



[www.holdenyouthsoccer.org](http://www.holdenyouthsoccer.org)

# COACHING MANUAL

## V2.0 2025





# HOLDEN YOUTH SOCCER – COACHING MANUAL

Chapter 1	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> <a href="#">Mission &amp; Core Values</a> <a href="#">Coaching Philosophies</a>	Pg 4
Chapter 2	<b>COACHING METHODOLOGY</b> <a href="#">6 Tasks of a Coach</a> <a href="#">Creating a Positive Environment</a> <a href="#">Effective Coaching Behavior</a> <a href="#">Coaching Methods Toolkit</a> <a href="#">Guided Discovery</a> <a href="#">4 Components of the Game</a> <a href="#">The Coaching Impact</a>	Pg 8
Chapter 3	<b>RUNNING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES</b> <a href="#">Practice Format – Play, Practice, Play</a> <a href="#">Recommended Activities</a> <a href="#">Technical Coaching Points</a> <a href="#">5 Elements of an Effective Practice</a> <a href="#">Warm Up &amp; Cool Down</a>	Pg 20
Chapter 4	<b>GAME MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY</b> <a href="#">Managing Games</a> <a href="#">Systems of Play</a> <a href="#">Attacking and Defensive Principles</a> <a href="#">Basic Tactics</a> <a href="#">Player Roles</a> <a href="#">Managing Lopsided Games</a>	Pg 36
Chapter 5	<b>COMMUNICATION</b> <a href="#">Communication Throughout the Season</a> <a href="#">Game Day Pre-During-Post</a> <a href="#">Communicating with Parents</a>	Pg 64
Chapter 6	<b>COACHING CHILDREN</b> <a href="#">Foundations of Coaching Children</a> <a href="#">Age Groups &amp; Development</a> <a href="#">Injury Management</a> <a href="#">Behavioral Issues</a> <a href="#">Player Relationships &amp; Motivation</a>	Pg 72



Chapter 7	<b>RULES</b> <a href="#">Basic Rules</a>	Pg 90
Chapter 8	<b>COACH EDUCATION</b> <a href="#">Coach Education</a> <a href="#">Additional Resources</a> <a href="#">HYS Pathways</a> <a href="#">Getting Help</a>	Pg 99
Chapter 9	<b>REFERENCES</b> <a href="#">References</a> <a href="#">Version History</a>	Pg 107



# Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

**Introduction**

Mission & Core Values  
Coach Philosophies





## INTRODUCTION

Holden Youth Soccer Association (HYS) is a non-profit organization that offers all children, ages 4 through 18, the opportunity to enjoy the game of soccer and improve their skills.

By providing a positive experience and helping players develop their skills, we hope to encourage children to keep playing and enjoying soccer, a game that provides healthy exercise, independent thinking, mental and physical challenges, collaboration and socialization, and most importantly fun. Our primary metric for success is player retention, we want our players to come back every season as they embrace their soccer development journey with HYS.

This manual serves as a resource for our coaches and serves as a comprehensive guide designed to help coaches effectively teach and develop players at various levels of the game. The HYS coaching manual ensures coaches can effectively guide their teams, fostering development, enjoyment, and competitive success.

## MISSION & CORE VALUES

Our Mission is to promote the game of soccer as a means of improving the physical, psychological, and social well-being of children while allowing every player an opportunity to play at a level that considers their ability.

Our Core Values include sportsmanship, fair play, and to educate:

1. Our community on the benefits of soccer,
2. Coaches as the cornerstone of player development,
3. Players to develop competence in the sport of soccer.



We strive to create an environment that develops respect, promotes leadership, and instills confidence while making the game of soccer available to all who desire to participate. We aim to be progressive and innovative in program, coach, and player development.



# COACHING PHILOSOPHY

As an HYS coach, it is important that you understand our goals as an organization, so you can help us achieve these goals. To achieve our vision and mission we have developed and continue to refine our core coaching philosophies to guide you along the way. Our top three principals are maximizing enjoyment, maximizing repetitions, and empowering players. We have added a fourth key principle in recent years as a reminder of how important the coach role is to set an example for youth soccer players.



## #1 - Maximize Enjoyment

The more children enjoy soccer, the more engaged they will be when they play, the more often they will play, the longer they will play, and the more they will improve.

- Having fun is the top reason children play sports.
- The more children enjoy practices, the more engaged they will be, the better they will behave, and the faster they will improve.
- The more children enjoy soccer, the more passion they will develop for it.
- The more they enjoy their experience, the more they will want to play.
- 70 percent of children in the United States quit organized sports by age 13 (and many of the remaining lose passion). The top reason for this is lack of enjoyment. We want children to enjoy soccer as long as they can.



## #2 - Maximize Repetition

Repetitions build muscle memory and is key in developing ball control and other technical skills.

- As with learning to read or play a musical instrument, repetition is the key to mastery.
- Repetition builds the muscle memory needed to control the ball quickly and adeptly without having to think about it.
- Repetition tunes “touch” on the ball, greatly improving control of the ball.
- At higher levels (like high school), where the game becomes very fast, the ability to control the ball quickly is paramount.
- Players can learn tactics and strategies easily when they get older, but they need hundreds of thousands of repetitions to become adept at controlling the ball.
- Using high-repetition activities like ball mastery and juggling, we can provide children with up to 20 games’ worth of touches in a single practice session.



### #3 - Maximize Empowerment

We want children to have ownership, so they feel more attached to their team. We want them to feel empowered to make decisions, so they can learn from the outcomes of those decisions.

- Players are much more engaged when they have a sense of ownership.
- Development is severely hindered if players are afraid to try new skills on the field.
- We want to develop smart players who think the game through.
- We want to foster independence, risk taking, and confidence.
- A focus on a guided discovery approach, by asking open ended questions of low and high order, will play a huge role in empowering your players.



### #4 - Maximize Composure

Set the examples for parents, players, other coaches, and officials by always practicing composure during games, practices, and all communication.

- Maintaining composure during practices and games shows trust in your players' ability to make their own decisions.
- Staying calm allows you to make thoughtful decisions based on careful observation and reflection, rather than reacting impulsively to emotions.
- A coach who remains composed fosters the development of composed players, a valuable yet challenging skill for any soccer players to master.
- As a coach, you set the example for sportsmanship, respect, and behavior, with composure being a cornerstone of this leadership.

Enjoyment, repetition, empowerment, and composure are the four core principles of a HYS coach. The more consistently we incorporate these into every game and practice, the richer and more rewarding the experience becomes for our players.



# Chapter 2

# COACHING METHODOLOGY

## Chapter 2

### COACHING METHODOLOGY

- 6 Tasks of a Coach
- Creating a Positive Environment
- Effective Coaching Behavior
- Coaching Methods Toolkit
- Guided Discovery
- 4 Components of the Game
- The Coaching Impact







# SIX TASKS OF A YOUTH SOCCER COACH

U.S. Youth Soccer define six unique tasks for a youth soccer coach:

1	<b>#1 COACHING GAMES</b> Create an environment which supports and guides players toward giving their best contribution to the game in order to further develop and score more goals than the opponent.
2	<b>#2 COACHING PRACTICES</b> Facilitate an environment which supports and guides players on the field in order to develop them to their full potential as well as prepare players/the team for the game.
3	<b>#3 LEADING THE TEAM</b> Create an environment of inclusion and engage players based on agreed upon team behaviors and goals.
4	<b>#4 LEADING THE PLAYER</b> Give players individual, unconditional attention, and mentor them to fulfill their maximum potential.
5	<b>#5 MANAGE THE PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT</b> Influence off-the-field circumstances and persons in order to create the best conditions for the development and performance of the players.
6	<b>#6 LEADERSHIP</b> Demonstrate coaching actions which are guided by a player-centered philosophy in order to accomplish defined team and player goals.



## CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

We want to create a positive environment where children feel safe and empowered. Here are some measures you can take toward this end:



*Create an Environment Where Children Smile*

- **Use positive reinforcement.** Instead of constantly correcting “mistakes” (which can make children feel dejected), praise them when they do something correctly. “Catch them being good,” as Tony DiCicco would say. This way, they learn correct techniques while building confidence and feeling good.
- **Be patient.** Development is a marathon, not a sprint. Don’t stress if a player is struggling to master something. If players feel that you will be supportive even when they “mess up,” their confidence will soar.
- **Smile.** Mother Theresa said, “I will never understand all the good that a single smile can accomplish.”
- **Let them play.** Shouting instructions at players can cause unnecessary stress and make them rush to get rid of the ball. Instead, allow them to stay calm, make their own decisions, and enjoy the game. This approach not only boosts their enjoyment but also helps them develop confidence and play with greater intelligence.
- **Talk with the children.** Ask them about their other activities, their weekend plans, etc. Doesn't matter what the topic is. Talking to them makes them feel that they are involved and that you care about them.
- **Ask for parents’ help** in creating a positive atmosphere. They can do this by being supportive and positive on the sidelines and refraining from yelling instructions



# EFFECTIVE COACHING BEHAVIOR

Congratulations on volunteering as a soccer coach for HYS. You've taken on one of the most rewarding yet challenging roles you'll ever experience. To make the most of this journey, it's important to embrace specific traits and behaviors that will help you succeed.

Coaching youth soccer is all about prioritizing the needs and experiences of the children. To be effective, you must always act as a responsible adult. A genuine passion for working with children and an understanding of the unique complexities of their varying ages, developmental stages, and maturity levels are essential. Your goal is to create an environment where children can grow, learn, and enjoy the game.

Becoming an effective youth soccer coach involves cultivating a range of positive traits. Here are just a few to consider:

## Typical Traits of Effective Youth Coaches:

### High Moral and Ethical Standards

- Be an appropriate role model.
- Be fair, no one likes it if you cheat.

### Respect of Players, Parents, and Community

- Develop strategies to develop positive relationships with all involved.

### Understanding Readiness Factors for Participation

- Maturation — when to begin, how the game is structured.
- Learning — what are children able to comprehend and how do they learn.
- Motivation — internal desire to play and have fun.

### Communication

- Appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses (body language & gestures).
- Appropriate language (words, tone, volume, rhythm, articulation).

### Development of an Appropriate Temperament for Coaching Children

- Be sensitive to each child.
- Exhibit a calm personality - show patience.
- Observe and guide; don't direct.
- Use your normal voice, not a whistle.

### Ability to Motivate Positively

- Develop high levels of self-confidence.
- Positive coaching.
- Don't yell.



### Possess Leadership Qualities

- Be prepared and be organized.
- Demonstrate discipline — identify appropriate and inappropriate behavior and enforce team rules.
- Learn to be critical of behavior, not a player's personality.

### Be Dedicated to Child Development and the Sport of Soccer

- Understand what is appropriate for different ages and levels of play.
- Let every child play (and play a lot).

### Be Enthusiastic and Have a Good Sense of Humor

- Your enthusiasm is contagious - Celebrate!
- Keep things light and have fun.
- Smile and laugh.

### Must Have Current Knowledge of Coaching Youth Soccer

- Learn about children and how they learn.
- Learn the rules.
- Learn appropriate practices, activities, and content.
- Learn appropriate tactics and strategy.
- Learn how to have fun.



# COACHES TOOLKIT

The coaching toolkit is a set of unique methods to convey key concepts and coaching points, each have their own strengths and weaknesses and as the coach it's up to you to choose how and when to adopt each method:

<p>1</p> 	<p><b>#1 COACHING IN THE FLOW OF THE GAME</b></p> <p>This approach is least intrusive. Asking a question or offering a coaching point during the activity without stopping the game. For example, "What part of the foot do we use to dribble with speed?" or "Make sure we lift our heads up" etc.</p>
<p>2</p> 	<p><b>#2 COACHING AT NATURAL STOPPAGES</b></p> <p>When the ball goes out of bounds or between activities, you might take that opportunity to remind the team about a key concept. For example, "It's important that once we make a pass, we need to move into the open space". This is a good way to address the team without really impacting the game.</p>
<p>3</p> 	<p><b>#3 COACHING AN INDIVIDUAL 1 ON 1</b></p> <p>Talk to player 1v1 on the side or even during a game/activity. This allows you to provide individual and very specific instruction that apply to only that player. For example, you might take a player aside and remind her to receive the ball on her front foot when she has space in front of her (ideally using a guided discovery strategy).</p>
<p>4</p> 	<p><b>#4 THE FREEZE METHOD</b></p> <p>This is the most obtrusive method and should be used sparingly. Sometimes, however, it's best to freeze play exactly how it is to make a point to the team. Say, for example, you have an attacker under duress with nobody providing support. That would be a good use of this method, especially when there is a visual to exemplify.</p>
<p>5</p> 	<p><b>#5 LET THE ENVIRONMENT BE THE COACH</b></p> <p>Using size, aspect ratio, number of goals, number of players, balance of players can often create the conditions for coaching concepts by itself. For example, putting three goals on each side forces defenders to pay particular attention to cover and balance and rewards attackers for changing the point of attack.</p>



## GUIDED DISCOVERY

Guided discovery is a coaching method used in soccer that encourages players to explore, problem-solve, and learn through experience rather than being directly told what to do. The coach acts as a facilitator, guiding players with questions or scenarios that prompt them to think critically, make decisions, and uncover solutions on their own. This approach helps players develop a deeper understanding of the game, enhances their creativity, and builds decision-making skills that can be applied in real-time match situations.



*Empowering Young Minds*

### Key Principles of Guided Discovery in Soccer Coaching

- **Player-Centered Learning.** The focus is on the player's thought process rather than the coach's instructions. Players are encouraged to analyze situations, experiment with different options, and arrive at solutions independently.
- **Use of Open-Ended Questions of High and Low Order.** Coaches use guided and leading questions using the five W's: who, what, where, when, why. For example:
  - "Who can provide cover for the first defender?"
  - "What can we do to give ourselves more time when we receive the ball?"
  - "Where can you go to get open for a pass?"
  - "When should we do a move when trying to dribble past a defender?"
  - "Why wouldn't I just run full speed at the first attacker and try to steal the ball?"

Use a balance of low-order questions, those which have a simple or binary response e.g. what part of the foot should we use to shoot, and high-order, more complex and open-ended questions, e.g. how can we create more space?



- **Creating Game-Like Scenarios.** Instead of abstract drills, use activities or small-sided games that mimic real game situations. This allows players to practice making decisions in a context that feels relevant and familiar and transferable to the game.
- **Trial and Error.** Players are encouraged to try different approaches and learn from their mistakes. Coaches provide constructive feedback to guide players toward effective solutions without giving them the exact answers.
- **Empowering Independence.** By letting players discover solutions on their own, they become more confident and autonomous. This skill translates to better decision-making during games when quick thinking is essential.

## Benefits of Guided Discovery in Soccer Coaching:

- **Deeper Learning.** Players retain skills and concepts better when they figure them out on their own.
- **Improved Problem-Solving.** Players learn to analyze situations and adapt strategies during games.
- **Fosters Creativity.** Encouraging experimentation leads to more innovative play, such as unexpected passes, movements, or shots.
- **Builds Confidence.** Players feel a sense of accomplishment when they solve problems and develop new skills without constant guidance.
- **Adaptability.** By engaging with different challenges, players become more versatile and able to handle diverse game situations.

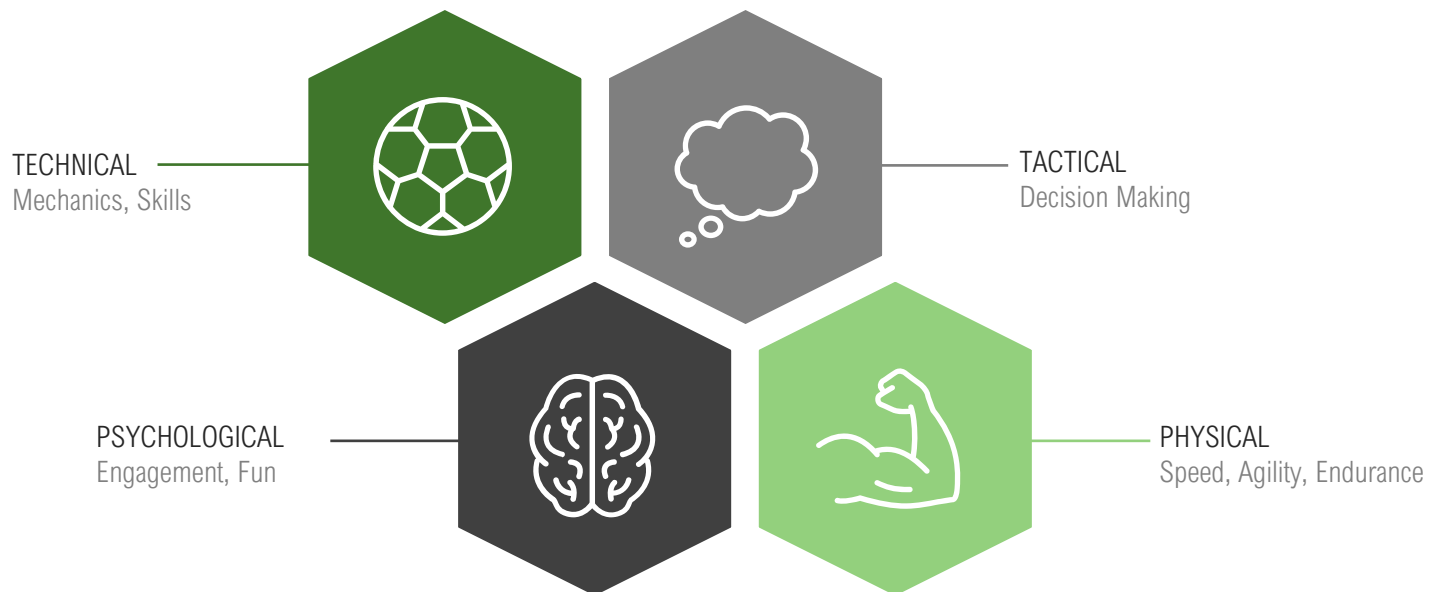
Guided discovery is particularly effective for youth soccer because it aligns with how children naturally learn - through exploration and hands-on experiences. By using this approach, coaches help players not only improve their soccer abilities but also develop critical thinking and decision-making skills that extend beyond the field.





# FOUR COMPONENTS OF THE GAME

Coaching youth soccer involves guiding players through four essential components - **technical**, **tactical**, **physical**, and **psychological** - each playing a vital role in their overall development and understanding of the game.



## #1 - Technical Development

This focuses on the mechanics of skill performance, such as dribbling, passing, shooting, and receiving. It's about teaching players *how* to execute fundamental soccer techniques, like where to place their non-kicking foot when striking the ball or locking their ankle when using their instep. Technical mastery is a foundational aspect for youth players, as it helps them build confidence and enjoy the game while improving their overall skill set. **THIS SHOULD BE A KEY FOCUS FOR ALL AGE AND SKILL LEVELS.**



## #2 - Tactical Development

Tactics revolve around decision-making, or the “when, why, and where” of soccer. Players learn to assess game situations and make smart choices, such as deciding whether to dribble, pass, or shoot based on their position and the flow of play. This progression starts with simpler tactical challenges, like 1v1 or 2v1 scenarios, before advancing to more complex situations, such as 4v4 play. Tactical development ensures players can adapt to the dynamic phases of the game - attack, defense, and transitions in between. We need to be careful to not overload players with too much tactical training, especially with younger age groups.





### #3 - Physical Development

The physical aspect emphasizes fitness, focusing on endurance, agility, speed, balance, strength, and flexibility. For younger players, physical development is often achieved organically through playing and engaging in soccer-related activities. However, as players grow older (U14 +), structured conditioning and speed training may be introduced to enhance their physical attributes and help them perform at higher levels.



### #4 - Psychological Development

This intangible but crucial component encompasses mental toughness, emotional regulation, motivation, and interpersonal skills. For youth players, this includes learning how to handle winning and losing, staying positive under pressure, and maintaining good relationships with teammates, coaches, officials, and parents. Psychological growth also ensures players enjoy the game, stay motivated, and develop a healthy attitude toward competition. **THIS SHOULD BE A KEY FOCUS FOR ALL AGE AND SKILL LEVELS.**

## Integrated Approach Across the Four Phases of Play

These four components come together during the game's four phases - attack, defensive transition, defense, and attacking transition. Coaches must balance technical skill-building, tactical awareness, physical fitness, and psychological resilience across these phases, helping players become well-rounded athletes who can adapt to different situations on the field.

In summary, effective coaching develops technical fundamentals, sharpens decision-making, builds physical fitness, and nurtures mental strength while keeping the game enjoyable. These elements work in harmony to help youth players grow as soccer athletes and as individuals.



# THE COACHING IMPACT

Being a soccer coach for a youth organization like HYS has far-reaching and multi-faceted impacts, influencing not only the players but also their families, the community, and the coach themselves. This impact can be broken down into several key themes:

## Development of Young Athletes

- **Skill Building.** Coaches teach players the technical skills of soccer, such as passing, dribbling, shooting, and positioning, helping them grow as athletes.
- **Physical Fitness.** Encouraging consistent physical activity promotes healthy habits, improving strength, endurance, and overall well-being.
- **Confidence and Self-Esteem.** Through constructive feedback and encouragement, coaches help players believe in their abilities and push beyond their perceived limits.
- **Goal-Setting.** Coaches teach the importance of setting realistic goals and striving to achieve them, which translates to other areas of life.

## Life Skills and Personal Growth

- **Teamwork.** Players learn how to collaborate, trust others, and value collective success over individual achievement.
- **Resilience and Grit.** The challenges of the game, such as losses or difficult drills, teach players to persevere through setbacks and develop a growth mindset.
- **Sportsmanship.** Coaches model and reinforce the importance of respecting opponents, teammates, referees, and the game itself.
- **Time Management.** Balancing school, soccer, and other commitments instills discipline and prioritization skills in young players.

## Social and Community Impact

- **Building Relationships.** The bonds formed between players, coaches, and families foster a sense of belonging and community.
- **Mentorship.** Coaches serve as role models, guiding players not just on the field but in making positive life choices.
- **Community Spirit.** Youth sports programs often bring communities together through shared experiences, events, and celebrations.
- **Inclusion.** A good coach ensures that every player, regardless of skill level, feels valued and included, promoting diversity and acceptance.

