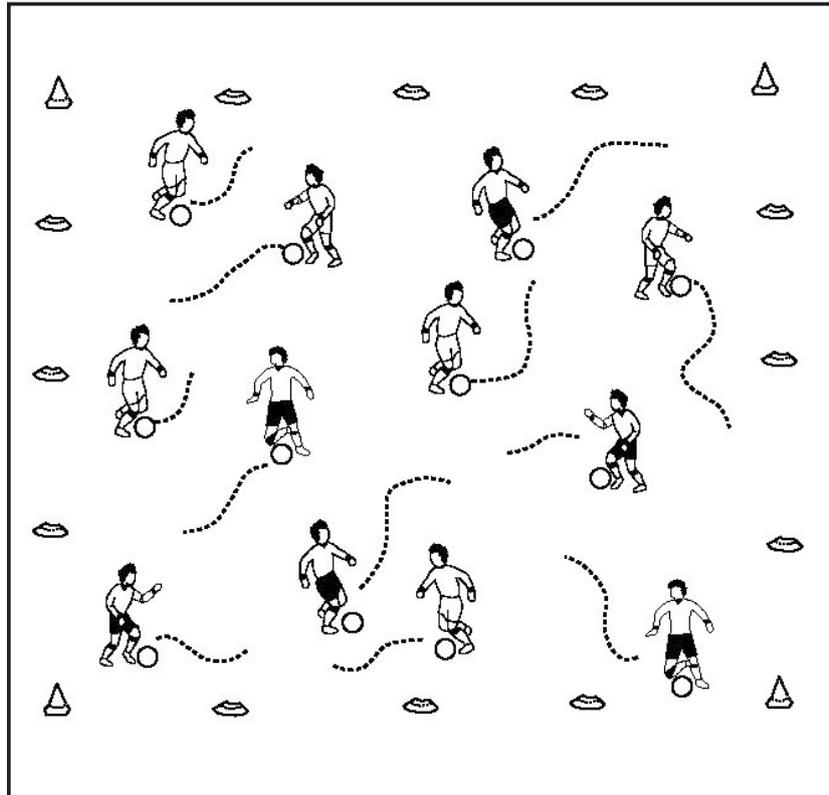


Dribbling 1 – Simple Dribbling

This drill involves a squad of players in another 20 x 20 yard coned square. All the players have a ball and begin dribbling around inside the square. This is a great drill as all the players have a ball and yes they are practicing close control and dribbling skills. The drill provides a natural challenge as other players are in the same space. They have to keep their heads up and eyes open so they are aware of the players around them and the edge of the square. But are you coaching them?



Most players will predominantly use only their favoured foot.

What can we do to coach or improve?

Let us add a rule, the players must use the instep of both feet, left then right then left then right and so on. Show the players what you mean by demonstrating dribbling with the instep of both feet. Make sure everyone understands.

How do we know they have understood?

Ask them watch them. Most players use the instep easily so can we challenge them further?

How could we change it?

You could always try speeding them up "How fast can you go"

Coaching the Coach

If you challenge them to speed things up and dribble faster what might happen? Could they revert back to their favourite foot again? Can you see this happening as your players train? If so ask them if they think they are doing anything wrong? How can they improve? Demonstrate dribbling with both feet and show how the ball is always under control. The challenge is using both feet and fast.

What else could we do? How could you change and challenge dribbling with one foot? How about the instep, outside and sole of that foot, let's see if they can do that.

Should they try with both feet?

Of course get the players to try the instep, outside and sole of both the right and left feet. Lets challenge them further, how about the coach shouting, "change" to swap from right foot to left foot.



Explain clearly and maybe ask a player to shout, "change" as you demonstrate.

When dribbling would you have your knees bent slightly and arms out for balance? Yes, then demonstrate and explain.

How can we create a bit of fun?

