

## The Discovery Phase (Up to U9's)

### FORMAT OF SESSIONS

**1. The Beginning**

The purpose of The Beginning (better known as the warm-up) is to get the kids in the right frame of mind and activate their bodies. It's unnecessary to run laps around the field and do stretches to achieve that: all sorts of relays and tagging games with and without the ball are much better (more specific, more fun) and also help develop the children's basic coordination.

**2. The Middle**

The Middle is the section of the training session where we conduct fun football exercises such as dribbling, passing, shooting, etc.

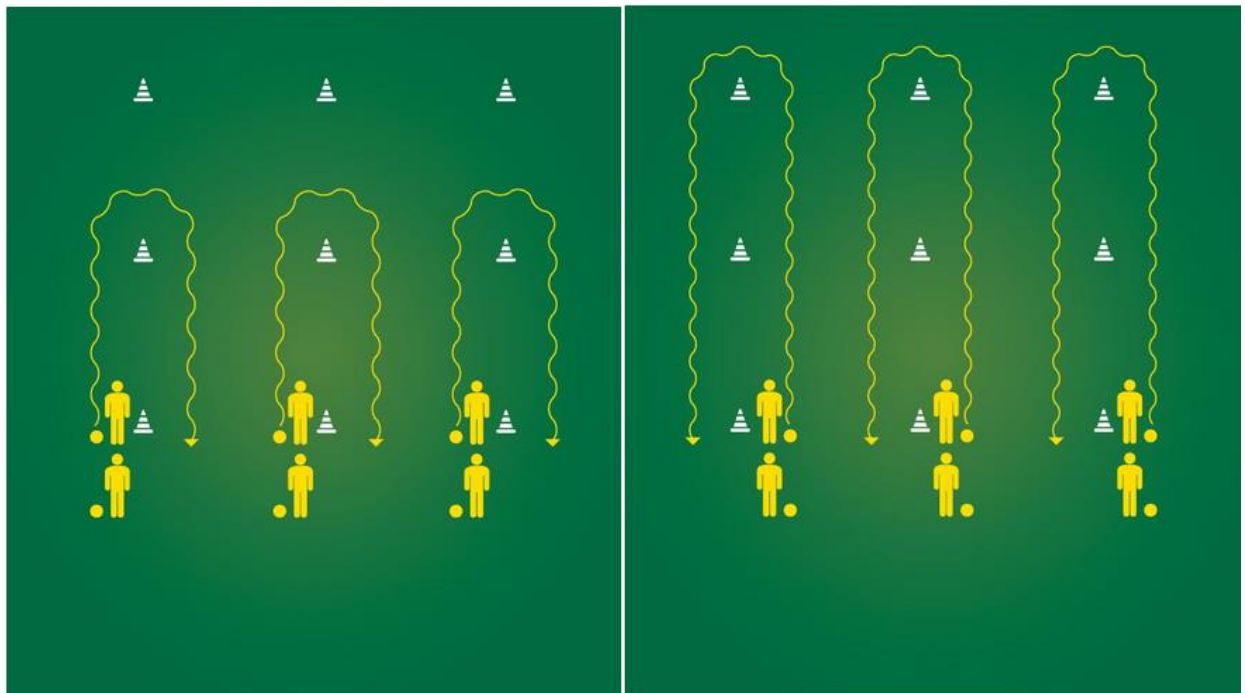
**3. The End**

The last part (The End) is allocated for playing all sorts of Small-Sided Games

Week	Topic	Timing	Session
1	Running with the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Relays</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Feather the nest</a>
		End	<a href="#">3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 training game.</a>
2	Striking the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Stuck in the mud</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Robin Hood</a>
		End	<a href="#">Pass to Score</a>
3	Striking the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Relays (1)</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Empty it! Fill it!</a>
		End	<a href="#">4-goal football</a>
4	1 v 1	Beginning	<a href="#">Me and my shadow</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">1v1 mini games</a>
		End	<a href="#">Line football 3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5</a>
5	Running with the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Relays (2)</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Round `em up</a>
		End	<a href="#">3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 training game (1)</a>

6	Striking the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Double Trouble</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Pairs through the gates</a>
		End	<a href="#">Short and Wide</a>
7	Running with the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Figure 8 Relay</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Colour Code</a>
		End	<a href="#">Dribble to Score (3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5)</a>
8	1v1	Beginning	<a href="#">Dribblers and Collectors</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">1v1 Mini games (1)</a>
		End	<a href="#">Line Football 3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 (1)</a>
9	Striking the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Relays (3)</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Beehive</a>
		End	<a href="#">3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 training game (2)</a>
10	Running with the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Catch the Tails</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Simon Says</a>
		End	<a href="#">2v2 / 3v3 / 4v4 End Zone Football</a>
11	Striking the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Relays (4)</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Pass and Move</a>
		End	<a href="#">4 Sided Football (3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5)</a>
12	Striking the ball	Beginning	<a href="#">Dribble tag</a>
		Middle	<a href="#">Hit the Target</a>
		End	<a href="#">Triangular goal football (3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5)</a>

## RELAYS



### Explanation for relays

Each player starts with a ball, dribbles around the marker (as shown in diagrams 1 and 2) and returns to the start

Upon returning to the starting point, the next player starts the same pattern with their own ball

### Guidelines for relays

Avoid long queues

Keep players as active as possible (don't keep them waiting in line for too long)

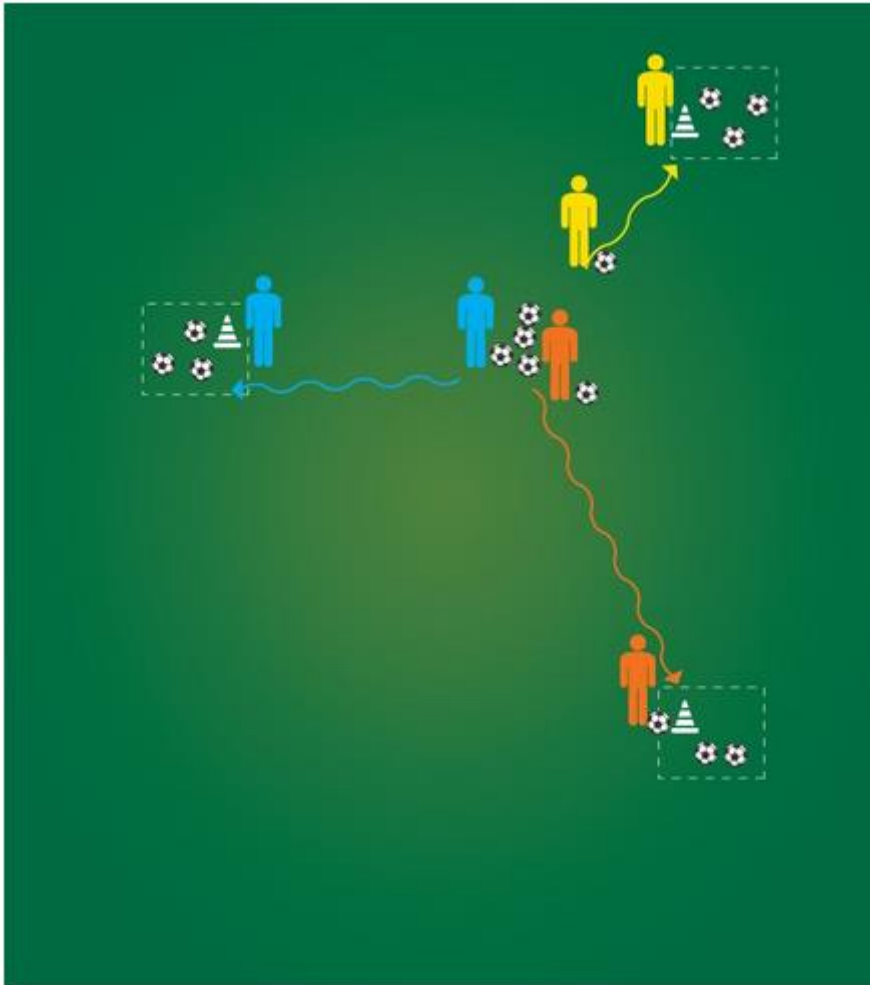
Give the group a quick break for a drink when necessary

All relays in this section can be performed with and without the ball (the preference is to always use the ball, but it is fine to take the ball out of the relays early in the session)

The more skill your players acquire, the more the ball should be used and the greater the challenges can be

If there are more than six players, make another lane of cones and keep it to two players in a line (this avoids long queues)

## FEATHER THE NEST



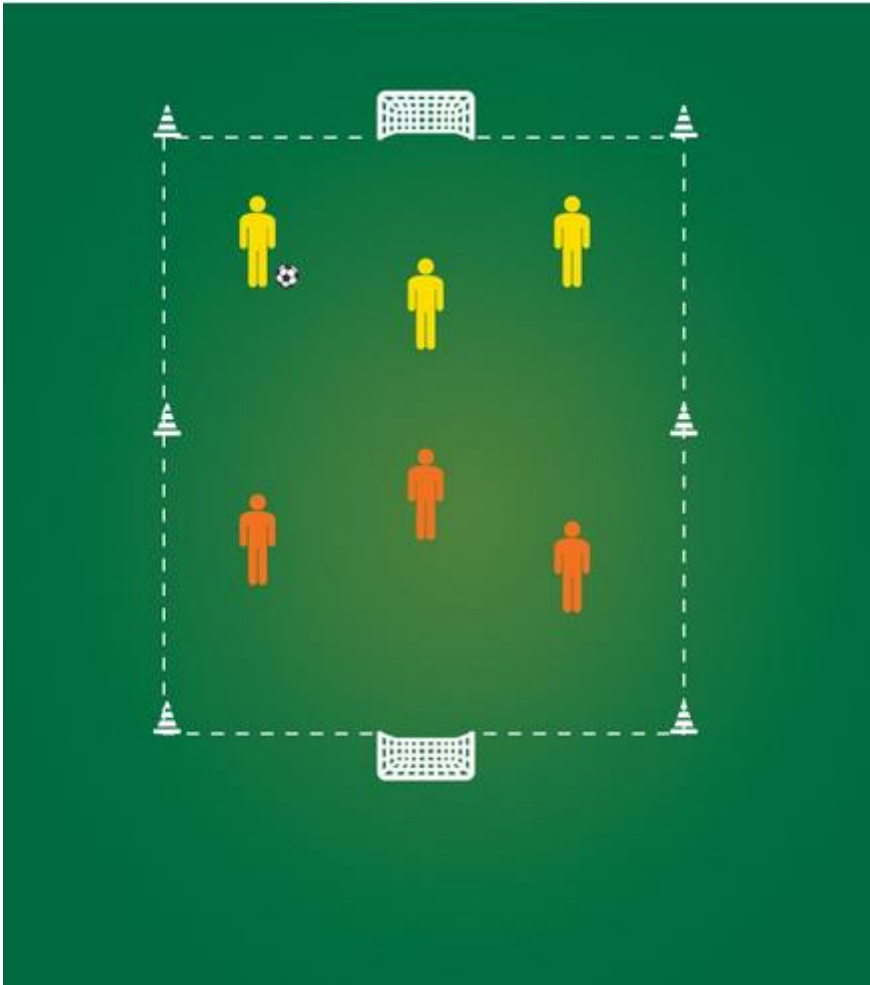
Mark out a triangle with sides 10m–12m long. Three teams of two players are positioned at each corner with a cluster of balls in the middle of the triangle. The object of the game is to gather as many balls as possible for the corner or 'nest' within a set time period.

One player from each team runs to the middle of the triangle to get a ball and dribbles it to their corner, or nest, and leaves it there. Their team-mate then does the same. When all the balls in the middle of the triangle are gone, players can take them from someone else's nest.

### Notes on this exercise

Players are NOT allowed to stop others from taking balls from their nest  
 – no blocking, defending, tackling, etc. No hands! Feet only.

## 3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 TRAINING GAME



Length: 20m–25m

Width: 14m–18m

Goal: 2m–3m

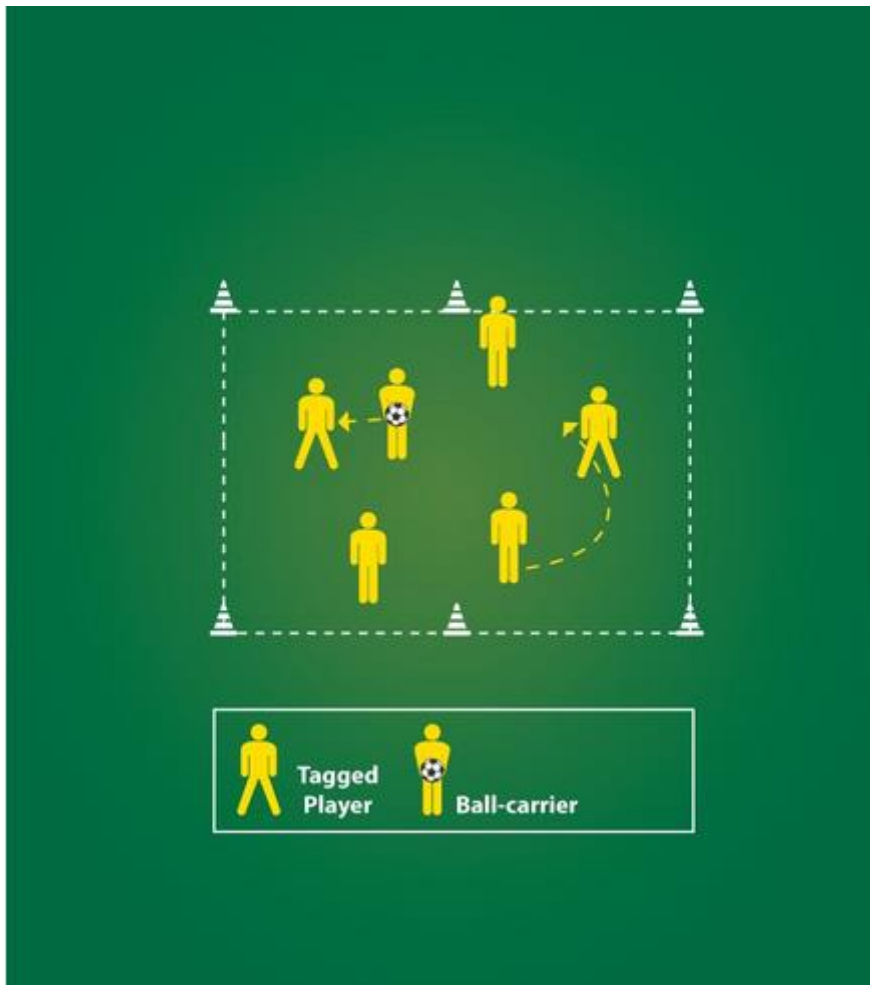
### Notes on this exercise

“Just let them play”

You can play with or without goalkeepers

Short games - 3 to 5 mins in length (with regular drink breaks)

## STUCK IN THE MUD



Mark out a 10m × 14m area. Five players try to avoid one player who carries a ball in their hands.

