

Soccer marbles

Objective: The "soccer marbles" drill develops both defensive and offensive skills. The defenders learn how to protect open space and turn with the football. The attacking players learn how to dribble, turn and perform evasive manoeuvres while running with the ball. Because the players take turns in each position, they develop a well-rounded skill set.

Age group: U6 upwards.

Area Needed: 10 yards x 10 yards.

Number of players: Whole team in groups of three.

Set up: Mark off a 10 yard x 10 yard area with cones. You'll need a stopwatch to record each attacking player's time. Give each player a ball -- two players start off as defenders and the third as an attacker.

How to play: The attacker dribbles the ball around the space, trying to keep it away from the two defenders. The defenders try to be the first to hit the attacker's ball with their own ball. When a defender hits the attacker's ball, the players rotate positions.

The coach times how long each player is in the attacker role. The player to last the longest, without getting their ball hit by the defenders, is the winner.

Coaching points: When dribbling, attackers should try to glance up and around between touches. Defenders should try to get close to the attacking player before attempting hit their ball.

Attackers should practice frequent turning and changing direction.

Progression: After a few rounds of this drill, try the following for 10 minutes or so:

The attacker must still dribble the ball, but the defenders can carry the ball and roll it at the attacker's ball -- increasing the challenge for the attacker.

Next, have the attacker focus on defensive shielding and positioning techniques. The attacker should work on shielding the ball by positioning their body between the defenders and the ball.

This drill teaches attackers to be aware of their surroundings while finding an attacking space. At the same time, the defenders practice following the attacker and reading their movements. Use this drill to increase coordination and teach players to think fast on their feet.