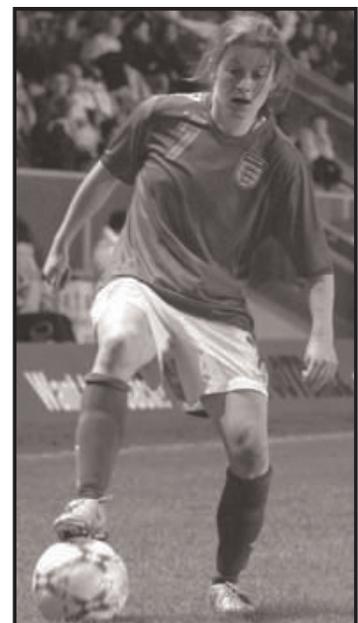
What if the coach shouts "Both" and then the players can use both feet alternately. If the coach shouts "Left" the players can only use the left foot and "Right" for the right foot and "Sole" for the sole of the foot. Who reacts the quickest? Who has to look round to see what other players are doing?

Now the environment has completely changed. We now have a more challenging use of all parts of both feet, reacting to the coach and with a bit of fun.

Can you think of more "rules" that we could use or a way of making it harder?

We could add "sole forward" and "sole backward" to get them to use the sole of the foot more and also in a direction.

We can give each "Rule" a number then the players have to engage the brain to remember which rule relates to which number i.e. 1 is Left foot, 2 is right foot, 3 is sole and so on.



What if we allocate each rule a colour and the coach has three coloured cones if they raise the red cone then the player has to use the left foot, blue cone right foot and a yellow cone signifies the sole. This means the players have to dribble about but keep their heads up watching the coach to see which coloured cone they have raised.

Remember to base these progressions on the skill and age levels of your players. Begin basically with one command and introduce more complications slowly and gently. With younger players these progressions could continue over several sessions. Older players may go straight to the more complicated drills. Why? If you give them a drill, which is not demanding enough or too easy they will lose interest and confidence in you as a coach.

Would holding up cones and raising the dribbling players head help a player in a game?

Of course, the more comfortable a player can be dribbling with the ball at their feet the better. This makes it easier for them to look up and see the players and opposition around them and where a pass can be played.

Would it be good to observe the players from the middle or the outside of the coned square?

I think you will agree that if you stand in the middle of the square you could also get in the way. So observing from the outside is far better.



I'm sure you have seen or can think of a few more "rules" that you can introduce to the drill, which you are now actively managing. You are dictating the degree of difficulty dependant upon the skill levels of the players. Introducing progressions and most importantly what and how you coach.

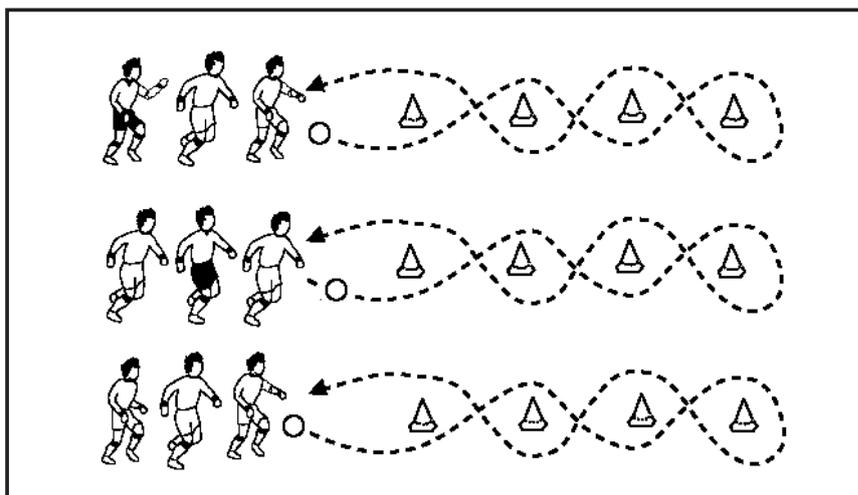
Do not expect a beginners group of 5 year olds to dribble about with the instep and outstep of both feet whilst watching for the coach to hold up a different coloured cone. Why? Because they probably wont even remember which colour relates to which foot.

