

# LOWER MERION SOCCER CLUB

[www.lmsc.net](http://www.lmsc.net)

[soccer@lmsc.net](mailto:soccer@lmsc.net)



## SKILLS CLINIC SESSIONS FOR OUR YOUNGEST AGE GROUPS

### FALL INTRAMURAL PROGRAM

Gladwyne Playground

Pee-Wees Divisions -- 4 year old boys and girls

Atoms Divisions -- 5 year old boys

Neutrons Divisions -- 5 year old girls

### SPRING INTRAMURAL PROGRAM

Penn Wynne Playground, Welsh Valley

Atoms Division -- 5 year old boys

Neutrons Division -- 5 year old girls

Bantams Division -- 6 year old boys

Microns Division -- 6 year old girls

Michael Mark, Director Of 4 - 6 Year Old Programs

Biff Sturla, President, Lower Merion Soccer Club

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## SKILLS CLINIC SESSIONS FOR OUR YOUNGEST AGE GROUPS

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Each skills clinic should last about **25 - 30 minutes**. During these skills clinics, there will be a large supply of soccer balls. For dribbling activities, there should be one ball per player. For passing activities, there should be one ball for every two players. Once the skills clinic has ended, group the players into teams and let them play small sided games (this is usually 4 vs. 4).

The exact skill worked on each week will be determined by the Program Directors. The Program Directors will NOT always follow the outline in this manual. Instead, they will choose the practice activity that they feel needs to be worked on for that week.

Coaches should remember that goalies are NOT used in these age groups. Goaltending should NOT be taught until an older age. LMSC does not use goalies until the seven year old divisions.

# WEEK 1: INSTEP DRIBBLING

Dribbling with the instep of the foot will be the first skill taught to our youngest age groups. The instep (also referred to as the top of the foot or “laces”) is the most important part of the foot. In soccer, the instep is used to dribble the ball and kick the ball.

Coaches should let players know that other parts of the foot can also be used to dribble (inside of the foot and outside of the foot), but this particular practice will focus on simple instep dribbling. For these activities, the players will dribble up and down the field in a straight line. In week three of this program, we will focus on dribbling with the inside of the foot and changing the direction of our dribble.

## Coaching Points

- The toe is pointed towards the ground.
- The player lightly touches the ball forward using the instep of the foot (laces).
- The ball should never be more than a step or two in front of the player.
- The player should be touching the ball with almost every step that he / she takes.
- Keep the head up, players should only glance down at the ball briefly.
- Do not let the players merely kick the ball and run after it. The ball should stay close to them.
- When stopping a ball, the player should put the sole of the foot (cleats) on the ball.

When beginning players first learn to dribble, they tend to look down at the ball the whole time. Coaches need to make sure that they only look down occasionally. They should have their heads up most of the time so that they can see what is in front of them and see the rest of the field.

## Practice Activity

Each player should have a size 3 soccer ball. The Program Director will line the players up along the sideline of one of the fields. The Program Director will then blow a whistle to have the players start dribbling in a straight line. When the Program Director blows the whistle a second time, the players should use the sole of their foot (cleats) to stop the ball. Ensure that all players have stepped on the ball and that the balls are no longer moving.

Coaches and referees will need to show the individual players how to do this. Each coach / referee should work with two or three players. They should demonstrate the activity to players if they are confused and they should make corrections as needed. Be sure players use their **left foot and right foot equally**.

Challenge the players to be able to stop the ball as soon as they hear the whistle. If the ball was kicked too far in front of them, they will have trouble doing this. They need to keep the ball close to them at all times.

For dribbling at the youngest age, we start out at a walking speed dribble (only for a minute), then move to a slow jog pace, progress to a jog, fast jog and finally a sprint. The coaches and referees need to keep reminding the players that this is not a race. It is more important that the players learn to do this correctly, then to do this fast and incorrectly. Players who simply kick the ball and run after it need to be corrected.

