

# TIPS AND DRILLS FOR YOUTH SOCCER TRYOUTS

By: Soccer Drive (/contributor/soccerdrive)



This article is helpful for coaches that are getting organized for their youth soccer tryouts. We will cover setting up evaluation criteria, age appropriate soccer drills, communication, and how to select the team. A lot of the resources we mention are available by following the links. For example, [soccer drills for a U12 tryout \(/soccer-drills/age-level/u12-soccer-drills-449\)](#) can be viewed here. There are downloads and additional resources throughout the article. Let's get started!

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The first thing you want to do for your soccer tryout is to establish criteria to evaluate the players. There are two sets of criteria we are going to evaluate players on. The first will be an evaluation of the player as a soccer player, athlete, and character. The second will be an evaluation of the player at their position and how well they fit into the type of team you are trying to build.

# SCORING AND RATING THE PLAYERS

## POINTS SYSTEM

There are a couple of systems you can use to rate the players. There is a rating/points system in which you will rate each player on a scale of 1 - 5 for each of the criteria you establish. Coaches will go through their evaluation sheet and assign a rating for each point. At the end of the tryout they will turn in their sheet to the head coach or director. This system can work well if you have a number of coaches involved with the selection process. It can also be a great way to combat complaints that tryouts are staged or political. We will discuss how to manage this later in the article.

## THIRDS SYSTEM

The other method involves giving each player a grade of 1,2, or 3. A “1” means the player is rated in the top third, a “2” equals the middle third, and “3” is the bottom third. Therefore, this method has coaches evaluate players relative to the entire group.

## CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SOCCER PLAYERS

Here are some ideas on the criteria for which to evaluate players. We have a couple of rating charts available for download too:

- [Evaluation Sheet with Categories \(/resource/soccer-evaluation-sheet-categories\)](/resource/soccer-evaluation-sheet-categories)
- [Evaluation Sheet - Blank \(/resource/tryout-evaluation-sheet-blank-categories\)](/resource/tryout-evaluation-sheet-blank-categories) (fill in your own categories)

### **Athleticism**

- Speed
- Quickness
- Agility
- Strength
- Endurance
- Compete Level
- Awareness / Instincts

- Engagement Level

## **Soccer Skills**

- Ball control
- Ball protection
- Shot accuracy
- Shot power
- Movement away from ball (ability to get open)
- Defensive Aggressiveness
- Ability to control ball under pressure
- Ability to pass under pressure
- Decision making quickness
- Heading the ball
- Throw-Ins
- Crossing
- Finishing Ability

## **Character**

- Body language
- Communication with teammates
- Adversity
- Eye contact with coach
- Responsiveness to coaching

# **PROCESS FOR SELECTING THE TEAM**

If you want to make the selection process as fair as possible then picking the team by committee may be a good idea. This method helps eliminate politics, favoritism, and in many cases headaches. The coaches that are evaluating the tryout are given an

evaluation sheet which contains all of the criteria you would like the players to be evaluated on. The coaches will give each player a rating from 1 - 5 and at the end of the tryout they will turn in their sheets to the head coach or director. The scores will be added up and all of the players will be ranked based on their composite score. If you are selecting 18 players then this does not necessarily mean that the top 18 players make the team. The number of coaches will determine how many coaches picks are available. Therefore, if there two assistant coaches then the top 15 rated players will make the team and each coach will get to pick a player outside the top 15 to finalize the roster.

## TRYOUT STRUCTURE

### ORIENTATION / PARENT MEETING

It is a good idea to have an orientation meeting with all players and parents before the tryouts. In this meeting be sure to be clear about your how your coaching staff will be selecting the team. If you are selecting the team using the rating system above then be clear about how it works and why you are using the system. Hopefully this is being proactive enough against the post tryout parental assaults we have all endured at some point. Also be clear to the players about what type of team you are building and mention the big points of emphasis your coaching staff will be looking for. In some cases it may help to give evaluation sheets out to the players and parents before the tryout.

