

# INTERMEDIATE COACH



Complete “How-To” for Coaching Teenagers  
*Fine-Tune Technical Skills & Teach Tactical Awareness*



AMERICAN YOUTH  
SOCCER ORGANIZATION

COACHING SERIES

# INTERMEDIATE COACH



everyone plays<sup>®</sup>

AYSO National Office  
TEL (800) 872-2976  
FAX (310) 525-1155  
[www.AYSO.org](http://www.AYSO.org)

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AYSO National Office  
19750 South Vermont Avenue, Suite 200  
Torrance, CA 90502  
800-872-2976

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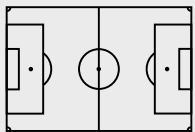
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# WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

## FROM THE FIELD



"Our National Coaching Program is expertly designed, tested and accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education. We have a proven method for player development and I am proud of our contribution to the game in the USA."

*John Ouellette, AYSO Hall of Fame and Former National Coach*

## THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING!

Most of you reading this are coaches who have completed the AYSO 12U Coaching Course and want to progress to the next level. The AYSO Player Development Department and National Coaching Advisory Commission is pleased to prepare this manual and course to help you continue your soccer coaching education.

Generally speaking, we now progress from technical to tactical development but as our former national coach John Ouellette always said, "We cannot do tactically what we cannot do technically!" so, we will always place a large level of importance on continued technical development, as well as physical and psychosocial components.

Players finally make the significant leap to 11v11 and face all the relative challenges that come along with that progression; therefore, we must consider this carefully in our planning, teaching and understanding.

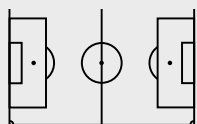
Thank you for being part of the AYSO Coaching Team and for doing your part to "enrich children's lives."

**NATIONAL COACHING ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**AYSO PLAYER DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

# AYSO

## FROM THE FIELD



“We strive to galvanize the player development pathways of our youth soccer organizations. The common objective is to develop the next wave of youth players. In this collective effort, it is critical to promote a single message and common coaching methodology with respect to player development. AYSO’s National Coaching Program is in line and coherent with these efforts.”

*Dave Chesler, Former U.S. Soccer Director of Coach Education  
Current WNT Performance Analysis Coach*

## THE WORLD’S BIGGEST SOCCER CLUB

Founded in Torrance, CA in 1964, AYSO is a distinguished cornerstone of U.S. Soccer and with approximately 50,000 teams across all age groups; AYSO is the world’s biggest soccer club!

Success can be measured in many ways, from the careers of professional players who got their start playing AYSO to the thousands of coaches (youth, high school, collegiate and professional) who developed their passion and understanding of the game in AYSO. Regardless of perspective, our contribution to the US game’s success is founded upon our unique **Vision**, **Mission** and **Philosophies**.

### KEEP IN MIND



Any player development or instruction should always include a comprehensive understanding and practical application of our core values.

## AYSO VISION

To provide world-class youth soccer programs that enrich children’s lives.

## AYSO MISSION

To develop and deliver quality youth soccer programs in a fun, family environment based on the AYSO philosophies:



# AYSO SIX PHILOSOPHIES

## EVERYONE PLAYS®

Our goal is for kids to play soccer—so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.

## BALANCED TEAMS

Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible—because it is fair and more fun when teams of equal ability play.

## OPEN REGISTRATION

Our program is open to all children who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.

## POSITIVE COACHING

Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment by the players and ultimately leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players.

## GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

We strive to create a safe, fair, fun and positive environment based on mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

## PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

We believe that all players should be able to develop their soccer skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually and as members of a team, in order to maximize their enjoyment of the game.

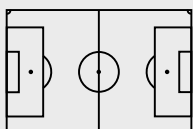
KEEP IN  
**MIND**



AYSO Six Philosophies:

Everyone Plays®  
Balanced Teams  
Open Registration  
Positive Coaching  
Good Sportsmanship  
Player Development

**FROM THE  
FIELD**

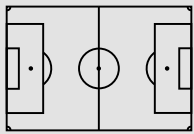


“It is better to win ten times 1-0 than to win once 10-0.”

