

SOCCER-BY-NUMBERS PROGRESSION

Purpose: To simplify a child's understanding of basic soccer ball-handling skills. This progression uses numbers with little memory-rhymes to help the kids remember what skill it is they are practicing. This exercise can be used from the U-5/6 age group all the way to U-12. This is a paraphrased and slightly modified version of Challenger Soccer's "10 Steps To Soccer Heaven." Before learning each step, the coach should demonstrate the proper technique of the skill.

"NUMBER 1, ON THE RUN" - players dribble the ball in a confined area (20 x 30 yards or similar size) accentuating the use of different parts of the foot. *Coaches should insure kids use the inside of the feet for turning and avoid using the toe at all for kicking. Players should remain in motion, avoiding each other and the other balls using turning movements. Players should also not move in a circle, have them dribble all over the area, using every bit of space. If kids start to stop or slow down, coaches should "Prompt" the player(s) by shadowing them and attempting to steal the ball.*

Variation/Progression: have kids use left or right foot only

Coach shadows players so they can practice ball protection measures

"NUMBER 2, WITH THE SHOE" - players stop dribbling using the inside of their foot to stop the ball or resting the foot on top of the ball. *Coaches should insure the kids don't reach down and use their hands to stop the ball. While either method of stopping can be learned, stopping the ball using the inside of the foot is preferred as the player is immediately ready to either pass or resume dribbling.*

Variation/Progression: have a contest to see who can stop first and avoid stopping last

"NUMBER 3, COME TO ME" – players abandon their ball in mid-dribble and "steal" someone else's ball. *This is designed so kids can learn how to spot a loose ball and quickly take possession of it. Insure the players immediately begin dribbling again after they "win" the ball. Since all players abandon their ball, all players should "win" a ball.*

"NUMBER 4, BACK DOOR" – players practice reversal maneuver in mid-dribble by gently stepping on the ball and rolling it back past them, then turning themselves around and retaking possession of the ball. *Coaches should insure the players don't attempt to run around a moving ball to stop it – the idea is to stop the ball with the bottom of the shoe and gently roll the ball backward. Accentuate the importance of then immediately resuming the dribble as opposing players might approach unseen to take the ball away.*

Variation/Progression: if players have enough skill, back-heels may be attempted

"NUMBER 5, BEES TO THE HIVE" – players, will immediately turn from their position on the field and shoot at a free goal (either end) on the field. *This progression teaches the kids to direct the ball at a specific target and finish the "play" into the net. Again, coaches should make sure no toes are used to strike the ball. Emphasize control over power. Because each player is attempting to shoot at the same time, tell the kids to shoot and get out of the way after the ball goes in – do not stand in front admiring your shot!*

Variation/Progression: yell a player's name and have him/her shoot while the others are still dribbling – after the player shoots, he/she gets a water break, next player's name is called, etc.