



Oregon Youth Soccer Association Age Group Curriculum for Youth Player Development U8-10

by
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"The younger they are, the more organized the coach must be."

Dr. Tom Fleck, USSF National Staff Instructor

KNOW THE PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH COACHING

Decision-making is the key. Soccer is a game in which the players have to think! Let the players make some input into the session, by giving them some opportunities to make decisions within the games that you choose as a coach.

The coach makes the games and the rules simple. One should allow scheming but not cheating. Have a lot of balls around as a coach, so that you can shout 'ball's out' or 'get out of here' to make the play somewhat continuous for plenty of repetition.

Principles of Youth Coaching

**A COACH OF YOUTH SOCCER MUST ALWAYS BE POSITIVE!
A COACH MUST ALWAYS CHECK THAT THE PLAYING AREA IS SAFE!**

1. Activities need to be developmentally appropriate – fun, agility
2. Give clear instructions – Brevity, Clarity, Relevance provide good pictures – little talking
3. Simple to Complex progression
4. Opportunities for decision making – attack/defend scheming
5. Use safe and appropriate spaces (ie. 20x30 yards)
6. Provide plenty of implications for the game – very wide scope with young kids

Player Development for Coaching U8-10 Players

Philosophy

The development of a soccer player is a long process in which players' progress gradually from a simple to a more complex involvement in the game. This progression requires proper guidance and direction from **quality, knowledgeable, licensed coaches**. This process cannot be rushed, but players should always compete at a level that is both challenging and demanding. I believe that there are eight elements that are essential for proper player development.

1. **Competitive Training Environment** that challenges players of all levels of ability at the same time, is varied, motivating and stimulating on a regular basis.
2. **Quality Coaching** to help, guide, direct and assist players through their youth careers. Coaches must continue with their ongoing education.
3. **Competitive Matches** against teams that will push the players to their maximum capabilities.
4. **Quality Referees** who understand and can interpret the laws of the game.
5. **Facilities** that are numerous and of a high quality.
6. **Proper Equipment** – Boots, Shin Guards, Balls (must be pumped up), Proper Clothing
7. **Political Pipeline** of Administrators, Politicians, Coaches and Referees that when making decisions and policies consider if it enhances the development of the player.
8. **Player Identification System** that can find the top players and place them in the appropriate level and program.

In recreational soccer for younger players (U6-8) FUN must be emphasized and therefore points #1, #3 #4 & #8 are not as important. There is no guarantee that a player will reach his or her potential, but at least we must give him or her the opportunity to become "The Best They Can Be".

In the words of Bobby Howe, former US Soccer National Director of Coaching Education;

"There is no magic formula or short cut to successful development, coaching at youth levels is all about working with players to improve performance, not about recruiting players to build teams to win championships. Soccer is a player's game and players should be considered first when political, administrative and coaching decisions are made".

Philosophy of Coaching U8-10 Players

Coaches must make it FUN for the players and not worry about a win-loss record! The primary measure of success for a coach of these young ages should be how many come back and play soccer next season!

Coaches have to consider players of this age from three perspectives; physiological, psychological and social. Children of any age can differ in their level of development in either of these categories by as much as (plus or minus) 3 years. There can be a world of difference between players starting their first season as opposed to their third! Please review the activities below and from your own personal experience, adjust accordingly to the developmental needs / techniques of the players/coaches you are working with.

Concentrate on a lot of touches on the ball for each player – each with own **size 4** ball. If a game is becoming tedious or the players are restless – declare multiple winners and move on to another activity. It is vital that a coach knows (or works out quickly) what level his/her players are at! If the games are too easy, the kids get bored and if they are too difficult, they get frustrated. Make activities sufficiently challenging to keep the players interested, or challenge the better individuals while a game is ongoing (i.e. using left foot only etc.).

Coaches need to avoid the 4 evil 'L's' at all costs

1. **Laps** = their time is precious – do fun game activities with a ball!
2. **Lectures** = their attention span is short – if you speak more than 30 seconds they're gone!
3. **Lines** = don't have them standing waiting to take a turn kicking a ball – develop activities where they can all participate at the same time!
4. **Language** = you are now an important role model – never use inappropriate language around children (make sure other adults do not either!)

Player Development

Curriculum

U8 Fun Phase (The Turn On)

The fascination for the ball, the desire to master it and the thrill of scoring goals provides the launching pad. The joy and pleasure of the game are best nurtured by encouraging freedom of expression and organizing children's play in small groups. The activities are best nurtured by allowing freedom of expression within small group situations.

Use FUN games and activities to encourage participation

Coach

Facilitator, Friendly helper, Organizer, Stimulator, Patient, Enthusiastic, Imaginative. Should hold either;

License: State Youth Module Level 1, or

License: State Youth Module Level 2

Technique/Tactics

Learning through FUN games and age appropriate activities. Activities should be Fun

Appropriate for the Age
Promote Decision Making
Encourage Creativity
Participation of All Players

Games: Body Awareness => Maze Games => Target Games

Physical: Physical/Movement Education through Soccer

Body Awareness
Balance
Coordination – Eye-Hand and Eye-Foot
Agility – Changing Direction while in Motion

Psychological: Keep in FUN and ENJOYABLE to Foster a Desire to Play (Intrinsic Motivation).

