

Montclair United Academy Guidelines

Purpose

This document is intended to stand alone as an instructive blueprint for anyone seeking to learn more about or administrate the Academy program.

Philosophy

The Academy philosophy is to provide high-level, structured training to Montclair children who demonstrate a passion for the game of soccer and a commitment to further developing skills through concentrated training. The program emphasizes individual, skills-based training and small-sided games, as well as developing an inspiring, fun environment that fosters confidence and creativity.

Team Composition

GEOGRAPHY

Teams should be comprised primarily of Montclair children with targets for team size and out-of-town participation.

Age Group	Number of Boys (target)	Number of Girls (target)	Non-Montclair (07042/07043) ¹
U7/8	36	36	max 20%
U9	36	36	max 20% per team
U10	36	36	max 20% per team
U11	32	32	max 30% per team
U12	tbd	32	max 35% per team
U13	tbd	tbd	max 40% per team

¹Academy Age Group Directors may petition the Academy Director and MUSC Board of Directors to raise the hard cap on non-Montclair players. Still, under no circumstances will out-of-town participation exceed 45% per team.

PLAYING UP

Players wanting to play with an older age group (e.g. an 8 year old playing with the U10 Academy) must fit one of the following criteria:

- *Grade appropriate* - if a player is not age appropriate, but is grade appropriate, he/she is eligible to play up.
- *Significant contributor* - if a player is neither age or grade appropriate, upon request, he/she may try out for the older age group. If the player is ranked in the top 1/3 of the A team, he/she is eligible to play up.
- *Extraordinary circumstances* - if a player does not fit either of the above criteria, the Team Manager and/or Academy Age Group Director may make an appeal to the Director of Academy Programs for an exception.

All applications to play up are subject to the judgment and final approval of the Director of Academy Programs.

Parent / Player Commitment

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND STRUCTURE

Each age group requires commitments from knowledgeable parents to ensure the program's success, as well as contain costs. The following roles are critical:

- **Vice President of Travel Programs** - plans and manages all MUSC travel programs.
- **Director of Coaching** - establishes age group benchmarks, evaluates and manages trainers and training organizations, drives developmental culture within the Club.
- **Academy Age Group Directors** - (one each for the girls' and boys' Academies) are responsible for overall administration of the program. Each enlists and manages parent volunteers to coordinate small-sided scrimmages, invited scrimmages, tournaments and any other events.
- **Team Managers** for each team (for age groups where teams are formed). **Small-sided Game Volunteers** will help to control costs by minimizing trainer involvement.

ATTENDANCE AND COMMITMENT

Children are expected to dedicate themselves to the program; best demonstrated by dependable, prompt attendance and enthusiastic participation. The level of commitment (and attendance) increases with each age group, materially stepping up for the U11s with a non-optional Winter component. But, in general, the Academy is designed to drive attendance using *the carrot* (ie fun programs in a challenging, competitive environment), not *the stick* (ie contracts, mandates or sanctions). Montclair United recognizes children will likely miss sessions due to school or religious education commitments, vacations and commitments to other sports. **The Academy supports children playing multiple sports** (especially in Winter/Spring) and understands the associated scheduling/attendance considerations. That said, the Club aims to balance the commitment of players who prioritize soccer relative to players who may have other commitments. At U12 and above, trainers may reduce playing time proportional to the number of regular practices and league games missed.

Training and Competitive Play

TRAINER COMMITMENT

The needs of the club can only be met with the following:

- Consistent, dedicated, enthusiastic, high-level training by qualified professional training staff.
- A dedicated training “director” who will oversee the program and coordinate all staff trainers.
- Detailed training curricula outlining how the program will unfold during the year on a session-by-session basis.
- Fields properly set up for weekday and weekend training.

For training purposes, each age group will be broken down into smaller groups with a maximum of 13 players per trainer (16 for U11 and older). Each trainer will work with all players within an age group. Even at age levels where players are divided into teams, trainers will float between teams during training sessions. The goal is to provide interchangeable, focused training for all players within the program to underscore the belief that each player is capable of achievement.

