Coaching Curriculum for Age Group: 10 and Under

As we move up the age ladder from 8 and under to the 10 and under age group there are many differences we must attend to in order to provide an optimal experience for young players of this age. However, there are also many similarities. Just as in parenting, it is important to be consistent in coaching and we must make sure that we follow a progressive trend of development for young players. We should continue to focus on technique during our practices, as we did at the younger ages. Creating environments in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is key. Players at this age should still work on ball mastery and demonstrate growing familiarity and comfortability with a ball at their feet.

Typical Characteristics of players 10 and under:

- **attention span lengthens** - they now start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions
- **they start to think ahead** - they can think “if this, then that”
- **they are wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play**
- **they should demonstrate self-responsibility** - bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility
- **they start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts**
- **children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure**
- **players affiliate with their team or their coach** - “I play for Hudson” or “I’m on Coach Lauren’s team”
- **players at this age are extremely rule bound** - remember each rule you create is the equivalent of a bar in the prison in which you would like to live
- **there is a wide spectrum of maturity evident on most teams** - this is still a crucial age for technical skill development

Skill Priorities:
Continue with dribbling priorities from 8 and under
Passing with inside and outside of both feet
Shooting with both feet - using laces
Receiving the ball with all parts of the body

Tactical Priorities:
Basic attacking ideas
Basic defending ideas
Comprehend 1 vs 1 and 2 vs 1 concepts
Introduction to 2 vs 2 concepts
Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd defenders
Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd attackers
Recommended games for Players 10 and Under:

1. **Free Dribble** - Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session. Players dribble towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

2. **Shield Steal** - Half of the players in the group have a ball and half do not. Players that do not have a ball need to steal one from someone who does. If the ball goes out of bounds, the person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at the start of the activity. Show technique with wide body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on the outside of the foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where the defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure the entire group knows how to properly shield.

3. **Gates Passing** - Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball though the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players repeat and try to beat their score. Place smaller gates central to challenge skilled players and wider gates around the perimeter to challenge less skilled players. Add a very small gate in the center for 2 points. *Version 2:* Challenge players to redirect the ball when receiving instead of trapping the ball.
4. **1 vs. 1 to End Lines** - In a 10 x 10 yard grid, players line up on opposite sides. The first player in each line alternates attacking the player opposite them. When the attacker dribbles over the end line they score a goal. If the defender wins the ball he or she can counter attack to the opposite end line to also score a goal. Players quickly return to their line after scoring or if the ball goes out of bounds. **Version 2:** Balls can be played in from only one line. Defenders play the ball in to the attackers. Restrictions can be placed on the defenders (not allowing them to defend until the ball is touched by the attacker). **Version 3:** Game can be expanded to 2 vs.2 or 3 vs. 3 (adjust field size accordingly).

5. **1 vs. 1 to Two Small Goals** - In the same size grid as above, place a 1 yard goal in the middle of each end line. Attackers try to score by passing the ball through the goal. Defenders can counter attack to the opposite goal if they win the ball. Players quickly return to their line after scoring or if the ball goes out of bounds. **Version 2:** Balls can be played in from only one line. Defenders play the ball in to the attackers. Restrictions can be placed on the defenders (not allowing them to defend until the ball is touched by the attacker). **Version 3:** Game can be expanded to 2 vs.2 or 3 vs. 3 (adjust field size accordingly).

6. **2 vs. 2 to Four Cross Goals** - Teams defend on goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three. You must dribble through a goal to score a point. The goals are on the ends of a large cross in a square grid roughly 10 x 10 yards. Have one team of 2 on deck, they come as defenders when a team gets scored on twice. Game is continuous, they must run on immediately to try to win the ball.
7. **2 vs. 2 to Four Small Goals** - In a 15 x 15 yard grid with a small goal in each corner teams of two attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The coach will set up as many grids as needed to accommodate the players. When the ball goes out of bounds it can be passed or dribbled in to play. The teams should be rotated about every 3 minutes until all groups have played against each other. **Version 2:** 3 vs. 3 in a 20 x 25 yard grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack.

8. **4 vs. 4 Endzone Game** - Teams comprised of 4-6 players depending on numbers and space. To score you must pass the ball to a teammate into the opponents end zone (created with discs). The player cannot go into the end zone until after the ball has been passed. Focus on recognizing opportunities, making runs and timing of passes.

9. **Triangle Goal Game** - Make a triangle in the center of the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goal mouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place 2 goalies in the triangle and the 2 goalies must protect the three goal mouths. Two even teams play a normal soccer game, except the both can score on any of the three faces of the triangle for a point. The game is continuous and if a goalie catches the ball he or she just throws it out so the game continues. Players should be encouraged to shoot low. **Version 2:** Use two balls at the same time.

**Every training session should end with a scrimmage**
US YOUTH SOCCER recommendations for 10 and under:

• Play 6 vs. 6 (including a goalkeeper)
• Field Size: 45-60 yards long x 35-45 yards wide
• Ball: Size 4
• Training time: Limit to 1 hour 15 minutes