

DRIBBLING SKILLS PACKET ONE

Building the Skills and Tactics for Success

When teaching a developing soccer player, it's important to focus on a combination of technical, tactical, physical, and mental skills. Ball control, and dribbling specifically, is one of the most important skills to prioritize.

The following packet of drills and activities provides a complete progression for practicing basic and intermediate dribbling skills.

Although drills are labeled by age group, consider using all activities for your youth soccer team. Begin with the most basic and work your way up through the progression until you find the activity that provides the optimal challenge for your team's skill level.

Ball Control: The ability to control and manipulate the ball with different parts of the body. This skill category includes dribbling, trapping, and receiving passes.

Fundamental Dribbling Coaching Cues:

- **Close Touches:** Emphasize taking small, close touches on the ball to maintain control and maneuverability.
- **Use the Laces:** Encourage players to use the top of their foot, known as the laces, to gain better control and speed.
- **Scan the Field:** Remind players to keep their heads up to scan the field, identify open spaces, and anticipate defenders' movements.
- **Change of Pace:** Encourage players to vary their speed, using bursts of acceleration to beat defenders or change direction quickly.



Inside this Dribbling Skills Packet

Drills and activities are listed in a progression from simple to complex.

DRILL NAME	TARGET AGE
Coach Says	U6 – 8
Driver's Test	U6 – 8
Follow The Leader	U6 – 8
Red Light, Green Light	U6 – 8
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Scramble	U9 – 11
Shark Attack	U9 – 11
Soccer Freeze Tag	U9 – 11
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One Foot Tight Slalom	U12 – 13
One Foot Big Slalom	U12 – 13
Stay In Your Lane	U12 – 13
Stop On A Dime Challenge	U12 – 13



COACH SAYS

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to take small, close touches on the ball to maintain control and maneuverability.
- Learn how to follow my directions and stop on the whistle.

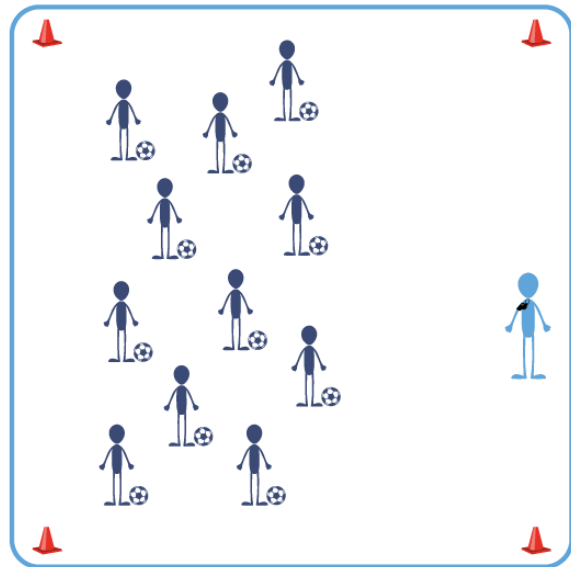
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 4 cones to set boundaries

Set-Up:

- Each student collects a ball and moves into personal space facing the coach.



HOW TO PLAY

1. This game is called *Coach Says*. The object of the game is to move in the right way by listening to my instructions. If I say, “Coach Says” and then give you a way to move with your soccer ball, then you’ll follow my directions. If you don’t hear the words, “Coach Says,” stay frozen in place.
2. When you hear the whistle, control the ball, freeze, and face me.
3. Let’s try a practice round. Coach Says... tap the top of the ball with your right foot. Keep tapping until you hear the whistle.
4. On the stop whistle, freeze and wait for my next instruction.
5. SAMPLE MOVEMENTS:
 - Alternate toe taps on top of the ball; Tap the ball and move around the ball (clockwise / counterclockwise); Tap the ball Side-to-side with the insides of your feet; dribble with control inside the cones.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we’ve practiced, let’s see what we’ve learned:

- Q1: Why is it important to take small, close touches on the ball?
- Q2: Why is it important to scan the field with your head up while you’re controlling the ball?

DRIVER'S TEST

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to take small, close touches on the ball to dribble safely in and around traffic.
- Learn how to follow my directions and stop on the whistle.

