

Middleton Youth Soccer Coaches' Guide

Thank you for volunteering to be a Middleton Youth Soccer (MYS) coach. Our program is 100% volunteer-run which allows the families of Middleton to have a low-cost way for kids engage in community soccer.

Coaches play such an important and memorable role in a child's life. I bet most of you can't remember who won the World Series when you were 10 years old, but many of you remember your youth sports coaches from that year. As a coach, you have such a special opportunity to help build great memories for the kids in our community.

This guide is intended to provide coaches with some basic information about the program, as well as some age group-specific information. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the In-Town Director, Travel Director, or any member of the MYS Board of Directors.

Middleton Youth Soccer Philosophy

It's important for coaches to understand the philosophy of MYS so that they can align and focus on program priorities. The program priorities are (in order):

1. **Fun and enjoyment:** MYS strives to have all players enjoy themselves and have fun while participating in MYS activities. As a coach, it is important for you to cultivate these types of environments.
2. **Inclusion and respect:** MYS requires players be treated fairly and encouraged by coaches; learn to respect themselves, others, and the fair play rules of the game; and are given fair opportunities to play and develop. As a coach, MYS asks that you drive inclusionary practices and that you foster an environment of respect.
3. **Safety:** MYS fosters safe learning environments for all players that are free from physical harm, intimidation, harassment, and bullying. Coaches play a key role in this and as such are required to complete training in this area but also are required to cultivate safe environments during practice and matches.
4. **Soccer Development:** And of course, MYS seeks to teach kids soccer. Ball skills, decision-making, teamwork, and perseverance are just a few attributes of the game we hope each child gets to learn during their time in the program.

Each age group may implement these priorities in unique ways (some age group-specific guidance is provided at the end of this document).

MYS is intended to be developmental. The goal is to help the players develop their skills and enjoyment for soccer in a respectful and safe environment.

Coaches Roles and Responsibilities

The primary role of all coaches is to provide a safe and fun experience for the children.

Once teams are formed, the Board works to identify/recruit 2-4 coaches for each team (the coaches are almost always parents of players on that team). One coach must be identified as the “Head Coach” for administrative purposes; however, the Board intends for all coaches on a team to have a roughly equal status in terms of decision making and their role with the players (some coaches may opt to have less of a role). In other words, the “Head Coach” is not considered the boss of the coaching staff. We hope the program can help each coach develop coaching skills/enjoyment the same way it helps each player develop playing skills/enjoyment.

Depending on the age group, a coach’s role may vary. The table below outlines some of these roles:

	In-Town	Travel
Communicate with parents (schedules, cancellations, etc.)	In-Town Director / Manager	Team Coaches
Hand out uniforms	In-Town Director / Manager	Player Families
Run weekly practices	N/A	Team Coaches
Run weekend sessions / games	Team Coaches	Team Coaches
Register for tournaments	Team Coaches – please coordinate with In-Town Director / Manager	Team Coaches – please coordinate with Travel Director

This is a volunteer position, and we understand that coaches have other obligations outside of soccer. Most coaches can't attend 100% of their team's practices/games. Each team's coaches should communicate together about their schedules. In the event that NO coaches on a given team can attend a practice/game, the In-Town Director/Manager or Travel Director should be contacted to help find other coaches within the Program to help. To ensure the safety of the players within the program and that substitute coaches have received the proper adult volunteer verification and training, please do not coordinate replacement coaches without coordinating with the In-Town Director/Manager or Travel Director.

Expectations of Players

MYS programs are open for players of all abilities and commitment-levels (this includes our Grade 3&4 Travel Program). Some players will be first timers, while others will have played for several seasons prior. Some players will not be able to attend all practices/games; while others will be able to attend all. We ask coaches to accept and accommodate these differences to the best of their ability.

The spirit of this program makes it inappropriate to punish/berate players for:

- A. Making mistakes

- B. Not being able to attend every practice or game
- C. Arriving late to practice

It is appropriate for a Coach to expect the following from each player:

- A. Treat all other players, coaches, competitors, etc. with respect. Inappropriate verbal or physical behavior should be addressed.
- B. A minimum level of effort at games/practices (above Soccer Tots). If a player is unwilling or unable to participate/follow coach instructions, it is appropriate to discuss this with the player's parents.
- C. Grade 3/4: Follow the coach-designated methods to accurately RSVP for all games (and practices, if requested by the coach).

In situations where a player is not meeting the above requirements, it is appropriate for the Coach to discuss this with the player and their parents. Coaches should also discuss these situations with the In-Town Director/Manager or Travel Director.

Coach Training

Middleton Youth Soccer typically offers weekly "skills clinics" for G1/2 and G3/4 players, which are run by professional soccer trainers that we hire. Coaches are encouraged to attend the skills clinics to assist and learn from experts.

Some "Drills" material is available, particularly for the younger age groups. Please contact the In-Town or Travel Director for this information.

MOJO

MYS has also partnered with MOJO as our "Official Grassroots Coaching Partner." This partnership offers each MYS coach use of their app with excellent coaching content, including age group specific activities designed by top youth soccer coaches and child development experts. The app automatically builds each team's practice at the tap of a screen or coaches can create practice plans for each practice session in advance.

We welcome all our coaches (and encourage those with less coaching experience) to download the MOJO app – it's free! Get the app wherever you download your apps.