*Vahid Halilhodžić, Bosnian Coach and Former Professional Player*

# STEWARDS OF THE GAME

## FROM THE **FIELD**



"We must all work together; coaches, officials and parents to create the optimal performance environments for our players' development."

Players need to play with freedom, confidence and enjoyment in a developmentally rich environment to truly reach their potential."

*Scott Snyder*  
*AYSO Player Development Specialist*

## APPLICATION ON THE FIELD

Referees and coaches are to be Stewards of the Game and work together to ensure that player safety, at the physical and emotional level, is the number one priority on the field. All 7 members of the team (3 referees and 4 coaches) are equal participants and are there for the sole purpose of discussing how to ensure a safe and protective environment for the players to play. The Center Referee shall initiate a brief meeting between referees and coaches before the AYSO match to collectively:

- Identify any potential issues that may impact the ability of players to safely have fun; such as the field, sideline areas, field equipment, players' equipment, the physical and emotional states of participants, and other game related concerns.
- Review and follow a simple process that encourages communication and collaboration when there is a concern or issue with players/participants.

## REFEREES

Referees, as Stewards of the Game, are responsible for keeping the game safe, fair, and fun. Referees should support and work with coaches to manage the behavior of players and spectators.

## COACHES

Coaches must keep their sideline participation to being: Positive, Instructive and Encouraging at all times. Coaches must ensure respect and support for referees by players, parents, and all other spectators.

## PARENTS

Parents are expected to respect coaches and referees, and model positive sporting behavior; and at the same time, maintain realistic expectations.

# KIDS ZONE®

## KEEP IT FRIENDLY

### KEEP IN MIND



Sideline critics who scream instructions at players or criticize referees or coaches slow down the learning process and make it less fun for everyone. Consider every time you prepare to kick the ball you receive numerous screams of direction? Scary, confusing and annoying!

Regardless of age group or playing level, *all* developing players benefit from a positive sideline. In AYSO, fans (yes, including parents) are asked to be cheerleaders, **not critics or sideline coaches**! Kids Zone® is a unique program that includes a Parent Pledge that moms and dads sign to commit to *positive, encouraging* behavior when they're watching the matches. It also includes signs, buttons and other match-day reminders.

Soccer is a *player's* game! Players learn the game by trying new things, making mistakes and trying again.

Negative, even violent, behavior of players, coaches and parents involved in youth sports has become almost epidemic in this country. Kids Zone® is a proactive effort to counteract this trend and involves the following elements:

To help execute this program, four basic elements are involved (and available from the AYSO Store):

1. **Kids Zone® Button.** Worn by program supporters at matches and serves as a reminder of the importance of positive sideline behavior.
2. **The Sign.** A large sideline poster lists positive behavior standards and can be posted at the entrance of participating fields. Parents and spectators who will abide by these standards are welcome.
3. **The Pledge.** AYSO requests all parents to sign a pledge that holds them to the Kids Zone® standards.
4. **The Video.** A 12 minute documentary introduces AYSO's principles and its Kids Zone® action plan to new participants. Viewers will also watch a parent intervene to change another parent's negative behavior. In order to make this program work, everyone must help!

### KEEP IN MIND



Help create a safe and encouraging environment for you and your team by implementing Kids Zone®.

To learn more or visit  
[AYSO.org/kidszone](https://www.ayso.org/kidszone)



# INTERMEDIATE COACHING

## SHOWTIME!

14U is the time to engage our players to prioritize and commit to soccer for the long haul! Hopefully, our players' prior AYSO (or other) experience will have laid the foundational skills necessary to easily transition into the intermediate stage of the game.

From a players' perspective the big shift is from 9v9 to 11v11; therefore, we must address this tactical progression carefully to maximize learning.

At this level, we will strive to educate the players on how to read the game by going deeper into the Principles of Play and Phases of Play in our training and playing environments and focus on functional group roles within a full team system.