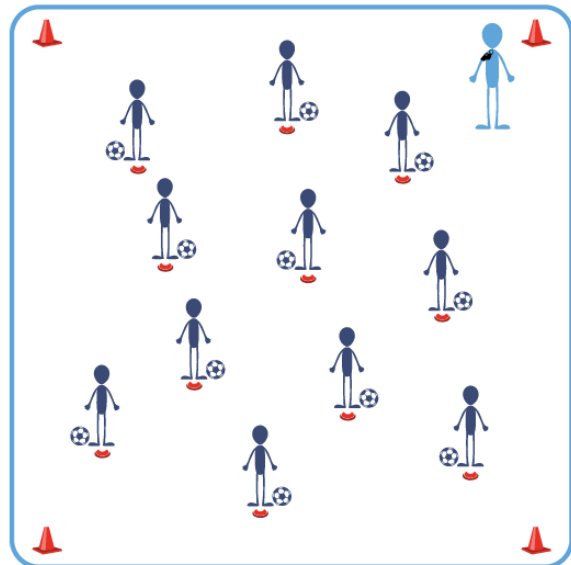
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 1 low profile cone per player
- 4 cones to set boundaries

Set-Up:

- Scatter low profile cones inside of the practice area.
- Each student collects a ball and moves to a homebase low profile cone.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time to take your soccer ball for a driver's test. The entire activity area is our road, and there are other drivers sharing the road with you.
2. On the start signal, move safely and use small, close touches to control the ball and dribble around our activity area.
3. Keep your head up and scan for your teammates and any obstacles. Avoid running into your teammates, their soccer balls, and the low profile cones.
4. On my whistle, freeze and listen for more instructions. When you hear, "drive home," dribble your ball back to your homebase cone.
5. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Move in different pathways; change speed; change directions on the signal (right, left, backward); circle as many cones as you can in 1 minute.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: What parts of your foot did you use to control the ball?
- Q2: On offense, our job is to look for open space. What does open space look like?



FOLLOW THE LEADER

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to scan the field while taking small, close touches on the ball to dribble safely in and around traffic.
- Learn how to work with a partner and stop on the whistle.

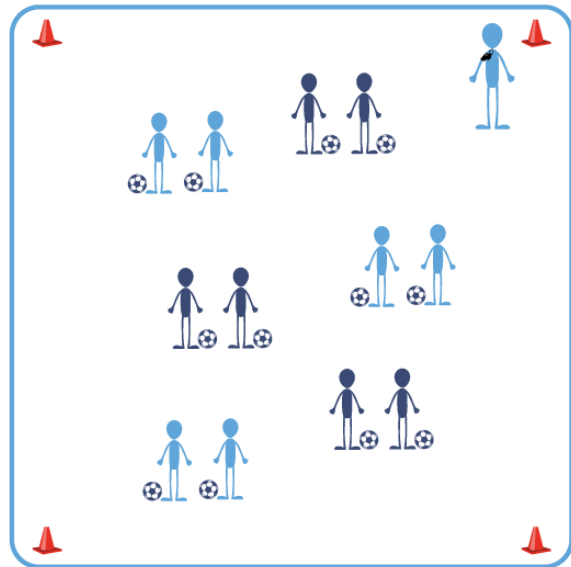
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 4 cones to set boundaries

Set-Up:

- Each student collects a ball and stands next to a partner.
- Pairs scatter inside the activity area with space to move.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time to play Follow the Leader. The youngest person in your group will be the leader first. On the start signal, the leader will begin to dribble safely throughout the activity area at a walking pace. Everyone else must follow their leader with a controlled dribble.
2. When you hear the stop signal, freeze and listen for more instructions. We'll take turns being the leader each time that we freeze.
3. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - When ready, challenge groups by increasing speed, adding obstacles, or changing directions on a signal.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: Spacing is the distance between you and the other players on the field. Why is spacing important in this game?
- Q2: What do you have to do to create space for yourself?

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to take small, close touches on the ball to dribble and stop quickly.
- Learn how to compete while demonstrating sportsmanship and game etiquette.

