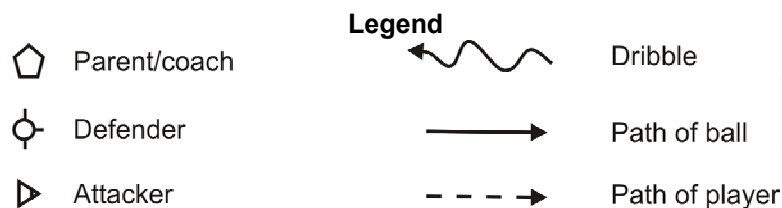


Burke Athletic Club

u4 & 5 Training Scheme Phase I

Introduction to Soccer 1v1



The purpose of this training program is to allow the u4 and 5's the opportunity to learn some basic ideas and experience the basic skill sets of soccer. They'll learn that it's a game that revolves around solving problems; that it ends with a result; that it takes place in a defined area; that it has an objective; direction; rules and involves other people.

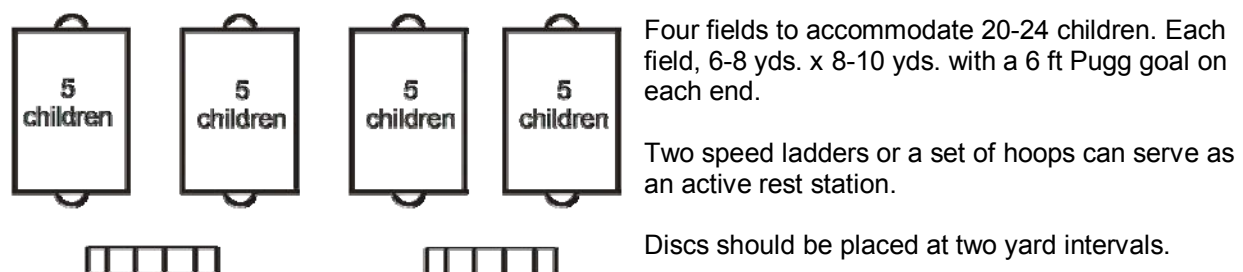
It's also important for parents to understand that the problems the children will need to solve and their level of difficulty are controlled by manipulating the elements of the game. This is done by controlling the time/space and the number of options that the children have to work with. Adjusting the elements is a vital coaching skill, as it creates the correct level of resistance. Too great a resistance breeds frustration, too little boredom.

There are four developmental areas we'll observe. They are interdependent and are improved within the context of the game. Together they provide the baseline for evaluation and education.

- 1) Motor skills. These develop over time as the child matures. Physical strength, coordination, balance and speed are improved within their genetic limits inside the game. Additional "Homework" can aid in this area.
- 2) Social development. Children must learn how to interact with others in order to play the game. Both cooperative and competitive social skills must be mastered.
- 3) Ball manipulation. The ball represents the first level of resistance. Manipulating it in order to achieve an objective represents the level of technical mastery.
- 4) Soccer insight. Understanding the meaning, objectives, problems and solutions that the game asks is a key learning objective.

The best way to realize development in the above areas is to use the basic 1v1 form as both a measure and as the primary teaching tool. As the children learn how to play and master the game they will show improvement in all four areas.

Basic organization of the training field



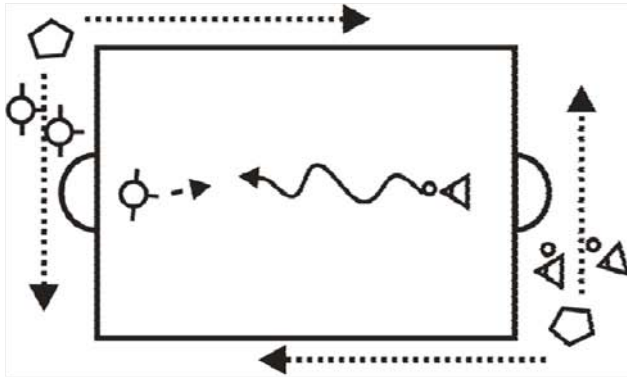
Color code the fields using different colored discs.

6' Pugg goals are recommended.

The basic field dimensions are 5 yds x 8 yds.

Basic games

1) Introduction to the basic game and taking turns.



