

YMCA Soccer Games and Skill Drills for 3-5-Year-Olds

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Attacking the Goal	Game	10	Players will learn that they have to attack a goal (cone) to score in soccer. Each team attacks a different goal (cone).	1 v 1—Each player tries to hit a cone using only his or her feet, not hands. (No need for any other rules right now!)	Coach: Which way do you go when you get the ball? Players: Toward the cone.	Try to have enough balls and cones so that all players get plenty of touches and chances to score. This is the point of the warm-up and the 1 v 1 game. If the number of balls and cones available is limited, have players pair off and pass the ball to each other before hitting a cone.	39
Attacking the Goal Team Play	Game	10	Players will learn that they can play with others on the same team and try to score (cone or goal).	2 v 2—Each pair tries to score by hitting a cone or by kicking into a small goal.	Coach: Who is on your team? Players: (Name of teammate) Coach: Which goal are you trying to score in? Players: That one. (Have them point.) Coach: Where do you kick the ball to score? Players: In the goal. (If they say “in there,” have them show you.)		40

¹ This document offers activities, telling you what to teach. For guidance on how to teach fundamentals, see the Teaching Skills and Tactics Topics in the in the YMCA’s **Coaching Soccer** online course.

² This page number refers to pages in the “Plans for 3- to 5-Year-Olds” document found on the “Season and Practice Plans” page in the YMCA’s **Coaching Soccer** online course.

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Field Boundaries Start/Restart Attacking the Goal	Game	20	Players will learn appropriate ways of restarting the game when the ball goes out of play.	3 v 3—Each team of three tries to score into a small goal. For each pair of teams, mark a playing area no larger than 50 by 30 feet.	<p>Coach: How do we start the game? Players: With a kickoff at the center. The other team must go back into its own half.</p> <p>Coach: What happens when the ball goes out-of-bounds? Players: The other team gets to kick it in. (Don't allow throw-ins yet.)</p> <p>Coach: What happens after you score a goal? Players: A kickoff at the center. The team that scored must go back into its own half.</p>		41
Dribbling Start/Restart Attacking the Goal	Game	10	To play a 3 v 3 game, focusing on controlling the ball (as opposed to kicking it anywhere).	The objective is for players to be able to move with the ball (dribble) during the 3 v 3 game.	<p>Coach: How can you get the ball up the field? Players: Run with it.</p> <p>Coach: What do we call this in soccer? Players: Dribbling.</p> <p>Coach: When you dribble the ball, should it be close to you or far away? Players: Close to you.</p> <p>Coach: What part of the foot should you use to dribble—the inside, the outside, or the toe? Players: The inside or outside.</p>	To use as a Game 2: Teams are 3 v 1 or 3 v 2. Choose based on the skill proficiency of your players. Players will learn to avoid opponents when they have the ball during game play.	43

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Dribbling	Skill Drill	5	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to control the ball while dribbling. 2. Practice controlling the ball while dribbling.	Individual—Each player dribbles in space and changes directions when you call “turn.” Young children are unpredictable. When you ask them questions, you may not get the answers you are hoping for. You may need to probe. Ask “What else?” Or give them choices: “Do you think it is this or that?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Keep the ball close.” • “Use the inside and outside of both feet.” • “Push the ball gently.” 		44
Dribbling	Skill Drill	5	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to control the ball with the inside or the outside of the foot while dribbling. 2. Practice controlling the ball while dribbling with the inside or outside of the foot.	Individual—First demonstrate dribbling with the inside and outside of the foot. Then have the players dribble individually while you call “turn” and “inside” or “outside” of foot.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Keep the ball close.” • “Use the inside and outside of both feet.” • “Push the ball gently.” • “Turn inside” or “Turn outside.” 	Play Follow the Leader, having the players follow you and dribble as you move about the playing area at slow speed, dribbling with both feet.	44
Dribbling Avoiding Opponent	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to move the ball to avoid an opponent. 2. Practice moving the ball to avoid an opponent.	Individual—Each player dribbles with control to avoid an opponent, which is you. The players move freely with the ball, but must avoid you when they see you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Move the ball away from me.” • “Keep the ball close.” • “Use the inside and outside of both feet.” • “Push the ball gently.” 		45
Attacking the Goal Passing	Game	10	Players will work with a teammate to score.	2 v 2—Players kick to cones or small goals.	<p>Coach: How can you help each other and work together to score? (You might have to prompt the answer by showing them an example. Put two players on the field, one close to the goal and the other farther back with the ball. Then ask “What is the quickest way for you two to get the ball into the goal?”)</p> <p>Players: Pass the ball forward toward the goal.</p>		47