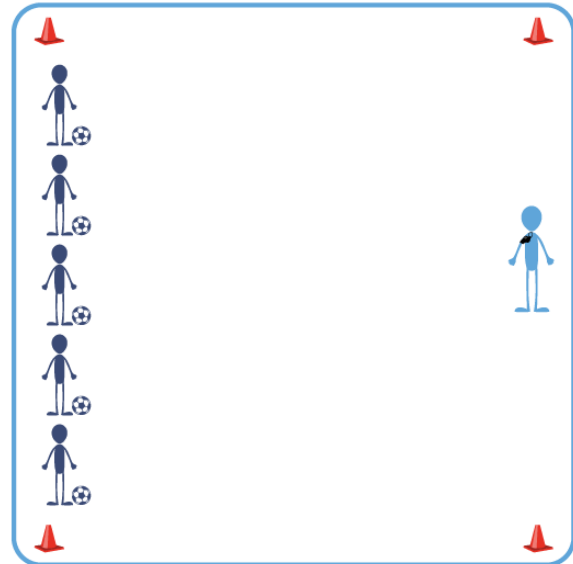
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 4 cones to set boundaries

Set-Up:

- Create two end lines with cones approximately 30 paces apart.
- Each student collects a ball and stands on one end line.
- Coach stands on the opposite end line.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time to play Red Light, Green Light while we control our soccer balls. Your goal is to dribble your soccer ball over the end line where I'm standing. I will be the traffic light first.
2. When I call out "Green Light," you will start to dribble toward the other end line. When I call out "Red Light," stop and freeze before I count to 2-Mississippi. Keep control of your ball. If you don't stop on time you have to go back to the start.
3. You must control your ball quickly on the whistle. If you have to move to retrieve it, you have to go back to the start. Use close touches so you can stop on the signal.
4. The player who crosses the end line first scores a point and will lead when we restart the game.
5. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - To start, keep a walking pace with a focus on ball control and light inside taps. Then, progress to a jog/run using both inside and outside taps.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: What is sportsmanship? What does it look like? What does it sound like?
- Q2: Why is sportsmanship important? How does it make playing against an opponent better?



SCRAMBLE

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to take small, close touches on the ball to dribble with control in traffic, and then stop quickly.
- Learn how to quickly respond to instruction from the coach.

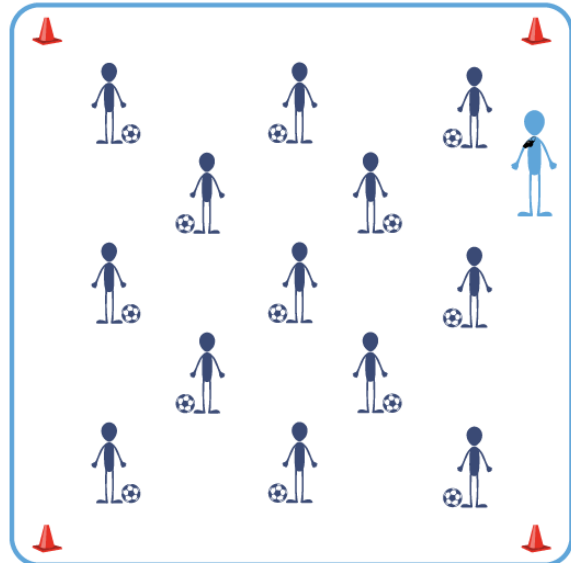
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 4 cones to set boundaries

Set-Up:

- Each player collects a ball and finds personal space within the boundaries.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time to play Scramble. Your goal is to dribble with control in open space and then to be the quickest to move to a new ball when you hear me call out "Scramble!"
2. On the start signal, begin dribbling in open space. When you hear "Scramble!" stop your ball, leave it where it is, and then move to find a new one.
3. You'll have 5 seconds to get a new ball before we begin again.
4. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Call out, "Double Scramble." Players must quickly move and tap a new ball, and then move and control a second ball.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: What does it mean to take small, close touches on the ball? How does that help you keep control while you dribble?
- Q2: On offense, it's our job to look for and then move into open space. Why is open space so important? What does it look like?



SHARK ATTACK

Ball Control: Dribbling In Traffic, Under Pressure Defense: Apply Pressure on the Ball

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to dribble with control in traffic with some defensive pressure.
- Learn how to apply defensive pressure to limit directional options for the offense.

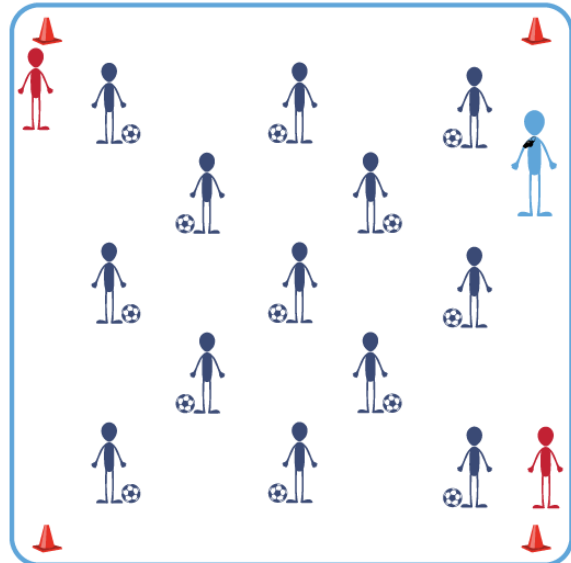
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 4 cones to set boundaries

Set-Up:

- Choose 1 to 4 players to act as Sharks (defensive players).
- Send Sharks to stand next to a cone (1 player per cone).
- All other offensive players have a ball and find personal space within the boundaries.