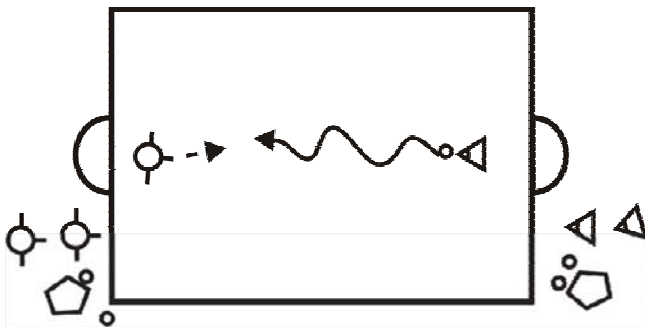
- 1) Up to three children sit next to each goal.
- 2) A parent monitors each group. Each parent can 'cover' one end line and one sideline.
- 3) One child from each line starts on the field in front of their goal. One child has a ball, he or she is the "attacker."
- 4) On a signal from a parent the attacker tries to score and the opponent defends.
- 5) The round/game is over when the ball leaves the field, either over the side, end or when a goal is scored.
- 6) Those two children return to the end of their line and the next two take a turn.

7) When each child in a line has had a turn the other line gets to start the attack.

Learning points:

- 1) The game is limited to the area of the field. Do the children recognize when to stop playing?
- 2) Direction – goals at each end. Do they remember which is their goal to attack? Defend?
- 3) Basic idea of attacker, (has possession) and defender, (doesn't have possession.) Tasks.
- 4) Introduction to transition, change of possession doesn't stop the game. Can they adapt to the change in tasks with the change in possession?
- 5) Technique is used to achieve an objective, scoring, keeping the ball or winning the ball. Keep comments to yes/no questions. Was it good? Not so good? Was it too far? Too close? Was it in? Out? On? Off? Too fast? Too slow?
- 6) All motor skills are used in the context of the game. Parents can evaluate what areas the children need to work on based on performance. How do they move laterally? Backwards? Change of speed and direction?
- 7) Children have to appreciate that their opponent is necessary to play the game and should be treated with respect. Can they get along with their opponent?
- 8) Do they look 'off of the field' for guidance or support? (This is not good. They need to mentally stay on the field.)

2) Variation on the basic game. Extended play and increased technical demands.

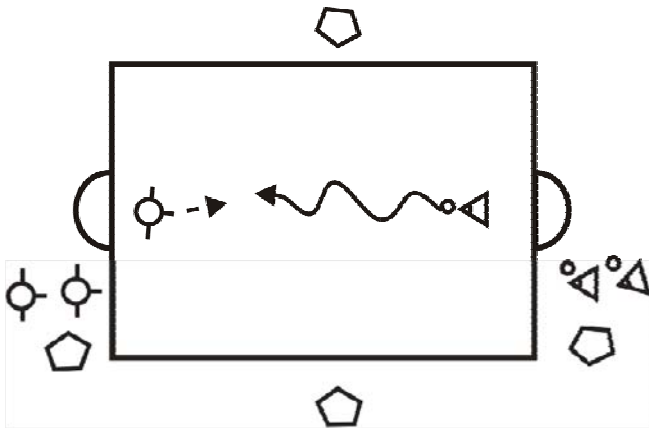


1. Both parents have a supply of extra balls.
2. When a goal is scored, (or possibly when the ball goes out of play), a parent puts a new ball into play.
3. A round/game should not run any longer than 1 minute.
4. It's best if there are only two or three children at a goal.

Learning points:

1. The game doesn't end when the ball goes out of play or a goal is scored. Improves concentration.
2. They'll have to quickly change direction and speeds as the new ball goes into play and they adjust to the new situation.
3. They'll learn how to contend with a free ball on the field and an opponent in close proximity.

3) Variation on the basic game. Extended play and increased technical demands II.

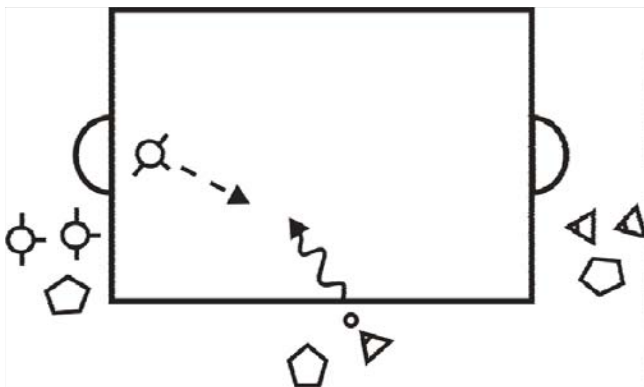


- 1) Several parents surround the field. When the ball goes out of play they quickly put it back into play.
- 2) A parent can put a new ball back into play after a goal is scored.
- 3) A round/game should not run longer than 1 minute.

