

# **FUNdamentals - U8**

## **Soccer Coaching Package - SSUFC**

### **Welcome to *FUNdamentals* Coaching!**

The Saugeen Shores United Football Club (SSUFC) relies on volunteers to create an amazing soccer experience for more than 600 youth soccer players on more than 60 teams. Thank you for volunteering to coach one of these teams!

We want to make coaching as easy and enjoyable as possible, so we have put together a package with everything you need to have a successful coaching season.

In this coaching package you will find information about SSUFC policies and safety protocols, Soccer Canada philosophy, general player developmental information, game play rules and philosophy, and activities to use during U8 weekly soccer practices. There will also be separate condensed practice plan with a listing of activities for you to easily reference when you are running the sessions each week.

### **SSUFC Policies & Safety Protocols**

Here is an excerpt from the SSUFC Mission Statement:

*Our Mission is to provide for our members of all ages and skill levels the opportunity to play soccer for their enjoyment, for their improvement, and for the improvement of the game. SSUFC is committed to developing the whole player and not just their soccer skills.*

*It is our hope that everything we do with the program is for the betterment of all our participants.*

### **Field Safety & First Aid**

When you arrive at a soccer session, quickly scan the field area for broken glass or any other object that could harm a player or damage equipment. Also check the balls and nets for damage, and remove damaged equipment from the playing area.

All players require shin guards, soccer socks over top of the shin guards, and soccer cleats. Player should remove their hats, sun glasses (unless they are prescription), and all jewelry, including watches, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, etc. Remind players to bring a water bottle to stay hydrated, especially in the heat of summer. Take plenty of water breaks during the session.

Ask parents if any of your players have an epipen or any other health conditions that you should be aware of to keep players safe and supported during the season. Remind parents that they need to stay at the field during each session, or they need to make arrangements with another parent to be responsible for their child. If a player needs to go to the bathroom during a soccer session you can direct them to the parent

Young players often try to stand and balance on the on the soccer ball. In the past we have had players fall off of a ball and break their arm. Please remind your player to not stand on the ball.

First Aid kits will be available at each field location, either in/near the shed or with the convenor. In the case of a minor cut or scrape that requires a band-aid, alert the parent and direct them to the convenor or first aid kit location to tend to the injury.

## **Field Locations**

In the case of a medical emergency that requires a 911 call, the field addresses are as follows:

JH Roberston Soccer Complex - 700 Pierson Ave, Port Elgin (main access gate at corner of Pierson and Bricker)

Helliwell Soccer Fields - 100 Grenville St, Southampton (main parking lot access to field)

SDSS Sports Field - 780 Gustavus St, Port Elgin (behind school, access off Gustavus)

In the case of any incident or injury, large or small, a Player Injury Report and Incident Report Form should be filled out and submitted to the convenor or Club. The convenor or coaching coordinator can assist in filling out these forms.

## **Head Balls & Concussion Protocol**

There is no heading the ball in U8 soccer. If a player intentionally heads the ball during a game, play should be stopped, the player should be checked for injury, and all players reminded that heads should not be used. Tell players that if the ball is coming toward their head during a game or practice they should duck out of the way. U8 players can kick the ball with enough force to cause a hard blow to the head, and every now and then a player falls during the course of a practice or game and hits their head on the ground. These are not generally serious enough to cause a concussion, but you should always be mindful when a player hits their head. The concussion protocol is attached to this coaching package so you can become familiar with the signs of a concussion and the procedure if a head blow occurs and concussion is suspected.

## **Severe Weather**

The Club will make all cancellation decisions in the case of inclement weather and will notify players and coaches by email, Facebook, and Instagram no later than 4:30 pm of that day. Soccer will be cancelled in the case of thunder or lightning, when the temperature is above 31 degrees, or when the humidex is above 40 degrees. If you hear thunder during a soccer session, notify parents that soccer is over for the evening and ensure that everyone on your team leaves the field. We do play soccer in the rain, and a session would only be cancelled due to rain if the fields are drenched to the point where playing on them would cause damage to the field.

## **Soccer Canada Philosophy**

Soccer Canada breaks its youth programming into three developmental stages leading up to full-field soccer play starting at age 13. Active Start is for players aged 4 to 6, FUNdamentals is for ages 7 to 9, and Learn to Train covers ages 10 to 12.

FUNdamentals soccer uses a “movement-oriented game-based approach” with an emphasis on physical literacy, both with and without the ball. Physical literacy is understood to be “an individual’s belief in their ability to move well and actively participate in activities requiring physical competence.”

The basic concepts of soccer positioning are introduced in U8 soccer, but do not expect players to “stay in their positions” with any consistency. With four out-players in U8 matches, introduce the positions of left wing, right wing, left defence, and right defence. You can remind players to think about where they are on the field in relation to their teammates by saying things like: “if you are playing forward, try to stay in front of the defence” or “if you are playing right wing, try to stay on this side of the players on the left side of the field”. Rotate players to play goalkeeper so that everyone has the opportunity to try it out, but do not force a player to play goalkeeper if they are not comfortable with it.

Introduce positioning, but keep in mind that putting too much emphasis on positioning can lead to a lack of enjoyment for FUNdamentals players. The emphasis on developing individual comfort with the ball, and starting to share it with one or two teammates, will provide FUNdamentals players with the best learning opportunities.

