



**Maple Valley  
Youth Soccer Curriculum**

**Proposed: October 26, 2007**

## MVYSA U8 Soccer Curriculum

### AGE GROUP:

U8

#### Skill Priorities:

Dribble with all side of both feet  
Dribble out of trouble Dribble past someone  
Shielding  
Soft first touch  
Introduce proper shooting technique  
Introduce passing

Although U8 children may begin to be far more physically and maturationally advanced than U6 children, we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. Dribbling still needs to be the primary focus of our efforts. Passing and shooting should be introduced at this age. U8 players tend to work best when in pairs and we should allow them to work in pairs (coach selected) often. Fun is a central theme in practice. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves.

#### Typical Characteristics of U8 Players

- Tend to play well in pairs – Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities.
- They now have a sense of how others are feeling.
- Still unable to think abstractly – be patient
- Heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults – still make sure to give frequent water breaks.
- Still much prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines
- Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task)
- Have an understanding of time and sequence.
- Many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play.

- Extremely aware of adult reactions – Be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently.
- Seek out adult approval – they very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age.
- Begin to become aware of peer perception – be sensitive to this
- Wide range of abilities between children at this age –your challenge is to manage a wide range in your practice in a way that challenges every player.
- Some will keep score – **we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age.**
- Beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements.
- Less active imaginations than U6 players

#### Some Recommended Games for U8 Players

1. *Free Dribble* – Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session; kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.
2. *Knock Out* – In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player's balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out, have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times).
3. *Shield Steal* – Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside of foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.
4. *Gates Passing* - Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.

5. *Get Outta Here* – Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. Place half of team behind each goal and coach stands at halfway line with all balls. When coach plays out a ball the first two players run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta here" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players. *Version 2:* Coach can stop yelling "get outta here" after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. *Version 4:* Have the first two or three players from each group come out each tie a new ball is played and play 2 vs 2 or 3 vs 3.

6. *Clean your Backyard* – Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (2-3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team's goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot cross the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense though no hands. Only shots with laces count as goals.

7. *2 vs. 1 keep away* – In a grid 10 x 15 yds, three players play 2 v 1 continuous keep away. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in.

**Reminders:**

Every practice should include a scrimmage.

Include age appropriate stretching and warm-ups.

Practice 1-2 times a week for 45-60 minutes.

# U8 --- Session One

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. At this age we introduce activities that foster dribbling, passing, shooting and receiving. (Sessions should be about 45-60 minutes in duration.)

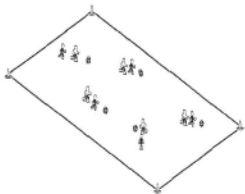
1) **Tag**---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees. (10 minutes)

2) **Free Dribble**---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (laces/instep dribble), change direction ("spin in" with inside of foot and "spin out" with outside of foot), and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction. (10 minutes)

3) **Knock Out**---In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player's balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 sole of the foot touches or juggling 5 times). (10 minutes)



4) **Shield-Steal**---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. *Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.* (10 minutes)



# U8 -- Session Two

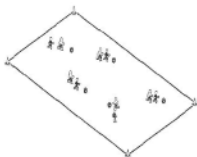
**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. At this age we introduce activities that foster dribbling, passing, shooting and receiving. (*Sessions should be about 45-60 minutes in duration.*)

1) **Shadow Dribble**---One player with a ball and another player behind them with a ball as well. The player in front can go anywhere in the 20x20 yard box and the player behind must try to keep as close to them as possible and follow where they are going and what they are doing. The leader determines where they are going and the player who is the shadow tries to keep up with them. Then have roles reversed. Can use both feet to start, then can choose to use one foot, then the other. *Version 2:* Now the leader adds in moves while they are dribbling in the space and the player being the shadow must do the same. (10 minutes)

2) **Triangle Tag**---Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly 1 yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is "it". However this time the player who is "it" tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player's ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither player can go through the triangle. *Version 2:* Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle. *Version 3:* Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players still only compete with their partner. Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag. (10 minutes)



