

## Dribbling the Ball

Dribbling is to many the essence of soccer, alongside goals. A dribble is spectacular but it doesn't just hold entertainment value, since a successful dribble can dish out a substantial tactical advantage for the attacking team, creating numeric superiority, clearing up a shot or a passing opportunity or simply causing panic in the opposing team's defense, ruining their tactical setup.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtyR\\_V07hxY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtyR_V07hxY)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2eFWhg-ETE>

### **Dribbling Soccer Drills: The Beehive**

Mark out a 20 yard x 20 yard square with cones. Each soccer player dribbles their own soccer ball inside the square using dribbling and foot skills to avoid other players. The idea of this soccer drill is to maintain control and dribble with the inside and outside of the foot, while stopping and changing direction and speed.

### **Dribbling Soccer Drills: Attack & Protect**

Mark out a 20 yard x 20 yard square with cones. Each soccer player dribbles their own soccer ball inside the square using dribbling and foot skills to avoid other players, while trying to kick other players' soccer balls out of the square (all while protecting their own soccer ball).

### **Dribbling Soccer Drills: King of the Ring**

Mark out a 20 yard x 20 yard square with cones. Each soccer player dribbles their own soccer ball inside the square using dribbling and foot skills to avoid other players, except for one player who is "it." Soccer players with balls try and avoid having their ball kicked out of the square by the player who is "it." Rotate the "it" player by making the person whose ball was knocked out, to become the new "it" player.

### **Dribbling Soccer Drills: One-on-One**

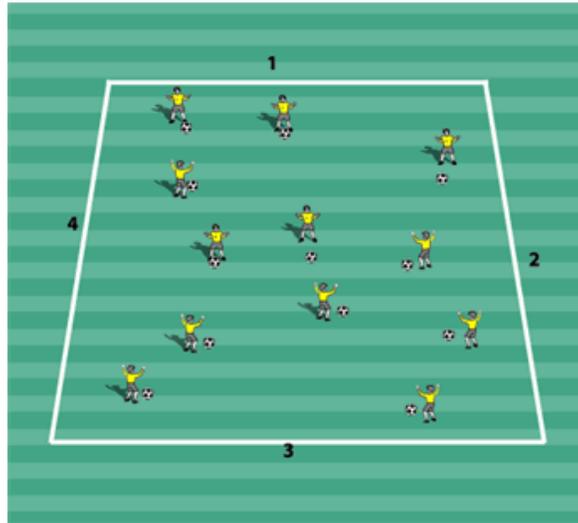
Divide soccer players into pairs with one soccer ball in a 5' x 10" rectangle marked out by cones on the four corners. One player is on defense, while the other soccer player is on offense. The object of this soccer drill is for the offensive soccer player to use foot skills to dribble to and touch one of the cones in front of him or her with the soccer ball, while the other player on defense tries to prevent this by blocking and knocking the ball away. Players take turns being on offense and defense.

### **Dribbling Soccer Drills: Shadow Dribbling**

Divide soccer players into pairs with each player having a soccer ball. One soccer player becomes the leader and dribbles the soccer ball around, while the second player becomes a follower and shadows the lead player (dribbling, also). This soccer drill should teach soccer players ball control, to keep their heads up, while encouraging creative foot skills and dribbling. Players should use the inside and outside of the foot, change directions and speed. Alternate leaders and followers on the shadow dribbling soccer drill.

### **Dribbling in Tight Spaces**

Start with a small grid and all players being in the grid with a ball.. Let's assume there are 12 players. The grid might be 15 x 15. Each line on the grid is assigned a number 1-4



This is a one minute activity. Each player must dribble as fast as they can (under control) and take the ball to each of the four lines of the grid. There is no order they must go in but they are trying to get to as many of the lines as possible in a one minute period. They must go to all 4 of the lines before they can repeat a line. This means while the order doesn't matter, they must go to line 1, line 2, line 3 and line 4 before they can go back to line 1.

They get a point for each line they dribble to and stop the ball on. If they go over a line, they don't get credit for that line.

The players do not try to touch any ball other than the one they are dribbling so there is no defending in this activity but they will have to avoid the other players so as not to run into another player or ball.

At the end of the one minute period, the player with the most points wins.

This is a fun, quick moving game for young players and works on dribbling, vision, stopping and turns.

### **Fundamentals of the Soccer Dribbling**

**The Angle** – the way you position yourself on the pitch when having the ball, opens up (or closes) dribbling opportunities. Theoretically, the easiest way to dribble is by moving parallel to the goal lines, which allows you to get some space and delays the defender's tackle. You don't actually create offensive superiority with this type of side-ways soccer dribble, but it does open up several passing opportunities and maybe even a shot.