## **Developmental Characteristics of FUNdamentals Players**

Our FUNdamentals players are aged 6 through 8, and are finishing Grade 1 or Grade 2. They are familiar with organized activities with other children, but there will still be a wide range of behaviours and abilities within a group of up to ten U8 players. In general, FUNdamental players:

- acknowledge the coach as the leader
- act on their own but will accept instruction if they feel like a coach has established rules and conditions
- are fairly individualistic and self-centered, but will try to make friends and want to be accepted by others
- are imaginative, curious, and want to know everything
- participate in sport because their friends participate
- react favourably to positive feedback/praise
- can start to learn the rules of the game and fundamental, tactical principles
- like to assume some responsibility and take part in decisions relating to the games or activities played
- like activities that encourage creativity and have few rules

## **Game Night Rules & Philosophy**

FUNdamentals soccer does not include “official” matches where scores are recorded and league standings are kept. All of the matches in our U8 soccer program are just for fun and are designed to give the players opportunities to practice their soccer skills in soccer matches with another teams. We mark a field boundary with cones, we have an official start and stop time of the match, and we have a game official who blows the whistle when the ball goes out of bounds or when a foul occurs.

In U8 we play across the mini or medium fields, with two games taking place side-by-side on each field. The length of the U8 field is the full width of the mini fields, and about 5 feet inside of each sideline on the medium fields. The width of the U8 field is from the top edge of the mini or medium field centre circle to the top edge of the crease in front of the net on both the mini and medium field. Mark this rectangular field boundary with cones.

The 5’ x 8’ popup nets are situated in the centre of each end of the U8 field. Use cones to mark a semi-circular crease around the front of each net. The top of the crease should be 2 to 3 large paces away from the centre of the net (approx. 6 to 8 feet), and the edge of the crease should cross the end line approximately 2 feet from the edge of the net. Players from the other team are not allowed to enter the crease, but players on the goalkeeper’s team can go in the crease. The goalkeeper can leave the crease, but then they can only kick the ball and cannot pick it up. The crease creates space between the shooter and the goal, and it creates a safe zone where goalies can pick up the ball without players trying to kick it at the same time.

There are two ways to play a game in U8 soccer, 4v4 no goalkeeper or 5v5 with a goalkeeper. Both configurations have four out players, set up as left forward, right forward, left defence, and right defence. If you have a fifth player as the goalkeeper, use the 5’ x 8’ pop-up nets. If you don’t have a goalkeeper, use the smaller 3’ x 5’ pop-up nets. In both cases play with a crease to give some separation between the shooter and the net.

The game official is either one of the coaches or a young referee. Some of the referees for U8 are 12+ and have taken the small-sided refereeing course, but many of our young referees are part of our Junior Referee program and are new to officiating a game of soccer. As a coach you can support and encourage our young referees.

Ideally there are two coaches for each team on game night. One coach can be with the team on the sidelines helping with substitutions, and the other coach can be walking around on the field supporting the players and helping to keep the game going.

If a team has just enough players to be on the field and no extra players to substitute, there should also be quarter time breaks in addition to the half time break. This gives everyone a chance to rest and have a drink of water.

These are the rules that govern the matches played in FUNdamentals soccer:

- The match has two 20 minutes halves.
- The match begins with a coin toss (or sometimes paper-rock-scissors) and the winning team takes the kick off. The other team takes the kick to start the second half. The player who kicks the ball can't touch the ball a second time until after another player (from either team) touches it.
- Any part of the body can be used by the players, except their head, arms, and hands. (Goalkeepers may use their arms and hands inside the crease.)
- If the ball touches a player's hand or arm but the direction or speed of the ball is not changed very much, play can continue and just remind players to keep their arm and hands out of the way.
- If the goalkeeper leaves the crease, they become like another player and cannot use their hands. If the goalkeeper picks up the ball outside of the crease it is technically a hand ball. This is hard for young players to remember, so be lenient and give them several reminders. If it looks like a goalkeeper is deliberately leaving the crease to pick up the ball, call a hand ball and give the other team a free kick approximately a meter outside of the crease.
- We do kick-ins instead of throw-ins in U8 soccer. If the ball goes out the sideline, it is passed back onto the field by the team that did not send it off the field. The ball is kicked in from the place on the sideline where it left the field.
- If the ball goes out the end of the field it is either a goal kick if it was put out by the attacking team, or it is a corner kick if it was put out by the defending team.
- When one team has a goal kick, players from the other team have to retreat back to the centre of the field. Players on the kicking team are allowed to be in their own end. The goalkeeper kicks the ball to one of the defenders on their team. Once that defender receives the ball, the other team can cross the centre line and play resumes as usual.
- A foul occurs when a player does the following:
  - Trips or pushes an opponent.
  - Deliberately contacts the ball with any part of their hand or arm (excluding goalkeepers inside the crease).

- When a goal is scored the ball goes back to centre and the other team gets a kick to restart the game in the same manner as at the beginning of each half.

