



Warm Ups

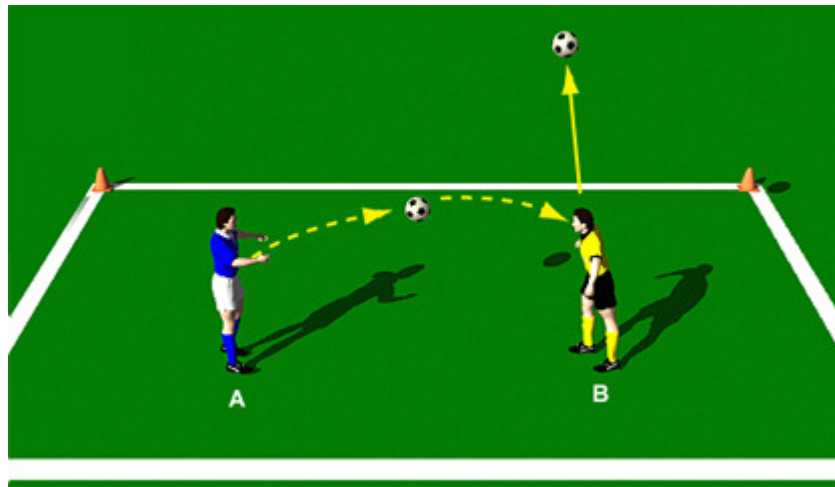
The International Coaches Association

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Up and Down



Teaching Points

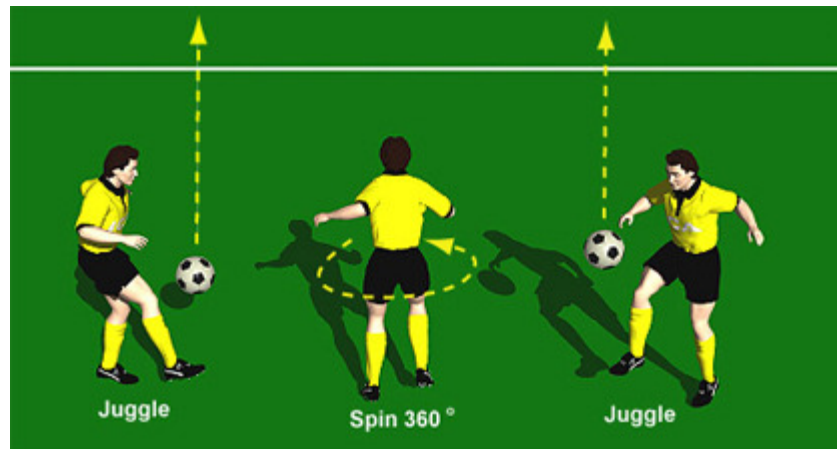
This is a very good warm up activity which includes hand eye coordination and skill.

Divide the entire group into pairs. There should be at least 5 yards between each player. Use two balls.

Player "A" and player "B" both have a ball. As player "A" serves the ball to player "B" to head back, player "B" must throw his ball above his head, head the ball back to "A" and then catch his own ball. Perform 8 each and change roles.



Juggle Spin



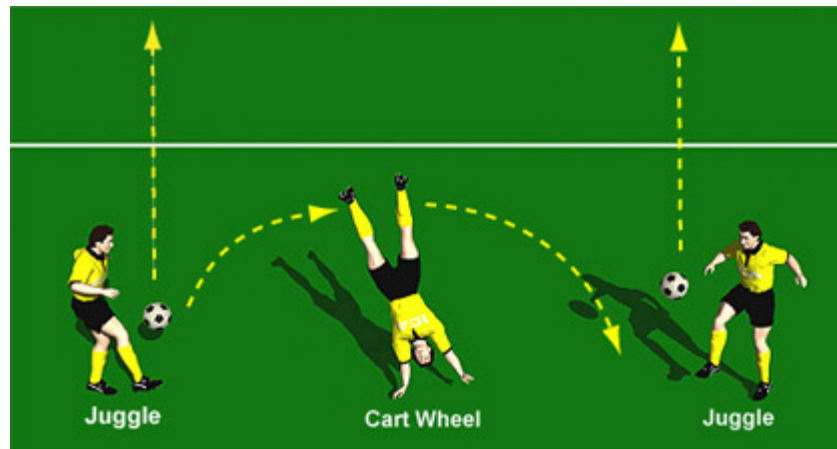
Teaching Points

This is a very good warm up activity which includes coordination and skill.

Have the player juggle the ball, on the coach's command the player kicks the ball above head height, spins 360 degrees and must control the ball again. The ball is allowed to bounce more twice.



Juggle Cart Wheel



Teaching Points

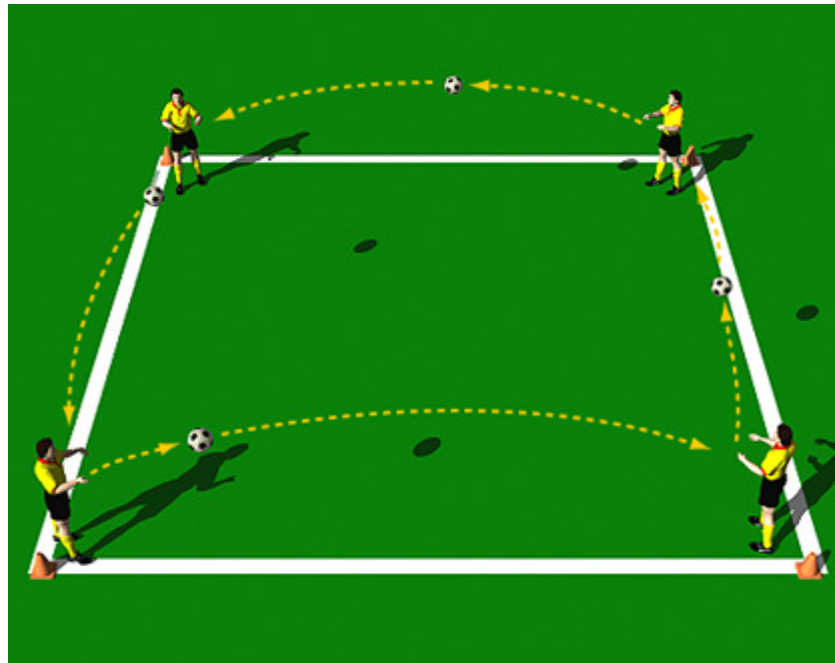
This is a very good warm up activity which includes coordination and skill.

Have the player juggle the ball, on the coach's command the player kicks the ball above head height, performs a cart wheel and must control the ball again. The ball is allowed to bounce more twice.

Other exercises, he can do a forward or backwards roll.



Tempo Drill 1 - Throwing the Ball



Teaching Points

This is a great group practice to develop individual and team tempo, rhythm and timing. Best used for player age 12 and upwards.

What you need:

Make a practice grid approximately 8 yards x 8 yards, 4 balls and 4 cones, divide your team into groups of four.

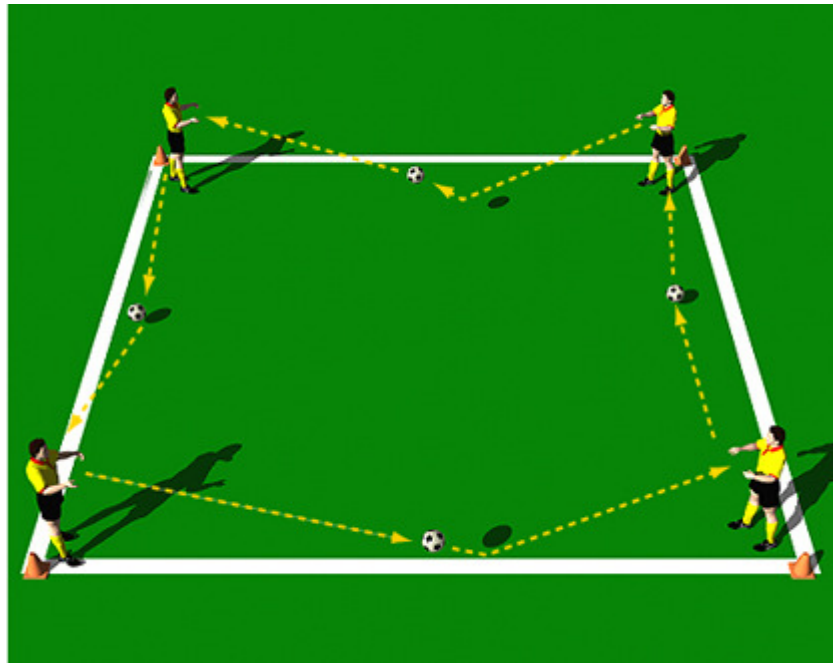
Position a player in each corner with a ball each. The players hold the ball in their hands. On the coach's command the players throw the ball 'clockwise' around the grid. the object is to establish a rhythm as quickly as possible and prevent the ball from hitting the ground. Coach should develop a high tempo rhythm as quickly as possible. On the coach's command the players throw the ball in the "opposite" direction. Players must try to establish a smooth transition.

What you need to teach:

Timing and communication is critical in establishing a rhythm. Players must be extremely alert to enable the group to work together. Players should be constantly glancing side to side.



Tempo Drill 2 - "One Bounce"



Teaching Points

This is a great group practice to develop individual and team tempo, rhythm and timing. Best used for player age 12 and upwards.

What you need:

Make a practice grid approximately 8 yards x 8 yards, 4 balls and 4 cones, divide your team into groups of four.

Position a player in each corner with a ball each. The players hold the ball in their hands. This drill is a simple progression from the first drill but now the players serve a "one bounce" throw. This makes the exercise a little more challenging.

On the coach's command the players bounce the ball 'clockwise' around the grid. The object is to establish a rhythm as quickly as possible and prevent the ball from hitting the ground.

