

## U8 Game Rules

- Size 3 Soccer Ball.
- All players MUST have shin guards and a water bottle.
- Four 8 minute quarters.
- Do not keep official score (ie: no league tables, play offs, etc), the children will know the score regardless if it is kept officially.
- 5 v. 5, with Goalies, all field players should move with the ball. You may introduce "shape" (Diamond: Front, Left, Right, Bottom). Shape should move with the ball!
- Goalies can only use hands in marked box areas and must not punt the ball.
- Coaches can guide the game, but should be out of play and not distracting opposing players.
- Corner kicks and goal kicks
- Kick ins when the ball goes out a side. Note that the object of the game is to get the ball back into play quickly.
- **Corner kicks, goal kicks, kick-ins and penalty kicks are all INDIRECT**, meaning they cannot directly result in a score.
- No one plays a 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter until everyone has played two.
- **MERCY RULE:** Coaches may re-balance the teams if one team is leading by more than 5 points at the end of a quarter. This can include adding or removing an additional field player, swapping a "stronger" player, etc. This is left up to the coaches discretion. The game should be well balanced and fun for all involved. A one sided game is not fun for either team.

### U8 Skill Priorities

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Shielding
- Soft first touch
- Introduce proper shooting technique
- Introduce passing

### Understanding U8 Players

Although U8 children may begin to be far more physical and mature than U6 children, coaches and parents must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. Dribbling still needs to be the primary focus, though passing and shooting should be introduced at this age as well. U8 players tend to work best when in pairs and we should allow them to work in pairs (coach selected) often. Similar to the U6 children, we need to make sure that fun is a central theme in practice. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves. Consider the following characteristics of U8 players:

- Tend to play well in pairs – unlike 6 year-olds, these children enjoy playing in pairs. Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities.
- Are now able to take another's perspective – they now have a sense of how other's are feeling.
- Still unable to think abstractly – still do not have this capability, be patient.
- Heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults – still make sure to give frequent water breaks.
- Still much prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines
- Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task) – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness.
- Have an understanding of time and sequence – they now understand "if I do this, then that happens."
- Many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play – not all players, but many players now have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible.
- Extremely aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction
- Seek out adult approval – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age.
- Begin to become aware of peer perception – a social order is beginning to develop. Be sensitive to this.
- Wide range of abilities between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.
- Some will keep score – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age.
- Beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements.