



1st & 2nd Grade Practice Ideas

Warm-up:

- Each day try and follow a similar warm-up. Our goal is to get the players touching the ball as many times as possible with the most different surfaces of the foot that they can. Begin with warm-up running activities with or without the ball. It is essential that all players have a ball to do many of the warm-up activities. You can't bring all the balls they need to practice. Encourage them to bring their own.
- Ideas for warm-up activities:
 - Dribble the ball for a lap around the field
 - Toe taps (around the world), tick-tock, pull backs, sole rolls
 - 4 surfaces – players touch the ball with outside of the foot, inside laces, pull back and switch feet. Coach them to try and get faster with the progression.
 - Tick-tock dribble – dribble touching the ball with EVERY step. Will look awkward at first but will encourage them to keep the ball close to their feet when dribbling.
- These exercises will be difficult at first. Continue to encourage them to work on the activities before practice and at home.
- Juggling is also a good idea to encourage before practice begins or in warm-up activities.
- Each week plan on ending practice with about a 15 minute "Scrimmage". You can arrange to play another team or you can just split your players up. While playing, please remember to reinforce the things that they were learning earlier in practice.

Week 1:

Drill 1: Cross the River

- Create a 20 x 25 yard soccer grid with two "end zones" of 2-3 yards on either end
- Divide the players in two groups and place them on opposite sides of the soccer grid. At coach's command, the players will dribble the soccer ball to the other side of the grid. They will try to cross the river as fast as they can.
- When they arrive on the other side, they must control the soccer ball within the "end zone" in order to get a point. Players must call out their name when they have full control of the ball

Coaching Points

- Get a forward first touch
- Use front part of the foot but not toe
- Run in a straight line
- Head up

Drill 2: Paired Tag

- In a 20 x 25 yard grid, pair players up (Tagger and Dribbler) each with soccer balls. The Dribblers are given a 2 second start to get away from the taggers. The tagger dribbling his/her soccer ball tries to tag the dribbler. Once the dribbler is tagged, the roles reverse and the chase starts again.

Coaching points

- Keep the ball close
- Change directions
- Dribble using different surfaces of the foot

Drill 3: Around the Cone:

- Place 3 cones on the field in a line – each about 10 yard apart. Repeat with another set of cones about 10 yard away from the first. The set –up will be like the players are running a relay race down the cones.
- The Coach will put the players in teams of two or three players. The first player on the team will run **with the ball** from the first cone to the second cone. At the second cone the player will perform the following:
 - The first turn the player has go around the cone with the inside of the foot
 - The second turn the player has go around the cone with the outside of the foot
- The player will then continue to the third cone. At the third cone stop the soccer ball: do a drag back or heel turn and dribble straight back to the first cone without stopping at the middle cone.
- When the player reaches the first cone, the next person in line takes their turn

Coaching Points - Dribbling:

- Keep ball close to the feet
- Dribbling using different surfaces of the foot
- Changing speed and direction
- Running with the ball
- Sudden changes of pace
- How to stop the soccer ball
- Decision Making
 - What foot to use
 - When and how to stop the soccer ball
 - Where to go with the soccer ball
- 1v1 attacking and defending
- Protecting the ball

Coaching Points – Around the Cone/ Running with the ball:

- Use front part of the foot
- Run in a straight line
- Head up
- “Chop” around the cone with small movements
- Acceleration after the turn

Week 2:

Drill 1: Cross Over Dribbling:

- Create a 15 x 20 yard grid. All players need a ball and need to stand somewhere around the perimeter (spread them out). When the coach says **“GO”** the players will try to dribble to the other side of the grid. When they reach the other side, the players turn and dribble back to their spots.
- Variation 2: Have them reach the other side and return to another spot.
- Variation 3: Time the activity and see how many times the players cross over in 30 seconds or a minute. They will need to add time, however, if they lose their ball outside the grid

Drill 2: Steal/Shield

Coaches pair up the players with one ball between them. One player starts with the ball and at coach’s command his/her partner tries to steal the ball away. The player with the ball should work to keep that player’s body in between their opponent and the ball shielding it from the other player. Play 30-45 second “matches”. The player who ends with the ball gets a point. If the ball goes out of bounds, one of the players must get it back in play very quickly.

Coaching points – Steal/sheild

- Body sideways to opponent. Use arm to protect and know where defender is going.
- Knees bent.
- Turn as defender attacks or reaches for the ball.