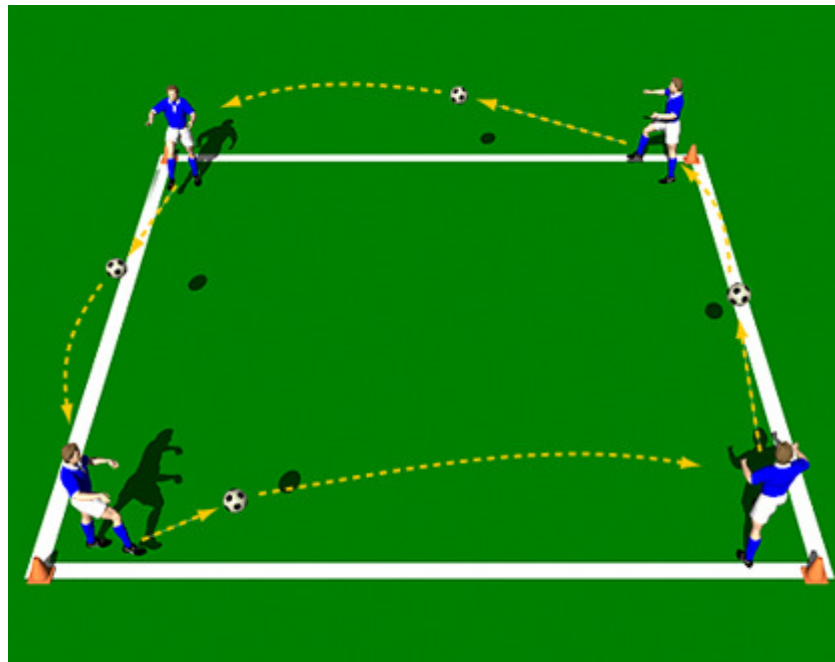
Coach should develop a high tempo rhythm as quickly as possible. On the coach's command the players throw the ball in the "opposite" direction. Players must try to establish a smooth transition.

What you need to teach:

Timing and communication is critical in establishing a rhythm. Players must be extremely alert to enable the group to work together. Players should be constantly glancing side to side.



Tempo Drill 3 - "Volleying the Ball"



Teaching Points

This is a great group practice to develop individual and team tempo, rhythm and timing. Best used for player age 12 and upwards.

What you need:

Make a practice grid approximately 8 yards x 8 yards, 4 balls and 4 cones, divide your team into groups of four.

Position a player in each corner with a ball each. The players hold the ball in their hands. This drill is a simple progression from the second drill but now the players "Volley" the ball. This makes the exercise much more challenging. You will immediately notice the difference in the tempo once the players move from their hands to their feet.

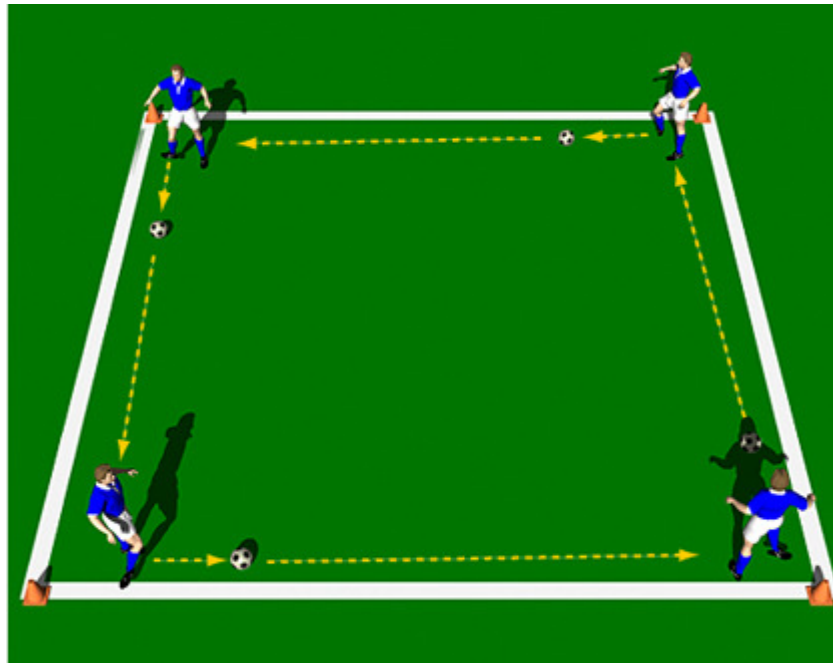
Coach should develop a high tempo rhythm as quickly as possible. On the coach's command the players throw the ball in the "opposite" direction. Players must try to establish a smooth transition.

What you need to teach:

Timing and communication is critical in establishing a rhythm. Players must be extremely alert to enable the group to work together. Players should be constantly glancing side to side. .



Tempo Drill 4 - "Passing the Ball"



Teaching Points

This is a great group practice to develop individual and team tempo, rhythm and timing. Best used for player age 12 and upwards.

What you need:

Make a practice grid approximately 8 yards x 8 yards, 4 balls and 4 cones, divide your team into groups of four.

Position a player in each corner with a ball each. The players hold the ball in their hands. This drill is a simple progression from the third drill but now the players "Pass" the ball. This makes the exercise even more challenging. Players should be constantly alert and glancing both sides. The ball must be kept inside the grid.

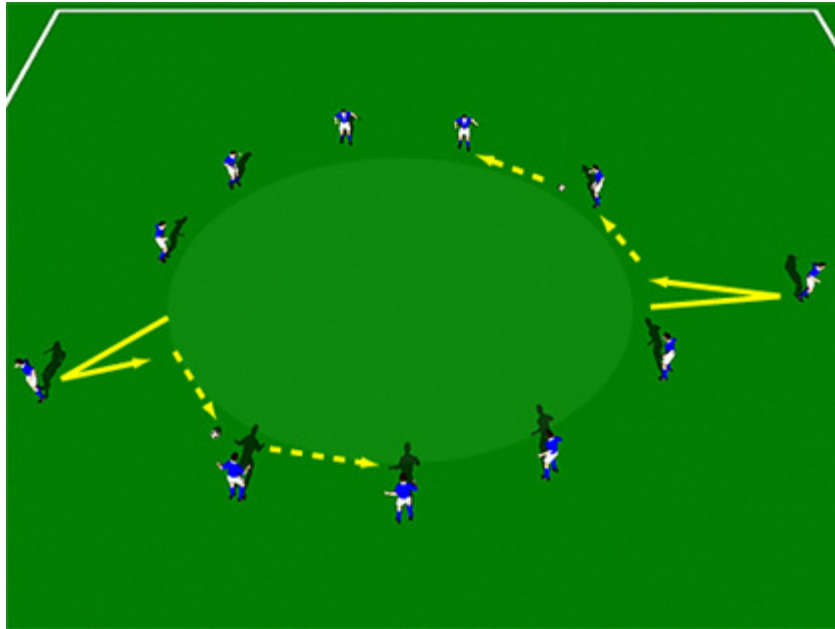
Coach should develop a high tempo rhythm as quickly as possible. On the coach's command the players throw the ball in the "opposite" direction. Players must try to establish a smooth transition.

What you need to teach:

Timing and communication is critical in establishing a rhythm. Players must be extremely alert to enable the group to work together. Players should be constantly glancing side to side.



Circle Sprints Outside



Teaching Points

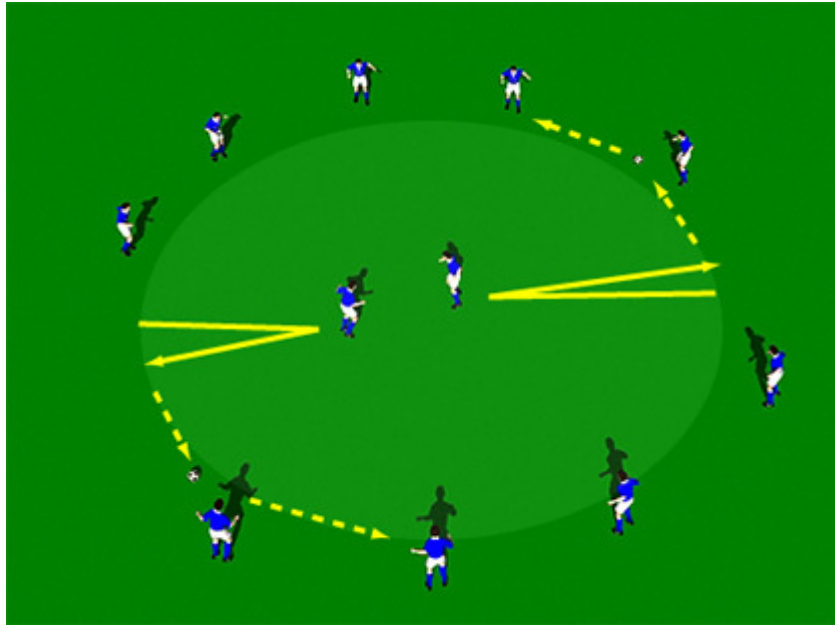
This is a very good warm up activity which includes sprinting and ball movement.

The entire group make a large circle. There should be at least 5 yards between each player. Use two balls.

The drills starts with the balls at opposite side of the circle. The ball is past to the next player on the right using "one touch" only. After a player passes the ball they must turn and sprint 10 yards outside the circle and back to their original position. Continue for several minutes. Have players perform same drill but pass to the next player on the left.



Circle Sprints Inside



Teaching Points

This is a very good warm up activity which includes sprinting and ball movement.

The entire group make a large circle. There should be at least 5 yards between each player. Use two balls.

The drills starts with the balls at opposite side of the circle. The ball is past to the next player on the right using "one touch" only. After a player passes the ball they must turn and sprint 10 yards inside the circle and back to their original position. Continue for several minutes. Have players perform same drill but pass to the next player on the left.



