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## **HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS**

Here are just a few helpful hints and tips for you as you begin your next season with your soccer team:

- Engage the children;
- Create an atmosphere that is positive, respectful, and fair;
- Communicate to the children on an eye-to-eye level about the fundamentals of the sport;
- Emphasize the “team” over the “individual”;
- Emphasize participation over winning;
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship;
- Put the needs of the children over your own; and
- Never underestimate the abilities of young players.

**KIDS WANT TO PLAY and the game is a remarkable teacher!**

**We invite you to experience soccer with Skyhawks in 2002! We are confident it will be one of your child’s highlights of the summer. The energy and care our coaches and staff implement for children is second to none.**

## **SOCCER SAFETY**

- Take care and look after your equipment.
- Be aware of the field conditions; sprinklers, holes, etc.
- Be aware of tippy goal posts.
- No climbing on goals.
- Make sure you have water for the kids.

## **KEY POINTS WHEN SCHEDULING YOUR PRACTICES**

When planning for a practice session keep these few things in mind:

- Practices should be planned and thought out in advanced;
- Create a simple schedule to follow. Always have two to three extra exercises to reinforce the skill for the day;
- Focus on one of the following skills throughout your training session;
  1. Ball control
  2. Dribbling
  3. Passing
  4. Shooting
  5. Defending

These five skills are the basics when it comes to training your children. Make sure emphasize one particular skill throughout your training session. For example, if your practice emphasizes dribbling; make sure the warm-up is an introduction to the skill (whether they know or recognize it or not); and the scrimmage at the end reinforces one

or all of the elements taught during the session. See the sample practice schedule for more detail.

- Make your presentation full of energy and FUN! Ultimately, whether your children enjoy the game of soccer will depend upon how enjoyable you are as a coach and a role model. **The most important thing you can teach your children is the love and enjoyment of the game.**

## **WARM-UP**

A proper warm-up prior to playing sports is important to prepare the body for strenuous activity and reduce the chance of injury. Start slowly and gradually increase the heart rate. Relate the warm up to the skill of the day. Be creative, energetic, and make the warm-up a fun start to the day.

### ***Warm-Up Activities***

- Follow the leader
- Relay races
- Steps in ladders
- Tag Games

**Remember:** *Be creative and fun... incorporate your skill or small parts of the skill during these warm-up activities and games.*

### ***Stretching***

Some believe that stretching is not necessary at this age. Physically speaking this may be true, **however**, the habit of stretching will become very beneficial. Players should stretch throughout the warm-up activity. Stretch in unison and count out loud. Count in French, Spanish, Italian, and Pig Latin to keep it fun and interesting.

Ankles	Hamstrings	Buttocks	Back	
Calves	Quads	Groin	Neck	Shoulders

**Remember:** *Relax and move gradually into the stretching position. Hold 20 seconds...and do not bounce!*

## **Juggling and Basic Ball control**

The object of juggling is to keep the ball in the air as long as possible using all parts of the body except the hands. Some believe it is unnecessary to spend time learning to juggle. However, while players struggle with the challenges of juggling, they are polishing all the basic technical skills needed for good ball control. In addition, juggling improves players' control, coordination, touch, timing, rhythm, and overall confidence with the ball. Therefore, juggling does play an important part in developing a young soccer player.

**Remember:** “Not all good jugglers are good soccer players; but all good soccer players are good jugglers.”

## **JUGGLING**

- Begin by having all players sit down with a ball in each player’s hands with knees bent upward.
- Have player toss the ball to a foot and knock it back to the hands. Have them practice with each foot. This teaches proper leg motion. The knee joint is your hinge, not your hip. If they use their fanny or hips the ball will either hit them in the nose or fly over their heads.
- Strike the ball with the top of the foot on the laces.
- Have players stand up, drop the ball to a foot and touch it back up to their hands. Repeat this procedure with the other foot.
- Eventually, try alternating touches from one foot to the other before catching the ball.
- Switch to dropping the ball to the thighs and work up to alternating touches.
- Have players touch the ball off of a foot and let it bounce again “bounce...touch” etc. Then have the players try two touches before each bounce, and so on.
- Challenge players to juggle the ball low to the ground, high in the air, and on the move.