Dribbling 2 – Dribbling Round the Cones

Now we will move onto a more formal yet standard drill. Everyone has seen a line of players staring out at a line of four or five cones spaced a foot or so apart. The first player in the line has the ball at their feet. On the coach's command the first player proceeds to dribble in and out of the cones and back again to pass to player number two who does the same.

Coaching the Coach

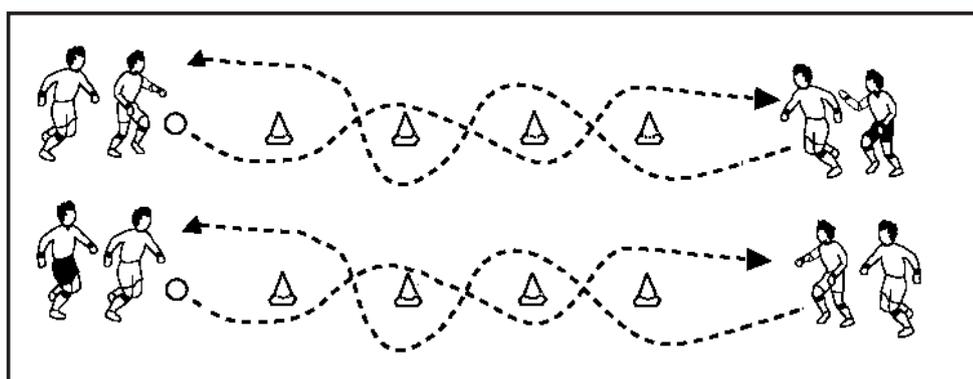
Before we look at our drill let us consider the organisation and another potential problem.



You have set out the drill above for your nine players as shown but unfortunately one of your players does not turn up and you are down to eight, what will you do?

It would be easier if you had the same number of players on each row of cones as they would then start roughly at the same time and finish roughly at the same time. This will make the drill easier to coach as players are not standing about waiting for one person or the odd player to finish, especially difficult if players are young or it is cold.

The first thought is probably to go for four lines of cones with two players on each line. This increases the number of drills being watched from three to four and means the coach has to keep an eye on a wider area but can be done. We could however think laterally, put two players at each end of two lines of cones. This gives the players less waiting time between turns and also means the coach only needs to watch two drills.



As the coach you will always have to adapt, you may have more or less players or even be a coach short. In these instances we must think about the organisation and how we can tweak the session to adapt to the circumstances.

Now let's get back to the drill and again we can supervise the players as they weave through the cones and yes, they are learning. The drill is helping them to practice close ball control. But can we improve the drill and can we coach?

Watch the younger players, can you spot any problems?

Many younger players will try and run around the ball so they can kick it back in another direction using their favourite foot. As the coach can you stop this and promote the use of both feet?

Can we get them to use the instep of their right foot when they kick left and the instep of the left foot when they kick to the right?