## Impact on Families

- **Parental Support.** Coaches often build partnerships with parents, encouraging them to support their children's growth in healthy and constructive ways.
- **Shared Experiences.** Families bond over practices, games, and team events, creating cherished memories.
- **Positive Role Models.** Coaches provide an additional layer of mentorship and support, complementing the role of parents.



## Personal Growth for the Coach

- **Leadership Development.** Coaching requires effective communication, decision-making, and the ability to inspire and guide others.
- **Sense of Fulfillment.** Seeing young players succeed and grow can be deeply rewarding and affirming.
- **Connection to the Community.** Coaching builds strong ties to the local community and creates a lasting impact through service.
- **Skill Transfer.** The leadership, planning, and interpersonal skills gained from coaching often benefit the coach in their personal and professional life.

## Summary

The impact of being a soccer coach for a youth organization like HYS is profound and a privilege, as it creates a ripple effect of positive change. Coaches not only help shape the next generation of athletes but also instill values and skills that last a lifetime. The relationships formed, lessons learned, and memories created extend far beyond the soccer field, influencing individuals and communities in meaningful ways. For the coach, it is an opportunity to give back, grow as a leader, and make a tangible difference in the lives of others.



## Chapter 3

# RUNNING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

### Chapter 3

#### RUNNING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Practice Format – Play, Practice, Play

Recommended Activities

Technical Coaching Points

5 Elements of an Effective Practice

Warm Up & Cool Down

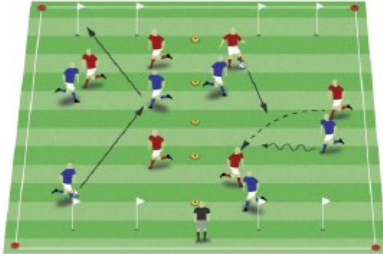
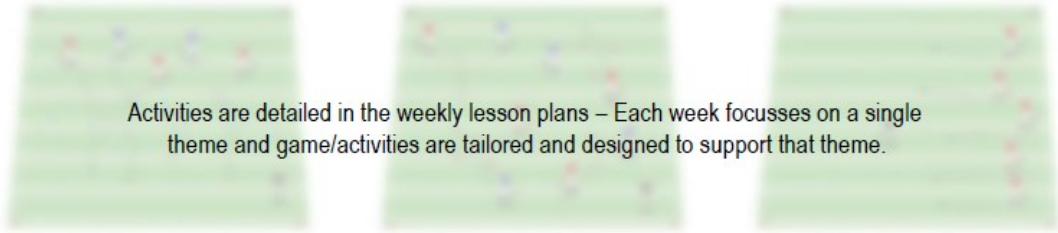
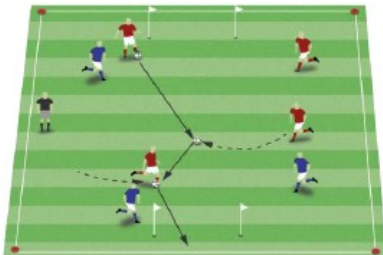




# PRACTICE FORMAT – PLAY, PRACTICE, PLAY

Play-Practice-Play is a grassroots developed philosophy designed around a player-centered approach to coaching. The concept of Play-Practice-Play is to allow young players to experience the game and game-like situations as much as possible. This approach differs from traditional practices that may have children standing in lines, running laps and participating in drills that don't resemble the game of soccer.

Each week the coach or coaches will lead the team through a quick small, sided game, followed by three game like activities, then after a break have a small scrimmage within your own team using as balanced teams as possible.

1st Phase - Play	<p><b>1st Phase - Play</b></p> 	<p><b>~10mins</b></p> <p>Set up a 20W x 30L grid with goals or two if you have enough players. When practice is scheduled to start and as soon as 2 players arrive, start playing a game.</p> <p>The game starts 1v1. As new players, the game becomes 2v1, then 2v2, 3v2, 3v3 etc. Just use your own team with pinnies.</p>	<p><b>Small Sided Game</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage players to move forward</li> <li>• If you see an opening, go directly to goal</li> <li>• Try to keep the ball</li> <li>• Try to protect your own goal</li> </ul> <p><b>Progression:</b> If you can not do multiple 2v2/3v3 games you can do one larger game</p> <p><b>Guided Questions:</b> When should you shoot on goal? What if someone is blocking your path? How can we stop the other team from scoring?</p>
2nd Phase - Practice	<p><b>2nd Phase – Practice – ~10 mins x 3 Activities</b></p>  <p>Activities are detailed in the weekly lesson plans – Each week focusses on a single theme and game/activities are tailored and designed to support that theme.</p> <p>Activity 1 - ~10mins      Activity 2 - ~10mins      Activity 3 - ~10mins</p>		
3rd Phase - Play	<p><b>3rd Phase - Play</b></p> 	<p><b>~20mins</b></p> <p>In a 20W x 30L grid with goals set up two evenly matched teams. Play a 5v5 game with goalkeepers. When the ball goes out of play the coach can play another ball onto the field and the play continues.</p> <p>Play for ~10 mins with a 2 min break at half.</p>	<p><b>5v5 Game against an opponent</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage players to move forward</li> <li>• If you see an opening, go directly to goal</li> <li>• Try to keep the ball</li> <li>• Try to protect your own goal</li> </ul> <p><b>Progression:</b> You can introduce some more rules like throw-ins, corner kicks, goal kicks and enforce rules</p> <p><b>Guided Questions:</b> When should you shoot on goal? What if someone is blocking your path? How can we stop the other team from scoring?</p>



### Step #1 – Choose a Topic

- Choose an attacking, defending or transitional focus for the session theme. Stay in this topic for the entire duration of the practice. All coaching points should be directed toward this theme.

### Step #2 – Choose a Focus Within the Topic

- Choose what part of the field you want to focus on - Your own half, your opponent's half, or goal scoring.

### Step #3 - The (Initial) Play Stage – Considered “Deliberate Play”

- Let the children play and take the pulse – who is engaged or who is avoiding.
- Make sure the teams are not lopsided.
- Coaching consists of asking guided questions only.
- Show the children you care, let them play and have fun.

### Step #4 - The Practice Stage – Considered “Play – Practice”

- Create small-sided game like activities focused on your ‘theme’ that create problems for the children to solve – “how can we....?”
- Create repetitions – positive reinforcement of effort and normalizing the errors – mistakes are part of the game and essential to learning.
- Set up the field to help create a natural environment to encourage success of your theme.
- Start simple, with fewer numbers of players and easier challenges and work toward more complex games with larger numbers and more challenging problems to solve.

### Step #5 - The (Final) Play Stage – Considered “Contextual Learning”

- Set up two teams of equal skill as close to your games as possible.
- Assess how much of the practice stage has transferred with each player in the game
- Let the children play for extended periods without interruption.
- Use guided discovery and guided questions to empower the players to solve problems for themselves.



## RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

Activities should vary depending on some key criteria, what age-group is the team you are coaching and what skill level is the team within their age group. Below is an adapted framework from U.S. Soccer used to highlight the focus area for each age group. The goal is for every player to be comfortable with the skills laid out in the framework as they transition from age group to age group.

	4v4	7v7	9v9	11v11
	U6, U7, U8	U9, U10	U11, U12	U13+
ATTACKING	U-6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> </ul> U-7/8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> <li>Create a 2v1 or 1v1</li> <li>Change the point of attack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> <li>Create a 2v1 or 1v1</li> <li>Change the point of attack</li> <li>Switch Positions</li> <li>Change the pace/rhythm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> <li>Create a 2v1 or 1v1</li> <li>Change the point of attack</li> <li>Switch Positions</li> <li>Change the pace/rhythm</li> </ul>
ATTACKING > DEFENDING - DEFEND THE GOAL AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE				
DEFENDING	U-6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> </ul> U-7/8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make is compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> <li>Make it compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> <li>Pressure, cover, balance</li> <li>Outnumber the opponent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> <li>Make it compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> <li>Pressure, cover, balance</li> <li>Outnumber the opponent</li> <li>Stay involved</li> <li>Mark the player/mark the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> <li>Make it compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> <li>Pressure, cover, balance</li> <li>Outnumber the opponent</li> <li>Stay involved</li> <li>Mark the player/mark the area</li> </ul>
DEFENDING TO ATTACKING - ATTACK AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE				

### The four moments of play in soccer are:

- In possession – attacking
- Out of possession – defending
- Defensive transition – winning the ball
- Attacking transition – losing the ball

We will use these phases to organize and focus our practice session each week. Each phase requires different strategies, skills, and player movements. Understanding these phases is important for understanding the game's tactics and strategies. Here are some things to consider for each phase:

### In Possession - Attacking

This is when your team has the ball. Having possession puts your team at an advantage, as it means the opposition can't score and you can create goalscoring opportunities.

The key to good attacking is using the space to your advantage. It's about making the right decision, at the



right time, to help you create a breakthrough.

Some principles that teams might employ when in possession include:

- Trying to play forward whenever possible, looking to pass between the lines and penetrate the defense. If going forward isn't an option, look to keep the ball until it is.
- Being creative and prepared to take risks, particularly in the final third of the pitch.
- Using movement, both individually and as a team, to create space – width, length and depth – to stretch the opposition's defense.
- Supporting play by offering an option for the player on the ball. 2v1 situations.

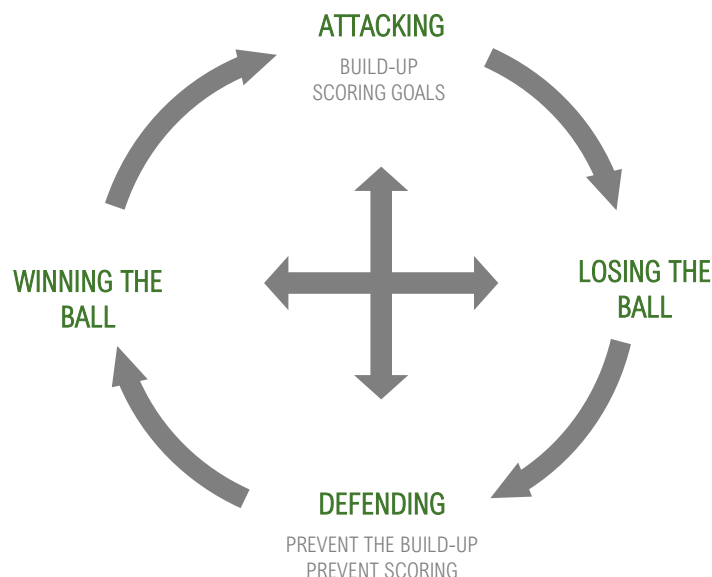
## Out of Possession - Defending

This is when your opponents have the ball, putting them at an advantage, with a possibility of creating goalscoring opportunities.

The key to good defending is denying, delaying and restricting your opponent's space. Defending is primarily about stopping your opponent doing things.

Some principles that teams might employ when out of possession include:

- Being compact and protecting central spaces.
- Delaying the opposition and preventing them from playing forwards.
- Pressing the opposition by putting pressure on the player on the ball and cutting off passing options.
- Providing cover by filling gaps when players press.
- Being patient and waiting for the opportunity to win the ball.



## Defensive Transition

This is when your team gives the ball to your opponents, or they win possession from you. It is sometimes also known as counter-defending.





In this phase, your team will be at its most vulnerable. Individual players must recover, and the team must regroup quickly, getting behind the ball and into a defensive shape and slowing the opposition's attack down as much as possible.

## Attacking Transition

This is when your opponent's give the ball to you, or you win possession from them. It is sometimes also known as counterattacking.

In this phase, the opposition team will likely be out of shape and out of position. Playing forward and attacking quickly can help to exploit this.

The transition phases are short periods of time when a team switches between being in possession and out of possession. These phases can have a big influence on a team's success

Activities will also vary heavily based on which phase of the game and which area of the field you choose to focus on to for the session.



*Attacking & Defending Phases of Play*



Within the attacking and defending phases and the area of the field to focus on there are specific topics to structure the activities around.

ATTACKING				
WHERE	WHY/GOAL	HOW	WHAT	WHO/QUALITIES
Where is it happening on the field?	Why do players attack? What are the goals?	How are the players going to accomplish their goals?	What can players do to achieve their goals?	Who are the players? What qualities do they need?
#1 Own half build up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move the ball forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find Openings</li> <li>Create Openings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> <li>Create a 2v1 or 1v1</li> <li>Change the point of attack</li> <li>Switch Positions</li> <li>Change the pace/rhythm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and understand the game and make decisions</li> <li>Take initiative, be pro-active</li> <li>Demonstrate focus</li> <li>Execute with technical ability</li> <li>Take responsibility and accountability for their own development and performance</li> </ul>
#2 Opponents' half build up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create chances</li> </ul>			
#3 Close to the goal - scoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Score goals</li> </ul>			

DEFENDING				
WHERE	WHY/GOAL	HOW	WHAT	WHO/QUALITIES
Where is it happening on the field?	Why do players attack? What are the goals?	How are the players going to accomplish their goals?	What can players do to achieve their goals?	Who are the players? What qualities do they need?
#1 Opponents' half Prevent the build up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevent the opponent from moving the ball forward</li> <li>Regain the ball</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close the openings to the goal</li> <li>Keep the openings to the goal closed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> <li>Make it compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> <li>Pressure, cover, balance</li> <li>Outnumber the opponent</li> <li>Stay involved</li> <li>Mark the player/mark the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and understand the game and make decisions</li> <li>Take initiative, be pro-active</li> <li>Demonstrate focus</li> <li>Execute with technical ability</li> <li>Take responsibility and accountability for their own development and performance</li> </ul>
#2 Own half Prevent the build up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevent the opponent from moving the ball forward</li> <li>Regain the ball</li> </ul>			
#3 Close to the goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevent scoring goals</li> <li>Deny chances</li> </ul>			

## Lesson Plans

Here you will find specific games and activities which are age group appropriate and that will ensure you keep the focus on the right level of skill for the age group you are coaching. These are a combination of HYS developed plans and Mass Youth Soccer Association plans.

- [Pre-K & K – U6](#)
- [Grades 1 and 2 – U8](#)
- [Grades 3 and 4 – U10](#)
- [Grades 5 and 6 – U12](#)
- [Grades 7 and 8 – U14](#)
- [Technical Session](#)



## TECHNICAL COACHING POINTS

The “coaching points” are the technical points you want to convey to the players. These are not meant to be exhaustive but offer some key points to consider.

### Dribbling Coaching Points

- **How to beat a defender 1v1:**
  - Change direction (or fake) **WELL IN FRONT OF THE DEFENDER**. Most players will dribble right up to the defender's feet before making their move, allowing the defender to easily steal the ball.
  - Use a long dribble and burst of speed to get past the defender. (You can run onto a long dribble faster.)
  - Use your momentum to your advantage. If a defender is facing you, and you pass him or her at speed, they will not be able to turn around and catch up to you quickly. So don't slow down when approaching a defender.
  - Sell your fakes to get the defender to lean the wrong way. Be an actor!
  - Look up and “take a picture” of the field frequently to see what's going on.
  - Shield with one side of your body and control the ball with your opposite foot.
  - When there is low pressure uses the laces to push the ball forward in the direction of travel for maximum speed, when there is pressure slow down and uses all surfaces of both feet to change direction to get out of pressure.



*Dribbling with Speed – Laces*



*Dribbling in Pressure – Instep, Outstep and Sole*

- **When to dribble**
  - Risk/reward is best in the attacking third (where beating a defender can lead to a scoring chance and losing it doesn't lead to an immediate scoring chance for the opponent) and worst in the defending third (where losing the ball can lead to a great scoring chance for the opponent).
  - Dribble when you have space (and no teammate is wide open in a better position), when there's only one defender to beat other than the keeper (and no teammate is open for a one-time shot), when in the penalty box (and no teammate is open for a one-time shot), or when you have no open teammates.



## Shooting Coaching Points

### • Power Shooting

- Approach the ball from a slight angle.
- Ensure the plant foot is next to the soccer ball.
- Laces. Contact the middle of the ball with your laces.
- Make sure the ankle is locked – this ensures power is transferred to the ball.
- Hop to your plant foot so your shooting leg is back and loaded. Plant foot and shoulders should face target.
- Finish line. Continue through the shot (“cross the finish line”) and land on your shooting foot.

### • Finesse Shooting

- For close-range shots, use finesse to make sure the shot is accurate. “Pass” the ball into the net with the inside of your foot vs the laces.
- Aim for inside back posts if the keeper is in position.



*Shooting for Power – Laces*



*Shooting for Finesse – Instep or Outstep*

## Passing/Receiving Coaching Points

### • Passing

- Use the inside of the foot to pass and receive.
- Pull your big toe up (lock your ankle) when passing and receiving.
- Approach the ball from a slight angle.
- Ensure the plant foot is next to the soccer ball.
- Instep. Contact the middle of the ball with your Instep.
- Make sure the ankle is locked – this ensures power is transferred to the ball.
- Pass where the receiver will be, not where they are (if moving).
- Consider weight of passes. Soft enough for the receiver to handle but hard enough to get there before a defender can.

### • Receiving

- Receive away from pressure.
- First touch sets up your second touch (active first touch).



- Receive with front foot to turn more quickly when no pressure.
- Receive with back foot when under pressure to shield the defender with your body.



*Instep Pass*

## Individual Defending Coaching Points

- **Pressure/Contain**
  - Hustle to apply pressure to the attacker but don't "dive in," because a good attacker will use your momentum against you and go by you.
  - Slow down on arrival and get low and sideways (like riding a surfboard). Look to be about an arm and a half from the attacker.
- **Delay/Jockey**
  - Slowing an attacker gives your teammates a chance to recover and help on defense. It also allows the attacker to lose control of the ball.
  - You can slow an attacker by staying in front of him/her and not trying for a tackle (i.e., "jockeying").
- **Tackling**
  - Tackle when you can win the ball, not before.
  - Use a block tackle for straight-on tackles and poke tackle when running alongside the ball carrier.
  - Use a slide tackle only as a last resort.





*Defending Technique*

## Goalkeeping Coaching Points

### • Catching the ball

- Scoop ground balls with two hands and pinkies together. Lock the ball to your chest with elbows pointing down.
- Catch low shots (below chest) with fingers down and elbows close, then lock it in. Bend at waist so that chest is parallel to ground. Do not squat.
- Catch high shots (above waist) with fingers up, in a diamond or triangle shape, with thumbs close together (but not touching). Elbows out. Lock it into chest after catching.



*Catching Low Shots*



*Catching High Shots*

### • Punting and Throwing

- **Punt.** Hold ball over kicking foot with opposite hand and drop ball onto foot. Use this for a quick counterattack or when no wide-open pass is available.
- **Roll.** Bowl the ball. Use this to get the ball to a close teammate who is open.
- **Football throw.** Throw the ball past your ear. This is a great option for throwing the ball far and accurately.
- **Roundhouse throw.** This is more advanced and takes a lot of practice. Used for far throws. More powerful but less accurate than the football throw.



Goalkeeper Roll



Goalkeeper Football Throw



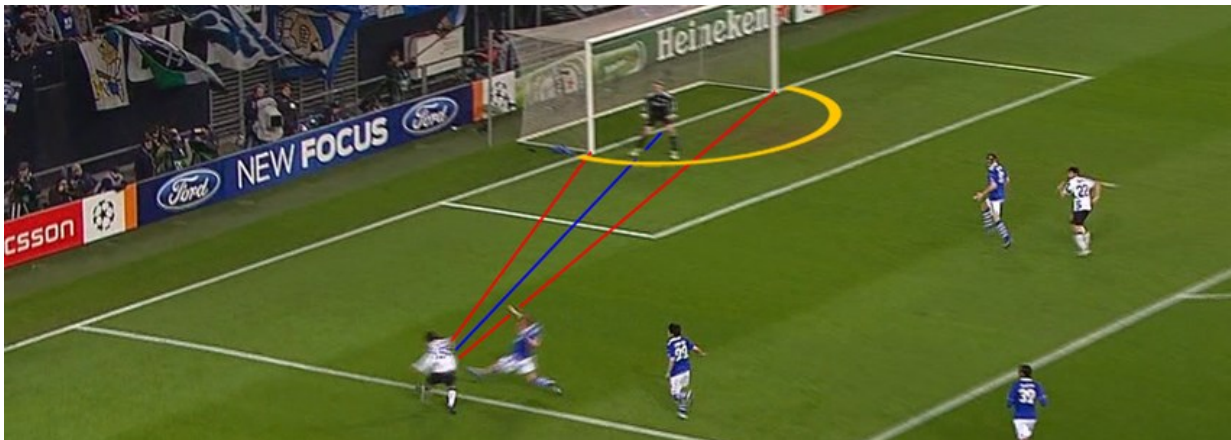
Goalkeeper Roundhouse Throw

### • Field position

- The keeper's position within the penalty area should reflect the location of the ball on the full field. So, if the ball is in the attacking third, the keeper should be out near the 18. If the ball is in the middle of the field, the keeper should be in the middle of the penalty area. If the ball is in the defensive third, the keeper should be inside the goal area.
- The reason the keeper should come out to the 18 is so that he/she will be in position to intercept through balls (thereby stopping breakaways) and to receive back passes.

### • Cutting angles

- In 1v1 situations, the keeper should look to cut the angle in an effort to cover more of the goal. Ideally the keeper should be in position to reach any shot on frame. So, if you drew an imaginary line from the near and far posts to the ball, the keeper should be able to reach both lines on a dive.



Goalkeeper Angles



- **Advanced Coaching Points – Footwork**

- Hurry to get your body in front of the ball, so your body will block the ball. Diving is a last resort.
- Use shuffle steps or crossover steps.

- **Advanced Coaching Points – Diving**

- Dive forward at 45 degrees.
- Dive in front of post to avoid injury.
- Legs and chest should hit the ground at the same time.
- Keep elbows out from under your sides to avoid injury.
- Never land on your back or your front ("superman").





## 5 ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

The 5 Elements of an effective practice are a tool for the coach to use to observe and check the created situation on the field, adapt, if necessary, based on the player behavior within the training session goal.

#1 ORGANIZED:	#2 GAME-LIKE:	#3 REPETITION:	#4 CHALLENGING:	#5 COACHING:
Is the activity organized in the right way? (is it safe and the ball stays in play?)	Is the activity game-like? (attacking, defending, & transition)	Is there repetition when looking at the overall goal of the session?	Are the players being challenged? (is there the right balance between being successful and unsuccessful)	Is there effective coaching, based on the age and level of the players?

