

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, there are five basic areas that can be included in each practice. These areas will be more fully explained in each Coaching Points & Drills section. Each practice needs to begin with a warm up and stretching time.

Warm Up

The goal of the warm up is simply to raise the player's body temperature by 2-3 degrees. This allows for a more effective stretching time. This part of practice can include direct soccer skills or simply be a quick activity that works on basic motor skills that will be used and developed while playing soccer.

Warm Up Ideas

- Linking Tag-- players are in pairs, standing next to their partner with arms linked. One pair is deemed the runner and the chaser. All players stand still except the runner/chaser pair. The runner is given a small head start and then the chaser begins pursuit. The runner runs until he is either tagged by the chaser or he links onto another pair. If he is tagged, he is now the chaser. If he links onto another pair, the player on the opposite side of the newly formed trio is now the runner. The chaser now attempts to tag this runner until they are either tagged or link onto another pair.
- Ladder Drills—if you have access to an exercise ladder, this can be a really fun activity for a warm up. Kids can run through, jump through, hop through, do 2 feet in/2 feet out, jump sideways, etc.
- Two Touch Passing—have players in pairs, first touch is control touch, second touch is pass to partner.
- Pass and Follow—have players in two lines facing each other. The ball begins at front of one of the lines. The first player in line with the ball passes to other line and follows their pass by going to end of opposite line. The first player in the opposite line receives the pass and passes to player that is now in front of original line. This passing player now goes to the end of the opposite line. Can also be done in a square.
- Flag Tag – players in 10yd X 10yd area (may need to enlarge, depending on number of players present) Flags are tucked into the back of each player's shorts (these could be pinnies). Players are each dribbling their own ball. Players must keep ball with them and try to steal others' flags. When a player's flag is stolen, they are out. The last player with flag in is winner.
- Hound vs. Hare—15 yd. square, players are divided into 4 lines—one midpoint on each side. Label 2 facing lines 1, other 2 facing lines are labelled 2. One of each number is

labelled hound, other is hare. Call number—hound tries to tag hare. If hare tagged, roles reverse.

- Pirate—Everyone in circle, all players except one with a ball. Player without a ball is the pirate. Everyone dribbles around inside of circle. Pirate tries to steal a ball from any player and pass it out of the circle. Now the two players are pirates and go after others....then 3, then 4, etc. Finally, only one player is left with a ball and he/she is the first pirate for the next game.
- Bridge Tag—players in 20x20 yd. area, 1-2 players are it. When player is tagged, they freeze and make a bridge using their hands and feet. To get unfrozen and rejoin the game, one of the other players must crawl under the bridge. Play 30-45 second rounds, changing which players are it.

Stretching

Although younger children are at low risk of pulling a muscle, it is a good idea to begin teaching a stretching routine so they are familiar with stretching as part of a complete exercise routine. Studies have shown that active stretching promotes a higher level of performance than static stretching. In active stretching, the player is holding the stretching position with the muscle group opposing the muscles that are being stretched.

Stretching Ideas

- Walking Knee to Chest—as walking, raise knee as high as possible toward chest. Can use hands on front of knee at end of motion to add to stretch.
- High Heels-while walking, kick heels up toward buttocks bending knees as far as possible.
- Long Side Steps—side stepping keeping hips and shoulders facing same direction. Players should take long side steps, feeling stretch on inside of leg. Reverse direction so opposite leg leads.
- Straight Leg Raise Walk—Walk while kicking leg out in front of body. Knee should be kept straight. Opposite hand should reach toward toes of kicking leg.
- Toe Walk—Walk up on toes.
- Heel Walk—Walk on heels while holding toes up.