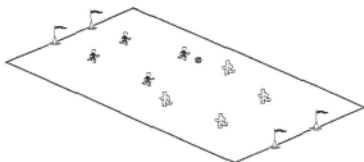
3) **Snake**---In an appropriate space for the numbers you have, have all players dribbling soccer balls except for 2-3 players to start. These players hold hands and work together as one snake to tag the other players. The players with balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands with players making up the snake. The snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must stay together as one animal and not break off into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss. (10 minutes)



4) **Gates**---Set up many pairs of cones (with roughly 2 yards in between pairs) all around the playing area. These pairs serve as gates or many mini-goals. Players each have a ball and must dribble through the gate in order to score. Have players count how many goals they score and when playing a second time ask them if they can beat their score by one goal. Coaches can vary this by asking players to dribble with left foot or right foot. If players end up dribbling back and forth through only one goal, set up a rule to protect against this. (10 minutes)



5) 4v4 Game—Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U8 -- Week Three

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. At this age we introduce activities that foster dribbling, passing, shooting and receiving. (Sessions should be about 45-60 minutes in duration.)

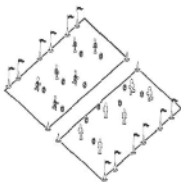
1) **Ball Tag**--Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball instead of their hand. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Have the tag count if their ball hits another player or that player's ball. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other, have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players. (10 minutes)



2) **Team Ball Tag**--Split into two teams. One team is trying to tag the other team below the knee or on their soccer ball. They keep track of how many times they hit the other team's soccer balls or them below the knee and then the coach can help them add up their numbers. Then the other team gets a chance to do the same thing. Only one team at a time is trying to tag. The other team is trying to keep away and shield their soccer balls. *Version 2:* Can only have the teams tag the other team's soccer balls. (10 minutes)

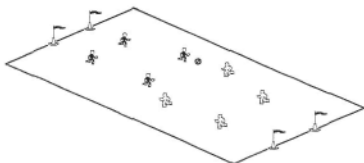
3) **Soccer Marbles**--Players are in pairs, each with a ball. One player plays out their ball (using the inside of the foot) and the partner passes their own ball in an attempt to strike the ball their partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turn at trying to hit each other's ball without ever stopping. If player 2 misses player 1's ball, then player 1 immediately runs to their own ball and tries to hit player 2's ball (player 2 does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1's ball). After player 1 has a chance, then player 2 immediately tries to hit player 1's ball right back. etc. etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score. Hint: If 2 balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back. *Version 3:* Three players start the game in a triangle, ten giant steps apart. They take turns trying to hit another player's ball. Number one goes first and so on. They keep score, and the first to ten points wins. If they hit two balls with one shot, they get two points. (10 minutes)

4) **Clean Your Backyard**--Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team's goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot enter the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense, though no hands allowed. Only shots with laces count as goals. *Version 2:* Allow teams to defend with hands as well. *Version 3:* Take out the buffer zone and play a normal game except with 3 goals at each end (use 2 or 3 balls at once sometimes). (10 minutes)





5) **4v4 Game**—Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U8 --- Week Four

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. At this age we introduce activities that foster dribbling, passing, shooting and receiving. (Sessions should be about 45-60 minutes in duration.)

1) **Freeze Tag**---Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place their ball above their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick his/her ball through the frozen player's legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion. (10 minutes)

2) **Gates Passing**---Same set up as previous game. However, players are now paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Similar to the previous game, have them pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot. (10 minutes)

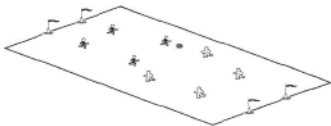


3) **2 vs. 1 keepaway**---In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 vs. 1 continuous keepaway. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in. (10 minutes)

4) **Capture the Balls**---Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coach's command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again. (10 minutes)



5) **4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U8 --- Session Five

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1) **Juggling**---Everyone with a ball. Hold hands out with ball in between, drop ball directly down and kick back up to hands, etc. Players practice keeping the ball in the air with feet, thighs, and head. Players count how many times they touch the ball before it drops to the ground. (8 minutes)

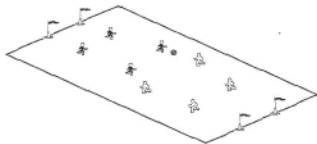
2) **Free Dribble**---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction. (12 minutes)