## Optional Practice Game: Sharks and Minnows

Line the players up on a sideline, each player with a ball. The players are the “minnows.” The coaches and referees line up in the middle of the field, they are the “sharks.” The idea of the game is to have the players dribble from the starting sideline, over to the other sideline without the “sharks” kicking their soccer ball away. If a player’s ball is kicked away, encourage them to get their ball right away and continue to the sideline. Just let them have fun.

## Game Time

After the players have worked on the skill activities for 25-30 minutes, the Program Directors will divide the players into groups of eight. Each group of eight will be assigned to a field. Each referee will get four blue pinnies so that the players can be divided into two teams of four. The coaches should have the players briefly work on dribbling before they start their game. Encourage the players to dribble the ball in the game. Do not let them simply kick the ball down the field without a purpose.

Most importantly however, be sure the players have **fun, fun and more fun**.

## WEEK 2: KICKING AND RECEIVING TECHNIQUE

For the second week of play, we will teach the players the proper way to kick a ball. Our coaching will focus on the “instep” kick (striking the ball with the laces) and receiving the ball with the inside of the foot. Similar to dribbling, it is VERY important that we have players practice these two techniques with BOTH the right foot and the left foot.

### Kicking Technique

- The “plant leg” is positioned next to the ball, pointing in the direction the kick is to go.
- The toe of the kicking foot is pointed down. The toes will graze the grass as the ball is struck.
- Contact is made with the laces.
- The kicking leg should “follow through” the ball and wind up pointing in the direction the kick is to go.
- Have the players take a couple of steps before planting the non-kicking foot and striking the ball.
- Players should first work on kicking a stationary ball, then progress to kicking a moving ball.

Older age players will eventually learn to use both the inside of the foot and the outside of the foot for passing the ball. At these young ages however, we want to limit our teaching to kicking the ball with the instep (laces). Coaches need to know that the concepts of “passing” and “teammates” are a bit too advanced for these young players. The coaches should not expect the players to want to pass the ball or share it with anyone else in a game. Teamwork and passing will not be introduced until future seasons.

### Receiving Technique

The most common way for a player to receive a ball that is coming to him / her is to turn the receiving foot so the toes are pointed out and the ball is received with the inside of the foot. The player should lift the receiving leg slightly so that the contact is made at the equator of the ball. If contact is made well below the equator, the ball will skip over the receiving foot. The heel of the receiving foot should be much lower than the toes, which should be pointing up. This is known as “locking the ankle.” If the toes are not raised up, the ball will likely skip over the foot.

### Practice Setup

Each coach and referee should work with two to four players. Have the players divided into pairs with the players about five to eight yards apart. The players should work on passing the ball back and forth. If there is an odd number of players, a coach or referee can serve as a partner for a player.

The coaches and referees should observe each player’s techniques and make corrections as necessary. Be sure the players do NOT toe the ball when kicking it. It is VERY important that players learn proper technique at as young an age as possible. Be sure to check for proper technique, both when passing and when receiving the ball.

As time passes, move the players further apart. The players will have to kick the ball harder and the reception of the ball should become more challenging as the distance grows.

Coaches need to make sure that players are using **BOTH FEET** when kicking the ball and when receiving the ball. It is VERY important that we develop players to be two footed players. Be sure to stress this to all of the players.

If time permits, challenge the players to kick and receive the ball at longer distances. Also, have a coach or referee kick balls to them that are going to the left or right of the player. This will teach them to have to move to the ball to control the ball with either the left foot or the right foot. This activity will resemble game play where the ball is not always going to go right to the player.

### Game Time

After the players have worked on the skill activities for 25-30 minutes, the Program Directors will divide the players into groups of eight. Each group of eight will be assigned to a field. Each referee will get four blue pinnies so that the players can be divided into two teams of four. The coaches should have the players briefly work on kicking a ball and receiving balls with their teammates before they start their game. Encourage the players to shoot the ball with the proper kicking technique. Remind them of the proper techniques and remind them to use BOTH FEET.

Most of all however, be sure that all of the players are having **FUN**.

## WEEK 3: DRIBBLING WITH THE INSIDE OF THE FOOT

The third practice session will bring the focus back to dribbling, but this time the players will work on using the inside of the foot instead of the instep. Using the inside of the foot allows players to change the direction of the ball whereas the instep dribble is mainly for dribbling the ball straight ahead.

