

Easton Youth Soccer League



U6-U18 Development Curriculum

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum**



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Easton Soccer Player Development Curriculum



Introduction

The position of youth soccer coach is a very important one! You are charged with the responsibility of positively impacting the development of young people through the sport of soccer...an awesome responsibility!

The youth soccer coach must work toward providing each player with an environment conducive to learning and having fun! This is no small task. It will take effective management of players, parents, referees and opponents to provide such an environment. Preparation for training sessions and games is imperative if positive player development is the goal.

The decisions that you make as a youth coach may not always be popular decisions, but, if they are player-development-centered, they will be the right decisions. With that in mind, I have prepared this player and coach development curriculum.

The purpose of this curriculum is to standardize “best practice” soccer training for the Easton Youth Soccer League (EYSL). This curriculum provides age appropriate player and coach development information for all EYSL coaches, players and parents. This document deals with player and coach development as they relate to the components of the game: technical, tactical, physical and psychological. The curriculum is also based on the human development domains: cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial domains.

It is imperative that we understand that every child develops at a different rate; so this curriculum is a guide from which youth coaches can design their training and playing environments to meet the needs of their players.

This curriculum is the compilation of youth soccer training information from 19 years of youth coaching and training experience. In addition this resource relies heavily on the coaching experience of Tom Goodman, who brings 35 years of youth coaching and training experience. As the former US Youth Soccer National Director of Coaching Education, former USSF National Staff Coach for Region 1, former Technical Director for Mass Youth Soccer and former Founder and President of World Class Soccer, Inc., Tom has researched and studied youth soccer at many different levels, and, as a result, he has provided much of the content for this document.

Best of luck...

John Barata
Director of Coaching, Easton Youth Soccer League
State Instructor, Massachusetts Youth Soccer
USSF A License
USYS National Youth License
NSCAA Premier Diploma

Easton Soccer Player Development Curriculum



How to Use This Curriculum

The curriculum that you are about to use is organized into the following major sections as detailed in the Table of Contents:

- The U6 Age Group (Pre-K and K)
- The U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)
- The U10 Age group (Grades 3-4)
- The U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)
- The U14 Age Group (Grades 7-8)
- The U16/U18 Age Group (Grades 9-12)
- Important Resources

The **Age Group** sections are full of valuable information such as:

- Role of the coach
- Age group player characteristics
- What game components should be taught to players in the age group
- What the training session should look like for players in the age group
- Sample practice plan for the age group
- Link to more age appropriate practice plans

The **Important Resources** available in this Curriculum offer very valuable supplemental information such as:

- Team Management – Parent Communication
- Prevention & Care – Risk Management
- Proper Warm-up/Cool-down/Stretching
- Player Evaluation/Assessment
- Coach Evaluation/Assessment
- The Training Environment
- Coaching Points
- Systems of Play (Formation)
- Small-Sided Games in America



Locate the age group section that you are interested in and read it carefully. Refer to the Important Resources section for ways to create a positive, safe training and playing environment for your players.

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U6 Age Group (Pre-K and K)**



The U6 Age Group (Pre-K and K)

The fascination for the ball, the desire to master it and the thrill of scoring goals provides the launching pad into a lifetime of soccer participation. The joy and pleasure of the game are best nurtured by encouraging freedom of expression and organizing children's play in small groups.

Role of the U6 Coach

The role of the coach in the U6 age group is as facilitator, friendly helper, organizer, and motivator. The coach should be patient, enthusiastic, and imaginative. The coach should experiment with fun activities that include all players, if possible. The environment and the activities are more important than technical coaching is at this level.

License Recommendations

The [US Soccer National F License](#) is recommended.
The [National Youth License](#) is recommended.





The U6 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- Short attention span
- Individually oriented...egocentric
- Sensitive...Easily bruised psychologically
- Love to use their imagination...pretend
- Tend to only one task at a time
- Can process small bits of information
- Immature understanding of time and space relations

Physical (psychomotor)

- Constantly in motion
- No sense of pace (full speed ahead)
- Easily fatigued with rapid recovery
- Eye/hand and eye/foot coordination is primitive
- Can balance on good foot
- Catching skills are not developed
- Love to run, jump, fall and roll
- About 36-40 inches in tall
- Weigh between 30-50 pounds

Socially (psychosocial)

- Love to show off
- Little or no real concern for team activities
- Tend to parallel play...play next to but not with a friend or teammate
- Influential person in their life is their MOM
- Like to mimic goofy actions

U6 boys and girls are quite similar psychologically and physically.



What to Teach U6 Players (Game Components)

Techniques (skills)

- **Dribbling**
 - Keep the ball close (with toe, inside of foot and sole of foot).
- **Kicking**
 - Kicking the ball at the goal (with toe, inside of foot, and laces).
- **Catching**
 - Toss to self and catch.

Psychology (mental and social)

- Sharing
- Fair play
- Dealing with parental involvement (confusion)
- “How to play”
- Emotional management

Fitness (movement education)

- Balance
- Running
- Jumping
- Rolling
- Hopping
- Skipping

Tactics (decisions)

- Where is the field
- Moving in the correct direction (which goal to kick at)
- Dealing with the ball rolling away
- Dealing with the ball rolling toward

Rules

- ✓ The kick off
- ✓ The goal kick
- ✓ Ball in and out of play
- ✓ Handball
- ✓ Physical fouls (pushing, holding, striking, tripping)

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U6 Age Group (Pre-K and K)**



US Youth Soccer U6 Modifications to the Game

Playing numbers:	3v3 (no goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	20-30 yards
Width	15-25 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	6 feet
Width	18 feet
<i>(Goals may be smaller in size)</i>	
Duration:	Four 8-minute quarters
Ball Size:	Number 3

The U6 Training Session

General Information

- The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities.
- Facilitate fun activities that draw out the skill in the player; focus on dribbling and shooting.
- Light coaching on simple technique is appropriate (dribbling & shooting)
- Small-sided games such as 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, should be included as well.
- Training should always conclude with a 3v3 game without goalkeepers if possible.
- The duration of the training session should be 45-60 minutes.

Sample Training Session Format

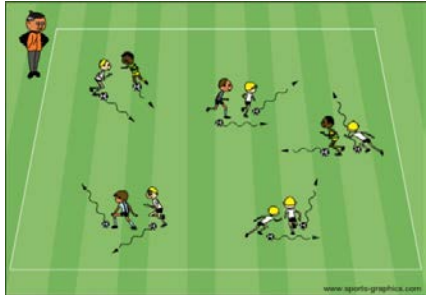
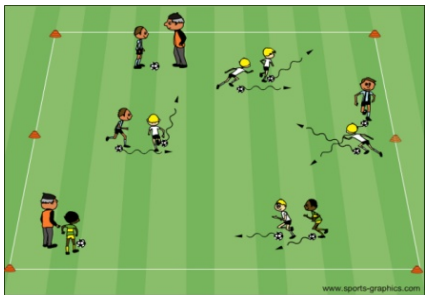

- Activity #1 – Dynamic Activity (players moving with or without ball)
- Activity #2 – Dynamic Activity (players moving with a ball)
- Activity #3 – Dynamic Competitive Activity (activity with pressure*)
- Activity #4 – Dynamic Competitive Activity (activity with pressure*)
- Activity #5 – 3v3 Games

** pressure from opponents, space, cones (equipment), time*

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U6 Age Group (Pre-K and K)**

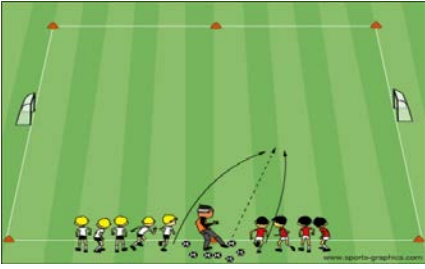


Sample U6 Practice Plan

Activity 1	Activity Description	Time
	<p>Tag: All players dribbling a soccer ball will try to tag each other with their hands. Players cannot abandon their own ball to tag.</p> <p>Coach: Have players keep count of their own tags. If playing more than one game, have players improve their tags by 1, 2 or 3 more than before.</p>	<p>6 minutes</p>
Activity 2	Activity Description	Time
	<p>Hospital Tag: All players dribbling a soccer ball will try to tag each other with their hands. Once a player is tagged he/she must cover the tagged (injured) spot with one hand, second tag use the other hand, third tag the player must go to the hospital to see the doctor and cure him/her.</p> <p>Coach: Acts as the “doctor” and heals the dribblers so they can keep involved in the activity.</p>	<p>6 minutes</p>
Activity 3	Activity Description	Time
	<p>Cross Over Dribbling: All players with a ball standing around the perimeter of a 15x20 yard grid. When the coach says “GO” the players will try to dribble to the other side of the grid. When they reach the other side, the players turn and dribble back to their spots.</p> <p>Variation 2: Have them reach the other side and return to another spot.</p> <p>Variation 3: Time the activity and see how many times the players cross over in 30 seconds or a minute.</p>	<p>6 minutes</p>

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U6 Age Group (Pre-K and K)**



Activity 4	Activity Description	Time
	<p>Get “Outta” There: The players are divided into two teams, and positioned at either side of the coach with multiple soccer balls outside a 10x15 yard grid with two small goals on each end line. The coach serves a ball into the grid and the players try to gain possession and score on their opponent. If a goal is scored or the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells “Get outta here”.</p> <p>Coach: Can make the games 1v1, 2v2 or 3v3. They should vary the service.</p>	<p>6 minutes</p>
Scrimmage	Activity Description	Time
3v3 - Dual Field Scrimmage	Set up two fields of 15 x 20 yards with a 5yd space between them in order to keep the majority of your team playing.	25 minutes

For More U6 Practice Plans go to:

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/session_plans/

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**



The U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)

This is the age where players can begin to understand the concept of working with a teammate. The notion, or willingness, to intentionally pass the ball to someone is just beginning to take hold. Coaches and parents will have more success encouraging players to pass the ball in the seven to eight year old age group. In this age group, the player begins to think beyond their personal needs and actively begins to cooperate with a teammate. However, players in this age group must continue individual ball work.

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U8 age group is to be a sensitive and patient teacher with an enthusiastic and imaginative approach. It is helpful if they have the ability to demonstrate and very important that they understand technique.



License Recommendations

The [US Soccer National F License](#) is recommended. The [National Youth License](#) is recommended.

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**



The U8 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- Short attention span, but better than U6
- Love to use their imagination...pretend
- Limited ability to attend to more than one task at a time
- Beginning to solve simple soccer problems (i.e. pass to a teammate)
- Some understanding of time and space relations

Physical (psychomotor)

- Beginning to develop physical coordination
- Improvement in pace regulation
- Skeletal system is growing; growth plates near joints
- Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adult's; heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover
- Catching skills are still not developed
- Improvement in dribbling and kicking
- Love to run, jump, fall and roll

Socially (psychosocial)

- Self-concept and body image are beginning to develop
- Sensitive...dislike personal failure in front of peers
- Negative comments from peers and adults carry great weight
- Limited experience with personal evaluation...effort is synonymous with successful performance
- Inclined more toward cooperative activities (small groups)
- Inclined to establish and cooperate with friends
- Desire social acceptance; want everyone to like them
- Influential person in their life is their father or significant parent
- Like to play soccer because it is FUN; intrinsically motivated; play for enjoyment

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**



What to Teach U8 Players (Game Components)

Techniques (skills)

- **Dribbling**
 - With outside of the foot
 - Change of speed and direction
- **Receiving**
 - Ground balls with inside, outside, and sole of foot
 - Bouncing balls with various body parts
 - Ball lifting and juggling
- **Passing**
 - With toe, inside of foot and laces
 - Throw-ins
- **Shooting**
 - With toe, inside of foot and laces
- **Tackling**
 - Toe-poke
- **Catching**
 - From self and from partner
 - Rolling, bouncing, and air balls

Psychology (mental and social)

- Working in pairs
- Sportsmanship
- Dealing with parental involvement
- “How to play” (social cooperation)
- Emotional management

Fitness (movement education)

- Introduce the idea of warm-up
- Agility
- Leaping
- Tumbling
- Eye/foot & eye/hand coordination

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**



Tactics (decisions)

- Being exposed to all positions
- 1v1 attacking
- 1v1 defending
- 2v1 attacking
- Introduce the names of positions
- Shape (triangles, diamond)

Rules

- ✓ Review the kick off
- ✓ Review the goal kick
- ✓ Review handball
- ✓ Review physical fouls (pushing, holding, striking, tripping)
- ✓ The corner kick
- ✓ Direct kicks
- ✓ Throw-ins

US Youth Soccer U8 Modifications to the Game

Playing numbers: 4v4 (no goalkeepers)

Field Dimensions:

Length 25-35 yards

Width 20-30 yards

Goal Dimensions:

Height 6 feet

Width 18 feet

(Goals may be smaller in size)

Duration: Four 12-minute quarters

Ball Size: Number 3

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**



The U8 Training Session

General Information

- The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities.
- The session becomes more thematic (dribbling, passing, receiving & shooting).
- Light coaching on simple technique is appropriate (dribbling, passing, receiving & shooting).
- Small-sided directional games such as 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, and 3v3 should be included as well.
- Training should always conclude with a 4v4 game without goalkeepers.
- The duration of the training session should be 60-75 minutes.