Drill 3: Boston Bulldog

- Divide your playing area (like the Italian flag). The starting zone, the defending zone and the shooting zone.
- Place at least 3 players in the starting zone behind the line (red part of flag). Each player has a ball. Place at least 2 players in the defending zone (white part of flag) and in the shooting zone (green part of flag) place 3 small goals, each 2 Y wide.
- When the coach says go the dribblers will dribble into the defending zone. If they make it past the defenders and into the shooting zone, they will be able to take a shot. The defenders cannot leave the defending zone.
- If the defender gets the ball, the players switch places. Play to 5 goals.

Week 3:

Drill 1: Gate Dribbling

- In about a 20 x 25 yard area set up as many “gates” (2 cones about 2 yards apart) as kids minus 1. Players dribble around the area and must dribble through the gates in order to score a point. Players keep track of their own points and the player with the most points after 1 minute wins. Repeat asking the players to beat their score by 1 or more points.
 - a. Coaching considerations: Keep the ball close. Work on changing directions with the ball by “chopping” with the foot. Accelerate after going through a gate. Stress decision-making (which gate) based upon where the other players are on the field.
- Variations: Coaches can have players dribble with only the right or left foot. Can also play “Bandit” gates. Same drill as above except 2-3 players are the “Bandits” on the field and try to take the ball from the other players. When the bandit steals the soccer ball, the player that lost the ball becomes the bandit.

- Can also use this drill to practice passing. Pair up players. Each time they pass successfully between the gates to their partner, they get a point.

Drill 2: Freeze Tag:

- All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 15x20 yard grid. 1-2 players dribble a soccer ball, but they are the freeze monsters. The freeze monsters tag other players who then freeze with the soccer ball above their head. The activity ends when all players are frozen.
- Players can unfreeze each other by tagging them
- Version 2: One coach may be the freeze monster while another is unfreezing players.
- Version 3: Players can unfreeze each other by kicking the ball through their legs.

Drill 3: Bandits:

- Use the same grid you used in Freeze tag except there will be one other square about 5Y square on one of the sides outside of the larger square
- Select 1 or 2 players to be the Bandits. The other players have a ball and they are the “dribblers”. Their mission is to get the dribblers’ ball and bring it to their hideout (the smaller square). The dribbler can take the ball back from the bandit.
- The bandits can dribble the ball or pass the ball into the hideout. If the bandit gets the ball into the hideout, the dribbler becomes a bandit.

Week 4:

Drill 1: Cross the River

- Create a 20 x 25 yard soccer grid with two “end zones” of 2-3 yards on either end
- Divide the players in two groups and place them on opposite sides of the soccer grid. At coach’s command, the players will dribble the soccer ball to the other side of the grid. They will try to cross the river as fast as they can.
- When they arrive on the other side, they must control the soccer ball within the “end zone” in order to get a point. Players must call out their name when they have full control of the ball

Coaching Points

- Get a forward first touch
- Use front part of the foot but not toe
- Run in a straight line
- Head up

Drill 2: Get “Outta” There (1v1):

- The players are divided into two teams, and positioned at either side of the coach outside a 10x15 yard grid with two small goals on each end line. The coach serves a ball into the grid and the players try to gain possession and score on their opponent. If a goal is scored or the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells “Get outta there” and the next two players come on the field.
- Give the players a time limit for trying to score in order to limit the amount of time the other kids are waiting.

Drill 3: Prison Break

- Break a 15Lx20W yard grid into 3, 5 yard sections. (Think of the Italian flag)

- The dribblers will try to escape from the prison by eluding the guards. Place two guards inside the 5x 15 yard area in the middle of the grid (the white area of the flag).
- Place half of the players (prisoners) with a ball at each end of the grid. At coach's command, one group of prisoners (one from each side) will try to dribble across the grid by going by the guards. As soon as one gets to the opposite line the next prisoner waiting in line goes.
- If the guard dispossesses the prisoner he/she becomes a guard.
- The guards must stay within the middle section of the grid as the prisoners are crossing

Week 5:

Drill 1: Mine Field

- Coaches set up a cones randomly in a area where there is about 2 yards between each cone
- Players dribble around the cones trying not to hit the cones
- Coaching considerations: Make sure players keep the ball close to their feet and use a "chopping" motion to get move the balls away from the cones

Drill 2: Moving Goal:

- All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 15x20 yard grid. Two coaches hold a practice vest (penny) between them, forming a goal. The players must try to kick their ball through the goal.
- Coaches: Move around into open space so that the players have to dribble around and kick their ball through a moving target.