## **DRIBBLING**

Dribbling is a technique that young players will continually rely on. It is, therefore, important to develop a player’s confidence and to encourage improvisation and flare when teaching the various methods of dribbling. It is equally important to develop an understanding for the proper times and reasons that a player may dribble.

### **Reasons that a player dribbles include:**

- To “create” a shot opportunity or “beat” an opponent
- To “carry” the ball forward taking advantage of space given
- To “relieve” pressure and gain space or time to make a play
- To “shield” or maintain possession if there are no options

### **While dribbling, a player must be able to:**

- See the field
- Keep close control
- Change directions quickly
- Change speeds suddenly

## ***Dribbling skills***

### **Seeing the Field (Peripheral Vision):**

Have players look at a soccer ball a few yards in front of them. Then have them look at a tree or an object further away. Point out that even though they are not looking at the ball, they can still

see the ball with their peripheral vision. Explain how they can watch the field and dribble at the same time using this vision.

### **Control dribble**

Have players knock the ball back and forth from left to right foot while jogging in place. Have them roll the ball forward and backward using the sole of the feet. Have them move laterally or in a circle using the outside of each foot. Allow them to be creative and combine all surfaces of the foot in any sequence while moving around each other. Give specific commands such as “stop”, ”dribble”, ”tap dance”, ”moon walk” etc. Remind them to use their peripheral vision to avoid colliding with another player. Encourage quick feet.

#### **Key Points:**

- *Eyes will fall down to ball often*
- *Fanny down*
- *Legs apart*
- *Define your space*
- *Arms up and with hands and fingers back*
- *Use - inside back, top, and bottom of foot*

### **Speed dribble**

Have the players line up and dribble to you with the instep of both feet (i.e. step touch, step touch). Increase the number of steps between touches (i.e. step, step touch, step, step touch). Time players across the line as you would with sprints.

#### **Key Points:**

- *Eyes up*
- *Body upright in a sprinters position*
- *The line of path for the ball should be a straight line*
- *Use – outside of foot (predominantly), inside of foot for correction (this will slow you down tremendously).*

### **Change Directions/Change Speeds**

Demonstrate various cutting maneuvers. Have the players dribble in a straight line and quickly switch direction using a particular cut on your command. Encourage players to accelerate immediately into space after each cut.

#### **Key Points:**

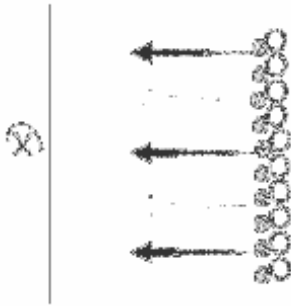
- *Eyes up*
- *Fanny down*
- *Legs apart*
- *Define your space*
- *Use - inside back, top, and bottom of foot*
- *Cut on outside foot... lean into direction of cut*

### Intermingle

Combine all dribbling elements into one grid as with the control sequence. As they improve move the cones closer making the drill more difficult.

### Dribbling Exercises and Games

Incorporate all players, with a ball, in all exercises. Add pressure of an opponent, an objective, less time, and limited space. Encourage peripheral vision and quick fee.

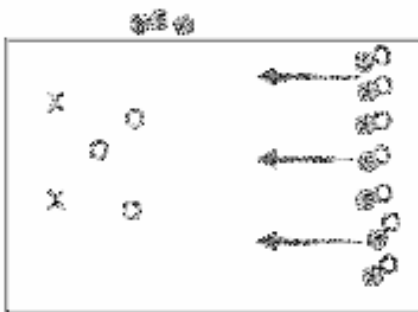


#### RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT:

Mark off a square 30x30yds. Have players line up on one end with their soccer balls, and choose a player to be the “lamp” at the other end. When the light is green, players may dribble. When the light turns red, players must freeze with their foot on top of their ball. If they continue to dribble, or if their ball keeps rolling, they must return to the start. The first player to reach the lamp becomes the lamp, and players begin again from the start.

#### TIGER IN THE MIDDLE:

Mark off a square 15 by 15yds. Have all players move about with their balls in the square. Choose one player to be the “tiger”. When he is released, all players try to avoid him and shield their ball from being knocked out. The last one left is the winner.