Sample Training Session Format

- Activity #1 – Dynamic Activity (players moving with a ball)
- Activity #2 – Dynamic Activity (players moving with a ball)
- Activity #3 – Dynamic Competitive Activity (activity with pressure*)
- Activity #4 – Dynamic Competitive Game-like Activity (activity with pressure*)
- Activity #5 – 4v4 Games

* *pressure from opponents, space, cones (equipment), time*

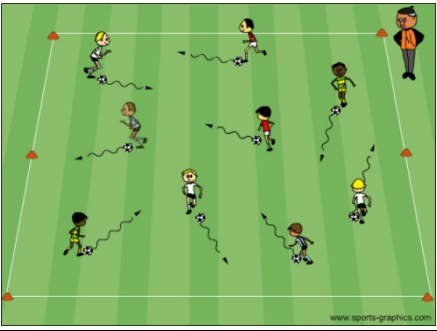


**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**



**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**




Sample U8 Practice Plan

Activity 1	Activity Description	Coaching Considerations
	<p>Free Dribble: All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 20x25 yard grid using the inside, outside and the sole of their foot.</p> <p>Coach: Have players change direction and accelerate away. Have players demonstrate a move and accelerate away.</p> <p>Version 2: Coach can put pressure on players dribbling. Version 3: Players can dribble at each other and perform a move and accelerate away.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge players to use different surfaces of foot • Players must dribble with their head up • Encourage the players to try a new move <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Sharks and Minnows: In a 20x25 yard grid have 3-4 players acting as the sharks. The minnows are in one end of the grid with their soccer balls. When the coach say “GO” the minnows try to dribble to the other end of the grid and the sharks are trying to kick the ball out. When the dribbler’s ball goes out, he/she becomes a shark. If the minnows reach the other end, they will wait for the coach’s command to play again. The game continues until all players turn into sharks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ball close • Changing speed and direction • Running with the ball • Defending – 1v1 <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Snake: All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 20x25 yard grid with the exception of at least 2 players. The 2 players hold hands or lock arms to create a snake. The snake works together to tag the dribbling players who then become a part of the snake. The snake must try to stay connected and not break into little parts.</p> <p>Coach: Encourage the snake players to hiss.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ball close • Changing speed and direction • Running with the ball • Sudden stops and going <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 8 minutes</p>

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U8 Age Group (Grades 1-2)**



Activity 4	Activity Description	Coaching Considerations
	<p>Get “Outta” There with Numbers: The players are divided into two teams, with each player given a number from 1-4 or 5 (depending on total amount of players). Players are positioned at either side of the coach, with multiple soccer balls, outside a 10x15 yard grid with two small goals on each end line. The coach serves a ball into the grid and the players try to gain possession and score on their opponent. If a goal is scored or the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells “Get outta there”.</p> <p>Coach: Can make the games 1v1, 2v2, or 3v3. They should vary the service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1v1 dribbling • 1v1 defending • Scheming and creativity • Decision making <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 8 minutes</p>
Scrimmage	Activity Description	Time
4v4 - Dual Field Scrimmage	Set up two fields of 20x25 yards with a 5yd space between them in order to keep the majority of your team playing.	30 minutes

For More U8 Practice Plans go to:

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/session_plans/

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)**



The U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)

The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age level. Children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to being self-critical and develop the need for group and/or team games. The game itself should be central to all skills training. Small-sided games continue to be the method of choice for this age group. This is an appropriate time to introduce some of the basic ***Principles*** of play:

Attacking Principles

Penetration

Support

Mobility

Width

Depth (length)

Improvisation (deception, creativity)

Defensive Principles

Recovery (Immediate Chase)

Pressure

Cover

Balance

Compactness

Counter Attack

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U10 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods.

License Recommendations

The [US Soccer National E License](#) is recommended. The [National Youth License](#) is recommended.



**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)**



The U10 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- Lengthened attention span
- Ability to sequence thought and actions; begin to think in advance of the ball...anticipate
- Ability to remember, follow more complex instructions and solve higher-level problems (i.e. simple combination play)
- Developing ability to focus and stay on task
- More understanding of time and space relations

Physical (psychomotor)

- Gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power; this is related to body size and muscle mass
- Motor performance includes a variety of motor tasks that require speed, balance, flexibility, explosive strength and muscular endurance; pace factor is developing quite well
- Gross and small fine motor skills becoming refined
- Children this age are in a linear growth mode (head to toe)
- Height can approach 5 feet and weight can approach 80 pounds

Socially (psychosocial)

- Self-concept and body image are important
- Less Sensitive...but still dislike personal failure in front of peers
- Begin to initiate play on their own...they want to play
- Becoming more serious about their play
- Inclined more toward small group and team activities
- Peer group attachment and pressure becoming significant
- Adults outside the family become influential (coach, teacher, etc.)
- Gender differences becoming more apparent

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)**



What to Teach U10 Players (Game Components)

Techniques (skills)

- **Running with the Ball**
 - At speed and under pressure
- **Passing**
 - With outside of the foot; with the head
- **Instep Drive**
 - Shooting; crossing
- **Receiving Ground Balls with the Inside and Outside of Foot**
 - Away from pressure; past opponent
- **Receiving Air Balls**
 - With the instep (laces) and sole, inside and outside of the foot (wedge)
- **Throw-In**
 - Short and long distances
- **Moves in Dribbling**
 - Half-turns; step-overs
- **Introduce Heading**
 - Head juggling (alone and in small groups)
 - Feet in contact with the ground
 - Introduction to jumping to head
- **Tackling**
 - Balance foot and contact foot (block tackle)

Goalkeeping (skills)

- **Ready Stance for Goalkeepers**
 - Foot positioning; body posture
- **“W” Grip**
 - Positioning of thumbs; fingers spread
- **How to Hold a Ball After a Save**
 - Ball to chest; forearm protection
- **Catching Shots at the Keeper**
 - Body alignment path of ball
- **Punting**
 - Distance and accuracy
- **Throwing**
 - Bowling; over-arm (round house)
- **Goal Kicks**
 - Distance and accuracy

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)**



Psychology (mental and social)

- Working in groups of 3-6
- Staying focused for one entire half
- Sensitivity; learning how to win, lose or draw gracefully
- Sportsmanship
- How to handle parental involvement
- Communication; emotional management

Fitness (conditioning)

- Endurance
- Range of motion-flexibility
- Proper warm-up is now mandatory
- Introduce cool-down

Tactics (decisions)

- Roles of 1st attacker and defender
- Roles of 2nd attackers and defenders
- 2v1 attacking (simple combinations)
- Man-to-man defending
- Throw-ins to teammate's feet
- Introduction to the tactics of set plays/restarts (goal kicks, corner kicks, other free kicks)
- Introduction to setting up walls

Rules

- ✓ Review Fouls and Misconduct
- ✓ Offsides

US Youth Soccer U10 Modifications to the Game:

Playing numbers:	7v7 (with goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	45-60 yards
Width	35-45 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	6 feet
Width	18 feet
Duration:	Two periods of 25 minutes
Ball Size:	Number 4

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)**



The U10 Training Session

- The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- Coaching technical skills is very important at this age as well as light tactical concepts.
- The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique, or passing and receiving, or combination play.
- Small-sided directional games such as 3v3, 4v3, 4v4, 5v4 and 5v5 should be included as well.
- Training should always conclude with a 7v7 game with goalkeepers if possible (6field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team).
- The duration of the training session should be 75-90 minutes.

Sample U10 Training Session Format

Warm-Up/Stretch – the warm-up prepares the player both physically and mentally for the rest of the training session. Warm-ups should incorporate a technical and/or tactical element as a lead in to the training session. *Stretching* should be integrated throughout the warm-up.

Small Sided Activity – small group games that provide a lead into larger group games. Small group activities will provide the majority of the work within the coaching session and should cover one chosen topic (i.e. dribbling or shooting). This activity may be non-directional such as a keep-away game or directional including goals or targets at each end of the field. These activities will continue providing the technical repetitions as introduced in the warm up and progress to simple tactical concepts.

Expanded Small Sided Activity - Small-sided games that now include more players and closely resemble the game of soccer. This activity must be directional and include a goal (can be multiple goals, end-lines or target players). Your topic still needs to be focused and taught during this activity. It is important that your coaching be simple, specific and detailed covering technical and tactical issues related to your session's theme (topic).

Scrimmage – this does not necessarily mean 6v6. It means a game without any stipulations. Ideally, you would want playing numbers matching the league play numbers (6v6). This is impossible if you have rosters of 8-10 players. So play the largest scrimmage possible with your numbers.

Cool Down – following the training session a cool down of light, low intensity exercise and static stretching aids the player to recover from the training session. They have worked hard and this will help them to unwind physically and mentally.

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)**

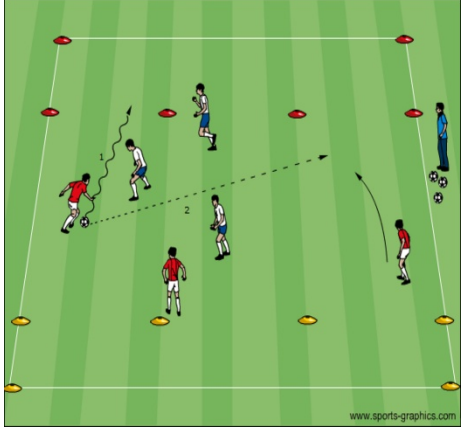


Sample U10 Practice Plan
(Dribbling for Possession)

Technical Warm up	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p>Technical Box: All players dribbling in a defined space. Players should use all surfaces of their feet.</p> <p>Coach: Prompt players to work on change of direction, scissors, fake left/go right, step over and turn, pull back, half-turn, sole of the foot rolls when he claps, “change”, “turn”, etc.</p> <p>Version 2: Walk around and put pressure on the players.</p> <p>Version 3: Player will try to knock each other’s soccer balls out of the grid while maintaining possession of their own.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the ball close • Use all surfaces of the foot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inside/outside ○ Sole ○ Laces • Keep your head up and use peripheral vision • Change of direction and burst of speed • Be creative – try something new <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 15 minutes</p>
	<p>Shield-Steal: Pair up the players with one ball. One player starts with the ball and at coach’s command, his/her partner tries to steal the ball away. The player that ends with the ball gets a point. If the ball goes out of bounds, one of the players must get it back in play very quickly.</p> <p>Coach: Show proper shielding technique during the demonstration. Fix technical shielding errors throughout the activity to assure that the group is doing it properly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body sideways on to opponent • Use arm to protect and know where defender is going • Knees bent • Turn as defender attacks or reaches for the ball <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 15 minutes</p>

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U10 Age Group (Grades 3-4)**



Exp. Small Sided Game	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p>3v3 End-zone Game: Two teams play in a defined space with each team attacking an end zone defended by the opponent. Teams score points when a player dribbles into the opponent's end zone under control.</p> <p>Coach: Encourage players to recognize opportunities to burst into space under control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of visual cues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1v1 no defender behind ○ Free space in front of dribbler ○ Near the attacking area • Identification of verbal cues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “take space”, “time”, “take him on” • Correct shape and balance of team • Deception and disguise • Attack at pace and set up the defender <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 25-30 minutes</p>
Game	Organization	Coaching Pts.
6v6 Scrimmage	Play with Goalkeepers in a 45-60 yards long by 34-45 yards wide field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above
COOL DOWN	Activities to reduce heart rate, static stretching & Review session – Time 10 min.	

For More U10 Practice Plans go to:

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/session_plans/

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)**



The U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)

The effect of the role model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. Players at this age can be extremely self-critical. This is the “Golden Age of Learning” and the most important age for skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by doing. This is an appropriate time to introduce and teach basic ***Principles*** of play:

Attacking Principles:

Penetration
Support
Mobility
Width
Depth (length)
Improvisation (deception, creativity)

Defensive Principles:

Recovery (Immediate Chase)
Pressure
Cover
Balance
Compactness
Counter Attack

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U12 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods. Specifically, individual and small group tactics should be the focus of the training sessions.

License Recommendations

The [US Soccer National D License](#) is recommended. The [National Youth License](#) is recommended.





The U12 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- Fertile period for learning...eager to learn
- Ability to sequence thought and actions and perform more complex tasks...can simultaneously run, strike a ball and think!
- Ability to use more abstract thought to meet the demands of the game (i.e. well-timed overlapping run)
- Use their teammates to solve game problems
- Training must replicate the game

Physical (psychomotor)

- Continue to gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power
- Flexibility training is key to prevention of injury
- More confident with physical technical demands above their waist (receiving with the chest; heading the ball)
- Goalkeeping skills are becoming refined
- Children continue to be in growth spurts
- Overuse injuries occur when age appropriate development is ignored
- Height can be well over 5 feet and weight can be 100+ pounds
- The age range for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 7-14, with the average being 10 years of age
- The age range for the beginning of pubescence in boys is 9-16, with the average being 12 years of age
- The onset of puberty brings a growth spurt that affects their balance and coordination; they gain strength and power, but temporarily lose agility and suppleness

Socially (psychosocial)

- Gender differences are more apparent
- Whether a child enters puberty early or late has important psychological implications regarding relationships with their teammates
- Spend more time with their friends and less time with their parents
- Children tend to conform to peer pressure
- Developing a conscience, morality and a scale of values

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)**



What to Teach U12 Players (Game Components)

Technique (skills)

- **Dribbling**
 - To beat an opponent (penetration); to possess (shielding)
- **Feints with the Ball**
 - Subtle body movements to unbalance the opponent
- **Receiving Air Balls with Feet, Thighs and Chest**
 - Away from pressure; to beat an opponent
- **Heading to Score Goals and for Clearances**
 - Accuracy (direction); timing
- **Finishing**
 - Chipping; bending; toe
 - Introduce Half Volley and Volley Shooting
- **Passing**
 - Deceptive use of foot surface (toe, outside of foot, heel)
- **Crossing to Near Post and Penalty Spot Space**
 - Driven; flighted
- **Introduce Slide Tackle**
 - Timing; poke Tackle

Goalkeeping (skills)

- **Footwork for Goalkeepers**
 - Post to post (lateral); forward
- **Throwing**
 - Side-arm; round-house; baseball
- **Kicking**
 - Drop-kick
- **Diving**
 - Step and Collapse (low)
 - Step and slide onto forearms and thighs (forward)
- **Angle Play**
 - Fast footwork; body shape
- **Introduce Parrying and Boxing**
 - One hand, two hands

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)**



Psychology (mental and social)

- Teamwork
- Confidence
- Desire
- Mental rehearsal
- Intrinsic motivation
- Handling distress
- How to learn from each match
- Sportsmanship
- Parental involvement
- Emotional management

Fitness (conditioning)

- Speed
- Strength
- Aerobic exercise
- Proper warm-up and cool-down now mandatory

Tactics (decisions)

- 1 v 1 through 3 v 3 attacking & defending
- Introduce the principles of play
- Verbal & visual communication for all players
- Half-time analysis
- Beginning to identify potential roles for players (goalkeeper, defender, midfielder &/or forward)
- Commanding the goalmouth by the goalkeeper
- Near post play by the goalkeeper
- Saving penalty kicks
- Simple set play patterns
- Speed in setting up walls

Rules

- ✓ Offsides

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)**



US Youth Soccer U12 Modifications to the Game

Playing numbers:	9v9 (with goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	70-80 yards
Width	45-55 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	6 feet
Width	18 feet
Duration:	Two periods of 30 minutes
Ball Size:	Number 4

Practice and Game Considerations

- Practice Length: 75-90 minutes
- Practice/Game Ratio: 2 practices:1 game

The U12 Training Session

- The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique and/or 1v1 decision-making.
- Introduction to functional training (position specific) is appropriate.
- Small-sided directional games such as: 4v4, 5v4,5v5, 6v5, 6v6 and 7v6 should be included as well.
- Training should always conclude with an 8v8 game with goalkeepers if possible. (7 field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team) The duration of the training session should be 90 minutes.

Sample U12 Training Session Format

Warm-Up/Stretch – the warm-up prepares the player both physically and mentally for the rest of the training session. Warm-ups should incorporate a technical and/or tactical element as a lead in to the training session. *Stretching* should be integrated throughout the warm-up.