Tend to one task at a time – Controlling the Ball is a Complex Task (Realistic Expectations).

Does not understand group or collective play – Individual Activities (All Players with a Ball).

Short attention span unless peaked – Keep Interest High. Like to show what they can do – Encourage to Try New Things

Develop self-esteem – Activities that Foster Positive Feedback and Attainable Positive Success.

The Game: U6 & U7 3 v 3 (no Goalkeepers)
 U8 4 v 4 (with Goalkeepers in an exclusion zone)

U10 Flux Phase (The Critical Transition Period)

The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age level. Children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to being self-critical and develop the need for group and/or team games. The game itself should be central to all skills training. Even a side soccer is too sophisticated and complicated for young players – small sided games, which provide the right amount of pressure for the child's level of development, are more appropriate.

Coach

Should be a sensitive Teacher, Patient, Enthusiastic, Imaginative, Ability to Demonstrate, Understanding of Technique, Preferably Young & Dynamic. Should hold either;

License: State Youth Module Level 2, or

License: State Youth Module Level 3

Technique

Is still most important at this age. Repetition of technique in practice should be achieved through fun games and dynamic activities.

Dribbling – Use of ALL Surfaces, Basic Turns, Basic Moves to beat an Opponent, Speed Dribbling in Open Space

Receiving – Body Behind the Ball, Cushion Ball => Ground Balls All Surfaces of the Foot from Pass
=> Air Balls from Self Service

Shooting – Proper Striking Technique (Open Body, Position of Plant Foot, Ankle Locked, Strike Ball with Laces, Follow-through); Hit Moving Ball

Passing – Proper Technique for Laces, Inside, Outside

Heading – Introduction – Build Confidence, Does Not Hurt, Hit Ball with Forehead (should begin by using a soft nerf-type ball)

Tactics

Can slowly begin to explain Fundamental Tactical Concepts in 1v1, 2v1 and 2v2 situations

Players should still all play a variety of positions => Develop the Complete Player

Attacking 1v1

Support, Width, Depth => 3v1, Introduce team triangle shape

Defending 1v1

Goalside; Immediate Chase; Pressure to the Ball

Physical

Use FUN exercises, All fitness should be done with a ball, coordination, agility

Psychological

Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to foster a desire to play (Intrinsic Motivation). Have players demonstrate increased self-responsibility. Give partial responsibility for preparation, discipline. Players can initiate play themselves and learn through self discovery/self expression. Players will enjoy competition so all activities should have objectives/method of scoring. Players can work in groups – so initiate cooperative games and activities.

The Game: 6v6 to 8v8 including Goalkeepers (5-7 Field Players with a Goalkeeper)

**** Do a Great Deal of Coaching/Teaching within 3v3 & 4v4 Games ****

General Topics to be covered during the U8 through U10 season

In general then, coaching the U8-10 age group involves preparing players for the transition from 3v3 to 8v8 11-a-side play. OYSA recommends that these teams play 4v4 to 6v6 but prefer the smaller-sided game. The emphasis for the coach through the season should be to cover:

Emphasis needs to be placed on **skill development** at this age. Your practices should include fun skill building activities with some teaching of technique. When coaching players in this age group, the role of coach expands from one of facilitating, to a teacher of technique and application in the game. Playing at this age is still very important: however, your emphasis should shift towards skill development. Players at this age start to move from the "How" (technique) to "**When**", "**Where**", "**With Whom**" and "**Against Whom**" (skill – tactics). Your practices should still focus on small-sided games so players have the opportunity to recognize the "pictures" presented by the game.

The Teaching System recommended by most Region IV State Directors of Coaching recommends that players under 8 years of age play 4v4 and under 10 play 6v6. It is suggested that coaches, therefore, devote the end of each practice to playing whatever your team will play in league games. You can also play fun games involving smaller numbers, especially 1v1, 2v1 and 3v2 or 5v3 leading up to your final activity. Coaches should always 'coach for success'. It is still important to ensure each child has a ball and to focus on fun games, but as the players develop psychosocially they will be ready to participate and cooperate in small groups also. **Please ask your Club Head Coach to arrange an age-appropriate clinic by calling your State Director of Coaching.**

Working with these age groups, coaches need to concentrate on;

1. **Understanding of the basic principles of team play**
 - a. Appreciation of space – Width, Length and Depth
 - b. Understanding the team triangle
 - c. Support in attack – The Big Triangle
 - d. Support in defense – The Smaller Triangle
2. **Develop the role of the Goalkeeper (Keeper-Sweeper)**
 - a. How to use hands to defend the goal
 - b. Coming out to narrow the angle on shots (makes view of goal smaller)
 - c. Moving out to clear long kicks with feet when necessary
 - d. Moving out to edge of goalkeeper zone & beyond
 - e. Encourage sweeper to join in attack when possible
 - f. Basic catching techniques
 - g. Coming out to narrow angles on shots
 - h. Distribution by throwing
3. **Greater Cooperation** by the field players – collective attacking and defending. Rotation of all players to play in different roles

4. **Further appreciation of space** in team play by:
 - a. Attacking shape on goal-kicks and throw-ins
 - b. Use of width on the field
 - c. When in possession of the ball, stretching the opposition with the most advanced player pushing deep toward the opposition's goal






5. **Continued development of the basic skills** – **dribbling** (to keep possession and to beat opponents), accurate **passing**, **shooting** and **ball control**, and introduce **goalkeeping** with limited pressure but in a challenging environment. Introduce heading (first with light balls - reinforce good technique).

