

Coaching Guidelines

- Create a fun learning soccer environment for your players in training and in games
- Be Organized and provide game-like activities and games (NOT Drills, Lines, Laps or Lectures)
- Get to know your players, be animated, show unconditional care
- Have a plan (even for the unexpected), involve players into an activity upon arrival, let them play
- Actively engage and coach the players, change activities using age group/experience guidelines
- Finish your practice with a game/scrimmage
- Review to check for understanding

Age Group Basics

Level	Tactical Direction	Characteristics
U6	→	Constantly in Motion, No Pace, Egocentric, Ball/Body Familiarity
U8	← →	Individual/Partner Work, Sensitive, Attention Span Increases
U10	Most Directions	Identify with Team, Memory Recall, Initiate Play, Peer Pressure
U12	All Directions	Follow More Complex Directions, Skill = Focus, Tactics, Game Like

Training Session Design

Start with the end in mind. Write down 2-3 things you want your players to learn/know. Then select an activity related to topic and list objectives that will get them going right away upon arrival and keeps them engaged with little to no coaching whatsoever. Progress from simple to complex by adding players, conditions, pressure, and evolve into more game like eventually ending with a game.

Coaching Tool Kit

- ❖ Use **guided discovery** by asking players questions versus telling them the answers (i.e. where is the space to attack? How do we prevent goals? How do we help out teammates?)
- ❖ Check for understanding by having players tell, explain, or demonstrate main concepts
 1. **Freeze:** coaching player(s) in the activity when a correction is necessary and having them stop instantly at the moment a behavior occurs
 2. **Natural Stoppage:** coaching point(s) made when there is a stoppage in the game (i.e. goal, out of bounds, corner, etc...)
 3. **Individual Reference:** making correction(s) to a player as they work on a skill or tactic
 4. **Coaching In the Flow:** making correction(s) as they happen naturally during play

Instant Activities

- **Street Soccer:** Set up 2 small goals (3 steps apart) about 25 yards in length from the other goal and as players arrive they grab a vest and begin playing.

- **Bag Ball/Coconut:** Set up a backpack, small cone with a ball on top of it (coconut) or bucket. When players arrive have them go and play 1v1, 2v2, up to 4v4 to the bag/coconut/bucket. Whoever hits the bag or knocks ball off scores a point. Just play. Add 2nd object as needed.
- **Guard the Goal:** Place pile of balls next to goal. Set up a safety line 8-10 yards from goal. Coach begins in goal, guarding and stopping any shots. Send 1 ball out at a time and players attempt to score. Keep track of points. Can add whoever scores, becomes next guard.
- **Coach is "it":** Kids dribble around in designated space and try and get away from coach, if tagged must do selected activity (jump over ball 2 times, run around ball 3 times, throw and catch ball 2 times, etc.) Great warm up for players!!

Dribbling/Body Exploration

- **Body Part Dribble:** Kids dribble in area, when coach calls out body part, must touch body part to ball (i.e. knee, elbow, belly, back, etc...) Challenge them. Be creative!
- **Red Light, Green Light, Blue Light, Orange Light...:** Kids dribble in area, coach calls out color, kids perform skill associated with color (i.e. red =stop, green=go, blue=hide, orange=run around ball, black=park on a cone..etc)
- **Who can?** Each player has a ball moving about in designated space. Coach calls out questions and checks if players can perform selected skill. Ideas include; Who can dribble fast? Who can dribble slow? Who can dribble around a cone? Who can change direction? Who can pull the ball back? Who can toss and catch the ball? Who can stop the ball and fake a pass/shot?
- **Boss of Balls:** Coach has children hand them the ball and then they toss it out in different directions. Have children bring ball back to coach. See who brings it back in creative, different ways. (encourage this) Have them try different ways. Eventually have them dribble ball back to you. Coach keeps moving around so players have to look up in order to find the coach (vision).
- **Superhero:** Children are all given a colored pinnie and tuck them into the back of their t- shirt (like a cape). Players try to steal other superheroes pinnies without getting theirs stolen. If stolen, a player goes over to side and does a trick (taps, bells, etc...) and then can grab a new cape (pinnie). Play without ball, then add dribbling. Make teams to progress to more difficulty.
- **Builders and Bulldozers:** Choose 1/2 players to be builders and the other 1/2 to be bulldozers. Set up 12-20 tall cones in area. Object is for bulldozers to dribble their ball (wrecking ball) and knock over cone (building) by shooting ball at cone, builder's job is to run over and set cone back up. Switch roles after several minutes. Keep points to make activity competitive.
- **Math Dribble:** players dribble around area with ball, when coach calls out a number players must get into that number (i.e. Coach calls "3", players must get into a group of three).
- **Follow the Leader:** Each player has a ball. Select 1 player to be the leader who dribbles around area, partner also has a ball and follows. Have leader change direction and speed. Progress to having leader try and fake out follower. When coach calls out switch, change roles.
- **Knockout:** Every player has a ball and dribbles around in grid. Object is for one person to kick another persons out of grid while keeping their ball inside. You can't leave your ball and chase

