



La Crescent Youth Soccer (LYSA)

Coaching U5 and U6 Soccer

Thank you for volunteering to coach. We have worked very hard to create an environment focused on fun and learning. This general attitude is especially important with kids of this age. This handout has been put together to help those that do not have much coaching experience or soccer experience. Hopefully it will serve as a starting point for you to come up with your own creative ways to make soccer a fun and positive experience for our kids.

Getting Organized

Team Name –

The kids seem to really enjoy creating/voting on a team name. It also helps getting the quieter kids involved and adds to the fun. Remember; think like a 5 year old.....Blue Blasters, Gray Sharks, Stingers, Dinosaurs, etc...

Roster Sheet

We will email rosters to parents. We will also have rosters available on the field. This helps them get to know each other and makes the season more fun.

Discuss the developmental difference between children

Parents will be reminded that all kids develop differently. The child who is a daisy picker this season may blossom into a tiger over the course of a few months. At times you can even see the light go on in their heads when they finally "get it". Also, either now or during the season if needed, make sure parents know that they don't need to be embarrassed if their child is one who "doesn't quite get it" I have done this numerous times and the parents always look relieved when I broach the subject. It is very important they stay positive with the child.

Cheering

Encourage parents to cheer for all the kids, and to follow your lead on what the kids are doing right. Oddly enough, I usually don't cheer too loud for a goal. They get enough of that from everyone else. I'll cheer loudest for the child that does something exceptional, like taking the ball cleanly from an opponent, running back hard on defense, or helping up a teammate who has fallen down.



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First Training Session - Getting Started

Introduce yourself to players and parents as they show up

Teach players to shake your hand and introduce themselves as they show up. You'll have to carry them through this. They are very undeveloped socially. Just let them goof around until the rest of the team shows up. Talk to them and joke around with them, remember, some of them are first timers.

Gather the kids around.....

Tell them how the practices will go. You'll play a few games, do some drills and then a scrimmage. Ask them if they know the most important rule (having fun and being nice).

Start practice with Endline drill

This is a secret weapon for maintaining order and bringing the kids together for instruction. Basically, whenever you bark out the command "Endline", they are supposed to run to the endline next to their goal, and stand on the line with their arms extended sideways (*Spread your wings*). This puts them all in one spot, and keeps them spread out so they can't touch, poke and bother each other.

Endline Drill - This is used to keep them in order during practice

Have them dribble around in a predefined area. Blow your whistle and shout "Endline, Endline, Endline" Chase them to the line, help them spread out. Tell them "good job" As soon as they are set, have them go out, dribble around, and do it again. Repeat until they seem to get it.

Assume Nothing

As you start the soccer season with these kids, assume nothing. Some of them may have no idea of the meaning of "dribble" or "out of bounds" etc...

ATTENTION SPANS

Once you have them on the line, figure you have about 28 seconds to explain whatever comes next. In my opinion, if you can't explain it in 28 seconds, you're doomed....

Soccer Basics

Soccer is wonderful in that it can really be distilled down to a very simple game. This is one of the reasons I think it is such a great sport for children. At this age, the key is to keep it as simple as possible. Emphasize the following points:

No Hands....

Bounce the ball off their knees, heads, heads, etc... and ask them if it's ok to hit the ball with that part of their body.

They say "YES"Do we ever touch the ball with our hands? NO



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Be nice.....

Go over the concept of cheering for teammates and encouraging them.

Some things to keep in mind on this first day....

Listen to what you tell them

Be precise as possible with your instructions. 9 out of 10 times, if the kids have not done what I asked of them, it is because I did not do a good job of telling them exactly what I wanted them to do. IE... If I yell "OK, Everyone line up", they will mill around, look at their buddy, and presume they are lined up just fine with him. However, if I yell, "everyone line up on the endline with your balls and spread your wings", they will do exactly that and be happy to do so.