6. **Development of the appreciation of space through the fourth player** in what is called "third man play" (see "Coaching 9, 10 and 11 Year Olds.")
 - a. Diamond Shape at goal-kicks and throw-ins must be continually emphasized
 - b. Continued encouragement to use the "width" – both sides of the field
 - c. Encourage the most advanced player to stretch the opposition by pushing towards the opposition goal – when own team is in possession

7. Encourage all players to be **"two-way players."** Suggest that all players should recover to help defend after losing possession. Similarly, all players should look to contribute to every attacking play (even when their "role" is as the "covering" rearmost defender)

Overriding Consideration "The game is for all players – everyone should be encouraged to participate, particularly the "non-assertive" player(s)."

Summary

-  Appreciation of space - through the diamond shape
-  Use of width – stretching opponents from end to length creates 1v1's
-  Continued development of the basic skills
-  Encouragement of "two-way play"
-  Awareness of the "third man" when on attack

Overriding Consideration "Avoid over-coaching at this transitional time as players get ready to move into 8-a-side play."

COACHING POINTS

TEACHING THE TECHNIQUES

DRIBBLING

Coaching Points

1. Manipulating the ball from side to side (Movement of the ball).
2. Moving the ball past opponents (Movement of the body).
 - a. Pure speed
 - b. Change of pace
 - c. Change of direction
3. Running with the ball a feet.
 - a. Ball comfortable at feet
 - b. Ball not too far ahead
4. Individual possession (shielding).
 - a. Body shape
 - b. Position of ball
 - c. Change of direction (transfer of ball)

PASSING

Coaching Points

1. Weight or Pace of Pass—The pass should be played with the right amount of weight to feet or into space so that the receiver is able to either control the ball easily or play the ball comfortably with one touch.
2. Accuracy—Naturally, it is important that all passes are accurate.
3. Time of the Pass—The player in possession of the ball should not pass the ball if the intended receiver is not in a position to receive it comfortably. A poorly timed pass could result in a loss of possession.
4. Time of the Run—The player making a run to receive a pass should ensure that the player in possession of the ball has the ball under good control and is ready to make the pass. Not only is a poorly timed run a waste of energy, but also it could result in a loss of possession.
5. Support—It is vital that the player in possession of the ball has immediate help from his teammates. The more options a player has to pass the ball, the easier it is for him to keep possession. (Angle & Distance)
6. Passing Angle—Is the receiver of the ball in a good position to receive the ball.

RECEIVING

Coaching Points

1. Make an early selection in method of control.
2. Get in line with the line of the flight of the ball.
3. Keep your eye on the ball.
 - a. Relax the controlling surface for certain methods of control.
 - b. Wedge the ball between the foot and the ground.
4. Receiving touch should be in preparation (away from pressure) to either pass, dribble or shoot.

CROSSING

Coaching Points

1. The same principles apply to crossing as to lofted, driven and bending balls.
2. It is important to emphasize the angle of approach to the ball.
3. Players should be aware of their body shape in relationship to the quality of the cross.
4. Consideration should be given to placement of the ball into the attacking spaces in and around the six yard box.

Planning your practice

Your practice must always be FUN. If you are not enjoying yourself, then you can be sure that the players are not! Use the Coaches Checklist at the front of this manual after planning your practice. Remember your practice must go from simple to complex!

A coach must always be organized and have some idea of what the team needs to work on. Therefore sit down for 5-10 minutes the night before practice and plan your session out. Please find an appropriate blank practice planning sheet to copy and use at the end of this section. Sometimes you will have to tear them up and start again! You should plan to photocopy your best plans and sit with other coaches of similar age-groups from your club about 2 weeks into the season and share information. This is a valuable resource – use it!

There is also a whole series of FUN and appropriate activities at the end of this manual to add to the game activities that you observed during the clinic. Do not let your practices get boring and staid! Always better yourself and your knowledge by attending coaching clinics, watching other coaches and doing your own research from books, video and internet resources. Make it FUN and the players will come back next season to play again. That is your ultimate goal.

For U8-10 players, we recommend a game/activities approach to teaching. Teach skills through playing fun games. We still want all players to be challenged but we need to concentrate on individual ball work as well as introducing small group cooperative situations.

By asking your players questions, you will find out what level they are at. If we put them in situations in practice where they can figure things out for themselves, then they will retain that information a lot longer! See sample plan below.

