

# Developmental Soccer Games

Soccer might be easy to follow, but it's not very easy to play and absorb. A newbie can easily get lost and unmotivated and want to stop playing altogether. Not every kid necessarily has all the required skills to play Soccer. Some find kicking easy but not dribbling; others find passing the ball easy but not controlling the ball! Very few hopefuls are the kind of players who find every part of this game easy and doable. Even then, absolutely every kid needs practice and must stick with it.

For kids just starting with Soccer, its drills and practices slowly help their transition into the stricter rules and ways of the professional game. **Soccer drills for 3- and 4-year-olds are mostly about getting them used to physical activity and the essentials of the game.**

Young kids can't handle repetitive drills the way older kids can. Everything you do needs to be tailored to the wonderful mind of a 4-year-old; this may mean forgetting how you usually talk about soccer. ***Everything should be a game, and everything should be fun.***

4-year-olds love having fun and playing with their friends. They won't be able to play real soccer just yet, they aren't ready for it. Your job as the coach is to harness their raw enthusiasm for play and to start making it look like soccer.

## Shooting

Kids this age need to learn how to kick the ball hard enough (but not too hard), and how to kick accurately.

### Tunnel Shoot

Have the kids stand in a line with their feet wide apart. One player kicks the ball through the legs of the other players to the other side of the 'tunnel.' After his turn, he runs to the back and joins the line.

This is a fun way to teach the kids to kick the ball accurately and hard enough to reach a certain distance.

### Clean Your Room

Divide the group into two teams. Place a line of short cones down the middle of the field, and place one team on each side. Each player has a ball of their own. On the coach's whistle, each team will begin kicking their balls over to the other side. When a ball crosses over onto the other side, that team needs to kick it back.

At the end of a set amount of time, the team that has the fewest balls on their side is the winner.

You may need to remind the kids that they are allowed to kick balls other than their own.

Perhaps there could be a penalty for kicking the ball so hard it goes out of bounds.

This game teaches the kids to kick their ball with the right amount of force, and to respond quickly to sudden changes on the field.

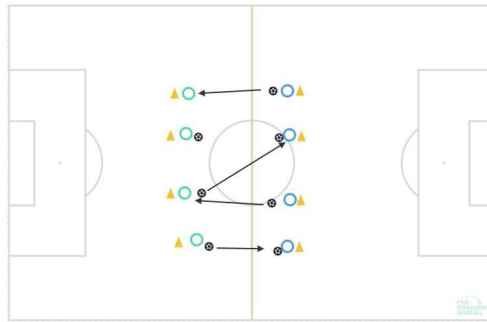
### Bowling

Divide the group into two teams. Place a line of short cones down the middle of the field, and place one team on each side. Give each player a tall cone to guard, and their own soccer ball.

The goal of the game is to knock over the other team's cones, while defending your own. Once a team has had all of their cones knocked over, the game ends.

You may need to remind the kids that they are allowed to kick balls other than their own, and encourage them to not stand on their cones the whole game.

This game teaches the kids about shooting accurately, and the basics of defense.



### Shooting goals

An obvious though useful exercise would be to just let the kids shoot their balls at the goal. One of the kids can play as the goalie, or one of the coaches can do this.

## **Dribbling**

Dribbling is one of the most important and foundational skills, because it lets the players keep control of the ball as they move across the field, but it does not come naturally.

### Sharks and Minnows

All players stand on one end of the field, each with their personal soccer balls. One player is selected to be the Shark, and she stands in the center of the field without a ball. The Shark's objective is to steal a ball from the other players, the Minnows, as they pass by, and the Minnows' objective is to dribble their soccer ball to the other side of the field without being intercepted by the Shark. After all players make it to the other side or have their ball stolen, another round begins where the players must cross the field again to get to the other side.

When the Shark successfully steals a ball from a Minnow, that player also becomes a Shark. Through this the number of Sharks increases each round, making it more difficult for the Minnows to reach the other side without being intercepted.

Play continues until there is only one Minnow left, he is the winner.

This game teaches players to control their ball while dribbling and to respond when another player tries to take the ball from them.

### Red Light Green Light

Have the kids stand at one of the field with their balls. When the coach calls “Green Light,” the kids start dribbling across the field. When the coach calls “Red Light,” they have to stop and trap the ball with their feet. If anyone loses control of their ball or is still moving when the coach calls “Red Light,” they have to go back to the end of the field.

