



NTH UNDER 5 AND UNDER 6 PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

DRIBBLING

Ball Master: Set-up/Action: Players give the ball to the coach. Coach kicks or throws the balls in all directions, sending the player approximately 10-20 yards away. The players should chase their ball and bring it back before it stops using various methods (jumping, skipping, backwards, one-hand, fingers, feet...etc). Allow the players to use their imagination.

Progression: Once players have managed to dribble back with their feet a few times, coach can move around the space to get them to begin to look up and find you.

Guided Discovery: Ask the players how they can get to you faster and how do they find you if you move. Do this while they are participating. This will allow them to connect with the activity.

Show Me!: Set-up/Action: Players form a circle around coach. Coach says, "Simon Says" and the players perform the activity. If coach does not say, "Simon Says" then players should not do it. If a player does something they are not supposed to, issue a "Gotcha" to that player. See who gets the least amount of "Gotcha's"

Progression: Include a soccer ball.

Paint the Field: Set-up/Action: In the grid players try and touch every blade of grass within 30 seconds, while painting their favorite picture (let them use their imaginations). Players try to "beat their own record" – 45-seconds for round 2.

Zoo: Set-up/Action: Within a grid players dribble around until coach calls out freeze (you can bring and use a whistle to begin preparation for future age divisions. When you blow the whistle, it represents a ref stopping the game). You ask players if they can dribble like a Lion (have them make a Lion sound). Keep changing animals for 30-seconds each. Ask the players to choose an animal to keep them engaged.

Grid Game: Set-up/Action: Players jog in a limited area without the ball. Periodically, coach gives an instruction player must demonstrate. Any players failure to perform the command must perform 10 Sole Taps or 10 Toe Taps.

Examples Include (Remember, these activities can be played with and without the ball):

- ★ "Simple Simon" Where players must imitate what coach does without any verbal instruction. (e.g. if the coach goes down to one knee, so must the players. Last one or two do a Sole Taps or Toe Taps.
- ★ "Link", Players must link up with another player or players depending on the # of players you request.
- ★ "Shorts/Shirts/Socks, oh my", all players wearing the same color must stand together, (e.g. if coach says all "shorts" players wearing the same color. Find each other and stand shoulder to shoulder.

Be creative and think of different variations. Follow each pause with more jogging but vary the rhythm so that sometimes there is a "longer" wait between instructions, while other times instructions come quickly one after the other.

Body Parts: Set-up/Action: Each player has a ball and dribbles around the grid. The coach calls out a part of the body, which the player must place on the ball as quickly as they can.

Progression: As soon as the first player gets the correct body part on the ball, all the players continue dribbling.

Variation: Add two body parts (e.g. Ear and Knee or Hand and Nose).

Follow the Coach: Set-up/Action: Every player with a ball. All players follow the coach as the coach dribbles around the field. Along the way, create a story (Wreck it Ralph, Pirate Ships, Cars...etc.) and while doing so, do goofy things such as hopping on one foot, rolling on the ground, hiding the ball under your shirt...etc.)

Bees: Set-up/Action: Players really like this one! While each player is with a ball, (tell them they are bees and buzz), then after a short while, have the coaches (couple of parents), walk around inside the area. It is the job of the "bees" to "sting" the big people with their ball (striking the ball with foot).



Catch Up: Set-up/Action: Players form a circle and are given #'s. Coach calls out two #'s. Both #'s have to run clockwise around the circle and back to their start position before the other #.

Progression: 2nd # called attempts to tag 1st # called. If successful, they jog back to their start position.

Variation: Add a soccer ball and include dribbling.

Corners: Set-up/Action: Coach lays out different colored cone (or pinnies) in each corner of grid. Coach shouts out a color and players dribble into the corner and around the called color cone and back to coach.

Progression: Coach can move positions to make it more difficult for players to dribble to. Coach will hold up color cone instead of verbally commanding the color desired.

Variations: Use different parts of the foot to change the direction around the cone.