Coaches and referees should review what was learned in the first week with instep dribbling (i.e., ball control, head up, etc.) Remind the players that all parts of the foot can be used to dribble the ball. The inside of the foot can be used to dribble the ball to the left and to the right. Coaches and referees will need to demonstrate using just the insides of the left and right foot.

As a side note, older, more advanced players will also use the outside of the foot to change the direction of their dribble. Using the outside of the foot however is too advanced for players of this age.

### Practice Setup

The Program Director will move all of the players into the middle of one of the fields. Cones can also be used to define a playing area. Each child will have his / her own soccer ball to work with.

On command from the Program Director, the players will dribble their ball inside the playing area, using the inside of their right foot and the inside of their left foot. As with all other skills, it is VERY important that we stress to the players that they work on all skills with both their **LEFT foot and their RIGHT foot**.

Be sure that the players stay inside the field or coned area.

Start the players off dribbling slow and then progress to having them dribble faster and faster. Similar to the practice session in week one, the Program Director will start and stop the players often so they continue working on ball control. A quick review of stepping on the ball with the sole of the foot to stop the ball should be done.

By having the players dribble in a confined area with the other players, they will soon learn to keep their heads up so that they do not run into other players. This is why we have them all working in the same playing area for this activity. They will quickly learn to keep their heads up to navigate around the practice area.

Once the players demonstrate proper technique with the inside of the both feet, have them start using the instep for straight ahead dribbling and the inside of the foot to change direction.

### Optional Game: Kick Away

If time permits, quickly setup the following game which uses the same playing area as the above practice. The coaches and referees will move into the practice area and try to kick the players' soccer balls outside of the practice area. The players, while remaining in the practice area, try to avoid having their ball kicked away by dribbling away from the coaches and referees. If a player's ball is kicked out of the playing area, have them quickly retrieve their ball and rejoin the game right away. Note to coaches and referees: Do NOT kick the balls hard or far. We do not want to hurt the players and we do not want them spending much time chasing after their ball.

### Game Time

After the players have worked on the skill activities for 25-30 minutes, the Program Directors will divide the players into groups of eight. Each group of eight will be assigned to a field. Each referee will get four blue pinnies so that the players can be divided into two teams of four. The coaches should have the players briefly work on dribbling before they start their game.

Coaches need to encourage the players to dribble the ball in the game. Encourage them to try and dribble past the opposing players. This is a VERY important skill for them to practice. At younger ages, they will often lose the ball. Coaches need to remember that players will only develop solid dribbling skills if they are encouraged to dribble at opponents, trying to beat them. Do not worry if they do not succeed at this right away. It will take a long time before players are able to succeed at beating players on the dribble. Do not let them simply kick the ball down the field without a purpose.

Most of all however, be sure the players have **fun, fun and more fun**.

## WEEK 4: KICKING AND SHOOTING

The fourth practice session will build on what was worked on during the second training session. The Program Director will review the key technical points for kicking a ball with the instep as well as receiving a ball with the inside of the foot. Coaches should review all of the key points outlined in the week two practice session. Other key points to stress to the players include:

- The upper body should be leaning forward, over the ball, when shooting.
- The knee of the kicking foot should be positioned over the ball.
- Contact with the ball should be made at the equator of the ball.
- Players should NEVER toe a ball. Instead, be sure they use the laces to strike a ball.
- Stress to the players that they need to learn to shoot a ball both **left footed and right footed**.

### Practice Setup

Group the players into pairs, with each pair supervised by a coach or referee. Have the two players setup about 15-20 yards from each other. Put the coach / referee in between the two players with his / her legs spread apart to create a small goal.

The player with the ball takes a shot at the “goal,” trying to knock the ball between the coach / referee’s legs. After the shot, the player on the opposite side of the coach / referee will try to control the ball as it arrives, using the inside of the foot. That player then attempts a shot on goal. Continue this activity for several minutes, keeping track of how many goals each player scores.