Small Sided Activity – small group games that provide a lead into larger group games. Small group activities will provide the majority of the work within the coaching session and should cover one chosen topic (i.e. dribbling or shooting). This activity may be non-directional such as a keep-away game or

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)**



directional including goals or targets at each end of the field. These activities will continue providing the technical repetitions as introduced in the warm up and progress to simple tactical concepts.

Expanded Small Sided Activity - Small-sided games that now include more players and closely resemble the game of soccer. This activity must be directional and include a goal (can be multiple goals, end-lines or target players). Your topic still needs to be focused and taught during this activity. It is important that your coaching be simple, specific and detailed covering technical and tactical issues related to your session’s theme (topic).

Scrimmage – this does not necessarily mean 8v8. It means a game without any stipulations. Ideally, you would want playing numbers matching the league play numbers (8v8). This is impossible if you have rosters of 10-14 players. So play the largest scrimmage possible with your numbers.

Cool Down – following the training session a cool down of light, low intensity exercise and static stretching aids the player to recover from the training session. They have worked hard and this will help them to unwind physically and mentally.

**Sample U12 Practice Plan
(Defending – Pressure and Cover)**

Technical Warm up	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p><u>Pressure Cover Warm-Up (10 min):</u> 3 players with one soccer ball. Two players about 10 yards apart pass and move with each other. The third player moves with the group staying about 10 yards away. One of the players passes a ball to the third while his teammate immediately applies pressure (1st defender). The passer becomes the cover player (2nd defender). Player three tries to split defender with a one-touch pass or a dribble.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st defender should bend their run to press attacker and force the opponent the direction they want them to go • Approach fast, arrive slow • Defensive stance-on their toes, knees bent, one foot forward, one foot back • 1st Defender “Ball” • 2nd Defender “Force him left/right” <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 10 Minutes</p>

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U12 Age Group (Grades 5-6)**



<p>Small Sided Game</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization</p> <p>2v2 to Two Small Goals (10 min): In a 15x20 grid with small goals on each end line, play 2v2 matches. Rotate teams to different fields. You could play matches with off sides.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Coaching Pts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed and angle of approach • Pressing defender forces head down of attacker • Covering defender is positioned about 30 degrees behind pressure • Patience; do not over commit • Good communication to facilitate role switching while defending <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 20 Minutes</p>
<p>Exp. Small Sided Game</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization</p> <p>4v4 to Small Goals In a grid two teams will play to score in the goals. Player will defend applying the principles and roles of 1st, 2nd and start introducing the 3rd. defending roles. (20 minutes)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Coaching Pts.</p> <p>All of the above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing when to be the 1st and 2nd defender. • Shape and communication • Visual and verbal cues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When and how to switch ○ Angle of coverage ○ When and how to tackle <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 25 Minutes</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Game</p> <p>6v6, 7v7, 8v8 or 9v9 Scrimmage</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization</p> <p>Play with goalkeepers in an appropriate size field for the number of players. As the game is going on, praise successful defending and connection by the 1st and 2nd defenders</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Coaching Pts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above • Goalkeeper communication with defenders <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 30 Minutes</p>
<p>COOL DOWN</p>	<p>Juggling in 2's and 3's only using their feet or head. Players will do static stretching of the major muscle groups</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 5 Minutes</p>	

For More U12 Practice Plans go to:

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/session_plans/

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U14 Age Group (Grades 7-8)**



The U14 Age Group (Grades 7-8)

This is a transitional age into the adult game. Adult standards and formal rules become applicable at this stage of development. The pace of development quickens at this time due to the acceleration of physical and mental maturation. The demands of skill training as well as training loads should increase thus provoking improvement in mental toughness, concentration and diligence. Awareness of tactics within the game becomes an important facet of the learning process. Players tend to be self-critical and rebellious, but have a strong commitment to the team. The ***Principles*** of play must be infused in every aspect of training:

Attacking Principles:

Penetration
Support
Mobility
Width
Depth (Length)
Improvisation (deception, creativity)

Defensive Principles:

Recovery (Immediate Chase)
Pressure
Cover
Balance
Compactness
Counter Attack

Role of the Coach

The role of the coach at the U14 age group must be a patient, strong and motivating leader. The coach must create game-like training environments where the lessons of the activities transfer to the game of soccer. Therefore, the coach must be comfortable teaching/coaching in the game. The tactical application of technique becomes extremely important for players in this age group, therefore the coach must introduce functional (position specific) training so that players develop the skills they need to solve the problems that the game presents.

License Recommendations

The [US Soccer National C License](#) or higher.



The U14 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- Crucial period for learning...will ask questions
- Initiation of thinking as an adult in the adult environment...more players, larger field
- Improved ability to sequence thought and actions and perform more complex tasks...can anticipate possible outcomes based on the recognition of visual cues
- Ability to use more abstract thought to meet the demands of the game (i.e. well-timed overlapping run)
- Use more of their teammates to solve game problems
- Training must replicate the game

Physical (psychomotor)

- Continue to gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power
- Flexibility training is key to prevention of injury
- More confident with physical technical demands above their waist (receiving with the chest; heading the ball)
- Goalkeeping skills are becoming refined
- Overuse injuries occur when age appropriate development is ignored
- Height for boys ranges between 5'3"-5'6" and weight ranges between 105 and 125
- Height for girls ranges between 5'3"-5'4" and weight ranges between 105 and 115
- Some boys are just reaching puberty, which impacts how they feel about themselves and how they are treated by their teammates.
- The onset of puberty brings a growth spurt that affects their balance and coordination; they gain strength and power, but temporarily lose agility and suppleness

Socially (psychosocial)

- Gender differences are more apparent
- Whether a child enters puberty early or late has important psychological implications regarding relationships with their teammates
- Spend more time with their friends and less time with their parents
- Children tend to conform to peer pressure
- Becoming more outgoing and confident...loves competition
- Their values impact their ethical and moral behavior on and off the field



What to Teach U14 Players (Game Components)

Technique (skills)

- **Dribbling**
 - To beat an opponent (penetration); to possess (shielding)
- **Feints with the Ball**
 - Subtle body movements to unbalance the opponent
- **Receiving Air Balls with Feet, Thighs and Chest**
 - Quality of 1st touch: away from pressure; to beat an opponent
- **Heading to Score Goals, To Pass and for Clearances**
 - Timing, accuracy (direction) and pace
- **Finishing**
 - Chipping; bending; toe; off crosses
- **Passing**
 - Short; long; chipped bent
 - Deceptive use of foot surface (toe, outside of foot, heel)
- **Crossing (placement)**
 - Near post; far post; penalty spot
- **Slide Tackle**
 - Constructive (to win possession of the ball)
 - Destructive (break up play and/or delay game)

Goalkeeping (skills)

- **Footwork for Goalkeepers**
 - Post to post (lateral); forward and backward
- **Throwing**
 - Side-arm; round-house; baseball
- **Kicking**
 - Drop-kick (driven); side volley from hands
- **Diving**
 - Step and Collapse (low)
 - Step and slide onto forearms and thighs (forward)
- **Angle Play**
 - Fast footwork; body shape
- **Parrying and Boxing**
 - One hand, two hands

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U14 Age Group (Grades 7-8)**



Psychology (mental and social)

- Teamwork
- Confidence
- Increase demands
- Intrinsic motivation...develop training targets
- Sportsmanship
- Creativity
- Emotional management – Mental toughness – Handling stress in the game
- Training activities should be competitive with winners and losers

Fitness (conditioning)

- Speed
- Strength
- Power
- Aerobic and anaerobic exercise
- Proper warm-up and cool-down now mandatory

Tactics (decisions)

- 1 v 1 through 4 v 4 attacking & defending
- Train with uneven numbers (i.e. 4v3) to foster proper decision making when numbers up and numbers down
- Increase tactical speed (small sided games provide the right environment)
- Encourage risk taking in proper areas of the field
- Reinforce the principles of play
- Verbal & visual communication for all players (Cues)
- Half-time analysis
- Beginning to identify potential roles for players (goalkeeper, defender, midfielder &/or forward); should have more than one role; should be comfortable in more than one position
- Begin to focus on the relationship between the different lines of the team (keeper, backs, midfield and forwards)
- Encourage the goalkeeper to be part of the attack
- Commanding the 6 yard box by the goalkeeper
- Far post play by the goalkeeper
- Saving penalty kicks
- Simple set play patterns
- Speed in setting up walls

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U14 Age Group (Grades 7-8)**



Rules

- ✓ Offsides

US Youth Soccer U14 Modifications to the Game

Playing numbers:	11v11 (with goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	100-120 yards
Width	50-75 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	8 feet
Width	24 feet
Duration:	Two periods of 35 minutes
Ball Size:	Number 5

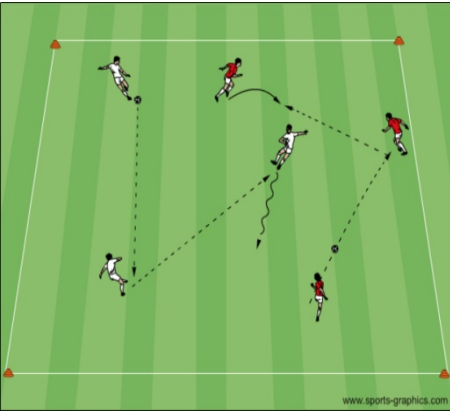
Practice and Game Considerations

- Practice Length: 75-90 minutes
- Practice/Game Ratio: 3 practices:1 game

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U14 Age Group (Grades 7-8)**

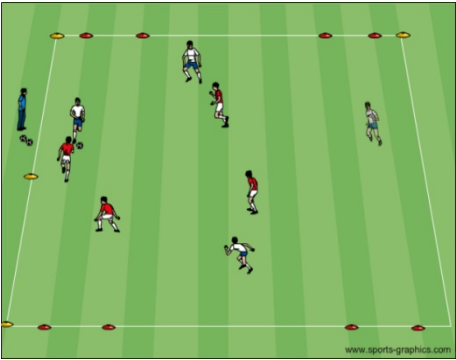
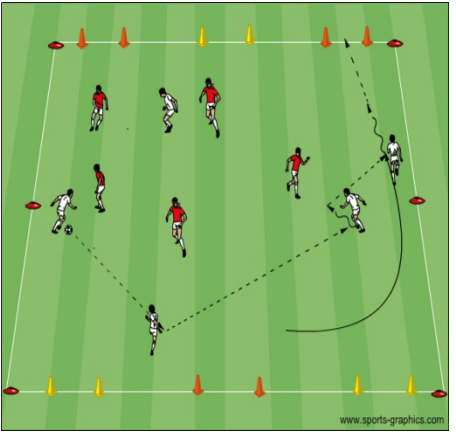


Sample U14 Practice Plan
(Passing and Receiving for Possession)

Technical Warm up	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p>Groups of 3 Passing & Receiving: 12 Players divided into 4 Groups of 3 3 Players pass and move with one soccer ball</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 3 touch: receive, set & pass ✓ 2 touch: receive & pass ✓ 1 touch: pass <p>3 seconds maximum in one location. Throughout this exercise all players shall be in constant communication.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time 15 minutes</i></p>	<p>Passing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technique of passing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ locked ankle, toe up ○ eyes on ball at instant of contact, follow through to partner ○ strike ball solid through the middle, knees bent and balanced • Passing accuracy and weight of pass <p>Receiving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technique of receiving • Keep eyes on ball • Select, present, and relax the controlling surface • Receive sideways on so you have better vision of the field • Receive ball away from pressure and toward supporting options • Importance of first touch to control and prepare the ball • Turn and change direction with one touch <p>Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Shape • Possession vs. Penetration • Keep possession-speed of play • Proper angle and timing of support <p>Clear Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand the ball • To alert teammates of attacking o • To alert teammates of de pressure

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U14 Age Group (Grades 7-8)**



<p style="text-align: center;">Small Sided Game</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization</p> <p>4v4 to Four Small Goals: In a 30x35 yd. grid with two small 3 feet cone goals on each of the 35 yard lines, near each corner. Each team defends and attacks two goals. If playing with 4 players, the attacking shape should be a diamond. If attacking with five players, the attacking shape should be a 3-2 or 2-1-2.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time 15 minutes</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Exp. Small Sided Game</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization</p> <p>5v5/6v6 to Six Goal Game: Players divided in two teams Play 6v6 with six goals located on end lines; each team attacks & defends three. Teams score points by dribbling or passing through goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dribble goal located in center = 1 point ✓ Pass through either goal near sideline = 1 point ✓ Pass through either goal near sideline from change of point of attack = 3 points <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time 20 minutes</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Game</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Coaching Pts.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">7v7 or 8v8 Scrimmage</p>	<p>Play in 55x80 yd. grid with Goalkeepers. Encourage him/her to communicate with teammates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 30 minutes</p>
<p>COOL DOWN</p>	<p>Activities to reduce heart rate, static stretching & review session. Time: 5-10 Minutes</p>	

For More U14 Practice Plans go to:

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/session_plans/

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U16-18 Age Group (Grades 9-12)**



The U16-U18 Age Group (Grades 9-12)

This is a critical time in the player’s development. Many players stop playing due to other interests, lack of success, shortage of playing opportunities, poor leadership, or other reasons. At this point many years have been invested in playing the sport, therefore the coach and the team environment must be positive and “of quality” in order to keep the players involved. If this environment is created, there will be a great focus on team spirit, leadership and discipline within the team.

The *Principles* of play are coached through the thirds of the field and must be infused in every aspect of training:

Attacking Principles:

Penetration
Support
Mobility
Width
Depth (Length)
Improvisation (deception, creativity)

Defensive Principles:

Recovery (Immediate Chase)
Pressure
Cover
Balance
Compactness
Counter Attack

Role of the Coach

The coach at the U16+ age group must be a charismatic, articulate and knowledgeable “manager” of young adults. The coach must create game-like training environments where the lessons of the activities transfer to the game of soccer. Through the game-like training environment, the coach helps the players to understand game management, thus giving the responsibility of the match to the players. In this way, the players are prepared to recognize the needs of a particular game and make the appropriate adjustments.

License Recommendations

The [US Soccer National B License](#) or higher.



The U16-U18 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- Improved learning through years of playing soccer...experience
- Thinking like an adult in the adult environment...more players, larger field
- Make decisions to help the “team” succeed
- Improved ability to sequence thought and actions and perform more complex tasks...can anticipate possible outcomes based on the recognition of visual cues
- Ability to use more abstract thought to meet the demands of the game (i.e. well-timed overlapping run)
- Use more of their teammates to solve game problems
- Training must replicate the game

Physical (psychomotor)

- Continue to gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power
- Flexibility training is key to prevention of injury
- More confident with physical technical demands above their waist (receiving with the chest; heading the ball)
- Goalkeeping skills are becoming refined
- Children continue to be in growth spurts
- Overuse injuries occur when age appropriate development is ignored
- Height in boys ranges between 5’7”-5’10” and weight ranges between 130-150 lbs.
- Height in girls averages 5’4” and weight ranges between 115-120 lbs.

