



Coaching Guide For players U5-U10

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Essential Concepts

“Truths” About Children and Sports

The study underlines a number of truths about children and sports that have been identified in other research.

1. FUN is pivotal; if it's not “FUN”, young people won't play a sport.
2. Skill development is a crucial aspect of fun; it is more important than winning even among the best athletes.
3. The most rewarding challenges of sports are those that lead to self-knowledge.
4. Intrinsic rewards (self-knowledge that grows out of self competition) are more important in creating lifetime athletes than are extrinsic rewards (victory or attention from others).

Below are some concepts of notable individuals in the fields of education, psychology, and child development throughout history. They are provided to establish a foundation of child development theory.

Plato (427-347 B.C.) From three to six years of age children should be absorbed with play, in games of their own devising.

Cicero (106-43 B.C.) Advocated early childhood education. He associated the importance of early childhood activities in their first six years of life to their total and overall development throughout life.

Michael de Montaigne (1533-1592 A.D.) Considered play to provide the circumstances in which children develop the individual qualities that become apparent with maturity. He promoted learning by doing, versus role playing and placed equal value on social interaction. He also felt that creating a desire to learn by making learning enjoyable would instill a long term attitude about the acquisition of knowledge.

Jean Jaques Rousseau (1712-1778) Believed that experience (doing) was necessary for perceptual change to occur. This included play experiences. He felt that curiosity and play should be used to inspire learning.

Robert Owen, British Educational Reformist (1771-1858) Established the first infant schools in Great Britain and the United States. He advocated the importance of outdoor play and learning, which occurred as a result of natural curiosity stimulated by play.

Jean Piaget, Swiss Psychologist and Development Theorist (1896-1980) He was the author of over a hundred books, most of them based on his analysis of children and their emergent reading process. His theories center on his discovery that children perceive the world differently than adults and that their development proceeds in determined stages (sensory Motor, Preoperational, Concrete Operational, Formal Operational) which always follow the same sequence. His major interest was in cognitive behavior throughout childhood and adolescence. He viewed imitation as an important part of learning via the play process.

TBAYS North Storm CORE VALUES

Accountability: Be accountable for your actions and hold others accountable for their actions. Who am I ultimately accountable to, and who judges my work?

Advice: Seek out advice and aspire to be the best. In order to learn, we must be open to learning and consider the advice of others. Are you coach-able?

Empathy: Empathy is at the core of solid relationships.

Enjoyment: Enjoy your work, this is a gift. The desires of diligent workers are satisfied.

Humility: Apologize when you make a mistake. Forgive others and do not look back.

Leadership: Leaders strive to be trustworthy, honest and sincere. They possess traits such as integrity and honor. They are willing to serve others and sacrifice their own interests. Leaders are constructive and hardworking.

Passion: Passion always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. Passion never fails.

Respect: Respect everyone. Respect the opponent, the rules, your colleagues, your superiors and subordinates. Be thoughtful and considerate.

Safety: Our environment is safe. This includes the office, our travels, the fields and our bodies. Safety is not only physical safety from harm, but safety from ridicule and attack. We are comforted and encouraged in the club. We portray self-control and kindness to our staff, our colleagues and players.

Tenacity: To be successful, persevere.... persevere but do not be anxious. Fear no one. Be strong and courageous. Work when no one is looking, even when the circumstances are not right and everyone else quits. Diligence never loses because it never quits. Out work your opponent and most importantly, work smart. Don't wait for external inspiration. The people who go far do so because they motivate themselves and give life their best, regardless of how they feel.

Unity: Together all things are possible. When your teammates are down, bear each other's burdens; conversely, celebrate your teammate's successes.

Characteristics of U5-U10 Children

Although children differ significantly, there are some common traits that all coaches need to be familiar with and take into account when coaching children. If we observe young children closely, we see that many of these characteristics inhibit their ability to play “real soccer” and practice activities are adjusted accordingly. Activities should fit the developmental levels of the children; the children should not fit the activities.

U6 Children (Dribbling, Shooting)

- Short attention span – get to activities ASAP
- Most are individually oriented – me, mine, my ball ... I’m not going to pass, so do not ask me to!
- Psychologically easily bruised – Give praise often, give “hints” don’t criticize
- Little or no concern for team activities – teamwork does not exist
- Boys and girls physical development is similar
- Eye hand and eye foot coordination is primitive – simple activities designed to help them gain more coordination are needed
- Love to run around, jump, etc. – so let them (not every activity has to have a ball; try an activity without a ball and then with it)
- Can attend to only one problem at a time
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated
- May or may not understand or remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on, what goal they are going for. We need to be patient and laugh with them as they get ‘lost’ on the field
- Need generous praise and to play without pressure. No extrinsic rewards (trophies, medals etc..) should be given for winning
- Prefer “parallel play” will play on a team, but not really engage with their teammates. Thus in a 3v3 is, in reality a 1v5 game because they all want the ball at the same time
- Constantly in motion, but, with no sense of pace. Go flat out! They are easily fatigued, but recover rapidly
- Prefer large, soft balls
- Catching or throwing skills not developed and Can balance on their good foot

U8 Children (U6 plus ball lifting and juggling; block tackle; receiving ground balls with inside and sole of foot; shoot with inside of foot; introduction of push pass and throw -in)

- Attention span a bit longer than U6, but still not at a “competitive” stage
- Some children inclined toward group activities (pairs)
- Always in motion: scratching; blinking; jerking; rocking.....
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Give praise and “hints”
- They want everybody to like them
- Developing physical confidence (most are bale to ride a two wheeler)
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same “gear” as them
- Still lack sense of pace – they go flat out until they drop
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in lack of coordination
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. Make sure they get adequate water breaks
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. “If they try hard, they performed well” regardless of the actual performance. Thus, they need to be engaged constantly, and asked, “Now, can you do this?”
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play, and remembering what goal they are going for but, in the heat of the battle, they will sometimes still forget. They will still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time
- Some children become quite astute and rule conscious – varied abilities
- Growing awareness of space and freedom – soccer must be fun
- Many children still unconcerned with team activities – team practices futile
- Beginning to develop physical coordination – will vary amongst the players
- Boys and girls physical development still similar – but do girls like playing with girls?

U10 Children (As U8's plus running with the ball, passing, instep drive; receiving ground balls with instep and outside of the foot; receiving bouncing balls with instep (cushion) and sole, inside and outside of foot (wedge); throw-in; fakes in dribbling; introduce heading and crossing. For goalkeepers ready stance; how to hold a ball after a save; W grip; catching shots at the keeper; punting and introduction to goal kicks and throwing.

- Memory ability develops – players can be asked to recall/perform tasks or ideas taught earlier, i.e., 1 v 1 moves, passing technique
- Lengthened attention span
- Team oriented
- Still in motion, but not as busy. Will hold still long enough for a short explanation
- Psychologically becoming more firm and confident
- Boys and girls beginning to develop separately
- Gross and small motor skills becoming more refined
- Prefer team type balls and equipment
- PACE FACTOR BECOMING DEVELOPED – THEY DO THINK AHEAD
- Some are becoming serious about their play – but it is still “play time”
- Enjoy the uniforms, team association
- Are now inclined toward wanting to play rather than being told to play
- Ability to sequence thoughts and/or actions – “If I do this, then this can happen,” A passes to B and B passes to C leads to a pass from C to A
- Think like adults – need a reason to do something
- Association with “team” – but ability to play in large groups primitive
- Motor performance improves significantly – potential to learn new techniques very rapidly
- Differences between girls and boys appear – separate programs preferable
- “Stronger” players may dominate – speed, strength and size can help a player dominate at U10, but this is often a poor indicator of who will develop into the best soccer players

COACHING ACTIVITIES CHECKLIST

1. Are the activities fun for the children? Are they enjoyable to participate in and will they keep the children's interest?
2. Are the activities organized?
3. Are the players involved in the activities? (NO LINES!) Games of inclusion.
4. Is creativity and decision-making being used? Are decisions ever changing or are they just repeating things without thinking?
5. Are the activities developmentally appropriate?
6. Is the space we used safe and appropriate?
7. Is the coach's feedback appropriate? For younger players, feedback should be positive and frequent. (NO LECTURES!)
8. Are there implications for the game? Are the objectives of the activities related to the demands they will face in the game? (NO LAPS!)

Remember: soccer is a unique and dynamic game that involves decision-making. Soccer practices should be active and involve playing the game and **SHOULD NOT** look like a baseball or football practice.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WELL-SELECTED GAMES

1. Opportunities to experiment and experience are abundant and continuous; children have lots of safe turns.
2. A broad range of differences can be accommodated. Progressive challenges can be built in to allow individuals to participate at their own personal level.
3. Effort has been made to reduce potential for emotional and social, as well as physical injury.
4. Goals and purposes are clear, consistent and attainable.
5. Feedback is usually immediate and frequent, allowing a participant to experience relationships between cause and effect.
6. Errors are expected and forgiven.
7. There is usually an almost instant opportunity to try again (to adjust, to repeat, to recover).

8. Perseverance and coping with temporary frustration is encouraged by the format of the game.
9. Self-control frequently contributes to achieving the goal.
10. All of the components of the game tend to enhance the possibility of positive social interactions.
11. No player is eliminated either blatantly or subtly.

Coaching Tip: It's the name of the game!!

The name of the game is very important. The younger players will concentrate longer at an activity if it is something that they can relate to and use their imagination to play at. Almost 10 years ago, the children's favorite was the Power Rangers, so instead of a 'soccer drill', we played the Power Rangers game! They didn't think they were learning the same old soccer skills, so they enjoyed themselves using their imagination and creativity. Coaches should attempt to get into the psyche of their players and find out what they enjoy. Their concentration will last longer and the your job as the coach will be easier!

RISK MANAGEMENT

Accepting a coaching position means accepting responsibilities. Important point to remember:

1. Exercise Reasonable Care (use tried/tested activities, have a first aid kit, take a Red Cross first aid course, have an emergency plan, etc.)
2. Fulfill Your Duties (be safe, appropriate and reasonable)
3. Use Common Sense to Foresee Potential Problems

ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Never leave a player alone after training or games.
- Be certain that players depart with their parents or designated individual.
- Avoid being left alone with players who are not your children.

COACHING GUIDELINES

It is the responsibility of youth soccer coaches to create a positive and enjoyable learning environment that ultimately makes playing soccer a rewarding experience for our young players.

How do coaches know if they have achieved these aims? First, youngsters should still be playing when they are 18 years old and beyond. Second, when a player moves from youth soccer to another playing environment, their soccer playing abilities are the best they can be based on their natural capacity. Consequently, it is vital that coaches take a long-term approach. Developing soccer players is a marathon and not a sprint (it is said that players do not peak until they are 27) ... winning in recreational soccer isn't indicative of future success!

To create a positive and enjoyable learning environment in soccer, coaches must focus upon three key concepts:

COMPETENCY – Players will put forth more effort if they feel they have the skills required to excel. Coaches can help players naturally put forth 100% effort by: teaching them the skills needed to excel at the game, having them participate in activities that promote skill development that are not boring drills, using activities that are “unregimented” and involve 360 degrees of movement, organizing half of the practice so that it looks like the real game, etc.