### Progression

After about 15 minutes, the Program Directors will divide the players into small teams, assigning eight players to each field. Each referee will get four blue pinnies so that the eight players can be divided into two teams of four. Before the games begin, the coaches and referees are to work with the players at the individual fields.

Have each group of four players take turns shooting at the goal on their half of the field that they were assigned to. Be sure each player has a ball to work with. At first, have the players shoot at the goal with a stationary ball. After a few minutes, progress to having the players start further from the goal, dribble for about five yards, then shoot a moving ball at the goal. This is a lot more like what they will experience in a game since the ball is almost always moving during a game.

Be sure that players practice this both **left footed and right footed**.

Remind the players that when kicking a moving ball, they need to get their plant leg next to the ball when shooting. The timing of this will be difficult for players of this age, but they should still at least be aware of this concept.

If time permits, setup a small obstacle course with four or five markers. Set the markers up so the players have to dribble five or ten yards while changing direction at each marker, before they wind up to shoot at the goal.

### Game Time

After the players have had plenty of chances to shoot at a goal, get them organized to play in their 4 vs. 4 games. Coaches should encourage the players to dribble the ball towards the goal and shoot. Encourage them to shoot whenever they are near the goal. Most importantly as always, be sure the players have **fun, fun and more fun**.

Note: In this practice, more time will be spent with the players at separate fields than in previous practices. One reason for this is so each player will have plenty of chances to shoot at a goal. The second reason for this is so that coaches get a chance to work on their own with players. It is important to remember that when these players get older, they will be assigned to teams of 12 or 14 players for a season. The coaches who are helping the Program Directors today will be the ones who will be in charge of their own teams in future seasons. This is a good chance for adult coaches to develop leadership skills, organize youngsters, make coaching points, etc.

Coaches are encouraged to take charge and be leaders, while remembering that their primary purpose as coaches is to ensure the players are having **a fun time**.

## WEEK 5: DRIBBLE LIKE AN ANIMAL

This practice will focus on dribbling. Each player will work with his own ball during the practice session. The practice starts out with each player dribbling his / her soccer ball around in an area, going in and out of the other players who are also dribbling a ball.

The Program Director will then stop play and have the players dribble like a particular animal. This is a fun activity for the players since they will enjoy imitating various animals. But, at the same time, they will be developing their dribbling skills. Below is a list of the different animals that the Program Director will call out and ask the players to imitate when dribbling. As always, be sure they work on their dribbling both **left footed and right footed**.

**PENGUIN** - A Penguin does not go very fast. Penguins have both feet pointed out a little bit. The players dribble the ball by using the insides of their feet, alternating between the inside of the left foot and the inside of the right foot. The players should try to touch the ball with every step while walking / dribbling like a penguin.

**TURTLE** - Turtles are very slow, but can walk forwards or backwards. A forward moving turtle dribbles a ball by placing the sole of the foot on the ball, then pushing the ball forward a few feet. The turtle would then repeat this, using the other foot. All touches are with the soles of the feet, pushing the ball forward with the left sole, then the right sole, etc. Have them avoid going in straight lines. Instead, have the players try to change direction, dribbling to their left or to their right.

A backwards turtle would have the ball well out in front of him. The player would then reach out with one foot, place the sole of the foot on the ball, then pull the ball back while taking a step backwards. The player then repeats this, using the sole of the other foot. Continue alternating feet, pulling the ball back and taking a step back. The players should never pull the ball under them so that the ball rolls behind them. Instead, they should make sure that the ball is always within eye sight, just in front of them.

**CHEETAH** - A Cheetah is the fastest animal on the planet but can only sprint for a short period of time. When the Program Director calls out "Cheetah," each player dribbles as fast as they can while maintaining possession of their ball. Be sure the players do not kick the ball far away and run after it. Instead, they should keep the ball close so that they can change direction easily and avoid having their ball hit another cheetah. This should only be done for short periods of time since they will easily get tired.

**RABBIT** - A rabbit is rather fast and changes direction quickly. The Program Director should tell the players that a rabbit would dribble at a fast speed (but not top speed) but change directions every time they touch the ball. Now, the players are constantly cutting the ball 90 degrees to their left or to their right.