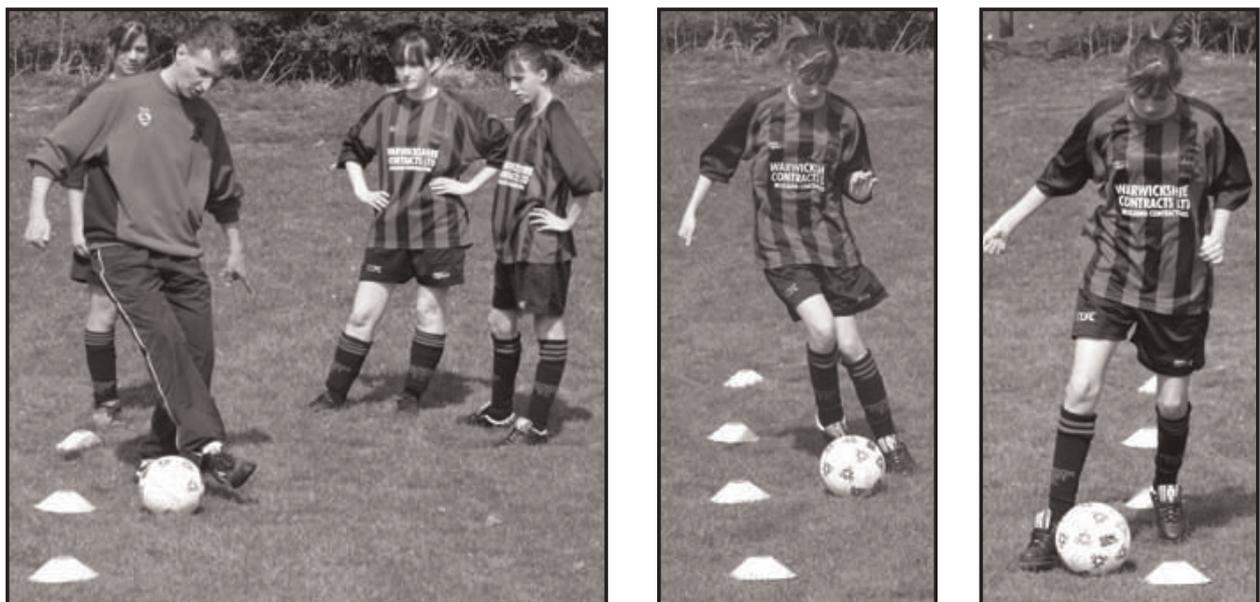
Show them how this makes it easier and faster, demonstrate and explain. Watch them to see if they have understood, did they do it right?



How else could we use this simple drill to improve our dribbling skills or adapt it for better players?

Going back to the warm up rules we have just used we could promote the use of the inside and outside of just the right foot.

Use the instep to kick to the left and the outside to kick back to the right. We could go out using just the right foot and return using the left foot.



Coaching the Coach

How can we create a bit of fun?

Simple, races can be used three goals for finishing 1st, two for 2nd and one for 3rd. Can you get the players waiting involved? Encourage the teams to cheer on their player doing the drill. If you make the cones to dribble round different colours for each of the teams you can name the teams after the colour of their cones. The reds can easily cheer, "Come on Reds".

Have you seen a change in the performance?

Does the pressure and need for a quick time in the race mean that the players have reverted back to using only their favourite foot? If they have, are they going quicker or is the ball going further away from the cone which means they take longer to get around them?

After a race has finished stop them and ask if there were any problems? What will they do next time to go faster or improve? Coach them to concentrate on lots of small touches with both feet, show them it improves their speed. Demonstrate by exaggerating the problem so they can see. Show them the difference in speed.

Can we progress this drill to make it harder or for more accomplished players?

Less space between the cones and more cones are obvious ones but how about moving them to a more zigzag pattern rather than a straight line of cones.

If you have used this drill before or seen it coached by others. Did you coach? Did you adapt? Did you demonstrate? Did you educate or coach your players? Will you do it differently next time and if so how?

Dribbling 3 – Through the Gates

For this we move back to our original 20 x 20 grid but with a series of gates or goals placed within the square. The gates are two cones placed roughly two feet apart. Make sure we have five or six more gates than players.

For the organisation of your grid would you use the same colour cones to mark out the square as the cones you use for the gates?

We could also ask if you would use the same coloured cones for the pair of cones signifying the gate or one blue and one white for example?

The organisation or setting out of your drill is incredibly important and needs to be clear and precise especially for younger players. In this instance we could use white cones to mark out our 20 x 20 square and use pairs of blue cones to signify our gates, if we need more gates then use pairs of red cones, any colour but white.