CHOICE – Player participation is hurt if our youngsters feel a lack of ownership or freedom. Players will have a sense of ownership and freedom if coaches: allow players to make decisions, ask questions rather than tell the players what to do, allow youngsters the opportunity to just play, avoid creating an overly structured training/playing environment, give players some controls, etc.

CARE – Young players need to feel cared for and respected. Coaches play a vital role in this area by: being a good role model, inspiring players to love the game, keeping winning and losing in perspective (children know winning is important and they don't benefit at young ages by coaches making soccer more stressful), treating all players fairly, making sure players are safe, etc.

IF COACHES FAIL TO PAY ATTENTION TO THESE THREE AREAS, THE PLAYING ENVIRONMENT WILL BECOME TOXIC!

A toxic playing environment manifests itself in many ways: players don't enjoy soccer anymore, “win at all costs,” cheating, fear of doing something wrong, anxiety, burnout and ultimately PLAYERS STOP PLAYING.

One key element in avoiding the creation of a toxic playing environment is to understand the true meaning of competition. Typically competition is referred to when we compete against other teams for a plastic trophy!! However, the word “competition” is derived from the Latin words com (with) and petere (to strive) and means “to strive with.” Hence, competition occurs over time and has some nurturing and cooperative elements. Competition involves coaches: encouraging players to outperform their best, valuing effort regardless of the outcome,

encouraging cooperation between team members, allowing players to learn from their mistakes, encouraging skill mastery, allowing the players to have fun, etc.

In order that coaches can achieve these and have their players “compete” better, they need to pay attention to points 1-5 and follow the competency, choice and care strategies detailed below:

- 1. Concern yourself with only those things you can control.** Coaches cannot control the referee’s decisions, how good the opposing team is, the final outcome of the game, etc.
- 2. Set simple goals for your players.** This might be as simple as five juggles by the end of the season. However, regardless of how simple or informal the goals set, they need to be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, have some time orientation, be evaluated and rewarded.
- 3. Help players to become intrinsically motivated.** Encourage players to work hard (effort is a choice and can be controlled), encourage skill development, allow children to enjoy just playing, discourage ego-oriented behaviors (e.g., soccer’s only fun if I win or if I’m the top scorer or if I’m the MVP, etc.), etc.
- 4. Communicate effectively ... be careful what you say and how you say it.** Be positive, ask open-ended questions, praise effort, give simple feedback/corrections, tell athletes what you want not what you don’t want, praise the things you want repeated, give non-contingent feedback (i.e., the nature of feedback should be similar regardless of the outcome), be consistent, be aware of non-verbals, etc.
- 5. Words of wisdom** – Stay positive, compliment others (not just your team), focus on important things (things you control), be humble/gracious, treat others fairly and have fun.

COMPETENCY, CARE AND CHOICE OF STRATEGIES

Competence – give good instruction

- Encourage the pursuit of skill mastery.
- Give good feedback (see above).
- Provide opportunities for children to achieve success.
- Don’t compare young athletes to one another.
- Show how players can learn from mistakes.
- Use activities where everyone is participating.
- Reward and encourage effort.

Choice – provide appropriate/meaningful opportunities for choices/control

- Allow athletes to have ownership ... it's their game.
- Share decision-making.
- Don't constantly yell instructions ... get players thinking for themselves.
- Use activities and play games that challenge players to solve problems.
- Ask for athlete opinions regularly.
- Focus athletes on what they control.

Care – Be friendly and warm with all players ... show equal care and concern for all players

- Keep winning and losing in perspective.
- Create a climate of belonging amongst the team.
- Deal with negative behaviors that hurt the team's experience.
- Listen and be observant.
- Make sure facilities and equipment are safe.
- Provide proper supervision.
- Provide reasonable selection of players for activities.
- Deal with injuries promptly and guard against post-injury aggravation.
- Respect opponents and referees.

MEETING THE PARENTS

All Coaches should take time to meet briefly with their players' parents. This meeting should take place after at least one practice. Important things to remember include:

- Prepare information ahead of time.
- Use “we” language when talking about the team, not “I/me” language.
Example: We are all responsible for making this season a success for the kids. We need to make sure that the kids have the proper equipment.
- Your expectations of the kids (sportsmanship, commitment, work ethic, attitude)
- Your expectations for parental behavior:
 - Communication with you
 - Champion behavior for yourself and for them on the touchlines
 - Clarify their role to team (schedules/locations, attendance, equipment, transportation, snacks, positive support)
- Clarify how your role is different in terms of the 3C's (competence, choice, care).
- Your philosophy
- Share your personal coaching goals for the season.
- Share your team goals with parents once you've set them with your team.
- Outline communication processes and boundaries.
- Discuss playing time philosophy and system for playing time.
- Share team rules and consequences (e.g., coming late, missing practice, poor sportsmanship, violation of team code) once you've set them with your team.
- Gather information from parents in survey form (e.g., their concerns/issues, expectations, priorities, goals for child). Short answers.
- Facilitate realistic expectations for their child (statistics/odds for college, pro participation).
- Decide together how inappropriate behavior on the touchlines will be addressed and consequences.
- Ask for volunteers if needed.

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Sample Emails to send prior to Season starting

Hello Team Spain!

We welcome you all back to Team Spain and we are really looking forward to getting out and having some fun on the soccer field this season. We have one new player on our team this season and his name is Bob Dillon. Bob, we look forward to you joining us this season.

We are scheduled for our first practice/game this coming Saturday, April 19th. Our practice/games will be the same as they were for the fall session . . . Saturday mornings from 10:00 to 11:00 at Keystone Park. I will be sending out weekly emails mid-week letting you know what field we play on as well as reminding who is responsible for bringing a snack that week. We plan on bringing the snack this coming Saturday and then I will be passing around a snack sign-up sheet for families to sign up for the remaining weeks.

I believe we have all the correct emails for the parents although let us know if there is anyone that needs to be added or deleted from this list.

Coach needs one parent to volunteer to help be the assistant coach this session. It is a much better experience for the kids with two adults on the field to help with the practice drills, keeping the ball in play, substitutions, etc. Please email us back if you can help.

Thank you!

Coach Scott and Team Manager Holly

Hello Team Arsenal!

We welcome you all back to Team Arsenal and we are really looking forward to getting out and having some fun on the soccer field this season. We have one new player on our team this season and her name is Mia. Mia, we look forward to you joining us this season.

We are scheduled for our first practice/game this coming Saturday, April 19th. Our practice/games will be the same as they were for the fall session . . . Saturday afternoons from 11:30 to 12:30 at Keystone Park. I will be sending out weekly emails mid-week letting you know what field we play on as well as reminding who is responsible for bringing a snack that week. We plan on bringing the snack this coming Saturday and then I will be passing around a snack sign-up sheet for families to sign up for the remaining weeks.

I believe we have all the correct emails for the parents although let us know if there is anyone that needs to be added or deleted from this list.

Scott needs one parent to volunteer to help be the assistant coach this session for the Tuesday night games. It is a much better experience for the kids with two adults on the field to help with the practice drills, keeping the ball in play, substitutions, etc. Please email us back if you can help.

Advantages of Playing Small-Sided Games

“Kids get tied up in the emotional level of the game. A little one playing 11-a-side says, ‘We won!’ but he touched the ball three times today. Our responsibility is DEVELOPMENT; so we must play 4 v 4 and

7 v 7 with plenty of time and space to learn – to learn combinations, skills, awareness, ‘smartness’.” – Rinus Michels, Former Dutch National Team Coach.

The Child Has:

- More practical space to be successful
- Increased number of contacts with the ball
- More actual playing time
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- To make more decisions
- Experience repeating game situations more frequently
- To learn both offense and defense in order to become a more complete player who better understands the roles and importance of teammates
- More time with the coach

The Small Field Enables:

- More efficient use of space
- Games to be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children to be physically more efficient in smaller space
- Young players to achieve a shot at goal or advance to goal more easily
- Children to be more actively involved for a longer period of time

GOALKEEPING

Many law changes in soccer have been centered on goalkeeping. How many steps, how quickly the ball is released, what is allowed in the pass-back, etc. More than ever before, the goalkeeper cannot detach him- or herself from the game. Goalkeepers have become vital elements of the attack as well as their more traditional role as the last line of defense. They must be accurate passers of the ball when distributing (feet as well as hands), reliable in receiving the ball under pressure and even show capability in heading when dealing with errant back passes.

In essence, goalkeepers must be as competent with their field skills as any player on the field. Most goalkeeping skills are specific to the position (catching low medium and high balls, diving, throwing). Older players are more likely to take on goalkeeping as a permanent position. How well these players combine the physical and mental skills of both field player and goalkeeper will determine their effectiveness in being the first line of attack and the last line of defense. Goalkeeping starts at U10.

Key Considerations:

- Players at the U10 level and up should be encouraged and exposed, but not forced to play goalkeeping roles in practice. Many goalkeeping skills are developed at older ages. Exposing many players to the position could help identify a hidden talent ... a player who had never considered trying it before. Exposure to the goalkeeper position may help field players understand the difficulty of the position.
- Goalkeeping should become an active part of every practice. Unfortunately, we often set up practices where goalkeepers work by themselves and call on them only for shooting practice. Goalkeepers should be involved early in training when working on technical development with the ball at their feet, and either as targets or in their primary role in front of the goal. They should not only play as shot blockers and distributors of the ball, but as an active communication link with the rest of the team.

- Whenever possible, goalkeepers should distribute the ball. Often coaches do not allow the goalkeeper to distribute the ball, instead ending play on a save or missed shot or the coach handling the distribution. This denies the goalkeeper work in their key offensive role, that of first line of attack.
- Be active. Concentration by the goalkeeper is vitally important to their effectiveness. Goalkeepers who stay on their line or who are not attached to the rest of the team will soon be reacting to a desperate situation instead of a relatively safe one. Encouraging goalkeepers to be involved and ready goes a long way in reducing dangerous situations.
- Goalkeeping is a tough job. Much is expected of goalkeepers, but they receive very little praise. In many ways, goalkeepers are subject to open and unforgiving exposure. Mistakes are clearly showcased and become very personalized, and psychologically deflating. Mistakes will be made. Encouragement and understanding mixed with sound coaching advice will go a long way in creating a stimulating and fun playing environment.
- When to begin is a frequently asked question. It is widely believed that initiating goalkeeping in games prior to age nine is inappropriate. Children should be exposed to body movements that simulate what goalkeepers do, but to put them under the pressure of being a goalkeeper before they have developed some basic psychomotor and cognitive skills is inappropriate.