3) **1 vs. 1 to Endlines**---In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one endline and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball in control over the opposing player's endline. *Note: Coaches should make multiple 1v1 fields and have 1 or 2 players on deck at each field.* (10 minutes)

4) **Get "Outta" There**---Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. The coach stands at halfway line with all of the soccer balls. Half of the players are lined up on his left side and half of the players are lined up on his right side in different colored bibs. When the coach kicks a ball onto the field, the first two players in each line run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta there" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players. *Version 2:* Coach can stop yelling "get outta there" after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. (10 minutes)



5) **4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U8 --- Week Six

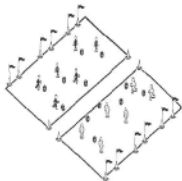
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**1) Paint the Field---**In pairs, players move around the grid and pass their ball back and forth in the area defined. At first have each pair in their own grid. You explain to them that their ball is actually a paintbrush and wherever it rolls on the ground, it paints that area. The task is to paint as much of the area as possible in the time allotted by passing (kicking) their soccer balls all over the grid. Progressively build this so that players go from moving slowly in their own grid to having multiple pairs in the same grid moving at a faster pace. *Version 2:* Have players use opposite foot. (10 minutes)

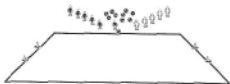
**2) Doctor-Doctor---**Break team into 2 groups. Send each team into their own hospital (at opposite corners of the grid). Select a doctor for each team. The doctor will be able to unfreeze their own players if they are frozen by the other team. Each team tries to freeze the other team by kicking their own balls or hitting either the other team's balls or someone on the other team below the knee. If a player gets frozen, they must stay where they are with their soccer ball and yell out "Doctor-Doctor". The doctors do not have a ball and their role is to touch their teammates to unfreeze them so they can continue playing. The Doctor is always safe (cannot be frozen) if standing in their hospital, but once they leave the hospital and enter the open grid, they become unsafe and are able to be frozen by the other team. When a Doctor is frozen, the game is over. (10 minutes)



**3) Clean Your Backyard---**Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team's goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot enter the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense, though no hands allowed. Only shots with laces count as goals. *Version 2:* Allow teams to defend with hands as well. *Version 3:* Take out the buffer zone and play a normal game except with 3 goals at each end (use 2 or 3 balls at once sometimes). (10 minutes)



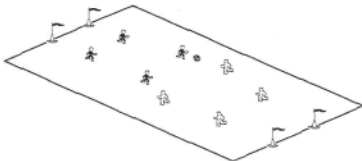
**4) Numbers---**Same set up as Get Outta There, but teams assign numbers (1-6) to each player and when coach calls out a number, the player from each team with that number comes out to play 1 vs. 1. Coach can set up particular match-ups and can call out



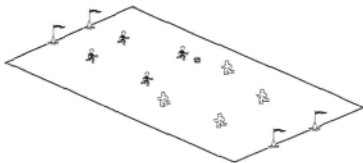
more than one number at a time for 2 vs. 2 or 3 vs. 3 etc. (10 minutes)

**5) 4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete.

**REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



5) **4v4 Game**--Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U8 --- Session Seven

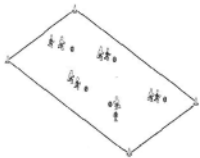
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1) **Tag**---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees. (10 minutes)

2) **Triangle Tag**---Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly 1 yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is "it". However this time the player who is "it" tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player's ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither play can go through the triangle. *Version 2:* Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle. *Version 3:* Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players still only compete with their partner. Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag. (10 Minutes)



3) **Shield-Steal**---Two players (partners) with one ball. One player starts with the ball and on the coach's command, her partner tries to steal the ball from her. Play 30-45 second matches. Whoever has the ball at the end of the time, receives a point. Play many matches. If ball goes out of bounds, one of the players must get it back into play quickly. Show shielding technique with body sideways on to opponent, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield. (10 minutes)