The Conga



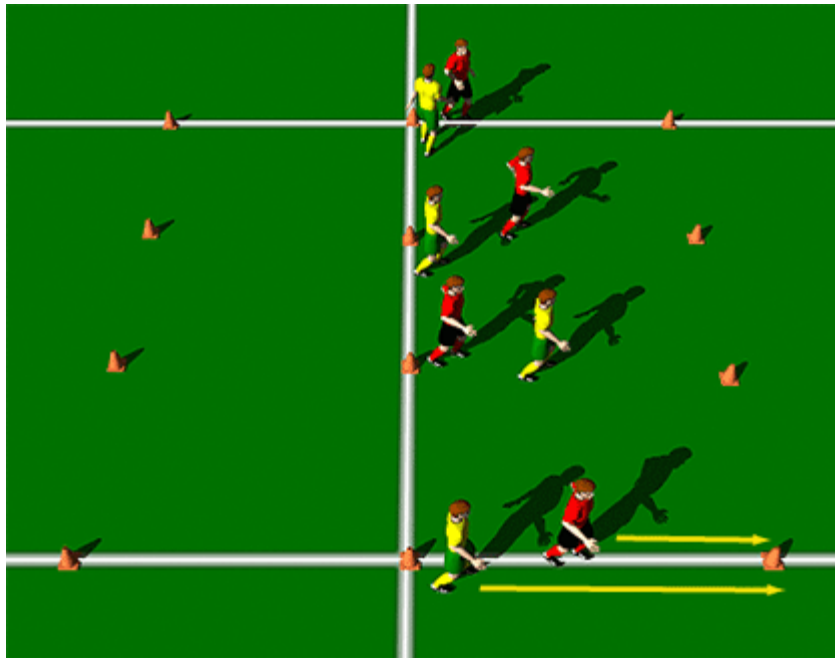
Teaching Points

Start the warm up by jogging in pairs.

- Start with slow jog around the perimeter of half the field.
- Perform Brazilian Warm up and continue jogging.
- Player react to the following commands.
- Coach shouts "Up" players touch the ground with both hands.
- Coach shouts "Down" players jump up to head an imaginary ball.
- Front men sprint to back.
- Back men sprint to front.
- Sprint backwards, side-step, backwards half way and turn.
- Jump and Challenge "shoulder to shoulder".
- Turn quickly 180 degrees.
- Inside man jumps on outside mans back and visa a versa.
- Coach calls out a number and team must split into groups of that number. Players must huddle as a group. Any players not in group do a simple exercise.



Odds and Evens



Teaching Points

Divide the group into pairs. Each pair positioned face to face on the starting line.

Using ones mark a line 5 yards each side. The coach designates a name for each side; e.g. Right - Left, Odd - Even, Red - Green, King - Queen, Apples Pears.

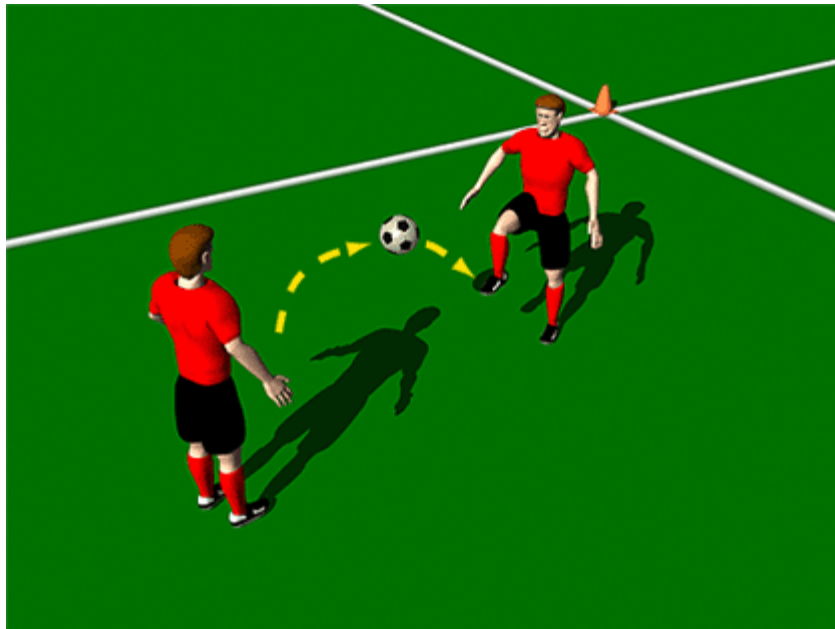
When the coach calls one of the names, the players race their partner to the side, in line with the cone and back to the starting position. First player back wins.

Coach can vary the practice by having players run the opposite side he calls. Also perform with a ball.

Make a competition between partners, award a point for each time the player wins the race. First player to 10 wins.



Call the Number



Teaching Points

Players are paired up with a partner, facing each other at a distance of 2-3 yards.

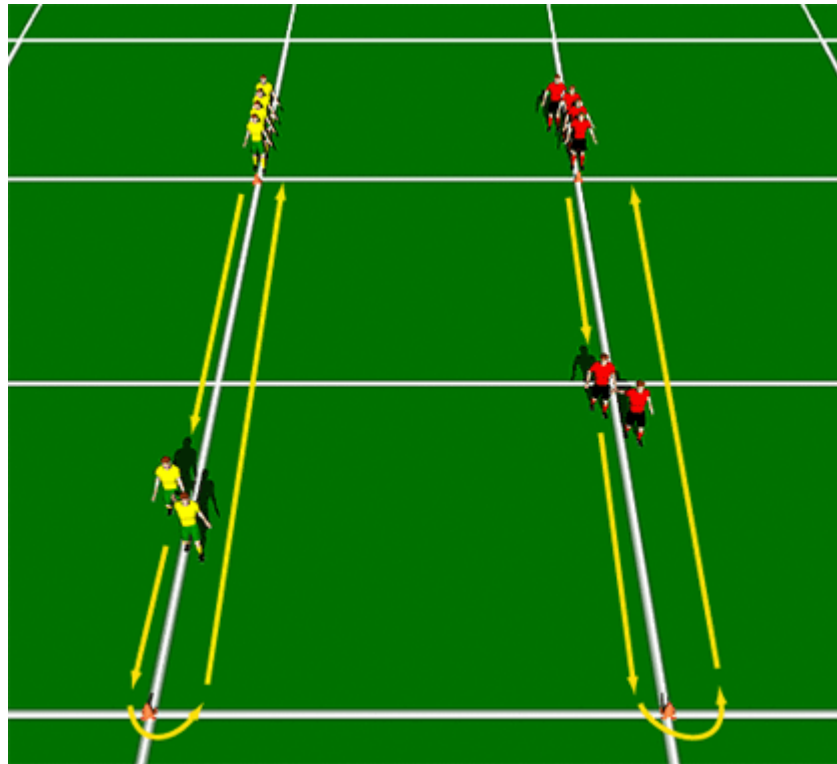
Players serve a ball to their partner in the air, using the Head, Chest, Thighs or Feet. On playing the ball, the server must instantly call out loud number; 1, 2, or 3. The receiving player must keep the ball in the air, the designated amount of times. e.g.: player shouts "one", ball is returned on the "first touch". Player shouts "two", ball is juggled once, played back on "second touch". On returning the ball, the player then calls out a number for his partner.

Point System:

- If the player allows the ball to drop - 1 point to partner.
- If the player does not control the ball the exact number of times - 1 point to partner.
- Bad service - 1 point to partner.
- Player forgets to call a number - 1 point to partner.
- Make a competition between partners, first player to 10 wins.
- Have different players challenge each other.



Chain Relay



Teaching Points

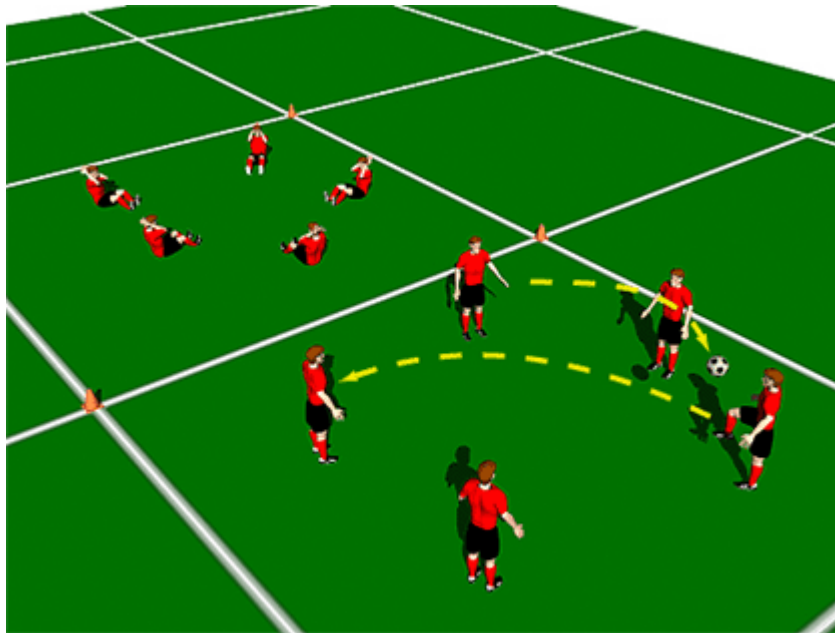
Divide the group into two teams. Place cones 20 yards apart.

First player in each group runs around opposite cone and back to group. He then joins hands with the next player and repeats.

Follow this sequence until all players are linked in a chain. First team around cone and back to finish line with all players win. If the link is broken, the team must start again from the first player.



Make Them Work



Teaching Points

Divide players into two groups. Each group in their own area, 10 yards x 10 yards. First group juggles the ball in the air "one touch", using the head, chest, thighs and feet. They may not pass the ball to the player they received the ball from.

Second group must perform a designated exercise until the first group drops the ball. Reverse roles after ball is dropped.

