

U8s... **MOST CRITICAL AGE!**

Still a bit selfish

More inclined towards “team play”

Still most interested in “Individual Success”

Athletic ability starts to show

Comfort level with friends

Developing attention span

Age Group Dynamics

Under 8

At the Under-8 level, things start to look a bit more like “real soccer,” but there’s still plenty of fun chaos. Here are 10 things to watch for that make games more interesting (and help you understand what’s developing):

- **The Game Starts to Spread Out:** You’ll still see bunching, but some kids begin to space out naturally—this is the early stage of understanding positioning.
- **First Real Passes:** Unlike U6, passes are sometimes intentional now. When you see a child look up and pass to a teammate, that’s a big step.
- **Dribbling with Purpose:** Kids start controlling the ball better instead of just kicking and chasing. Look for changes of direction or keeping the ball close.
- **Awareness of Teammates:** Some players begin to notice open teammates or move into space—that’s early soccer IQ developing.
- **Understanding Direction of Play:** Fewer kids will go the wrong way with the ball. Most now understand which goal they’re attacking.
- **Basic Defense Appears:** You’ll start seeing kids try to block shots, stay between the opponent and the goal, or chase back on defense.
- **Goalkeepers Begin to Matter:** If there’s a goalie, this may be the first time you see kids actually guarding the goal intentionally.
- **Listening and Applying Coaching:** Players might respond to simple instructions like “spread out,” “pass,” or “shoot,” even if inconsistently.
- **Stamina and Substitutions:** Kids play harder and longer now, but you’ll notice energy swings—some bursts of speed followed by slower moments.
- **Confidence Differences Show Up:** You’ll start to see kids who want the ball a lot versus those still building confidence—and both are totally normal at this age.

At U8, the game becomes a mix of **fun + first real understanding of teamwork**. If you watch for those little “lightbulb moments,” it makes the whole experience much more rewarding.