The results of these games are not recorded, so we do not focus on the goals that are scored. The kids will be trying to keep score and may ask you what the score is during the course of the game. It is better to respond by saying something like: “we focus more on improving our soccer skills rather than whether we get more goals than the other team”. During the game you can highlight times when players moved into an open space (either with or without the ball), passed the ball to an open player, dribbled down the field with the ball, or attempted to get past an opponent 1v1. We also encourage parents to support their child by asking things like “how was soccer tonight?” or “did you have fun?” or even “did you do some passing with your teammates?” rather than “did you get a goal?” or “did your team win?”

## **Practice Session Basics**

There are three basic objectives of all FUNdamentals soccer sessions:

- Explore different movements and actions
- Create an environment that presents moments to explore and interact with the ball
- Create a fun and enjoyable experience

All U8 practice sessions are one hour long. You will start with a short “warm-up” and then lead your players through 4 or 5 fun activities during each session. The warm-up generally includes dribbling and ball-on-foot movements. Each activity will last 10 to 12 minutes with a short water break to transition between activities. The water break can give you or your assistant coach time to set up cones, etc. for the next activity. You will general end the session with a more match-like activity, like a small-sided scrimmage.

Each practice session will have a ball skill or tactical concept as the focus of the practice. The ball skills include pull backs, passing, shooting, dribbling, head fakes, and trap & control the ball. The basic tactical/teamwork concepts include kick-ins, clearing the ball, and crossing the ball in front of the net.

Inherent in each activity will be opportunities for players to:

- perform fundamental movement skills (walking, running, jumping, kicking, etc.)
- interact and experiment within their environment
- search for and exploit space
- make decisions
- gain experience through trial and error

Many activities have ways of modifying them to make them easier or harder to suit the abilities of the players. Soccer Canada recommends that you make an activity easier if players are unable to have a balanced consistency of success and failure. Making an

activity easier often involves adding more balls, enlarging the playing space, or reducing the number of opponents. You can make an activity harder if players are consistently having success and need to be presented with a new problem to solve. Examples of making activities harder include: reducing the number of balls so players have to go 1v1, adding hazards or zones to avoid, making the playing area smaller, making the target further away, or requiring stronger players to use their non-dominant foot during an activity.

An important aspect of physical literacy in the game of soccer is for players to be comfortable using both feet. By age 7 or 8, most players will have an established dominant side of their body, usually the right side. Encourage U8 players to try activities with their left foot as well as their right foot while dribbling and shooting.

## Ball Skills

The main soccer skills that will be learned and practiced in U8 activities are dribbling, pull backs, shooting, and passing, and to a lesser extent ball control and fakes.

- **Dribbling** means using your feet to move the ball in a controlled way. Encourage your players to look up to see the field/obstacles around them while they are dribbling. They can just peek at the ball or see it with their peripheral vision.
- **Pull Backs** means to use the bottom of your foot to pull the ball slightly behind you so you can change directions with the ball.
- **Shooting** means using your feet to score. Encourage players to use the side or top (laces) of the foot to shoot, not the toe.
- **Passing** means using your feet to get the ball to your teammates in a controlled way. The side or top of the foot should be used, not the toe.
- **Ball Control** means to use your body, legs, and feet to cushion the ball and bring it to your feet in order to then pass, dribble, or shoot.
- **Fake** means to move parts of your body in one direction before you move sharply with the ball in the other direction.

## Tactical Concepts

When your team has a kick-in from the sideline, it can sometimes be confusing for players to know who should take the kick and where they should kick it. Here are some general principals for your players to use during a kick in.

- The defence player on that side of the field should take the kick. The exception is when the kick is deep in the other team's half, then the forward on that side should take the kick.
- The kicker often wants to pass to a teammate, and players on the other team will be trying to guard those players. This often causes a delay where the kicker is waiting for an open player and defenders are chasing the players to guard them.

- Instead, suggest that the forward on that side of the field be ahead of the kicker at about a 30 degree angle off of the sideline. That player will be guarded, but that's okay. This creates a pie shape between the sideline and the line between the kicker and the guarded teammate.
- Have the kicker pass the ball through the open space between the sideline and the guarded player, right down the middle of the pie shape. The guarded player can then run onto the ball and head up the sideline toward the other team's end, or cross it to the forward on the other side of the field if they are already close to the other team's net. You can remind your players what to do during a kick-in by saying "give them a piece of pie!"
- If the kick-in is deep in the other team's end and a forward is taking the kick, they can kick the ball through an empty space in front of the net for a teammate to try and shoot on net.

The other main tactical concept for U8 is the general flow of bringing the ball out of your end by clearing it to the side, dribbling or pass it up the sideline, and crossing it in front of the net to a teammate. This game flow starts when one of your defenders has the ball in their own end. Often the defender thinks about carrying the ball up the centre of the field toward the other team's net, but the other team is blocking their way up the centre of the field.

If the defender with the ball looks around for a pass, they will often see the other defence player wide open in front of their own net. It is tempting to make this pass, but it will usually get intercepted by the opposing forwards, giving them an open shot on net. Instead, encourage your players to dribble the ball towards the side line to make space. Then they can start dribbling it up the side of the field ("up the line") and then pass it up to the waiting forward.

The general strategy once the forward has the ball is to dribble the ball into the other team's end, parallel to the sideline, and pass the ball to the other forward who is waiting in front of the net. It is tempting to carry the ball directly toward the net, and this sometimes works depending on the skill and speed of the player, but encourage your forward to dribble the ball along the sideline. This draws the defence players toward the player with the ball, usually leaving the other forward open in front of the net.