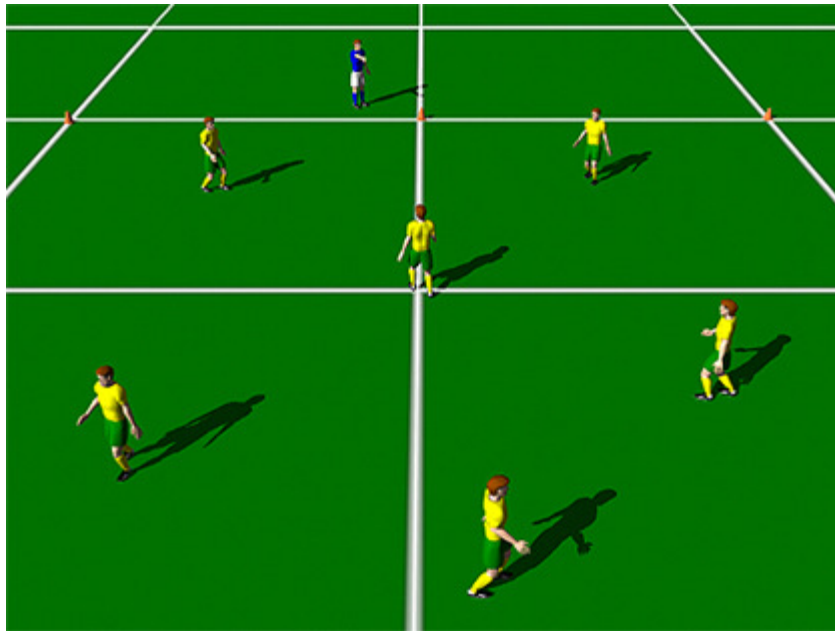
Players exercising can perform:

- Sit-ups.
- Push-ups.
- Star jumps.
- Sprints.

Purpose of the juggling group is to make the exercising group work for as longer period as they can.



Birds on a Fence



Teaching Points

Have players jog around area 30 x 30 yards. Players alternate stretching and jogging every 60 seconds. While the players jog, heads must be up scanning the whole field, glancing behind them, looking far and near.

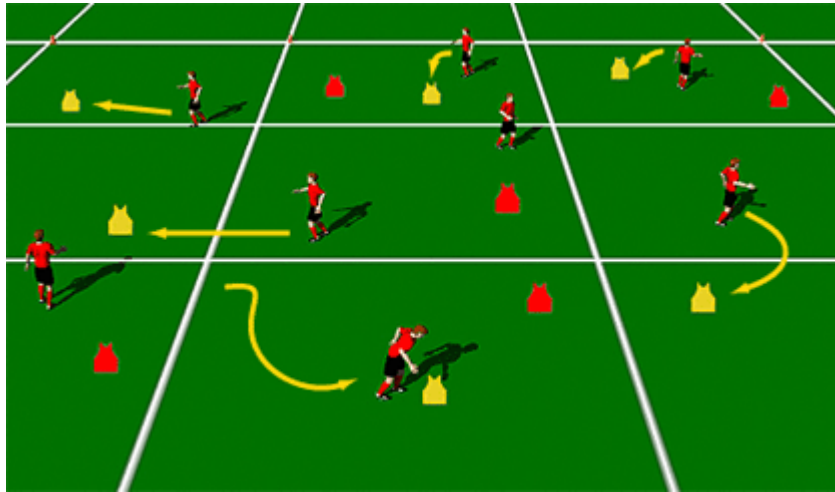
On coach's command:

Players must shout out the color of "John's socks", make of Tom's boots etc. (forces players to scan all players quickly).

Players heads should be like that of a "bird on a fence" always glancing and checking behind.



Pick up the Vest



Teaching Points

Place 12 colored vests on the ground, six red, six yellow.

Players jog around the grid. As the players jog, the coach calls out a color.

The players have to race to pick up a vest of the right color. Players who have a vest are awarded 1 point, first to 5 points wins. Or, players who do not have a vest perform a short exercise.



Million Touches



Teaching Points

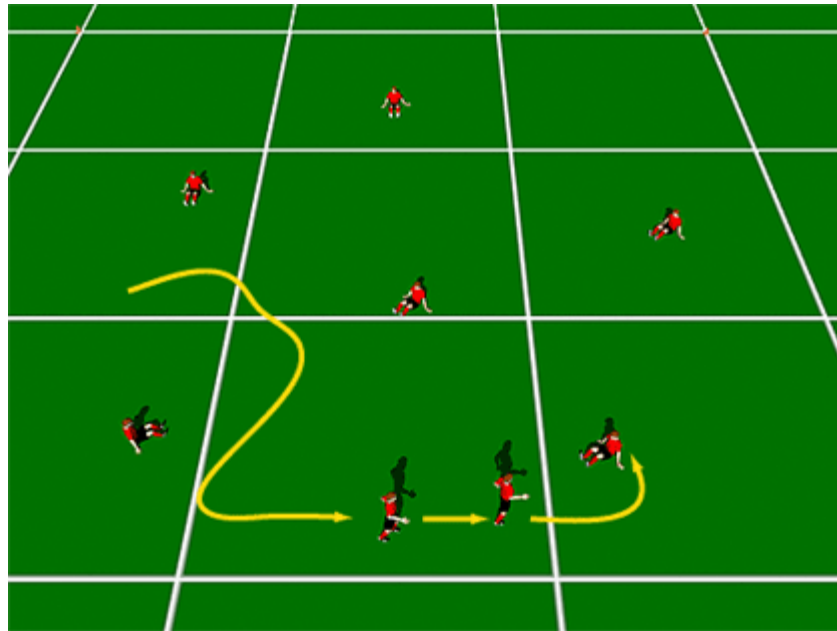
Divide group into 2 teams. One team has a ball and jogs around the grid with the ball in their hands. The working players must move quickly around the grid receiving the ball from the servers. Servers throw ball for the player to control using the head, chest, thighs and feet. Alternate roles every 60 seconds.

Make a competition by seeing who can get the most touches in 60 seconds. Players may not receive the ball consecutively from the same player. Only award a point if the player controls the ball and plays it back without the ball hitting the ground.

Develop to passing "one touch".



Sprint and Sit



Teaching Points

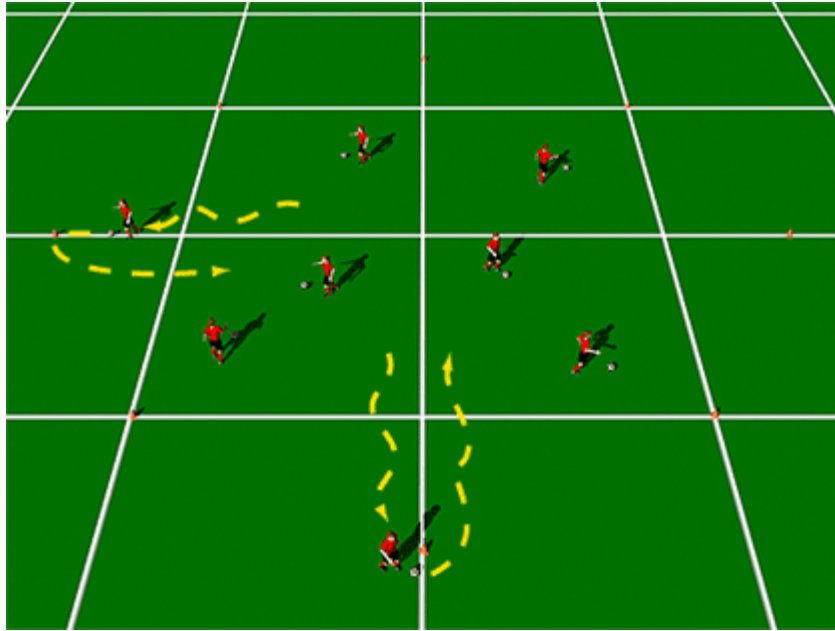
Group sits on ground, spread out in an area approximately 30 yards x 30 yards.

Two players start off the practice. One player the "runner", the second the "chaser". The "runner" avoids being tagged by the "chaser" by moving in and around the sitting players. If the runner is tagged he becomes the chaser.

The runner can be relieved by sitting next to a resting player, thus making the player he sits next to the new "runner".



Dribble Tag



Teaching Points

Players dribble around grid and try to tag each other using their hand.
Any player tagged must leave their ball and sprint around the nearest cone placed outside the grid.

Progression:

Instead of tagging, the players try to knock other players' balls out of the grid.
The players that lose their ball must sprint around the flag pole with their ball before they can join back in.



Sixty Seconds



Teaching Points

Divide team into 2 groups. One group stretches for 60 seconds while the other group maneuvers around the penalty with the ball. Swap roles every 60 seconds.

Stretches:

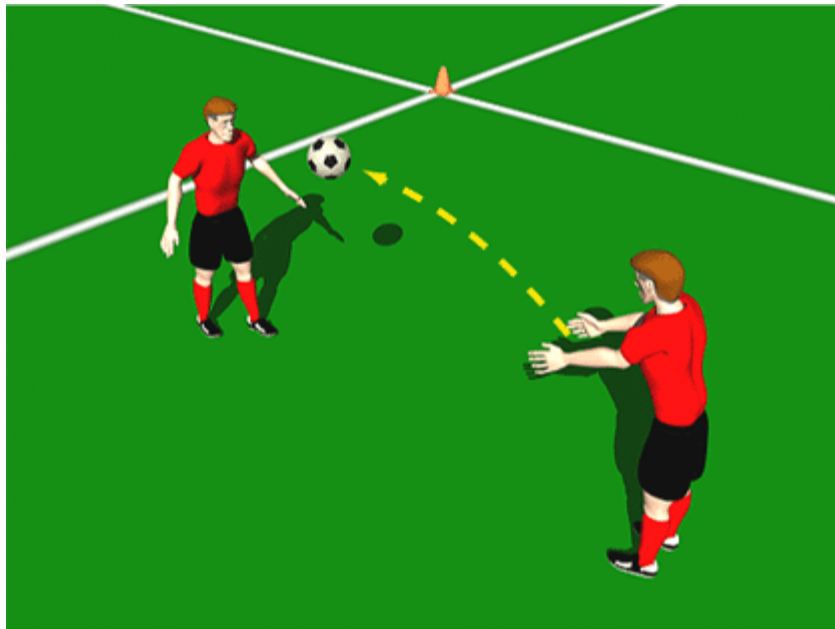
Calf's.
Quadriceps.
Groin.
Back.

Ball Maneuvers:

Dribble into space.
Push ball through stretching players legs.
Flick ball over stretching player.
Variety of turns.
Volley in the air and control.
Try to tag another player who has a ball e.g.: how many points in 60 seconds, the first player to reach 20 points wins.



Head Catch in Pairs



Teaching Points

This is a fun warm up game, especially if the topic you are teaching is heading. It starts the practice with an enjoyable tempo and forces the players to make a quick decision.

