

U8 SOCCER COACHES PRACTICE MANUAL

Age Group Philosophy

Create a positive learning environment with fun activities with a soccer ball which keep players moving, developing a comfort with the ball and an awareness of space and other players.

Age Group Objective:

If you ask your players at the end of the season would they like to play soccer again next season and they answer YES, then your season has been a success

Key Words:

FUN and **MOVEMENT**

Age Group Skill Focus:

Players at this age group at the end of the season should demonstrate the following

- Comfort dribbling and turning with the ball with different surfaces and with either foot
- Comfort receiving and controlling the ball with the inside of the foot
- Comfort accurately passing the ball short distances with the inside of the foot
- Players can connect passes with a teammate (ability to work in pairs)
- Players are aware of where the space is on the field and show a willingness to dribble or pass the ball towards space particularly after the ball is won in a crowded area
- Players begin to move up and down the field as a unit (limit players “hanging back” in front of their own goal or “cherry-picking” in front of the other team’s goal)
- Players begin moving into space when a teammate has the ball rather than running towards the teammate with the ball and crowding

Typical Practice Format:

6pm to 6:15pm | **INTRO GAME**

6:15 to 6:35pm | **FUN ACTIVITY WITH A BALL**

Phase 1: No Defenders

Phase 2: Add Defenders

6:40 to 7pm | **END GAME**

Phase 1: Conditioned (Pick one condition and play 6 minutes)

Phase 2: Free Play (Game Rules Apply)

LET THE KIDS PLAY! Minimize the amount of instruction and get the kids on the field playing

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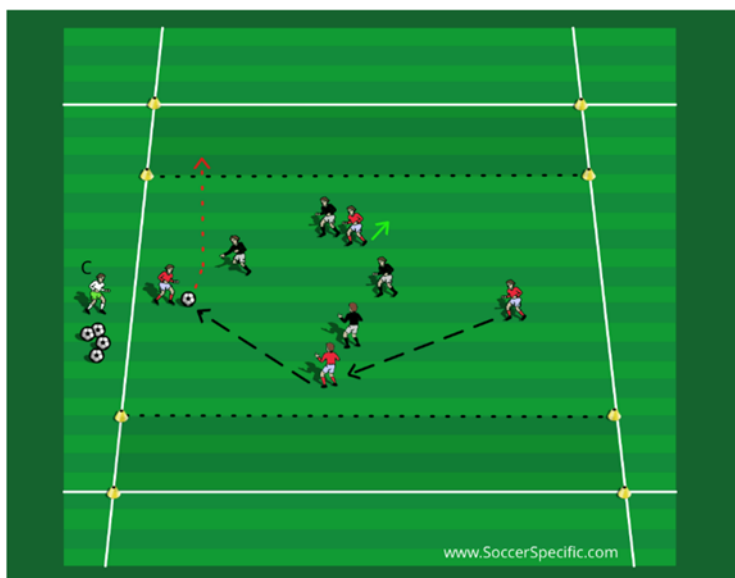
INTRO GAME: END ZONES

Setup:

As players arrive give them a ball and allow them to dribble around the field or pass with a partner
Once you have 6 players, split them into teams and begin playing a game

End Zones:

- Create end zone areas at each end of the field or use half the center circle at one end and the goal box at the opposite end
- Teams score a point by dribbling the ball into the end zone or designated area and then stopping the ball in that area for a point
- Once you have 8 or more players you can split the group and play two games of 2 v 2 or 3 v 3



End Zone Targets

- 2 teams of 4 or 5 players play in half of the 4 v 4 playing field
- 1 player from each team is a TARGET at one end of the playing area: one TARGET in the midfield circle and one TARGET in the goal box
- Teams score by passing to the TARGET player that is on their team
- Rotate TARGET players every 2 minutes

Coaching Points:

- Players look for opportunities to dribble forward to end zone or pass forward to targets
- Awareness of space on the field

Note:

