

# PRACTICE PLAN (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade)

| WARM UP                                    | SKILL DRILLS | SKILL DRILLS | DEVOTIONS                        | SKILL DRILLS | PLAYS                         |
|--|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Dynamic Stretching/<br>Running & Free Time | Dribbling    | Passing      | Devotion/Prayer/<br>Memory Verse | Shooting     | Offensive/<br>Defensive Plays |
| :00--:05                                   | :05--:15     | :15--:25     | :25--:33                         | :33--:45     | :45--End                      |

## WARM UP

- **High Knees:** Start at midfield and stop at the goalie box, emphasizing a high knee kick.
- **Backward Kicks:** Start at midfield and stop at the goalie box, emphasizing kicking backwards.
- **Karaoke:** Start at midfield and stop at the goalie box. Criss-cross legs, alternating in front and behind.
- **Jumping Jacks:** Do jumping jacks for 20 or 30 repetitions.
- **Lunges:** Alternate legs while lunging. Start at the backline and stop at the goalie box.
- **High Skips:** Skip to midfield. With every skip, try to jump as high as possible.

## Free Time

Allow everyone to have an unstructured free time with a ball at the beginning of practice.

- › This will allow players to practice tricks, score goals, chat with friends, and let out energy.
- › Players should be doing something soccer-related.
- › At the end of this time allow everyone to score one goal and then meet at the middle of your practice area

## DRIBBLING DRILLS:

*\*Many of these practices require the use of four soccer balls. If you are limited in the number of soccer balls you have for practice, you can modify the games by creating lines based on the number of soccer balls you have available.*

## DRIBBLING TECHNIQUE

- › With knees slightly bent, use the inside, outside, or sole of the foot to move the ball in the direction you want.
  - Inside: use the inside of the foot to direct the ball
  - Outside: turn foot and “wrap” it around the ball to use the outside of the foot (good for changing direction)
  - Sole: use the bottom of the foot to roll the ball (great for tight spaces where close control is needed)
- › Keep the ball close to your foot and body so you have it under control
- › Try to look up every few steps so you are aware of your surroundings
- › Begin as slow as necessary (even walking)! Only increase speed as you are more comfortable with the ball
- › Begin with using right foot only, then left foot only, and progress to using both feet (switching from left to right every few steps)

## DRIBBLING WITH ALL SURFACES OF THE FOOT

**Objective:** Introduce dribbling technique

**Equipment Needed:** Cones to set up grid, or field lines can be used. You will need one ball for every pair of players (preferably one ball for each player).

**Setup:** Setup a grid 15 x 15 yards. If you do not have enough balls for everyone to have their own, divide players in groups of two with one ball between them. All players should be in the grid.

- › On coach's signal players begin dribbling around the grid on a very slow jog practicing correct dribbling technique.
- › Have players without a ball take turns with players with a ball. Switch often!
- › Encourage players to look up every few steps to check surroundings.

### Variation/Progression:

- › Require players to perform the following variations:
  - Inside of foot only
  - Outside of foot only
  - Sole of foot only
  - Right foot only, left foot only, and both feet
- › On coach's signal, have players dribble faster, slower, or change their direction.

## “KNOCK OUT”

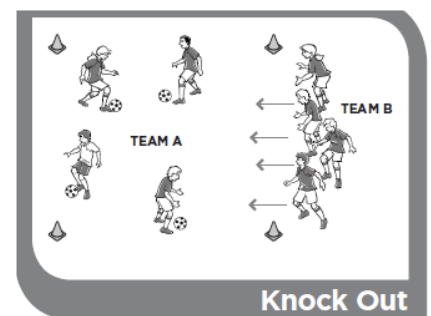
**Objective:** Practice dribbling technique while having fun

**Equipment Needed:** Cones to set up grid (optional), or field lines can be used. You will need one ball for every two players.

**Setup:** Divide players in two teams. Place one team inside the grid with a ball and the other team outside of the grid without a ball.

### Activity:

- › Team A (inside the grid) begins dribbling around the grid using the inside, outside, and sole (bottom) of their foot.
- › When coach yells “knock out” Team B (outside grid) runs into the grid and attempts to steal any ball they can and dribble (not kick) it back to the outside.
- › Players with a ball in the grid attempt to keep the ball away from the defenders by dribbling or passing to a teammate who has lost their ball.
- › If an attacking player (Team A) loses a ball, they immediately try to steal it back before Team B can dribble it outside of the grid.
- › Play until all the balls have been dribbled outside of the grid, and then switch teams with Team B inside and Team A outside.