We will review numerous formations and discuss strengths, weaknesses and tactics to play against. The Coaching Cycle now provides a clear pathway from match performance to training requirements, (individual, group, team).

Physically, players are going through significant changes, which can take a major toll on their performance so we will introduce planning cycles as we develop a more global picture of our players' individual, group and team objectives.

Ultimately, our goal is to stimulate our players' passion and learning by becoming true students of the game...and to help them fulfill their soccer potential!

Are you ready?



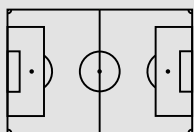
### KEEP IN MIND



- Strive to develop each and every player you coach, while at all times embracing the AYSO Philosophies.
- Use this manual as a constant resource and reference throughout your entire season.
- Plan, structure and progress sessions as shown to maximize development and time.
- All coaches improve through continued education!

# COACHING METHODOLOGY

## FROM THE FIELD



“Success should be measured by the demonstrated & documented improvement of each individual (not results). The role of a youth trainer is to improve the skills & habits of each & every footballer in his or her charge. Ironically, if the club does improve each player, the team results improve.”

*Johan Cruyff*

## DEVELOPMENT OVER WINNING

Let's remove any myth related to AYSO, “We play to win!” The purpose of a match is to win! However, the manner in which we obtain the victory becomes a question of development versus winning.

Is there any real development taking place when our players simply punt the ball 30 yards each time they receive it and hope it bounces near a teammate on way to goal? There isn't! Yet, this is how many teams at all ages win matches and measure their success. At AYSO, we feel, it is time to challenge that methodology on the quest for victory.

Prioritizing development over winning does NOT reduce competition (which is instrumental to a player's development). However, a competitive environment does not necessarily need to be entirely league table-dependent.

Make your player's better by encouraging them to play with purpose, intent, creativity...skill. Give them quality instruction to develop their skills, the freedom to express themselves (and make mistakes) and the platform to improve...by playing. To echo the comments of the famous Dutch master Johan Cruyff, “Ironically, if the club does improve each player, the team results improve.”

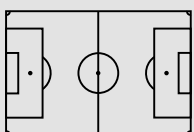
As coaches, it is our responsibility to respect our individual players' development and skill acquisition on our quest for team victory. Please consider this on your coaching journey.

### KEEP IN MIND



A healthy competitive environment for our players should focus on performance as well as outcome (favoring and recognizing ball skills, intent, effort, creativity, etc., as factors of success, not simply the score). Consider the emotional rollercoaster of quantifying success only to when you win the game or score a goal (aspects that are not 100% within any player's control). As adults, how would we like to be measured in that type of scenario?

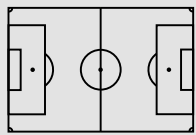
## FROM THE FIELD



“Development over winning. Being faithful to it, being really faithful to it every single day. Are the players, are the kids the most important thing? That's what I worry about. That's what I talk about. That's my only goal: making the players and of course, the coaches who teach them, all of us, better!”

*Claudio Reyna, Former U.S. Soccer Youth Technical Director*

## FROM THE FIELD



“What makes soccer so special is that it’s a player’s game. In other American sports there is so much impact that a coach can have on the game; in soccer, it’s the opposite. I remind coaches all the time that their job is to be a guide for the players. At the end of the day, it’s the players who are making the decisions on the field.”

*Jurgen Klinsmann, Former US Men’s National Team*

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCCER (VS. OTHER U.S. SPORTS)

At 14U, we should know the differences between soccer and other U.S. sports. Well, consider this a reminder as you approach your own coaching. From the design of activities and sessions; to coaching persona; to coaching methodology, most characteristics of other US sports don’t translate well to soccer.