### #1 Organized

An overview of components that allow for a training session to be organized

Session Goal:	Developmentally appropriate session goal
Set-Up Field:	Optimal use of available space & preparation of pitch (cones, balls, pinnies)
Environment:	Check of surroundings to ensure player safety (field, equipment, players etc)
Description:	Clear rules and expectations for both teams in relation to the training session goal and activity objective (starts, re-starts, scoring)
Demand:	Awareness of physical demand placed on the players. Applies an appropriate physical demand based on the developmental stage of the players.
Spacing:	Appropriately defined field spacing to bring out realistic, game-like player behaviors
Positioning:	Players are in the right position in the formation at the start of the exercise and each repetition.
Substitutions:	The management of players throughout each activity so that all players participate (rotation into each activity and able to experience the training session goal)
Transition:	Efficient transition between different activities and phases
Outcome	The training environment is safe and fun for players
Outcome	The players are clear on what is expected in each activity of the training session

### #2 Game-like

An overview of components that allow for a training session to be game-like

Set-Up:	At least one ball (based on game model i.e. 4v4, 7v7)
---------	---



Teams:	Two clearly defined teams in each activity/phase
Moments:	The 4 Moments of the game may occur for both teams.
Scoring Opportunities:	Provide directional scoring opportunities for both teams (through large goals, small goals, or end zones)
Rules:	Respect Laws of the Game and apply/modify appropriately based on the activity/phase. For example, for play 1, sideline kick-ins allowed. For play 2, all laws of the game apply.
Decisions:	Player decision making is present.
Outcome	The training environment provides players with an enjoyable, game-like experience
Outcome	The players experience and understand what they are doing and why as it relates to the formation and training session goal.

### #3 Repetition

An overview of components that allow for a meaningful number of repetitions during the activity

Repetition:	The activity is organized in a way that allows players to experience repetition of the player actions to develop the key qualities of today's training session goal.
Outcome	Players experience meaningful repetitions of today's training session goal.

### #4 Challenging

An overview of components that allow activity to have different levels of challenge

Goals:	The ability to design developmentally appropriate activities based on the player developmental stage, goals and needs.
Transition:	The ability to recognize when to move between less challenging/more challenging within an activity.
Outcome	A balance between successful and unsuccessful actions.

### #5 Coaching

An overview of components that allow for influencing the players to the desired behavior

Observation Position:	The position allowing for a good observation (linked to the training session goals) and possible coaching interventions/teaching actions
Interactions:	Utilizes the training session manual to deliver teaching actions from the U.S. Soccer Coach's Tool Kit based on the player's needs.
Length:	Amount of time spent within the interaction allows for maximum play time
Outcome	Players experience success and use mistakes as meaningful learning opportunities.









## WARMING UP & COOLING DOWN

Warm-ups and cool-downs are essential for youth soccer teams as they help prepare the body for physical activity and aid in recovery afterward.

A proper warm-up increases blood flow, enhances flexibility, and activates muscles, reducing the risk of injuries such as strains or sprains. It also helps young players mentally focus and transition into game mode.

Similarly, cooling down after a game or practice aids in gradually lowering the heart rate, reducing muscle stiffness, and preventing soreness, which is vital for recovery and long-term performance. Incorporating these routines fosters healthy habits and ensures players can perform at their best while minimizing the risk of injury.

Below is a simple infographic to help you understand the importance of warming up and cooling down.

<h3>WARMING UP</h3> <p>WHY?</p> <div>    </div>	<h3>COOLING DOWN</h3> <p>WHY?</p> <div>    </div>
<div> <p>Prevent Injury</p> <p>Get Focused on the Game</p> <p>Increases Heart Rate</p> </div>	<div> <p>Reflect on the Game</p> <p>Speed Up Recovery</p> <p>Decreases Heart Rate</p> </div>
<h4>HOW TO WARM UP?</h4> <p><b>INCREASE HEART RATE</b> Increase your heart rate through running and completing specific warm up drills and exercises.</p> <p><b>STRETCHING</b> Stretching is vitally important as it massively reduces the risk of pulling muscles and getting injured</p> <p><b>FOCUSING</b> Start to focus on the game ahead and think about the basics you need to do within your role. Also, try and visualize how you can positively impact the game.</p>	<h4>HOW TO COOL DOWN?</h4> <p><b>DECREASE HEART RATE</b> Decrease your heart rate through walking, jogging, and completing some light stretches.</p> <p><b>REFLECTION</b> Give yourself time to think about how you performed in the game.</p> <p><b>SPEED UP RECOVERY</b> Use static stretches to reduce soreness in your muscles. Also, make sure you are eating and drinking the correct things in the hours after the game.</p>



## COACHING EQUIPMENT

Here's a comprehensive list of what a youth soccer coach will need for the season:

- Team Practice Cones - For games and creating boundaries
- Training Pinnies or Jerseys - To differentiate teams during practice
- Soccer Balls - Multiple size 3, 4 or 5 for drills and matches
- First Aid Kit - Bandages, antiseptic wipes, ice packs, etc.
- Clipboard or Coach's Notebook - For schedules, games, and notes
- Pens/Pencils and Markers - For marking formations or notes
- Stopwatch or timer - For managing practice time and organizing games
- Whistle - For signaling during practice and games
- Water Jug or Cooler - For players to stay hydrated during practices
- Scoreboard or Scoring Sheet - To track game progress
- Team Rosters and Player Contact Info - For communication and organization
- Picnic or Lawn Chairs - For supervising during games
- Sun Protection - Sunscreen, hats, or visors
- Optional Items - Portable speaker for music, training ladders, agility poles etc
- Coaching Bag - For storing all that fun stuff
- Extra gear - Tape for making numbers on shirts, GK gloves, socks and shin pads.

These can all be found at [soccer.com](http://soccer.com) or ask your AGD for support.



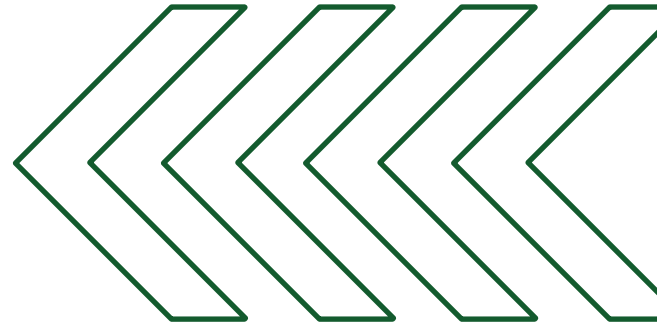
## Chapter 4

# GAME MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY

### Chapter 4

#### GAME MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY
















- Managing Games
- Systems of Play
- Attacking and Defensive Principles
- Basic Tactics
- Player Roles
- Managing Lopsided Games





# MANAGING GAMES

Managing a youth soccer game effectively requires preparation, adaptability, and reflection. Coaches need to focus on the players' development, enjoyment, and well-being while ensuring the game runs smoothly. Here's a breakdown of what a coach should know about managing a game before, during, and after:

BEFORE THE GAME	DURING THE GAME	AFTER THE GAME
 Communicate date, time and provide transport details if needed	 Set an example by your enthusiasm, encouragement and positive support	 Always put the game (win, loss, tie) into perspective for the players
 Reminder players what equipment to bring	 Ensure a solid rotation of players substituting in and out	 Check the field to make sure no belongings or trash has been left
 Check field for safety issues and rectify	 Focus coaching/feedback on what principals were emphasized	 Thank the ref and opposing coach regardless of the outcome
 Introduce yourself to the ref and opposing coach	 Do not overcoach or joystick – stay calm at all times!	 Inform the players about the next practice or game
 Set line up and key coaching points for the game		 Keep the ride home positive – it's not a teachable moment
 Get the team physically and mentally ready for the game		

## Before The Game:

### Preparation

- **Know the Rules.** Familiarize yourself with the league's rules and regulations, including game format, substitution policies, and any specific youth guidelines.
- **Plan Lineups and Rotations.** Create a lineup that ensures all players get fair playing time and are rotated through different positions for development. Select captains for the coin toss. It's best to rotate starters, we don't want children to feel like bench players.
- **Prepare Equipment.** Ensure all necessary items (balls, cones, corner flags, pinnies, first aid kit, etc.) are ready and in good condition.
- **Safety.** If it's a home game, check the field for safety concerns (e.g., glass, broken goal posts, holes in the field, etc.).
- **Introductions.** Introduce yourself to the ref and opposing coach, start the game off by setting the highest standard for sportsmanship and respect.

### Team Warm-Up



- **Warm Up.** Lead a structured warm-up session that includes dynamic stretching, light cardio, and ball-related drills.
- **Key Points.** Reinforce key tactical or technical points (e.g., defensive shape, offensive movement) in the warm-up.

### Pre-Game Talk

- **Set Clear Goals.** Focus on effort, teamwork, and specific areas of improvement rather than just winning.
- **Encourage a Positive Mindset.** Remind players to enjoy the game, support each other, and show good sportsmanship. Children usually enjoy a team cheer before taking the field. This is a good time to let the players decide what to cheer. Just use veto power if they choose something offensive!
- **Simplify Instructions.** Emphasize one or two key focus points to avoid overwhelming the players.

### During The Game:

#### Game Management

- **Observe and Adapt.** Assess how the team is performing and adjust tactics or positions as needed. Stay calm and avoid overreacting to mistakes or setbacks. Stay Composed: Your demeanor as a coach sets the tone for the team. Stay positive, calm, and supportive.
- **Make Substitutions Thoughtfully.** Rotate players fairly to balance development and competitiveness. Ensure all players have equal time on the field to gain experience.
- **Communicate Effectively.** Give clear, concise instructions from the sideline without over-coaching. **Allow players to make their own decisions and learn through the game.** Some coaches feel that they have to "coach" (meaning be vocal). This is not true. We much prefer a coach to say nothing than too much to where it infringes on the positive environment we want for our children.
- **Halftime Team Talk.** Ask them what the team did well and what they should focus on in the second half. Their thoughts will surprise you! You can point out some of the positives you noticed in the first half as well. Keep it simple, 1-2 key points is all they will remember.

#### Encourage and Motivate

- **Stay Positive.** Provide positive reinforcement for effort, teamwork, and improvement.
- **Stay Positive.** Avoid focusing on mistakes; instead, give constructive feedback to help players learn and grow once they are off the field, not during their game time.
- **Stay Positive.** Keep the sideline atmosphere supportive and fun, cheering appropriately without excessive pressure.

#### Maintain Sportsmanship

- **Respect.** Promote respect for referees, opponents, and teammates. Don't worry about the referees. They are sure to make calls you don't like. Forget about it. Nothing good will come of yelling at the refs. Even if a call costs your team a game, it's not a big deal in the scheme of what we are trying to accomplish as an organization.
- **Issues.** Address any unsportsmanlike behavior immediately, setting an example for fair play.



## After The Game:

### Post-Game Talk

- **Debrief Positively.** Highlight what the team did well, both individually and collectively.
- **Constructive Feedback.** Address areas for improvement without assigning blame. Focus on learning opportunities. Refrain from having a talk about what the team did wrong. We don't want them leaving the field feeling dejected. Mention a few quick positives or don't say anything about the team's performance.
- **Celebrate Effort.** Reinforce the importance of effort, teamwork, and having fun over the outcome. Ensure the players leave the field feeling proud and excited to return for the next game.

### Encourage Recovery

- **Recovery.** Advise players to hydrate, stretch, and rest to recover properly.
- **Issues.** Address any injuries immediately and communicate with parents about necessary follow-ups.
- **Questions.** Be available to answer any questions and provide feedback to players who seek advice.

### Reflect and Plan

- **Reflect.** Reflect on your coaching decisions and the team's performance. Identify what worked and what could be adjusted for future games. Winning is secondary to fostering a love for the game and building players' confidence.
- **Plan.** Prepare for the next training session by addressing key takeaways from the game.
- **Thank-You.** Ensure you and every player on your team thank the referee, regardless of the outcome of the game.

By managing the game thoughtfully before, during, and after, coaches can create an environment where players feel supported, grow in their skills, and develop a lifelong passion for soccer.



*Kids love play - Lets let them*





## SYSTEMS & STYLES OF PLAY

System of play, sometimes referred to as a 'formation', is a tool we can use to identify areas of the field players should occupy and their roles and responsibilities in each of these positions according to your principles of play.

Style of play refers to your approach to the game as it pertains to your soccer philosophy, and primarily what the actions of the players within the game will be when on and off the ball.



There are many systems and styles of play, each with their own benefits and drawbacks. You may choose a specific method based on many factors like the age group, the skill level, the specific players on a team, the opponent, or even the field type of weather.

For each group we have outlined many of the popular systems, highlighting the overall description of the system, how it can be adapted as you transition to larger teams in older age groups and a simple pro/cons list for each. This detailed document can be found here:

### HYS Systems of Play

Below is an example of one system per age group, which is the HYS preferred systems, as it coaches natural progressions, but coaches have full autonomy to adapt as they see fit.



## U6/U8 – 4v4 System of Play

**1-2-1 or 1-2-1 with a GK** - For these small-sided games, a diamond formation (1-2-1) is generally recommended. This formation provides balance between defense and attack, while also maintaining an outright striker and a player to stay at the back so good for all round learning to take players to the next stage. The U8 system is the same but with the inclusion of a goalkeeper.

### Pros

- Clear roles and responsibilities.
- Offers balance in depth and width.
- Helps naturally coach principles of offense and defense.
- Can adapt quickly to 3 in defense or 3 in offense.

### Cons

- Offers up the center of the field to the opposition.
- Wide players need to be very mobile.
- Players at this level tend to prefer attack – requires discipline of midfield players to work on offense and defense.



4V4 OR 5V5 1-2-1

## U10 – 7v7 System of Play

**1-2-3-1** – The 2-3-1 is the most classic 7v7 formation. It offers fantastic balance in any team and is incredibly easy for young players to grasp. Two defenders being helped by three hard-working midfielders offers plenty of support at the back without overloading defensive areas. A lone striker is often supported by a central midfielder.

This system can adapt quickly to a 4-1-1 when the wide midfield players drop back to support the defense, or a 2-1-3 when they go forward.



### Pros

- Attack-minded and possession oriented.
- Achieves fantastic balance in both wide and central areas, defense and attack.
- Every player has a clearly defined role.
- Creates lots of opportunities for goals.
- Supports the start of a back 4 system.

### Cons

- If defenders play too far apart, a massive gap is left in the center of defense.
- Midfielders are required to be non-stop runners and help in both attack and defense.
- Forwards can become isolated if opposition midfield shuts down central areas.



7v7 2-3-1

## U12 – 9v9 System of Play

**1-4-3-1.** The 4-3-1 is one of the best formations to get team used to playing 11v11 soccer because of the standard back 4. 9v9 might be the best time to introduce the arc of the back-four and get teams thinking about the notion that defense is the best form of attack. Although it is somewhat defensive on paper and requires your team to have the necessary defensive personnel, a fantastic balance can still be achieved.

### Pros

- Effective for wing play, right/left defenders can push high and take the ball up the field without apprehension about who might cover them.
- Teaches players how to play in a 4-defense system very early in their development.
- Effective for keeping clean sheets.

### Cons

- Midfielders need to quickly learn that they have an integral role in supporting the striker in attack. If there's no support, the striker will become extremely isolated.
- Can become overly defensive if outside defenders or central midfielder show no attacking prowess or become static.
- With an extra player in defense, you always have at least one less player joining attacks.



9v9 4-3-1



## U12 – 9v9 System of Play - Alternative

**1-3-1-3-1.** The 3-1-3-1 incorporates one goalkeeper, three defenders, one defensive midfielder, a trio of attacking midfielders, and a striker. The obvious spaces in the formation are therefore in the half-spaces between the defensive and central attacking midfielder, requiring both to put a shift in to cover those spaces out of possession.

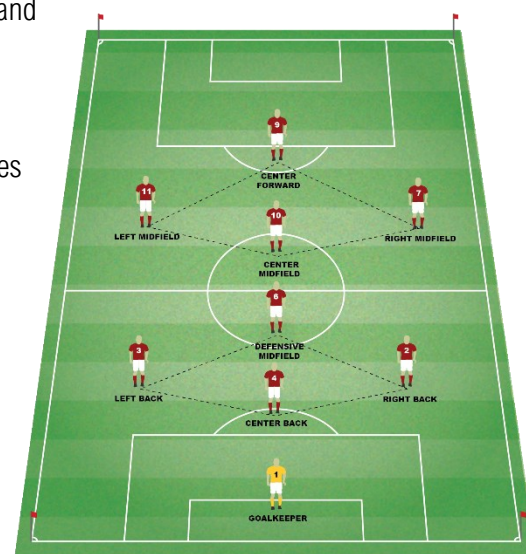
More positively, the formation is well set up to cover both wide and central channels if players hold positional discipline and incorporates a natural pressing diamond up front. It therefore becomes easier to teach young players all about their specific role in a team within the 3-1-3-1, through clearly defined roles and positions.

### Pros

- Excellent control through the central locations both in defense and midfield.
- Offers a flexible attack through midfield rotation.
- Naturally leads to a high press with attacking players.
- Good for player development with clear roles and responsibilities and transition to the 4-3-3 at 11v11.

### Cons

- Exposed wide areas/flanks with only three defenders can be vulnerable to quick wingers.
- Requires a very disciplined defensive midfielder player who needs to cover a lot of ground.
- Congested central areas are possible if players don't have positional discipline.
- Requires a higher tactical awareness both offensively and defensively.



9v9 3-1-3-1



## U14 + – 11v11 System Of Play

**1-4-3-3.** The 4-3-3, four defensive players, three midfield players, and three forwards, is another variation that emphasizes attacking soccer. The key to the 4-3-3 formation is the attacking players' width and their ability to exploit space outside the defense. While on the attack, the 4-3-3 allows attacking with at least 6-7 players. On the flip side, when attacking, the defensive side of the field is left vulnerable.

### Pros

- Provides natural triangles for keeping possession.
- Allows players to understand the use of space and playing wide and naturally provides moments for creativity and adaptability.
- Teaches fullbacks to get forward while most utilize the formation for its attacking potential.

### Cons

- Leaves a lot of open space between the fullbacks and the left and right forwards.
- Front three often do not do a lot of defending which places more pressure on the midfield three.
- Only with very defensive-minded fullbacks and a top-quality defensive midfielder who can cover a lot of ground could a team be very successful in a 4-3-3 without being possession-based.



11v11 4-3-3

There are many systems of play and choosing the right one is a complex decision based on a variety of factors, for a more comprehensive view of the systems available [click here](#).



# ATTACKING & DEFENDING PRINCIPLES

The principles of attacking and defending in a game are fundamental strategies that teams use to adapt tactically. These principles are used to help evaluate player performance and achieve the desired outcome.

There are five commonly used principles of attacking and defending as well as transitional principles

## PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

### ATTACKING DEFENDING

#### PENETRATION

Moving the ball up the field. Play through or in behind gaps left the defensive team.

#### PRESSURE

The defender closest to the ball closes the space to delay and potentially win the ball.

#### SUPPORT

Offer support to the teammate with the ball at good angles and distance.

#### COVER

Cover the first defender at a good angle and distance to recover the ball or prevent attacks.

#### DEPTH & WIDTH

Make the field as large as possible by staying wide and deep to create space and options.

#### COMPACTNESS

Stay close and connected to prevent penetration and attacks through the middle.

#### MOBILITY

Movement on and off the ball to create and find space or to create a numerical advantage to exploit the opposition.

#### BALANCE

Providing adequate numerical advantage when defending to delay the opponent and eventually regain possession.

#### CREATIVITY

This is how and when to take calculated risks to surprise the defense.

#### COUNTERATTACK

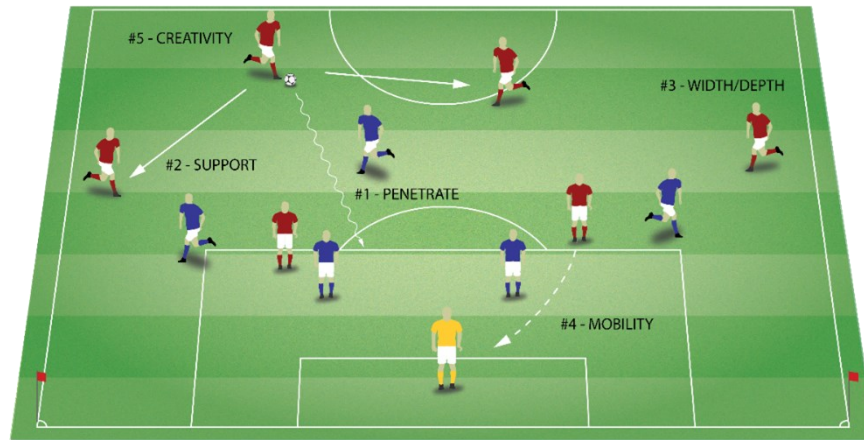
Turning defense into offense through quick transitions and overloads.





## Principles of Attack

The principles of attack guide a team's approach to breaking down the opposition's defense, creating opportunities, and scoring goals.



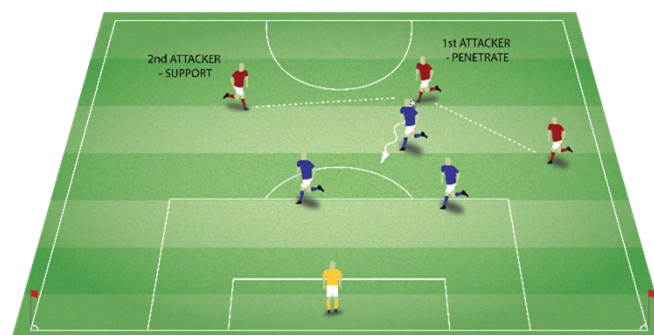
*Attacking Principles of Play*

### #1 - Penetration

- **Definition.** The ability to move the ball forward to create goal-scoring opportunities.
- **Execution.** Players look to bypass defenders through passing, dribbling, or shooting. This could mean a direct run at goal, a through-ball, splitting the defense, or a long-range shot.
- **Importance.** Penetration is the primary goal of attacking play and the first step to unbalancing the opposing defense.