If teams are uneven, switch players so the teams are balanced or you may create one team with more players than the other team. For example: play 4 vs 3 with the team of 3 consisting of stronger players

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INTRO GAME: MULTIPLE GOALS GAME

Setup:

- As players arrive place them in teams of 2 to 4 players
- Teams play across half of a 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 field
- Use cones to create two goals each 4 yards wide towards the corners of the playing area



Objective:

Teams score a point by dribbling through one of the two cone goals at the end they are attacking. Players must have control when dribbling through the cone goal for the point to count

Progression: Teams score by passing the ball on the ground through one of the cone goals

Coaching Points:

- Players attack the goal if there is space in front of them
- If the other team is blocking a goal, move the ball into space on the other side of the field and attack the other goal
- Defenders work together to block off paths to goal

Note:

If teams are uneven, switch players so the teams are balanced or you may create one team with more players than the other team. For example: play 4 vs 3 with the team of 3 consisting of stronger players

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FUN ACTIVITY GAME NO DEFENDERS: DRIBBLE IN A CONFINED PLAYING AREA

Setup:

- Each player has a soccer ball in a defined space.
- Defined space is approximately 15 x 15 up to 20 x 20



Objective:

Introduce players to the concept of dribbling in a confined area with other players around

Instructions:

- Each player is dribbling a soccer ball inside the playing area constantly moving, changing directions and avoiding other player
- If players collide, two players that collided to dribble their soccer ball out to the edge of the playing area, perform 5 jumping jacks (or ball taps) and return to the playing area

Coaching Points:

- Keep your head up and find space to dribble into
- Bigger dribbles into open space, smaller dribbles (closer to the body) in crowded areas
- Turn the ball and dribble to a different area of the square
- Speed and slow down

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FUN ACTIVITY GAME NO DEFENDERS: BODY PARTS

Set-up:

Each player dribbles their ball throughout a 15 x 20 yards grided area.

Structure grid size smaller or larger based on the numbers of players present.

Ideally you want enough space available to run into as the exercise progresses.



Objective:

To have fun! Players need to be able to change direction and speed. Tight touches are encouraged while maintaining ball control. Players must be able to listen to the coach's instruction as the exercise progresses. Vision is all important as players need to see the open spaces within the grid and move into it or out of it as it fills up.

Progression:

1. The coach will call out a specific part of the body. As he does, the player will stop their ball with that part of the body.
2. Utilize the heel, sole, laces, toe, outside of the foot, thighs, rear, stomach, elbows, shoulders, forehead and anything else that may be appropriate.

Coaching Points:

- Keep close control of the ball
- Eyes up seeing ball and space
- Keep arms out for balance
- Avoid running into each other
- Develop a comfort level between the ball and the player

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FUN ACTIVITY GAME NO DEFENDERS: NAME GAME

Setup:

Each player has a soccer ball in a defined space.

Defined space is approximately 15 x 15 up to 20 x 20



Instructions:

Each player is dribbling a soccer ball inside the playing area

When the coach calls out SWITCH:

- Players dribble towards another player
- Stop the ball with the sole of the foot
- Announce her or his name to the other player
- Then switch soccer balls and resume dribbling

Repeat several times and players switch with different players each time.

Progression: Players announce their favorite color or food instead of their name

Coaching Points:

- Keep your head up and find space to dribble into
- Scan the field for players with whom you have not switched
- When Coach calls SWITCH, quickly find and dribble towards a player
- Be under control to be able to stop the ball next to a player
- Look your teammate in the eyes and listen to her or his name

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FUN ACTIVITY GAME NO DEFENDERS: FOOT SURFACES

Setup:

Each player has a soccer ball in a defined space.

