



Fact Sheet for ASA Recreation Coaches

Focusing Exercises

Use these exercises to enhance your ASA Recreation Soccer Players' ability to focus. It will take repetition and practice to get it to stick. After you establish a precedent for interweaving these exercises at practice we hope you will start to notice a difference by the 3rd to 4th practice, if done regularly.

Create a Focused Atmosphere at the Beginning of Practice

- ❖ **Introduce the concept of paying attention to breathe:** *Script:* "We are going to do some focusing exercises at the beginning of practice because it will help you be completely present on-the-field and learn soccer faster. Who wants to learn new soccer skills as easily as possible? One simple way to be completely here at soccer practice is to start with paying attention to our breath, then connecting to sounds around us and sensations in our feet. Let's give it a try! Ok?"
- ❖ **90 Second Instruction:** Give these instructions to your players prior to their first soccer drill.
 - **PART 1:** "Everybody, Close your eyes, place one hand on the belly and one hand on the chest. Notice silently which had is moving more. Good job. lower your hands to your sides."
 - **PART 2:** "Now keeping your eyes closed, notice the sounds around you. Do you hear the... voices, cars, etc.. Good..."
 - **PART 3:** "Now, turn your attention to your feet in your shoes. Wiggle your big toes, now wiggle your pinky toes, now let your feet be still and tell them to listen to your mind while learning new soccer skills."
 - **PART 4:** "Open your eyes! Now we are ready for our first soccer drill!"

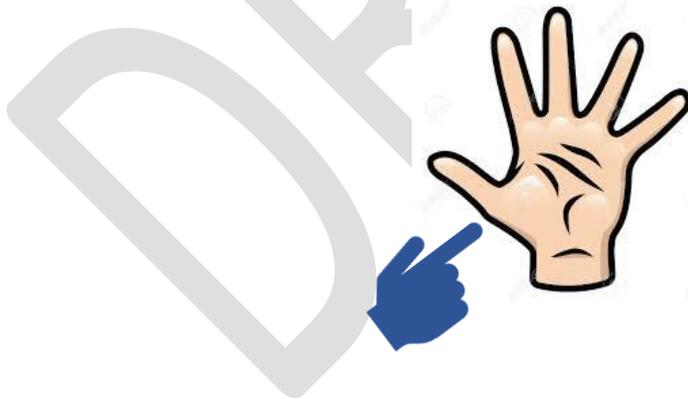
Establish a Signal that Indicates it's time to Huddle-up and Listen

- ❖ **Introduce Concept:** *Script:* "We are going to practice huddling-up as quickly as possible. You'll know when it is time to run to me and get ready for the next instruction when I do this." [do something distinct and loud enough for them to hear such as clapping 3 times, blow whistle, etc.] "Are you guys ready to practice huddling up really fast?"
- ❖ **Instruction:** Make it into a racing game so they associate it positively and can work on their speed
 - **Part 1:** "Everyone is going to move to another part of the field [create reasonable bounds] with a partner and get ready for my signal. As soon as I make that sound you all know what to do right?" [let them answer]
 - **Part 2:** Make the *distinct huddle-up sound* and notice how well they respond. Then say, "I think we can do better than that. Let's try it again and really work on your speed. Your goal is to get back in our soccer huddle as fast as possible. Let's see how speedy you can be."
 - **Part 3:** Repeat distinct sound and keep encouraging them to be speedy.



Take FIVE Exercise for In-between Soccer Drills: 2nd- 5th graders¹

- ❖ **Introduce the concept:** *Script:* “In between each drill we are going to take five to help us refocus on our body and mind connection. Whenever we move from one thing to another it helps to take a brief moment to refocus. You guys ready to give it a try?”
- ❖ **First Time Instructions:**
 - **Part 1:** “Everyone put out your right hand with your fingers stretched out.”
 - **Part 2:** “Now take the pointer finger of your other hand and place it on the outside of the thumb on your right hand.” “We are going to trace our right hand with our pointer finger.”
 - **Part 3:** “As you move your pointer finger up your thumb, inhale, as you move your pointer finger down your thumb, exhale, inhale as you move your left finger up the right finger and exhale as you move your down that same finger. Keep inhaling and exhaling as you move up and down each finger until you reach the outside of your hand.”
 - **Part 4:** “Now let’s all try it together. Inhale up, exhale down, inhale up, exhale down.” (repeat). “Great job!”
 - **Part 5:** “Now let’s do it on our own without my verbal instructions.”
- ❖ **30 second Instruction:** After the soccer players know what to do you can shorten the instruction. When possible, it is important that you do the exercise with the kids.
 - “It’s time to take five before our next drill.” Here is a quick reminder. Put your hand out and the pointer finger traces the other hand. Remember to inhale as your pointer finger goes up and exhale as it goes down.
 - Do the exercise with the team.



¹ Adapted with permission from *The Peace of Mind Core Curriculum*. Visit: <https://teachpeaceofmind.org>



Flower-Candle Exercise for In-between Soccer Drills: Pre K- 1st graders²

- ❖ **Introduce the concept:** *Script:* I want to include a 30-second fun breathing exercise in-between our soccer drills to help us refocus our body and mind. Whenever we move from one thing to another it helps to take a moment to refocus. This will help you learn soccer faster. You guys ready to give it a try?"
- ❖ **First Time Instructions:** Describe it first to the group then have them do it.
 - **Part 1:** "We are going to breath in slowly with our nose like we are smelling a flower. Watch me do it." [demonstrate inhale while clasping hands with pointer fingers facing up]
 - **Part 2:** "Then we are going to slowly blow out through our mouth like we are blowing out a birthday candle. Watch me do it." [demonstrate]
 - **Part 3:** "Now, let's try it together." [clasp hands together with pointer fingers pointing up to sky] "Inhale and sniff the flower. Now exhale blow out the candle." [repeat 3-5 times]
 - **Part 4:** "Now let's all do it on our own without my verbal instructions. Let's Go!"
- ❖ **30 second Instruction:** After the soccer players know what to do you can shorten the instruction.
 - "It's time to do our Flower-Candle exercise before our next drill." Let's do it together as a team. When possible, coach should do the exercise with the players.



1st INHALE



2nd EXHALE

Have questions? For more information contact: Robyn Kenney at robyn@mindfulnessathletlcs.com

² Adapted with permission from *The Peace of Mind Core Curriculum for Early Childhood*. Visit: <https://teachpeaceofmind.org>