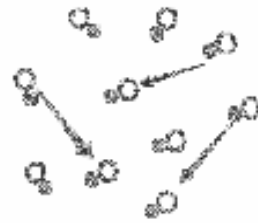


#### OCTOPUS:

Mark off a square about 15 by 15yds. Choose one or two volunteers to be “Diver Dans”. Line up the rest of the kids at one end of the square. The object of the game is to dribble the ball from one end of the square to the other, then stop. If a players ball is kicked from the square then he or she is to sit down on the exact spot and become an Octopus. An Octopus may not move his bottom from the ground, but if he succeeds in picking the ball from a dribblers foot, then that person is also out and must sit down also. Soon an octopus garden is formed. Last child with a ball is the winner.

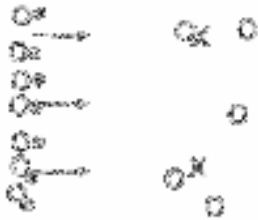
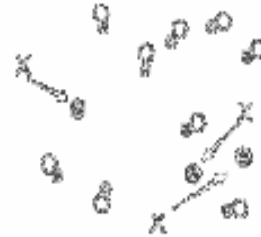
### **KNOCKOUT:**

Mark off a square 15 by 15. Have each player enter the square with his/her ball. Blow the whistle and have the kids try to knock out the other players balls without losing their own ball. Players must move and cannot leave their ball. Last one left is the winner. A good variation is to make 3 smaller grids and if your ball gets knocked out you need to start back at grid #1. If you knock a ball out of a grid you advance up to the next grid. This will keep all the kids working without having to stop or lose.



### **MEG-O-MANIA:**

Mark off a square 20 by 20. Choose two or three volunteers. Players enter the square with their balls and dribble around. Those that are it try to tag as many people as possible. If a player gets tagged he picks up his ball and holds it above his head. If another player is able to kick a ball through his legs that player can move again. The game ends when all players are frozen.



### **CRAB:**

Mark off a grid 15 by 15. Choose 1 or 2 volunteers to be King or Queen Crabs. Players try to dribble from one end of the square to the other. If they get their balls knocked out then they become “crabs”. They have to try to stop dribblers by crab walking. After three crabs have been created, then King and Queen Crabs become regular crabs too. The last player to become a crab wins.

These games are terrific ways to reinforce the skills taught for dribbling. Players enjoy these games while practicing the techniques just recently learned. Additional games may be created by using your imagination and the basics of these games. The reduction of time and space will always increase the difficulty of the game or exercise.

**Remember:** These games are intended to allow you to pull children aside and correct their technique while the other players continue practicing. This eliminates standing and non-productive time.

### ***Dribbling Scrimmages (end the practice with)***

- 1 v 1
- 2 v 2
- 3 v 2
- Three goal soccer
- Four goal soccer
- Multi-Ball soccer

- Number Game: Split players into two teams. Give each player a # 1-8. Coach calls out a number or a bunch of numbers. The players with the numbers called out play 1 v 1 or 2 v 2, etc...First team to 10 wins.

## CONTROL

Emphasize the fact that the ball can be the players' friend or enemy. If a player is tight and afraid of the ball it will control him and become an enemy. If a player can relax and move with the ball, it will become a friend. Controlling the ball is simply receiving it with a surface of the body and fluently taking the ball in another direction.

### **Key Points:**

- *Keep eyes on the ball.*
- *Body square and behind the ball.*
- *Present the surface to the ball early.*
- *"Cushion" on contact – "give" or "withdraw" the surface.*
- *Control the direction of the ball into the next play.*

### **Control skills**

- Sole-of-the-foot
- Instep or top-of-the-foot ("catch")
- Inside-of-the-foot
- Outside-of –the-foot
- Wedge (bottom of foot)
- Thigh
- Fanny...just kidding Chest

### **Example Exercises**

In pairs, have players roll, toss, or kick balls to their partners. Begin with balls on the ground.

In pairs, create an area in which each partner must stand (i.e. 3-yd. Circle). Each player must control their partner's throw within their circle to earn a point. The first partner to ten points wins.

In pairs, have one partner stand behind the other with the ball. The person in front runs until his partner yells "Now". At that time, his partner will throw the ball and the runner must turn, control it and dribble it back to his partner. The partners should then change roles.