Don't Worry, Be Happy

Never, Never, Never get frustrated with the level of soccer play. Always be giving instructions in a positive way. Never get loud in a negative way. Understand that some kids are not mature enough to "get" what is going on. The mark of a good coach is to work to make sure that these kids have fun too. Please don't get frustrated with them, instead, try to be amused by whatever is going on in this child's head. As a coach, you want to make sure this child is having fun, and he wants to come back the next day and the next year and play. As long as they keep having fun, they will continue to come back until the day he finally does "get it".

No Hands.

This gets kind of confusing when you introduce throw-ins. "Do we ever use our hands?" "NO, except for throw-ins."

More Concepts to work into your Training

Beginning of Practice Routine

Stretches

This is really just to get them in the habit and all in one place at the start of practice. These kids are already more flexible than you or I would be with three hours of stretching. Make it quick and easy. I usually do toe touches, jumping jacks, and flamingos, (Quad Stretches)

Ball Rollies

Rolling the ball back and forth and side to side with the bottom of the foot

Ball Steppies

This is a basic foot coordination skill. Stand in front of the ball and with a small hop; touch the ball with the ball of the foot. Bring foot back to ground. Repeat. The idea is to just tap the ball without moving it. After a while, you might move up to alternating feet with each hop....(good luck ☺). After a while, you might have them try it without looking at the ball. This skill is made into a drill by asking them to count how many they can do in 10 seconds. Then have them do it again and see if they can beat their own record. *(This seems like a great idea until you realize that half of them can't count.)*



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Basic Rules Understanding

Out of Bounds - Some kids won't have a good grasp on "in-bounds"

The first practice or two, run laps around the field yelling "in bounds- out of bounds" and have them run on that side of the line.

Throw-Ins - Keep it basic

When the ball is kicked out of bounds on either side, it necessitates a throw-in. The simplest way to teach this is: Have the kids put their toes on the line, Grab the ball with both hands, Pull it back over their head, Touch the back of their neck with the ball, Throw it at your goal. (...or your mascot). *Both arms come over together Both feet stay on the ground on the line.*

Goal kick -

Sorry....Still working on an easy way to get this point across to 4 year olds - good luck!

Corner kicks

Ditto.....

THROW -INS

Some kids may get off track and try to throw it to a teammate instead of at the goal. This is perfectly fine, and shows how they start to solve problems on their own. Pull them aside and praise them for using their head and being smart.

Take a knee drill -

This is to teach the kids to immediately take a knee when play is stopped for an injury. I'll have them dribble around until I yell take a knee. They are to stop and get on one knee as fast as they can. It's kinda silly, but they need to learn it.

"Get up fast when you fall down" drill.

If you thought the last one was silly..... this is in response to kids falling down in games and just laying there. We talk about how you can't play soccer if you are laying down, and you can't help your teammates. Basically, have them dribble around, and they are all supposed to fall down whenever you yell 'DOWN'. As soon as they hit the ground, start yelling, "Pop up, pop up pop up as fast as you can". We'll do this a few times until they get bored. It makes a surprising difference in the way some kids act during a game.

Red Light Green light -

The classic kids game. Sometimes I'll throw in blue light and make them cluck like a chicken. Emphasize that they are to take "Tiny Kicks" and keep the ball close to their body. On red lights, they are supposed to stop the ball with their foot. If the ball is not close to them, they can't stop it.



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Sharks and Minnows (or whatever)

Classic Kids game. One kid starts without a ball, and he chases the other kids around trying to kick their ball away from them. If their ball goes out of bounds, they become a shark and have to help trying to kick other kid's balls away.

Dribbling through Gates.

Set up a series of cones in random locations kind of close together. Set the cones in pairs (gates) about 2 feet apart. Tell the kids they have to dribble through the gates, and count how many gates that they get through in 30 seconds. Tell them they can't go through the same one twice in a row. Then do it again and tell the kids to try to get more gates than they did last time.