Whoever dribbles their ball to the other side wins.

For a more advanced variation, you could add “Yellow Light,” where the kids have to dribble more slowly. Alternating between green, yellow, or red will teach the kids to control their dribbling speed and ability to stop the ball with intention.

### Cone Obstacle Course

Set up a bunch of cones and have the kids dribble their balls through and obstacle course, going between or around the various cones.

This will teach the kids to dribble in different ways and to have greater control over the ball.

You may need to make it very clear how they are supposed to do the course, and keep a close eye on them so that they don’t stop partway through.

Maybe you could play “follow the leader,” and have all the kids follow a coach or another player through the obstacle course.

## **Passing**

Kids this age are unlikely to know how to pass in the heat of a game. Practicing the basics now will help them become better passers in the future, and will develop teamwork.

### Monkey in the Middle

Divide the kids into small groups, as few as three, as many as seven. One player from each group stands in the middle, and the players around her pass a ball amongst each other, trying to keep it away from the player in the middle. The player in the middle does her best to intercept the ball. If she does, another player goes to the center.

Switch the middle player out often, especially if they are struggling to catch the ball.

This teaches the kids to pass the ball to each other and avoid players on the other team intercepting their passes.

### Pressure Passing

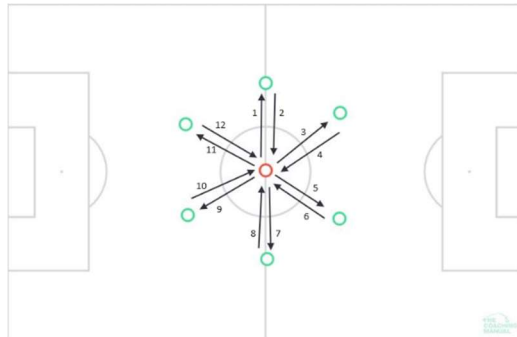
This game may be fairly advanced.

Put one player in the middle, with the other players in a circle around him. The player in the middle passes the ball to one of the players in the circle, who has to catch the ball and then return it to the middle. The player in the middle then passes the ball to another player, and they continue this process, going around the circle.

If this is easy enough, add in a second ball so that the players have to keep track of two balls at once. Add as many balls as you feel the kids are able to handle.

Change the player in the middle every few minutes. Maybe starting with a coach in the center will help the kids understand how the game works before they are put on the spot.

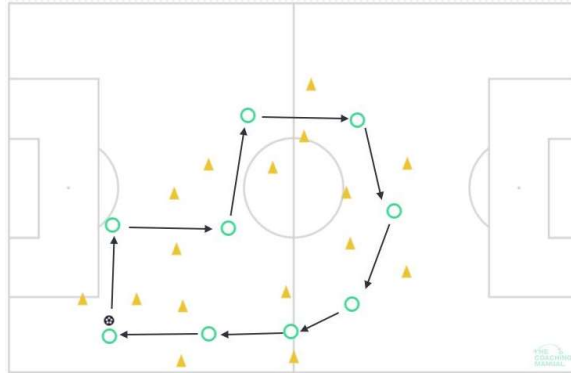
This game will teach the kids how to respond fast and accurately, and to stay attentive and light on their feet.



### Passing Gates

Set up several pairs of cones around the field. One player will pass a ball through a pair of cones to another player, who will then pass it to another through a different pair. Each player will have two different partners, one whom they receive a ball from, and another to whom they pass a ball.

Arrange the “gates” so that there is a loop of players, like you can see in this picture. You can add as many balls to the sequence as you’d like.



Regularly rearrange the order of the players and the layout of the “gates” to switch up the gameplay.

## **Other**

These are games that could be used to warmup, fill time, or teach multiple skills.

### **Simon Says**

The coach gives instructions like “Simon says dribble around the cone,” “Simon says pass to a partner,” or “Simon says shoot into the goal.” Players are only supposed to follow instructions when “Simon says” to do them, otherwise they are “out.”

You don’t necessarily have to knock any of the players out, at this age it may be better/simpler to just let everyone keep playing until you decide to switch to the next activity.

You don’t have to call out only soccer actions. Consider calling out stretches, or hopping on one foot. Anything that gets the kids moving and engaged with the group activities is good.