Socially (psychosocial)

- Gender differences are more apparent
- Spend more time with their friends and less time with their parents
- Some have the responsibility of a job outside of school
- Taking more responsibility for their actions
- Values impact their ethical and moral behavior on and off the field

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U16-18 Age Group (Grades 9-12)**



What to Teach U16-U18 Players (Game Components)

Technique (skills)

- Refining technique under the pressures of the game (opponents, time and space)
- Increase technical speed...how fast can your players take care of the ball player

Psychology

- Positive approach to stresses of the game...handling the controllables and the uncontrollables...teammates, coach, referees, fans, parents, weather, field conditions, etc.
- Self motivation...practice on own; setting and attaining goals

Fitness (conditioning)

- Focuses on being soccer fit; can handle and deal with the length and pace of the training and match environment
- Nutrition - Proper diet - pre-game, post-game, tournaments, etc.
- Prevention and care of injuries is very important.
- Importance of rest/recovery

Tactics (decisions)

- Focused on team tactics; play as a team of 11 players; how the various lines of players (keeper, backs, midfield players and forwards) connect to attack and defend successfully

Rules

- ✓ Gamesmanship...Playing within the rules of the game and the behavior of the officials

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U16-18 Age Group (Grades 9-12)**



US Youth Soccer U16-U18 Modifications to the Game

Playing numbers:	11v11 (with goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	100-120 yards
Width	50-75 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	8 feet
Width	24 feet
Duration:	Two periods of 40-45 minutes
Ball Size:	Number 5

Practice and Game Considerations

- Practice Length: 90 minutes
- Practice/Game Ratio: 4 practices:1 game

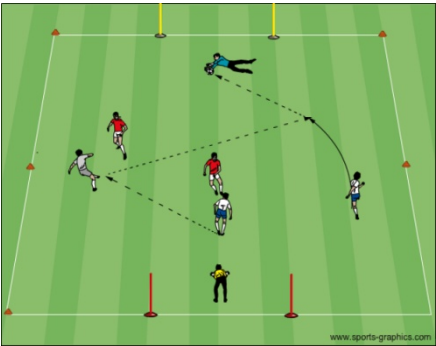
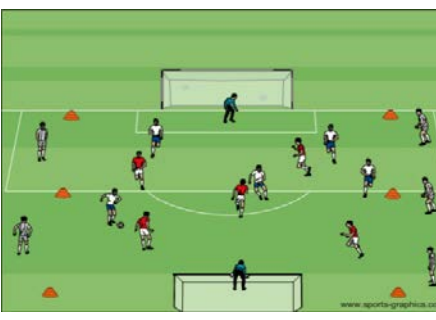
Sample U16 Practice Plan

(Training the Goalkeeper for Shot Stopping)

Technical Warm up	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p><u>Basket Catch/Front Smother</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GKs in net with coach tossing underhand with pace a hard ball into their mid/low section for basket catch. Then downwards towards feet ● GKs in a line, front smother a stationary ball one after the other using proper technique. Then coaches serving low hard ball on ground to GKs. ● Shots from 12-15 yds. out driving low hard shots towards the GK. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set feet for shot ● 2 sounded catch ● Momentum coming forward ● Hands in front of body ● Body high then low ● Secure ball then bring to ground in staggered feet stance <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time: 20 minutes</i></p>

**Easton Soccer
Player Development Curriculum
U16-18 Age Group (Grades 9-12)**



Small Sided Game	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p><u>2v2 +1 to Goals</u> Two teams of two players each attacking and defending one goal with a goalkeeper. Neutral player plays for whatever team has possession.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set feet for shot • Front smother on low, hard driven shots towards feet • Communication with field players • Be on the ball line <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time: 20 minutes</i></p>
Exp. Small Sided Game	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p><u>5v5 +5 on Deck to Goals</u> Two teams of 5 attack and defend one goal with a goalkeeper. Game played to 1pt. Winning team stays on, team that was scored upon rotates to being the team on deck (surrounding the field)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper technique when making a save • Attack the ball, don't wait for it • Organize defenders <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time: 20 minutes</i></p>
Game	Organization	Coaching Pts.
<p style="text-align: center;">7v7 – 9v9 Scrimmage</p>	<p>Play in a 55x80 yd. grid with Goalkeepers. Encourage him/her to communicate with teammates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above <p style="text-align: right;">Time: 30 minutes</p>
<p>COOL DOWN</p>	<p>Activities to reduce heart rate, static stretching & review session. Time: 5-10 Minutes</p>	

For More U16-18 Practice Plans go to:

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/session_plans/

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Team Management – Parent Communication

As coaches, it is extremely important to communicate with our players and their parents. This should be the job of both the team coach and the organization. Included in this section you will find guidelines and a sample parent handout for you as the coach.

At the start of the season, we recommend that you (the coach) hold a **parent meeting** to clarify goals and expectations for the team. Initiating this communication will help prevent confusion and eliminate potential problems. It is recommended that you have something “in writing” to hand to parents at this meeting. By doing so, you are insuring your words are not being misconstrued. If there is a concern down the line, you can reference the document to provide clarification.

The following topics should be covered in the meeting and in the supporting document:

Your Coaching Philosophy

- Player Development
 - Players exposed to different positions
 - Technical (skill) and tactical (decision making) development
 - Positive, creative environment
 - Age appropriate activities
- Enjoyment
 - Dynamic, fun activities
 - Small sided game environment

Your Expectations and Goals for the Season

- Style of play
- Winning and losing

Player Responsibilities

- Arrive at all training sessions and games prepared to work hard and have fun
- Bring appropriate equipment and gear to play safely (shin guards, shoes, water, etc.)
- Help with field/equipment set-up or breakdown, when appropriate

Parent Responsibilities

- Get players to training and games promptly
- Be supportive of their children and the team
- Focus on player development and fun rather than winning and losing
- Communication assistance – help communicate schedule changes, etc.
- Help to get medical assistance if necessary

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-
- Providing refreshments if necessary
 - Help with field/equipment set-up or breakdown

Rules/Policies

- Attendance
- Discipline (Player behavior; Parent behavior)
- Sideline behavior
- Communication (handling questions and concerns)

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Sample U6 Parent Meeting Agenda

Philosophy/Team Goals: Our primary goal as a team is to have fun. We will help the players improve their balance and coordination and give them endless opportunities to dribble a soccer ball while playing childhood games that may not seem like soccer to adults at times. We want to use their imagination and insure that they all enjoy the game. Although it may not look like soccer, the activities we use will help socialization, coordination, encourage the players to solve problems and at times make them laugh. Winning will not be a priority or even a goal for our team. We will be making fun our priority.

Style of Play: I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. We will focus on developing dribbling skills, but will not spend time on passing, receiving, and shooting skills as U6 players are not typically physically and mentally ready to do this. Also it is best for them to develop dribbling skills before trying to do anything else. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills in the game and practice. The game may look like a swarm of bees at times and that is OK. We will not be coaching positions. In reality, even if the game is 3 vs. 3, in our player's minds it is really 1 vs. 5. That is fine and we will let the players have fun at this age without forcing adult concepts upon them.

Attendance: I will be at every practice and game, foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 15 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

Discipline: I have been told that I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior best without it detracting from the rest of the players' experiences on the team. The more we communicate, the more I can assure the practice environment is fun and safe for everyone.

Sideline Behavior: Please be supportive and enthusiastic on the sideline during games. The players and I will truly appreciate your applause and encouragement. However, if everyone is coaching, this will only confuse the players. Please do not coach from the sideline. The players need to make their own decisions and we need to support them and educate them at practice. Remember, you are a role model on the sideline for the players. Please set a good example.

Communication: I am typically a difficult person to reach by phone. The best way to contact me is via email at soccercoach@sampleclub.com. Should you wish to talk by phone, my office number is 1-800-852-6666 and the best time to reach me is between 12pm and 3pm. If these times do not work, let's schedule a time that works for both of us. Please, if you have a concern, do not talk to me during a

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practice or game or when your child or other people can hear. I do encourage open communication and questions as we all hope to make this a great experience for the children.

Overall: I am excited for a great year and I hope you and your child are as well. Let's all have fun and enjoy the game. If you have any questions, please, let's keep the lines of communication open. ☺

*** Have the schedule of all practices and games and the weather/medical emergency plan attached to these agendas.

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Sample U8 Parent Meeting Agenda

Philosophy/Team Goals: Our primary goals as a team are to have fun and to develop as young soccer players. I hope to be able to teach the players needed skills that will help them improve in the game. We will have fun practices that focus on technical skills. Winning will not be a priority for our team. Team priorities will be developing skills and enjoying the game. If you watch practice you may at times see us engaging in activities that do not look like “real soccer”. Please be assured that all activities we do will help with skill building, motor development, and enjoyment.

Style of Play: I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. We will focus primarily on developing dribbling skills, and also spend time on passing, receiving, and shooting skills so players begin to develop in age appropriate skills. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills in the game and show comfort ability on the ball. We will try to move up and down the field as a team and I will be moving players into multiple positions to help them learn all parts of the game. We will not be spending a lot of time on positions and organization. We will spend most of our time on skill development.

Attendance: I will be at every practice and game, foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 20 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

Discipline: I have been told that I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior best without it detracting from the rest of the players’ experiences on the team.

Sideline Behavior: Please be supportive and enthusiastic on the sideline during games. The players and I will truly appreciate your applause and encouragement. However, if everyone is coaching, this will only confuse the players. Please do not coach from the sideline. The players need to make their own decisions and we need to support them and educate them at practice. Remember, you are a role model on the sideline for the players. Please set a good example.

Communication: I am typically a difficult person to reach by phone. The best way to contact me is via email at soccercoach@sampleclub.com. Should you wish to talk by phone, my office number is 1-800-852-6666 and the best time to reach me is between 12pm and 3pm. If these times do not work, let’s schedule a time that works for both of us. Please do not ask to talk to me during a practice or game or immediately before or after the game or in front of your child. I do encourage open communication and questions as we all hope to make this a great experience for the children.

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Overall: I am excited for a great year and I hope you and your child are as well. Let's all have fun and enjoy the game. If you have any questions, please, let's keep open communication. 😊

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Sample U10 Parent Meeting Agenda

Team Goals: Our primary goals as a team are to have fun and to develop as young soccer players. I hope to be able to teach the players needed skills that will help them improve in the game. We will have fun practices that focus on technical skills and on basic tactics. Winning will not be a priority for our team. Team priorities will be developing skills and enjoying the game. If you watch practice you may at times see us engaging in activities that do not look like “real soccer”. Please be assured that all activities we do will help with skill building, game awareness, and enjoyment.

Style of Play: I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills in the game and show confidence with the ball. We will try to move up and down the field as a team, use combination plays and give proper offensive and defensive support. I will be moving players into multiple positions to help them learn all parts of the game. We will not be spending a lot of time on tactics yet. We will spend most of our time on skill development and awareness; not positional duties and set plays.

Attendance: I will be at every practice and game foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 20 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

Discipline: I have been told I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior best without it detracting from the rest of the players’ experiences on the team.

Communication: I am typically a difficult person to reach by phone. The best way to contact me is via email at soccercoach@sampleclub.com. Should you wish to talk by phone, my office number is 508-555-1234 and the best time to reach me is between 12pm and 3pm. If these times do not work, let’s schedule a time that works for both of us. Please do not ask to talk to me during a practice or game or immediately before or after the game or in front of your child. I do encourage open communication and questions as we all hope to make this a great experience for the children.

Sideline Behavior: Please be supportive and enthusiastic on the sideline during games. The players and I will truly appreciate your applause and encouragement. However, if everyone is coaching, this will only confuse the players. Please do not coach from the sideline. The players need to make their own decisions and we need to support them and educate them at practice. Remember, you are a role model on the sideline for the players. Please set a good example.

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Overall: I am excited for a great year and I hope you and your child are as well. Let's all have fun and enjoy the game. If you have any questions, please, let's keep open communication. 😊

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Sample U12/U14 Parent Meeting Agenda

Philosophy/Team Goals: Our primary goals as a team are to have fun and to develop as young soccer players. I hope to be able to teach the players to perform skills under pressure and at full speed, which will help them improve in the game. I also hope they learn how to make basic tactical decisions on their own during the games. We will have fun practices that focus on technical skills and on basic tactics. Winning will not be a priority for our team. Team priorities will be developing skills and enjoying the game. If you watch practice you may at times see us engaging in activities that do not look like “real soccer.” Please be assured that all activities we do will help with skill building, tactical awareness, team-building, and enjoyment.

Style of Play: I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills and make tactical decisions in the game. We will try to move up and down the field as a team, use combination plays, and give proper offensive and defensive support. I will be moving players into multiple positions to help them learn all parts of the game. It is my hope that the players will be coaches on the field for each other and will encourage each other as well.

Attendance: I will be at every practice and game foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 30 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

Discipline: I have been told I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior without it detracting from the rest of the players’ experiences on the team.

Sideline Behavior: Please be supportive and enthusiastic on the sideline during games. The players and I will truly appreciate your applause and encouragement. However, if everyone is coaching, this will only confuse the players. Please do not coach from the sideline. The players need to make their own decisions and we need to support them and educate them at practice. Remember, you are a role model on the sideline for the players. Please set a good example.

Communication: I am typically a difficult person to reach by phone. The best way to contact me is via email at soccercoach@sampleclub.com. Should you wish to talk by phone, my office number is 508-555-1234 and the best time to reach me is between 12pm and 3pm. If these times do not work, let’s schedule a time that works for both of us. Please do not ask to talk to me during a practice or game or immediately before or after the game or in front of your child. I do encourage open communication and questions, as we all hope to make this a great experience for the children.

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Overall: I am excited for a great year and I hope you and your child are as well. Let's all have fun and enjoy the game. If you have any questions, please, let's keep open communication. 😊

****** Have the schedule of all practices and games and the weather/medical emergency plan attached to this agenda***

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Prevention & Care/Risk Management

An integral component of all coaching and playing activity throughout the season must be the prevention and management of injury to players (and coaches). There are numerous simple tasks a coach can and should do in order to secure the health of his or her players. Before the season begins, the coach should make sure all parents know the emergency procedures for all situations (injuries, accidents, weather problems). This procedure should be clear and simple. If it includes cell phone use, the coach should make sure he/she gets reception at all playing sites.

Field Safety/Weather Conditions

Before starting practice or a game, it is important to check the field for dangerous objects. Often glass and other sharp objects can be found on fields, as well as holes and other hazards. Goals need to be inspected and anchored properly, or moved away from the playing area if not being used. When moving goals, it is important to utilize adults and to supervise them, as often it is the first time they are moving goals.