For other ideas, please see the OYSA recommended texts;

The Peak Performance: Soccer Games for Player Development, by Dr. R. Quinn

Soccer: How to Play the Game, US Soccer Federation

Sample Practice Plan using a game/activities approach (in part from Ron Quinn's book – *buy it!*)

Suggested age-level U8-10 (all activities in following game activity section)

Practice Objectives:

- 1. To develop an assertive attitude when in possession of the ball*
- 2. To begin developing creative dribbling*

Warm-up Activities

2 minutes Hospital Tag

1 minutes Static stretching

Play for 2-3 minutes then stop for rest and introduce one static stretch for 1 minute, then repeat a couple of times, with different chasers each time.

Main Activities

10 minutes Creating new moves

10 minutes Knockout

5 minutes Water break

10 minutes Crab Soccer (emphasis on ball being dribbled touching ground)

15 minutes Multiple ball (3-4) scrimmage (finish with only 1 ball for last 5 minutes)

5 minutes Water break

Warm-down Activities

5 minutes Red Light, Green Light

5 minutes Static stretching

Total practice time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Always end practice with positive reinforcements for their efforts

TOPIC: _____
Coach Name _____ **Age Group** _____



(Activities should be developmentally appropriate.)

| <u>(WARM-UP)</u> | <u>ORGANIZATION</u> | <u>KEY COACHING POINTS</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <u>INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES</u> | | |
| <u>SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES</u> | | |
| <u>LARGE GROUP ACTIVITIES</u> | | |

TOPIC: _____
Coach Name _____ **Age Group** _____



(Activities should be developmentally appropriate.)

| <u>(WARM-UP)</u> | <u>ORGANIZATION</u> | <u>KEY COACHING POINTS</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <u>INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES</u> | | |
| <u>SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES</u> | | |
| <u>LARGE GROUP ACTIVITIES</u> | | |

See the OYSA Coaching Manual on CD Rom for other age-appropriate activities!

U-8/U-10 Appropriate Games

We must be able to reinforce fundamental skills/techniques to them through both fun games and making them think a little!

WARM-UP

Many of the warm-up activities introduced in the U6-U8 module are still applicable or can be made more challenging/appropriate by some minor coaching adjustments.

It is preferable to use a quick warm-up tag game to get U8-10 kids 'juiced up' (excited) for the game of soccer. This in turn will get the kids to get both out of their parents' car and tie their shoelaces quicker. Good habits can be formed now though and when changing the taggers after 30-60 second intervals, a coach can introduce some basic stretches or utilize some ball gymnastics.

Pick 2 games to show coaches as examples, for instance one without a ball to get them enthused and having fun, and then one with a ball involved in a simple exercise.

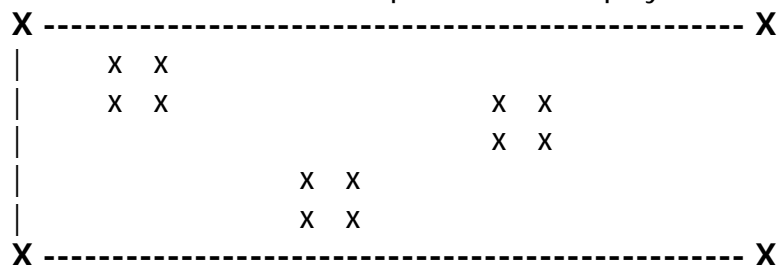
Freeze Tag (U8 appropriate)

Every player starts (without a ball) in a grid except two taggers (in different color bibs). After 3 seconds, the taggers are free to tag anyone on the arm. If tagged, they have to freeze with their legs apart. They can be released (or unfrozen) by another free player crawling through frozen players legs. Swap taggers after 30 seconds or if they freeze everybody!

This can also be played with free players dribbling the ball. To be unfrozen, free players pass the ball through the legs of the frozen players.

Star Wars or "Running bases" game (U10 appropriate)

This activity works for most U8 through U14 players. Set up 2-4 random bases (a base = 4 cones set as a small square, where a player cannot be tagged)



The coach appoints 2 or 3 people as being IT (the taggers then are given a colored training vest to hold in their hand). The objective is for them to get rid of the vest by tagging another player. If a tagger touches another player, he or she drops the vest and the new tagger has to pick it up (no tag-backs). Only 1 allowed on a base at a time. The last one on base is safe (the other player then has to move away).

Then play the game with the taggers without a ball, but everyone else with a ball. Later **introduce new rule: tagger has to touch ball, not person!** Then make it

more challenging by having the taggers only tag by touching a ball with their foot. Stop. Coach can introduce shielding with hands, then play again (see below). **Coach players in game – point out good things!**

Highlight smart play – ask player why he/she is doing it...