### **Control Exercises and Games**

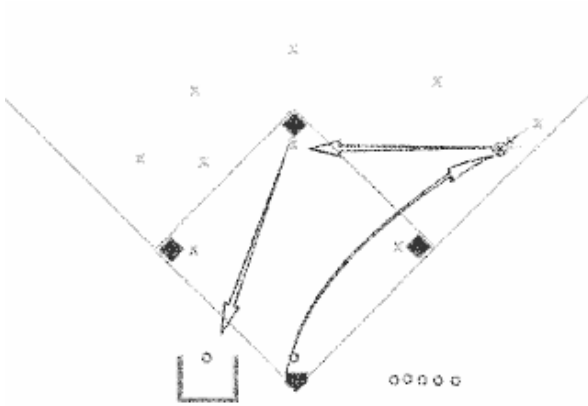
#### **500:**

In groups of fours, one player tosses the ball to three players who compete to control it. The player that controls the ball earns 100 points for in the air, 75 for one bounce, 50 for two bounces, 25 for ground ball. The first player to 500 points wins and becomes the tosser.



### **Soccer Tennis/Volleyball:**

(use a goal bar): Split the group into two teams one on each side of the bar. The bar serves as a net. The coach serves the ball over the bar. The two teams control and rally the ball for points. Use the rules of the actual game and modify them for the particular age and skill level of your group.



### **Soccer Baseball/Kickball:**

(no hands): The coach serves as the pitcher for both teams. One strike or one foul and the batter is out. A fair ball that is controlled out of the air and juggled three times by one player is a triple play. A fair ball that is controlled three times between any two or more teammates is a double play. A ball headed out of the air is one out. Otherwise, the ball must be controlled in the pitcher's mound to stop the runners. Any runner stopped between bases is out. There can be up to four runners per base, therefore, a runner may

choose not to advance. After three outs, both teams have 5 seconds to switch before the next pitch. If the ball rolls over the plate and the correct player, (according to the batting order) is not there to kick it, that player is out. To further emphasize control, the coach can designate outs for great chest traps, thigh traps, wedge traps, etc.

### **Control Scrimmages**

Set up a field with zones on either side instead of goals. Divide teams and number each Team member. The One and Two player from each team must begin in their respective End zone. The object is for a team to send a ball into their end zone player to control. If controlled well, that player trades with player number three, and so on. Each team must get all members in and out of the zone to win.

Play 5 v 5 or 8 v 8 to goal and limit players to two touch only. On every restart, every player must "freeze". The coach then serves (tosses?) a ball to a particular player to control for the actual restart of each play.

## **PASSING**

Passing is the key to an efficient soccer team. It links 4 - 11 individual players and molds them into one. A string of good passes is the fastest and most effective way to move the ball from one side of the field to the other. Passing is the cornerstone of teamwork.

## **Passing Skills**

- Inside-of-the-foot
- Outside-of-the-foot
- Instep
- Chip
- Loft

When instructing your players, do not be afraid to get down on your knees and physically help them through each technical point. An example of technical points for the Inside-of-the-foot pass include:

### **KEY POINTS:**

- Eyes on the ball
- Non-kicking foot planted beside the ball pointing in the direction of the pass
- Kicking foot locked in an “L” shape
- The hinge is the knee **not the hip**
- Stroke firmly through the center of the ball
- Knee over the ball on impact
- Follow through toward the target

Example Exercises:

**Leg shoot: In pairs, have partners stand 5 to 10 yards apart and attempt to pass the ball between each other’s legs for a point. The first player to 10 wins.**

### **Soccer golf:**

Make a short golf course with flags. Each player tries to hit each flag in as few shots as possible. The player with the lowest score wins.

In pairs, challenge players to one touch back and forth for a designated time.

Have the players practice moving and passing within a grid.

## **Passing Exercises and Games**

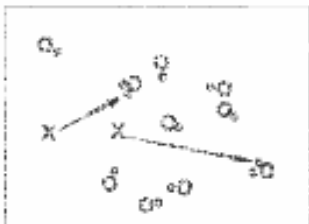
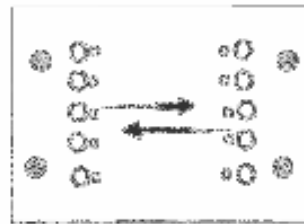


### **Star Wars:**

Split group into 2 teams, the “Empire” and the “Jet Stars”. Have each team set up a ship of 3 cones. The force is controlled by noise. If the force of one side is stronger, a cone or part of the team’s ship will be destroyed. Each player takes a shot at the ship with a ball. The team to win is the one with cones remaining.