### SESSION SCHEDULE

A youth soccer tryout should be a two or three day event with one session per day. This way the players can be at full strength for most of the tryout. Good players will have bad days so spreading things out over three days should give you a chance to see all of the players at their best. It also allows you to see what kind of consistency they have.

### INFORMING THE SELECTED TEAM MEMBERS

After the last session has ended the players (and especially parents) will be on pins and needles about the selections. Gather the players around and thank them for their time and inform them of how the team members will be notified. If it is a local team then it makes sense to let them know the team will be posted on the team's website on a particular date. If people have traveled a good distance then you may need to let people know sooner, especially if you need to get signatures right away. In this case, let the players know the coaching staff needs a few hours to select the team. Set up a team

meeting at particular time for the selected team members. Inform the team that you will personally call them by a certain time to invite them to the team meeting. If they do not receive a call then tell them they will receive an email to set up a time to meet with the coaches and receive feedback if they wish.

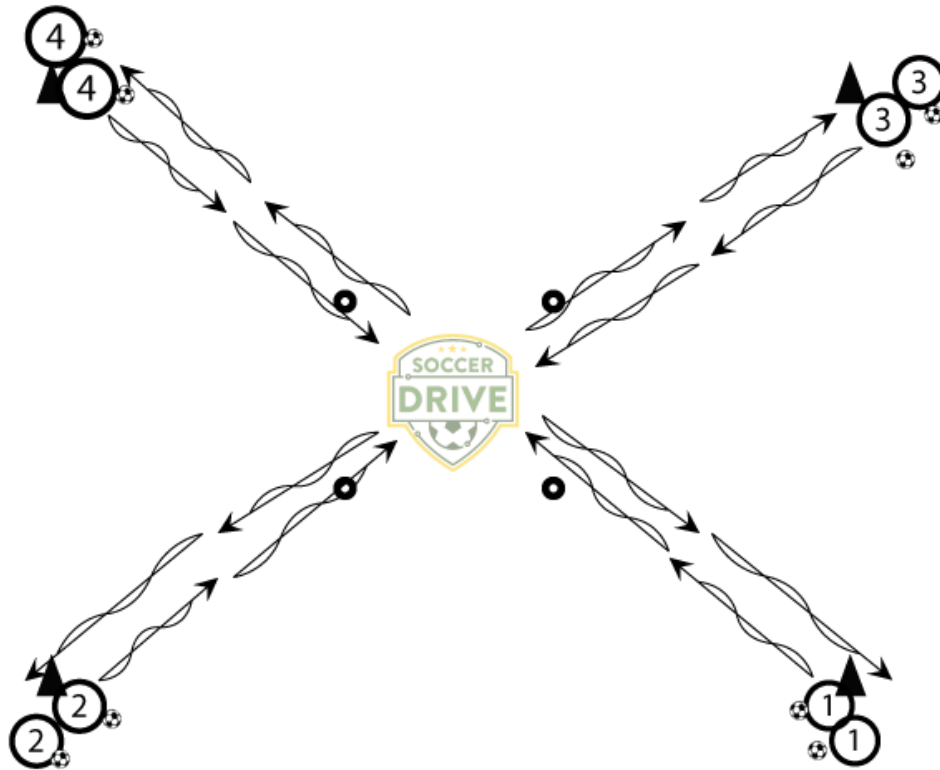
## DRILLS AND GAMES FOR THE SOCCER TRYOUT

One of the most important elements of a good soccer tryout are the drills and games the players will be evaluated on. Again, you have to ask yourself what type of team are you trying to build and plan the sessions accordingly. In this example we are going to structure the tryout so we can place an emphasis on ball skills, compete level, and game effectiveness. Therefore we are going to structure our sessions so we can evaluate the players in these areas. Here are some soccer tryout drills that you may find useful in your own tryout.

## SAMPLE SOCCER TRYOUT DRILLS

### TO TAPS IN BOX

Players can get a feel for the ball and get the legs loosened up. It is a good time to start evaluating the ball control of the players. You can add progressions to this drill to evaluate more ball control skills.