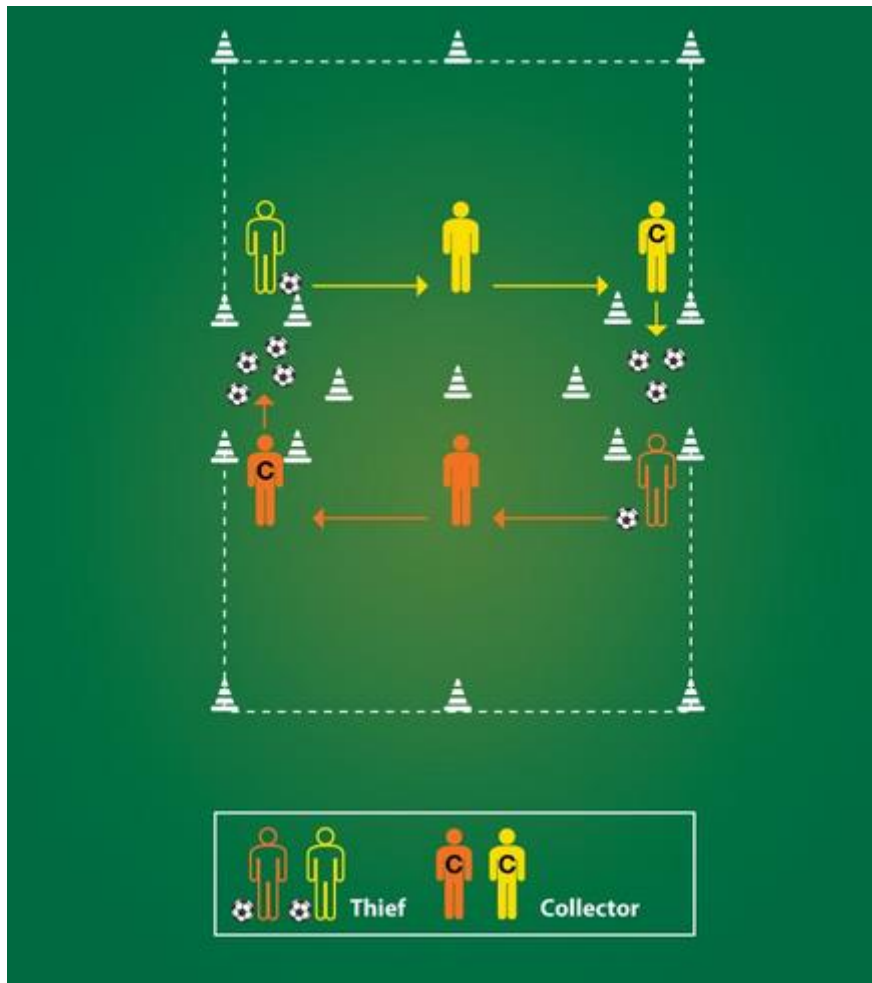
The ball-carrier attempts to tag the runners by touching them with the ball (make sure the ball is not thrown and that players aim for the trunk). If a player is tagged, they are 'stuck in the mud', and stand with their legs wide apart until a team-mate frees them by crawling through their legs.

Each ball-carrier has 30 seconds to tag as many players as possible. After 30 seconds, change the ball-carrier.

### Progression

Ball-carrier dribbles the ball around the field and tags the players with their hand, while keeping the ball close to them (if this progression proves difficult for them, make the field smaller)

## ROBIN HOOD



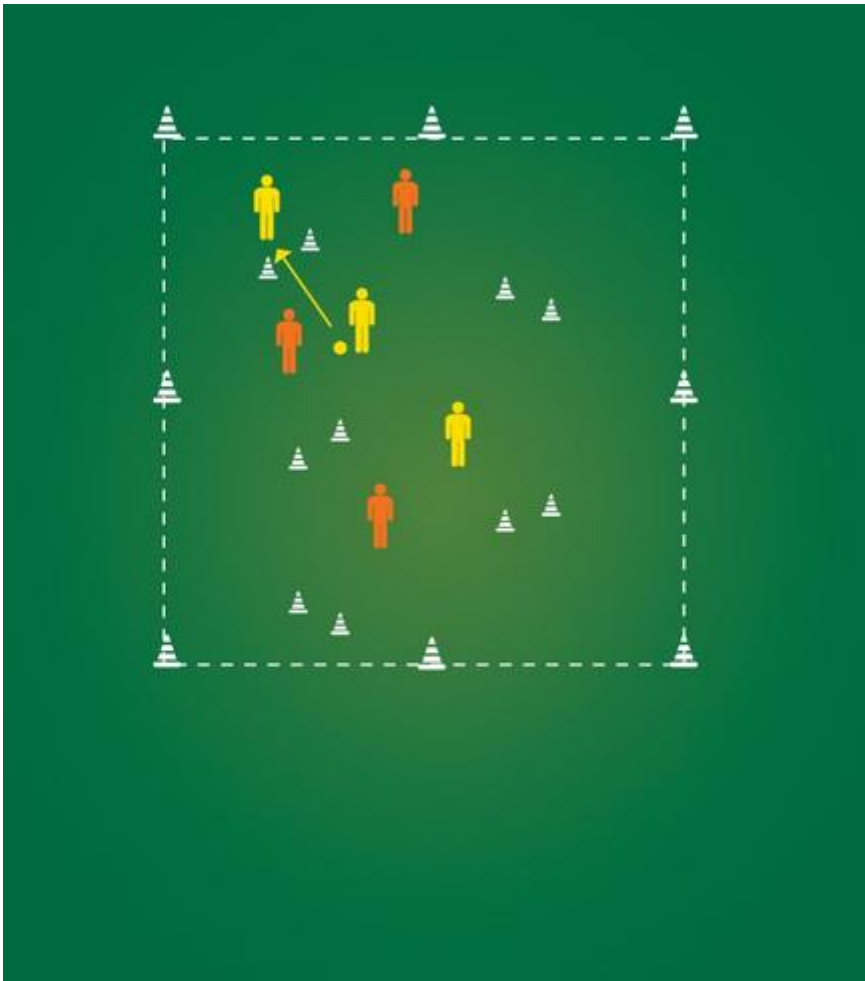
Two teams of three split up as shown in the diagram. Each team starts with an equal number of balls in their 'safe'. When the game begins, each team can start stealing balls from their opponent's 'safe' – there is one 'thief' who takes a ball and passes it across the first 'moat' to their team-mate; they then pass it across the second 'moat', to their team's 'collector', who puts it in the team's 'safe'.

Meanwhile, their opponents are doing the same with their balls! After a set time period (e.g. two minutes), see which team has the most balls in their 'safe'. The team that passes and controls the balls best will have the most balls in their 'safe' and will therefore be the winners.

### Guidelines for Robin Hood

You can't use your hands – feet only!

## PASS TO SCORE



Length: 15m–20m

Width: 15m

Goal: none (make 4 or 5 gates of 1m–2m width inside the area)

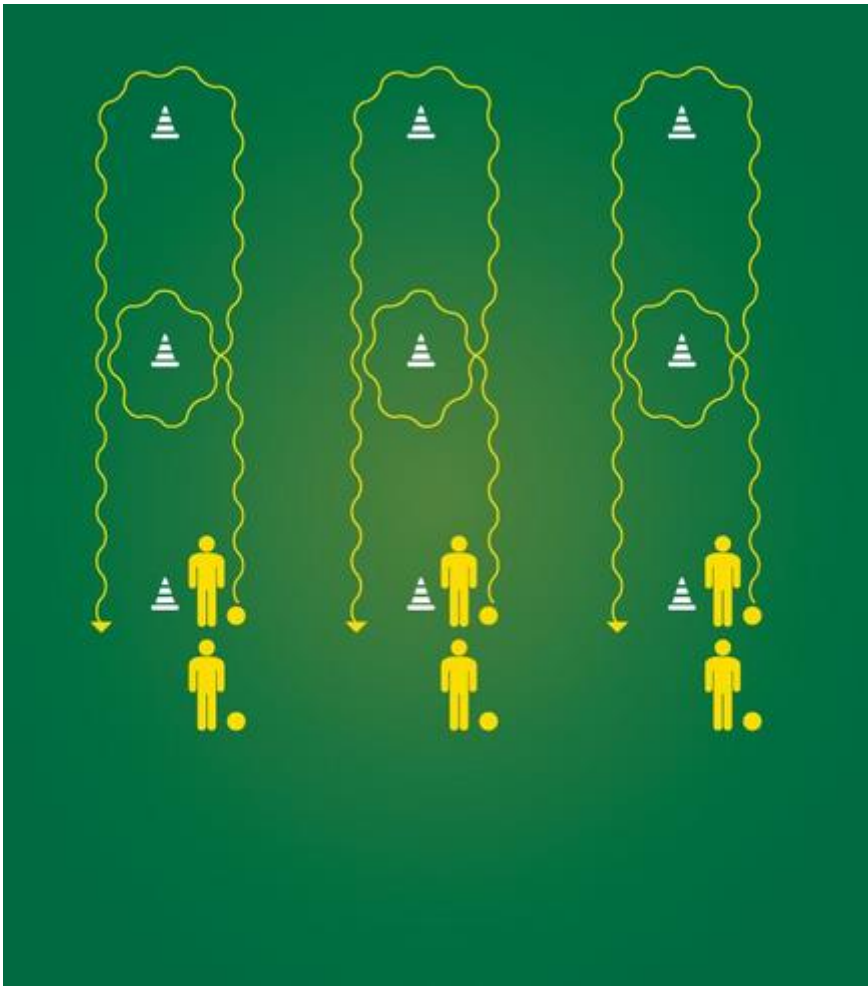
### Notes on this exercise

To score a goal, pass the ball through any of the gates to a team-mate

This game encourages passing



## RELAYS (1)



Each player starts with a ball, and dribbles around the first marker in a full circle (as shown in diagram) then dribbles around the second marker, and then returns to the start

Upon returning to the starting point, the next player starts the same pattern with their own ball

### Guidelines for relays

Avoid long queues

Keep players as active as possible (don't keep them waiting in line for too long)

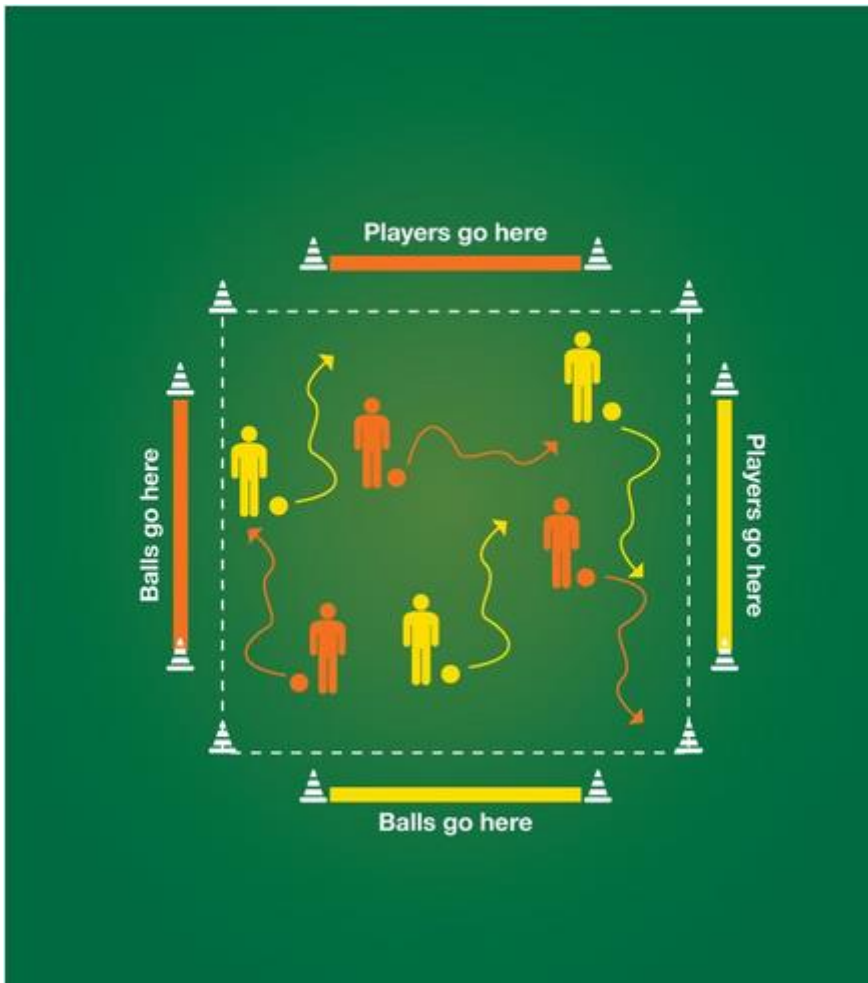
Give the group a quick break for a drink when necessary

All relays in this section can be performed with and without the ball (the preference is to always use the ball, but it is fine to take the ball out of the relays early in the session)

The more skill your players acquire, the more the ball should be used and the greater the challenges can be

If there are more than six players, make another lane of cones and keep it to two players in a line (this avoids long queues)