The three things to remind your players are:

- When in your own end, move the ball toward the sideline, not in front of your net
- Carry the ball up the field near the sideline, not up the centre of the field
- Cross the ball in front of the other team's net to your waiting teammate

Every situation in soccer is different and we want to encourage the players to try things out bring their creativity to the game. Talking about this general flow of the game during practices isn't meant to be too strict or structured, but it will give your players a general idea of strategy and can improve their confidence during a game.

## Warm-up

Try to arrive at the field 5 to 10 minutes before the session begins to give time to set up the field for the first activity. Welcome each child by name as they arrive at the field. Try to start promptly, and continue to welcome players into the warm-up activities as they arrive. At the start of the season, try to help the players learn each other's names. Use names when you refer to the players on your team, and encourage players to say the person's name when they kick the ball to a teammate during an activity.

Start each session with every player getting a ball and dribbling around the playing area follow-the-leader style. Then bring the players into a circle to start the session. We don't officially do stretching in U8 since their bodies are still naturally flexible, but the jogging and ball movements should get their bodies ready for soccer. Early in the U8 season you can review some of the ball-on-foot movements that players may have done in U6:

- **Toe Taps** - Stand on one foot and tap the ball with the bottom of the other foot. Alternate feet 5 to 10 times.
- **Push Pulls** - Stand on one foot and move the ball forward and backward with the sole of the other foot, then change feet.
- **Side Rolls** - Stand on one foot and move the ball side to side with the sole of the other foot, then change feet.
- **Hopping Pulls** - Pull the ball backward three times with the sole of one foot while hopping backward with other foot, then change feet
- **Side Hops** - Pull the ball inward across the front of your body three times with one foot while hopping sideways with the other foot, then change feet

Then introduce the skill focus for the day. If it is an individual ball skill, not a tactical concept, give the players a few minutes to try it out on their own. Some of the activities suggested for that session will give opportunities to practice that particular skill. You can also remind players of skills learned in previous sessions to work on as the season progresses.

A great warm-up activity is Shark 'n' Minnows. Use cones to create a medium-sized oval fish tank. Two players are the sharks and the rest are the minnows. Minnows each have a ball, and sharks do not. Let the minnows dribble the ball around the fish tank for a few seconds, and then call the sharks to come in. Sharks try to get balls from the minnows and kick them out of the fish tank. Minnows try to evade the sharks using the skills that have been introduced, particularly pull backs and head fakes. Alternately, you could create a larger fish tank and have minnow work in pairs with one ball and pass to evade the shark. When a minnow loses their ball, they exit the tank and wait for the next round. Let everyone have a turn to be the shark.

# Activities

This package includes 16 activities for U8 players.

The FUNdamentals activities are arranged into the following categories:

1. Exploring Movement with the Ball
2. Exploring Space and Escaping Skills
3. Scoring Goals
4. 1v1 Duels
5. Exploring Game Play

For each activity you will see a description of the activity, a diagram of the field layout, and ways to modify it or make it easier or harder. The diagrams are taken from the original Soccer Canada FUNdamentals activity guides, and some are a bit hard to understand. We have provided written descriptions so you can use the diagrams as guides and refer primarily to the activity descriptions.

We have included enough activities to provide options and variety throughout the season, but you are welcome to use other activities that you have found online or that you have used with a group of U8 players in the past. Soccer Ontario has many weeks of FUNdamentals practice plans at: <https://www.ontariosoccer.net/grassroots-practices>.

When selecting activities, avoid those that have a high risk of players tripping, like when balls are kicked or rolled toward players who are trying to avoid those moving balls. Also avoid activities that contain a higher risk of players running into each other.

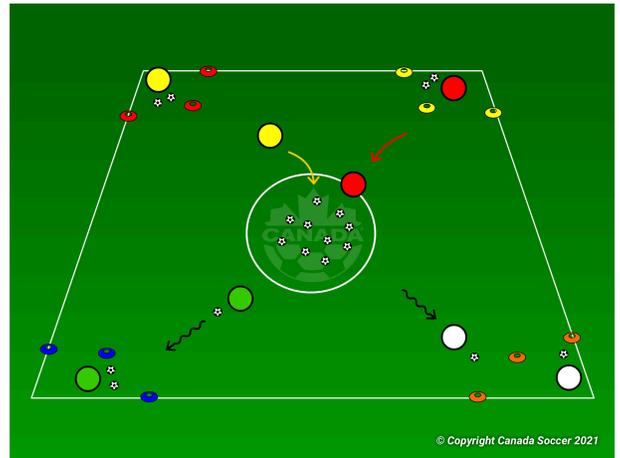
## Exploring Movement with the Ball

These activities get players moving and give them opportunities to interact with the ball. They involve dribbling, shooting, and passing. Some of the activities can be modified depending on the focus of the practice.

### Nuts & Squirrels

**Setup:** Create four semi-circles out of cones to make the corners of a large square - these are the nests. Put all of the balls in the middle of the square. In U4 & U6 we call the players the squirrels, so you can use this language to make it fun for your players if it suits the group of players on your team.

**Action:** On the coach's call, one player (squirrel) from each nest runs to the centre and dribbles a ball back to their corner (nest). When the first player returns, the second player can go. This can be done in different ways: have players do a pullback to get the ball out of the centre before dribbling back to their corner, or have them do a pullback and then pass the ball back to their corner.