If one player is struggling – the coach can play and bale him out (dribble into him accidentally)

Shielding/Turning

Introduce the concept of shielding the ball using hands first (younger players will comprehend this infinitely quicker as they are more dexterous with their hands than feet). Each player has a partner with one ball between them. (The coach should give a good picture to start so they do not go straight down and bang heads). One player tries to keep the ball away from coach. The only rules are that the ball has to remain on the ground and that you can only maneuver it with one hand at a time. If partner (coach) touches the ball with his/her hand possession changes! When the coach wins the ball, demonstrate that you don't have to run away, just simply place your body frame between the ball and the opponent. Secondly, tell players not to travel - can stay in one spot and still retain possession. Third, get shielder to keep hip pointing to partner. Fourth, play shielding game using feet. Fifth, give everyone a ball in the rectangle and if coach (without ball) approaches them they are to turn away to shield. Coach can introduce inside and outside of foot turns this way.

If one player is struggling - the coach can play and bale him out (dribble into him accidentally)

Ball Wars!

Everyone has a ball, dribbling in a fairly small grid. Each player can score a point by dribbling around and hitting their ball against somebody else's. This encourages both attacking and defensive play. It is guaranteed that the coach will be asked 'what happens if he kicked his ball against mine as I was kicking towards his?' Give both a point. Points don't matter. Challenge the individual to beat his/her own personal score each time.

Ball Tag!

Then in a 20 x 30 yard grid introduce a 2 team competition, blues against orange 8v8. Blues start inside grid without a ball. Orange begin outside grid and then are timed to get a ball (from a pile just outside the grid) pass it among themselves and try to hit the blue players with the ball below the knee! If hit this time have to kneel down on one knee, but can knock balls away with other foot. Time it, then change teams.

DRIBBLING

Remember to notice and encourage players using both left and right feet!

Find your own space!

All dribble in a reasonable size grid trying not to bump into each other. Again encourage players to use both left and right feet. Stop the players when a few are close to each other, then get them to stand with their arms out to the side and twist gently from the waist. If they can touch one another player, they are too close! Then guarantee them that the next time you stop them, they will all find their own space. As a coach, one must stand in an appropriate spot to see the whole field of play. He or she can wait until every player is in their own space before calling stop. This way show the coaches that they can stand in a position to see everybody and recognize certain situations in which to stop the players to make positive points.

Creating New Moves!

All kids/players love to learn new tricks! Instructor can use their favorite trick or any Coerver move as long as they break it into very small steps. I prefer to teach tricks without the ball first!

Get all participants to stand 3 steps back from their ball to learn the foot positioning first before complicating things with the ball! Lift the left foot up, take a small diagonal step forward (to the left), bend the left knee and drop the left shoulder down. Then lift the right foot up and take a quick hop diagonally forward to the right. When the ball is involved, on the hop push the ball forward in the same direction with whichever part of the foot is comfortable, preferably the right hand side of the laces of the right shoe. Let them practice on their own for 30 seconds. Do not spend long on this exercise. Some players will understand the concept and this will begin to rub off on the players around. I have had a 3 year old do this fake at camp and remember it the next day!

Show players two fakes (one using body and one using ball) and then pair kids up and have them make up their own. Each can start with their own ball and then graduate to one with a ball and a passive defender.

Knockout

For 12-16 players, mark off a grid 15x20 yards. Each player dribbles and keeps ball under control but tries to kick other players balls out of the grid. If a ball is kicked out a player has to sprint after his/her ball and if they get it before it stops rolling they can rejoin the game. If it stops before they get there do 10 alternate toe-taps and then rejoin game. The last 30 seconds can be used as competition so if the ball is kicked out you sit out or get a water break. This way the maximum a player has to sit out is 30 seconds.

American Football - Create a playing field of 15 x 30 yards, but make the last 5 yards of each end an end zone. A touch down is scored by keeping possession and creating an opportunity to dribble into the end zone. If this is done with the ball under control, then a touch down is scored.

PASSING

U8-10 Players are usually psychologically ready for passing to their teammates. At these age groups coaches should definitely work their players in twos and build to the concept of the team triangle and supporting options around the ball. It is never too early to give them a concept, as some will get it and again it will begin to rub off on the others in their peer group.

Coaching points (Passing):

Keep on toes all the time (be ready), look up and take 'snapshot', make decision who to pass to, then head down and keep eye on ball, ankle locked with toe up, swing leg in straight plane, follow through center of ball.

Coaching points (Receiving):

Keep on toes all the time (be ready), get body behind line of ball, look up take a mental 'snapshot', make decision where to turn when ball is controlled (away from pressure), then keep eye on ball, offer largest area of contact to ball, cushion ball by giving slightly on contact, trap towards the ground, push ball out to side 1/2- 1 yard (away from pressure) to enable to take in stride.

Keep-Away - This is an excellent exercise for warming up. Instead of having players standing around in a line waiting to shoot at goal before a game, have them gently warm up playing 3 v 1, or 5 v 2 keep-away for 15-30 second intervals. This gives players a lot more touches on the ball and produces a good feel for the particular playing surface, while alternating aerobic and anaerobic exercise. When an opposing coach sees this happen, he knows that the other coach knows what he is doing and begins to worry!

Windows'95

Place a number of windows around an area (2 cones close together). 2 players have to pass through the window to score a point. Only rule is not to pass through same window **twice in a row!**-The Coach must introduce passing and communication at this point.

Advance the game by using left foot pass only, outside of foot passes, or play in groups of three and introduce the concept of a triangle shape.