Coaching Points - Striking the ball:

- Technique of striking the ball – NO TOES – laces or instep
- Willingness to kick the ball away from them.
- Players can experiment with how hard to kick the ball.
- Dribbling and striking the ball
- Weight of the pass
- Accuracy of the pass

Drill 3: Capture the Balls:

- Players should be divided into equal teams to play in a grid with each team's home in one of the corners of the grid.
- Soccer balls are in the middle of the grid with all players starting inside their home bases.
- On the coach's command, the players each get one ball. They try to dribble or pass it into their home base. Players can also steal soccer balls from their opponent's home bases and dribble or pass them into their bases.
- Call time and each team counts the balls they have collected.

Coaching Points – Capture the Balls

- What foot to use
- When and how to stop the soccer ball
- Where to go with the soccer ball

- How to get the balls from the center or other home bases
- How to defend their home base
- Dribble or pass

Week 6:

Drill 1: Gate Dribbling – passing

- Follow the set up for Gate dribbling that you did in Week 3
- This time – break players into groups of 2 with one ball between them
- Players must pass the ball through the gate to their partner in order to score a point
- Work on players talking to each other about their location on the field and when to pass

Drill 2: Catching Robbers

- All players are spread around a 15x20 grid
- Only two players (the cops) have soccer balls. When the coach says “let’s catch some robbers” the cops attempt to catch the robbers who are running around the grid by striking their legs below knee height with their soccer balls.
- Once a robber is caught he/she goes and gets any ball from the perimeter and becomes a cop.
- Coach: Place the balls that are not being used around the perimeter of the grid.

Drill 3: Get “Outta” There (2v2):

- The players are divided into two teams, and positioned at either side of the coach outside a 10x15 yard grid with two small goals on each end line. The coach serves a ball into the grid and the players try to gain possession and score on their opponent. If a goal is scored or the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells “Get outta there” and the next four players come on the field.

Week 7:

Drill 1: Cross Over Dribbling:

- Create a 15 x 20 yard rectangle. All players need a ball and need to stand somewhere around the perimeter (spread them out). When the coach says “**GO**” the players will try to dribble to the other side of the grid. When they reach the other side, the players turn and dribble back to their spots.
- Variation 2: Have them reach the other side and return to another spot.
- Variation 3: Time the activity and see how many times the players cross over in 30 seconds or a minute. They will need to add time, however, if they lose their ball outside the grid

Drill 2: Triangle challenge

- Set up cones in the 15 x 20 grid in groups of three – triangles
- The basic idea to this drill will be for the kids to dribble into a triangle in the grid between two cones and exit the triangle through a separate two cones.
- Players can see how many triangles they can get through in 30 seconds
- Variation – tell the players that they can enter the triangle forward but they must back out of the cone by turning and using a pullback move

- Variation 2 – Tell the players that they can enter the triangle and then need to make a “move” with the ball (go over with their feet, tick tock, ball feint) before leaving the triangle

Drill 3: Sharks and Minnows

- In a 15x20 yard grid have 3-4 players acting as the sharks. The minnows are in one end of the grid with their soccer balls.
- When the coach say “**GO**” the minnows try to dribble to the other end of the grid and the sharks are trying to kick the ball out.
- When the dribbler’s ball goes out, he/she becomes a shark. If the minnows reach the other end, they will wait for the coach’s command to play again. The game continues until all players turn into sharks.

Other drills you can try:

Combat:

- The coach makes 2 teams of 3-5 players each. The players are lined up next to the coach.
- When the coach serves the ball onto the soccer area, the players next to the coach will go after the soccer ball and retrieve it by dribbling and passing it into their team’s goal for a point.
- You can make this game 1v1, 2v2 and 3v3.

4 vs. 1 Keep away:

- In a grid 15yds x 15yds, five players play 4 vs. 1 timed keepaway. Four attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. The four attackers are awarded a point each time they complete 3 consecutive passes without losing possession.
- If the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately attempts to dribble out of the grid for a point. The four attackers try to prevent this from occurring by trying to win possession of the ball back immediately.
- Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed into the grid by one of the attackers. Play multiple 1 minute games, changing the defender each game.

Popcorn Plus

- Gather players in a tight circle (no more than 3Y diameter). Use one ball for every two players
- Before beginning chant “no toes, no toes, no toes”. Players kick the balls around the circle to other players practicing trapping and quick release. If a ball pops out of the circle, just kick it back in.
- Variation: Leave two players outside of the circle. When a ball pops out, the two players chase after the ball and play 1v1 to a goal. Make sure to reinforce to the players that in games there will sometimes be a large group of players. You need to space yourself and wait for the ball to pop out.