## ATTACK THE CONE DRIBBLING SKILLS

This drill uses the same setup with the four lines at each cone so it requires no additional setup time. It is another drill good for evaluating ball control and dribbling skills. This drill does require players to have their heads up and you will be able to notice the awareness and ability of the players to control the ball under a little bit of pressure.

00:26

## TWO TOUCH UNDER PRESSURE

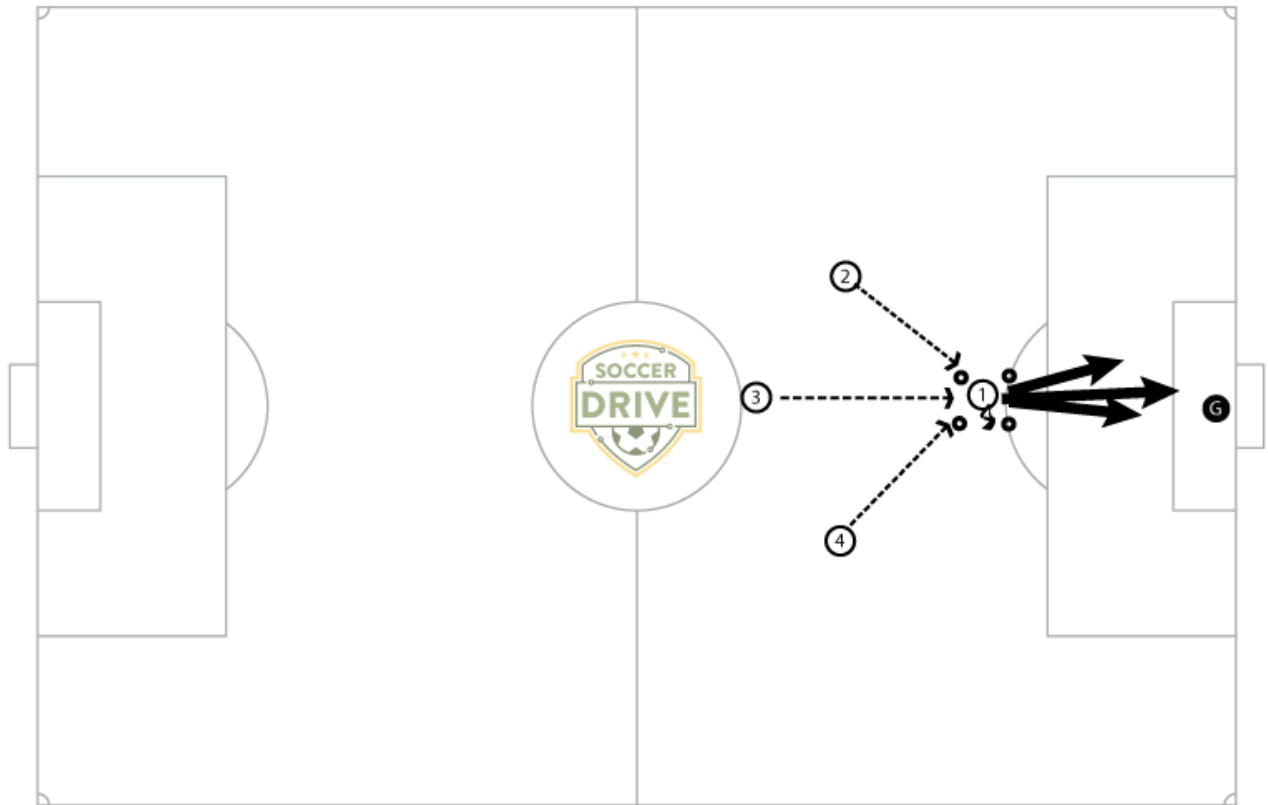
The next drill will give you a chance to evaluate the players passing skills. The drill can start basic and progress into more of a pressure situation so you can watch how they deal with less time to make a decision and execute the skill.

00:25

## SHOOTING BOX

This is a great drill to evaluate the player's ability to receive a pass and get off a shot.