2 teams (4 blue, 4 orange). Have to pass through window (gate) to score a point. How many can you score in 30 seconds. If balls collide - deduct 1 point. Keep ball moving. If ball stops deduct 1 point. 2 teams compete against each other.

Same game only ball has to keep moving. If ball stops deduct 1 point.

Death on the Nile!

20 x 30 grid. 3 teams of 4 players, and 3 balls. Each get one minute in the middle. Count # of interceptions. Other 2 teams have to play the balls across the 'river' back and forth. Introduce calling for the ball, then passing to a teammate on same side to open 'channels'. Techniques being used include-, passing & receiving, chipping,

defending etc. We have to challenge our players cognitively. Other changes can include- points for passes, keep ball moving, time limit to play ball.

3v3 Passing & Moving

Play in a grid 15x25 yards. Two teams of three/four playing with a ball each. All they are to do is to keep possession in the area without bumping into the other team. Coach should stress team shape (triangle) always to be in a position where you can see the ball i.e. be passed to! Introduce communication and the importance of looking around before receiving and passing! Receiver's first touch should be in the direction where they want to go next.

3v3 'American Football!'

Play 3v3 but instead of making goals for the teams to score in, create an end zone at either end of the small field. A team can score a 'touch-down' (6 points) if they pass the ball to a teammate standing in the end zone. Think up any number of variations for an extra point! Then restrict a player waiting in the end zone to staying in there a maximum of three seconds and then has to get out similar to basketball.

Advance the game by not allowing any player to stand still in the end-zone, or then limit access to the zone to 3 seconds at a time for any player.

Chip Pass to Target (U10)

Create three 10 x 10 yard adjacent grids, and three teams of 4 players. Place one team in each square. The team in the middle (team B) have to sit down in their grid, but can move about. The object is for team A to chip the ball to team C over the heads of team B. For team C to score a point, the ball has to be brought down under control (remaining in the grid or at the coach's discretion). Team C then has '3 touches, one to control, one to lay off a short pass and one to chip the ball back to team A. Whichever team is the first to play the ball out of the playing area, or allows team B to make a contact, switches position into the middle.

COMBINATION/TRANSITION

Wall Pass (2 v 1) - In a 20 x 15 yard grid play 2 v 0 to get the feel of a one-touch wall pass. Then add one defender into the grid, and make the offensive pair play 2 v 1 and produce a wall pass to beat the defender and score by stopping the ball on the end line under control. The players with the ball turn round and repeat the exercise, trying to score as many times as possible by utilizing the wall pass. Get player A with the ball to dribble at speed at the defender to start the move. Player B then must read the visual cue and create an appropriate angle to either side of the defender in order to allow the opportunity for the wall pass. As the players get better technically, and more accustomed to the players around them, the coach should point out further visual cues. For example, if Player A wants to play a wall pass to the left, then he may want to run to the right of the defender (as he faces him). This will not only open up space on that side by drawing the defender away, but it can also be read as a cue for a teammate to create an angle for a wall pass on that side. Add deception by having the initial pass made with the outside of the foot.

FINISHING

Get out of here

Play "Get out of here" (works for 8-14 year olds) - Two teams in a line stand either side of the coach (standing on the half way line with all the balls). Have the two teams determine their team names. Play 2v2 in a 15 x 20 area (or 3v3 in 20x30) grid to 2 yard goals, with the first 2 from each side coming out as soon as the coach puts a ball on the field. The coach is boss of the balls! Introduce penalty for encroaching! When a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the coach shouts 'Get out of here!' and the players have to go to the back of their line. As soon as the coach yells, he can put another ball on the field for the next two players from each team to play. The game is continuous till the coach has no balls left. He can then ask the players what they can do to rectify the situation... They will soon collect all the balls back!

4 goal open/close game 25 seconds (3 teams of 3)

Then introduce four small goals, one each on the mid-lines of the grid described above. Have 3 teams of 3 players. Four goal game with gates. One team is assigned to be gatekeepers, one player standing in each goal and the coach goes in the fourth. They are to act as a gate, designed to close or open the goal (step to the side) when directed by the coach pointing. The other players (each team with a ball) play to score on any open goal by passing through it. Then try game with only one ball on the field. Then develop to...

Finish with 2 fields of 3v3/4v4, with a different method of scoring on each field.

Field 1: Head to score.

Field 2: All 4 have to be in opponents half of field for their goal to count!

Option: Have to go around the back of goal and dribble/pass through cones the opposite way. ***The Coach can use any number of different options!***

Jurassic Park

30 x 20 or 30 x 30 yard grid, with 6 mini goals around border. Start with 5 orange inside grid with 5 balls, blues are outside. On command they have to come in and steal the balls to score. When scored the ball is dead. Time how long it takes to kill all 5 balls. Swap roles.

Numbers Up

Going to one goal. Add pressure - (i.e. 2v 1, v2). Provide target for defender if they win the ball. Looking to shoot as quickly as possible, by having body in correct position, showing good 1st touch when receiving ball. 1st touch should be away from pressure. Disguise your shots.

