



ESSENTIAL SOCCER

DRIBBLING AND BALL CONTROL DRILLS

14

FUNDAMENTAL DRILLS
TO CONTROL FANCY FEET

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INTRODUCTION

Dribbling in soccer stands out as the most basic foundational skill for any other core skill in the game; skills such as ball control, passing, and shooting.

The best coaches help players establish the correct dribbling foundation early on so that they can easily develop most of the other soccer skills.

Not only is dribbling and ball control an essential basic. Some of the most exciting players to watch and the best professionals are those that have unimaginable control of the ball, on and off the field. This comes with an understanding of the importance of this aspect of the game and with thousands of hours of practice.

For players to master dribbling like the pros and ultimately total ball control, good balance is vital. To maintain good balance players must adapt their movements and body control against different defensive pressures. As a coach, it is important that you provide players with drills that help them improve these skills.

Essential Soccer Dribbling & Ball Control Drills contains 14 of those drills that will allow you to properly coach your players on developing the needed dribbling and ball control skills to have fun and win games.

You should encourage players to practice these drills with both feet and require them to do so during practice. This will allow players the ability to move and cut in any direction and will make it more difficult for opponents to defend them.

Remind your players that no matter how good they are, if they want to tap into their full potential as a player, they must want to get better. Constant improvement is a simple yet extremely valuable principle of success in soccer and in life.

DRILL #1 – STOP, TURN & DRIBBLE

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

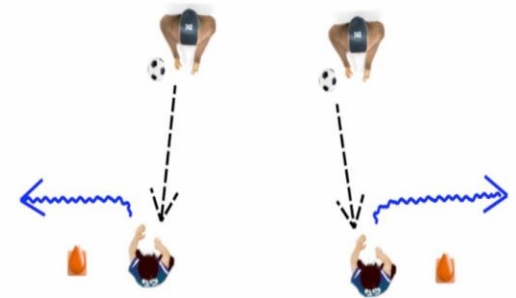
Set up a pylon/cone (or two for two stations), and have the children line up facing the coach.

Execution:

1. Roll or kick the ball to the first player in line.
2. Have your player stop it, and turn to go outside the cone, dribbling for 5 yards in one direction.
3. Have them switch lines and turn to different sides allowing them to turn to both their dominant and non-dominant sides.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill is designed to put a couple of the basic skills together into one drill that will help your players improve upon the basics of soccer.
- Working both sides will help the players learn to go either direction to get out of trouble when opposing players attack them.
- Players will be able to control the ball better. They will also be more confident in stopping the ball and then taking off with it down the field.



Players learn to stop, turn, and dribble the ball in a condensed area.

DRILL #2 – SPACEMAN

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

Place four cones equal distance apart, creating a squared area of about 25 yards by 25 yards. Have the players stand 10-12 feet apart around the outside of the coned area.

Execution:

1. Give each player a ball and have them face counter clockwise.
2. When the coach blows the whistle each player must dribble the ball around the outside of the coned area.
3. Make sure each player maintains the 10-12 foot distance between all of the other players on the field.
4. Have them do 2-3 rotations and then stop and switch directions.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill focuses on getting rid of the 'pack' mentality and teaching your players proper spacing early on in their soccer development.
- The only way your players are going to be able to do this is to keep their heads up and make sure they know where the other players are. Encourage them to keep their heads up the entire time.
- You should also emphasize the importance of spacing when players are passing and trying to move the ball. Proper spacing allows opportunities for advancing the ball down field and for scoring.



This drill will help your players gain the skill of dribbling with their heads up, seeing the field, and maintaining proper spacing.

DRILL #3 – STUCK IN THE MUD (GAME)

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

You will need three or four players that are going to dribble around and try to tag the remaining players. Every player needs a ball to dribble. Keep the players on the field or in a coned area.

Execution:

1. The taggers must tag the other players by dribbling their ball and tagging the other players with their ball.
2. The other players need to keep control of their ball and avoid the taggers.
3. If a player is caught, they must freeze and wait with their legs open and arms out.
4. Other players still in the game that aren't tagged can put a ball between the frozen players legs to set the player free.
5. The game ends when all the players are frozen.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill incorporates the game of frozen tag with the ability of the players to keep control of the ball. Players will be able to have fun by playing a game that forces them to use the skills they have learned.
- This works on skills like dribbling, keeping the head up, and gives the kids a chance to exercise and practice their skills while playing a fun game. It helps them to not overthink the skills and to just react naturally.