Learning points:

Same as above.

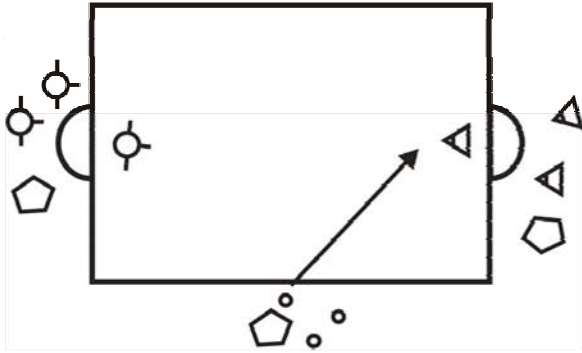
4) Change of possession as a consequence.



Learning points:

1. When you play the ball off of the field the other player gets it. Keeping the ball on the field is important.
2. Helps to develop field sense. An awareness of the limited playing area.
3. Technique is a tool to keep the ball in play and possession as well as scoring.
4. "Winning" the ball replaces "defending."

5) Introducing passing and receiving.

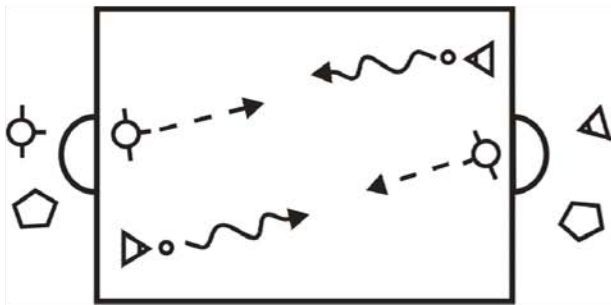


- 1) Same structure as above but a parent passes the ball to the attacker to start the game. The attacker will have to receive the ball while their opponent closes down on him or her. Ensure a quality service.
- 2) In this example the attacker will receive the ball with their right foot. By passing the ball to the player at the other goal that player will have to use their left foot.
- 3) Allow a child to make the inbounds pass. They are practicing passing to a teammate. The quality of the pass will determine if the round/game can begin or not. Rotate the passer after each round/game.

Learning points:

- 1) Increased demands on concentration as well as receiving the ball.

6) Crowded field. Increased complexity and traffic. (Advanced players.)



- 1) Two 1v1's simultaneously on the same field.
- 2) Field dimensions, 8-10 yds. x 10-12 yds.
- 3) Players are paired off, one attacker vs. one defender. They cannot intentionally become involved with the other pair.
- 4) Each attacker starts with a ball. When they touch it the game goes live and the defender can react. (Or the game goes live by a parent saying "Start.")
- 5) When an attacker scores that game is over, the

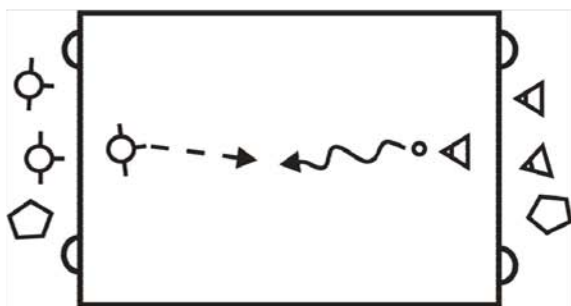
other game continues until a goal is scored.

- 6) Add parents around the field to help keep the ball in play.

Learning points:

- 1) With the field being more crowded, the children will have to be aware of the moving obstacle. Can they use it to their advantage?
- 2) Dealing with more distractions.

7) Four-goal game. Changing directions.



- 1) There will be two sets of small Pugg goals. If they are not available use 8 cones. They can be used to set up the Four-Goal game.
- 2) Adjust the service/starts to suit needs.