Each team will have a primary, but not exclusive, game day coach, though rotating coaches from season to season is encouraged. While Parent Team Managers may administratively assist trainers on game day in pre- and postgame, the professional trainer will be the only one on the sideline during the game, unless a professional trainer is unavailable.

In order to expose players to different training methods and styles, each trainer will be paired with an individual team for a maximum of two years.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

A deliberate, well-planned approach to training and game play is comprised of several components, many of which are utilized in some combination within MUSC travel teams. The Academy format, however, is specifically designed to maximize player development and social enjoyment, while controlling costs. The elements:

Training sessions will focus on rhythm, balance, explosion, coordination, change of speed and the use of technique with maximum time on the ball. Training activities will take place in match-related or match conditions to emphasize fun and creativity and to develop well-balanced players able to utilize both feet with a concentration on technique. Secondly, tactical elements will be introduced gradually for each age group as follows:

- U9s to begin to understand goal kicks, throw ins and free kicks

- U10s to include the details of corner kicks
- U11s should understand all rules/regulations and how to deal with situational soccer

Small-sided games encourage team play and pride in competing. Key ingredients to creating the ideal environment:

- Use of medium-sized goals to encourage scoring.
- 4 v 4 (including a goalie).
- 3 fields or more (depending on small-sided formation) playing simultaneously (potentially with a sub or two - requires supervision).
- Formally structured sessions where age groups alternate playing with/against different age groups (eg play up one week, play down the next) and special guests (e.g. Rec League All Stars, invited clubs/guests).
- T-shirts as uniforms (eg Professional Club affiliations).
- Weekly newsletter recognizing accomplishments.
- 1-2 professional trainers to supervise (depending on field size), multiple parent volunteers to assist.

Depending on intent and context, **Tournaments** offer the opportunity to experiment with rosters, develop team chemistry, and/or allow a taste of travel for younger groups

Invited Scrimmage Opportunities are arranged practice games with clubs that share the Academy's attitude toward player development and small-sided games (eg West Orange, Ironbound). A formal relationship with a few such clubs would be ideal. Objective is to create competitive atmosphere (ie uniforms, referees, etc). Scrimmage Opportunities are just as valuable, and easier to schedule, within the Academy, between age groups (eg U11s play U10s).

REASONS FOR SMALL-SIDED PLAY

Philosophical

1. Because we want our young soccer players to have more individual teaching time with the coach. Fewer players on the field will guarantee this. (Need to feel worthy...need to feel important)
2. Because we want to distance our young soccer players from the external undo pressures of the adult game (eliminate extrinsic value).
3. Because we want our young soccer players to enjoy the game for its own sake (foster intrinsic value).

Educational

1. Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become more skillful with it (individual technical development).
2. Because we want our young soccer players to make more quality decisions during the game (tactical development).
3. Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically efficient in the field space in which they are playing (reduced field size).
4. Because we want our young soccer players to have more involved playing time in the game (more opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents).
5. Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunities to play on both sides of the ball (more exposure to attacking and defending situations).
6. Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunities to score goals and make saves (pure excitement).

source: US Youth Soccer Organization

Individual development through a **Standardized Report Card** at the conclusion of the Fall and Spring seasons. The coach/trainer will spend an appropriate amount of time with each player and their parents summarizing their strong points, developmental areas, and areas of focus for future training. This standard report card should be used across all age groups with assessment categories including, but not limited to: attitude, coordination, technique, balance, rhythm, desire to learn, enthusiasm, coachability.

Feedback from parents in the form of a **Parent Evaluation/Survey** allows the program to identify trends (both over time and across age groups), as well as incorporate fresh ideas into the Academy model. Evaluation should be both qualitative (for solicitation of ideas and expanded comment) and quantitative (to allow for trending analysis).

POSITIONING

In the interest of providing a diverse experience during game play, players should play at least three positions until U10 (at least one agreeable to the player) and two positions at U11 (at least one agreeable to the player).

SUBSTITUTIONS

During league games, coaches will strive for equal playing time through U11, rotating players in groups at even intervals. From U12 and older, players will be guaranteed a minimum amount of playing time (in aggregate):

U12 - 60%

U13 - 50%

U14 - 40%

PARENT BEHAVIOR

During games and small-sided scrimmages, parents are expected to lend encouragement and enthusiasm, and refrain from coaching their sons/daughters from the sideline.