Under 6 Modified Rules and Field Structure

The Field:	30 x 20 yards (approx.) recommended Two equal sized fields next to one another are recommended to set-up 'side by side' format
The Goal:	6 feet wide by 4 feet high (approx) Cones or flags can be used if goals are not available
The Ball:	Size 3 is recommended
Players:	Number on the field at one time: 3 (no goalkeeper) Roster size: Single team rosters of 5-6 players are recommended or a maximum of 8-10 players for clubs using the 'side by side' game method.
The Kick Off:	One team will be designated to kick-off at the start of the game. Kick-off is intended to insure possession and can go forward or backward to a teammate. The ball is not kicked "football" style to the other team.
Playing Time:	Games for this age should last approximately 30 minutes. The use of quarters is recommended, but thirds or halves can be utilized. There should be a 2-3 minute break between periods for water and physical recovery.
Ball Out of Play:	When the ball goes completely out of the boundary lines, the coaches will have the restarts with balls in their hands to throw back into the open space on the field. We need to keep attention spans and have as much actual playing time allows. Once the ball has been reentered, it can be touched by anyone.
Equipment:	Players should wear athletic type shoes. Soccer shoes are not necessary but are okay. Players must wear shin guards that should be covered by a high pair of socks. Shorts are recommended. Clothing should not be restrictive. Every player should have a soccer ball or have access to one at practices and games.
Referee:	A referee is not necessary at this age group. Coaches should monitor play on each field and enforce rules regarding rough play, handballs, and rule violations approved for this age group. All fouls result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team. Use the rules as per US Youth Soccer's U6 and U8 Official's Handbook.

Under 7/8 Modified Rules and Field Structure

The Field:	40 x 25 yards (approx.) recommended 4-5 yard (approx.) arc in front of goal (optional)
The Goal:	6 feet wide by 4 feet high (approx), 12' x 6' maximum Cones or flags can be used if goals with nets are unavailable
The Ball:	Size 4 is recommended
Players:	Number on the field at one time: 5 (no goalkeeper) Roster size: Single team rosters of 10-12 players are recommended.
The Kick Off:	One team will be designated to kick-off at the start of the game. Kick-off is intended to insure possession and can go forward or backward to a teammate. The ball is not kicked "football" style to the other team.
Playing Time:	Games for this age should last approximately 40-45 minutes. The use of quarters is recommended, but thirds or halves can be utilized. There should be a 2-3 minute break between periods for water and physical recovery.
Ball Out of Play:	When the ball goes completely out of the boundary lines, the coaches will have the restarts with balls in their hands to throw back into the open space on the field. We need to keep attention spans and have as much actual playing time allows. Once the ball has been reentered, it can then be touched by anyone.
Equipment:	Players should wear athletic type shoes. Soccer shoes are not necessary but are okay. Players must wear shin guards that should be covered by a high pair of socks. Shorts are recommended. Clothing should not be restrictive. Every player should have a soccer ball or have access to one at practices and games.
Referee:	A referee is not required. Coaches should monitor fields and enforce rules regarding rough play, handballs, and rule violations approved for this age group. All fouls result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team. Use the rules as detailed in the US Youth Soccer's U6 and U8 Official's Handbook.

Under 9/10 Modified Rules and Field Structure

The Field:	50 x 35-40 yards (approx.) recommended
The Goal:	18' x 6' recommended (21' x 7' maximum)
The Ball:	Size 4 is recommended
Players:	Number on the field at one time: 7 (6 plus a goalkeeper) Roster size: Single team rosters of 10-12 players are recommended.
The Kick Off:	One team will be designated to kick-off at the start of the game. Kick-off is intended to insure possession and “football” style kick-offs are to be discouraged.
Playing Time:	Games for this age should last approximately 50 minutes. The use of two 25-minute halves is recommended.
Ball Out of Play:	When the ball goes completely out of the boundary lines, throw-ins are utilized.
Equipment:	Players should wear soccer shoes and other appropriate soccer gear (shin guards, etc.). Every player should have a soccer ball to practice with at home.
Referee:	A referee is necessary at this age group. The referee should use the US Youth Soccer modified U10 rules. There is no offside at the U9 age group.
Goalkeeper:	We discouraged Goalkeeper to Punts at U9-U10. But encourage Goalkeeper to keep possession and play out of the back.

U6 Coach's Guide

Things you can expect as a coach

As coaches of these young players there are things that we know that we expect during training and games. If we know what to expect, we will be more effective in dealing with the hundreds of situations that come up. This will help us relax and, in turn, allow us to enjoy the unpredictable nature of working with these children even more. Here are some of the things that we can expect.

- Most players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.
- No matter how loud we shout, or how much we “practice” it, they cannot or will not pass the ball.
- Someone will come off the field in need of a toilet. Somebody will stay on the field in need of a toilet.
- Don't even consider teaching positional play.
- Twenty seconds after the start of the game every player will be within 5 yards of the ball.
- Several players will slap at the ball with their hands, or pick it up. Several parents will yell at them not to do that.
- A model rocket that is launched from nearby field will get 99% of the player's attention. By all means, stop whatever you are doing and go watch for a couple of minutes.
- During a season, you will end up tying 40-50 shoelaces.
- They will do something that is absolutely hysterical – make sure that you laugh!

Coaching Rational

It is important to understand that at the outset players coming to any sport prior to the age of 6 years old, in general, do not do so by their own choice. As a result, their coaches need give them something about which to get excited. Further, at this stage, learning to play soccer is secondary to most other things in their lives.

With the above assumptions, let's look at some things that we can do to energize the U6 players, and, hopefully, get them to the point where they will enthusiastically sign up for next year.

- Each session should be geared around touching the ball as many times as possible. Involve the ball in as many activities as possible. Basic movements such as running, skipping, hopping etc need to be emphasized. If these can be done while kicking, catching, rolling, or dribbling a ball all the better.
- Training should not last for more than one hour. This is primarily due to physical fatigue and attention span considerations. We train for 20-30 minutes on Wednesdays and Saturdays and play for the rest of the time. Any more than this may lead to their and your burnout.

- Have as many different kinds of activities ready as you can get into a session. Emphasis needs to be placed on what is FUN!
- Every player should bring his or her own size #3 ball.
- Remember, although they may have very similar birth dates, their physical and/or mental maturity may vary as much as 36 months. Activities need to accommodate these individual differences whenever possible.
- Team play and passing is an alien concept to these players. They know that if they pass the ball, they may never get it back. In fact they often will steal it from their own teammates. Do not get uptight if they do not pass, let them dribble till their heart's content.
- Plan plenty of water breaks their cooling system is not as efficient as in older players.

Coaching Emphasis – Individual Play and Fun

Coaches of U5 and U6 children should ensure that their players enjoy their soccer experience and are eager to come back.

Soccer Knowledge

Not using hands (during the game), in & out of play, direction to attack, etc.

Team Positions

NONE – Shape can be introduced, i.e., “Magic Triangle.” The kids can be set up in a triangle to start the game and at other natural breaks in the game (kick-offs, goal kicks, etc.) During the game, children must be allowed to run around freely. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD CHILDREN BE MADE TO STAND IN POSITION, STAND ON A LINE OR STAY IN A CERTAIN AREA, ETC.

Technical Emphasis

The following techniques should be covered indirectly through the use of developmentally appropriate games (NO DRILLS):

1. Dribbling
2. Shooting

Tactical Emphasis

1. Where is the field
2. Which goal to kick at

Psychological Emphasis

1. Sharing
2. Fair Play
3. Parental Involvement
4. “How to play” emotional management

Physical Emphasis

1. Balance
2. Running
3. Jumping
4. Introduce idea of how to warm up
5. Movement Education

Practice Schedule

Wednesdays and Saturdays 30 minutes activities 30 minutes game.

Recommended Activities

One player-one ball activities (tag games with/without the ball, maze races [no dribbling around cones set up in a straight line!], etc.), 1 v 1 games and small-sided scrimmages.

Player Equipment

Size 3 ball, athletic shoes, appropriate clothing, shin guards, water bottle, etc.

Coaching License Required

“Y1” or “Y2” Certificate

U7/U8 Coach's Guide

Things you can expect as a coach

6-8 year olds are a bit more compliant than their U6 counterparts. They will be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to have a good understanding about what it means to play a "game". They are also starting to cooperate more with their teammates. In fact, they now will recognize that they even have teammates by fact that they occasionally, and I mean occasionally, will pass the ball to a teammate, on purpose. Often, they will repeat the phrase "I can do that!", but will quickly run to you to show you that they can, even when they only think that they can. Some other things that you can expect to happen during a season with this age group are:

- There will be at least 200-300 falls during the season, but now they usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Keep a spare pump in your bag as the players usually do not realize that their ball is flat until they try to kick it, or you the coach tell them it is flat.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys.
- They will still want to wear a bib, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who is whose best friend as you try to make up teams.
- School conflicts will come up, please let them go (they must face their teachers five days a week).
- They will wear their uniform to bed.

Coaching Rational

Some of the players that are playing as a 7 year old have had two years of soccer experience and thus have already touched the ball a few thousand times in their lives. This, however, does not mean that these players are ready for the mental demands of tactical team soccer. True, they do have some idea of the game, but the emphasis still needs to be placed on the individual's ability to control the ball with his/her body. They are still there to have FUN, and because some of the players may be brand new to the sport, it is imperative that activities are geared towards individual success and participation. Following are some more items that a coach of U8 players should consider.

- Small-sided soccer still is undoubtedly the best option for these players. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but also it is an easier game to understand.
- Because of rapid growth spurts during this age, players will go through times when they seem to have lost control of their body. What they could easily do 2 weeks ago now seems unattainable. Be patient!
- Passing is not an important part of their game, no matter how much anybody yells at them to do otherwise, it is much more fun to dribble and shoot. Let them.
- Training once or twice a week is plenty, and should not last longer than one hour and fifteen minutes.

- Each player should bring his or her own size #3 ball to training. Learning how to control it should be the main objective. They need to touch it as many times as possible during fun activities that will engage them.
- Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.
- Incidental things are important. They are forming the habits that will impact their future participation. Ask them to take care of their equipment (water bottle included), cooperate, listen, behave and try hard. Realize, however, that they often forget and will need to be reminded often.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and work from there.

Coaching Emphasis – Individual Play, introduction to working cooperatively with a partner
Coaches should continue to emphasize fun and encourage their U7/8 players to be ball-orientated. 1 v 1's continue to be important. Older/more insightful children should be gradually encouraged to move away from the 'swarm' they should be encouraged to recognize moments to pass, although this may not be their first choice.

Soccer Knowledge

What constitutes a foul, throw-ins (for players at some clubs), what we do when we lose the ball, etc.

Team Positions

Introduction of "Magic Diamond" (one back player, two wide players and one forward). The children can be set up in a diamond to start the game and at other natural breaks in the game (kick-offs, goal kicks, etc.) During the game, children must be allowed to run around freely. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD CHILDREN BE MADE TO STAND IN POSITION, STAND ON A LINE OR STAY IN A CERTAIN AREA, ETC. IT IS THEIR GAME LET THEM PLAY IT!

Technical Emphasis

The following techniques should be covered with children (most indirectly) through the use of developmentally appropriate games. The key techniques to be covered are: Reinforce skills learned at U6.