Learning points:

1. Changing the direction of the attack. Using the ball to draw the defender away from the goal that you want to attack.

Using 1v1 as the model to measure and learn by at this age presents a problem for the children who aren't ready for this level of play. Some children will arrive at the sessions and will not be able to handle the social interactions. They won't be able to let go of their parent. Others won't have the necessary ball manipulation and insight skills to make the game meaningful.

These children can engage in activities more in line with their own needs and abilities. The socially shy child can watch the other children, gradually moving closer to the action. When they're ready they can play a turn or two with a child they feel comfortable with. Children who lack the motor, ball manipulation or insight skills can work on soccer like activities until they're ready to try them out in the game. See VYSA's u5 lesson plan for some ideas; <http://www.vysa.com/docs/programs/34831/U5-LP-050204.pdf> and the NASL site for video clips with individual moves; <http://www.nasl.com/drills/moves.htm>.

Burke Athletic Club u-4 & 5 Training Scheme II Introducing Teammates

Children should be introduced to this new level when they have demonstrated the following in 1v1:

1. That they recognize the field as a place to play soccer.
2. They recognize the basics of the game, i.e., limits of the field, goal orientation, basic rules, (don't use your hands) and an opponent.
3. They recognize the two main moments, in possession and opponent in possession and the basic tasks, attacker – to score goals and defender – to win the ball back.
4. They begin to demonstrate independence and self-reliance. Their focus is on what is happening on the field and not directed towards outside distractions.

Children can develop their soccer talents in the basic 1v1 form. But don't expect a child to reach the top of each significant area at once. He or she may be comfortable with the physical elements but not much with the social side. Finally, children are inconsistent. Yesterday's stellar performance can be followed by today's debacle. Dealing with this requires patience on everyone's part.

1. Motor skill development. They appear comfortable with the physical challenges that 1v1 presents. They can turn, speed up, slow down, move forwards, backwards, side-to-side, start and stop in relation to the ball and the opponent. They are able to handle the physical challenges of the opponent and the occasional fall that comes with the game.
2. Social development. They are able to play cooperatively with the opponent. He or she can take both sides of competition, success and failure in stride. They recognize that scoring a goal is nice and conceding one is not the end of the world. They are able to maintain concentration on the field and are not dependent on outside support. (They don't look for approval or direction from a significant other.)
3. He or she can manipulate the ball when in possession to achieve their task. They demonstrate the ability to use different surfaces of both feet; inside, outside, sole of the foot and the toe. They appreciate the value of close control, change of direction and change of pace.
4. Soccer insight. They appreciate that when in possession they need to keep the ball until they have the opportunity to score. When they're not in possession they need to win the ball, not just defend the goal or kick the ball away. The opponent and the game represent a problem that they have to solve and they must use their soccer talents to solve it.

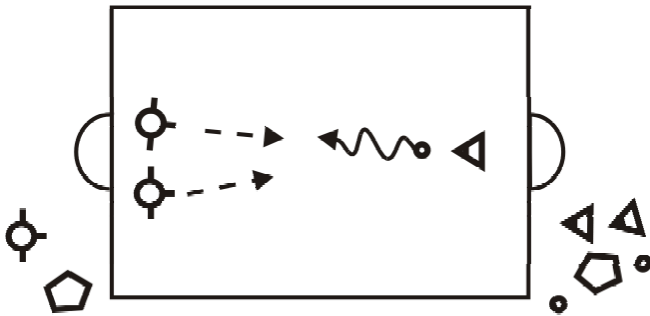
Introducing Teamwork

As the players gain in confidence and competence in the 1v1 form they will need to move onto the next level of play, playing with a teammate. This requires them to learn an entirely new way to see the game, introduces the division of tasks and offers new technical skills that need to be mastered.

The best way to introduce this level is with the forms of 1v2 and 2v1 where only one 'team' plays with a teammate. This minimizes the number of distractions and options that the children and you have to deal with.