We need to remember is that soccer is NOT coach-centric. It is player-based. Having “Coach” on our shirts and stepping in with epic motivational speeches and world class plays for every possible scenario...is NOT what is required of a soccer coach. So, as a gentle reminder, here are some key differences between soccer and other US sports, since these strongly impact how the game should be played, viewed and coached. In comparison, soccer is:

- Free-flowing (fewer stoppages).
- Not play-by-play based (free-flowing rhythm promotes player decision making, less coach involvement).
- Low-scoring (more often).
- Requires eye-foot coordination (versus eye-hand in baseball, basketball, football).
- Has no physical size requirement.
- Equal opportunity sport (girls and boys are of equal capability and have comparable opportunities).
- PLAYER-based (as game flows, players make the decisions, rather than the coach, and PLAY the game).
- \*PLAYER-based (as game flows, players make the decisions, rather than the coach, and PLAY the game).

\*Not a typo!

As coaches, it is our responsibility to respect our individual players’ development and skill acquisition on our quest for team victory. Please consider this on your coaching journey.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COACHES

Coaching styles differ based on personality and beliefs on how the game should be played. Effective coaches; however, all possess similar characteristics:

1. Positive (Focus On Capabilities And Convey Optimism).
2. Supportive.
3. Individualized (Training And Instruction).
4. Fair (Adjust To Meet Each Athlete’s Needs And Strive For Equity).
5. Appropriate (Apply Right Behaviors At The Right Time).
6. Clear (In Their Communications).
7. Consistent (In Their Behaviors).

Source: Quality Coaching Behaviors, Dr. Andrea J. Becker, California State University, Fullerton, CA

### KEEP IN MIND



Whatever coaching persona you may adopt, avoid being the center of attention! Create an environment where the players are the focus and priority. Remember, this is a game for players!

The general qualities of any coach combine into four fundamental attributes that all successful coaches share:

1. Soccer knowledge.
2. Prioritize athlete’s well-being and development.
3. Ability to communicate knowledge to the player.
4. Ability to observe and evaluate (coaching eye) to correct any apparent faults (in a positive manner).

# PREPARATION AND ORGANIZATION

## PREPARATION

**Always prepare a written Training Plan!** Consider what you wish to work on and what activities you can use to achieve your goal. A written plan ensures smooth transitions, less down time and a more economical use of precious time.

Take a few minutes just before your training session to review your plan and the coaching points you want to make. Consider saving your plans as a coaching library for future seasons/sessions or to share with other coaches in your Region.

## APPEARANCE

Appropriate attire is expected when conducting your coaching session. Wearing soccer apparel and footwear go a long way to comforting your players that you know what you are doing related to your role as their “soccer coach.”

Sunglasses are discouraged, as players cannot see your eyes. Even with a prescription, remove your sunglasses when in direct communication with your players.

## ORGANIZATION

Ideally, set up your area in advance of players and parents arriving. **Upon their arrival, they should see a planned and organized environment, which will immediately set the tone for the session as well as provide confidence for the parents.** In organizing your coaching area:

- Make sure the area is safe (playing surface, physical considerations, sprinklers, etc.).
- Plan for a smooth transition from one exercise to another.
- Minimize the number of cones that you have to pick up or reset.
- Have a place for equipment and breaks.



## EQUIPMENT

The more equipment you have to help create a realistic and dynamic training environment the better.

Below is a basic list of the minimum equipment you should have as part of your coaching kit:

- AYSO Player Registration Forms – which include the Emergency Authorization.
- Basic first-aid kit\*.
- **Players should bring water to every session.**
- 16-20 cones (preferably multi-colored, preferably tall and disc).
- 16 scrimmage vests (preferably 2 sets of different colors).
- Extra soccer balls (players should bring a ball to every session).
- Pump.
- Extra pair of shin guards (players must wear shin guards at *every* session).
- Pop-up goals (preferred).
- Whistle.
- Charged cell phone (in case of emergency).
- Training plan.


\*Be familiar with your first aid kit contents so that you know what you have **and where it is** if needed.




# AGE APPROPRIATE UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

The following chart generalizes age characteristics of children ages 12 through 15 years of age. (Note: *All* children are unique and often chronological age can conflict with developmental age; therefore, individual application should always be considered.)