This is a fun game that allows players to work a wide variety of skills to improve their ball control.

DRILL #4 – TIGHT BALL HANDLING

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

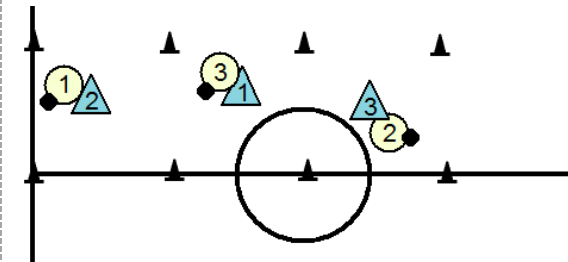
Organize three stations at one time and mark off an area that is five yards by five yards with cones. Place a ball handler and a defender inside each station.

Execution:

1. While inside the square, the ball handler must try to keep their head up while dribbling and maneuvering the ball away from the defender.
2. At first, the defender should only put on slight pressure, and make the odd attempt to knock the ball away.
3. The ball handler is to use all tools at their disposal to keep the ball from the defender's reach.
4. You can make this drill even more difficult in two ways: First, you can shrink the tight area down to a three yard by three yard area to simulate really close play. Second, you have an additional defender on the outside of the square area attempting to steal the ball away from the ball handler when they are close to the perimeter of the station.

Coaching Tips:

- Players will develop exceptional one on one skills which is one of the more important parts of fielding a winning soccer team.
- The ability to handle and control the ball in tight quarters is important in one on one situations.



Players learn to handle the ball with defensive pressure in a tight area.

DRILL #5 – BODY PART CONTROL

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

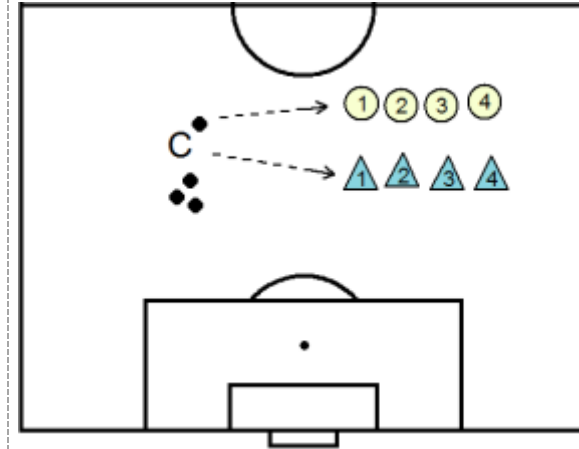
Players can be in two lines, with coaches tossing, rolling or throwing balls from on each side.

Execution:

1. Coaches should toss the ball so it reaches the player at a variety of angles, with the player needing to determine how they are going to receive and control the ball.
2. The player must get into the right position and cushion the ball just the right amount with the proper body part to control the ball when they're receiving it in the air.
3. Rotate players after several different throws have been made.
4. You can also have the players partner up and do this together.

Coaching Tips:

- Players must begin to learn how to stop and control the ball with other parts of their body including their head, chest, midsection, inner thigh and inside of the foot and ankle.
- It's important that the ball arrives to players at a variety of different angles and that it doesn't always come in a nicely wrapped pass. This will help them learn to control the ball no matter where the ball comes from and will allow them to receive an airborne pass.



This allows players to practice receiving the ball in various ways.

DRILL #6 – CONTROL ON THE RUN

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

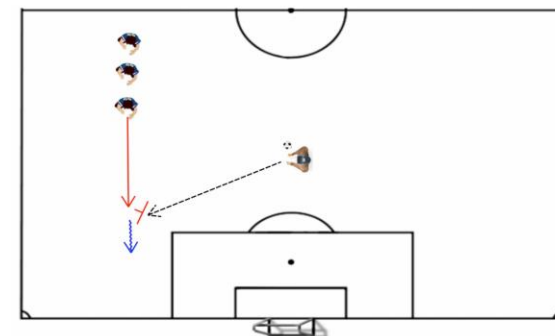
All you need is a line of players that are ready to get into a full sprint and looking for the ball to come to them.

Execution:

1. Once the players are ready to run, they can take off at a sprint with the player looking back at the coach.
2. The ball is going to come at them either as a pass, a lob, or even just a deflection making the ball tough to gather and control.
3. The player must attempt to gain control of the ball and dribble down field.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill helps players learn to be able to control the ball from a pass, a throw in, or a deflection, while they are on the run.
- The first couple of times you do this drill, it should be at a jog, so there are no injuries and so players can get a feel for controlling the ball on the run. Then progress to a full sprint.
- Players are going to be at a slow jog or run a lot during a game. The ball doesn't always come to them nicely, so this drill is key to helping them understand and learn how to control the ball while they are going full speed.



In this drill players learn to intercept and control the ball while in a real game speed and scenario.

DRILL #7 – SHIELDING THE BALL

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

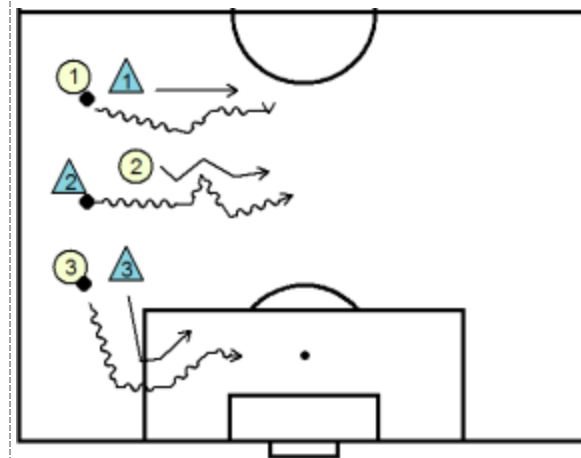
Players should be paired up with someone close to their own skill level and one ball should be given per pair.

Execution:

1. The player with the ball will use a combination of their short dribble and their long dribble to keep the ball away from the other player.
2. When the coach blows the whistle, the player with the ball has to stop the ball, keep control and get their body in between the opponent and the ball.
3. The object is not for the defender to take the ball, but rather for the ball carrier to maintain control of the ball, and to get their body in the way of the defender to protect it.
4. If the defender can touch the ball with a toe, then the two players switch sides.

Coaching Tips:

- Players will have to learn to shield the ball from defenders, while maintaining control. To do this effectively, your players will need to have their heads up and on a swivel to identify the direction the other player is coming from.
- Those controlling the ball will learn to control under pressure and to shield themselves from defenders when in tight situations.



This helps offensive players with dribbling and protecting the ball from defensive pressure.

DRILL #8 – SHARKS & MINNOWS (GAME)

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

Give all of the players a ball to control and dribble around a given area, except two or three, who will be the sharks.

Execution:

1. The two or three players without balls, the sharks, are going to try and take the balls away from the other players that are trying to maintain control, the minnows.
2. If a player has their ball taken away, then they go on the sharks team and try to take away the ball from the other players.
3. Time the players for 2-5 minutes and once the time is up, whoever doesn't have a ball must do laps, pushups, or anything else.

Coaching Tips:

- This is a great game and drill for players to keep learning to keep their head up and keep control while having fun and while acting naturally.
- Anytime you play a game like this one, your players will gain a little bit of conditioning, but they will also have a chance to continue honing their skills in a fun way.



This game allows players to have fun while gaining experience with defense and dribbling.

DRILL #9 – FIGHTING ROOSTERS

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

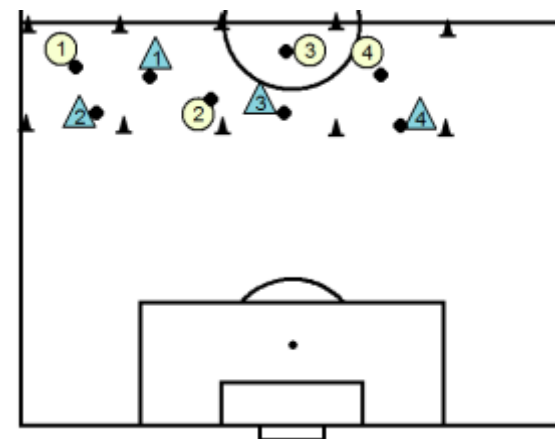
Pair players up that have similar skill ability. Give them two balls between the pair so each player should have a ball and their own small area of about 10x10 yards.