1. Dribbling
2. Introduction of push pass
3. Shooting the ball (with multiple surfaces, they will use the inside introduce, striking the ball with the 'laces')
4. Ball Lifting and Juggling
5. Receiving ground balls with the inside and sole of the foot
6. Introduce throw-in

Tactical Emphasis

1. Being exposed to all positions
2. 1v1 attack
3. Introduce names of positions

Psychological Emphasis

1. Working in pairs
2. Sportsmanship
3. Parental Involvement
4. “how to play” emotional management

Physical Emphasis

1. Agility
2. Eye/foot and eye/hand coordination
3. Introduce the idea of cool-down
4. Movement education

Practice Schedule

One or two 1-hour practices per week.

Recommended Activities

Tag games with (and without) the ball, gate games, maze games, target games, 1 v 1 games, 2 v 2 games and small-sided scrimmages.

Player Equipment

Size 3 ball, athletic shoes, appropriate clothing, shin guards, water bottle, etc.

Coaching License

“Y1” or “Y2” Certificate

U9/U10 Coach's Guide

Things you can expect as a coach

As coaches of these young players there are things that we know that we expect during training and games. If we know what to expect, we will be more effective in dealing with the hundreds of situations that come up. This will help us relax and, in turn, allow us to enjoy the unpredictable nature of working with these children even more. Here are some of the things that we can expect.

- Team identification is important to them.
- You as a coach may take on added significance.
- Players now have sequential thoughts.
- Several players will emulate their heroes.
- Peer pressure is significant.
- They demonstrate increased responsibility, they bring ball and water to practice, they tuck in their shirts and pull up their socks, and they are likely to carry their own stuff.
- They may not lose or win gracefully.

Coaching Rational

Some of the players that are playing as a 9-10 year old have had four years of soccer experience and thus have already touched the ball a several thousand times in their lives. This is when players are ready for some of the mental demands of tactical team soccer. True, they do have some idea of the game, but the emphasis still needs to be placed on the individual's ability to control the ball with his/her body. The team concept starts to become more important, some are still there to have FUN, and because some of the players may be brand new to the sport, it is imperative that activities are geared towards individual success and participation. Players can now work in small groups cooperatively; they enjoy the uniforms and team association. They are now more inclined toward wanting to play rather than being told to play. Following are some more items that a coach of U10 players should consider.

- Small-sided soccer still is undoubtedly the best option for these players. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but also it is an easier game to understand.
- Some players are becoming serious about their play.
- Passing is now an important part of their game.
- Training once or twice a week is plenty, and should not last longer than one hour and fifteen minutes.
- Each player should bring his or her own size #4 ball to training. Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and progress to groups of 3,4,5.

Coaching Emphasis – Individual technical development, Small group decision-making and fun

Because of the cognitive and psychomotor abilities of U9/10 children, coaches should focus on teaching their players the key fundamental soccer techniques. Special emphasis should be placed on developing players who are willing and able to go 1v1. Coaches should not sacrifice their players' technical development in order to win games, regardless of what the parents want. Players' decision-making can be enhanced through small group play in small-sided games.

Soccer Knowledge

Spreading out to create length and width when we have the ball, the moves used by professional players and greater awareness of professional teams/players by watching 'pro' games.

Team Positions

Players can be exposed and asked to play a position. We recommend 3 defenders and 2 attackers. The goalkeeper should be encouraged to 'join in' when the team is in possession and make a diamond on the ball side of the field by positioning between the two defenders on that side. However, coaches must remember that positions are fluid – not fixed – and that, developmentally, many children will still have a difficult time playing a position. Coaches must make allowances for these children, enable them to roam and adjust their team accordingly. Rotate those players who are willing to go in goal into the goalkeeper position.

Technical Emphasis

The following techniques should be covered with children through the use of developmentally appropriate games (especially conditioned small-sided games). Drills are to be avoided (drills focusing on intricate individual technique can be used for short periods by qualified, experienced soccer coaches). The techniques to be covered in the order of importance are what were previously learned at U6 and U8:

1. Running with the ball.
2. Turning with the ball to elude a defender or change direction.
3. Shooting (instep drive)
4. Passing (with inside, outside of foot and shoe laces).
5. Receiving the ball (wedge and cushioning techniques to minimize the number of touches needed to control the ball.)
6. Heading (to be introduced in a 'user-friendly' manner).
7. Shielding the ball for possession.
8. Fakes in dribbling.
9. Introduction to crossing.
10. We discouraged Goalkeeper to Punts at U9-U10. But encourage Goalkeeper to keep possession and play out of the back.

Tactical Emphasis

Below are some tactical considerations for the U10 coach. Coaches must remember that our players' technical development is vastly more important than tactics at this age. However, coaches can help players make better use of their greater technical prowess by making superior decisions. Team tactics can be addressed one practice out of every ten.

1. 1v1 defending.
2. Roles of 1st attacker and defender
3. 2v1 attacking
4. Man-to-man defense
5. Introduction of set plays
6. **Creativity.** Players need to be encouraged to improvise and take risks in solving tactical problems. Coaches and players need to remember the difference between creative decisions (good/unique ideas that might not always work out) and bad decisions (making the same mistake twice.)
7. **Vision.** Players should be encouraged to 'get their heads up,' 'see the field,' and scan for options before receiving the ball, so they already know upon controlling the ball what their next action will be.
8. **Play quickly but with purpose.** Coaches are compelled to discourage 'kick ball.' Players should not be allowed nor encouraged to kick, 'send' or 'dump' the ball aimlessly down the field. However, our players have to be encouraged to play (think, execute) quickly.
9. **Small-group play.** Focus on support play. Do players move or stand still when not in possession? Do they move into open spaces at the right time? Players should be encouraged to find new positions to help their teammates, rather than be told where and when to move.
10. **Team play.** Does the team attack and defend together as a large group? Does the team transition quickly (on their own) from attack to defense after losing the ball and from defense to attack after winning the ball?

Psychological Emphasis

1. Working in in-groups of 3,4, or 5
2. Stay focused for one entire half
3. Sensitivity
4. How to win or lose gracefully
5. Sportsmanship
6. Parental involvement
7. "How to play" emotional management
8. Communication

Physical Emphasis

1. Endurance
2. Range of motion-flexibility
3. Proper warm up and cool down are now mandatory

Practice Schedule

2 x 60-75 minute practices a week. Players can be encouraged to attend a third ‘skills’ practice if they choose to do that.

Recommended Activities

Tag games with the ball, 1v1 games, small group activities, small-sided conditioned games and small-sided scrimmages.

Player Equipment

All U10 players should have their own ball (size 4) to take home and practice, soccer shoes, appropriate clothing, shin guards.

Coaching License

“Y1” or “Y2” Certificate

Tips for organizing any practice

Have practice designed before driving to the field. Write it down.

Organize practice so it moves through a number of activities. Players have short attention spans. Don't give them the chance to get bored.

Dress like a soccer coach when coaching.

Play the math dribble game and finish with the size of the group you need for the next game.

If you finish one activity with pairs and need groups of four next, quickly group players together in close proximity and get started.

Soccer is a chaotic game incorporating movement and decision-making. Standing in lines does not foster that. Keep line time to a minimum.

Practice activities usually include both "exercises" and "games." Understand there is a big difference.

"Exercises" - those activities that include less than 4 vs. 4, such as "drills," skill work, etc. - should be employed at the beginning of practice, serve as a "warm-up" and occupy 25% or less of practice.

"Games" - those activities that include at least 4 vs. 4 - should occupy 75% of the allotted practice time.

The more "small-sided" games at practice (4 vs. 4, etc.) the more learning. Small-sided game are more efficient since the lessons are increased. Two games of 4 vs. 4 are better than one game of 11 vs. 11.

Once in a while let them scrimmage the whole practice. Occasionally say, "Try this. Forget that. Play." The surprise heightens motivation.

Fundamental Games

	Theme	Added Restrictions	Area
Bring it back U6	The coach rolls balls away and players simply bring the ball back.	You cannot touch the ball with your hands, feet, arms etc. For older groups they may not move while they have the ball. Or the ball may not touch the ground	Unrestricted
Gates U6	Cones are placed three yards apart, forming gates in an area. Players must dribble or pass through the gates to score points.	Players can compete to go through all the gates the fastest, or as many as they can in a time frame. U8 players can work in pairs passing through gates or 1v1. U10 team v team	Random
Coach goofy says U6	Players run around and the coach requests on command (Goof) that players perform a move.	Moves can be a jump, roll a twist.	Unrestricted
Follow the leader U6	Coach has players follow him/her	For younger players this game is ideal to define the playing area. Add a ball change speed.	20X20
Cone flip U6	Cones are laid out on the field half upright and half upside down. Players are put into two teams. Team A must turn all the cones upside down, and team B must turn all the cones right side up.	Add a ball after game is established. U8/10 players can kick opposing players balls away. Players must retrieve there ball before continuing, and must not kick their ball if they are not standing	Random
Body part dribble U6	Players dribble with a ball and on the coach's command (a body part) they must stop and put that body part on their ball.		20X20
Musical balls U6	Balls are placed in the area. Players run around the area without a ball, while the coach sings/hum's when the coach goes silent players sit on their ball	Remove a ball; last player has to perform a move.	20X20
Knock em' down U6	Upright cones are placed around an area. Players must knock down the cones with their balls.	Try to make player keep track of points. Make a time frame and have them try to beat their own score.	Random

Ghost Blasters U6	Players (ghosts) run along the area. One player kicks balls from the outside of the area (the blaster) and tries to hit the ghosts (below the knee); Ghosts must avoid being hit by a ball. When they are hit they become a blaster.	Players can be made to run around a cone and return to starting position.	10X30
Bingo U6	Players dribble in there are and try to hit other players ball with theirs every time the hit someone's ball they call out 'Bingo'. They must try to avoid having their ball hit.	Try to make player keep track of points. Make a time frame and have them try to beat their own score.	20X20
Hunters & rabbits U6	One player has a ball. This is the hunter. All the other players do not have a ball; they are the Rabbits and must stay in the area. The Hunter can dribble in the area and must use the ball to shoot at the Rabbits. Once a rabbit is hit they get a ball and become a hunter.		20X20
I can do this, can you? U6	Coach demonstrates a move/act, such as throwing the ball in the air and catching it. Encourage players to try it.	Throwing the ball higher, clapping while the ball is in the air, kicking the ball in the air. Etc	Unrestricted
Paint the field U6	Players pretend their ball is a paintbrush and the playing area is their canvas and paint as much as they can.	Add a move like ball taps to add more paint to the brush. U8 players can play in pairs.	20X20
Red light, green light U6	Each player has a ball. On command 'green light' players dribble with their ball. On command red light players stop their ball. To emphasis dribbling with the head up introduce visual commands, i.e. hold up a red cone for red light.	Additional commands Yellow light – ball taps, Roadblock – pull back, under a bridge – scissors.	20X20

