

FAQ

I just got my team assigned to me in Sportsengine... now what?

You will actually be assigned to TWO teams.

The second team is a group chat with all the other coaches in your division.

COACHES CHAT: this is where you will organize your practices with other coaches. It is a *first come, first serve* basis and you can only use the game fields ONCE per week for your practices. You are only expected to use half of the field for practice. However, if no one is using the other half, you may use the full field. Just know that if another team shows up, you must go back to using half. This allows us to accommodate SO many more teams for practices.

FIRST: organize your practice days/times with the other coaches

This is also a space to bounce ideas off each other, share ideas, or ask questions. Please keep it respectful. Please keep it positive.

TEAM CHAT: This is where you will communicate with the parents of your players!

SECOND: Reach out to your team using the chat feature and introduce yourself! This is also a great time to set your expectations for your players, your parents, and set the practice schedule. Enter the practices into the schedule within Sportsengine.

Tips:

- It's really nice to be able to be flexible and want to accommodate everyone. But that is also incredibly difficult. Do not be afraid to say, "practices are on these days at these times". You are the one who stepped up to coach, you get to decide what works for your schedule. That said, be sure to have a back up plan just in case that day doesn't work for a lot of your team. Sometimes kids will have to miss, unfortunately, but if it's a day where the bulk of your team will miss, try and find a different day.

THIRD: Pick up your equipment! You will get a coaching kit with pinnies, cones, and some helpful resources to get you started. You will also receive the players bags/jerseys, and soccer balls (fall only). You will pass these out at your first practice.

Help! My first practice is tomorrow!

You got this! But don't try and wing it. You don't need an elaborate plan with every single second accounted for, but DO have an idea of what topics you want to cover, and what games you want to play. Going in with a plan makes your life less stressful. Going in with a plan helps with behavior management from the players. Too much idle time can cause issues.

Tips:

- LEARN NAMES
- Try to show up to practice a little early and have an activity ready to go as kids arrive. Small sided games are a great option for this (1v1, 2v2, 3v3)
- Plan activities with similar playing spaces to minimize how much time spent putting cones down/picking them up.
- Have players pick up cones! Makes your life easier and clean up faster.

The younger the ages, the simpler the topic can be.

At the younger ages, it's basics:

- Dribbling
- Ball striking (passing & shooting)
- Defending
- Attacking

The older the age, the more complex it becomes, HOWEVER, a lot of games that are played at the U6 level are easily modified to fit the older ages.

As players get older start to include topics like:

- Set pieces (goal kicks, corner kicks, kick off, etc)
- Creating space
- Movement off the ball

Tips:

- It's important to note that practices should encompass most of these skills, but a "dribbling" focused practice might see more activities like sharks and minnows, red light/green light, etc. A "defending" drill might include soccer pirate, knockout, or 1v1 situations.
- Games and drills should mimic situations they will come across in an actual game!

End each practice with a scrimmage. The kids love it and it helps them learn positions/how games work! It can help to have players scrimmage in the position they will be playing in their game that weekend.

Game Day!

Communicate with parents the day before (or morning of) how early you would like the players to be at the game. I recommend 15-30min before the game starts. This allows you to make sure everyone is there and gathered. You can start warming up off to the side of the field, or communicate game plans and line-ups during this time.

Line ups

Have your line up set ahead of time, and know who your subs are going in for. At the younger ages especially (U6-U8) it is important that players have an opportunity to learn and experience every position! Goalie is generally the only exception. Try to only have kids who actually WANT to play goalie, play that position. At the U10 level players start to get a better idea of what positions they like/excel at. However, it is still important for them to learn and understand the role of each position. Just because a kid was a great striker at U8, doesn't mean they won't be better utilized on your team as a midfielder or defender. As the ages increase, so do the amount of players on the field. This opens up new positions and opportunities for kids to excel at.

HELP! I don't have enough players!

In cases where teams find themselves short players, coaches have three options.

1. **If a team has at least the minimum number of players required*, play on.** The opposing coach may choose to play the same number of players, but this is not a requirement.
2. **If coaches agree, share players.** The opposing coach may choose to share specific players at his/her discretion, but this is not a requirement. Every player on the mixed team will wear a pinnie to distinguish it from the other team.
3. **Forfeit.**

Coaches may not...

- bring up or down players from other divisions.
- use players in the same division who are rostered on other teams (other than the opposing team, as in case #2 above).
- use children from outside the league.

The minimum players required to start/continue a match are as follows:

- U12/U15: 7 players per team
- U10: 5 players per team
- U8: 4 players per team
- U6: 3 players per team

Before the game

Routine is important in youth sports. It helps kids stay on task and know what to expect. Try to have a "game day" routine. A common warm up activity is having two lines 15yds

away from each other near the half line and 1 defender at the top of the box. 2v1 to goal – change out the defender periodically. But there are so many options and as long as kids are getting touches on the ball and are behaving safely, create your own routine!

The referees will need to check in players. They will have your team line up, check their equipment, and give them a safety/rules speech. Then they will ask for captains. You can pick a different kid each time if you'd like, it's just a coin toss to determine who gets the ball/side.

Play Time

Each player must play at least one-half of each game, regardless of division level. At the younger levels, equal play time is a priority. In the older ages (U12+), there will start to be more imbalances in play time as it becomes more competitive and winning becomes more of a focal point, but every player must play one-half. This can be the hardest part of game day, keeping time and keeping track of who needs to go where.

Tip:

- Try to set a timer on your phone to go off at regular intervals (relative to the length of the game) to remind you when it's time to sub someone in.
- It's really helpful to have a parent help keep time on game days. It takes something off your plate, and they can let you know when it is time to sub.

Subbing for U10 and under is done on the fly. This means you do not have to wait for the game to stop (goalie excepted), you can sub whenever you would like. When a player comes off the field, acknowledge them. If you can think of something specific they did well, communicate that to them! While players are sitting out, this can be a great time to make observations and give pointers for when they go back into the game.

Tip:

- When you are subbing, try to wait til the gameplay is AWAY from the player you are subbing. If you are subbing on defense, wait for your team to be attacking to sub. If you are subbing someone on the left side of the field, wait for the play to be on the right side, etc.

Half Time

This is a brief time to check in with your players and hype them up! During the game, try to find a few things that the team is doing really well, and find 1-2 (no more) things that need more attention. Sandwich these observations:

"We are passing the ball around so well, I'm loving it! Our decision making on defense needs a little work though. We're waiting too long to put pressure on their attackers. When we do decide to step, we are doing a great job of winning the ball and moving it away from our goal!"

This time is short, you aren't going to fix all the problems and mistakes at half time, that comes during practice. Use this halftime to get your players excited for the second half! You can dive deeper into specifics when you have more time at practice.

Give the lineup for the next half/quarter and cheer with your team as you get set up for the next half.

End of game

At the end of the game, have the players line up to high five the other team, then make your way over to the referees for high fives/fist bumps.

Have a brief closing to meet with players. This is a great opportunity to point out great things that specific players did that you might not have pointed out to them during the game. This is another chance to praise what went well, lightly touch on what you will be working on in practice that week (aka what might not have gone well during the game), and end the meeting on a high note!

Winning coach needs to input the score of the game in Sportsengine.

*** This FAQ document is a work in progress. Please reach out to the Director of Coaches if there are questions you feel would be beneficial to include! ***