Divide your group into pairs. Each pair has one ball. One player serves a straight throw to their partner. As the player serves the ball he shouts one of two commands "HEAD" or "CATCH".

If the server shouts, "HEAD" - the player must do the opposite and catch the ball.

If the server shouts, "CATCH" - the player must do the opposite and head the ball.

The player receives a goal for every successfully performed header or catch. If the player heads the ball it must be headed back to their partners hands, then returned by their partner for them to serve.

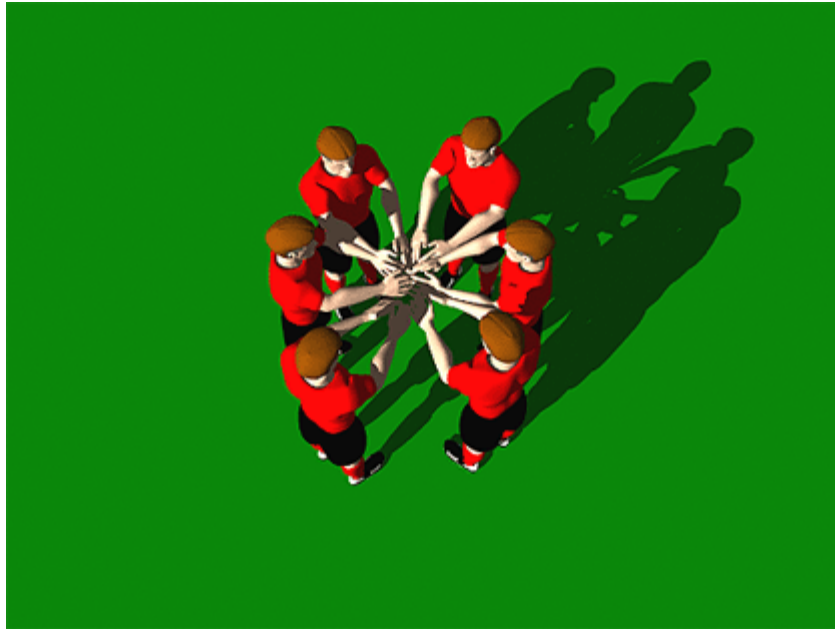
If they catch the ball they must then serve it back to their partner for them to either head or catch.

A competition can also be played. First player to 5 goals wins.

Swap partners for a new competition.



Hands in a Circle



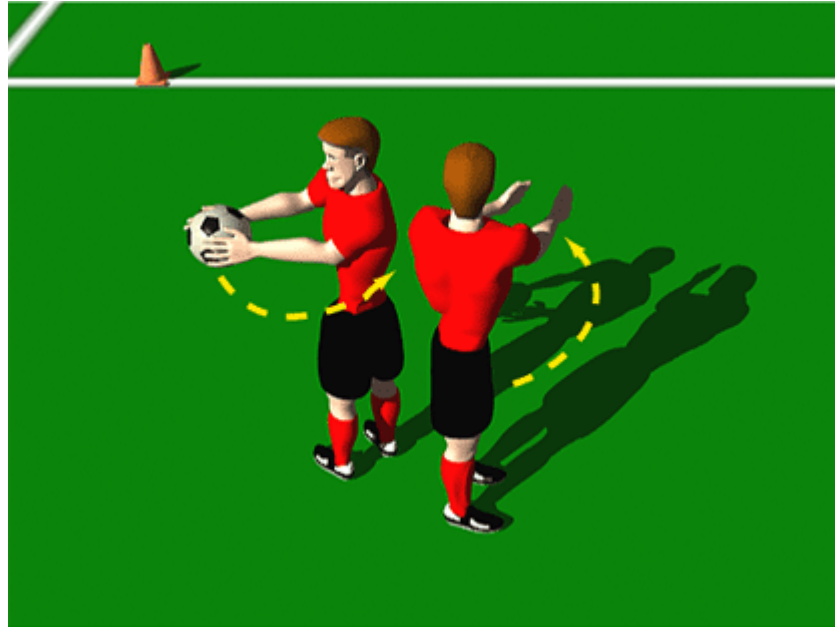
Teaching Points

This is a fun game to end your warm or even a warm down. Bring the team together to form a small circle. Have the players close their eyes and reach out and hold the players hands of a player opposite them.

Then they open their eyes and try to unravel from the group without letting go of their partner's hands. This is a great team problem solving game.



Trunk Twists



Teaching Points

This is a good warm up incorporating the ball. Divided your group of players into pairs. Each pair has a ball. Both players stand "back to back".

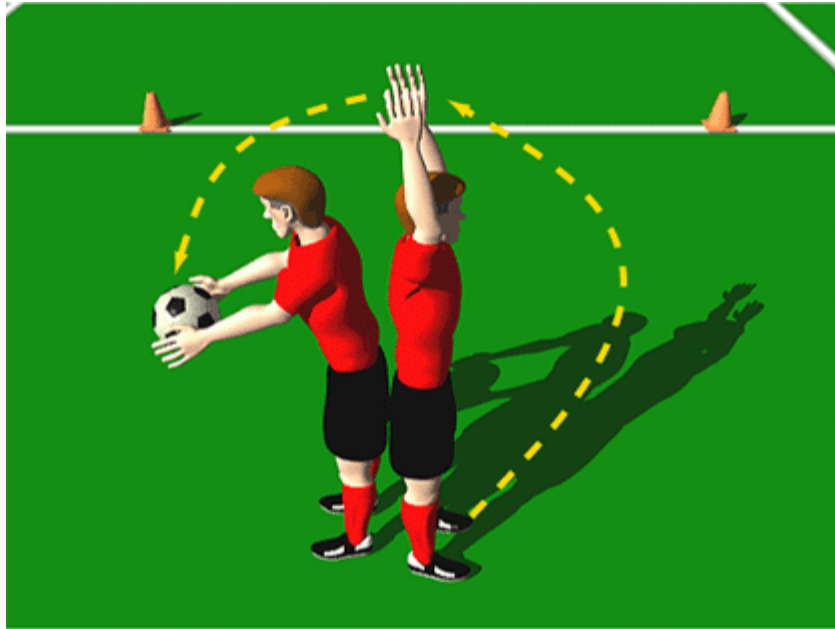
Both players work together "in synch" as they time their trunk twists. One player has the ball and turns the upper half of the body (trunk) around to meet their partner. Their partner must turn from the opposite side to receive the ball. After receiving the ball, the partner turns to the opposite side to return the ball.

This is continued for 60 seconds. The coach can adjust the speed going from slow to quick, quick to slow.

Make a game. How many can you do in 30 seconds?



Up and Under



Teaching Points

This is a fun game to incorporate a ball with your warm up activity. It also develops coordination and timing.

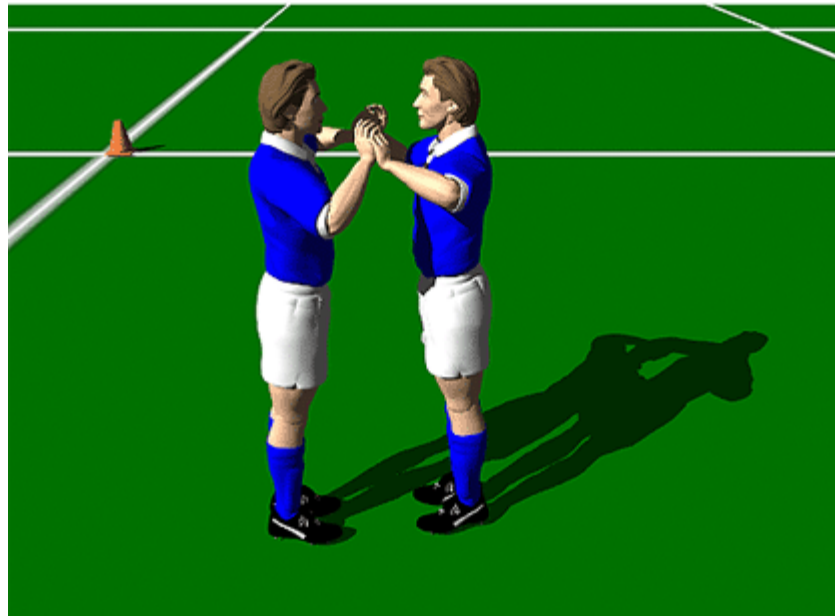
Divided your group of players into pairs. Each pair has a ball. Both players stand "back to back". Both players work together "in synch" as they time the exercise. One player has the ball and raises the ball above their head for their partner to take. Their partner brings the ball down and hands the ball back through both the players open legs.

This is continued for 60 seconds. The coach can adjust the speed going from slow to quick, quick to slow. Also the coach can shout "change" for the players to change the exercise in the opposite direction

Make a game. How many can you do in 30 seconds?



Push Me Over



Teaching Points

This is a fun game to incorporate into your warm up activity. It also develops balance, strength and timing.

Divided your group of players into pairs. Each pair faces each other with hands in front and legs closed. Players stand approximately 1 foot apart.

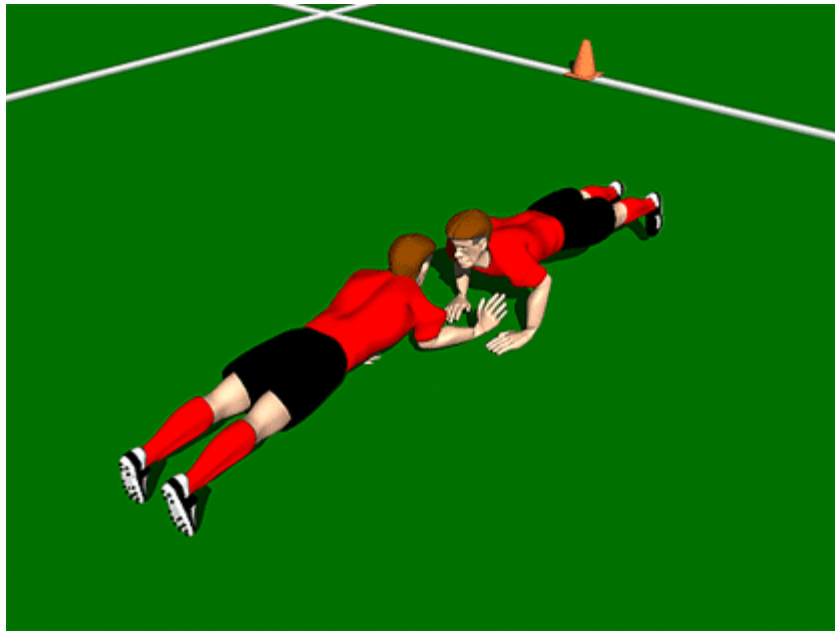
The object of the game is to try and make your partner move their feet by unbalancing them. Contact can only be made by pushing the partners hands. Points are awarded each time a player moves their partners.