Shark pool U6	Half of the players sit on the ground without balls they are the sharks, the other half has balls. Keeping their balls close they dribble from one end line to the other as often as possible. Each crossing scores a point. If player loses their ball to a shark they switch roles.	Time limit 10 minutes. Who can score the most points? U8+ see bulldog/sharks and minnows.	20X20
Cross over U6	Dribbling around and area, the coach calls cross over and all of the players cross to the other side.	With older players a move can be requested during the cross over.	20X20
Marbles U8	Players, all with a ball get into pairs and take turns in kicking their ball at or away from their partner's ball. They score points when they hit their partner's ball.		Unrestricted
Bulldog U8	All players except one (who is the bulldog) start from one side of the area with the ball, and must dribble to the other side. If the bulldog gets their ball, players then become bulldogs [sharks, minnows].		40X30
The Blob U8	All players have a ball except one (who is the blob). If the blob kicks another player's ball out of the area, that player joins the blob. Players hold hands and the blob gets bigger until all the balls are gone.	Once there are four players in the blob. In can break into two blobs.	20X20

Balls galore U8	An area is divided into two halves and two teams are separated into those areas. Each team has the same number of balls in there half. The coach gives the teams 1 minute to kick as many balls out of there half and into the other half.		40X30
Every man for himself U8	Four mini goals are set up on the field; there are half as many balls as players. Each player tries to win a ball and score between the cones. Each goal counts as a point. After scoring a player must move to a different goal. Who can score the most in time limit?	Request players dribble through to score.	Random
Get out of there U8	Players compete to get to a ball fed in by the coach. Two teams of players are lined up. The coach plays in a ball and calls a number "2". Two players from each team compete for the ball a try to play it back to the coach. If the coach says 1, 3, or 4 that will be the number of players from each team that competes. Time limits can be made to speed play.	You can also create numbers up and down situations.	20X30
Knock the ball off the cone U10	Two players with a ball stand 10 yard apart with another ball placed on a cone between them. They use their ball to try and knock the ball off of the cone.	Move players further away.	10 yards apart

Recover U10	Two teams of players at opposite ends of the area, which has goals on either end. The coach plays in a ball and one player from each team attempts to win the ball and score in the goal behind them. The other player must then make a recovery run to defend that goal.	You can send in 2 players from each team and add 20 seconds to score.	30x20
Four corners U10	This is a small-sided game with two teams, there are four goals in each corner 4-7 yards apart. There are no goalkeepers. Each team must defend and attack two goals		50X30
Keep away U10	Separate into two teams. One player from each team enters opposite team's area for one minute and tries to win the ball. 3 points each time a defender wins a ball and 1 point for 4 passes made by possession players		2X20X20
Hand ball U10	Playing to two end lines. Players use hands to throw the ball to teammates. They score when a team member catches the ball behind the end line. Whilst holding the ball a player cannot move. After each point they keep possession and target the other end line.	Gradually progress to score by headers/volleys to end line player and they no use of hands. And then add goals.	30X40
Relay	Any type of obstacle course can be used.		Random
Tag	With or without a ball.		20X20

Sample sessions

U6

1 st Activity	Tag
Area 20x20	All players try to tag as many people as possible without getting tagged.
2 nd Activity	Bring it back
	1 Ball per player. Each player brings you a ball, which you distribute, for him or her to bring back to you. You may add difficulty by restricting the use of hands, feet, arms etc. skipping, jumping, throwing the ball up in the air and hopping when bringing the ball back.
3 rd Activity	Musical balls
Area 20x20	Players move around balls while coach sings/hums. When the coach stops singing/humming players sit on a ball, in addition ask players to touch the ball with their elbow, foot etc. Remove some balls to increase difficulty but do not exclude players.
4 th Activity	Paint the field
Area 20x20	All players pretend that their ball is paintbrush and the area is the canvas. Players must paint the canvas. Encourage dribbling but allow the use of hands.
5 th Activity	Game 3v3
3v3	Game. Let players which way to go. Red team this way □, Blue team that way □.□

U8

1 st Activity	Tag
Area 20x20	All players try to tag as many people as possible without getting tagged.
2 nd Activity	Bring it back in pairs
No outlined area necessary.	1 Ball per pair. Each player brings you a ball, which you distribute, for him or her to bring back to you. You may add difficulty by restricting the use of hands, feet, arms etc. skipping, jumping, throwing the ball up in the air and hopping when bringing the ball back.
3 rd Activity	Paint the field in pairs
Area 20x20	All players in their pairs pretend that their ball is paintbrush and the area is the canvas. Players must paint the canvas. Players should start passing the ball between themselves. Encourage them to get further apart.
4 th Activity	The Blob
Area 20x20	All players have a ball except one (who is the blob). If the blob kicks another player's ball out of the area, that player joins the blob. Players hold hands and the blob gets bigger until all the balls are gone.
5 th Activity	Game 4v4
Area 40x25 4v4	Game. Let players know which way to go. Red team this way Blue team that way

U10

1 st Activity	Red light / Green light		
<p style="text-align: center;"> x. x. x. x. x. x. x. x. </p>	<p>Each player with a ball. On command green light players dribble with their ball. On command red light players stop their ball. Additional commands Yellow light – ball taps, Roadblock – pull back, under a bridge – scissors. To emphasis dribbling with the head up introduce visual commands, i.e. hold up a red cone for red light etc.</p>		
2 nd Activity	Passing in sequence		
<p style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 </p>	<p>Players in groups of four pass the ball. Then they are numbered and pass in sequence</p>		
3 rd Activity	Keep away		
<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"> x o o o </p> </td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"> x x x o </p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p style="text-align: center;"> x o o o </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> x x x o </p>	<p>Separate into two teams. One player from each team enters opposite team's area for one minute and tries to win the ball. 3 points each time a defender wins a ball and 1 point for 4 passes made by possession players.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> x o o o </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> x x x o </p>		
4 th Activity	Get out of there		
<p>BBBBB. Coach RRRRR.</p>	<p>Players compete to get to a ball fed in by the coach. Two teams of players are lined up. The coach plays in a ball and calls a number "2". Two players from each team compete for the ball a try to play it back to the coach. If the coach says 1, 3, or 4 that will be the number of players from each team that competes. Time limits can be made to speed play. You can also create numbers up and down situations.</p>		
5 th Activity	Game		
<p style="text-align: center;">6v6</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">40X50</p>		

Planning and Evaluating your Sessions

1. How many of you plan your sessions?
2. How many of you plan your sessions on paper?
3. How many of you keep your plans in a folder?
4. How many of you evaluate your sessions?
5. How many evaluate your sessions on paper?

These 5 simple questions, highlight how effective and organized you are as a coach.

Planning your session

It is vitally important that you plan your sessions ahead of time on paper. This allows you to attend the sessions knowing exactly what activities you will be running. Here are four main areas of a Practice Session:-

1. Warm up:

Enthusiastically set the tone for the session. The warm up prepares the mind and body for the upcoming activities. Ball gymnastics greatly enhance motor skills (i.e. coordination, balance, agility and flexibility). Young players need very little stretching, but it is a good habit for them to begin at an early age.

2. Individual Activities:

Fun filled activities emphasize technique development. This is a discovery level, there needs to be lots of ball contacts.

3. Small Group Activities

Small-Sided games that are an extension of individual activity. Groups are small to again allow for maximum ball contact. Activities should emphasize fun while challenging the players in a non-drill like manner.

4. Large Group Activities

An extension of the small group activity, this portion of the session is designed to familiarize the players with the varying aspects of the game. Kids want to play and have fun. Every practice should finish with the game itself.

Evaluating your Sessions

By evaluating your sessions, it allows you to see what worked with various age groups and what did not work. It allows you the opportunity to see what the players enjoyed or what they did not. This will then make the repetition of sessions easier to perform and plan for.

When evaluating the sessions, ask yourself the following questions:

- Did the players enjoy the session?
- Did I enjoy coaching the session?
- Was I able to achieve what I wanted from it?
- Did the session flow?

With your answers, it provides you with the necessary background information to move on with your sessions. If the answer to some of these questions was “no”, ask yourself WHY? Was it too complex? Did I not explain clearly enough? Did I not demonstrate well enough?

Week 1 Curriculum (U4-U6)

Activity 1

To set-up you will need a cone for the players to stand behind to begin. You will then need colored pinneys (or cones) down the other end to act as the treasure!



Explanation

To begin you will need to get the players excited about playing soccer. Tell the young players that this game is "...a fun game called pirates of the Caribbean. What noise do pirates make?" The kids will make an 'arghhh' noise. Then you need to tell them that pirates love treasure and the treasure is down the other end of the island.

The kids will need to go one at a time and pick up one piece of treasure (cones/pennies) and bring it back to the pirate ship.

1. To get the players to understand this game, play the first round without soccer balls.
2. The second time they should kick a soccer ball down with them.

Progression

Add cones leading up to the treasure so the players have to weave in and out of them before getting to the end. By placing the cones down the young players have to dribble the soccer ball in different directions - not just straight.

You could also encourage a race parallel with each other to see who can get the most treasure in the quickest time!

Coaching points

-> No hands on the ball use your feet to dribble - how many different surfaces

-> See if the players can change direction by placing the bottom of their foot on the ball and rolling it behind them.

Activity Two



Explanation

The players will be the surfers and you are the lone crab in the middle of the area. To make this game fun the kids will have to act like surfers before dribbling their soccer ball toward the other end. You will shout out "surfers are you ready?" The kids will jump sideways onto an imaginary surf-board and shout "surfs-up dude!"

You will then in reply have to do a fun crab dance (the players love this). Use your hands as crab claws and sing the following verse.

"A snappy to the left, a snappy to the right, a snappy in the middle because we're having surfers tonight!"

As a crab you need to be on all fours with your feet in front and your stomach facing upward moving around using your hands and feet.

Shout out 3,2,1 GO! and the kids have to dribble their soccer ball toward the other end of the area. If you catch a surfer they will become a crab with you for the next round. Make sure you do the surfer's chant and crab dance every round.

Progression

Get parents involved as the crabs. The players will love trying to dribble the ball past their parents and often try harder too.

Coaching points

-> Make sure the players use little touches and demonstrate what happens if you kick the ball too far in a game.

-> See if the players can change direction by placing the bottom of their foot on the ball and rolling it behind them.

-> Make sure the players use different surfaces to dribble the ball.

Activity 3

Each player and the coach will need a ball each.



Explanation

The coach will need to sing/chant one verse and then get the players to repeat it. After they have done this the coach will demonstrate what the chant represents and what actions the players must follow after they have repeated the verse. After the players have completed the task and you are ready to move on just go back to the first verse.

The numbers game song goes as follows (best done in the tone of a military chant):

1. "Number one is on the run" - The players must dribble their ball around the area.
2. "Number two is sole of the show" - The players stand still and role the ball in different directions using the bottom of their foot.
3. "Number three is follow me" - The players will follow the coach in whatever he decides i.e. dribbling/tricks.

4. "Number four is head to the floor" - This one is fun and will require the players to lie down and use their ball as a pillow.
5. "Number five is stayin' alive" - (this comes from the beegees song) The coach says the first part and the players reply with "aah, ahh, aah, aah stayin' alive" whilst doing toe-taps on the ball and moving one arm diagonally up and down just for fun.
6. "Number six is do some tricks" - Allow the players to do their own tricks and skills.
7. "Number seven is down from heaven" - The players will throw the ball in the air and attempt to trap/control the ball.
8. "Number eight is swap with a mate" - The players will pass their ball to someone else and receive another ball, passing into space if necessary to avoid balls clashing.