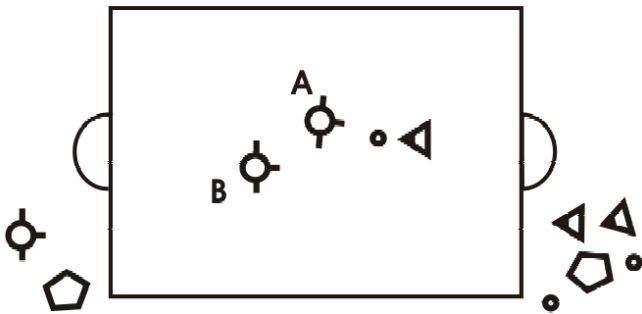
The 1v2 form, one attacker against two defenders is the easier of the two. Preferably the attacker should be playing at a higher level than the defenders. He or she will need to be comfortable and confident with the attacking role from 1v1. Use older or more experienced players if necessary to get the games going.

1) Introducing the basic forms for team play, 1v2, the second defender.



Introduce this form with the players starting in front of their own goals. The attacker touches the ball, or the game begins on the coach's signal. Use this form for the orientation phase. Mistakes, and there will be plenty, can supply you with real examples and player problems. You are setting a frame of reference, a base line for the children.

2) First coaching point for the defenders, one presses the attacker, the second covers behind the first.



After the orientation phase the defenders will need to work out a basic plan. The basic plan is "The pressing player *can* win the ball, but doesn't need to. The second player watches for the attacker's mistake and should be close enough to pounce on it." This introduces the separation of tasks between players.

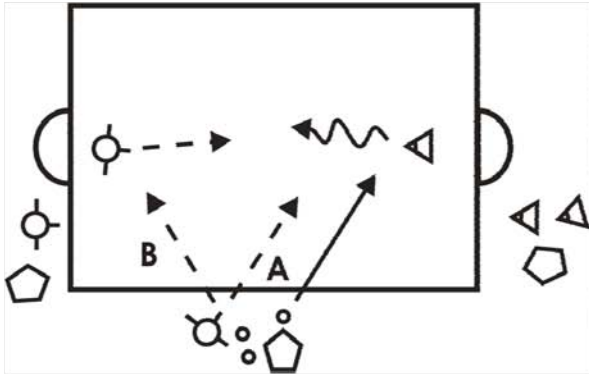
In the diagram at left, one player, A, gets close to the attacker while the second, B, stays slightly behind him or her and in line with the goal.

Once they have their plan the first problem for the two defenders will be deciding who will take which role? In the beginning they might take a very strict, "I'll do this, you do that" approach. Experience, along with your guidance, will teach the players how to work together.

The second problem will be keeping the correct distance and angle between the two. Once again, the experience that they gain by playing in the form will provide them with plenty of opportunities for trial and error learning.

3) Next adjust the starting positions of the defenders.

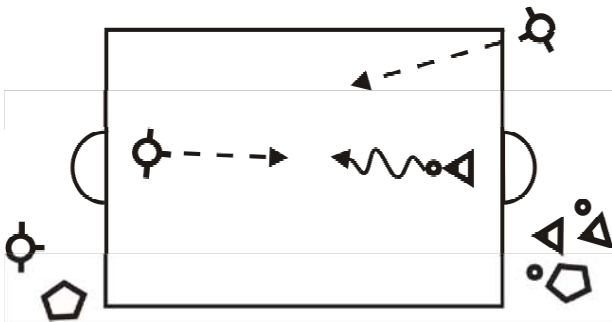
The defenders will not always be side by side in a game. Adjusting their starting positions gives them a new experience and problems to solve. It also allows you to control how quickly the second defender can come into play.



In the diagram at left start the game by passing the ball into the attacker from the side of the field. (Or the attacker can start with the ball.) One defender starts by their goal, the other next to you. By separating the defenders they will be faced with a variation on the basic problem, who should press the attacker and who should be in support? Who's closest to the attacker and who can get there the fastest? The increased distance between the defenders places an added burden on their communication and decision-making. (Children have a limited sphere of awareness. With the defenders split, the two must concentrate over a larger area.)

In this example the defender next to the coach must choose between run A and run B, to press or to cover. The decision will be based on the movement of his or her teammate and the attacker. (His or her teammate has to make the same decisions as well adding to the complexity.) The children will be developing their plan and teamwork on the fly.

4) Recovery runs from behind the ball.