- ★ Inside foot
- ★ Outside foot
- ★ Sole of foot
- ★ Shoe laces

Musical Chairs: Set-up/Action: Place cones randomly around the area. Make sure there is the same amount as the # of players playing. Each player has a ball and dribbles in the area. When coach Shouts "time", players try to stop their ball next to a cone. Only one player per cone. Players receive 100 points for stopping their ball at a cone.

Progression: Take away one cone. The player that does not get to a cone (1 player per cone still), loses the round and does 5 frog hops (change the activity, when a player loses the round). Take away more cones to make it more challenging. **This is not an elimination game. They do an activity and can resume the next round.**

Last Player Out: Set-up/Action: Play in a large grid. All the players stand at a cone about 20 feet from a group of soccer balls. There is one less ball than the # of players. On the coach's command, the players run to the balls, get one and begin dribbling. The player who didn't get a ball tries to steal one from the others. The coach keeps time and after a preset period has passed, the coach stops the game. The player who does not have a ball has to perform "sole taps or toe taps" and then a new round begins.

Progression: Take away an additional ball or two.

Minefield: Set-up/Action: Randomly place cones throughout a defined area; cones should be rather close together (3yds apart) and no set pattern. No clear defined lanes from player start point to player end point. Players start on one side and attempt to run all away across to the other side without touching the cones (mines). If they hit one, have them start again.

Progression: How many times can you get from one side to the other side. You can do this with and without a ball (do both).

Gate Game: Set-up/Action: Place a # of gates (cones set 3yds apart) around the field. All players have a ball. Players try to dribble the ball through as many gates as possible in 1-minute.

Progression: Go again. Can players beat their score? 90-seconds this time.

Variation 1: Add a couple of players as "Gate Closers". These players move around the gates and if they stand in the gates then the gate is blocked and players cannot pass through that gate, they must go find another gate.

Variations 2: Have players go through the gate and back out of the gate, now find another gate.

Have players use inside, outside, sole and laces to make changes of direction.



Red Light, Green Light 1: Set-up/Action: Coach is “it” and stands at one end of the field with their back to the players and calls out red light, green light; one, two three and turns around. The players meanwhile having been dribbling toward him/her, must stop with their foot on the top of the ball, when the coach turns around. Anyone moving must go back to the beginning and try again. First player to Coach is the CHAMPION of that round.

Red Light, Green Light 2: Set-up/Action: Players each have a ball and dribble anywhere in the grid. Coach shouts out red, yellow, green or purple light. On red, players stop ball with their foot on top of ball and make a funny face. On yellow, players move the ball super slow. On green light, players continue to dribble ball around. On purple light, players stop ball like red light and dance.

Progressions: When coach shouts “race car”, players dribble as fast as they can go. Coach can hold up the colored cones instead of shouting the color to encourage players to play with their head up. When coach shouts, “pump gas” players do sole taps (left, right on top of the ball alternating feet). When coach calls “its raining” players ping ball with the insides of their feet (left and right alternating), When coach shouts, “reverse”, players pull the ball backwards with the sole of their foot.

Rabbit Tag: Set-up/Action: In a grid, two or three players are “Wolves (taggers)” and the rest as “rabbits”. Have each Wolf hold a training bib (pinnie). The Wolves must hop (with both feet together) around the grid trying to tag the rabbits, who must also hop to get away. If a rabbit is tagged, he/she takes the training bib from the wolf and they switch roles. Any player who is a wolf when time expires, must do 5 extra hops before playing again.

Progression: Change up activity: skip, sidestep, run backwards. Add a ball so that players are gaining valuable touches.

Freeze Tag: Set-up/Action: To begin, players do not have a ball. One player (or coach) is mr. or ms. Freeze (player is it). Players run around in the grid and try to avoid being tagged. If a player gets tagged, they are frozen. To resume play, they must be tagged by a teammate who is still “in”.

Progression: Each player has a ball except (mr. or ms. Freeze), Mr. or Ms. Freeze tries to touch the other player’s soccer ball with his/her feet. If Mr./Ms. Freeze touches the ball that player becomes frozen and must stand with legs wide open and hold the soccer ball over their head. The frozen player can be freed by a teammate striking the ball through the frozen player’s legs.