KEEP IN  
**MIND**



Our players are *not* mini-adults; therefore, our training sessions must be adapted to life through *their* eyes, *their* interests and most important, *their* capabilities.

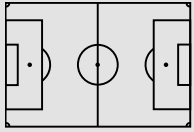
	AGE APPROPRIATE CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS
14U	<p>Tactical development becomes significant; however, technical efficiency should still be prioritized, practiced and perfected. Position-specific training should now be applied to both individuals and small groups.</p> <p>Tactical training should now involve larger more game-like areas and realistic environments. Attacking and defending Principles of Play should be laced throughout the session. Small-sided matches are still a vital learning platform.</p>
15U	<p>Coaching methods should consider players’ health and fitness due to the major physical changes players are experiencing at this age.</p> <p>Fitness training should now incorporate strength and endurance. Proper form and dynamic flexibility during warm-ups and cool downs are critical at this physically demanding stage of development.</p> <p>Players should now be developing the required desire and discipline to maximize their soccer career.</p>



# COACHING MOMENTS

At the end of the day, it is the coach's job to coach! But having the content is one thing (and we are providing this for you), but knowing *how* to effectively communicate, motivate and develop your individual players is another talent.

## FROM THE FIELD



"Football is simple; trainers (coaches) shouldn't make it so complicated."

*Johan Cruyff, Dutch Soccer Legend*

## MANAGING THE COACHING MOMENT...LESS IS MORE

Know in advance who will be at your session. During technical and tactical training, plan and group players to maximize their development. This does not necessarily mean strong with strong and weak with weak. Frequently it is more on a personality or positional basis.

### KEEP IN MIND



**Positive Coaching!** Regardless of your personal approach or delivery, **Positive Instruction and Encouragement (P.I.E.)** should *always* be used to instruct and motivate your players. They will respond better to you and it will help keep AYSO a developmentally rich and positive environment.

The coaching environment you create must be safe and conducive to learning. Players must be stimulated to learn and educational opportunities must be well thought out to maximize development.

It is a fine line managing the flow of your session and finding the appropriate time to step in. Occupy a central but sideline position to allow a clear, panoramic view. Methods of intervention:

- **Forced Stoppage** (freeze, get in, make your point, get out).
- **Natural Stoppage** (be careful the coaching opportunity hasn't passed and the situation forgotten).
- **Flow** (talking as the game is playing...but *avoid* constant commentary).
- **Individual Reference** (pulling a player aside to make an observation).

### KEEP IN MIND



Players must be given freedom to be creative and find solutions without constant coaching in order to learn from their mistakes. Remember, mistakes are guidelines for improvement!

## PRESENTING YOUR COACHING POINT

**Avoid lengthy speeches!** Keep instructions for activities as simple and quick as possible and limited to one point at a time. Where possible, explain in images and provide visual analogies (much easier for kids to grasp). Coaching points or instructions should be:

- Concise (broken down, simple, small pieces of information).
- Accurate.
- Relevant (to a coaching principle or objective).
- **Demonstrated** (whenever possible)!

When addressing your players, make sure *they* are not directly facing the sun.

## LET THE PLAYERS PLAY AND THE GAME TEACH!

### KEEP IN MIND



**Avoid lengthy speeches!** Keep instructions for activities as simple and quick as possible.

I HEAR...

I SEE...

I DO...



I FORGET



I REMEMBER



I UNDERSTAND

## VOICE

- Do consider the volume and tone of your voice.
- Avoid being monotone.
- Modulating the intensity of your voice can help emphasize your coaching points and gain the required attention.
- Always maintain control and *never* raise your voice in anger or frustration.

## INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS OF DELIVERY

### Questions

Children respond enthusiastically to questions and are stimulated to find the answer. Questions can be:

- Factual: Definitive, simple answers (*what*).
- Conceptual: Requires a higher level of processing and thought (*how*).
- Stimulating: Requires complex reasoning (*why*).