## EMPTY IT! FILL IT!

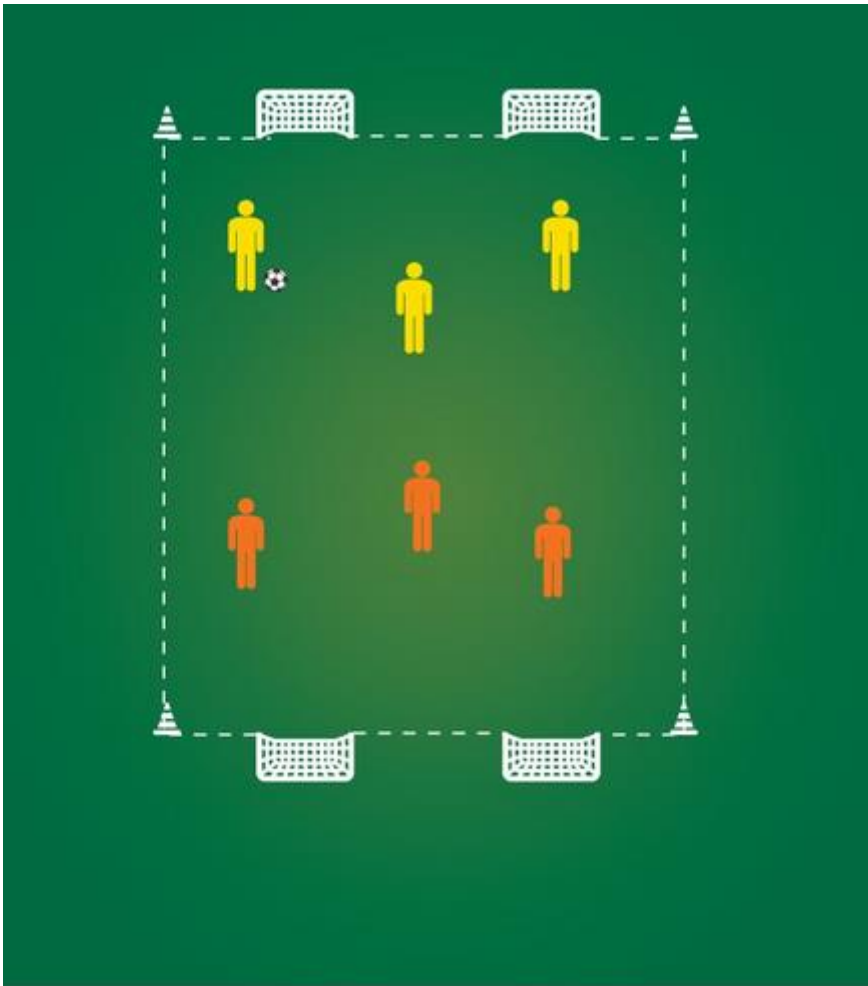


Mark out a 14m × 14m square.

Players in two teams dribble balls inside the square. Outside the square, each team has two lines marked: one for their balls and one for themselves. On the call 'empty it!' the teams compete to be the first to empty the square.

On the call 'fill it!' the teams compete to be the first to get all their balls and themselves back in the square.

## 4-GOAL FOOTBALL



Length: 20m

Width: 15m

Goal: 2 goals (2m wide) on each end-line

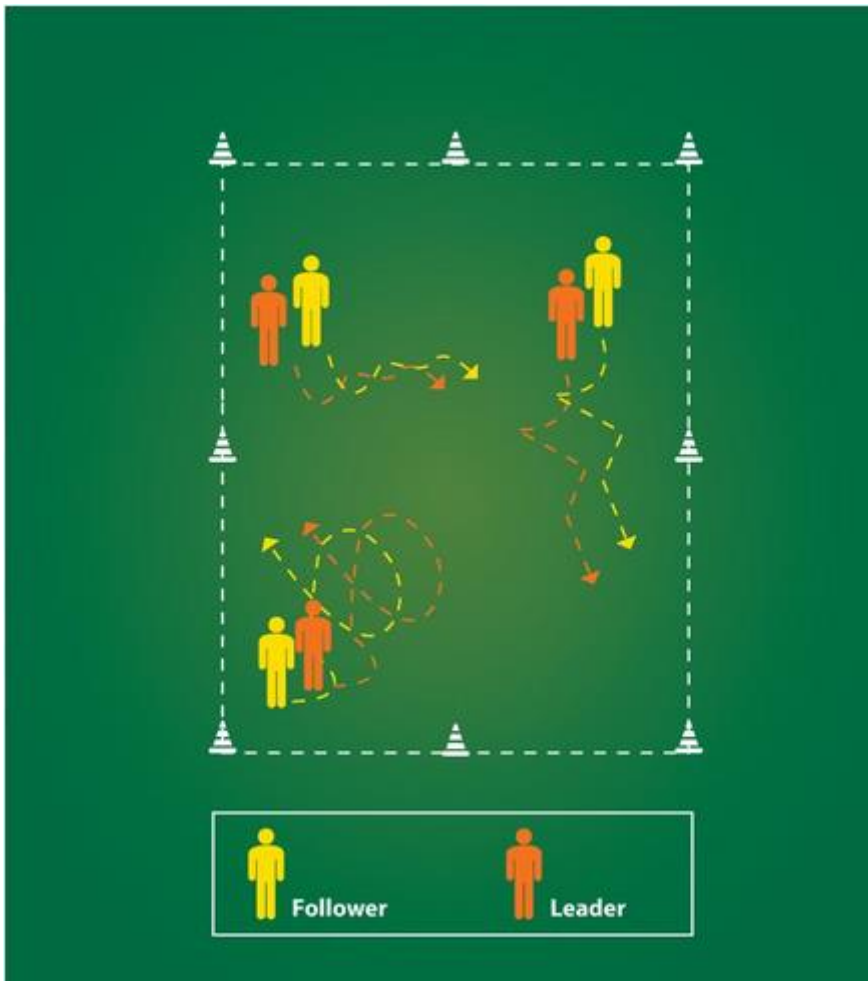
### **Notes on this exercise**

There are no goalkeepers

Goals can be scored in either of your opponents goals

This game encourages shooting and scoring

## ME AND MY SHADOW



Players get into pairs; one is designated as 'leader' and the other as 'follower'.

The 'leader' moves around the field, changing speed and direction frequently, and perhaps adding a variation here and there, such as a jump or a ground touch.

The 'follower' then copies everything the 'leader' does.

Change roles regularly and also change partners regularly.

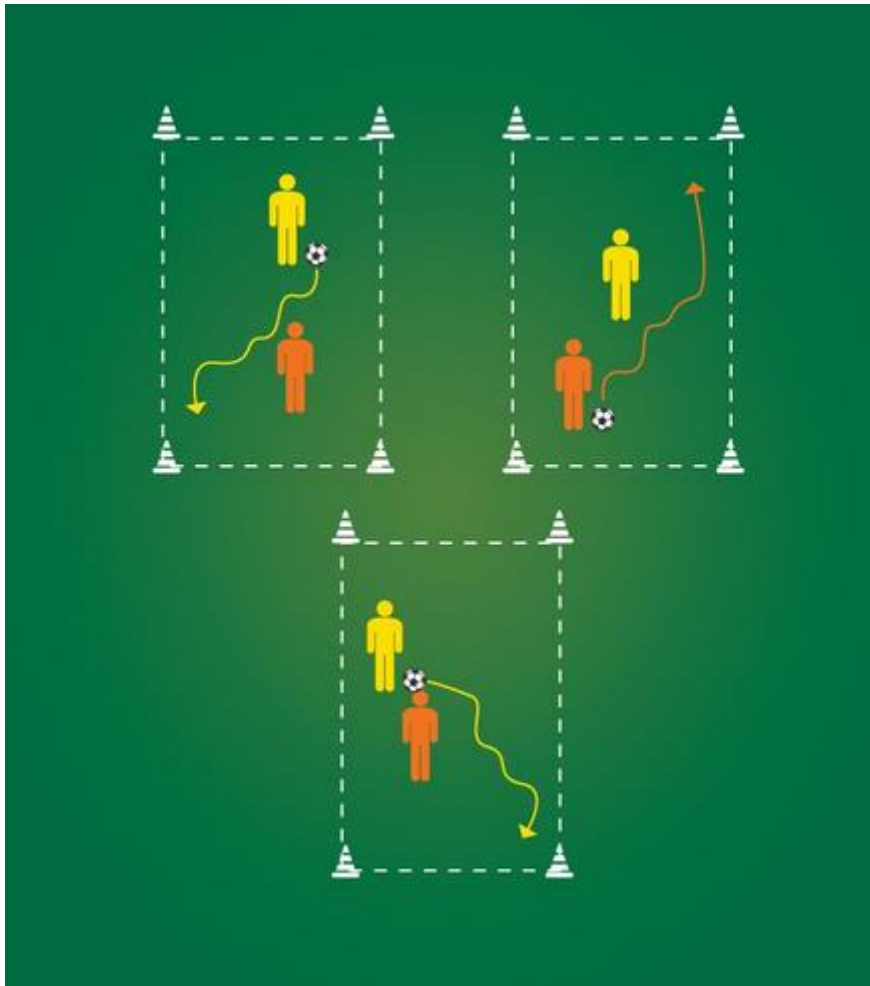
### Progression

The leader (only) has a ball

The leader and the follower both have balls

The follower has a ball (this is a difficult progression so instruct 'leader' to jog at medium speed around the area, with occasional random changes of direction)

## 1v1 MINI GAMES



Make three small areas about 10m × 7m.

Players play 1 v 1 on each mini-field and score by dribbling the ball over the opponents' line.

Think of safety when setting up; avoid scenarios where players could dribble into each other by allowing buffer zones.

### Guidelines for 1v1 Mini Games

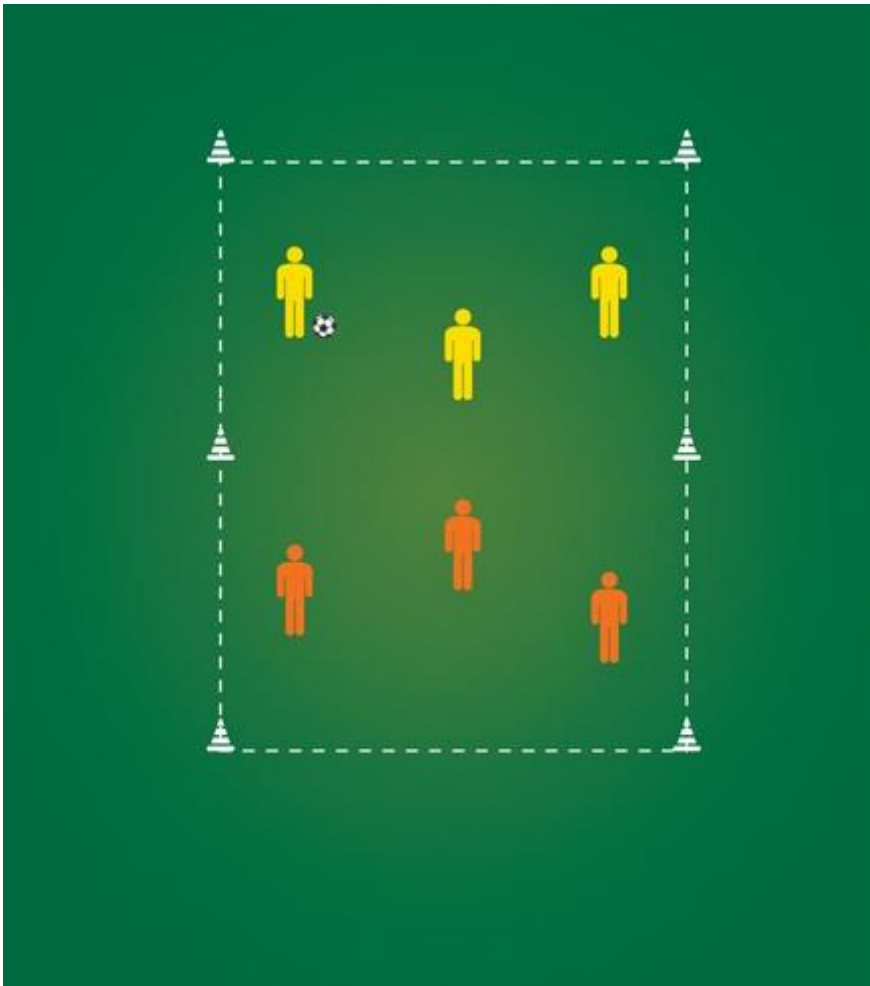
Keep rotating so opponents are changed regularly. Rotation also allows a period of rest, so control how long rotation takes depending on how fatigued the players seem. You could also give some brief hints to the whole group in order to give them a rest.

Games should be no longer than 1 minute maximum.

If enough cones are available, progress to a small goal on each end-line for players to score in.

Make sure you keep a good supply of spare balls, as they tend to go everywhere when shooting is introduced!