### #2 - Support

- **Definition:** Ensuring players off the ball are positioned to provide passing options to the player in possession.
- **Execution:** Supporting players position themselves at varying angles and distances to ensure the ball carrier can retain possession and move the attack forward. This includes lateral and backward support if forward options are limited.
- **Importance:** Good support allows a team to maintain possession under pressure and continue building the attack.



*Penetration & Support*





### #3 – Width & Depth

- **Definition:** Spreading the attacking play across the field to stretch the defense and create space.
- **Execution:** Wingers or fullbacks push out wide to force defenders to cover more ground, opening up gaps in the center or on the opposite flanks.
- **Importance:** Width prevents defenses from clustering around the ball and makes it easier to penetrate the defensive line.

### #4 – Mobility

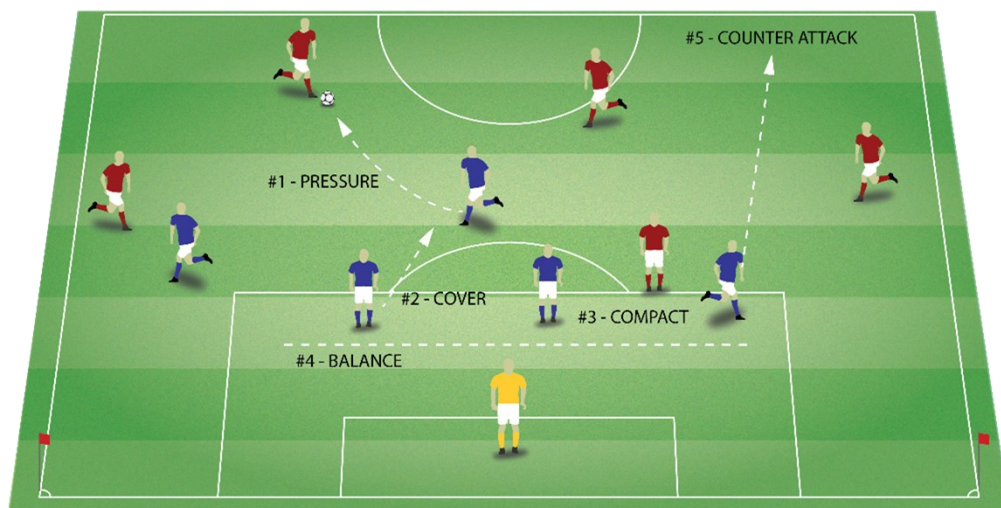
- **Definition:** Dynamic movement from attacking players to unsettle defenders and create spaces.
- **Execution:** Players make off-the-ball runs, overlaps, diagonal movements, or even deceptive runs to draw defenders out of position.
- **Importance:** Mobility creates confusion among defenders, making it harder for them to stay organized and easier for attackers to exploit gaps.

### #5 – Creativity

- **Definition:** The use of unpredictable, innovative plays to break through defensive lines.
- **Execution:** Players rely on individual flair (e.g., dribbling, feints, and skill moves) or team-based improvisation, like unexpected passes, combinations, or patterns.
- **Importance:** Creativity is crucial for overcoming compact defenses and finding unexpected solutions to score goals.

## Principles of Defense

The principles of defense focus on regaining possession, neutralizing threats, and maintaining team structure. The five key principles are:



*Defending Principles of Play*

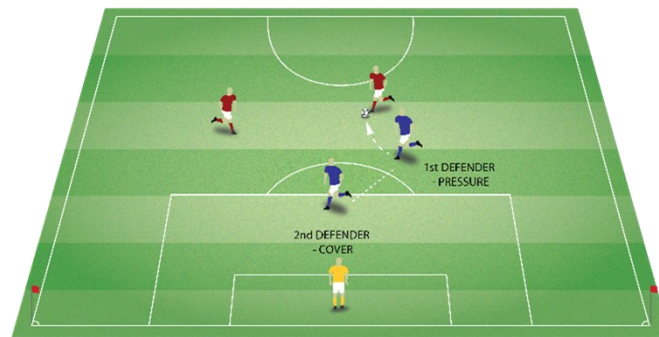


## #1 - Pressure

- **Definition:** Slowing down the opposition's attack to allow the defending team to regroup.
- **Execution:** A defender closes down the ball carrier, forcing them to stop, pass backward, or move laterally. This gives teammates time to organize behind the ball.
- **Importance:** Pressure delays or prevents the attacking team from gaining momentum and creates opportunities to disrupt their play.

## #2 - Cover

- **Definition:** Maintaining a layered defensive structure to provide coverage behind the first line of defense.
- **Execution:** Defenders position themselves at different depths to protect key areas, ensuring there is always backup if the first line is bypassed.
- **Importance:** Cover ensures defensive solidity and prevents attackers from breaking through easily.



*Pressure & Cover*

## #3 - Balance

- **Definition:** Preventing the attacking team from exploiting spaces left open by the defense.
- **Execution:** While some defenders pressure the ball, others maintain a balanced shape by covering vulnerable areas, such as the weak side or the middle.
- **Importance:** Balance ensures that a team is not overcommitted to one side or area, maintaining stability in case of quick transitions.

## #4 - Compactness

- **Definition:** Reducing the spaces between defenders and midfielders to minimize gaps attackers can exploit.
- **Execution:** Players close down spaces in central areas and limit passing lanes, forcing attackers to play wide or backward.
- **Importance:** Compactness makes it difficult for attackers to penetrate through the middle and maintains defensive integrity.

## #5 – Counter Attacking

- **Definition:** Converting defensive phase of play quickly into attacking phases once possession of the ball is regained.



- **Execution:** Defenders quickly transition to attackers once the ball is in possession exploiting the overload of opposing players in the attacking third.
- **Importance:** Counter attacking soccer can become a critical strategy and create many goal scoring opportunities, especially if the teams are mis-matched from a skill perspective.

One additional principle which is more frequently adopted in European soccer styles and systems is **composure and control**. This is where players exercise patience and discipline to avoid unnecessary fouls or over-committing in challenges. It is also used to let the play develop and avoid release the ball too early. Players stay calm, ensuring they maintain position and composure rather than diving into tackles, losing their shape or release the ball too quickly. Composure prevents giving away dangerous free kicks or creating opportunities for attackers through poor decision-making and allows a picture of the attacking field develop.



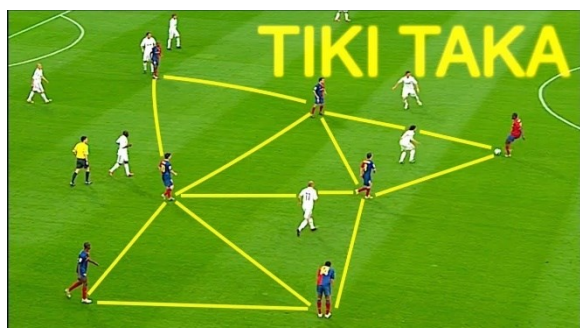
## BASIC TACTICS

Whilst as coaches we are mostly focused on technical skills, the following tactics are good for the players to learn and can help your team win! Don't try to introduce these all at once or push the children hard to learn them.

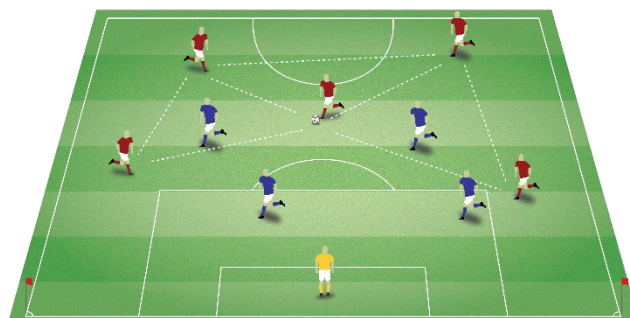
Remember that tactics, just like technical skills need to be introduced at the right time from an age and development perspective, consult the player development guidelines to ensure you are introducing the right concepts at the right time. Some of these concepts are only appropriate for advanced U14+ teams but some can apply to all ages and levels.

### Tiki-Taka

Tiki-taka is a style of play that focuses on possession play, quick passing, and good movement off the ball, overwhelming opponents in the midfield and leaving them scrambling to regain control. This style of play was popularized by teams like Pep Guardiola's Barcelona and the Spanish National Team 2008-2012.



*Tiki-Taka*



*Tiki-Taka*

The key to being successful at tiki-taka is having a strong midfield made up of technically gifted players who can not only keep possession of the ball in tight spaces but be constantly moving and linking up with other players by creating shapes on the field such as triangles and diamonds.

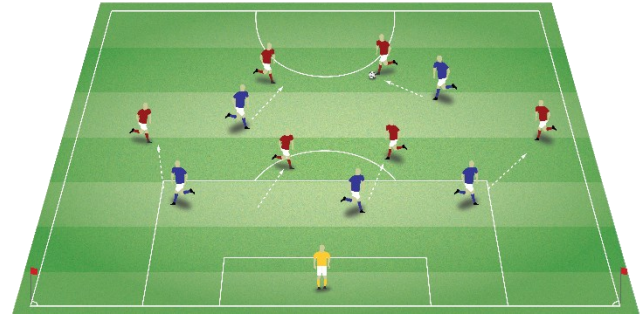
For tiki-taka to work you also need defenders who are good on the ball as well as a goalkeeper who can play as a sweeper-keeper. Although tiki-taka is not as popular as it used to be, teams that are able to master this style of play can become some of the most successful we see.

### The Press

The high press tactic is known for its aggressive approach where players without the ball apply intense pressure on opponents, usually in the opposing team's half, especially after just losing possession. The aim is simple: to force mistakes and quick decisions from the other side to regain control as fast as possible.



*High Press*



*High Press*

Teams that adopt this style can throw off their rivals' game plans while keeping a tight grip on possession. Success with the high press relies heavily on two things: fitness and teamwork.

Players need high stamina to keep up the intensity throughout the game, while coordinated teamwork ensures everyone knows their role and works together seamlessly. Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool team were a great example of a team successful in high pressing; they demonstrate both individual athleticism and superb team coordination, closing down spaces fast and applying relentless pressure.

## Long Balls

In the world of soccer tactics, the long ball game stands out as a classic strategy that can still be effective, despite newer more technically focused strategies emerging. A long pass, or a long ball, is all about going straight for the goal, skipping the midfield and catching the other team off guard.



*Long Ball*

To pull it off, the forward players need to be fast, strong, and great in the air, and they have to be on the same page as the midfielders. Even though possession-based play and high press tactics have taken the spotlight, the long ball still has its moments, especially against teams that are packed with midfield players.

It adds a whole new level of unpredictability, catching the entire team napping and creating chances out of





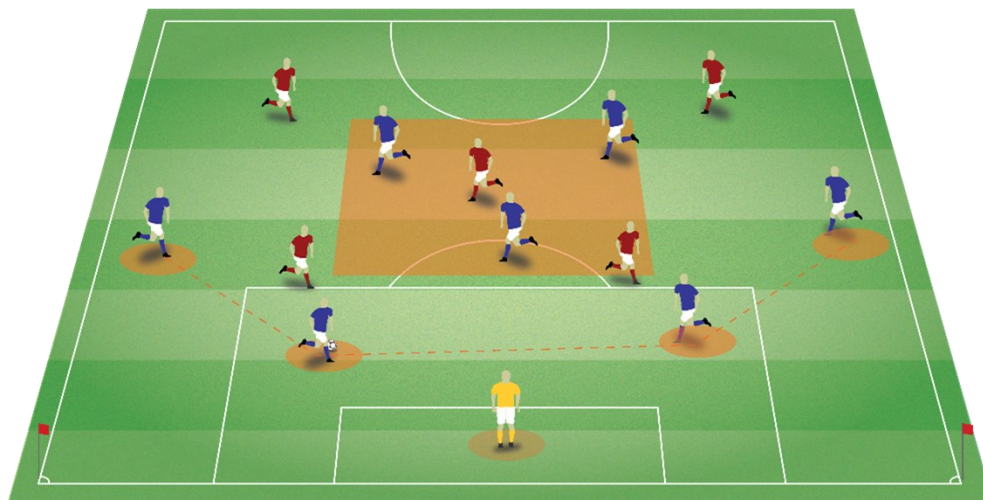
nowhere. However, teams can catch on if the opposing team is only playing long balls and will adjust accordingly so it is also smart to not overdo this tactic.

## Building Out from the Back

Building out from the back in soccer is a tactical approach that emphasizes maintaining possession and initiating attacks from the defensive third of the field. Instead of resorting to long, speculative passes, players use short, controlled passes to advance the ball methodically.

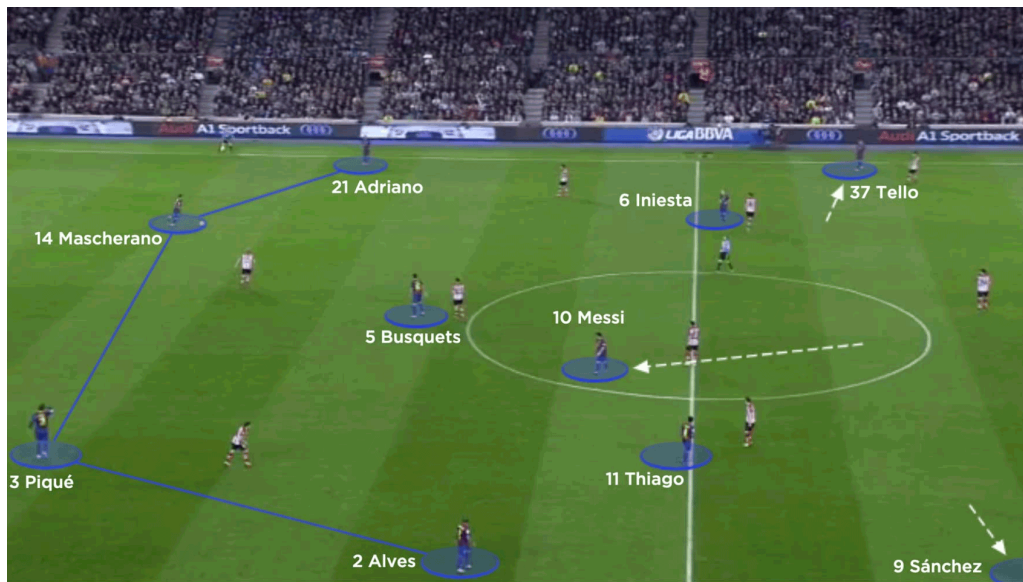
This strategy requires defenders, goalkeepers, and midfielders to work cohesively, maintaining composure under pressure while creating passing lanes and angles to move the ball forward. The goal is to retain possession, dictate the tempo of the game, and build opportunities for attack while limiting turnovers in dangerous areas.

This style of play offers several advantages. By starting from the back, teams can draw the opposition forward, creating spaces in the midfield or higher up the pitch. It also promotes player development, as it demands technical precision, awareness, and effective communication. Building out from the back allows defenders and goalkeepers to refine their passing skills, decision-making, and ability to manage pressure, while midfielders improve their positioning and link-up play. Teams adopting this strategy must train regularly to ensure proper spacing, movement off the ball, and an understanding of how to handle pressing opponents.



*Building Out From the Back*

However, building out from the back carries risks, particularly when players lose possession close to their goal. To succeed, teams need a clear tactical plan and players who are confident and capable on the ball. Coaches must instill trust and patience while preparing players to handle mistakes constructively. With proper execution, building out from the back not only contributes to a possession-based style of play but also creates a solid foundation for transitions, creativity, and offensive success throughout the game.



*Building Out From the Back*

## Parking the Bus

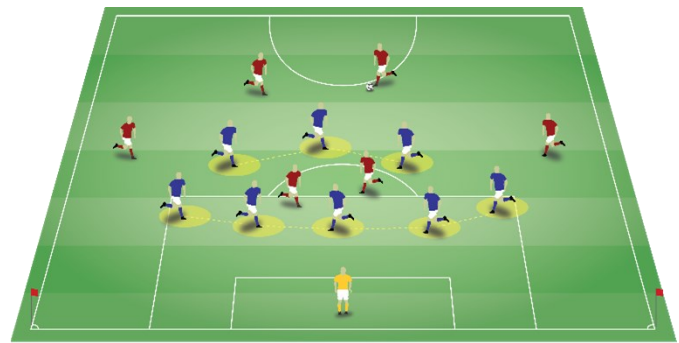
“Parking the bus” is one of the most, if not the most, popular defensive tactics that was popularized by Diego Simeone’s Atletico Madrid and Jose Mourinho on various occasions. This tactic prioritizes preventing goals over scoring them, often leading to low-scoring matches but increasing the likelihood of securing at least one point.

To successfully use this tactic you need defensive minded teams with strong defensive lines that ideally play in a 4-5-1 formation. With four defenders forming the defensive line and five midfielders providing cover and support, the team maintains a compact shape, making it challenging for opponents to penetrate through the middle.

This tactic is often labeled as “anti-football” because it is not the most exciting to watch, however it can be very successful when it is executed correctly. This strategy does not need to be applied over the entire season but can be used when dealing with particularly strong attacking teams or if your own team roster is challenged.



*Parking the Bus*



*Parking the Bus*





## Counter Attacking

Counterattacking is one of the most useful offensive tactics utilized by successful teams like Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool, demonstrating its effectiveness in turning a defensive situation into an unpredictable counterattack. This strategy demands players to retreat deep during defensive phases and get the ball forward to the attacking players as fast as possible as soon as they win the ball from the opposing team.

The key to successful counterattacks is speed, both physical and mental, enabling players to outpace opponents and make quick decisions under pressure, crucial for capitalizing on scoring opportunities. Making accurate passes is also very important because a bad pass can slow down or completely stop the counterattack.

Klopp's Liverpool team is a team that has mastered this approach, often employing pressing to regain possession immediately after losing it, catching opponents off guard and creating scoring chances.

## Total Football

Total Football is a tactical philosophy where players have the freedom to interchange positions during a game, creating fluid and dynamic movement. Originating in the Netherlands and popularized by coach Rinus Michels and players like Johan Cruyff in the 1970s, it emphasizes teamwork, adaptability, and technical skill.

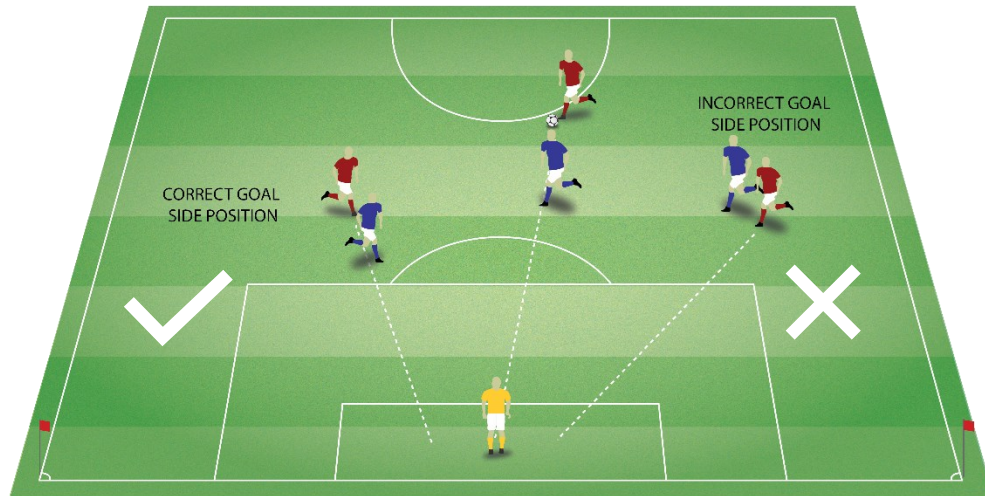
In Total Football, every player must be versatile, able to attack, defend, and adjust their role as the game demands, ensuring the team maintains balance and control. The approach focuses on maintaining possession, pressing the opponent, and creating space to exploit through constant movement and positional awareness.

## Getting Compact and "Ball Side" and "Goal Side"

Goal side in soccer refers to the defensive positioning of a player in relation to the opponent they are marking and the goal they are defending. To be "goal side" means the defender positions themselves closer to their own goal than the opponent. This ensures the defender is between the attacker and the goal, making it harder for the attacker to receive the ball, take a shot, or make a dangerous play.



Being goal side is a fundamental defensive principle. It helps prevent attackers from gaining an advantageous position and reduces the likelihood of conceding a goal. Maintaining goal-side positioning requires awareness of the ball, the opponent's movement, and the goal's location at all times.



*Goal Side*



# PLAYER ROLES

In soccer, every player on the field has a unique and vital role to play, contributing to the overall success of the team. Understanding these roles, whether as a defender, midfielder, forward, or goalkeeper, is essential for both individual development and team dynamics. Each position requires different skills, responsibilities, and decision-making, and coaches must help players recognize how their strengths and abilities can be best utilized within the team's strategy.

This section will explore the various roles on the soccer field, providing insights on how to coach players in these positions, promote teamwork, and ensure that each player understands their contribution to the game.

## #1 – Goalkeeper

### In Possession

- Distribute effectively - try to play short to defenders or kick early with pace.
- Be an option when defenders are in possession.
- Communicate with outfield players. Early decisions and clear, purposeful instructions.

### Out of Possession

- Starting position relative to the position of the ball and in line with the ball.
- Sweeper/keeper when the defense pushes up.
- Shot stopping - ready position, decision whether to catch/parry or punch. React to 2nd chances.



**11V11 4-4-2 DIAMOND**



## #4 & #5 – Central Backs/Defenders

### In Possession

- Be prepared to receive the ball from the goalkeeper.
- Try to play angled passes behind the opposition. Play sharp, quick passes to full backs & midfield.
- Attack aerial balls with power, purpose & timing.

### Out of Possession

- Recognize when to follow opponents short and when to hold your position.
- Be comfortable playing 1v1 and 2v2, practice marking goal-side and ball side.
- When full backs show wide, move deep and centrally to defend crosses.



11V11 4-4-2 DIAMOND

## #2 & #3 – Full Backs

### In Possession

- Try to get on the ball from the Goalkeeper.
- Recognize when to get forward to support the attacking play and when to stay back.
- Look for forward passes which break lines.
- Recognize when to come inside with or to receive the ball.

### Out of Possession

- Try to be close enough to the opposition wide player to pressure their first touch.
- Try to show opponents inside until level with the penalty box, then show down the line.
- Look to take quick throw-ins on your side of the pitch.