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Passing	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to pass accurately to a partner. 2. Practice passing accurately to a partner.	Pairs—First demonstrate the proper passing technique. Then have partners practice passing, both when stationary and when moving the ball.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Get close to the ball.” • “Face your partner.” • “Turn your foot out” (so they use the inside of the foot). • “Follow through toward your partner.” 	More advanced players will pick up the skill quickly. Have these players also use the outside of the foot (by turning the foot inward rather than outward).	48
Passing Creating Passing Lanes	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to move to support a teammate with the ball. 2. Practice moving to support a teammate with the ball.	Pairs—Tell partners to practice getting the ball from one end of the field to the other without running with the ball. Ask “How do you do it?” They should answer “Pass and move forward.” After they practice passing the ball and score at the other end, they come back.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pass and move ahead of your partner.” 	Notice that some players need more attention than others. Observe which pairs are struggling and provide them with a little extra help.	49
Passing Creating Passing Lanes	Game	15	Players will learn to pass and move ahead during the game.	3 v 1, 3 v 2, or 3 v 3 (choose based on the skill proficiency of your players)—Each team of three tries to pass often during the game. Rotate players accordingly so they all have a chance to play offense and defense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pass and move ahead.” 		49
Passing Receiving Triangle Formation	Game	10	Players will remember to move the ball downfield by passing and receiving.	3 v 3—Each team of three tries to pass often during the game. Emphasize and encourage passing in the game. Freeze the game when you see it happen, and point out good passing, receiving, and dribbling under control.	<p>Coach: What do you need to do when the ball comes to you? Players: Stop it.</p> <p>Coach: How do you stop it? Players: (Various answers, to which you could respond, “Yes, you can.”)</p>	To use as a Game 2: Teams are 3 v 1 or 3 v 2. Choose based on the skill proficiency of your players.	51
Receiving Triangle Formation	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to receive a pass and control the ball. 2. Practice receiving passes and controlling the ball.	Groups of three—Each group passes in a triangle formation, focusing on receiving the ball.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Get behind the ball.” • “Use the inside or outside of the foot.” • “Push the ball gently toward the player you will pass to next.” • “Make the next pass.” 	Have better players move the triangle over the field as they pass.	52

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Receiving Dribbling Triangle Formation	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to receive a pass and move with the ball under control. 2. Practice receiving passes and moving with the ball under control.	Groups of three—In a triangle formation, each person receives the ball and dribbles a little before passing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Push the ball into space.” • “Dribble keeping the ball close.” • “Find a teammate and pass.” 	Have better players move the triangle over the field as they pass.	53
Spacing Passing Receiving	Game	10	To keep possession of the ball by supporting teammates who have it.	<p>3 v 3—Each team tries to have teammates help each other during the game. The objective is for players to be able to move to a good position to receive a pass when a teammate has the ball during a game.</p> <p>Explain that a regulation game has 11 v 11 and that all players spread over the field so they can help or support each other.</p> <p>Freeze the game occasionally to show players where good supporting positions are. Watch that players don’t try to support by getting too close to teammates who have the ball. This only makes the game more crowded, so encourage them to stay in space to receive a pass.</p>	<p>Coach: Where can you go to help a teammate who has the ball? (You may have to show them an example. Put a defender in front of the player with the ball so that the player who wants to receive the ball has to move away into space. Then ask “If Katie has the ball here, where can Matthew go so that Katie can pass to him?”)</p> <p>Players: To space.</p>	To use as a Game 2: Teams are 3 v 1 or 3 v 2. Choose based on the skill proficiency of your players.	55
Spacing Passing Receiving	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to stay in space to receive passes. 2. Practice staying in space to receive passes.	Teams of three, unopposed—Each team tries to make four passes as it moves to the end of the field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pass and move forward into space.” • “Receive and pass to a teammate.” 		56
Spacing Passing Receiving	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to create a passing lane away from the defender. 2. Practice moving to create a passing lane away from the defender.	Teams of three—You oppose each group for one or two passes, then move to the next group when it begins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Move away from me so he (or she) can pass to you.” • “Pass the ball by me.” 	Make better players work harder to get the ball around you.	56

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Passing Passing Lanes Triangle Formation	Game	10	Players keep possession of the ball by passing well, receiving the ball effectively, and supporting teammates who have the ball.	3 v 3—Each team tries to pass three times before scoring a goal. If they do, give them an extra point for that goal.	Coach: How can you keep the ball as a team? Players: Pass. Coach: What do you need to do as well as passing? Players: Receive and control. Coach: If a player with the ball wants to pass, what does he or she need? (Again, you may need to set this up in a demonstration.) Players: Someone to pass to.	To use as a Game 2: Teams are 3 v 1 or 3 v 2. Choose based on the skill proficiency of your players. Another variation: Players play 2 v 1 in an area 20 feet by 10 feet with a small goal.	58
Passing Creating Passing Lanes Triangle Formation	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to create a passing lane around a defender. 2. Practice moving to create a passing lane around a defender.	Groups of three—Each team tries to pass in a triangle formation, with you opposing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Move to help your teammate.” • “Pass and control the ball.” 	Apply more pressure to better players. This will challenge their control.	59
Passing Creating Passing Lanes	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to support a teammate under pressure. 2. Practice supporting a teammate under pressure.	2 v 1—Players practice in an area 20 feet by 10 feet with a small goal. The two attackers must pass three times before scoring in the goal while defended by the third player. Remember to have the players rotate playing the defender in skill practice 2. If necessary, guide players to the right answers as you ask questions by setting up scenarios (e.g., if Katie wants to pass to Michael or Kolicia, where do they have to be?).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pass and move quickly.” 		59

