

SKILL MOVES KIDS SHOULD LEARN

A simple guide for coaches and parents: build comfort on the ball, confidence in 1v1 situations, and the courage to try things.

THE GOAL: Do not worry about kids mastering every move. Give them a toolbox. Let them experiment, fail, try again, and discover which moves feel natural to them.

1. CORE TURNS & 1v1 MOVES

Pull-Back / Drag Back

Put the sole of one foot on top of the ball, pull it straight back, turn your body, and accelerate away in the new direction.

Use it: Change direction when a defender is directly in front of you.

Inside Cut

Use the inside of the foot to cut the ball sharply across your body. Plant, cut, and explode into the new direction.

Use it: A simple, useful way to turn away from pressure.

Outside Cut

Use the outside of the foot to push or cut the ball away at an angle, then accelerate after it.

Use it: Great when you want to change direction without breaking stride.

Cruyff Turn

Shape your body like you are going to pass or shoot. Instead, use the inside of that foot to pull the ball behind your standing leg and turn away.

Use it: A deceptive turn when a defender expects a pass, cross, or shot.

Body Feint / Shoulder Drop

Lean or step hard to one side as if you are going that way, then take the ball quickly in the opposite direction.

Use it: One of the best first moves for teaching deception.

Scissors / Step-Over

Circle one foot around the front of the ball to sell a move in that direction, then push the ball away the other way.

Use it: Useful in 1v1 situations when facing a defender.

Ronaldo Chop

While moving, fake a pass or shot and use the inside edge of the opposite foot to chop the ball behind your planted leg.

Use it: Changes direction while helping put your body between the defender and ball.

La Croqueta

Move the ball quickly from the inside of one foot to the inside of the other, shifting it sideways across your body.

Use it: Excellent for slipping past an outstretched foot or a defender who dives in.

2. BALL MASTERY BUILDERS

These are not all "moves" used to beat a defender. They are ways to build touch, coordination, comfort with different surfaces of the foot, and confidence manipulating the ball.

1	Toe Taps Alternate feet tapping the top of the ball. Start slowly, then find a rhythm.
2	Sole Rolls Use the sole to roll the ball across the body from one side to the other. Practice both feet.
3	V-Drags Pull the ball back with the sole, then push it diagonally forward with the inside or outside of the same foot, creating a V shape.
4	Inside-Outside Touches With one foot, touch the ball across with the inside, then back out with the outside. Repeat while moving.
5	Figure 8s Place two cones a few yards apart and dribble in a figure-eight pattern using lots of small touches and turns.
6	Fake and Take Fake a touch, pass, or movement one way, then take the ball the other way. The exact fake can vary.
7	Step-Over Repetitions Practice the step-over slowly without a defender first. Focus on selling the fake with the whole body, not just the foot.

HOW TO TEACH THEM

- **Show it briefly.** Demonstrate the move once or twice. Do not turn it into a long lecture.
- **Let every player have a ball.** Repetition matters. Avoid lines whenever possible.
- **Practice both feet.** It is okay if one side is much easier at first.
- **Add a defender.** A move becomes useful when a player learns when and why to use it.
- **Play 1v1 and small-sided games.** Give players lots of chances to recognize pressure and make their own decisions.
- **Praise attempts, not just success.** If a player tries a move in a game and loses the ball, that can still be a developmental win.

COACHING CUE: "Can you try a move?" is usually better than telling a player exactly what move to use. We want players looking at the defender and making their own decision.

3. RESOURCES FOR COACHES

You do not need to invent every practice yourself. These resources can help you find games, activities, session ideas, and coaching education.

MOJO Sports - Footwork Drills	A collection of youth soccer footwork activities and ideas. Useful when you need a quick activity for ball mastery or dribbling. https://mojo.sport/coachs-corner/10-best-soccer-drills-to-improve-footwork/
U.S. Soccer Learning Center	The official U.S. Soccer coaching education hub. Look for Grassroots education, coaching articles, and age/game-model courses. The Grassroots pathway emphasizes player-centered learning and Play-Practice-Play. https://learning.ussoccer.com/
United Soccer Coaches - eLearning	Online coaching education and professional-development resources from United Soccer Coaches. https://unitedsoccercoaches.org/elearning/
Smart Soccer Coaching	A paid digital library with organized drills, small-sided games, and ready-made training sessions. Useful for coaches who want a larger searchable practice library. https://www.smartsoccercoaching.com/coach

HILLWOOD COACHES: Interested in a U.S. Soccer Grassroots course? Hillwood supports coach education. Ask the club about reimbursement for approved coaching courses.

A SIMPLE PRACTICE FORMULA

PLAY	PRACTICE	PLAY
Start with a small game.	Teach or explore one skill/theme.	Return to a game and let players use it.

Remember: The game is where skills become decisions. Ball mastery is useful, but kids also need lots of 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 and other small-sided play where they can experiment under real pressure.