TEAM FLIGHTING

Academy age groups will initially play in a mixed-team environment without any focus on individual teams. As the players progress within the Academy, they will form ability-based teams based on the timetable below. The intent is to have players consistently train in a challenging environment. Once ability-based teams are created, however, it's important to maintain a developmental focus on all players within the Academy, as well as allow players to be rewarded for effort, hard work and development.

- Trainers, as noted above, will rotate from team to team within each season in a teaming approach.
- Small-sided scrimmages, as noted above, will create competitive, mixed-ability opportunities for all players.
- Trainers will reward and recognize players by allowing them to train "up" during training sessions.

- Ability-based teams will be re-evaluated after the fall season to determine if player movement between teams is warranted. This window for player movement is not intended to reproduce the end-of-year tryout process, instead to create an environment where Trainers have the **option** to move players should such a decision be **clear**. In other words, teams are formed for each season (e.g. Fall), not each year. Such midyear player moves can be made only with VP of Travel and/or Director of Coaching approval.

Flighting

	Fall	Winter	Spring
U8	mixed teams	mixed teams	mixed teams
U9	mixed teams	mixed teams	ability-based teams
U10	ability-based teams	ability-based teams	ability-based teams
U11	ability-based teams	ability-based teams	ability-based teams

Note: while the Academy program is a best of breed program based on many years of experience, research and findings, it's worthwhile to note that there is considerable alignment with the training curriculum released by US Soccer (download at: <http://www.ussoccer.com/Coaches/Coaching-Education/Coaching-Home.aspx>). Specifically, the recommendation for the amount/frequency of training is identical to the curriculum outlined in the following pages.

U7/8 TRAINING PROGRAM

Players are not divided into teams or units and instead train as a group and play scrimmages, games and tournaments on teams with a balanced mixture of talent. Winter sessions are optional.

U7/8 Schedule

Season	Training Sessions	Small-sided Games	Tournaments*		Invited Scrimmages*		League Play		Additional Offering(s)*
			<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	
Fall (12 weeks)	Twice per week (1 hr)	Once per week (75 min)	1-2 per season	-	1-2 per season	-	-	-	-
Winter (8 weeks)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	League play throughout the Winter (mixed teams)
Spring (12 weeks)	Twice per week (1 hr)	Once per week (75 min)	1-2 per season	-	1-2 per season	-	-	-	-
Summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* optional offerings - typically not included in program cost

U9 TRAINING PROGRAM

For the Fall season, players will train as a group and play scrimmages, league games and tournaments on teams with a balanced mixture of talent.

Winter sessions are optional.

For the Spring season, players will be divided into ability-based teams determined by trainer assessment. These teams will serve as the basis for the Spring travel schedule with teams participating in competitive games for a full season (8-10 games). Teams will train together as units within the larger age group, however there will be latitude for rewarding/recognizing players by having them train “up”. Teams can also be shuffled/mixed for some tournaments and/or scrimmage opportunities. If there is sufficient depth within the age group, Spring teams may be mixed (with Academy Director approval).

For Summer, trainers will decide on an optional, large-roster Select Team for participation in a schedule of five tournaments, with players eligible to play in as many as four tournaments.

U9 Schedule

Season	Training Sessions	Small-sided Games	Tournaments*		Invited Scrimmages*		League Play		Additional Offering(s)*
			<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	
Fall (12 weeks)	Twice per week (75 min)	Once per week (90 min)	Twice per season	-	Twice per season	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	-	-
Winter (8 weeks)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	League play throughout the Winter (mixed teams) and Tournaments. Winter training 1x week.
Spring (12 weeks)	Twice per week (75 min)	Once per week (90 min)	Once per season	Twice per season	Once per season	-	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	-
Summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Summer Select-style tournaments with an ability-based team. Larger roster with each boy or girl playing in 4 tournaments out of a possible 5

* optional offerings - typically not included in program cost

U10 TRAINING PROGRAM

For both Fall and Spring seasons, players will be divided into ability-based teams determined by trainer assessment. These teams will serve as the basis for the travel schedule with teams placed and flighted in local leagues as deemed appropriate. Teams will train together as units within the larger age group, however there will be latitude for rewarding/recognizing players by having them train “up”.