HOW TO PLAY

1. This game is called Shark Attack. The goal is to dribble your soccer ball in open space without having it stolen by a Shark.
2. On the start signal, begin to dribble. Sharks, stay in your cages (near a cone).
3. When you hear "SHARK ATTACK!" the Sharks will come out and play defense. They cannot tackle or take your ball unless you make a mistake. If you lose control or dribble out of bounds, the Shark will take your ball.
4. If your ball is stolen, you become a Shark and the Shark who stole your ball will dribble in space. You can't steal the ball from the player who stole it from you.
5. On the whistle, everyone freezes. Current Sharks return to your cages.
6. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Begin the game with 1 shark and then add sharks to increase defensive pressure. Give the sharks the ability to steal the ball.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: Remember, on offense, it's important to move into open space. How does scanning the field with your eyes help you find open space?
- Q2: On defense, it's your job to close space before the offense moves into it. How can you use your body position to close space to the player with the ball?



SOCCER FREEZE TAG

Ball Control: Dribbling In Traffic, Under Pressure

Defense: Move to Close Space

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to dribble with control in traffic with some defensive pressure.
- Learn how to change direction while dribbling in traffic.

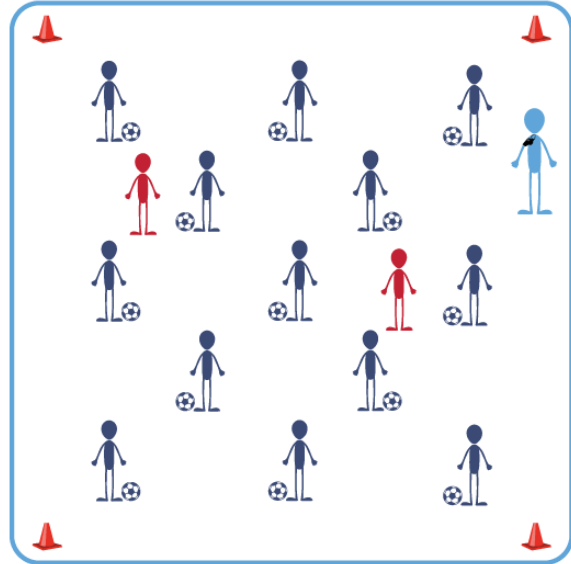
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 4 cones to set boundaries

Set-Up:

- Choose 1 to 4 players to act as Taggers (defensive players). Scatter taggers in the activity area.
- All other offensive players have a ball and find personal space within the boundaries.



HOW TO PLAY

1. This game is called Soccer Tag. The goal is to dribble your soccer ball in open space without being tagged.
2. On the start signal, begin to dribble. Taggers will do 5 jumping jacks before moving to tag other players. Taggers, tag with an open hand on the back, shoulders, or arms.
3. If tagged, hold your soccer ball above your head and make a goal with your feet spread apart. You're free when someone passes a ball through your legs.
4. Offensive players score 1 point for every teammate they set free.
5. On the whistle, everyone will freeze. Change taggers every 3 minutes.
6. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Begin with 1 tagger and then add taggers to increase pressure. Larger areas decrease the challenge – smaller areas increase the challenge. Focus on and practice 1 technique for changing directions in each round of play.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: Why is it important to be able to change directions when you're dribbling?
- Q2: What are some ways you can quickly change direction?



ONE FOOT TIGHT SLALOM

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to better maneuver the ball under control with small close touches.
- Learn how to work with focus and determination toward skill development.