**Luring Opponents and Creating Offensive Superiority** – a soccer dribble is efficient against both zone and man-marking defenses, considering the way you can destabilize both of these defenses.

Zone defenses require one defender to cover a specific zone of the pitch (central left area, central right area, etc) so if you manage to outwit one defender with a dribble, another one will have to leave his zone and cover you (since for defenders, the rule of thumb is that the player with the ball is always the most dangerous). This can easily destabilize an entire defense, leaving you with offensive superiority. Same goes for **man-marking** defenses, with the addition that these are even easier to confuse with a well timed dribble.

**Dribbling Technique** – Soccer can employ tactic to a point, but after that it's the player's own creativity and inspiration that comes into play. Therefore the dribbling technique you will use will have

to be "invented" right there on the spot, seconds before you actually initiate the soccer dribble. There are of course certain guidelines and certain "trademarked dribbles" you can try out, but ultimately the dribbling technique will be based on your skills and your skills alone.

## Types of Dribbles

**The Angle Creator** – I'm sure no one has a trademark over this type of soccer dribble, since it's far too common and widely used. The Angle Creator dribble is a quick burst move where you move the ball slightly sideways when facing an opponent, in order to clear an angle for a pass or a shot.

**The Scissors** – The scissors dribble is equally effective as it is spectacular and hard to counter by the opposing defender. It involves moving one foot over the ball in a quick motion, allowing your entire body weight to press on this foot, then immediately cutting the ball with the outside of your other foot and accelerating. In order for it to be effective, the scissors dribble must be done quickly and it's usually more efficient against defenders that stay "on guard", rather than a defender that attacks you decisively.

Once you've mastered the scissors move, you can try practicing with the double scissors soccer dribble, which involves two faking motions over the ball. This move is especially popular with Brazilian players; some of the most famous ones using it frequently include Ronaldo, Ronaldinho or Robinho. Cristiano Ronaldo also makes good use of the scissors dribble.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FogGzrYVL3c&feature=user>

**The Fake Kick** – This is one of the most effective dribbles in soccer when you're near the enemy penalty box. I'm sure you've all seen it: the attacker fakes a shot, making the defender jump or attacks him to try to block the would-be shot, but instead of actually releasing the shot the attacker stops the initial move and cuts the ball past the defender and accelerates.

You can make good use of your body to make the initial fake shot more believable, for example using your hands to "charge" the fake shot and so forth. If you want to learn how to dribble in soccer, this should be one of the first moves to try and master.

**The Lunge** – One of the basic one-on-one soccer dribbles that every player should start with. The lunge is all about using your body to trick the defender into thinking you're going one way or the other. Simply take a small sideways jump around the ball, pushing your shoulder and your entire body on the sustaining foot, and then cut the ball in the opposite direction, with your other foot.

It's sort of a scissor dribble, but without faking a step over of the ball. The ball should roll gently forward during this trick but you shouldn't really touch it during the dribble, only redirect the ball once you've confused the defender with the body movement.

**The 360** –What this soccer dribble involves is placing your sole on the ball in front of you, pushing it slightly further, "climbing" on the ball and spinning, then pulling the ball back with the sole of your other foot.

I know it sounds complicated, but once you try it you'll realize there's not really much to it and you can master it in a few minutes. However, the hard part about this dribble is using it effectively in a real match. It can be a great way to dribble past 2 or even 3 opponents that give you a short gap in between them to make the 360 move.

# Fun Dribbling Games that Teach Skills

NOTE: Several of the games listed are "knock out" games where the losers are knocked out and the last player left is the winner. Since the first ones knocked out are often the ones who need the most practice, those knocked out should be required to do something to either get back into the game or to keep them working on their ball skills until the game is over. One possibility is to set up a parallel game for those knocked out to participate in.

## Explode

Every kid has a ball. You get them all around you dribbling their balls as close as they can get. Make sure they begin their dribbling using the insides of both feet...no toe balls at the first practice! Make them keep control of the ball....always within one step....and do not let them run into one another or dribble their ball into another ball or another player. Keep telling them to get their heads up and see the open spaces. Yell "Explode!" at which point they all run away (dribbling their balls) as fast as they can. First one to get to a boundary or cone "wins".

## Flags

Players start with a ball and 2 flags. A flag is a cloth strip about 2 inches wide and a foot long. Flags are stuck into the waistband of the players' pants at each side. A player is eliminated when he/she loses both flags and his/her ball. A ball is lost when it is kicked out of bounds (by another player with a ball) or stolen (by a player with at least one flag but no ball). You can only take someone's flag away when you have a ball. The first flag usually goes pretty quick. The real fun comes when they learn to protect both the ball and the remaining flag by using the flagless side to shield

## Dribble Relay

Set up an 'obstacle-course' with cones as 'gates' - and team 'A' races team 'B'-they have to go out and back - if they lose control and miss a gate, they have to regain control and go through the gate. A variation is to have a small 'square' at the end. They have to stop the ball in the square, then sprint back and high-five the next player before he/she can take off. Another variation is to have several parents positioned at different places along the 'course' and have a different one hold up a number of fingers at random times during the race - and award points to the player that sees it and correctly yells out the number first. This gets the players heads up.

