



# Developmental Skills

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## Juggling

*Juggling will not make you a great player, but all great soccer players can juggle extremely well.*

Juggling in soccer is the art of using your body to keep the ball in the air without the use of your hands. A player uses his/her feet, thighs, shoulders, and head to control the ball. Juggling is an essential skill. It will make you more comfortable with the ball as well as develop your touch and control. The development of this skill will give any player the confidence and ability to see the field and control the ball at the same time. Good jugglers develop a natural instinct for controlling the ball with any part of their body and setting it up for the next touch. This skill is invaluable during a game when a player is under pressure from an opponent. Whether a ball is passed on the ground or in the air, a good player should be able to bring it under control and direct it away from the defender.

Juggling should be introduced at the earliest possible age. Juggling initially can be very discouraging, but with persistence youngsters will soon see both their improvement and their confidence grow. Being able to practice this skill nearly anywhere, juggling will then become both fun and challenging. Begin by having the youngsters drop the ball on the laces of their shoe and kick it back to their hands. Have them drop the ball on their thigh and direct it back to their hands. Have the player's kick the ball up so that when it falls it drops on their shoelaces. To practice stalling the ball, bounce the ball on the ground and catch it with the laces of the shoe. Do these drills with both feet so they can learn to use their left and right foot equally well, this is an invaluable skill that also builds coordination.

Be realistic, 5-7 year olds may only be able to reach highs of 5-10 juggles all year. As a child improves, set achievable goals and measure their progress. Maybe start with five, then ten, then fifteen, and so forth. Keep a chart to show progress. Give rewards as the youngsters reach new levels. By the time a player is ten he/she should be able to get to a hundred and perhaps much higher if they are dedicated and practice on a regular basis.

If you are a parent/coach, juggling should be included as part of your warm up. Juggling can be practiced just about anywhere so encourage your child to juggle daily, just 15 minutes or more a day can improve development. Another fun way to improve juggling is by counting how many juggles a player can do in a specific amount of time (you can use, one, two or three minute time frames). The pressure of time, forces a player to move quickly when they lose the ball (record their progress).

As players progress, have them juggle with a partner. A player can juggle once or twice, and then pass the ball to their partner, who in turn juggles the ball and then passes it back. They can use any part of their body to juggle and to pass the ball back and forth. Juggling will help players learn how to control the ball on the ground and in the air. It will give them the confidence to maintain possession of the ball even when they are under tight pressure.

***Most importantly have fun juggling, and remember the ball is your best friend!***