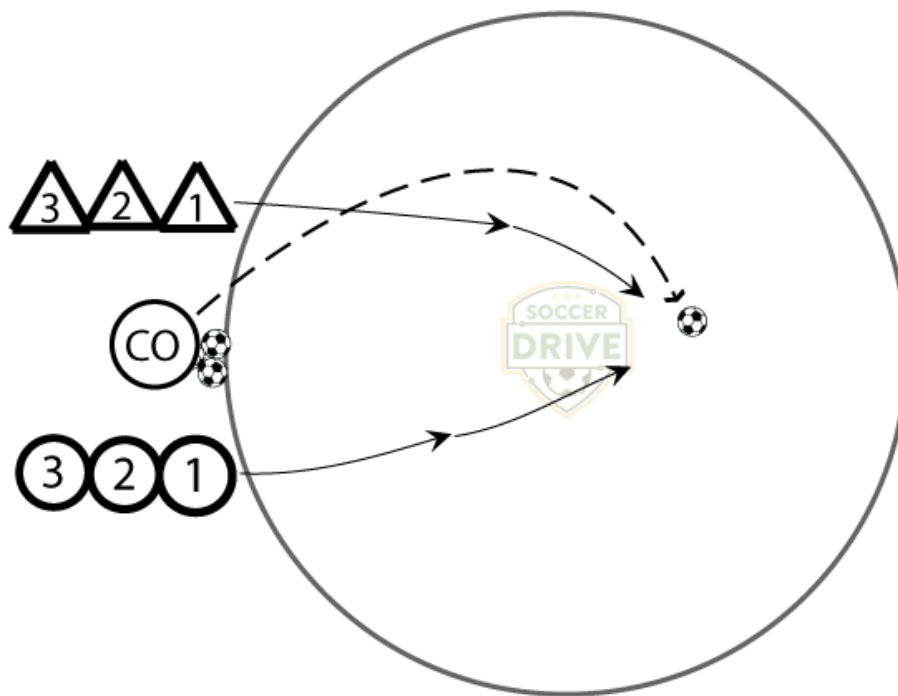
Set up a 5 x 5 yard box just outside the 18 box with one player in the middle of the 5 x 5 box. Players will pass a ball to this player and they will receive it facing away from the goal and try to get a good shot on net with two touches of the ball. To see all the details of this drill you can view the animation (</soccer-drills/shooting-box>).



## IN THE RING 1 VS. 1

This is a good drill here to see you can protect the ball well and who tends to be more aggressively on defense. The players will battle 1 vs 1 inside the circle for about 20 seconds.





## TWO TOUCH SHOOTING VS. DEFENDER

This drill is a 1 vs. 1 drill and incorporates the player's ability to receive the ball under pressure. Players will also get a lot of scoring chances so it is a good chance to evaluate player's finishing ability.

00:27

## CORNERS

In this drill you can start to evaluate the player's ability to be creative, think while under pressure, and compete for loose balls. Set up a field as shown with four boxes marked by the discs in each corner. Place one player from each team in the boxes, the players on the same team should be in the box diagonal from them. Each team is trying to complete as many passes to the players in the box that are on their team. Every time they complete a pass to their player in the box it is worth a point.

00:26

## 3 VS 3 TRANSITION GAME

This 3 vs 3 drill forces players to compete and they have to be ready to transition from offense to defense quickly and often. You can really evaluate player's ability to compete and their ability to make quick decisions.

00:45

## SCRIMMAGE

Finally a chance to evaluate the players ability to play the game. By this point you should have had a chance to evaluate the player's athletic ability, soccer skills, and character. In the scrimmage situation you have an opportunity to evaluate their ability to play specific positions. For the older age levels where players are starting to specialize in their position it could be worth it to evaluate them on their positional play. Below are some additional criteria for specific positions.