## PASSING DRILLS:

### PASSING WITH THE INSIDE OF THE FOOT (PUSH PASS):

- › The ball is struck using the inside of the foot, right above the arch of the foot.
- › Toes should be raised slightly higher than the heel and the ankle should be locked.
- › Knees should be slightly bent for balance and the non kicking (plant) foot is placed next to the ball and pointed in the direction of the pass.
- › Place eyes on the ball and strike through the middle of the ball. Make sure your leg is pointed towards the target.
- › Follow through with the passing leg after striking the ball.

## PASSING WITH THE INSIDE OF THE FOOT

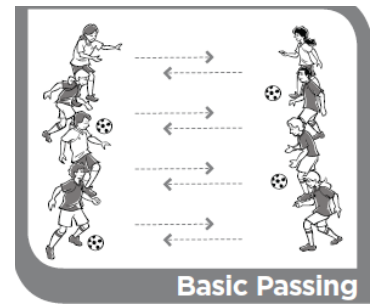
**Objective:** Introduce passing technique with the inside of the foot

**Equipment Needed:** One ball for every pair of players

**Setup:** Divide players into groups of two. Place players across from their partner with five yards of space between.

**Activity:**

- › On the coach's signal players pass the ball to their teammate with correct technique using the inside of their foot.
- › Allow players as many touches as necessary to receive the ball and pass it back.
- › If players are successful with the five-yard pass, increase distance to ten yards.
- › The pass should not leave the ground. Focus on proper technique and completion of the pass.



## SHOOTING DRILLS:

### SHOOTING WITH THE INSIDE OF THE FOOT:

- › Shooting with the inside of the foot is very similar to the push pass technique.
- › The ball is struck using the inside of the foot, right above the arch of the foot.
- › Toes should be pointed down and ankle should be locked.
- › Knees should be slightly bent for balance and the non-kicking (plant) foot is placed next to ball and pointed in the direction of the goal.
- › Place eyes on the ball and strike through the middle of the ball. Make sure your leg is pointed towards the target.
- › Follow through with the shooting leg after striking the ball.
- › Accuracy is most important. Players can try to add more power to the shot once they develop accuracy.

## “TEAM SHOOTING”

**Objective:** Practice shooting technique with the inside of the foot

**Equipment Needed:** Cones to set up grid (optional) or field lines can be used. Two goals (cones can be used for goals if necessary). At least two balls (best to have four or more).

**Setup:** Set up a 15 x 15-yard grid with a goal on each end line. If you do not have two goals, cones can be used to set up a two yard wide goal. Divide players in two teams. All players begin in the grid each facing their goal. Coach stands outside of the grid with all of the balls.

**Activity:**

- › Coach passes a ball into the grid and each team tries to get the ball and score as quickly as possible!
- › Each time a goal is scored the coach passes another ball into the grid.
- › Play two minute games, encouraging each team to score as many goals as possible!

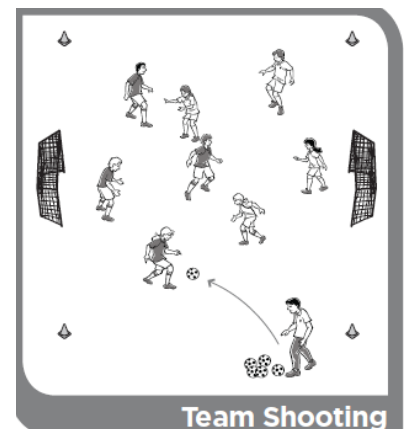
**Variation/Progression:**

- › Require players to use right foot only or left foot only to shoot.
- › Pass two balls into the grid at once.
- › Players must do a fake before they can shoot

## Basic Offensive Tactics:

### 4 VS 4 SHAPE

- › Good offensive shape (tactics) is necessary to stretch the opposing team's defense.