At every field, look to see where you could go in case of lightning or heavy rain. Is there a building or public bathroom nearby where you could fit all the children? If not, do enough parents stay to watch practices and games in order that all the children could fit in their cars in case of severe weather? At the first sign of lightning, get the players into a safe environment. This is where your written emergency plan comes into use. Lightning detectors are already in use at many of the parks in which you play. If you do not have a lightning detection system, seek out ways to get one installed.

Seeing all the Children

Players can not be let out of your sight. Often times, young players need to go to the bathroom. Make sure they are supervised when they go (preferably by their parent). Never allow a child out of your sight without adult supervision.

Second Adult Present

Always have a minimum of two adults at every practice. This allows one person to care for injuries or bathroom breaks as the other tends to the rest of the team. It also provides for another witness in the case of injury or accident. Make sure that both of you are present until the parents of the last child arrive. You should stress to parents they should arrive on time after practices.

Injury Prevention

Before the season starts, check to see if you have a player whose parent is a doctor or nurse. Also ask parents if their children have any pre-existing conditions and how they normally deal with these conditions. Ideally, the coach is CPR and First Aid qualified. The coach should have a simple first aid kit and ice at all events. It should be mandated that players always wear shin-pads and come to practice with water. Parents should be told to apply sunscreen on their children on sunny days. If players come to the

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field with a hat on to protect their head from the sun, ask that they wear a soft-brimmed hat, as baseball caps could cause eye injuries to other players.

What to Do in Case of Injury

When a player goes down with an injury, it is important to remain calm, and ask your assistant or a parent to take care of the team. If you have had to stop practice, it must be fairly serious. Even if you are qualified, you need to make sure that you get immediate assistance for the player. The most likely problems you may encounter are two children running into each other and banging heads, heat exhaustion, prior medical issues (i.e. inhalers) and dehydration. Make sure that the parents of an injured player know their child was hurt during practice. Err on the side of safety.

- Cuts – If blood is involved, always wear latex gloves for protection. Clean the wound and apply a clean, sterile bandage. If a deep cut, apply light pressure to the wound to control bleeding. Recommend that the parent immediately take the child to the hospital for a professional opinion.
- Head Injuries – When approaching a player who has suffered an apparent blow to the head, do not try to move them until you have been able to establish communication with them and can confirm they are conscious and in no immediate severe pain. If the player is unresponsive, immediately call 911. Do not move a player who has suffered a head trauma, as there may be internal damage. Only consider moving an unconscious player if their airway is obviously blocked due to the position of their head and body (i.e., face down with face in the grass). If the player is responsive, ask him/her to identify where he/she was struck (head, face, and jaw or neck area) and if and where he/she are experiencing any pain. If the player is experiencing any pain, dizziness, or nausea, he/she should be removed from the field and not be considered for re-entry into the game. Immediately contact the parents so that they are aware of the nature of the injury and can decide to take their child to the hospital or doctor. It is best for both safety and liability issues to ask the player to provide a doctor's note clearing him to play before allowing a head injured player to participate in any future training.
- Heat Exhaustion – A player with heat exhaustion may feel sick and dizzy, have a high body temperature, and is still sweating. This may come on suddenly. Have the player stop playing, find some shade, and cool him/her down by using cool water on his/her clothes, head and neck. Ice may shock the body and can be dangerous. Use cool water to gradually reduce body temperature. If the player is able, it is alright to have him/her take sips of water.
- Nose Bleed - Place the player in a sitting position with the head forward. Apply pressure to just below the bridge of the nose. Use ice when necessary. Be sure to wear latex gloves before you treat the player! If you suspect a head or neck injury, do not try to control the bleeding. Instead, stabilize the head and call 911.
- Heat Stroke – If a player shows signs of heat stroke their sweating will stop, the player may be confused or dizzy, have pale skin, an extremely dry mouth or be unconscious. It is important to

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call an ambulance immediately. This can be life threatening. While waiting for the ambulance, similar steps to that which are taken for heat exhaustion should be followed. Making sure your players are properly hydrated will help prevent heat injuries.

- Fractures & Dislocations - If a body part does not have a normal appearance or function, then suspect a fracture. Do not move the player, keep warm and make comfortable, call 911. With a possible dislocation, the joint will have a marked deformity with intense pain. If a player can walk, immobilize the joint and immediately transport to hospital. If the player is unable to walk, call 911.
- Abrasions - Abrasions are very common sports injuries that are usually caused by a fall on a hard surface. As the athlete falls or slides on the ground, friction causes layers of skin to rub off. General treatment of abrasions includes treating the area by cleaning the wound with mild soap and water or a mild antiseptic wash like hydrogen peroxide, and then covering the area with an antibiotic ointment and a dry dressing. Be sure to wear latex gloves before you treat the player!
- Sprains, Strains and Contusions - R.I.C.E. Principle (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) is the best method of dealing with these injuries. Using these four immediate first aid measures can relieve pain, limit swelling and protect the injured tissues.

The R.I.C.E. Method of Acute Injury Treatment:

- Rest: Resting is important as it will allow the injured area the time to heal itself as well as help prevent further injury.
- Ice: Use ice bags & cold packs to limit swelling by reducing blood flow to the injured area. Do not leave ice on an injury for more than 20 minutes at a time. Compress or wrap the area with an ACE bandage around the swollen part of your body. If throbbing occurs, remove the bandage and re-wrap the area so the bandage is a little looser.
- Compression: Compress or wrap the area with an ACE bandage around the swollen part of your body. If throbbing occurs, remove the bandage and re-wrap the area so the bandage is a little looser.
- Elevation: Elevating an injury reduces swelling. It's most effective when the injured area is raised above the level of the heart. For example, if you injure an ankle, try lying on your bed or sofa with your foot propped on a couple of pillows.

Two important factors with dealing with field injuries of this nature:

- 1) If you see clear visual evidence of abnormal deformity to the injured area, call emergency professional care immediately.
- 2) If symptoms persist (pain, swelling, severe bruising) after 24-48 hours of using the R.I.C.E. method, consult your doctor.

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Proper Warm-up, Cool-down and Stretching

As children get older, we need to teach them to warm-up and stretch properly in order to minimize injury. It is very important that we teach the players a proper warm-up to avoid their natural tendency to run onto the field and kick the ball at the net as powerfully as possible (this can be harmful).

We recommend utilizing a ball in all warm-ups for players. You will see many games on our website that could serve as warm-up activities as long as the pace of the games are controlled, the speed of the games are slowly built up to full speed, and intermittent stretching (once muscles are warm) is included. We believe this area to be an area in which we (coaches) know very little, as much of our current knowledge has been learned in recent years, long after our playing days ended. For this reason we have sought out the advice of the professionals in this field to teach all of us proper techniques to insure the safety and preparedness of our players.

A proper warm-up and a dedicated stretching program are often overlooked by soccer players for injury prevention. An athlete must be prepared mentally, physically and in a neuromuscular fashion for the explosive game of soccer. This can be achieved through a proper warm-up routine. Current trends describe that a more active and dynamic warm-up is important to prepare for play and that the static stretching to elongate the muscles and joints is best immediately following a training or game situation.

Incorporating these dynamic movements within the warm up would be optimal. This allows for the players to get their touch on the ball while warming up their bodies as well. Performing high knees, skipping, lunges, quick lateral sidesteps are all examples of movements that can be performed every few minutes within the warm up stage of a training session. Please refer to our website for more information on this topic.

Following the game or training session, you must take 15-20 minutes to perform a static stretching routine. These stretches are held at least 20 to 30 seconds and each stretch is repeated twice for each side. Hold the position to feel a muscle stretch, but not pain. Do not bounce, but hold the stretch in a static, prolonged manner to elongate the muscle. This process not only helps the body cool down after play, but the focus is also on injury prevention through maintenance or improvement of your flexibility.

This dynamic warm-up and recovery stretching program should become part of your daily training and competition routine. The focus of this program is to completely prepare for practice intensity and then help recover with prolonged stretches. This concept is the foundation of prevention for muscular and tendon injuries and will also prepare the athlete to maximize their training sessions and achieve a higher level of soccer performance.

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Player Evaluation/Assessment Evaluator Criteria

Experience

- has observed many good players
- has observed multiple levels of play
- has observed multiple playing environments

Expertise

- has identified many good players
- has selected many good players
- has developed many good players
- has played the game at multiple levels

Patience

- give players the opportunity to get into it and develop their rhythm in the game
- don't write off a player because???

Objectivity

- understands that players may be mis-positioned
- understands that players may be having a bad day
- understands what's best for current level and potentially for the next level

Professionalism

- Look sharp...clean clothes, shirt tucked in, etc.
- Observe each activity completely...enjoy watching the kids play
- Always keep your rating sheet out of the view of all others
- Do not coach at tryouts
- Do not make verbal, sarcastic or negative comments as it may rattle players
- Do not sit on the ground
- Do not show favoritism to any player or parent

Preparation

Before the player evaluation event, the Evaluators should meet with the Town Program CED (Coach Education Director) or the person responsible for organizing the event to make sure that everybody is on the same page regarding the evaluation process (environment, rating system, rating sheet and ranking procedure).

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Player Evaluation/Assessment Process

The Player Evaluation Process can be a difficult and stressful experience for players, parents, and coaches at every level of soccer, but especially in youth soccer. There are countless ways in which to organize and run player evaluation events and no process is completely flawless. However, one tenet that is a foundation of all player evaluation events is that *we need to see players in game situations* in order to effectively evaluate their talent.

It is our recommendation that team coaches not be involved in picking their own teams. This reduces any chance of personal bias and aids the Youth Soccer organization in proving to parents they are providing an impartial tryout process.

Evaluation Activities

- **Warm-up**
 - Free dribbling
 - Dribbling with moves
- **Small Sided Games** (3v3 or 4v4 games)
- **Full Sided Games** (7v7 – 11v11 games)

Activities to Avoid (activities that don't transfer to the game)

- 1) Lines where most of the players are inactive
- 2) Running/sprinting for time
- 3) Long distance running (laps)
- 4) Dribbling through cones (figure 8)
- 5) Kicking for distance

These tasks are not relevant for evaluation because the best players are those that can demonstrate the proper technique in the game, not in an isolated setting. The application of technique in the game is what we call skill. The only way to truly evaluate skills is by letting the players play soccer. This allows us to find the confident players who know how to use their skills under game pressure!

Psychological & Stress

We have to take into consideration the psychological component of player evaluation events and try to create a friendly environment for the players. The ideal situation is to try to provide a stress free environment. Coaches should make every effort to make player evaluation events enjoyable.

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Player Evaluation/Assessment Criteria

We look at the following categories when evaluating players:

Technical Skills – a player’s comfort level with the ball

- Dribbling, receiving, passing, heading, shooting, tackling (getting the ball back from the opponent or regaining possession of the ball).

Tactical - Decision Making – the decisions that a player makes

- When, where, why, & how to dribble, receive, pass, head, shoot and tackle the ball.
- What to do when our team has possession of the ball
- What to do when our team does not -have possession of the ball.

Athleticism – Speed, Quickness, Strength, Agility, Balance, Aggressiveness

Psychological / Mental Skills – Involvement in the activity

- Wants to be involved all the time
- Work ethic
- Takes charge in the activity
- Discipline
- Loves the competition
- Commitment
- Personality in game competition
- Coachability

Offensive Ability – helps to keep possession of the ball for the team

- Loves to have the ball at their feet
- Comfortable with the ball
- Finds a way to move the ball forward toward the opponent’s goal
- Finds a way to score goals
- Positional awareness (positioned to support teammates who have the ball)

Defensive Ability – helps win the ball back from the opponents

- Recovers to a defensive position after his/her team losses possession of the ball
- Good tackler of the ball
- Show restraint/patience when outnumbered by attackers
- Applies immediate pressure to opponent to win the ball back when appropriate
- Communicates with other players on the team

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2011 - Mass Youth Soccer Evaluation Form



Evaluator Name: _____
Date: _____

Age Group: _____
Gender: M ___ F ___

Easton Soccer Player Development Curriculum Important Resources



Player #	Technique	Tactics	Athleticism	Comments	Avg. (1 to 3)	Overall Rank
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

Scale: 1 = Very Good 2 = Good 3 = Needs Improvement

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Player Development Curriculum
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Player Evaluation Sample (Report Card)

Player Name: Joan

1=Excellent 2=Very Good 3=Good 4=Satisfactory 5=Needs Improvement

PHYSICAL COMPONENT (Fitness):

Quickness	1	2	3	4	5	<u>Joan you are a tremendous athlete. You have very good quickness and extremely good pure speed. I believe that your fitness shows on the field in every match. I would encourage you to take care of your lingering injuries and begin focusing on next year.</u>
Speed	1	2	3	4	5	
Strength	1	2	3	4	5	
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	

TECHNICAL COMPONENT (Skills of the Game):

Dribbling & Shielding	1	2	3	4	5	<u>You are technically sound as a soccer player; it is evident to me that you have been coached well as a youth player. You must work on building your confidence so that you will create opportunities to finish. I believe that you should be open to playing in the middle of the park and become more of a connecting, impact player on a match. You are also tremendously dangerous on the flank, but we may need you to be more involved as an attacking play maker & striker.</u>
Passing	1	2	3	4	5	
Heading	1	2	3	4	5	
Receiving	1	2	3	4	5	
Shooting	1	2	3	4	5	
Tackling	1	2	3	4	5	

TACTICAL COMPONENT (Decisions made on the Field):

Pressure	1	2	3	4	5	<u>You are very good at all the categories listed. I have high expectations that you will continue your development and love of the sport into your senior year. If you can work on improving the speed of your decision making under pressure you will become an even more effective and solid player.</u>
Cover	1	2	3	4	5	
Balance	1	2	3	4	5	
Penetration	1	2	3	4	5	
Support	1	2	3	4	5	
Mobility	1	2	3	4	5	
Speed of Play	1	2	3	4	5	
Reading the Game	1	2	3	4	5	

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPONENT (Mental Attitude)

Coachability	1	2	3	4	5	<u>You are a quality young woman. You are an extremely positive person and influence on our team. I am confident that your leadership on and off the field is a major factor for the team's success. I would like to see you continue your captainship on the same pathway and build the camaraderie again for next year.</u>
Concentration	1	2	3	4	5	
Aggressiveness	1	2	3	4	5	
Attitude	1	2	3	4	5	
Communication	1	2	3	4	5	

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Head Coach: Tom Jones
2010

Date: November 4,



Coach Evaluation/Assessment *(Found on Brian Mac Sports Coach Website)*

Martens (1997) identified five key areas that coaches should focus on: coaching objectives, coaching styles, evaluating and developing communication skills, principles of reinforcement and understanding motivation. Coaches are responsible for conducting themselves and their services according to professional and ethical standards, promoting the interests and protecting the rights of their performers, the sport and the coaching profession.