Bomber: Set-up/Action: Everybody inside a grid with a ball. One player is the Bomber and must try to roll (bowling style), their ball at the other player’s soccer ball and knock it out of the grid. If a player get’s their ball knocked out, they become Bombers.

Dribble Relay: Set-up/Action: Split players into 2 or 3 teams who race against each other through a series of gates. If a player loses control and misses a gate, they must regain control and go through the gate.

Progression: Add a square in which the player must perform a step on (stop the ball) before the next player can go.

Battleships: Set-up/Action: Place random cones (battleships) around the area. Player’s dribble around and roll their ball over the cone to destroy the “battleships”. Players have 60 seconds and are awarded 1 point for each battleship they destroy.

Kangaroo Jack/Jackie: Set-up/Action: All players except 2 or 3 begin with a ball. Players without balls are Kangaroo Jacks and must hop like a kangaroo to try and tag the Koala Bears (who each has a soccer ball). If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a Kangaroo Jack/Jackie. Play until all players have become Kangaroos.

Planets: Set-up/Action: Place cones into multiple squares or triangles that serve as planets (or cities or whatever you can gain their imaginations), All players must follow coach’s command and dribble into the planet that is called out. Coach can have all players follow same directions or break up into teams, so they star at different planets and have them dribble through the solar system clockwise or counterclockwise. Coach can have groups dribble in opposite direction through the solar system.



Snake: Set-up/Action: In a grid, 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 serpent and not break off.

Finding Nemo: Set-up/Action: Each player has a ball and starts as “Nemo” and attempts to dribble past the mean shark “Bruce” to get to the other side of the ocean. If “Bruce” tags Nemo, they hold for three seconds and carry on to the other side.

Progression: “Bruce” can attempt to “steal” the ball with the player freezing for 3 seconds if “Bruce” touches their ball with their feet (Do not allow Bruce to kick the ball away, it is a simple touch). Add a goal at one end and after dribbling the players get to shoot. Give them 45-60 seconds to do this as many times as they can.

Islands: Set-up/Action: Create 3 areas in the grid that are Islands (3 sets of triangles or squares within the grid). Each player has a ball and dribbles around trying to avoid the defender. The defender does not have a ball and tries to steal another player’s ball. If the defender steals a ball then they dribble to an Island and there is now a new defender (the player who just got ball stolen). To avoid the defender, players can go on an island for 5 seconds and then must go fast away.

Progression: Each player must visit all Islands once and add in twice.

Cats and Dogs: Set-up/Action: Players are split into 2 teams (cats or dogs). Cats start with training bibs as a tail. The Dogs chase the Cats in the grid. The Dogs are trying to pull the cat tails. When a player gets their cat tail pulled, they are frozen. A non-frozen cat can tag a frozen cat and then they can rejoin the game. When all cat tails are pulled or a pre-determined time, the teams switch roles.

Progression: Add a soccer ball. Add a time, how long does it take to pull all the cat tails, each team gets a chance to be the cat. Play 3 rounds.

Sharks and Minnows: Set-up/Action: One player, the shark, starts outside the square without a ball. All other players, the minnows, start inside the square with a ball. When coach yells, “Sharks getting hungry!” the shark starts running around the outside of the square and the minnows start dribbling around the inside of the square. When coach yells “Shark Attack!” the shark enters the square and has 30 seconds to send as many balls as possible outside the square. When a ball leaves the square for any reason, the minnow must go perform 10 toe taps or sole taps and may re-enter. Coach will give the “Sharks Full” command to stop play. Keep track of how many Minnows the Shark ate!

King/Queen of the Castle: Set-up/Action: In a 20yd by 20yd grid. Each player with a ball. Players start to dribble inside the grid while trying to avoid other players with a ball trying to kick their ball out of the grid (All players are “it”) Players may re-enter the Castle after performing 10 toe taps or sole taps.

Zen Master: Set-up/Action: Place cones randomly in grid. Players stand near a cone but cone only serves as a point of reference. Coach is the Master. Coach demonstrates a skill and on command players perform the skill repeatedly (10 seconds) and then move to a new cone. Repeat. Activities can be with or without ball such as foot balance, hopping one foot, heel to toe roles, inside/outside roles with sole of foot, etc...)