### Progression

After the players have had a chance to dribble like these four animals, play a game where the Program Director calls out the name of one of the animals and the players dribble like that animal. The Program Director changes the animal every 15 seconds or so. When the players get tired, have them rest.

At this point, to maintain interest, ask the players what other types of animals might play soccer and have the players demonstrate how that animal would dribble a ball. If a player says "elephant," ask that player how an elephant would dribble, then have the players dribble like an elephant.

As the players get a bit tired of this, finish the activity with a couple of fun characters. First, ask them to dribble like Frankenstein. Next, ask them to dribble like King Kong. See what other interesting characters they can come up with and have the group dribble like those characters. Be sure this ends on a fun note with the players laughing.

### Game Time

As with previous practices, divide them up into teams of four and play 4 vs. 4. Encourage the players to dribble the ball up the field and try creative dribbling moves in a game.

# WEEK 6: CONTROLLING AIR BALLS

In this practice, we will BRIEFLY show players how to deal with balls that are bouncing or flying in the air. These are not techniques that we will work on regularly. Instead, they are to be taught so that players will have a very basic understanding of what to do when a ball is off the ground. Each of the four types of air balls should be worked on for about four minutes before moving on to the next type of air ball.

## Low Bouncing Balls

The Program Director will assign two or three players to each coach or referee. The coach / referee will stand about four yards away from the players and gently lob or bounce a ball to each player. The ball should only be a foot or two off the ground. Have the players lift their leg off the ground and **receive the ball with the inside of the foot** so that the ball drops down to the ground and is not bouncing. Once the ball is completely under control (not moving) on the ground, the player should make an instep pass back to the coach / referee.

The coach / referee should serve several balls to each player, making sure that they practice receiving balls and passing them back both **left footed and right footed**.

## Thigh Trap

The thigh should only be used when there is a ball around waist height. The player should lift one leg up so that it is slightly off the ground. The player's leg should be slightly bent. For beginners, they can leave the toe of their controlling leg on the ground for balance, though most balls will require the player to lift the leg off the ground. When the ball is played to the player's thigh, the player will let the ball hit the front of the thigh and drop to the ground. From there, the player can control the ball with the feet and begin dribbling the ball down field or shoot. The coach / referee should lob an arcing ball in the air so the player can receive it with his / her thigh.

## Chest Trap

The chest is used to control balls that are higher than the waist. This is a VERY difficult concept, but we introduce it to the players so that they are aware that it is OK to use their body to control a ball. The player will lean back slightly and let the ball hit their chest. Leaning back allows the player to cushion the ball and have it drop to the player's feet. For slightly lower balls, the player can lean forward a bit and have the ball make contact with the stomach. By leaning forward, the ball will deflect down to the ground right away. The coach / referee must be VERY careful when lobbing balls to their chest. Stand only a couple of yards away, throw it lightly and accurately.

## Heading

Players at this age should NOT be heading soccer balls. The top of their heads are still developing and are not as hard as the heads of older children. We will only show players that heading a ball is part of soccer, but we will not work on this skill for any significant amount of time. The coach referee hold a soccer ball in the air with the ball about head height. The players walk up one at a time and lightly tap the ball with their forehead. Contact should be made just below the hair line. After players have had a chance to do this, the coach / referee should lightly throw a ball to each player. The throw should only be a maximum of two feet. The player gently heads the ball back. Each player should only do this a couple of times, just enough for them to understand that heading is a part of the game.

## Progression

Divide the players into teams of four with a coach or referee assigned to each team. Before playing the usual 4 vs. 4 games start, have the person in charge of each team line the players up about 10 yards from their goal. The coach should have several balls and be standing next to the goal. One at a time, the coach bounces a ball to one of the players. That player controls the ball, takes a few dribbles and shoots. Be sure the bouncing balls are played to the players in a safe manner. This is a good chance for coaches to take the lead role with a bunch of young players. Coaches need to remember that six year old teams in our program each have a parent coach in charge.