Trainers will work with the Academy Age Group Director and Academy Director between the Fall and Spring seasons to assess whether player movement between teams is warranted.

Winter sessions are optional.

For Summer, trainers will decide on an optional, large-roster Select Team for participation in a schedule of five tournaments, with players eligible to play in as many as four tournaments.

Optional, but encouraged, Supplemental Training sessions are offered.

U10 Schedule

Season	Training Sessions	Small-sided Games	Tournaments*		Invited Scrimmages*		League Play		Additional Offering(s)*
			<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	
Fall (12 weeks)	Twice per week (90 min)	Once per week (90 min)	-	one to three per season	-	Twice per season	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	Supplemental training (60 min)
Winter (10 weeks)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Once per week training, tournaments and local, indoor league (eg TSF, Soccer Palace)
Spring (12 weeks)	Twice per week (90 min)	Once per week (90 min)	-	one to three per season (target 1-2 U11 tournaments)	-	Once per season	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	Supplemental training (60 min)
Summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Summer Select-style tournaments with an ability-based team. Larger roster with each boy or girl playing in 4 tournaments out of a possible 5. Play “up” to prepare for 11 v 11

* optional offerings - typically not included in program cost

U11 TRAINING PROGRAM

The U11 commitment level is expected to be incrementally higher. Winter training and league play are included in the program.

For both Fall and Spring seasons, players will be divided into ability-based teams determined by trainer assessment. Teams will train together as units within the larger age group, however there will be latitude for rewarding/recognizing players by having them train “up”.

Trainers will work with the Academy Age Group Director and Director of Coaching/VP of Travel between the Fall and Spring seasons to assess whether player movement between teams is warranted.

For Summer, trainers will decide on an optional, large-roster Select Team for participation in a schedule of five tournaments, with players eligible to play in as many as four tournaments.

Optional, but encouraged, Supplemental Training sessions are offered.

U11 Schedule

Season	Training Sessions	Small-sided Games	Tournaments*		Invited Scrimmages*		League Play		Additional Offering(s)*
			<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	
Fall (12 weeks)	Twice per week (90 min)	Once per week (90 min)	-	one to three per season	-	Twice per season	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	Supplemental training (90 min)
Winter (10 weeks)	Once per week (90 min)	-	-	Two to three per season	-	-	-	Local, indoor league (eg TSF)	-
Spring (12 weeks)	Twice per week (90 min)	Once per week (90 min)	-	one to three per season (target 1-2 U11 tournaments)	-	Once per season	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	Supplemental training (90 min)
Summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Summer Select-style tournaments with an ability-based team. Larger roster with each boy or girl playing in 4 tournaments out of a possible 5

* optional offerings - typically not included in program cost

U12 TRAINING PROGRAM

Winter training and league play are included in the program.

For both Fall and Spring seasons, players will be divided into ability-based teams determined by trainer assessment. Teams will train together as units within the larger age group, however there will be latitude for rewarding/recognizing players by having them train “up”.

Trainers will work with the Academy Age Group Director and Director of Coaching/VP of Travel between the Fall and Spring seasons to assess whether player movement between teams is warranted.

Optional, but encouraged, Supplemental Training sessions are offered.

U12 Schedule

Season	Training Sessions	Small-sided Games	Tournaments*		Invited Scrimmages*		League Play		Additional Offering(s)*
			<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	<i>mixed teams</i>	<i>ability based teams</i>	
Fall (12 weeks)	Twice per week (90 min)	Once per week (90 min)	-	one to three per season	-	Twice per season	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	Supplemental training (90 min)
Winter (10 weeks)	Once per week (90 min)	-	-	Two to three per season	-	-	-	Local, indoor league (eg TSF)	-
Spring (12 weeks)	Twice per week (90 min)	Once per week (90 min)	-	one to three per season (target 1-2 U12 tournaments)	-	Once per season	-	Travel league play; flighted accordingly	Supplemental training (90 min)
Summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Summer Select-style tournaments with an ability-based team. Larger roster with each boy or girl playing in 4 tournaments out of a possible 5

* optional offerings - typically not included in program cost