If a player touches another players chest, their partner receives a point.
A player can quickly move their hands away and make a player touch their chest.

First player to 5 points wins. Rotate players to challenge new opponents.
Players should keep their legs closed and ankles touching.



Push Up Wars



Teaching Points

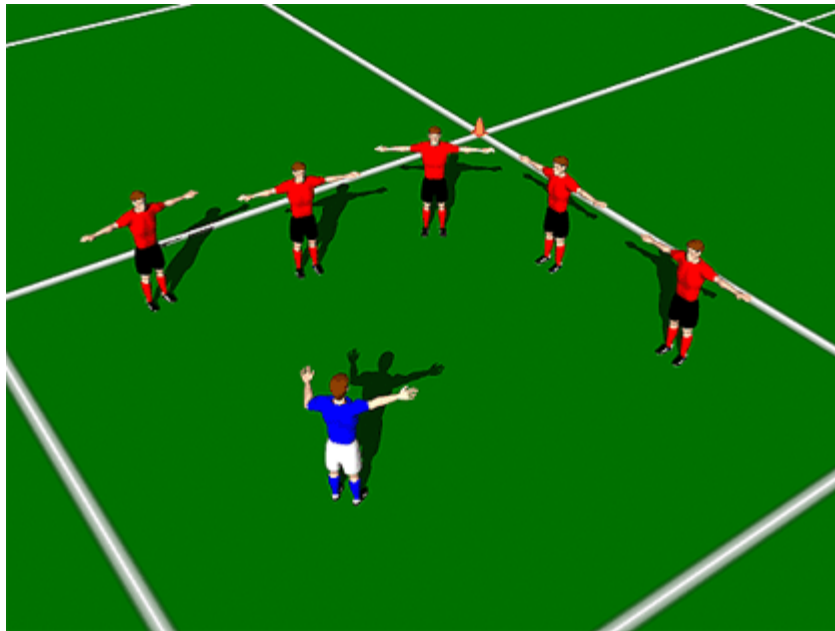
This is a fun game to incorporate into your warm up activity. It also develops strength, balance and timing.

Divided your group of players into pairs. Each pair faces each other in the push up position. The object of the game is for each player to try to knock their partner to the ground by pulling their arms. A point is award for each successful attempt.

First player to 5 points wins. Rotate players to challenge new opponents. Players should keep their legs closed and ankles touching.



Do This, Do That



Teaching Points

This is a fun game to incorporate into your warm up or warm down activity. It also develops quick thinking, timing and coordination.

The coach should stand in a position so the entire group can see him clearly.

The Rule: If the coach says "**Do this**" the group does not react. If the coach says "**Do that**" then the players must instantly mimic the coaches movement.

The coach should be creative and perform a variety of different moves such as;

- Both arms out to the side.
- Both arms out to the front
- Kneel on one leg, both legs
- Sit down
- Stand up
- Move a finger, elbow, etc.
- Make up your own moves

Any player who moves when they shouldn't can either;

- Sprint around a cone
- Do an exercise
- or sit out until there is a champion of the game.



30 Second Shielding



Teaching Points

This is a fun game to incorporate into your warm up. It develops the technical ability of shielding the ball and also improves upper body strength.

Divide your group into pairs. One ball per pair. One player starts with possession of the ball in the center of a grid approx 5 yards by 5 yards.

On the coaches command, the defender has 30 seconds to see if they can win the ball from their partner. The player with the ball must protect the ball within the boundaries of the grid. If the player with the ball losses it, they then become the defender. The player who has the ball at the end of 30 seconds wins a point.

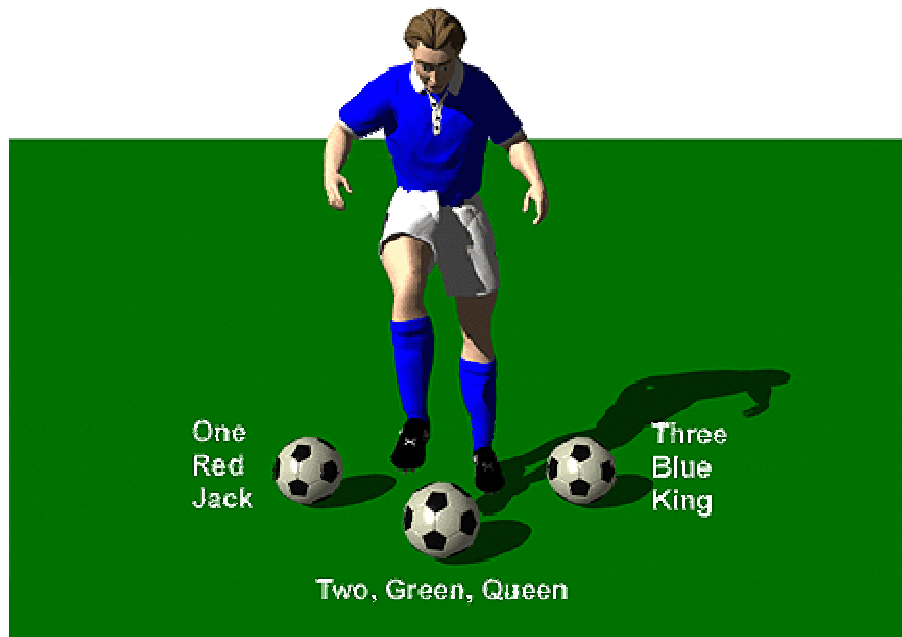
Make a competition, first player to 5 points wins.
Rotate players to challenge new opponents.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Always adopt a "side on" position to protect the ball. This provides a greater distance between the ball and the threatening defender.
- Clench your fists! This will tighten the upper body and make you stronger to shield the ball.
- Keep moving the ball. Change direction in relation to the defender.
- Back into the defender to block his vision of the ball.



Speedy Feet



Teaching Points

This is a great exercise to incorporate in your warm up activity. This drill will help improve both the quickness of the player's decision making and their foot reactions.

Divided your group of players into pairs. Each pair has 3 balls. One player calls the instructions while the other performs the exercise. Position 3 balls to form a triangle.

The player starts the drill by jogging slowly in place, between the 3 balls. On the partners command, the player touches the top of the ball with the sole of the foot, as quickly as possible. The challenge is for the player not only to perform the drill quickly, but also select the correct ball.

Each ball is labeled in the following order;

One, Two and Three
Red, Green, Blue
Jack, Queen, King

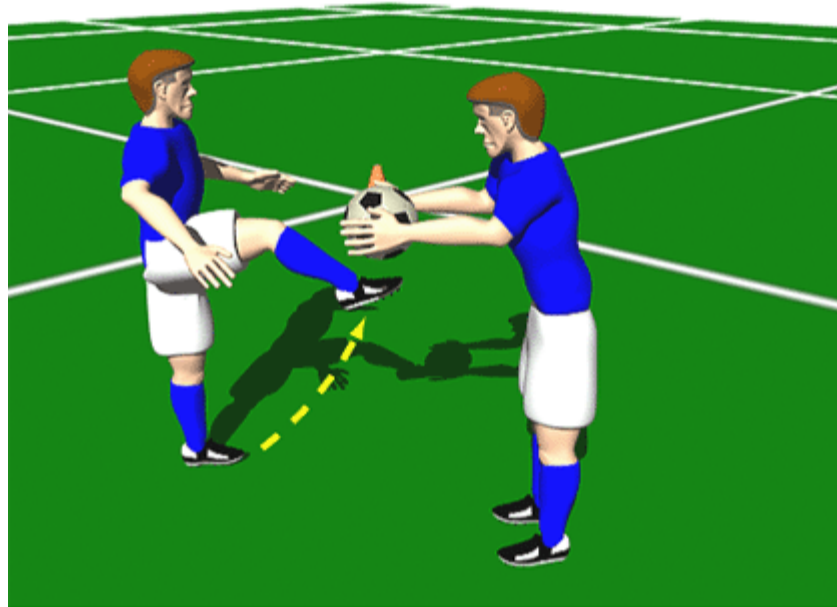
The partner calls out series of commands for the player to perform. If the partner calls out "Three" the player must touch ball #3. If the partner calls out "Queen" the player must touch ball labeled Queen etc.

Keep the pace fast and the player should prevent moving the balls when they touch them. Add your own categories and see how many things they can remember under pressure.

Rotate every 60 seconds.



Toe Touches



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up. It develops both flexibility and agility.

Divide your group into pairs. One ball per pair. One player holds the ball with arms forward.

While jogging in place, the working player alternates touching the ball with the foot with right and left foot. The player can vary the foot surface such as touching the ball with the laces, inside of the foot, outside of the foot.