## LINE FOOTBALL 3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5



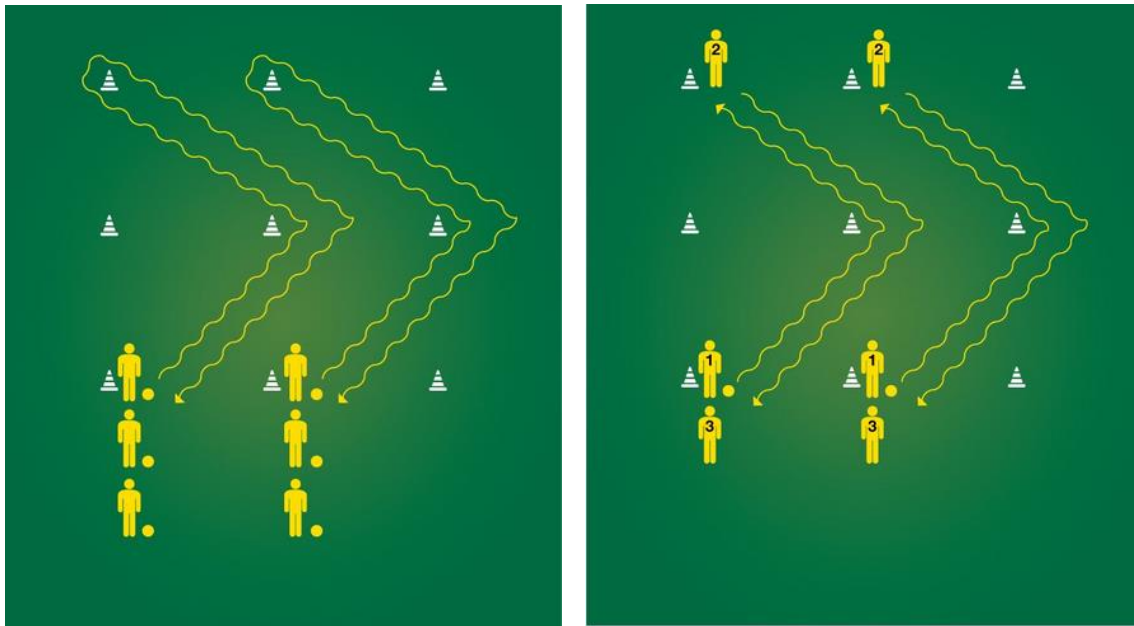
Length: 20m  
Width: 15m  
Goal: none

### Notes on this exercise

Usual rules, but method of scoring is to dribble the ball across the opponents' end line

This game encourages dribbling and 1 v 1 skills

## RELAYS (2)



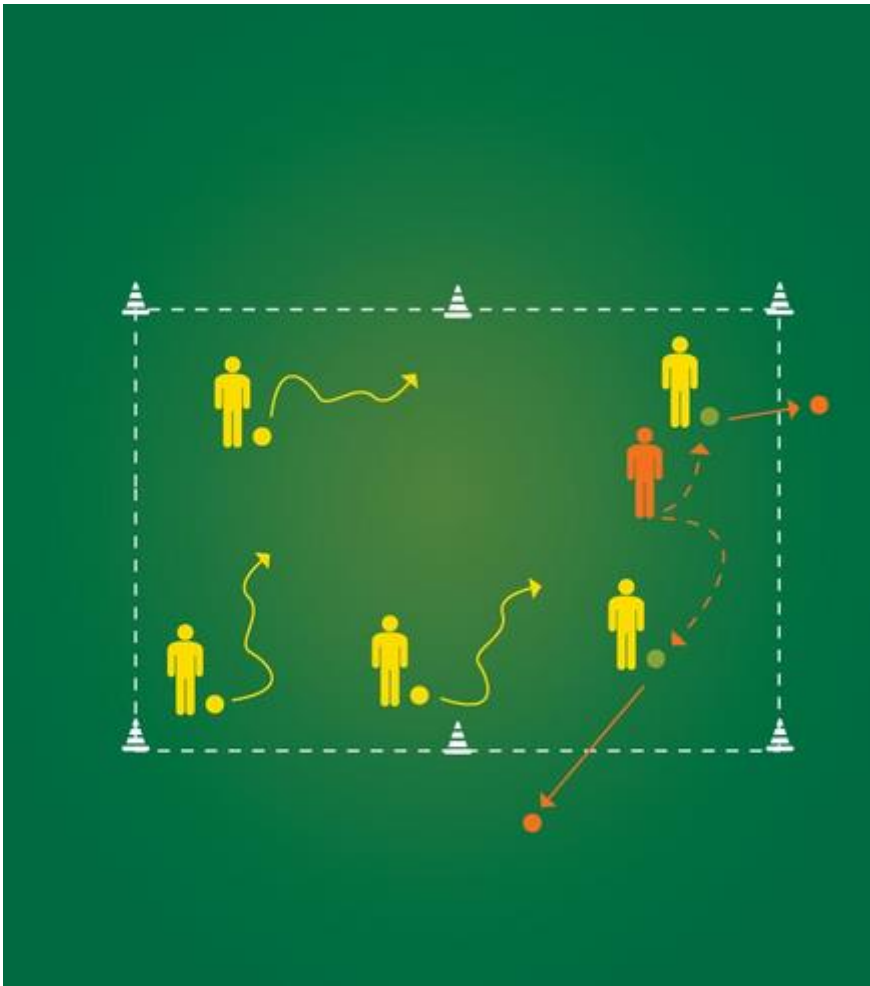
Each player starts with a ball, and dribbles around the first marker and then cuts the ball, changing direction to the left (as shown in diagram 1). Then dribbles around the second marker, and repeats the same pattern (but cuts right this time) on the way back

Upon returning to the starting point, the next player starts the same pattern with their own ball

To vary this exercise, instead of having all players beginning at the one point, they could be split up at either end.

Player 1 now dribbles around the first marker and then passes the ball to player 2 (as shown in the diagram), who repeats the same movement and passes to player 3

## ROUND 'EM UP



Five players dribble their balls inside a 10m × 14m area. On your call 'round 'em up!' the sixth player tries to 'round up' all five balls, by kicking them out of the square.

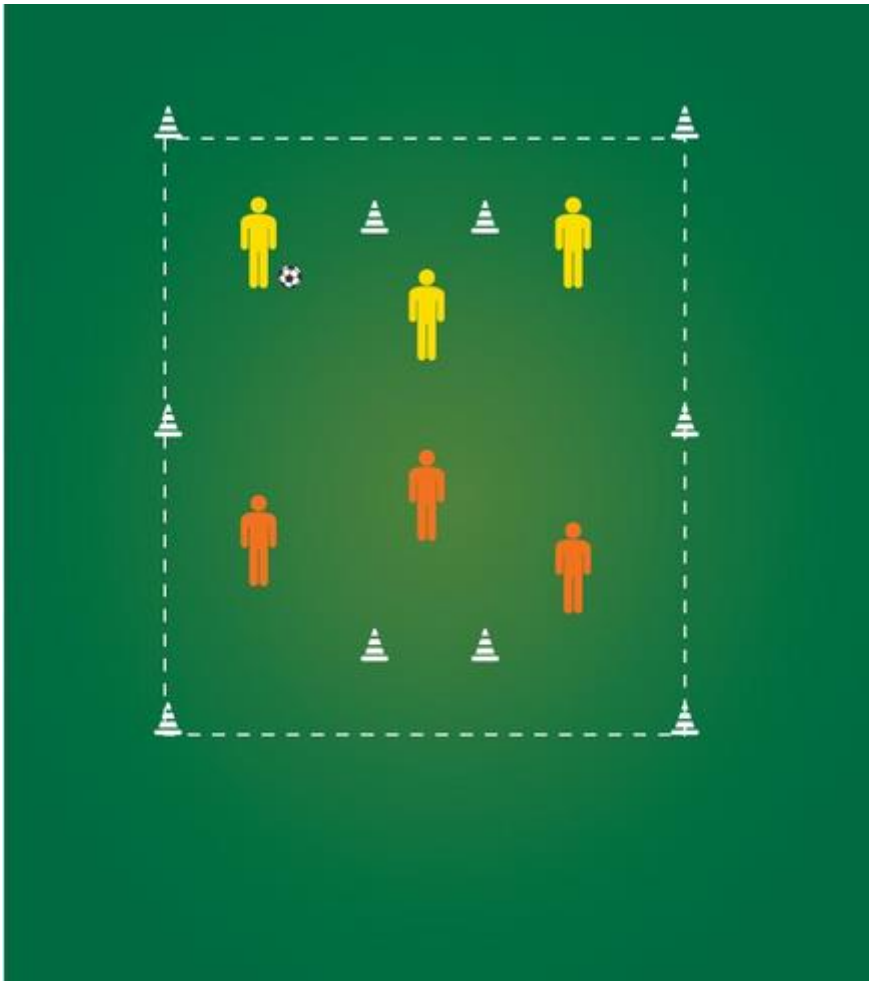
### Notes on this exercise

Allow 30 seconds for players to 'round up' as many balls as possible.

Take turns so each player has a go at rounding up the balls.



## 3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 TRAINING GAME (1)



Length: 20m  
Width: 15m  
Gate: 2m–3m

In this game players can score by passing/shooting the ball through either side of the gate, from in front or behind.

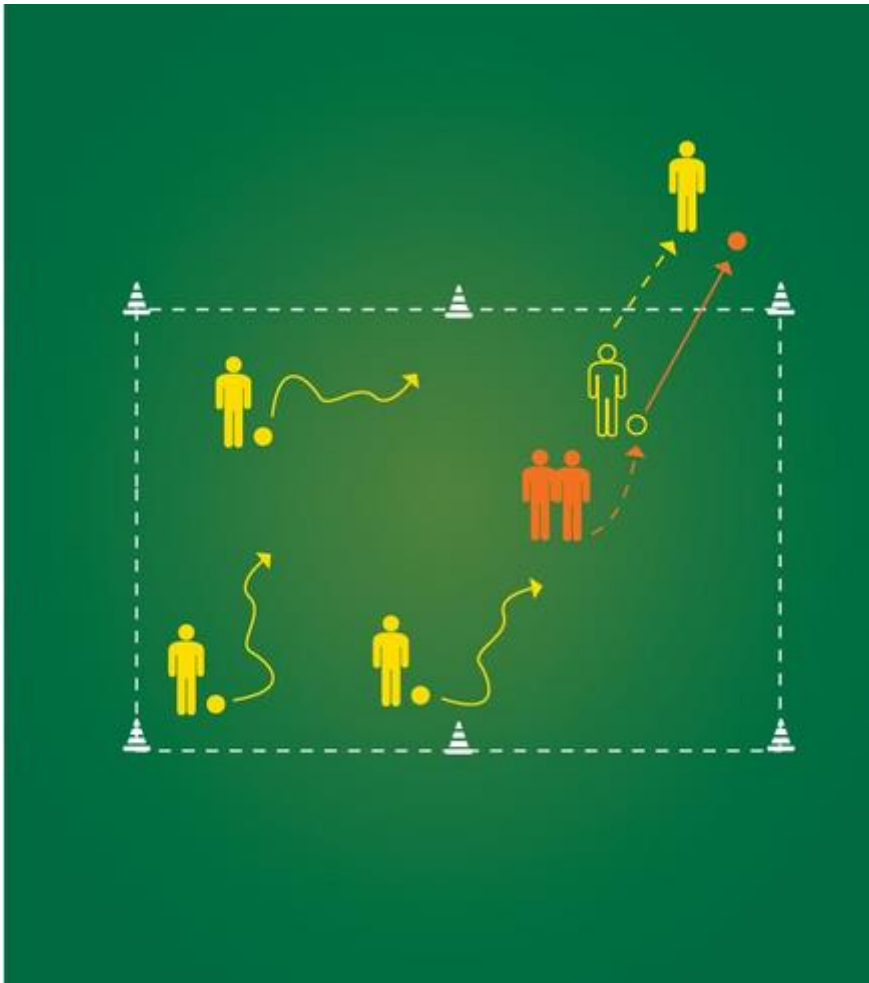
### Notes on this exercise

“Just let them play”

You can play with or without goalkeepers

Short games - 3 to 5 mins in length (with regular drink breaks)

## DOUBLE TROUBLE



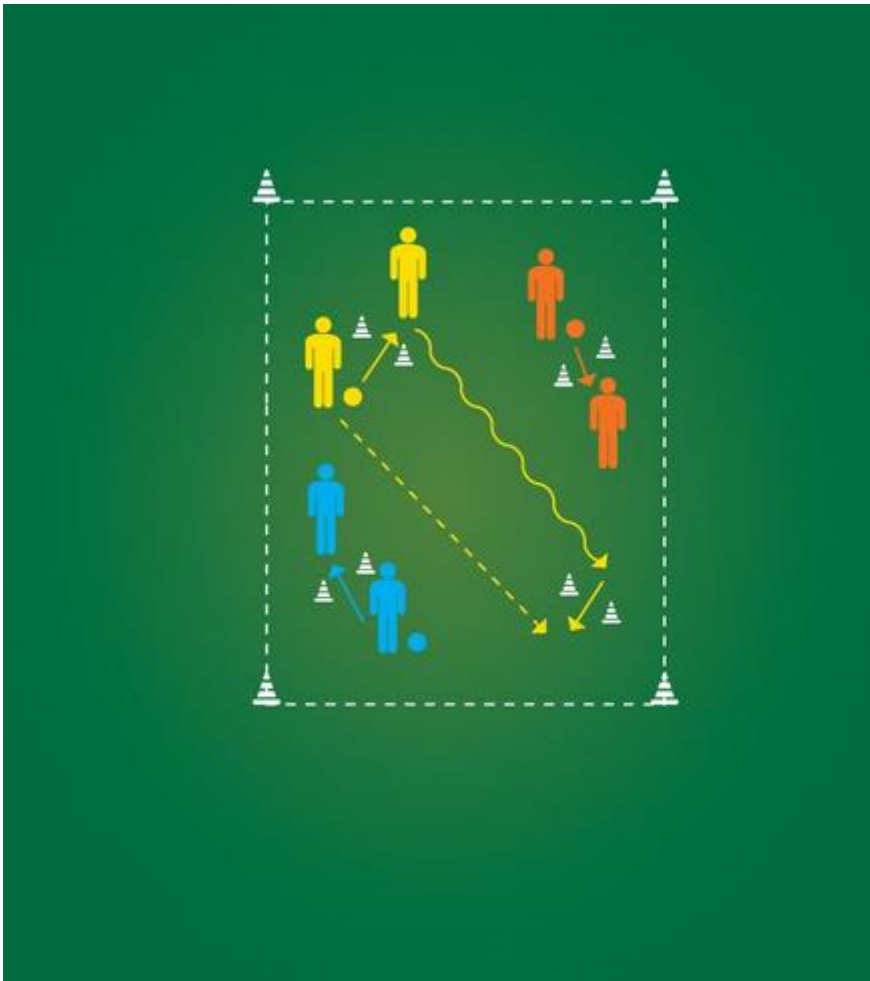
Two players without a ball link hands and move around the area trying to kick other players' balls out.

The other players dribble their balls around the area, trying to avoid having their ball kicked out.