### **OVER THE LINE:**

Set up two small goals about 15 feet apart. Divide the group into two teams. Each team lines up between the goals. One by one, in alternating turns, players will attempt to shoot or pass the ball through the lines. Each time a team scores the goals are marked back 5 feet in favor of the team that scored. The first team to back the other over the line wins.

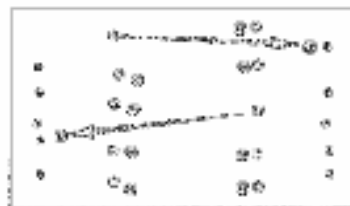


### **SOCCER HUNTERS:**

Two players with bibs and a ball enter the area and try to hit the other players with a pass below the knees... The other players dribble around trying to avoid being hit with the hunter's pass. If they are hit, then they lose their force field which is the ball. If they are hit a second time, they too become hunters and put on bibs. The winner is the last one left.

### **SLOT SHOT:**

Divide your group into two teams and set them in a field marked with two end zones. Each team may place their 5 cones in the end zone any way they like. The object is to knock the other team's cones down without entering the end zone. You must shoot or pass the ball to knock them over. To make the game more difficult, make deeper end zones forcing longer shots...you may use more than one ball at a time.



### **Passing Scrimmages**

Grid training: Set a grid 10 by 10 and have teams of 3 in each grid. Have a game of "keep-away", Two vs. One. Whoever loses or kicks the ball out of the grid then goes into the middle.

### **Three vs. One grid training:**

### **Two vs. One vs. One vs. One vs. One "meat grinder":**

Two players in line take the ball and try to beat the first defender in the first grid (the ball must stay in the middle of the grid). If they beat the first defender they then try to beat the second defender in the second grid, then the third in the third. Finally they take a shot at the goal. Rotate the defenders.

## **TRI-SCORE**

Split your group into 3 equal teams, with one goalie or you as the goalie. Set the goal in the middle of the grid. All 3 teams play at once. The ball is kicked into play by the coach and the object is to score. The team who has the ball goes to goal against the other two teams. Note you can score from either side of the goal. First team to 5 wins.

### **Two touch soccer games:**

Two vs. Two soccer games in a restricted area with keepers.  
Refer to “Soccer Games” for additional material.

## **SHOOTING**

In the game of soccer there is nothing that is more exciting to watch than a great goal in the making. How are most of these great goals scored? However, 90% of the great shots in soccer are not necessarily fancy or spectacular shots. They are simply well placed instep drives, outside or inside benders, volleys, or headers. It is not how hard a player strikes the ball, but rather how well he strikes it. When shooting skills are taught to players it should be emphasized that proper technique is much more important than the force of the shot.

*Questions: Do you know the difference between a shot and a pass?*

*Answer: A shot is on goal 😊*

### **Shooting Skills**

- Instep Drive – Top of the foot
- Volley – While the ball is in the air and heading downward
- Half-Volley – While ball is in the air and heading upward... immediately after bounce. This is very difficult to control and keep low. You must overemphasize keeping head and chest over the ball.
- Side-Volley

Example Exercises:

Have partners stand about ten to twenty yards apart and kick a ball back and forth, stopping between passes, until proper technique has been achieved.

Have partners shoot back and forth through a “window goal”. Encourage them to shoot a moving ball. Eventually, add a goalkeeper to try and “shut the window”.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- Eyes on the ball
- Non-kicking foot firmly planted beside the ball pointing in the direction of the pass
- Shooting foot locked with toe pointed down
- The hinge is the knee **not the hip**
- Head, Eyes, and chest over the ball
- **Snap** through the center of the ball
- Follow through non kicking side elbow to kicking knee

## ***Shooting Exercises and Games***

Penalty Shots: Line up the group six to twelve yards away from the goad (depending on their ages) and have them take shots against a goalkeeper.



### **STAR FIGHTER:**

Have each player grab his or her other ball and make a circle around you and some cones. Set these cones up in the middle. You are the “Star Defender” and they are the “Last Star Fighters”. Their objective is to knock over all of the cones while you prevent them from catching fire. The players are allowed three chances before the game is over.