## Freeze Tag

Set up a large rectangle with cones and have the players dribble in the rectangle. After a short time, take the ball away from one or two players who then become "it." Any player whose ball is touched by an "it" player becomes frozen and has to stop dribbling, spread his legs apart, and hold his ball above his head. He is frozen in this position until another player dribbles his ball between the frozen player's legs. Switch the "it" players often and make it a contest to see who can freeze the most at one time.

## Red Light/Green Light

Each player with a ball lines up at one end of the penalty area. A coach stands at the other end and yells, "Green light," and turns his back to the players. The kids race across the penalty area to see who can reach the coach first. After a few seconds, the coach yells, "Red light." At that command, the players must stop and put a foot on top of the ball. The coach turns back around and looks for players whose ball is still moving. Those players must move a certain distance back to the starting line. Repeat calling red light/green light until someone wins the race. This game encourages fast dribbling while keeping the ball close.

## **Simon Says**

Just like the common children's game, the coach gives instructions like "Simon says dribble with your left foot" or "Simon says switch balls with someone." The players only follow the instructions if they begin with "Simon says..." Anyone following instructions that do not start with "Simon says..." are knocked out. But the knocked out players should be doing something with the ball, not just watching the game continue. Continue the game until one player is left.

## **Follow the leader**

Pick a leader and have him dribble anywhere on the field, encouraging him to make lots of turns, changing speed, etc. All other players have to follow the leader and do whatever that player does. Switch leaders often.

## **Get 'em**

All players must stay within a grid. Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'. The game is over when all of the players have been caught. The last player caught starts with the ball for the next game. If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It". Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard. Encourage deceptive passing of the ball: look one-way and pass the other; use the outside of the foot. Players not caught should run, jump, and use zig-zag movements.

## **Dribbler's Alley**

Four or more players needed. Set up one less pair of cones (gates) than the number of players you have in a line. Each gate should be about 6 feet wide and have about 10 feet between each gate. Every player guards a gate and the remaining player tries to dribble through the gates.

## **Last Man Out**

Two players or more needed. All players stand at a cone about 20 feet from a group of balls. There is one less ball than the number of players. On the coach's command, the players run to the balls, get one and begin dribbling. The player who didn't get a ball tries to steal one from the others. The coach keeps time and after a preset period has passed, the coach stops the game. The player, who at that time does not have a ball, is out. Remove one ball from the group and repeat until there is only one person with a ball.

## **Tag**

This drill is based on the common kids' game of tag. Mark off a grid or circle. Everybody needs a ball. Whoever is "it" must dribble to another player and tag him. The other player avoids being tagged by dribbling away from "it." If the player being chased loses his ball outside the grid, dribbles out of the grid, or is tagged, he is "it" and the game continues.

## **Ball Tag**

Everyone has a ball and dribbles in a confined area. The player who is "it" must pass his ball so that it hits another player's ball. The player whose ball was hit then becomes "it."

## **Hat Tag**

Bring a half dozen baseball caps to practice. Then, in a slight variation of ball tag, we assigned hats to the "taggers," gave everyone a ball and had them dribble within a grid about the size of the penalty area. Whoever got tagged got the hat and went off in search of someone else to tag.

## **Bumper car dribble**

The whole team does this in a small grid. Try and match players of similar height. Have one player dribbling while another partner is trying to nudge them off the ball shoulder to shoulder. This teaches them to dribble under physical pressure and teaches the players that contact is a good and fun thing. Before games I have 2 players inside a circle formed by the rest of the team playing for possession of a ball, gets the players in the mode of fighting for the ball on the field (30 sec).

### **Musical Chairs**

One less ball than the number of players in the drill. Players run around in goal areas in a scramble until whistle is blown. Players race to get ball from center circle and dribble to score on goal. Player without ball help get balls to center, repeating this until only one player left. Make sure to keep things moving along, don't wait very long to blow the whistle. Once players have concept start adding in defenders. One more that may work for you is using a ball as the goal. Have players match up by ability. Throw one ball out as the goal. Throw a second out that the two players will try and possess and score. First player to ball is attacker, second defends goal (ball) and tries to gain possession of ball. If successful, roles reverse. Only run this for 30-45 sec depending on effort of the players. I usually have 2-3 pairs doing this at once each with their own goal (ball) and playing ball.