Execution:

1. Each player has to maintain control of their ball, but tries to touch the other player's ball with the toe of their foot.
2. Each time they touch the other players ball they get a point.
3. The point doesn't count if they don't have control of their own ball.
4. The first player to 5-10 points wins.
5. You can rotate pairs and partners to make it more fun and can even make a tournament out of this drill.

Coaching Tips:

- Players often have a hard time keeping the ball from someone who is trying to get it. This is a fundamental ball control skill for advanced players.
- Instruct your players to focus on keeping their head up, focusing on the ball and then trying to get into their opponent's space to touch their ball.
- Your players will become more aware of what is going on around them and how to protect their ball while trying to score points.



This drill gives players an environment to gain experience with natural game awareness.

DRILL #10 – LONG PASS CONTROL

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

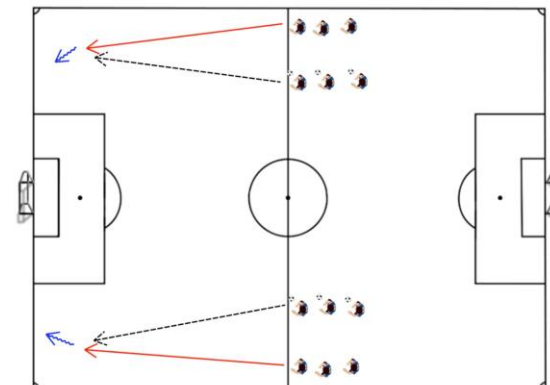
One line of passers and one line of receivers or just the coach passing with two stations of players.

Execution:

1. The receivers will streak down the side of the field
2. The passer from the middle will kick the ball deep to the player going down the field.
3. The player receiving the pass will have to control the pass either in the air or off of the bounce.
4. To make the drill more of a challenge, add a group of defenders to follow the player down the field.

Coaching Tips:

- Even professionals need to control the ball off of a long pass from midfield into the attacking zone. This drill helps your players do that effectively.
- It is important to stress the different ways that a player can try to corral the pass. It can be done with their head, chest, thigh, etc.



This back to basics drill gets players focused on long pass control for your team.

DRILL #11 – QUICK CONTROL

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

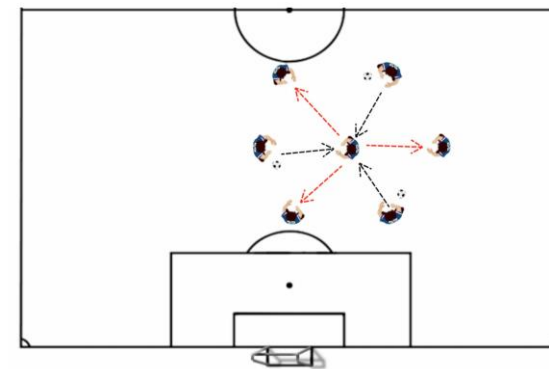
One player should stand in the middle of a circle of five or six other players. Each circle should have three balls. Form as many circles as needed.

Execution:

1. The player in the middle must keep their head on a swivel and listen for their players calling to them to receive a pass.
2. The players forming the circle will call out to the player in the middle one at a time, in random order, and the middle player will turn to them to receive a pass.
3. Have the players on the outside give a variety of passes to the player in the middle to try and control.
4. The middle player must control the ball and then pass it right back to the player in the outside circle.

Coaching Tips:

- Players learn to change directions and get their bearing to control the ball when the pace is fast. This is a good skill for players to advance and play at a higher level.
- You can vary the difficulty of the drill by increasing the speed in which players call out to the person in the middle or you can add another ball.
- Make sure players focus on providing a wide range of different passes so the person in the middle has the opportunity to improve control in all types of situations.



Players will learn to make quick decisions when they hear their players call for passes.

DRILL #12 – HEAD CONTROL

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

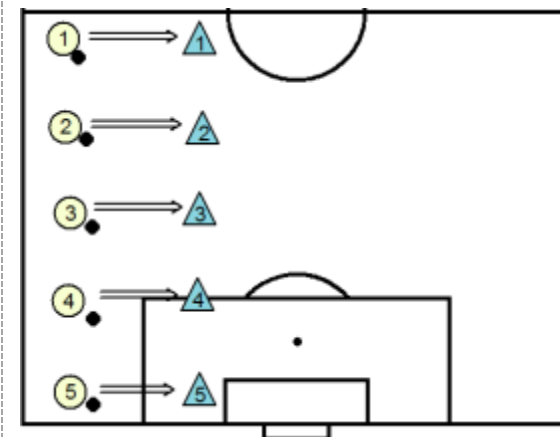
Partner up the players and give each pair a ball.

