



Ball Control and Creativity: 6 - 12 years old

PRE ACADEMY LEVEL: U-6 THROUGH U-12 AGE GROUPS

U-6: K and 1st graders

Soccer at these ages should be discouraged in any form other than as a fun activity for kids, that happens to include a soccer ball. There should be groups of players rather than teams. Fees

GAME APPLICATION

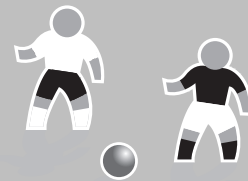
Game Form: 3 v 3 is best option for these ages

GK Status: Goalkeepers should not be used

Field Size: 4 v 4 (40 yards x 25 yards)—3 v 3 (30 yards x 20 yards)

Ball Size: 3

When ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted with a kick-in or dribble-in. No throw-ins.



should be nominal. Attendance should be optional. Creating a joyful environment is mandatory.

■ SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS AGE:

Five- and six-year olds are too young to be involved in any structured, organized soccer program. At most, they should be involved in fun activities that encourage the children to explore their physical abilities, while also including a ball with which to play. Make sure these are activity-based games that emphasize exploration and experimentation with the rolling, spinning, and bouncing qualities of the ball. The soccer ball should be considered a toy. There should be no activities where players wait in lines to perform a pre-determined movement or required action.

Five- and six-year olds, although still young, are beginning to gain more control over their bodies. At the same time, it is still new to them and they will require a lot of time and energy figuring out what their bodies can do, and how to use this developing coordination. Children at this age also love to use their imagination when they play. Keep this in mind when designing games. They



enjoy playing on their terms, and as a by-product of their play, they will gain some limited comfort with the ball. Although they love to play, their ability to stay focused on any one thing is very limited. Keep your activities short and simple. Finally, even as they are steadily developing physical and mental abilities, they are still very young. Always treat children with care, patience and give plenty of encouragement. It can be helpful to include parents in the practice/play time so they can take ideas home with them to their backyards or parks. If children must be involved in these organized practice times, they should be having so much fun that when they go home, the soccer ball becomes one of their favorite toys.

■ DURATION OF PRACTICE; RATIO OF BALL TO CHILD AT PRACTICE

30 to 45 minutes is the best option for these ages. Most of the practice should be spent in ratios of one ball per child or one ball per two children.

■ GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING DURING PRACTICE

The children should be having fun with the ball. There should be periods of active playing where everyone is involved, and there should be ample opportunities for short breaks for water and for catching their breath. If there is more than one adult/coach, the children should be divided into smaller groups, with at least one adult per group. At these young ages, children work hard and tire quickly. Allow them to have “active rests,” where they are not running but are trying to do something specific with the ball, often sitting or standing. Everyone should be occupied with something, even when resting. Keep the numbers from 1 v 1 to 3 v 3 and keep as many children actively involved with a ball as possible. Let them go to small goals with no goalkeepers. When possible, a size 3 soccer ball should be used.

■ GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING IN MATCHES

U.S. Soccer recommends that there be no organized matches at this age. Consistently set up mini games at practice for your kids to compete with and against each other, according to their age.

CONSIDER THIS: At these young ages, the primary goal is to make the player’s experience with soccer so enjoyable that when he or she has a choice of activities, he or she choose to play soccer on his or her own.

■ GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION THAT IS COMMUNICATED TO THE PLAYERS BY THE COACH

At these ages, the coach/parent should be positive and encouraging of each child. Specific soccer-related information should be limited to basic ideas of how to best keep the ball from running out of bounds too often. There should not be any discussions about positions or any other team concepts.



■ BEST QUALITIES OF A COACH FOR THIS AGE PLAYER

Patience, good humor, and a willingness to see the world through a child's eyes. Also, the ability to speak their language and accept that the children's play will not look at all like soccer.

■ NUMBER OF MATCHES PER CALENDAR YEAR

Children at these ages should not be playing any organized games. Playing with and against their teammates during practice times is sufficient and is to be encouraged.

■ BREAKS FROM ORGANIZED/MANDATORY SOCCER

Children at this age should be able to play when they want to play, and walk away when they are through.

■ TRAVEL

None.

■ STATE, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

None.

■ TOURNAMENTS, FESTIVALS, ETC.

None.