11V11 4-4-2 DIAMOND



## #6 – Holding /Defensive Midfielder

### In Possession

- Try to release wide midfield players with passes which break lines.
- Try to get on the ball from the GK and defenders. Play forwards quickly when possible.
- Encourage attacking midfielders to support when playing into forwards.

### Out of Possession

- Drop in as a supplementary CB if they are pulled wide.
- Provide a defensive screen, block balls into striker's feet or steal from the front.
- Be close enough to defenders to pick up second balls.



11v11 4-4-2 DIAMOND

## #7 & #11 – Wide Midfielders/Attackers

### In Possession

- Play high against the opposition full backs and threaten the space behind.
- Provide accurate crosses when high up the pitch.
- Work across the forward line to support the CF & disrupt the defensive line.
- Recognize when to dribble or play quick combinations.

### Out of Possession

- Provide defensive cover in wide areas, pin the FB back.
- Stop opposition crosses.
- Track wide players.



11v11 4-4-2 DIAMOND





## #8 & #10 – Central Midfielders

### In Possession

- Try to play quick combinations in midfield.
- Link play from back to front and support forwards quickly. Recognize when to support beyond the strikers/forwards.
- Try to slide passes between the defenders to create chances.
- Score goals.

### Out of Possession

- Play a high-pressure game in midfield, try to intercept passes.
- Break up the opposition play.
- Try to force the opposition to play wide or backwards.



11V11 4-4-2 DIAMOND

## #9 – Center Forward/Striker

### In Possession

- Recognize when to shoot with power & precision.
- Show for passes into feet and receive on the half turn.
- When play is developing in wide areas, find space between defenders to attack crosses.
- Score Goals.

### Out of Possession

- Force the CB to play risky passes.
- Try to make play predictable.
- Try to prevent the ball going into midfield & win the ball from the "wrong side".



11V11 4-4-2 DIAMOND



## MANAGING LOPSIDED GAMES

It's not uncommon for some games during a season to be lopsided, with one team significantly outmatching the other. Despite our best efforts and those of the league to create balanced teams, these situations can still arise. This document aims to provide our coaches with tips and resources for managing such games.

Our primary goal is to ensure a challenging and developmentally appropriate level of competition for all players. Excessive scoring doesn't reflect this development.



Additionally, teams facing heavy defeats may feel deflated or embarrassed, which can hinder their motivation to improve. Below are some strategies for addressing both sides of this issue.

### #1 – Shore Up Your Defense

These strategies aim to minimize the number of goals conceded, which may come at the expense of your team's scoring chances and the likelihood of a positive result. However, they will help make the game more competitive overall

- **Adopt a more defensive system of play.** For U8, use a 2-1-1 formation instead of a 1-2-1. For U10, consider a 3-2-1; for U12, a 4-3-1; and for U14 and above, a 5-3-2. This approach will help manage the number of goals conceded. For more information on formations.
- **Position stronger players strategically.** Place some of your stronger players in central positions (center midfield and center defense) where the greatest threats are likely to come from.
- **Force opponent attacks to the outside.** Aim to direct your opponents' attacks toward the wings. While this may lead to more crosses and wing plays, it can help eliminate easy scoring opportunities through the middle.





Ultimately, the opportunities to manage a game where you're conceding a lot of goals are limited. Playing your strongest players for extended minutes at the expense of weaker ones isn't fair. The best chance to make the game competitive often relies on cooperation from the opposing coach.

## #2 – Make Scoring Harder

When the score starts to escalate, especially early in the game, it's important to implement conditions right away to prevent a large goal deficit. Here are some strategies that not only make scoring more challenging but also enhance player development and increase the level of competition.

- **Limit scoring to the non-dominant foot.** Players can only score using their non-dominant foot.
- **Apply shooting restrictions.** Players must shoot from outside the 18-yard box or can only shoot from inside the 6-yard box.
- **Set specific scoring conditions.** Goals can only be scored through specific actions, such as heading (if allowed), volleys, or directly from a pass.
- **Reduce the number of players allowed to score.** Ensure that every new scorer is a different player and that no player scores twice.
- **Use alternative targets.** If necessary, designate different targets besides the goal, such as a sign behind the goal, the coach's bag, or the side netting, these can all help practice shooting without actually scoring.

Making scoring more difficult is the easiest way to prevent a runaway score. However, if the opposing team is significantly weaker, this approach alone may not be sufficient to avoid a lopsided game.

## #3 – Apply New Goals

It's equally important to have strategies beyond just making scoring more difficult. In many cases, these additional approaches can be more effective and beneficial from a development standpoint. Here are some holistic strategies to consider.

- **Change your system of play or formation.** Use this opportunity to experiment with a new system that emphasizes possession and balance over attacking and scoring.
- **Switch player roles.** Play your most defensive players in offensive positions and vice versa. This allows players to learn new roles while helping manage the competitiveness of the game.
- **Reduce the number of players.** Consider removing players and playing down. While this is a more extreme strategy and can disrupt your system and development goals, it can effectively balance



the game. You can always add players back in (with the referee's permission) if needed.

- **Implement a passing requirement.** Introduce a rule where the team must make a certain number of passes before they can shoot. Start with three passes, then increase to five, or require that the whole team must touch the ball before attempting a shot.
- **Adopt a two-touch rule.** Allow each player only two touches of the ball. After their second touch, they must wait for an opponent or teammate to touch the ball before they can play it again.
- **Reset with the goalkeeper.** Require the team to play the ball back to the goalkeeper before each attack. If the attack breaks down, they must reset with the goalie.

These strategies can be very effective in managing lopsided games, challenging the team in new ways while limiting scoring. However, they can be complex to implement on the fly, so it's crucial to have a plan in place before the score escalates—see #4.

## #4 – Don't Embarrass the Losing Team

All of the strategies mentioned above should be introduced subtly. Simply shouting “stop scoring” or “play keep away” can be humiliating for the opposing team. It's important to communicate these instructions quietly, perhaps using substitutions or a trigger word. Here are some additional important considerations.

- **Implement strategies early.** Don't wait until the score reaches 7-0 to start applying these strategies. Doing so eliminates all the “Making Scoring Harder” options. Begin implementing them at 3-0 or 4-0, or even earlier if you notice an uneven matchup.
- **Have a plan in place.** With many ideas outlined in this document, it's crucial to have a proactive plan. Discuss strategies with your team at the beginning of the season or game to ensure everyone knows what to expect if adjustments are needed.
- **Communicate your plan clearly.** Make sure the team understands how you will communicate the implementation of these strategies—whether it's at a specific goal differential, using a key word, or through messages during substitutions. Avoid any yelling or shouting methods to maintain a positive atmosphere.

Winning or losing by a significant margin is neither enjoyable nor developmentally beneficial, and it reflects poorly on sportsmanship. Having a plan in place ahead of time is essential for ensuring a positive experience for everyone involved.



## Final Thoughts

All the suggestions in this document aim to enhance player development while fostering a positive sportsmanship environment for everyone on the field.

We recognize that there are many strategies here, but it can be challenging to limit scoring when there's a significant skill imbalance, particularly for younger players who may not fully grasp the implications. We also want to emphasize that scoring isn't inherently bad. Do your best to create a plan, implement it thoughtfully, and approach the situation with humility.

Lastly, remember the bigger picture. Youth soccer coaches, referees, and parents all share the responsibility of creating a positive experience for every player. When situations become challenging, collaborating with the opposing coach can help prevent misunderstandings and resolve issues. At the youth level, it's not just about winning or losing; it's about how the game is played that truly matters.



## Chapter 5

# COMMUNICATION

Chapter 5

### COMMUNICATION

Communication Throughout the Season  
Pre-Game, During the Game, Post Game  
Communicating With Parents





## COMMUNICATION THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

Effective communication throughout the soccer season is essential for keeping parents, players, and your coaching team informed and engaged. Here's a roadmap for how to communicate effectively at different stages of the season:

PRE-SEASON	DURING THE SEASON	POST SEASON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome E-Mail/Meeting</li> <li>• Set Expectations</li> <li>• Define Communication</li> <li>• Talk About Goals</li> <li>• Logistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Updates</li> <li>• Weekly Game/Practice Details</li> <li>• Conflict Resolution</li> <li>• HYS Concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank-You</li> <li>• Season Celebration</li> <li>• Evaluations</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Season Reminders</li> </ul>

### Pre-Season:

- **Welcome E-Mail/Meeting.** Host a 15 mins meeting or send details in an email introducing yourself, setting expectations, talking about how you would like communication to work, defining goals, and offering information about games and practices.
- **Set Expectations.** Setting expectations with players and parents is key to a strong team culture and a smooth season. How early do you expect players to turn up, what should they wear, if they must cancel what is the best way to get in touch, how should parents behave etc.
- **Define Communication.** It is important to define exactly how and what communication methods you plan to utilize early. Do you prefer texts, calls, e-mails or app messages? How do you want or plan for communication to flow between you and the parents/players? Are you using an app, if so which one, what if parents are not tech savvy?
- **Talk About Goals.** Key to getting on the same page with parents and players is to remind them of the team and individual goals, which almost never include how many wins you plan to get this season. Goals are focused on players being engaged, growing developmentally, solving problems, being part of a team etc.
- **Logistics.** Get into the details, uniform ordering, times, dates and locations for practices and games. Over communicate, send an overall schedule out at the start of the season and keep it updated.



## During The Season:

- **Weekly Recap/Update.** Send a weekly update via your defined communication channel recapping the last weeks game (stay positive), reminders folks of the schedule or any important dates coming up, shout out to any player or player efforts, tips for parents (articles, hydration, positive feedback). Keep this communication consistent to ensure players and parents read it.
- **Weekly Game/Practice Details.** Include specific information on the weeks game and practice details (include the topic). Include where and what time you expect players, what to bring, how long it takes to get there, parking instructions, filed number or location etc.
- **Conflict Resolution.** Ensure there is a communication channel for conflicts that come up, this could be play time issues, injuries, social challenges etc. Ensure this communication channel is clear or you will have angry parents coming over at full time which is the worst time to solve problems.
- **HYS Concerns.** If anything comes up with players, parents, officials, coaches, scores etc. and you feel you need support to manage or handle the issue do not hesitate to reach out. Even if the issue feels small, letting the HYS team know might be key to a long-term solution.



*Pre-Season Coach Player Meeting*

## After The Season:

- **Thank-You.** Please thank the players and parents for the season, regardless of how hard or successful it was, coaching children is a privilege and it's so important that they feel we are there for them.
- **Season Celebration.** Organize or get parents help in organizing a team celebration, this could be a



simple ice-cream or pizza party after the last game, it's certainly not mandatory but often a great idea to remind us all that soccer is about bringing people together to have fun.

- **Evaluations.** Depending on the age-group and level you coach, the HYS team may ask you to complete an evaluation for your team. This is intended to support us in ensuring that every player in our program maximizes their development and enjoyment by placing them on the best team the next season.
- **Feedback.** Some parents or players may ask for specific feedback from you as a coach, if you feel comfortable take some time, ideally after completing the evaluation, and offer some positives and areas for improvement. If you do not feel comfortable the HYS team can help.
- **Season Reminders.** The HYS team would love your help in promoting the players to come back next season and ensure they sign up for assessments, registration, camps, winter futsal etc.

By maintaining regular, consistent communication, you'll build trust with parents, keep everyone on the same page, and create a positive atmosphere for your team.





## GAME DAY, PRE-GAME AND POST GAME

Game day communication is so critical for the success of the team, not winning or losing the game, but how the game is played and how the team shows up. Balancing your own emotions with what's best for the team is challenging, our job as coaches is to prepare our teams for success and how you communicate on game day will, in part, create the environment for that success.

BEFORE THE GAME	DURING THE GAME	HALF TIME	AFTER THE GAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation</li> <li>• Roles &amp; Line Up</li> <li>• Key Focus Areas</li> <li>• Sportsmanship Reminder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask Questions</li> <li>• Simple Reminders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce Focus Areas</li> <li>• Ask Questions</li> <li>• Line Up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recap the Positives</li> <li>• Reminders About Next Game/Practice</li> </ul>

### Before The Game:

- **Formation/System.** Remind the team of the system, 4-3-3, 4-5-1 for example, its helpful to visualize this with cones or a whiteboard.
- **Roles and Starting Line-Up.** Ensure the team know who is playing where at the start of the game, make sure they know who the captains are for the pre-game coin toss.
- **Key Focus Areas.** Highlight the key 1-3 areas of focus for this game e.g. we need to be more aggressive, we need to take more shots, we need to hold on to the ball better etc.
- **Sportsmanship Reminder.** Remind the team that they are representing the town of Holden, their team and themselves on and off the fields, maintain the highest level of sportsmanship is your expectation.

### During The Game:

- **Ask Questions.** If you have to coach, ask questions to engage their own problem solving skills e.g. how can we increase the intensity, how can we possess the ball more, can we shoot the ball earlier?
- **Simple Reminders.** STAY QUIET AND ENJOY THE GAME!!! This is your opportunity to sit back, watch and reflect. Ask yourself who is engaged, is the formation working, did the concepts at practice set in, what can we work on next week. If you have to coach keep it simple e.g. 'lets in crease out intensity', 'can we press a little higher', 'lets try to control the ball more'.

Avoid, at all costs, telling the players what to do, it might seem counterintuitive to winning or performing well but whenever you yell instructions, of any kind, we are taking all control and often the fun away from the game.



## Half Time:

- **Ask Questions.** Ask the team what they are seeing, ask them who is the opponent's biggest threat, ask them what went well and what could we work on. The response to these questions will be enlightening for you as a coach.
- **Reinforce Key Focus Areas.** Reminder the team of the 1-3 focus areas and highlight if the team is doing these well or if they need more work. Always stay positive, this is the time to remotivate and engage the team for the second half.
- **Line Up.** Ensure the team knows who is starting the second half and what position they are playing.



*Half-Time team talk and cheer*

## After The Game:

- **Debrief Positively.** Highlight what the team did well, both individually and collectively. Address areas for improvement without assigning blame. Focus on learning opportunities. Refrain from having a talk about what the team did wrong. We don't want them leaving the field feeling dejected. Mention a few quick positives or don't say anything about the team's performance.
- **Reminders.** Remind the team about when and where the next practice or game will be and make sure you leave with a cheer.



# COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Here are some practical tips for communicating effectively with youth soccer parents as a coach:

## Set Clear Expectations Early

- Hold a preseason meeting to explain team goals, practice schedules, game expectations, and your coaching philosophy.
- Provide a handbook or email summary covering team policies (e.g., playing time, sideline behavior, and communication protocols).

## Be Proactive and Transparent

- Share a regular communication schedule (e.g., weekly emails or updates) to keep parents informed about logistics like practice times, game schedules, and team needs.
- Explain your decisions, such as position assignments or playing time, with fairness and clarity if questions arise.

## Encourage Two-Way Communication

- Create an open-door policy where parents feel comfortable discussing their concerns at appropriate times (e.g., after practice, not during games).
- Use tools like group chats or apps (e.g., TeamSnap, SportsEngine) for organized and centralized communication.

## Focus on Development, Not Winning

- Emphasize that the primary goal is player development, teamwork, and fostering a love for the game - not just winning matches.
- Reinforce this message consistently so parents align with your coaching approach.

## Model Positive Behavior

- Set the tone by demonstrating sportsmanship, patience, and respect. Parents will often mirror your behavior.
- Address poor sideline behavior promptly but respectfully. Get help from the HYS team when needed.

## Be Professional and Approachable

- Keep communication professional while also being approachable and empathetic.
- Avoid emotional reactions, especially in tough situations like handling disputes about playing time or disagreements.

## Utilize Technology

- Use group emails, team apps, or social media groups to keep everyone on the same page.
- Post reminders, updates, and photos/videos from games to engage parents in a positive way.

## Create Opportunities for Positive Engagement

- Involve parents as volunteers for roles like team manager, snack coordinator, or fundraiser organizer.



- Share praise about their children's progress or effort when appropriate - parents love to hear positive feedback.

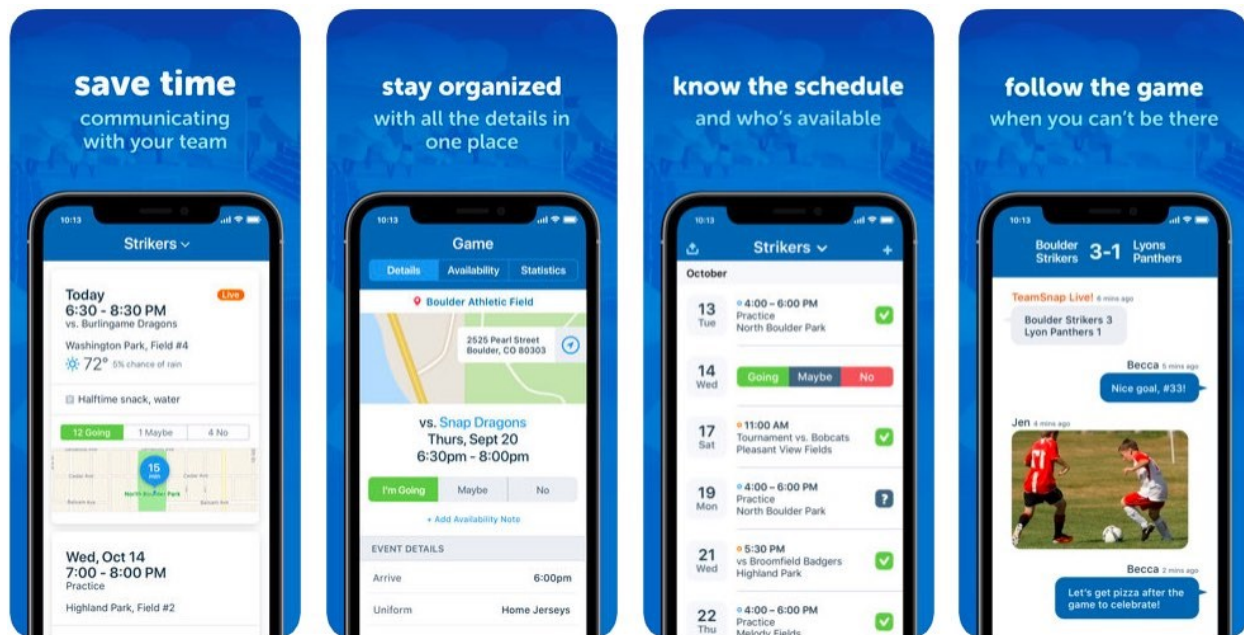
### Have a Plan for Conflict

- Stay calm and listen when parents bring up concerns.
- Acknowledge their perspective, and offer to discuss solutions privately, away from players and other parents.
- Stand firm on decisions made in the best interest of the team while remaining respectful.

### Build a Team Culture

- Foster a sense of community by organizing team-building activities or social events for both players and families.
- Encourage parents to cheer for all players, not just their own child.

By creating a collaborative, respectful environment, you can manage parent relationships effectively while keeping the focus on the kids and their soccer experience.



*Team Snap - Popular app for team and parent communication*



## Welcome E-mail Examples

Below are two example welcome e-mails to parents which focusses on a warm welcome and introduction to yourself, goals and objectives, expectations of the parents and players, key information for practices and games and communication.

### Example 1 – Bullet Format

Dear Parents and Families,

I'd like to welcome you and your player to the upcoming [season/year] with Holden Youth Soccer! I'm excited to be coaching this team and helping the players grow both on and off the field.

#### A Bit About me

- I have [X] years/seasons of experience working with youth soccer, both as a coach and a player myself.
- I have also been involved with [other relevant background – coaching courses, volunteering, local teams]
- I have [X] children aged [X and X] and something personal [hobby, teams you support, where you live]

#### My Goals for the Season

- Foster a positive, fun, and safe environment where players enjoy the game.
- Help each player develop their soccer skills, teamwork, and confidence.
- Teach sportsmanship, respect, and the value of effort and commitment.

#### Expectations for Players

- Come ready to learn, try their best, and support teammates.
- Arrive on time to practice and games with proper gear (cleats, shin guards, water, ball).
- Show respect toward coaches, referees, teammates, and opponents.

#### Expectations for Parents

- Encourage your player and others with positivity and support.
- Allow coaches to coach during games and practices.
- Communicate with me if your player will miss a practice or game, or if you have questions or concerns, especially medical or behavioral concerns.

#### Practices

- [Days/times/location – fill in specifics].
- Practices will focus on skill-building, teamwork, and preparing for matches.
- Please ensure players arrive 5–10 minutes early, ready to start on time.

#### Games

- [Day(s) of week/timeframe/location – fill in specifics].
- Players should arrive 30 minutes before kickoff for warm-ups.
- Sportsmanship and fair play will always be emphasized over winning.

I believe youth soccer should be an enjoyable experience that teaches life lessons as well as soccer skills. Together, we can make this season a rewarding and memorable one for all players.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [your email/phone] with any questions. Thank you for your support—I'm looking forward to a great season!



Best regards,  
[Your Name]  
Head Coach – [Team/Division Name]

## Example 2 – Prose Format

Dear Parents and Families,  
I'd like to welcome you and your player to the upcoming [season/year] with Holden Youth Soccer. I'm truly excited to be coaching this team and to spend the season helping the players grow, both in their soccer abilities and in the life skills that come from being part of a team.

By way of introduction, my name is [Your Name]. I have [X years] of experience working with youth soccer, both as a coach and as a player myself, and I've also been involved with [other relevant background—coaching clinics, volunteering, local teams, etc.].

My goal is to create an environment where the kids enjoy coming to the field, feel supported in trying new things, and gain confidence in themselves. While we'll spend plenty of time building soccer skills and learning the game, we'll also be focusing on sportsmanship, teamwork, and respect—values that extend well beyond the field.

For the players, my hope is that they come ready to learn, put in their best effort, and encourage one another. For parents, I ask for your partnership in supporting the team by cheering positively, allowing the coaches to guide the players during games and practices, and keeping communication open if your child will miss a session or if you have any questions or concerns, especially medical or behavioral concerns.

Practices will take place on [days/times/location], and we'll begin promptly, so I encourage everyone to arrive a few minutes early and ready to go. Games are scheduled for [day(s)/timeframe/location], and players should plan to arrive about 30mins before kickoff so we have time to warm up together. Winning is never the ultimate measure of success at this level—our focus will always be on playing fairly, competing with spirit, and learning as we go.