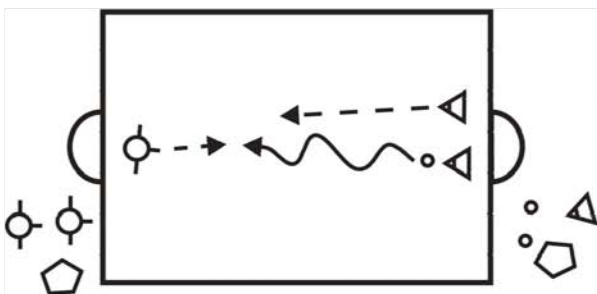


In the last example the second defender starts behind the ball. They'll have to recover back to goal side, or go straight to the attacker in order to take up a useful defensive position.

Later on the defenders can have enough confidence in each other that a 1v1 is an acceptable risk. In that case the recovery run isn't necessary.

In these situations the two defenders will have to work together in order to get the most out of their numerical advantage. Their ability to read a dynamic situation will be tested, and developed with each opportunity they get. The attacker, on the other hand, only has to concentrate on the task of scoring themselves. For them, and you, the decision making process is much simpler because the options are fewer.

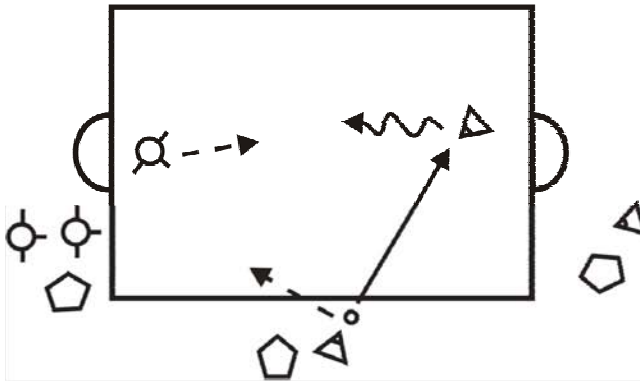
5) Introducing the basic form, 2v1, the second attacker.



Introduce this form by letting the attackers start next to each other. Chances are they will come out together and too close. The second attacker may actually get in the way of the ball carrier and make his or her job more difficult. When both attackers have experienced the problem, they will have a frame of reference to understand your explanations about spacing.

Allowing children some experience in doing it wrong may help them appreciate how and why to do it right.

6) 2v1, separate the attackers, spreading out the field.



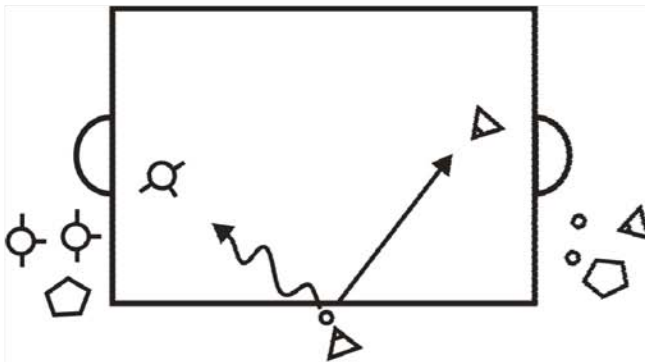
Next start with the attackers separated from each other. One attacker begins by his or her goal and their teammate is on the side. He or she passes the ball into their teammate to start.

This starting point ensures that the two attackers begin the game at a better distance than in the orientation game. They'll be able to compare the two situations and decide for themselves, which works best.

This is a good time to begin stressing that the attackers want to keep the ball 'clean.' When the

attackers have a numerical advantage their opponents should not be able to even touch the ball. They already know that the job of the attackers is 1) to score or, if that's not possible, 2) to keep possession. They need to learn that the easiest way to do this, keep possession, is to get the ball to the open player. Allowing the defender to even touch the ball is giving him or her a chance to turn the table on the attackers. "Playing clean" involves the ability to read the situation, understand the odds, choose accordingly and execute the decision.

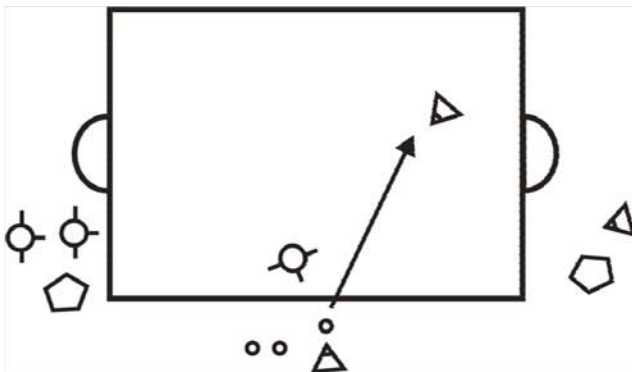
7) 2v1, introducing players choice, the most basic decision. When you have space dribble.