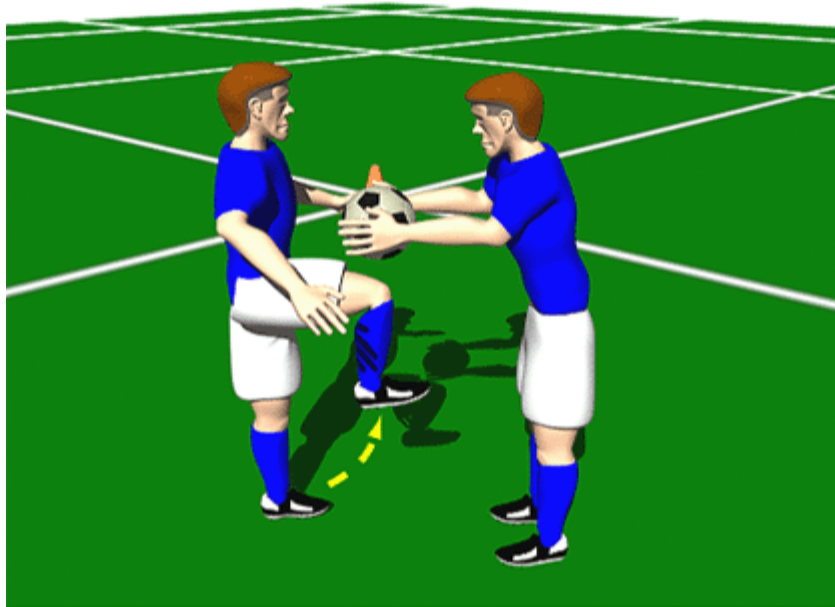
The partner can gradually increase the height of the ball as the exercise progresses. Work for 60 seconds then reverse roles.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Always keep on the balls of your feet.
- Develop a rhythm to your movement.
- Start slowly then increase pace.
- Use a variety of foot surfaces to touch the ball.



Thigh Touches



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up. It develops both flexibility and agility.

Divide your group into pairs. One ball per pair. One player holds the ball with arms forward. While jogging in place, the working player alternates thigh touches on the ball, with right and left thigh. The partner can gradually increase the height of the ball as the exercise progresses.

Work for 60 seconds then reverse roles.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Always keep on the balls of your feet.
- Develop a rhythm to your movement.
- Start slowly then increase pace.



Crescent Kicks



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up. It develops both flexibility and agility.

Divide your group into pairs. One ball per pair. One player holds the ball with arms forward.

While jogging in place, the working player alternates performing crescent kicks around the ball with right and left leg. The partner can gradually increase the height of the ball as the exercise progresses.

Work for 60 seconds then reverse roles.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Always keep on the balls of your feet.
- Develop a rhythm to your movement.
- Start slowly then increase pace.



Figure Eights



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up. It develops both flexibility and agility.

Each player has a ball. The players rolls the ball in between and around both legs making a "figure 8". Reverse the direction after each rotation.

This exercise will help stretch the groin and hamstrings. Work for 60 seconds then move onto next warm up activity.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Never take your hands off the ball.
- Develop a rhythm to your movement.
- Start slowly then increase pace.



One Bounce through the Legs



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up. It develops both flexibility and coordination.

Each player has a ball. With legs open wide, the player drops the ball from behind and towards their legs. The ball has to bounce once through the legs for the player to bend over and catch.

Work for 60 seconds then move onto next warm up activity.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Legs should be open wide.
- Transfer quickly from leaning backwards to bending forward.
- Develop a rhythm to your movement.
- Start slowly then increase pace.



Roll around the Feet



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up to develop flexibility.

Each player has a ball. The player sits on the ground and rolls the ball around the legs and back. The players fingertips must always be in contact with the ball. Reverse directions after each rotation.

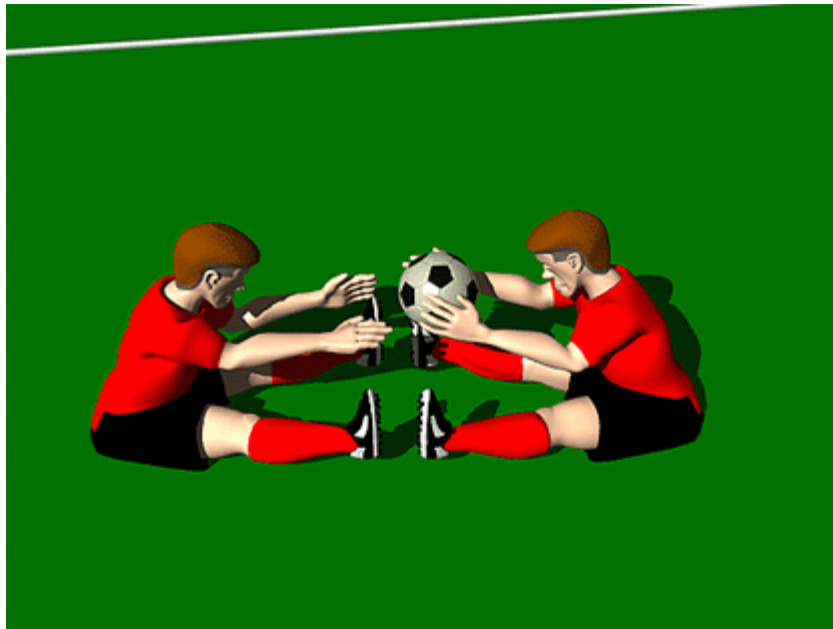
This exercise will help stretch the hamstrings. Work for 60 seconds then move onto next warm up activity.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Never take your hands off the ball.
- Legs should be pressed against the ground, no bent knees
- Develop a rhythm to your movement.
- Start slowly then increase pace.



Two Player Ball Sit Ups



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up. It develops both flexibility and coordination. This is also a good exercise for developing the abdominal muscles.

One ball per pair. Both players sit facing each other on the ground. The players alternate handing the ball to each other. Each time the ball is handed, the player with the ball must extend backwards and touch the ball on the ground. (lying full stretch). The player then sits back up with the ball and hands the ball to their partner to perform.

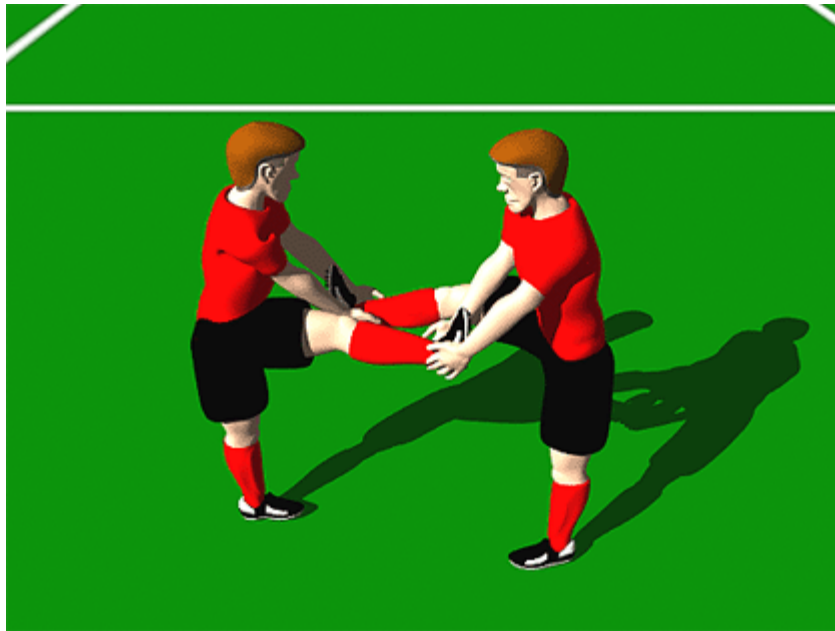
Work for 2 minutes then move onto next warm up activity.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Never throw the ball to your partner, always hand it over..
- Develop a rhythm to your movement.
- Start slowly then increase pace.



Two Player Leg Stretch



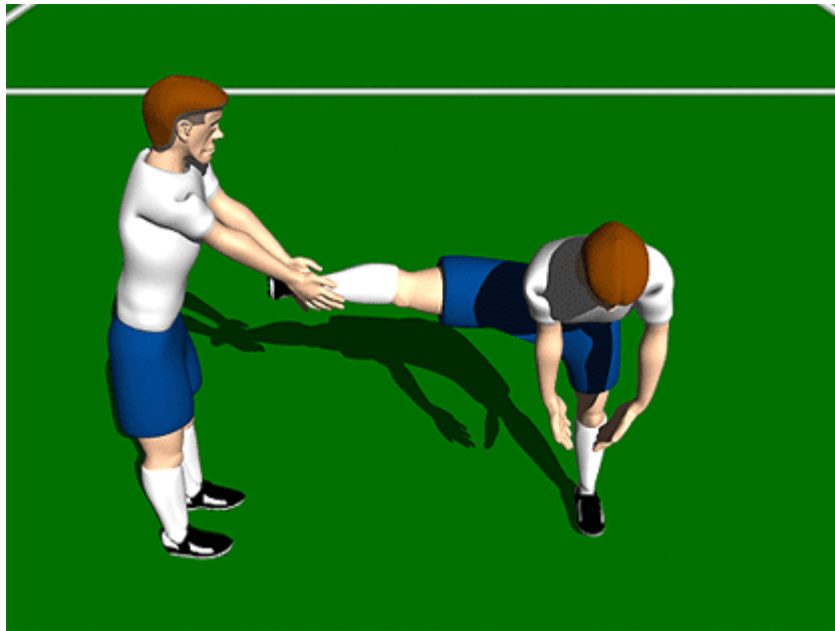
Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up for stretching the hamstrings and groin.

Both players stand facing each other. Players raise their leg for their partner to hold. Hold until muscle is stretched then move onto next warm up activity.



Two Player Leg Stretch (sideways)



Teaching Points

This is a good exercise to incorporate into your warm up for stretching the hamstrings and groin.

Both players stand facing each other. Players raise their leg for their partner to hold. Reach down to touch toes. Hold until muscle is stretched then move onto next warm up activity.

Warm Ups

Warm up is important in preparing the body for a higher energy production and preventing injury.

While opinions conflict on the value of a warm up, most evidence favors its use prior to intense play. If a player understands the reasons for a warm up they should be inclined to warm up on their own in the absence of a trainer or coach. Warm up helps gear-up energy production. As exercise levels gradually increase with a warm up, the blood circulation adjusts to meet the new energy demands. Blood flow to the working muscle increases during exercise due to two responses: the heart rate increases so more blood is pumped per minute than at rest, and a greater percentage of the increased flow is sent to working tissue.



The increased blood flow to the tissues is important as the blood brings with it more oxygen which can then be used in the aerobic system to produce energy.