There are other numbers, but the game can go on too long if your not careful. Remember to go back to the lower numbers frequently after presenting a new number.

Progression

Allow players to put their mark on the game and alter as they so wish.

Coaching Points

-> Make sure the players use little touches and demonstrate what happens if you kick the ball too far in a game.

-> Make sure the players use different surfaces

-> Demonstrate every turn that you use and show the players how this could work in a game situation.

-> Make sure the players change direction frequently and keep their heads up to see where they are going and ensure they do not bump into anyone.

Week 2 (U4-U6)

Activity 1

Jake and the Never Land Pirates

Spread cones out all over the field and they are gold bullion or coins. Players are pirates and they follow coaches directions. Such as the captain is coming so they dribble, scrub the deck they take the ball and scrub the floor. (progression can be they do pendulums - move the ball from side to side between their feet). Hoist the sail - players throw the ball up and catch it. When Coach says " I see land" players put hand up and say "land a hoy". When players get to land they dribble and when coach says "find the buried Treasure" players pick up cones. You can add in walk the plank and other fun stuff.

Skills worked on: Following directions, dribbling, turning, ball familiarity, catching, movement education.

Activity 2

Sharks and Nemos

The Nemos start at one end of the grid. The Sharks stand on the opposite line. The Nemos must try to cross the Shark's line without losing possession of their ball. The Sharks defend their line, trying to kick the Nemos' balls out of the defined area.

Nemos who successfully dribble across the Shark's line go back for round two. Each Nemo who loses their ball join the Sharks. The last Nemo left in is the winner. Coach Can be the Shark. Tell players swim Nemo's swim.

Skills worked on: Following directions, dribbling, turning, ball familiarity, catching, movement education

Activity 3

Shark Attack

Objective: To improve dribbling skills, (especially keeping close control of the ball and playing with head up), turning with the ball and shielding the ball from pressure.

Set-up: Use a grid about 20 yards across is ideal and 15 yards in length.

Every player has a ball and goes inside the circle except for two players – the Sharks – who don't have a ball and stay outside the circle.

How to play:

- Players dribble their ball around inside the circle and the two Sharks jog around the perimeter.
- On your signal, the Sharks have 10 seconds to kick as many balls out the circle as possible.
- Any players who lose their ball leave the circle and join the Sharks for the next attack.
- The last two players left dribbling are the winners and they become the Sharks at the start of the next game.

GAME REMINDERS:

1. Play **quarters**, as opposed to halves; this gives the players an opportunity to rest. Players at this age have one speed most of the time.
2. Do not get too caught up with kick-ins/throw ins and corners. Have several balls around the field and let the children play as much as possible.
3. Try and have the players move as the ball moves. For example, if the ball moves up field the players should move up field. Encourage the sweeper/defender to join the play and not act as a goalkeeper.
4. If scores are lop-sided mix up the teams at half.
5. U4-6 - introduce the concept of the magic triangle. A player who plays the sweeper position (defense) a right and left sided forward (offense). Also let them know that they are connected by an invisible rubber band: at no time at all should the rubber band touch the ground (too close) no time should it be about to break (too far). If one person moves everyone moves. Every player should experience playing in every position in attack and defense.

Week 3 (U4-U6)

Activity 1

Retrieve

The coach begins with all the balls. He throws the balls in different directions for each player who must bring the ball back to the coach as quickly as they can. First the children bring the ball back by using their hands in some fashion; such as, rolling the ball with their hands, or bouncing the ball with two hands. After the children get the idea that they are to bring the ball back to coach then the coach has the children bring the ball back using their feet.

The purpose of the activity is to encourage the children to move toward a target. First, by bring the ball with their hands and then with their feet.

Activity 2

Red Light, Green Light:

Players imagine that they are driving their favorite car. The last thing the players want to do is crash their car. Green Light all players dribble around the area. Red Light stop with foot on ball. Yellow light: players do step ups (right foot on ball, then left foot on ball).

Other commands are:

Highway, players go fast (remind players to dribble with head up)

Forwards park: players do step ups going forward

backwards park: players do step ups going backwards

Traffic: players move ball between feet from side to side (pendulums)

Bridge: players use a creative way to make a bridge for their car (coach can introduce scissors or step over move)

Roadblock: players change direction (introduce or re-introduce turns such as pull back or inside hook etc)

Dribble with your radios on: sing the ABC's

Runaway truck - coach comes in and tries to kick players ball out of area. If players ball is

knocked out then they have to do 10 yellow lights before they get back in the square.

Skills worked on: Spatial awareness, dribbling, turns, foot- eye co-ordination.

Activity 3

"Get Outta Here"

For ease of transition into the game, play this game on your half of the field. Split your group into 2 groups. Gather all balls on the sideline in the middle of the field at coach's feet. Each group lines up in pairs on both sides of the coach. Coach plays ball onto field, once ball is played in players start to play.

When ball goes out of bounds, the coach shouts "Get Outta here" at which point players leave the field. When coach plays another ball in another pair go in. Once ball is won players can attack designated goals. Once all the balls have gone players retrieve balls and bring them back to coach. Children love this game.

Skills worked on:

Dribbling, defending , attacking, teamwork, quickness, reaction time to verbal and non verbal cues. Great mental preparation leading to game.

Week 4 (U4-U6)

Activity 1

Body Part Dribble

In an area the size of the center circle the children dribble while avoiding each other. While they dribble the coach calls out a body part, such as "elbow," "knee," "nose" or "belly button." The children stop the ball using the part of the body identified.

Children learn to keep the ball close so they can stop the ball quickly.

Activity 2

Hospital Tag

In a space appropriate for the number of children, the children dribble around and try to tag other children while controlling their ball. When tagged, the player must hold the part of the body that was tagged. After the player is tagged for the third time, they must go to the hospital to get well. The hospital is a space ten to fifteen yards away where the player must dribble to and perform four ball touches. After completion they come back into the game with a fresh start. The children learn to keep the ball close to be able move quickly to avoid being tagged. Those who are more comfortable with the ball will tag those less comfortable, but after visiting the "hospital" they are back in.

Activity 3 **Gates Dribble**

Cones or disks are placed as gates all over the playing area (there should be more gates than children). Children try to dribble through as many gates as possible in a specified period of time, such as 15 sec. The children keep track of how many gates they dribbled and try to get more the next time. The coach needs to make sure the children go from one gate to another.

The children learn to control the ball at pace while running and turning.

Week 5 (U4-U6)

Activity 1 **Shark Attack!**

Objective: To improve dribbling skills, (especially keeping close control of the ball and playing with head up), turning with the ball and shielding the ball from pressure.

Set-up: Use a grid about 20 yards across is ideal and 15 yards in length.

Every player has a ball and goes inside the circle except for two players – the Sharks – who don't have a ball and stay outside the circle. How to play:

- Players dribble their ball around inside the circle and the two
- Sharks jog around the perimeter. On your signal, the Sharks have 10 seconds to kick as many balls out the circle as possible.
- Any players who lose their ball leave the circle and join the Sharks for the next attack.
- The last two players left dribbling are the winners and they become the Sharks at the start of the next game.

Activity 2 **SNAKE TAG**

Step 1: 1 player or the coach is it. Every other player runs around and tries not to get tagged by the snake.

Step 2: If a player gets tagged then they join the snake. Continue until all players have been tagged. If snake breaks and some one gets tagged then that player is safe!

Step 3: Introduce a ball and let players play again.

Remember they love to be chased by adults.

Skills worked on: dodging, dribbling, running, jumping, decision making, changes of speed and direction.

Activity 3

FLY ME TO THE MOON/ TRAVEL AGENT

Grid Setup: Half field

P=Player, C=Coach

Ps bring the ball to the "travel agent" (C and tell the C where they want to go). The C passes the ball out for the Ps to retrieve. Be creative on how the Ps bring it back - let them decide too. - 1 finger & 1 forehead; 2 elbows; 1 finger & 1 bellybutton; dribbling with laces; dribbling with bottom of foot.

Variations: for U8 and above have them pass the ball back and forth to partner while getting back to Coach.

For the older age groups you can have the juggle or head it back and forth.

Coach may also move...

Ask players about type of dribbling/passing - long or short.

Skills: dribbling, changing direction, vision skills, finding a target, passing, passing a moving target.

Week 6 (U4-U6)

Activity 1

Bumper Cars

Step 1: Coach has a ball (car) and dribbles around the grid.

Step 2: Each of the players tries to hit the coach's car (ball).

Step 3: (imagination) be creative about what the players knock off your car each time they bump you. Let them yell out the part they knock off each time they hit your ball.

Skills worked on would be: Motor skills, dribbling, striking the ball, eye/foot coordination, changing direction.

Activity 2

Red Light, Green Light:

Players imagine that they are driving their favorite car. The last thing the players want to do is crash their car. Green Light all players dribble around the area. Red Light stop with foot on ball. Yellow light: players do step ups (right foot on ball, then left foot on ball).

Other commands are:

Highway, players go fast (remind players to dribble with head up)

Forwards park: players do step ups going forward Backwards park: players do step ups going backwards

Traffic: players move ball between feet from side to side (pendulums)

Bridge: players use a creative way to make a bridge for their car (coach can introduce scissors or step over move)

Roadblock: players change direction (introduce or re-introduce turns such as pull back or inside hook etc)

Dribble with your radios on: sing the ABC's

Runaway truck - coach comes in and tries to kick player's ball out of area. If player's ball is knocked out then they have to do 10 yellow lights before they get back in the square.

You can add calls such as Get gas and the players come and give you a high five, soft 5 is all good. Hard 5 car gets in-pounded you punt the ball away and they go get it.

Skills worked on: Spatial awareness, dribbling, turns, foot-eye co-ordination. Following directions

Activity 3

Killer Whale

Grid Setup: Half field

P=Player, C=Coach

Have 4-6 Ps inside the grid dribbling a soccer ball. One defensive P wears a pinnie and is the "Killer Whale"

The object of the game is for the "killer whale" to kick as many soccer balls outside of the circle as s/he can. Each ball that goes out is worth a point.

The O's with a soccer ball try to shield the ball from the killer whale(X's). If his or her ball gets kicked out, they retrieve the ball and continue dribbling in circle.

The "killer whales" can usually go for 30 to 60 seconds and keep track of their score. Make sure everyone has a chance to be killer whale. The player who kicks out the most balls wins.

Variations:

You can use one or two killer whales

Add goal(s) to the outside of the grid, if a whale steals a ball, s/he tries to score a goal. If a whale scores, s/he gets a point (rather than just kicking the ball out).

Skills: dribbling, changing direction, shielding, finding a target, passing.

Week 7 (U4-U6)

Activity 1

FREEZE TAG

Without Ball:

Step 1: One catcher is the "freezer" who chases players and tries to tag them. Once tagged they are frozen.