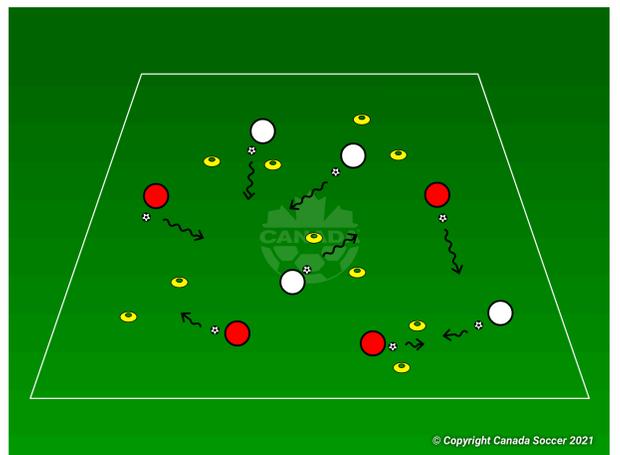


### Gates

**Setup:** Place pairs of cone gates randomly throughout your playing area. Each player has a ball.

**Action:** Players dribble the ball around the playing area and either dribble or kick the ball through the gates. Remind players to use their left foot as well as their right foot during both dribbling and kicking through the gates.

**Modify it:** This can be used as a partner activity where two players work together to either pass the ball to each other through the gates or to have one player act as the goalkeeper standing between the cones when their partner tries to shoot the ball through the gate.



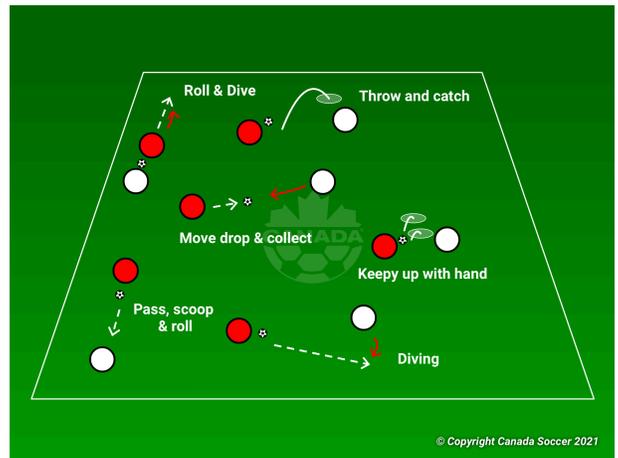
## Goalkeepers (or Trap & Control)

**Setup:** Players are in pairs with one ball between them.

**Action:** Partners take turns practicing goalie moves by tossing or kicking the ball to each other. The receiving partner uses their hands (not their legs or feet) to stop and trap the ball. Remind the receiving player to try not to let the ball hit them in the head. If a high ball is coming and they don't think they can catch it, they should just duck out of the way.

Partners can:

- play catch with the soccer ball
- toss the ball at waist or chest height or above the head for their partner to catch
- kick the ball low and straight for their partner to go down on their knees and trap
- kick the ball low and to the side for their partner to dive towards and trap

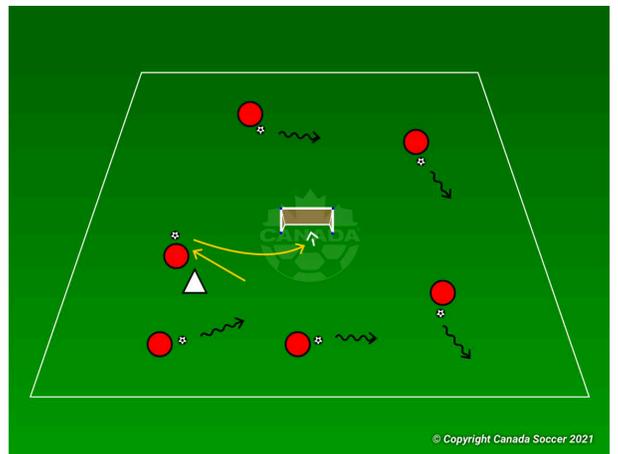


**Modify It:** To practice “Trap & Control” have players toss the ball to their partner’s chest or legs. The receiving partner attempts to “catch” the ball with their body and direct it to their feet. If the ball is tossed too high, remind players to duck out of the way so the ball doesn’t hit them in the head.

## Pirate’s Treasure

**Set up:** Mark a large area with cones to be the Pirates’ Island. Put the pop-up net (“treasure chest”) in the middle of the area. Each player has a ball (“treasure”).

**Action:** Players dribble the ball around the Pirates’ Island while the pirate tries to steal their ball and put them in the treasure chest. When the pirate gets a player’s ball, that player can try to get it back from the pirate before it makes it to the treasure chest. If they are unable to get their ball back before it makes it to the treasure chest, they become a pirate and help take balls from remaining players.



**Make it Harder:** If it is taking too long for the pirate to get any treasure in their chest, the coach can help by being a pirate until one or two other players are pirates as well.

