they are on a safari in the dangerous jungle. Huge spiders have made a massive web and are trying to capture them all in it! On the command of “GO”, the ‘web’ will start to move throughout the ‘jungle’. If the ‘web’ touches the player’s ball, the player must join the ‘web’ and kick their ball out of the area. The game continues until all the players are caught in the web!

### Objectives & Tips

Encourage players to dribble with their laces, keeping their heads up to see the available space.

Switch it up! Make the game a direction activity by adding a safety zone in each end of the jungle.



- ⚽ The spider’s web grows whenever it touches a ball. Players must dribble in space.
- ⚽ Players in the web must remained linked.



- ⚽ Add 2 safety zones to make the game more directional.
- ⚽ Play becomes more predictable.

*Providing the progressive developmental framework that will help coaches and players reach their full potential.*