## Game Time

After the players have had plenty of chances to receive a ball, take a few dribbles and shoot at a goal, get them organized to play in their 4 vs. 4 games. While the games are going on, encourage players to work on all of the different skills that they have been taught during the season.

Most importantly as always, and please do not underestimate this, be sure the players have **fun, fun and more fun**.

# WEEK 7: ADVANCED DRIBBLING AND FUN DRIBBLING GAMES

The ability to dribble a ball and maintain control of it when opponents are near is a very important soccer skill. Even more important (and more difficult) is the ability to dribble the ball past an opponent. This practice will continue our work on dribbling and include some fun dribbling games.

## Practice Setup

Place all players on one of the playing fields, each player has a ball to work with. The Program Director will demonstrate a couple of advanced moves, then let the players practice them while supervised by the coaches and referees who will correct the players' technique as needed.

**Captain Hook:** Hooking a ball is a quick change of direction. The player takes several dribbles in a straight line, then quickly "hooks" the ball back in the opposite direction. This is done by having the player extend his leg out so his foot actually gets ahead of the ball. The player then uses the inside of the foot to turn the ball back in the opposite direction. The player needs to quickly swing his / her hips so that the player is now facing in the exact opposite direction that he / she was originally dribbling.

The Program Director will let the players dribble randomly around the field, working on hooking the ball. The coaches and referees need to make sure that the players are doing this both **left footed and right footed**.

**Pull Back:** This is another change of direction move which is designed to change the direction of the ball 180 degrees. The players start out dribbling in a straight line, then put the sole of the foot (cleats) on top of the ball, pull it back and dribble in the opposite direction. It is important for the coaches and referees to point out that the players should turn their body in the direction of the foot pulling the ball back and "see the ball" at all times. They should **never** pull the ball back under them in a way that the ball would be behind them. Be sure they pull the ball back and turn so that the ball is in eye site at all times.

Similar to the Captain Hook move, the Program Director will give the players plenty of time to work on this move while the coaches and referees observe the players and make coaching corrections as needed. Also, as before, the players will need to work on this move both **left footed and right footed**.

**Circle The Cones Game:** After the players have worked on this for awhile, the Program Director will setup a fun game for the players to play. The Program Director will drop about 20 cones randomly on the field. On command, the players will dribble their ball from one cone to another. At each cone, the players will try to dribble a full circle around the cone without the ball hitting the cone and without the ball hitting another player or another ball. Ask them to count how many cones they can dribble around in 45 seconds. (Note: Remember that some of these kids struggle to count at this age and some will have a wild imagination about how many cones they actually circled). As before, ask the players to sometimes go around a cone counterclockwise (right foot) and sometimes clockwise (left footed). We must continue to strive to make them two footed players at an early age. If the group is doing well, require them to alternate going around a cone right footed one time and around the next cone left footed.

## Game Time

After the players have had plenty of chances to work on the different dribbling moves, divide the players into groups of 8, have the referees get four pinnies for each field and get the 4 vs. 4 games started. Coaches should encourage the players to try the Captain Hook move and the Pull Back move in the games. Most importantly as always, be sure the players have **fun, fun and more fun**.

## WEEK 8: FUN DRIBBLING GAMES

With the season starting to wind down, practice time will consist more of fun games that will help the players work on the different skills that they have been working on during the season. The Program Directors will determine which activities to play.

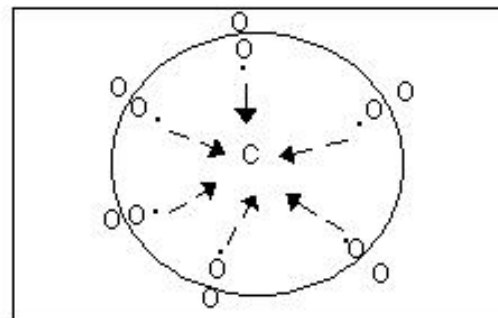
**Dribble Around The Coach:** Have the players setup in a circle of about 10 yards in radius. There should be two players paired up, each pair with a ball. Position a coach or referee in the middle of the circle. There should be 5 - 8 pairs of players on the edge of the circle.