Defined space is approximately 15 x 15 to 20 x 20



Instructions:

- Coach instruct players which surface of the foot or which foot to use
- Players dribble in space using that foot or that surface
- RIGHT Foot only / LEFT foot only
- OUTSIDE of the foot only
- INSIDE of the foot only
- SOLE of the foot only

Switch surface every minute or so

Coaching Points:

- Make sure players are clear on the location of each surface before each round. Have a player point to the surface identified
- Encourage the players to stick to using the surface identified
- Players turn with the appropriate surface

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FUN ACTIVITY GAME NO DEFENDERS: OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Setup:

Each player with a soccer ball

Playing area 15 x 15 up to 20 x 20



Instructions:

- Players dribble around the playing area
- Dribble towards another player
- As you get close to the player, turn the ball and dribble away in the opposite direction
- Continue dribbling and find another player to repeat
- Use different surface to turn

Progression: Coach instruct which foot surface to use to turn (outside of foot, inside of foot, sole of foot)

Coaching Points:

- Smaller dribbles (closer to body) as you approach another player
- Sharp “speedboat” turns as opposed to slow “cruise ship” turns.
- Look over your shoulder before turning so you know there is no one behind you
- After turn take 2 bigger dribbles into space

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FUN ACTIVITY GAME WITH DEFENDERS: FOXES AND FARMERS

Setup:

- Players split into 2 teams of 4 to 7 players per team each player with a ball
- One team tucks a pinnie into the back of their shorts giving FOX TAILS
- The team without the pinnies are FARMERS
- Defined space is approximately 15 x 15 to 20 x 20



Objective:

FARMERS try to pull the FOX TAILS (pinnies) from the FOXES until there is only one FOX left. The last FOX remaining wins the game.

Instructions:

- Players dribbling in space with FARMERS trying to steal FOX TAILS
- If a FOX loses her tail, she becomes a FARMER chasing the other FOX TAILS
- Last player with a FOX TAIL wins the game
- If a player runs away from her ball to avoid losing her FOX TAIL, she loses her
- If a player runs away from her ball to take a FOX TAIL, the TAIL is returned to the FOX
- Switch FOX and FARMERS at the end of each round

Coaching Points:

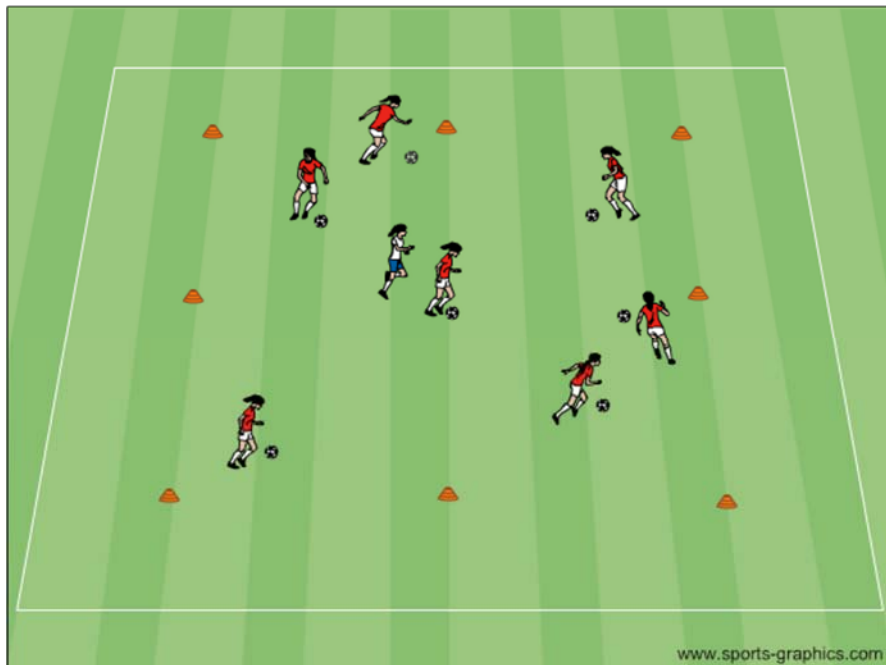
- Head up scanning the field while dribbling
- Be ready to quickly change directions and dribble away
- FARMER can work together to “corner” a FOX

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FUN ACTIVITY GAME WITH DEFENDERS: STUCK IN THE MUD

Setup:

