

Off-Season Soccer Training

I Passing/Receiving/Shooting

a. Wall Game

This drill is my favorite when it comes to individual soccer drills. There are countless variations on this one and I recommend you to practice this as often you can. Many great soccer players (Maradona and Pele) used to practice their skills with a wall. All you have to do is find a wall, bench, or solid surface and see how many times you can keep the ball moving as it rebounds back to you. Try to use all parts of both feet (e.g. inside, outside, instep).

b. Soccer Bowling

Set up your own pins. How many pins can you knock down? Use regular bowling rules or make up your own. Also, you may use this activity as a shooting drill. However, this time remember to strike the ball with the lace/instep. In addition, try hitting a moving ball not a stationary one.

c. Soccer Golf

Set up a golf course using gates as the holes. Have players pass their ball through the gates in the order you designate. Players count their number of passes. The lowest score wins.

Teaching points: A variety of passing techniques, short, angled, long.
Variation: have players design the course, or use obstacles such as trees or parents that players have to pass around.

d. Soccer Tennis

Visit the local tennis court and play tennis but use a soccer ball. Of course, no hands allowed. Play singles or doubles.

e. Soccer Basketball

Play in your driveway or at a local park. Try to score a basket by kicking the ball through the hoop. Make up your own rules. No hands allowed.

II Ball Handling/Dribbling

a. Juggling

If you don't know how to juggle a ball then you don't know how to play soccer either! This is one of the most basic soccer skills and will help you improve your overall game. Of course, this is not something you would do during a game. However, I have never known a good soccer player that cannot juggle.

Start with your feet. Hold the ball in your hands. Drop it onto your laces and try to catch it. Repeat with the other foot and various parts of your body (no hands or arms of course). Inexperienced players are allowed to use their hands to begin and to catch the ball in-between "touches". However, at no time is the ball allowed to hit the ground. A hard surface may even be advisable; let the ball bounce between "touches". Experienced players should be able to flick the ball up and not use their hands or let the ball bounce, at any time. If you are feeling confident attempt juggling while you are moving. Set yourself targets and constantly look to beat yourself.

b. Dribbling

How fast and accurately can you dribble through a maze of disc cones. Time yourself. For each cone "hit" or missed add 5 seconds to the overall time. Try to beat your previous time. Increase the difficulty of the course.

c. Ball Gymnastics

Forward Stance:

- Roll the ball with the bottom of your foot forwards and backwards with the right then left.
- Repeat from side to side, and then in a circular motion.
- Repeat all movements with increased speed.
- Perform in a stationary position, then while in motion as you improve.

Sideways Stance:

- Roll your right foot over ball and stop it with the inside of your left.
- On return use other feet.
- Repeat all movements with increased speed.
- Perform in a stationary position, then while in motion as you improve.

Stair-Steppers:

- Put the ball in front of you.
Place your kicking foot on the top of the ball.

- Jump and put your other foot on the top of the ball while taking the first one off.
- Keep jumping on and off the ball without letting it move.
- As you improve, attempt to move the ball backwards and forwards to a designated target while maintaining total control of the ball.

Machine Guns:

- Start by placing the ball between your feet.
- Perform a motion similar to the stair steppers exercise. However, you should do this on the side of the ball in order to get the ball to move back and forth between your feet.
- Try to keep your feet pretty close together.
- Keep your body relaxed and focus 100% on the ball.

III Fitness

<http://www.presidentschallenge.org/>. Try to use a ball as much as possible while you jog and/or stretch.

IV Camps

<http://www.pbysoccer.com>

V Coerver DVD's

<http://www.coerver.co.uk/content.php?page=9>; awesome activities on how to improve ball handling skills available for those who prefer a more visual approach. The training methods are recognized worldwide.

VI Summary

You should perform these activities within appropriate age/gender intervals. For example: Do these various activities for 1 or more minutes then, rest for 1 minute. Try to do at least 5 sets per drill. If you put effort in to performing the drills right you will soon notice an improvement in your overall ball skills while, at the same time, improve your stamina. It is vital to develop 2 footed players so please provide time to practice with both feet.

Coaches, be careful you do not "burn out" yourself, the parents, and the players by over training. Over the summer, organized practices are not recommended. It's fine to meet once a week, but keep it simple. Adopt more of a "street soccer" approach with pick-up games and fun activities.