## POSITION SPECIFIC EVALUATION CRITERIA

### **Attackers**

- Breakaway speed
- Finishing ability

### **Mid-Fielders**

- Creativity

- Awareness
- Ability to distribute ball

## **Defense**

- Aggressiveness
- Strength of clears
- Ability to kick the long ball

# **ADDITIONAL SESSION PLANS FOR TRYOUTS**

If you would like to explore more options for your tryout practice plans then you can have a look at these pages that have a number of age specific practice plans:

- U6 Practice Plans (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/soccer-practice-plans/u6>)
- U8 Practice Plans (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/soccer-practice-plans/u8>)
- U10 Practice Plans (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/soccer-practice-plans/u10>)
- U12 Practice Plans (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/soccer-practice-plans/u12>)
- U14 Practice Plans (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/soccer-practice-plans/u14>)
- U16 Practice Plans (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/soccer-practice-plans/u16>)

# **CONCLUSION**

Keys to a successful tryout includes making sure players and parents are crystal clear about what you are looking for, how the tryout is structured, and the evaluation process. It is then up to you to make sure you have planned the sessions in a way that allows your coaching staff to evaluate players based on your criteria. It is ideal to allow you and your staff to have at least two days to make the selections so work hard to set up a three day tryout.

# **RESOURCES**

- Custom Practice Sheet (</node/add/custom-practice-sheet>) (download with your team logo)
- Pre-filled Player Evaluation Sheet - PDF FILE (</resource/soccer-evaluation-sheet-categories>) | [View in Google Docs](#)

(<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/174kkOURnuAOcmXFKVSWvB2wxtwIQYyFse-ZtKagKsfQ/edit?usp=sharing>)

- Blank Player Evaluation Sheet - PDF FILE (/resource/tryout-evaluation-sheet-blank-categories) | View in Google Docs

(<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Ik6KZZW63n520Hte4LmjV9hs2MVS-Co3FTwh5Dj3k44/edit?usp=sharing>)

- Tryout Resource Packet (/sites/default/files/soccer-tryout-package.pdf) (Evaluation Sheets and Sample Drills)

## MORE BLOG POSTS



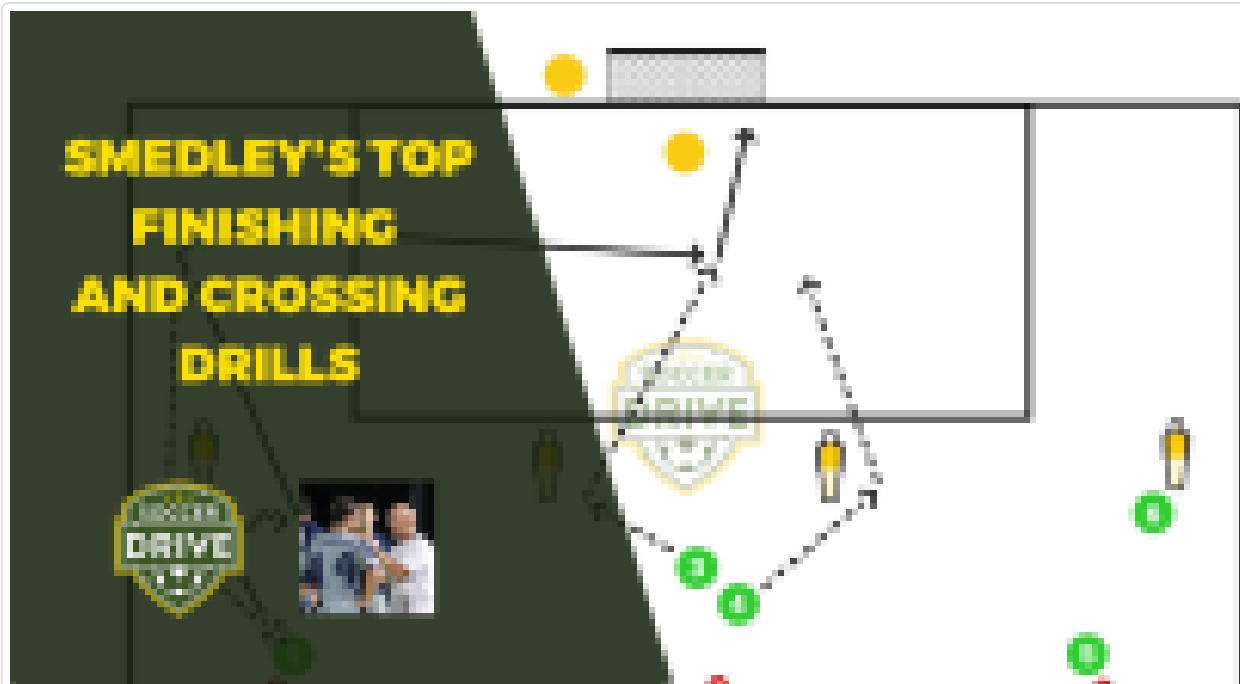
(/blog/22176/its-all-about-details)