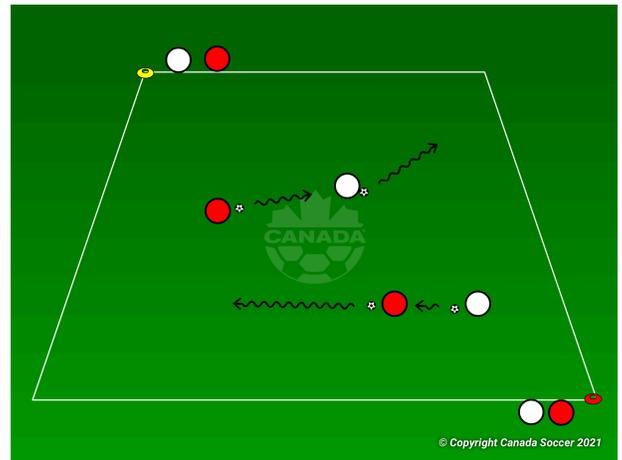
## Exploring Space and Escaping Skills

These activities help players to think about the space around them and decide where they should go to escape an opponent or to get open for a pass from a teammate.

### Dribble Tag

**Setup:** Create a large playing area with cones. Players are in pairs with one ball per pair.

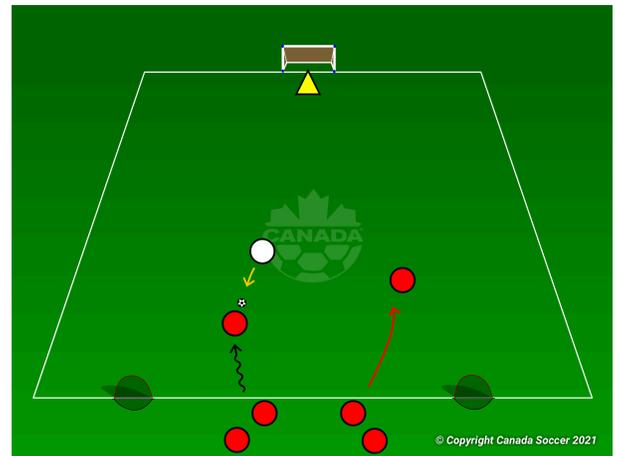
**Action:** Partner without the ball chases the player with the ball and tries to get the ball away from them. Then the other partner chases to try and get the ball back. Alternately you can have each player start with a ball. One partner chases the other while both are dribbling. The chasing player just has to tag their partner.



### Continuous 2v1

**Setup:** Create a playing area with the pop-up net at one end and two cone nets at the other end. There is a goalkeeper in the net and one defender. The other players are the attackers and start on the other side of the playing area between the two cone goals. Two attackers are in play at a time.

**Action:** The attackers work together to get past the defender and score on the goalkeeper. If the defender gets the ball, they attempt to score on one of the two cone goals. The next pair of attackers has a turn when either the previous attackers score, the defenders score, or the ball goes out of the playing areas. Swap defender and goalkeeper for every three or four pairs of attackers.



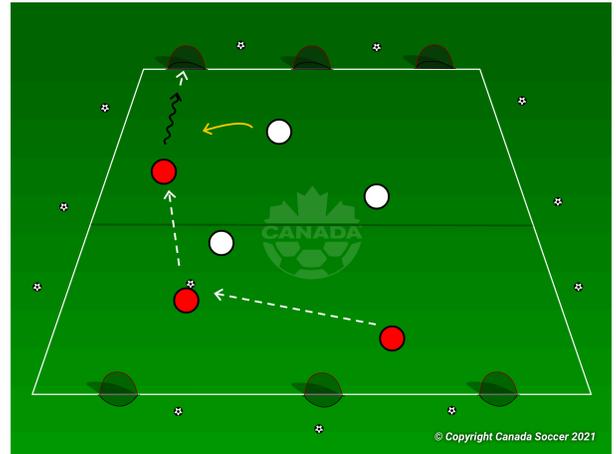
**Modify It:** If you have a lot of players and it feels like the other attackers are waiting too long for their turn, split the team into two groups on two different playing areas to allow them to rotate positions more frequently. Or add a second defender to make it 2v2.

## 3v3 + Six Goals

**Setup:** Create a playing area with three cone goals on each end and extra balls positioned around the playing area.

**Action:** Play 3v3 with each team attempting to score on the other team's three goals. If the ball goes out of bounds, an opponent player can get a nearby ball and keep the play going. If you have a lot of players consider creating two playing areas and split the player to have 3v3, 3v2, or 2v2 with 4 goals.

**Make it Harder:** Make different goals worth different points, have the teams attempt to score on each of the three nets, or players can only score when they are in the other team's half.



## Scoring Goals

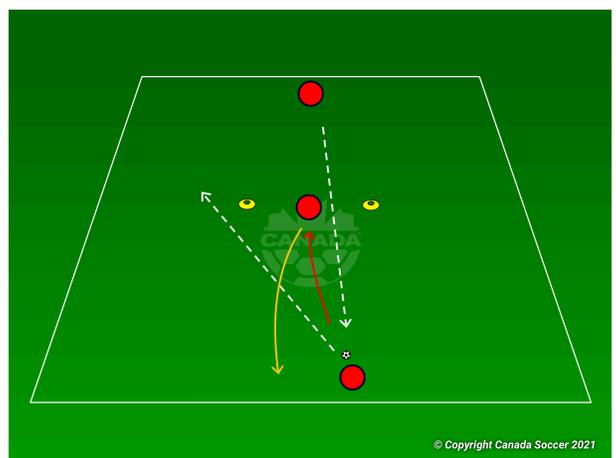
These activities give players opportunities to shoot for a goal. Players should practice shooting low, medium, and high on the goal. Remind players to use the laces or top side of their foot when shooting on goal.

