

5/6U

The purpose of this simple coaching manual is to help you understand your players and your role as a recreational youth soccer coach. This guide will provide some information about your players' physical and mental ability, your role as a coach, and how your practices and games should be structured.

Remember: Practice makes PERMANENT, if the players practice a skill the wrong way then they will be really good at doing that skill incorrectly. It is easier to make corrections at the younger ages than at older ages.

Your players:

- Your players will have short attention spans. They will need to be moving as much as possible as well as having several activities throughout a session.
- Your players will need help with fundamental motor skills;
 - Locomotor: walking, running, skipping, jumping, walking backwards, leaping.
 - Non locomotor: bending, pushing, pulling, balancing, stretching.
 - Basic manipulation: throwing, catching, kicking, rolling, dribbling, collecting, striking.
- Your players want to play and have fun.
- Your players do not understand complex thoughts, KEEP IT SIMPLE. Focus on one topic at a time.
- Your players may say "team", but they mean "my ball".
- Even though it is supposed to be 4v4, it tends to be 1v7.

Your role:

Your role as a 5/6U rec coach is to help the players develop their fundamental soccer skills, like dribbling and passing. You should also focus a large amount of practice on developing their motor skills. This can be achieved with many activities, with or without the soccer ball.

You should ALWAYS be positive and keep things fun and engaging. If the players do not have fun, they will not want to come back. Do not get bogged down in trying to teach professional tactics or several skills a day. KEEP IT SIMPLE.

You should not be running soccer drills, repetitive and waiting in lines, at this age group. Instead, you need to run engaging activities, which are more fluid, and all players are in motion.

Activities should be more individual, but you can incorporate a select few partner activities as well.

Keep up communication with the parents/guardians of players on your team.

Your practice:

Your practice should run an hour long with 30-40 minutes of activities followed by 20-30 minutes of play. Activities should be no more than 10 minutes long and progressive (simple to complex). They should also be fun and engaging for players.

Your soccer-specific activities should only consist of dribbling and/or passing.

Motor skill-specific activities do not require a soccer ball.

Make sure to encourage your players. ANY time the young players do something well, praise that effort. If young players do something incorrect, do not yell at or shame them. Instead, SHOW them what they're doing wrong and how to fix it.

When it is time for "play" make sure to keep teams small – 3v3, or 4v4. If teams are uneven, that is okay. You may need to run two small games to incorporate everyone. EVERYONE should be playing during this time. The fewer numbers on the field helps develop player touch and confidence on the field.

Work with the players on the triangle shape. IF your players can use the triangle shape in games and continually succeeding in it, you may introduce the diamond shape to your team.

Your games:

You should focus on one main objective for the game (e.g. Can we do one skill move every time we get the ball?). Keep track of this if you can, the players will love to hear how many they did. You can even count your objectives as points and refer to that instead of the goals scored. For example, "Even though we only scored two goals, we scored seven points from players doing their skill moves!" Make objectives the same number of points as goals, or MORE points if you really want players to do it.

4v4 play does not require positions. Do not confuse players with this. *If you think they are understanding enough, you can try to integrate triangles in games and practices – having players form a triangle when their teammate gets the ball, with the teammate with the ball as one point of the triangle players need to try to create two more points to get open for him/her. Because you're playing 4v4, you may introduce the diamond shape, but only AFTER your team understands how to make a triangle shape.

****All players should play roughly 50% of the game.****