I believe youth soccer should be a fun and meaningful experience for every child, and I'm grateful to have your support in making this season a positive one. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [your email/phone] at any point. I look forward to getting to know each of you and to a great season ahead.

Warm regards,  
[Your Name]  
Head Coach – [Team/Division Name]





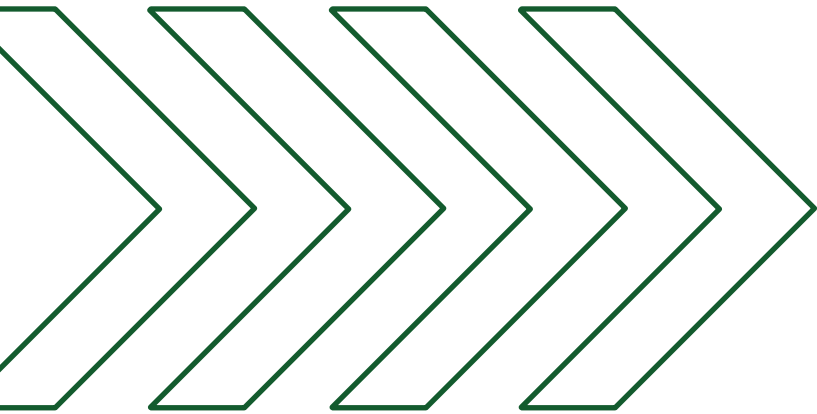
## Chapter 6

# COACHING CHILDREN

### Chapter 6

#### COACHING CHILDREN

Foundations of Coaching Children  
Age Groups & Development  
Injury Management  
Behavioral Issues  
Player Relationships & Motivation





# FOUNDATIONS OF COACHING CHILDREN

Children gain numerous benefits from playing games, provided that the games are appropriate for their mental and physical development. When this alignment is achieved, children are more likely to have positive and enriching experiences during play.

## Understanding Children's Natural Play Behaviors

Young children, particularly those between the ages of 5 and 8, naturally enjoy activities such as running, jumping, rolling, climbing, skipping, falling, and shouting during play. These behaviors highlight the suitability of soccer for this age group. When designing a play environment, adults should take these natural tendencies into account.

It is crucial to match activities to the developmental levels of children rather than forcing children to conform to the activities. When an activity is too difficult, children may become frustrated, and when it is too easy, they may grow bored. Coaches must be attuned to the varying developmental levels of their players and understand how these levels impact their ability to play soccer.

## The Natural Fit of Soccer for Development

Soccer is an excellent activity for young children because it encourages body awareness and requires the use of various body parts. Through soccer, children develop balance, agility, coordination, vision, and social interaction, all of which contribute to their physical and social development.

As players grow older, their developmental stages—psychomotor, cognitive, and psychosocial – mature. This maturation enables coaches to introduce more complexity into training activities. For example:

- **Under-6 players.** Each player should have their own ball.
- **Under-8 players.** Pairs of players can share one ball.
- **Under-10 players.** Four players can share one ball.
- **Under-12+ players.** Eight players can share one ball.



*Diversity in Youth Sports*

This progression forces players to think more abstractly and adapt to new challenges, preparing them for the dynamic nature of soccer games, where coaches cannot pause play to provide constant guidance. Although players are often grouped by age, their developmental stages can vary significantly. Coaches must design

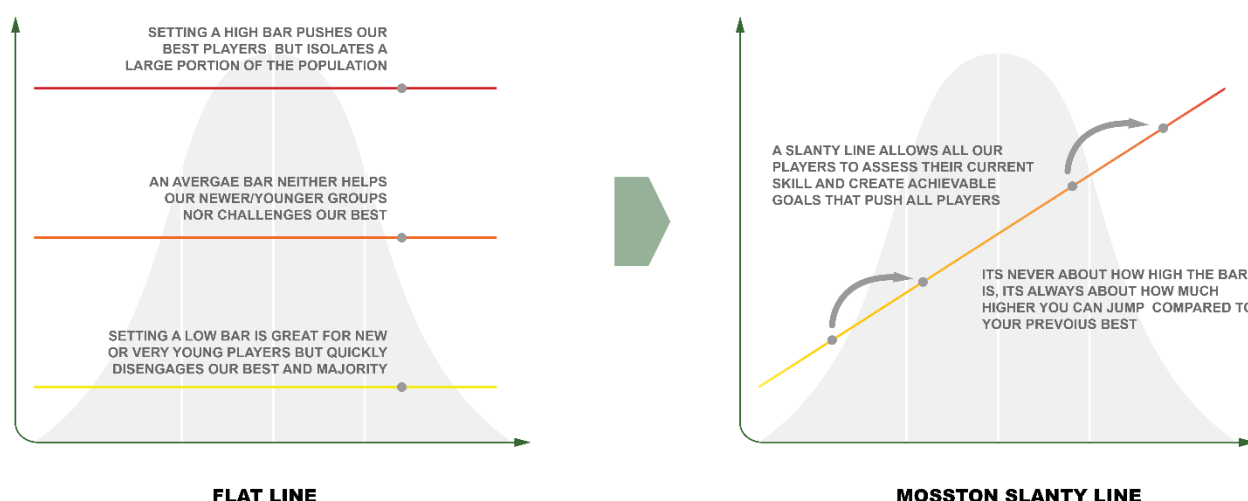


training environments that allow all players to succeed, regardless of their individual skill levels.

## Developmentally Appropriate Training – The Slanty Line Concept

Although players are often grouped by age, their developmental stages can vary significantly. Coaches must design training environments that allow all players to succeed, regardless of their individual skill levels.

Muska Mosston, a leading physical education teacher, introduced the concept of the "Slanty Line." This instructional approach ensures that all participants can engage at their own ability levels. For example, in the traditional game "High Water/Low Water," players who failed to jump over the rope were eliminated, leaving those who needed the most practice with the least opportunity to improve. The Slanty Line approach adjusts this by slanting the rope, allowing all players to participate and progress at their own pace.



Coaches are encouraged to incorporate the Slanty Line philosophy into their training. This involves designing activities that give all players equal opportunities to practice and improve their skills. For instance, if one player completes 15 ball taps in 30 seconds, challenge them to reach 20 ball taps. If another player achieves 22 ball taps, challenge them to aim for 25. By setting personalized goals, coaches place players in situations where they can achieve success, fostering growth and confidence.

## Summary

Success is essential for motivation and growth, regardless of the task. Young soccer players deserve the same opportunities to succeed and develop their skills. Coaches should use the Slanty Line approach as a foundational method to create inclusive, developmentally appropriate training environments that empower every child to improve and thrive.



## AGE GROUPS & DEVELOPMENT

Youth soccer players at different age groups have distinct developmental needs that require tailored coaching strategies. Understanding the unique physical, cognitive, and emotional characteristics of players at each stage is essential for fostering their growth in the sport. Coaches must recognize that younger players are just beginning to develop basic motor skills and soccer awareness, while older players are refining technical abilities, decision-making, and teamwork. This section will explore the specific needs and differences of each age group, offering guidance on how to adjust coaching methods to effectively support players at every stage of their soccer journey.

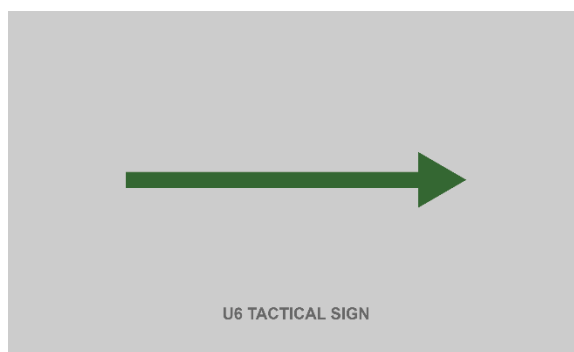
### Pre-K and K Children

The primary focus of Pre-K & K soccer is to introduce the fundamentals of dribbling the ball and for the players to have fun.

This, for many or all your players, is the first exposure to both soccer and organized sports. They may have no frame of reference or comparative experiences.

#### For most Pre-K or K Players:

- They will have never played on a bounded field
- They are used to playing with their own ball
- May be aware of positions (Center, Defender, Goalie) but still lack the discipline to play any type of formation
- Soccer is about scoring goals, not defending
- U6 players think in one direction only, toward the goal



#### Typical Characteristics of Pre-K & K (U6) Players

1. **Focused on themselves.** Reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel - it is “the world according to me” time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic.
2. **Everything is in the here and now.** Forget about the past and future, they live in the moment. They feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice, so every player is always playing. They have a limited attention span (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions



concise and to the point.

3. **Effort is synonymous with performance.** If they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality, and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm. If we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
4. **Look for adult approval.** Watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!” They are usually unaware of game scores – we should keep it that way.
5. **Their bodies are not conditioned for soccer yet.** They often like to fall just because it is fun – they are just children having fun. They typically have two speeds -- extremely fast and stopped. They often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot. Their heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes), or they may just run until they cannot run anymore.

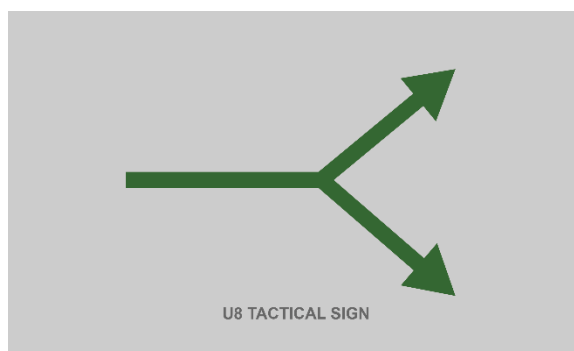
## U8 – Grade 1 and 2 Children

The primary focus of Grade 1 & 2 soccer is to introduce the fundamentals of dribbling the ball and for the players to have fun.

This, for many or all your players, is the first exposure to both soccer and organized sports. They may have no frame of reference or comparative experiences. Some may have played Pre-K & K soccer before.

### For most Grade 1 & 2 Players:

- Have limited experience playing on a bounded field
- They are used to playing with their own ball
- May be aware of positions (Wing, Center, Defender, Goalie) but still lack the discipline to play any type of formation
- Soccer is about scoring goals, not defending
- Have limited understanding of soccer rules – goal kicks, free kicks, throw-ins etc.
- U8 players are still very focused on going forward, they may have figured out a straight line is not always the best approach





## Typical Characteristics of Grade 1 & 2 (U8) Players

1. **Begin to see others perspectives.** 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. They now have a sense of how others are feeling.
2. **Have an understanding of time and sequence.** They now understand “if I do this, then that happens”. They still much prefer playing to watching. Make sure every player has a ball in practice, so every player is always playing. They have a limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, 20 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point.
3. **Wide range of abilities.** There are a 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 to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.
4. **Look for adult approval.** Extremely aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently. 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.
5. **Their bodies are still not conditioned for soccer yet.** Many players will 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 Their heating and cooling systems are still less efficient than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes).
6. **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.
7. **Beginning to develop motor memories.** By attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements.

## U10 – Grade 3 and 4 Children

The primary focus of Grade 3 & 4 soccer is to introduce a range of technical skills and for the players to have fun.

A typical Grade 3 & 4 (U10) player that starts at age 8 will play 4 seasons (2 years) of play at this level before they move up to Grade 5 & 6 (U12). They may or may not have played at the U6 or U8 levels

### For most Grade 3 & 4 Players:

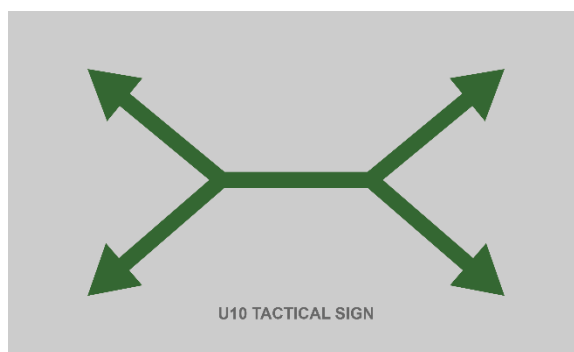
- Now playing on a much bigger field with larger goals
- Have been used to playing 3v3 or 4v4 games
- May be aware of positions (Wing, Center, Defender, Goalie) but still lack the discipline to play any





type of formation

- Have never played goalkeeper before or using their hands in the game
- Are not used to the new rules (offside, throw-ins, corner kicks, goal-kicks or fouls)
- May be playing for Travel teams against all players of similar ability
- U10 players are beginning to see the advantage of moving themselves and the ball in both forward and negative direction in order to main possession.



### Typical Characteristics of Grade 3 & 4 (U10) Players

1. **Can see other perspectives.** Unlike in U6 or 8 year-olds, these children enjoy playing in pairs and teams. Try to set up the pairs and team activities yourself to control the games and manage the personalities. They now have a sense of how others are feeling.
2. **Have an understanding of time and sequence.** They now understand “if I do this, then that happens”. They have a expanded attention spans and start to show the ability to sequence thought and action.
3. **Wide range of abilities and maturity levels.** There are a wide range of abilities and maturity between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. Your challenge to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.
4. **Demonstrate independence.** Players are more inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play at this age. Some players will demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their responsibility.
5. **Organizational awareness.** Players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach—“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for coach Amy’s team”. Children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure. Players at this age are extremely rule bound

### U12 – Grade 5 and 6 Children

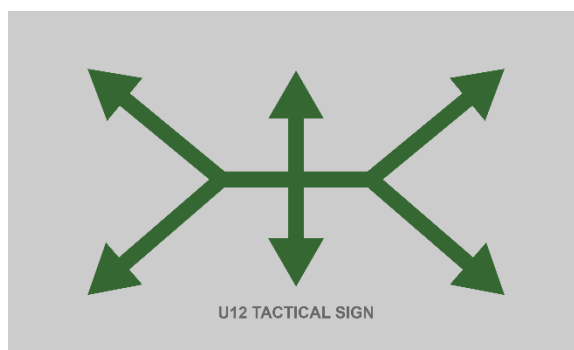
The primary focus of Grade 5 & 6 soccer is to introduce a range of intermediate technical skills, introduce some tactical concepts, and for the players to have fun.



A typical Grade 5 & 6 (U12) player that starts at age 10 will play 4 seasons (2 years) of play at this level before they move up to Grade 7 & 8 (U14). They may or may not have played at the previous U10 level before.

### For most Grade 5 & 6 Players:

- Now playing on a much bigger field with larger goals
- Have been used to playing 7v7 games
- Have basic positional awareness but lack understanding and discipline at this scale
- Are not new to rules (offside, throw-ins, corner kicks, goal-kicks or fouls) but lack discipline to follow them
- Will be challenged by the larger field size
- U12 players are beginning to see the whole field, recognizing the value or penetration, negative and lateral ball and player movement to solve more complex problems.



### Typical Characteristics of Grade 5 & 6 (U12) Players

1. **Understand abstract concepts.** Can visualize and understand hypothetical situations. Players understand dynamic pictures on the field and can act accordingly.
2. **Wide range of abilities and maturity levels.** There are a wide range of abilities and maturity between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. Your challenge to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.
3. **Physical challenges.** Players need to warm up and stretch – muscles pulls, and nagging injuries can become prevalent. Body co-ordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt or not. Playing too much can lead to overuse injuries and or burn-out.
4. **Creativity and risk.** It's easy for players based on egos to stop taking risks at this age – encourage players to be creative and to take risks – we never want them to stop doing these things . Players at this age like to solve problems for themselves.
5. **Shift from coach to peers.** Peer evaluation and judgment is a constant, egos are sensitive and needs to be managed carefully. Ask players for feedback – they will tell you how things are going. Try to hand over leadership and ownership to the team.



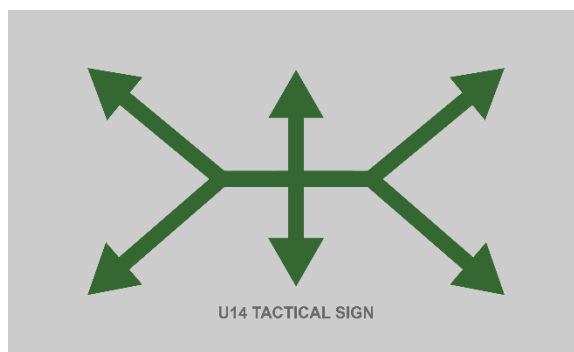
## U14 – Grade 7 and 8 Children

The primary focus of Grade 7 & 8 soccer is to build off the intermediate technical skills, build on basic tactical concepts, and for the players to have fun.

A typical Grade 7 & 8 (U14) player that starts at age 12 will play 4 seasons (2 years) of play at this level before they move up to W5 soccer. They may or may not have played at the previous U12 level before.

### For most Grade 7 & 8 Players:

- Now playing on a much bigger field with larger goals
- Have been used to playing 9v9 games
- Have strong positional awareness but lack understanding and discipline at this scale
- Will be challenged by the larger field size
- U14 players see the whole field, recognize the value or penetration, negative and lateral ball and player movement to solve complex problems.



### Typical Characteristics of Grade 7 & 8 (U14) Players

1. **Understand abstract concepts.** Can visualize and understand hypothetical situations. Players understand dynamic pictures on the field and can act accordingly.
2. **Wide range of abilities and maturity levels.** There are a wide range of abilities and maturity between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. Your challenge to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.
3. **Physical challenges.** Players need to warm up and stretch – muscles pulls, and nagging injuries can become prevalent. Body co-ordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt or not. Playing too much can lead to overuse injuries and or burn-out.
4. **Creativity and risk.** It's easy for players based on egos to stop taking risks at this age – encourage players to be creative and to take risks – we never want them to stop doing these things . Players at this age like to solve problems for themselves.



5. **Shift from coach to peers.** Peer evaluation and judgment is a constant, egos are sensitive and needs to be managed carefully. Ask players for feedback – they will tell you how things are going. Try to hand over leadership and ownership to the team.

## Summary

In summary, players at each youth soccer age group have unique developmental needs that require coaches to adjust their approach to training and instruction. Younger players focus on basic skills, coordination, and having fun, while older players begin to refine technical abilities, tactical understanding, and teamwork. By recognizing these differences, coaches can create age-appropriate learning environments that foster skill development, boost confidence, and keep players engaged. Tailoring coaching methods to each age group ensures that players not only grow as athletes but also enjoy their soccer experience at every stage of their development.

For more information on age group development see out player development guidelines. [Click here.](#)



# INJURY MANAGEMENT

Injury management and prevention are crucial aspects of youth soccer coaching, as young players are still developing physically and can be more susceptible to certain injuries. By promoting safe playing environments, encouraging proper techniques, and understanding how to manage injuries when they occur, coaches can help minimize the risk of injury and ensure players remain healthy and active in the sport.

## Injury Prevention Strategies

- **Warm-up and Cool-down.** A proper warm-up before each session is essential to prepare the body for physical activity. Warm-ups should include light aerobic exercise (such as jogging) followed by dynamic stretches to increase flexibility and range of motion. Cooling down with gentle stretching after practice helps prevent muscle tightness and reduces the risk of injury.



*Proper warm up and cool down are key*

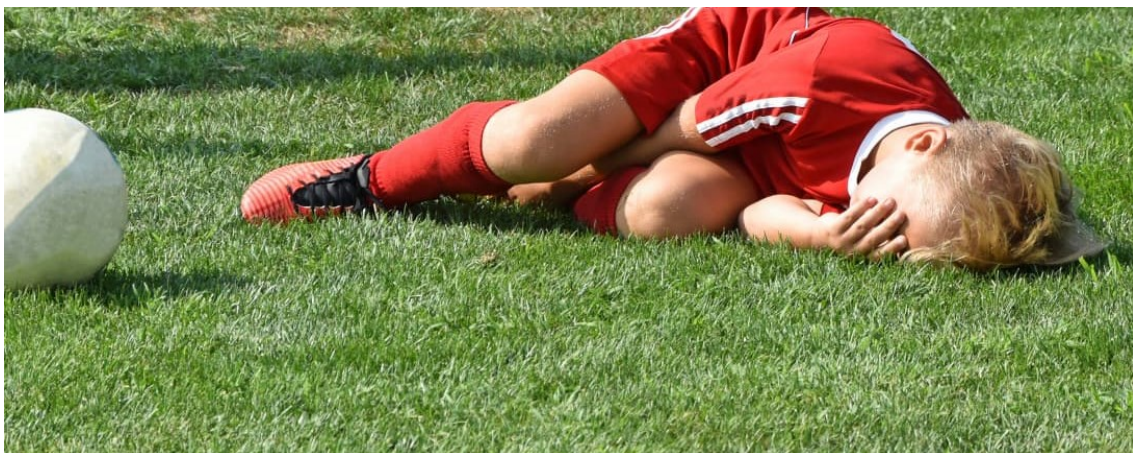
- **Proper Footwear:** Wearing the correct soccer shoes for the playing surface (e.g., cleats for grass or turf shoes for artificial fields) is essential to prevent slips, falls, and unnecessary stress on the feet and ankles. Ensure players have well-fitting shoes that provide adequate support and protection.
- **Hydration:** Dehydration can increase the risk of cramps and muscle strains. Encourage players to drink water regularly, particularly on warm days or during intense practices, to stay hydrated.
- **Rest and Recovery:** Adequate rest between sessions is crucial to allow the body to recover. Overuse injuries, such as stress fractures or tendinitis, can occur if players do not get enough rest. Encourage players to take breaks, avoid excessive training, and get proper sleep for optimal recovery.
- **Strengthening and Flexibility:** Incorporating exercises to strengthen key muscles and improve flexibility can help prevent injuries. Focus on strengthening the core, legs, and ankles, as well as improving balance and coordination. Stretching regularly helps maintain flexibility and reduces the risk of muscle strains.
- **Age-Appropriate Drills and Loads:** Ensure that training sessions are tailored to the physical and developmental capabilities of the players. Overloading young athletes with intense drills, long



practices, or high-intensity competition can lead to fatigue and increase the likelihood of injury.