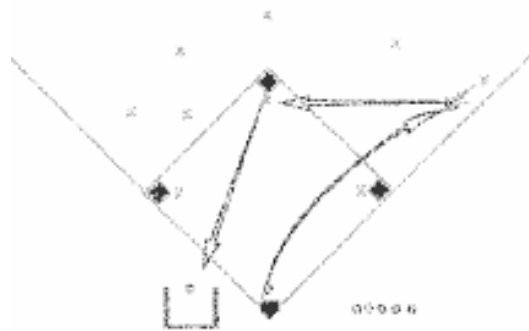
## ***Shooting Scrimmages***

### **Example Exercises:**

- 1 vs. 1 to goals with emphasizes on shooting as much as possible.
- 2 vs. 2 to goals with emphasizes on shooting as much as possible.
- 3 vs. 2 to goals with emphasizes on shooting as much as possible.

### **Soccer Baseball:**

Designate a goalie for the batting team. The coach passes the ball over home plate. A player kicks the ball onto the field of play—two fouls or strikes is an out. If the opposing team controls it before it touches the ground, that player is out. If the team does not control the ball in the air, the kicker runs around the bases, collecting as many points as possible while the defending team tries to score on the goalie. If the goalie saves the ball, the goalie can punt it out to the field until the other team scores and the kicker is out. One point is scored for every time the kicker touches home base. Each person on the team gets to kick one time per inning. The teams then switch-roles.



## **FAST FOOTWORK SEQUENCE**

Fast footwork is key to a soccer player's success on the field. A player must be able to escape tight situations, change directions, unbalance defenders, and be unpredictable. The following sequence is designed to develop control, confidence and quickness with the ball at the player's feet.

To begin, it may be helpful to set-up a grid 10 by 10 as a boundary. This boundary can be increased or decreased to promote better control. This set-up can also allow the coach to use commands such as, "knock out" "sit", "stand", etc. Another option might be to make this a "Soccer Aerobics" worked with music and dance steps.

### ***Phase one - Get to know the ball***

While standing on one foot, use the other to roll the ball forward, backward, sideways, and all the way around the standing foot. The goal is to get use to the feel of the ball.

### ***Phase two - Movement with the ball***

#### **1. Toe Tapping:**

Tap the ball outward with your toe, and pull it back with the soul of the same foot. Switch feet and start adding hops and a little movement.

#### **2. Running on the ball:**

Start with one foot on the ball. Yell switch, and put the other foot on top of the ball. Repeat until they pick up the pace to a full jog, or even a sprint.

#### ***Key points:***

- Arms up and out for balance
- Legs bent and relaxed
- Fanny down
- Quick feet while moving with the ball

#### **3. Foundations or the Basic:**

Knock the ball between your feet, keeping the ball directly underneath the body. Increase the speed as you improve, and eventually add movement.

**4. Add Toe Tapping to the Foundation.** Push, pull, knock between the feet, push, pull. Be creative – push with one foot, pull with the other, and continue the foundation...

Improvise and add your own ideas to the sequence. Tailor it to your group's abilities; however, do not underestimate them.

### ***Phase three- Turns***

#### **1. Stop-Pull-and Pivot:**

Start with the foundation and move forward, stop the ball with the bottom of the foot, pull it directly back, pivot on inside foot, and continue the opposite direction.

#### **2. Drag over:**

Drag the ball across your body with one foot in one direction, then switch and use other foot going the opposite direction.

#### **3. “V”:**

Start with the foundation, push the ball away from your body and pull it back, quickly change direction of the ball and continue foundation.

#### **4. Drag and push:**

Start with the foundation and drag your foot over the ball from outside to inside then immediately push the ball back out with the outside of your foot.

#### **5. Behind the back:**

Start with the foundation, then pull the ball back behind you and then behind your opposite leg. Turn to the opposite direction and collect the ball. Ball should make an “L” shape.

#### **6. The Stanley Mathews:**

While hopping on one foot, use the other to move the ball inside and out without stepping, commit the defender one way and go the other.

#### **7. Swivel Hips:**

Twist the body as if changing one direction then continue in the same direction.

#### ***Key Points:***

- Balance
- Control
- Arms up and out
- Fanny down
- Quick feet

### ***MOST IMPORTANT HINT OF ALL***

**Never underestimate the abilities of young players. If you doubt their skills or abilities, then so will they. Build confidence with positive reinforcement. If a player believes in his/her self, they will perform beyond expectations!**