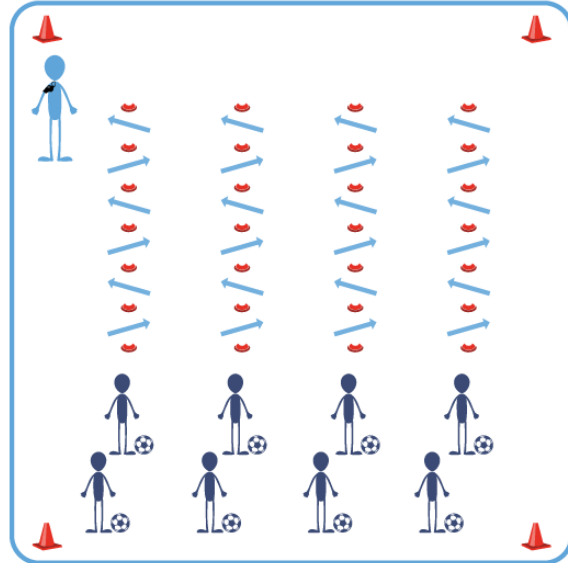
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 7 to 10 low-profile cones per group

Set-Up:

- Create a straight slalom line for each group using low-profile cones spaced one pace apart.
- Create groups of 2 or 3 players per group.
- Each player collects a ball and stands with their group behind a slalom line.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time to for One Foot Tight Slaloms. The object of this drill is to dribble in and out of the cones using only one foot during each down-and-back slalom attempt.
2. On the whistle, the first player in line will begin dribbling with the right foot only all the way down and back through the cones. Use small, close touches on the ball. Use the inside and outside of the foot. Focus on each touch as you move through the course.
3. At the same time, players waiting will perform non-stop stationary toe touches on the ball.
4. As soon as one player finishes the slalom course, the next player begins. Alternate using right and left foot each time it's your turn.
5. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Changing the distance between cones will change the dynamic of the drill.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: In this drill, why is control more important than speed?
- Q2: As you work to improve your skills, why is it important to stay focused on quality of touches and control?



ONE FOOT BIG SLALOM

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to better maneuver the ball under control with the inside and outside of the foot.
- Learn how to work with focus and determination toward skill development.

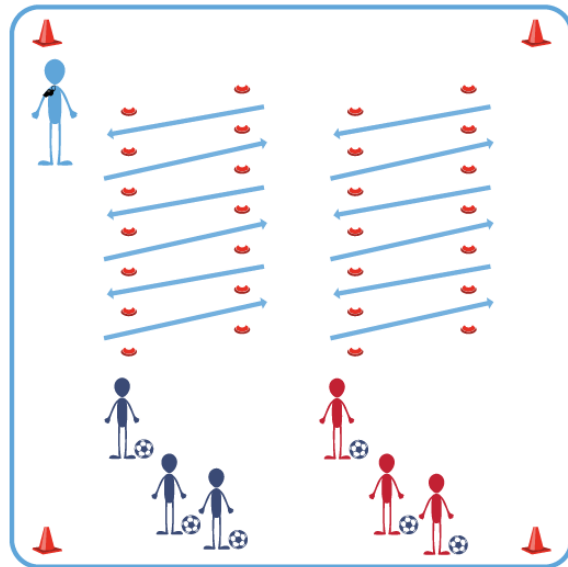
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 12 to 14 low-profile cones per group

Set-Up:

- Create 2 parallel slalom lines 5 paces apart for each group using low-profile cones spaced two paces apart.
- Create groups of 3 or 5 players per group.
- Each player with a ball, standing with their group at a slalom course.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time to for One Foot Big Slaloms. The object of this drill is to dribble zigzag, in and out of the cone course using the inside and outside of only one foot.
2. On the whistle, the first player in line will begin dribbling with the right foot only. Zigzag from one line to the next and back, making your way down the course. Use controlled touches on the ball. Stay focused on every touch.
3. As soon as the first player reaches the mid-way point through the course, the next player will go. Continue this rotation until you hear the whistle.
4. On you next turn, use only your left foot. Continue alternating with each turn.
5. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Changing the distance between cones changes the dynamic of the drill.
 - Once players demonstrate control, make this activity a race.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: What types of distractions made you lose your focus during this drill?
- Q2: What can you do to minimize or avoid those distractions?
- Q3: What types of distractions might you face during a game? Why is it important to practice focusing during our skill development drills?



STAY IN YOUR LANE

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to control the ball while dribbling in the open field.
- Learn how to work with focus and determination toward skill development.