### Some familiar terms that you should know:

- **Sprain.** Ligaments are bands of tissue that attach bone to bone and stabilize joints. A sprain is an injury to one or more ligaments. Care: R.I.C.E.
- **Strain.** A tearing injury to a muscle or a tendon (tendons attach muscle to bone). Care: R.I.C.E.
- **Contusion.** An impact injury to a muscle or tendon caused by an outside Force, which causes hemorrhaging (heavy bleeding) to the surrounding tissue. Care: R.I.C.E.
- **Abrasion.** A loss of surface area of the skin caused by sliding. Care: the area should be cleaned with an antiseptic to prevent infection. An antibiotic ointment should be applied to keep the wound moist and destroy bacteria.
- **Concussion.** A type of traumatic brain injury that occurs when the brain moves or twists inside the skull. It can be caused by a blow to the head or a hit to the body that causes the head to move rapidly. Care: Stop play and follow concussion protocol guidance.
- **Heat Cramps.** An involuntary contraction of a muscle or a muscle group that is repetitive and rapid in nature. Care: rest, drink water and stretching.
- **Heat Exhaustion.** The surface temperature is about normal, the skin is pale and clammy, profuse perspiration, fatigue and weakness, headache; perhaps cramps, nausea, dizziness, possible vomiting and possible fainting (the player will probably regain consciousness as the head is lowered).
- **Heat Stroke.** The body temperature is high, the skin is hot, red and dry, the sweating mechanism is blocked, the pulse is rapid and strong; the player may lose consciousness.



*Most soccer injuries are not serious, but be prepared if they are*





## Managing Injuries

Despite the best prevention efforts, injuries can still occur. Coaches should know how to properly manage injuries and understand when to seek medical attention.

- **The R.I.C.E. Method.** For minor injuries like sprains, strains, or bruises, the R.I.C.E. method (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) is an effective approach:
  - **Rest:** Allow the injured area to heal by avoiding activity that could worsen the injury.
  - **Ice:** Apply ice for 15-20 minutes every 1-2 hours to reduce swelling and pain.
  - **Compression:** Use an elastic bandage or wrap to help control swelling.
  - **Elevation:** Keep the injured area elevated above heart level to minimize swelling.
- **Assessing the Injury.** If an injury occurs during practice or a game, it is important to assess its severity. For minor injuries, such as a mild sprain or bruise, follow the R.I.C.E. method. For more serious injuries, such as fractures, dislocations, or suspected concussions, immediate medical evaluation is necessary. If a player is unable to walk, has severe pain, or experiences dizziness, nausea, or confusion, seek professional medical assistance immediately.
- **Concussion Management.** Concussions are a serious concern in youth sports. If a player shows any signs of a concussion, such as headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or sensitivity to light, they should be removed from the game and evaluated by a healthcare professional. Players should only return to play after receiving medical clearance.

Coaches can see the concussion fact sheet posted to our [website](#) and as part of the state requirements complete the concussion training as part of their [registration](#).

- **Immediate Care.** If you suspect a fracture, severe abrasion, heat exhaustion or stroke, cardiac arrest or any other severe injury put your emergency response plan in place and call 911 for assistance.
- **Return-to-Play Protocol.** After an injury, players should follow a step-by-step return-to-play protocol, guided by a healthcare professional. This typically involves rest, gradual reintroduction of low-impact activities, and progressively more intense training and play. A player should not return to full activity until they are completely pain-free and have regained full range of motion, strength, and coordination.

## Summary

By focusing on injury prevention and understanding how to properly manage injuries when they occur, coaches can ensure that players stay healthy, safe, and enjoy the game of soccer. Teaching players proper technique, encouraging rest and recovery, and providing a supportive environment will reduce the likelihood of injuries and foster a positive, long-term experience in youth soccer. Always remember, when in doubt about an injury, consult with a medical professional to ensure the safety and well-being of the players.



## BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

As a coach, managing player behavior is an essential aspect of creating a positive and productive environment for all participants. Youth soccer provides an opportunity not only for physical development but also for teaching important life skills, such as discipline, respect, and teamwork. However, at times, players may display disruptive or inappropriate behavior, whether due to frustration, lack of focus, or personal challenges. Addressing these issues calmly and constructively is crucial for maintaining a positive atmosphere and fostering a love of the game. This section will explore strategies for effectively managing behavioral issues on and off the field.

### Establish Clear Expectations

One of the most effective ways to prevent behavioral issues is to set clear, consistent expectations from the start. Communicate with your players, parents, and assistant coaches about the behavior standards expected during practices, games, and in all team-related activities. These expectations might include:

- Respect for teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents
- Active participation and focus during practices and games
- Positive sportsmanship, including handling both wins and losses gracefully
- Adherence to the team's rules and guidelines

Make sure players understand that their actions have consequences, and that positive behavior is valued and reinforced. Establishing a team code of conduct or a behavior charter, along with regular reminders, helps players internalize the standards and feel accountable for their actions.

### Addressing Disruptive Behavior

When behavioral issues arise, it's important to address them promptly and consistently. Here are a few strategies for managing disruptive behavior:

1. **Stay Calm and Focused.** As the coach, it's essential to remain composed when dealing with behavioral issues. Reacting emotionally or harshly may escalate the situation. Instead, approach the issue with a calm, firm demeanor, maintaining control over the situation.
2. **Understand the Root Cause.** Often, disruptive behavior stems from underlying issues such as frustration, lack of confidence, or personal difficulties. Take the time to understand why the behavior is occurring. Is the player feeling overwhelmed, frustrated with their progress, or reacting to something outside of soccer? A one-on-one conversation can help uncover the cause and offer insight into how to best address the behavior.
3. **Private Conversations.** If a player repeatedly displays disruptive behavior, speak to them privately to avoid embarrassing them in front of their peers. Use a constructive, empathetic approach, explaining how their actions affect the team and offering alternative behaviors. Listen to their side of the story and offer guidance on how they can improve.
4. **Use Positive Reinforcement.** Reinforce positive behavior by recognizing and rewarding



improvements, whether through praise, encouragement, or small rewards. Catching players doing things right will motivate them to continue exhibiting positive behavior. Public acknowledgment can also be a powerful tool but be mindful to balance this with private recognition when appropriate.

5. **Implement Consequences.** If disruptive behavior continues despite redirection and private conversations, it may be necessary to implement consequences. These should be fair, consistent, and proportional to the behavior. For example, temporarily removing a player from a drill or activity can help the player understand the impact of their behavior. Always explain the reasoning behind any consequence so the player understands the connection between their actions and the outcome. If the issues persist, ask the parents or guardians to support you, they may have strategies which could help. Don't hesitate to get the HYS team involved if you have exhausted your own ideas.



*Set clear expectations and manage poor behavior swiftly*

## Summary

Handling behavioral issues is an inevitable part of youth coaching, but with a proactive, patient, and consistent approach, these challenges can be managed effectively. By setting clear expectations, maintaining open communication, reinforcing positive behavior, and fostering a supportive team culture, coaches can create an environment where players can thrive both on and off the field. Remember that the ultimate goal is not only to develop soccer skills but also to help players grow as individuals and responsible members of their community.



# PLAYER RELATIONSHIPS & MOTIVATION

As a youth soccer coach, building strong relationships with your players and understanding what motivates them are fundamental to creating a positive, engaging environment. When players feel valued, respected, and supported, they are more likely to be motivated to improve their skills, contribute to the team, and enjoy their soccer experience. This section will explore how to develop meaningful relationships with players and strategies for motivating them to achieve their potential both individually and as a team.

## Building Strong Player-Coach Relationships

1. **Show Genuine Interest.** To foster trust and connection with players, take the time to show genuine interest in their lives both on and off the field. Ask about their hobbies, interests, and experiences outside of soccer. When players feel that you care about them as individuals, they are more likely to respond positively to your coaching.
2. **Communicate Openly and Honestly.** Clear and open communication is the cornerstone of a strong player-coach relationship. Be approachable and make sure players feel comfortable coming to you with questions, concerns, or feedback. Practice active listening—give them your full attention and validate their feelings. Honest communication also means providing constructive feedback and being transparent about expectations, goals, and team decisions.
3. **Respect and Empower Players.** Respect is a two-way street, and when you show respect to your players, they are more likely to reciprocate. Value each player's unique contributions, whether they are on the field or in the locker room. Encourage autonomy by giving players opportunities to make decisions and express themselves within the team structure. Empowering them to take ownership of their development fosters a sense of responsibility and pride.
4. **Be a Positive Role Model.** As a coach, you serve as a role model for your players, both in how you handle the game and how you interact with others. Demonstrate qualities such as integrity, patience, sportsmanship, and work ethic. Your behavior, whether on the field or in the community, sets the tone for your players and reinforces the values you aim to instill.

## Understanding What Motivates Your Players

Every player is different, and understanding what motivates each one can help you tailor your approach to encourage growth and engagement. Motivation in youth soccer often comes from a mix of intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) factors. Here are some ways to recognize and foster motivation in your players:

1. **Intrinsic Motivation.** Intrinsic motivation comes from within the player and is driven by the enjoyment and personal satisfaction they derive from playing. This type of motivation is often linked to a love of the game, the desire to improve, or the joy of mastering new skills. To nurture intrinsic motivation:
  - Create a fun, engaging, and positive environment where players feel a sense of accomplishment.
  - Set realistic, individualized goals that challenge players but are achievable, helping them



experience progress.

- Encourage a growth mindset, emphasizing effort, learning, and resilience over the result of any single game or practice.
2. **Extrinsic Motivation.** Extrinsic motivation comes from external rewards such as praise, recognition, or competition. While it is important to foster intrinsic motivation, external incentives can also play a role in keeping players engaged and motivated. Here are some ways to incorporate extrinsic motivation:
    - Offer praise and recognition for hard work, positive attitudes, and teamwork. Public acknowledgment can boost a player's confidence and encourage continued effort.
    - Create opportunities for players to achieve recognition within the team, such as "Player of the Week" awards or team challenges.
    - Use rewards like stickers, small prizes, or additional playtime as incentives for achieving specific goals or demonstrating strong behavior.
  3. **Understanding Individual Motivations.** Every player may be motivated by different factors. For some, the excitement of competition may drive them, while others may be motivated by personal development, friendship, or the joy of playing with teammates. Take the time to learn what excites and inspires each player. By engaging in one-on-one conversations and observing how they respond to different situations, you can tailor your approach to meet their needs. For example:
    - Some players might thrive on competition and excel when the stakes are high.
    - Others may be motivated by encouragement and positive reinforcement, thriving in a supportive environment.
    - Some players may enjoy learning new skills, while others are driven by the sense of camaraderie that comes from being part of a team.
  4. **Set Meaningful and Achievable Goals.** Help players set personal and team goals that align with their interests and aspirations. Goals should be specific, measurable, and attainable, but also challenging enough to push players outside their comfort zones. Celebrate milestones and progress toward these goals, reinforcing the idea that effort and persistence lead to improvement. For example:
    - A personal goal might be improving dribbling technique or increasing stamina.
    - A team goal could be working on communication during games or achieving better defensive organization.
  5. **Keep Practices Fun and Engaging.** Motivation is often highest when players are enjoying themselves. While skill development is important, ensuring that practices are engaging and enjoyable is equally essential. Mix in fun activities and games that allow players to improve while having fun. Incorporating variety, friendly competition, and creative drills can keep players excited and motivated to attend practices and give their best effort.

## Fostering Team Motivation and Camaraderie

In addition to motivating individual players, it's important to cultivate a strong sense of team motivation and unity. When players feel connected to their teammates and the team's goals, they are more likely to stay engaged and motivated throughout the season. Some ways to build team motivation include:

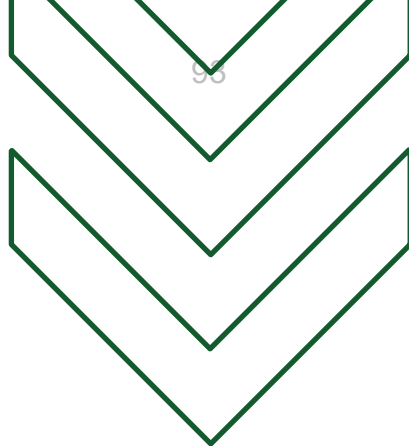


- **Team Building Activities.** Incorporate activities that help players bond and develop trust in one another, both on and off the field.
- **Encourage Positive Team Culture.** Foster a culture of support and encouragement, where players celebrate each other's successes and work together toward shared objectives.
- **Involve Players in Team Decisions.** Give players a voice in decisions such as team strategies or game tactics, helping them feel more invested in the team's success.

## Summary

Building strong relationships with your players and understanding what motivates them are key components of being an effective coach. By taking the time to connect with players, fostering an environment that values effort and personal growth, and recognizing the individual and collective factors that motivate each player, you create a foundation for success both on and off the field. Motivated, confident players will not only perform better but will also develop a lifelong love for the game.





# Chapter 7

# SOCCER RULES

Chapter 7

**RULES**

Basic Rules by Age Group





# SOCCER RULES

Soccer is a complex sport, but the rules are simple. The objective is to get the ball in the opposing team's goal.

The rules become more complicated and technical with the level of play. But even at the professional level they are quite simple. FIFA, International Federation of Football, holds the official rules to the game. The official rules may be modified in their application for players of under 19 years of age, female soccer players, veteran players (over 35 years of age), and for players with disabilities.

Any or all the following modifications are permissible:

1. Size of the field of play
2. Size, weight, and material of the ball
3. Width between the goal posts and height of the crossbar from the ground
4. Duration of the periods of play
5. Substitutions
6. Rules related to safety
7. Age group accommodations

## General Soccer Rules

### Size of the Field

The field must be rectangular, that's pretty much it. The field size depends on good judgment of how many players on each side, and the size of your goals. The more you play or watch soccer the better you will get at judging a field size. You want it big enough to keep ball in play but small enough to engage all players and prevent kick and chase ball. To be considered true international competition basic soccer rules (11 vs 11) field must be:

- Length: minimum 100 m (110 yd) maximum 110 m (120 yd)
- Width: minimum 64 m (70 yd) maximum 75 m (80 yd)

CMYSL (Our Travel Team League) prescribe field sizes, players, and game rules [here](#).



## Ball Size

The ball size depends on age. Below are soccer size rules/guidance. We suggest the following sizes for all development programs:

- **U6.** Size 3 is a good size for introduction to soccer for younger players.
- **U8.** Size 3 is a good size for introduction to soccer for younger players.
- **U10.** Size 4 is better for players at this level, the more surface area the better for development. This is also mandated by CMYSL for travel teams at this level.
- **U12.** Size 4 is better for players at this level, the more surface area the better for development. This is also mandated by CMYSL for travel teams at this level.
- **U14 +.** Size 5, this is the standard size for professional and adult soccer. We use this size for U14 and above. This size is also mandated by CMYSL for travel teams at this level.

## Players

Soccer is played by two team's preferably of equal number. Max players per team is 11 (Goalie + 10 field players). Team size is reduced by age.

We suggest the following numbers based on age and league:

- **U6.** 4v4 with as few substitutes as possible. This has some flexibility for our in-town programs.
- **U8.** 5v5 with as few substitutes as possible. This has some flexibility for our in-town programs.
- **U10.** 7v7 with a roster size of approx. 9-13. This has some flexibility for our in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams. The minimum numbers of players on the field are 5.



- **U12.** 9v9 with a roster size of approx. 11-18. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams. The minimum number of players on the field are 6.
- **U14+.** 11v11 with a roster size of approx. 13-22. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams. The minimum number of players on the field are 7.

## Substitutions

For youth leagues usually there is no cap on substitutions. A substitution can only be performed when the ball is not in play and your team has possession or on any goal kick. (Ex) it's a throw in for your team, or goal kick for your team or the opponent. Substitutions cannot be made when the ball is in play (even if your goalie has the ball in his/her hands. this is still in play). When there is a referee officiating a game, you will typically make substitutions at the halfway line on the referee's approval.

## Durations

The standard duration of a soccer game is two 45 min halves separated by a 10–15-minute half time break. There is often a small amount of time added to the end of the game for injuries, substitutions, and goals. Game duration is reduced by age.

We suggest the following based in age group and league:

- **U6 .** 10-20 min scrimmage based on the players comfort level.
- **U8.** 20-40 min scrimmage based on the players comfort level.
- **U10.** 2 x 25 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams.
- **U12.** 2 x 30 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams.
- **U14.** 2 x 35 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams.
- **U16.** 2 x 40 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams.
- **U19.** 2 x 45 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by CMYSL for travel teams.

## Equipment

The basic equipment needs for soccer are simple. Every player on the team should have a matching color jersey, wear shin pads under soccer socks, wear appropriate soccer footwear, and be wearing no form of jewelry at all.

Depending on the league (in-town vs CMYSL D3 vs CMYSL D1/2) these rules will be applied at various levels of scrutiny.

- There is **no** jewelry allowed – earrings of any type, bracelets, necklaces, watches.
- Medical/religious bracelets are allowed but must be secured or taped down.
- There are **no** rigid casts allowed – this includes soft hand/wrist/arm splints with metal in them.
- Knee braces with metal are **not** allowed.



- Soft hair items – pre-wrap or elastic bands are allowed.
- Barrettes, beads, or plastic clips in hair are **not** allowed.
- Sweatshirts are allowed if worn under the jersey and the hood is tucked in.
- Sweatpants worn over the uniform shorts and socks are allowed.
- Shin guards are required and worn under the socks.
- Socks are required and worn over the shin guards.
- Soccer footwear is required – no football or baseball cleats or footwear with metal studs.
- For CMYSL D1/D2 season where teams qualify and play in the MTOC, some referees will require complete matching jersey, shorts, and socks to be worn.
- The goalkeeper, if applicable, needs to be distinguishable from the rest of the team and opposition.

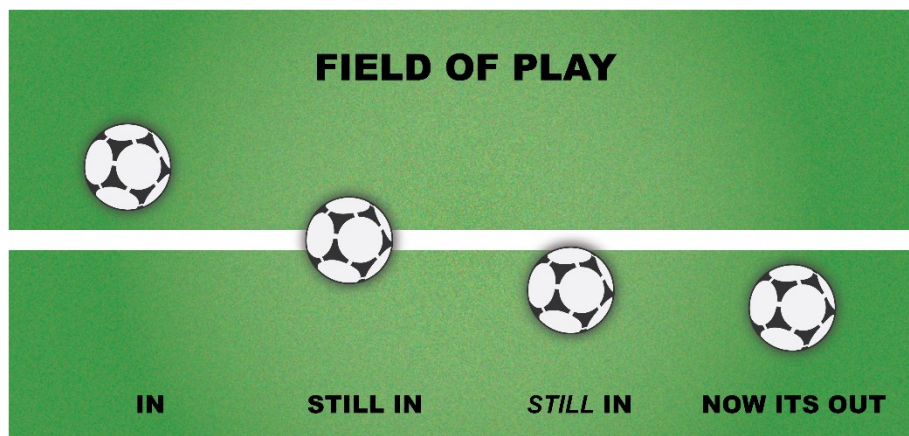
## Playing Soccer Rules

### Starting the Game

The game begins at the center of the field. The team who kicks off passes the ball to a teammate at the referee's signal. Before 2016 the ball had to move forward at kick off. This has been changed by the IFAB (The International Football Association Board). Now the ball can be passed back or forward at kick off. The opposing team is not allowed to enter the center circle until the team kicks off (some get confused with the refs whistle as the signal to play but it really begins with the team kicking off).

### Game in Play:

As long as the ball stays in the field the game is in play. The only exception is when the referee blows his whistle for an infraction or offside. The ball is considered in play as long as it is inside the end lines and side lines. Furthermore, it's still in play as long as the entire ball has not crossed the entire line. Therefore, the ball may not be touching the end line or side line and still be considered in play (This applies if the ball is in the air as well). Contact with the goal post, or corner flag is still considered in play.





## Goal

In the basic soccer rules the point of the game is to get the ball in the opposing teams goal and the team with the most goals after the specified time is the winner. The ball must cross the goal line to be a goal. Therefore, if the ball is still in contact with the end line in the inner part of the goal it is not a goal!

## Outcome of the Match

A typical soccer match ends in either a win/loss or a draw. A win is when the referee ends the match, and a team has more goals than the other team. A losing team is the team that has less goals at the end of the match. A draw is when both teams have the same number of goals at the end of the match.

During tournament play, if the match ends in a draw, the game may continue. They will typically play two extra time halves. If the match still ends at a draw, the match will be decided on a penalty shoot-out.

## Ball In and Out of Bounds

If the ball crosses the sideline, it is a throw in. The team who did not touch the ball last before the ball crossed the line gets the throw in. If the ball crosses the end line two things may occur. If the team that is defending that end line touches it out it is a corner kick. If the team attacking that end kicks it out it is a goal kick

- **The Throw In.** When the ball leaves the field from the side or touch line it is a throw in. The sideline assistant referee or referee, if available, signals who's throw in it is by point the flag to the direction that team is attacking. There are no offsides on throw ins, and you can't score directly from a throw in. A proper throw in is both feet need to have contact with the ground at time of throw. Also, the arms need to move from back of the head to the front over the head. No side throws allowed.
- **Goal Kicks.** A goal kick is given when the attacking team touches the ball last before it leaves the end or goal line. The goalkeeper (or any other player on his team) places the ball anywhere in the goal area to restart play. Prior to 2019 the ball had to leave the penalty box before a second player could touch it. This has since changed. Now, the ball can be a simple touch to a teammate inside the penalty box. The opposing team is not allowed inside the penalty box when the kick is taken.

In U10 games, leagues (including our in-town league) require the defending teams to recede behind a 'build-out' line on the opposing teams goal kicks. This is to allow the team with the ball the opportunity to play out from the back instead of just kicking the ball long every time. Some fields have a specific build out line, but most use the halfway line.

- **Corner Kicks.** A corner kick is given when the defending team touches the ball last before it goes over their end or goal line. The corner kick is taken from the corner kick area. The ball needs to be on or inside the lined area. It is a direct kick so the ball can go directly in the goal without touch a person. Also, the nearest defender needs to be at least 10 yards away from the corner on a full side pitch.





## Offside

Only an attacker can be considered offside. The offside rule does not apply to the team without the ball.

A player is offside when they are on the opponent's half of the field, closer to the defending team goal line than both the ball and the opponents second last player when the ball is played (passed to or passed into an area in which the player engages in play).