On command the first player in each group dribbles the ball towards the person in the middle of the circle. The player tries to quickly dribble the ball around the coach and back to the starting spot. The player then gives the ball to his / her partner who repeats this activity. Let the players continue this for several minutes.

Variation 1: Allow the coach to kick away any soccer ball that he / she can get to.

Variation 2: Allow the players to kick away any other soccer ball that comes near them.

Variation 3: Require the players to make two full circles around the person in the middle of the field and allow that person to move around inside of the circle.



**Hook, Pull, Step:** All players are inside one of the fields, each player with a ball. The Program Director will shout out several different commands which the players will try to obey. The coaches and referees should help any player that appears to be confused or who is struggling with the activity.

Commands from the Program Director include:

- Dribble: Players dribble about freely inside of the playing area.
- Left Hook: Players execute a left footed hook, then continue dribbling in the opposite direction.
- Right Hook: Players execute a right footed hook, then continue dribbling in the opposite direction.
- Left Pull: The players do a left footed pull back move, then continue dribbling in the opposite direction.
- Right Pull: The players do a right footed pull back move, then continue dribbling in the opposite direction.
- Step: The players step on the ball with the sole of their foot (cleats) and stand still.

Before starting this activity, coaches should review the various moves that will be used. Coaches and referees need to remember that players at this age will have trouble remembering which is their right foot and which is their left.

**Dribble Through The Cones:** The Program Director will set up several small goals throughout the field, using cones. Each goal will be only two feet wide. Set up about 20 goals randomly around the field. On command from the Program Director, the players will dribble their ball around the field, trying to dribble through as many different goals as possible in one minute. When the Program Director stops the players, ask the players how many goals they scored. Remember that players at this age will have trouble counting and will have a wild imagination about how many goals they actually dribble through. Play this game several times.

### Game Time

After about 25 - 30 minutes of playing these dribbling games, divide the players into groups of 8. Have the referees get four pinnies for each field and get the 4 vs. 4 games started. Coaches should continue to encourage the players to work on the various dribbling moves in the games. Encourage the players to try and beat opponents with their dribbling moves. Most importantly as always, be sure the players have **fun, fun and more fun.**

## WEEK 9: FUN GAMES

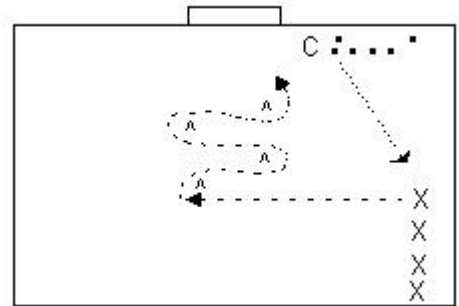
The following session can be implemented if there is enough time at the end of the season. Some seasons have more than one rainout so it is possible that there won't be enough weekends in the season to run all of the sessions in this manual. The last weekend of the season (see next page) is mainly for giving players a chance to play games and then get their end of season trophy.

The activity below can be run by coaches on the next to last week of the season or the last week of the season, if the Program Directors feel that there is enough time to run a skills clinic. This activity involves many of the skills worked on during the year, including receiving a pass, dribbling the ball, changing directions and then shooting the ball into a goal. The Program Directors will divide the players into teams right away and assign each group of four to one half of a field. Each team will have a coach working with them and hopefully a referee as well.

Station the players on the sideline, near midfield. The coach should have a large supply of soccer balls and be positioned by the goal. A set of cones needs to be placed in a zig-zag fashion, leading towards the goal. The coach rolls a ball out to the first player in line. That player receives the ball, dribbles it through the cones and then shoots the ball into the goal. After the player shoots the ball, he returns to the end of the line. The coach then throws a ball to the next player who repeats this process.

Be sure to only have four players on each half of the field, we do not want them spending much time standing in line, waiting for their turn.

In the diagram, the coach is near the goal with a large supply of balls. He plays a ball to the first player in line. That player must first receive the pass, then dribble the ball over to the cones, then dribble through the zig-zag pattern created by the cones. After the player goes around the final cone, he must dribble the ball towards the goal and shoot. That player then goes to the end of the line and the coach quickly puts a new ball into play for the next player in line.