## Monkey in the Middle

**Setup:** Players are in groups of three with a medium cone goal in the middle. The player in the middle stands between the cones and is the goalkeeper. One of the outside players starts with the ball.

**Action:** The player with the ball attempts to shoot the ball between the cones, getting it past the goalkeeper and to the player on the other side. If the shooter scores, they stay where they are, if the goalkeepers stops it, they switch positions.

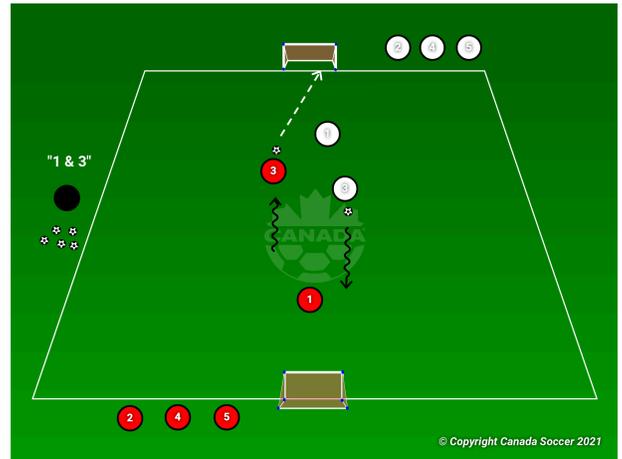
**Make it Easier:** If players are having difficulty scoring through the cones, do not allow the goalkeeper to use their hands.



## Numbers Game

**Setup:** Have two goals across from each other - one can be the pop up net, and use cones for the other. Half of the players start beside each net. Assign each player a number, so there are pairs of matching numbers on each side. Have two balls in the middle of the playing area

**Action:** When coach calls a number, both players with that number race to get a ball and dribble it to the opposite net to shoot on goal. Once they've scored, they can stay on that side and join the other line of players. Then another number is called.



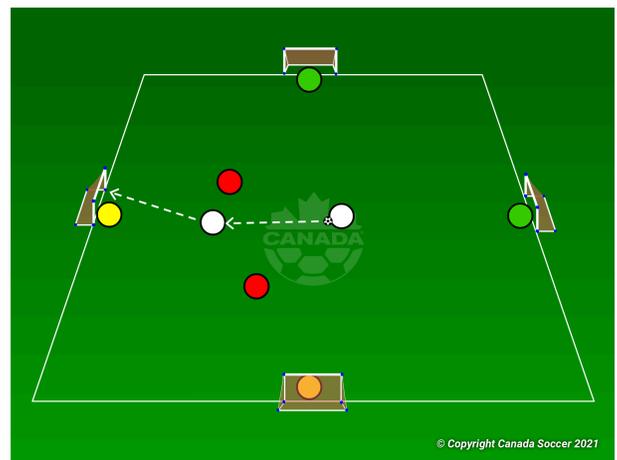
**Make it Harder:** Have one ball so the players go 1v1. When going 1v1 make sure to match players with a numbered partner who is similar in speed and skill. Put a time limit of 30 seconds so other players aren't waiting too long.

**Make it Even Harder:** Call multiple numbers so players go 2v2 or 3v3. Have the waiting players observe how the two groups move into spaces and look to make a pass.

## 4 Goal Game

**Setup:** Create a small playing area with four cone goals in the middle of each side. There is a goalkeeper in each goal, and four players in the middle for 2v2.

**Action:** The four players in the middle play 2v2 and either pair can score on any of the goals. Each round can have a time limit or a goal limit before swapping the out players and the goalkeepers.



**Modify It:** If it is too easy or too difficult to score goals, make the cone goals smaller or bigger accordingly. Modify the number of cone goals, the number of playing pairs, and the number of balls based on the skill level and number of players at practice.

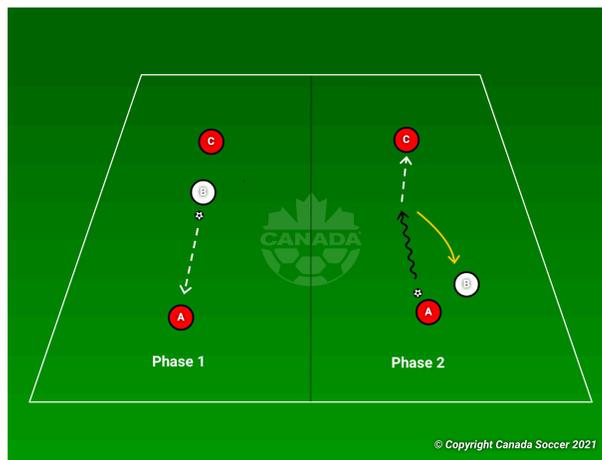
## 1v1 Duels

These activities give players an opportunity to practice attacking and defending in a 1v1 situation. Encourage players to be creative and try different ways to get around their opponent.