### Progression

- Change the chasing pair when everyone is out (when a player's ball is kicked out, they fetch it then remain outside until that game is over)
- Change the chasing pair after a set time period by setting the challenge: 'How many balls can you kick out in 30 seconds?' (When a player's ball is kicked out, they fetch it and come back into the area as soon as possible, continuing to dribble and to avoid losing their ball)

## PAIRS THROUGH THE GATES



Mark out an area about 7m × 10m and set up four small gates – two cones about two metres apart.

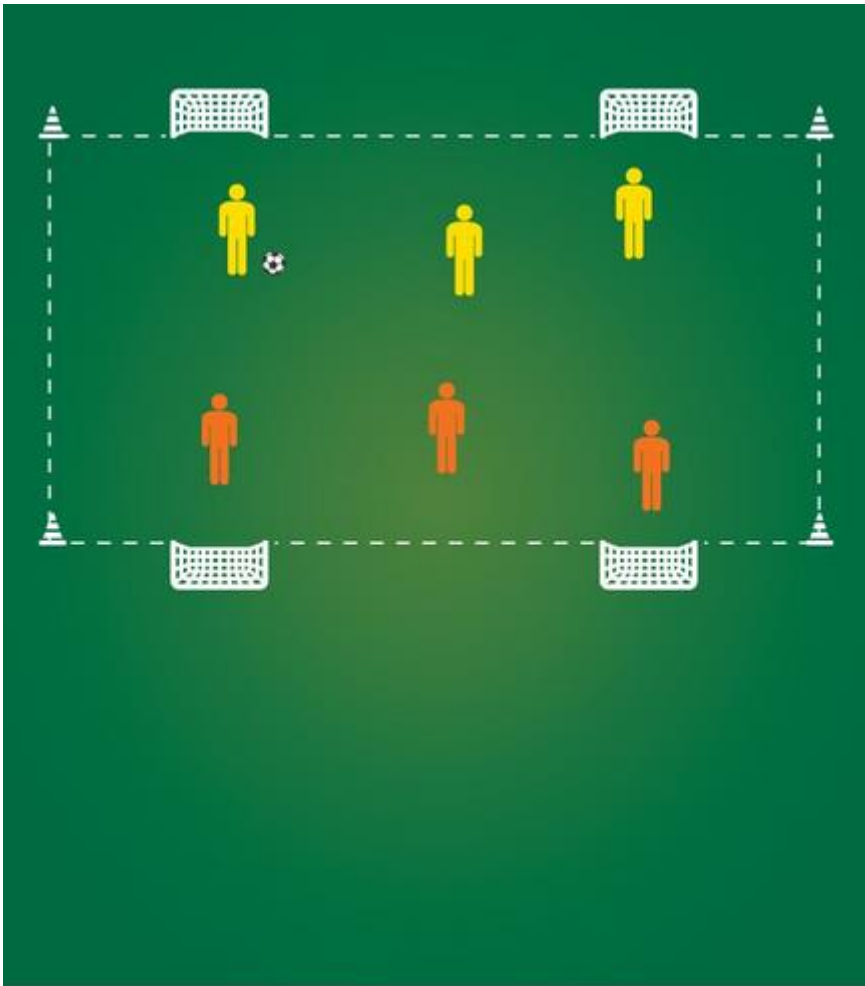
The players run around the area in pairs with a ball between them and pass it through the gates to each other until they have performed a successful pass through each gate.

The winning pair is the first to pass through every gate and wait outside the area.

### Notes on this exercise

Before moving to the next activity, have a competition to see which pair (one at a time) can pass through the most gates in 20 seconds.

## SHORT AND WIDE



Length: 15m

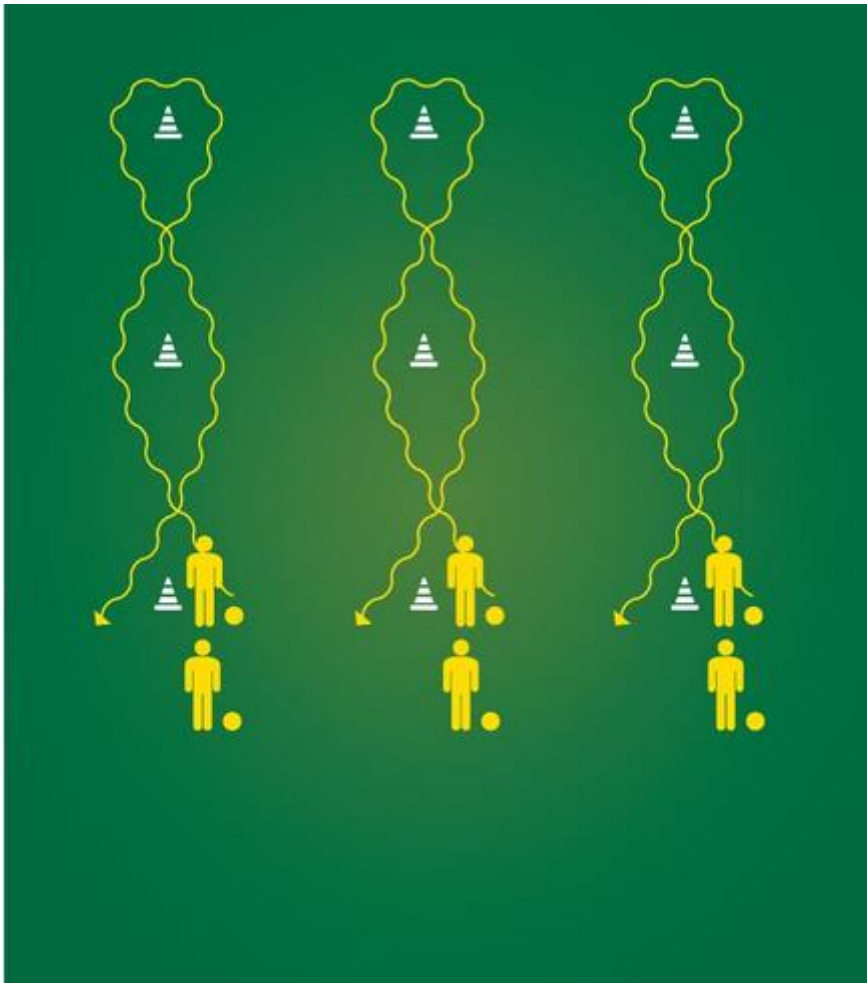
Width: 25m

Goal: 2 goals (2m wide) on each end-line

### Notes on this exercise

This game develops awareness of space

## FIGURE 8 RELAY



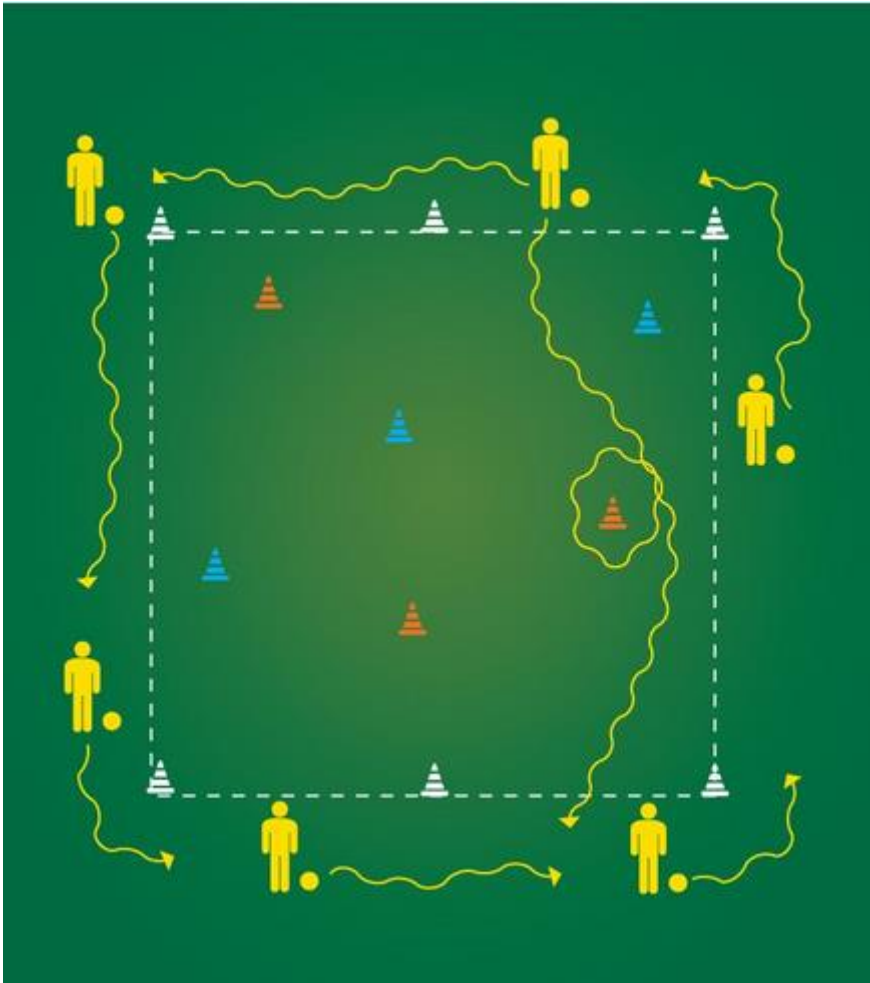
Each player starts with a ball, and dribbles around the first marker and then the second marker in a figure 8 type direction (as shown in the diagram)

Upon returning to the starting point, the next player starts the same pattern with their own ball.

### Progression

- Players to use their right foot only
- Players to use their left foot only
- Players to use the inside of their foot only
- Players to use the outside of their foot only
- Each group to use one ball only, where the ball is exchanged at each end upon completing the figure 8

## COLOUR CODE



This activity should be arranged in a square 15m x 15m and requires at least three cones of two or more colours placed randomly inside the square.

Players dribble their balls round the outside perimeter of the area.

Call out a colour and the kids must dribble into the square, around the cone of that colour, and back outside the square. The winner is the first one back outside with their foot on their ball.

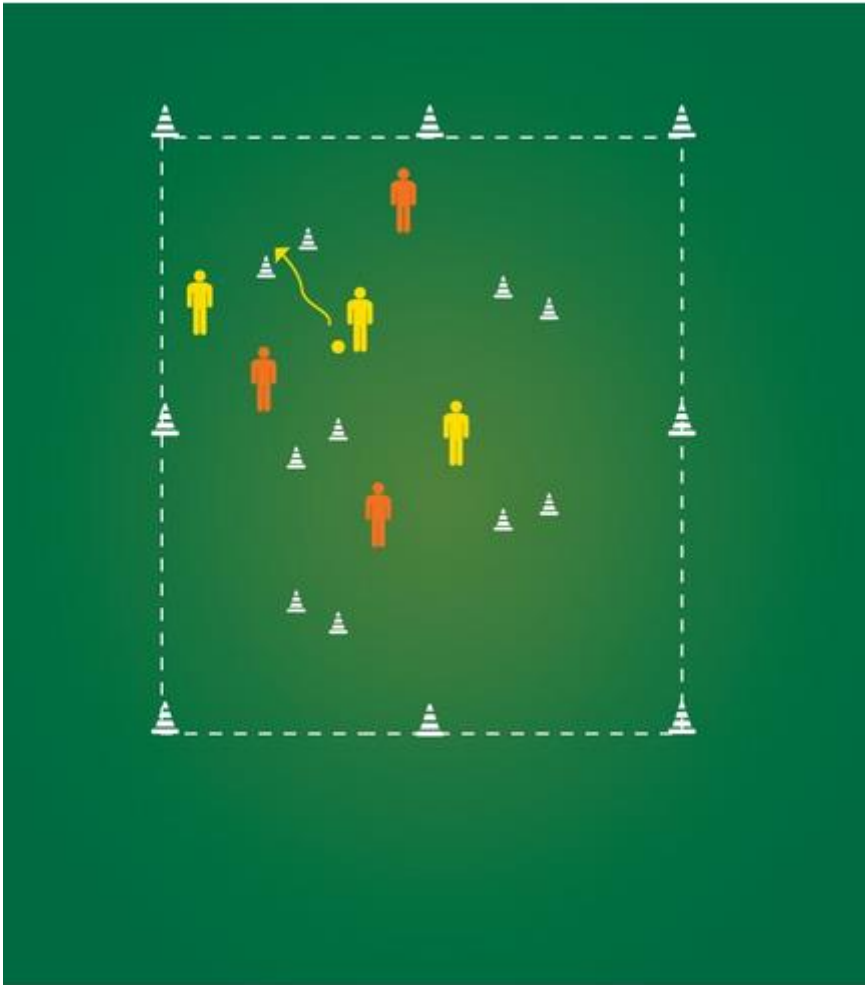
Remind players to keep their heads up and watch out for possible collisions.

### Progression

- Round all cones of that colour
- Players to use their right foot only
- Players to use their left foot only
- Players to use the inside of their foot only
- Players to use the outside of their foot only

There are more possible variations, limited only by the number and colour of your cones, and your imagination!