After doing this activity for about five minutes, have the players go to the opposite sideline and repeat the activity. Rearrange the cones so that they have to zig-zag in the opposite directions.

Be sure to position the cones setup so that the players would shoot the ball right footed when coming from one direction (as in the diagram above) and shoot left footed when coming from the opposite sideline.

The coaches can change the layout of the cones to make it more challenging each time.

### Game Time

After about 20 minutes of playing this activity, get the games started. Be sure the referees have brought four pinnies to the field. Get the 4 vs. 4 games started. Coaches should continue to encourage the players to work on the various dribbling moves in the games. Encourage the players to try and beat opponents with their dribbling moves. Most importantly as always, be sure the players have **fun, fun and more fun**.

## LAST WEEK: GAMES & TROPHIES

The last week of the season will focus on letting the kids have fun playing games and then giving out trophies. This is a very hectic week since parents will want to take pictures of their children with their trophies, say their end of season good-byes to everyone, etc. Attendance is usually a bit higher at the last day of the season since they know they are getting a trophy at the end of the session.

The Program Directors might run a simple and quick practice session on the last day. Most likely however, they will quickly divide the players up into teams and get the games going. After the players have been divided into teams of four players and have gone to their fields, the coaches are welcome to run a small, FUN, 15 minute session before the games start. They may work on whatever it is they choose, as long as it is fun for the kids. As always, the players should get a lot of touches on the ball, get plenty of chances to work on their skills, etc. Coaches should keep in mind that skill work ending with a shot on goal is often the most fun. Coaches are welcome to look at the Week 9 practice described on the previous page.

The Program Directors will be VERY busy on the last day of the season, talking with the parents, giving out trophies, etc. They usually are asked questions about what LMSC has in store for them in the future, including soccer in future seasons, the Travel Team Program, etc. The Program Directors will likely be too busy to run a training session of their own.

The Program Directors will end each session 15 minutes early so that there is enough time to get everyone off the field and over to the table with the trophies. Instead of being on the field for an hour, players will likely only be on the field for about 45 - 50 minutes.

A few coaching points:

- Please be sure that all trophy boxes and wrappings are put in the trash can.
- If a player has a trophy that is broken, exchange it right away at the table.
- It is most important that the players have a FUN time on the last day so they carry that memory until the next season starts.
- If you know of a player who will not be at the last weekend, you may take an extra trophy for that player.
- Players who miss the last weekend may pick up a trophy at Main Line Trophies, Conestoga Road in Rosemont. The trophies will be at the store on the Tuesday AFTER the season is over.

Coaches need to remember that when the players get old enough, the players will be divided into set teams for the season and the individual coaches will be responsible for organizing their team, running practices, etc. This will take place in the fall season for the six year old teams and then the following spring for the seven year old teams. Coaches in these younger divisions are encouraged to sign up to be HEAD coaches for their child's team when the players get old enough. The following coaching concepts should always be remembered for all age groups:

- Practices and Games should always be FUN. That is why the players signed up.
- Skill development takes place much faster when each player has his / her own ball to work with. Also maximize the ball : player ratio and minimize the number of players standing in lines doing nothing.
- In practices, try to maximize the number of touches on the ball that each player gets. This will maximize the rate of skill development.
- In games, players should be encouraged to dribble the ball and try to beat opponents. They will often fail and lose the ball, but this is how skills are developed. They must be encouraged to try their skills in game situations and not worry about failing when they are on the field. Keep encouraging players to dribble the ball and try to beat opponents. It takes a lot of time and many failures before success will start to occur.
- Players at these young ages, do not understand the concepts of passing or teammates. This is OK. They will get that when they are older. Give that time, players at this age do not want to share the ball.
- Players love to compete. Practices should have a lot of small sided games. 1 v 1, 2 v 2, etc. When coaches are running their own practices, play a lot of small sided games. Refer to the coaching material that LMSC provides them to come up with age appropriate ideas for practices.