



# Indianola Soccer Tribe: New Coach Quick-Start Guide

Theme: "Let Them Play, Let Them Learn"

Welcome to the Tribe! Your goal this season isn't just to teach soccer; it's to build a love for the game. This guide simplifies your focus into three areas: **Culture, Practice, and Games.**

## PART 1: Culture

As a new coach, measure your success by how many players sign up to play again next year, not wins and losses. Focus on these three metrics:

1. **FUN:** If they aren't smiling, they aren't learning. More games, less drills.
2. **EFFORT:** Praise the hustle, not just the goal. Effort is something all players can maximize.
3. **RESPECT:** Respect for teammates, opponents, and officials helps the kids grow in more than just soccer skills.

### The Golden Rule of Youth Coaching: Minimize Laps, Lines, and Lectures.

- **Laps:** Sometimes kids need to burn off energy, but keep them engaged with a ball as much as possible.
- **Lines:** If kids are standing in a line, they aren't getting touches. Keep groups small.
- **Lectures:** Keep instructions between 30-60 seconds. Players learn by *doing*, not listening.

## PART 2: RUNNING A TRIBE PRACTICE

The Golden Thread that should weave through all your practices:

1. Lots of fun
2. Loads of touches
3. Stretch (edge of their current comfort zone with skills)
4. Constant player decision making
5. Practice looks like the game

### Asking questions vs. providing answers

There are times, especially at the young ages, where you need to be direct. However, after initial explanations try asking questions to help the kids engage and problem solve themselves. Examples: "Where should you be right now?", "What were you trying to accomplish?", "Where can you look to help make that decision?", etc.

### Communication (Speaking in visuals)

New players struggle with technical jargon. Use "Word Pictures" to help them understand.

- **"Kiss the Foot":** When receiving a pass, let the ball touch your foot gently.
- **"Flashlight Eyes":** Keep your head up to "shine your light" on open teammates.
- **"Surfer Stance":** Get low and side-on when defending (balanced and ready).

There are multiple coaching methods that can be used to run a practice. At the U5-U8 level, we've found that the Play-Ball mastery-Practice-Play model works well and have built curriculum packs based on this method to help get you started.

## 1. Play 1 (~10 mins)

Don't wait for everyone to arrive. As soon as two kids are there, start a Small Sided Game.

- *Example:* 1v1 or 2v2 to small goals.
- *Goal:* Maximum touches, play soccer, and immediate engagement.

## 2. Ball Mastery (~10 mins)

Every player has a ball. Lots of touches, building comfort and confidence on the ball.

## 3. Practice (~15 mins)

Pick one or two concepts you want to teach and do so through fun games. Demo and provide help as needed, but don't "steal their reps" by always assisting or commenting on each attempt. The kids get better through their efforts to accomplish the task.

## 4. Play 2 (~15 mins)

Let them play the game. Depending on field space this might be a full sized game or you may have to adjust and use half the field. There will be tons of items you can instruct them on during this portion. Try keeping it focused on what you were teaching earlier in the practice to reinforce those concepts, you'll get to the other topics at another practice.

- Don't "Joystick Coach" (telling them exactly where to pass, etc.). Instead, ask questions: "Where is the open space?" "How can we get the ball there?"

# PART 3: GAME DAY

- **The 50% Rule:** Every player plays at least 50% of the game.
- **Sideline Behavior:** Be a "Cool" Coach. Cheer for good efforts from *both* teams. Let the players make their own decisions on the pitch. The intelligence has to be on the field, not on the sideline. Guide them at times, but don't call out continuous instructions.
- **Halftime:** You are going to overload them with all the things you want them to work on in the second half. Keep it simple, pick one or two topics in each area below:
  - *What went well?* Reinforce those concepts.
  - *What can we improve on?* Give simple ideas they can execute, maybe with a key term that will help them remember if you call it out during the game. Ex. "Mark up" means to get between an attacker and our goal.
- **Post-Game:** High-fives for everyone. Focus on one "Highlight of the Day" that wasn't a score (e.g., "I loved how Sarah looked up when dribbling and passed to Alice!").

**Resources:** For other practice diagrams and curriculum packs, visit the Tribe Coaching website: <https://www.indianolasoccertribe.com/Default.aspx?tabid=1916153>