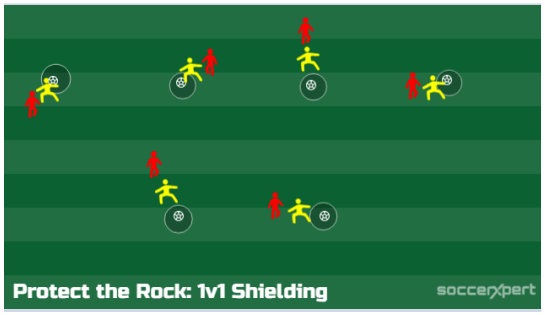


# Protect the Rock: 1v1 Shielding Game

**Objective:**
This game teaches your youngest players one of the most useful skills in soccer: shielding the ball. One player stands over the ball like it's a treasure they must guard. The other player tries to knock it away. The defender learns to use their body, not their hands, to keep the attacker out. It is simple, it is active, and every player touches the ball on every single turn. Coaches love it because it needs almost no setup and keeps kids moving the whole time.

## Drill Quick Glance

| | |
|---|---|
| **Age:** 4+ | **Field:** 15x20 |
| **Players:** 2+ | **Time:** 10 min. |
| **Difficulty:** Easy | **Focus:** Shielding |
| **Keeper:** No | **Type:** Small Group |
| **Author:** Chris Johnson | |

## Equipment

Disc Cones/Markers | Soccer Balls

## Setup

- Split players into pairs.
- Use cones to build several small circles, one circle per pair.
- Place one ball in the center of each circle.
- Pair up players, two to a circle.
- Assign one player in each pair as the defender, protecting the rock. The other is the attacker.

## Instructions

1. Give each pair a small circle of cones with one ball sitting in the middle.
2. Pick one player to be the defender. Their job is to protect the rock.
3. The other player is the attacker. Their job is to knock the ball out of the circle.
4. On your command, the attacker moves in and tries to poke the ball out.
5. The defender uses their body and quick feet to block the attacker and shield the ball, staying inside the circle.
6. Stop play when the ball leaves the circle, or after 10 to 15 seconds, whichever comes first.
7. Switch roles so both players get a turn on defense and a turn attacking.
8. Mix up the pairs so players battle different friends.

## Coaching Points

- Tell defenders to stay low and keep their body between the ball and the attacker.
- Watch for defenders using their arms to push. Hands and arms stay in, not out.
- Encourage defenders to keep moving their feet around the ball instead of standing still.
- Remind attackers to use quick jabs at the ball instead of one big kick.
- Praise any player who protects the rock for the full count. Confidence grows fast at this age.
- Keep circles far enough apart so pairs do not bump into each other.

## Variations

- Make the circle bigger to give the defender more room to move.
- Make the circle smaller to raise the challenge for older or stronger players.
- Add a second attacker for a 2v1 version once players get comfortable.
- Give the defender a point every time they protect the rock for the full time.
- Let the winner of each battle move to a new circle and face a new defender, like a mini tournament.