## DRIBBLE TO SCORE (3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5)



Length: 15m–20m

Width: 15m

Goal: none (make 4 or 5 gates of 1m–2m width inside the area)

### Notes on this exercise

To score a goal, dribble the ball through any one of the gates

This game encourages dribbling

Players cannot score in the same gate consecutively

## DRIBBLERS AND COLLECTORS

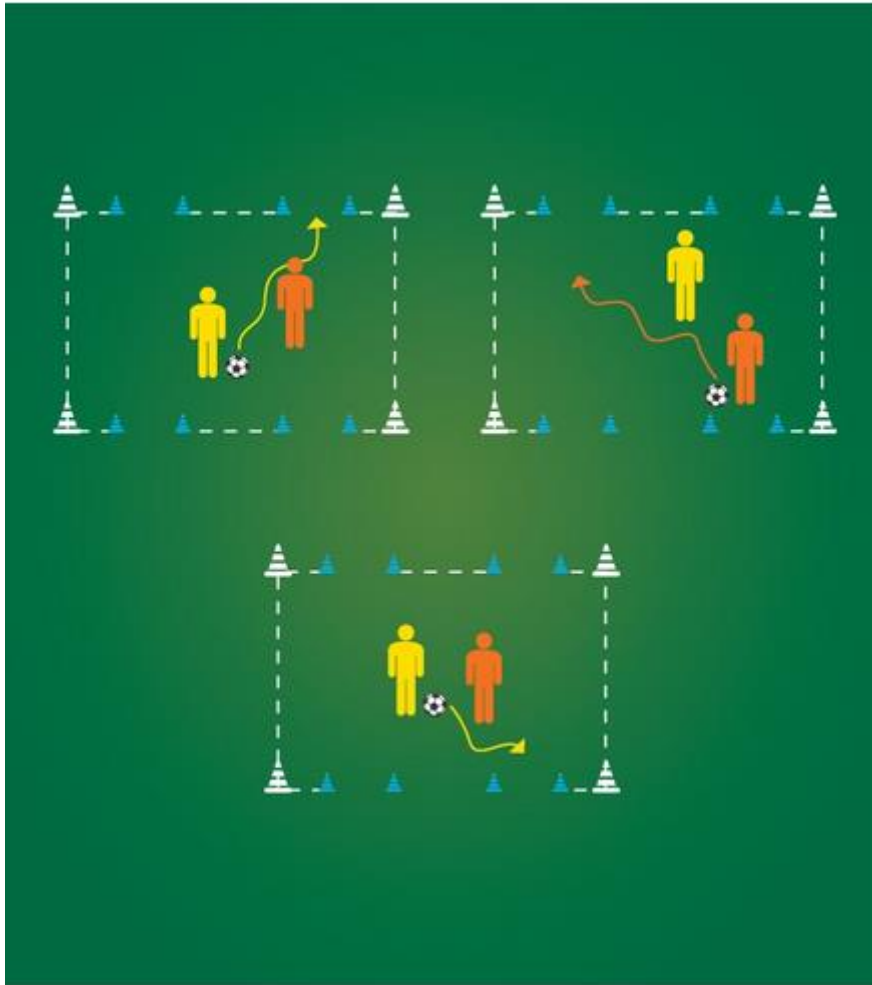


Two players without a ball link hands and move around the area trying to kick other players' balls out. They are the 'collectors'.

When a player's ball is kicked out, they immediately join the 'collectors', so that there are now three players with hands linked chasing the others (then four and five) until everyone is out. Then two new 'collectors' start chasing.



## 1 v 1 MINI GAMES (1)



Make three small areas about 10m wide × 7m-8m long (field is short and wide).

Two gates 2m wide placed on each byline, approximately 1m away from each corner marker.

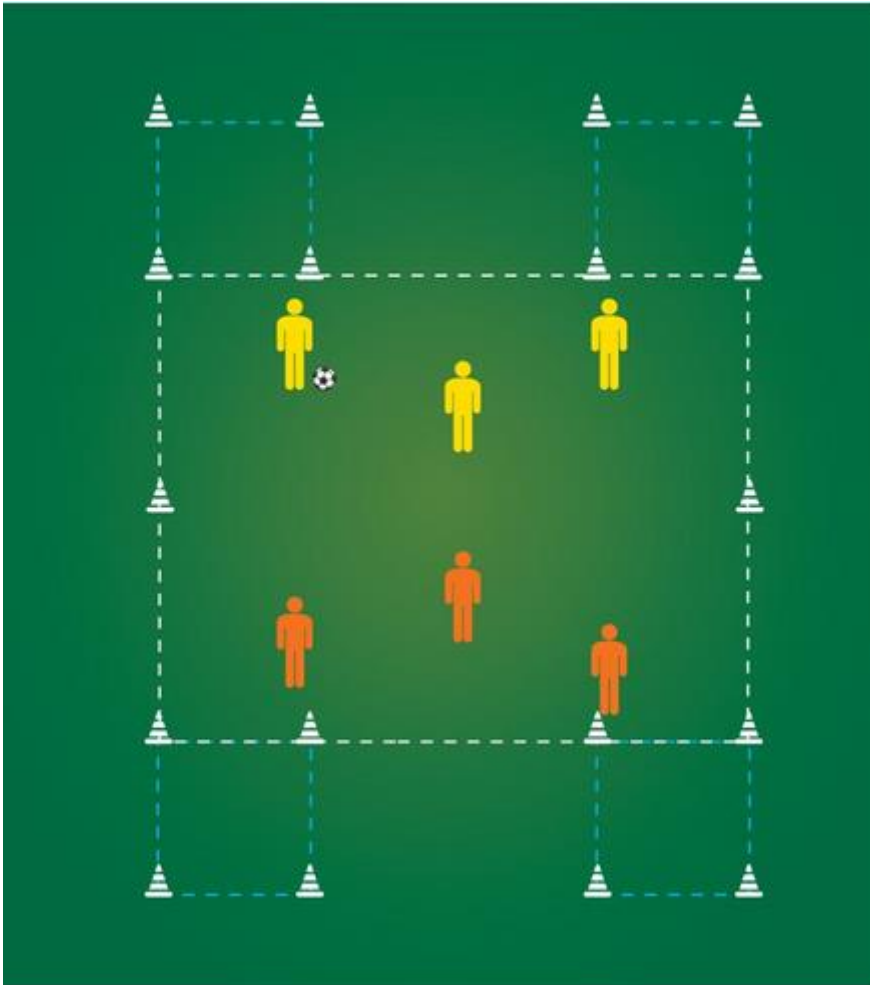
Players play 1 v 1 on each mini-field and score by dribbling the ball through one of the gates.

Think of safety when setting up; avoid scenarios where players could dribble into each other by allowing buffer zones.

### Notes on this exercise

Keep rotating so opponents are changed regularly. Rotation also allows a period of rest, so control how long rotation takes depending on how fatigued the players seem. You could also give some brief hints to the whole group in order to give them a rest.

## LINE FOOTBALL 3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 (1)



Field dimension is short and wide

Length: 15m - 20m

Width: 20m - 25m

Goal: none

Usual rules, but method of scoring is to dribble the ball across the opponents' end line

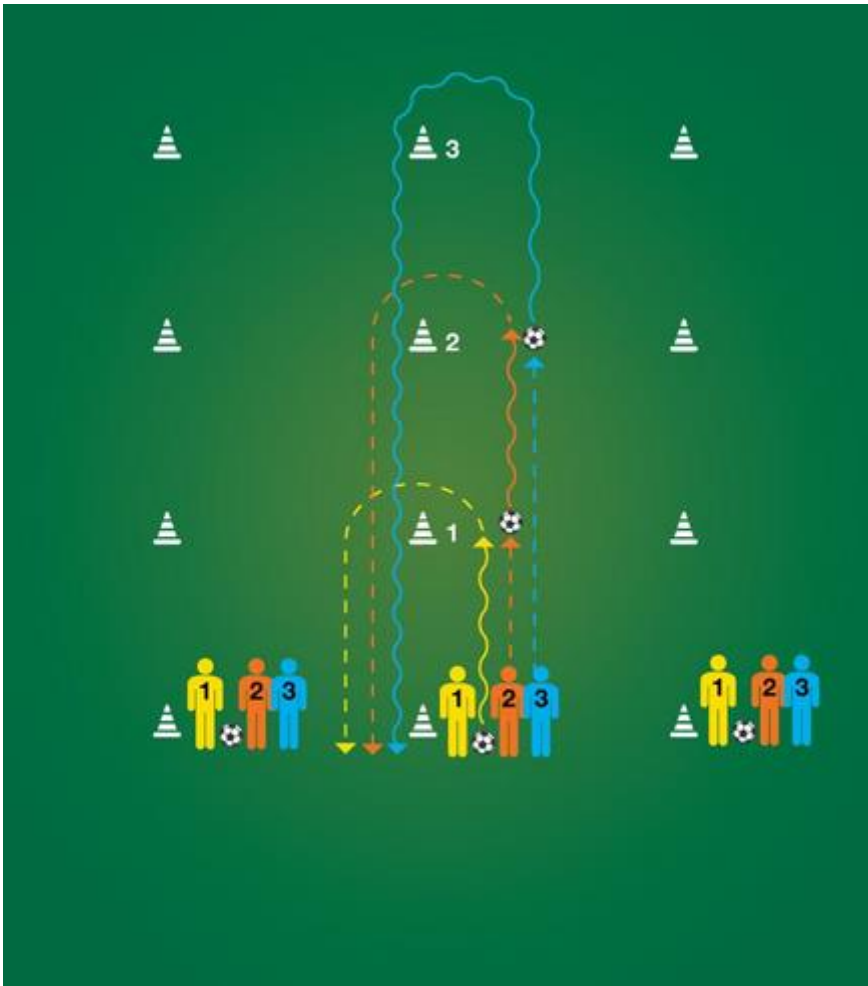
### Notes on this exercise

This game encourages dribbling and 1 v 1 skills

### Progression

- Add 2 scoring zones behind each byline (as shown in the diagram)
- To score, players must dribble the ball over the byline, but also stop the ball in the scoring zone

## RELAYS (3)



Each group starts with 1 ball

Player 1 dribbles the ball to marker 1, and leaves it there. Then runs around the marker and tags player 2 at the starting point.

Player 2 runs to the ball, collects it from marker 1, dribbles it to marker 2 and leaves it there, then runs around the marker and tags player 3 at the starting point.

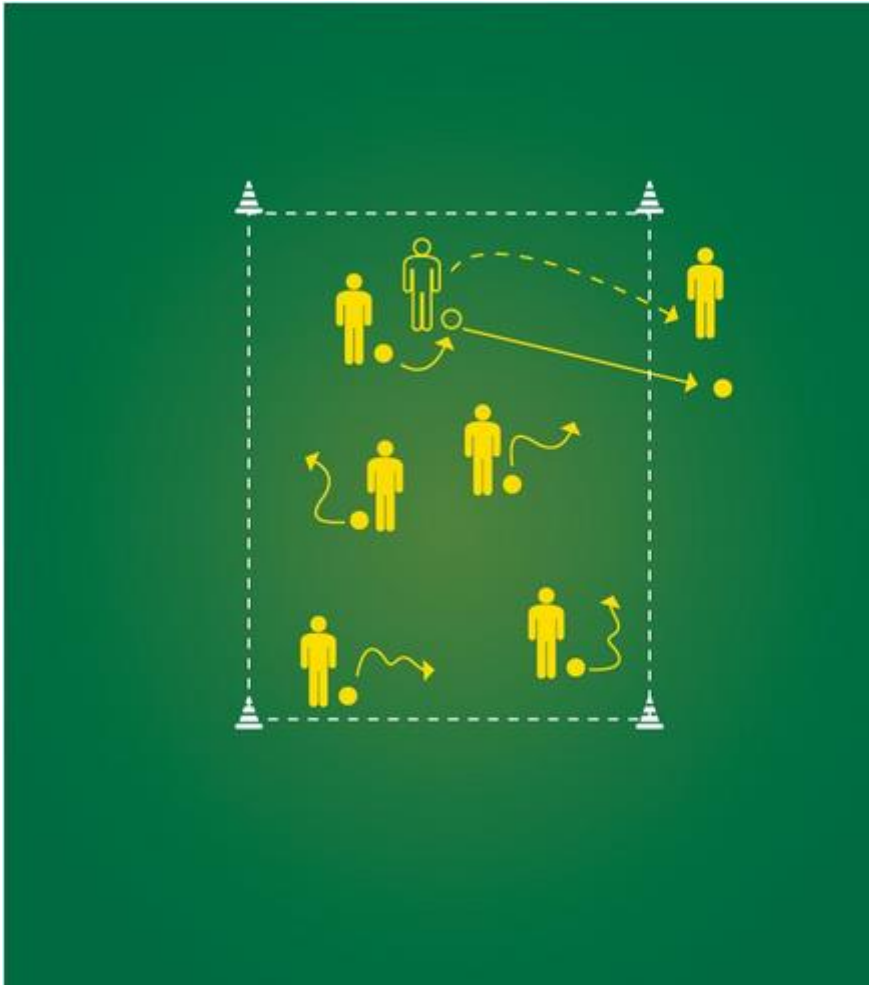
Player 3 runs to the ball, collects it from marker 2, dribbles with it around marker 3 and brings it back to the starting point

Change the player numbers regularly

### Progression

- Players to use their right foot only
- Players to use their left foot only

## BEEHIVE

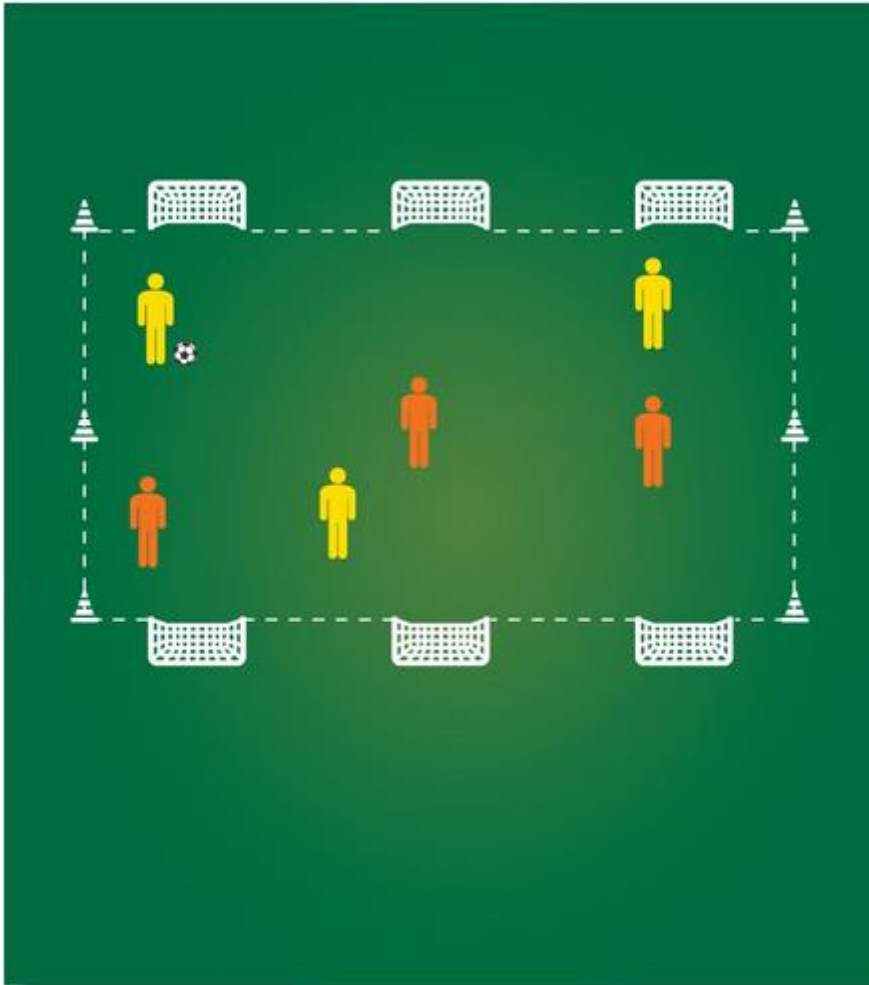


Six players with a ball each dribble around an area about 7m × 10m.