- One or Two players without a ball designated as CHASERS. All other players with a ball
- Playing area 15 x 15 up to 20 x 20
- Ratios: 1 CHASER to 5 dribblers | add a 2nd CHASER at 7 dribblers or more



Objective:

Players with a ball dribble inside the square and try to avoid their soccer ball getting touched by one of the two CHASERS

Instructions:

- Players with a ball are dribbling in space while CHASERS try to touch a players' soccer ball
- If a CHASER touches a soccer ball, the player dribbling that ball is STUCK IN THE MUD. Move inside the playing area and hold the soccer ball above your head and open your legs wide
- Other players with a ball can get you UNSTUCK by dribbling or passing their ball through your legs. Then you return to the game dribbling away from the CHASERS
- Make the grid smaller or larger depending on outcomes

Play for one minute and count how many players are STUCK IN THE MUD at the end of the game
Switch CHASERS. Give every player a chance to be a CHASER

Coaching Points:

- Find space away from CHASERS and get there
- Be ready to quickly change directions and dribble away
- Find teammates who are STUCK and push the ball between their legs

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FUN ACTIVITY DEFENDERS: PAC MAN

Setup:

- Two players start with a ball as Pac-Man
- All other players without a ball
- Playing area 15 x 15 adjust as necessary



Objective:

Pac-Man pass the soccer ball to hit players with a ball knee level or below until the player left wins the game

Instructions

- 2 Pac-Man start with a ball chasing the other players without a ball
- Pac-Man pass the ball and strike a player at the knee or below and that player must then go get a soccer ball and become a Pac-Man
- Play until no players left without a ball

Coaching Points

- Agility without the ball changing speed and direction
- Head up with the ball dribbling and changing direction
- Passing technique to accurately pass the ball
- Awareness of when to pass the ball and when to dribble closer before passing

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FUN ACITIVITY DEFENDERS: SOCCER MARBLES

Setup:

- Each player with a ball inside the playing area
- Two players with pinnies designated as Kings or Queens
- Playing area 15 x 15 adjust as necessary



Objective:

The Kings or Queens are trying to avoid having their soccer ball hit by another ball

Instructions

- Players begin by dribbling in the playing area
- Players are trying to pass their ball so that it hits the soccer ball of a King or Queen
- If the King or Queen's ball is hit, then he or she joins the Peasants
- Play until the Kings or Queens are gone
- Give each player a chance to be King or Queen

Coaching Points

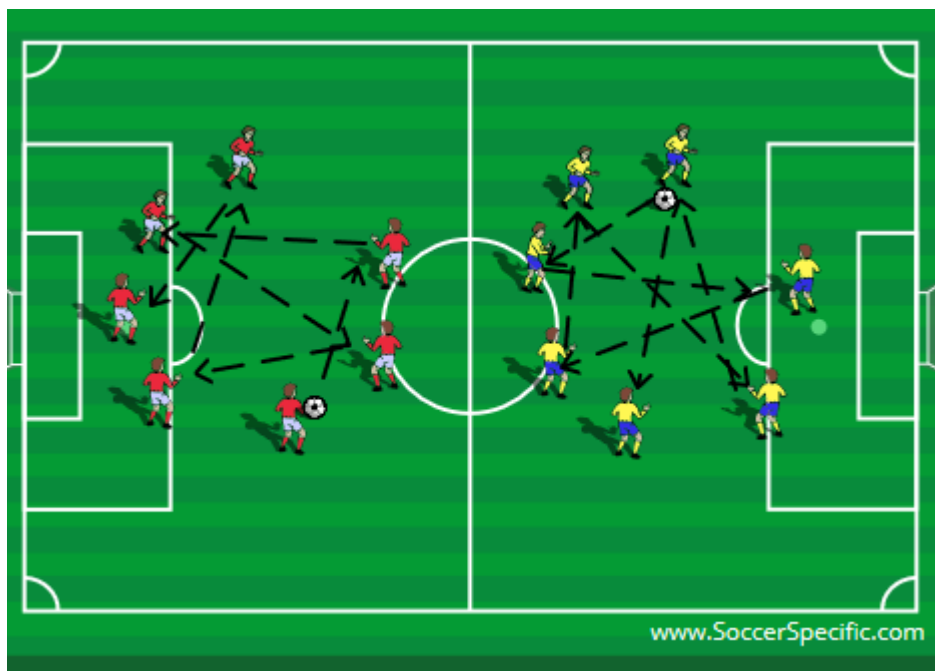
- Agility with the ball changing speed and direction
- Head up with the ball dribbling and changing direction to avoid getting hit
- Passing technique to accurately pass the ball
- Awareness of when to pass the ball and when to dribble closer before passing