Bumper Cars: Set-up/Action: Coach dribbles a soccer ball (car) around the area. Each player dribbles a soccer ball and attempts to hit the coach’s ball with their ball and knock something off the coach’s care (i.e. one tire, mirror, door, etc...) Let them keep going until the car can’t go anymore.

Marbles: Set-up/Action: Each player has a ball and dribbles within the grid. Coach tries to knock their ball into the player’s soccer ball as they try to “hide” or protect their ball. If coach hits the ball, the player gets the ball they had and joins the coach being one of the “it” marbles. Last one dribbling is the winner.

Variation: Each player has a ball and tries to hit someone elses ball. 100 points for each ball they hit.



House Dribble: Set-up/Action: Players dribble inside the grid. On coach's command:

- ★ Red Light = players stop the ball by placing foot on top of ball (step on)
- ★ Turn = Players change direction of the dribble
- ★ Clear the House = Players dribble fast as possible outside of the grid
- ★ Sit = Players sit on ball
- ★ Switch = Players leave their ball and find a teammates ball to use for a moment
- ★ Hide = Players hide their ball under the bed = strike ball into the goal

Color Dribble: Set-up/Action: Players dribble inside the grid. Parents hold training bibs (or those that have different colored tops) and they stand randomly around the grid. When coach calls out a color, all players dribble fast to parents wearing the specified color top. After every turn, parents move around grid to a new position.

Shadow Dribbling: Set-up/Action: Players in pairs, # themselves 1 and 2. 1 runs anywhere in grid while 2 tries to stay as close as possible. When coach shouts "freeze", players stop and #2 gets a point if close to #1. Switch roles. 20-30 seconds.

Progression: #2 now has a ball and attempts to #1 who does not have a ball.

Progression: Both players have a ball.

Capture the Treasure: Set-up/Action: Players are split into 2 or 3 and each team begins in the corner of the grid (where you place them is their home Pirate Ship). All balls are placed in the middle of the grid. On coach's signal (argh matey), one player at a time, attempt to get one soccer ball at a time and bring it back to their pirate ship. Once all balls are gone from the middle, players count how many they have on their ship.

Progression: Players now can "steal" treasure from another pirate ship once all treasure (balls) are out of the middle. Only one player can go at a time from their pirate ship and can only steal one ball from another ship. Once the player dribbles back to their ship, their teammate can go. Ball must be back at their ship before next player of that ship can go.

Circle Soccer: Set-up/Action: Players dribble a ball around a large circle, same direction.

Coach Commands:

- ★ Cross = all players dribble across without bumping into each other
- ★ Weave = players dribble in and out of the cones
- ★ Turn = Go in the opposite direction

Progression: A player "it" in the middle tries and clear the ball out of the circle when you call "Cross", if player gets ball kicked out, they become it.

1v1 Cone Soccer: Set-up/Action: play 1v1 soccer, cones are 10yds from each other. Every player plays at the same time (i.e. 8 players = 4 fields). No boundaries, each player must be within playing distance to the ball. No standing or guarding the cone, unless they are in that playing area. Objective is to hit the cone for a point. 90 seconds of play, then switch to someone they have not played yet.



SHOOTING

Clean Your Yard: Set-up/Action: Grid is split into two sections (make a midline with cones if no midline exists. Players are divided into two teams and stand on opposite sides of the grid. Players are not allowed on the opposite half of the grid. Players shoot their ball into the opponent's area and then try to return the opponent's balls that come over into their half of the field. When coach shouts "freeze", the team with the least # of balls in their area is the winner.

Variation: Set up goals to have players strike ball towards goal.

Coach Points: Control Ball, then hit it across. Use laces to shoot the ball.

Bears and Lions: Set-up/Action: Bears knock off soccer balls on top of disc cones with their hands. Lions put balls back on top of cones. Keep going for 30 seconds until coach calls out "freeze". Switch Roles.

Variation: Bears knock off soccer balls on disc cones (must go find another set to knock off, cannot be one that just got put back up by the Lions). Lions reset the ball on the cone. Keep going and switch roles.