Areas of Assessment

The following are possible aspects of the coaching session that could be assessed:

- Health and Safety
- Communication skills
- Coaching Skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Long and short term Planning
- Training session content and structure
- Knowledge and experience
- Control of athletes
- Monitoring of athletes
- Level of flexibility

The following questions can be used by you to analyze your coaching skills or to analyze the skills of a coach who you mentor.

Pre-Session Activities

The following are points to monitor:

- Were facilities checked for safety
- Was a phone point identified - in case of emergency
- Was the First Aid person known - in case of emergency
- Was appropriate equipment selected
- Were equipment and facilities checked for health and safety
- Was the status of health of each athlete checked - injuries, colds, tired etc.
- Was there a clear plan of work and objectives for the session
- Was each athlete checked to determine what exercise they had completed that day - e.g. school football match - for potential impact on the planned training session

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Session Activities

The following are points to monitor:

- Was each athlete's level of experience checked
- Were athletes informed of the session content and aims and their understanding checked
- Were athletes made aware of the rules and code of conduct for the activity and their understanding checked
- Were instructions clear, concise and appropriate
- Was the body language and tone of voice appropriate when giving instructions and advice
- Was positive feedback and appropriate corrective action provide to each athlete
- Were explanations and demonstrations appropriate and clear
- Was the athlete's understanding of what was required checked
- Were athlete's allowed to ask questions
- Were appropriate coaching methods used in developing each athlete
- Were athletes observed throughout the session and appropriate feedback on strengths and weaknesses provided
- Was an appropriate warm up and cool down undertaken by all athletes
- Were athletes asked for their feedback on the session
- Were athletes monitored for tiredness or the onset of injury
- Were all athletes in their training groups given equal attention
- Were athletes given an appropriate amount of recovery between activities
- Were athletes encouraged to keep warm between activities
- Were the athletes encouraged to drink (water, sports drinks) to replace lost fluids
- Did the coach show appropriate and correct use of coaching skills e.g. Instruction, Explanation, Demonstration, Observation, Analysis and Feedback

Post Session Activities

The following are points to monitor:

- Did the coach have control of the athletes
- Did the athletes enjoy the session
- Did the coach exhibit a clear understanding of the techniques and skills required by the athletes for the session
- Did athletes trust and respect the coach
- Did the coach provide appropriate feedback to the athletes
- Did the coach use good communication skills
- Did the athletes achieve their objectives from the session
- Were the coach's objectives for the session achieved
- Was the coach's relationship and behavior with the athletes in line with good practice
- Did the coach analyze what worked well, what did not and how it might be corrected

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U.S. Soccer Youth Certificate Course
Practical Coaching Evaluation

Name: _____ Email: _____
as it appears on your state or government issued legal identification

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____ Age Group: _____

Date: _____ Site Location (i.e. school or field location, state): _____

Candidate	Grade		Comments
Appearance	S	U	
Voice	S	U	
Enthusiasm	S	U	
Motivational Skills	S	U	

Outline	Grade		Comments
Reflects Age Group	S	U	
Outline Organization	S	U	

Presentation Organization	Grade		Comments
Organization of Players	S	U	
Appropriate & Safe Place	S	U	
Clear-Concise-Correct Information	S	U	

Coaching/Teaching Ability	Grade		Comments
Developmentally Appropriate	S	U	
Players Engaged in the Activities	S	U	
Players Are Having Fun	S	U	
Implications of the Game	S	U	

(Grading Scale: S – Satisfactory, U – Unsatisfactory)

General Comments:

Final Grade: _____ **Evaluator(s) Signature(s):** _____

Easton Soccer Player Development Curriculum Important Resources



U.S. Soccer National Coaching Schools C License Evaluation Form

Name: _____ Date: _____ Course Site: _____ Grade: _____

Topic: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Comments</u>
I. Outline		
1. Reflects Topic	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
2. Outline/Organization/Progression	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
3. Appropriate Progression	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
II. Candidate		
1. Appearance	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
2. Voice	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
3. General Attitude	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
III. Presentation/Organization		
1. Organization/Equipment	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
2. Organization/Field Space	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
3. Organization/Players	<u>S</u> <u>U</u>	_____
IV. Coaching Effectiveness (must receive a <u>P</u> in all category IV topics to pass the course)		
1. Teaching Ability	<u>P</u> <u>NR</u>	_____
2. Knowledge/Content/Clarity	<u>P</u> <u>NR</u>	_____
3. Recognizes moments to address decision making (tactics)	<u>P</u> <u>NR</u>	_____
4. Recognizes moments to address proper technique and its application	<u>P</u> <u>NR</u>	_____

Instructor Comments: _____

Instructor Name: _____ Instructor Signature: _____

Grading Scale: P-Pass, NR-Not Ready (must re-test before eligible for license), S-Satisfactory, U-Unsatisfactory

PASS = Candidate must wait a minimum of 1-year before eligible to attend USSF 'B' License course
 NR = Candidate must wait a minimum of six months before eligible to re-test at a regional site



The Training Environment

Principles of Coaching

It is imperative that coaches take into account the *Principles of Coaching*, when endeavoring to create a quality training environment:

1. Observation

- Watch your players/team
 - In games
 - In training sessions
- Watch your opponents

2. Organization

- Progression...simple to complex
- Equipment
- Time
- Field space
- Players

3. Demonstration...Paint the picture

4. Information...Feedback to players

How to Coach

During a session, a coach must recognize a “coachable moment” to give or retrieve information to or from their players. A coachable moment is when a technical or tactical issue arises, based on the topic for the session. Each activity in a session plan will create “coachable moments”. As coaches, we watch for these instances so that we can make our coaching points and teach our topics.

Once a coachable moment is recognized, there are several methods coaches use to provide or retrieve information to or from the players. This coaching methodology is referred to as using the “**Coach’s Toolbox.**”

The Coach’s Toolbox

a) Allow the conditions of the game to coach the topic

- Use touch incentives (one touch, two touches, etc.)
- Adjusting the size of field and/or size of the goals
- Use a neutral player to provide a numbers up opportunity
- Let your players play the game

b) Coach in the natural stoppages of the activity- ball goes out of play

- Wait for the ball to go out of play, then recreate the coachable moment
- Natural stoppages are throw-in’s, goal- kicks, re-starts from fouls

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- c) **Coach in the flow of the activity (large group)**
 - Direct information to groups of players, “push forward!”, and “slide left!”
 - Information must be concise and clear to all of the players you are speaking to
 - This is instruction, not a running dialogue with your team
- d) **Coach individual players as the activity continues**
 - Talk to one player either from a distance or close
 - Clear, concise information must be provided
 - Have a player step out of an activity and then provide them with short instructions
- e) **Coach using the “freeze” method**
 - Stop play when the “coachable moment” occurs
 - Players must stay exactly where they were when the “freeze was called”- if not, the picture of what is being taught changes completely
 - Review what happened, rehearse what they could have done to find success, and restart play from a point prior to the point of your stoppage.

Regardless of the chosen method, remember to keep instructions short, detailed and topical (30 seconds for your coaching point). Also, use **“Guided Discovery...the art of asking quality questions”** to pull the information out of the players...to get them to come up with the solutions to the soccer problems.

Paint a clear picture of what you want your players to do by reviewing what occurred during the run of play, rehearse the situation so your players gain success with what you are teaching them and then restart play using what you rehearsed with your players.

As we coach, we need to allow our players to play the game. Making a maximum of four coaching points per activity, using any of the methods discussed above, will help keep your activity flowing yet still providing instruction to your players. We do not need to coach every mistake that pertain to your topic that occurs as we would be stopping play too often. Pick your times to make your points and teach your players!



Training Session / Training Environment Design

Coaches must take into account the following considerations when designing a training session:

Demands of the Game

- The moving ball
- Body and ball control
- Decision making
- Opposition
- Stresses of the game

Elements of the Game

- Ball
- Teammates
- Field of play
- Direction of play
- Objectives...goals and or targets
- Opponents
- Decision making

Playing Area

- Size
- Shape
- Number of players
- Topic/theme
- Direction
- Natural marking

Components of the Game

- Technical
 - Ability to consistently manipulate the ball successfully
 - Dribbling, passing, shooting, receiving, heading, tackling
- Tactical
 - Decision making
 - Game insight...game instinct
 - Categories
 - Individual (1v1)
 - Group (less numbers than age appropriate game numbers)
 - Team (age appropriate game numbers)
 - Psychological
 - Age specific
 - Self perception
 - confidence
 - determination
 - self esteem
 - emotions
 - stress
 - intellect
 - commitment
 - desire
 - enjoyment
 - effort
 - persistence
 - relationships
 - Gender
 - Outside influences
 - Family
 - Teammates
 - Motivation
 - Individual versus team

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- Physical
 - Speed
 - Endurance
 - Strength
 - Flexibility
 - Agility
 - Aerobic versus anaerobic activity

Economical Training

- Activities that are like the game
- Combining as many of the components of soccer in your activities as possible
- Competition...makes the activities competitive!

Specificity of Training...SAID Principle

S = Specific

A = Adaptations

I = Imposed

D = Demands

Principles of the Game

Setting up an appropriate training environment also requires the inclusion of the principles of the game in every facet of the plan.

- Principles of Attack
 - penetration
 - support
 - width/length
 - mobility
 - improvisation
- Principles of Defense
 - pressure
 - cover
 - balance
 - compactness
 - counter-attack



Training Variables

Specifically, when creating a quality training environment, coaches need to consider the *training variables*:

1. Goals
 - Number of goals
 - Size of goals
 - Shape of goals
2. Field
 - Size of field
 - Shape of field
 - Divisions of field
3. Balls
 - Number of balls
 - Placement of balls
 - Service of balls
 - Size and weight of balls
4. Players
 - Number of players
 - Design the session for the maximum # of players expected to attend the session
 - Design the session to be as inclusive as possible for all players
 - Neutral players
 - Numbers up / numbers down
 - Age and ability of the players
5. Rules
 - Restrictions
 - Incentives
 - Offsides
 - Point system
6. Miscellaneous
 - Outdoors versus Indoors
 - Surface
 - Equipment
 - Time...duration

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Lesson Plan

1. Organization...simple to complex
 - Warm-up activity
 - No pressure or light pressure from opponents
 - Pressure from ball and imposed demands
 - Small sided game activity
 - Introduce pressure of opponent(s)
 - Does not have to be directional, but the more it looks like the game the better it is for the development of the players
 - Expanded small sided game activity
 - Increase number of players
 - Directional
 - Looks like the game
 - Scrimmage (game) with appropriate numbers
 - Let's play soccer
 - The game with the rules

2. Age appropriate activities
 - Name each activity (i.e. free dribble, 4v4 to 4 goals, etc.)
 - Describe each activity:
 - Objectives of the activity
 - Rules
 - Restrictions and or incentives
 - Point system
 - Diagram each activity
 - Shape of field
 - Dimensions of field
 - Number & formation/shape of players (X's, O's and N's for neutral players)
 - Movement diagrams
 - straight line = pass
 - dotted line = run
 - scribbled line = dribble
 - Use area of field applicable to topic (i.e. goal area for goalkeeping)
 - Make sure activities are realistic to the game

3. Content
 - Does it look like soccer? Does the activity/practice bring out the elements of the game?
 - Will players understand where the practice fits into the game?
 - Are the objectives for the players realistic?
 - Are instructions clear and concise?

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4. Delivery

- Player considerations
 - Need a good amount of uninterrupted play...they need to concentrate and they need to hear the game
 - Need to establish a rhythm of play
 - Need to have a chance to solve problems on their own
- Coach's toolkit (in order from least intrusive to most intrusive)
 - Allow the conditions of the game to coach the theme
 - Coach at natural stoppages
 - Coach in the flow of the game
 - Coach individual players as game continues
 - Coach using the freeze method
- Things to avoid
 - Excessive coaching...over-coaching
 - Incorrect or inappropriate activities
 - Training sessions that don't flow and are frustrating
 - Activities that are unrealistic

Final Thoughts

- Find ways to make things competitive.
- Hold your players accountable for their decisions on the field.
- Demand technical precision.
- Keep the practice flowing.
- Give rest periods for rest and water.
- Make it FUN! It is a game!



Coaching Points

Technical Coaching Points

Dribbling

- Low, balanced body position.
- Agile lateral (left-to-right) movement for dribbling in tight spaces, change of direction and faking out opponents.
- Proper use of insides and outsides of the feet and the toe to propel ball an appropriate distance.
- Proper use of soles of the feet to pull, push and roll the ball.
- Eyes up enough to survey the situation and to have good peripheral vision.
- Keep the ball close when under pressure (lots of touches).
- Propel the ball away from feet when dribbling into space away from pressure.

Receiving

Coaching Points (common to all surfaces)

- Keep body relaxed.
- Eyes on the ball while it is traveling and as you receive it.
- Position body in-line with the in-coming ball.
- Present a surface to receive the ball with.
- Cushion the ball if it arrives with velocity.
- Propel the ball away if it arrives slowly or if under pressure or in open field.

Coaching Points (unique to specific receiving surfaces)

Sole of the Foot

- Ground Ball
 - Comfortable body position.
 - One foot on the ground.
 - Present the sole of the foot at about a 45 degree angle to the ground as the ball arrives.
 - Wedge the in-coming ball between the sole and the ground.

Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)

- Comfortable body position.
- One foot on the ground.
- Allow the ball to hit the ground.
- Just as the ball hits the ground, present the sole of the foot over the ball (wedge the ball between the sole of the foot and the ground).

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Important Resources – Coaching Points



Inside of the Foot

- Ground Ball
 - Comfortable body position.
 - One foot on the ground.
 - Present the inside of the foot to the in-coming ball.
 - Pull the receiving foot back or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.

Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)

- Comfortable body position.
- One foot on the ground.
- Allow the ball to hit the ground.
- Just as the ball hits the ground, present the inside of foot over the ball and drag the ball away from pressure.

Line-Drive Ball (Horizontal arrival)

- Comfortable body position.
- One foot on the ground.
- Present the inside of the foot to the in-coming ball.
- Pull the receiving foot back or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.

Outside of the Foot

- Ground Ball
 - Comfortable body position.
 - One foot on the ground.
 - Present the outside of the foot to the in-coming ball.
 - Pull the receiving foot back or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.
- Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
 - Comfortable body position.
 - One foot on the ground.
 - Allow the ball to hit the ground.
 - Just as the ball hits the ground, present the outside of foot over the ball and drag the ball away from pressure.

Laces (In-step)

- Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
 - Comfortable body position.
 - One foot on the ground.
 - Present the laces to the in-coming ball.
 - Lower foot (give with the foot) as ball is received.