- › The best 4 vs 4 formation is the diamond formation.
- › The diamond formation is setup as follows: one player towards the back (depth), two players on the outside in the middle (width), and one player in the front (height). This provides depth, width, and height.
- › The attacking team (offense) should always have depth, width, and height and the diamond formation provides this.
- › This shape causes the defense of the other team to spread out which creates space for attacking.
- › Creating space is the key to attacking effectively!

## ATTACKING PRINCIPLES

- › The attacking team must maintain correct shape to create opportunities to dribble, pass, and shoot.
- › Creating space to dribble, pass, and shoot is done through maintaining depth, width, and height while attacking.
- › Players should always have an option to pass to their teammates. This is done by moving towards the player with the ball to provide support.
- › In order to maintain correct shape players must move to support each other. *(Ex: when the top player has the ball all other players should shift forward to support so the player has an option to pass the ball.)*
- › After passing the ball, players should move to create space. This is called mobility. A good player will pass the ball and then move to open space to receive the ball back.
- › If a team is not mobile when attacking (always moving) then it is very easy for the opposing team to defend.

## PLAYING IN A DIAMOND FORMATION WHILE MAINTAINING SHAPE

**Objective:** Introduce correct attacking shape

**Equipment Needed:** Two soccer balls

**Setup:** Divide players in two groups of four and place one group on each side of the field. Give each team a ball.

**Activity:**

- › Each team will set up in a diamond formation and pass the ball around while jogging.
- › Teams are not playing against each other!
- › Player's should be focused on maintaining the correct diamond shape while moving.
- › Ensure that the following attacking principles are being practiced:
  - Support: moving towards teammate to provide a passing option
  - Mobility: moving together as a team and always moving towards space
  - Shape: maintain depth, width, and height while moving
- › Require each team to always be moving!
- › Practice this for a few minutes until everyone has a basic understanding of correct attacking shape.
- › Switch players around so each player gets to practice playing in a different position on the field.

## DEFENSIVE STANCE

- › Defenders should always defend "side-ways on" which means the defender should defend towards one side of the attacker with one foot slightly in front of the other and knees slightly bent.
- › Defending "side-ways on" allows the defender to force the attacker in one direction or the other. If you defend straight on the attacker can go past you on either side.
- › Players should be on the balls of their feet while bending the knees for balance. Always be light on your feet!
- › When defending an attacker with the ball, the defender should drop back by quickly moving (shuffling) their feet while staying close to the attacker. This movement is called "Jockeying".
- › Have patience and do not jump in and try to win the ball until the attacker makes a mistake. Jumping in will allow the attacker to get past you.

## 1 VS 1

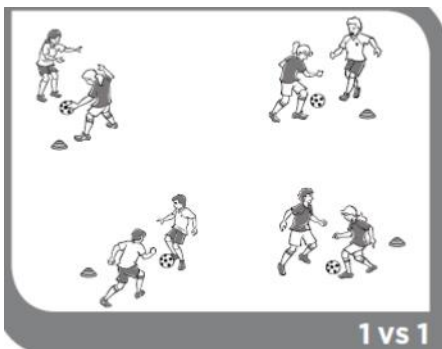
**Objective:** Practice correct defensive stance in 1 vs 1 defending

**Equipment Needed:** One cone and one ball for every two players

**Setup:** Divide players into groups of two. Each pair sets up a cone with at least five yards of space around it.

**Activity:**

- › Each pair will play 1 vs 1 against each other.
- › Place the ball on the ground one yard away from the cone. The cone will be the goal that each player is trying to score on.
- › Every player begins by placing their right foot on the ball and waiting for the coach's signal.
- › On the coach's signal, players try to score by hitting the cone.
- › Each time the cone is hit, a goal is awarded and the other player gets to start with the ball.
- › Games will be played for one minute. The person with the most goals in a minute wins!



## 2 VS 2 KEEP AWAY

**Objective:** Practice correct defensive stance while working with a teammate

**Equipment Needed:** Cones to set up a grid and two balls

**Setup:** Create two 15 x 15-yard grids (if you have 8 players). Divide players into four teams of two. Place two teams in each grid to play against each other.

**Activity:**

- › 2 vs 2 Keep Away will be played in each grid.
- › Each time the team with the ball completes three passes they are awarded a goal.
- › Each time the defending team wins the ball, they are awarded a goal.
- › Players should use the proper defensive stance and work together as a team to win the ball.
- › Play each game for three minutes and then switch teams.