In this variation, allow the player with the ball to start with a player's choice. They can pass the ball in or dribble themselves. This will involve them immediately in the decision making process. "If the defender is far away, dribble."

When a player decides to move with the ball they need to watch what affect it has on the game. If the defender comes out to meet them, or stays put, the situation changes. How they react to the change is a key learning point.

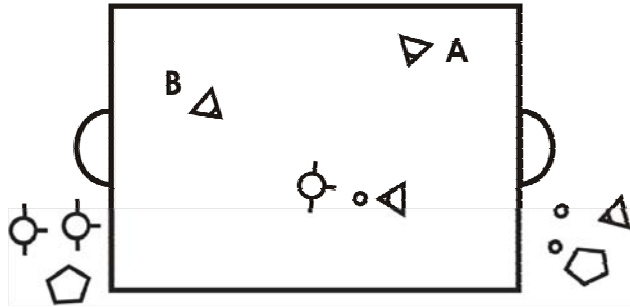
8) Player's choice, when you're don't have space pass.



Next you can encourage the defender to come out and stop the dribble. This leads to the next learning moment and decision. "If the defender blocks your way, find your teammate and pass. Use your numbers to your advantage." It also allows the second attacker to find the open space behind the defender where he or she can get the ball.

The first attacker can practice deception by looking away from their teammate before passing. If the defender is too close to the first attacker, have the first attacker move back 1-2 yards.

9) When to go ahead of or stay behind the ball.

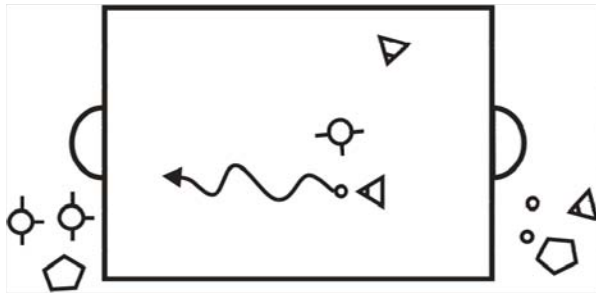


The second attacker is constantly faced with the decision, "Should I go ahead of the ball or stay behind?" If I go ahead when is the correct moment?" Often children just go forward, regardless if the run helps or is necessary.

When they do go forward they need to stay in a space where they can receive the ball. In this diagram the attacker with the ball is under pressure.

At position 'A' the second attacker can receive an easy pass and may find a clear path themselves to the goal. At position 'B' the second attacker has made his or her teammate's job much harder. Receiving a pass here is difficult at best. (2v1 is a good form to learn this skill. The two attackers will have a lot of opportunities and space to use.)

10) Choosing when to pass and when to dribble.



Keep in mind that the player with the ball's natural inclination will be to take on the defender. They'll see most situations as 1v1 and dribbling as their primary tool. Forcing a pass, when it's not necessary maybe even worse then letting them always go it alone. It will run counter to what they know about the game. Learning when to pass and when to dribble is a key skill for players and it's best if they learn by meeting the demands of the game.

In this diagram the attacker with the ball has an opportunity to take on the defender, ala 1v1. The decision to dribble should be encouraged, a pass is unnecessary.

In the beginning of 2v1 you might want to play as the defender yourself. You can control the decisions of the players through your positioning, blocking either the pass or the dribble and allowing the other. When they begin to execute the correct decisions you can bring in a real defender.

These forms will not proceed sequentially. You will have to ping-pong between them depending on who you're working with and the biggest problem that they have to solve. The important point is that the children are exposed to a limited number of games, close enough in structure that the situations will closely resemble each other. This will allow the children to apply what they are learning in any of games to the others.

After awhile you should begin to notice that the children are developing the skill sets of 1v1, 1v2 and 2v1. This, as opposed to the skill sets of passing, dribbling, shooting and so on. Being able to play in the different combinations is more useful then mastering specific techniques. Spending time on the former brings faster results in real match situations. Later, as the children progress they can supplement their baseline skills with additional technical work. This can be in the form of technical games, homework, active rests periods or even in an academy setting.