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Shooting	Game	10	Players shoot a stationary or moving ball accurately at the goal.	3 v 3—Players try to score as many goals as they can.	Coach: What do you have to do to score? Players: Shoot. Coach: When you shoot, where should you aim the ball? Players: At the goal.	To use as a Game 2: Teams are 3 v 1 or 3 v 2. Choose based on the skill proficiency of your players. Have teams count the number of goals they score in Game 1 and see if they can score more in Game 2. This way they see the value of practice.	63
Shooting	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to accurately shoot a stationary ball into the goal. 2. Practice accurately shooting a stationary ball into the goal without pressure.	Groups of three—Have one retriever and two shooters. Each shooter shoots a stationary ball into the goal he or she is attacking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Get close to the ball.” (Use a long stride to plant the non-striking foot beside the ball.) • “Use the laces to kick the ball.” • “Keep the toe down as you shoot.” 	Have better players shoot from farther away.	63
Shooting	Skill Drill	10	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to accurately shoot a moving ball into the goal. 2. Practice accurately shooting a moving ball into the goal.	Groups of three—You or one of the teammates rolls the ball forward so the shooters can move in and shoot the moving ball.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Catch up to the ball.” • “Shoot before the ball stops rolling.” • “Get close to the ball, use laces, toe down.” 	Have better players shoot from farther away.	64

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Shooting	Game	10	Players will learn to attempt more shots and shoot accurately under pressure during game play.	3 v 3, shooting to goals. Players shoot under pressure from a defender during game play.	<p>Coach: Do you always have a lot of time to shoot in a game? Players: No, sometimes you have to hurry.</p> <p>Coach: When do you have to hurry? Players: When an opponent is close to you.</p>	<p>Keep the feeds simple for weaker players. A low, rolling ball is easy to control and shoot.</p> <p>Vary the feeds for better players so the ball bounces a little, making control before the shot more challenging.</p> <p>To use as a Game 2: Teams are 3 v 1 or 3 v 2. Choose based on the skill proficiency of your players.</p>	66
Shooting	Skill Drill	15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to shoot accurately under pressure. 2. Practice shooting accurately under pressure from a defender. 	<p>Pairs of players—You feed the ball between two players who chase it toward the goal. The first player to reach the ball must shoot as quickly as possible. This teaches shooting under pressure.</p> <p>For the skill practice, the best place to start feeding the ball is from the middle of the field. When one of the first pair has scored, the pair returns to the starting point by coming back down the sides of the field while you feed the next pair. As it takes players some time to return to the starting point, this practice might involve several pairs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Chase hard.” • “Shoot quickly.” 		67

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Marking	Game	10	Players learn to defend space, focusing on marking opponents when on defense in the game.	3 v 3, shooting to goals. The objective is for players to be able to defend space in a game by marking opposing players.	Coach: How can you stop players on the other team from getting the ball? Players: Stand close to them. Coach: If I want to pass to Katie, where can Matthew go to make it hard for Katie and me? Players: Next to Katie.	Freeze the game occasionally to check on whether players know who they should be marking.	69
Marking	Skill Drill	5	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to follow an opponent. 2. Practice following an opponent.	Pairs—When you call “go,” one player tries to get away from the other. When you call “stop,” the players switch roles, then repeat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Watch your opponent.” • “Stay close to him or her.” 	Use a ball. Player A can try to get away from player B while dribbling a ball.	70
Marking	Skill Drill	15	1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to mark an opponent who is trying to receive a pass. 2. Practice marking an opponent who is trying to get free to receive a pass.	Groups of three—One player feeds the ball to the attacker. The attacker tries to get free from the defender. Play stops when the attacker or the defender has the ball in space; they then do it again. In skill practice 2, you may need to take over as feeder, depending on the ability of the third player to feed accurately. Rotate the third player into the practice every two or three trials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mark your opponent.” 		70
Marking	Game	10	To defend their own space in a game, focusing on marking tightly and pressuring opponents who have the ball.	3 v 3—Each team tries to stop the other team from scoring.	Coach: If the opponent you are marking gets the ball, where should you move? Players: Closer to him or her. Coach: As the opponent you are marking gets closer to your goal, where should you move? Players: Closer to him or her. Coach: How should you move (quickly or slowly)? Players: Quickly.	Freeze the game from time to time to show good marking and to check that players are marking appropriately.	72

Topic(s)	Type	Min.	Activity ¹	Activity Description	Questions (Games) or Tips (Skill Drills)	Variations	Page ²
Marking	Skill Drill	15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to pressure an opponent in possession of the ball. 2. Practice pressuring an opponent who is in possession of the ball. 	<p>Groups of three—Set the cones about 10 yards apart. Players 1 and 2 each have a cone, and each stands by the cone to start. A feeder feeds the ball to player 1. Player 2 closes the gap as quickly as possible, trying to prevent player 1 from dribbling to player 2’s cone. Rotate the feeder into the practice every two trials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Go to the player with the ball.” • “Move quickly.” 	<p>Vary the distance apart that players start. High-ability players can start farther apart, giving the defender more distance to cover to close down the space.</p>	73