After you've installed the app and set up a profile, please affiliate with our organization on the app by following these instructions:

1. On the "Practice" tab, select "Team" in the top right corner of the app
2. Tap the gear wheel next to your team
3. Under "Org Affiliation" search for "Middleton Youth Soccer"
4. Select "Middleton Youth Soccer"

Other Coaching Resources

We also encourage coaches to pursue additional training from Massachusetts Youth Soccer and US Soccer:

- Mass Youth Soccer Training - <https://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/coach-education/>
- US Soccer Training - <https://www.ussoccer.com/coaching>
- *Play-Practice-Play* is a Grassroots developed philosophy designed around a player-centered approach to coaching. More details about the *Play-Practice-Play* model can be found at <https://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2018/02/five-things-to-know-about-playpracticeplay>

In-Town Program Details

Soccer Tots

The Soccer Tots program is coordinated by the In-Town Director who may appoint a Soccer Tots Manager to help with program execution. At this level, players are divided into teams. Each team ideally has 2-3 coaches. There are no practices during the week. The weekend session typically consists of all teams rotating through a circuit of stations (or drills).

Within the Soccer Tots program, the focus is allowing the kids to have fun, increasing their enjoyment of soccer, and burning off energy. Most drills have a soccer ball involved, and coaches may try to teach some basic technique, but a successful session ends with happy and tired kids.

In certain cases, some children may not be emotionally ready to engage in this soccer program. We would recommend coaches allow children to engage at their own pace, and to work with parents when necessary.

Grade PreK/K

The PreK/K program is coordinated by the In-Town Director who may appoint a PreK/K Manager to help with program execution. At this level, players are divided into teams. Each team ideally has 2-3 coaches. There are no practices during the week. The weekend session typically consists of each team participating in their own drills as specified and led by the team coaches. Kids also enjoy scrimmaging other teams at this age. We recommend scrimmages of 3v3, 4v4, or 5v5.

Within the PreK/K program, the focus remains on promoting fun. Coaches begin to expose players to basic techniques (trapping, passing, shooting, and dribbling). A successful session ends with happy and tired kids, some of whom will walk away with a new soccer skill or two that day.

At this age group, it is important to remind kids of expected and unexpected behaviors in an appropriate way.

[Grade 1/2](#)

The Grade 1/2 program is coordinated by the In-Town Director who may appoint a Grade 1/2 Manager to help with program execution. At this level, players are divided into teams. Each team ideally has 2-3 coaches. There are no practices during the week. The weekend session typically consists of each team participating in their own drills as specified and led by the team coaches. Kids also enjoy scrimmaging other teams at this age. We recommend scrimmages of 3v3, 4v4, 5v5 or 6v6. Additionally, scrimmages against neighboring towns may be coordinated with the In-Town Director and/or Grade 1/2 Manager.

Within the Grade 1/2 program, the focus continues to be on fun and burning off energy; however, an emphasis should continue to be placed on proper technique. While it is not expected that all kids will perfect the technique, an effort should be made by coaches to patiently work with kids to make progress in this area relative to each player's starting skill level. Additionally, coaches should introduce team concepts, such as positions and work with kids to break habits of chasing the ball around the field.

At this age group, it continues to be important to remind kids of expected and unexpected behaviors in an appropriate way.

[Travel Program Details](#)

[Grade 3/4](#)

The Grade 3/4 program is coordinated by the Travel Director. At this level, players are divided into teams based on skill levels. Tryouts are typically held in May or June for the following Fall season. We attempt to keep team compositions relatively unchanged between the Fall and Spring seasons. Each team ideally has 2-4 coaches. There are typically practices during the week, and games are held each weekend.

This program is intended to be developmental. The goal is to help the players develop their skills and enjoyment for soccer. Coaches should make every effort to give each player equal playing time at games. We encourage coaches to allow each player to experience as many soccer positions as they would like over the season. Helping each player develop is more important than winning each game. In terms of soccer development, coaches should continue to focus on proper technique. Additionally, coaches should focus on proper positioning and introduce basic strategy.

When forming teams, players are grouped by ability and experience. This helps to optimize each player's development and helps in identifying the best travel league "bracket" for each team. Social considerations are also taken into account when forming teams but are generally only used to help sort players of roughly similar skill. The travel league attempts to group

teams into brackets with other teams of similar experience/skill levels, so most games will be reasonably competitive.

The traditional format for the G3/4 travel league is for each team to have a game each Saturday during the regular season. The exact time and location will vary for each game (roughly half the games will be “at home”, and the other half will be “away”). Occasionally, specific games might need to be rescheduled, which is typically handled by the two relevant teams’ head coaches and/or the Travel Director.

Most teams also choose to hold one (or more, if desired) separate weekly team practice (typically on a weekday late afternoon/early evening). These typically start 2-3 weeks prior to the first scheduled game. An example format for these practices is:

- Warm-up (5-10 minutes)
- Drills (2-3 drills, 10-15 minutes per drill)
- Interleaved Water Breaks and Coach Discussion
- Scrimmage (20-30 minutes)

Contact Information

For general questions, please email info@middletonsoccer.com. To reach out to specific board members (including In-Town and Travel Directors), please visit <https://www.middletonsoccer.com> and see the MYS Leadership section.