They attempt to kick the other players' balls out of the area while keeping their own ball under control. The players must be careful – while they are kicking someone's ball out, someone else might kick theirs out!

If their ball is kicked out, the player must leave the area immediately without kicking any other balls out. The player can fetch their own ball and wait until there is a winner and the game starts again.

## 3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5 TRAINING GAME (2)



Field dimension is short and wide

Length: 15m

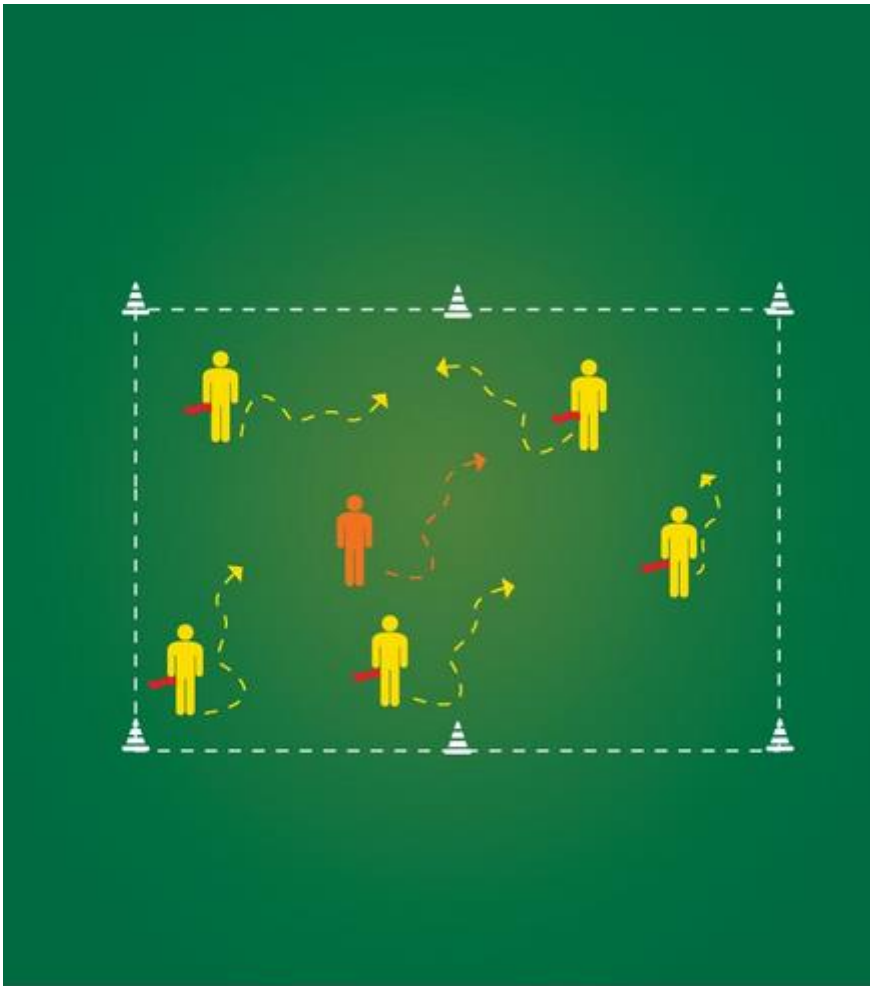
Width: 15m - 20m

Goal: 3 goals on each byline (as shown in diagram)

### Notes on this exercise

This game encourages shooting as often as possible

## CATCH THE TAILS



One or more players are 'hunters'. They chase the other players and try to remove their 'tails'. If a player's 'tail' is taken, they become a 'hunter'. (Bibs tucked into shorts can function as 'tails').

### Progression

The 'hunter' dribbles their ball while trying to remove the 'tails'

Players with 'tails' dribble their balls while trying to avoid the 'hunter'

## SIMON SAYS



Players dribble freely around the area with a ball each. Give the kids various tasks and challenges, which they must do **ONLY** if you say 'Simon says' at the start of the sentence. Therefore, sometimes you use 'Simon says' and sometimes you don't – see who's listening!

The players must avoid touching anyone else's ball, and must not let anyone else touch their own ball.

### Possible tasks

**STOP!** (Means stop dead with your foot on your ball)

**TURN!** (Quickly go the other way with your ball)

**OUT!** (Run outside the square and put your foot on your ball)

**CHANGE!** (Leave your ball and find another one to dribble; who is the last one dribbling a new ball?)

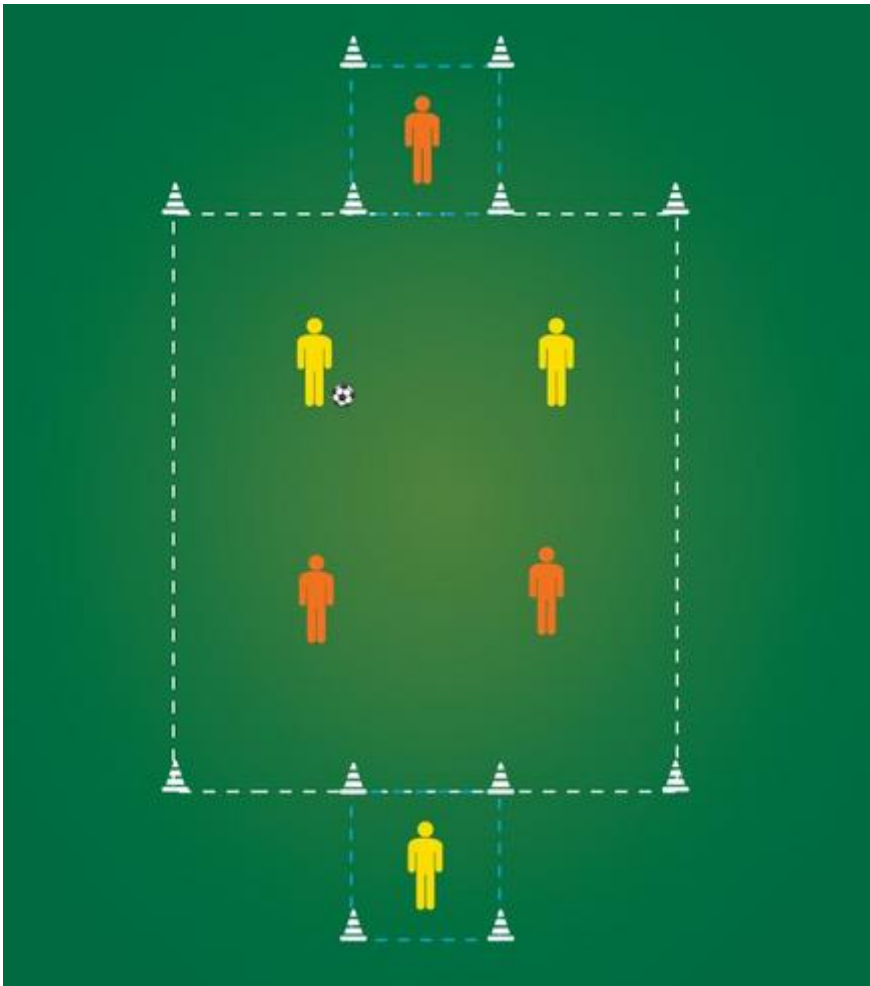
**LEFT!** (Dribble around the area touching the ball only with your left foot)

**RIGHT!** (Dribble around the area touching the ball only with your right foot)

Use your imagination!

Use instructions like 'Simon says sit next to your ball' or 'Simon says get a drink from your bag', to give the players a rest when needed.

## 2v2 / 3v3 / 4v4 END ZONE FOOTBALL



Length: 20m

Width: 15m

Goal: create an end zone (a square 2m x 2m) behind the centre of each byline

To score the players must pass the ball to their own player in the end zone who must stop/control the ball in the area.

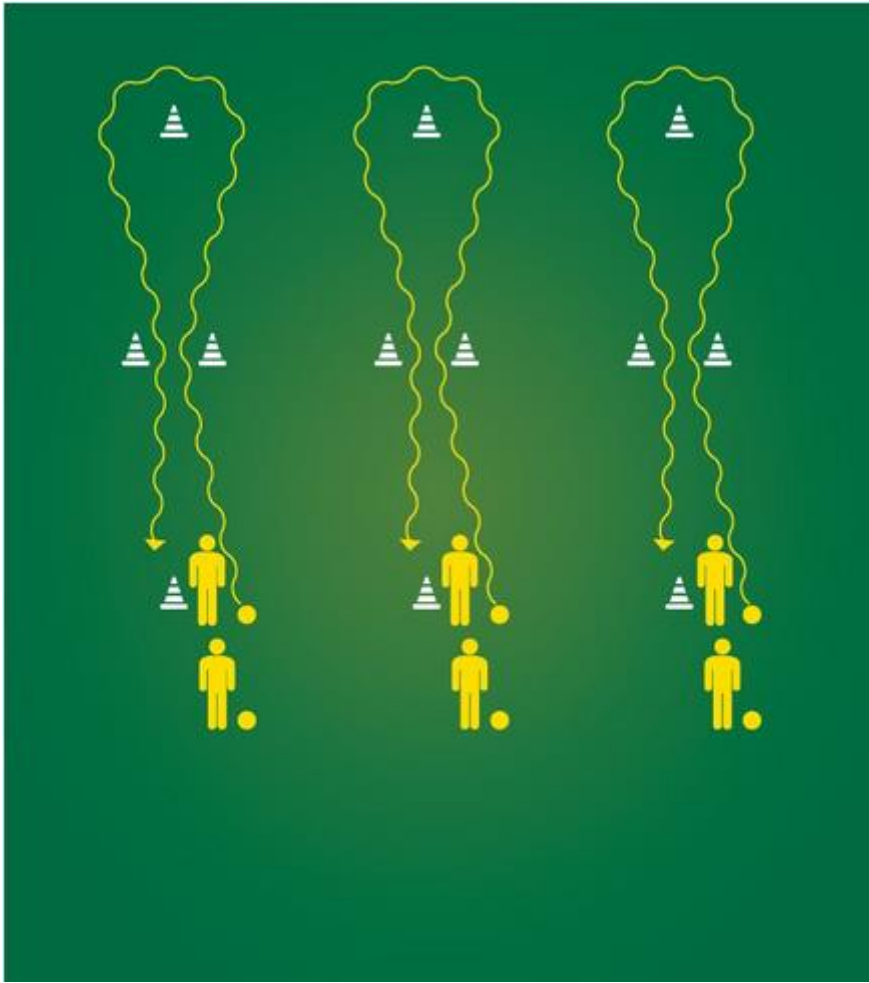
### Notes on this exercise

There are no goalkeepers

Rotate players in the end zone every 1-2 minutes



## RELAY (4)



Each player starts with a ball. Player 1 dribbles their ball through the middle gate and then around the far cone and back through the middle gate again on the way back

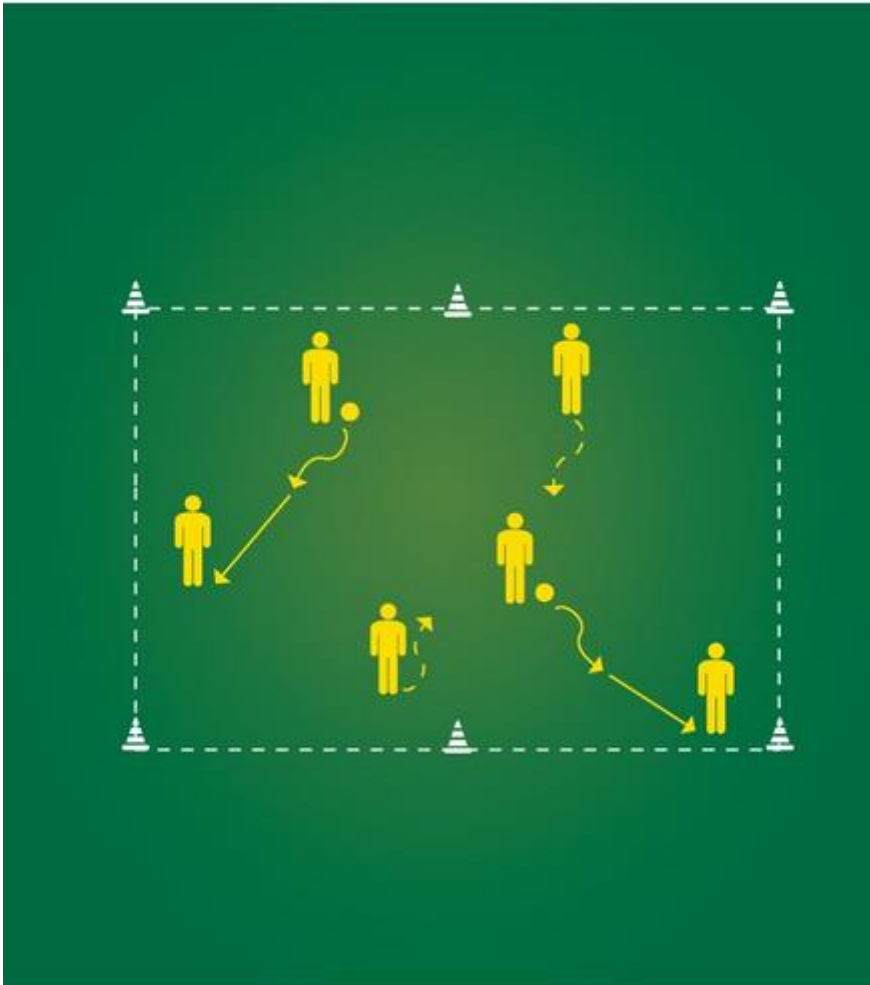
Upon returning to the starting point, player 2 commences the same pattern

Twelve cones are required

### **Variation**

Vary the width of the gates to increase/decrease difficulty

## PASS AND MOVE



This activity requires two players with a ball and four players without.