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Important Resources – Coaching Points



Thigh

- Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
 - Comfortable body position.
 - Straight back.
 - One foot on the ground.
 - Present the mid/upper thigh (horizontal to the ground) to the in-coming ball.
 - Lower thigh (give with the thigh) as ball is received.

- Line-Drive Ball (Horizontal arrival)
 - Comfortable body position.
 - One foot on the ground.
 - Present the mid/upper thigh (perpendicular to the ground) to the in-coming ball.
 - Pull the receiving thigh or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.

Chest

- Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
 - Comfortable body position.
 - Arch back (limbo dance position).
 - Arms out.
 - Both feet on the ground or both feet off ground (if jumping).
 - Present the chest (45-60 degree angle to the ground) to the in-coming ball.
 - Bend the knees to absorb the ball (cushion) as it is received.

- Line-Drive Ball (Horizontal arrival)
 - Comfortable body position.
 - Straight back.
 - Arms out.
 - Both feet on the ground or both feet off ground (if jumping).
 - Present the chest (perpendicular to the ground) to the in-coming ball.
 - Jump back to absorb the ball (cushion) as it is received.



Kicking (Passing and Shooting)

Coaching Points (common to kicking low/ground balls)

- Low/Ground Balls
 - Non-kicking foot placed comfortably next to the ball.
 - Non-kicking foot pointed in the direction of the target.
 - Body slightly over the ball.
 - Knee of kicking leg slightly over the ball.
 - Eyes on ball.
 - Land on the kicking foot.

Coaching Points (unique to specific kicking surfaces)

- Inside of foot
 - Lock ankle with toe pointed up on kicking foot.
 - Straight kick... Strike through the center (equator) or slightly above the center of the ball with the ankle surface of the foot.
 - Bent kick...Strike/Slice the outside center (or slightly below center) of the ball with the inside of the foot.
- Instep (laces)
 - Lock ankle with toe pointed down on kicking foot.
 - Strike ball with instep surface of the foot.
- Outside of the foot (for deceptive passes and shots)
 - Non-kicking foot placed slightly farther away from the ball than normal.
 - Lock ankle with toe pointed down and turned in.
 - Straight kick...Strike (punch) the inside center (or slightly above center) of the ball with the outside of the foot.
 - Bent kick...Strike/Slice the inside center (or slightly below center) of the ball with the outside of the foot.

Coaching Points (common to kicking flighted/air balls)

- Flighted/Air Balls
 - Approach ball from slight angle.
 - Non-kicking foot placed comfortably next to and slightly behind the ball.
 - Non-kicking foot pointed in the direction of the target.
 - Body upright and slightly leaning back..
 - Eyes on ball.
 - Strike with laces or upper inside surface of the foot.
 - Strike through the bottom/center of the ball.
 - Land on the kicking foot.

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Player Development Curriculum
Important Resources – Coaching Points**



Coaching Points (unique to specific types of kicks)

- Chip
 - Lock ankle with toe pointed up on kicking foot.
 - Sharply cut the grass below the ball with the kicking foot (like a 9-iron or wedge shot in golf).
 - The ball should travel with backspin.
- Long/Driven ball
 - Big power step (step right before the kick is taken).
 - Lock ankle with toe pointed down on kicking foot.
 - Strike ball with instep surface of the foot.
- Outside of the foot (for deceptive passes and shots)
 - Non-kicking foot placed slightly farther away from the ball than normal.
 - Lock ankle with toe pointed down and turned in.
 - Bent kick...Strike/Slice the ball below the inside center with the outside of the foot.

Heading

- Square the body to the ball (body in line with the in-coming ball).
- Eyes on ball.
- Time the jump if one is necessary.
- Tighten the neck muscles.
- Arch the back.
- Arms out and forward for balance.
- Thrust upper body forward.
- Contact the ball with the top of the forehead.
- The head strikes the ball! (like the hammer hits the nail)

- To drive the ball down...strike the upper half of the ball.
- To drive the ball up...strike the lower half of the ball.



Tackling

- Block tackle
 - Maintain a comfortable playing distance from the opponent.
 - Do not telegraph your intent.
 - Shepard the opponent to one side or the other.
 - Do not commit yourself too early (do not dive in)...time your execution.
 - Throw stabbing fakes at the opponent to force mistakes.
 - Keep your eyes on the ball.
 - Keep a low center of gravity.
 - One foot slightly angled in front of the other with bent knees; back foot is the tackling foot; front foot is the plant/balancing foot.
 - When tackling, place the front foot to the side of the ball (as if to make an inside of the foot pass).
 - Use the inside of the back foot to drag through the ball keeping the ankle locked, toe up and knee bent.
 - Lower same side shoulder (as tackling foot) thrusting it forward to provide the necessary forward momentum and velocity to handle the impact of the opponent's force.
 - Drag the ball through and into the space behind the opponent and start the attack!

- Toe Poke
 - Use the toe of the front foot to poke the ball away!

Tactical Coaching Points (Considerations)

There are three (3) moments in the game of soccer:

- When your team has possession of the ball (attacking)...
- When your team does not have possession of the ball (defending)...
- When your team is changing from one to the other (transition)...

Therefore, coaches must understand the Principles of the game:

- Attacking Principles
- Defending Principles
- Transition

Important player terminology:

- 1st Attacker...player in possession of the ball; responsible for penetration.
- 2nd Attackers...players near the 1st attacker; responsible for support .
- 3rd Attackers...players away from the 1st attacker; responsible for mobility and providing width and length.

- 1st Defender(s)...player(s) pressuring the ball.
- 2nd Defenders...players near the 1st defender; responsible for defensive support/cover .
- 3rd Defenders...players away from the 1st defender; responsible for tracking 3rd attackers (attacking players away from the ball) and squeezing space centrally.



Attacking Principles

Penetration

Advancing the ball forward into the space behind the defending team.
Responsibility of the **1st attacker** (player in possession of the ball).

This is accomplished by dribbling, passing or shooting the ball:

- Recognize that there is space behind the defending team to exploit.
- Dribble by an opponent(s) using deceptive moves, change of speed and direction.
- Passing to a teammate in a forward position or running into the space behind the defending team.
- Shooting at the opponent's goal.

Support

Providing help to the **1st attacker** in the area around the ball.
Responsibility of the **2nd attackers** (attacking players in close proximity to the ball).

This is accomplished by:

- Recognizing that the 1st attacker needs help.
- Communicating with the 1st attacker...alerting the 1st attacker that you are available and where you are or will be.
- Timing your runs...moving to a supporting position at the right time...not too early-not too late.
- Being at the right angle and distance to support the 1st attacker...behind, square or in advance of the ball.
- Providing good body shape...positioning your body so that you can keep the attack moving in a positive direction (forward toward the opposing goal).

Mobility

Team movement provided by the attacking players close to the ball (**2nd attackers**) and away from the ball (**3rd attackers**).

This is accomplished with:

- Short, explosive runs (angled and lateral).
- Checking runs...away from the ball, then quickly back to the ball.
- Deceptive, long runs out of the back.
- Overlapping runs.

Shape

The attacking look or make-up of the team at any point in time with regards to positioning. Determined by where the ball is and where & how pressure is being applied by the defending team.

The attacking team must provide width, length and connection:

- **Width**...players moving into positions that widen the field. Players moving into positions that allow them to use as much of the field as possible. Opening the field up laterally (from East to West).



- **Length**...players moving into positions that lengthen the field. Players moving into positions that allow them to use as much of the field as possible. Opening the field up vertically (from North to South).
- **Connection**...players in positions to link or connect players from East to West and North to South. Usually midfield players.

Improvisation

The innate ability by a player or players to solve a soccer problem with flair and creativity.

Defending Principles

Pressure

The action of the **1st defender** (defender closest to the ball).

The responsibilities include:

- **To intercept the ball** and win possession for his/her team.
- **To tackle the opponent** and win possession for his/her team.
- **To delay the forward progress by the 1st attacker** and thus for the attacking team.

Cover

Providing help to the **1st defender** in the area around the ball.

Responsibility of the **2nd defenders** (defending players in close proximity to the ball).

This is accomplished by:

- Taking a position at an appropriate angle and distance behind the 1st defender to:
 - Prevent penetration by the 1st attacker with the pass (prevent splitting the 1st and 2nd defenders).
 - Become the pressuring defender if the 1st defender gets beat.
 - Match up with (track and/or mark) the 2nd attacker
- The tighter the pressure being applied by the 1st defender...the tighter (closer) the cover by the 2nd defender.
- The looser the pressure being applied by the 1st defender...the looser (farther away) the cover by the 2nd defender.

Balance

Providing defensive help and safety at a distance away from the ball.

This is the responsibility of the **3rd defenders** (players away from the ball). They must:

- Track (keep an eye on) attackers away from the ball.
- Position themselves so that they can squeeze space centrally, making the field smaller for the attacking team.
- Position themselves so that they can become the 1st or 2nd defender immediately if a pass is made by the attacking team.



Shape

The defensive look or make-up of the team at any point in time with regards to positioning. Determined by where the ball is and how the attacking shape is organized.

The defending team must be compact (concentrated) between the ball and their goal. This will help to prevent penetration by the attacking team.

Transition

This is the moment in the game when a team has to change their mentality (their roles) from attacking to defending or defending to attacking. Teams that can accomplish this with speed and organization are successful.

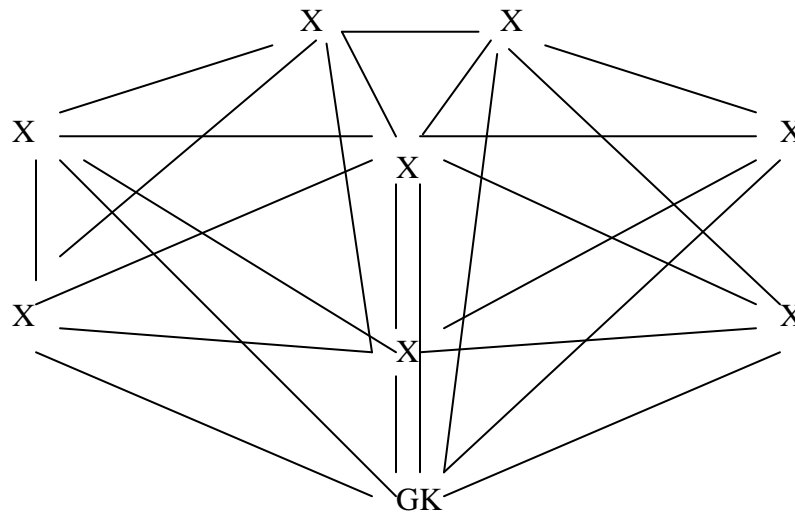


Systems of Play (Formations)

A *system of play* is the *formation of players* or placement of players on the field at the start of the game. The system selected by the coach is most commonly determined by his/her players' abilities (strengths and weaknesses). The coach also selects a system that will provide balance all over the field...players up top, players in the middle, players in the back; players on the right and players on the left.

We use numbers to define a system of play and describe the formation from back to front. The goalkeeper is assumed, therefore not included in the numbers used to describe the system. For example, a 3-3-1 system (formation) includes the goalkeeper, 3 players in the back, 3 players in the midfield and 1 player up front (top); 8 players total. How the coach positions the players determines the shape of the team. Formations must provide geometrical shapes that allow for different playing angles and distances for the players.

NATURAL SUPPORT ANGLES IN A 1 - 3 - 3 - 2 FORMATION



We could not discuss systems of play without discussing age appropriate playing numbers. The younger the players, the smaller the playing numbers and the smaller the field, thus, the less complicated the system of play. For instance, U6 teams play with 3 players. With only 3 players on the field, the only shape attainable is some form of a triangle. At this age, the shape of the team is not as important as the opportunity for the players to exercise and get touches on the ball.

The age appropriate playing numbers as recommended by US Soccer and US Youth Soccer are as follows:

U6 Games	3v3	3 field players	NO goalkeeper
U8 Games	4v4	4 field players	NO goalkeeper
U10 Games	7v7	6 field players	1 goalkeeper
U12 Games	9v9	8 field players	1 goalkeeper
U13+ Games	11v11	10 field players	1 goalkeeper



Formation Options U6, U8, U10, U12, U13 +

U6 Formations

Based on the explanation above, U6 teams play with 3 players on the field. Therefore there are only two possibilities for formations:

- 1-2 1 back player and 2 front players
- 2-1 2 back players and 1 front player

Due to the stage of development most U6 players are at, it is appropriate for them to play on a smaller field where we only consider front and back areas of the field; in other words 2 halves of the field.

Coaches should not waste time (spend too much time) demanding and forcing their U6 players to play in a formation. Instead, the focus must be on fun, exercise (physical education) and maximum ball touches; building confidence and comfort on the ball in fun games.

U8 Formations

Teams in this age group play with 4 players on the field. Keeping in mind the size of the field and the number of players, we still only consider front and back areas (2 halves of the field). With this in mind, there are only two balanced formation options:

- 2-2
- 3-1
- 4-0 (typically not used because of the weakness in the back half of the field with NO goalkeeper)

Cognitive and Psychomotor development has improved from the U6 days, so the coach can briefly remind the players about their shape (formation) during practices and games. But, it would be a waste of good technical time to spend long periods trying to coach shape at this age. Instead, focus on fun, dribbling, kicking (passing, shooting) and receiving in game-like activities.

