

Backyard Training Activities

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Often, you will find that you are alone or with one or two of your friends in the backyard or at the playground. The following activities are challenging soccer activities that will, not only keep you and your friends busy, but will help you improve your skills and your decision making.

Training on Your Own or with a Friend(s)

Dribbling

Multi-Cone Dribbling

Throw some cones (or soda cans, etc.) around the yard haphazardly. Dribble your ball around the yard touching it to one of the cones. When you touch a cone with your ball, quickly pull the ball away from the cone with the bottom (sole) of your foot and dribble off to another cone. Continue this activity for 30 seconds. Try it at different speeds. Build your speed up gradually, but always try to perform the skill at top speed...this is referred to as technical speed.

Multi-Goal Dribbling

Set up small goals with cones about 1 step apart. Place many of these goals around your yard at different angles. Dribble your ball through as many of the goals as you can in 30 seconds (ask your mom or dad to time you). The next time you do it, try to increase the number of goals that you dribble through in 30 seconds by at least one.

Nutmeg

Set up small goals with cones about 1 step apart. Place many of these goals around your yard at different angles. Dribble your ball toward a goal and push your ball through the goal. While the ball travels through the goal, you must run around the goal and retrieve the ball on the other side (nutmeg). As soon as you regain control of the ball, dribble at one of the other goals and nutmeg again. Nutmeg as many goals as you can in 30 seconds (ask your friend, mom or dad to time you). The next time you do it, try to increase the number of goals that you nutmeg in 30 seconds by at least one.

Combat

Set up a goal with cones about 4 steps wide. You stand behind one of the cones with the ball and your friend stands behind the other cone without a ball. Both of you face the same direction. You must throw or kick the ball about 10-15 yards out into the area that you and your friend are facing. The instant the ball is struck, both of you must attempt to get it (gain possession of the ball) and dribble it back through the goal. Play for 20-30 seconds. Alternate the server each time.

If your Mom or Dad is available, they can serve the ball from a position away from the goal and keep time. This is a great 1 versus 1 activity.

Options: - Mom serves (kicks) the ball out into the yard and you and your friend compete to get the ball back to her, instead of going through the goal.

This is a great activity to work on playing with pressure from behind. Thus the players must shield the ball often, escape the pressure of their opponent and create a space large enough to pass the ball back to the coach.

Kicking (Wall skills)

If you have access to a wall that you can kick your soccer ball against, consider the following soccer activities:

Training on Your Own or with a Friend(s)

Straight On

Kick your ball directly against the wall at different speeds (pace or weight) and from different distances. Use different surfaces of the foot. Try to keep the ball on the ground. Receive the rebound with different surfaces of the foot, always trying to keep the first touch within playing distance (about 1 or 2 steps from you). Receive the rebound with a controlling touch or two and then kick it against the wall again. Keep the ball moving and keep your feet moving at all times.

Kicking surfaces: inside of the foot, outside of the foot, instep (laces), heel, toe

Receiving surfaces: inside of foot, outside of foot, sole of foot

Angles

Position yourself about 10 yards away and at one end of the wall. Kick your ball on the ground toward the middle of the wall (about 45 degrees). Immediately after kicking the ball, run to receive it as it rebounds from the wall to the opposite end. Perform a change of direction move and repeat the activity in the opposite direction. Experiment with the pace and the angles of your kicks, as well as your receiving surfaces and number of controlling touches. Always try to keep the ball moving.

Change of Direction Moves: Pull back with sole of one foot and push behind other foot; chop with inside or outside of foot.

Tennis

Volley your ball against the wall with one or two bounces in between each volley. Eventually, keep the ball going with only one bounce in between volleys. Vary your distance from the wall as you play. See how many times you can keep the ball going as you move closer to and farther from the wall. Use different surfaces of your foot and develop a rhythm.

Set up a rectangular court out from the wall and play soccer tennis against the wall with a friend. Set up your own rules with regards to services and bounces, etc.

Squash

This game is played with more than one player. You can set up a rectangular court or play in open an area.

After a kicking order has been determined, the player #1 kicks the ball off the wall. The player #2 must get to the ball before it stops and immediately kick (1-touch) the ball against the wall. If there are more than 2 players, the game proceeds accordingly until all the players have kicked the ball against the wall, at which time the first player is up again. You get a point if the player that follows you allows the ball to stop before she kicks it or if she misses the wall on her kick. Play begins with the next player in the order striking the ball against the wall.

This is a great game for scheming (strategy)...putting the right pace on the ball so that it barely moves after hitting the wall or rebounds off the wall with great speed. Passing angles become a strategic threat in this game as well.