others. Once your ball gets knocked out you must go to a coach and do a small skill before getting back in.

Tag/Exploration Activities

- **Freeze Monster:** Designate 2 players as freeze monsters (blue pinnies work great!) They chase others who are dribbling and try to tag them. If caught, the player must pick up the ball and place it on top of their head. To get unfrozen, another player must dribble their ball over and either tag frozen player or pass the ball through the legs of the frozen player (more advanced)
- **Snake/Blob Tag:** Two children join hands and attempt to tag others who are dribbling in area. If tagged they join hands with snake and continue to make snake bigger. Great cooperative activity.
- **Hospital Tag:** Everyone has a ball and dribbles around an area trying to tag others. If you are tagged you must place your hand (a band-aid) on the place where you were tagged. If tagged a 2nd time, a player must place their band-aid (hand) on the place where they were tagged. After 3rd time the player must go over to the coach and get healed by doing a skill trick (i.e. bells).
- **Robot Tag:** Pick 2 players to be robots. The rest of the players dribble their soccer ball inside grid. The robots "its" must only walk and talk like a robot and try and tag others (more advanced version is to steal balls vs. tag) If caught by robot (or ball stolen) player becomes a robot helper.
- **Everybody's It:** Each player has a ball and attempts to tag other players. If tagged, a player must do a select activity (i.e 5 Bells or 7 taps) before getting back into the game. U8 and older can partner up 2 vs. others.
- **Islands:** Set-up three to four islands (about 10 x 10 yards) and give them each a name. Children start on one of the islands. When a coach (shark) yells out the name of one of the islands the children must dribble their ball and avoid being tagged by a shark making it safely onto the island that was called. If tagged they join in a become a shark.
- **Spiderman:** 2-3 spiderman/woman try and tag others who have a ball (green goblins) and are dribbling around in designated area. If they get tagged, players go to the spider web (soccer goal or coned area). Once you have 3-5 green goblins release the players from the web.
- **Sharks and Minnows:** All players have ball in grid (minnows). 2 players are taggers (sharks) and are released into grid and attempt to kick minnow's ball out of grid. If a minnows ball is knocked out they help sharks get all of the other minnow's balls out. (Can also play this to lines)
- **Alligator Alley:** Line children up on a line in a grid about 25 x 35 yards. Object is for one tagger, to call out "Alligator, Alligator, will try to get you". Players will then dribble across grid to other side of the grid without their ball being kicked out of the river. If the ball is kicked out they join the alligator and try to get the others out. Coach should begin as the alligator with younger ages and allow success progressing towards challenges players.