Execution:

1. One player tosses or softly kicks the ball in the air.
2. The other player uses their head to control and direct the ball to their feet.
3. Have each player do 5-10 repetitions and then switch with their partner.
4. Have each pair complete 3-5 rounds.

Coaching Tips:

- Players need to be able to use their heads to control the ball when it is up in the air. This drill teaches players just that.
- It is clear that the head is a valuable tool to control the ball when it is up high in the air. This is what players need to work on. Emphasize that they use their head not only to advance or retreat the ball, but also to gain control of it at their feet.



This provides a safe environment for players to learn to control the ball from the air with their head.

DRILL #13 – CATCH THE TIGER'S TAIL

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

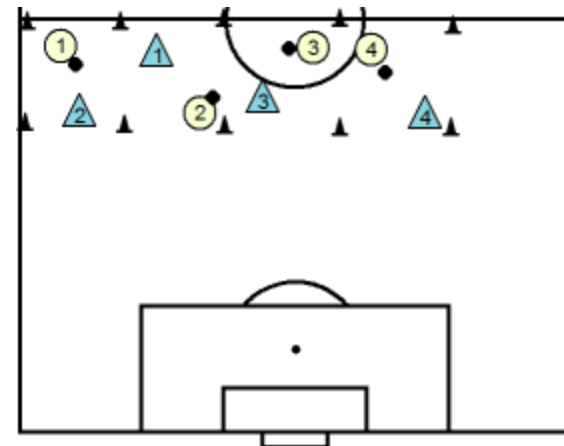
Match players up with similar skills. Give them one ball between the pair. This drill is like Fighting Roosters, but there is only one ball in play.

Execution:

1. The defender doesn't try to take the ball away, but they do try to do any of the following: cause a loss of control, to nudge the ball away from their opponent, or to simply touch the ball with their toe.
2. The defender wins if they get more than 3-5 points in the 2 minute period.
3. The other player wins if they can control the ball and protect it the entire time.
4. Try to emphasize using the arms to keep a player at a distance, using the body to create a barrier for the defender, and to maintain ball control while keeping the head up.

Coaching Tips:

- Creating space and using your arm to create a zone around you are skills players should be working on in this drill.
- This is a way for players to feel real defensive pressure as their opponent doesn't have a ball this time while they are trying to get it.
- Coaches shouldn't be afraid to let players go for a couple of minutes, and then insert coaching tips when the whole group is listening.



With practice this game helps players develop on offense and defense.

DRILL #14 – TARGET MAN

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

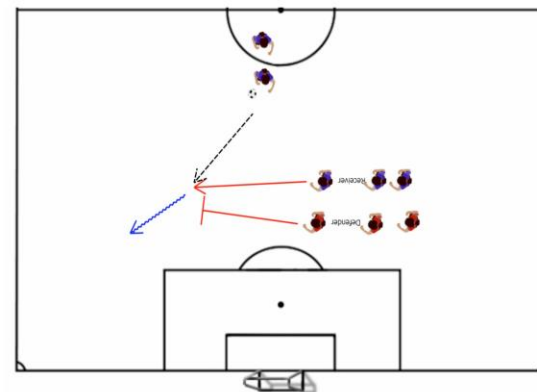
Form three lines: one will be a passing line (you can use goalies), one will be a receiving line and another a defending line. The defending and receiving lines will be parallel to each other and the passing line will be about 20 yards away.

Execution:

1. The player in the receiving line will need to spring out from the middle of the practice field to the side and the defender follows in tow.
2. At this point, the passer will kick the ball to the target man (receiver). The receiver must create an area for him or her to receive the pass and keep the defender from intercepting the ball.
3. Have players rotate through each line so they each get several repetitions as a receiver and a defender.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill teaches players to create space to receive and control a pass. This is a crucial skill for ball control at higher levels.
- Keep in mind that this is an important element of ball control. When one of your players has the ball and is trying to pass it to another teammate it's vital that they can do this effectively so that you don't lose ball control during a game.



Players will learn to shield the defender from the ball to allow the pass to come to them unimpeded.

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