The warm up allows the adaptation in blood circulation and oxygen delivery to occur gradually and in this way the increasing energy cost can be met predominantly by the aerobic system. If the player does not warm up and goes straight into an intense game, his energy requirement will increase suddenly from resting to a high level and the increase in energy will have to come from anaerobic glycolysis until the oxygen delivery system has time to adjust and deliver more oxygen to the muscles for aerobic energy production. Lactic acid (an end product of anaerobic glycolysis), is related to fatigue so the player who does not warm-up will feel fatigue sooner in a game than the warmed up athlete.

As exercise continues, deep body temperature rises causing an increasing in energy metabolism. For every 1 degree in Fahrenheit rise in cell temperature, metabolism increases 13%. This rise in temperature is also responsible for making it easier for oxygen to be released from the hemoglobin at the cell level, thus providing the cells with more oxygen.

These adjustments along with the increased blood flow to the working tissue prepare the body for higher total energy production through aerobic metabolism.

Some muscle tears, strains, and soreness can be prevented by a thorough warm up. A stretching sequence as part of the warm-up can help prevent muscular injury by improving joint range of motion prior to play. The increased muscle temperature mentioned above also helps in injury prevention because after a warm up the nerve impulses are speeded up which in turn improves coordination.

As one muscle group contracts, its opposite muscle group relaxes to allow the movement to occur. If the relaxation does not happen at the right time, injury will result. A common example of this type of injury is a pulled hamstring (the muscle group at the back of the upper leg). A quick contraction of the quadriceps (the muscle group at the front of the thigh) to straighten the knee will injure the hamstring unless it relaxes at exactly the right time. Coordination of these movements is improved by the speeded up nerve impulse due to warm-up.



To warm-up, a soccer player should slowly jog a lap or two of the field, stretch his whole body (and then practice soccer skills by starting slowly and gradually building intensity until he feels "right" for peak energy expenditure.

The skill routine should start with close ball control and short range passing, stressing footwork and control and progress to free running, long range passing, and shooting.

Allow skill difficulty to progress with momentum. It is the goalkeeper's responsibility to be fully stretched and warmed-up before opposing his team.

Warm up time varies with the individual and tends to increase with age. Allow between 15 and 30 minutes for the skill warm up period after the jogging and stretching and taper it off between 5 and 15 minutes before game time. Substitutes should stay warm on the sideline and complete at least one lap of the field, starting slowly and building to a run, before they are put in the game. On cold days, warm up should be longer and players should wear warm clothing right up till game time.

Stretching

With good flexibility, the player can change direction easily, is able to fall with less chance of injury, and can adapt to almost any game situation.

Flexibility is defined as the range of motion about a joint. Good flexibility permits an optimum range of movement within a joint; muscles and connective tissue of flexible players are not easily strained or torn. All soccer players should develop their flexibility to an optimum level and maintain it, in order to avoid injury. Repetitive stretching exercises over a period of time can increase the elasticity of the tissue. Tight-jointed athletes should set aside time each day, year-round, to improve their flexibility and in this way protect themselves from possible injury.

A muscle can be stretched in two ways. The first way is called ballistic. This stretching uses a bouncing movement to force the muscle to maximum stretch. It can be dangerous as the bouncing can extend the muscles and connective tissues beyond their safe limits. Muscles have a protective reflex which causes them to contract when they reach their maximum elasticity (or stretchiness). This is the same reflex which jerks your head up when you nod off to sleep while sitting down. Some fibers might tear if movement is stopped by the reflex. A bouncing stretch is more likely to surpass the safe limit of stretch than the second way of stretching.



Static stretching, the alternate method of stretching, is preferred because there is less danger of muscular tears and pulls that are often the result of ballistic stretching. Also, a static stretch allows the opportunity to consciously relax the muscles to obtain a maximum stretch.

To increase flexibility strictly, stretch the muscle until it feels tight, then hold that position while consciously relaxing the stretched muscle. As the muscle relaxes it can be slowly stretched a little more. Expert opinion varies about the length and frequency of each stretch. The method suggested by most athletic trainers is a single stretch held 30 to 40 seconds. The range of motion should increase slightly towards the end of each session and improvement should be seen within a few days. Static stretching should be done daily or at least following each exercise session.

Before a soccer game or practice, players should stretch as part of their warm-up. Stretching loosens up the body, helps warm the muscles, and allows the joints to operate through their maximum range of motion without injury. Players should jog a few laps before stretching since warming the muscles increases their extensibility. Stretching after exercise as part of cool down helps return the muscle fibers to pre-exercise condition.

Excessive flexibility, or hyper flexibility, must be avoided if possible. It is of no value and can result in weakening of the joint at certain angles, which in turn can cause ligament problems or dislocations. Stretching the muscles after unaccustomed or severe exercise helps reduce soreness, and when soreness does occur, gradual stretching of the sore tissue can assist in reducing pain.

Necessity of Cool Down's



After intense exercise, a cool down period helps circulation, lactic acid levels, and other body functions to return to normal gradually.

If a soccer player suddenly stops moving after intense exercise, he will feel faint and possibly see stars. During exercise the blood vessels taking blood to working tissue expand along with the increase in heart rate and blood flow, during exercise the blood flow to the working tissues is 4 - 6 times higher than at rest. Muscle contraction aids in returning the blood to the heart so when the player suddenly stops running, blood gets stranded in the lower body and there is not enough to feed the brain, this causes a light-headed feeling and sometimes fainting.

Lactic acid levels can increase to five times their resting levels during intense exercise. The slow removal of the excess lactic acid can cause post-exercise soreness. To avoid this discomfort lactic acid levels should be lowered as soon as possible. While some lactic acid goes to the liver and is made into glucose, most of it reverts to pyruvate, enters the mitochondria and is broken down through the aerobic system to provide energy for low-intensity work. Inactivity after exercise lowers the need for energy and lactic acid clearance will be slowed considerably. But, if the cool down consists of moderate to light exercise, the energy from the lactic acid will be used more rapidly and the post-exercise soreness will be less.

The 10 to 15 minute cool down period immediately after exercise should consist of one or two jogging laps of the field and a period of stretching. If the recovery exercise is too intense it will be of no benefit and may even prolong recovery by increasing the lactic acid build up. Remember, the laps are not a victory charge, a race, punishment, or time to show how fit you are. Start them slowly and end even slower.

Stretching Exercises



The Calf

Place left foot in front of you, leg bent, right leg straight behind you. Move hips forward until you feel stretch in calf of right leg. Keep right heel flat and toes pointed straight ahead. Hold easy.

Stretch 10 to 20 seconds.

Repeat on other side.



Calf Stretch

Stand with feet shoulders width apart and the left foot slightly forward. Slightly bend the left knee and fully extend the right leg. Pull the toes towards the shin. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat other leg.



Hamstring

Stand with knees slightly bent. Bend forward and reach for the toes. Straighten the legs and hold in this position for 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat 1-3 times.



Hamstring

Sit on the ground with both legs straight and extended. Feet upright about 6 inches apart. Hands on ankles or toes. Bend from the hip and lean forward. Hold this position for 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat 1-3 times.



Hamstring Stretch

This position can be maintained while gently drawing the ankle of the outstretched leg towards the forehead while you sit upright. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat on other side.

Hamstring Stretch



Sitting with one leg bent and the other straight, lean forward (keeping the back as straight as possible), thus stretching the hamstrings of the straightened leg. (This can also be done with both legs straight).

Repeat on other side.

Standing Straddle



Stand in a straddle position. Bend forward from waist, bringing hands toward the floor in front of you. Stretch until you feel tension in your hamstrings. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

Standing Quadriceps Stretch



Grasp your right foot near the toes and pull your heel up toward your gluteal muscles. Push your right hip forward for a better hip flexor stretch. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat other side.

Forward Lunge



In a standing position, lunge forward by placing one foot forward. Make sure your knee doesn't move beyond the ball of your foot. Push the hip of your straight leg forward. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat other side.

Groin Stretch



Stand with your feet apart. Gradually shift all your weight to your right leg by bending your right knee. Your left leg stays straight. Place both your hands on your right knee for support.

Repeat 1-3 times.



Groin Seated

Heels together, holding both feet with your hands. Lean forward from your hips, gradually increasing the stretch by bringing your heels closer to your groin, and your chest closer to your feet. Make the movements small and controlled.

Repeat 1-3 times.



Lateral Hip

Lying on your back, cross your right leg over your left knee. With the ankle of your right leg, touch the left knee. Keep your back, shoulders, and head on the floor. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat other side.



Hip and Back

Sit on the ground with the right leg forward and straight. Cross the left leg over the right. Slowly rotate upper body to left and look over shoulder. Reach across the left leg with the right arm. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

Repeat other side.



Shoulder and Biceps Sitting Stretch

Player sits on the ground. Partner takes both wrists into hands, palms facing up, and elevates the straight arms until the player feels the stretch.

Hold 15 to 20 seconds.
Perform twice then reverse roles.



Shoulder and Biceps Stretch

Player kneels on the ground. Partner takes both wrists into hands, palms facing up, and elevates the straight arms until the player feels the stretch.

Hold 15 to 20 seconds.
Perform twice then reverse roles.



Shoulder, Chest

Stand with head up, chin in, hands joined behind back. Pull shoulders down and back. Press shoulder blades together and down. Pull stomach in to prevent arching of the lower back. Hold for 5 seconds.

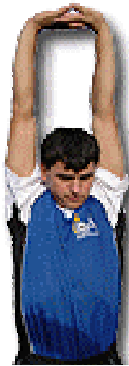
Repeat 1-3 times.



Triceps, top of Shoulders, Waist

Keep knees slightly flexed. Stand or sit with arms overhead. Hold elbow with hand of opposite arm. Pull elbow behind head gently as you slowly lean to side until mild stretch is felt. Hold 10 to 15 sec.

Repeat on other side.



Shoulder Stretch

Interlock your fingers and reach above your head. Your lower back should be flat or slightly arched inwards.

You can perform this exercise sitting or standing.

Repeat 1-3 times.



Chest Stretch

Player -sitting, standing, or kneeling - places both hands behind head. Partner, from behind, grasps both bent elbows and applies pressure by pulling elbows backward, behind the player's head.

Hold 15 to 20 seconds.
Perform twice then reverse roles.