### **Egg Hunt**

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. (If you have an unusual colored ball --make it the Golden Egg or something special.) At the other end of the field is a goal. I use a portable goal and call it the "basket." Blow the whistle, or whatever, and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. I like to time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task.

### **Snake**

Players are grouped into threes (preferred) or fours. First player is the "head" of the snake, and does not have a ball. She's essentially the leader in a follow-the-leader game. Second player has a ball at her feet, and must follow the head of the snake, dribbling wherever she goes. Third player is the "rattle". No ball, just following. Emphasize to the "heads" to vary their lead -- some fast, some slow, some sideways, some stopping, etc. I let one lead for about 20 seconds or so. Then, on a whistle from a coach, #2 drops the ball to #3 and becomes the head of the snake. The rattle (#3) becomes the dribbler and the former head circles around to become the rattle.

### **Line Soccer**

Start with two lines of players facing one another. Give each player a number and a "matching" player in the other line. Kick the ball between the two lines and call out a number. The two players with the corresponding number will play one on one while trying to kick the ball through the opposing line. This game teaches the players in the line not to chase after the ball since they have to defend their line in a limited area.

### **Circle Game**

Set up a 20x40 yard grid, make a center circle, and split players into to teams that can be identified by a color. Have all the kids dribble their balls in the center circle. Call out a color. That team dribbles toward their goal. The other team leaves their ball and runs to slow the attackers down trying to get them to a sideline and to dribble out-of-bounds, or not get to their goal line before the coach counts to 7 or

☐ Award 1 point for each out-of-bounds and 1 point for each player "held" for the coach's count. Attackers get 1 point for each "goal". Play to 10 points.

### **Sharks and Minnows**

Start with a defined area marked, adjusted for size depending on the age of the players. Half the players have balls and are Minnows. The rest do not have balls and are the Sharks. The Minnows start at one end of the area and must dribble across the area and across the opposite goal line without losing possession of their ball. The Sharks defend the area, trying to kick the Minnows' balls out of the defined area. Minnows that retain possession turn around and go back for round two. A Minnow who loses their ball join the Sharks for round two. The last successful Minnow is the Grand Champion.

### **Variations of Sharks and Minnows**

Sharks steal ball and go to a goal instead of just kicking the ball out.

Instead of eliminating players until only one is left, give points to the sharks for kicking out balls but let everyone stay in the game. Everyone gets a turn as a shark.

Sharks who take possession of a ball immediately become Minnows; Minnows who lose the ball become Sharks.

Players are not knocked out, but must perform some task before getting back into the game. (Such as ball dance.)

Minnows must control the ball in a goal area to encourage good ball control instead of just kicking the ball over the end line if a Shark gets close.

### **Death Square**

Everyone dribbles around trying to keep their own ball and kick out everyone else's ball. If a player's ball is kicked out, he must retrieve it, then dance on the ball for 10 touches before getting back in. A player gets a point for every ball he kicks out (so if you spend time outside dancing on your ball, you have less time to win points).

### **Under Pressure**

Get all the kids dribbling around in a square area and then remove one, two, or three balls, depending on how much pressure needed. Then announce that whoever has possession of a ball after 1 minute is a winner. If they can chase someone out of bounds they automatically win that ball. Count down the last 10 seconds real loud to increase the activity. Kids without a ball have to do some token penance; a couple of pushups, make a weird face for the others, nothing real negative.

### **1v1 to Goal**

Divide players into two teams of 4 or 5 each + one goal and a supply of balls. Station each team at a corner post of the goal, standing off, but facing the field. Place a GK in goal facing the field.

Coach/assistant stands behind the center of the goal with a supply of balls. Coach tosses a ball over the crossbar to about the penalty spot. A player from each team both sprint to the ball and attempt to control it, turn, and get a shot off. The second to the ball defends (if he then wins the ball, then he tries to shoot). When there is a score, save, or ball goes out of play, restart the same way with a different pair of players.

### **Treasure Chest and Trolls**

This is a three-team, three-goal game. Play with 1-3 balls to keep everyone moving and looking up.

Three players on each team play, while a sub is kept locked in "troll prison." Each team has three pieces of gold behind the goal they have to defend. Small disc cones, water jugs, etc. can be used.

Whenever a team scores in the opponent's goal, they get to claim a piece of treasure for their treasure chest. The trolls, older kids or parents, had their own treasure chest and would occasionally run randomly within the field of play. If you hit the troll with the ball, you could claim a piece of troll treasure OR free a teammate from troll prison. (decision-making!) The grand finale is the "breakout" from troll prison. Let each of the prisoners escape with a ball and head for the goal while the trolls run wild on the field for a final, furious minute of play.