

Recommended Backyard Games

By Mike Singleton

The offseason is near, so here are ways players can work on their skills on their own. ...

1. Juggling

- a) Juggle the ball with all parts of your body (left and right sides). Try not to have more than five consecutive juggles with the same body part (i.e., feet, head, etc.).
- b) Juggle with a friend or friends in a similar fashion to the basketball game "HORSE" -- the player who drops the ball gets a letter.
- c) Play one-touch or two-touch juggling with your friends, earning letters for drops.

2. One-vs-One

- a) Only use one foot -- the ball cannot touch your other foot.
- b) Have a goal (or a cone) which you can score upon from all sides.
- c) Same as b, but have the same goal for both players.
- d) Have two goals for each player, one on an end line and one on a sideline.
- e) Have three goals for each player, one on an end line and one on each sideline.

3. Wall Soccer

Just kick a ball against a wall using both your left foot and right foot. Place hard shots against the wall (with accuracy and force). Try doing this three-touch, then two-touch, then one-touch. This game helps with trapping/receiving, positioning, striking of a ball with both feet, foot speed, being on toes, and concentration.

It also will improve your passing/shooting accuracy because of the high number of touches you will have on the ball and the high number of balls you play against the wall.

Vary your shots - high, low, left, right, inside foot, outside foot, instep, etc., and make yourself work at a high pace to get your body behind the ball before it rolls past you. Get closer to the wall to improve foot quickness and move further away to increase lateral quickness.

4. Own the Ball!

Just you competing for possession of one ball (through shielding) with one other person. If you lose possession, do whatever you have to do get the ball back as quickly as possible. Correct shielding technique -- body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going.

Look for more backyard games in next week's Youth Soccer Insider.

(Mike Singleton is the [Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association](#) 's Head State Coach and Director of Coaching. He is a Region I ODP Senior Staff Coach and a U.S. Soccer and US Youth Soccer National Staff Coach. This article first appeared in [Mass Youth e-News](#).)