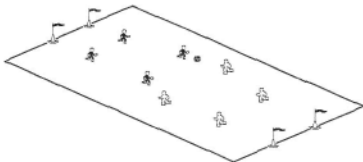


4) **Team Gates**---Set up many pairs of cones (with roughly 2 yards in between the cones) all around the playing area. These pairs serve as gates or many mini-goals. Players are split into two teams and each team has a ball and must pass the ball through the gates in order to score. Have players count how many goals their team scores in 45 seconds. After the two teams get comfortable moving and passing through the gates with their own soccer ball, play a competitive game with only one ball. (10 minutes)



more than one number at a time for 2 vs. 2 or 3 vs. 3 etc. (10 minutes)

**5) 4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



# U8 -- Week Eight

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1) **Soccer Marbles**—Players are in pairs, each with a ball. One player plays out their ball (using the inside of the foot) and the partner passes their own ball in an attempt to strike the ball their partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turn at trying to hit each other's ball without ever stopping. If player 2 misses player 1's ball, then player 1 immediately runs to their own ball and tries to hit player 2's ball (player 2 does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1's ball). After player 1 has a chance, then player 2 immediately tries to hit player 1's ball right back, etc. etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score. Hint: If 2 balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back. *Version 3:* Three players start the game in a triangle, ten giant steps apart. They take turns trying to hit another player's ball. Number one goes first and so on. They keep score, and the first to ten points wins. If they hit two balls with one shot, they get two points. (10 minutes)

2) **Gates Passing**—Set up many, small 2-yard gates with cones and scatter them around the field. Two players to a ball; players must successfully pass the ball through the gates to their partner to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as possible in 45-60 seconds. The coach can manipulate the game by directing the foot surface the players must use to pass the ball (inside, outside, laces, etc.) (10 minutes)

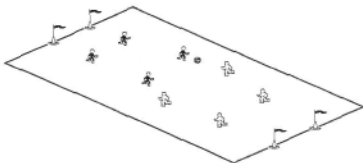


3) **Freeze Tag**—Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place their ball above their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick his/her ball through the frozen player's legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion. (10 minutes)

4) **Get "Outta" There**—Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. The coach stands at halfway line with all of the soccer balls. Half of the players are lined up on his left side and half of the players are lined up on his right side in different colored bibs. When the coach kicks a ball onto the field, the first two players in each line run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta there" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players. *Version 2:* Coach can stop yelling "get outta there" after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. (10 minutes)



5) **4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)



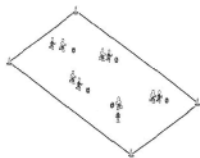
# U8 --- Session Nine

**Objective:** To provide fun, active, age appropriate activities that foster comfort with the ball for each player. At this age we introduce activities that foster dribbling, passing, shooting and receiving. (Sessions should be about 45-60 minutes in duration.)

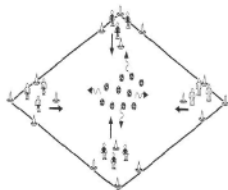
**1) Paired Tag**---Pair players up, each pair has 2 balls. One player starts and is given a 2 second lead to get away from his/her partner. The chaser ("it") dribbles after the first player and tries to tag him/her with his/her hand. If tagged, the roles reverse and the player who was previously "it" has two seconds to get away before their partner tries to tag them. Players must always dribble their soccer ball during this activity. (10 minutes)

**2) Paint the Field**---Have players work in pairs and pick a color that their soccer ball is going to 'paint'. Partners paint by passing the ball to each other on the ground. The ball only paints the area when the ball is on the ground and it paints the lines created by the pass. See how much of the area they can cover by passing and moving to a new space. *Version 3:* Ask the players to pass using only their left or right foot or to pass using the outside of their feet. (10 minutes)

**3) Shield-Steal**---Two players (partners) with one ball. One player starts with the ball and, on the coach's command, her partner tries to steal the ball from her. Play 30-45 second matches. Whoever has the ball at the end of the time allotment, receives a point. Play many matches. If ball goes out of bounds, one of the players must get it back into play quickly. **Coaching points:** Show shielding technique with body sideways on to opponent, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield. (10 minutes)



**4) Capture the Balls**---Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coach's command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again. (10 minutes)



5) **4v4 Game**---Separate players into two teams and play a game of 3 against 3 or 4 against 4 without goalkeepers. Let the players play and give plenty of positive feedback to them as they compete. **REINFORCE the GOOD STUFF!** (15 minutes)