### Commanding

Definitive, controlled, lecture (less player-centered).

### Guided Discovery

Guides the player through process by posing a *series* of questions whose responses lead to the understanding of a concept (like detectives).

### Experimentation

Cause and effect comparison (try it and see, compare).

## COMPLETE SYSTEM OF DELIVERY

### Say, Show, Do and Review

An effective complete teaching method for any age group:

1. **SAY:** Explain skill or technique (keep it brief especially with younger players).
2. **SHOW:** Effectively demonstrate skill or technique.
3. **DO:** Have players perform skill or technique.
4. **REVIEW:** *Observe*, *Correct* and *Confirm* proper technique.

**Observe** (silently). Instead of trying to correct immediately, let them play uninterrupted for a time (they will learn from mistakes) and take notes (preferably written), focusing on *one* effort they can improve.

**Correct** what you saw in terms of the player's execution, and then provide them with attainable modifications to correct one or two deficits by once again demonstrating.

**Confirm** accomplishments once success is achieved! Say it out loud, so everyone can hear.

### Post Session

**Discussion with the players:** Do not underestimate the value and impact of a positive comment or constructive feedback to a player after the training session (but keep it concise).

**Review your training plan:** Note what worked well and what needs to improve.

**Evaluate yourself:** Encourage constructive feedback from others in relation to your coaching management and session structure.

# COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD

If you are coaching your own child at 14U, the chances are you've been doing it for quite some time, so we will simply summarize some pointers to help keep your efforts prosperous on and off the field.

- **Avoid being harder on your own child than the other players because you're worried about perceptions of favoritism.** No matter what you say or how you say it, your comments can often register as a personal attack because they come from mom or dad.
- Don't be afraid to praise your child and acknowledge her strengths and accomplishments at every opportunity. As well as your child they are also a player on the team!
- A good test on how to treat your child on the soccer team is to constantly ask yourself if your reactions to your child's play or behavior are the same as they are to your child's teammates.
- Another peril of coaching your own children is to leave your coaching hat on when the session/match is over. Limit your post-session soccer discussions once the whistle blows. Once the topic of food is raised, it is probably time to get back to your full-time role.

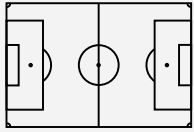
KEEP IN  
**MIND**



Savor Every Moment!  
It will pass all too quickly!

# AGE APPROPRIATE (PLAYER) DEVELOPMENT

## FROM THE FIELD



“Learning to be a soccer athlete, there are progressive stages and if you don’t get the early stages right, *in sequence*, then you are fighting an uphill battle in developing an athlete.”

*Dave Chesler, Former U.S. Soccer Director of Coach Education  
Current WNT Performance Analysis Coach*

## THE SCIENCE OF AGE APPROPRIATE TRAINING

“To provide youth soccer programs *that enrich children’s lives.*”

This vision can **only** be achieved if we continually ask ourselves if the activity, method or decision will truly enrich the player’s life. To achieve this goal, our training sessions **must** be adapted to the player’s specific age and stage of development.

Technical, tactical, physical and psychosocial training components should be woven throughout each session; however, **at all-times** with deep respect to the player’s specific age **and** stage of development. At AYSO, we prioritize these important aspects as follows:

### Psychosocial

Respect, motivation, confidence, cooperation, competitiveness, etc., and how these emotions and feelings impact a player’s development. Also, includes a player’s ability to reason, learn and solve problems. **At AYSO, we develop the whole person!**

### Physical

A player’s physical attributes: speed, agility, endurance, strength and power, etc. **At AYSO, we promote a healthy lifestyle through soccer!**

### Technical

A player’s ability to master ball skills, i.e., ball control, shooting, passing, etc. **At AYSO, we prioritize skill development and ball mastery.**

### Tactical

A player’s capacity to use their skill and ability **within** a game environment, i.e., creating space in midfield, possession and transition, creating width, etc. **At AYSO, we educate our players on playing as part of (and within) a team dynamic.**