U10 Formations

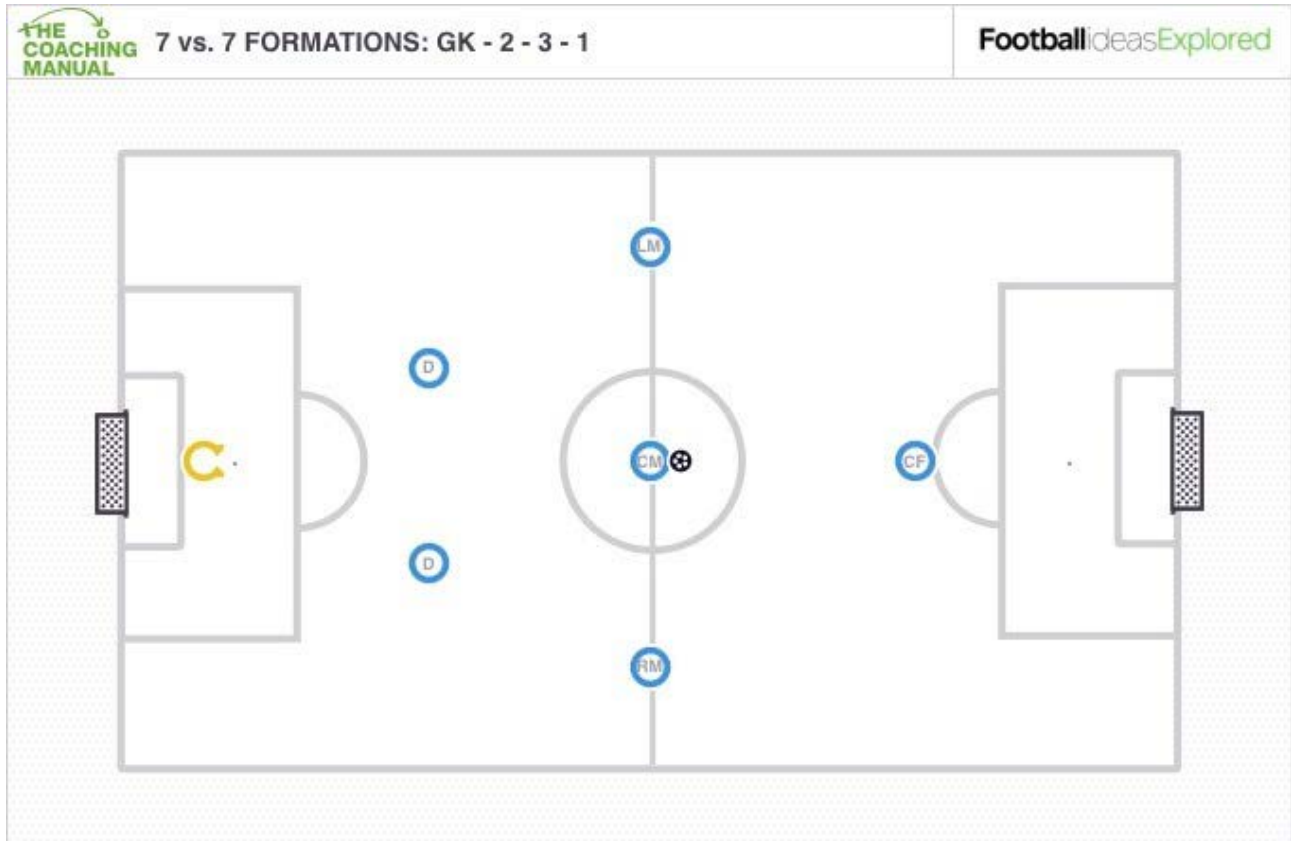
Teams in this age group play with 7 players; 6 field players and 1 goalkeeper. Keeping in mind the size of the field and the number of players, we still only consider front and back areas (2 halves of the field). With this in mind, there are only a one balanced formation options:

7v7 Formations

In 4v4 we looked at 2-2 and the diamond formation. When players progress to 7v7 the roles and responsibilities of the goalkeeper, defenders, midfielders and attackers are more clearly defined. This gives coaches the option to adopt different formations...



GK-2-3-1:



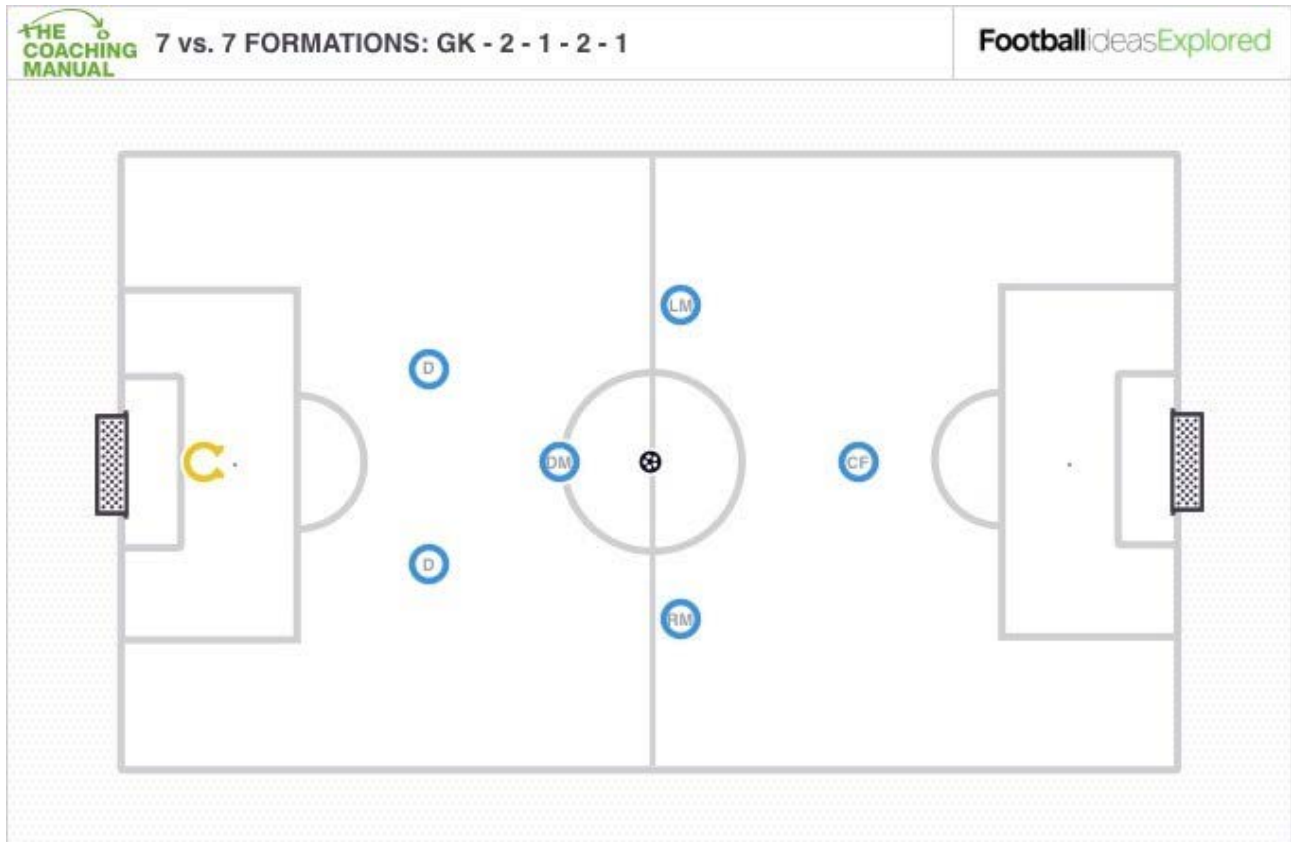
Within this formation there is a Goalkeeper, 2 x defenders, 3 x midfielders (left, central and right) and 1 x attacking player. This formation promotes passing and movement in possession and recovery runs to support when out of possession.

The 2-3-1 would be a good progression from the 2-2 formation played at 4v4 as the coach is encouraging angled runs and passing options from players ahead of the ball in order for defenders to play forward. Once the ball is in midfield the lone attacker looks to provide an option in the final third with support from the remaining midfield players behind and around the ball.

A coach could also progress the diamond-4 into a 2-3-1 formation as there are three natural diamond shapes on the pitch; 1. GK -LD-RD-CM 2. LD-LM-CM-CF (CF movement strong side) 3. RD-CM-RM-CF (CF movement strong side)



GK-2-1-2-1:



A Goalkeeper, 2 x defenders, 1 x holding midfielder, 2 x midfielders (left and right) and 1 x attacking player are set up in the 2-1-2-1 formation. It promotes combination play in possession and compactness when out of possession.

The 2-1-2-1 formation includes 2 x diamond shapes. The first diamond being between the holding midfielder, left and right midfielders and the forward player. The second diamond would be the goalkeeper, left and right defenders and holding midfielder. This formation directly leads on from the diamond-4 concepts coached at 4v4.

GK-3-2-1:

The 3-2-1 formation incorporates a goalkeeper, 3 x defenders (left, central and right), 2 x midfielders (left and right) and 1 x attacker. It encourages forward runs with width being provided by the wide defenders to create 1v1's and overloads in wide areas. Out of possession this formation is set up to defend deep and provide cover in the defensive half of the pitch.

This formation looks a very defensive formation, however defenders will be encouraged to attack through wide areas and support behind the ball in central areas. Again there is a prevalent diamond shape between the central defender, 2 x midfielders and attacker.




U12 Formations

Teams in this age group play with 9 players; 8 field players and 1 goalkeeper. Keep in mind that the size of the field has increased considerably, thus, introducing a middle third area of the field and the necessity to introduce midfield players to connect the back players to the front players. From this age group forward, we will discuss play as it relates to thirds of the field: Back third (defensive third), middle third (midfield) and front third(attacking third).

In the 9v9 formation, there are several different options, which are displayed and described below. Each system has their strengths and weaknesses on the offensive and defensive side.


- 1-2-3-3
- 1-3-3-2
- 1-2-4-2


At the U12 age groups, the players are more technically, tactically, mentally and physically developed, so, depending on the team, a one player in a line can be extremely effective. These players understand how to move off the ball, intelligently switch positions to create proper support for their teammates.

MAIN AREAS OF BUILDING BLOCKS: INDIVIDUAL / GROUP TACTICS	
FORMATION	1-2-3-3
WHY USE IT?	Three forwards and three midfield players higher on the field can help when working on pressing the ball high on the field but also on attacking topics as well.
WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE?	Crossing and Finishing Attacking 1 v 1 Combination Play Group Defending
 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Red Bulls New York Academy</i></p>	
TRANSITIONS INTO	11 v 11 – 1-4-3-3

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FORMATION	1-3-2-3
WHY USE IT?	Players working in pairs in the wide areas allows for multiple topics to be conducted in relation to this area of the field. This formation also allows for lots of natural triangles.
WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE?	Possession Attacking 2 vs 1 Combination play
	
TRANSITIONS INTO	11 v 11 – 1-4-2-3-1

FORMATION	1-2-4-2
WHY USE IT?	Lots of natural triangles which create a structure that helps to bring out the principles of the game, two forwards as well.
WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE?	Passing and Receiving Shooting Possession Combination play
	
TRANSITIONS INTO	11 v 11 – 1-4-4-2



U13+ Formations

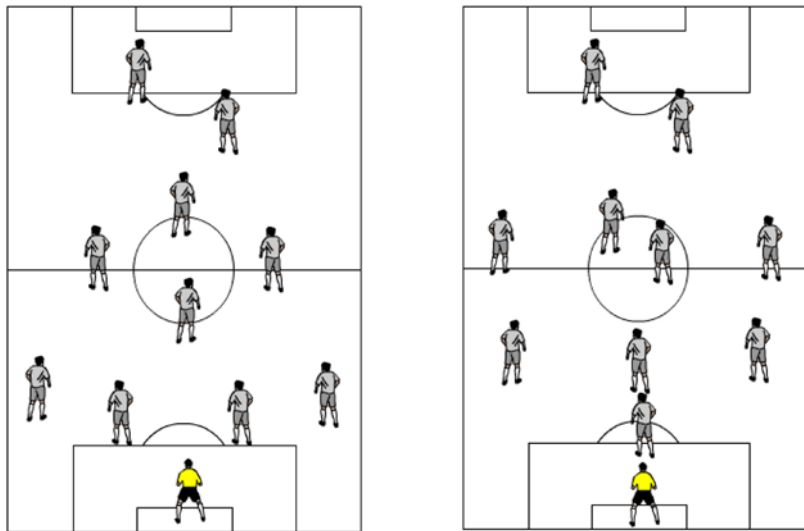
Teams in this age group play with 11 players; 10 field players and 1 goalkeeper. Keep in mind that the size of the field has, once again, increased considerably, especially in its width.

In the 11v11 formation, there are several different options, which are displayed and described below. Each system has their strengths and weaknesses on the offensive and defensive side.

- 1-3-4-3
- 1-3-5-2
- 1-4-3-3
- 1-4-4-2

The challenge, once the players reach the age of the 11v11 game, is maintaining appropriate defensive and attacking shape all over the field. This is where the choice of formation (system of play) becomes crucial...placing the appropriate players in the correct positions; balancing personnel through the thirds of the field (defensive third, middle third and attacking third).

Sample U13+ (4-4-2) Formation Diagrams:



Transitioning from 4v4 to 11v11

4v4	7v7	9v9	11v11
2-2	2-3-1	2-4-2 or 2-5-1	3-4-3 or 3-5-2
3-1	2-1-3	3-3-2 or 3-2-3	4-4-3 or 4-4-2



Small-Sided Games in America

By Tom Goodman, M.Ed.

MAPLE - Executive Director

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Former Massachusetts Youth Soccer Technical Director

Former US Youth Soccer National Director of Coaching Education

As the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Technical Director, veteran soccer player at various levels, veteran youth coach and father of three adult children, who used to be little soccer players, I have thought long and hard about the answer to the questions, “Why Small-Sided Games?” and “Why here in America?”

Let me make sure that everyone understands the meaning of “Small-Sided Games.” These are soccer games with fewer than 22 players (11 versus 11) usually competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that involve the players more because fewer than 22 players are sharing one ball.

Small-sided games have always been around in my life here in America. My first experience playing soccer was in a small-sided game. I lived in Springfield, MA across the street from Nathan Bill Park, one of the many city parks available to my friends and me.

One afternoon, I rode my bike over to the park and I saw a man and two boys, who I later learned were his children, playing soccer. The two boys were trying to score goals on their father into a goal made of one soda can and one beer can. When the dad won the ball he would try to kick the ball against a trash can about 15 yards away, opposite the goal at which they were shooting. They were having a great time! The dad looked over at me and asked me if I wanted to play...I said, “YES!”...and so began my long career in the game. The development of my passion for the game had begun.

The dad’s name was Mr. Cazavaland, a Hungarian immigrant, who lived in the neighborhood. He had played the game back in Hungary and could do many wonderful things with the ball. He was a kind man, patient and helpful. He never yelled at us, but instead, encouraged us to try new things and to dribble past each other and shoot from anywhere on the field. It was great!

Mr. Cazavaland volunteered to coach my first organized team in the local Parks and Rec league in Springfield, MA. when I was 8 years old. In those days, the early 1960’s, the teams competed with 11 players on the field for each team (22 players). The field was a football field (100 yards x 50 yards).

Mr. Cazavaland thought that the field was too big and that there were too many players on the field for our age level. I didn’t like playing as much on game day as I had when there were only 6 or 7 players on the field during practice because I hardly ever got the ball and hardly ever shot the ball at the goal. NOT FUN!

In practice, Mr. Cazavaland always set up small-sided activities and coached us in those activities. I looked forward to practice more than I did the games! The activities would consist of a maximum of 8 or 9 players. We would play 4 versus 4 or 5 versus 4. He would set up two or three small fields and everyone would play and have fun! Mr. Cazavaland was truly ahead of his time.

True stories like this are abundant in America. Many of our parents, our grandparents and our great grandparents immigrated to America having played this wonderful game in the streets of their native countries. It is their experience and our experiences together with our research on child development that leads me to share the following information with you.



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