Passing/Receiving/Finishing Activities

- **Pong:** Set up a small cone goal. Partner players up and have them be approx. 20 yards apart with the goal in the middle. Working on passing, players pass the ball back and forth working on both passing and receiving. Can challenge by: 1) counting # of passes 2) working on receiving with one foot, playing with opposite 3) receive with outside of foot, pass with the same 4) 1 touch
- **Technical Lines:** Groups of 3 w/1 ball approx. 15-20 yards apart. 1st player dribbles to opposite side, new player gets ball dribbles back across, 3rd player does same - continuous. Progress to dribble and pass, pass and follow, inside-opposite foot pass, outside-same foot pass.
- **Alien Blaster:** Kids dribble in area and attempt to blast (kick soccer ball and hit coach or designated kid) below knee, award points for each hit. Choose different kids and designate different points.
- **½ In ½ Out:** Divide players, ½ w/ball on outside of 30x30 yard area. ½ without ball begin in middle and run to outside players and receive pass, control and pass back to player. Continue 1-2 minutes, switch roles. Progress: 2 touch, 1 touch, Man on, Time, Turn, Tossed ball, etc...
- **Hungry, Hungry, Hippos:** Mark off area, put all the balls in a pile to one side all kids move around inside area with ball, 1-3 players are off to the side and are designated Hippos and attempt to kick their ball and hit others below knee height. If kid is hit they become Hippo Helpers and go over to pile of balls and attempt to hit other kids with their ball.
- **Clean out your yard:** Divide into two teams. Make a grid (30 x 40 yards) with a dividing line separating two areas. Object is to pass/strike the balls into other team's grid and have fewer balls in their grid. On coach's signal, no one is to kick a ball. Count who has the least.
- **Pirates of the Caribbean:** Divide into 4 equal teams. Place 4 grids (5 x 5 yards) equally from the center area where you will place all soccer balls (treasures) in one large pile. On command have each pirate (player) run out and get one soccer ball and dribble it back to their ship (grid). If no balls are left in the middle players go to any ship and take a treasure (ball) and dribble it back to their ship. No one is allowed to block someone/steal a ball that is not inside a grid. Add a golden ball (one that is different) and make it worth more points.
- **Foxes and Chickens:** Half of the children are foxes and the other half make into chickens (w/eggs=ball). Start all foxes in a group and send them into grid area. Object is for foxes to knock out all of the chickens eggs out. Switch after all eggs/balls are knocked out. (You can change the type of characters)
- **Frienemy:** 3 players move and pass ball, on signal "Frienemy", 1 player keeps it from 2.
- **Gates:** Set up 8-9 small goals 3 yards apart and spread them out within your area. Send the players out to dribble through as many gates in allotted time. Challenge them (i.e. only right foot, only left, must pass thru gate, must do a move...etc.). Can partner up and have them work on passing thru gates. Add gatekeeper(s) who can block/guard various gates.
- **Double Goal Finishing:** Set up 2 small goals 30-40 yards apart. Divide players equally standing next to each goal. 1st player in each line dribbles and shoots on opposite goal. Get their ball and go to new line, wait turn. Can work on right side and left side so both feet get work on shooting.

- **Thunder:** Same as Double Goal Finishing, but have play 1v1 to goals. Whichever player shoots the ball, becomes the defender and tries to prevent new player from scoring - continuous game.
- **Draw:** 2 players have one ball between them. They stand feet together equidistance from ball. On coach's command, "draw," players attempt to pull the ball back. Play up to a set amount of pts.
- **Combat:** Begin by playing Draw (see above). Player try to keep it by shielding without dribbling away. After 20-40 seconds call time, Player without ball does a trick.

End Games/Scrimmages

- **Ball to Coach:** Divide players into 2 small teams standing in a short line behind a cone (i.e. two groups of 3-4 each). Coach has 1 ball and passes it out into the field calling a number 1-4. If the coach calls out #1, the first player from each team runs out and whoever can pass it back to the coach gets a point for their team and then go to end of their team's line. Vary the number of players that are sent out and keep track of points playing to a certain number of points.
- **New Ball:** 2 teams play to small goals and coach has a pile of balls. Each time ball goes out of bounds, coach call out, "new ball" and players play with the ball that was just played in. Continue until all balls have been played. Have players go and collect and bring back, start again.
- **"Get Out of Here":** Make 2 teams and have them stand behind 2 cones. Use pinnies to distinguish teams. Send one player out at a time and have them go to designated goal. If ball goes out of bounds coach responds by saying "get out of here." Then send next players in. Can also play Ball to coach by having the coach play out a ball and call #'s.
- **2v2, 3v3, 4v4 Games:** Can play to small goals or end lines. Set up several fields approximately 20/25 x 30/35 side by side and just observe. The game is the best teacher! But remember that if players don't know how to play, help facilitate the process.