



King's "Backyard" Soccer Basics

- The most important thing is **just getting started!!!**
- **It doesn't have to be complicated** or take a long time. Just passing the ball back and forth beats sitting on the couch.
- **When in doubt, just play some 1 v 1 with makeshift goals.**
- **Try to turn everything into a little contest**, keep score, and even give out "prizes". (There is a 1st division English coach who hands out jellybeans to his professional players - when they do well in practice -and they fight for them!) So try giving out special popsicles, candy, ice cream or promise that new game boy cartridge (that you were probably going to get anyway....) if they do 15 juggles etc. Then keep "raising the bar".
- **Be creative.** For instance, if you successfully complete 10 "one-touch" passes, then "rip" a shot at the rebounder net, or garage door. Alternate shooters and keep score. Then "raise the bar" to 15 passes and so forth.....
- **Check Below for simple "backyard" soccer activities involving:**
 - Juggling**
 - Passing**
 - Kicking**
 - Soccer Tennis**

I.) Juggling practice and games

Play Juggling games.

- **Use the driveway when first learning to juggle** and allow bounces between touches until they get proficient.
- **Juggle "Horse"** - just like the old basketball version of "horse" where one player calls a shot or skill and the other player must do it or get a letter. So, player 1 calls "foot-knee-foot-catch" and then demonstrate it. Player 2 then must also do it or get a letter. I play that you must catch the ball at the end which prevents the wild last uncontrolled kicks. Start simple and even use bounces on the driveway, i.e. "foot-bounce-foot-knee-catch".
- **"Toe-knee-chest-nut or Tony Chestnut"** - this is for younger kids or absolute beginners. Have them drop the ball to the toe (i.e. foot) and kick it back to the hands for a catch. Repeat for knees, chest and head. Begin to link them together, i.e. "toe-knee-catch". Then "turn Tony on his head" and go the other way. Do "head-catch" followed by "chest-catch" then knees and toes etc. Then link them all together and watch out.....all of a sudden they will whip off a "head-knee-foot-catch" and will have done 3 juggles and their first "waterfall" - yeah baby!
- **Waterfall Shots** - The "waterfall" is successfully doing a head touch - down to a knee touch - and then a foot touch - and then directly back up to the head again without the ball touching the ground. The trick is to do many in a row. Set up a penalty kick game where each player gets shots for the number of waterfalls they can do. For instance, only one successful waterfall gets 1 PK, but two waterfalls in a row is worth 4 PK shots, and three waterfalls would be worth 8 etc. Play goalie for each other, keep score and play for 10 minutes. Give extra shots for "reverse" waterfalls!

II.) Passing Skills

- Hop into each pass and give it a little "zip".*
- The best short passes are quick "rollers".*
- Follow your leg through the ball in the direction you want it to travel.*
- Brush up and over the top of the ball to get it rolling smoothly.*
- Use the inside part of the foot to pass for accuracy.*
- Learn to pass with the outside of the foot as well.*

- **2 Touch Passing** - Pass the ball back and forth utilizing only "2 touches". The first touch controls the ball and the next is the pass back to the other player. Try not to "trap" the ball with the first touch. Instead, "redirect" it to the side and then pass it back. In other words, keep the ball moving at all times. Challenge yourselves to see how many you can do before a miss.
- **1 Touch Passing** - Same as above but this time don't even control the ball, just pass it right back. Stay over the top of the ball with the inside of the foot. Try to keep it from bouncing up and keep it rolling smoothly. Count how many you can do. If you do ten good ones in a row try adding a "first-timer" shot at the garage door or rebounder net, just for fun.
- **Outside footwork** - Do the above exercises but only use the outside aspect of the feet. The first one to miss, gets a "letter" in the game of "HORSE"
- **Pass and Move** - Do either 1 or 2 touch passing with movement. Place 4 to 6 disks or cones out in the shape of a big square (or circle) with about 5 to 8 yds. between disks. Each of you stands near a disk to start. After you pass to the other player, you must run to an empty disk and get ready to receive the next pass. Try to keep the 2 touch passing going even while you are moving all around. Count how many you can do or keep track of who "goofs-up" first and keep score.

III.) Kicking Power

- Use the instep (shoelace part of the foot) for power.*
- Have your ankle "locked" with the foot extended downwards.*
- Keep your head down and over the ball as you follow through.*
- First kick softly, just trying to make solid contact with the instep.*
- Later go for speed and power and don't worry if it doesn't go very high at first. That will come.*
- Do not try and "cheat" the ball up into the air by leaning back or lifting your toes.*
- Buy a lightweight ball like a volley ball or "cheapie" plastic soccer ball and start off kicking it to build confidence. Believe me, it will zoom all over the place.*
- Use a little orange marker disk as a "tee" to prop the ball up off the ground while trying to master the mechanics.*
- START EACH PRACTICE WITH THE WEAKER FOOT, and then later work the stronger one.*

- **"PK's"** - Nothing is more fun than penalty kicks. Use your garage door or your rebounder net as the "goal". Take big kicks at the goal and keep score. Keep moving the shooter further and further back.
- **Garage Punts** - Find the side of your garage roof that slopes towards you (hopefully there are no windows nearby). Practice "goalie type" punts up to the roof. Make good contact with the instep (shoelace part) and follow through. The ball will conveniently bounce back to you as you build strength. If you are really "into it", you can try to "trap" the ball as it bounces back to you (chest trap, thigh trap etc.) and then try to flip the ball up to your hands with a little pull-back lift. Now you have worked on kicking power, trapping skills and some juggling and the shingles are still up there.
- **Soccer Golf** - Go to the nearby park or schoolyard or common ground area. Each player brings a soccer ball. Then make up a "golf" hole. For instance, I might say "We kick it to the right of that big oak tree, then around the back-stop, then hit the brown dumpster..... and it will be a 'par 6'" So now the players put their balls down and try to do that hole in 6 shots or less. Make the holes reasonably long to work on big kicks. The players take turns in making up holes. Keep track of who wins the hole. (Smaller players get handicap strokes so they may have to do the hole in 8 kicks not 6 kicks etc...) And yes, you can "blow" putts in this game too!
- **Use the "rebounder"** - Don't underestimate the value of banging the ball against a wall or rebounder net. It is an excellent way to rehearse volleys, half volleys, rollers, bad bounces, side volleys, chest traps to volley kicks etc. In fact I would go so far as to say that kids that do not work with a rebounder will be at a disadvantage as they get older. Check out these possible rebounders.