It's All About The Details (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/blog/22176/its-all-about-details>)



(/blog/22176/keep-street-soccer-alive-0)

Keep Street Soccer Alive (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/blog/22176/keep-street-soccer-alive-0>)



(/blog/21021/top-finishing-and-crossing-drills-youth-soccer)

Top Finishing and Crossing Drills for Youth Soccer (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/blog/21021/top-finishing-and-crossing-drills-youth-soccer>)

# 6 YOUTH SOCCER DRILLS TO WORK ON DEFENSE



(/blog/21021/6-youth-soccer-drills-work-defense)

6 Youth Soccer Drills To Work On Defense (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/blog/21021/6-youth-soccer-drills-work-defense>)

## SMEDLEY'S 5 FAVORITE SMALL SIDED GAMES



(/blog/21021/smedleys-5-favorite-small-sided-games)

Smedley's 5 Favorite Small Sided Games (<https://www.soccerdrive.com/blog/21021/smedleys-5-favorite-small-sided-games>)

## SITE INFORMATION

[Contributors \(/contributors\)](#)

[FAQ's \(/faq-search\)](#)

[Getting Started \(/getting-started\)](#)

[Contact Us \(/contact-us\)](#)

[Terms & Conditions \(/terms-and-conditions\)](#)

[Privacy Policy \(/privacy\)](#)

[Disclaimer \(/disclaimer\)](#)

[RSS \(/\)](#)

## DRILL CATEGORIES

[Passing Drills \(/soccer-drills/category/passing-drills-443\)](#)

[Shooting Drills \(/soccer-drills/category/shooting-drills-445\)](#)

[Dribbling Drills \(/soccer-drills/category/dribbling-drills-438\)](#)

[Goalkeeping Drills \(/soccer-drills/category/goalkeeping-drills-440\)](#)

[Conditioning Drills \(/soccer-drills/category/conditioning-drills-435\)](#)

[Small Sided Games \(/soccer-drills/category/games-439\)](#)

## CATEGORIES

[Blog \(/blog\)](#)

[Soccer Drills \(/soccer-drills\)](#)

[Soccer Tactics \(/soccer-tactics\)](#)

[Soccer Practice Plans \(/soccer-practice-plans\)](#)

[Free Resources \(/free-downloadable-soccer-resources\)](#)

## DRILLS BY AGE

[U16 Soccer Drills \(/soccer-drills/age-level/u16-soccer-drills-451\)](#)

[U14 Soccer Drills \(/soccer-drills/age-level/u14-soccer-drills-450\)](#)

[U12 Soccer Drills \(/soccer-drills/age-level/u12-soccer-drills-449\)](#)

[U10 Soccer Drills \(/soccer-drills/age-level/u10-soccer-drills-448\)](#)

[U8 Soccer Drills \(/soccer-drills/age-level/u8-soccer-drills-453\)](#)

[U6 Soccer Drills \(/soccer-drills/age-level/u6-soccer-drills-452\)](#)



<https://www.facebook.com/soccerdriveofficial>

[https://twitter.com/soccerdrive\\_com](https://twitter.com/soccerdrive_com)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX0z-l-ue0H5YydR2qt26iQ>

[https://www.instagram.com/soccerdrive\\_com](https://www.instagram.com/soccerdrive_com)