### Things to know

- The goalkeeper counts as one of the two players.
- Any part of the body which can legally play the ball (knee, foot, head or even buttocks) is considered offside.
- You are not offside if you are even with either or both of the two players.

### Offside position versus offside offense

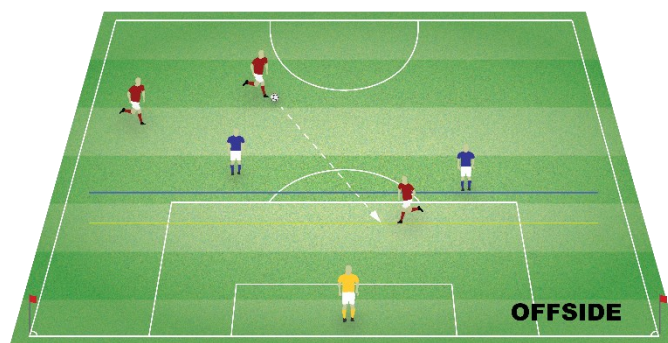
One thing to know is that just because you are in an offside position, it doesn't mean you get a freekick. If you are just standing offside, that is generally okay. If you are standing offside and then get involved in the play, then that is an offside offense. You must become an 'active' player for there to be an offense.

### Other things to know

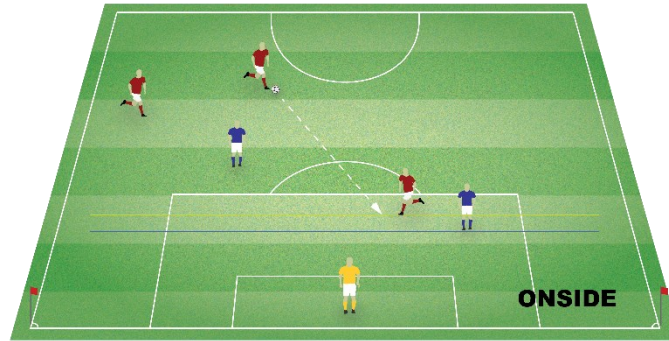
Your offside position is determined when the ball is touched by a member of your team. This means that if you are not offside at the moment your team member kicks the ball to pass it to you, then you can legally pursue the pass.

- Offside can be a very difficult call to make for the referees. Different angles can make the same play look different to different people playing the game.
- The penalty for an offside offense is an indirect free kick for the opposing team.

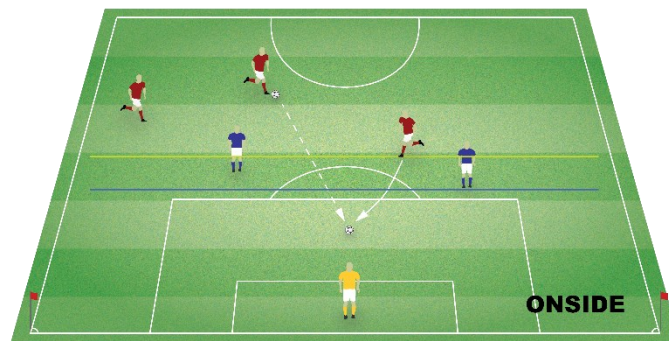
### Offside examples



The player is offside because only one player (the goalkeeper) is between the player and the goal when the pass is made.



Here the player is not offside because two players are between him and the goal.



In this example the player is not offside because there are two players between him and the goal at the time when the ball is kicked for the pass, even though the player receives the ball in an offside position.

### Fouls and Misconduct.

The referee has the obligation of catching and enforcing infractions of the rules. Misconduct may have one or a combination of the following consequences:

- Direct Kick - See Free kicks.
- Indirect Kick - See free kicks.
- Yellow Card - Warning and the second yellow is a red.
- Red Card - Direct expulsion from the game with possible further repercussions.

Common misconduct behaviors are:

- Fouls (pushing, tripping, pulling, overly aggressive play).
- Hand balls.
- Vulgar behavior (spitting, verbal threats and insults, bad sportsmanship behavior etc.)

These apply to players, coaches, and parents.

### Free Kicks



There are two types of free kicks in soccer.

- **Indirect.** Indirect kicks are awarded for less violent or interruptions to the game. It is awarded at the spot the ball was last and does not need a referee's whistle to restart unless the attacking team asked for their 10 yards to the wall. The ball must touch another player before it can directly be kicked into the goal.
- **Direct.** The direct kick, on the other hand, can be directly kicked to goal on the restart whistle by the referee. The 10 yards to the wall is also applied here.

### The Penalty Kick.

A penalty is awarded when the defending team commits an infraction or foul on or inside the 18-yard penalty box. The ball is placed on the penalty spot (12 yards from the goal line) and the shooter must kick the ball in one forward motion without touching the ball twice. The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line until the shooter strikes the ball.

For more detailed descriptions of the rules please see [iFAB](#).



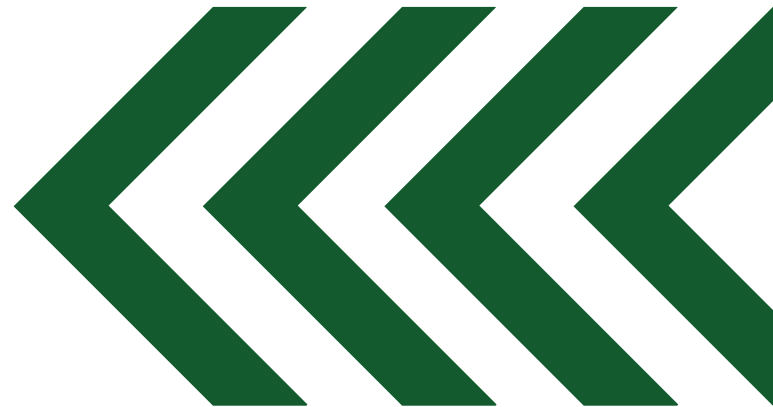
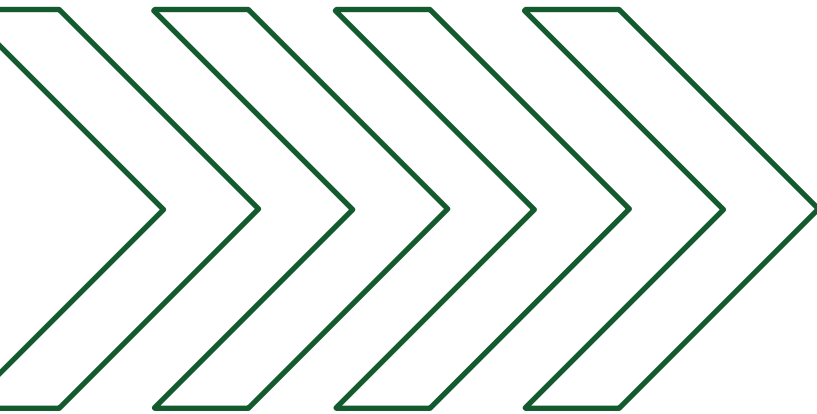
## Chapter 8

# COACHING EDUCATION

Chapter 8

### COACH EDUCATION

Coach Education  
Additional Resources  
HYS Pathways  
Getting Help





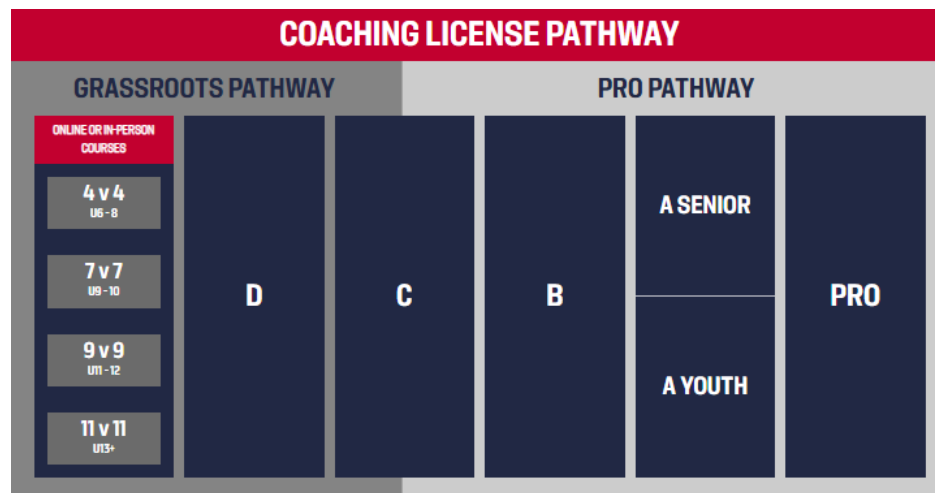
## COACH EDUCATION

Embarking on the pathway to gain formal coaching education is an exciting one, at HYS we support and encourage our coaches to gain formal coach education, and we are very lucky to have amazing support from our state level organization – MYSA (Mass Youth Soccer Association).



MYSA is governed by U.S. Soccer, which is committed to providing all coaches, from beginner to advanced, with education tailored to their experiences and the needs of their players.

The Coaching License Pathway consists of a series of courses designed to meet the specific needs of a coach at every step of the way. U.S. Soccer believes education is a journey, and our goal is to provide the necessary tools, guidance, and mentorship a coach requires along their way.



MYSA offers courses to aid with the transition to US Soccer's Player Development Initiatives. The courses are designed for coaches coaching players playing 4 v 4 format, 7 v 7 – 9 v 9 format and 11 v 11 format. All of the coaching education pathways offer excellent information pertinent and relevant to the age of the children you are coaching. All coaches must begin at the Introduction to Grassroots Coaching License.

### Introduction to Grassroots Coaching – [Click here to learn more](#)

This free introductory module, which represents the first step in the newly revised coaching license pathway, is now the general starting point of the pathway and is the required prerequisite to undergo any of U.S. Soccer's Grassroots Licensing Courses. Coaches who complete the module will also be provided with four complimentary Play-Practice-Play training sessions. The module takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

**4v4 Coaching Course** – Focused on players U6-U8 – [Click here to learn more](#)

**7v7 Coaching Course** – Focused on players U9-U10 – [Click here to learn more](#)

**9v9 Coaching Course** – Focused on players U11-U12 – [Click here to learn more](#)



11v11 Coaching Course – Focused on players U13-U19 – [Click here to learn more](#)

### The goals of these courses are

- To understand the basic needs of grassroots players
- To understand the basic structure of the game
- To understand the basic structure of a training session
- To understand the basic tasks of a grassroots coach

### With specific learning objectives

- To observe the game, recognize moments and basic player actions
- To demonstrate a basic understanding of Play-Practice-Play methodology (P-P-P)
- To execute and reflect on a P-P-P training session
- To create a player centered environment

### Formative Assessment in

- Coaching Games
- Coaching Training Sessions
- Leading the Player
- Leading the Team
- Managing the Performance Environment
- Leadership





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

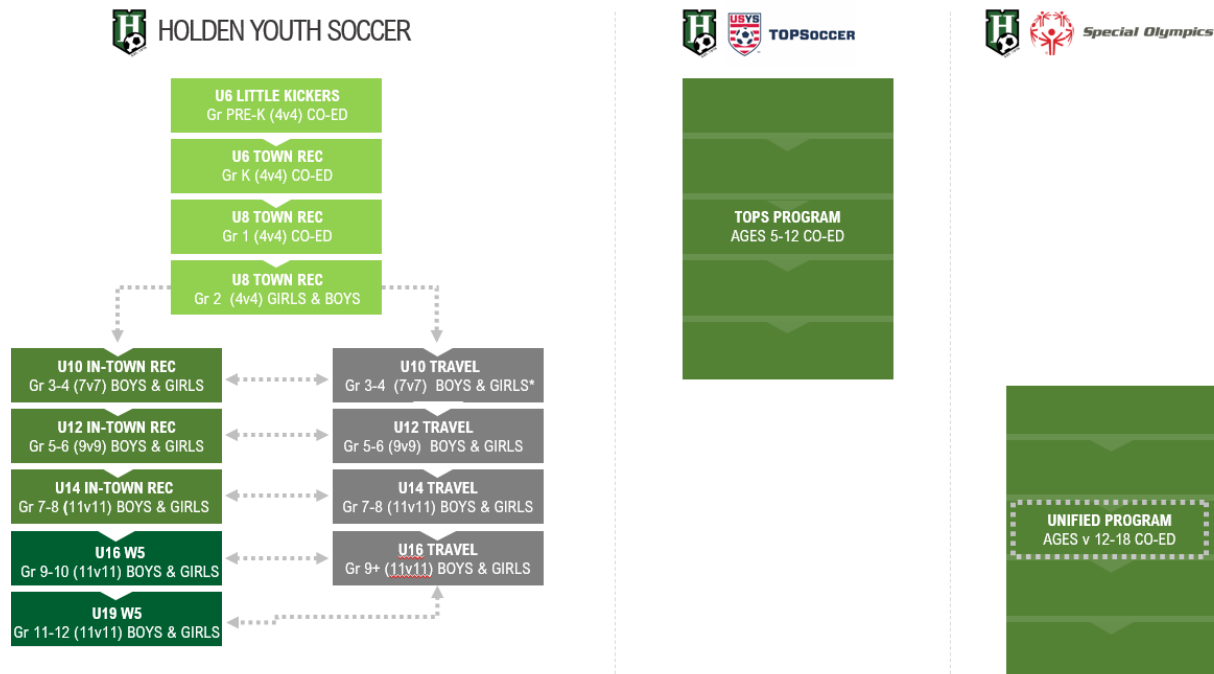
We have many resources available to our coaches which will help them through the season.

- **Age Group Guidelines.** Defines development objectives and specific technical, tactical, psychological and physical skill focus areas for that age group. [Click here.](#)
- **Lesson Plans.** Specific games and activities which are age group appropriate and that will ensure you keep the focus on the right level of skill for the age group you are coaching. [Click here.](#)
- **Systems of Play.** Offers different formations by age group, an understanding of the roles and responsibilities for each position on the field and a general understanding of phases of play. [Click here.](#)
- **Rules of the Game.** If you are new to soccer, here is a brief summary of the major rules in soccer. [Click here.](#)



# HYS PATHWAYS

Our goal at Holden Youth Soccer Association is to offer all children, ages 4 through 18, the opportunity to enjoy the game of soccer and improve their skills. In order to accomplish this, we have built a variety of unique program which each serve a different age-group and need. A high-level summary is below:



## Pre-K to Grade 2 – HYS Futures Program

- Designed to introduce kids to the game of soccer using lots of fun activities and game
- Pre-K, K and Grade 1 are Co-Ed teams and Grade 2 is split into boys and girls teams
- Season runs fall and spring for approx. 8 weeks
- Sessions run for about an hour on Saturday mornings at Davis Hill School (directions)
- Sessions are split into approx. 30mins of age-based games/activities followed by a short, small sided 4v4 scrimmage
- Coaches are provided lesson plans for the season as well as 1:1 coach instruction before each session

## In-Town Rec U10-U14 (Grades 3-8) – HYS Champions League

- Similar to the K-2 Program with more age-appropriate games/activities. Girls and Boys teams evenly matched across all skill levels
- More casual atmosphere than the Travel Program
- Games and practices typically run an hour each



- Weekend games (day depends on grade) plus one weekday practice. Games are 7v7, 9v9 and 11v11 depending on age group.
- Field location depends on grade
- Season runs fall and spring for 8 weeks

## Travel Program U10-16 (Grades 3-10) – HYS Travel Program

- This is a more competitive atmosphere for those players looking for more. Girls and Boys teams are made up by skill level
- Teams play against nearby town teams within the MAYS (Midland Area Youth Soccer) league
- Typically Saturday games, times depend on age group
- Practices are on a weeknight(s) TBD by coach for each team
- Season typically run for 8 weeks plus playoffs
- Playoff winners of Division 1 and 2 Teams are eligible for MTOC (Massachusetts Tournament of Champions) and play teams from other towns and leagues

## W5 Program U16-19 (Grades 9-12) – HYS W5 Program

- Casual soccer for high-school players . Girls and Boys teams evenly matched across all skill levels
- Teams are made up from players from Holden and other surrounding towns
- Typically Sunday games, but can vary year to year, times depend on age group
- Games held in Holden, location varies by year
- Season typically run for 8 weeks but can vary

## TOPSoccer Program (ages 5-14)

- The HYS TOPSoccer Program is developed for children with special needs in the age range of 5-14 and live in the central Massachusetts area
- It is a volunteer-driven, community-based program that brings the game of soccer into the lives of these wonderful children who might not otherwise have an opportunity to play
- Players are given the opportunity to experience, enjoy, and play soccer in a modified version specifically designed to foster a feeling of individual confidence and success
- Sessions are held one hour per week run by volunteer groups of trained coaches (ages 15 & up) to facilitate one to one interaction with each TOPSoccer athlete.
- Athletes participate in soccer-specific activities to help them experience a sense of personal achievement

## Unified Program

- Teams composed of players both with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) with minimal soccer rules modifications
- All players of ages 12-18 across mainstream, autism spectrum, and any ID are welcome and should be capable of being an individual contributor to a team environment (i.e., without 1:1 support)



- The program strives to provide meaningful social inclusion for all players and promotes an equal role for all despite different abilities
- Practices/scrimmages held weekly to develop peer-to-peer friendships through the game of soccer
- In the fall season, Unified players compete in the Special Olympics State Cup at the Governor's Academy in Newbury. The event includes team bus ride, opening ceremonies, multiple games, and an awards ceremony.
- Teams can participate in the Special Olympics Unified Fitness Challenge where partners train together on fitness goals and compete in United Through Sports World Virtual Youth Festival.
- In 2021, a league team was formed to compete against other Massachusetts Unified teams. The league offers an additional commitment and challenge for interested players.
- HYS is pioneering this unique operating model by introducing the Unified sports model into town youth sports



## GETTING HELP

As a coach you should never feel like there is a situation you are not equipped to manage. If this situation comes up, please reach out to one of our board members for help. If you have any questions related to topics included in this manual contact Ryan Hall at [rhall@holdenyouthsoccer.org](mailto:rhall@holdenyouthsoccer.org). Below is a full list of contacts within our Board of Directors, contact details can be found on the [HYS website](#).

ROLE	CURRENT BOARD MEMBER
President	Jessica Frenger
Vice President	Jarret Groccia
Treasurer	Jeff Locke
Secretary	Natalie Dellecese
Registrar	Pam Sansoucy
Director of Player and Coach Development	Ryan Hall
Coach and Player Development	Josh Gay, Joseph Hall
Age Group Director – Boys Travel	Grace Blanchette
Age Group Director – Girls Travel	Andrew Smith
Age Group Director – In-Town - Pre-K – 2	Alan Lambkin
Age Group Director – In-Town - Grades 3-8	Erin Deslauriers
Age Group Director – In-Town - High School	Andrea Berger
Age Group Director – TOPS	Osman Bilsel
Age Group Director – Unified	Jon-Paul St. Germain (Term Ending)
Age Group Director – Winter Futsal	Craig Toney
Risk Manager	Jaime DePari
Referee Coordinator	Jessica Frenger
Field Coordinator	Regino Mercado
Equipment Coordinator	OPEN ROLE
Marketing Coordinator	Luis Garcia
Sponsorship Coordinator	Inna Subert
Web Master	Alan Lambkin, Ryan Hall, Jessica Frenger
League Rep & Revs Liaison	OPEN ROLE Jarret Groccia & Craig Toney (Interim)
Parent Liaison	OPEN ROLE
Unified Liaison	Jenn Shiels
Associate Board Member	Dave Murphy (Past President)



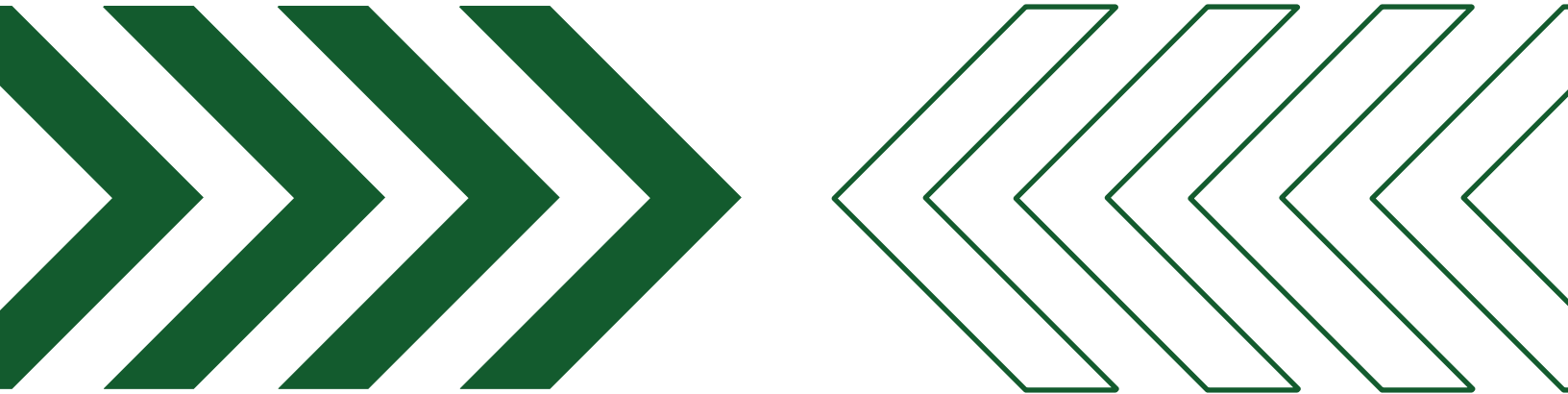
# Chapter 9

# REFERENCES

Chapter 9

REFERENCES

References







## REFERENCES

Below is a list of references used in the completion of this coaching manual.

- HYS Coaching Handbook – 2017
- U.S. Youth Soccer – Coaching Manual 2015
- U.S. Soccer Coaches Toolkit
- U.S. Soccer Coaching Grassroots Training Manual 2018
- The Coaching Manual – New Coaches Starter Pack
- ChatGPT, ver. 3.5; OpenAI

## VERSION HISTORY

- V1 – Released Apr 2025
  - Initial Release
- V2 – Released Aug 2025
  - Added coach equipment checklist
  - Added sample parent communication e-mail
  - Updated HYS Board Member List

[illegible]



[www.holdenyouthsoccer.org](http://www.holdenyouthsoccer.org)

THANK-YOU