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FUN ACTIVITY NO DEFENDER: PASSING CIRCLES

Setup:

- Players split into two teams of 5 to 7 players
- Each team form a circle in one half of the field
- Each team has one soccer ball



Objective: teams pass the ball amongst themselves using the inside of the foot and keeping the ball on the ground. The team that connects the most passes in the specified time period, wins the round

Instructions:

- Form a circle and players pass the ball across the circle to a teammate using the inside of the foot
 - Pass the ball with your second touch
 - Make sure everyone is receiving passes
- Play 90 second round and count the number of passes completed
- Progression: add a second soccer ball in each half
- Progression 2: back to one soccer ball each half, after a player makes a pass, he must sit down on the ground and then get back up before being available to receive a pass
- Progression 3: call your teammate's name before passing it to her

Coaching Points:

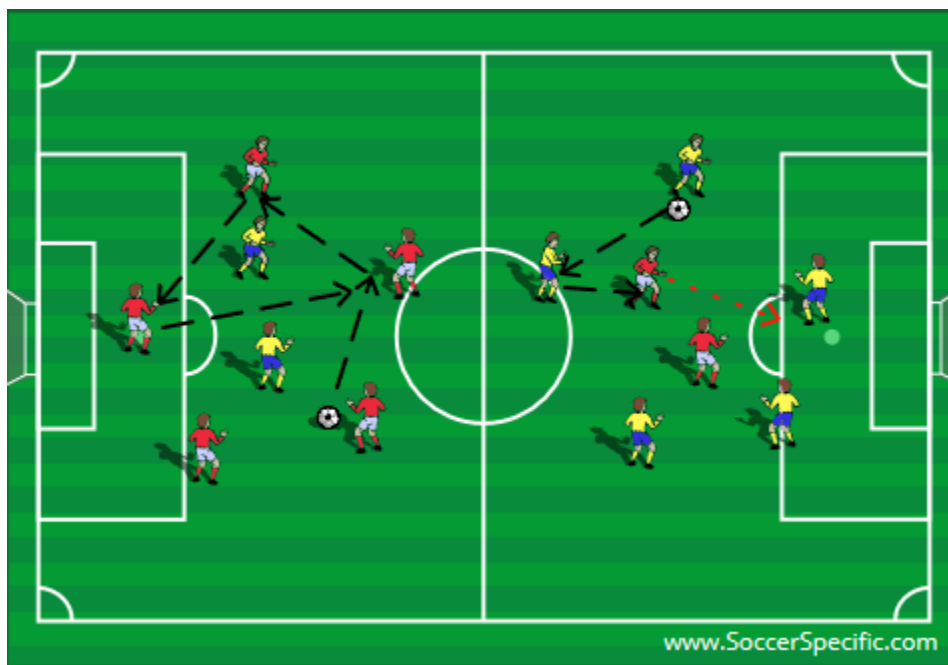
- Receive with the inside of the foot so that the ball ends a step in front of you
- Pass with the inside of your foot to push it across to a teammate
- Be aware of which teammates have not received a pass
- Think ahead to where/to whom you are going to pass BEFORE you receive the ball

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FUN ACTIVITY WITH DEFENDERS: KEEPAWAY HALVES

Setup:

- Players split into two teams of 5 to 7 players
- 4 v 1, 4 v 2, or 5 v 2 in each half of the field
- One soccer ball each half of the field



Objective:

Attackers keep ball away from defenders. Defenders win the ball and attack the goal.