Follow the leader.

Have them follow you around. The intent is to practice dribbling and to take breaks to work on minor skills. Every 20 steps or so, do something like "take a knee" or "right shoe with your laces only" or anything bizarre you can think of.

Steal and Turns.

Try to get the kids to understand turning the ball around after they take it from the other team. Get all the kids lined up on the endline, then stand next to them and the goal with the ball. You dribble out, and after a few steps, yell out one of their names. They are supposed to chase me down, steal the ball, and take the ball back to the goal to score. Give them the appropriate amount of resistance based on their own skill. This is a good drill to have another parent help with. You can set-up another goal with cones to rotate the kids faster.

Dribbling in a square / Simon says

Set out a 20' x 20' square. (You can change the size as needed.) Have the kids dribble around inside the square without hitting anyone else or anyone else's ball. After they get comfortable with this, yell out different commands. *Do 10 steppies... Take a knee.. Touch the ball with your knee... Cluck like a chicken.* A variation of this is to make it like "Simon says." They have to keep dribbling until you say "Simon Says". Instead of making those who make a mistake having to sit out, make them dribble to a cone at the other end of the field and come back to be in the game.

Count your dribbles

One of those drills that works well with kids that can count. Have them dribble down to a cone as fast as they can and come back. Have them count their kicks. Do it again, and tell the kids to try to beat their own record by kicking it more times than before. You are trying to teach them to take small kicks and control the ball, but still move quickly.

Avoid having anyone "sit out"

Avoid games where someone has to sit out. Instead, make them do something else like dribble to a cone that's about 20 yards away, and then come back and into the game.



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Scrimmages

Scrimmages are the most important part of your practice. That is what the kids want to do. At this age, make sure you scrimmage every practice. At this age, it doesn't matter if it is Boys vs. Boys, boys vs. girls, etc. Make it a learning experience, and teach both teams, not just your own. Don't be afraid to stop the game to make a point, just don't do it so much that it takes away from the game. Try not to single out someone's mistake, but focus on the concept of what is correct. IE...*Who knows why we stopped?* That's right, it went out of bounds. *What do we do next?* "That's right, a throw in, because it went out on the side."

Game Time

Keep it simple,

Remind them of the basics:

What are we going to do? **Take the ball away from the other team and kick it in our goal.**

Are we going to use our hands? **NO**

Are we going to play nice? **YES**

Substitutions.

Use a round robin technique to get players in and out. We will have 2 quarters of 12 minutes. Having a watch comes in real handy. Coaches will be the referees and instructors. You can make the kids stand next to you but you will notice some of them will want to go to their parents for water and compliments. Do whatever makes sense to you.

Some Comments about Games

Passing

They won't pass. They don't want to pass. They have been waiting all week to kick the ball, and once they get, it the last thing on their mind is to give it to someone else. Don't make them pass. The only time I really promote passing is when we are slaughtering the other team and I am trying to slow my kids down.

Pushing and shoving

If too much of this goes on in a practice or game, make the offender play with their thumbs stuck in their wasteband. This keeps them from being pushy or using their hands too much.

Injuries

When they fall or cry, don't panic. Tell parents that they are welcome to run onto the field if they think their child is hurt. We have found that most of the "injuries" in this age group are for getting attention or embarrassment from a mistake. If you feel that a child is using this to seek attention, give them all the attention they need....on the sideline. Give the requisite amount of sympathy, and then have them sit out an extra shift. Explain that you afraid to put them back in since they were "hurt".....this usually drives them nuts because they were planning on a quick "recovery" as soon as the attention died down. It tends to cause a tapering off effect in the amount of "injuries" we sustain over the course of a season.



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Final Thoughts

We hope this helps you get prepared for the season. If you have any suggestions or comments regarding things that have worked for you, please let me know, and we'll add to this handout for future seasons.

Thanks!!!!
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