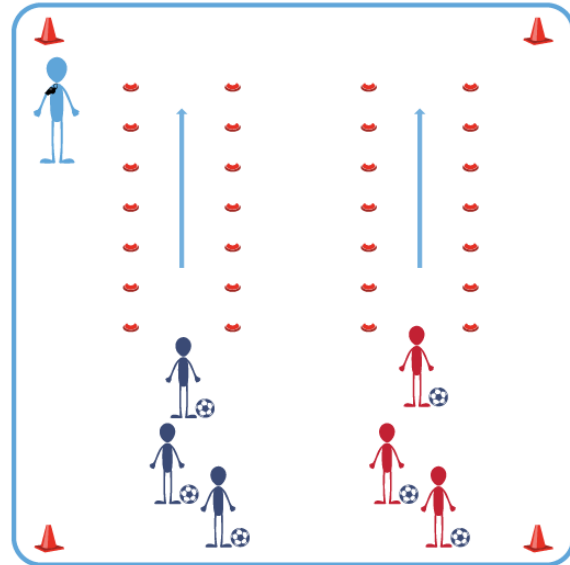
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 8 low-profile cones per group

Set-Up:

- Use 2 parallel lines of cones to create a dribbling lane. Lanes should be 4 to 6 paces wide and 20 to 50 yards long.
- Create groups of 3 to 5 players per group.
- Each player with a ball, standing with their group at a start of a dribbling lane.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time to for Stay In Your Lane dribbling challenges. The object is to use one foot to dribble straight down the dribble lane without the ball going outside the lane.
2. Control touch challenge. Dribble at a medium pace with a focus on touching the ball with your right foot each time you bring your right foot forward. On your next turn, do this with your left foot. As soon as the first player gets halfway down the lane, the next player can start.
3. Speed lane challenge. Dribble as fast as you can and keep the ball in the lane. Push the ball ahead so that you take more than two strides in between touches. Continue using only 1 foot per turn down the lane. Switch on the next turn.
4. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Shorten or lengthen the lanes based on fitness and skill level.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: When dribbling for speed, the outside of the foot often works best for keeping the ball moving straight. Why do you think that is?
- Q2: What are some strategies you can use to help improve your performance if you're having trouble keeping the ball inside the lane?
- Why is this drill important? How will it apply to game play?



STOP ON A DIME CHALLENGE!

Ball Control: Dribbling

COACHING GOALS

During this drill, my team will:

- Learn how to control the ball while changing directions and stopping quickly.
- Learn how to work through fatigue while focusing on quality touches.

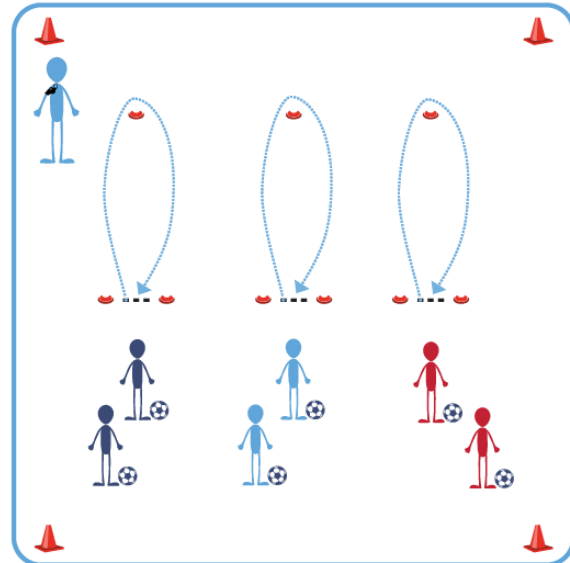
EQUIPMENT & SET-UP

Equipment:

- 1 soccer ball per player
- 3 low-profile cones per group

Set-Up:

- Use cones to create an elongated triangle with one cone 15 yards from a start/stop gate.
- Create groups of 2 or 3 players per group.
- Each group with a ball, standing with their group behind the start/stop gate.



HOW TO PLAY

1. It's time for the Stop On A Dime Challenge!
2. The object is to dribble quickly around the end cone, change direction with the outside of your foot only, and then dribble back as quick as you can – stopping the ball in the center of the start/stop gate using the outside of your foot once again.
3. As soon as the ball comes to a complete stop, go again around the end cone and back. Repeat 5X before giving the next teammate in line a turn.
4. ADD CHALLENGES:
 - Shorten or lengthen the distance between the start/stop gate and the end cone.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Now that we've practiced, let's see what we've learned:

- Q1: Why is it important to develop control when changing directions and stopping quickly?
- Q2: Why is it important to practice ball control skills while also working hard to develop aerobic fitness?