### Intro to 1v1

**Setup:** Divide the players into groups of three with one ball per group and each group having their own area on the field.

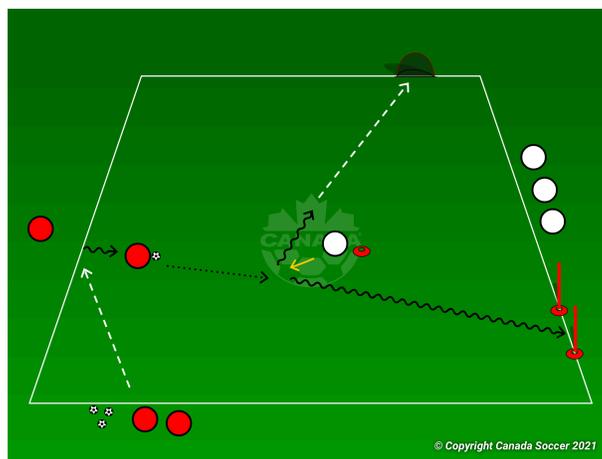
**Action:** Player B passes it to Player A. Then Player B challenges 1v1 while Player A tries to get past and advance the ball to Player C. If Player A gets past Player B, they pass to Player C and then circle behind for the next round to start with player in new positions. If Player B gets the ball from Player A, the round is over and players change position. Encourage Player C to watch how Player A attempts to get around Player B and how Player B attempts to stop them. If you have fewer players, just have two players in pairs take turns attacking and defending 1v1.



### Spacial Recognition

**Setup:** Create a small playing area with the pop-up net near the top right and a cone gate near the bottom right. One defender is in the middle of the playing area, one attacker is to the left of, and the rest are at the bottom.

**Action:** One of the waiting attackers (bottom of playing area) passes a ball to the attacker on the left. The attacker with the ball advances toward the defender and challenges 1v1 with a choice to make. The primary objective is to beat the defender and dribble through the gate (right of playing area). The alternate objective is to pass the ball into the net target (top of playing area). If the defender wins the ball, they dribble it out past the start line of the attacker. If you have lots of players, consider having two playing areas to reduce wait times.

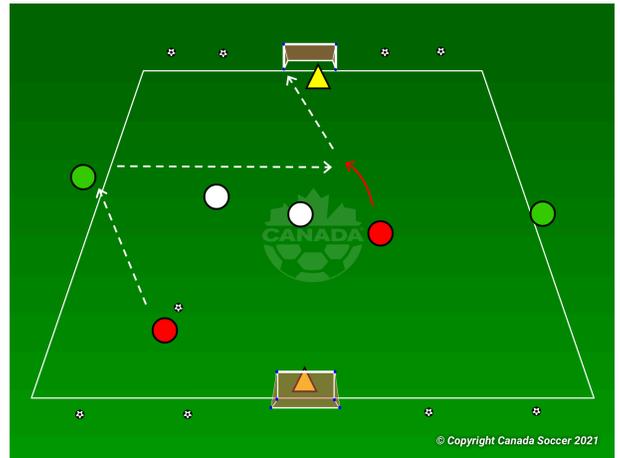




## 3v3 + 2

**Setup:** Create a playing area with two cone goals and one ball. Extra balls can be beside the goals on the edge of the playing area. There are two teams of three, each with a goalkeeper and two out players. Two other players are on the sidelines.

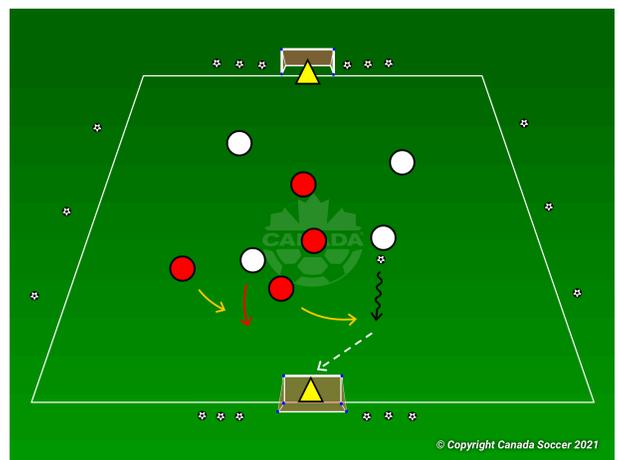
**Action:** Players attempt to score on the other team's goal. The two players at the side can be utilized by the team with possession of the ball. Play for a set amount of time before switching positions. The four out players switch with the two sideline players and two goalkeepers.



## 5v5 Scrimmage

**Setup:** Create a large playing area with the pop-up goal and a cone goal. The players are divided into two teams of 5 (or two teams of 4) with one goalkeeper per team. Extra balls are around the perimeter of the playing area.

**Action:** Players scrimmage 5v5, 5v4, or 4v4 with the regular rules of U8 soccer. Depending on the skill focus of the practice, remind players to: try using pullbacks to change direction, use the side of their foot to pass to a teammate, use the top of their foot to shoot on goal, or use a head fake to get around an opponent.



**Modify It:** Put a medium-sized oval of cones in the middle of the playing area. This is the lava pit. Players can go through the lava pit, but they can't pass the ball through the lava pit. This is good to do when the practice focus is clearing the ball, going up the sideline, and crossing in front of the net.