Instructions:

- 1 or 2 players from each team go into the other team's half of the field to defend
- Group of 4 or 5 keep the ball away from the 1 or 2 defenders keeping the ball in their own half of the field
- 4 v 1, 4 v 2, 5 v 1 or 5 v 2 keepaway each half of the field
- When the defender or defenders win the ball, they win a point and then win 3 points when they score a goal
- Ball out of bounds, coach send in a 50/50 ball
- Play one minute and switch defenders
- Team with the most points at the end of the game wins the game
- Progression: defenders pass the ball out to the coach on the side for a point

Coaching Points:

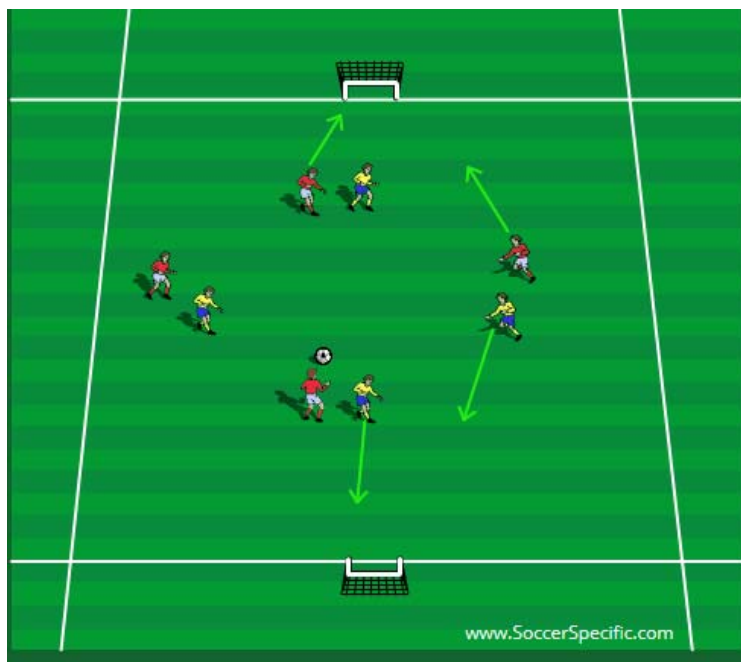
- Quick and accurate passing
- Think ahead before the balls comes to you
- Defenders work together to close down passing lanes
- Defenders quick attack when the ball is won and attackers quickly transition to defending

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END GAME: CONDITIONED

Setup:

- Split players into two teams
- Play 4 v 4 or 5 v 5 with a PUGG goal at each end



Objective:

Teams score goals by passing the ball into the PUGG goal

Instructions

- Game day rules apply

Conditioned Games:

Coach may apply ONE condition for a portion of the END GAME

- Goals count double when everyone on your team is past midfield when the goal is scored
- Play with Two goals at each end (2 PUGGS one end and 2 cone goals other end) similar to the INTRO game. Switch Directions after 3 minutes.
- Opposite Directions: One team attack PUGG goals on the ends, the other team attack cone goals on the sides. Switch directions after 3 minutes.

Alternate End Game:

You can split into two games and play 3 v 3 to cone or PUGG goals in half a field

Note:

If teams are uneven, switch players so the teams are balanced or you may create one team with more players than the other team. For example: play 5 v 4 with the team of 4 consisting of stronger players

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END GAME: FREE PLAY

Setup:

- Split players into two teams
- Play 4 v 4 or 5 v 5 with a PUGG goal at each end



Objective:

Teams score goals by passing the ball into the PUGG goal

Instructions

- Game day rules apply

Note:

If teams are uneven, switch players so the teams are balanced or you may create one team with more players than the other team. For example: play 5 v 4 with the team of 4 consisting of stronger players