Step 2: Frozen players can be saved when someone crawls through their legs.

With Ball:

Step 3: Introduce a ball, "freezer" tags players (or alt. version: kicks their ball)

Step 4: Once frozen player stands with ball on his head.

Step 5: Player can be saved when someone passes the ball through their legs.

This will work on many skills such as dodging, dribbling, running, jumping, passing and kicking.

Activity 2

I Can do this Can you?

I Can, can you? The coach says, "I can..." and then demonstrates a movement or ball skill, and finishes by saying "Can you?". The players try to do the same thing. After a short time repeat with different movements.

Examples: gallop, bending and twisting different ways, tossing and catching the ball, toss clap then catch the ball, bounce the ball off the knee and then catch, etc.

Progress to having the players demonstrate what they can do.

Activity 3

Brutus and the Dog Catcher

Players have a soccer ball that is their dog and they dribble (walk their dog) the ball in a grid (park). Introduce different elements...when the coach calls out "dog catcher" the players dribble as fast as they can for a few seconds before slowing down. When the coach calls out "Brutus" (neighborhood bully dog) they turn with their ball and go the other way. Disc cones could also be put upside down and the players have to take their dog from cone to cone to get a drink of water.

Week 8 U4-U6

Pick the children's favorite activities.

U7-U8 Curriculum

Session 1

Gates Dribbling:

The coach sets up several small goals or gates (two cones a yard apart) inside a larger area. There should be at least one or two more gates than there are players. Have the players try to dribble through as many gates as they can in 60 seconds. Repeat for round 2 and see if the players can beat their OWN record.

Coaching Points: After dribbling through a gate, look up to see open space and the next gate. Dribbling technique.

Pirates with Gates:

Set-up gates (two disc cones two steps apart) randomly in a large grid. The players try to dribble through as many gates as they can. Two players are “Pirates”. The “pirates” run around the grid and try to steal some treasure (soccer ball) from another player. When a player had their treasure taken, they have to become a pirate. No tag backs. When a player gets their ball taken they have to go get someone else’s ball/treasure. Add more pirates to make the game more difficult.

Coaching Points: Vision 1v1 to Gate Goals: Using the same set-up as above, all the players find a partner and play 1v1. The player with the ball scores by dribbling through a gate goal. When they score, they stop the ball and their partner gets to start with it.

Progress to when a player scores they just keep going.

Coaching Points: Shield the ball, dribble it so it is on the far side of your body away from the defender.

Get Outta There:

Circles attack the right goal. Squares attack the left goal. The coach rolls/tosses a ball into play and the first person from each line runs into the game and plays 1v1. If a ball goes out of bounds or over a sideline both players are “outtalk there” and a new ball is served for the next two people in line. If a player scores they stay in the game and go against a new defender. This should be VERY fast paced.

Progress to playing 2v2.

Session 2

Switcheroo:

Each player has a ball. Players dribble around in a grid and listen for the coach to shout out a word. When that word is yelled out the players have to stop their ball, and then run to another ball. Once the players get the hang of it, the coach could yell out different body parts (elbow, forehead, bottom, etc.). The players then have to stop the ball with that body part and then move to a different ball. Once getting to the new ball the players start dribbling around right away until they hear the word shouted out. again

Coaching Points: Head up, find a ball that is open and accelerate to it.

Everybody's It:

Each player has a ball and each player is it. The point of the game is to tag as many different players as possible. Tag should be shoulders or below and a player can't tag the same player twice in a row.

Coaching Points: Vision – head up while dribbling. Keep the ball close so you can change direction quickly!

Storm the Castle:

Split the team into two teams and divide the field into two halves. Each team has some tall cones spread out in the field. Play a regular soccer game but to score a player tries to knock a cone over of the other team (players can go on either side). When a players knocks over a cone of the other teams they get to pick it up and put it someplace in their half of the field.

Coaching Points: Look for defenders and avoid them!

Multiple 1v1's:

Make a field that is 25 yards long and 35 yards wide. Place 3 cone goals (2 disc cones 2-3 steps apart) on each side of the grid. Each player finds a partner that they play against. One player attacks one side and the other attacks the other side. Players can score in any of the 3 goals on the side they are attacking. Just as in regular soccer when a goal is scored the other partner starts with the ball.

Coaching Points: Dribbling!! Be deceptive. See the open space behind the defender.

Session 3

Bob the Builder:

Split the players into two groups, bulldozers and builders. Set up a lot of tall cones (regular cones, not disc cones) throughout the area. The bulldozers dribble their ball around and use it to knock over cones (kick at cones or just dribble right through them). The builders run around and pick up the cones. Switch roles after 30 seconds to a minute. You may need to play with the numbers a bit (the number of builders vs. bulldozers) depending upon the skill level (split into three groups, two groups of bulldozers and one group of builders for example). To make the game hard have the builders dribble a ball as they pick up the cones. Could have the players flip disc cones over (right side up vs. upside down) if tall cones are not available.

Pac Man:

One player starts with a ball in a grid (usually one of the better players). All the others start in the grid without their balls (placed just outside the grid within easy reach). When the game begins the player with the ball has to dribble the ball under control while attempting to tag others. If he does then they also get their ball and attempt the same. Variation: The Pac Man passes the ball off the other players below their knees.

Coaching Points: Pac man – keep the ball close so you can strike it at any time. Use of feints to make the players jump (hit them as they land).

Chaotic Countdown:

Players have to transfer soccer balls from one side of the grid to the other and then shoot them into the goal. A few players don't have a soccer ball and are "defenders" that try to steal a ball of someone that is dribbling. If they can do so they kick it back towards the pile. Play for 90-120 seconds and then switch defenders. Progress to having players find a partner they can work together with to get past the defenders.

Coaching points: Encourage and acknowledge passing!

Multiple 2v2's:

Set up multiple small fields and play several 2v2 games at the same time. Use cones, flags, or PUGG goals for goals. Play short games and rotate who is playing who. You could also have multiple games of 2v2 going on in the same field (less space requires them to get there head up, this also takes less space).

Session 4

Zookeeper:

Use disc cones to make a rectangular area that is the “zoo”. Have each player come up with an animal that they are going to pretend to be. Each animal needs to have a ball. Have two players without soccer balls start off as zoo keepers. The zoo keepers run around and try to steal the soccer balls from the animals and kick them in the cage (goal, small PUGG goal, or through a cone goal). When an animal has their ball taken they become a zoo keeper as well. Play several rounds and switch who gets to start as the zoo keeper. Variations: When a player has their ball stolen they can try to win it back before it is kicked into the “cage”. To make the game easier have the players switch roles when the ball is kicked into the goal rather than having both be zookeepers.

Ships and Subs:

One team is designated the “Ships,” and they shield their balls from the other team which is designated the “Subs.” The “Subs” attempt to strike their balls into the “Ships” balls. Each “Sub” keeps track of the number of balls they hit in 1 minute. Switch roles and see which team makes the most “direct hits.”

Coaching Points: Keep the ball close so you can pass it (subs) at a seconds notice or change direction quickly (ships).

Passing Pac Man:

Everyone has a ball inside a grid. Two players are “it” and wear pennies. The players that are it try to pass their ball so it hits someone else’s ball that isn’t it. When a player gets their ball hit they have to go get a pennies and join the team of “Ghosts”. The last two or three people that haven’t had their ball get hit yet start the next round as the “Ghosts”.

Coaching Points: Same as above. Vision. Movement!

3v3 to 2 Goals:

Use disc cones to make two 2-yard goals on each endline. Players play 3v3 (set up multiple fields) and can score by passing (2 points) or dribbling (1 point) through one of the opponent’s goals.

Coaching Points: Head up to see which goal would be the easiest to score on..

Session 5

Pirates:

This game is played in a fairly large grid. Two players are “Pirates”. The “pirates” run around the grid and try to steal some treasure (soccer ball) from another player. When a player had their treasure taken they have to become a pirate. No tag backs. When a player gets their ball taken they have to go get someone else’s ball/treasure. Add more pirates to make the game more difficult.

Coaching Points: Keep the ball on the far side of your body away from the defenders. Stay sideways on so you can see the ball and the defender.

Partner Tag:

Every player gets a ball and a partner. One partner is “it” and tries to dribble their ball and tag their partner. If they tag their partner then the player that was tagged does 3 jumping jacks (gives other player a chance to get away) before giving chase.

Two-Headed Shark:

Everyone finds a partner. One pair is holding a towel between them and is the two headed shark. The other pairs have a ball between them and are passing and moving. If a player with a ball is tagged by the shark then they join their partner and become a two headed shark as well. Encourage players to check to the ball when their teammates is under pressure and spreading out when possible.

Coaching Points: Off the ball movement – move for your partner when the “shark” is trying to tag them.

2v2 to Endzones:

Play 2v2 on a 15 yard wide by 25 yard long field. Use cones to make an “endzone” on each end of the field. Teams score one point by dribbling into the endzone and 3 points if they can pass the ball to their teammate in the endzone.

Coaching Points: Encourage passing.

Session 6

Tail Tag:

Each player takes a penny (practice jersey) and tucks it into the back of their shorts. Everyone runs around trying to grab a tail away from someone else. When your tail gets taken, keep going and try to grab other tails. You can only grab tails that are tucked in. Start without a ball and then add a ball. Progress to playing with a partner (no soccer balls). The partners each have a tail but have to link elbows or hold hands (for round 1 both partners are facing the same way, for round 2 the partners are facing opposite directions).

Partner Keep-Away:

Players find a partner and a ball between the pair. The player with the ball tries to keep possession of the ball while their partner attempts to gain possession of the ball.

Coaching Points: Keep the ball from your partner by shielding it (keeping it on the far side of the body) or by dribbling away. Stay sideways on when shielding so you can see the ball and the defender.

Marbles:

Players are in pairs, each with a ball. One player plays out their ball (using the inside of the foot) and the partner passes their own ball in an attempt to strike the ball their partner played out. Immediately after the player passed their ball to try to hit their partners' ball, then their partner runs to their ball and tries to do the same thing. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. Point system: If a player hits their partners ball after it has stopped moving it is worth one point. If a player hits their partners' ball while it is still rolling it is worth two points.

Coaching Points: Passing technique.

4 Goal Soccer:

Place one goal on each endline of a large rectangle (maybe 30 x 40 yards). Players each have a ball and try to score as many goals as possible in one minute. After scoring a goal, the player should get their ball out of the net and then go score on a DIFFERENT goal. Use cones, flags, or PUGG goals for the goals. Progress to playing a game in which each team has 3 players. Assign each team a goal and play with several soccer balls. When a player gets a ball, they can score in any goal except their own.

Session 7

P-E-L-E:

Two or more players needed. The first player juggles one, the second player has to match. The first player then juggles two and the second player has to match again. The first player then juggles three and so on. When a player misses, the other player gets a letter – first P, then E, then L, then E. After awarding a letter, the players start out at one again. The first player to spell PELE is the winner. This game can be played with thighs only, feet only, head only or any combination.