The players with the balls start by dribbling, while the other players move freely around the area. When the ball carriers see another player ready to receive the ball, they pass to them, then move to another part of the area. When a player receives the ball, they dribble until they can see another player who is ready to receive the ball. They then pass the ball to that player and move. Players are constantly moving, either looking to receive one of the two balls, or looking to pass to one of the players without a ball.

### Notes on this exercise

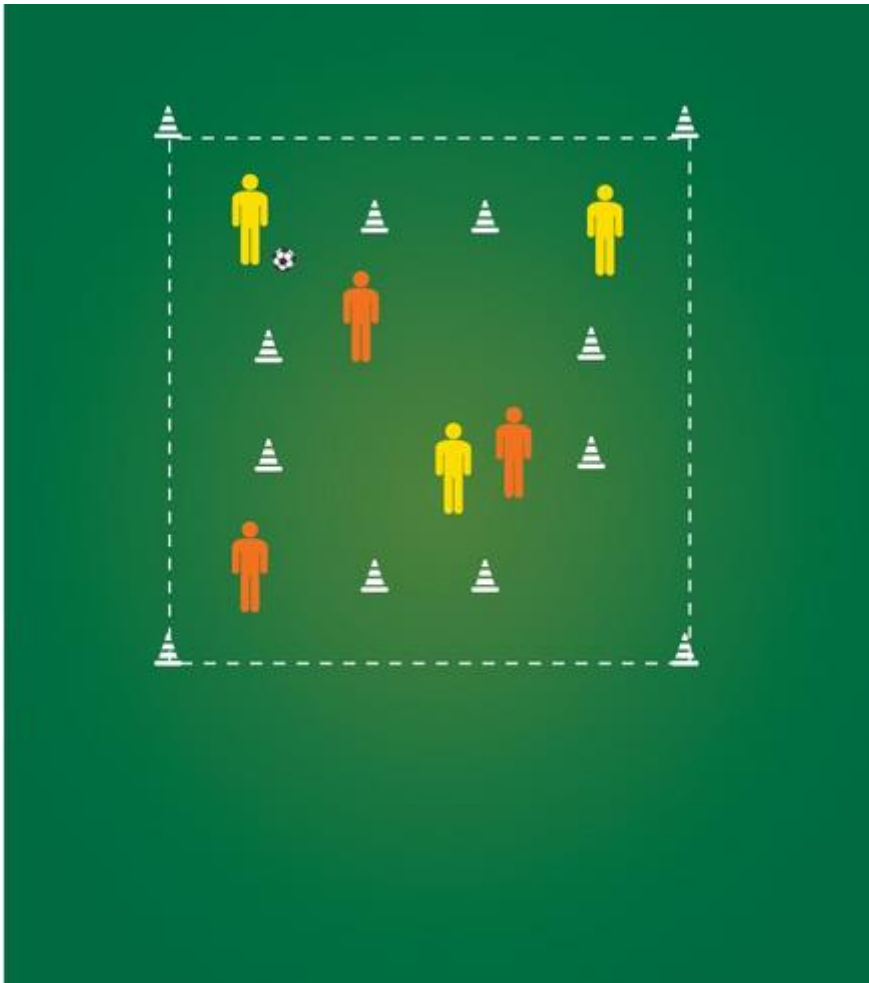
This activity helps develop vision and communication and introduces the concept of passing the ball to a team-mate, which is often difficult to grasp for a naturally self-centred under-seven!

**Passing will begin to be more evident from under-eights upwards.**

### Progression

Three players with a ball and three without

## 4 SIDED FOOTBALL (3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5)



Length: 20m

Width: 20m

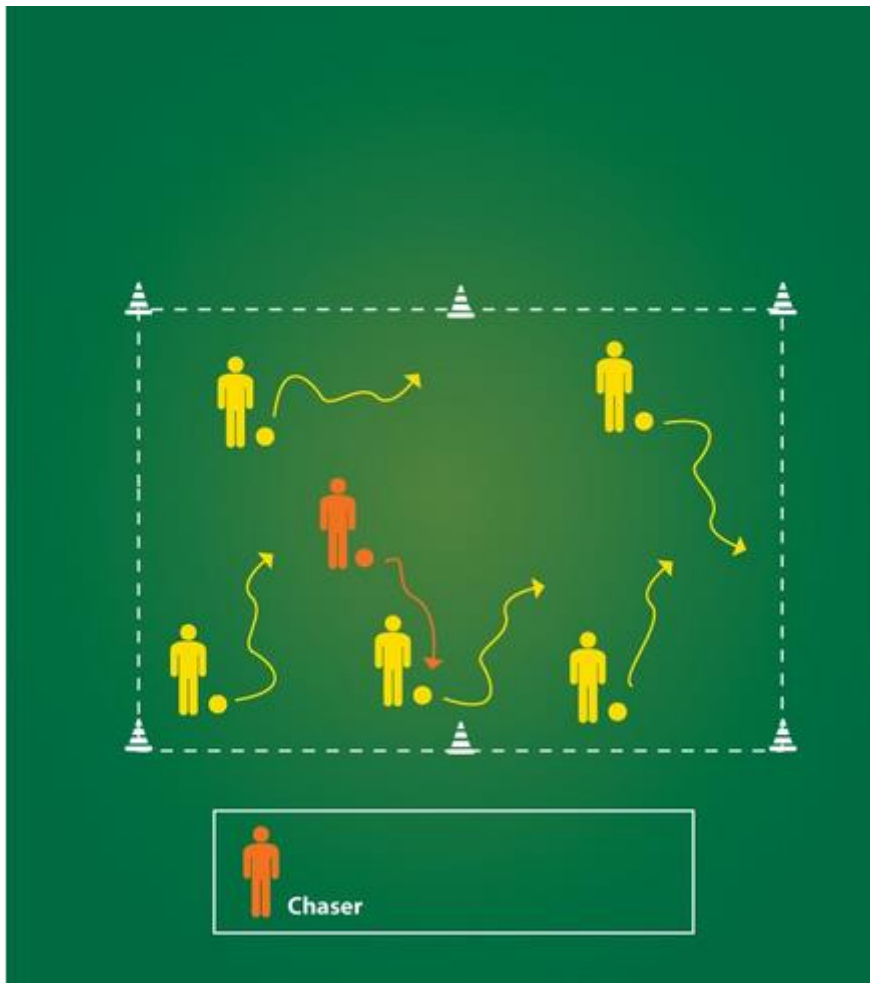
Gates: 4 gates of 1m–2m wide inside the area (as shown in the diagram)

Players can score by passing the ball through any one of the 4 gates (and from either side) to one of their team-mates

### Notes on this exercise

This game encourages passing and supporting

## DRIBBLE TAG

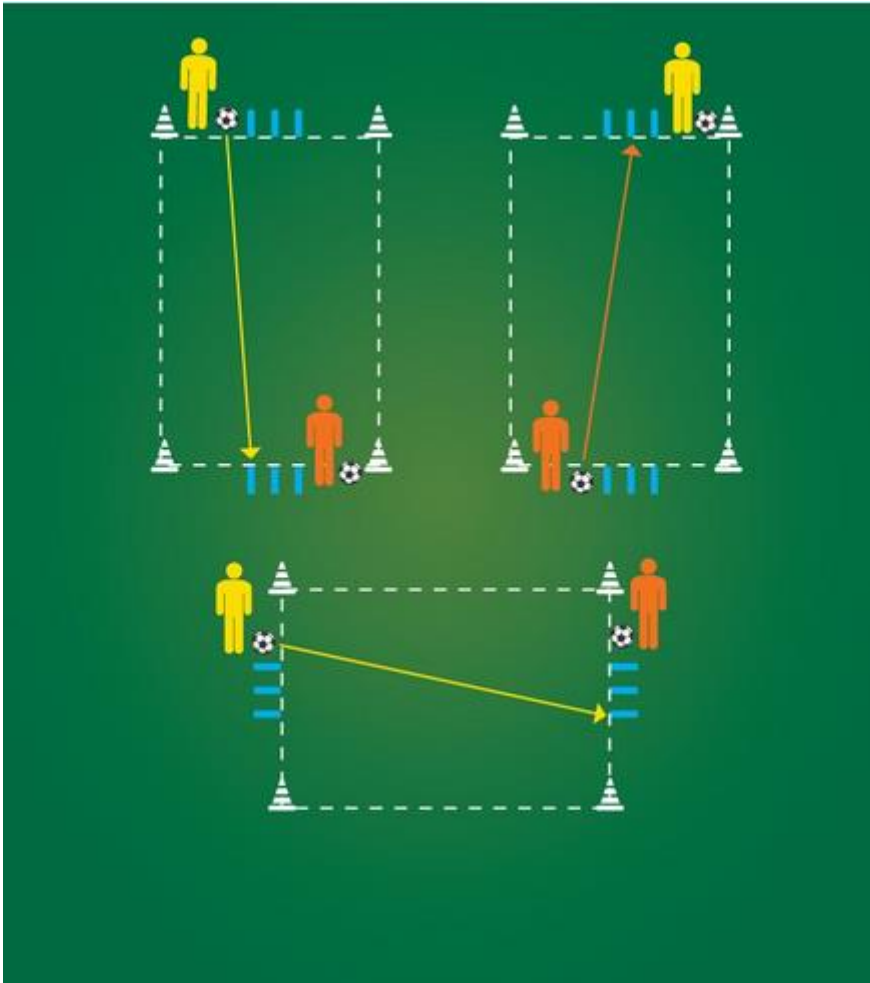


In an area about 10m × 14m, players dribble their balls around.

A 'chaser' is nominated and they try to tag the other players while keeping control of their own ball. The other players avoid him or her while keeping control of their balls.

If you are the tagger you must carry a bib so everyone knows who the chaser is.

## HIT THE TARGET



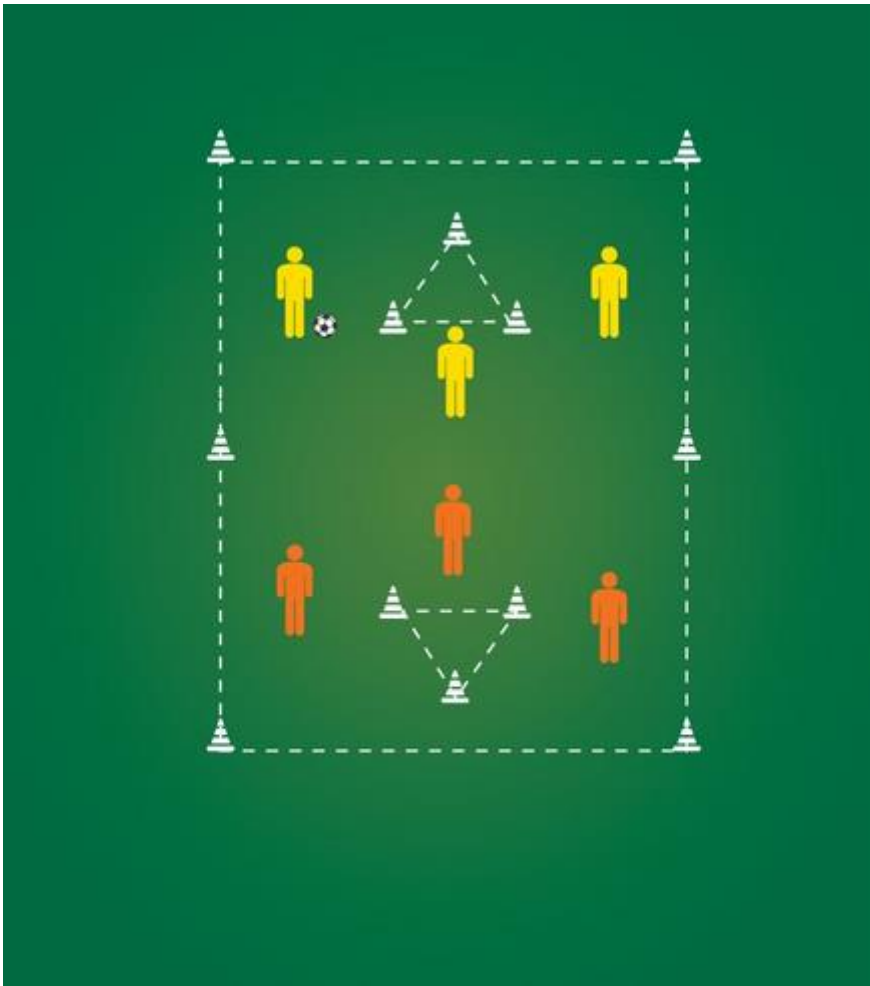
Make three small areas about 10m × 7m.

To score, players must hit the target to get points.

Targets may include 3 tall cones, water bottles, balls, empty plastic bottles etc.

Players will receive 1 point for every target which is knocked over or hit (like ten pin bowling).

## TRIANGULAR GOAL FOOTBALL (3v3 / 4v4 / 5v5)



Length: 20m

Width: 15m

Goal: triangular goal, 2m-3m per side, 2m-3m inside the field

To score players must shoot or pass through any one of the 3 sides of the triangle of their designated goal

### Notes on this exercise

This game encourages passing and shooting from different angles