Hit the Clown!!!: Set-up/Action: In the grid, every player has a ball. Coach (Clown) jogs around in the grid and players try to kick their balls and hit the clown. They get a point for each time they hit the clown. The coach should yell "ouch" each time they are hit. If players are struggling to hit the coach, the coach should slow down or stop to assure success of players hitting the target.

Coach Point: Make sure players are using inside or instep (Laces), left and right foot.

Hitters and Dodgers: Set-up/Action: In a 15x15 Grid, 2 or 3 players start off with balls (hitters). The remaining balls should be placed outside the grid. The other players start off scattered throughout the grid, they are the "dodgers". The "hitters" dribble inside the grid and attempt to pass the ball and hit the "dodgers". If dodger is hit, they must perform 10 sole taps or 10 toe taps and become a "hitter". The last players standing wins.

Dribble/Cut/Shoot: Set-up/Action: All players are placed 5 yards away from the goal at the goal line. They dribble 5 yards (marked by a cone in front of goal) around cone and shoot. You will have two goals, so make it a relay. Once the player shoots (scoring or not), the next player can go. Have a couple of parents help retrieve balls from goal or missed shot to keep the lines moving. Go for about 2 minutes, rest, and go again.

Camp Town Races: Set-up/Action: Line up all the players at one end of the field. They each have a ball. On your command, they all dribble to the opposite end, shoot the ball into goal, get ball out of goal and run back and finish with a shot on the opposite goal (where they started). The first one to score both goals and back on their line wins.

Progression: Start half the players on one end and the other half on the other end. Same race, just with unopposed defenders (traffic)

Losing Your Marbles: Set-up/Action: Coach has all the balls. Players lay on the ground with their eyes closed. Coach places balls randomly in the grid. When coach shouts "go", players get up, find their ball and dribbles to coach.

Progression: Place 2 – 4 goals or pugs out. Players now will find their ball and score a goal instead of dribbling back to coach. Then they must come back to the starting point and lay on their back.

Protect Your Castle: Set-up/Action: Split players up into two teams. Instead of using one goal on each side, place 3 balls on 3 cones on each half. Play a regular game. They get a goal by knocking off a ball on a cone with the "game" ball. Once a team knocks all three balls off, they win. Restart if a game goes by quickly and readjust lineups for a competitive environment.

Goal Relay Race: Set-up/Action: Players are split into two teams. Each team stands beside the goal (not in the goal). Coach starts the game. The first player dribbles his/her ball and shoots the ball into the goal opposite of starting position. When he/she scores (if he/she misses, must retrieve ball and score), the next player in line goes. After each goal, players in line celebrate. Once you score your goal, you stay near that goal. 1st team to score all balls in goal wins.



Steal the Bacon: Set-up/Action: Players are split into 2 teams and stand on opposite corners of the grid. Coach #'s players on each team. Coach stands outside the grid with a supply of balls and serves one ball into the middle as he/she calls a #. The two players with that # (one from each team) sprints to the ball and attempts to dribble past their opponent and score in a specified goal.

Progression: 2 #s are called out.

Variation: Each player must touch the ball once before they can score.

1v1, 3 goals: Set-up/Action: Use pugs or goals. One goal at normal goal line, other goal at other goal line and the 3rd goal straight across from coach/players at opposite sideline. At sideline, two teams. One team on the left of the coach, one team to the right of the coach. The two closest players to the coach facing into the field go first. All balls near coach at sideline. Coach serves ball into play. Players run in and play. If Player A has ball he/she can score on any goal, player B is trying to steal the ball and score.

Variation: Change the direction of the goals. This allows for changes of direction and seeing which goal makes sense to score on.

Balls All Over: Set-up/Action: Play a normal 3v3 game. Only exception of playing with more than one ball. Add as many as you would like.

Players vs Parents: Set-up/Action: Last practice of the season, have a game between parents and players (with coaches helping players). This serves a couple of purposes:

- ★ The kids love this game. They get a chance to show their parents what they can do and enjoy beating their parents. **The parents never win, the coaches make sure of that...**
- ★ It serves as parent education on how this game is not as easy as it looks from the sidelines.