Quick Fire!

Pull one goal all the way up the field to the outer edge of the 18 yard box. Play 5v2 in an area 18x36 yards with two full size goals 18 yards apart. Play for 1 minute at a time, with the 5 having to make 5 passes before shooting. If the defenders steal the ball they go for goal also. You can add goalkeepers at any time.

Cooler Ball!

Can play 4v4v4. Put large cooler / trash can (or similar) in middle of field and have 1 ball and the three teams play against each other! To score a team simply has to hit the target. Kids will play this game forever!

Triangular Goals

Create Triangular goals (3 flags 2 yards apart in a triangle shape) in the middle of the penalty area. Play 4v4 in penalty box. One team has 4 attackers, the other 3 keepers and 1 defender. If ball goes out of box, or keepers/defender makes a save, switch. Let each team captain keep scores.

Then go to larger area - 6v6 or 8v8 in between halfway line and edge of 18 yard box. Open goals up to 6 yards wide.

Advance the activity appropriately by asking players to play 3 passes before shooting or chip over goals to teammate! Have to score with a volley or half volley, etc.

"The Game" 8v8, 9v9 to goals with one ball!

A coach should always try to let the players scrimmage for a third or so of practice in the format that they will play in season. For the U10-12 age group this will be any number from 8v8 to 1 v 1.

Review objectives of soccer activities

- 1. Get players to solve problems**
- 2. Foster cooperation and teamwork**
- 3. When does the coach control the game as opposed to the players?**
- 4. Use games that bring out an aspect of the real game**
- 5. Excitement - get kids 'juiced up!'**
- 6. Create environments to bring ideas out. Show kids how to survive!**

Please view our website at www.oregonyouthsoccer.org for other good coaching information!

Model Practice Appropriate for U10 Players

Setup a 20 x 30 yard grid. This can be utilized for all activities! 12 x U-10 players

WARM UP

Get players (each with a ball) to dribble in a grid. Then instruct kids to try and get as far away from everybody else as possible. Introduce a trick/turn with the ball to change direction, e.g. a step by the ball, spin on standing foot and take the ball away with other foot. Advance exercise by giving one player (without ball) a colored bib and play freeze tag for 30-60 seconds high intensity. If he tags someone they have to freeze (& place ball by side of feet) and can only be released with a teammate passing a ball through their legs. Then have 2 taggers! Then taggers have to touch ball. Coach shielding.

Windows '98 Triangles

Create 4 small triangles, one in each corner, and a larger triangle in middle of grid. Play through a triangle = 1 point. Cannot go through same triangle twice in row. Then introduce a tagger. If heading for a corner and tagged, player loses 1 point, if heading for the middle and tagged they lose 3 points. Then pick 2 taggers. Ask kids to keep score and find out record - always ask players to try and beat the record for intensity.

Passing

Have each player dribble in large grid area with partner passing ball between them. Then introduce one tagger who tries to knock balls out of grid. If knocked out, then both partners have to sprint to the ball, then play it back in. Both pay for the mistake. Ask Question-

Do we need short or long passes when we are under pressure?

Swap taggers, until all have been in middle. Passers must always keep the ball moving - "If you kill the ball you kill the game," Johan Cruyff.

Now if ball is knocked out do 5 toe taps simultaneously.

Ask Questions about **awareness...**

Show angles and distance of support in 2v1 - don't let defender cover both players! Play again.

Three teams of four (red, yellow, green)

All red and yellow players in grid with ball each. On command, greens are timed knocking all balls out. If a ball is out it stays out, but then the red and yellow players can pass and support each other to keep remaining balls away from green. Keep green's time. Then play again timing red and then yellow as the attackers. A lot of scheming, helping and double teaming strategy to be evident. Can send in two stealers, for first 30 seconds, then add third and then fourth after 45 seconds. Ask Question: **How can the chasing team make the game easier?**

Keep new winning times/scores. Jan's kids schemed - left best kid with ball so he couldn't help others! Play game 3 v 3 + goalies. Play 5 minute halves.

Cool Down

Light Jog & Stretch.

Top 10 List
Reasons for Dropping out of soccer
(Ranked according to mean importance)
10-14 year olds, School & Non-school Soccer

Boys

1. I was no longer interested
2. It was no longer fun
3. I was tired of playing and practicing
4. Soccer conflicted with other sports I wanted to play
5. Practices and games were boring
6. My coach was a poor teacher
7. I wanted to participate in other non-sport activities
8. Coach only played his/her favorites
9. I did not like the coach
10. Too much emphasis was placed on winning

Girls

1. I was no longer interested
2. It was no longer fun
3. I wanted to participate in other non-sport activities
4. Soccer conflicted with other sports I wanted to play
5. I was tired of playing and practicing
6. Soccer required too much time
7. Practices and games were boring
8. My coach was a poor teacher
9. There was too much pressure
10. I never felt I belonged to the team

**This is why we as coaches must work on developing players:
Make it fun and don't care too much about winning and losing!
The greatest coaching achievement is to see players get better over the
season**