Coaching Points: Balance – put your feet down after touching the ball to regain your balance.

Gates Passing:

Players find a partner and pass their ball through as many gates as possible in 60 seconds. If players begin to go back and forth through the same gate congratulate them for creative thinking and then tell them they can't do that anymore. Play more rounds and challenge the pairs to beat their OWN record.

Coaching Points: Passing technique (ankle locked = toes up, following through at target, hips square to target).

Gates Passing with Defenders:

Set up gates throughout an area. Partners have a ball and pass through as many gates as they can. Have a few pairs (vary the number to add or decrease challenge) without a ball that are defenders. When a defender steals a ball they have to communicate with their partner that they did so and then the pair of defenders now keeps the ball. The pair that lost the ball now becomes defenders.

Coaching Points: Vision, where are the defenders. Communication with your partner.

Crossfire:

Make a grid (size depends on skill level) that is a square. Break the team into 4 teams and have each team stand on one side of the grid with a ball. Place a ball that stands out in the middle of the square. Teams try to kick their ball so it hits the ball in the middle. When a ball goes past a team's line they get a point and the ball is put back in the middle. At the end of the game the team with the fewest points wins. Teams can't touch the ball to stop it from going past their line, they can only kick a ball at it. After kicking a ball players can go and get it but must be behind their line before kicking again.

Session 8

Pairs Ball Retrieval:

Players have a partner and one ball. The player with the ball HANDS their soccer ball to the coach who specifies how the ball must be brought back (“Bring it back with two foreheads”). After the players get their ball they bring it back in the manner asked by the coach and then hands their ball back to the coach, who tosses it randomly into an open area where the players have to go retrieve it and bring it back again. Be creative with how you ask the players to bring the ball back! Also, move around the area so the players have to be actively looking for you.

The Big Drop:

Split the team into two groups. One group has a soccer ball at their feet, the other group has a soccer ball in their hands. When the game begins, the group of players with the soccer balls at their feet starts to dribble around the area. The group of players with the soccer balls in their hands tries to run around and drop their ball on a ball of someone that is dribbling around. If that happens, the player that dropped the ball gets a point and the player that got their ball dropped on keeps going. Play for 60 seconds and then switch the “droppers” and “dribblers”.

Coaching Points: Keep the ball on the far side of your body. Vision to see people coming.

Knockaway:

Everyone has a ball and is dribbling in a grid. The object of the game is to try to kick another player’s soccer ball out of the grid while keeping possession of yours. If a player gets their ball kicked out they do an exercise like 5 ball taps and then they come back in. Variation: If they can get to their ball before it stops rolling they don’t have to do any exercise before coming back in. The “traditional” way to play eliminates a player when their ball is kicked out. The bad thing about playing that way is the players that need the most practice get eliminated immediately and then sit out.

3v3 to Endzones:

Play 3v3 on a 20 yard wide by 30 yard long field. Use cones to make an “endzone” on each end of the field. Teams score one point by dribbling into the endzone and 3 points if they can pass the ball to their teammate in the endzone.

Coaching Points: When to dribble vs. when to pass? Look at what is behind the pressuring defender. space = dribble at them, other defenders = pass!

Session 9

Blackjack:

Play with two or more players. The first player juggles as many touches as they can and keeps track of the count. The second player begins after the first player misses. After the second player misses, the first player starts again, starting the count where they missed in their first turn. For example, if a player got five touches before missing in their first turn, they would begin the second turn at six. The first player to 21 wins. This game also can be made more challenging by restricting it to certain body parts.

Coaching Points: Balance – put your feet down after kicking the ball to regain balance. Try to keep the ball low.

Bases:

Make a 30 x 30 grid with 5 yard bases in each corner. Designate a few players as being “it” and they try to tag the other players. When tagged they switch roles, no tag backs. Players can be safe in one of the corner bases but only one player is allowed in a base at a time. When someone comes into the base then the player already in there has to leave.

Coaching Points: Vision – see the taggers. Dribbling ability to get past the taggers (change speed and pace).

Blob Tag:

All players dribble a ball around in an area except for two players that are the “blob”. The blob has to remain holding hands and tries to tag players dribbling around. If a player is tagged they kick their ball out of the area and join the blob. When the blob gets to be four people it can break into two little blobs of two people.

Coaching Points: Dribbling deception, quick changes of direction and pace to get away from the blob. Vision to see where the blob is at all times.

4v4 to Lines:

Play 4v4 on a regulation sized 4v4 field but instead of scoring by kicking into a goal players score by dribbling across the other teams’ endline.

Coaching Points: When to dribble vs. when to pass. Introduce different game concepts such as what to do when the ball goes out of bounds, etc.

Session 10

Bumper Cars:

All players dribble a ball around in an area. Each player tries to kick his or her ball and have it hit another player's ball. If they hit someone else's ball they get a point.

Progression: Form two teams. You only try to kick your ball off of the other team. Progression 2: one team is "it" and the other team is dribbling away. The team that is "it" tries to kick their soccer balls off of someone's ball from the other team. Play for 60 seconds and then switch which team is "it".

Sharks and Minnows:

The game takes place in a rectangle; all the players start off on one side of the rectangle and are minnows while two players start in the middle and are sharks. The sharks yell out "swim" and the minnows have to try to dribble their (minnow food) ball to the other side of the grid (across the ocean). When a minnow is tagged they become a shark as well. Play until only two children are left. Those children become the sharks for the next game.

Variations: Sharks have to steal a ball to catch a minnow. Sharks have to steal a ball and dribble it out of the grid. If the minnow can steal it back before the shark gets out of the grid they get their ball back. To make the game easier, when a minnow is captured by a shark they switch places with them so the game will only have two taggers at all times.

1v1 Inside the Square:

Have 2 pairs play 1v1 inside a 15 x 15 yard square. Put a 2 yard cone goal in the middle of each endline. Players score by dribbling through a goal outside the grid. After scoring, the other player gets the ball and can score in any of the other three goals.

Variation: Add additional points...when a player is scored on and they start with the ball, they get 2 points if they can dribble past the other defender and score behind them (ideal), or 1 point if they dribble around them and score in one of the side goals.

Multiple 1v1's:

Make a field that is 25 yards long and 35 yards wide. Place 3 cone goals (2 disc cones 2-3 steps apart) on each side of the grid. Each player finds a partner that they play against. One player attacks one side and the other attacks the other side. Players can score in any of the 3 goals on the side they are attacking. Just as in regular soccer when a goal is scored the other partner starts with the ball.

Session 11

Hospital Tag:

Each player has a ball and is moving in a grid. Just as in everybody's it, anybody can tag anybody. When tagged, the player takes one of their band-aids (hands) and covers their "injury". When a player is tagged for a second time they use their other hand to cover up that injury. When a player is tagged for a third time they have to go to the hospital (small grid in the corner) and do an exercise (ball taps, juggling, jumping jacks) before coming back in.

Battleships:

Each player has a ball. Space several disc cones throughout an area. Players (submarines) have to dribble around the area. The submarines shoot a torpedo (their soccer ball) at a battleship (cone). Players then go get their ball and move to a different battleship. How many battleships can you hit with your torpedo in 30 seconds?

Coaching Points: Introduce ball striking technique (could use various surfaces, inside of foot or laces).

Chaotic Countdown:

Players have to transfer soccer balls from one side of the grid to the other and then shoot them into the goal. A few players don't have a soccer ball and are "defenders" that try to steal a ball of someone that is dribbling. If they can do so they kick it back towards the pile. Play for 90-120 seconds and then switch defenders. Progress to having players find a partner they can work together with to get past the defenders.

Coaching Points: Passing technique. When to pass vs. when to dribble.

4 Goal Soccer:

Place one goal on each endline of a large rectangle (maybe 30 x 40 yards). Players each have a ball and try to score as many goals as possible in one minute. After scoring a goal, the player should get their ball out of the net and then go score on a DIFFERENT goal. Use cones, flags, or PUGG goals for the goals. Progress to playing a game in which each team has 3 players. Assign each team a goal and play with several soccer balls. When a player gets a ball, they can score in any goal except their own

Session 12

Attack of the Ants:

Spread disc cones out all over the field and tell the players they are anthills. In order to “close” an anthill so the ants can’t attack they must dribble their ball around the cone and then pick it up. Play to see who can pick up the most cones.

Variations: Use different colored cones and players have to do different skills to pick up each color (red-juggle 4 times, blue-dribble around, etc.)

Coaching Points: Dribbling technique, use of various parts of the foot to move the ball.

Stinger Tag:

The coach has a pool noodle and attempts to tag a players’ soccer ball. If a player has their ball tagged they have to do 5 jumping jacks to get the venom out.

Coaching Points: Use of various parts of the foot to move the ball away from the defender (coach with the noodle). Shield the ball or accelerate away from the defender when under pressure.

1v1 to Gate Goals:

Using the same set-up as above, all the players find a partner and play 1v1. The player with the ball scores by dribbling through a gate goal. When they score, they stop the ball and their partner gets to start with it. Progress to when a player scores they just keep going.

Coaching Points: Head up...see behind the defender and know where the open space and goals are.

Get Outta There:

Circles attack the right goal. Squares attack the left goal. The coach rolls/tosses a ball into play and the first person from each line runs into the game and plays 1v1. If a ball goes out of bounds or over a sideline both players are “outta there” and a new ball is served for the next two people in line. If a player scores they stay in the game and go against a new defender. This should be VERY fast paced. Progress to playing 2v2.

Bonus Session

“The Network”

Place disc cones throughout a grid (two different colors of cones). Players start at one color and then move to another color, repeat continuously. Start without a ball first...run to a cone and touch it with your hand...then touch with your knee...then jog backwards to the next cone...then add a ball and dribble to the next cone... Encourage players to have a head like a windshield wiper (always scanning back and forth). Use “pinky toe” to dribble (not inside of foot = looks like a penguin dribbling).

“Drag Races”

Players find a partner and get two cones that they spread out about 5 yards apart. The partners start next to one of the cones and on the “go” signal they dribble to the other cone, make their ball touch it, do pullbacks to drag the ball back to the first cone, and then repeat once more to be done. (players are using the bottom of their feet to drag the ball back)

“Nascar”

Same set-up as above but now players have to dribble around the cones twice to finish the race. (players are using the inside of their feet to turn around the cone) “Gates” – Spread out several 1-2 yard gates throughout an area. Players try to dribble through as many of the gates as they can. Play for 45-60 seconds to have them set a baseline and then have them go again to see if they can beat THEIR record.

“3 – Touches”

3 players have a ball in a 10x10 grid with one defender. If the defender can touch a dribbler’s soccer ball 3 times then they switch places.

“Cross the River”

Make a 10x10 grid and have one defender in the middle and three players on the outside standing by one of the lines. The players on the outside attempt to dribble through the grid to get to another outside (doesn’t have to be straight across). If the defender steals I then they switch players. Encourage players to be brave, can you make it straight across past the defender? Encourage players to use the correct foot when dribbling past a defender (if dribbling on left use the left foot so your body is between the defender and the ball).

Finish with an age appropriate scrimmage!