Top 10 List
Changes Needed in Soccer
(Ranked according to mean importance)
To induce 10-14 year olds to play soccer again

Boys

1. Practices were more fun
2. Coaches understood players better
3. I could play more
4. The coach understood the sport better
5. The coach was a better teacher
6. Games and practices were scheduled at different times
7. The coach didn't yell as much
8. There was less emphasis on winning
9. There were more leagues so other players were closer to my ability
10. The sport did not take so much time

Girls

1. Practices were more fun
2. Practices or games did not conflict with social life
3. Practices or games did not conflict with studies
4. The coach understood the players better
5. I could play more
6. The coach was a better teacher
7. The coach understood the sport better
8. Games and practices were scheduled at different times
9. The sport did not take so much time
10. There was less emphasis on winning

This is why we as coaches must work on changing our attitudes
Coaches are powerful role models, and must always work to be positive!
Continue to educate yourself as a coach – study & attend as
many clinics as you can

When Should We Teach Positions?

by

Jan Smisek, US Soccer U-14 National Coaching Coordinator
with Dave Schumacher, WSYSA Coaching Director

At youth coaching clinics and licensing courses across the country, the question of when to teach positions is usually raised. The fact that questions and concerns continue to be asked, mainly by coaches of 9 or 11 year olds, suggest that it is important to address this issue. Many coaches of this age group seem to be focusing on organizing players to play in specific positions once they begin playing 6 v 6, 7 v 7 or 9 v 9. It also appears that, at this point, these coaches are abandoning the use of small-sided games, 3 v 3, 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, as a teaching tool in their practices.

Because there are more players on the field at this age, inexperienced coaches feel an overwhelming need to manufacture structure at the expense of continuing to build a solid base of individual techniques and a clear comprehension of individual and small group tactics. Many coaches fall back on their familiarity with other American team sports, where positional play and structure are a natural and fundamental part of playing the game. As a result, these coaches create practices filled with an array of contrived, unrealistic drills designed to get players to spread out in an attempt to resemble the adult game. Providing the structure of being a defender, midfielder or forward starts to become the guiding force in their approach.

This is not to say that as we begin to add more players on the field 4 v 4 to 9 v 9 we ignore that team roles start to occur and that players should be allowed to experience these various roles. It should not, however, assume high priority in coaching 9-11 year olds.

Soccer is different! Its foundation is based upon basic techniques and elementary principles required by all players. A young player's ability to perform the basic techniques of the game; passing, dribbling, receiving, shooting, heading, and tackling, is directly related to the application of simple principles of play and is critical to their development and future success. It is therefore vital that coaches continue to play

small-sided games such as 3 v 3 and 4 v 4 in practices. Small-sided games increase the number of touches on the ball, do not allow players to hide or be excluded, and provide simple but realistic soccer challenges and decisions. In addition to small-sided games at practice, providing players a variety of playing experiences in games produces the appropriate environment for learning to take place.

Goalkeeping is a unique role and needs training of special techniques. However, it must not be forgotten that in today's game goalkeepers are soccer players and need exposure to the same techniques and principles as field players. Youth coaches must safeguard against limiting players to just playing in goal at these young ages, we must develop well-rounded soccer players with some ending up as goalkeepers later in life.

A major element of soccer is decision-making. Players must make decisions individually and collectively regarding possession, penetration and defending. Playing in a particular area of the field only provides one view of the options or choices available to the player with the game. It is important for young players, as they learn the game, that they be exposed to playing in different areas (roles/positions) to gain the perspective (vision) which will help increase their recognition of situations and decision-making options. When players play in various areas of the field they develop an increased awareness of relationships to teammates, opponents, the ball and the goal. Over time, through practice and competition, players will be able to apply basic techniques and simple principles of play in different areas of the field. This is the foundation from which positional play develops.

As players get older they will naturally start to gravitate to particular areas of the field. This is usually based on personality, natural athletic qualities and the skills they have developed. Coaches must appreciate that playing a position is part of a player's overall maturation in the game. Players should be allowed to gravitate towards these roles when they demonstrate a predisposition to the role. Players by the age of 13 or 14 will start to feel more comfortable in one or two roles/functions. This feeling may even be apparent much earlier, however, be on guard about limiting players too early just because they "like to play defender". Players will continue to develop physically well

into their teens and they may become more effective in other roles as they mature. Playing a position is a natural end to playing the game rather than a predetermined starting point by which the youth coach organizes practices or Saturday's line up.

Coaches must remember that they are working with 9, 10, and 11 year olds. They display distinct characteristics mentally, physically and socially. It is the ideal age for challenging technical development and it is the point at which they begin to understand the importance of cooperation in team play. They are capable of grasping basic principles of play, such as support, and their application in a small-sided environment. We need to take this into account and keep our expectations and demands of players within this context. The foundation of the game *must be* created in the small-sided environment. We can't expect players to see the pictures and make good decisions in larger sided games until they master them in small-sided games. Most of all, be patient. We don't teach children to read by starting with "War & Peace". In this respect, soccer is *not* different!

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Please view our website at www.oregonyouthsoccer.org for
other good coaching tips and information